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Television Documentary Film's language: The use of film semiotics in observational documentary films to convey the social challenges of underrepresented women.

(Practice based research applied on Nubian woman in Aswan, Egypt)

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Abstract

This study investigates the style, techniques, and methodology of Television observational documentary films to analyse how such films convey meanings and construct different experiences and identities. The study also identifies the codes and conventions (film language) used in observational documentaries to create the desired meanings. It connects the following domains: observational documentary films, feminism, and representation.

This study stems from structuralism and semiotic film theory, which emphasises how such films conveys meanings through the use of codes and conventions, not dissimilar to the way languages are used to construct meanings in communication.

Following a theoretical discussion of film theory and developments in the area of observational documentary films in the twentieth century, the researcher turns to analyse observational documentary films, which is followed by applying theories and producing/directing her own observational documentary film entitled " The town the men left".

The findings of this applied research reflect on the advantages of the new forms of Television observational documentary genre, as a medium that conveys the challenges of the underrepresented women. It proves how film semiotics (signs, codes, and conventions) are used by the director to provoke the desired associations on the audience. For instance, "The town the men left" (Directed by Hanan Youssef) used actions, imagery, lighting, sound, denotation, and connotation to make the audience aware of the Nubian women's plight.

This study should contribute to filling the gap into researching the capabilities of Television documentary films, specifically, observational documentary films as there is a shortage in researching this area, especially in the Arab world. In addition to proposing an emerging new form of observational documentary films, where it is mainly direct cinema that borrows an element or two from cinema verite.