

Theatre and Transgression

Dirty Hands at the Finnish National Theatre in 1948 and the Aftermath

HANNA KORSBERG

ABSTRACT

I will discuss transgression and debated boundaries in performing arts in this article. I will be looking at a production of Jean-Paul Sartre's *Dirty Hands* at the Finnish National Theatre in 1948 and discussing the political norms of transgression in theatre at an unstable moment in Finnish history. The production premiered on 8 October 1948 and was performed for two months only. On 5 December 1948, Finland received a note from the Soviet Union, the reason was hostile action towards the Soviet Union. After the note, *Dirty Hands* was performed no more. In Chris Jenks's definition, transgression is "to go beyond the bounds or limits set by a commandment, the law or the convention." It is a "conduct which breaks rules or exceeds boundaries." (Jenks 2003, 2.) Transgression can be dangerous and challenge dominant hierarchies and authorities. What kind of a transgression took place in *Dirty Hands*? What strategies did the theatre and the artists participating in the production use to negotiate the transgression? Reading this performance through transgression, I argue that the theatre had a vital function in creating an understanding of the nation's role in Finland after WWII.

KEYWORDS

theatre history, historiography, performance, transgression, politics, Finnish National Theatre, Jean-Paul Sartre, *Dirty Hands*

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In this article, I will discuss transgression and debated boundaries in performing arts by looking at a production of Jean-Paul Sartre's *Dirty Hands* at the Finnish National Theatre and discussing the political norms of transgression in theatre at an unstable moment in Finnish history. The production premiered on 8 October 1948 and was performed for two months only. On 5 December 1948, Finland received a note from the Soviet Union because of hostile action towards the Soviet Union. After the note, *Dirty Hands* was performed no more.

In Chris Jenks's definition, transgression goes "beyond the bounds or limits set by a commandment, the law or the convention" and it "breaks rules or exceeds boundaries."¹ Transgression can be dangerous and challenge dominant hierarchies and authorities. As Lisa Purse and Ute Wölfel have defined, "Transgression exists as an act, a breaking of demarcated norm, rule or law, but at the same time it is an interpretation of an act which might not be a conscious rule-breaking but it is perceived and categorised as such."²

Revisiting the Finnish National Theatre production of *Dirty Hands* is motivated by the ability to discuss the question of transgression.³ What kind of a transgression took place in *Dirty Hands*? What strategies did the theatre and the artists participating in the production use to negotiate the transgression? Reading this performance through transgression, I argue that the theatre in Finland had a vital function to play in creating an understanding of the nation's role after WWII. It seems that Finland's position as a neighbour of the Soviet Union influenced the event and the later discussions. Covering up the alleged transgression cast long shadows that lasted several decades.

Sartre's *Les Mains Sales* premiered at Théâtre Antoine in Paris on 2 April 1948. It is set in a country, Illyria, on the verge of ending a war. Hugo, a bourgeois intellectual who has abandoned his class, has joined the revolutionary Proletarian People's Party and is sent out by the party to assassinate Hoederer, the leader of the party, because Hoederer wants to make peace with the Fascists and split the government of the country. Because of this, he is considered a traitor to the revolution by an important fragment of the party. So, Hugo and his bored wife Jessica, who never asked to be married to a political anarchist, move into Hoederer's headquarters where Hugo is to work undercover as a secretary for Hoederer. Through his time with Hoederer, he starts to admire him, and he only kills him, one day delayed, when he finds Hoederer embracing Jessica. While he is in prison, the party changes its policy and Hoederer is suddenly considered a hero. Hugo is then faced with the question of the meaning of his action. Was it a political murder or was it "just" a crime of passion?⁴

1 Jenks 2003, 2.

2 Purse & Wölfel 2020, 3–4.

3 I have discussed the production of *Dirty Hands* in my previous article "Decade of Political Uncertainty: The Finnish National Theatre in the 1940s" (Korsberg 2001) and my PhD thesis (Korsberg 2004, 185–92).

4 According to Rhiannon Goldthorpe, Sartre seems to appeal to the emotional and rational levels of response which may be dissociated in the reception. Goldthorpe 1984, 132, 225–6.

***Dirty Hands* at the Finnish National Theatre**

The Finnish National Theatre production, which premiered on 8 October 1948, was directed by the director of the theatre Eino Kalima. Hoederer was played by Aku Korhonen, a well-known actor and a board member of the Finnish National Theatre. Jessica and Hugo were played by two very prominent young actors Kyllikki Forssell and Rauli Tuomi. The production received considerable attention from the critics as well as from its audiences. Especially the performance of Korhonen as Hoederer cut a dash. A member of the audience recalled later the moment when Hoederer entered: “[There] was total silence and then everybody was thinking how the ensemble dared?”⁵ The reason for the shock was that the character Hoederer was masked to look like Joseph V. Stalin, the General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.



Figure 1: As Hoederer, Aku Korhonen was wearing a wig, loose moustache, and eyebrows. From the left Georgi (Oke Tuuri), Slick (Heikki Savolainen) and Hoederer (Aku Korhonen)

Performing *Dirty Hands*, the way the Finnish National Theatre did in 1948 was a transgressive act. After the war, the political situation in Finland remained critical for years. The Control Commission, with mainly Soviet members, stayed in Helsinki until 1947 when the final peace treaty was signed in Paris. Those years have often been characterized as an extremely hard time for Finland.⁶ Even after the ratification of the Paris Peace Treaty, the country did not return to its pre-war conditions. There were constant negotiations about what was allowed and what was forbidden to keep independence and avoid a Soviet military takeover. Simply by performing *Dirty Hands* the Finnish National Theatre and performing arts became part of these negotiations.

To understand the intent of the ensemble of *Dirty Hands* at the Finnish National Theatre it is necessary to analyse the cuts in the text. Combining this analysis with an analysis of the public discourse surrounding the production should, I hope, lead to a greater understanding of

5 Hellevaara 15.12.2000.

6 Jussila, Hentilä & Nevakivi 1999, 229, 246.

how the Finnish National Theatre negotiated the transgression and how the theatre was used as a cultural product in a struggle for reconciliation following a highly unstable time in Finnish history.

Sartre builds his dramaturgy around the characters' development while they are together at Hoederer's headquarters, and the four middle episodes are the crucial suspense-building scenes. In the opening scene, Hugo comes back to see Olga, who is a loyal member of the party. This scene takes place in the present and introduces the central conflict of the play. In the original script and in the text of the Finnish National Theatre performance he continues: "(...) you will meet surprises. Even if you have the best will in the world and do precisely what the Party orders, it will still not be satisfied. "You'll go to Hoederer and send three bullets into his body". That order was plain and simple. I was at Hoederer's, and I did send three bullets into his body. But then it became a total other story. The order? There was no order any longer. From a certain given moment, the orders leave one to one's own destiny. The order kept behind. I wandered on alone. I had murdered all alone, -- I didn't even know why I had murdered. I would almost wish the party would order me to shoot myself. Just to know. Just to know."⁷

In the Finnish National Theatre interpretation most of the names of real places (Soviet Union, Germany) and historical personas (Lorca, Hegel, Marx, T. S. Eliot) are cut but these cuts are not consistent. It is important to notice that the mythic name of the country "Illyria" is maintained. This has the immediate consequence that the text becomes more abstract and not focused on any real situation or place — or that was probably the intention. Furthermore, some of the lines describing the geo-political situation in Illyria could be describing the situation in Finland after WWII. It seemed important in the production to locate the events of the play to Illyria instead of encouraging the audience to see the play as too clear an allegory of the present situation.⁸

The second part of the play, Act IV, Scene Four, begins by describing the murder in flashbacks. It is March 1943, a year after Hugo, with the cover name Raskolnikoff, initially entered the party, and at the time he is given the order to shoot Hoederer. Hugo edits the party's newspaper in which he is only able to present the news given to him by the English and the Soviet radio. "He is excused because he is only doing his job", Ivan, another party member says. This is a core line in the play being part of a pattern of repetition freeing the character of his responsibility.

According to the director, Eino Kalima, he had left out Act II with its description of party-political activities to emphasize his "purely artistic interpretation".⁹ In the lines of the description of the parties, it says: "our party, who fights for Democracy, Freedom and a society without class differences." This was cut in its entirety from the Finnish production. After Act I scene one, where Hugo returns from prison to Olga's house, the performance of the Finnish National Theatre moved right away to Act III where the scenes take place at Hoederer's in March 1943.

The line by Hoederer was radically cut: "When it [the Soviet Union] understands that the fascist-dictator and the conservative party are sincerely aiming to assist it with its victory, it is undoubtedly very. (pause) One party maintained its faith to the Soviet Union. Only one understood to keep in touch with it during the war. Only one is able to send messengers through the front lines. Only one could guarantee that our calculations succeeded: our party. When the Russians arrive, they will see things our way. (pause). Therefore, it is best to do as we tell you."¹⁰

It seems obvious that the text in bold of this line was cut because in it, Hoederer could have described the situation in Finland during WWII. It could have been understood as a reference to the Finnish Communist Party which had been illegal in Finland and obliged to operate underground from the Civil War in 1918 until the end of the Continuation War in 1944.

7 Sartre 1966, 12. All quotes are in my translation. The prompt script is compared to the published play in Sartre 1966. The prompt script is in the Archive of the Finnish National Theatre.

8 For example, in the first scene of the play Olga listens to the radio. The radio describes Illyria's situation fighting against the Soviet Union. Also, the lines in Act IV Scene four describing Illyria's situation. Sartre 1966, 7, 79–81.

9 A letter to the Minister of Education R. H. Oittinen from Eino Kalima 9.12.1948.

10 Sartre 1966, 80. In the prompter's book of the Finnish National Theatre the Soviets were called the Russians. The bolding in the quotation is mine.

Some of its members had been moved to the Soviet Union and most of its leadership was killed in the Stalinist purges of the 1930s. Furthermore, in the summer of 1941, the Finnish authorities arrested some 500 Communists some of whom had co-operated with the Soviet Union during the war.¹¹

According to the text cuts and the stage production, the *crime passionel* was not emphasized: the discussions about jealousy between Hugo and Jessica in Act V Scene Three were cut from the text. In the performance, Hoederer was played by an almost 60-year-old Aku Korhonen, who looked like Stalin with distinctive hair, eyebrows, and a moustache on the stage. The image must have been a conscious choice since in the 1940s Korhonen himself was bald and neither had a moustache nor visible eyebrows, so clearly this was a question of masking and not an accidental resemblance. Jessica was played by Kyllikki Forssell, a 23-year-old actress whose first big role in Jessica was at the Finnish National Theatre. The remaining pictures of the performance do not show any erotic tension between the two. The cuts in the text cut the political content of the play.

The Reception of *Dirty Hands*

Dirty Hands received very good reviews. In the opinion of the critics, *Dirty Hands* was a problem play, and a lot of attention was given to the play by Sartre. Some of the critics mentioned that the world premiere of the play was a success in France, but they did not discuss the possible reasons for it.¹² Although some critics labelled *Dirty Hands* as a political play, the political dimension was not considered to be its most central aspect.¹³ According to *Suomen Kuvalehti*: “The crucial question in *Dirty Hands* is the current phenomenon of changing one’s opinion according to conditions. The hardest struggle is the conflict between the ideal and reality, and the political environment of the story is not essential.”¹⁴ Eino Palola wrote in *Helsingin Sanomat*: “Some people have considered Sartre’s play political, but it is not. Although it is situated in political surroundings, it is a pure idea-play.”¹⁵ Based on the reviews it looks like the reviewers consciously ignored the political messages of the performance.

According to one of the first reviews, which Raoul af Hällström wrote in *Nya Pressen* the direction by Eino Kalima was steady and safe and one could be sure that nothing gets played up or done excessively.¹⁶ This time, the very well-known and recognized theatre critic could not estimate the reception of the performance. Almost immediately after the premiere, the newspaper *Työkansan Sanomat*, the chief organ of the Communist Party of Finland, argued that the motive of the Finnish National Theatre in performing Sartre’s play was to attack communism. The writer continued: “But Sartre’s viewpoint hasn’t been enough for the Finnish National Theatre, and in the staging of the play the theatre has added a dirty extra dimension of its own: one of the main characters, murdered in the play, is masked as generalissimus Stalin! This deed of the Finnish National Theatre shows that the leadership of the theatre wants to be like all the right-wing groups trying to harm the relationship between Finland and the Soviet Union.”¹⁷ The author, whose identity was not mentioned in the article, but who, most likely, was Armas Äikiä, focused on two transgressions, the first one made by Sartre in the play and the second, made by the Finnish National Theatre in the staging of Sartre’s play.¹⁸ The core of the article was that when, in the play, Hoederer is murdered, the public of the Finnish National Theatre was allowed to see the murder of Stalin on stage. This detail, the mask of the actor playing Hoederer, was immediately considered a transgression of the norm of behaviour. In the

11 Jussila, Hentilä & Nevakivi 1999, 182, 201.

12 The play’s reception in France was mentioned briefly in *Ilta-Sanomat*, 9.10.1948, *Uusi Suomi*, 10.10.1948, *Nya Pressen*, 9.10.1948.

13 *Dirty Hands* was reviewed in eight newspapers: *Ilta-Sanomat*, 9.10.1948, *Helsingin Sanomat*, 9.10.1948, *Suomen Sosialidemokraatti*, 9.10.1948, *Nya Pressen*, 9.10.1948, *Uusi Suomi*, 10.10.1948, *Vapaa Sana*, 11.10.1948, *Suomen Kuvalehti*, 12.10.1948 and *Uusi Aura*, 28.11.1948.

14 *Suomen Kuvalehti*, 12.10.1948.

15 *Helsingin Sanomat*, 9.10.1948.

16 af Hällström *Nya Pressen*, 9.10.1948.

17 *Työkansan Sanomat* 12.10.1948.

18 Armas Äikiä was identified as the author of the article in *Työkansan Sanomat* 12.10.1948 already in the fall 1948. See, for example, Pseudonym Aki *Etelä-Suomen Sanomat* 14.11.1948.

reception, it was not mentioned that it could have been a transgression of the criminal code as well.



Figure 2: The scene of *Dirty Hands* where, according to Armas Äikiä, the Finnish National Theatre staged the Finns' winter wartime dream of seeing Stalin assassinated. From left Hoederer (Aku Korhonen), Jessica (Kyllikki Forssell), and Hugo (Rauli Tuomi)

The article in *Työkansan Sanomat* did not accurately describe the play by Sartre. In *Dirty Hands* Sartre criticized the Communist Party of France from inside the party. In the play, Hoederer is considered the hero, not the villain, and it was Hoederer who was alleged to be masked as Stalin. Hoederer's humanity is portrayed in many of the scenes of the play, and perhaps most clearly in the discussion that Hoederer has with Hugo. According to Rhiannon Goldthorpe: "In Hoederer, one of the protagonists of *Les Mains Sales* (1948) and one of Sartre's convincingly 'committed' characters, political insight and action are motivated by a loving concern for others. Hoederer makes clear to the young intellectual Hugo, whose motives are confused both by class guilt and by egoism, that to love people for what they are, or despite what they are, is of greater value than a commitment to abstract principles and ideologies."¹⁹

Besides *Työkansan Sanomat*, only Maija Savutie mentioned the connection between Aku Korhonen's Hoederer and Stalin in her review in the leftist newspaper *Vapaa Sana*: "To the last moments of the performance it was difficult for the audience to locate their sympathies because there was the risk of a wrong conclusion which perhaps occurred in the auditorium of the Finnish National Theatre. The Stalin mask of Hoederer was, to put it mildly, confusing. In my opinion, it was only pleasant, since Hoederer was a very sympathetic, good, wise, and strong man."²⁰ In Savutie's opinion, some members of the audience did not like Hoederer because of the appearance of the character.

The other critics wrote positively about Aku Korhonen's Hoederer but there seems to have been something exceptional in the character. For example, Eino Palola wrote that the part of Hoederer was "one of his [Korhonen's] strangest. It alone can draw the audience into the

19 Goldthorpe 1992, 177.

20 Savutie *Vapaa Sana* 11.10.1948.

theatre.²¹ It might be asked why the part was strange and how it alone might draw the audience into the theatre since Palola also wrote positively about the other actors' work, indicating that the whole ensemble succeeded very well and the acting of Korhonen was not any better than the rest of the ensemble.²² The critic wrote in *Suomen Sosialidemokraatti*: "Korhonen has inhabited his mask and character down to the last detail. It was a really impressive performance".²³ Paula Talaskivi wrote, "His Hoederer is somehow strange and new, quietly and internally strong. Effective 'in itself'".²⁴ At the end of November, pseudonym J. V-ri considered Aku Korhonen's Hoederer to be "peerless in our conditions."²⁵

In these reviews, there was a lot about Korhonen and his character, especially about the physical appearance of Hoederer. In my opinion, there seemed to be a subtext to the discourse. Something was not being said directly, and the reviews were filled with vague and suggestive comments. For example, the critic of *Suomen Sosialidemokraatti*, who wrote that Korhonen had inhabited his mask and character down to the last detail, did not mention what the details were. Likewise, the term "strange" came up twice. Paula Talaskivi mentioned that the character was effective "in itself", without clarifying what she meant by it.

It seems that the article in *Työkansan Sanomat* was crucial in terms of transgression, although the result did not follow immediately. *Dirty Hands* remained in the repertory for nearly two months. The Finnish National Theatre also invited members of Parliament to see the production on 23 November 1948. Less than two weeks later, on 5 December, the Chargé d'affaires of the Soviet Union in Helsinki, A. N. Fedorov, sent a note to Carl Enckell, the Finnish foreign minister complaining of propaganda that was hostile to the Soviet Union. The propaganda was said to be the Finnish National Theatre production of *Dirty Hands* and *Soldier's Bride* (*Jääkäarin morsian*) by Sam Sihvo performed by a theatre called Red Mill (Punainen Mylly).²⁶

President J. K. Paasikivi wrote about the incident in his diary. The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Carl Enckell, had discussed the productions with the President. On 5 December 1948, a note arrived expressing the fact that the *Soldier's Bride* and *Dirty Hands* were both considered to be hostile against the Soviet Union.²⁷ Neither of the performances were in the repertoire on 8 December, the day of the diary entry. *Soldier's Bride* had closed earlier as planned on 6 December 1948, Finland's Independence Day. After the note from the Soviet Union, *Dirty Hands* was performed no more.²⁸

Closing the productions was not enough. The Minister of the Interior, Aarre Simonen, was obliged to ask the police authorities to ensure that all activities by irresponsible persons damaging Finland's relations with a foreign country, referring to the Soviet Union here, be ended. If this kind of activity occurred, it was of the utmost importance that it be reacted to swiftly and with immediate measures.²⁹ The Minister for Foreign Affairs, Carl Enckell, contacted the Soviet chargé d'affaires A. N. Fedorov about the consequences of the episode. According to Enckell, the productions were not performed anymore. Although the note had concerned two productions, *Dirty Hands* was more important than *Soldier's Bride* because of the status of the two theatres. The Finnish National Theatre was deemed to represent official cultural policy, whereas the Red Mill had "no significance at all", as the secretary of the board of dramatic art, Verner Veistjä, wrote to the Minister of Education.³⁰ Enckell focused on the performance of *Dirty Hands*.

In Enckell's opinion, essential changes had been made in the production of the Finnish National Theatre when compared to Sartre's original. The main change concerned removing

21 Palola *Helsingin Sanomat* 9.10.1948.

22 Palola *Helsingin Sanomat* 9.10.1948.

23 *Suomen Sosialidemokraatti* 9.10.1948.

24 Talaskivi *Iltta-Sanomat* 9.10.1948.

25 Pseudonym J. V-ri *Uusi Aura* 28.11.1948.

26 A letter from A. N. Fedorov to Carl Enckell 5.12.1948.

27 Blomstedt & Klinge 1985, 680.

28 *Uusi Suomi*, 8.12.1948; *Suomen Sosialidemokraatti*, 8.12.1948; *Hufvudstadsbladet*, 8.12.1948; *Helsingin Sanomat*, 8.12.1948.

29 A letter to the police authorities from the Ministry of Interior signed by the Minister of Interior Aarre Simonen 10.12.1948.

30 A letter to the Minister of Education R. H. Oittinen from Verner Veistjä 10.12.1948.

what he calls, the political colouration of the text. Enckell also argued, based on the reception of the performance, that opinions of the content of the play were contradictory. He also informed Fedorov that Finnish authorities were expected to pay attention to all cases like this and had intensified vigilance and supervision. A letter circulated to the Finnish police authorities informing them of their duties from Minister of Interior Aarre Simonen was translated into Russian and attached to Enckell's letter to Fedorov.³¹

Although the reason for cancelling the performances of *Dirty Hands* was expressed in the newspapers there is no reference to it in the minutes of the board meetings of the Finnish National Theatre. Despite the immediate silence about the reasons for closing the production in the minutes of the board meetings, it was mentioned in the book called *Diaari II* which lists all the productions and performances of the theatre: "Closed down due to the note from the Soviet Union".³²

It seems to be that in the play, Hoederer is the hero, but in the production, the character had an ambiguous reception. Was this ambiguity intentional? On the one hand, the stage character of Hoederer could be seen as critical of Stalin and the Soviet Union because the character was shot at the end of the play, but on the other hand it could be seen as support for them since the character was the hero of the play. Both readings can be seen from the reviews of the performance. This ambiguity allowed the Finnish National Theatre to perform the play to make a covert anti-Communist statement. One might question how much the article published in *Työkansan Sanomat* had to do with the closing of *Dirty Hands*. The position of the newspaper is important since it was the organ of the Communist Party of Finland.³³ It might also have been read in the Soviet Union.

The Aftermath of the Transgression

The note concerning *Dirty Hands* can be seen as one manifestation of the new tighter policy the Soviet Union had towards Finland from the turn of the year 1948–1949. The reason for this was the lack of confidence the Soviet Union had in the social-democratic Prime Minister, K.-A. Fagerholm. He was thought to be leading Finland closer to the Western Bloc of the Cold War.³⁴

To understand the consequences of the transgression it is important to see how it is discussed afterward in different histories and memoirs. It seems to be that the position of Finland as a neighbour to the Soviet Union and especially the status of the Soviet Union also affected the aftermath of the event. In the 1960s and 1970s historians and artists writing their memoirs wrote very carefully about *Dirty Hands* – or did not write about it at all.

In the history of the Finnish National Theatre, published in 1972, Rafael Koskimies introduced the season of 1948–1949 with the headline "Politics gets involved in *Dirty Hands*".³⁵ He quoted Kalima's memoirs and referred indirectly to newspaper articles. According to his interpretation of the newspapers, the chargé d'affaires of the Soviet Union had implied that Sartre's and Sihvo's plays were hostile.³⁶ Interestingly, Koskimies did not reveal his interpretation of the process though in 1948 he was the chairperson of the board of the theatre. If it had been a case of self-censorship from inside the theatre, it would have been the board's decision to close the production. He described Korhonen's Hoederer as "an imagined Stalin mask". In his opinion: "Kalima's direction of *Dirty Hands* portrayed the soul, instead of an inflated criminal drama or party drama, which was the case in the production I saw in London in the summer of 1948."³⁷ So, in the history of the theatre, Koskimies described the production as apolitical, but at the same time he wrote about the political events that the production caused. He did not mention anything about the possible statement that the theatre wanted to make by performing the play.

31 A letter to A. N. Fedorov from Carl Enckell 22.12.1948.

32 *Diaari II* of the Finnish National Theatre.

33 When *Työkansan Sanomat* was founded in 1946, the Communist Party of Finland had decided that all the members of the editorial staff of *Työkansan Sanomat* had to be members of the Communist Party as well. The writer of the article, Armas Äikiä, was also a party-member. Perko 1981, 118–27.

34 Nevakivi 1996, 29, 36–41.

35 Koskimies 1972, 534.

36 Koskimies 1972, 534–6.

37 Koskimies 1972, 536.

In his memoirs published in 1968, at the height of the Soviet Union's international power, Eino Kalima wrote about *Dirty Hands*. In his opinion, the production was very successful, and he also remembered that the production was closed. According to Kalima, the closing of *Dirty Hands* was not a compulsory measure from the government, and it all happened with mutual understanding.³⁸ In Kalima's opinion, the attack on the production was absurd. He did not see the similarity between Aku Korhonen's appearance and Stalin's. As a member of the Finnish Cultural Delegation, Kalima met Stalin in Moscow in 1945, so he had seen Stalin closer than many other Finns. While Kalima admitted in his memoirs that there might have been something similar in these two since some people had noticed the similarity, he emphasized that the resemblance was not intentional.³⁹

It is especially interesting to look at the varying interpretations by Kyllikki Forssell, who was the only member of the ensemble who returned to the production afterward on several occasions. Sadly, Rauli Tuomi, who played Hugo, committed suicide in February 1949, at only 29 years old.⁴⁰ Aku Korhonen, who played Hoederer, died after a long illness in 1960.⁴¹ As Kai Häggman has summed up, Forssell has both denied and admitted the resemblance over the years.⁴² In a radio program recorded in 1984, Forssell mentioned Jessica's role in *Dirty Hands* as one of the highlights of her career. She said that the performance was canceled due to the similarity of Korhonen's appearance and Stalin's, and, according to Forssell, the ban came after members of Parliament went to see the show.⁴³ When I interviewed Forssell in 1999, she said that the production was closed on the advice of the Committee for Foreign Affairs.⁴⁴ In Forssell's opinion, the appearance of Aku Korhonen did not resemble Stalin and the possible similarity was not intentional.⁴⁵ In a television program recorded in 2000, Forssell said that *Dirty Hands* was canceled because of Korhonen's mask, but the ban would have come after the Parliamentary Foreign Affairs Committee went to see the show.⁴⁶

In her memoirs, published in 2007, Kyllikki Forssell specified that the production was forbidden because Korhonen's mask looked too much like Stalin. In her own opinion, though Korhonen looked "a little like Stalin", this was not something the ensemble could foresee during the rehearsals.⁴⁷ Forssell continues "I have heard there's nothing in the minutes of the National Theatre. But it was first the note came, and then the Committee on Foreign Affairs saw the production, and when it considered it inappropriate, it was pulled out of the repertoire."⁴⁸ When interviewing Forssell in 1999, I mentioned to her the absence of the event from the minutes of the board meeting of the theatre, but she could have known it before the interview, too. In Forssell's memoirs from 2007, there seems to have been a disagreement as to whether Korhonen's mask looked "too much like Stalin" or just "a little like" Stalin. However, she argues that the resemblance wasn't intentional.

Kalima, Koskimies, and Forssell have different interpretations about who banned the production. Forssell refers to the Foreign Affairs Committee in 1999, 2000, and 2007, and to Parliament in 1984. In Kalima's opinion, there was a mutual understanding that closing was best.⁴⁹ This refers to self-censorship inside the Finnish National Theatre. In the history of the Finnish National Theatre, Koskimies quoted Kalima at length but wrote in a roundabout way

38 Kalima 1968, 398.

39 Kalima 1968, 398.

40 Mustonen 2007.

41 A year after Aku Korhonen's death the dramaturg of the Finnish National Theatre Ritva Heikkilä edited a collection of Korhonen's interviews and eulogies. On page 71 there is a picture of Korhonen and Forssell in *Dirty Hands* but nothing about the production is mentioned in the book. Heikkilä 1961, 71; Lahtinen 2001.

42 Häggman 2022, 226.

43 *Taiteilijavieraana Kyllikki Forssell* 18.10.1984.

44 Forssell 12.5.1999.

45 Forssell 12.5.1999.

46 *Itse asiassa kuultuna Kyllikki Forssell* 27.12.2000.

47 Forssell & Kinnunen 2007, 85.

48 Forssell & Kinnunen 2007, 85.

49 Forssell 12.5.1999; *Taiteilijavieraana Kyllikki Forssell* 18.10.1984; *Itse asiassa kuultuna Kyllikki Forssell* 27.12.2000; Forssell & Kinnunen 2007, 85; Kalima 1968, 398; Koskimies 1972, 536.

about the reasons for banning the performance.⁵⁰

If closing the production was self-censorship within the Finnish National Theatre, Koskimies and Kalima would have known about it. *Dirty Hands* would probably have ended earlier, for example, right after the premiere. Anyway, it is certain that there would have been discussions within the theatre before the production was closed. Why didn't Koskimies, in his history of the Finnish National Theatre, bring up the reasons for pulling the show out of the repertory? Kalima's "mutual understanding" leaves open who was, besides the Finnish National Theatre, the other party in the *mutual* understanding.

If closing the production was not externally enforced censorship from the Soviet Union, then why did the closing coincide with the note? Nothing happened in mid-October when the review in *Työkansan Sanomat* was published, and the Finnish National Theatre did not change anything but continued performing it for two months. Also, *Dirty Hands* continued to run for almost another two weeks after the members of Parliament saw the performance on 23 November 1948. If we agree with Forssell's interpretation, why did it take more than a week after the show before the Foreign Affairs Committee reacted?

In my opinion, the production was closed due to a note from the Soviet Union. At least, nothing happened to the production before the note arrived on 5 December 1948. After the note, *Dirty Hands* was performed no more, so the performance on 4 December 1948 remained the last performance of the production. The Finnish National Theatre did not give any statements about closing the performance nor is anything about the closing mentioned in the minutes of the meetings of its board. In the minutes of the meetings of the Foreign Affairs Committee, there is only a mention of the propaganda hostile to the Soviet Union. Specific productions are not mentioned nor are any measures concerning them.⁵¹ *Dirty Hands* seems to be a case of transgression where the production broke a debated boundary of a set of new norms, what was forbidden and what was allowed in Finland in 1948. The reason for banning the production was given in several newspapers,⁵² and it was noted in the *Diaari II* of the Finnish National Theatre, too. Therefore, the alleged (and strategical) ignorance of different sources does not seem probable.

The question may be asked why different sources highlight the fact that Korhonen's mask was not deliberate, but a possible similarity was a coincidence. This is a question that no other researcher or member of the ensemble has asked or at least considered publicly. In my opinion, this shows how sensitive the case of *Dirty Hands* was. A possible reason for the claimed ignorance and coincidence in the sources is the change in the criminal code of Finland which took place in May 1948. Parliament added to chapter 14 of the Penal Code section 4 a, which restricted the freedom of speech. Anyone who publicly and purposely, with printed matter or writing or with a figurative presentation or with any other vehicle of expression or otherwise, accomplished damaging the relationship between Finland and a foreign country would be punished with a fine or two years imprisonment.⁵³ The change in the law was intended to ensure that no violations against a foreign country, i. e. the Soviet Union would occur. Accordingly, the episode of *Dirty Hands* was not merely an annoying incident, but a transgression of Finnish legislation: that is to say, a crime. A theatre production was a public event, so it was much more convincing to argue that Aku Korhonen had not purposely created a Stalin mask while preparing his character and thus did not intentionally intend to confront the Soviet Union.⁵⁴ The seriousness with which this kind of act was considered and feared can be seen from the fact that the addition was only removed from the penal code in 1995.

50 Koskimies 1972, 534–6.

51 The minutes of a meeting of the Foreign Affairs Committee 8.12.1948.

52 For example, Månsson 1948; Aarto 1948; Pseudonym Tero 1948; Pseudonym Aki 1948.

53 Statutes of Finland 363/1948; Statutes of Finland 1948. According to the decisions made in 8.5.1948, it was the President of Finland who would decide whether to prosecute for contravening the 14th chapter of the penal code section 4 a §. Section 4 a § was removed from the penal code only in the reform of legislation in 1995. Statutes of Finland 578/1995.

54 According to Antony Beever and Artemis Cooper, the Kremlin prohibited the performing of *Dirty Hands* in Finland on the grounds that anti-Soviet propaganda was against the peace treaty. Beever & Cooper 2009, 404.

Conclusions

From the point of view of transgression, *Dirty Hands* is interesting as a case since it happened at a time when Finland was negotiating its restricted possibilities in a new situation. Although the war ended in 1945, Finland's situation remained critical for years and the Control Commission, mainly with Soviet members stayed in the country until 1947.

Eino Kalima's edits to Sartre's play showed political caution. Performing *Dirty Hands* the way the Finnish National Theatre performed it broke the new rules and probably the law. The episode met the definition of transgression by Chris Jenks: it broke rules, exceeded boundaries, and challenged dominant authorities. As Purse and Wölfel have described, the act of transgression might not be conscious though it is perceived as such, and the ensemble members argued that the act was not conscious. Still, in the case of *Dirty Hands*, it is not likely that the resemblance of Aku Korhonen's mask as Hoederer and Stalin was merely an unfortunate chance. In my opinion, there are too many similarities to be a coincidence.

Transgression seems to have been part of the performance, specifically its staging. The theatre could hardly think in advance what the consequences of the act seen on stage might have been. The violation was identified at the reception and from the resulting discussion. The immediate discussion about the production in 1948 seemed to be hinting at something not mentioned and many of the newspaper articles were published without mentioning the author or under a pseudonym. Also, except for the *Diaari II*, there are no official records in the archives of the Finnish National Theatre nor the archive of the Foreign Affairs Committee. It is not clear who participated in the decision-making about banning the production. Perhaps written sources were not wanted. In the Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the documents focus on the argument that in the productions of the Punainen Mylly and the Finnish National Theatre, there was nothing hostile towards the Soviet Union. Also, later in the histories of the theatre and the memoirs of those involved in the case and the historical studies based on them, it is difficult to point out where the decision to withdraw the production from the repertoire was made and who participated in making it. The ensemble members were careful in how they described the events afterward, in some cases even for decades. The transgression cast long shadows.

AUTHOR

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