



# What is Ethnofiction?

Johannes Sjöberg

# The research on ethnofiction is intended ...

- ① ... as a method for ethnographic research and representation
- ② ... as a complement to other methods in the social sciences
- ③ ... to establish collaborative, reflexive and creative art practice as research
- ④ ... to expand the 'pallet' of available methods within the humanities

# Ethnofiction

- Experimental ethnographic film genre where the fieldwork informants act out life-experiences in improvisations



*Jaguar 1957-67*



*Moi, un noir 1958*

# Transfiction

- Identity and discrimination among transgendered Brazilians
- Fabia plays a transsexual hairdresser and Bibi a transgendered sex worker
- Confronting intolerance and re-living memories of abuse through improvisations



A FILM BY JOHANNES SJÖBERG WITH FABIA MIRASSOS AND SAVANAH MEIRELES

# TRANSFICTION

AN ETHNOFICTION ABOUT IDENTITY AND DISCRIMINATION AMONG TRANSGENDERED BRAZILIANS

WEBSITE: [WWW.FAKTAFIKTION.SE](http://WWW.FAKTAFIKTION.SE)

FILM SCREENING

22 MAY 2007  
4:00 - 5:30 PM

BRAGG LECTURE THEATRE  
THE MARTIN HARRIS CENTRE  
FOR MUSIC AND DRAMA  
THE UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER

# Transfiction (Remix 2010)



# Ethnofiction: five guidelines

- ① Ethnographic Film Approach
- ② Shared Anthropology
- ③ Reflexive Filmmaking
- ④ Improvised Filmmaking
- ⑤ Improvised Acting

# Ethnographic Film Approach

- ⦿ Ethnographic research methods
  - Intimacy with protagonists prioritised over technical quality
- ⦿ Extended period of fieldwork and filmmaking
- ⦿ Small-scale productions

# Shared Anthropology

- ① Collaborative process
- ① Screen-back and informant feedback
- ① Non-intentional advocacy



# Researcher's Responsibilities and Collaborative Limitations

- ⦿ Ethical responsibility
- ⦿ Ethnographic responsibility
- ⦿ Narrative responsibility

# Reflexive Filmmaking

- ◎ Director and participants in reflexive dialogues:
  - self-reflexivity
  - screen back
  - informant feedback

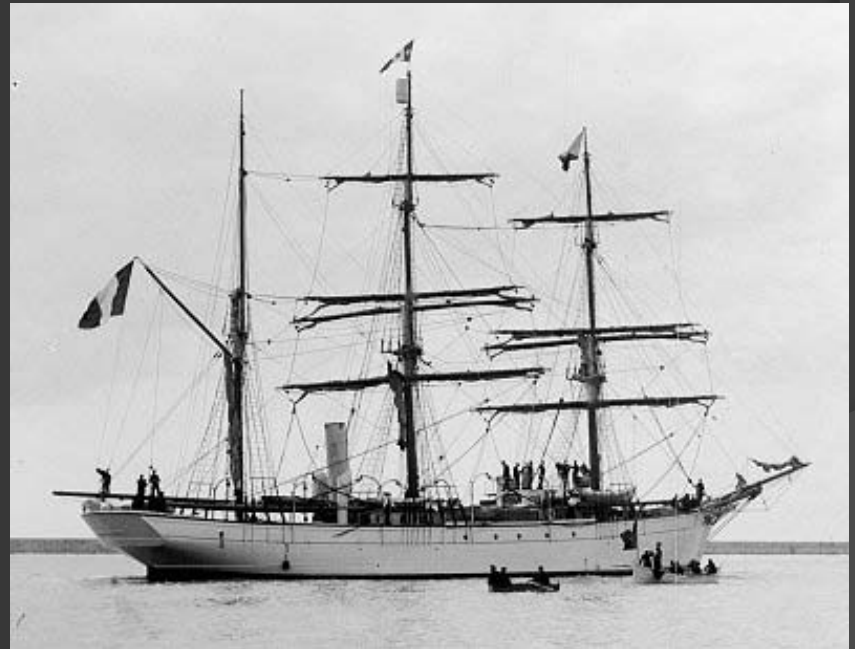


- ◎ Provides a discursive context for the creative art practice
  - to make the production process transparent
  - to allow for the protagonists to discuss '*their reality*' in relation to '*the image of their reality*'
  - to form the basis for ethnographic research

# Improvised Filmmaking

Surrealistic and poetic approach  
inspired by Songhay religion

- ⦿ 'Ciné-trance'
- ⦿ 'Pourquoi-pas?'
- ⦿ 'Ciné-provocation'



“Pourquoi-pas?”

# Improvised Acting

- Projective improvisation – *‘The use of improvisation and fantasy as projective methods in the exploration of people’s lives’* was one of the major innovations that Rouch brought to ethnographic filmmaking *‘to convey something fundamental about real lives’*.  
(Loizos, 1993: 46, 50)

# Functions

*Descriptive:* Illustrates events difficult to show in written ethnography and documentaries, such as historical and criminal events

*Expressive:* to make the implicit explicit. Emotions, dreams and aspirations are expressed, as in psychodrama, drama therapy and forum theatre.

*Representative:* The Ethnographic Allegory (Clifford 1986) - to bridge the different through the similar by identifying the protagonists.

# Different means and ends

## Applied Theatre

- ◉ Personal / Social Change through Participatory Theatre
- ◉ Interactive



Centre for Applied Theatre Research

## Visual Anthropology

- ◉ Ethnographic Research and Representation through Audio-Visual means
- ◉ Observational



Granada Centre for Visual Anthropology

# Boal's Metaxis

- *'The participant shares and belongs to these two autonomous worlds; their reality and the image of their reality, which she herself has created' (Boal 1995)*



Bibi



Zilda

# Bibi's sketches informed by Moreno's psychodrama

Bibi's picture of "How I see myself."

"How I would like other people to see me."



"How I think that other people see me."

Photos: Sjöberg 2006



# Similar Methods

- In 'Creative Explorations' (2007), David Gauntlett asks the participants to project their own identities by building Lego models, drawing on the therapeutic possibilities of art as a research process within the social sciences.

# AMP – Practice-based PhD in Anthropology, Media & Performance

- Exploring methods combining extended ethnographic fieldwork research with collaborative and creative art practice





# Centre for Screen Studies

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