

# Love, Hate and Suicidal Tendencies: The Construction of Rudolph Valentino's Stardom in Finland 1923–1927

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## Introduction

In 1923 Finnish author Olavi Paavolainen wrote in *Ylioppilaslehti* about the growing 'Valentino fever' (reprinted in Anttila, Toiviainen & Uusitalo 1995, pp. 35–36). According to Paavolainen, everyone who read foreign newspapers and glossy magazines would be drawn into its magical orbit. Rudolph Valentino was one of the most popular and controversial United States screen stars in the 1920s. However, one cannot assume that the bulk of Finland's cinema-goers followed the foreign press like Paavolainen. Therefore, I have explored how Valentino's star image was constructed within Finnish film culture in order to try and ascertain whether it makes sense to talk about Valentino's 'Finnish star image.' In other words, the emphasis in this paper is placed on social film history.

I will begin by briefly discussing existing studies of Valentino's US reception by film scholars Miriam Hansen and Gaylyn Studlar. After examining their major arguments I will proceed methodologically via a survey of the film magazines *Filmiaitta* and *Filmrevyn*, published in Finland during the 1920s. My aim here is to emphasise historical and cultural specificity in order to bring out the main differences in Valentino's American and Finnish star images.

## Rudolph Valentino in American Culture

Contradictions were at the core of Rudolph Valentino's American star image. Nevertheless, the controversies that surrounded him did not originate from him; rather, they were already present in an American culture that was going through vast changes. Two of the most important of these, as pointed out by both Miriam Hansen and Gaylyn Studlar, were, firstly, the high number of immigrants arriving in the United States each year, and, secondly, women's emancipation from traditional gender roles. Two issues about Valentino soon became controversial. He was an Italian immigrant, born Rodolfo Alfonzo Raffaele Pierre Filibert Guglielmi di Valentino d'Antonguolla. Secondly, it was widely known that in his early years in the United States he had been a taxi dancer (a dance partner for hire), and had thus earned his money by dancing with women. 'Taxi dancing' was a profession that was despised by American men, and looked down upon as not being "real" work. As a screen star, Valentino (by now often known as Rudy) was thought to appeal especially to women audiences. Indeed, men might have noted that he was still making a living by entertaining women. This relationship to American women proved difficult. Because it was also known that screenwriter June Mathis had discovered Valentino, because he was a good-looking dancer, and because he was known to be dominated by his second wife Natacha Rambova – to mention just some of the well known aspects of his life and career – Valentino was talked about as a woman-made-man.

Since the turn of the century America had been struggling with what was called the 'immigration problem.' The thousands of new immigrants arriving to the country each month were seen as a national menace that threat-

ened the very concept of WASP America. As early as 1907, the influential clergyman Josiah Strong declared: ‘we either Americanize the immigrants or else they will foreignize our cities, and in so doing foreignize our civilisation’ (in Abel 1999, p. 120). According to Miriam Hansen, after The First World War the failure of concepts of instantaneous Americanization became obvious and the discourse on the new immigrants increasingly assumed a racist tone, as differences of class and nationality were submerged into a “biological” discourse on race (Hansen 1991, p. 255). This discussion was closely related to what Gaylyn Studlar has termed ‘race suicide discourse,’ as it dwelt on a fearful future world scenario resulting from American women choosing racially inferior foreigners to be the fathers of their children (Studlar 1996, p. 182).

American women fell in love with this foreigner who represented a new kind of masculinity. American men, however, were reported to despise and hate Valentino. As Jeanine Basinger has put it: ‘Valentino provided a sharp contrast to the hearty, honorable American movie heroes who would never, but never, do wrong by a gal. Valentino *would* do it, and would enjoy doing it [...] He was a new type of exotic hero with a different set of morals, a man who offered women outlaw romance’ (Basinger 1999, p. 266). To sum it up as both Hansen and Studlar have done: the clamour around Valentino in United States was closely related to his sexual ambiguity and his erotic ethnicity (Hansen 1991, pp. 243–294; Studlar 1996, pp. 150–198).

The reactions to Valentino’s death were emblematic of his popularity among women in the United States. When Valentino died in a Chicago hospital in 1926, due to complications following an operation, two women, it was reported, attempted suicide outside the hospital. When Valentino’s body was put on display in New York, thousands of people gathered on the streets and riots broke out. ‘One New York woman, Agatha Hearn, a mother, shot herself while clutching a sheaf of Valentino photographs. In London a depressed twenty-seven-year-old actress named Peggy Scott took poison while surrounded by photographs of him and left a note saying “with his death my last bit of courage has flown”’ (Leider 2003, p. 387).

## Rudolph Valentino in Finnish Culture

Thus, according to both Miriam Hansen and Gaylyn Studlar, the two main issues that caused a lot of fuss around Valentino in the United States were his ethnicity and the fact that he was seen to appeal to a broad spectrum of female audiences. These aspects of his stardom were discussed in relation to the immigration problem and changes that were taking place in the gender roles. When it comes to the question of whether there were corresponding issues in Valentino’s Finnish reception, the answer is simple: there were not.

First of all, there was no large-scale immigration problem in Finland in the 1920s. Valentino was, of course, talked about as an exotic leading man, but his ethnicity was not seen in Finland as the problem that it was seen as in the United States. Immigration was simply not one of the hot issues of the day in Finland, even though there was much talk about the nature and character of Finnish people. Secondly, yes, Finnish women were gaining emancipation from their traditional roles, but because this social change was not related to an immigration problem (as it was in The United States), the biggest controversies that coloured Valentino’s American reception simply did not rise in Finland. However, women’s emancipation most likely geared Valentino’s popularity in Finland.

So, how popular was Rudolph Valentino in Finland? What was his Finnish star image? And what were the major discussions relating to him?

## The Most Popular Screen Star of the Era

The first thing I noticed when surveying the film magazines of the era was that Valentino feature films (that is, films where he is the leading man) were not seen in Finland prior to 1923, even though he had been a screen star in the United States since 1921, when *The Four Horsemen of Apocalypse* had premiered.

The different release dates in the US and Finland are shown in the following table.

FILM TITLE	UNITED STATES <sup>1</sup> (Year of release)	FINLAND <sup>2</sup> (Year of release)
<i>Camille</i>	1921	1923
<i>The Conquering Power</i>	1921	1923
<i>Beyond the Rocks</i>	1922	1923
<i>The Four Horsemen of Apocalypse</i>	1921	1923
<i>Moran of Lady Letty</i>	1922	1924
<i>The Sheik</i>	1921	1924
<i>Blood and Sand</i>	1922	1924
<i>The Young Rajah</i>	1922	1924
<i>Monsieur Beaucaire</i>	1924	1925
<i>Sainted Devil</i>	1924	1926
<i>The Eagle</i>	1925	1926
<i>Cobra</i>	1925	1926
<i>The Son of Sheik</i>	1926	1926

As a result, the Finnish film critics, who followed the foreign press, already knew who Valentino was, and had even written about his popularity in the film journals before any Valentino films had been screened in Finland. Therefore there was a lot of anticipation surrounding Valentino films, and in 1923 when *Camille*, *The Conquering Power*, *The Four Horsemen of Apocalypse*, and *Beyond the Rocks* hit the theatres it was written in film magazine *Filmiaitta*: 'to us Rudolph Valentino has been something of an unknown celebrity. We have heard a lot about his popularity in America, but we have not had a chance to see any of his films in our biograf theatres' (*Filmiaitta* 17/1923, p. 246). At the same time author Olavi Paavolainen wrote in *Ylioppilaslehti* about the growing Valentino fever, as discussed above. Now that the films were available for Finns to see, both Finnish film magazines, *Filmiaitta* and *Filmrevyn*, did their bests to keep Valentino on the agenda. Both published not only Valentino articles but also photographs, which were even used as cover images.<sup>3</sup>





IMAGE 1: Rudolph Valentino as *The Sheik* in *Filmiaitta*'s cover (*Filmiaitta* 5/1924, cover).

With regard to Rudolph Valentino's popularity in Finland, it was written as early as 1924 that the most popular film stars in Finland were Alice Terry, Norma Talmadge and Rudolph Valentino (*Filmiaitta* 5/1924, p. 80). *Filmiaitta* based this argument on the fact that postcards representing these stars were best sellers. The following year, *Filmiaitta* held a competition where readers were asked to vote for their favourite screen star. Norma Talmadge and Rudolph Valentino received most votes (*Filmiaitta* 3/1925, p. 69). In 1926 it was once again written, in the same journal, that Valentino was still the most popular film star in the country (Jambo in *Filmiaitta* 2/1926, p. 35).

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## Filmiaitan suuri palkinto- kilpailu ratkaistu.

Norma Talmadge ja Rodolph Valentino suosituimmat filmitähdet.

Normalle 182, Valentinolle 92 ääntä.



Filmiaitan viime vuoden joulunumerossa julistamamme suuri kilpailu suosituimman filminäyttelijän ja filminäyttelijättären arvaamisesta herätti vilkasta mielenkiintoa. Vastauksia saapui runsaasti neljättä sataa. Suosituimman naispuolisen filminäyttelijän arvaaminen oli melko helppo tehtävä. Vastaavissa kilpailuissa ulkomailla on Norma Talmadge useimmiten tullut ensimmäiseksi ja ensimmäinen — huomattavasti muista edellä — on hän meilläkin. Hän voitti ratkaisevasti 182 äänellä Mary Pickfordin saadessa 15 ja Alice Terry'n 7 ääntä. Muut naisnäyttelijät saivat vain hajaaääniä. Miesnäyttelijöistä voitti Rodolph Valentino saaden 92 ääntä. Häntä seurasivat Ramon Novarro — 45 ääntä, Milton Sills — 28 ääntä ja Douglas Fairbanks — 11 ääntä. Merkit viittaavat kuitenkin siihen suuntaan, että Valentinon johtoasema alkaa olla uhattu,

sillä hän sai verraten vähän pääkaupunkilaisten ääniä. — Kilpailun toinen osa oli melko helppo ja useimmat ratkaisivatkin sen tyydyttävästi.

- I. Iloisten soittoniekkain seurassa: Majakka ja Perävaunu.
- II. Kadonneitten laivojen saari: Milton Sills ja Anna Q. Nilsson.
- III. Zorron merkki: Douglas Fairbanks ja Marguerite de la Motte.
- IV. Salaisuuksia: Norma Talmadge, Nichols ja — Eugene O'Brienin jalat.
- V. Nummisuutarit: Axel Slangus ja Aku Käyhkö.
- VI. Hauska kiinalaistyttö: Constance Talmadge ja Warner Oland.
- VII. Hotellipoika N:o 13: Douglas Mac Lean.
- VIII. Läpi myrskyn. Lillian Gish ja Richard Barthelmess.

Päävoitot: I palkinto: Pathé Baby kinematografikone  
 II » 50 kpl. vapaalippuja eläviin kuviin  
 III » valokuvauskone

IMAGE 2: Finland's favourite screen stars Norma Talmadge and Rudolph Valentino (*Filmiaitta* 3/1925, p. 69).



It was emblematic of Valentino's popularity in Finland that postcards representing films stars, which had become a huge hit among film buffs, were in late 1926 advertised with Valentino's image (*Filmiaitta* 12/1926, back cover).

MIELUISIN

# JOULULAHJA



jokaiselle  
**filmiystävälle**  
on hauska  
**filmitähtikuvasarja**  
jonka parhaiten löydätte moni-  
puolisesta varastostamme.

N:o 600 *Sheikin poika* (Filmiin  
löytyy meillä 18 eril. tähtikorttia.)

Sen johdosta että kuviamme on väärennetty, pyydämme arv. ostaja-  
piiriämme tarkistamaan, että leimamme  löytyy korteissa.

Varastoamme johon nyt jo  
kuuluu yli 700 eril. tähtikorttia kartutetaan  
joka keskiviikko uutuuksilla.

Jälleenmyyjille edullisin ostopaikka

Maaseudulle postietuannilla. Luettelot ilmaiseksi.

Liikkeemme sijaitsee  
HELSINKI ALEKSANTERINK. 13 III oik. PUHELIN 6 88

## KORTTIKESKUS

Helsinki 1926. F. Tilgmann Oyn Kivi- ja Kirjapaino.

IMAGE 3: Film star postcards were being advertised with Valentino's Image (*Filmiaitta* 12/1926, back cover).

In a relatively short period of time Valentino had become the biggest film star in the country. When *The Son of Sheik* premiered in 1926, the time lapse between US and Finnish release dates had been overcome. Perhaps too much should not be made of it, but I think it shows that Finnish film audiences had grown, may I say, Valentino-hungry. In 1927 Valentino biography written by S. George Ullman was published in Finland. Clearly the star had made a lasting impression.

## The Fans

By now it should be evident that Rudolph Valentino was one of the most popular film stars in Finland, just as he was in America. Now the question is whether Valentino appealed especially to women audiences in Finland as he did in the United States. I have conducted an analysis of the Valentino articles published in the Finnish film journals, and these articles tend to assume that women formed the majority of Valentino fans in Finland. However, this does not prove that this was actually the case, as the authors of these articles may for example have carried this idea from the foreign papers they were reading. Secondly, it definitely does not prove that men were not interested in Valentino as well. According to Anu Koivunen, who has researched Finnish film magazines of the late 1920s, Finnish film journalists tended to assume that women formed the majority of movie star buffs, even though male journalists themselves dreamed of movie stars (Koivunen 1992, p. 177).

I have paid special attention to the readers' section of *Filmiaitta*, where readers were allowed to ask the editorial board film-related questions. The two Valentino related questions that were repeatedly asked were 'what is Valentino's address?' and 'is he married?' The readers' pen names – including ones such as Helga, Diana, Pricilla and White Lilly – suggest that these questions were asked by women. Therefore it is clear that Valentino did appeal to women. However, this does not mean that he did not appeal to men as well, as they may have expressed their fandom in different ways. First of all, it seems likely that winners of the 'who is the most popular film star in Finland?' competitions would have received votes from both women and men. Along the same lines it is possible, and even likely, that men were also buying Valentino postcards, as they were bestsellers. There is at the very least evidence to suggest that men collected postcards as well. In 1925, a poem about the loveliness of owning hundreds of film star postcards was published in *Filmiaitta* – and it was written by a man, named Eero Pentti (*Filmiaitta* 1/1925, p. 22). But the most clear-cut evidence to suggest Valentino was admired by at least some Finnish men was published in *Filmiaitta* in 1927, when Valentino had passed away. It was a poem, written by a man named Väinö Selki.

### To Rudolph Valentino

By Väinö Selki

As the beauty king of this land of yearning  
Were you appointed by the heavenly Smile.  
Never shall the crown on your name tarnish,  
Or the deathly ship take you beyond recall.  
This night of minds illuminated anew  
By the mystic depths of your deep eyes.  
Above the common throng your sacred brow  
Cast its glow like a fresh star of great eternity.

No longer are you of this dismal earth,  
But a divine denizen of another realm.  
Yet with worship remembers a grateful folk  
You, favoured child of great Providence.

(*Filmiaitta* 6/1927, p. 110)<sup>4</sup>



In his poem, Väinö Selkki celebrates the beauty of Valentino, expresses how much happiness this film star has brought to the heavy minds of his fans, and promises that the star will never be forgotten. In other words, this poem, whose author undertakes to speak for all Valentino admirers, is evidence that Valentino had enthusiastic male fans in Finland. This is a clear-cut difference between Valentino's position in Finnish and American film cultures. In Finland it seems to have been acceptable for men to express their admiration for Valentino, whereas in America men were expected to loathe him. Significant in this regard was most likely the fact that in the 1920s there was no yellow press in Finland as there was in America. It was not customary in Finnish publicity to "hate" or defame celebrities, stars or great men.

Here is the famous *A Song of Hate*, a poem written, tongue-in-cheek, by Dick Dorgan, just one example of the negative attitude towards Valentino amongst males in the United States.

### A Song of Hate

By Dick Dorgan

I hate Valentino! All men hate Valentino. I hate his oriental optics; I hate his classic nose; I hate his Roman face; I hate his smile; I hate his glistering teeth; I hate his patent leather hair; I hate his Svengali glare; I hate him because he dances too well; I hate him because he's a slicker; I hate him because he's the great lover of the screen; I hate him because he's an embezzler of hearts; I hate him because he's too apt in the art of osculation; I hate him because he's leading man for Gloria Swanson; I hate him because he's too good looking.

Ever since he came galloping in with the "Four Horsemen" he has been the cause of more home cooked battle royals than they can print in the papers. The women are all dizzy over him. The men have formed a secret order (of which I am running for president and chief executioner as you may notice) to loathe, hate and despise him for obvious reasons.

What! Me jealous? – Oh, no – I just Hate Him.

(Photoplay, June 1922 – reprinted in Hansen 1991, p. 258)

What about suicides? Were Finns so committed to their idol that they committed suicides when Valentino passed away? They were not. Several people, however, wanted to write about their deep grief in the readers' section of *Filmiaitta*. Most of the letters, according to the editor, were left unpublished (*Filmiaitta* 11/1926, p. 185). Those that were published indicate that some people found it hard to accept Valentino had died. Did stars not shine forever? One reader even wondered whether the news was merely some kind of a publicity stunt (*Filmiaitta* 10/1926, p. 168). As an example of the grief ridden letters, the editor published parts of one he found especially touching. A woman lying ill in a hospital had written it. Nurses had told her she would soon be able stand and walk, but she did not want to, not anymore, not now, when Valentino had died. This woman wanted death to come and relieve her. In her letter she made clear that life without Valentino was not worth living (*Filmiaitta* 11/1926, p. 185). Even though no actual suicides were reported, the published letters make clear that Finnish movie fans were very strongly attached to Valentino, like American audiences, even if the two nationalities understood him in different ways.

I will now move on to discuss those few aspects of Valentino's Finnish star image that were repeatedly discussed in the film magazines of the era.

## The Immigrant

In 1926 *Filmiaitta* published an article where the readers were told that American men do not like Valentino's films because in his early immigrant years the star had worked as a liftman (*Filmiaitta* 7–8/1926, p. 128). According to the article, someone who had once worked as a liftman was, as far as an American man was concerned, always a liftman. Whether Valentino had really been a liftman or not is beside the point. When it comes to star images what really matter are things that are *said* to be true. In any case, the author of this article took Valentino's side and wrote that to his knowledge several great men had started from the bottom. Interestingly, in the



Finnish film journals, not much was made of Valentino having been a taxi dancer. In 1922 it was mentioned in *Filmiaitta* (in a translated article written by Russel Holman) that Valentino had worked as a dance teacher in his early poverty-stricken immigrant years (*Filmiaitta* 18/1922, pp. 280–281). This, however, did not ruin Valentino's reputation as a man in the eyes of Finns. In Finland, this dance career was talked about as one among many things Valentino had done before his stardom. One reader even mused in the readers' section of *Filmiaitta* over whether Valentino had once been a miner (*Filmiaitta* 10/1926, p. 167). According to the magazine this was unlikely, but not impossible, because it was widely known that Valentino had done all kinds of work before his film career. The possibility of Valentino having been a miner, it seems to me, is a clear-cut contrast to the American discourse on him as a weak woman-made-man. It seems that the Finnish film journals tended to downplay Valentino's position as women's idol and to emphasise the masculine jobs he had undertaken. This publicity guided Valentino's reception by taming his image and therefore making him more suitable for Finnish consumption.

My argument is that for Finns, Rudolph Valentino was an immigrant who had worked his way up to become a success on the silver screen. In other words, he was seen as the American dream come true. He had moved to the United States, started from the bottom, worked hard for his living and finally made it big. This must have been one aspect of his star image that really appealed to Finns, many of whom emigrated to the United States each year. For Finns, Valentino's worldwide success was a proof of the opportunities America offered for bettering one's life.

## The Artist

Another aspect of Rudolph Valentino's Finnish star image was that he was thought to be a skilled actor. This is an interesting aspect of his Finnish star image, because in the United States there was (and actually still is) a lot of talk about whether Valentino was a fine actor, or merely a good looking man and a charming lover of the silver screen. In Finland, however, in 1923, when the anticipated Valentino films were available for viewing, an article with the following comment was published in *Filmiaitta*: 'the good looks and the exotic appearance of this actor must have benefited him when it comes to his popularity, but one has to admit it, he is also a fine actor' (*Filmiaitta* 17/1923, p. 246).

I have tried to find articles and comments published in Finland in which Valentino's acting skills are questioned, but I have not found any. It was, however, mentioned in *Filmiaitta* in 1925 that some people did feel that Valentino's popularity was based simply on him being a good-looking man (*Filmiaitta* 12/1925, p. 231). But the author of this article wanted to point out that this did not mean that Valentino was not a talented actor. According to him, Valentino's female fans had done their idol a disservice by admiring his appearance. The author told readers to pay attention to Valentino's great impersonations and versatility.

Even though one could argue that in many of his films Valentino occupies a rather classically feminine position, it is worth pointing out that he is not only an object of the gaze but also an active character. As Richard Dyer has put it, in *The Son of Sheik* – only one of many movies that could have been chosen to make the point – Valentino is 'an extremely active object of desire' (Dyer 2002, p. 118). It seems to have been possible for contemporary audiences to make widely differing interpretations of Valentino's screen persona: some saw him as a male beauty, whereas for some others he was a romantic hero. This openness of Valentino's star image helps us to understand the differences in American and Finnish interpretations: whereas American critics emphasised Valentino's to-be-looked-at-ness, Finnish critics paid more attention to his subtle acting skills. Both readings were based on the same film material viewed from different perspectives.

Not only was Rudolph Valentino seen as a skilled artist, he was also seen as a man who stood up against the policies of American studio filmmaking by defending so-called art films. In 1924 *Filmiaitta* reported that Valentino had left The Famous Players film studio as a protest against their policy of producing entertainment instead of what he, and the Finnish critics, saw as art cinema (*Filmiaitta* 9/1924, p. 173). This is one aspect of Valentino's stardom that probably appealed to Finns, as Finnish film critics at least were constantly arguing against what they saw as cheap Hollywood entertainment. The same article also reported that Valentino despised Hollywood studios for hiring the best European actors only to give them roles unworthy of their skills. Finnish critics could not have agreed more.

Despite the fact that Valentino was a pure Hollywood product he seems to have gained a reputation in Finland as European artist who – like Pola Negri or Ernst Lubitsch – had emigrated to the United States.

## The Gentleman

The third aspect of Valentino's Finnish star image is what could be called his 'fine personality.' The film journals tended to represent him as a gentleman of the finest manners who was both intelligent and cultivated. To support this argument I will discuss an article that was published in *Filmrevyn* in 1925 (*Filmrevyn* 8/1925, pp. 168–169). This article was accompanied by a full-page image of Valentino wearing a stylish suit and reading an issue of the magazine.

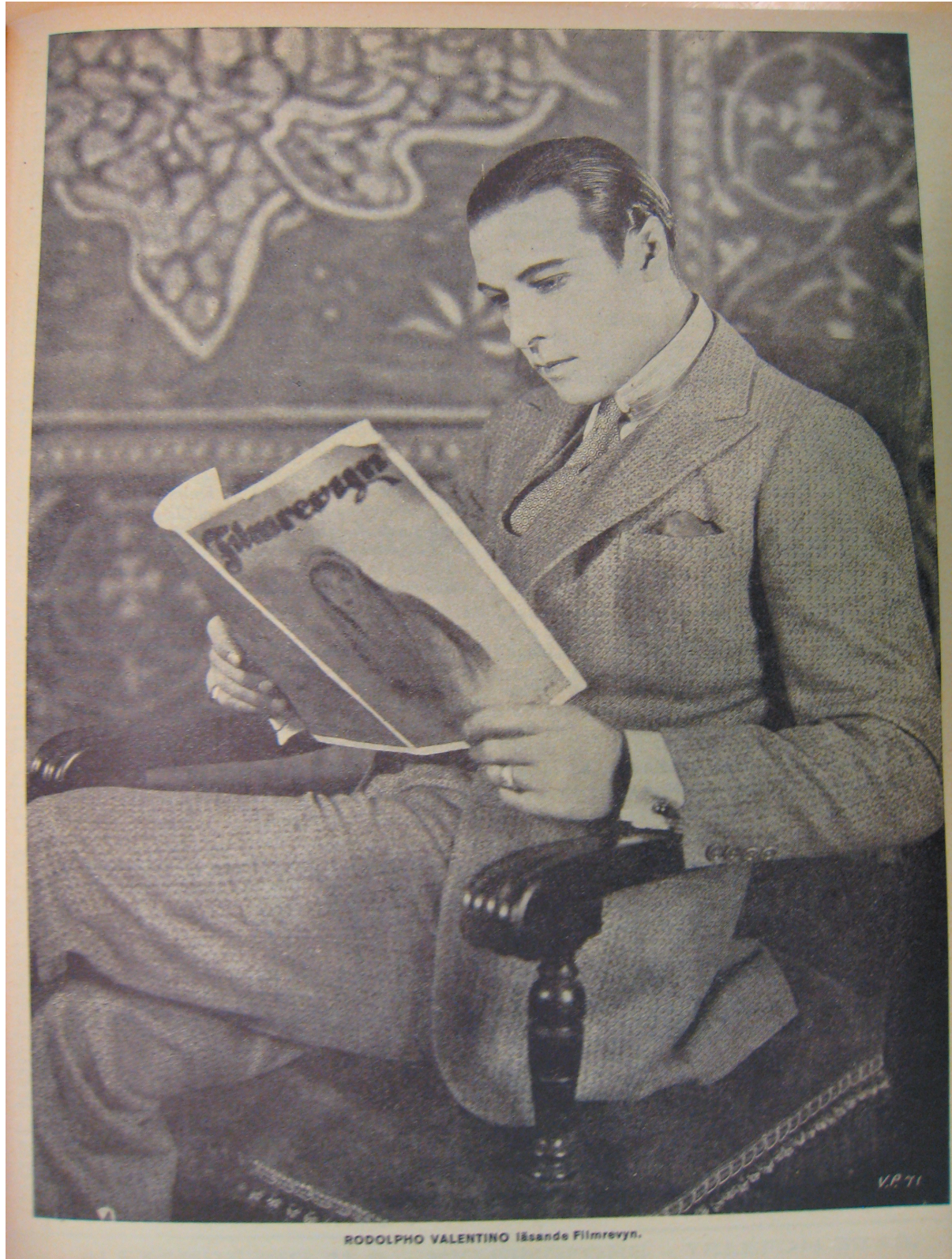


IMAGE 4: Rudolph Valentino reading an issue of *Filmrevyn* (*Filmrevyn* 8/1925, p. 169).



When it comes to Valentino's private life, as it was discussed in this article and others like it, I will pick up on three aspects: animals, sports and the arts. Readers were told, first of all, that Valentino had a passion for fine horses and dogs, and that he owned several of these. Secondly, Valentino was described in the journal as a man of sports. Readers were told that he got up early each morning in order to do his gymnastic exercises before breakfast. Thirdly, it was mentioned that Valentino had an enormous library, collected old weapons such as swords and muskets, and had several huge paintings on the walls of his house. In his free time, Valentino – the journal wrote – enjoyed theatre, cinema and concerts, rather than wild Hollywood parties. These features lend an almost aristocratic dimension to his star image.

It seems likely that at least some Finnish men saw Valentino as role model. There is evidence to support this argument in *Filmiaitta* in 1924, when Helsingin pukutehdas Oy advertised its suits with Valentino's image (*Filmiaitta* 10/1924, p. 194). A caption next to this image instructed the reader that one must wear a fine suit if one wants to be a fine gentleman like the admired screen stars. In short, Valentino was at least represented in some areas as a role model.



*Oletteko nähneet miten Pola Negri  
tai Rodolpho Valentino  
pukeutuvat?*

*Huolella ja taidolla tehty puku on  
hyvän pukeutumisen ehto !*

Jos tahdotte käydä hienosta naisesta tai herrasmiehestä,  
sellaisista kuin Teidän ihailmanne filmitähdet ovat,  
Teidän tulee  
huolehtia siitä, että puku  
kunne on  
tehty huolella ja  
taidolla.

»pukutaiteen» kultaisten sääntöjen  
mukaan.

Puvun on oltava *halpa ja kestävä* mutta ennen  
kaikkea sellainen, että

**omistaja viihtyy siinä.**

Sen takia on Teidän räätililtänne vaadittava,  
että puku on:

- 1) *aistikas*
- 2) *muodin mukainen,*
- 3) *sopiva iälleenne ja arvoasemallenne,*
- 4) *ennen muuta halpa.*



*POLA NEGRI.*

**HELSINGIN PUKUTEHDAS O. Y. HELSINKI**

tarjoaa Teille juuri nämä edut. Tilatessanne pukunne meiltä, ette kadu kauppaanne.  
Käykää siis jo tänään liikkeessämme

**ALEKSANTERINKATU 54 tai L. HEIKINKATU 12.**

Huom.! Uusi vähittäismaksujärjestelmä helpottaa pukuhuolianne. Huom.!

IMAGE 5: Helsingin pukutehdas Oy advertising its suits with Valentino's image (*Filmiaitta* 10/1924, p. 194).



## Some Conclusions

In conclusion, I want to suggest that it does make sense to talk about Rudolph Valentino's Finnish star image. Even though Finns *did* see the same motion pictures as Americans, these films were understood and discussed in different ways because the context was different. Rudolph Valentino did stir several controversies in the United States and all these were largely based on the facts that he was, first of all, an immigrant and, secondly, appealed especially to women. It could be said that Valentino was a victim of his star image. Just before his sudden death he had been struggling with the notorious "Pink Powder Puff" accusations directed against his manhood published in the Chicago Tribune (Leider 2003, pp. 371–376). In Finland, however, these issues were not discussed in the same way or on the same scale. The "Pink Powder Puff" article was never published in the Finnish magazines. *Filmiaitta* only reported that a journalist working for the Chicago Tribune had insulted Valentino's manhood and that the star had challenged him to a boxing match (*Filmiaitta* 1/1927, p. 14). The Finnish star image, it seems to me, was probably closer to the one Valentino sought to create than was the American one.

In Finnish film culture Valentino was mainly talked about as a hard-working immigrant who had made it to the top, a fine, capable artist, and a gentleman of the finest quality. Just why these aspects of Valentino were seen as so appealing as to make him Finland's most popular film star of the era is something that awaits further study.

To sum up, in the United States Valentino was largely hated by men and loved by women, and, unfortunately, a few suicides occurred because of his death. In Finland, however, Valentino was mostly loved and not really hated, it was acceptable for men to admire him, and at worst there were only suicidal tendencies. Fortunately for those affected, the Finnish strain of 'Valentino fever' was not a lethal one.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Emily W. Leider, *Dark Lover: The Life and Death of Rudolph Valentino* (London: Faber and Faber, 2003), pp. 431–435.

<sup>2</sup> *Elonet* (<http://www.elonet.fi>).

<sup>3</sup> Rudolph Valentino's image was used in the covers of the following numbers: *Filmiaitta* 17 (1923), *Filmiaitta* 5 (1924), *Filmiaitta* 10 (1925), *Filmiaitta* 20 (1925), *Filmiaitta* 2 (1926), *Filmiaitta* 12 (1926), *Filmrevyn* 13 (1925), *Filmrevyn* 4 (1926).

<sup>4</sup> Translated by Ville Marttila.

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*Filmiaitta* 1 (1925)  
*Filmiaitta* 3 (1925)  
*Filmiaitta* 10 (1925)  
*Filmiaitta* 12 (1925)  
*Filmiaitta* 20 (1925)  
*Filmiaitta* 2 (1926)  
*Filmiaitta* 7–8 (1926)  
*Filmiaitta* 10 (1926)  
*Filmiaitta* 11 (1926)  
*Filmiaitta* 12 (1926)  
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