Documentary Theory CW2: History And Theories Of Documentary

A documentary that has been described as “the use of perpetual negotiation between the real event and it’s representation” according to (Bruzzi, 2000). Discuss with reference to ONE or MORE documentaries shown on the unit.

In this essay, I will be discussing and researching the history of documentary and the theories that I will include the like Bruzzi, Bill Nichols, Patricia White and so forth as they referred to Gaea Girls and Grey Gardens which are the two documentaries that I will emphasize my argument which is there is relationships between the real events and it’s representation shown in documentaries.

Documentary’ is a film or television or radio programme that gives facts and information about a subject (Cambridge Dictionary). “Very early films back in the 1900s…actuality films captured… actual events” (Desktop Documentaries, n.d.). These encounters that the first film back then were documentaries and also called newsreels. For example, they filmed a boat pulling up to the dock or workers leaving a factory. From there to now, a documentary has changed and developed more in-depth by different theories with it’s approach. From different categories’ and mediums. The, Direct Cinema movement came in North America and the Cine?ma Ve?rite? movement in France, both established in the early 1960’s. They are both are often considered the same, but they have very different motivations and ambitions in their film practice and intention to reveal ‘truth. Therefore, it still involves raising awareness of how real events and to allow the audience to participate whilst, watching it.

Gaea Girls (Longinotto, 2000) is an observational documentary film directed by a female film director called Kim Longinotto, who also directed other films including Dream Girls (1994), and Shinjuku Boys (1995). Along with her co-director Jano Williams who also participated and helped with Longinotto with this amazing film. It features a Tokyo school in Japan, that trains young Japanese wrestling women but, not with the style of Sumo. Focusing in particular on one trainee, Takeuchi, who is trying to prove herself.

She works as a cinematographer in her film. Patricia Whites explain her the use of her position “Her position as cinematographer… her authority by approximating the (presumably male)…ideal.” (White 2006: 124). This emphasises that she’s positioned as a cinematographer whereas, the male cinematographer is the priority within the film industry. Although, she was inspired by Nichols theory towards documentary modes. Observational documentary: “gives a sense of what it is like… what it is like for the filmmaker to be there, too… result.” (Nichols 2010: 181). This demonstrates that observational documentary is participating in what’s happening within the situation to see the results as to what the filmmaker is filming and observing from it’s truth.

In Gaea girls, has it’s the use of perpetual negotiation of the real event. According to the independent news article about Gaea girl, Kim Longinotto behind the story. “About being…not realising… horrible it was… to be” The Independent (2000). This foregrounds that, seeing a fight makes you feel emotional from what you see and it’s real because, you are watching it in front

of you, the strengths and weakness of each wrestler, who is better than the other person knowing, that in wrestling match someone will have to win or lose. In addition to that, it refers to a flashback of Nagayo father ‘bitter relationship’ that she didn’t want to get abused again and wanted to be preferable as she is now an empowered women. Therefore, it raises back to Longinotto who had conditions like this in her childhood ‘Class traitor’ by her headmistress especially telling her she can’t succeed in life instead she was able to be a female filmmaker as her horrible foregone especially, her education. Equivalently, Nagayo and Longintoo faced temptations growing up with a horrifying situation.

Representation is presented in Gaea Girls, where Longinotto and Williams filmed a new trainee called Sato, who also desires to become a professional wrestler after Wakabayashi run away. It reveals about her and women’s bodies in japan. “No academic…changing their… body of their…transformation” Fujimura-Fanselow, K. (2011). This clarifies, how Sato body is contrasting from other professional wrestlers, who also trains to fight well. Longinotto was observing that she was struggling to do squats exercises, showing that she was weak as the senior wrestler beside her is stronger and also muscular. Reasonably, I chose to highlight on this particular sequence is considering, she’s never done these type of professional wrestling techniques before as she only watched them on Television, which gave her inspiration to become one of them. As a result, her mother was anxious as she didn’t require her to do in the first place nor watching her in a wrestling match either.

Even though, Longinotto described its representation in her film especially, Gaea girls. “ Films as…. strong women… who are brave outsiders… oppress them” Austin, T. and Jong, W. (2008), Geritz (2006). This suggests empowered women that they can be strong to from what they can represent as. Regarding the fact, that this help Longintto to produce films with stories that can make a change because, it can happen also it will make her proud of what she represents especially, in her films as she is one of the ‘Documentaries on women’s histories’ (Documentary and gender: Performativity in Practice). Along with that, there’s another outstanding female film director called Agnès Varda who directed The Gleaners and I (2000).

In contrast, Grey Gardens is also observational documentary and it’s about two elderly women called Edith Ewing Bouvier Beale, the mother and Edith Bouvier Beale, the daughter who talks about their real-life and living in a decay mansion. When they were younger, they were members of a society called New York City high society. After a long period of years later, they were withdrawn from it and advised to stay in an estate home ‘Grey Gardens’. Every day, they had conversations about their personal lives and the realness of what they do, whilst living in a mansion that is collapsing slowly, throughout the film.

Representation is shown in Grey Gardens. The house is shown as a representation within the documentary. “domestic architecture…about the entwinement domestic… space” (John David Rhodes 2006). This verifies that they want to show cinematic space between the space of the house, the space between from each room means from viewing it and also the two characters story and their lives within living in this house. For instance, when both them stay in upstairs in a living room/bedroom which is they only room they use with a lot of property and how they are isolated from the other rooms within in the house as the it’s slowly decaying. Therefore, Rhodes was also trying to reference it to a genre film to be placed in with the mode of ‘Meditation’ by the use of the house and the domestic space itself.

According to the 'Concentrated Ground” : Grey garden and the cinema of the domestic. The

Real event is presented that Grey Gardens House being haunted. “Three ghosts living…terror of doors…know” (The National Enquirer 1972). This symbolizes that Little Edie was haunted by ghost or evil spirits her from childhood back then and the house itself it gives a sense from the cinematic melodrama. Due to the fact, that there was paranormal activity within in the house is because it’s old and everything is being devastated slowly everyday with ceiling linking, mouse and raccoons making massive holes in order to enter and escape from the house and most of all dust is everywhere, making the house looking like it’s been demolished, abandoned or Haunted overall.

Considering that, Grey Gardens is similar to but the filmmaker who’s behind the camera interviews the character in the frame to choose to have a direct conversation, question and answer in-between. “The subject of the film is performance, and the filmmakers are no mere observers of the action, they’re its catalysts” Richard Brody (2015). As a result, there are sequences where the directors and the crew with him stay silent as they listen to the character in the frame as they are the story of the film. Most filmmakers like to participate themselves in their own films, as it offers a huge opportunity to create awareness and really inspires people and it’s powerful form of communication. However, for those who preferred to be unlikely shown, as they want to concentrate on the storytelling of what’s presented from their perspectives.

In both documentary films, they are different such as in ‘Gaea girls’ they don’t interview the characters who are in the frame as the film observes the scene that is the idea of honesty and unbiased truth within documentary film. It mostly relies on what see do nowadays like people film and speaks in front of their cameras instead of the individual behind the camera proverb something or interviewing the character too.

Conclusively, exploring the use of perpetual negotiation of the real event and it’s representation in documentary films in a sense of understanding point of views and preceptive of the filmmakers. Especially, the relationship between the two types of different documentary films from Gaea girls and Grey gardens with it’s viewpoints, arguments and opinions of the filmmakers towards it. Overall, it reliefs us as filmmakers for ourselves to identify and explore the aspects of the film theories such as Bruzzi, Nichols, Fanselow, K and others towards different forms of documentary modes in a way of turning into a theory based in a way of their preceptive in comparison with what they learnt from and they take the idea and elevate into their own to be shared.

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