

Iiris Ruoho

The Way Home. Utopian collectivity and gender in *Metsolat*

The article examines the feeling of “something better” that the tv-series *Metsolat* provides for its spectators. The significance of the serials for the spectators is derived from the point of the time when it was watched, i.e. the structural breaking point in society. Symbolically the fracture is described in the serials by the state-built road, which leads to the meeting place of the family, home to the farm of Leppävaara. The realism of the serials is constructed both by the empirical verisimilitude and by the power of the ethical questions. The serials brings forth vanishing small farm in a nostalgic way by emphasizing strong women figures and the utopian idea of how things “ought to be”.

At the level of the empirical realism *Metsolat* is clearly a survival story of a man, Erkki Metsola, but its fulfilment is linked with the way emotional life of a strong female community. From the point of view of critical feminism the serials portrays the effort to save the masculine identity. “Feminine” is used in the serial to ensure the future of the masculine subject. Still, there are similarities to the stories about strong Finnish woman. Both in the story of *Niskavuori* and in *Metsolat*, tradition is represented by strong women, Loviisa Niskavuori and Annikki Metsola. In *Metsolat*, however, there is no purely “masculine” or “feminine” story but the two different stories are having a dialogue. Nor is it possible to easily associate the impressional empirical and emotional reality with a gender.

The *Metsola* women represent different aspects within the women’s movement such as self-sacrificed motherhood, feminism which strives for aims at equality, the feminist ideal of the strong woman and the post-feminist ethos of woman’s many identities. The significance of female figures images depends ultimately on

how the spectators themselves as men and women see the difference between sexes.

Making use of Richard Dyer’s idea of utopian function of the entertainment it is proposed in the article that although the ideal in *Metsolat* is essentially within Capitalism, the utopian collectivity leads not the one but at least to two directions. In *Metsolat* the spectators found such solidarity which was not to be found in their own society at the time. It is possible to see in the fictional family community of the serial a demand for women to return home and for services to be produced by household economies. But it is equally possible to read in the serial a story of being for others. This story can be a dream of a strong community which respects people as they are both for those who have been culturally branded as others and for those who see future as threatening. The small community of *Metsola* which offers mutual care and support becomes thus a utopia of a better society. (Pages 5-13).

Translation by Taru Salakka

Kaarina Nikunen

Let’s masquerade. *Alma & Doris* on the traces of the feminist representation

Alma & Doris is a Finnish television programme with a special feminist viewpoint. The main characters of the programme are two women, two highly exaggerated figures, who are travelling to the world of feminism. I consider the figures (Alma, a feminist and a spinster, and Doris, a pleasure-seeking housewife) intentional stereotypes — “masqueraders”. According to Mary Ann Doane a masquerade in visual culture is an exaggeration of femininity. The exaggeration reveals femininity as constructed and creates distance between the image and a female spectator. Doane claims that female spectators have difficulties in creating distance from the image. They are haunted by the closeness and doomed to

iconography.

Doane’s concept of masquerade is an attempt to brake the culture bound closeness with playful excessiveness. The old stereotypes are refilled with new meanings and in this way the masquerade deconstructs the male gaze. I consider the masquerade a play with power and reality. It is a kind of carnivalism where the object of the gaze becomes the subject and the line between being and appearing becomes indistinct.

I think the power of masquerade is in the multiplicity of the image and I think it should be regarded as a mode of representation — not as a key to the problems concerning the female spectator. But only the confusing of the gaze does not bring the feminist dimension apparent. Masquerade needs a direction. There has to be a right kind of setting.

Alma & Doris consists of jokes, sketches, songs and interviews. The main theme in the sketches and jokes is the inversion of power. Different jokes depict how the power relations between men and women work in politics, at home or in sexual behaviour.

Also the line between fact and fiction becomes slippery. *Alma and Doris*, the caricatures, leave the setting sometimes and interview politicians and people. The reality then appears always constructed, always bias. In a very interesting way *Alma & Doris* combines the feminist view of the representational level - by masquerading — with the feminist ideas at the level of issues and themes — raising questions about the equal pay, etc. *Alma & Doris* creates thus a multiple and abundant representation combining different ideological levels of the feminist movement and theory. I see *Alma & Doris* as a part of Braiddotti’s nomadic project where there is a multiplicity in unity — and the masquerade has a direction. (Pages 14-21).

Translation by author.

Matti Salakka

"Gypsies are moving into our neighbourhood". Romas around the beginning of the 1990s in the Finnish television production and films

In the article I examine the Romany representations in the Finnish television production and films of the early 1990s. The object of my study consists of two television series, one sketch-show and two films. In studying the Romany representations in them I make use of ethnicity theories and Richard Dyer's analyses of stereotypes and images expanding, however, the concept of representation. Using the terminology of Stuart Hall and Jim Pines I examine whether the representations are dominated by a race relations narrative or a narrative which emphasizes the relations of representations or whether the representations are regarded as burdens. Applying the theory of the Third Cinema of Fernando Solanas and Otta-vio Gettino I search for possibilities to divide the material for study into the first, the second and the third cinema (and television programs). Dyer's studies on representations and analyses of images constitute a basis in my effort to find out whether the Finnish television and film production of the early 1990s portrays the membership of the dominating group as a normality and being a Roma as abnormal and what kind of stereotypes there are in the Romany characters.

When examining the racist aspect in the Romany representations through the theory of Stuart Hall almost every representation turns out to be racist having a one-sided viewpoint - that defined by the dominating group. Only rarely are the Romas portrayed as subjects instead of the role of the instigators or victims of different social problems. Still, the change of attitude towards the Romas in the family series *Päin perhettä* is not to be belittled. Besides their own relation to an individual Roma and to the common idea that the dominating group has of the Romas the family is also interested in what the Romas think of them. In the film *Töpärin kingi* of a Romany director Armas K. Baltzar the Romany representations are un-

der reconsideration as the problems are individualized. In the film a young Romany man has to answer as an individual for the murder he has committed. (Pages 22-34).

Translation by Taru Salakka

Veijo Hietala

Finnish Television Anno Zero(two)

In January 1993 a major organizational reform was carried through in Finnish network television: the national public service company YLE (=The Finnish Broadcasting Company) and the commercial company MTV Finland separated their programming. Until then YLE had rented air time on the two national channels to MTV; from now on YLE operated alone on channels 1 and 2 leaving channel 3 to MTV.

The new rivalry between channels and companies resulted in the increasing importance of audience ratings also in Finland. The present paper discusses the impact of the great channel reform on both audience ratings of the three channels and, on the other hand, on the program profile of the companies.

YLE's one single strategic mistake, switching temporarily its main news broadcast from the usual 8.30 pm. to 8.00 pm, caused a conspicuous drop in its audience figures and, by creating a bad image for YLE, gave MTV a flying start. Since then, MTV has dominated the audience ratings, all of its ten most favorite programs reaching over one million spectators of Finland's nearly five million population, whereas YLE makes those figures only with its main news and sports magazine on TV1 and, from time to time, with TV2's *Tuttu juttu* show, the Finnish counterpart of the American *Mr. and Mrs.*

As for the program profile, it seems that YLE and MTV have grown increasingly similar, at least with respect to the top ten statistics: when compared to the situation in 1987 YLE has more entertainment in its top ten, MTV, in turn, more fact-oriented programme.

Certain new trends in the programming can be discerned: after the channel reform TV2's serial *Metsolat* (The *Metsola* family) started a national nostalgia boom which has continued on all three channels. This may be typical of postmodern culture — as Fredric Jameson suggested — but in this case it is probably a national reaction to Finland's economic depression and, above all, the uncertainty caused by Finland's European Union membership in 1995.

Of other new trends one might mention the growing popularity of "coupling games" (like the afore mentioned *Tuttu juttu*) and the appearance of such "body shows" as *Gladiattorit* (MTV3, the Finnish adaptation of the American *The Gladiators*) and its counterparts on the other two channels. Their success might be interpreted as a counter-attack against the baudrillardian hyperreality created by postmodern television: the whole culture turns inwards to some "stable" grounds and meanings, to couple relations and, in the last instance, to each individual's own body. (Pages 35-43).

Translation by author.

Katja Huhta

Japanese family drama in television. Generic features of Terebi hōmu dorama

Family drama has appeared in Japanese television since the beginning of television broadcasting. At first *hōmu dorama* (home drama) took some of its features from American soap opera, but eventually developed into a genre of its own. However, it still has things in common with soap opera, like strong women and weak men as well as emphasis on dialogue and relationships. Both, soap opera and *hōmu dorama* are primarily aimed at women.

An important generic feature in *hōmu dorama* is aiming at verisimilitude. This can be understood as well in socio-cultural as in generic sense. Socio-cultural verisimilitude is created through making the environment as "realistic" as possible, as well as

making the characters to do "normal" things, such as eating breakfast, lunch and dinner, which are not necessary for the plot, but develop a sense of verisimilitude.

In the present paper I have evaluated some historical developments of the genre as well as taken specific examples of one *hōmu dorama* called *Wataru seken wa oni bakari*. This specific program is the first appearance of the genre since it disappeared from prime time in the late 80's. *Wataru seken wa oni bakari* discusses mostly the relationship between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law. This relationship acts like a whirl in the program pulling different characters in the center. It also is the tool through which the sex-gender system is discussed.

The family and the sex-gender system is not questioned in the program, but alternative ways of solving practical situations appear. Thus *Wataru seken wa oni bakari* cannot be considered a "counter-program" in a sense that it would actively try to change the sex-gender system. However, it does provide scenes, where women get to complain the system as a disadvantage to them. (Pages 44-51)

Translation by author.

Hanna Kangasniemi

Between Images, Behind Images. How to Study Lesbian Film?

In the present article I discuss both the ways lesbian film has been studied in the past and the ways in which it could be studied. My approach concentrates, firstly, on the research of the films dealing with lesbians, secondly on the study their reception and, thirdly, on the research of lesbian authorship. However, these approaches are not strictly separate but, rather, they intersect in many respects.

Through these three aspects I also consider how lesbian film has been defined and might, perhaps, be defined. Lesbian film as a distinct genre is difficult to trace because the definition can be connected with mutually quite different genres and also on very different grounds. Lesbianism is not a property of the films in an essentialist sense, but is constructed in and around them in multifarious ways.

It seems that lesbian film as a research object escapes definitions. Searching for a special lesbian film, gaze or reception has not always turned out to be very fruitful, because of the possibility of endless and often contradictory definitions and interpretations.

Yet, these contradictory and inconclusive results do not prevent studying lesbian film; this requires, however, abandoning the search of that mysterious "specialness" and, also, evaluative "lesbian — more lesbian — most lesbian" premises. The most interesting and fruitful results can be obtained by combining such approaches as textual analysis, audience research and the problematics of authorship — without forgetting history of its production, either.

Despite the problems in defining lesbianism, lesbian film and lesbian approach, emphasizing endless differences and disavowing unity is similarly problematic. The former may result in "defective" or essentialist definitions of lesbianism; the latter, in turn, is a difficult premise in the political sense, because politics presupposes joint and shared experience. Instead of these extremes, one might argue that a coherent identity is locally created through various political and cultural practices. As Stuart Hall has suggested, politics can be based on a strategy in which a characteristic feature and premise of political and cultural struggle is the ability of uniting divided social classes and separate groups into collectives which, through their concentrated power, can resist oppressive social structures. (Pages 52-68).

Translation Veijo Hietala.



- Lähikuva on neljä kertaa vuodessa ilmestyvä audiovisuaalisen kulttuurin tutkimukseen keskittyvä aikakauslehti.
- Elokuvan esihistoriasta virtuaalitodellisuuteen!

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