

Culture Consumption in Finland

Distinctive Characteristics

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There seem to be some the distinctive and apparently fairly deep-rooted characteristics of the consumption of culture in present-day Finland. These characteristics has been taken mostly more or less for granted in earlier research and the whole issue has been skated over – which makes them a particularly interesting subject of study.

My concern is with the collective cultural memory, with the question of how investigation of that memory can help us understand (said to be) "national" characteristics. Or to see if there are any, in rhetorics of "national culture" they exist anyhow.

Many of our ways of thinking today can be traced a long way back in history, in the nation-building process and the enlightenment that came with that process. The moral aspects of culture consumption seem to be particularly resistant to change. It is not only that we have the freedom to choose; the good citizen is expected to do something or to choose something rather than to do or to choose something else; at least the feeling, the pressure is always there. The history of the Finnish gender system and ways of cultural consumption also seem to be intertwined. But how have these cultural models evolved in history, how have they been constructed, how are they reproduced in everyday life today?

Patterns of Culture Consumption and Trends in Development

Extensive research has been done in Finland to explore people's cultural leisure pursuits, the breakdown of participation in culture, people's choices and preferences in the domain of culture (*Culture of the Everyday*, 1994). There is also quite abundant information available on the distinctive characteristics of culture consumption in Finland; the active role of women, for instance, is well substantiated. As in other countries of the world, women in Finland take a keener interest in culture than men. However, in Finland the difference in favour of women is quite considerable.

By far the most active consumers of art are represented by highly educated women. There are both similarities and differences in women's choices with international patterns. The international pattern is that women's favourite television programmes are soaps and drama, but in Finland women's top favourites (as of men's) are the news and current affairs programmes. Women read more than men, and they read a lot of romantic entertainment as well as non-fiction and quality literature. While the international research literature has found that women are chiefly oriented towards enter-

tainment, women in Finland show a stronger orientation to non-fiction, entertainment and high culture. As far as men are concerned, including those occupying higher social class position, they do not show the same degree of identification with art in Finland.

We also know that there is a preference in Finland for cultural products of domestic origin; realism and the author's or producer's gender are also important factors (see the reading studies by Katarina Eskola, e.g. 1989, and the television studies by Pertti Alasutari, e.g. 1991). In recent years, however, we have seen changes in both the frequency of consumption and the choices themselves. According to leisure surveys in Finland younger generations show a stronger preference for audiovisual culture and for foreign products. This orientation seems to be particularly clear among young males. Young women are also quite keen in everything that is new, but they have not discarded the old: they still read a lot, play musical instruments and listen to classical music.

All in all there is ample evidence of a major breakthrough of audiovisual culture. Our leisure studies clearly indicate that traditional music in particular (folk music, religious music, traditional dance music, etc.) has lost much of its appeal in the early 1990s. The same applies to theatre and the traditional formats of radio programming which require concentration on the part of the audience.

In Finland the intelligentsia has played an exceptionally important role in "civilizing" and building the nation. Now that the process of nation-building is nearing its completion, it seems that the ethos of the intelligentsia in culture consumption has reached a turning point. The results of our leisure surveys show that the consumption

of audiovisual culture has increased among intellectuals at the expense of high culture. It appears that the new audiences of traditional high culture are to be found in the agrarian population, among pensioners and to some extent in the working class.

Although the consumption of culture, by international standards, is at a comparatively high level in Finland, it seems that culture is rarely attributed a significance in its own right as a form of art (e.g. Liikkanen, 1994a). This applies most notably to men, among whom hardly anyone f.i. said that opera or theatre are important to them personally.

This very same paradox is highlighted in the interim report of a European group of experts appointed to evaluate cultural policy in Finland:

Incidentally it is interesting to note that this high participation appears somewhat paradoxical in the light of the very detailed analysis of the Finnish cultural identity drawn up by Jaan Kaplinski, a member of the group of experts (cf separate report entitled *Some remarks on Finnish culture*): how indeed can this high participation rate be explained in the light of such aspects of the Finnish identity revealed in this report as solitude, individualism and a lack of communication? An interesting subject of reflection for cultural anthropology. (*National Cultural...* 1994, 117)

The traditional pattern of culture consumption in Finland seems to give more weight to collective elements rather than strategies of distinction. Unity and homogeneity are key values and important building blocks for (national) identity. Conveying an outward image of cultural unity has in fact been a distinct objective for intellectuals in Finland. This, apparently, has been grounded in prevailing images of a nation

divided into two camps, i.e. a front guard of intellectuals on the one hand and the people on the other (see e.g. Ollila 1994, 54). The arts have developed under the protection of this ethos of national unity.

However, society and the place of arts in society are going through some major changes at the moment. Ever since the 1970s social scientists have been advocating theories of the erosion of traditional identities attached to occupational status or social class or even gender; these identities are now being discarded in favour of looser, more variable and more optional attachments to consumption, leisure pursuits, etc. The nature of culture consumption is changing; it is becoming less serious, more touristic, more a genuine pleasure. At the same time, the status of art and high culture is changing.

New elements of professionalism are also entering the scene. Occupations related to culture production in a broad sense (advertising, the media) involve increasing numbers of people today. Indeed a large part, sometimes the majority of people at cultural events may be people who are there for professional reasons, or at least partly for reasons of getting new ideas for their own job (see also Noro 1995).

The dividing line between high culture and low culture in Western culture is eroding, even though there are also signs of opposite trends in development. My hypothesis is that the rapid rise of the consumption of popular and audiovisual culture in Finland as legitimate practices alongside (or even beyond) high culture in the middle class and the intelligentsia (upper white-collar groups) has to do with the fact that attachment to the consumption of high culture by social class has been ambiguous, but by gender comparatively strong.

What is High Culture in Finland?

Definitions of high culture vary. Perhaps most typically, high culture is defined in terms of the quality and internal characteristics (e.g. complexity) of the cultural product. Another definition takes departure from the audience: high culture is consumed by a "high-quality" audience. In many cases both of these elements are present at the same time, i.e. the cultural product is defined as high culture through its use in society (see *Cultivating...* 1992). But is high culture art, or is art always high culture?

Traditionally, a basic condition for qualification as high culture in Finland has been complete dissociation from everything foreign: a high-culture product must appear as an integral part of national culture, serve the interests of national unity (e.g. Liikkanen 1994a). Similarly, a high-culture product must not be associated with entertainment or commercialism. To a certain extent commercial has become synonymous with foreign. Vuokko Lepistö (1994, 188), for instance, says in her study that even the invasion of foreign-produced household appliances around the turn of the century and their adoption among the common folk was discouraged because they were considered a threat to the project aimed at the revival of craftsmanship in the country. In the context of popular education, Lepistö says, the two values of foreign and domestic were wholly incompatible and mutually exclusive. Even so, "it is likely that the new technology was brought to the homes of top people in the association and that there was serious debate about allowing people to use them" (ibid., 188). The top people had one set of moral rules for themselves, another for the common folk.

Clearly then Finland has always lacked a firm societal class basis for an artistically-oriented high culture based on distinction. The imperatives of nation-building and national unity have been so overriding that the whole idea of distinction through culture and art has been untenable. Even the bourgeoisie and the rising middle class have traditionally been forced to promote the nation's "common" interest in their cultural taste. Tracing back to 19th-century ideas and ideals of nationality, these notions of "people's power" have survived up until the present day.

Even today the cultural tastes of professionals (e.g. literary critics) and the general public, for instance, have a great deal in common in terms of cultural canons (Eskola & Linko 1984). The art genres and the individual works of art that in Finland enjoy the status of high culture are those that show a firm commitment to the societal objectives (the building of a common language and national unity) adopted and accepted by all. Finland has not been built on a multicultural basis but rather as a land of one language and one culture, even though Swedish enjoys a special status as the country's second official language. No social class has committed itself to art and to connoisseurship as a strategy of distinction. Elitism has a bad reputation in Finland. The general image is that the tastes of the nation are fairly homogenous in the domains of culture.

This is not to say that there is no high culture and no low culture in Finland, or that there has never been any contest between them. Radio, movies, phonograms, television and video have all had to go through a more or less intense cultural process of legitimation. In all these cases the safest strategy has been to rub shoulders with national culture and to shrug off any labels of commercialism. For example,

most films that have secured a place as canonized national culture have been connected, often through an intertextual relationship, to the epic and realistic tradition of narration that is such an integral part of the national cultural heritage (Wuolijoki, Linna, Aho).

Kimmo Laine (1993, 14) has shown how the written manifestos of SuomiFilmi in the 1930s were intended to represent the film producers as being behind the official policy line of unity:

[We] have been encouraged by the conviction that the film industry has an important role to play in the national project, that films can disseminate the message of national unity to people who remain blind to other forms of modern art.

According to Laine (*ibid.*, 11), the boundaries between art and entertainment or high culture and low culture do not yet seem to be very clear and strict in the 1920s and 1930s. Several authors (e.g. Makkonen 1992, Kivimäki 1993, Laine 1993) have shown that the demarcation project started in earnest in the 1950s, following the strong period of ideological unity during the war and the popularity of entertainment. The 1950s marked the invasion of modernism and Anglo-American popular culture in Finland.

Rahkonen (1995, 15) says that, for Bourdieu, tastes are "undoubtedly, above all else, strong dislikes, horror and visceral intolerance ('feeling sick') towards other tastes and the tastes of others". The respondents of the leisure survey by Statistics Finland were asked to identify not only their favourite cultural products but also the television programmes and the type of music they would not want to watch or listen to. The dimensions that emerged in their responses were foreign/domestic, gender, generation, old/new, urban/rural, modern/

traditional. The interesting thing, however, is that both men and women and both young people and older people mention jazz more frequently on the reject side than opera. So should the inference be drawn that jazz is the most elitistic genre of all?

Polarization of Home & Work and Leisure

Value systems of life-morality also include more or less permanent elements which affect patterns of culture consumption. Finnish culture revolves very clearly around home and work. In the process building up models of living and good life culture was regarded as secondary to higher objectives: to high standards of work ethics and to harmony at home, to the growth of enlightenment.

Looking at the subjective meanings that people attach to the everyday and to leisure in our interviews, we find that in many life-morality issues there are layers which go back a long way in the history of Western civilization as well as the history of Finland. The analyses so far (e.g. Liikkanen 1992) have revealed longer-term structures at a more general level than just life-situation and social status. This "cultural memory" also plays a role in the way that culture and cultural products takes on its meanings in the everyday.

Leisure (the setting for most culture consumption) assumes different, sometimes contradictory meanings depending on the context in which it is talked about. The traditional cultural meaning of leisure regards it as general futility and idleness.

The modern concept of leisure is closely connected to the concept of (wage) employment. When it is considered as an optional attachment to work and family life, leisure is typically defined as a minor residual category outside the domains of work and the

family. But when leisure and its meanings are explored in their own right, from the point of view of the respondent's own everyday life, it takes on a whole new importance; in fact it appears as more important than work. In this analysis virtually any area of everyday life or indeed life in its entirety (as was the case in ancient traditions) is defined as leisure (e.g. Liikkanen 1994).

The polarization of work and family in Finnish culture has been a central concern in the recent work of Antti Karisto (1994). Karisto has highlighted the importance of the "third sphere": community life, self-realization and leisure, and modern services. His thesis is that

within the third sphere it is crucially important to gain control over one's life ... and to find and maintain a positive undercurrents in life, to fit together and prevent the emergence of problems in two other spheres, i.e. work and family.

The convergence of work and family started around the turn of the century, but it was only from the 1930s through to the 1950s that the project really got off the ground with the middle-class home ideology. By this time education was mostly provided by professionals (journalists, teachers, etc.) and by the public sphere. With the development of communication technology the consumption of culture was increasingly moving into the home, and one of the explicit objectives of education was indeed a spatial and temporal segmentation of the home. The consumption of culture was consciously linked up with recreation, with leisure at home. Leisure was supposed to be spent together with the family in a space specially set apart for the purpose, i.e. in the living room, and the purpose was to strengthen the family's sense of togetherness. At the same time this project also involved the production womanhood/femi-

ninity and manhood/masculinity in the family.

Cultural Memory

Although the field of culture consumption has long been in turmoil and transition, and although uses of culture have proliferated enormously, there is still a remarkable permanence and rigidity about many of its structures and discourses. If culture consumption in Finland and the relationships between the world of art/culture and its audiences do possess distinctive national characteristics, I do not believe they can be fruitfully explored by looking at current practices only; we need also to look at the characteristics and structures that have been produced in history.

The project to build up a distinctive Finnish culture has been a conscious effort on the part of an active group of people. Hierarchic systems of meanings related to culture consumption are all the time being reproduced not only by the consumers within their own everyday life, but also through the products of culture and the public domain (f.i. artcritics). If and when practices change and are redefined, it is precisely these "cultural title pages" that will be reflected upon, that will be resisted, taken apart, redefined, and left behind.

For the present purposes I have randomly selected a piece from the culture pages of *Helsingin Sanomat* (Finland's biggest daily) on 25 Feb 1995. In it, critic Lauri Karvonen is commenting on a concert that was held in connection with the founding of the Finnish Saxophone Society. He writes:

The Finnish Saxophone Society certainly got off to a flying start with a packed house of devoted listeners. If you have an interesting theme for a jazz session you can be sure the audience will be there.

The difficulty with having such a vast array of different types of bands playing at the same concert is that you are bound to get a somewhat muddled picture; and less of true artistic pleasure.

Yet the cavalcade-like setup has undisputed legitimacy as an integral part of the nation's musical policy line, not least in an education sense. Even the most hard-headed peasant must have appreciated the strengths of Finnish saxophone players, learned in what sort of music those strengths can best be exploited, and absorbed a great deal of information about the history of this family of instruments.

This excerpt raises at least the following questions:

- The relationship between education and art (artistic pleasure): why does the enlightened listener sacrifice his pleasure on the shrine of education and the nation's musical policy line, what purpose does this serve?
- Who, specifically, is the critic addressing in referring to the nation's musical policy line: the audience, the enlightened listener, the public authorities?
- Who is this enlightened listener (is it a she or a he, does he or she have a class location, is he or she a member of the intelligentsia)?
- The relationship between the audience's approval and artistic pleasure: are they mutually exclusive?
- The notion that there exists "true artistic pleasure"; whose is that pleasure, what exactly does it consist in?
- Who is this audience, "the most hard-headed peasant" (in the original Finnish text a gendered expression with historical undertones)?

- The relationship between popular culture and art: why it is an "artistic" pleasure that the critic refers to in his account of the reception of jazz?
- The view of a polarized society: the intelligentsia vs the common folk.
- The view that the intelligentsia is obliged to sacrifice itself to popular education (Anne Ollila, in a study on the history of the Finnish Housewives' Association, refers to this as the intelligentsia's ethics of obligation. She says that "the intelligentsia was expected to expend every ounce of effort in this work and to brush aside all thoughts of personal benefit; in return it was not proper to expect any praise [...]").

It is interesting to consider the question of how far present-day practices can be understood as reflections of the past, and how far back in time we have to go, or can go, in the search for fragments of memory. Although the consumption/use/reception of culture is a multifaceted process, my concern here is specifically with the collective and shared elements of cultural practices. The long traces and reflections of the collective memory seem to be bound up, particularly, with life-morality, with notions of what is valuable and what isn't. The patterns of culture use and the hierarchic structure of different cultural domains have taken shape in history, and they have a relevance all their own from the point of view of the present.

In any analysis of the use of cultural products it is important to bear in mind that meanings and hierarchic orders are connected not only to individual products but also to the broader culture in which they exist, or to the domain that is known as art.

We may assume that, from the consumption point of view, different forms of culture have very different roles, functions and meanings. Following are some examples of preliminary meanings attached to different domains as they emerged from our interviews:

Theatre: middle-of-the-week festivity, entertainment, gender (femininity)

Opera: festivity, distinction, class (elite), femininity

Music: home, identity (generation)

television: everyday, gender, modernity

literature: knowledge/education, identity

film: diversion from the everyday, visuality, art, opposition to culture

The consumer's encounter with the cultural product involves a complex process of approval/rejection. The process may perhaps begin with the consumer recognizing the main category of culture in question (theatre, visual arts/art exhibition, television, radio...) and then identifying the specific genre, the product itself, the producer, etc. Other factors enter the scene in subsequent stages: contextual factors, the recipient's life-situation, the time of day and time of year, etc. Non-conscious (non-said, unthought) elements and emotions (like/dislike) figure centrally in this process. Reception studies tend to bypass this process altogether, moving straight on to the situation where the receiver is face-to-face with the cultural product of choice. To me, however, it is clear that this "natural" process of approval/rejection should be incorporated in the analysis of the long-term semantic structures of culture.

On the Relationship between Art and the Audience

Some of the structures of the collective cultural memory are connected with the relationships between the field of art, the world of art and the audience. As we have already seen, art, in Finnish history, has been closely involved in popular education and in the project of nation-building. The intellectual class and public authorities have perhaps taken an exceptionally active role as mediators between the general public and the field of art.

This must have affected the position of art in society as well as the relationship between art and the audience. It seems that there is an exceptionally strong tradition of autonomy in the field of art, a deep-seated antipathy against commercialism and false exploitation. This is grounded in the romanticist theory of art, whose Kantian notions of genius and the artist have been described as follows (Salmi 1991, 268):

The genius never copies nor works according to rules laid down by others. The genius creates his own rules [...] Given the direct links of the genius with nature, the ideas he received were through some sort of divine inspiration. The artist created his works of art in a trance that was never going to bow to any sort of working hours. A strict distinction was made between artisans and 'real' artists. [...] The stereotypical artist locked up in his chambers would follow nothing else but his inspiration; he could not work for a patron. At the same time the handicrafts aspect of the artist's job, the everyday drudgery was consciously put aside and forgotten.

In Finland this is probably combined with an ethos of autonomy at work and coping alone, which probably traces back to our peasant heritage (cf. Kortteinen 1993). In

so far as the relationship to society has been mediated through the state, there has been no need to call into question and problematize the relationship to the audience, and the notion of the autonomous artist and the individual or lonely creative artist has retained its appeal.

Any culture that has failed to shrug off the labels of commercialism or popular entertainment or pure amateurism will certainly have had a very hard time trying to get public funding. Some forms of culture (such as the circus) have gone to great lengths to establish their status as legitimate art instead of popular culture. In a small country such as Finland the private markets for culture are very limited indeed, and that means that public funding is essential for the survival of art and the culture industry in general. Since the state has had a very central role in providing culture with the resources it has needed, it also has an important role in pulling up different branches of culture – and pushing them down. One of the most recent examples is the case of VAT: the discussion about the introduction of VAT in culture made it clear that the traditional dichotomies of art vs entertainment and commercial vs non-commercial are still very central to cultural policy. It also emerged that literary culture has a value in itself as compared with the visual arts or certain areas of music culture.

It seems that all this has resulted in the world of art and the audience living a parallel and separate existence with very little contact between them. It may well be asked whether it is difficult for the field of Finnish art, because of its historical traditions, to regard its audience as anything other than a receiver, as a mass of people requiring education. The field of art seems to be more strongly oriented towards its own inner dialogue and to safeguarding the position of individual branches of art vis-à-vis

the public authorities than towards a broader, collective dialogue. It often seems that it is extremely difficult for the world of art to accept that its audience can itself create art and that it is actually capable of fruitful dialogue. The emphasis in artistry is on autonomy and on professionalism, which is reflected in needs to draw a dividing line between professionalism and non-professionalism in both the production of art and its reception.

In a television programme on the art exhibition ARS 95 in Helsinki, Neil Hardwick (British TV-writer and journalist who has worked about 30 yrs in Finland) said he did not want to disturb ordinary people by interviewing them because he had noticed that Finnish people are not very keen on talking about art in public. The public domain is strictly controlled by experts. Where else does one still hear so much talk about the dangers of populism as in art reviews?

The cultural determination of art in Finland no doubt has significance from the point of view of non-professional consumption of culture and non-professional production of culture. Does it generate silence in the audience? How is the artist's and the audience's relationship affected in the situation where the walls between professionalism and amateurism begin to crumble with the arrival of new technology? According to Kari Ilmonen (1992, 85) the general public does not necessarily regard professional art as superior to amateur art.

Keijo Rahkonen (1995, 15-16) refers to Schulze in pointing out that the art and culture discourse has changed. Schulze describes the new discourse as "laconic", as "profoundly subjective aesthetics" in which "we are not actually talking about art but about ourselves, not about a work of art but about the effects it has on ourselves, not

about the quality of art in an objective sense but of liking or not-liking."

In the light of our interview material and also in the light of my own personal experience, this manner of speech is easy to recognize. When people talk about art and, say, culture programmes on television, they want to stress their own "individual" experiences, they are reluctant to attach it to the genre, or to the artist's intentions. People want to define their own "self" outside the hierarchies of the world of art, to retain their autonomy, their freedom of choice. But is this a purely "new" mode of reception? Or does it perhaps have roots that go back a bit longer? Does it perhaps combine something of the Finnish heritage and the new situation?

The Finnish Gender System and Patterns of Culture Consumption

One aspect of culture consumption that seems to be fairly stable in Finland is that men and women take different attitudes towards art and culture. The Finnish gender system and its historical evolution have been explored in a research project under Liisa Rantalaiho and Raija Julkunen (The sex/gender system of the welfare state; see *Naisten hyvinvointivaltio* 1994).

The theory of the gender system prevailing in society is based on Yvonne Hirdman's notion of two key principles within that system, i.e. separation and hierarchy. Separation implies that woman and womanhood can be clearly distinguished from man and manhood; and hierarchy that man and manhood are more highly valued than woman and womanhood. A basic premise of the theory is that, within our Western culture of antitheses, each pair of opposites carries meanings of gender hierarchy. The assumption here is that the gender differ-

ence is a key factor which structures human life and cuts across language, culture and everyday life. The gender difference can be seen as a sort of deep structure of culture. Referring to Carole Pateman's (1988) concept of "sexual contract", feminist scholars in the Nordic countries have also advocated the view that within the existing gender system negotiations are carried on in society to produce sexual contracts which contain the unspoken rules, the reciprocal rights and duties that determine the relationships between the male and the female gender, the relationships between generations, and ultimately the relationships within the domains of production and reproduction (Rantalaiho 1994, 14).

The building of the Finnish gender system since the beginning of twentieth century has been based on a strict separation of male domains and female domains, on a gender partnership based on labour ethics, and on a clear division of labour and relative autonomy. Around the turn of the century women themselves were still very much in favour of maintaining the separation of men and women and male and female domains. According to the research project one of the specific responsibilities allocated to women was that of civilization and education. According to Raija Julkunen the First sexual contract was negotiated in the beginning of the century and second, the so called "working mother contract" in the sixties. What is crucial according to her is that the latter was negotiated between women and the state, which means that culturally the relations between masculinity and femininity remained untouched.

This relative autonomy and separation (and de-eroticization) of the male and female domains probably goes some way towards explaining the extraordinary rigidity of the gendered division of labour in Finland. This applies equally to time usage and

to the allocation of household chores, to professional differentiation and to wage differentials. Art studies and the humanities remain alien to Finnish male culture; men are still heavily oriented towards technology, engineering sciences, economic sciences, in general towards professional occupations. The different orientation of men and women is still clearly seen in their leisure studies and in their other leisure choices.

Art and culture consumption have formed an integral part of the educational project, which means the domain has been controlled in large part by women. The current extent of culture consumption is not entirely an achievement of the cultural policies pursued by the welfare state, but its roots can be traced back to a maternalistic social policy (to which current policies are a natural extension). Maternalistic social policy refers to the work in which "the women of many generations have built the service institutions of the welfare state, first on the basis of private and voluntary work and then, as the opportunities were made available, in collaboration with the state" (Rantalaiho 1994, 23). Women are accustomed to working together across social class boundaries. Leisure studies have shown that there are women who take an interest in high culture in all social groups, even though the hard core of high culture followers is to be found among those with the highest education, i.e. those chiefly responsible for the civilization project. The entertainment favoured by women also seems to contain a message that education provides an opportunity for upward mobility. Indeed my own thesis is that, working under the protection of their autonomy and unity, women have developed their own distinctive way of receiving and consuming culture.

Matti Hyvärinen has referred in many different contexts to the deep sense of anxiety that is repeated in the biographies of first-generation educated men. In Finnish male culture art and "gentlemen" ("herrat") often seem to find themselves on one side of the court, facing the common folk on the other. For instance, the light entertainment of and by men likes to ridicule culture, femininity, education, "gentlemen". Indeed it seems that male attitudes towards art and culture still reflect historical class antagonisms, tracing all the way back to the Civil War. The Finnish gender system would thus appear to provide at least a partial explanation for the paradox identified by the European research team quoted above. The canonized image of Finnishness is emphatically a male-dominated image.

The thesis that culture and the consumption of culture belongs to the female domain is also supported by the findings of Ruostetsaari in his study on Finnish power elites. Ruostetsaari (1992, 90) found that power elites in Finland are heavily male-dominated; only a few per cent are women. Rather than rigid blocs with clear, fixed boundaries, Ruostetsaari says, power elites in Finland are fluid networks, comparable to fraternal associations.

Women's representation is highest in the political elite (where women account for one third) and the cultural elite (one quarter). Also characteristic of the cultural elite is that it has very little contact with other elites. As Ruostetsaari says (ibid., 218),

the cultural elite is so loosely connected to other elites that it is questionable whether it should be counted in the power elite in the first place.

Further,

the very core of power in Finland is in the hands of just 17 men who occupy at least three elite positions in one or more sectors.

In this group neither the sectors of administration, the mass media or culture are represented.

Finnish power elites say they take an interest, in broad terms, in "culture"; this result was based on an open-ended question. It does not, as such, differ from the findings of Statistics Finland's Leisure Survey, which used open-ended questions to measure leisure interests in the whole population. Among the "leisure interests" mentioned most frequently were reading (26 %), literature (16 %), music (16 %), culture in general (6 %), visual arts (5 %), films (4 %), theatre (4 %), writing (3 %), photography and videofilming (3 %). Other interests that were more important than or equally important as culture included sports and physical exercise (25 %), outdoor recreation and walking (14 %), fishing (11 %), gardening (8 %), and travelling (8 %) (ibid., 178).

Clearly then, in the light of these findings, culture is no longer a particularly important means of distinction (in the sense that Bourdieu defines the term). Indeed Ruostetsaari concludes that

as far as their leisure interests are concerned the power elite hardly differs from the rest of the population (ibid., 181).

Women mention culture, studies and social participation more often than men (which is the same situation as in the whole population), who for their part take a keener interest in sports and physical exercise (ibid., 171).

Cultural pursuits are least common in the business elite, where (not surprisingly) the share of women is lowest. The only exception to the pattern is music, which in general is characteristically a male domain of culture. Otherwise the business elite's main interests include sports, physical exercise, hunting, fishing, tennis and golf (ibid.,

174). It seems a safe argument that other signals related to way of life and to the representation of way of life (and possibly gender) are far more important.

The Question of the Female (Art)Audience

The ambivalence of the field of culture in relation to womanhood/femininity is also reflected in an obvious tension in attitudes towards women audiences: the shared and explicit objective of all fields is to reach a broad (and a broader) audience. At the same time, however, there are clear indications of a growing sense of annoyance, both among artists and critics, about women audiences, particularly middle-aged or ageing audiences, who are supporting and in fact keeping alive several branches of art.

Theatre director Laura Ruohonen (1993) has drawn attention to this point:

People are now talking about the demise of Finnish theatre with the same sort of conviction that others are talking about its resurgence. The interesting thing is that both views attribute a crucial role to women: on the one hand theatre is dying because men are no longer interested; on the other hand the new spirit and vigour that is growing up in theatre is very much inspired by women. Both the general public and theatre itself agree that the declining number of people in the auditorium is mainly a budgeting problem. The fact that most of the people who do come to the theatre are women, is an indication of an artistic crisis: nothing that appeals to middle-aged women can be good, significant or even alive.

Kirsikka Moring, art critic for *Helsingin Sanomat*, addresses the same issue in her column on 8 March 1994:

For a very long time now a wall of fur coats has been common abuse at theatre premieres. I've never heard anyone say anything about a wall of cigars, or about Armani barricades. That's because there haven't been any Why not?

Traditionally, men have spent their time in different places, sipping whisky and making it clear to each other how important they are.

So what's wrong with walls of fur coats? The women themselves, or their "fur coats", the gentlemen who reluctantly follow in their wake and who go into yawning mode before the first curtain!

Women have never been respected as consumers of culture, nor their active grapevine role and influence. [...] There was a time, there still is, when young male directors looked at their audiences of old bags with unmistakable contempt. You can't do proper art for these people. So who can you do proper art for? [...]

The views of novelist Anja Kauranen (1993, 95) come across in this excerpt:

Most of the sisters in hospices are mature daughters, in their fifties; they've lived with their mother always and forever or longer, they have a paid job, they do a lot and they always seem to have the time, yet they're very typically lonely women. [...] It's hard to find quieter people anywhere in the country than these prematurely aunted women. They're used to being willing listeners, a good audience and in fact it is they who largely make up the ridiculed mass who wander down to fill the theatres, concerts, panels, passions, yoga classes, fashion shows at department stores in the afternoon. They are many, they fill an empty space.

Mature daughters do not have a strong personal identity, unless one is provided by hard work and clean sheets for absenteeism. They're rarely called spinsters any more, they don't really dare regard themselves as independent women either, after all they've always shared all the television soaps and all the special offers from the supermarkets with their mothers.

The babushka-type aunt also figures in the description of Anne Rouhiainen (*Helsingin Sanomat* 19 February 1995):

Sorbelli, resident at the Whore Academy, hits the revolving doors of the State Art Museum at the same time as a crowd of shrieking schoolchildren. The divinely beautiful blonde takes off her grey macintosh, starts up the staircase in her spiked heels and net stockings, and turns to study the paintings of Richter.

The camera crew follow in her footsteps, then the crowd, young and old, fascinated by the sculpture that appeared in their midst from nowhere.

The girls conclude that Sorbelli must be a professional dancer; no one else could move like that. That Sorbelli is a transvestite is no big deal as far as the youngsters are concerned.

We've seen it all before.

The pubescent boys exhibit characteristic teenage homophobia, making absolutely sure they are not in the same shot with Sorbelli. The only ones who seem to be quite dumbfounded, and quite interested, are the older aunts in the audience.

[...] Once you've met Sorbelli, mediocrity just doesn't matter any more.

So sublime, as far as women – and particularly middle-aged – women go, is transformed into banal. Kirsti Määttänen (1993,

24) has observed that "one of the matters of course that needs to be called into question in the analysis of womanhood and the everyday is the way in which our culture and we as members of that culture understand the limits of banality".

The excerpts above also go to show how the definition of art audiences and existence as an art audience cannot be distinguished from (self)definitions of artisthood. This also raises the question of the relationship between different generations of women.

The issue of women audiences is also interwoven with the issue of gendered public and private spaces. The different opportunities for men and women to utilize their (leisure) time have been connected to the relationships between public and private space in different social classes. Earlier research has referred to the history of the city and its gendered spaces (e.g. Wilson 1991). The leisure of men is very much located in public spaces, which are readily accessible to men regardless of their social class. Privatization has provided one means to exclude social classes that have not been welcome.

Those public spaces that are open to women – streets, restaurants, dance pavilions, sports fields – have not been (morally) open in the same way. Indeed important aspects in the analysis of women's leisure pursuits include the home, family power relations and private space. The gradual opening up of public spaces to women has taken the safe route through semi-public or semi-private spaces (Wilson 1991, 101). Legitimate and safe spaces for women have included and include department stores, cafeterias, concert halls, theatres, exhibition centres. Class position has also been a factor of crucial importance in the history of women's leisure. Some of the spaces mentioned above, particularly those related to the consumption of culture, have been

open to middle-class or bourgeois women only. The boundaries have been determined by dress codes and norms of behaviour as well as by the form and content of the art on show in the space concerned. On the other hand, certain public spaces have been more open to working-class women than to upper class women.

The question that presents itself here is whether women, as an audience, have found their own space or their own spaces, what sort of cultural practices are related to being an audience, does it involve joy or revolt. Why do so many women not consider it humiliating to be a listener or a receiver, why don't they even seem to be bothered by the mockery they're subjected to? It is hard to believe that it all boils down to the "non-identity" that Kauranen speaks of. Is it more a matter of finding peace, a social area of one's own, perhaps waiting for enlightenment...

The reception of art, as a cultural system, (re)produces gender difference. Could it be that the emphasis on "new professionalism" that was mentioned earlier creates a new element of dignity or distinction in the reception of art so that existence as an audience is more easily acceptable in the production of cultural masculinity?

Strategies of Research into Culture Consumption

One way to unravel and make visible the hierarchies related to the consumption of culture is to look at earlier research on consumption and reception.

In a crude description we can make a distinction between two different approaches to studying culture: the search for elements that different cultures share in common and the search for elements that separate different cultures. The former line of inquiry is often associated with the study

of modern society and the latter with the study of post-modern society. They may also reflect different views on the role of culture in the structures of society, without taking any explicit stand on the stage or situation of social development. If these two perspectives were combined, it might be easier to detect the different layers of society and to make visible the fact that the world appears in a different light from different perspectives.

Research that focuses on the consumption of art and high culture likes to underline the hierarchic nature of culture as well as cultural differences. These studies also involve an evolutionistic view of culture in which the cultural products made in society can be set out on a linear continuum. Qualities attached to the cultural products defined as the highest forms of art include such descriptions as multiplicity, complexity, high underlying educational level, etc.

This also seems to be reflected in theories on the reception of art culture. In these theories, too, the element of hierarchy is often there; modes of reception as well as the objects of reception are set out in a hierarchic order. Pierre Bourdieu, for instance, describes reception of art by experts as cool, aesthetic distanciation based on knowledge. The antithesis is represented by popular aesthetics grounded in emotions and immediate experience (Bourdieu 1968).

It is quite striking how studies of art reception remain blind to the significance of gender and gendered practices. In many cases the discourse that emphasizes emotions and experiences is typical precisely of women's mode of reception, regardless of their social status. The emphasis on hard facts and knowledge is in turn more clearly present in the speech of men.

The fact that women are more active consumers of culture than men is often neglected in these studies completely – if in-

deed women are included in the study in the first place. One of the scholars who decided to omit women altogether was Michéle Lamont (1992) in a comparative study of cultural practices of the upper middle class in the United States and France. This means that differences appearing as class and educational difference may actually derive from gendered practices.

Feminist research on the consumption of culture has wanted to draw attention to forms of culture that are defined as the lowest forms, the television programmes that women favour, soaps and quizzes and game shows, romantic readers, to the joy and satisfaction that women get out of these cultural products, or to the social competencies that are related to the use of these products.

Many scholars concerned with popular culture have also made clear their objections to the tendency of art reception studies to adopt a view from above and to critically evaluate the consumer's competencies. In research on popular culture the viewpoint is at the consumer's level of everyday life. It often stresses the shared features of culture, and refuses even to admit that there exists a distinction between art and non-art; or at least it pays no attention to it. Indeed sometimes it feels as if studies devoted to television or other forms of popular culture are addressing a completely different society from studies dealing with the audiences of high culture.

Sometimes research on popular culture anchors itself to the line of inquiry which emphasizes differences; this is typically the case when the aim is to underline the central role of new cultural domains such as television, audiovisual culture and fashion in cultural distinctions. Where this boundary collapses, new problems are inevitably caused to art studies in which the drawing of the dividing line between art and non-art

is an integral part of theory-building. On the basis of old theories it is very difficult to understand the cultural products (e.g. pictures) which have traditionally been on the other side of the boundary.

The active role of the audience and their involvement in the generation of new meanings was stressed most particularly in television studies in the 1980s as well as in other research on the reception and consumption of popular culture. Art reception studies as well as the art policy discussion usually reserves the role of the creative individual exclusively to the artist. According to Kirsi Saarikangas (1993, 39),

traditional, modern history of art has implied an invisible viewer (and researcher); in the case of architecture this has implied the fading out of the user and the experiencer.

So does all this mean that there has been a reluctance, in the case of the sacred, the artistic, to study everyday, profane, perhaps disrespectful practices because the sector of culture production regarded as art has been considered unproblematic from the point of view of power?

For example, it is hard to imagine how the classical encoding/decoding model proposed by Stuart Hall (1980) for the analysis of television viewing could be used in the context of studying "art": films, a theatre performance, or visual art. But it has been used, and successfully so, in interpreting the reception of soap operas, detective series, or television current affairs programmes. The model is based on the assumption that a hegemonic message consistent with the cultural order is coded into the cultural product (media). The audience has three (active) modes of decoding the message: dominant reading, in which case the message is decoded verbatim, negotiated reading and oppositional reading.

But could the new subjective mode of reading (as the opposite of aesthetic-theoretical reading), as described by Rahkonen and Schulze (1995, 15), be interpreted as corresponding to this oppositional reading, which ignores the criteria for the sanctification of science and the "objective" evaluation of quality and emphasizes the recipient's subjective feelings?

It is interesting to consider the question of how far different concepts of culture have guided theory-building in reception and consumption studies on artistic and popular

culture. The question that I have is this: To what extent are images of the "audience" produced by theory? Will the boundaries between theories attached to art culture and those attached to popular culture cave in if and when the walls between art culture and popular culture collapse? And how will this affect and transform research? One symptom of change might be the fact that the debate which used to be waged in the domain of the sociology of art is now going on in the domain of the sociology of consumption.

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