

Sanna Karkulehto

## "Smash the Heterosexual Orthodoxy": Politics and Aesthetics of *Queer as Folk*

The article discusses the relationship between commercial queer aesthetics and politically invested queer theory, and their manifestations in a British gay television series *Queer as Folk*. The article begins with examining recent popularity of queer aestheticism in media and advertising, and its impact on taming subversive queer politics. *Queer as Folk* is studied in this context: as a commercial product which fulfills needs of the market in offering new, different and exotic queer entertainment, but also as a production which has radical, queer political tasks. How does *Queer as Folk* meet these culturally two-dimensional and ambivalent challenges?

*Queer as Folk* proves to be contradictory and ambivalent. It represents themes, which maintain and reproduce cultural hegemony of heterosexuality and marginality of gayness, such as sexuality and pairing. By expressing and reiterating gay sex endlessly it on one hand reveals gay stereotypes which reduce gayness to sexuality, and makes space for subversion and appropriation of the dominant sexual discourse. On the other hand, however, it connects masculinity this way to activeness and sexuality, while femininity is connected to passivity and asexuality. This is not the only example which proves *Queer as Folk* is a traditionally masculine project. Although it calls into question the idea of complementary sexuality and the idea of homo-heterosexual dichotomy, opposition between male-female remains unquestioned.

This is how *Queer as Folk* makes cultural concession in order to tame its political mission. Maintaining hierarchic opposition between genders enables it to deconstruct sexuality and sexual identities. While the position of a conventional spectator is shaken in *Queer as Folk* by breaking sexual boundaries it also gets offered support and security by the fact that boundaries between genders stay untouchable. This is for example how it becomes visible that even subversive and resisting dis-

courses and representations are contradictory and ambivalent. By taking this under consideration we might be able to examine the strategies which produce hegemonic power positions and positions marginal to them, and make critical analysis of the relationship between hegemony and marginality.

Mikko Winberg

## Presenting the Evil: Richard III as an Incarnation of the Evil

Evilness threatens from within the very existence of the society. Indeed, societies regularly try to define and name the signs and symbols of evil, in order to make it recognizable and thus tame it. History is crowded with wicked men with their wicked deeds, exemplifying the process of defining the evil. Richard III (1483-1485) is among most famous examples. His reputation as an ambitious and cruel tyrant and a bloodthirsty murderer was popularized in William Shakespeare's Richard III (1593) and its subsequent adaptations.

The latest British adaptation, directed by Richard Loncraine in 1995 and titled *Richard III*, can be seen, on one hand, as a part of the British heritage-culture, based as it is on a Shakespeare's play. On the other hand, the film can be read as a way of comprehending and coming into terms with the British past and present, by evoking the mythical and nationally well known figure of vice.

Drawing from the theatrical tradition and Shakespeare, the film treats the villainy of Richard III in various ways. First of the all, at the beginning of the film he is presented as a murderer. Secondly, relocating the story in the fictive 1930s emphasizes his tyrannical nature, when a fascist dictator becomes the King of Britain. Furthermore, Richard's wickedness is marked visually with physical deformities, which resonates with a metaphorical deformity of the society; everything in *Richard III* is filmed as dark and dreary. Towards the end of the film, it is suggested that his mother's rejection and the lack of the motherly love can explain Richard's evilness. However, regardless of all his villainy, Richard is also portrayed as a

charming person who can seduce not only women in the story but also the film's audience and thus make them parties in his crimes.

Above all, Loncraine's *Richard III* depicts Richard III as a collage of different types of *arch villains* and a universal prototype of evilness. More particularly, in the humanistic tradition of historiography, the film portrays Richard III as an *Exempla*, as a model of an evil tyrant, (not surprisingly since Richard III has functioned as a reference point in assessing various rulers and politicians ever since Richard's own time).

## Markku Rönty The Party politics in a Finnish Television series the *Rintamäkeläiset* (1972-78)

The *Rintamäkeläiset*, one of the most popular television series in Finland during the 1970's, tells about two aging farmers, struggling with their everyday personal relationships, as well as the depopulation of the countryside, for example.

The party-politics, typical to its period, plays a prominent role in the *Rintamäkeläiset*. The Finnish Broadcasting Company (YLE), who produced the series, and its programming policy were part of the era which was heavily influenced and closely tied to the party politics. This climate resonates closely with individual episodes of the *Rintamäkeläiset*, as well as with its general themes.

The series' was indeed influenced by the YLE's programming policy. For example, the so called "principle of impartiality," required by the YLE's programming regulations, was reflected in the *Rintamäkeläiset* in the fact, that the principal characters (local farmers), with their distinct views and opinions, all represented various Finnish political parties. Furthermore, the series is characterized by Finnish consensus mentality of the era, most clearly seen in a social democratic character of Veikko Honkonen (Ahti Haljala).