

FAKEBOOK and VIRTUAL AUDIENCE_ theory

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VLP


Unit 3

**Drama-documentary**

The audience approaches drama-documentaries with similar expectations to those of documentaries, in the sense that they are viewing a truthful (if heightened) reality which is based on a familiarity with factual discourse and its associated codes and conventions. This is reinforced by the stance taken by the filmmaker, who promises to deliver a truthful account of the events and issues. In this sense, the audience treats drama-documentaries in much the same manner as the filmmakers, with the reliance on dramatic context and dramatic conventions not necessarily seen as interfering with the objective of the text.


Drama-documentaries engage both documentary and fictional modes of engagement which viewers move between throughout the text (Caughie, 1980), although Petley (1996) suggests that the dramatic look is increasingly displacing the documentary look in contemporary drama-documentary. In utilizing these two modes viewers effectively erase the boundaries between them but, significantly, also tend to obscure any contradictions and tensions between the assumptions and expectations which each 'trigger'. Consequently, the text is evaluated not so much on its apparent reality as on how truthful or believable is the account.

Woodhead goes on to argue that drama-documentary could prompt a critical reconsideration of factual television and a 'refreshment' of the contract between filmmaker and viewers. In a similar vein, Paget argues that the drama-documentary offers an intertextual relationship between drama and documentary that is provocative in audience terms. It asks, subtextually, in what ways any drama can be 'documentary' and any documentary 'drama', thus challenging and assumed fact/fiction dichotomy.

 Saturday at 7:29am · [Comment](#) · [Like](#) · [Share](#)**Mock-documentary**

As with drama-documentaries, mock-documentaries engage both a documentary form of engagement and a fictional mode on the part of its audience. To varying degrees, the audience is expected to be conscious of the fictionality of the text; to 'get the jokes' and to appreciate the intention behind the appropriation of documentary codes and conventions. To engage with the text at this level does require the viewer to watch it 'as if it were a documentary', but, nevertheless, to do so in the full knowledge that it is a fictional text. The mock-documentary addresses a knowing and media-literate viewer.

In contrast with drama-documentary (and the reflexive mode of documentary representation), it is the deliberate play between the factual and fictional modes of reading which generates reflexive potential. Although a mock-documentary text in effect 'triggers' the factual discourse in using documentary conventions, it is ultimately the encounter between text and audience which determines the extent to which the latent critique of this discourse is appreciated.

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Hoaxes

Texts are the mock-documentaries which deliberately look to create confusion within audiences over their factual status, and especially those which effectively perpetrate a hoax. These mock-documentaries, while not necessarily containing messages which are deliberately intended to be reflexive towards factual discourse, still trigger reflexive interpretations among viewers because of the subsequent uncovering of their fictional status. Audiences are initially encouraged, by the text itself and extra-textual events to adopt a factual mode of reading toward the text.

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Parody

This degree includes those fictional texts which involve what could be termed the 'benevolent' (or not deliberately reflexive) use of documentary codes and conventions. Generally, these texts feature the consistent and sustained appropriation of documentary codes and conventions in the creation of a fictional milieu. The intention of these text is generally to parody some aspect of popular culture. These are fictional text which both make obvious their fictionality (the audience is expected to appreciate the text comic elements) and are comparatively muted in their challenge to the nature of the documentary project itself.

Here documentary aesthetics are appropriated largely for stylistic reasons. These tend to be texts where humour is emphasised by having a rational or deadpan face present, examine and investigate openly fictionality figures and events.

The humour in these texts, then, comes in part from the contrast between the rational and irrational, between a sober form and an absurd or comic subject.

One key aspect of parody is that it often comments upon cultural forms which are 'easy target'; their cultural currency is typically exhausted and they are ripe for mocking.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, it is the fictional subjects of texts within this decree which are most often celebrated by audiences.

These are aspects of the extra-textual impact of these texts which open up the interesting issue of the deliberate confusion of their ontological status by audiences.

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