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The Core of Reality Television: Peer Melodrama? An Analysis of *The Bachelor*

This article aims to clarify the concept of "reality television" by discussing the history and the current state of this televisual phenomenon and by mapping out the core elements that make these programs popular and pleasurable to the audience. It argues that reality television should not be treated as a coherent genre, marked throughout by certain features of content and/or form and distinguishable from other TV categories, but rather as a cultural phenomenon of a larger scale. Reality television is an umbrella concept encompassing a wide range of programs that is produced primarily in discussions concerning reality television. In other words, the field of reality television programming is too diverse to be treated as a genre, but it can be seen as the logic behind the production and reception of these programs. Reality TV displays cultural tendencies that are telling of our contemporary society – including the question of authenticity, the rise of the ordinary people to publicity and sometimes even to stardom, the striving for more and more extreme emotional stimuli and expression, as well as questions concerning moral and ethics.

The article introduces a new concept, "peer melodrama", to describe certain forms of reality shows, including *The Bachelor* (USA 2002–). These programs are characterised by an

exaggerated display of emotions and conflicts between the participating characters, a focus on fantasy-like ideals of (traditional, heterosexual) romance, and an emphasis on the authenticity of the people appearing on screen. Peer melodramas base their appeal on what can be seen as the core of reality television: the melodramatic representation of (artificially created) emotional drama involving people who the viewers can relate to as their peers.

Outi Hakola

The Performative Viewer

In early television studies the viewer was perceived as a passive recipient under the direct influence of television. This idea was later replaced by the notion of an active viewer engaged in reading television texts against the grain. In my opinion, such a binary opposition active versus passive does not provide a nuanced view of television viewing. I also believe that television studies needs different kinds of concepts.

"The performative viewer", based on theories of performance, could be one such concept. The concept of performance has been used in many ways. Traditionally it has meant a presentation in front of a live audience and it has been used to refer to modern forms of dance and spectacle. However, in television studies the most useful way of understanding performance is to see it as part of everyday life. In this article performance refers to the performer's own consciousness of his or her performance. Thus

performance is not defined by an audience but by the performer: every ordinary action can become a performance if the performer sees the situation as such. When a viewer watches a television show conscious of its conventions, he becomes able to recognize similar situations in his own life and to make use of the models of behaviour and interpretation provided by the television shows. In this sense, the viewer is neither a passive recipient nor simply an active interpreter. Rather, he participates in the television show, mostly through gaze and identification as a performative viewer.

The article discusses the concept of the performative viewer through an analysis of situation comedy and specifically the television show *Friends* (USA 1994–).

Anna Mäkelä

"Male Humiliation – or Female?" The Press Reception of *Manrape*

In 1978, the controversial Finnish film director Jörn Donner made a movie called *Manrape*. In the film a woman is raped and, as revenge, she sexually humiliates her rapist. The film gained wide publicity in the Finnish press.

This article analyses the ways in which conceptions concerning sexual violence were expressed and produced in the press coverage of the film. In the coverage, different voices are heard: some condemn the rape while others do not consider it serious or especially injurious to the victim. The most interesting point in the coverage

is the normative opposition to revenge. Sexual violence is condemned as a phenomenon and rapists are declared guilty as charged. However, the woman is held responsible for her reaction, which, according to these newspaper articles and critiques, should not be revenge but silent recovery and acceptance of that which has occurred.

Antti Autio

The Cinema of Takeshi Kitano: a Neo-auteurist Approach

This article briefly maps the discussion on film authorship and the so-called film auteur since the Second World War, and introduces Paisley Livingston's fairly recent view of film authorship rooted in the Western tradition of analytic philosophy. The article attempts to formulate a synthesis of recent notions of film authorship with Kristin Thompson's neo-formalist film analysis and David Bordwell's notion of biographical legend, resulting in what I call a neo-auteurist approach. The key elements of this approach are the application of the causal history of the film(s) in question with the biographical legend of the film author within a neo-formalist framework. I use the neo-auteurist approach to analyse two films by the Japanese film director Takeshi Kitano: *Fireworks* (*Hana-Bi*, Japan 1997) and *Kikujiro* (*Kikujiro no natsu*, Japan 1999).