

**Deconstructing the Finnish Man: Studying Representations of Masculinities in
Finnish War Films *The Partisans* and *Ambush***

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The premise of this research is the notion that Finnish war films are an important part of cultural discourse about war, and can thus influence the way we understand and remember this period in Finnish history and its impact for the nation and its people. Because the viewpoint assumed by a majority of these films is masculine, war narratives can be considered important sites for negotiating and constructing norms, ideals, and stereotypes related to Finnish men and masculinity. Using Finnish war films *The Partisans* and *Ambush* as material, this research examines how representations of masculinities are constructed in these films, and what kinds of images and notions of Finnish men and masculinity do these narratives produce.

The theoretical framework used to analyse these films consists of feminist film theory and critical studies on men and masculinity, as they are both based on the notion that gender and its representations are historical, social, political, and cultural constructions, and thus subject to change and re-evaluation. Feminist film theory offers useful tools and critical concepts for analysing representations of gender in cinema, whereas Finnish studies on masculinity, the military, and war provide a national framework that allows this research to place these films within a larger context of Finnish history and culture.

Three aspects were identified as central to the construction of masculinities in these films: the masculine environment of the military and war, the masculine body, and male sexuality. The homosocial environment of the military actively excludes women and strives to eliminate attributes associated with femininity, and masculinities in these films were therefore constructed primarily in the relationships between men, which resulted in different forms of masculinities being placed in a hierarchical order. The portrayal of male bodies was examined in terms of the objectification of the body through the gaze of the camera/viewer, and state power and control, but this study suggests that the possibly feminising effect of subjugation and objectification is subverted in Finnish war narratives by shifting the focus away from the military as a disciplinary institution and over to the heroic soldier, who embodies the characteristics of ideal masculinity realised in war. Finally, this research argued that portrayals of male sexuality in these films are used to highlight but also challenge sexual behaviour as an indicator of ideal masculinity.

Although this research's focus on only two films means that the results cannot be generalised to all Finnish war films, the framework formulated in this thesis can be utilised in the study of other films as well, which is one of the most important outcomes of this research.

Keywords: masculinity, war film, Finnish cinema, sexuality, military

Contents

1. Introduction.....	1
2. How to study men: Methodology.....	7
2.1. Feminist film theory.....	7
2.2. Finnish research on men and masculinity.....	11
2.3. How men are made: A poststructuralist methodological approach.....	12
2.4. A question of genre: What is a Finnish war film?.....	16
3. Men in a world without women: The inherent masculinity of war.....	19
3.1. Hegemonic masculinity.....	21
3.2. Hierarchical and horizontal homosociality.....	23
3.3. A group of soldiers as a collection of masculinities.....	25
3.4. A hierarchy of masculinities.....	29
4. For your viewing pleasure: The masculine body and its cinematic representations.....	33
4.1. The body as the object of the gaze.....	34
4.2. The body as an object of state power and control.....	37
4.3. Avoiding objectification: Narrative strategies.....	41
5. Sexuality.....	44
5.1. The lover and the rapist: Sexuality in <i>Ambush</i>	46
5.2. Make war not love: Sexuality in <i>The Partisans</i>	49
6. Conclusion.....	54
7. References.....	59

1. Introduction

“War films are equivalents to memorials and monuments in the realm of popular culture because they impose upon the viewer patterns of “remembering” past and present wars” (Sokolowska-Paryz, 2012, p. 10-11). There are few other genres that would be so dominated by the expectation of reality than the war film. These films visualise the victories, defeats, emotions, and trauma of war to generations of people who have never experienced them, but whose present is defined by the events of the past. Although war films can help us to understand our history, there can never be an objective representation of the past: like all cultural narratives, war films are always someone’s interpretation of what happened, emphasising one perspective at the expense of another. These interpretations are inevitably influenced and shaped by the historical, political, social, and cultural environment in which they are produced. Studying these representations of the past can thus show how history is continuously constructed and reproduced in the present, but it also allows us to shed light on the cultural discourses, norms, and ideals that produce these representations. In short, studying war films is important because they can tell us something about the past *and* the present of the society and culture that produced them.

It is thus no wonder that there is a large body of works devoted to the study of war films particularly in Anglo-Saxon film studies. War films have been examined from so many different perspectives that it would be impossible to recount them all here, but by categorising research based on their choice of material, it is possible to detect common approaches to the study of this genre. One frequently used context for the study of war films is national cinema – unsurprisingly, Hollywood seems to be the most common national context. Robert Eberwein (2009), for example, offered a comprehensive analysis of war films throughout the history of American cinema in his book *The Hollywood War Film*, while Elisabeth Bronfen (2012) examined the way war has been thematised in American films across genres. There are also several studies focusing on films made in specific time periods, such as Hollywood during World War II (Jones, 1945), the Weimar Period in Germany (Kester, 2003), or American cinema at the beginning of the millennium (Allison, 2017), but arguably the most common approach to the study war films is to examine films in terms of the specific wars they depict. Although this kind of research concerns a variety of conflicts – Martin Barker (2011), for example, has extensively analysed films about the Iraq War – a large part of academic interest seems to be focused on films about World War II and the Vietnam War.

Emphasis on World War II narratives can be partly explained by the number of films available for analysis: countries with prolific film industries, such as Germany, France, the UK, and the US, all had a significant role in the conflict. However, I would argue that the interest in films

depicting these two military conflicts – World War II and the Vietnam War – largely stems from the notion that films can be seen as a platform for negotiating national identities, addressing national traumas, and visualising social and cultural values and ideals. Vietnam War films, for example, have been often read as visualisations of the trauma of the defeat on the American society. According to David Desser (1991), in the American context, the war has always been seen “in strictly American terms”, as a fault in the American society (p. 82). War films have also been studied in terms of concrete consequences that cinematic representation of war might have on the society that produced them: John Chapin, Marissa Mendoza-Burcham and Mari Pierce (2017) studied American war films’ influence on the public’s perception of service members, arguing that “[m]edia depictions can be a powerful third force that not only motivates young men and women to serve their country but also sways public support for lengthy military engagements” (p. 86). Of course, it is very unlikely that there would be a direct causality between war films and people’s attitudes and opinions about war, but studies like these point to the fact that films cannot be dismissed as “mere entertainment”, that there is a need to examine films as products of larger cultural environments than just the film industry and to consider how these cultural environments are influenced by cinema in return.

As war films have come to be seen to reflect and represent societal and cultural issues and changes, there is one aspect in particular that has been increasingly thematised in studies on war narratives: representations of gender. Feminist theory and film studies can be largely credited for the growing interest in gender and its representations, not just in terms of war films but cinema in general. Laura Mulvey’s (1975/1999) seminal essay about the effect of the patriarchal unconsciousness on classical film form and the representation of women in American cinema can be considered one of the most influential theories in feminist film studies, and Raya Morag (2009) also pointed to Judith Butler’s theory of gender performativity as a significant influence on the study of gender (p. 27). Due to the male-dominant perspectives on war in film narratives, research on the construction of gender has mostly focused on masculinity. Representations of women in war films have been addressed to some extent, of course – Shelley Anne Galpin (2014) studied female protagonists in European war films, while Ralph Donald and Karen MacDonald’s (2014) book *Women in War Films: From Helpless Heroine to G.I. Jane* offered an extensive look on female characters in war films throughout film history – but the war film and its relation to social, political, and cultural issues has been considered mainly in terms of masculinity and the male body. For example, Eberwein (2001, 2007) has studied masculinity and sexuality first in American World War II combat films, and later in a book about American war films in general, and Morag’s book *Defeated Masculinity* viewed masculinity in German and American films through the lens of post-traumatic cinema. Research on

Vietnam War films in particular has often thematised the dichotomy between active, masculine Us and passive, feminine Other (see e.g. Brauerhoch, 2000; Fuchs, 1990; White, 1991).

Considering the wide interest in war films internationally, it seems remarkable that there does not seem to be much academic attention paid to Finnish war films. In fact, one of the few comprehensive studies about Finnish cinema in terms of genre is Kimmo Laine's (1994) research on *sotilasfarssi*. The term refers to comedy films which commonly depict recruits' funny mishaps and blunders as they enter the compulsory military training (Laine, p. 9), and therefore these films have little to do with war or the war film genre. The kind of extensive research that has been done in other countries on World War II films and their role in the society and culture that has produced them, for example, seems to be completely missing in Finland. This is even more remarkable when one considers the massive impact World War II had on Finnish culture, people, and the country in general. Not only are the Winter and Continuation War, fought during World War II between Finland and the Soviet Union, one of the most critical events in the history of independent Finland, they have also significantly influenced Finnish literature, cinema, and general cultural discourse on 'Finnish-ness'. Väinö Linna's novel *The Unknown Soldier* (published in 1954), depicting the experiences of Finnish soldiers during the Continuation War, is arguably one of the most popular Finnish books ever published. The first film adaptation of the novel, directed by Edvin Laine and released in 1955, is the most-watched Finnish film of all time (SES, 2018), while the third film version of *The Unknown Soldier*, released in 2017 as Finland celebrated its 100 years of independence, became the most-watched Finnish film in 50 years as it crossed the one million viewer mark in early 2018 (Huhtala, 2018). These two film adaptations have collectively won nine Jussi Awards, Finland's equivalent to the American Academy Award. Other award-winning Finnish war films include *Ambush* (seven Jussi Awards), *The Partisans* (four Jussi Awards), and *Silence* (four Jussi Awards), to name a few. Although these awards do not necessarily tell everything about the reception and meaning of these films, they do point to the cultural acclaim that is often given to war narratives.

A considerable part of such acclaim has arguably to do with the historical and cultural importance of war, and the general atmosphere of credibility that surrounds fictional war narratives. That is, war novels are not non-fiction and war films are not documentary films, but they are still perceived as realistic portrayals of real events. Because we know that Väinö Linna himself served as a soldier in the Continuation War, it is commonly held that the portrayal of war in *The Unknown Soldier* has been influenced by his own experiences, whereby fictive male characters in the novel can be considered to represent real men who fought in the war (Jokinen, 2000, p. 120). This does not pertain merely to Linna and *The Unknown Soldier*: many Finnish war films are based on either (fictive) books by authors who served in the war, or memories and accounts of Finnish soldiers. This

undeniable element of reality highlights the need to study Finnish war films, to ask how is Finnish history not only represented but *produced* by these narratives. When Edvin Laine's *The Unknown Soldier* is shown on TV every Independence Day, or when the third film adaptation of the same story is promoted as the biggest, most important Finnish film ever made and released as a part of the celebration of 100 years of independence, then this particular narrative undeniably occupies a central position in cultural discourse about war and how it is remembered.

Studying war films and their place in Finnish culture thus also forces us to recognise whose stories are being told and whose are not. Considering that most war films are at least partly based on soldiers' accounts of wartime events, the viewpoint assumed by these films is naturally masculine. Representations of war can and should be criticised for their male-centricity because they reinforce the male-centric perspectives of history and culture in general and erase women's stories, experiences, and efforts in the process, but criticism alone is not fruitful if the aim is to examine how war and Finnish-ness is portrayed in cinema. Rather, it is important to recognise that war films – particularly those that depict combat – are predominantly about men and their experiences of war, because it points to the defining aspect of many war films, as noted by Jeffords (1989): “they are a ‘man’s story’ from which women are generally excluded. For such narratives, gender is the assumed category of interpretation, the only one that is not subject to interpretation and variation” (p. 49). Therefore, after having acknowledged the male-dominant perspectives that structure war narratives, the question then becomes: what kind of norms, ideals, and images of men and masculinity do these films produce? How are these representations of masculinities constructed, and how do they reflect and influence wider notions of masculinity in the culture in which they were produced? These are questions that have been posed in the studies mentioned above, but rarely in the Finnish context.

The starting point of this Master's thesis was the hope to be able to answer at least some of these questions. To do so, I chose two Finnish war films for analysis: *The Partisans* (fin. *Sissit*, dir. Mikko Niskanen) and *Ambush* (fin. *Rukajärven tie*, dir. Olli Saarela). Both films are combat war films, depicting a group of soldiers during a mission in the Continuation War. Although the narrative and perspective are quite similar in these films (as are in many war films), there are also some basic differences which influenced my choice of films. *The Partisans*, released in 1963, is a considerably older film than *Ambush*, released in 1999. *The Partisans* also features elements that can be read as criticism towards war. I would not go as far as to call it an anti-war film, because I do not think that it is, but the tone of the film is arguably less patriotic than the rather conservative viewpoint of *Ambush*. However, despite these possibly differing views on war, the exclusively masculine perspective remains, which is why my research started from the hypothesis that the strategies and elements used to construct masculinities in these films are similar, that it is possible to find

reoccurring components and essential features of representations of men and masculinities in both films. Therefore, the main purpose of this thesis is to answer the following research questions:

1. How are representations of masculinities constructed in *The Partisans* and *Ambush*?
2. What kinds of images and notions of Finnish men and masculinity do these narratives produce?

These two questions reflect my assumption that war narratives construct and represent certain types of masculinities, thus producing and reinforcing certain stereotypes, ideals, and norms that can shape our understanding of what Finnish men were, are, or should be like. However, because the first question assumes a quite wide perspective on the subject, I limited this research's scope by narrowing the analysis down to three aspects:

1. The masculine environment of the military and war
2. The masculine body
3. Male sexuality

These three viewpoints were determined central to the construction of masculinities based on previous research on not only war films but on the relationship between masculinity, war, and the military in general, and they also reflect the topics often thematised in the theoretical perspectives that form the framework for this research. These three aspects also form the structure of this thesis.

I begin by first detailing the theoretical framework used to analyse the films I have chosen as my material. It mainly combines two different but related theoretical perspectives: feminist film theory and critical studies on men and masculinity. Although the objects of interest differ between these two perspectives – feminist analysis has been mostly concerned with representations of women, while masculinity studies obviously focus on men – they are both based on the notion that gender and its representations are historical, social, political, and cultural constructions, and thus subject to change and re-evaluation. Feminist film theory offers useful tools and concepts for analysing representations of gender in cinema, but Finnish studies on masculinity, the military, and war provide a national framework that allows this research to place these films within the context of Finnish history and culture.

The analysis itself is structured according to the three abovementioned aspects. Firstly, I consider the inherently masculine environment of the military and war and the exclusion of the feminine as an ideal site for the construction of masculine identities. I also discuss how this creates a homosocial setting where masculinities are constructed in relationships between men, which results in different forms of masculinities being placed in a hierarchical order, highlighting the notion that there are more and less desirable ways of being a man, and that these films participate in the negotiation of the norms, expectations, and ideals connected to the concept of masculinity. Secondly,

I look at the portrayal of male bodies in these films, and examine the relation between the body and the construction of masculinity from two perspectives: the body as an object of the gaze of the camera/viewer, and the body as an object of state power and control. The former focuses more on the visual aspects of cinema, while the latter primarily concerns the narrative strategies and structure of these films, but they both deal with the issue of objectification and its relation to representations of masculinities. In the third part of the analysis, I focus on the portrayal of male sexuality in these films, demonstrating how sex scenes and other expressions of sexuality are used to highlight but also challenge sexual behaviour as an indicator of ideal masculinity. Finally, I conclude by discussing the main findings and the limitations of this research, which also points to the need for further research.

2. How to study men: Methodology

In order to produce a framework for analysing the representation of masculinities in Finnish war films, this study will combine two slightly different but related critical perspectives: feminist film theory and critical studies on men and masculinity (*kriittinen miestutkimus* in Finnish). Although feminist film theory and feminist studies in general have largely focused on the representations of gender from a female perspective, and critical studies on men and masculinity, as the name already suggests, position men and masculinity as the centre of the analysis, these two disciplines are by no means each other's opposites. In fact, critical studies on men and masculinity did not emerge as a counteraction to feminist studies, as some men's studies did: this field of masculinity studies is built on and draws from gender theories developed by various feminist scholars (Jokinen, 1999, p. 8). As Finnish researcher Arto Jokinen (1999) has argued, critical studies on men and masculinity must develop its own theoretical and methodological terminology and a way of thinking that acknowledges the social and cultural differences, especially in relation to power, between men and women (p. 8). That is, the theories and methodologies used in the study of (female) gender in the feminist tradition can only rarely be applied unmodified to the study of men. However, unlike critical studies on men and masculinity, feminist studies have a long and fruitful history of film analysis, and the emerging of feminist film theory has arguably been one of the most influential developments in the study of cinema. Therefore, the aim of this study is to utilize the many practical tools and methods provided by feminist film studies (especially in relation to film form), but not without recognising the significantly different positions men have occupied, historically and culturally speaking, in society, in war and in cinema.

2.1. Feminist film theory

Although feminist film analysis is not necessarily a one, homogeneous field of study, feminist film theory strongly reflects the same critique of patriarchal societies in terms of gender, power structures, cultural norms and social practices that is at the core of all feminist studies. It has been largely defined by feminist scholar Laura Mulvey's seminal essay "Narrative Cinema and Visual Pleasure", where she argued that the film form of classical Hollywood cinema has been structured by "the unconscious of patriarchal society" (p. 833), and that the female form is objectified and eroticized by the male gaze, that is, by the film camera. Although her use of psychoanalytical theory can be questioned and argued to be obviously out-dated – the "to-be-looked-at-ness" of women as a site where masculine

fantasies are projected certainly does not apply to films that are structured around a group of female characters, for example – the classical Hollywood narrative structure is still by far the most popular way of making films, and, despite the scarcity of female characters, Mulvey’s theory does lend itself surprisingly well to the analysis of war films, which can be read as visualizations of violent male fantasies that can be realised only in cinema or in war.

As the title already implies, in “Narrative Cinema and Visual Pleasure” Mulvey argued that the pleasure derived from cinema is in the act of looking and in a patriarchal society “pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female”: a woman on screen is an erotic object both for the viewer and the characters in the film (pp. 837-838). However, as the bodies most frequently seen on screen in war narratives are male rather than female, the representation of masculine bodies becomes a substantial part of the discussion, if not the main issue: how does the objectifying and eroticizing (male) gaze function when the bodies displayed are explicitly and often violently male? What kind of pleasure does the film offer when its narrative is based on physicality and bodily action of (young) men, and to whom? Some of these issues were raised in German film scholar Annette Brauerhoch’s (2000) essay “Sexy Soldier – Kriegsfilme und weibliches Publikum”, where she asked what makes war films, which are made by men and arguably *for* men, attractive to female spectators. She argued that these films constantly toy with instances of control and loss of control, rationality and regression, sadism and masochism, and despite the illusion of active, masculine power through excessive, weaponized violence, the subjugation by the military hierarchy transforms these men into passive, feminine objects of state power and authority, ready to be used whenever necessary (pp. 93, 100). Following this logic, it could be suggested that the male characters in these films are not objectified (feminized?) only on a narrative level, but also visually: they cannot escape the eroticizing objectification of the camera.

This line of argument directly opposes Mulvey’s claim that “the male figure cannot bear the burden of sexual objectification” (p. 838), but it also points to the outdated-ness of some of the aspects in “Narrative Cinema and Visual Pleasure”: although a significant portion of films are still structured around a male protagonist, and female characters are still all too often portrayed as erotic spectacles, the male body is increasingly objectified and sexualised, and intentionally so. Still, the influence of Mulvey *and* psychoanalysis is obvious: the majority of discourses on gender in war narratives are largely founded on the binaries of active masculinity vs. passive femininity and the (masculine) Us vs. the (feminine) Other. The uniformity demanded by the military institution is particularly of interest here. Like Brauerhoch, also film scholar Susan White (1991) notes the importance of the body clad in uniform – “One’s body must not be alluringly or disgustingly ‘other’” (p. 208) – that rids the soldiers of their individualism and makes them part of the war machine.

Brauerhoch and White have both also discussed the relationship between the emphasis on the male body and the inherently homosocial world of these films, where “desire for male love . . . must be externalized onto women and the enemy” (White, p. 209). Another aspect of masculinity that is heavily featured in many feminist analyses of war films is sexual and sexualized violence (see e.g. Brauerhoch; Fuchs, 1990; Sokolowska-Paryz; Stuhldreher, 1994), but although sexuality and sexual prowess as an extension of masculine power is certainly present in the films analysed in this thesis, it is rarely violent.

The issue with using feminist film theory in the context of this study is twofold. Firstly, a majority of the texts concerning gender and war films discuss American war films, and the Vietnam War films in particular, which can be considered a genre of its own within the war film genre, and thus they often have features, both narrative and visual, that are rather specific to this genre only. Secondly, and this is directly related to the first point, the discourses about Vietnam war films are a part of larger, social, political and cultural discourses not only about the war but American society in general. Therefore, a significant number of these analyses and critiques take place in an American framework, and are directly connected to the political and cultural changes within the US society, making it somewhat problematic to apply these theories outside of that context. Vietnam war films especially have been read in the context of *remasculinization*, an issue extensively discussed in Susan Jeffords’ (1989) book *The Remasculinization of America*, where she argued that the fascination with Vietnam war narratives and their excessive and often violent representations of masculinity are an effort to counteract the ‘feminization’ of the US society.

Whether Finnish war films can be read as similar visualisations of a masculinity crisis is debatable, because the historical, political and cultural context for these films is completely different. Whereas the defeat in Vietnam was a traumatic political and cultural crisis in the US, the events of the Winter and Continuation War depicted in Finnish war films are not only a source of pride but also directly connected to Finland’s independence and to a certain ‘Finnish-ness’ that is difficult to put into words.¹ The depictions of masculinities in these films thus seem more like an attempt to uphold traditional, ‘tried-and-true’ ways of being a man (a *Finnish* man, specifically) rather than a reaction (or counter-reaction) to societal changes. If we are to assume that the cinematic portrayal of Finnish soldiers has not significantly changed in the period from the 1950s to this day, it could also be suggested that this refusal to rethink the norms, practices, and representations of men and masculinity is indeed an indicator of an idealisation of that specific time when being a man meant being a soldier. That is not to say that it would mean glorifying the war as such, but, as will be discussed later in this

¹ The ritualistic showing of Edvin Laine’s *The Unknown Soldier* on every independence day is one example of this.

thesis, the exceptional circumstances of war allow the construction of a male subject that would not necessarily be possible in other contexts.

Despite the US-centricity of many feminist analyses of war films and gender, they still discuss narrative and visual elements that can be found in most war films, regardless of their origin – only their interpretation may vary. The phallic symbolism of firing weapons is an unescapable part of every war film, as is homosociality and a certain Us vs. Other dynamic. Nature, which has been more or less universally associated with femininity, has been assigned a quite significant symbolic importance especially in Vietnam war narratives. Nature versus technology directly translates into feminine versus masculine as the jungles of Vietnam are penetrated with heavy war machinery. Here the sexual undertones are undeniable: Brauerhoch points out that obscurity (of the jungle) and invisibility (of the Viet Cong) are both features associated with female genitals, which then, to express it in a manner suitable for the language of these films, “got fucked” by the Americans (pp. 90-91). The key issue here is that in nearly all American war films the US military is invading a foreign country, which allows for this kind of “raping of the land” reading. In the Finnish context, however, the military action is defensive rather than invasive, and the defending of one’s own land quite effectively eliminates the violently sexual aspect that defines the portrayal of nature in Vietnam war films. Here nature is an almost maternal, safeguarding presence, but also a ‘maiden’ (*Suomi-neito*) in need of protection, whereby the whole country is gendered female. Any, potentially sexually-loaded, threat to the ‘maiden’ that is Finland comes from the outside, which already positions Finnish (male) soldiers as the defenders of country, home and virtue.

Another important aspect of this discourse is language, and not just that of the films but military in general. Unsurprisingly, military language is sexual, sexist, degrading (on multiple levels), and aimed to enforce the Us vs. Other dichotomy. It also often links sexuality directly with violence: the Marines famously reciting “This is my rifle! This is my gun! This is for fighting! This is for fun!” while holding their rifle with one hand and their crotch with the other in Stanley Kubrick’s *Full Metal Jacket* (1987) is perhaps the most obvious example of this, but this type of language has its roots strongly outside of the cinematic sphere. In her article about the misogyny that coloured the Vietnam war, Jacqueline E. Lawson (1989) refers to a quote by an American veteran from Mark Baker’s book *Nam*: “To some people carrying a gun was like having a permanent hard on. It was a pure sexual trip every time you got to pull the trigger” (as cited in Lawson, p. 60). This sort of military rhetoric is not unique to the US, however. In his research on Finnish military slang, Jokinen (2000) quoted a song sung by Finnish marines:

“Huomenna mennään Tukholmaan
Ruotsista tehdään siirtomaa

Naiset ja lapset tapetaan
lämpimät ruumiit raiskataan
Miehet puukolla kuohitaan” (p. 147)

As Jokinen noted, even if songs like these use humour as an attempt to cope with the harsh and uncomfortable realities of military training, and singing them does not actually mean that all soldiers are sadistic psychopaths, this type of language still constructs ideal military masculinity that is violent, racist and misogynistic (p. 150). Moreover, it actively connects soldiering, masculinity and sexuality together: raping women and castrating enemy men is used as a sign of dominance, conquering and victory. It is important to note that attitudes like these do not exist merely on the level of language: rape is, and always has been, a part of war.

As these examples have shown, research on masculinity in war films cannot be limited only to the analysis of the films: it must also consider the wider cultural, social and political circumstances where these films have been produced.

2.2. Finnish research on men and masculinity

Although feminist film theory offers many practical tools for analysing the representations of masculinity in cinema, the aim of this research is not to merely ask how masculinities are constructed, but also to suggest that war films simultaneously shape and are being shaped by other cultural and social constructions of maleness and masculinity. Therefore, to be able to situate this research within a larger cultural narrative in Finland, Finnish research on men and masculinity, especially with regards to the military and war but not necessarily in the context of cinema, will form the other half of the theoretical framework of this research. However, the need for feminist film theory in the first place becomes obvious when we look at the research done on masculinity in a Finnish context: the construction of masculinities in Finnish cinema is a severely under-researched area. In fact, Lasse Majuri's (1999) essay "Pelastakaa private Perkola, kuningasjätkä kulkureiden" is one of the few texts that explicitly discusses the representation of masculinity in Finnish war films, in this case in *Ambush*. Another article which examines the relationship between fictional war narratives and Finnish manhood is Ville Kivimäki's (2014) "Sotamies Riitaojan poikauhri: Sota suomalaisen mieheyden myyttisenä lähteenä", where he read *The Unknown Soldier*, both the novel and its two film adaptations, as a portrayal of rites of passage where boys are made into men, and to fail in this process, that is, to fail in becoming a man, will inevitably result in death. Similarly, in "Myytti sodan

palveluksessa: suomalainen mies, soturius ja talvisota”, Jokinen (2006) analysed the representation of masculinity in literature about the Winter War, written during and after it, noting how the war, which is portrayed as inhumane, unfair and brutally violent, transforms young civilians into real men and heroic soldiers.

Compulsory military service is another aspect of Finnish culture that is often considered to be of importance to the construction of masculinities. In *Manhood and the Making of the Military: Conscription, Military Service and Masculinity in Finland, 1917-39*, Anders Ahlbäck (2014) examined the impact of establishing a compulsory military service, arguing that “[s]ince military service was compulsory for all able-bodied men and categorically excluded all women, universal male conscription powerfully linked manhood and soldiering together” (p. 3). Ahlbäck (2006) has also discussed the central role of the body in this type of compulsory military system, noting how the state observed, categorised, shaped, mistreated, approved or disapproved young men, thus exerting nearly absolute control over the recruits’ bodies (p. 111). Jokinen’s abovementioned research on military slang also connected military and Finnish manhood, but in addition to discussing the role of the military system, which is especially of interest to this research, he also provided an overview of how the concepts of discourse and representation are understood and used in the study of masculinity in his book *Panssaroitu maskuliinisuus*, which counts among the most important and extensive research done on Finnish masculinity and violence in the field of critical studies on men and masculinity. These two concepts – discourse and representation – are at the core of this research.

2.3 How men are made: A poststructuralist methodological approach

As a nod to Simone de Beauvoir’s (1949/1988) famous notion that “[o]ne is not born, but rather becomes, a woman” (p. 295), many texts discussing masculinity refer to the idea that “men are made”. This points out the fruitfulness of studying the role of films as representations of men and masculinity, as they are so utterly ‘artificial’ portrayals: although these war narratives exist in an apparent realm of historical realism, the stories themselves are fictional and, more importantly, carefully constructed. Narrative and film form are what they are because someone decided so: no shot is there by accident. Whether all of these decisions are conscious is, of course, another question: one does not need to go as far as psychoanalysis and the patriarchal unconsciousness to recognise the impact cultural and social norms and practices have had on film narrative and form. The heroic male soldier in war films, for example, is in many ways a ‘natural’ and self-explanatory choice for a protagonist. Gender becomes noticeable only when it deviates from the norm: in films like *G.I. Jane* (dir. Ridley Scott,

1997) and *Private Benjamin* (dir. Howard Zieff, 1990) that portray women in a military environment, the whole point of the story is that they are women and not men. Here gender becomes the driving force of the plot, whereas in most war and military narratives that are centred around male protagonists, gender ‘disappears’. Every aspect of these films is suffused with masculinity, certainly, but as it is the expected order of things, it transforms into a universal or national experience: the failure of American soldiers in Vietnam signifies a failure of the US society, and the suffering and sacrifices of Finnish soldiers represents the suffering and sacrifices of the whole nation. Therefore, this research aims to “unravel social tropes and discourses that, over time, have come to pass for a ‘truth’ about the world” (Saukko, 2003, p. 20). This means analysing and deconstructing representations of masculinities in Finnish war films, and examining not only the discourses that have shaped these representations but also how these representations actively take part in influencing discourses. Jokinen aptly summarised the need for this kind of research as he notes that in critical masculinity studies, we need to ask what kind of impact representations have, what do they say about the surrounding culture, and how they have been formed (pp. 125-126).

Before getting into the question of representation, however, we first need to look at the concept of discourse within the context of critical studies on masculinity. Instead of micro level discourses that mostly concern speech and phrases – ways of talking about something – Jokinen (2000) talks about a poststructuralist, Foucauldian definition of discourse: a collection of texts, claims and statements that form and shape the objects they talk about (p. 112). This Foucauldian tradition also stresses the importance of institutions in creating and maintaining discourses (p. 112). In the context of war films and their relation to Finnish culture, the military is of course one of the key institutions producing discourses on masculinity that then become visible on screen (as representations), and the masculine images produced within this system scarcely need elaborating. However, the film industry can also be considered an institution of equal importance, and this notion is indeed in the heart of many a feminist critique: Mulvey’s formulation of the patriarchal unconsciousness and the film industry is one (perhaps extreme) example of this, but a simpler way of expressing the same idea is Brauerhoch’s claim that war films are made by men for men. It would not be much of a generalisation to say that war films *are* mostly made by men, but the intended audience is a trickier issue, since there is no way of ‘proving’ who the filmmakers had in mind as a target group. Having said that, there is no doubt that a significant part of the presumable audience is male, and this has largely to do with established, cultural and social, gender norms, and film genres. These two aspects boil down to the highly oversimplified notion that men like violence and women like romance. Or, to look at it from a slightly different angle, that men *are* violent and women *are* romantic. These stereotypes are the result of historically intricate discourses on gender that cannot be

discussed in the space of this research, but it is important to note how this has influenced the gendering of film genres. The dichotomy between masculine and feminine as a defining feature of a genre becomes glaringly obvious especially in two cases: in films that are centred around bodily, often violent, action (such as war films, action, buddy cop films, etc.), and in films that have mostly to do with relationships, romance and emotions (such as romantic comedies and dramas). The latter count among the few genres where most of the protagonists are female. Moreover, as film industries are, for all practical purposes, still mostly patriarchies, the gendering of films is not only influenced by patriarchal discourses, but it also upholds values, norms, and meanings that are, at worst, oppressive and harmful.

To circle this back to the topic of this research, it would not be unreasonable to claim that war films are made by men for men *about* men, and within a system that actively takes part in regulating norms and ideals related to gender. Recognising positions of power that dictate who is allowed to speak, how and when is a central aspect of poststructuralist discourse analysis (Jokinen, 2000, p. 114), and here the various institutional factors connected to film-making become especially significant. To illustrate this with the help of an example, the 2017 version of *The Unknown Soldier* (dir. Aku Louhimies) was partly funded by the Suomi Finland 100 project that celebrated Finland's 100 years of independence. The following is a description of the film on the Suomi Finland 100 website:

The Unknown Soldier, the story, the characters, their experiences and suffering are part of Finland's national legacy – and part of the identity of the war generation and their children. It is a story we must not forget. . . The aim is that as many Finns as possible can see the film on the big screen, together, as a collective experience.

Already the funding itself but especially how the film is described and sold positions it as *the* film, *the* story of Finland and Finnish people. Of course, this is possible because of the cultural importance of *The Unknown Soldier*: the original novel is a literary classic and the first film version is shown on TV by Yle, a national public-broadcasting company, every Independence Day. When we as a nation talk about the experiences and meaning of war, this particular story, this particular viewpoint has been deemed essential enough to be repeated and commemorated time and time again, arguable at the expense of other stories and viewpoints. As discourse analysis is especially interested in subject positions that allow certain individuals to produce speech in a discourse (Jokinen, 2000, p. 114), the film industry is a rather practical example of this: funding, distribution and marketing largely dictate whether a film gets made in the first place, and then who gets to see it. In other words, who is allowed to speak, how, and when. *The Unknown Soldier* is thus simultaneously a text that is allowed to be

‘spoken’ because it upholds existing discourses, a text that produces discourses, and their visual representation.

While recognising discourses that produce masculinity is an important part of the theoretical framework, this will not be a discourse analysis as such: a majority of the analysis in this research will be focused on *representations* of masculinity. The concept of representation does not refer simply to visual images, although admittedly film analysis is a rather visually-heavy field of study by nature. In the context of critical masculinity studies, studying representations means studying materialized images, texts and symbols of masculinity that are included in and have been produced by discourses (Jokinen, 2000, p. 117). Jokinen (2000) conveniently used *The Unknown Soldier* (the novel) as an example, noting that it both symbolizes the war and represents its interpretations: although fictional, the novel has not only shaped our perception of what Finnish soldiers were like, but also influenced future representations of war and Finnish men (pp. 117, 120). It has thus had concrete, real-life consequences, demonstrating the power of representations and emphasising the need to study them.

Moreover, representations function within a culturally coded system, where certain codes, categories and conventions limit what can be represented and how (Jokinen, 2000, p. 117). In cinema, genres form one such culturally coded system, which is perhaps a curse artistically but a blessing for this research, because it allows certain generalisations: whether Finnish war films (or more specifically, Finnish World War II films) constitute a genre will be discussed further on, but for now it can be safely stated as a fact that films centred around a military conflict conform to certain genre conventions, both visually and on a narrative level. As Jokinen (2000) has noted, a representation of masculinity is not the same thing as a fictive male hero that embodies the masculine ideals produced by discourse (p. 122). The purpose of this research is not to claim that all war films depict identical masculine images, because they do not. In fact, a group of soldiers as a preferred narrative feature means that many films present a variety of men and masculine characteristics. Instead of looking at these characters *as* a representation of masculinity, the aim is to analyse *how* they, and these films, represent certain types of masculinities that are constructed as a result of various conventions, norms and ideals produced within cultural and national discourses on masculinity, especially in relation to war. The military uniform, for example, symbolises and represents a collection of different things depending on the viewpoint – it is both unifying and subjugating, for example – but above all it is a highly gendered piece of clothing already for the historical reason that women did not wear it during the Winter and Continuation War. It can thus be seen to represent a very specific type of masculinity, even if the men wearing them do not. The uniform is just one of the numerous masculine symbols – dictated both by cinematic genre conventions and other cultural representations of manhood – that

are crucial to the construction of masculinities in these films, and deconstructing these intricately crafted images and narratives that tie masculinity and war together is the main purpose of this research.

From a methodological point of view, this research aims to provide what Paula Saukko (2003) calls “a constructively deconstructive analysis” that strives to create a dialogue between various readings of a text, rather than merely criticizing one approach and positioning another as a ‘correct’ deconstruction (p. 151). Thus, the aim here is not to claim that war films are simply violent male fantasies, as is sometimes explicitly or implicitly stated in feminist critique, but the intention is also not to paint these films as direct extensions of the power structures and hierarchical institutions (such as the military) that subjugate men and force them to embody the uniform (figuratively and literally) model of how a man should look, feel and act. In keeping with the notion that deconstruction aims to “unearth the constitutive binaries that underpin our understanding of a particular phenomenon” (Saukko, p. 21), feminist film theory is an especially fruitful way of approaching these films, as such analysis often reveals the masculine/feminine, machine/nature, and (masculine) Us/(feminine) Other binaries that can be found both on a narrative and symbolic level in these films. However, there are some aspects of Finnish history and culture (such as the significance of these wars and their veterans to Finnish independence, and the compulsory military service for young adult males, for example) that would not be taken into consideration if this research were to only utilise feminist film theory. That is why Finnish research on masculinity, especially in relation to war, violence and the military, provides not only theory but also important context for this project that film theory in itself often lacks. This research will thus look at these films through the theoretical lens laid out in this chapter in order to identify and deconstruct reoccurring cinematic elements that are essential to the establishing of certain masculine attributes, norms, and symbols.

2.4. A question of genre: What is a Finnish war film?

Although the definition of a war film might seem obvious at first – naturally, a war film is a film about war – attempts to categorise films has proven that the distinction or the necessity to distinguish between genres and subgenres is not always simple. In his discussion on whether Vietnam war films should be considered a genre of their own, David E. Whillock (1988) notes that a common argument against the idea of the Vietnam War film genre is that either there are too few films to constitute a genre, or too many: “nearly every American feature film made during the conflict. . .directly or indirectly reflects some aspects of the war’s political make-up and therefore could be relevant to the

Vietnam war” (p. 245). Because the American film industry produces films at a significantly quicker rate and larger scale than the film industry in Finland, the two perhaps cannot be directly compared, but Whillock’s point about the cultural pervasiveness of war can be discussed also in the Finnish context. Although the Winter and Continuation War understandably affected film production, it was not completely halted. According Lauri Piispa and Jorma Junttila (2013), films made in wartime Finland generally avoided openly political or propagandistic tones, and, as Jari Sedergren (1999) has pointed out, war film as a genre did not really come into being in Finland until the 1950s (p. 28). Sedergren’s notion of the war film genre likely refers to combat war films, that is, films that depict the actual combat of warfare, which is arguably the easiest and most common way of defining a war film. However, this definition of the genre overlooks films that thematise the impact of war on the nation and its people without depicting actual battle scenes. Another issue in trying to define the war film genre is the question of subgenres. If the definition of a genre is the recurrence of “icons and conventions (motifs and themes) from film-to-film” (Whillock, p. 245), can different films depicting different wars be categorised into different subgenres under the umbrella term of war film? For example, the Finnish Civil War took place within a completely different historical, political and cultural environment than the Winter and Continuation War. Could the cinematic depictions of these wars also be so distinguishable from each other that they could be divided into different genres?

This is a question this thesis unfortunately cannot answer, but the reason I am bringing it up here is because it has affected the selection of films analysed in this research. My assumption is that films about the civil war might produce different images of masculinity than films about the Winter and Continuation War, which is why the scope of this thesis is limited to the latter. My analysis will also be limited only to films that portray actual combat, as that is probably the simplest way of approaching the war film genre, especially within the limitations of this research. However, being able to produce a coherent, conclusive understanding of the representations of masculinities these films would require the analysis of a large selection of films, which is not possible within the limits of a Master’s thesis. Therefore, the analysis henceforth will focus mostly on two films: *The Partisans* and *Ambush*, which both portray a military operation by a group of soldiers during the Continuation War, but were released 36 years apart, allowing me to also consider the effect time has had on the representation of masculine images. While I am very aware that limiting the material only to two films will not be able to provide results that could be applied to *all* films that depict combat during the Continuation War, I still argue that the view on genre that has been discussed in this part allows me some room for generalisation. Some of the elements that are discussed in the following chapters – such as the dominance of male characters in war narratives and the bodily, violent action – are those very elements that arguably form the genre of war film, and those elements will thus reoccur in most

films that are perceived as war films. Therefore, I do maintain that this research has value in understanding and deconstructing images and notions of Finnish masculinity beyond the two films specifically discussed in this thesis.

3. Men in a world without women: The inherent masculinity of war

Although the title of this chapter is a slight exaggeration, it nonetheless reflects both the historical reality and the cultural narratives and discourses that structure our understanding and memories of war. As Jeff Hearn (2004) notes, “[m]en have been studying men for a long time, and calling it ‘History’, ‘Sociology’, or whatever” (p. 49). Feminist scholars and historians have increasingly focused on challenging the often exclusively male perspectives that have had a huge impact on historiography, but war still remains a largely masculine experience in fictional representations of it. Or perhaps better formulated, wars are national experiences told from a male perspective, whereby the suffering, traumas and victories of soldiers can translate into the suffering, traumas and victories of the whole nation. This becomes especially evident in the context of cinema. Although the Lotta Svärd organisation consisted of over 230,000 female volunteers and was crucial to the Finnish war effort during the Winter and Continuation War (Latva-Äijö, 2004, p. 11), there are very few films that depict the war from the perspective of *lottas*. *Promise* (fin. *Lupaus*, dir. Ilkka Vanne, 2005), mostly funded by the Lotta Svärd Foundation, is probably the best-known of these, but there are also earlier examples: Aarne Tarkas’ *Girls at the Front* (fin. *Rintamalotta*, 1956) premiered only a year after the first film adaptation of *The Unknown Soldier*. That *Girls at the Front* was a financial failure and is now largely forgotten while *The Unknown Soldier* became a national classic is a rather fitting analogy of the gender imbalance that colours our perception of history.

However, the construction of historical or fictional narratives about war from a male perspective reflects the fact that the overwhelming majority of soldiers have been – and still are – men, and criticizing war films solely for their male-centricity is not the purpose here. Rather the aim is to examine how representations of masculinity are constructed in an environment that is so completely dominated by men. Susan Brownmiller (1975) argues that war is “the most exclusive male-only club in the world”, where “[v]ictory in arms brings group power undreamed of in civilian life. Power for men alone. The unreal situation of a world without women becomes the prime reality” (pp. 32-33). Ahlbäck (2014), who has studied various materials and historical sources about the conscription army in Finland, argues that “[b]y leaving women out as a matter of course, they all convey cultural knowledge about soldiering, conscription and military training as something obviously, naturally and eternally masculine” (p. 19). In terms of the films discussed in this thesis, *The Partisans* perfectly exemplifies how the masculine environment of the military is separated from the civilian world where women are an inevitable part of men’s life. It opens with a scene set after the war, as lieutenant Takala (Matti Oravisto) is getting ready to go to a reunion and meet the men of the 20. Division, the group that he fought with in the Continuation War. He is at home, where both

his wife and their maid keep fussing over him, making sure he has his medals and his speech and that he will not be late for the train. As Takala leaves with his wife, the wife's concerns that he will drink too much in the reunion are slowly drowned out by a light, chirpy music that has been heard throughout this scene. The music in this first scene stands out because it is so different from the actual soundtrack of the film, which is heavy, loud, and aggressive, and it highlights the fact that the wife had not been a part of Takala's 'other' life – the military and the war. Takala's wife is no longer with him in the next scene, where he meets his old army friends at a cemetery and holds a speech in honor of the men that died in the war. The film then moves to a restaurant, where Takala and the other men have reserved a room solely for them to drink and reminisce the events of the war. The film thus quite literally separates this group of men from the rest of the world and creates a space that can be only entered by the men who were a part of the exclusively masculine experience that was the 20. Division. This opening scene of the film ends with a shot of the restaurant door that says: "The 20. Division is getting drunk here. Intruders will be shot. Except the waiters" (Fig. 1). The rest of the film takes place in the form of one, long flashback about the events of the war.



Fig. 1. This and all following images are screen captures taken by me.

Same kind of narrative separation also takes place in the beginning of *Ambush*, although here the dynamic between the male protagonist, lieutenant Eero Perkola (Peter Franzén), and his fiancée Kaarina Vainikainen (Irina Björklund) is more complicated, since she is a *lotta* and therefore also closely connected to the events of the war. However, she still is not actively a part of the masculine environment of the military and Perkola's squad of men. *Ambush* opens with a scene where Perkola and his fiancée are lying in bed together as Perkola comforts her. Similar to *The Partisans*, the film then cuts to a scene showing Perkola with the soldiers of his group. They are on a beach, swimming and having fun while they wait for their next order. Although Vainikainen inhabits the same narrative space of the war (unlike Takala's wife in *The Partisans*), her and Perkola's interactions are built on the notion that war is a temporary, separate world from the reality where their relationship exists: in a letter to Perkola, Vainikainen writes that she will wait for their life together, a life that they do not have to share with anyone, not even the fatherland. She thus represents home and civilian life, a future without war. Perkola's relationship with the other men in the film, on the other hand, is completely based on the actuality of war. These men would not have

ever even met had it not been for the war that had forced strangers to live, eat, sleep and fight together to survive.

This juxtaposition of masculine (military) and feminine (domestic life) environments naturally reflects the categorization of people into two (biological, social, and cultural) categories: women and men. In feminist theory and in masculinity studies, analysis is often fundamentally based on the idea that these two categories are distinctly different and exist within a hierarchical relationship to each other. Masculinity is thus “knowledge about a particular category in the resulting gender order”, meaning attributes, norms, and ideals that shape our understanding of what men are like (Ahlbäck, 2014, p. 20). Instead of ‘masculinity’, the plural form ‘masculinities’ is a more suitable term to be used here, because our knowledge about what men are like is not limited to one set of characteristics. It should be noted, however, that representations of masculinities in the context of war and the military are perhaps more limited than in ‘normal’, everyday life: the circumstances of war demand that men look and act a certain way, and the military is arguably an institution that strives to weed out individuality in order to create a system in which each person does as they are ordered to. Still, many Finnish war film narratives are structured around a group of soldiers consisting of individuals, men who are different from each other. In these cinematic depictions of war, where women are severely underrepresented, masculinity cannot be simply considered in relation to its perceived opposite – femininity – but in relation to other masculinities. Therefore, this first part of analysis will examine how (military) masculinities are constructed in the relationships between men.

3.1. Hegemonic masculinity

Although the concept of hegemonic masculinity is a contested one (see e.g. Demetriou, 2001), it would be difficult to discuss representation of masculinities – particularly in the context of critical masculinity studies – without at least briefly mentioning it. To put it simply, hegemonic masculinity refers to the predominance of one form of masculinity over other masculinities:

Hegemonic masculinity was distinguished from other masculinities, especially subordinated masculinities. Hegemonic masculinity was not assumed to be normal in the statistical sense; only a minority of men might enact it. But it was certainly normative. It embodied the currently most honored way of being a man, it required all other men to position themselves in relation to it, and it ideologically legitimated the global subordination of women to men (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 832).

The term gained popularity during the 1980s, especially after it was used in R. W. Connell's book *Gender and Power*, published in 1987, and since then it has been utilized in media studies, criminology, masculinity studies, and education studies (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). The concept has been criticized for various reasons, which Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) address in their article "Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept". One of those critiques is that it is difficult to distinguish what kind of a man is a hegemonically masculine man. Connell and Messerschmidt remark that "hegemonic masculinities can be constructed that do not correspond closely to the lives of any actual men. Yet these models do, in various ways, express widespread ideals, fantasies, and desires" (p. 838). Therefore, in the context of this research, the concept of hegemonic masculinity could be used to describe fictional portrayals of masculinities that convey certain ideals about what men were or should be like in the circumstances of war. That is not to say that this has much to do with actual, lived lives of real men, on the contrary: these war films are carefully constructed, reimagined versions of somewhat real events, not documentations of what actually happened.

Because the Winter and Continuation War were so crucial to sustaining Finland's independence, cinematic depictions of these events are bound to be patriotic. It could even be argued that these films are fantasies about Finnish masculinity, fantasies about the courage, strength, and morality of Finnish men. Not all characters in these narratives embody "the currently most honored way of being a man", nor can it be claimed that one single character would be the embodiment of hegemonic masculinity. Rather, the concept could potentially be utilized to demonstrate how these narratives construct different masculinities and place them in a hierarchical relationship to each other, whereby certain attributes become more desirable than others, and men who possess these preferable characteristics are considered more masculine. However, the problem with the concept of hegemony is the intrinsic element of power. Even though the military is a deeply hierarchical institution, and the amount of power and number of subordinated men increases the higher one gets, in Finnish war narratives military rank rarely plays a significant role in the construction of masculinity. In fact, as will be discussed later in this chapter, high-ranking military officers might even be portrayed as less masculine than the regular soldier, who has barely any power over anyone. Instead of hegemonic masculinity, 'ideal masculinity' is perhaps a better suited term to describe "the most honored way of being a man" in the context of this thesis, because it eliminates the notion of power, but still implies that there are different types of masculinities that are not presented as equal.

3.2. Hierarchical and horizontal homosociality

Considering the male-dominated nature of military and war, both in reality and in fiction, it is now useful to shortly turn to the concept of homosociality, which is used to describe and examine non-sexual and non-romantic relationships between persons of the same sex. Most often it explicitly refers to social bonds between men, and it is thus one of the key concepts in explaining the mechanisms that maintain patriarchal power structures and men's privileged positions (Hammarén and Johansson, 2014). This use of the term has also raised criticism: Hammarén and Johansson have argued that considering homosociality only from this perspective oversimplifies the concept and disregards aspects such as “emotional closeness, intimacy, and a non-profitable form of friendship” (p. 5). These aspects are a part of what Hammarén and Johansson call “horizontal homosociality”, which is different from “hierarchical homosociality”, a term that they used to describe the more established understanding of the term which considers homosociality as “a means of strengthening power and of creating close homosocial bonds to maintain and defend hegemony” (p. 5). The most obvious indicator of the impact of hierarchical homosociality is the exclusion of women from the military. Finnish women were not allowed to serve in the military until 1995. In *The Partisans*, the idea of female soldiers is hilarious to Finnish soldiers, who laugh hysterically about the fact that Russians have women in their army, joking about “girl majors”. The few women that briefly appear in the film are mostly there for lieutenant Takala to hit on or to have sex with. The role of sexuality in the construction of masculinities will be discussed in a later chapter, but as Hammarén and Johansson remark, “[w]omen become a kind of currency men use to improve their ranking on the masculine social scale” (p. 2). It is noteworthy that in *The Partisans* and *Ambush*, the protagonists – who are both lieutenants and thus higher up in the military hierarchy than the other men in the group – are shown having sex.

But to return to the concept of homosociality, the division into hierarchical and horizontal is especially useful in the context of this research, since portrayals of male authority and male friendship in war films produce environments where elements of both hierarchical and horizontal homosociality exist within one group of soldiers. “In modern conscript armies, notions of brotherhood-in-arms and equal duties based on equal citizenship were juxtaposed with sharp hierarchies and demands for subservience,” Ahlbäck (2014, p. 22) notes. This juxtaposition builds the basis for the group dynamic in both *The Partisans* and *Ambush*. The protagonists are army officers and thus in a position of authority in relation to the other men, but they are not distanced from the action. They are just as likely to be shot and killed as any other man in their group. However, there is still a degree of separation established, particularly in scenes where the men are not in combat. In

Ambush, the group of soldiers is first introduced in the abovementioned beach scene. While the other soldiers play and joke around together, Perkola sits alone on the beach, almost a paternal figure, watching over his “children” as they play. Perkola’s voice is heard narrating the events leading to that point to the viewer, and in his narration, he refers to the other men as “his men”, confirming him as the leader of this group. Right in the next sentence after that, however, he notes how they all had already fought in the Winter War: “We know how to live a soldier’s life.” This notion unites him with the other men, as the reality of war had already become a national, masculine experience, regardless of military rank.

This scene on the beach also demonstrates how bullying and having to prove one’s courage is used to define and measure masculinity within a group of men. Corporal Tauno Snicker (Kari Väänänen), the oldest man in the group and the father of one of the younger men, has climbed up to the diving tower, although he cannot swim. Knowing that Snicker will not jump, corporal Lukkari (Kari Heiskanen) and private Heikkinen (Petri Manninen) climb to the tower and throw Snicker into the water while being cheered on by the other men. Realising that his father is about to drown, Snicker’s son Ville (Arttu Kapulainen) yells at the others to go and save his father, at which point everyone jumps into the lake to help Snicker up. Perkola, who has remained silent up until that moment, also orders everyone to go and help Snicker, but does not go into the water himself, again creating a certain level of distance between himself and “his men”. In his research on men’s experiences in the military during the 1920s and ‘30s, Ahlbäck (2006) remarked that the formation of social relationships was largely defined by violence and group solidarity. Anyone considered to have broken unwritten social codes of conduct could be punished by his peers. These punishments were often violent and encouraged by the higher-ups, who were not directly involved in these situations of military bullying (p.

116). Although Snicker is not punished for anything, this scene in *Ambush* still reflects typical military group dynamics, where bullying and mobbing is often considered normal and acceptable.



Fig. 2

It should be noted, however, that the kind of violent, humiliating bullying that was reported in the soldiers’ recollections that Ahlbäck studied, is rarely – if at all – depicted in Finnish war films. Aside from the occasional verbal altercation or instances like Snicker being thrown off the diving tower, these narratives often create images of brotherhood in arms. To restore harmony within the group, the beach scene in *Ambush*

ends with a photography session, where all the men are immortalized in a group photo (Fig. 2). Military rank and other possible indicators of hierarchical positions are not clearly visible.

Relationships between men are defined by elements of horizontal homosociality also in *The Partisans*. The beginning of the film is already one indicator of this: the war has ended but the emotional closeness between these men has remained, as they come together to not only mourn those who lost their lives, but to also celebrate their friendship. In the flashback to the war that constitutes the most of the film, the soldiers are shown going to the sauna and swimming together, as well as getting drunk and celebrating. These free time activities offer a much-needed break from the brutalities of war, but also demonstrate the group spirit and close bonds that prevail in these social relationships. Like *Ambush* and most Finnish war films, *The Partisans* is more focused on depicting social and emotional relationships between soldiers than military hierarchies. This is evident in both Takala's relationship with his men, as well as Takala's relationship with captain Kokkonen (Erkki Siltola). Kokkonen is one of the film's main characters and Takala's superior, but military rank rarely plays a part in their interactions. They are portrayed more as friends: they are shown shaving together after the sauna, they go to watch a movie together, and Kokkonen becomes increasingly worried about Takala's mental health as the film progresses. During the times the soldiers spent at a military base, waiting for and planning their next assignment, Takala has sexual relationships with multiple nurses. After one such occasion, as Takala comes back to the room he shares with Kokkonen, Kokkonen voices his concerns about Takala's behaviour. The scene is strikingly domestic: they are both dressed in their undershirts and sitting on their beds, and Kokkonen does not speak to him as a higher-ranking military officer, but as a concerned friend, who is afraid that Takala has given up on life.

3.3. A group of soldiers as a collection of masculinities

Although established notions of masculinity, genre conventions and the burden of a certain level of realism quite heavily restrict the possible depictions of male characters in war films, structuring the narrative around a group of soldiers allows for an ostensible variety of representations of men and masculinities. An ensemble cast is widely used in war narratives all over the world, but it has had a particularly interesting impact in the Finnish context. Discussing the portrayal of masculinity and manhood in *The Unknown Soldier* (and its two film versions), Kivimäki argues that the novel is often regarded as *the* defining portrayal of Finnish masculinity, and that its collection of male characters became a catalogue of (stereo)typical Finnish men, producing images that have been central to the

creation of an ideal, mythical manhood (p. 246). The two films at the centre of this thesis, *Ambush* and *The Partisans*, have a similar function: they offer a selection of personalities who seemingly represent a variety of male images.

Unlike *The Unknown Soldier*, however, *Ambush* and *The Partisans* are both built around a clear protagonist. In the opening scene of *Ambush*, where Perkola is seen lying on a bed, comforting Vainikainen, dark colours, the sound of storm raging in the background, and multiple close-ups of various religious items set a sombre mood fit for a war film. More importantly, however, this scene does not only introduce the romantic subplot and clearly establish Perkola as the main character, but it also offers essential information on the duality of his character. He is serious, brooding, and tormented by the realities of war (as is typical for a war film protagonist), but still caring and gentle towards his fiancée. In fact, this image of Perkola is so important it made the film poster, where the dichotomy between what could be called the masculine and the feminine is quite explicitly illustrated: the upper part of the poster displays a battle scene from the film, while the lower part shows Vainikainen lying in Perkola's arms. Perkola himself seems to hover somewhere between these two contrasting worlds.

Similar dichotomies are depicted throughout the film, most notably in the form of corporals Lukkari and Saarinen (Taisto Reimaluoto), who are essentially the devil and the angel sitting on Perkola's shoulders. If there were a spectrum of stereotypical war film characters, ranging from righteous to immoral, Saarinen and Lukkari would be situated at the opposite ends of it. Saarinen, a religious man, is defined by his calm and kind demeanour, offering comfort, empathy and encouraging word to his fellow soldiers. Lukkari, on the other hand, is a typical war-hardened character, merciless and cruel, but *Ambush* carefully avoids portraying him as evil or making too much of a moral judgement on his actions. He has simply embraced the at times inhuman attributes demanded by the military institution that trains men to kill. The tension between these two contrasting depictions of masculinity comes to a head when Lukkari discovers a wounded Russian soldier in an abandoned village, and performs what he calls "target practise", shooting at him but deliberately missing. Although he gets scolded by the others, Lukkari's slightly psychotic tendencies are offset by his acknowledgement of the situation they are in. When Saarinen suggests that they take care of the Russian soldier, Lukkari mocks him by asking if he will carry him to the hospital alone. Caught between these two opposing forces, Perkola's inability to decide between what is morally right and what is practical in a combat situation is demonstrated by the following scene where Perkola, Saarinen and Lukkari discuss the fate of the wounded soldier:

Saarinen: "Mitäs vangille tehdään?"

Perkola: "Sekään ei ole alikersantin murhe."

Saarinen: "Luutnantti, meidän täytyy olla ihmiselle armeliaita."

Lukkari: "Ryssästä on pakko päästä, jos aiotaan jatkaa matkaa."²

This exchange does not only illustrate Perkola's struggle to be both a good man and a good soldier, but points to a larger moral dilemma that is at the core of many cinematic depictions of war: how does the narrative justify the deplorable actions of its heroes? To steer the audiences' sympathies in the right direction, war films often avoid close-ups of the enemy, as a close-up of a human face is an especially effective stylistic device to generate an emotional response in the viewer (Süselbeck, 2013, pp. 234-235). The scene with the wounded Russian is therefore somewhat of an exception in a film where the enemy is otherwise virtually unseen, but the construction of this scene emphasizes the emotions of the Finnish soldiers, not those of the prisoner. After Lukkari has shot the Russian soldier, the film cuts to show Perkola's silent disapproval, and then spends a considerable amount of time switching between shots of Perkola's and Lukkari's face as they stare at each other. Arguably the viewer would not have had time to create much of an emphatic response to the suffering of the enemy anyway, but using close-ups of Perkola's and Lukkari's faces even further highlights the fact that this scene is about them. The prisoner is merely a plot device to demonstrate the harsh realities of war and how different characters react to them. While Perkola does not approve of Lukkari's decision to kill their prisoner, he is aware that they could not have taken him with them. Saarinen's suggestion to care for the Russian thus comes across as too naïve and too kind for the circumstances of war.

The interaction with the prisoner shows how different types of masculinities represented by different male characters are constructed in relation to each other. Saarinen is too kind and Lukkari is too cruel, which stresses Perkola's superior masculine characteristics: he knows that leaving the Russian soldier behind is the best option for his men to survive, but he does not condone unnecessary killing. This has become evident already in an earlier scene, in which Perkola and his men come across a group of Karelian evacuees. One of the evacuees tries to run away, because he does not want the soldiers to go through his belongings. Despite Perkola explicitly telling his men not to, private Karppinen (Tommi Eronen) shoots the escaping man. Perkola then takes away Karppinen's gun and later strongly reprimands him. The logic behind the use of violence in war narratives can be considered in relation to "cultural violence", a term coined by sociologist Johan Galtung. Cultural

² Saarinen: "What are we going to do with the prisoner?"

Perkola: "You don't have to worry about that, corporal."

Saarinen: "Lieutenant, we have to be merciful."

Lukkari: "The Russian has got to go, if we're going to carry on."

violence refers to various aspects of culture that can be used to justify the use of violence: killing in civilian life is wrong, for example, but killing for your country in a war is necessary and encouraged (Jokinen, 2000, pp. 18-19). However, even the circumstances of war do not allow senseless violence. Perhaps somewhat paradoxically, aversion to unnecessary violence seems to be one of the defining attributes of ideal masculinity in the context of these films. Killing a badly wounded enemy soldier or a civilian is against the moral code of conduct that the ideal male subject represents. In his research on warrior communities, psychologist Barry McCarthy noted that fighting fairly, sparing the lives of civilians and prisoners, and avoiding unnecessary cruelty were key values in these communities (as cited in Jokinen, 2006, p. 145). These same values define the honourable male subject in Finnish war narratives. In *The Partisans*, as Kokkonen voices his concerns for Takala's sexual behaviour, Takala points out the absurdity of Kokkonen's worries, who is perfectly fine with him killing people, but not with him having sex. While Kokkonen concedes that killing is an unavoidable part of war, he also remarks that men should not live like pigs. The ability to kill is a standard for military masculinity, but it cannot be done without a reason and it should not be enjoyed. That is why Karppinen's recklessness and Lukkari's sadistic tendencies stand out so strongly as unwanted behaviour.

As it has become evident, not all characters embody attributes that are complimentary to the Finnish war spirit (*sisu*, if you will) and its masculine embodiments. To return briefly to *The Unknown Soldier*, Kivimäki, who reads the novel as a 'from boys to men' narrative where young men are initiated into manhood through the rituals of violence, places particular emphasis on the character of Riitaoja, who is "a coward", embodying the fears of all soldiers, but who fails to turn this fear into violent action and thus fails in the initiation process, and is eventually killed (pp. 256-258). It is noteworthy that *Ambush* features a nearly identical character with a similar fate. Karppinen, who recklessly shot the civilian, suffers from "grenade fear", which makes him nervous, paranoid and unpredictable. His shaking hands make him drop his bicycle into a river as the group is crossing a bridge, and Perkola forces him to turn around and walk back to the base alone as a punishment. As he is walking through a field, he gets ambushed by a group of Russian soldiers who shoot him immediately. The graphic depiction of his unnecessarily violent execution seems like a rather brutal end to a character whose actions have been explained by what would now be called post-traumatic stress disorder, but as Perkola puts it in the film, Karppinen should have been over it already.

The "suck it up and shut up" mentality of the military has indeed become a defining characteristic in representations of Finnish manhood, also manifesting itself in sayings such as "suomalainen mies ei puhu eikä pussaa"³. In *Ambush*, after (falsely) learning that his fiancée has died,

³ "Finnish men neither talk nor kiss"

Perkola explicitly vocalizes this standard for acceptable masculine behaviour when Saarinen tries to offer him words of comfort: “Ei tässä mitään sanoja tarvita.”⁴ In this scene and in many others, Saarinen displays attributes that are generally considered feminine rather than masculine, and he often seems to be at odds with the excessive masculinity of war and military. It is his lack of traditionally (hyper)masculine characteristics that makes him such an important figure in this collection of male characters, as any understanding or definition of masculinity is bound to exist in relation to what it is *not*. Femininity and masculinity have generally acquired fixed meanings as each other’s opposites, and in this line of thinking, it logically follows that if not showing emotion is a masculine trait, then its opposite – being emotional – must be a feminine attribute (Herkman, Jokinen & Lehtimäki, 1995, p. 15). Saarinen contrasts and therefore highlights certain norms of military masculinity that are performed and embodied by the other members of his group.

3.4. A hierarchy of masculinities

Including characters who display attributes that deviate from the norm – whether they are scared, sensitive, or mentally unstable – does not challenge established notions and criteria for socially and culturally accepted forms of masculine behaviour when different kinds of masculinities are placed in “hierarchical relationships to each other where certain ways of being a man are considered superior and ‘manlier’ than others” (Ahlbäck, 2014, p. 22). In feminist film analysis drawing from psychoanalytical theory, ‘the other’ is women and femininity. Reading war films as visualizations of men’s contempt for women is plausible in the context of films such as *Full Metal Jacket*, where the climax of the film is the execution – “constructed as a visual gang-rape” – of a Vietnamese female sniper (Fuchs, p. 129), but the juxtaposition of masculine Us and feminine Other is not as glaringly evident in Finnish war films. As Ahlbäck (2014) points out, ‘the other’ can also be other men and masculinities (p. 22). These alternative depictions of masculinity create even stricter standards for correct, desired ways of being a man, because they are juxtaposed with the hero’s superior form of masculinity and found lacking: characters who fail to embody the masculine norms demanded by the military environment are often either sent home or killed, as happened to Riitaoja in *The Unknown Soldier*, Karppinen in *Ambush* and private Saastamoinen in *The Partisans*. The ideal soldier – the ideal man – is thus produced in relation to its opposite. “Images of manliness go hand in hand with images of *countertypes* and *unmanliness*; immature boys, decrepit old men, ‘cowards’, ‘weaklings’,

⁴ ”We don’t need to talk about this” or, a more literal translation, “we don’t need any words here”

or men belonging to a ‘inferior’ social class, race, people or nation” (Ahlbäck, 2014, p. 22). This juxtaposition is crucial to the construction of masculinity in the context of war and military. In his research on Finnish literature depicting the Winter War, Jokinen (2006) noted that although these narratives are often sympathetic towards soldiers suffering from the trauma caused by war, portrayals of mental breakdown simultaneously highlight the hero’s ability to *not* break under pressure, to stay both mentally and physically strong (p. 150).

The Partisans in particular constructs masculinity in relation to mental strength. At the beginning of the film, private Saastamoinen (Yrjö Järvinen) sees a hallucination of the ‘white death’, a white angel with a machine gun, accompanied by a highly distressing sound of ringing bells. He starts shooting uncontrollably at the hallucination and is forcibly restrained by the other men. What happens to Saastamoinen is never explicitly explained, but he is presumably sent away, since he is not seen again. Takala suffers from similar hallucinatory fits throughout the film, but he is still capable of carrying out his duties as a lieutenant. He even successfully leads a group of soldiers to a near suicide mission and survives. Moreover, in the very first scene of the film – before the flashback to the war that comprises most of the narrative – Takala is shown trying on his many military awards, indicating that he did not only survive the war, but did so with honourable actions. While *The Partisans* is arguably one of the few Finnish war films that explicitly deal with the traumatizing effects of the war, ultimately its hero is defined by his ability to not be defeated by the trauma he has suffered. Even if the intention might have been the opposite, these kinds of narratives run the risk of glamorizing war: being able to endure suffering becomes the defining characteristic of masculinity, and the extreme conditions of war allow the construction of a tough, strong, and honourable male subject that would not be possible in any other environment (Jokinen, 2006, pp. 148-149).

Even though different masculinities are placed in a hierarchical relationship to each other, it seems that the construction of ideal masculinity is only partly linked to the strict hierarchy of the military institution. Perkola and Takala are both lieutenants in charge of a group of men, so there is undeniably an element of power connected to their characters, but, as was discussed already earlier, they are often portrayed as almost equal to their men: they, too, must risk their lives in combat. In *The Partisans*, for example, captain Kokkonen volunteers to take part on a mission where they are supposed to take a Russian officer as a prisoner. Kokkonen’s decision surprises the other men, because as a captain, he mostly controls and orders various assignments from the base. Kokkonen’s willingness to participate, although he could risk losing his life, demonstrates the notion that has shaped the way wars are remembered in their fictional representations: that war was won by the men who actually, physically fought in it. In Finnish war narratives, the front line – the most dangerous position to be in during a war – turns civilians into soldiers, and the better a soldier, the better a man,

and vice versa (Jokinen, 2006, p. 149). The kind of ideal military masculinity that these fictional narratives construct is thus not tied to hierarchical positions, but to physical action. In fact, it could be argued that high-ranking military officers, those who do not crawl through the woods with a gun in their hand, are often portrayed as less masculine than the regular soldier. Their clean, stiff uniforms with decorations provide a sharp contrast to the dirty and bloody uniforms of the soldiers who return from missions. Takala's and Kokkonen's meeting with a general who congratulates them after a successful mission highlights the certain absurdity of warfare. The general and other officers stand there in their decorated uniforms toasting with tiny sherry glasses, as Takala and his men have just lied ten hours on the ground, covered in dirt and leaves, so that they could surprise the Russians and get through the enemy lines.

Because Finnish war narratives generally depict the war from the perspective of lower-ranking soldiers, the strict hierarchy of the military can be perceived as a subjugating and often unfair system. In *The Partisans*, for example, Takala becomes furious after hearing that his squad is ordered to capture a Russian officer, because he sees it as nothing else but some officer's desire to get a promotion, while he and his men are left to do the dirty work. Rebelling against the hierarchical structures of the military can even become one of the defining characteristics of masculinity. Probably the most famous example of this is corporal Antero Rokka in *The Unknown Soldier*, who is an excellent fighter but continuously refuses to address officers by their formal titles and does not yield to the disciplinary measures ordered against him. Rokka is arguably one of the most well-known and best-liked fictional characters in Finnish literature and film. In a poll done by a local paper *Tamperelainen*, for example, Rokka was overwhelmingly voted as people's favourite character in *The Unknown Soldier*, because he was said to represent common sense and patriotism (Mäkinen, 2017).

Rokka has shaped notions of Finnish masculinity ever since Linna's novel was published, but his character is taken to a whole new level in the newest film version of *The Unknown Soldier*, where Rokka is portrayed as such an utterly flawless representation of the ideal Finnish man that he almost becomes a parody of himself: when he is not too busy fighting the war, he is at home on a short holiday away from the battlefield, ploughing the field, shoeing the horse, or getting his wife pregnant. As Näre (2008) notes, being able to conquer the ruthlessness of life through hard work is a trait often connected to rural manhood, and this relentless attitude transferred over to the battlefield (p. 345). Although *The Unknown Soldier* is not the main focus of this thesis, a discussion on representations of masculinity in war narratives would be incomplete without at least briefly mentioning Rokka, because he is the perfect embodiment of this kind of no-nonsense rural masculinity that has arguably become the most idealised form of Finnish manhood in the context of

war. The endless popularity of his character certainly seems to suggest that the attributes, norms, and ideals we associate with wartime masculinity have not considerably changed throughout the years.

In this chapter, the focus has been on the narrative construction of masculine images: how different representations of masculinities are constructed in relation to each other, and how the structure of the story defines and shapes these representations. However, when it comes to cinema, there is also another level of representation to be considered in addition to the narrative, namely the visual representations of masculine bodies.

4. For your viewing pleasure: The masculine body and its cinematic representations

“The militarily trained male body. . . was handsome, energetic, aesthetically balanced, harmonious, lithe and springy” – this is how *Suomen Sotilas*, a Finnish military magazine published since 1919, described the physical results of military training in 1920 (Ahlbäck, 2014, p. 115). In addition to mental strength and courage, attributes related to physical strength and appearance provide standards for socially and culturally accepted and preferred forms of masculinity. The body is one of the central stages where masculinity is constructed both in the military and in cinema. Analysing representations of masculinity in the context of cinema also means analysing visual images, whereby the male body is of utmost importance. As the example from *Suomen Sotilas* demonstrates, it is not just about what the body can do, but what it looks like. *Suomen Sotilas* went on to compare the militarily trained body to the “purely civilian” male body, which is inferior in every way (ibid.). As Ahlbäck (2014) notes, descriptions like these were part of the rhetoric used in *Suomen Sotilas* during the 1920s and 1930s to portray the mandatory military service in a positive light and emphasize its importance for both the nation and individual men (pp. 112-113). It is interesting that already in the 1920s – much before the male body had become increasingly objectified and eroticized in advertising, TV shows and films – the military institution itself defined masculinity in relation to the body’s physical appearance. “Handsome” and “aesthetically balanced” are completely superficial attributes that in no way describe the abilities of the body. This rhetoric also points to the hierarchical relationship between different kinds of masculinities: some men’s bodies are more desirable than others, and military training can turn a less handsome man into an aesthetically balanced one.

The bodies seen in war films are arguably good-looking. Of course, it is impossible to objectively assess how attractive a person is, but it would not be an exaggeration to suggest that most actors – particularly in leading roles – are generally considered attractive, unless their unattractiveness is crucial to the story. Camera angles, lighting and make-up tend to show people at their best, if their best is measured in conventional, Western beauty standards. Even in war films, where bodies must endure all kinds of hardships, crawl through the mud, and be shot at, they are never too dirty for too long. The description of the militarily trained body in *Suomen Sotilas* fits many of the male bodies in the films analysed in this thesis. Combat war films are structured around the physicality of action, which means that military bodies are often inevitably in the centre of the frame, but these films do not focus on bodies merely out of necessity. Particularly in psychoanalytical film theory, the starting point of the analysis is the notion that there are various pleasures derived from the act of watching a human body on screen. In this chapter, the body will be analysed from two perspectives. Firstly, I will consider the body as an object of the gaze (of the film camera and the viewer), and secondly, as

an object of state power and control. Finally, because objectification is historically and culturally gendered and linked to subjugation, I will discuss the impact the object position has on the portrayal of male bodies and representation of masculinities.

4.1. The body as the object of the gaze

In 2006, *Casino Royale* (dir. Martin Campbell) flipped traditional gender roles around as Daniel Craig's James Bond rose from the sea while the camera caressed his muscular body dripping with water. Anyone familiar with the Bond franchise could instantly recognise the scene as a nod to earlier Bond films where it was the 'Bond girl' whose body was closely watched by the male gaze of Bond/the film camera as she got out of the water. Showcasing Bond's body in this manner comes across as a very concrete example of the eroticization of the male body: the "pleasure in looking at another person as object" is no longer limited to the eroticization of the female body, to women as the object of the gaze, like Mulvey argued (p. 835). Indeed, it seems that the male figure can and *does* bear the burden of sexual objectification, even when he is the active subject in the narrative. And James Bond is the most active of subjects. Every other part of *Casino Royale* perfectly supports Mulvey's argument that "the male protagonist is free to command the stage, a stage of spatial illusion in which he articulates the look and creates the action" (p. 839). Yet, in this moment, he is undeniably the sexual object of the gaze, the source of the visual pleasure provided by cinema, precisely because we are conditioned by the history of cinema to recognise the he is occupying a position traditionally reserved for the female body.

In 1999, seven years before Daniel Craig got out of the water in *Casino Royale*, Peter Franzén did the same in *Ambush*. The film opens with the short scene of Perkola lying in bed with his fiancée Vainikainen, but it is immediately followed by the scene on the beach where the whole cast is first introduced. The first time the viewer properly sees Perkola is as he is getting out of the lake wearing nothing but tight swimming trunks (Fig. 3). As discussed in the previous chapter, the scene does not only function as an introduction to the characters, but also establishes certain hierarchical relationships while simultaneously emphasizing the homosocial bonds that tie this group of men together beyond the necessary co-operation



Fig. 3

demanded by the circumstances. However, there is no narrative reason why this introduction should take place on a beach. There is definitely no narrative reason why the film should introduce its protagonist properly for the first time as he is wet and almost naked. Lacking any observable narrative logic, it could be argued that the reason is visual. If one of the pleasures provided by cinema is pleasure in looking, then it begs the question to whose pleasure is *Ambush* catering in this instance? If Mulvey is right and “[m]an is reluctant to gaze at his exhibitionist like” (p. 838), is Perkola’s Bond girl moment there for the benefit of the presumably heterosexual female viewer? Is this a moment of cinematic gender equality – naked bodies for all? Admittedly *Ambush* does not objectify Perkola as blatantly as *Casino Royale* does Bond. The camera does not linger on his body, and unlike Bond, who stands still as the camera/viewer feasts on his body, Perkola is in motion and running to the shore. Still, the reason why James Bond should be mentioned here – despite him having nothing to do with Finnish war films – is that the mechanism of looking versus being looked at is the same in both films, it is only more pronounced in *Casino Royale*, because the reference to the origin of this action is intentional and more obvious.⁵ In both films, the bodies belong to the films’ protagonists, both of whom are physically and mentally strong and capable of violence. They are the bearer of the look in the narrative, yet in those moments their bodies are displayed, being looked at by the camera/viewer.

The “to-be-looked-at-ness” that Mulvey only assigns to women has been critiqued after the heterosexual male body became an object of academic study and scrutiny. Steve Neale (1993) points out that Mulvey’s notion of the voyeuristic male gaze’s sadistic control of the female object that drives the narrative forward can just as well be applied to film genres where action takes places between men: the lack of female characters at whom this voyeuristic gaze could be directed means that “male figures on the screen are subject to voyeuristic looking, both on the part of the spectator and on the part of other male characters” (p. 16). Because “in a heterosexual, patriarchal society, the male body cannot be marked explicitly as the erotic object of another male look”, Neale goes on to note that the “repression of any explicit avowal of eroticism in the act of looking at the male seems structurally linked to a narrative content marked by sado-masochistic phantasies and scenes”, meaning, for example, war films (pp. 14, 16). The mutilation of male bodies in combat films can thus be seen as a mark of repression, but also as a means of achieving it: the bodies are beaten, bloodied and mutilated to the point that they are “disqualified” from “erotic contemplation and desire” (Neale, p. 14).

⁵ Bond films are obviously not the only films to have a female character raise out of the water, but Ursula Andress’ iconic moment in *Dr. No* in 1962 is arguably the most famous example of this, followed by Halle Berry’s similar introduction in *Die Another Day* in 2002.

Ambush in particular features extremely graphic scenes of mutilation of the male body. The execution style killing of private Karppinen discussed earlier in chapter three is one of these, but corporal Saarinen's fate is even more violent, although he does miraculously survive as it later turns out. After being sent to cross a bridge alone as the other soldiers watch from the woods, Russian soldiers, unseen throughout the entire scene, open fire on Saarinen and his body moves around uncontrollably every time a bullet hits him and blood splatters out. Refusing to stay down even after being badly hurt, Saarinen's suffering is prolonged by the use of slow-motion, which forces the viewer to see the mutilation of his body in even more detail as he tries to stand up while being shot. Mulvey's "to-be-looked-at-ness" seems rather fitting in this context as well. Saarinen's mutilation is being looked at by both the viewer and the male characters. Keeping in mind Mulvey's notion of voyeurism's connection with sadism – "pleasure lies in ascertaining guilt (immediately associated with castration), asserting control and subjecting the guilty person through punishment or forgiveness" (p. 840) – it is especially interesting how Saarinen ended up on the bridge alone: having insisted on keeping a captured Russian soldier alive despite the protests of the other men, Saarinen was ordered by Perkola to cross the bridge alone as a punishment (the same way Perkola ordered Karppinen to walk to the base alone as a punishment). Perkola, who is the bearer of the gaze in most parts of the narrative and thus controls the action, can then do nothing more but to look at the spectacle that is Saarinen's body being shot to pieces. In *The Partisans*, on the other hand, the bodies are not mutilated in such graphic fashion. This has probably mostly to do with the production year: the film is in black and white, the image quality is not as good, and the liberal use of fake blood was not as common in the sixties as it was in the turn of the millennium. Still, even when the mutilation is not as explicitly shown, it does happen. Like in nearly every war film, male bodies are shot, wounded and dirtied.

Before the mutilation, however, the narratives analysed in this thesis provide fruitful opportunities for "erotic contemplation". Perkola getting out of the water in *Ambush* is one example, as is the following beach scene. As Perkola sits shirtless on the sand, drying himself, another soldier is seen doing pull-ups behind him. Some of the soldiers are swimming naked together. In *The Partisans*, a scene where the soldiers are together in a sauna is particularly interesting. There is no polite distance between their bodies, they are practically on top of each other, groaning in pleasure as they whip themselves with birch whisks. The soundtrack alone could suggest a porn film and the camera shows close-ups of the soldiers' ecstatic faces. After the sauna, they all run naked outside and jump into the lake, after which the camera cuts to Takala and Kokkola, talking together, naked from the sauna, as Takala shaves his beard in a scene that suggests domesticity and comfort. This kind of behaviour particularly in war films has been often read as homoeroticism that is paradoxically made

possible by the extremely masculine, heterosexual world of the military. Mark Simpson (1994) argues that “[t]he war film not only offers a text on masculinity and how to take one’s place in patriarchy, it also offers a vision of a world in which the privileges of heterosexual manhood can be combined with boyish homoeroticism—a purely masculine world awash with femininity” (pp. 214-215). Like Neale’s argument about repression through mutilation, also Simpson notes that this kind of homoeroticism is possible “only when married to death” (ibid.).

The discussions about the portrayal of the male body often seem to focus on the dynamic between the eroticized object of the gaze and the assumed heterosexual viewer, but this kind of preoccupation with the erotic is not without its issues. Putting too much emphasis on the potentially homoerotic undertones in male-dominated film narratives could mean that the patriarchal and hegemonic structures and ideals that these texts strive to deconstruct are actually reinforced. As Jillian Sandell (1996) points out, “relegating male intimacy to the realm of homosexuality. . . offers little to challenge contemporary stereotypes about gender and sexuality. It merely recontains intimate friendships within the realm of the erotic” (p. 24). Moreover, the underlying assumption in psychoanalytical film theory seems to be that the bodies seen on screen must be erotic objects, and if those bodies are male, then the (homo)eroticism must be combated with violence. Instead of criticizing stereotypical ideas about the connection between masculinity and violence, this line of thinking can enforce them, also adding sexuality to the already complicated mix. Therefore, although it is possible to analyse the male body within the framework provided by feminist film analysis drawing from psychoanalytical theory as well as Neale’s addition to it, I feel that it is important to also note the potential problem with the concept of the male gaze, as summarised by Yvonne Tasker (1993): “What once may have provided an enabling critical concept, now seems almost completely disempowering in its effects, operating as a term which fixes an analysis within the restrictions of the very gendered system it seeks to question” (pp. 115-116). Furthermore, focusing merely on the eroticism or eroticisation of the male body disregards another important perspective on the objectification of the body, namely the idea of the male body as an object of state-enforced control.

4.2. The body as an object of state power and control

In addition to the visual objectification of the body that is, practically unavoidably, at the heart of cinema, there is another level of objectification that is not limited to film but extends beyond it: the body as an object of state power and control. As Ahlbäck (2006) remarks, a man’s willingness to defend, fight and die for his country has been often seen as something natural, something that is

simply an instinctive part of masculinity, when, in reality, there are many cultural and historical institutions that systematically strive to create and maintain this idea. Most important of those is the compulsory military service (pp. 107-108). Although wars and militaries have been male-dominated throughout history, the impact of conscription in Finland should not be overlooked. The unequal treatment based on gender by an institution implemented and controlled by the state enforces the idea that soldiering is “naturally” masculine and thus the duty of all Finnish men (Ahlbäck, 2014, p. 3). In his article “Mitä miehen on kestettävä”, Ahlbäck (2006) studied the recollections of recruits who took part in the mandatory military training during the 1920s and ‘30s. The medical examination done before the beginning of the service is the first example of the state’s control over male citizens’ bodies. Young men’s naked bodies were scrutinized and hopefully deemed fit enough for duty. If not, they were labelled as “*ruununraakki*”, a derogatory term used for those released from duty. One recruit recalled being nervous before the examination because both of his brothers had been given the label “*ruununraakki*”, and having no sons fit enough for the military would have been a great shame for his mother. This examination was of course only the first link in the chain: the next step was the actual training, which often included physical and verbal abuse and humiliation. Many recruits noted that harsh bodily punishments were given arbitrarily for even the smallest mistakes (p. 111-115). In his book *Discipline and Punish*, French philosopher Michel Foucault (1975/1995) connected military discipline particularly to the concept of “docile bodies”, bodies that can be trained and shaped:

By the late eighteenth century, the soldier has become something that can be made; out of a formless clay, an inapt body, the machine required can be constructed; posture is gradually corrected; a calculated constraint runs slowly through each part of the body, mastering it, making it pliable, ready at all times, turning silently into the automatism of habit; in short, one has 'got rid of the peasant' and given him 'the air of a soldier' (p. 135).

The expressions “got rid of the peasant” and “the air of a soldier” refer to an ordinance from the year 1764, but the rhetoric is very similar to the one used in *Suomen Sotilas* in 1920, which argued that a body trained in the military was distinctly different from “the purely civilian male body”. The idea of discipline through repetition that Foucault described is still the dominant form of military training, which is defined by its strict routines and countless hours of repetitive exercises.

This basic training is a significant part of any military institution, but its role is particularly notable in Finland, where such a large number of citizens are subjected to it. That is why it is remarkable that training – which is the foundation of military discipline – is rarely portrayed in Finnish war films. The one genre where military training has been portrayed in Finnish cinema is *sotilasfarssi*, which has little to do with war. Outside of that genre, one of the only examples of

military training being depicted in Finnish narrative cinema is *Our Boys* (fin. *Meidän poikamme*, dir. Erkki Karu) from 1929, which it is not a war film, but focuses solely on the mandatory military training. The lack of even short training sequences in Finnish war films seems noteworthy especially in comparison to American cinema, where there are multiple examples of military training being a part of a war film narrative. It seems that in some American cinematic narratives, it is not necessarily the war that weeds out the weak, but the basic training. *Full Metal Jacket* is perhaps the most obvious example of this – with its infamously abusive drill sergeant, and Private Pyle shooting himself in the head – but it is the only one. In their analysis of the American war film *Jarhead* (dir. Sam Mendes, 2005), Richard Godfrey, Simon Lilley and Joanna Brewis (2012) drew from Foucault's theories on discipline to demonstrate how basic training is used to create and shape a masculine, militant body. As Godfrey et al. note, according to Foucault, discipline is achieved by first separating the bodies from the rest of the society, then putting them into specific spaces where they are ranked against other bodies and given specific tasks accordingly. The repetitive execution of these tasks is carefully controlled, until the body becomes a piece of a system that can be easily moved, controlled and utilized (p. 548). This is not only a very apt description of the training scenes in American war films, but also applies to the processes of the mandatory military service in Finland. Yet this first part of militarizing the body – the training – is hardly ever addressed in Finnish cinema. Why?

In this instance, it is useful to again turn to Ahlbäck's (2006) notion that it is often commonly thought that men are somehow naturally inclined to fight and take part in warfare (p. 107). The idea of warfare as a naturally masculine experience is perpetuated by the narrative structure of most Finnish war films. These stories generally begin in the middle of the war, which eliminates all the culturally, politically and historically significant steps that have led these men to this point. From a practical point of view, this is understandable: there is no need to spend time explaining the historical background and reasons for the Winter and Continuation War, because it is such a crucial part of Finnish history that surely the audience already knows. Similarly, the audience is most likely aware of the mandatory military service and that all able-bodied men had to fight in the war. Yet, it is precisely for these reasons that Finnish war films are able to continuously uphold the myth about Finnish men as 'natural' fighters, with an innate desire to defend their country. That is not to say that these films would necessarily glorify the war or portray the soldiers as fearless super-humans. *The Partisans* explicitly deals with the psychological trauma of the war, and in *Ambush*, Perkola is also exhibiting symptoms of trauma, reacting to non-existing threats. Moreover, just before the final battle scene in *Ambush*, Perkola asks his men whether they are afraid, to which private Raassina replies,

“Kyllä pelottaa, herra luutnantti,”⁶ while another soldier calmly states that he is not. Regardless of their answer, both men must run towards enemy lines while being heavily fired at. This experience is at the heart of Finnish war films: by shifting the focus away from the higher-ranking officials, who plan the course of the war without physically fighting it with a gun in their hand, and over to those ordinary soldiers who do, the winning of the war becomes less about organized military action and more about the efforts of individual men, who have the drive to fight even when they are afraid.

The lack of military training in war narratives has also been noted by Jokinen (2006) in his research on Winter War literature. The Finnish soldier does not have to train for war, because the skills needed for warfare are an inherent part of his way of life. The characters in these narratives have spent their lives near the wilderness of the deep forest: they know how to hunt, how to move in nearly inaccessible terrain, and how to survive in the freezing coldness of the winter. The harsh nature has made Finnish men relentless, resilient, and tough, and being able to not only survive but to thrive in these conditions makes them innate soldiers, who can use nature to their advantage. Finnish men thus go into war already possessing the skills they need, but the war refines and hones them (pp. 147-148). Although Jokinen’s analysis concerns Winter War literature specifically, arguably the idea of the Finnish man as a born-to-be soldier is at least implicitly present in most fictional representations of the Winter and Continuation War, where the norms and ideals for being a good man and a good soldier considerably overlap. Moreover, the combat scenes in both *The Partisans* and *Ambush* take place in the forest. The archetype of the Finnish male subject in literary narratives described by Jokinen thus seems quite an apt description of the soldiers in these films as well, who continuously utilize nature and the cover provided by it as an offensive tactic.

Drawing from Jokinen’s analysis of the tough male subject hardened by the extreme conditions of the wilderness, it can be argued that the military plays only a minor role in preparing men for war in the narratives analysed here. The issue of the body being subjected to the control of the state thus becomes rather complicated. On the one hand, any soldier operating as a part of a national army will inevitably lose autonomy over his body. Returning to Foucault’s notion of the docile body, “[d]iscipline increases the forces of the body (in economic terms of utility) and diminishes these same forces (in political terms of obedience). In short, it dissociates power from the body” (p. 138). On the other hand, it seems that in these fictional representations of war, the military mostly provides the context where basic attributes of Finnish masculinity can be utilized in the defending of one’s country. As has already been mentioned in part 3.4, the military as a subjugating system is addressed to some extent in these films – particularly in *The Partisans* – but it is limited

⁶ “Yes, I am, sir.”

mostly to complaints about individual missions. By completely ignoring the processes of militarizing the body, these war narratives avoid portraying bodies as docile in the Foucauldian sense, as pawns on the board of international politics, thus perpetuating a fantasy about a generation of Finnish men who fought because they wanted to, not because they had been forced to do so by a societal institution that trains and organises male bodies for the purposes of warfare.

Again, I want to stress that the intention of this thesis is not to evaluate how realistically these films depict the experiences of real Finnish soldiers or how they might have felt about the war, but to demonstrate how the narrative structure of these fictional representations is constructed to maintain a nearly mythical image of the patriotic male subject. Captain Kokkonen did not have to risk his life in a dangerous mission in *The Partisans*, he chose to do so. The element of choice gave him power over his own fate (and his own body), although admittedly his choices were limited: he could not have chosen to not participate in the war at all, for example. Still, individual men's choices and actions are at the centre of these war films, and the decisions they make drive the plot forward. As has been noted previously in this thesis, despite elements of military hierarchies being an inevitable part of war film narratives, they are not the focal point of the story. Ultimately these films are about the struggles and accomplishments of individuals, not about the military or organised warfare.

4.3. Avoiding objectification: Narrative strategies

In this chapter, I have discussed the body and its possible objectification from two different perspectives: the body as an object of the gaze, and as an object of state control. Because objectification has been historically and culturally linked largely to representations of women and femininity, it is now worth considering what – if any – kind of an impact this has on representations of masculinity. If the male body is being treated as an object, is being objectified also feminizing? The emasculating effect of objectification is suggested by Brauerhoch, who notes that, because soldiers serve and thus belong to their country, they are no longer in charge of what happens to their bodies (p. 93). The loss of control is also argued by Ahlbäck (2006, 2014) and Godfrey et al., but their research concerns mostly the strategies used to control and shape the body. Brauerhoch, on the other hand, discusses the consequences of such control, arguing that the state's claim over the soldiers' bodies puts said bodies in a position that is – in a patriarchal society – traditionally reserved for women. The subordination of these bodies thus transforms them into feminine objects (p. 93).

While I agree with Brauerhoch on the notion that objectification and the subsequent subordination have generally been gendered concepts, automatically equating subordination with feminization becomes a rather complicated issue in the context of the military and war, and especially in relation to what has been argued previously in this thesis. The starting point of this research was the assumption that war and military are inherently masculine environments that allow the construction of masculinities that would not necessarily be possible in other contexts, and arguing that the military as a subjugating system does, in fact, emasculate men seems to contradict this assumption. Of course, these two concepts – excessive masculinity and subjugation – do not have to be considered mutually exclusive. The military does promote and reinforce a certain type of masculinity, while simultaneously also denying men the autonomy to their own bodies. However, I do not see that this kind of loss of control would necessarily directly translate to the feminization of the body. The concept of feminization is more commonly discussed in cultures that are based on a more hierarchical gender order. In research on masculinity and military, the emphasis on “female-coded” chores such as cleaning and making beds in military training has been seen as a strategy to feminize the recruits and strip them “of their manly honour”, but as Ahlbäck (2014) remarks, Finland and other countries in Northern Europe are

marked by more egalitarian gender relationships than other European cultures. The opposite of manliness in many contexts was not womanliness, but being a boy or a youngster that was not yet a skilled workman. In the Finnish narratives, the soldiers’ manly pride as workmen was taken away by the denial of their ability to perform even the simplest task correctly (pp. 177-178).

It is thus possible to argue that because Brauerhoch’s discussion on feminization takes place within an American framework, it reflects values and traditions specific to that cultural and societal environment, and is not fully applicable in the Finnish context.

Moreover, even if one were to consider the subjugation by the military as a feminizing practice, depictions of military hierarchy constitute only a minor part of Finnish war narratives, as has been extensively discussed in this chapter. In terms of the narrative structure, these films position individual soldiers at the centre of the action, downplaying the role of the military as a disciplinary institution. Individual soldiers are also visually the main focus of the story. Examining the use of character close-ups, Timothy Corrigan (1991) argues that “the dominance of expressive faces are able to absorb the wide-shot complications of political and social history by filling the frame with overdetermined moral and humanistic dilemmas, personal emotions and fears” (p. 42). The war and its meaning to the construction of national and masculine identity provides the context in which these

films tell stories about Finnish men, their struggles, and their victories, whereby the political, societal, and historical circumstances must make way for the individual to take centre stage.

As for the other level of objectification discussed in this chapter, I think it can be argued that the highly gendered practice of objectification that Mulvey describes in terms of the body and its relation to the gaze of the film camera/viewer has perhaps lost a part of its validity over time. The male body has been increasingly subjected to the same kind of eroticised objectification that used to be mostly reserved for the female body. This development can be seen even in the films analysed in this thesis: *Ambush* displays the male body in a decidedly more sexualised manner than *The Partisans*, released 36 years earlier. The key issue here is that the normalisation of the “to-be-looked-at-ness” of the masculine body means that being objectified does not systematically translate to being feminised. Particularly in action-driven narratives, the male hero’s body is often displayed to demonstrate his masculinity, not to reduce it. It is thus quite difficult to find many narrative or visual elements from these films that could be interpreted as explicit or implicit feminization. Rather, the soldier’s body is the visual manifestation of the norms, ideals and fantasies associated with military masculinity.

5. Sexuality

So far in this research, representations of masculinities have been discussed in terms of the homosocial environment of war and in terms of the body. These two aspects are inherently connected to the genre of war film. While the analysis has focused on two films specifically, it is possible to generalise the results to some extent, as film narratives centred around physical combat in a male-dominated setting do tend to repeat the elements highlighted in this thesis. Sexuality, however, is not necessarily as openly present in other narratives about the Winter and Continuation War than it is in *The Partisans* and *Ambush*. In fact, these two films were chosen partly because they feature rather explicit sex scenes, which is not particularly common in Finnish war films. With regard to the cultural and historical discourse on war and its effect on Finnish citizens, it seems that sexuality is still something so private and intimate, even dirty, that it simply does not fit the image of the patriotic (male) subject.

As Sari Näre and Jenni Kirves (2008) note, post-war rhetoric stresses the heroism of Finnish soldiers and the Continuation War's importance in maintaining Finland's independence. Criticism towards any aspect of the war can be easily dismissed as unpatriotic, which has significantly shaped the way we remember, talk about, and research these often deeply traumatic events (pp. 8-9). It is thus no wonder that sexuality in the context of war has been a severely under-researched area in Finland: Näre's (2016) *Sota ja seksi* seems to be currently the only Finnish book dedicated to the topic. Moreover, it seems that many people do not necessarily want to consider our war heroes in any kind of sexual context. In an online article about the book *Sota ja seksi* in *Helsingin Sanomat* (Heikkinen, 2016), the comments to this article are mostly criticism and disbelief towards the subject. Of course, a few online commentaries do not constitute a general opinion and they should always be taken with a grain of salt, but there is something to be said about the rhetoric of the outrage that the memory of Finnish soldiers and *lottas* could be tarnished like that. Liberal sexual behaviour rarely corresponds with the notion people generally tend to have about war veterans.

Internationally, however, there has long been an academic interest in the relationship between war and sexuality, particularly from a feminist perspective. Much of the discussion has centred around war-time rape⁷ (see e.g. Brownmiller; Lawson; Stuhldreher), which, as history has shown, has been a part of practically every war ever fought: "Down through the ages, triumph over

⁷ I am hesitant to discuss rape in a chapter about sexuality, since rape is, first and foremost, an act of violence. Stuhldreher (1994), for example, calls for the desexualisation of rape, so that it can be seen for what it is: "a violent, gender motivated crime, a crime against women because they are women." Still, there is arguably a sexual element to rape, and it is an inherently gendered crime, which is why it is discussed here.

women by rape became a way to measure victory, part of a soldier's proof of masculinity and success" (Brownmiller, p. 35). In the exceptional circumstances of war, masculinity, sexuality, and violence become intricately intertwined. As Adrienne Rich poetically suggests, "when you strike the chord of sexuality in the patriarchal psyche, the chord of violence is likely to vibrate in response; and vice versa" (as cited in Fuchs, p. 125). Despite the lack of much public acknowledgement of it, also Finnish women were victims and Finnish men perpetrators of sexual violence during the war: Finnish women faced increased sexual harassment from Finnish soldiers and dead bodies of Russian female soldiers were found with their clothes cut open and breasts exposed (Näre, 2008, pp. 366-367). The extent to which the war affected the occurrence of sexual violence became evident in the years following the end of the Continuation War. The number of rapes significantly increased after the war and they did not decrease to pre-war levels even by the 1950s (ibid.).

Especially in feminist film analysis, the phallic symbolism of firing weapons provides another level of interpretation for the link between masculinity, sexuality, and violence. This arguably applies to any film where a man fires a gun, but it has been discussed mostly in relation to American Vietnam War films. Brauerhoch, for example, notes the dichotomy of masculine Us/feminine Other in the scenes where American machine guns, grenade launchers and tanks destroy the Vietnamese jungle (p. 90), and Fuchs remarks the explicitly sexualised language of *Full Metal Jacket*, where a soldier shoots a machine gun from a helicopter while simultaneously shouting "Get some! Get some!" (p. 128). In *Casualties of War* (dir. Brian De Palma, 1989), sergeant Meserve (Sean Penn), one of the film's protagonists, holds a gun and says, "The army calls this a weapon, but it ain't." He then grabs his crotch and continues, "This is a weapon." It is practically impossible to not note the gun/penis symbolism in these films, because it is vocalised so blatantly. In terms of the films analysed in this thesis, however, the sexualisation of the weapon is not as obvious, if it can be said to exist at all. It could be argued that this has mostly to do with the moral atmosphere of these films: Vietnam War films can be considered almost aggressively sexual on a both narrative and visual level, and a certain depravity of war seems to be always present. In Finnish war films, on the other hand, the tone is arguably more patriotic, which quite effectively eliminates most depictions of moral corruption. As was mentioned above, sexuality is not a particularly central element to these narratives, but when it is addressed, it is rarely portrayed as aggressive or violent.

Although the link between sexuality and violence is perhaps not usually thematised in films about the Winter and Continuation War, sexuality is still inevitably tied to the representation of masculinities. That is, the function of the sex scenes in *The Partisans* and *Ambush* is to express something about what kind of men the films' protagonists are. How sexuality is used to construct masculinity greatly differs between these two narratives, however, which is why the analysis in this

chapter is divided into two parts. First, I will focus on the relationship between Perkola and Vainikainen in *Ambush*, as well as the implied rape of Vainikainen by Russian soldiers. The second part considers Takala's almost reckless sexual behaviour in terms of the construction of his character and its relation to the possible anti-war message in *The Partisans*.

5.1 The lover and the rapist: Sexuality in *Ambush*

Considering the quite conservative view on sexuality during the times of war, it seems that *Ambush* has managed to depict sex in a way that avoids offending the delicate memory of the patriotic soldier: an about-to-be-married couple reunited after fearing that they would never meet again. Relatively early in the film, Perkola and his *lotta* fiancée Vainikainen accidentally end up stationed in the same small village. They recognise each other in the crowd and run to each other's arms, after which the film cuts to them lying in bed together, suggesting that they have already slept together. Vainikainen talks about how she was certain that she would never see Perkola alive again, and Perkola comforts her by telling her that they will leave together once it is all over. As Perkola gets up from the bed, Vainikainen grabs his hand and asks him to do "that" to her again.



Fig. 4

"That", it turns out, is oral sex. The scene is shot through a doorway to the room where Perkola and Vainikainen are, and other than the fire that illuminates their bodies, the shot is mostly dark, positioning the action to the centre of the frame (fig. 4). After Perkola has kneeled between Vainikainen's legs, the scene switches to a close-up shot of Vainikainen's face, and then to a shot where the camera slowly moves over their naked bodies.

This scene can be examined from two perspectives, as it arguably has a visual and a narrative function, but both are ultimately connected to construction of masculine images, to the construction of the type of masculinity Perkola in particular represents. Visually, this scene places heavy emphasis on the body. Interestingly, that body is Perkola's. That is not to say that Vainikainen's body would not be displayed at all; unsurprisingly, as the camera tracks the movements of their bodies, it pauses on her exposed breasts. For the majority of this scene, however, the focus is on his body and not on hers. As figure 1 demonstrates, Vainikainen is clothed while Perkola's naked body

is in the centre of the frame. This is not the first time *Ambush* displays him in such manner: as was discussed in part 4.1, his character is first properly introduced as he is getting out of the water nearly naked. Such focus on his body can be seen as a means to demonstrate that he conforms to the standards set for the masculine, militarily trained body. He is lean but muscular, and, as *Suomen Sotilas* would put it, handsome and aesthetically balanced.

It is also difficult to not think about such blatant displays of the male body in terms of psychoanalytical film theory and the visual pleasure provided by cinema. The erotic context of this scene already turns the body into a sexualised object, and the composition of the shot multiplies the effect. It would be very challenging to find any other explanation for the positioning of Perkola's naked body other than it being there for the viewer to look at. Yet, this again raises the question about whose pleasure is this scene intended for? To briefly resort to generalisations and stereotyping, the romantic subplot can be considered a way to attract female viewers. While I absolutely do not believe that women would be interested in war films only if there is a romantic element to them – I am a woman myself, after all, fascinated with all kinds of war narratives – the film industry does target different audiences with different kinds of films, and this kind of targeting is often based on gender. Putting an image of Vainikainen lying in Perkola's arms in the centre of the film's poster highlights the romantic element of the story, possibly drawing in viewers from different demographics. It would thus not be far-fetched to suggest that Perkola's naked behind is there for the benefit of the presumably heterosexual female viewer. As for Mulvey's notion that a man "is reluctant to gaze at his exhibitionist like" (p. 838) and the possible homoeroticism of male-dominated narratives discussed in 4.1, any homoerotic undertones are arguably subverted by the presence of Vainikainen: there is an obviously heteronormative reason for Perkola's nudity. Had his body been displayed in a similar manner in the presence of other soldiers, the tone would be completely different.

From a narrative point of view, this scene is central to the construction of ideal masculinity. If sexuality should be a part of the heroic male character, then surely this is the most moral and virtuous way to do it: Perkola and Vainikainen are in a committed relationship, Perkola is gentle, loving, and generous, and there is a reverent, even religious, atmosphere, highlighted by the cross necklace that Vainikainen is wearing, which conveniently rests between her breast. At the same time, sexuality is used as an indicator of masculine prowess. To refer to Hammarén and Johansson's notion of women being used as a "currency" on the masculine social scale (p. 2), it is noteworthy that Perkola is the only male character in the film who engages in sexual activity, which, from the perspective of the viewer, could enhance his perceived masculinity in relation to the other male characters. Yet, most importantly, his sexual behaviour is contained within the moral standards set for the patriotic Finnish man/soldier. In *The Partisans*, by contrast, Takala has multiple, short-term

sexual relationships with different women, and his actions are both admired and heavily criticised by the other soldiers. Before continuing with the analysis of sexuality in *The Partisans*, however, *Ambush* features one other element of interest to this chapter, namely the implied rape of Vainikainen.

Perkola and Vainikainen part ways after their emotional reunion, Perkola moving forward to Russian territory, while Vainikainen gets a ride in a truck headed back to the Finnish side of the border. Shortly after their departure, the trucks are attacked by Russian soldiers, who kill most of the Finnish soldiers and *lottas*. Vainikainen hides underneath the truck until she is discovered by a Russian soldier. Vainikainen is presumed dead for most of the film, as Perkola receives a message that the trucks were attacked and all *lottas* killed. At the end of the film, however, after a final battle scene that functions as the climax of the film, Vainikainen miraculously appears in a small village where wounded Finnish soldiers are being treated and where Perkola also happens to be after their last battle. What had been done to her at the hands of the Russians is never explicitly explained, but her back is bruised and bloody and her dress is heavily blood-stained around the area of her groin, suggesting sexual violence. Perkola finds Vainikainen in the midst of wounded soldiers and the film then cuts to the same scene with which the film began: Vainikainen lies in Perkola's arms in a dark room, thunder and rain is heard from the outside and close-ups of Perkola's face show him crying. The very last shot of the film is of the two of them the next morning, lying in each other's arms as the sun shines on their faces.

Although the film avoids visually depicting what happens to Vainikainen, the implication of rape is too obvious to ignore. Representations of rape in war narratives have been criticised because they "belittle the trauma of female victims by shifting the meaning of rape from a criminal sexual assault to a metaphor of the violence and dehumanization instigated by war" (Sokolowska-Paryz, p. 1). This is arguably the function of the implied rape also in *Ambush*. The film is not *about* Vainikainen: she is a plot device used to convey the horrors of the war and particularly the depravity of the enemy. Vainikainen's body becomes a symbolical battleground for the values and morals of the nation that the Finnish soldier defends. As Barbara Kosta (1997) argues, rape is used as "a weapon to penetrate the innermost sphere of the national body, its home and traditions and to desecrate the values that women, as gender and social product, symbolically represent" (p. 221). The sexual violation of Vainikainen's body by the enemy highlights the Us versus the Other dichotomy that can be found at the heart of most war narratives. From this perspective, implying that Vainikainen has been raped seems almost grotesque on the film's part, because it is used to contrast the brutality and immorality of the enemy with the Finnish soldier's morally superior characteristics in all aspects of life.

The perceived immortality and depravity of the enemy has its roots in wartime propaganda. Heikki Luostarinen (1986) has identified two extremities in the descriptions of Russians in Finnish press during the first year of the Continuation War: they were portrayed either as dangerous, disgusting, and filthy as possible or as ridiculous and harmless. As the war progressed, however, the stereotypes and propaganda about the nature of Russians changed, and the press started to increasingly portray the enemy as cruel, brutal, and animalistic. There were even articles about rumoured cannibalism. A crucial part of such propaganda is the way Finnish soldiers were, of course, portrayed as the complete opposite of their depraved enemy (pp. 260, 330-334, 396). While it is not surprising that these stereotypical beliefs about both the enemy and Finnish men would be repeated, at least to some extent, in later representations of the war, they should not go completely uncriticised. As has been noted above, also Finnish soldiers were perpetrators of sexual violence during the war. After the occupation of Petrozavodsk (Petroskoi), for example, 45% of the children in the city were born outside marriage and most of them to Finnish soldiers. All of these children being the result of consensual sex is highly unlikely (Näre, 2008, pp. 355-356). As Jokinen (2000) argues, fictional representations of war do not simply *re-present* events as they occurred: they are interpretations of what happened, aiming to represent something in a certain way to a certain audience (p. 117). By showing a Finnish soldier as a loving fiancé and implying that the enemy is a violent rapist, *Ambush* produces images of Finnish masculinity that not only shape the audience's notions of actual Finnish soldiers but likely also enforce already existing beliefs about the war and the men who fought in it.

5.2. Make war not love: Sexuality in *The Partisans*

“Silloin aikaisemmin minä en uskaltanut ja nyt minä en enää kykene! Minä olen sairas, minussa on tauti.”⁸ This is how Takala responds to a woman who is in love with him, as she points out that Takala has not even touched her yet. This notion quite aptly summarises the way sexuality is portrayed in *The Partisans*. Considering especially the year of release, the film examines the relation between sexuality and war in a manner that is rarely done in Finnish cinema. Unlike *Ambush*, where sex is depicted in a scene that expresses mutual love and desire between a couple about to be married, *The Partisans* uses sex to demonstrate the effect the war has on the masculine psyche. During the film, Takala is shown in sexual situations with two different *lottas*, and it is implied that there have been more of such occasions. The one woman he has not touched, however, will eventually become his

⁸ Previously I was too afraid to, now I cannot! I am sick, there is a disease in me.

wife. This reflects the moral – or immoral – implications of sexual behaviour that the film uses to address the traumatising impact of warfare. However, Takala's popularity with women simultaneously highlights his sexual prowess, which arguably improves his ranking on the masculine social scale, to again refer to the argument by Hammarén and Johansson. Therefore, the film's stand on sexuality and masculinity in the context of war is a complex one. Sexual relations with multiple women can be considered a means of highlighting the characteristics of a desirable form of masculinity, yet the film also places moral judgement on Takala's actions: his encounters with women are never particularly enjoyable, as sexual pleasure is tainted by shame and guilt. Moreover, these scenes also seem to suggest that the mental trauma caused by the war affects Takala's ability to perform sexually. The environment of the war thus seems to both drive Takala to seek casual, sexual relationships, and simultaneously prevents him from enjoying them.

The moral conflict that colours the depiction of sexuality in *The Partisans* seems to reflect the wartime tension that prevailed in the 1940s: although abstinence from sex was considered a virtue, the exceptional circumstances of war provided a momentary separation from the society that enforced these norms (Näre, 2008, p. 336). This tension becomes evident in the first sex scene of the film, which is also interesting in terms of its power dynamic. As Takala and his men are drinking and celebrating after they have returned from their mission, a *lotta* takes an interest in Takala. Although it seems that Takala is originally in charge of the seduction, he becomes increasingly weary as the scene progresses, and eventually it is the woman who persuades Takala to leave with her. She remains the more passionate party throughout the scene, but ultimately seems to regret it: as she is putting on her clothes, she says that she is so ashamed, to which Takala replies that he is the one who should be ashamed. He presumably refers to his inability to satisfy her needs, as he had basically fallen asleep during the act. As they are leaving, the woman says that she will go back alone, so that the others will not see that she was with Takala.

This encounter's meaninglessness for Takala is demonstrated by what happens next. When the woman he just slept with has left, he walks to another building and starts flirting with a young *lotta* named Riitta he finds there. She notices that Takala has a Mannerheim Cross – the most esteemed military decoration – attached to his jacket, and the two of them start kissing. Riitta is the second woman Takala tries to sleep with in the film, but it does not happen yet. Instead, Takala leaves, agreeing to call her, and walks alone to a building they had been drinking in, which is now empty. There Takala has a hallucination that he experiences multiple times in the film: he hears an excruciating ringing of bells, which seems to almost drive him crazy until it stops. The ringing of the bells signifies the mental trauma caused by the war; the placement of this particular hallucinatory episode in the narrative seems to indicate that his sexual behaviour is also a symptom of such trauma.

Takala uses relationships with women to try and escape the stress of the war, but it does not work. When he finally does get Riitta to bed, it is even more of a failure than the previous time with the other woman. Takala has another hallucinatory fit, he hears the ringing of the bells as well as the sound of a machine gun, and cannot continue the act.

On a symbolic level, the construction of this scene ties sexuality quite explicitly together with war and violence. It starts without music, but as soon as their bodies touch, the film resumes its relatively heavy and fast-paced – even aggressive – score, which has been previously heard during the combat scenes. Aurally, this scene immediately reminds the viewer of war, not sex. The erratic camera movements and the image going in and out of focus might have suggested pleasure, but pairing them with the bells and the music transforms this scene into a representation of Takala's inner state: he enjoys sex as much as he enjoys the war, that is, not at all. The sound of the machine gun and its abrupt ending combined with a close-up of Takala's slack-jawed expression hints at the gun/penis symbolism, but the film denies him the actual climax, since he is unable to perform sexually in the first place. Interestingly, the scene that immediately follows this one is Kokkonen explaining to Takala that a group of soldiers had been killed on their failed mission to seize a territory currently occupied by the Russians. The emasculation suggested by Takala's sexual incompetence is followed by the emasculation of the Finnish army in their defeat to the enemy. However, because the previous group failed, Takala and his men are sent to the same mission, and they succeed: this piece of land, the perhaps unintentionally but suggestively named *Pallikukkula*, is recaptured by the Finns.

As this analysis has aimed to demonstrate, how sexuality relates to the construction of masculinity in *Sissit* depends on the viewpoint. On the one hand, the film does use Takala's interaction with women to enhance his masculine rank: in the scene leading to his failed encounter with Riitta, Takala sees a captain talking to her, and then proceeds to threaten her that if he does not leave her alone, Takala's men will drive the captain over to the Russian side. This thinly-veiled death threat causes the captain to back down and he apologises, saying that he did not know that the girl belonged to Takala. Although he ranks higher in the hierarchy of the military than Takala, the captain still yields to Takala's will, again highlighting the notion that military hierarchy rarely plays a significant role in the construction of the hero's arguably superior masculinity. On the other hand, however, there is a disconnect between what other soldiers assume Takala does and what the viewer sees. Despite him appearing a "ladies' man" in the eyes of other men, he fails to actually be one, if his success is measured by his sexual performance. Yet, it should also be noted that both on a visual and narrative level, the film portrays Takala as a great soldier: military decorations adorn his jacket, and he successfully leads his men to a seemingly impossible mission.

To better understand the rather complicated dynamic between war, masculinity and sexuality in *The Partisans*, it is now useful to consider the film in terms of its possible anti-war message. While I do not believe that there will ever be a major Finnish feature film that would portray the Winter or Continuation War in the context of an anti-war statement, *The Partisans* arguably views the war through a more critical lens than most Finnish war films. In *Partisans*, being a good soldier does not always translate to being a good – or moral – man. Still, rather than suggesting that Takala is an inherently flawed character, the film uses his occasionally objectionable behaviour to address the negative effects the war can have on soldiers. The sickness that Takala mentions does not necessarily refer only to his hallucinations, but also to the general atmosphere of the war that drives people to abandon their morals and live like there is no tomorrow, and liberal sexual behaviour becomes one indicator of such immorality. As Kokkonen criticises Takala's continuous sexual escapades, he worries that Takala will throw his life away if he continues behaving like that. Kokkonen is wrong, however. Takala does not waste his life, because as the opening scene of the film reveals, he survived the war, became a decorated hero, got married and simply continued his life. Arguably the possible anti-war message is at least partly subverted by Takala's success as a soldier and a man. As was already discussed in part 3.4, the harsh conditions of war provide the perfect stage for the construction of masculinity that is defined by the ability to endure suffering and trauma.

Furthermore, it seems that ultimately it is women who must bear the burden of questionable wartime (im)morality. The fact that Takala ends up marrying the woman he did not have sex with during the war already suggests that women are responsible for upholding virtuous morals when men are unable to do so, but a letter from Takala's mother to his son further highlights this: she has sent him a picture of Marja, the woman he marries after the war, accompanied with a request that he should not forget her. His mother's approval of Marja seems to differentiate her from the other women who Takala turns to in order to find a momentary relief from the war. The reception of this story in the 1960s also points to the misogynistic attitudes towards sexuality that prevailed at the time, and arguably still do to some extent. *The Partisans* is based on a script for Paavo Rintala's novel *Sissiluutnantti*, which was released the same year as the film. Interestingly, shortly after the novel was released in 1963, 40 former generals of the Finnish army sent a letter to the publisher of the novel, criticising them for publishing a book that portrays *lottas* as morally reprehensible and despicable people (*Helsingin Sanomat*, 2013). Yet, they do not seem to be the least concerned about the portrayal of the male soldiers who were equally responsible for such indecent sexual behaviour, just as Takala's multiple casual, wartime relationships do not tarnish his reputation or decrease his chances of getting married. A closer look on the portrayal of women in Finnish war narratives would

certainly be worth researching, but it unfortunately cannot be discussed in more detail within the scope of this thesis.

6. Conclusion

Assuming a poststructuralist methodological approach, the starting point of this research was the notion that the masculine images produced in war narratives are shaped by larger cultural discourses on masculinity, particularly in relation to the military and war, and that the cinematic representations of masculinities then contribute to and enforce these already existing beliefs, images, and ideals about Finnish manhood, which is why identifying and studying the strategies used to construct masculinity is worthwhile. By deconstructing representations of masculinity in *The Partisans* and *Ambush*, my aim in this thesis was to argue that war narratives are important sites for the construction of ideal Finnish masculinity and to answer the two research questions I formulated at the beginning:

1. How are representations of masculinities constructed in *The Partisans* and *Ambush*?
2. What kinds of images and notions of Finnish men and masculinity do these narratives produce?

In this chapter, I will first briefly outline the theoretical background for this thesis, then summarise the main findings of my research, and finally conclude by discussing the limitations of this study and the need for further research.

The theoretical framework used for the analysis of these films consisted of two slightly different but related perspectives: feminist film theory and critical studies on men and masculinity. Feminist film theory is particularly useful in identifying structures of binary opposites that are traditionally of interest for poststructuralist analysis, in this case particularly the binary opposites of male/female. Feminist film theory also places heavy emphasis on the film form as a product of patriarchal power structures, which again highlights the male/female dichotomy. In addition to these two central aspects, feminist film analysis has quite a long tradition of analysing war films specifically in terms of gender, thus providing valuable tools for recognising and deconstructing gendered structures, images and symbols. However, many of the feminist theories and perspectives utilized in this thesis thematise phenomena that occur – sometimes exclusively – in American context, therefore reflecting issues specific to US history, society, and culture, and are not directly applicable to the study of Finnish films. That is why Finnish research on masculinity formed the other part the theoretical framework for this research. Finnish masculinity studies take into consideration aspects specific to Finland, such as the compulsory military service and the Winter and Continuation War's importance to and role in Finnish society and culture.

To structure and define the approach and viewpoint of this research, I considered three aspects to be central to the construction of masculinities: the inherently masculine, homosocial environment of the military and war; the masculine body, and sexuality. These three topics were also

used to organise the analysis in this thesis, each topic being discussed in its own main chapter. In the first chapter, I identified the almost exclusively masculine world of war as a significant element in the construction of masculinities, because it actively excludes women and strives to eliminate attributes associated with femininity. This rejection of the feminine could be found on a both narrative and visual level in the films analysed in this research. Therefore, representations of masculinity were considered specifically in relation to other masculinities, not only in relation to their perceived opposite, that is, femininity. Because of the abundance of male characters in war narratives, homosociality became arguably the most important theoretical concept discussed in this chapter. I utilised the division into hierarchical and horizontal homosociality to describe and examine the homosocial relationships depicted in these narratives. Portrayals of horizontal homosociality, meaning friendships based on emotional support and closeness, are a considerable part of both films, whereas military hierarchy plays only a minor role in the interactions between soldiers. However, military hierarchy does affect the construction of masculinities, only not in a way that one might perhaps expect. As this research showed, high-ranking army officers can be portrayed as less masculine than the ordinary soldiers who do the actual physical fighting. This is also emphasised by the narrative structure: a high-ranking military officer is never the hero in these films.

Although hierarchies enforced by the military as a societal institution are not a major element in these stories, this research did identify another hierarchical element that is of importance to the construction of masculinities: certain ways of being a man are portrayed arguably more honourable than others. In this context, the ‘other’ – the opposite of masculinity – is not necessarily always femininity, as is often argued in feminist theory, but other men and masculinities. These narratives produce male images that can be considered to represent “ideal masculinity” by juxtaposing them with other types of masculinities. This hierarchical construction of masculinities is made possible by the narrative structure of these films. Although the action is centred around a group of soldiers, there is still an identifiable protagonist, and the protagonist’s masculinity is produced in relation to other characters who embody different masculine characteristics. That is not to say that the protagonists in these films would be perfect representations of ideal masculinity, but they do embody characteristics that make them a better soldier than some of the other men in their group. Attributes connected to good soldiering often correspond with the attributes associated with being a good man. These attributes include, for example, physical and mental strength, courage, common sense, and being a tough but a fair fighter. The exceptional conditions of war thus enable the construction of a masculine subject that would not be possible in any other environment.

In the second chapter, the construction of masculinity was considered in relation to the portrayal of the male body. As cinema is such a visually-heavy medium by nature, and war films are

often based on the physicality of combat, the body is unavoidably placed in a central position, both visually and in terms of the narrative. Instead of focusing too much on *what* the body looks like – as is to be expected, male bodies depicted in war films are generally fit, strong, and attractive – in this part, the body was examined in terms of its objectification: as an object of the gaze of the film camera/viewer, and as an object of state power and control. These two viewpoints also roughly correspond with the two theoretical perspectives that form the framework of this research. The concept of the body as an object of the gaze comes primarily from Laura Mulvey's application of psychoanalytical theory to argue that the classical film form is based on the division between the passive female object and the active, voyeuristic male gaze.

Because the body in the centre of the frame in war films is more often male than female, it was then worth asking what are the implications of this for the male figures on the screen. As has been argued by Steve Neale, the violence and mutilation of male bodies in such narratives can be seen as a way to subvert and repress the eroticism that is inherently connected to the voyeuristic act of looking at another body. The display of the militarily trained body and the violence performed by it – both elements associated with representations of masculinity – can thus be considered in terms of the (homo)eroticisation of the body and the repression of said eroticisation. However, the issue with psychoanalytical theory is that this viewpoint comes with the implicit assumption that being objectified, being displayed as an erotic object, means being put in a position traditionally reserved for women, which would imply the feminisation of the masculine body. This arguably points to the out-datedness of this perspective. The emphasis put on appearance is no longer a burden carried only by women; masculinity is increasingly defined by what the male body looks like, not only by what it can do, and this change could be found also in the films analysed in this thesis.

In addition to the visual objectification, the body was also considered in terms of its objectification through state power and control. This meant examining the structures and practices of the military as a subjugating institution, whereby the men participating in this system are denied autonomy to their own bodies. In the Finnish context, the compulsory military service is central to the militarisation of the body. A significant percentage of Finnish men are forced to submit themselves to the control of the state, which has the power to scrutinise, regulate, shape, and use male bodies as it deems necessary. Michel Foucault connects this kind of use of military discipline to the concept of “docile bodies”, bodies that are put through countless repetitive exercises and drills in order to produce an effortlessly functioning system that can be effectively utilized in warfare but also creates obedient subjects of the state. This kind of subjugation also raised the question of feminisation: Annette Brauerhoch argues that the state's control over men's bodies places them in an emasculating position and thus transforms them into feminine objects. However, as was shown in this

research, *The Partisans* and *Ambush* do not feature any scenes depicting any kind of military training nor do they address the state-enforced militarisation of the body, that is, how these men learnt how to fight in an organised manner. The impact of completely disregarding these strategies and practices that control and militarise male bodies on the construction of masculinity is twofold. Firstly, it allows these narratives to create an illusion of Finnish men as natural fighters, that the skills needed for warfare are inherent to Finnish masculinity and these men's way of life, which again enforces the connection between masculinity, soldiering, and war. Secondly, by structuring the narrative around individual men's victories and struggles, these stories suggest that battles were won because of the courage, skill and sheer willpower of Finnish soldiers, not because the military had trained and organised male citizens for the purposes of warfare. Therefore, it could be argued that the possibly feminising effect of subjugation is subverted in Finnish war narratives by shifting the focus away from the military as a disciplinary institution and over to the heroic soldier, who embodies the characteristics of ideal masculinity realised in war.

The third aspect central to the representations of masculinity identified by this research was sexuality. Although it cannot be considered a significant element in all Finnish war films, portrayals of wartime sexuality are featured in *The Partisans* and *Ambush*, and I deemed them to be directly connected to the construction of the protagonist's masculinity, only in considerably different ways. As wartime sexuality is still somewhat of a taboo in Finnish culture, the portrayal of sex in *Ambush* is contained within the moral standards set for the patriotic Finnish man/soldier: Perkola is a gentle and generous lover, emotionally present and concerned for the well-being of his fiancée Vainikainen. This kind of male sexuality represented by Perkola is contrasted with the violent sexuality of the enemy, as the film implies that Vainikainen had been raped after she was captured by the Russians. Depictions of rape in war narratives have been strongly criticised particularly by feminist scholars, because utilising rape as a metaphor for the depravity and immorality of war often downplays the trauma of the female victim. Although *Ambush* does not visualise Vainikainen's rape, its implication allows the film to portray the enemy – who is virtually unseen for most of the film – as brutal and immoral, and thus highlight the Finnish soldier's moral superiority and honourable masculinity. In *The Partisans*, on the other hand, the connection between sexuality and masculinity is arguably more ambiguous. Its protagonist's multiple sexual relationships with multiple different women can be considered a means of demonstrating his masculine, sexual prowess in a homosocial environment. However, the film also uses sexuality to address the war's effect on the masculine psyche, the "sickness" of war: Takala's somewhat reckless sexual behaviour is portrayed as a reaction to the traumatising environment of war where death is always present, but his trauma simultaneously

prevents him from actually finding relief through sex. The narrative thus plays with the suggestion of emasculation, while also placing moral judgement on expressions of wartime sexuality.

The limitations of this research have already been mentioned in part 2.4, but I will elaborate on them here, because they also establish a need for further research. The most significant limitation of this research is the number of films analysed. As I am very aware, studying only two films does not allow me to draw larger conclusions on the construction of masculinities in Finnish war films. However, I do think that I have produced a theoretical framework that could be used to study other films as well, and of the three main elements – the masculine environment of the military and war, the masculine body, and sexuality – I identified as central to the construction of masculinities, the first two will almost inevitably be present in the majority of Finnish war narratives. The aspect of sexuality is a more complex one, since I assume that it will not be as explicitly thematised in many other war films as it is in *The Partisans* and *Ambush*. Nonetheless, feminist theory in particular stresses the connection between violence, sexuality, and masculinity, so one possible approach to the study of Finnish war films could be to focus solely on narrative, visual, and symbolic representations of sexuality, and how they link to the construction of masculine images.

As my original ambition was to be able to say something conclusive about masculinity in Finnish war films, the next natural step would be to extend the analysis to more films, which would allow us to recognise elements related to masculinity that can be found throughout the war film genre. However, a possible challenge with such research could be the issue of deciding which films to include and which not. As I have already suggested before, depictions of masculinities in films about the Finnish Civil War, for example, could be different from the depictions of masculinities in films set during World War II, because the impact of these wars on Finnish history, culture, and society was considerably different. That is why I hope to be able to continue my research on Finnish war films in a PhD, specifically as a comparative analysis between films depicting these different wars. In addition to a comparative analysis, masculinity in war films could also be considered from a genealogical perspective: the selection of films for this research already pointed to this idea, but two films are not enough to even begin to answer the question whether the representations of men and masculinities have changed in the about 70 years the Finnish film industry has been producing war films, and whether the possible changes can be traced back to changes in Finnish culture and society. Moreover, this research's focus on masculinity obviously meant that the other side of the coin was largely ignored, namely the representation of women. Because female characters generally form a very small minority in Finnish war narratives, it would be not only interesting but also necessary to consider how women and femininity are represented in the male-dominated environment of war films.

However, there is a fundamental issue connected to the study of gender, not just in terms of this research but in most research concerning representations of masculinity: they are contained within the limitations of the gender binary. What I mean by this is that the intention of this kind of research is often to deconstruct dominant, possibly harmful, conceptions of gender, to highlight that what we perceive women and men to be like are not unchangeable truths but historical and cultural constructions that can be transformed. Yet, these studies will inevitably operate within the parameters of the culture they seek to criticise and repeat the same stereotypes they hope to dismantle. For example, my motivation for this research was to be able to demonstrate the ‘artificial’ nature of representations of masculinities in war films, because I believe that these narratives are a part of a system that produces very limited standards for socially and culturally acceptable ways of being a man. I do not mean that a person would watch a war film and use it as proof and a model of what men are supposed to be like, but I do think that these mediated representations of masculinities have an effect on our understanding of gender, no matter how indirectly. Still, despite my best intentions, I, too, am a part of this system when I argue that Saarinen contrasts Perkola’s masculinity because he embodies characteristics that are commonly associated with women and not men. I am equally guilty of enforcing gender stereotypes, because this research is based on the notion that masculinity and femininity are binary opposites and thus defined by opposing characteristics.

The problem with acknowledging this issue is that it is very difficult to find strategies to overcome it, because of how deeply these notions of gender are ingrained in our society and in language. There is no other way to convey my arguments than resorting to the existing conventions we use to talk about and construct gender. I also want to note that my intention in broaching this issue is not to invalidate my research, but to address the fact that many theoretical concepts related to the study of gender are founded on the conception of gender as a binary rather than a spectrum, and the results gained from using this theoretical framework will reflect this. Moreover, I do believe that recognising these limitations related to the concept of gender and how we study and talk about it is important in terms of negotiating and proposing new perspectives on the matter. Although this research cannot currently offer solutions to the issue discussed here, I do hope to have contributed to the study of masculinity and war in Finnish cinema.

7. References

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