



Documentary Film, Truth and Beyond

On the Problems of Documentary Film as Truth-telling

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| <p>Sammandrag:</p> <p>Mitt examensarbete behandlar problemet av sanning i dokumentärfilm. Dokumentärfilm anses ofta som något annat än fiktion eller nyheter, men något som ändå berättar om verkligheten, en sanning. Andra definierar dokumentär enbart som konst eller fiktion, men alla dessa definitioner är lika problematiska.</p> <p>Film kan anses som ett språk, och från en sociologisk synvinkel påverkar språket verkligheten. Detta betyder att även film bidrar till en socialt konstruerad verklighet. I mitt examensarbete behandlar jag dokumentärfilm som ett sanningspåstående eller som sanningstalande. Dessa är starkt kopplade till vetenskap, och vad vi tolkar eller upplever som sanning eller något verkligt.</p> <p>Mina påståenden baserar sig på en översiktlig granskning av ett begränsat antal av centrala bidrag inom filmteori, sociologi och filosofi. Då vi undersöker sanning, sanningspåståenden och sanningstalande i dokumentärfilm har vi möjligheten att förstå och problematisera dessa koncept även i större sammanhang. I slutet av mitt arbete föreslår jag även nya kriterier för att skapa en mer sann dokumentärfilm.</p> | |
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| <p>Abstract:</p> <p>My thesis deals with the problem of truth, or more specifically truth-telling in documentary film. Documentary film is often seen as something different from fiction and news, yet as something telling us about reality, a truth claim. Some define documentary film merely as “art” with no difference to fiction, however, both views are equally problematic.</p> <p>Cinema in general can be viewed as a language, and from e.g. a sociological point of view, language is able to shape reality, and thus, cinema contributes to the social construction of reality. Therefore, I am looking at documentary film as a sort of truth claim, or as an act of truth-telling. These in their turn are linked to knowledge, and what we perceive or interpret as truth or real.</p> <p>My claims are based on a limited review on key contributions in cinema theory, as well as sociology and philosophy. By investigating truth, truth claims, and truth-telling within documentary film, we may find new approaches to address, problematise and understand these issues also in a broader perspective. My thesis also suggests a criterion for a more truthful art of documentary filmmaking.</p> | |
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| <p>Tiivistelmä:</p> <p>Opinnäytetyöni käsittelee totuuden ongelmaa dokumenttielokuvassa. Dokumenttielokuva nähdään usein fiktiosta tai uutisista poikkeavana konseptina, mutta kuitenkin elokuvamuotona joka kertoo jotain todellisuudesta, eräänlaisena totuutena. Jotkut kuvailevat sitä taiteeksi tai pelkäksi fiktioksi, mutta nämä määritelmät ovat yhtä lailla ongelmallisia. Elokuva voidaan tarkastella kielenä, ja esimerkiksi sosiologisesta näkökulmasta katsottuna kieli muokkaa todellisuutta, ja tällöin myös elokuva osallistuu todellisuuden sosiaaliseen konstruointiin. Tästä syystä tarkastelen dokumenttielokuvaa opinnäytetyössäni eräänlaisena totuusväittämänä tai totuuden puhumisena. Totuusväittämällä ja totuuden puhumisella on myös vahva yhteys tietoon, ja siihen minkä tulkitsemme tai koemme totuutena ja todellisena.</p> <p>Väitteeni perustuvat rajalliseen elokuvateorian, sosiologian ja filosofian avaintesten tarkasteluun. Tutkiessamme dokumenttielokuvan totuutta, totuusväittämiä ja totuuden puhumisena, voimme ymmärtää ja problematisoida näitä konsepteja myös laajemmassa mittakaavassa. Opinnäytetyössäni ehdotan myös kriteereitä totuudenmukaisemmalle dokumenttielokuvanteolle.</p> | |
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FOREWORD

*“Above all, do not lie to yourself.
A man who lies to himself and listens to his own lie
comes to a point where he does not discern
any truth either in himself or anywhere around him,
and thus falls into disrespect
towards himself and others.”*

- Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*

Before I was not quite sure what the distinction between a good and an excellent teacher is. However, now I know that I have had the opportunity to work with the latter; my thesis supervisor Matteo Stocchetti. I feel privileged and grateful for all the guidance and support that I got from him. My partner Harri Koskela and my parents should also be awarded for all the help they have given, and the patience they have shown during my journey. A special thank you goes to Mikko Karjanmaa, Joonas Karhu and Lauri Kotilainen for continuously answering my silly questions. as well as to Satu Maikkula-Haavisto for an English language check, and to Veijo Kiuru and Lisbeth Konttinen for checking the Swedish summary. Finally, I would like to thank everyone else who participated in making documentary films with me, or those who have taken the time to discuss documentary, truth, and life in general, with me.

1 INTRODUCTION

This thesis is about the relationship between “documentary film” and “truth”, and more specifically, the problem of documentary film as “truth-telling”. The problems are the definitions of the concepts “documentary film”, “truth”, or “truth-telling” and their relationship with each other, as well as the errors and confusions that may occur in the process, and how these issues affect our everyday lives.

In my attempt to problematise documentary film as a speech activity, that of truth-telling, I am not trying to make a thorough description of all the failures that documentary films in a certain geographical sphere have made, or why they would not meet certain demands of “truth”. Instead, my attempt is to problematise documentary film as a speech activity, to demonstrate how these matters affect our daily lives, as well as to create certain criterion for what a more *truthful* documentary film could be like.

My approach to dealing with these problems will be a limited review of the key contributions mainly in film theory, sociology, and philosophy. As my point of departure I use Francesco Casetti’s book “Theories of Cinema 1945-1995” which describes ways of studying cinema, and organises its content into three paradigms. The first paradigm is “Ontological Theories” – What is Cinema? In our case this means the definitions and problematisation of concepts of documentary film, truth and truth-telling. The second one is “Methodological Theories” - From which standpoint should Cinema be studied? In my thesis I am investigating these issues from a more sociological and philosophical point of view rather than a strictly technical or pragmatic perspective. Casetti’s third paradigm is “Field Theories” – Which problems does Cinema give rise to, and how does it manage to both shed light on them and receive light from them? This will be for me the place where I discuss the problems of truth-telling in documentary film, what this suggest about the problems of truth in reality, as well as try to find answers or solutions. However, as material and discussion, questions and answers are at times hard to tell apart, the chapters are often interlinked and a strict division is difficult to make. A division does, however, offer some guidelines, or a framework, for a structure for both writing and reading this thesis.

Table 1. Comparison of Casetti's structure and the structure of the thesis.

| Casetti's Paradigms | Ontological Theories | Methodological Theories | Field Theories |
|---------------------|-----------------------|---|---------------------|
| Structure of Thesis | Defining the concepts | Sociological & philosophical approaches | Problems in reality |

In addition to Francesco Casetti's work, especially in the discussion part, I rely strongly on Michel Foucault's lectures on Discourse and Truth as well as my own experiences in documentary filmmaking. I will also be reviewing other contributions that I find relevant in discussing the problems of documentary film, truth, and truth-telling as a speech activity.

This thesis does not take into consideration e.g. economical, productional, technical or aesthetical aspects of documentary filmmaking. It excludes topics such as funding, marketing, the productional problems of a documentary film, digital manipulation or enhancement of an image, aesthetic style etc., albeit these undoubtedly do have a huge impact and relevance in filmmaking.

Rather, this thesis focuses on the more sociological and philosophical issues of documentary film, the things that can, and in my opinion *should* be dealt with before and after the actual production, or viewing, of any documentary film.

The problem(s) regarding reality also exceeds the limits of our investigation (as well as those of the author).

2 THE PROBLEM

“I know of no theoretical position, no definition of documentary that does not in some way reference the relationship to the real – from the phrase coined by John Grierson, the founder of the British documentary film movement, who described it as the ‘creative treatment [that is, image making] of actuality [that is pre-existing reality]’ to Michael Renov’s ‘direct ontological claim to the real’: ‘Every documentary issues a “truth claim” of a sort, positing a relationship to history which exceeds the analogical status of its fictional counterpart’ (Renov 1986 p.71).” (Winston 2008 p.9)

The problems that this thesis is dealing with can perhaps be divided into two parts. The first one is defining the concepts of documentary film and truth, and how the concepts are connected. The second part could be how documentary film is perceived, what passes as truth in our society, and how is this connected to *truth-telling*, and obviously, how do these issues affect our ways of navigating in our daily lives.

Encyclopedia Britannica (Britannica Academic 2017) defines documentary film as a “motion picture that shapes and interprets factual material for purposes of education or entertainment”. A fiction film can do that too, as the filmmaker does not exist in a vacuum, and must get some influences from some factual material, the world, in order to be able to create a story. And shaping and interpreting factual material – is not that something journalists do as well? The definition of documentary film has also differed depending on time and place, and I will present some of these definitions later in more detail. One of the earliest definitions of documentary film by John Grierson was “a creative treatment of actuality” (as described by Brian Winston 2008 p.14), however, others would argue that there is very little actuality left after a creative treatment. According to Brian Winston (2008 p.9), documentarists have tried to simultaneously claim “journalistic/scientific and (contradictory) artistic privileges”, which is sort of confusing when one really starts thinking about it. Another definition provided by Carl Plantinga (1997 p.18) is that a nonfiction film [and I include documentary film into that category] is a text that more or less publicly claims that the presented objects, states of affairs or events truly exist or existed in the actual world as they are presented. It is also, according to Plantinga and Trevor Ponech (as described by Jouko Aaltonen 2006 p.40), a communicative act, in which the audience is invited to believe that what is presented is somehow “true”, and thus, according to Aaltonen, it is sort of a contract between an audience and the filmmaker.

Even to deny the journalistic/scientific connotations of documentary film, and to only claim it as *art*, becomes problematic. As an example, Iris Olsson, a film director and the artistic director of Helsinki Documentary Film Festival 2017, interviewed for Hufvudstadbladet (Hällsten 2017), answered the question how Finnish documentary film does compared to international documentary productions: “Good. Our documentaries are creative narration and builds on cinematic art, not on journalism.” [own translation, original quote: “Bra. Våra dokumentärer är kreativt berättande och bygger på filmkonst, inte på journalistik.”]. As well-intended as this comment may be, trying to emphasise the aesthetic value of the medium, I cannot but help thinking that it simultaneously declines all connections to truth or something real, as well as any demands or expectations of responsibility of the filmmaker. “The film documentarist is selective and thus creative, creative and thus artistic, and artistic and thus, to a certain extent, absolved from the everyday norms of moral and ethical behaviour” (Winston 2008 p.29). The title ‘artist’, opposed to e.g. a journalist or educator, seems to have less burden of responsibility entwined in it. Also, if the cinematic and/or emotion triggering attributes become more valuable than whether the content has any “truth value” or not, we easily forget what the consequences may be.

What is also interesting is also the historical background of the word “documentary”, the modern source being “document”. A “document” would be “something written, inscribed, etc., which furnishes evidence or information” (Winston 2008 p.14) and this definition dates back to 1727. The word “document” in its turn derived from “documentum” (Latin: a lesson). “‘Document’ in the sense of something written actually replaces ‘muniment’, ‘a title deed preserved as evidence of rights and privileges’, in use in that sense by the late Middle Ages” (ibid.). “Muniment”, again deriving from Latin, means fortification, which at least with some imagination involved, gives more protection than e.g. a piece of paper, a written document. A “document” is also closely connected to terms in the legal realm, and the contemporary use of the word still carries the connotation of evidence (ibid). The word “evidence” also refers to science - evidence to either support or counter a scientific theory. One could also go as far as to associate evidence with criminalistics and collection of evidence.

However, the thing one should keep in mind for now is that documentary film has often been seen as something that differs from fiction film or news, leaving documentary in a very ambivalent position.

A dictionary offers several descriptions of “truth”. It is explained as fidelity or constancy, sincerity in action, character and utterance, or as facts – the “real” state of things. It can also mean a judgement, a proposition, an idea, or statement, that is true or accepted as true (e.g. truths in science). It can be the property of being in accordance to with fact or reality.

However, the daily use of this word, as well as words associated to it or used as synonyms, becomes increasingly problematic. Even the dictionary description of “truth” includes the equally problematic concepts such as “reality” and “real”.

“Reality” is defined as the quality or state of being real, or someone or something real or actual. The dictionary now even adds reality television programming to this list of explanations, videos of actual occurrences in reality. And what about the concept of “Real”? The dictionary would again provide us with answers such as something fixed, permanent or immovable, not artificial, deceptive, or false, occurring or existing in actuality (or reality) etc.

Obviously, we cannot problematise the concept of reality or real further for various reasons. These words are so closely linked to truth that they are impossible to ignore altogether, and also as we often use them as some sort of synonyms for each other.

The digital age is sometimes also referred to as the information age. The amount of data at our disposal has never been this huge, and we are drowning in information. A vast amount of misinformation and disinformation surrounds us, as well as the more or less narrated descriptions of our world, be it fictive or scientific. It is often hard to tell the difference between what is true and what is not, especially as so much is presented as facts, claimed as “real”. Just think about *alternative facts*, or certain advertisements for health and beauty products, e.g. moisturising creams and such, in which we are shown happy and healthy people, who are implicitly claimed to possess those qualities because they use the specific product that is being presented. Very often an advertisement like this would be accompanied by promises such as *Nine out of ten women using this product for two weeks became happier/ more beautiful or lost 10% of their weight, found*

Prince Charming and probably lived happily ever after, but presented in scientific-looking nonsense. Different variations of pseudoscience surround us in such vast amounts that the boundaries between facts and lies eventually become so blurred, that some may choose to ignore the difference, and choose to believe what either best suits the person's own previous opinions or based on how amusingly it is presented.

Even Oxford Dictionary chose as the word of the year 2016 "*post-truth*" - an adjective defined as 'relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief'. And if something seen simply as entertainment rather than providing information, we receive less information, and our decisions are less likely to be well based (Slade 2002 p.59).

So where does documentary film situate itself in the field of acquiring knowledge about the world? Also with keeping our key concepts in mind, the problem beyond certain definitions is then how do we *speak* about truth, what sort of things are *presented* as truth and what *passes* as truth in our society? An important question becomes thus what is *truth-telling*, and what are the possible effects?

"The commercials [i.e. mainstream producers] are interested only in the first results of their films, that is to say, in the amount of money a film takes in a twelvemonth. The long range propagandists [i.e. Grierson's sponsors] are not. Quick takings are a guarantee of immediate public interest and are therefore important, but the persistence of a film's effect over a period of years is more important still. To command, and cumulatively command, the mind of a generation is more important than by novelty or sensation to knock a Saturday night audience cold; and the `hang-over` effect of a film is everything." (Grierson 1979 as cited by Winston 2008 p.72)

3 CINEMA, TRUTH CLAIMS AND TRUTH-TELLING

To address the problems described in the previous chapter I will do a limited review of contributions mainly from the realms of film theory, philosophy, and sociology. In order to illustrate certain examples, or to e.g. check claims that are presented in the main literature I have searched for information elsewhere as well.

3.1 Approaches to Cinema

As we are dealing with documentary film, which can be regarded as a ‘sub-genre’ in the broader field of ‘film’ or ‘cinema’, which I further use as an umbrella terms for almost any audio-visual material in general, we will have a look into the theoretical framework(s) provided by Casetti, as well as certain historical approaches to see and study cinema. We will also take a look into literature regarding specifically documentary film written by Jouko Aaltonen and Brian Winston.

As presented briefly in the introduction, in the book “Theories of Cinema 1945-1995” Francesco Casetti has collected and organized different theories regarding cinema (how it has been imagined, discussed and studied) starting from the end of World War II until the change of the millennia, and he illustrates the history of cinema at least to the degree that theory makes sense.

As for the approaches to study film, Casetti has divided the theories into three different groups, or paradigms: ontological theories (“What is cinema?”), methodological theories (“From which standpoint should cinema be studied, and what does it look like from that perspective?”) and field theories (“Which problems does cinema give rise to, and how does it both manage to shed light on them and receive light from them?”).

In other words, the first group discusses the essence of cinema and its connection to reality, such as cinema as a window open to the world or as a mirror of life, creations of illusions of reality, subjective realities etc. The second paradigm mostly discusses how cinema should be studied, and brings up combinations such as cinema and sociology, cinema and psychology and cinema and semiotics. As an example, through sociology we can look at cinema as an institution or a social organization which influences socie-

ty, how it triggers or even dictates attitudes and behaviours, etc. The third paradigm, field theories, brings up film engaging in a more general debate, e.g. politics, critique of representation, feminist film theory etc. This suggests that cinema is a field of or for observations, and that by looking at the problems of cinema, we may learn about problems in the world. However, as Casetti does not say much specifically regarding documentary film, a look into other contributions dealing with that particular concept in more detail is needed.

Jouko Aaltonen's book "Todellisuuden vangit vapauden valtakunnassa – Dokumenttielokuva ja sen tekoprosessi" (*The prisoners of reality in the realm of freedom – Documentary film and its production process*), is in its turn a doctoral thesis. It deals much with the production processes of documentary filmmaking. Even though the thesis is in that sense quite pragmatic with its approach, the most relevant parts for my thesis are the various definitions of documentary film, the history of documentary film, certain examples from the interviews (e.g. how the specific interviewed documentary film directors subjectively think about certain matters).

According to Aaltonen's thesis, in the preproduction and planning of a documentary film the filmmaker has to study the reality, take a stand to the socio-historical world and one's relation to it, and in the editing phase to the representational aspect, choose how to represent all of this. The filmmakers interviewed for Aaltonen's study find the relation to the film's characters extremely important, but their relationship to the spectator is not often thought of (some filmmakers even find the question absurd). The connection and relationship between film and reality are brought up as well.

Documentary filmmaking is defined in Aaltonen's book as "being in the world", encountering the world and having an open dialogue with "reality". However, a clear distinction between journalism and documentary film is emphasized all the way. The filmmakers are "searchers" and "artists" who look at the world and paint their impressions of it (and making films "for themselves"). Aaltonen also describes that audiences also understand that a documentary film is a text, a construed performance, that is more or less the authors subjective view of the world. Documentary films do not record reality or make claims about it, but offer an opinion or an experience about what it is like to be human.

In order to find something more nuanced compared to Jouko Aaltonen's approaches to documentary film and the productional aspects of documentary, I searched for answers in Brian Winston's works.

Brian Winston's starting point is the Griersonian definition of documentary film as a "creative treatment of actuality", which has influenced the whole documentary film canon and the studies of it for almost 100 years. He challenges the definition and brings up vivid examples of many problems of documentary film from many decades. The first version of "Claiming the Real" came out in 1995, and a second, updated version was published in 2008.

3.1.1 Capturing the Real

"Photography is Truth. The Cinema is Truth twenty-four times per second."
- Jean-Luc Godard

In the early years of cinema, and very similarly to photography, the discussions circulated around the film's ability to "capture the reality in itself and present it to the viewer in a neutral way" (Aaltonen 2006 p.27). A photograph was seen as a document or evidence of something real. The idea was that cinema orients itself toward reality because of its photographic nature, and it had "a natural bond [to reality] due to the medium itself" (Casetti 1999 p.22). From semiotics we could use the notion of *index* and call this as the indexical nature of the image, and as for film, the thought was that a photograph, or later film, would be able to record reality directly in an objective way. Siegfried Kracauer goes as far as defining cinema's mission to be duplicating and preserving reality, saving the physical reality. The relationship between the photographic or filmic image and science was very close, as these images were sometimes thought of as scientific instruments. If failing to meet these certain realistic or naturalistic demands, the art was often seen useless or even harmful. According to Jouko Aaltonen, e.g. in Finland the cinema reformists (*kinoreformistit*) wanted to ban theatrical films in the 1920's as "harmful humbug" (Aaltonen 2006 p.29). Nonfiction was the high culture of film, it was serious, important, and educational, and for some people, documentary film still is that (Aaltonen 2006 p.29-30). According to Aaltonen, many of the trends in documentary filmmaking have been born as a counter reaction to fiction's untruthful illusionary

world (Aaltonen 2006 p.33). Thus, there seems to continue a sort of connection, or a demand, between documentary film, facts and the real.

The early realist theories also suggested that cinema could not be a form of art, as it merely copies or reproduced reality mechanically (Casetti 1999 p.22). As post World War II theories would argue, this is not the case, but as the relationship with reality and realistic traditions stuck with documentary film for a longer period (than with fiction), the documentary filmmakers have felt a stronger need to defend or define their work as a form of “art” even in this century. This leads us to the next observation – within the debate regarding the close relationship between the reality and the image (be it photographic or cinematic), the relationship is seen in various ways. As Casetti formulates it (1999 p.22), one of the questions is whether the representation [the image] should “emphasize the singularity of what is reproduced” or rather become an interpretative tool? Also, Michael Renov (as described by Aaltonen 2006 p.28) defines the documentary film’s main functions as:

- 1) to capture, reveal and preserve [reality],
- 2) to promote and persuade [which is more or less propaganda],
- 3) to research and analyse, and
- 4) to express [in order to do so, an interpretation must precede this].

Casetti continues by reforming the question to “do films somehow prolong our experience of the world, bringing it to life on screen, or do they present it as an event complete in itself, merely describing it as best they can?”.

3.1.2 Explaining the Real

“Beyond art, beyond drama, the documentary is also evidential, scientific.” (Winston 1995 p.127)

Cesare Zavattini was a screenwriter, director and theorist who contributed largely to the writings regarding neorealism. As Francesco Casetti describes the starting point for Zavattini’s thoughts, it is the post-war appreciation of the *richness of the real* and the discovering of the importance of current events (Casetti 1999 p.25). According to Zavattini, the space between life and spectacle should disappear, e.g. through bringing

real [and/or realistic] elements to fiction in order to “invent stories as close as possible to reality”, and also, to re-create reality as a story (Casetti 1999 p.25). The moral reason for this was the human need to know each other (in order to achieve solidarity), and cinema was, according to Zavattini, the perfect instrument of knowledge. The lesson of neo-realism would, perhaps, be that of *shadowing reality* - that the camera is meant to look at what is in front of it, and cinema should explore the world.

Guido Aristarco replaces this kind of realism with a critical one. He thinks that a direct encounter between cinema and reality is much more complex. Rather than observing and describing, verifying what is happening, it is important to understand the dynamics and motives. The choice of narrating and participating [in the world] “allows cinema to step beyond the surface of a phenomenon, to grasp its internal mechanisms and hidden reasons. The result is a more complete portrait of reality, in which a list of facts is paired with an understanding of the causes and in which the mere recording of events is supplemented by the perception of their underlying logic” (Casetti 1999 p.27-28). This notion would mean a shift from cinema as mirroring reality to reconstructing it, and what construction as a work may suggest is that there is always *someone* who is building, that there is some work and a worker involved. Thus, “There are many degrees of realism, just as there are many degrees of reality (reality as it is perceived) that directors may uncover according to their inclination and capacity for examining it” (as Casetti refers to Guido Aristarco 1955, Casetti 1999 p.28).

3.1.3 Becoming the Real

According to André Bazin, behind various forms of art, such as painting or sculpture, lies the need to preserve what is doomed to decay, to defend oneself against time and, thus, defying death (Casetti 1999, p.30). And yes, often a work of art or a text, if well preserved, can live on even when the author is “six feet down under”. For Bazin, photography supports this need and adds to it absolute objectivity, and photography is like a natural phenomenon – like flower or snowflake - existing on its own. Cinema in its turn adds the ability to reproduce time to the photographic objectivity, and thus a closer bond between cinema and reality is created. According to Bazin, by tracing reality cinema continues it, “adding to nature rather than creating another” (Casetti 1999, p.31). With such closeness to the reality it can present itself as a replica, or a prolongation, of the

world. As Casetti explains (1999 p.32), cinema and the world belong to each other: cinema attaches itself to reality and even participates in its existence, and eventually, fuses with the world.

For Siegfried Kracauer, the fundamental characteristic of photography and film is the ability to reproduce the material reality around us by both recording it, and by revealing what is difficult to perceive at first sight, e.g. what is too small or big or quick to see or grasp (Kracauer 1960, Casetti 1999). However, Kracauer emphasizes on the ability to present a reality of *facts* (as Bazin focuses on revealing a *truth*). For Kracauer, “the medium must above all analyse people and things, with the attitude of an explorer or scientist”, and the realistic basis emerges from the ability to document (Casetti 1999 pp.39). György Lukács’s starting point is that cinema is a *double mirror* of reality as it firstly reproduces the world (due to its photographic nature) and secondly, it becomes a presentation that goes beyond the immediate appearance of reality; it reveals the universality and exemplary nature of what is portrayed (ibid.). The photographic mirroring of reality does not, however, convey the meaning of things, but it does bring authenticity to films. As Jouko Aaltonen writes about authenticity, the demand for it became central after WW II and culminated in *direct cinema* and *cinéma vérité* (Aaltonen 2006 p.170). The second kind of mirroring “must therefore take into account the data at its disposal”, and a film will fail unless it is able to express an indeterminate objectivity (Casetti 1999 p.40). This means, as Casetti explains it, that a film should reconstruct a world complete and evident in itself.

The idea of cinema being a reflection or continuation of reality continued e.g. in the debate initiated by semioticians. According to e.g. Pier Paolo Pasolini, cinema functioned similarly to how writing does. Cinema is a medium that fixes behaviour on film, it is a language of actions. For Gilles Deleuze cinema could not be a language, instead it is the “world itself, which presents itself at all levels of existence, the world as it is and develops, as it appears and can be conceived” (Casetti 1999 p.41).

3.1.4 The Problems of Realism

Francesco Casetti ends his chapter on realism/realisms by concluding that realism is a purely idealistic theory. Those who would believe that the onscreen images are copies (and expressions) of what exists forget that the images are first of all produced by work.

And those who view films as a copy of the external world (as well as a reflection of the interior one) hide the process of production that lies behind the movie. Realism, thus, hides the material dimensions of things at stake – the “technical, professional, economic and ideological factors contributing to the creation of an illusion of reality” (Casetti 1999 p.41). However, the bond between cinema and reality continues to cause problems. For some it is a conviction, for others an assumption to be destroyed, and also new problems arise, e.g. the ideas that impressions of reality come from images, or truth is emancipating from them, to mention a few. They can be connected e.g. to the notions of *verisimilitude*, the ability to reflect what exists, and *veracity*, the ability to construct something that presents itself as what exists, with the help of signs. As Casetti puts it, it is a matter of both resembling reality and speaking as if it was true (1999 p.42).

Realism now also includes processes of perception (the ease or difficulty with which we relate what we see in an image to what we see in the world), mental habits (we rely on well-established schemes in order to recognize a certain figure), linguistic processes (the more or less effective ways of ordering the various elements), communication strategies (openly stating that we are telling the truth is sometimes more effective than simply telling it, without indulging in redundancy), etc. (Casetti 1999 p.42)

3.1.5 As a Conclusion

I think that the (indexical status of the) image is dead. The awareness of e.g. digital manipulation or enhancement that can be done on still images as well as video is relatively widely spread. Some ‘instagrammers’ now include #nofilter to their image descriptions to highlight that the image is (supposedly) not altered, and this illustrates how the manipulation and enhancement is now the norm. Recently also videos presenting real-time video footage manipulation, e.g. facial capture and re-enactment (Thies et al. 2016), has been published on YouTube, as well as new ways to alter sound (“photoshop for sound” or Project VoCo). As scary and fascinating as this sounds - the new tools to manipulate or to discover and reveal such manipulation - my concern and focus is on the ideological dimension, the “[...] factors contributing to the creation of an illusion of reality”, processes of perception, communication strategies, etc. (Casetti 1999 p.42).

3.2 Approaches to Truth

As the views of the cinema in general, as well as those of documentary film are connected with the concept of “truth” in this thesis, we also need to wrestle with truth claims for a while. What is meant by truth in science or in the legal realm (as the word document derives from Latin’s *documentum* etc.) and how can we compare these to e.g. truth in fiction? Thus, we need to look into contributions which are philosophical in their nature, as well as those that provide more detailed descriptions regarding construction of truth within the legal realm and what problems may occur there.

The philosophical approach needed for this thesis became obvious while reading Christina Slade’s book “The Real Thing – Doing Philosophy with Media”. Slade brings up good examples regarding what is “real”, what “seems real” and what kind of things may seem “more real than the real”. She explains certain philosophical traditions regarding the notion of “truth and reality”, and she also discusses them in the framework of media, simultaneously bringing up reasons and ways of combining these two topics (which is, perhaps, not always self-evident for all). Slade does not either address directly documentary film directly, at least without problematising it, but she does speak of truth in fiction and brings up “reality television” as an example of the paradoxes that appear when we are discussing connections between reality, “the real” and a mediated reality.

In the attempt to broaden the understanding of *nonfiction*’s relationship to reality and truth, a look into fiction is necessary. What kind of relationship has fiction with reality and truth? Are fictional characters such as Sherlock Holmes real, and in what sense? What can fiction tell us about the nature of truth and reality? Richard Mark Sainsbury, a British philosopher specialising in philosophical logic and philosophy of languages, brings up interesting points about truth in fiction, presuppositions, and e.g. acceptance of what he calls “possible worlds” in his book “Fiction and Fictionalism”.

Because of the etymology of the word “document”, I also felt the need to look more deeply into the concepts of document and evidence, even truth, in the legal realms, as well as other words than can be associated to law and documentary film (such as proof,

evidence, witness). I will to bring up certain examples that I found in my brief research, and which I find relevant and connected to some problems of documentary film.

For this purpose I will be referring e.g. to Brian Winston (from the documentary film aspect), Jaana Haapasalo et. al. and Klaus Helminen et al. and their contributions in criminal law, preliminary investigations, witness statements and witness psychology.

3.2.1 Between Science and Fiction

As Cristina Slade writes, at a first glance the distinction between the real world and television seems easy. Obviously, the real world is *out there*, but what we see on television is a representation which is more or less *realistic* (Slade 2002 pp.2). However, a philosophical pessimist may ask if we can be *sure* that “what is out there is really out there, and not imagined?” – how do we classify what is out there, how can we measure the correspondence between what is out there and a representation, especially without begging the question what is out there (ibid.)?

In practice, we often merely have to *believe* that what is out there is really out there in order to function in the world. Some issues we can perhaps check for ourselves, collect the evidence. If someone claims that it is snowing, we can simply look outside of the window to see if that is indeed the case, and thus, it is fairly quick and easy to check if the statement regarding the current weather corresponds with what is visible to us. However, if the same person is claiming that it is snowing because Santa Claus lost one of his reindeers, it would be, if not only absurd, but very difficult to verify. Firstly, we would need to believe such a character exists, decide whether Santa lives in Finland or on the North Pole, and hopefully also see that character with our own eyes. Some may want to meet the reindeers in question as well, and to know if Santa is simply bad at math. If, indeed, there was a person who is *a* or *the* Santa Clause, that the person would own some reindeers, and would also be accurate with calculations, *then* we may conclude that parts of the statements are indeed *true*. But correspondence theory only gets us to a certain point, that kind of uncomplicated relationship to facts. In this case we would also have to decide if the events (snowing and a disoriented reindeer) had any connection to each other, and if they did indeed have a connection, that could then perhaps be the *truth* (we could still continue to argue if *a* Santa is good enough or are we speaking about *the* Santa). And as irrelevant or silly this playing with these thoughts

may feel, usually the matters that are subjects of such pondering are much more complex and have as much or more actual effects (at least if you live in Finland and have become quite accustomed to snow).

Often what we see on TV is second-hand information. At least for me many of the presented images or narratives are mostly unreal. Jersey Shore could, with the little knowledge I have of the television series, be situated on a different planet as I lack the familiarity of what is presented. However, I may base certain assumptions on e.g. police investigation on the Swedish (original) version of “The Bridge - Bron” merely because it seems more *realistic* or *truthful* to me. And a mediated reality may in some cases become *the real* as that is perhaps the only reality or truth that we are offered.

As Slade writes: “Television has turned what is real into representation while representation has displaced reality” (Slade 2002 p.3) and tells as an example, “an event that is not represented on television, or does not fit the narrative pattern of television, is not taken to be real, since the very presentation lacks the conviction of familiarity. Reality is not real unless massaged into a reality package” (ibid.).

However, there was very little systematic research regarding to what extent the audience does think the television is real or replacing the real, the ways reality is represented (and how then the representations are interpreted) when Slade’s book was published (Slade 2002 p.7).

Now, speaking from my own experience, I do claim that even a fictive book or film would in a particular moment feel *incredibly* real (however, still not Jersey Shore). In its most vivid moments it would be similar to dreaming, to the moments when I would not know whether I was awake or in a dream. As Slade puts it (2002 p.10), “From earliest times, fiction and myth have seemed to readers and listeners to be real”. Obviously later, when I would wake up or after finishing a book or a film, I could reflect on the experience. Slade also talks about a reactive audience that is constantly interpreting and reinterpreting what they have seen (in media/television/cinema). However, Slade says “News is intended to be strictly and literally true”, but agrees that fiction can be a “route to understanding the world, but that the assertions made in fiction are not strictly and literally true” (Slade 2002 p.58). As for documentary film, one may ask where it positions itself. Should it be regarded as news or journalism, or merely fiction?

As for news and fiction, R. M. Sainsbury compares these two in the following way (2010 p.19):

“The headline in the morning’s paper is that nearly a million people died last night in a flood in Bangladesh. We pour more maple syrup on our pancake, take another sip of our coffee, and turn to the sports pages. A great tragedy leaves us largely unaffected. By contrast, the relatively minor tragedy told by the sounds of axes bringing down the cherry orchard in Chekhov’s play can be highly affecting. Fiction affects because of the vivid way in which it presents; a dry recital of something much worse may be less affecting.”

So let us take a closer look at our emotional response to fiction.

How many remember weeping when Titanic sunk and Jack saved Rose, but had to die in order to do so? The image of Titanic sinking may or may not have an impact on your decisions to travel by boat, but perhaps it makes you feel uneasy in rough sea. As a portrayal of death addresses our own fear of death and the emotional trigger is quite obvious in that sense, there are other less straightforward examples of this.

Sainsbury suggests that the emotional and physical response to the fictive presentation may create a model on how to behave in reality if a particular thing is encountered. The psychological participation in a game of make-believe may have some Darwinian survival value in some cases, in others perhaps not. Some suggested behavioural patterns are not a real solution to a problem, and yet they are often presented as such in a representation. The question is, what is actually happening? As Sainsbury explains (2010), we enter a game of make-belief. For a moment, we pretend that what we see, what is not real, is or could be real. This ability comes from early childhood, when we play.

“Life begins in play, and play involves pretense, making things up, fiction. Predatory mammals engage in pretend chase-and-kill routines from almost as soon as they can move. From at least as early as 18 months, when their use of language is still pretty primitive, human children engage in spontaneous pretense, as fun (that is, with no ulterior motive, like the intention to deceive): they pretend that a banana is a telephone and that they are talking on it; that there is a dragon under the bed when there is nothing...” (Sainsbury 2010 p.1)

With adults, the playing and entering a game of make-believe is equivalent to e.g. going to theatre or cinema. Sainsbury continues (2010 p.12), “[l]ike belief, but unlike pretense, make-believe is often involuntary. To open a novel with a normally receptive mind is to start make-believing. Likewise, to engage in a conversation with a normally receptive mind is to start believing. It may turn out that one should not have made-

believe or believed what one did: unreliable narrators are to be found in fiction as well as fact.”

When discussing fiction, we may say that the creator/author of the fictive text is mainly trying to get the audience to engage in a game of make-believe. The relevant question for this thesis is then, what is the documentary filmmaker trying to do? What kind of game are we entering if we go to the cinema as our aim to watch a documentary film?

Now, even if truth in fiction would not be a species of truth as Slade and Sainsbury conclude, truth can in fiction collide with truth in fact (Sainsbury 2010 p.31). Also, we can say false or fictive things, such as the sun rises, even when it is not the exact scientific explanation of the phenomenon, and yet as Sainsbury puts it “[f]alsehood may sometimes properly guide conduct [...]”, e.g. a statement that *fire* causes damage to skin and one should be careful with it, when the scientific reason would be *heat* causing the damage, but it is *useful* to avoid touching fire, whatever the reason is (2010 p.155).

This may suggest also that a truth could merely be a “useful belief” or myth, a pragmatic view on truth. E.g. the fictionalism about mathematics: “math is just a useful myth, to which we can help ourselves without believing in numbers, nonetheless requires us to believe in non-existent entities as the referents of numerals” (Sainsbury 2010 Preface and acknowledgements p.xix). He is saying that numbers are such abstract concepts, that they can perhaps not be considered as material beings, something tangible, but we can use numbers to calculate how we should build a bridge that will not break if a truck drives on it.

However, this pragmatic view on truth can also cause serious damage. For whom is that particular truth valuable for, who benefits from it, “*qui bono*”, and who might suffer because of it? Defining e.g. homosexuality as a crime (legal aspect) or a disease (a “scientific truth” at a particular time) may have been useful for some, but most certainly harmful, or even dangerous, for many individuals for many decades.

However, not to get too carried away with power struggles and the problems that may come with pragmatic “truths” just yet, let us for now just consider a sort of *relativity* to truth, or an acceptance that in a certain situation or within a particular frame, something can be seen as a *truth*.

“Firstly, we must note that truth is primarily a property of utterances, statements, or propositions. The sort of things that can be true or false are things that someone says or

conveys at a time or things that are believed” (Slade 2002 p.51). Instead of thinking that some news report is strictly literally “true”, we are actually saying, as Slade describes, “[...] that we understand under what conditions it would be true, and that we have evidence that those conditions obtain” (ibid). Sainsbury also agrees that “[w]e need to recognize, in addition to a conception of absolute truth, a conception of truth relative to a presupposition or a pretense.” (Sainsbury 2010 p.27)

This is very similar to acceptance of a scientific “truth”. As van Fraassen writes in *The Scientific Image* (1980 p.12 as referred to by Sainsbury 2010 p.162): “to accept a theory is to believe that it is empirically adequate, and to commit to allowing it to shape questions and research”. Van Fraassen continues by saying that “there are many contexts in which in *saying* that we have a theory that explains something we are thereby committing ourselves to the truth of the theory” (as retold by Sainsbury 2010 p.165). We are, once again, entering a game of make-belief, albeit another kind than that of entering a theatre or cinema. We are taking a reality as given, or at least, accept what is presented in a specific manner, just as in fiction.

This does not mean that we are denying an external (material) reality, but we accept that our thought and ideas of the matters at hands are sort of “fictions of the imagination” – even made up by imagination. However, various absurd confusions usually happen during that creative process (Sainsbury 2010 p.107), whether that process leans towards fiction or something else.

Modal fictionalism, which is about necessity (what has to be or cannot be otherwise), and possibility (or what can be or what could be otherwise) includes the concept of possible worlds. Without literally thinking that something is true, we accept that it can be useful to treat the thing in question as if it was true. There are at least some benefits in accepting the concept of possible worlds. As an example, if my friend told me about the ancient Greek gods, which I have neither met nor have I been able to time-travel back in history, and would thus easily claim as *unreal*, I would merely think that there is a possible world (time and geographical location) in which people may or may not have believed such gods exist. Then I could continue listening to what my friend has to say about these matters.

The thoughts about possible worlds can be, or are, or should be, treated as thoughts within a story (Sainsbury 2010 p.179). The relevant thing, however, becomes the point

of view(s), because even the world I inhabit may sound fictive to someone else. And in order to understand that other world, we may have to shift our perspective. This we will dig deeper into in the chapter on Interpreting Truth (and reality).

And obviously, it is not wise to accept *anything*, like the “theory” (example on p.22) that it is snowing because Santa lost one of his reindeers, not even if we would believe in Santa.

With this being said, we could bring up yet another matter that affects scientific research, e.g. the observer effect. In physics, to put it simply, the act of observing can alter the observed matter. The results from empirical psychological tests done in laboratory facilities may not always be reliable elsewhere. Then again, as unfamiliar with physics or psychology as I am, in the film realm and in documentary filmmaking we often encounter the situation that some people simply behave differently when a camera is recording them.

Another issue is, as Winston (1995 p.134) puts it, “[f]ilms are never called *Events observed during a facilities visit to a military establishment by me and my crew when we happened to have the camera switched on.*”

Yet another problem that may become relevant is that “[t]he actual image is of one particular person; the rhetoric of the title and the genre [in our case: the documentary film] is of a tribe” (ibid). This is going from particular to general; a documentary portraying e.g. one subjective experience of a person or a group can suddenly be applicable to even a larger group of individuals or a community. Making a documentary about my experience of being a film student is not automatically an experience that may apply to all identifying as *film students*. The experience might just as well be something else – gender, profession, parenthood, some specific illness or belonging to chess club – any experience that we simply do not possess, and again we need to rely on second-hand information.

However, even when we ourselves cannot identify with a certain experience or narrative, even a completely fictive story, it does not necessarily mean that we should not listen, or that we would not be able to learn something from it. Even fiction can have value and importance even if it would not be literally “true” (Sainsbury 2010 p.152). Sainsbury says that “[...] the valuable fictions are not or should not be *believed*, for they

are false, or at any rate cannot be known to be true; instead the appropriate attitude is one of *acceptance*, a state that may guide action without amounting to belief” (ibid.).

As a conclusion, what can be seen as “humbug” can indeed teach us something about the world, even if criterion for philosophical or scientific “truths” remain unfulfilled. But as Casetti stated, with film, we are also dealing with communication strategies, and sometimes claiming that we are telling the truth can be more effective than simply telling it (Casetti 1999 p.42).

3.2.2 Truth, Lies and the Legal Dimension

”The application of the adjective ‘documentary’ to film (and the use of ‘documentary’ as a noun meaning a documentary film) most appositely flags the fact that, despite claims to artistic legitimacy (‘creativity’) and dramatic structuring (‘treatment’) when dealing with this film form we are essentially and most critically in the realm of evidence and witness (‘actuality’).” (Winston 1995 p.10)

“The cultural concept of evidence also, obviously, involves the law.” (Winston 2008 p.141)

As mentioned in the introduction, the etymology of ‘documentary film’ is indeed interesting. The word “documentary” in documentary film has a strong connection to the word “document” which means something written, inscribed, etc., furnishing *evidence*. The word itself derived from “documentum” (Latin: a lesson), and replaces in that sense ‘muniment’, ‘a title deed preserved as evidence of rights and privileges’, in use in that sense by the late Middle Ages” (Winston 2008 p.14). The dictionary description for muniment would be the evidence (as documents) that enables one to defend the title to an estate or claim to rights and privileges, or a means of defence. “Muniment”, again deriving from Latin (*munimentum*), means fortification, which is also something giving protection or defence, perhaps even more than e.g. a piece of paper, a written document. A “document” is also closely connected to terms in the legal realm, and the contemporary use of the word still carries the connotation of evidence (ibid.).

First of all, we must understand that there is a difference between truth and evidence in science and in law. In the legal realm the task is not always to finding out *the* truth, but rather to settle conflicts (Haapasalo et al. 2000 p.13). Truth can sometimes be regarded more as a kind of agreement. In the legal realm there is also a gap between material

truth and that of the processual truth (Säily 2014 p.13), of which the latter is basically the only truth which can be achieved. Processual truth could then be described as a *closeness* to truth or a *probability* (Säily 2014). Thus, there is often a need to evaluate evidence as well as statements (credibility assessments).

Historically, facts were so unprovable that “judgements could only be reached by appeals to the Almighty (judicium Dei) in the form of ordeals or, later, battles (judicial duels)” (Winston 2008 p.141). In addition, third parties could come forward to swear someone was honest in person and in their actions. There was also an ever-growing appetite for documentation – proving of fact by written documents. However, in the early period “even documents required witnesses to attest to their authenticity – which again, vexatiously, occasioned the need for judgment as to their credibility” (ibid.). Later, the rise of modern science began to influence law, and both judges and philosophers began to talk about weighing evidence in probabilistic ways.

Around the middle of the eighteenth century evidence became considered as guaranteeing necessary information in order to make a judgement, and “even longer before reforms in the actual conduct of trials were undertaken” (ibid.).

According to Winston (2008 p.142), “[t]he legal concept of evidence is important to the idea of documentary ‘actuality’ in two ways. I have been arguing that documentary’s truth claim depends on the fact that, because of the camera, scientific evidence is what is on the screen, but scientific evidence itself is influenced by the concept of evidence in the law. After all, the law, as it were, came first. [...] Law provides the general cultural concept of evidence into which science and documentary’s truth claims in general both fit.”

Law is also the source of a critical documentary technique – the interview” (ibid.). As soon as legal interrogatory was used in courts, it was borrowed for journalism, and later e.g. social sciences, radio, and cinema. The rise of the interview around 1870s was, however, seen controversial. It was even described as a “[...] joint product of humbug of a hack politician and another humbug of a reporter” (Frank Mott, *American Journalism*, 1962, p.386, as cited by Winston 2008 p.142). Despite the artificiality and unnaturalness interview became a staple for the Griersonian documentary (ibid.). One may ask why? Well, because people are capable of lying.

Robert S. Feldman has studied lying for some 30 years and his studies suggest that people lie on the average of two or three times for every ten minutes of conversation time (Britannica Academic 2014). Various studies show that there are many motives for lying, e.g. the need to preserve self-esteem, in order to avoid conflict, or to manipulate others. Not only are lies used to deceive others, but to deceive ourselves as well, a sort of self-deception. Studies also show that people are extremely bad at detecting lies, and less than one percent of the people participating in the studies are able to naturally detect lies (ibid.). Obviously, this would create problems for e.g. journalists, law-enforcement, and judges to evaluate whether a person is lying or not.

At this point it is important to bring up certain aspects of juridical thinking at least here in Finland. Basically, there are differences between suspect [epäilty], victim/claimant/plaintiff [asianomainen] and witness [todistaja] in the Finnish juridical system. The two latter have an obligation to be truthful [totuusvelvollisuus], however, no-one is obligated to testify against oneself, and thus, a suspect does not necessarily have to say anything that could be used against him or her in trial. It is about the *right to silence* and the *privilege against self-incrimination* [itsekriminointisuoja]. And to put it even more simple: there is a difference between “to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth” and that of “you have the right to remain silent”.

The truth cannot be solved by any means necessary and as stated earlier, no-one is obligated to testify against oneself (Helminen et al. 2014 p.11). In the Finnish legal system there is also the presumption of innocence which means that a person is not guilty until proven otherwise. This is because it must be held more important that an innocent will not be punished than someone guilty is left unpunished. In case of doubt, a verdict must be made in favour of the defendant, “In dubio pro reo”, (Helminen et al. 2014 p.12, Larouer 2009).

Then we could have a peek into e.g. eyewitness statements and what may affect the eyewitnesses. There are obviously individual differences between how well we observe and remember things. What could affect the observance of a matter and the memory of it is e.g. the duration of the issue or event observed, the frequency and recurrence, the

details and the familiarity (Haapasalo et. al. 2000, Helminen et al. 2014, Gudjonsson 1992). Familiarity and how central or relevant the observed is means that e.g. new, “weird” and unfamiliar things tend to be easier to notice than the familiar. Then again stress or trauma may reduce the focus field (ibid.). Age obviously affects as well, e.g. very young or old people may not remember certain things that well (ibid.). Even profession may affect as people may notice some things easier because of their professional training and mere interest (Haapasalo et. al. 2000, Gudjonsson 1992). Haapasalo et al. describe how our information structures, thoughts and emotions play a part in observing and memorising as well, and what one should keep in mind is that we might have or get certain memory distortions.

Distortion can happen at all stages, when memorising, bearing the memory and recalling it (Haapasalo et. al. 2000). As an example – a witness who has seen a person many times elsewhere, in a library or a shop maybe, but does not really remember that the person in question is familiar because of *that*, and therefore may connect the person to a crime if this person’s picture is shown to the witness, or if the person appears in an identity parade (police lineup). Haapasalo calls this an unacknowledged [memory] displacement (*tiedostamaton siirtymä*). According to Haapasalo, memory also tends to *fill in the gaps*, in other words, what we do not actually remember, we may build up with our imagination, and the imagined may then become for us the “real”.

Disinformation or leading and suggestive questions may also create or contribute to the memory distortions, and thus affect the testimony or confession (Haapasalo et al. 2000, Yuille 1988 p.155-170). Loftus et al. describe also *misguided memories* which can be described as sincere distortions of reality, and how people typically have great difficulties in determining whether a memory is real or not (Yuille 1988 p.155). “There are a number of mechanisms by which one’s own memory can inadvertently distort the truth including: expectations, interference resulting from similar events, and the natural decay of memory over time”, and a particularly dangerous source of memory inaccuracy is the influence of misleading information (Yuille 1988 p.155).

There is a number of rules regarding interviewing and interrogation in the criminal and legal realm. The literature regarding criminal preliminary investigation brings up examples of how a suspect may feel pressured by the interrogator and the leading questions. In interrogation, it is not permitted to give false information, false promises, to exhaust,

threaten or force the interrogee, or use other unfit means or methods that may affect the interrogees freedom of choice, will, memory or judgement (Helminen et al. 2014 p.97). Discreetness/tactfulness [hienotunteisuus] in hearing is constantly highlighted (Helminen et al. 2014 pp.101->).and the officers should also try not to stigmatise the suspect or victim (e.g. in cases of sexual abuse). They should also take into account age, health condition, shock, etc.

The philosophical thought regarding interrogation is that it is also communication between individuals (e.g. Karstinen 1998), and there are plenty of issues that may affect the outcome. Simply “bad chemistry” between interrogator and interrogatee is among them. The interrogator may also make certain presumptions regarding guilt, or have other prejudices that affect the situation, even unaware of this matter.

Another problem that is brought up by Haapasalo et al. is if an expert is needed in court to give an evaluation of some sort. The first problem is to define who is an expert, then how valid is the expertise, etc. (Haapasalo et al. p.12-17)?

All of these issues can be compared to the problems of documentary film. For example, one may ask if the documentary subject, whether it is a certain topic or a person, is treated as suspect, victim, or witness? Is the filmmaker making leading questions or pressuring, using force, etc.? What about presumptions and prejudices? Who is chosen to perform the role of an expert for a documentary film e.g. to explain a phenomenon, and with what qualification? And not only when filming, but while editing? What is the director or editor choosing to present and what is cut out? Is documentary film giving a “fair trial”, or does it risk of becoming both judge, jury and executioner?

3.2.3 As a Conclusion

If we would for a moment agree that scientific truths are not always fixed and that they may change, that fiction can contain or collide with certain facts, and that fiction can be valuable even when it is not necessarily true, and accept that even the truths in the legal realm may leave us in great suspicion, as well as the means to achieve information (e.g. in an interview or by interrogation), then *this* is the moment when we at the latest should become aware of that our everyday use of the word *truth* is a disturbingly com-

plicated thing. After this realisation, we can finally focus on the *act of claiming to speak the truth* and *truth-telling* as a speech activity.

3.3 Approaches to Truth-Telling

So far we have mostly been wrestling with definitions and views on cinema and truth. However, what I would like to focus on in this thesis is the social dimension of the problematised concepts of documentary film and truth, especially that of truth-telling. Thus, we need sociology.

Obviously, the philosophical and sociological questions overlap from time to time. As an example, if the man on the street believes he possesses '*freedom of the will*' and he is thus '*responsible*' for his actions, a philosopher would be asking e.g. '*is man free*' or '*what is responsibility*'. A sociologist may be unable to give answers to these questions; however, the sociologist may be asking if the notion of freedom has been taken for granted in one society and not another, or how this thought is maintained in one society and lost to an individual or an entire collectivity (Berger & Luckman 1966 p.14-15). The difference between philosophy and sociology could also be illustrated as in sociology, it is possible to take reality as given, as an object of analysis, without further inquiring about the foundations of this reality – which is a philosophical task (Berger & Luckman 1966 p.33). In our case, sociology enables us to look at cinema and documentary film not only as some aesthetic entities, or "truth" as something we may get a terrible headache from while desperately trying to disclose what it is, but rather as phenomenon or institutions that have effects in our society.

As for sociology, I will mainly rely on Peter L. Berger's and Thomas Luckmann's "The Social Construction of Reality – A treatise in the sociology of knowledge". The authors introduced the term 'social construction' into the social sciences and the book itself is a classic. They claim that language helps us to make sense of the everyday life and in creating meanings. "I live in a place that is geographically designated; I employ tools, from can-openers to sports cars, which are designated in the technical vocabulary of my society; I live within a web of human relationships, from my chess club, which are also or-

dered by means of vocabulary. In this manner language marks the coordinates of my life in society and fills that life with meaningful objects” (Berger & Luckman 1966 p.36).

To summarize: language contributes to knowledge, and understanding a language is essential for any understanding of the world.

I will also be referring (once again) to Casetti’s contribution, and finally bring up Foucault and his descriptions of *truth-telling* as a speech activity – parrhesia. This part of the thesis should perhaps be regarded as an “interlude” to the discussion part, as in chapter four I discuss these issues in more detail.

3.3.1 Cinema as a Language

“At a first glance, it seems totally obvious that every film, by choosing certain segments of reality, certain kinds of shots, certain strategies, attributes a precise meaning to what it slowly unfolds before our eyes and openly transmits that meaning to us. Every film, in addition to representing either an interior or an exterior world, gives us information, impressions, ideas. It offers us meaning, and it makes that meaning’s importance clear. [...] In a word, cinema appears as the sphere of a signification and of a communication.” (Casetti 1999 p.54)

Cinema can be seen as a powerful tool, or even a weapon, that can be used to affect people’s thoughts. Among the reasons for this is film’s ability to touch us emotionally. There are plenty of examples in history when films have been used for e.g. propaganda purposes. However, films as well as other audio-visual content made for other purposes than that also carry in them more subtle or implicit statements on what the world is like, or how it could, or should, be. This is because film can be seen as a language, a “device that allows man to express himself and to interact” (Casetti 1999 p.54), a vehicle for communication. Each film would then be a communicative act (Casetti 1999 p.54), and from a sociological perspective, language can shape the world (Berger & Luckman 1966).

The idea that cinema is a language was already discussed in the pre-WW2 years, but was taken up again in the mid-1960’s by a new discipline, semiotics, as they focused more on cinema’s linguistic features rather than linguistic basis. There is also a connection between thought and language, and as Casetti (1999 p.69) cites Jean Mitry, “the latter being a way to both translate and shape the former, so that the latter relies on the former’s operations, namely, ‘conceiving, judging, reasoning, ordering according to re-

relationships of analogy, consequence, or causality”. Mitry also compares the filmic and verbal language as even though they use different symbols and signs, they have the same basic mental structures, namely, the operations of thought (ibid.). Thus, if language can shape our thoughts, and if cinema is seen as a language, cinema is able to shape our thoughts too.

In order to tie this together with documentary film, we can use this approach of looking at cinema as a language and filmmaking as a communicative act that is constructing reality (Berger & Luckmann 1966). And as documentary film is for me a peculiarity in that broader field of cinema, I will be relying strongly on Carl Plantinga’s definition of nonfiction film as a film that more or less publicly claims that the objects, state of affairs or events truly exist or existed in reality as they are presented in the film (Plantinga 1997). Thus, we are looking at documentary film – not solely as a truth claim because we would probably get lost in the battlefields of epistemology etc. – but rather as an act of truth-telling.

3.3.2 Truth-telling and Parrhesia

The act of speaking in general and a specific kind of speaking, that of truth-telling, leads us to Michel Foucault’s lectures on “Discourse and Truth: The Problematization of Parrhesia” which Foucault gave at the University of California at Berkeley in 1983. The referred text itself is compiled of tape-recordings from those lectures, a transcription made and edited by one of his auditors, Joseph Pearson.

In the lectures, Foucault’s intention was not to deal with the problem of “truth”, but with the problems of “truth-tellers” or “truth-telling” as an activity, “parrhesia”. Thus, he is not analysing the internal or external criterion for evaluating if a statement or proposition is true or not, but rather the relation between the activity of truth-telling and the exercise of power.

Foucault analyses old Greek and Roman texts in order to show the development of the problematisation of parrhesia, and deals with issues such as *who* is able to tell the truth, the truth about *what*, with what *consequences*, and with what relation to *power*.

Foucault's contribution may be philosophic in its nature and original form, however, it gives us great tools to deal with many of the issues I bring up in this thesis, and perhaps even some that go beyond usual approaches to documentary film and truth claims.

The word "parrhesia" first appears in Greek literature in Euripides (c. 484-407 BC) and is still found in texts around AD 345-407. Ordinarily it is translated into English as 'free speech'. 'Parrhesiazomai' is to use parrhesia, and a 'parrhesiastes' is someone who uses parrhesia. Etymologically 'parrhesiazesthai' means 'to say everything' – from 'pan' (*everything*) to 'rhema' (*that which is said*). It can be associated to 'frankness', to the quality of being open, honest and direct in speech or writing. Thus, an early definition of a parrhesiastes is someone who says everything he has in mind, without hiding anything. He gives a complete and exact account of something, directly, and avoiding rhetorical forms which would veil what he thinks. Furthermore, parrhesia refers to a type of relationship between the speaker and what is being said. It is also clear that what is said is a personal opinion.

However, saying anything or everything one has in mind, may include even the most stupid and dangerous things. Such parrhesia is referred to as merely 'chattering' or ignorant outspokenness. There is even a Greek word, 'athuroglossos', which literally refers to someone with a tongue but not a door, and hence, implies a person who cannot shut his or her mouth. The metaphor of a mouth as a door is frequent in ancient Greek literature, and it can also be found in the Sixth Century BC text Theogni's *Elegies*:

Too many tongues have gates which fly apart
Too easily, and care for many things
That don't concern them.
Better to keep bad news Indoors,
and only let the good news out

The important thing then becomes to distinguish those occasions when one *should* speak from those when it is better to remain silent.

Another type would be parrhesia with an exact coincidence between belief and truth – the parrhesiastes says what is true because he knows that it is true; and he knows that it

is true because it is really true. Thus, not only is the speaker sincere and says his opinion, but his opinion is also the *truth*.

However, for the Greeks, the coincidence is the verbal activity, or something more like an attitude. Foucault mentions that it would be interesting to compare Greek parrhesia with the modern Cartesian concept of evidence, because for René Descartes, before obtaining indubitable clear and distinct evidence, one cannot be certain that what he believes is, in fact, true. Also, it should be noted that the parrhesiastes in the Greek texts never seem to doubt their own possessions of the truth.

Then *who* is able to tell a truth?

For the Greeks, the “parrhesiastic game” presupposes that the parrhesiastes is someone who has the moral qualities which are required to *know* the truth as well as to be able to *convey* that truth to others. The moral qualities would be e.g. honour, good reputation, a respectful relation to the city and law etc. In the ancient Greek context parrhesia is often also linked to social status. Similarly to citizenship – which applied generally to free men with property, but not to women, slaves or poorer members of the community, parrhesia was a privilege of relatively few. The knowing in its turn is linked to education; *mathēsis* – *learning or wisdom*.

“Someone is said to use parrhesia and merits consideration as a parrhesiastes only if there is a risk or danger for him or her in telling the truth” (Pearson 1985 p.4). From an ancient Greek perspective, this means that a grammar teacher may well be telling the truth to the children that he teaches, and indeed, he may have no doubt that what he teaches is true, however, he is not a parrhesiastes. Then again, a philosopher telling a tyrant that his tyranny is unpleasant and disturbing because tyranny is incompatible with justice, the philosopher is speaking the truth, *believes* he is speaking the truth and also takes a *risk* in doing so. Consequences may be e.g. social exclusion, punishment, even death, and so on.

The function of parrhesia is also criticism, either towards another or oneself. “For power without limitation is directly related to madness. The man who exercises power is wise only insofar as there exists someone who can use parrhesia to criticize him, thereby putting some limit to his power, to his command” (Pearson 1985 p.10). Also, the parrhesi-

astes is always the “weaker” and less powerful part. Just as the grammar teacher does not risk anything, a pupil criticising the teacher just might do that. And the tyrant cannot be a parrhesiastes as he is the one in power, but the philosopher criticizing him can.

The last characteristic of parrhesia is regarding the truth-telling as a *duty*. This means that the speaker is not forced to speak from the outside, e.g. by being interrogated or because he is tortured, but because of one’s own sense of duty.

In the later lectures, the focus shifts from parrhesia as a social action to something concerning the individual, and Foucault discusses parrhesia as the courage and capability to disclose truths about oneself to oneself, as an art of life. Parrhesia is, thus, also a relation towards oneself, and the truth that emerges can then be disclosed either to oneself or someone else.

To summarize: Parrhesia is a verbal activity, which has a relation to truth through frankness, comes with risks and dangers, has the quality of criticism, and is done because of a sense of duty, or the free will, to do so. However, the problems then become *who* is able to tell a truth? What are the moral, the ethical, and spiritual conditions which entitle someone to present himself as a truth-teller or to be considered as one? About what topics is it important to tell the truth and with what kind of consequences? What are the anticipated positive effects? And finally, what is the relationship of truth-telling in relation to exercise of *power*?

In my thesis, I treat documentary film as a very specific type of film, something different from e.g. fiction film, which has a very specific kind of relationship to truth. The definition by Carl Plantinga illustrates this thought quite well – a nonfiction film, or a documentary, is a text that more or less publicly claims that the presented objects, states of affairs or events truly exist or existed in reality as they are presented, whereas the things presented in a fiction film does not necessarily need to exist, and thus, there is no truth claim in fiction.

And just as parrhesia, in the Greek sense, can no longer occur in modern epistemological framework, perhaps neither can documentary film convey an ontological truth about anything. However, the act of filmmaking is indeed comparable to truth-telling, as a parrhesiastic activity, and the problems are then, too, very similar.

3.3.3 As a Conclusion

Cinema (film or other audio-visual material) can be seen as a language, and language contributes to the social construction of reality. It must be highlighted that we, as an audience, would obviously not believe *everything* that we see on the television. However, our *attitude* towards what we see may be slightly different depending on whether we are watching Lord of the Rings or the evening news. Usually our assumption is that the fantasy story is made up, but journalists provide us with facts and tell us things that are *true*. The question is, however, where does documentary film then position itself? Should it be compared to fantasy or the news? Is it fiction or not? Can documentary convey some sort of truth, and if, then how? What about truth-telling as a speech activity? Who can tell a truth? Why do these things matter, and more importantly, what can we learn from them?

4 DOCUMENTARY FILM, TRUTH-TELLING & TRUTH

“One side is concerned with insuring that the process of reasoning is correct in determining whether a statement is true (or concern itself with our ability to gain access to the truth). And the other side is concerned with the question: what is the importance for the individual and for the society of telling the truth, of knowing the truth, of having people who tell the truth, as well as knowing how to recognize them.” (Foucault’s Discourse and Truth, Pearson 1985 p.74)

Previously we have looked at approaches to and views on cinema and truth, as well as what may be compromising these views, what problems and errors may occur, etc. We have also seen how parrhesia, truth-telling, has been defined, albeit the processes of this evolution and the problematisation is not described in detail.

As Foucault describes the certain criterion on what parrhesia is, who can be a parrhesiastes, and issues of parrhesia in relation to power, we too will start doing that, but this time in the framework of documentary film. And just as there is a shift from parrhesia in relation to others to parrhesia in relation to oneself, we too will need to take that step.

I am not trying to make a thorough description of all the failures that documentary films in a certain geographical region have made, or why they cannot meet certain demands of “truth”. Instead, I am problematising documentary film as a speech activity, that of truth-telling, and in my attempt to create certain criterion to what truth-telling in documentary film could be, I use thoughts from Foucault’s lectures on Discourse and Truth, as well as my own experiences in making documentary film.

4.1 Documentary as Truth-Telling

Parrhesia in its earliest and widest form could be translated into “free speech”. In addition, a film, whether it would be a fiction or non fiction film, can also be seen as a language, communication, a speech activity and as a way to exercise free speech.

Free speech has, however, its good sides and its bad sides. As an example, social media makes an excellent platform to express all kinds of opinions, even erroneous or those filled with anger and hatred. Sometimes they are presented as facts. Even the Ministry for internal security and migration here in Finland warns that hate-speech creates inse-

curity and confrontations between groups of people, and how easily speech leads to actions (STT, Aamulehti). The right to free speech is after all, in the Finnish context, the right to express without preliminary inspection or censorship (Kurki 2017).

So, expressing e.g. xenophobic and misanthropic thoughts may well feel as a right or a privilege for some, but what about responsibility of speech, and what about the consequences? Not just for the speaker, but the people or issues he or she is referring to, or to the audience that will hear that speech?

The first task is thus to distinguish parrhesia from chattering, as this freedom of speech would in that sense also include the freedom to say even the most stupid or dangerous things. This was referred to in *Discourse and Truth* as ‘athuroglossos’, a tongue without a door (Pearson 1985 p.26). Many would agree that ‘athuroglossos’ is indeed the case with a number of films and TV-series as they can be regarded as “silly” or “stupid”. And indeed, many see them as dangerous as well in our day, just as the cinema reformists wanted to ban fiction as harmful humbug (Aaltonen 2006 p.29). However, in the classical texts parrhesia had the more positive meaning, that with a connection to truth.

Then we have the question of who can be a parrhesiastes? In order to be a parrhesiastes and use parrhesia, certain criterion had to be met. One had to have certain moral qualities, but in the ancient Greek context those moral qualities were defined e.g. as having honour, a good reputation, a respectful relation to the city and law, and it was also linked to social status. The parrhesiastic game presupposed that the parrhesiastes is someone who can *know* the truth as well as to be able to *convey* that truth to others.

Some may suggest that in our time some particular film director or institution most probably possesses similar ‘moral qualities’, and therefore they should be believed. Documentary film itself might be viewed as such a reliable institution. However, almost everyone has a digital camera of some sort, so the material conditions enable almost anyone eager to make a video of any kind to do so. Some people choose to film cute kittens, others start filming documentaries. Or once you have attended film school, mingled with the right people, proved that you are a nice buddy, smiled and laughed at the right occasions, you may suddenly find yourself in a team making a ‘doccie’. You might have to apply for funding somewhere, or if you are lucky, you are ridiculously rich or have

just won the lottery. Certain things have not changed much in a couple of thousand years, and thus, some education, wealth and a social status can get you at least half the way. However, as eventually these qualities were not enough in ancient Greece, they will not be enough either for us. Because with the previous qualities one could indeed make a film, perhaps even a good one, but it would not be enough to meet the later criteria for parrhesia, certainly not those of truth-telling documentary film.

4.1.1 The Contract of Truth

“A story about an imaginary world is just a story. A story about the real world (that is a documentary) is an ‘argument’.” (Winston 1995 p.252)

We were discussing in chapter three the eyewitness statement and interviews (or interrogation). We could also view them as subjective “truths” or opinions, or sometimes merely as lies. The thing is, however, that subjective truths can either be private or public. As an example, by writing a diary, a person could spill out just about everything without there being any consequences, besides the hopefully therapeutic effects. At least diaries used to be something private for most of the people writing them. Would then a criterion to distinguish documentary film from any film be the view of it as the filmmaker’s subjective truth and opinion, as Aaltonen suggest (2006 p.42)? A parrhesiastes would have emphasised that a statement was a subjective opinion, “I am the one who thinks this and that” (Pearson 1985 p.3). A parrhesiastes was, however, also supposed to distinguish the occasions when to speak, and when to shut up.

Now, a documentarist is usually hoping to have the film published. The act of making a documentary and showing it to the world – it is communication *with* someone. Thus, it is also a social action. And according to Trevor Ponech (described by Aaltonen 2006 p.40-41), when an object is the product of a communicative act, it is reasonable to examine it through the author’s intentions.

If fiction is made with the intention of communicating about something that is not necessarily true or real, and is merely an invitation to enter a game of make-believe, then nonfiction could be seen as a text communicated as having a connection to reality, inviting us to think that the things presented are somehow true or real. Thus, style does not

define a film's status as either fiction or documentary, the indexical status of photography or something else, but the *intention* (Aaltonen 2006 p.40-41).

Let us briefly have a look into fictive intentions as described by Sainsbury. "We contrast fact and fiction, but we cannot say what fiction is just by saying it's not fact, or that it is not represented as fact, or that it is represented as not being fact" (Sainsbury 2010 p.4). Then again, an out-of-date timetable is not fiction even though it is not fact any longer. Sainsbury also suggests that we may define fiction as the author's fictive intention. "Whether something is fiction is determined by how it came to existence, and in particular the aims and intentions of the producer" (Sainsbury 2010 pp.5). However, various confusions may occur, e.g. the public may well treat a novel as if it were factual narrative, or factual narrative as if it were a novel, or a "documentary might be mistaken for an ordinary drama-movie, or vice versa" (Sainsbury 2010 p.5). Another option would then be that a work is fictional if it is a product of a fictive utterance, or a series of such.

Assume that the content of the uttered sentence, *s*, is that *p*. The intention must be that a potential audience should, on encountering *s* in its context, make-believe that *p*. That is the first condition. The second is that *p* should not be true, or, if true, true only by accident. The second condition is to eliminate cases like this: the first condition is satisfied by an author mistakenly thinking he is producing something purely fictional, whereas he is actually producing factual truths concerning his own life which he has repressed, and so he does not recognize them as memories. In these cases, we say that it's not really a work of fiction but an autobiography. This is because of the systematic and reliable link between what the work says and the early life of the author. The first condition is the crucial one. What is it to intend that a potential audience should make-believe that *p*? We fail to make-believe that *p* if our response is simply 'That's false'. [...] We have to open ourselves to immersion in the story, so that we care how it unfolds, and are ready to speculate about the characters' motivation. We do not have to believe that the events really happened or that the characters portrayed really exist. But in make-believe we can combine the real and the fictional just as the author does. (Sainsbury 2010 p.7-8)

Intentions might as well leave us bewildered, and thus we could view at documentary film, as Aaltonen suggests (2006 p.42), as a social convention, custom or practice. "If not stated otherwise, the audience will make predefined assumptions regarding what is being seen. One of these assumptions is that of the film's documentary value ("*dokumentaarisuus*") or fictiveness. One could think that we are dealing with an unvoiced contract between the audience and auteur (or the text)" (Aaltonen 2006 p.42). The contract would thus mean that there is, often, a presupposition that documentary is something different from fiction, e.g. a fairy-tale, and it is more *real*. This might, however,

result with pretty upset grownups in a situation where they were presented with a film under the label documentary film (genre), which was claiming that Santa is literally real. As a confusing example of giving mixing presuppositions, there is a *docu-fiction* called “Houston, we have a problem” directed by Žiga Virč. It is about space programme in former Yugoslavia and uses archival material as well as new material. The audience cannot be quite sure whether it is true or a lie, and yet the director claims it would be true even if it was not true. However, all of this seems to be breaking a sort of contract of truth, which we so often are used to in the context of documentary film.

As for the Greeks it was important to recognise a parrhesiastes, and parrhesia itself was more like an attitude, we could view documentary film as an attitude (both that of audience and of filmmaker). Also, if breaking the contract, sincerity would become questioned and it could be difficult to recognise a parrhesiastes. And in the situation of the filmmaker breaking the contract by deliberately misleading the audience, he or she would perhaps have also imposed a false presupposition.

4.1.2 Presupposition of Truth

Let us thus for a moment think about predefined assumptions, which I refer to as presuppositions. Presupposition could further be described as the certain things I more or less take for granted as I try to communicate. Now, as we already concluded that there were certain issues regarding predefined assumptions regarding Santa Claus, e.g. are we discussing *a* or *the* Santa, as well as if Santa lives in Korvatunturi, Finland, or the North Pole. Thus, we will forget Santa for a moment and draw examples from elsewhere.

Consider the following examples, the first being “I was having a wild night out in the pubs of Helsinki”. In this example I presuppose firstly, that we both agree on that there is a city called Helsinki, and secondly, that people all around the world may go out in the evening to bars and clubs. Besides these you might start to draw conclusions regarding my personality, however, that is not relevant.

Now what if I change the example to “Hobbits were having a wild night out in the pubs of the Shire”? You may become slightly confused. However, you may soon *accept* that I am once again trying to describe something by using metaphors from the fictional

world, such as Santa or Hobbits, and not take my sentences as literally true. You might even play along and say “Yes! Hobbits are such party animals”. The third example, “Hobbits were having a wild night out in the pubs of Helsinki”, would however become even more peculiar, as Hobbits are (by most people) perceived as fictive characters and Helsinki is *not* a fictive place, and our attitude towards these different statements most probably differs.

Also, within these examples, I presuppose you are familiar with the books by J. R. R. Tolkien or the film adaptations of them, and that they are categorized as fiction. I also presuppose that you are familiar with Hobbits as well as Helsinki. And most obviously, if you were *not* familiar with these concepts, my examples would not make any sense, and communication would fail.

In other words, as in science, we can create truths and statements of “true” within a certain paradigm, however, as Sainsbury explains, “[...] drop the presuppositions, and we no longer have truth.” (Sainsbury 2010 p.28).

Sainsbury also claims that “the first word of a sentence tends to set the relevant presuppositions” (ibid.). The “I” in the first example ties the it to reality much stronger than the two others. “Hobbits” in their turn set the tone to a fictive world, and we are more likely to ridicule these as nonsense or humbug, in other words, fiction. I would argue that a genre can do that too.

As a simple example – films are often organized in classes, namely genres. When we choose to watch a *comedy* we usually expect to see something funny, something that will make us laugh. If we choose to watch a Western movie, we presuppose there will be horses, cowboy hats and a gunfight (if not several). And when we choose to watch a documentary film, we most often assume that we will be seeing something targeting reality, something containing things that are *real*, something *true*, even a *truth*. As Aaltonen described, documentary film is a sort of contract between filmmaker and audience. Documentaries often also include *real* people or places instead of actors and built up sceneries, which may strengthen the presupposition. This expectation, or presupposition, is increased by the label *documentary film* itself, as the word *document* carries with it the meaning of something furnishing information or evidence. And as Brian Winston

(1995 p.104) collects the thoughts of Andrew Tudor (Theories of film) and Dudley Andrew (Concepts in Film Theory):

Modern theory treats genre as something more than type or category. 'Genre notions are... potentially interesting... for the exploration of the psychological and sociological interplay between film-maker, film and audience' (Tudor, 1973, p.141). In fact, genres construct the proper spectator for their own consumption' (Andrew, 1984, p.110). The claim on truth necessary for the documentary exactly depends on spectators 'constructed' by the genre to have prior faith in it. According to this view, documentary's 'truth' is a function of the viewers' interaction with the text rather than any formal quality of the text itself.

This is very similar to the label *reality television* which suggests to be showing something *real*, but which is often very far from that. First of all, the things the participants say or do in the show may be written in advance by scriptwriters, or at least an editor or director chooses which parts of the speech will be shown and what is cut out. On e.g. social media celebrities are constantly complaining on how the portrayal of them on the shows (or in media in general) is unfair, one-sided, etc., and it would be highly unlikely that they would be the only people experiencing something similar, albeit this experience is perhaps articulated in differing ways.

The participants of reality television shows (and occasionally in documentaries) are often put into artificial situations and locations, e.g. a desert island or locked into a house with strangers, into conditions that the participants would probably not end up in if not the film or television series was produced. This may indeed become *a reality created or constructed* for the participants, and in a later phase indirectly for the viewers as well, however, sometimes this raises some ethical concerns.

As an example, in Russia a new reality television format "Game2: Winter", will start in July 2017. The participants must survive in Siberia for nine months, and there are no rules. One may ask would the same people applying to participate in the show spend nine months in Siberia also if it would not be broadcasted? Are the participants encouraged to violent behaviour if all rules are abolished? Is it acceptable that the producers of this kind of shows make money on the risks others are taking (possibly even risking their lives)? Obviously, the winner of this *game* may win some money and find the risks worth taking, however, will this phenomenon spread? Will we soon be surrounded with more of these real-life Hunger Games?

Thus, even though documentary film seems to be in an ambiguous position somewhere between news and fiction film, it is still often regarded as something revealing things about reality. Often the filmmaker's intention is indeed to tell something about reality, and the viewer may also expect to see something real. However, the result is often closer to fiction. Also, the production of a film as well as the final product affect reality, sometimes directly and at other times indirectly.

The label *documentary film* itself and the typical content may increase the presupposition that a film would present something other than fiction, things that are *true*. It is similar to a presupposition of a parrhesiastes which, by possessing certain moral qualities would, indeed, be capable of knowing the truth and being able to convey it to others. However, various things affect what we perceive as real or true, not only within films, but in a broader sense, and these things in their turn affect our decision making.

4.1.3 Interpreting Truth (and Reality)

“The claim that some uses of “true” are presupposition-relative can be understood in more than one way. It could be the claim that an optimal representation of the semantics of the word “true”, as used on that occasion, treats it as a kind of fiction operator governing everything else: it's true in such-and-such a story or culture that.... This requires us to treat the speaker as having in mind (albeit implicitly) a specification of the relevant qualification. An alternative view invites us to see us, the audience, as supplying the context and viewing the remark as falling within it.” (Sainsbury 2010 p.29)

As Ponech and Aaltonen were emphasising the filmmakers' intentions, another strategy is to focus on the receiver, the audience. If you would happen to live in the eastern parts of Finland, you may have been introduced to the saying “vastuu siirtyy kuulijalle” [the responsibility is on the listener – or audience, in our case]. This indicates that an artist/director/author/choose your protagonist is entitled to say or do whatever, and the responsibility of reading or interpreting this message is solely the receiver's.

Let us thus define “interpretation”. Firstly, it can be the action of explaining the meaning of something. It can mean to understand or conceptualize the significance of a matter or to present or conceptualize a meaning. Sometimes it also means to translate something, either in language or in style, e.g. a stylistic representation of a creative work or dramatic role. However, interpretation sometimes becomes tricky as there often seems to be as many interpretations of a subject matter as there are people interpreting them.

The whole subject matter is also so wide and complicated that I can only provide a brief introduction to it. Also, as Lawrence Kramer says “[t]he idea of interpretation as a primary mode of cognition has historically had to struggle against the suspicion that it is a systematic promotion of illusion, if not delusion” (2011 p.6). And as we were in the beginning discussing e.g. the digital age and the amount of misinformation and disinformation circulating, would not then interpretation be or become just another opinion, even a deluded one?

Aaltonen put the responsibility on the audience by claiming that the audience nowadays understands more clearly that a documentary film is a text, a construed performance, that is more or less the authors subjective view of the world (2006 p.42). However, there are many kinds of audiences, receivers of the text, and not all fall into Aaltonen’s category of an audience.

For example - if we are deliberately choosing to claim that Santa is de facto *real*, we may have some pretty upset children in front of us when they discover that Santa was the neighbour or their uncle. At that stage we have estimated (or neglected to estimate) the possible effects of the utterance, such as the potential long-term damages in family relations and other unpredictable harms (Forsberg 2016). At some stage, we have chosen to use a rhetoric of convincing, forced our children to participate in a game of make-believe, but in which the children of a certain age are perhaps not capable of distinguishing the game from the real. We are claiming that what we say is “true”, even if we are lying, and we cannot always take for granted that the children share the same knowledge and understanding as we do (unless the child is Richard Dawkins who claims to have debunked the Santa myth before his 2nd birthday). The older children may play along in the Santa myth, as their behaviour may have an impact on the number of gifts they get on Christmas. However, then the participants share a certain knowledge about Santa, and more importantly, also then the fiction affects the reality (as the children behave in a different manner).

Now, as we are discussing documentary film specifically, we could divide interpretation in three momentums:

1. The filmmaker's interpretation of reality in general, the subject matter, which will affect the presentation or reconstruction of a subject matter, and his or her intention (e.g. to choose whether the subject is a victim or a suspect, guilty of something, or something else).
2. The documentary subject (in the case of a person and not e.g. a phenomenon) interpreting reality as well as the filmmaker's motives (as "chemistry" was mentioned as a factor affecting the communication between interrogator and interrogee). There is also then a difference between whether subject is comparable to e.g. witness or an expert.
3. The audience interpreting the reality and the filmmaker's intention (presupposition of fiction or truthfulness), as well as the presentation - the actual documentary film.

One could also describe interpretation as an action. In all of these cases, neither filmmaker, subject or audience is merely absorbing, being brainwashed or otherwise just randomly coming up with interpretations, but rather, the interpretation is a form of *doing*. Similarly to filmmaking as an eventual communicative action, or creating a text as that of writing, and reading, when done properly, as interpretation. There is also a difference between reading an interpreting, e.g. "when interpreting, a reader might 'relate the sense of what is going on to the author's constructive intentions,' but a reader might also (or otherwise) 'relate the sense of what is going on' to something else – say, the reader's notions about reality, or ideas about metaphysics, or views of textual and social processes" (Staiger 1992 p.20). This could be the moment when intention and reception may take different paths.

Interpreting it is neither arbitrary nor prescriptive (interpretation both as understanding and **performing**), and what may affect the interpretation is the:

1. Presupposition, e.g. genre, previous knowledge, etc.
2. Personal traits e.g. personality and personal experience, memory, language, education, etc.
3. Identification (towards subject), but also alienation or distancing effect (German: *verfremdungseffekt*).

4. Social norms and common beliefs – e.g. social pressure or other.
5. Narration and/or translation of something, e.g. events. However, this includes certain rules/norms/freedoms and restriction of a particular narration, and the material and productional aspects which we will not deal with in this thesis.
6. Other issues which are unknown at the time being.

The question is, however, how aware of this process are we? And if we regard interpretation merely as fiction of the imagination, then are we aware, or capable of awareness, of this matter? One should also keep in mind that all people have the tendency to believe things that support previous beliefs, which is called *confirmation bias* (vahvistusvinouma). This might be among the reasons why even chimpanzees seem to do better than Swedes or Finns when testing their “knowledge”, by pure accident (Nurmilaakso 2017). And as Britannica Academic (2014) explains the confirmation bias:

Confirmation bias, the tendency to process information by looking for, or interpreting, information that is consistent with one’s existing beliefs. This biased approach to decision making is largely unintentional and often results in ignoring inconsistent information. Existing beliefs can include one’s expectations in a given situation and predictions about a particular outcome. People are especially likely to process information to support their own beliefs when the issue is highly important or self-relevant.

Obviously there then become conflicts between individuals as well as institutions regarding what is regarded as truth. Even what is real to me may sound to you as false. Between two individuals the different interpretations may arise from e.g. experiences or perspectives, point of views, and that creates two possible worlds so to say:

“One of them is the one we inhabit, which we call actual. This marks a perspectival difference between our world and all the others, but not a metaphysical one: all are equally real, though just one is (from our point of view) special in that we inhabit it. Inhabitants of other worlds also think of theirs as actual, and with no less right. The analogy is with spatial position. Where I am, my *here*, is special to me. You call where you are *here* too, and that place is special to you. Your location is just as real as mine, so there’s no difference of metaphysical status between where I am and where you are. But there’s a perspectival difference: we each think of where we are as special.” (Sainsbury 2010 p.179–180)

Now conflicts of point of view are not a problem, especially if we encounter the differing perspectives with a receptive mindset and mutual respect, or as Sainsbury described, with the acceptance of possible worlds (see chapter Between Science and Fiction).

However, problems may occur e.g. if there are institutional conflicts, or if an interpretation is somehow against the common beliefs and norms.

As an example, Galileo Galilei was stubbornly defending the heliocentric theory despite the “official truth” provided by the church. Hence, he was condemned to spend the rest of his life under house arrest. A modern-day example could be that of Edward Snowden, exposing information (a sort of truth-telling) about mass surveillance, and having to seek asylum in Russia. Not all people with conflicting world views would perhaps be locked up in jail (or worse), however, social exclusion might occur. This could be seen e.g. in the way some strict religious sects exclude a person, e.g. for presenting opinions which are against the official dogmas of the community (Ruoho 2010).

The danger aspect is, however, interesting if we tie it to parrhesia. “Someone is said to use parrhesia and merits consideration as a parrhesiastes only if there is a risk or danger for him or her in telling the truth” (Pearson 1985 p.4). From the ancient Greek perspective, this means that a grammar teacher may well be telling the truth to the children that he teaches, and indeed, he may have no doubt that what he teaches is true, however, he is not a parrhesiastes. Then again, a philosopher telling a tyrant that his tyranny is unpleasant and disturbing because tyranny is incompatible with justice, the philosopher is speaking the truth, *believes* he is speaking the truth and also takes a *risk* in doing so.

4.1.4 As a Conclusion

If we ignore the process of interpretation it may lead to e.g. mistakes or unfairness in both representation and reception. Additionally, if disregarding interpretation and confirmation biases, the documentary filmmaker might actually start, albeit unintentionally, creating propaganda. Now propaganda is usually referred to as something deliberately trying to affect a public opinion, either by using facts, arguments, rumours, half-truths or pure lies. However, we may often be very *convinced* that our own subjective opinion or argument is indeed correct, perhaps even *the* truth. Just as the parrhesia could be an attitude, as the parrhesiastes merely *believed* he was speaking the truth, the line between (unintentional) propaganda and documentary film would be blurred. I would, however, also suppose that propaganda-making is seldom a documentarists intention.

Interpretation, as suspicious as it might sound, can also be a good thing and a richness, as I would argue that the world would be incredibly dull and colourless without the variations of views. And how could anything new be created if everyone saw the world in the same manner? Another problem would also be if all people were forced into a dogma, having someone else dictating how to think and experience (which, occasionally, does seem to be the case).

However, for now we just need to remember that the way and the context of how we are discussing *true*, is very relevant in order to be able to communicate, and it can be seen even as a contract, or presupposition. The options for a documentary filmmaker could thus be to:

1. Merely hope that we are “playing the same game” of communication, and sharing at least similar presuppositions,
2. or to deny all responsibility of the sender (filmmaker) and claim that it is up to the listener/member of audience to apply his or her concepts of everything in understanding the framework which restricts the statements (of *true*), and in this case, the documentary film.

The issues regarding a contract of truth, presuppositions, as well as interpretation, however, bring up some ethical issues as we are discussing communication and documentary film as social interaction as well. As an example, let us have a look at the following lyrics to a well-known Christmas song:

You better watch out / You better not cry
Better not pout / I'm telling you why
Santa Claus is coming to town

He's making a list / And checking it twice
He's gonna find out who's naughty or nice
Santa Claus is coming to town

He sees you when you're sleeping
He knows when you're awake
He knows if you've been bad or good
So be good for goodness sake!

As we can be quite confident that Santa is a fictional character (as well as Hobbits), we may agree that this song is in fact a lie. Now if the lie is used with the intention to teach

a moral lesson, e.g. teaching children kindness or to behave well, I would like to argue (or at least hope) that there would be other less creepy methods to achieve that.

If the intention is to inform about Internet surveillance, the lie may, in my opinion, be more acceptable. But aside from lying being a morally ambiguous exercise, as well as worrying about the risks of creating severe traumas to the listener, we have other ethical issues to wrestle with when dealing with documentary film.

4.2 The Price of Truth and Truth-telling

Even if we cannot always be sure how much weight one particular individual puts on a documentary film, to what degree he or she may perceive the presented text as real or true, documentary film can still be seen as a *public truth claim* already because of its name, the title “documentary film”. There is also, as mentioned, a huge difference if a statement is written e.g. in a private diary or if it is publicly displayed, and usually, a documentary is intended to be published.

Obviously, documentary film can also be seen purely as entertainment. This would, however, feel strange after our discussions regarding intentions, for why would then the filmmaker simply not choose to make fiction? As parrhesia could be linked to danger or criticism, and just reciting grammar rules (truths) would not count, a parrhesiastic truth would then be something of importance. The question is then if the documentary filmmaker is inviting the audience to enter a game-of make-believe, that of fiction and play, or intending to present us something real, and is the topic then important? Another issue was that if something is seen simply as entertainment rather than providing information, we receive less information, and our decisions are less likely to be well based (Slade 2002 p.59). Cinema’s ability to touch us emotionally becomes then a double-edged sword.

Because of the emotion triggering attributes of cinema, a documentary film can well introduce to us precisely the important issues that may otherwise not pierce our consciousness. The artistic dimension also enables to describe many phenomena or experi-

ences that cannot be put in statistics or science books, or other criterion that would merit as a scientific truth.

As an example, the documentary film “The Act of Killing” (2012), directed by Joshua Oppenheimer, portrays the Indonesian genocide 1965-1966. The main “characters” or subjects are the perpetrators, individuals who participated in the killing. Anwar, one of the perpetrators, is invited to recount his experiences in front of cameras, and to make film scenes depicting his memories, however done in various genre styles (e.g. Western). Also, e.g. families who lost a member in the genocide still fear violence. In this example, the artistic dimension protects the innocent and makes it possible to deal with difficult themes and bring them into the attention of a larger public. As a sidenote, after the film was published, the director demanded that the United States should acknowledge its role in the killings and that they, as well as the United Kingdom, have a collective responsibility for participating and ignoring the crimes (yet another way of affecting reality).

Thus, the motives for using artistic creativity could be protecting anonymity of subject, to enable people to get beyond the surface of certain phenomenon, to avoid certain problems of representation, or simply because of (lack of) access. Also, the artistic dimension may become valuable as not all people are eager to or have the possibility to study, read, do the research for themselves etc. Even if they had the possibility, some may find it dull, and also, some people simply learn things better if there are some emotions involved. However, before we would be able to use this artistic dimension in a truth-telling documentary we would need to wrestle with certain issues, e.g. which rules then apply to *art*?

4.2.1 Responsibility Toward the Documentary Subject

“Does a man die at your feet - your business is not to help him, but to note the colours of his lips; does a woman embrace her destruction before you, your business is not to save her, but to watch how she bends her arms.” - John Ruskin

Robert J. Flaherty is usually considered a pioneer of documentary film (Plantinga 1997 p.35), or at least as the one producing the first commercially successful “documentary

films”, e.g. *Nanook of the North* and *Man of Aran*. According to Winston, he had a rather exploitative relationship with the Inuit, and as he put the films above anything else (such as ethics), he admitted putting his documentary subjects in physical danger and to take enormous risks. In *Man of Aran* there is a sequence in which the islanders go fishing in dangerous seas, which they would have not done in reality, if not Flaherty had bought their consent (Winston 2008 p.235). Now Flaherty rhetorically admitted he should be shot for what he asked the documentary subjects to do, and according to Winston he should have been shot - rhetorically speaking, obviously (ibid.).

This example of Flaherty buying the consent of the documentary subjects is sometimes compared to buying the consent of actors to participate in a fiction film. Some of the fiction filmmakers would, however, claim that even when money *is* involved, one cannot ask an actor to do certain things, e.g. to risk their lives. Also, an actor is seldom risking their own reputation, unless that of bad acting skills, but a role is a role and not their real persona. A documentary film subject on the other hand may become stigmatised.

Another ethically controversial example is the case of Kevin Carter, a South African photojournalist, who won the Pulitzer Prize for feature photography in 1994. The prize-winning image was that of a starving child somewhere in Sudan, lying on the ground, with a vulture eyeing her from nearby. The image first appeared on *The New York Times* March 26th 1993, and instantly hundreds of people contacted the *Times* wanting to know what happened to the little girl in the picture (MacLeod 2001). The photographer himself claimed that after he had taken the images he chased away the vulture, but what happened to the girl eventually remained unknown. After winning the award the critique toward Carter increased. “The man adjusting his lens to take just the right frame of her suffering, might just as well be a predator, another vulture on the scene “, claimed the *St. Petersburg (Florida) Times* (ibid.). Things did not go very well for Carter, and later the same year after winning the award he committed suicide.

As asking to put someone’s life in danger is perhaps the most dramatic example of risks a filmmaker may be asking the documentary subject to take, a form of abuse, or the events of watching someone suffering without the will or ability to interfere, there are other forms of exploitation involved.

Jouko Aaltonen asks in his study from the filmmakers if they think that they have ever exploited/abused (käyttää hyväkseen) their documentary subjects, the people (2006 p.197). Aaltonen specifies that the question can mean two things, either an exchange or trade which benefits all parts in some way, which is regular interaction, or meaning immoral and deceitful behaviour where just the other part benefits (ibid.). Most of the interviewed interpret the question in the definition of an exchange, a few of them as immoral action, but even they deny that they would be exploiting their subjects. One of the filmmakers, Visa Koiso-Kanttila, answers that he is definitely taking advantage of the people in the documentary, but simultaneously also he is being taken advantage of (ibid.). The exploitation just comes in many forms. Koiso-Kanttila continues by telling that he has exploited the documentary subjects e.g. in order to tell something about his personal youth. He has used his documentary subjects as an example of how changes in the welfare state reflects to the young people's lives. However, the filmmaker must be aware of his or her own motives – the filmmaker is not out there just saving the world, but has some own selfish reasons: “We all are ambitious and we have our own artistic and professional goals” [*“Me ollaan kaikki kunnianhimoisia ja meillä on omat taiteelliset ja ammatilliset tavoitteet.”*] (ibid.). Director Virpi Suutari gives an example of how the filmmaker is being abused e.g. as an amateur psychologist, how the people she is speaking with pour all their dirty laundry on her [metaphorically], or that the filmmaker and the documentary film being made is used for personal power struggles (Aaltonen 2006 p.198). Thus, also the documentary subject may have hidden motives, and one of the responsibilities of the filmmaker is to make sure these motives are not hurting the subject, or deceitful in other ways (Aaltonen 2006 p.199). According to Suutari, the documentary subjects are not merely poor victims, helpless under the power of the filmmaker (ibid.).

Then how to determine what is, or should be, acceptable and what is not? Winston proposes (1995 p.230):

1. What evidence is there that documentaries have consequences for participants?
2. Can the public right to know compensate for such consequences?
3. Can public information and private costs be balanced by altering the terms of relationship between filmmaker and participant?

Another question that comes to mind is if there is a difference in what is acceptable and what is not depending on if the subject is seen by the filmmaker as a “victim” or the “bad guy”? “The problem of balancing the right to know against cost to participants is rendered particularly complex because, in its most journalistic investigative mode, documentary wants participants to pay costs” (Winston 1995 p.235). Winston is referring to the attempt to expose the “villains” for, if not punishment, then at least a strong reaction. He continues by saying that thus, the end is automatically deemed to justify the means, even if it would mean including some decisive acts (ibid.).

Now, as one of the basic ideas of criminal law is that of preventing personal revenge (Helminen et al. 2014 p.21), that all should get a fair trial, that “truth” should not be extracted by any means necessary etc., I would suggest that a documentary filmmaker, in contrast to a propagandaist, should perhaps think about the fair trial aspect as well.

4.2.2 Responsibility Towards the Public

Another important, but less frequently asked question is that of the filmmaker’s responsibility towards an audience: is there such a demand and if, what kind of responsibility is it? It is interesting because journalists do discuss the responsibility towards the audience, and they have guidelines to their work (see e.g. Guidelines for Journalists and An Annex, JSN Council for Mass Media). Often documentary film is, however, claimed as something else than journalism, e.g. as “art”. Should an artist follow any rules? Also the other question remains, is the artist relieved of morality?

For Winston, the only good solution is self-regulation - “[...] the only acceptable and safe pattern for ethics has to be self-imposed. The media system as a whole has to demonstrate a commitment to ethical behaviour and be willing to police itself. All one can say at this stage of development is that the self-awareness among individual professionals about ethics is currently too low. These must rise if the rules of conduct are to be, as they must be, both self-imposed and effective” (Winston 1995 p.241).

I am not sure if Winston is thinking about something similar to the Council of Mass Media, or a sort of “Council of Documentary Filmmakers”, or the self-regulation of an individual. However, the Council for Mass Media too can only deal with complaints

directed towards the medias that are committed to follow the guidelines. Some may also question if the rules of conduct are indeed effective.

If then documentary film is a social contract, a contract that the filmmaker is presenting something real, a sort of promise, would it not then be a responsibility to keep that promise? Or if we view documentary film as a statement of truth, similar to a truth claim of science, is not the documentarists responsible to make thorough research, to check certain facts and collect some evidence? Obviously, truth in science was not without problems either.

What about the presuppositions that often are created when choosing the genre documentary film? Should filmmakers merely leave the responsibility on the receiver and do whatever pleases them (which indeed often seems to be the case)?

Another question also remains: if not the documentary maker's intention is to find out, or express, something about the world, something *real*, and strive for a *truth*, then *what* on earth is the intention, the purpose of choosing to make a documentary film?

All in all – ethical questions are quite tricky. “[O]ne might think [...] that moral values are too `queer` or peculiar to belong to the natural order [...]” (Sainsbury 2010 p.193).

Thus, often it seems easier to rely on the laws (i.e. what are the punishable acts – another kind of social contract). And indeed, some documentarists have been sued. However, ignorance or just plainly being an asshole is not always defined as illegal, and therefore there is a need to wrestle with these matters.

Foucault claims that parrhesia could also be a danger to democracy itself, “[b]ecause parrhesia is given to the worst citizens, the overwhelming influence of the bad, immoral, or ignorant speakers may lead the citizenry into tyranny, or may otherwise endanger the city” (Pearson 1985 p.33). Perhaps then another kind of responsibility towards an audience could be that of not leading citizenry into tyranny or danger? For then documentary film, as a truth claim and a speech activity of truth-telling, would indeed have consequences.

“And now I think we can begin to see that the crisis regarding parrhesia is a problem of truth: for the problem is one of recognizing who is capable of speaking the truth within the limits of an institutional system where everyone is equally entitled to give his or her own opinion. Democracy by itself is not able to determine who has the specific qualities which enable him or her to speak the truth (and thus

should possess the right to tell the truth). And parrhesia, as a verbal activity, as pure frankness in speaking, is also not sufficient to disclose truth since negative parrhesia, ignorant outspokenness, can also result.” (Pearson 1985 p.31)

4.2.3 Responsibility Towards Oneself

All the problems regarding free speech, attitudes and intentions, contract and presuppositions of *truth* means that as we are in the moment of crisis with truth-telling, we become once again confronted with the crisis of truth. In Foucault’s *Discourse and Truth*, this is also the moment when there is a weight shift from telling a truth to others to that of being able to tell the truth to oneself. Truth-telling can then be seen a responsibility towards oneself, art of life or a self-discipline.

4.3 Documentary Film and Truth

Parrhesia could be seen as a practice or activity of small groups of people or community life, similarly to as how we have been discussing parrhesia as a sort of relationship between filmmaker and audience. This relationship, however, does not come without difficulties. And as media in general - and I include documentary films and art, as well as entertainment to that group - can be seen as the *fourth estate*, an institution of power, the comparison to parrhesia in community life sounds reasonable. And according to a social constructionist view, it is we who construct reality. We construct it with actions and language, and film too can be both. Therefore it is not irrelevant how we discuss truth and truth-telling even as we discuss film. However, the crisis of truth-telling returns us back to the crisis of truth, and thus, just like in parrhesia, we need to switch our focus from the relationship (between filmmaker and audience) to the individual.

4.3.1 Who Wants to be a Parrhesiastes

Many of us are familiar with the aphorism *know thyself*. According to Foucault, a parrhesiastes needs to go beyond that. A reason for this is self-delusion, self-love, or ‘*philautia*’. Modern examples of this could be seen in e.g. the motives for lying, and in the way we lie to ourselves as well (see chapter on “*Truth, Lies and Law*”) as well as the confirmation biases etc. For this reason, it is often hard to recognize and accept a par-

rhestiastes, or a *truth* (just think of Donald Trump and all the texts and other statements that he claims as *fake news or lies*).

This also means that it can be difficult to recognize a truth about oneself. Sometimes we do not even want to do so. As Plutarch puts it, we are [often] our own flatteners, and we live in permanent illusions about what we are. As a peculiar detail, depressed people seem less likely to lie to themselves and to engage in self-deception (Ford 1999 p.275). The classical Greek conception of parrhesia would then mean, that it is not enough that one is courageous enough to tell the truth to other people, but that he or she needs to be courageous enough to disclose and confront a truth about oneself.

This sounds quite obvious to me, as it would feel strange to think that anyone could tell me a truth about the world, unless they first know the truth about themselves, or that I could make claims about the nature of things *out there* unless I had a relatively good self-knowledge.

One may argue that would not then *interpretation* also affect the way we see ourselves? Indeed, this is the case, however, interpretation was not only delusion, and one is able to improve the skills of interpretation.

Now the Greek texts offer us various exercises to improve the skills of self-knowledge in order to be able to recognise a truth, and to be able to convey it to oneself. These exercises may indeed also suggest ways to improve these skills in our time, however, to me they sound very cryptic. The main points for developing a parrhesiastic relationship with oneself is, however, a combination of the following elements: courage, theoretical knowledge and practical skill (in which education plays a big role), and that of self-examination. The self-examination would not be that of a judge pronouncing a verdict, that destructive kind of self-criticism, but rather that of an “artist, who - from time to time – stops working, [...] steps back, gains a distant perspective, and examines what he is actually doing with the principles of his art [...] (Pearson 1985 p.73). This time however, one would step back and examine oneself.

An exercise which could help is that which has been tested in the Media and Education in the Digital Age (MEDA) programme and a pilot project called Point of View (Rajala 2016).

The task was to choose a topic of importance (to oneself), and as (future) filmmakers, we were to make a short documentary film about it. The purpose was to:

1. Express an opinion.
2. Gain a better knowledge of oneself, as well as to develop the introspective skills.
3. Gain a better knowledge of the (social) world, and finally, to
4. develop deeper control of communicative skills.

The exercise was at least for me very painful, not easy at all, however surely worth the effort. It also led me to this study regarding a connection between documentary film, truth and reality, as well as that of truth-telling, and all the problems that might occur.

For firstly, an opinion may or may not have any connection to truth and reality. An opinion is merely a *belief*, which is not always based on evidence or fact. It may be fiction of the imagination, just an attitude towards something. Opinions or beliefs can be harmful as well, as we discussed e.g. humbugs of fiction or bad parrhesia, athuroglossos, and the problems of free speech.

The knowledge of oneself can be quite devastating as well, as the image in the mirror, what we are seeing, might not please ourselves. And I am not referring to *who's the fairest of them all* nor anything regarding appearance or looks, and neither the fact that most people misquote the Disney film sentence regarding the mirror (various explanations are suggested, e.g. *false memory*). We may be our own worst flatterers, but then we are often merely deluded. A certain amount of self-delusion may be beneficial to mental health (in contrast to the lack of self-deception of depressed people), however, in an attempt to become a parrhesiastes one should be prepared to wrestle with that delusion and the evil *daimones* as well.

In addition, by learning about the world, we learn something about ourselves, and by learning about ourselves, we may learn something about the world. We are in constant dialogue with our surroundings and it would be wise to pay attention.

And finally, regarding the communicative skills, a parrhesiastes was supposed to convey truth (either to others or oneself), and thus, improving those skills will most likely be beneficial.

4.3.2 A Parrhesiastic Documentary Film

Then how to make a more truthful, parrhesiastic, documentary film?

My suggestions would be:

1. Examine your attitudes and values.
Do not rely merely on opinions or beliefs. Investigate your biases and motives, e.g. are you on the journey as a hitman, thief, saint or what?
2. Wrestle with your own demons.
Even if you would find out that you are not that awesome, perhaps even horrible, you can change, step by step. Then again, if you do think that you are a saint, well, then I suggest you should do some more wrestling.
3. Search for evidence or proof.
That includes also the search for evidence and proof that does not support your hypothesis and previous beliefs. Weight the evidence, evaluate the sources, give the case a fair trial.
4. Repeat steps 1,2, and 3 again and again,
and preferably again, during a longer period of time.
5. Make (or view) a documentary film.
Simultaneously, learn more about yourself and the world. And while making, remember the ethical issues.
6. Go through your material
– e.g. in what possible ways could it or was it interpreted, is it risking of becoming dangerous parrhesia (or then another question, dangerous for who?)? What did you learn and what can you do better next time?

The same exercises can benefit members of the audience too. The moment you see a documentary film which feels *unreal* or *false*, preferably disturbs you somehow, instead of denouncing it to falsity or *fake documentary*, do the same “exercises”. At best, you will learn something about the world as well as yourself. Even if you feel you fail the first times, do it again. Have patience and enjoy the ride, and above all, have courage!

4.3.3 A Parrhesiastic Truth

As an interpreter is a “historically situated subject who ventures forth with and takes responsibility for the work – and the play – of interpretation” (Kramer 2011 p.18), and by parrhesiastic exercises we may become better at interpreting ourselves and the world. Thus, we can also take better responsibility for what we do.

From sheer naivety or stupidity we move towards wisdom. With the knowledge about the world and ourselves, and the courage to wrestle the demons within, we also gain *power* over ourselves and this leads us towards a parrhesiastic truth in its more critical sense. This would obviously not ensure that the parrhesiastes, whether a filmmaker or a viewer, has access to *the* truth. However, we become better equipped for truth-telling as well as for recognising truths, and we take a giant leap closer to the truth.

And it just might be that this is as close to *truth* as we can get.

5 SUMMARY / CONCLUSIONS

As the society is surrounded by concepts such as post-truth, alternative facts, fake news, etc., our notions of knowledge and truth becomes increasingly important. Documentary film seems to be in an ambiguous position somewhere between fiction film and news, however, as something telling us about reality or making truth claims, as well as addressing our emotions. Often the filmmaker's intention is indeed to tell something about reality, and the viewer may also expect to see something real. However, the requirements for a truth are seldom met.

Documentary film can perhaps neither be a representation or a mirror to reality (literally), nor be a reality in itself (as it does affect us), but in its existence, it is participating in reality (both in the act of making and as a text that is being written and read and interpreted by an audience) and thus, it becomes a discourse that contributes to socially constructed knowledge and reality. However, one of the peculiarities of documentary film lies also in its name, the label, the genre. This may create certain presuppositions towards documentary film and the documentary filmmaker as a truth-teller.

I used Foucault's lectures on Discourse and Truth as my main framework in the discussions part, in which I compare parrhesia, truth-telling as a speech activity, and documentary film. Foucault also suggests that by problematising something we may also find answers, "[f]or I think there is a relation between the thing which is problematized and the process of problematization. The problematization is an 'answer' to a concrete situation which is real" (Pearson 1985 p.75). Thus, by studying documentary film, problems of truth within documentary film, as well as documentary film as the speech activity of truth-telling, we may also learn many things about truth and reality. Documentary film gives us tools to investigate what we perceive as truth and real, and what we count as knowledge in our daily lives. The problems of truth-telling eventually lead us back to the problem of truth (and reality). Simultaneously, there is a shift from telling a truth to others towards disclosing truth to and about oneself. In the last chapter I also discuss exercises which could lead a documentary filmmaker or a viewer closer to truth, a suggestion on how to make a more truthful documentary film.

My conclusions are that if we indeed live in a post-truth era, the responsibility of documentary film becomes even larger, as well as the possibilities for a documentary film to be truth-telling. However, then the documentary and the practice of truth-telling must be done cautiously. As the documentary film takes advantage of both the artistic dimension in filmmaking and a rhetoric of truth-telling, it has the power to affect our opinions on many levels, and after all, it is we who also construct reality.

In my opinion, the possibilities for future research are endless. Especially the aspects regarding interpretation could give us more tools for understanding what we perceive as real, true, and falsity. To dig into the *fiction in nonfiction* could be equally fascinating approach to wrestle with these issues. Then again aspects of the interview process (comparing e.g. to interrogation) would sound exciting to investigate as well. One could also try to develop more “exercises” of how to become a parrhesiastes. And who knows, perhaps by investigating the issue thoroughly enough, one may even find a new definition or criterion to truth.

6 SAMMANDRAG

Det påstås att vi lever i en tid av postsanning i vilken känslor spelar en större roll i vårt beslutsfattande än fakta. Dessutom är vi omringade av koncept så som *alternativ fakta* och *fejkheter*. Desinformation och rena lögn sprids på nätet i enorma mängder, och ibland är det nästan omöjligt att skilja åt fakta från det fiktiva. I denna tid blir det då allt mer viktigt *hur* vi talar om sanningar och vad vi *påstår* som sanningar, för vad vi *anser* som sanning påverkar våra attityder och beslut.

Dokumentärfilm brukar ofta anses vara en filmgenre någonstans emellan fiktion och nyheter, men ändå som något som berättar om verkligheten omkring oss. Redan benämningen ”dokumentärfilm” kan leda till dessa förväntningar om ett slags samband mellan dokumentär och sanning, och även verklighet. Stilen och autenticiteten av bilden är dock relativt oväsentliga i detta examensarbete. Dokumentär behandlas istället som ett slags sanningspåstående som dessutom tilltalar våra känslor. Filmmakarens avsikt är ofta att berätta om verkligheten, t.ex. en *sann historia*, och åskådarna förväntar sig ofta att se något *sant*, men kraven för *sanning* är inte alltför ofta bemötta. Att enbart definiera dokumentärfilm som konst eller fiktion är dock lika problematiskt, då detta kan anses bl.a. neka eller gömma undan filmmakarens ansvar och de potentiella konsekvenserna.

Definitionerna av sanning kan också avvika från hur vi använder begreppet i vår vardag. Då man bättre känner till vad som är *sanning* i t.ex. vetenskap eller i den juridiska världen, och även hurdana problem som kan uppkomma, blir det även lättare att se hur komplicerat *sanning* egentligen är.

Bilden, och därmed film, har genom tiderna blivit teoretiserade på olika sätt. Från att ha blivit ansedda som kopior av verkligheten, eller speglar till den, till verkligheter i sig själva osv. Också tankarna om hur man borde studera film har också varit olika.

Dokumentärfilm kan kanske inte bokstavligen vara en spegel till verkligheten, och inte heller vara en verklighet i sig själv (för att den påverkar oss), men i sin tillvaro deltar den i verkligheten (genom att bli tillverkad och mottagen). Film även i ett bredare sam-

manhang kan anses som ett språk och en form av kommunikation. Genom detta blir dokumentär en diskurs som bidrar till en socialt konstruerad verklighet och vetenskap. Därför är det rimligt att behandla dokumentärfilm som *sanningstalande*. Genom att undersöka problemen av sanning och sanningstalande i dokumentärfilm kan vi lära oss mycket om sanningar och verkligheten. Dokumentärfilm kan bl.a. ge oss verktyg för att granska *vad* vi uppfattar som sanning och sant i våra dagliga liv.

I mitt examensarbete använde jag mig av Michel Foucaults föreläsningar "Discourse and Truth: the Problematization of Parrhesia" för att jämföra *parrhesia*, sanningstalande som en talaktivitet, och dokumentärfilm. Parrhesia är ett begrepp från antikens Grekland och Rom, och i sin bredaste bemärkelse kan det översättas som yttrandefrihet. Denna frihet skulle dock inkludera även de mest korkade och farliga yttranden. I en snävare bemärkelse har parrhesia då ett samband med sanning; det som parrhesiasten (sanningstalaren) säger är sant, men även då är sanning mer som en attityd och en subjektiv åsikt. Problematiseringen av parrhesia omfattar även frågor så som *vem* kan tala sanning, om *vad* kan man säga sanningen om och vilka är *konsekvenserna*, och vilken anknytning har parrhesia till *makt*? På ett liknande sätt skiljer jag dokumentärfilm som en speciell talhandling från all annan film och tal, och problematiserar då dokumentärfilmens sanningstal.

De huvudsakliga problemen av dokumentär som sanningstalande som jag behandlar i examensarbetet är kontraktet av sanning, förväntningarna av sanning och sanningstalande, och tolkningen av sanning (och verkligheten). Konsekvenserna av att överse dessa är bl.a. att kommunikationen mellan filmmakare och publik misslyckas, att filmmakaren (antingen avsiktligt eller oavsiktligt) skapar propaganda, eller att dokumentären påverkar verkligheten på oförutsägbara sätt (även skadliga). Till de faktorer som jag anser att påverkar tolkningen tillhör åtminstone förutfattade meningar och tidigare kunskap, personliga egenskaper (så som t.ex. personlighet, tidigare erfarenheter, minne, språk), identifikation (hur nära eller främmande det som tolkas känns), de sociala normerna i samhället, skildringen eller översättningen av ett fenomen (t.ex. en händelse), och andra saker som jag inte i denna stund känner till. Men då vi diskuterar dokumentärfilm måste vi komma ihåg att tolkningar görs både av filmmakarna, subjekten (ifall personer) och åskådarna, och mycket kan gå på tok då tolkning sker.

Eventuellt leder problemen gällande sanningstalande både i parrhesia och dokumentärfilm tillbaka till problemet av sanning. Samtidigt förflyttas vikten från sanningstalandet mellan individer (t.ex. mellan filmmakare och publik) till sanningstalandet till och om individen själv. För om vi inte känner till och lyckas uttrycka sanningen om oss själva, hur skulle vi lyckas se eller berätta sanningar om och till omvärlden?

Min slutsats är att om vi verkligen lever i en tid av postsanning, och då dokumentärfilm använder sig både av konstnärlighet som tilltalar våra känslor, och innehåller sanningspåståenden och sanningstalande, så kan dess påverkan bli även starkare, men samtidigt blir filmmakarens ansvar större. Närmare slutet av mitt examensarbete föreslår jag även övningar som möjligtvis kan leda en filmmakare eller åskådare närmare en sanning om världen och sig själv, och genom detta, även möjligheten att skapa en mer sanningsenlig dokumentärfilm. Detta betyder dock inte ännu att vi skulle ha tillgång till en absolut sanning, men åtminstone blir vi bättre utrustade för att både berätta och igenkänna sanningar. Vi tar även ett stort steg närmare sanningen, och vem vet, kanske närmare än så kan vi inte komma.

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