

Marika Maijala

The Self Portraits of Women. Feminism and Documentary in *Naisenkaari* and *Kuinka katosin karkkimaahan*

Autobiographical elements became a central issue of documentary film making in 1970's, when many formerly marginalized groups begun to represent themselves in documentaries in order to constitute their identity and to challenge the stereotypical images that mainstream representations create of them. Autobiographical discourse had an especially important role for feminist documentary filmmakers. Showing women's ordinary life from their own point of view feminist filmmakers tried to create new ways of establishing female identities.

Feminist documentarists have also tried to deconstruct the traditional representations of women. The deconstruction of traditional eroticized and aestheticized representations of the female body as it appears in mainstream images is one way of creating these new identities, to represent culturally ignored sides of female body as beautiful and desirable is another. Feminist documentary films have relied on dialogical and emotional expression, which can be seen as a reaction against the patriarchal repression of female language. Through feminist documentaries women have created a forum for communication with those who speak "the same language".

In her article Maijala focuses on these questions as they appear in the works of two Finnish female filmmakers. Kiti Luostarinen's *Naisenkaari* (1997) as well as in Kaisa Rastimo's *Kuinka katosin karkkimaahan* (1991) exemplify both the autobiographical tendency of feminist documentary and the explicit reconstructive way of representing women differently than in masculine mainstream imagery. Both directors use documentary filmmaking as a way to challenge patriarchal hegemony and to create new, alternative ways for creating female identities.

Elisa Aaltola

Nature documentaries and the representation of animals

Elisa Aaltola's starting point in her study of television nature documentaries is to ask to what extent do these programmes replicate the premises of Cartesian dualistic philosophy. This tendency is strengthened by visuality as such as it reenacts the power structure in which the animals are treated merely as otherness which is being observed at a distance, often emphasising their savagery and strangeness as they are reduced to being mere "objects of vision". These structures of representation emphasise the presumed supremacy of culture with its connotations of order, rationality, morality and progress. This is particularly obvious in documentaries such as *Reptiles and Amphibians* produced by National Geography (1989). It considerably less blatant, at times even avoided in certain documentaries which could be referred to us post-modern. Among them is *Microcosmos: Le peuple de l'herbe* (1996) in which insects are studied in such extreme close-up that at times they can be observed only as colourful geometric patterns. This strategy does not reduce the insects into mere objects of scientific curiosity and instead maintains a sense of wonder and delight. Yet another approach is to gauge the degree in which the animals resemble humans. In *Nature Profiles: Pelicans and Haws* (1986) this is accomplished by presenting the animals as purpose-bound actors rather than just mechanical creatures driven by blind instincts. As long as excessive anthropomorphism is avoided this seems to be the best way to promote a positive human relationship to animals.

Veijo Hietala

Reality Television: Neorealism or Simulation of Realism

In his article Veijo Hietala discusses the practices, different types and ideological implications of reality television particularly in the Finnish context. Among the ideological questions particularly racial issues as they emerge American programmes of the *Cops* type are particularly important. Black families are almost without exception presented as being unable to form a harmonious nuclear family and thus prone to serve as a ground for violence and criminal behaviour. Another major question, raised by Bill Nichols, is whether there is a danger that reality television might "kill" the tradition of genuine documentary film. Hietala does not see this as a problem, as reality television is taken as a form of entertainment. A more important question is whether this kind of entertainment alienates people from social issues by giving them the comfortable experience of "tele-participation".

There have been dissenting voices, though. Tarleton Gillespie claims that television is by far a too heterogeneous media, catering for all sorts of psychological needs, to simply serve the dominant ideology. Besides, reality television of the "confessional" type is often made in camp spirit and allows the spectator a position of superiority in respect of the people appearing in these programmes. The enjoyment is often voyeuristic, appealing to our need to know what is happening behind the next door. This may combine with an oversaturation by the polished image of mainstream fiction. As producing reality television costs only a fraction of what fiction costs, it will undoubtedly remain a permanent part of television programming.

Pentti Stranius

The Disgusting Story. The party-state control of Soviet cinema

In this article I discuss the Soviet cinema during the stagnation, i.e. during the Brezhnev era (1964-82) and the limits of filmmaking formed by "the aesthetics of censorship".

Censorship operated on three levels within the Soviet cinema. The first level was the self-imposed censorship among filmmakers, the so-called "internal militia". It was operative on the state level and it derived from the total ideological propaganda machine. It was probably the most important level of the entire system. The second level was that of the "Red Pens". Every local studio in the USSR had its own censors - trusted writers and film historians, sometimes film critics from the elite circle. They knew the taste of the party-leaders and they controlled film writing, the scenarios at the local level in studios such as those in Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev, Tbilisi and Tallinn. These studios were the most important in Soviet film production. The third level, the last form of party-state control, was simply the shelving of films. This

practice was seldom used because internal militia and red pens worked adequately, accurately and firmly. When a film was shelved the original negative material as well as the copies if they had already been made were confiscated and sent to the Central Film Archive at Gosfilmofond, near Moscow.

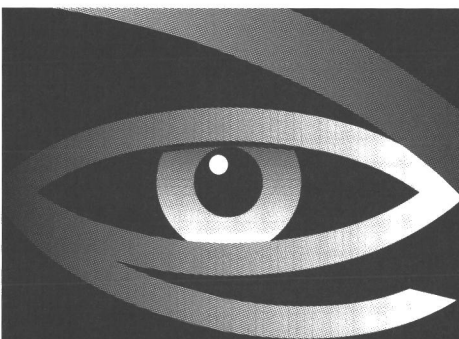
I have spoken with many Russian film directors about the significance of censorship on the Soviet cinema. Most of them wanted to mention not only negative but also some positive aspects:

1) Right from the very beginning in the 1920s cinema was considered to be an art in the USSR. Goskino and the local studios did their best in the professional sense. In the party-state system the financing never ended once the shooting of a film had started. All serious film historians and critics agree that Soviet cinema was usually reached high professional standards but that it was too heavily ideologically bound.

2) Thanks to the bureaucracy and censorship filmmaking was always a long process during which many films actually were improved. The screenplays were often of high quality, almost a special genre in litera-

ture. The Red Pens even at the local studios were not stupid people, but intelligent professionals. In Moscow they were, of course, ideological gatekeepers but nevertheless they sometimes really helped young directors to work inside the censorship system. In this sense the censorship system became a special professional college for Soviet filmmakers. The fear of censorship forced them to show important things below the surface, indirectly. The same phenomenon functioned in literature, theatre and art. It was very useful to learn to present things indirectly and so sometimes this practice really helped directors to develop their cinematic expression.

3) Paradoxically, thanks to censorship, many quality Soviet films of the 1960-70s offered plenty of room for different interpretations. Here the role of an enlightened public was enormous. In addition, one of the functions of intelligent cinema - cinema by Tarkovsky, for example - was and is to permit different interpretations, to allow the spectator to think more, to use his or her memory and imagination.



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