



Representation of Social Criticism in the Documentary Film Netflix: *Miss Americana*

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Abstract:

This study aims to describe the representation of social criticism in the documentary film Netflix: *Miss Americana* (2020) by using John Fiske's Semiotic analysis technique. Based on the research finding, the writer concludes that there are social criticism representations in documentary film Netflix: *Miss Americana* seen from media interviews and entertainment reality shows. Through the whole interviews and arguments, Taylor Swift explained in the movies that she needs to be on the right side of history especially through political views. She also mentioned in *Miss Americana* that she doesn't want any other else's input about her body and others' criticism to impact her life anymore. Furthermore, this documentary film also says that speaking up against what isn't right is a necessity, especially if we are young and we are a woman. "*Miss Americana*" offers an effective backstage look at Taylor Swift that works best when the megastar opens up about her life

Keyword: *Representation, social criticism, documentary, netfix, miss Americana, social criticism*

INTRODUCTION

Artwork reflects people's lives. That is because an artwork (including music, drama, theatre, novel, romance, poetry, and film) are created by someone as a member of the community. An art creator presents various kinds of problems that exist in society, such as social crime, poverty, gender equality, social inequality, human slavery, pedophilia, including migration of people through the themes of the artwork. A documentary film is part of a person's artwork.. Bill Nichols described it "an institutional framework", the institutional framework suppresses much of the complexity in the relationship between representation and reality, but it also achieves a clarity that implies documentaries achieve direct, truthful access to the real. This functions as one of the prime attractions of the documentary form, even if it is a claim we must assess with care. Therefore, the strongest in representing society and culture is through a documentary film, because it is a reflection of culture, people, habit, story and etc. John Grierson, the father of British and Canadian documentary film indicates the term of documentary as "the ability of medium to document the particular event and it views as "the creative treatment of actuality" undercuts the claim of truth and authenticity on which the documentary 2

depends. (1991: 25)”.

In other words, it is capturing the truth of the reality to anchor the presentation in time and place through a long take without any interference. Bill Nichols argued that, documentary will be the flagship for the film (2017: 1). The documentary impulse has rippled outward to the internet and to sites like Netflix which offers online streaming of a library of films and television programs, including those produced in-house. McDonald, K and Smith Rosey, D added that Netflix are the savior to the filmmakers. It has changed ultimately films, including feature documentary, Netflix is restating of the values and the workings of the past in a new contemporary (2016: 153) One of documentary . This Film , told about Taylor Swift as a singer. Taylor still had been criticized.. She also added in the documentary about her experience about sexual assault, body image, and even politics. Based on the description above, the writers are interested to present the social criticism nowadays that media has shown the world about the woman who speaking up about politics and speaking up about what against that isn't right as well as in the main character efforts for using all her media platforms to gain people sympathy and understanding for the world to be on the right side of history represented in Miss Americana film.

It is interesting to analyze this film as a medium that describes Swift's brand of feminism and liberalism that will definitely be of value to a younger audience, but she remains an enigmatic construct. Like so many documentaries and biopics that have been either produced or authorized by the star at the center, we're being shown exactly what they want us to see and there's something uneasy about what that represents. Swift will remain a deservedly successful singer with a rare talent but we may never get to know her as anything more than that.

Representation is a description of a matter contained in life that is described through the media. “Representation is the process of recording physical ideas, knowledge, or messages. It is defined as the use of a sign or re-display of something that is absorbed, sensed, imagined, or felt in physical form (Danesi, 2010:3)”. Representation connects concepts in our minds by using language that allows us to interpret objects, people or events that are real, and the imaginary world of objects, people, objects and events that are not real (fictional). Representation techniques is a way that is carried out in a social process that is related to the lifestyle and culture of a particular society that allows a change in the concept of ideology in concrete form.. In this research, the representation referred to in the Documentary Film Netflix: Miss Americana is describing the social criticism that happened with singer-songwriter Taylor Swift. The main thing in representations that need attention is how the reality of an object is displayed. Humans construct meaning with a system of representation through codes. It is code that makes people different in components and in relation to one another. Representation technique used by researchers in analyzing an object displayed in a film using John Fiske's Semiotic analysis technique. The code of Television theory John Fiske has three levels in analyzing, there is the level of reality, the level of representation and the level of ideology. Humans use their creativity and interpretation signs to create the meanings.

Semiotic analysis, is a process of representing the reality of various objects presented by the media is a reality encoded by the media, and then that reality is described in the media according to the technical according to its genre. These organized codes then conventionally refer to ideology. (Rusadi, 2015:108). The Codes of Television, John Fiske. Level One “REALITY” Appearance, Dress, make-up, environment, speech, gesture, expression, sound, etc. The encoded electronically by technical codes. Level two: “REPRESENTATION” Camera, lighting, editing, music, sound Which transmit the conventional representational codes, which shape the representational of, for example: Narrative, conflict, character, action, dialogue, setting, casting, etc. 10 Level three: “IDEOLOGY” Which are organised into coherence and social acceptability by the ideological codes, such as those of: Individualism, patriarchy, race, class, materialism, capitalism, etc (Fiske, 1987:7).

‘Social’ means to live together in society as a group with rules in it. Social processes are ways of connecting in people's lives that can be seen when individuals and human groups meet each other and determine the systems and forms of these relationships. Thus, criticism becomes the exchange of public opinion. Criticism is not only about the matter of good taste, but must involve ways of analysis and

forms of special experience that are not owned by others in general. In Curtis's view, criticism is a problem analysing and evaluating something with the aim to increase understanding, expand appreciation, or help improve work. In the modern era, social criticism can be conveyed through a variety of channels that are the most influential channels, because of the broad, fast and of course easy to reach through modern communication tools 11 such as internet, social media, newspapers, radio, television and other media.

Social criticism is an innovation which means that social criticism becomes a means of communicating new ideas while assessing old ideas for social change, as a form of communication in society that aims or serves as a control over the course of a social system or social process (Oksinata, 2010:33). Based on this explanation it can be concluded that social criticism is a criticism, input, refutation, satire, response, or assessment of something that is deviated or violates the values that exist in people's lives.

Film, also called movie or motion picture, is a visual art-form used to simulate experiences that communicate ideas, stories, perceptions, feelings, beauty or atmosphere, by the means of recorded or programmed moving images, along with sound (and more rarely) other sensory stimulations. Film is also the second form of modern communication that appears in the world. "Film is also a form of art that has become a phenomenon in modern life. As an object of art this century, film is a process of developing into 12 one part of social life, which certainly has a significant influence on humans as spectators. The film plays a role as a cultural shaper of the era. (McQuail, 1987:13) Therefore, a film is quite an important part in literature and education to convey a message or at least give effect to the audience to act something. John Grierson, the father of British and Canadian documentary film defined documentary as the 'the creative treatment of actuality'. A documentary film is a non-fictional motion picture intended to "document reality, primarily for the purposes of instruction, education, or maintaining a historical record". Documentary films were originally called "actuality films", and were one minute, or less, in length. Over time, documentaries have evolved to be longer in length, and to include more categories; some examples being: educational, observational, and docufiction. 13 Documentaries are meant to be informative works, and are often used within schools, as a resource to teach various principles.

Netflix was founded in August 1997 as a DVD delivery service for users to watch movies without fear of late fees by two serial entrepreneurs Marc Randolph and Reed Hastings. By 2007, the public company began to move away from delivery service into an online streaming model. Rather than wait for DVDs to be delivered, users could now watch a selection of films on their computers, greatly increasing the number of daily and hourly visitors to the site. In October 2019 it had over 151 million paid subscribers in over 190 countries around the world. It offers a wide range of TV series, documentaries, and feature films across a wide variety of genres and languages. The researcher statement about Netflix is that Netflix one of the Internet platform/media which provide such as films and tv-series online by subscribing it, and the people who subscribe to it can access whatever the films or tv-series they want and wherever they want to access it, it can be on their phone, pc, laptop, etc.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this research, researchers use descriptive qualitative research methods which is a study that explores certain information and then analyzed and the results obtained in the form of a description. Qualitative method is making the real setting in research. Associated with the methodological aspects, this study uses a semiotic analysis approach which is an alternative method of interpretation of research data

The research technique used in this study is John Fiske's semiotic analysis. Where in this study analysed based on the relationship between the sign and its meaning and how a sign is combined into a code. John Fiske put forward the theory of codes that are commonly used in the world of television or The Codes of Television. In television codes revealed in John Fiske's theory, the events aired in The Television World have been encoded by social codes divided into three 20 levels and researchers focus on examining several points contained in John Fiske's television codes, i.e.: (1). Reality Levels Events

that encoded as reality. Social code which includes Appearance, Costume, Makeup, Environment, Behaviour, and Speech. It describes for example: documents, transcripts, interviews, etc. (2). Representation Levels Realities in electronically encoded must be displayed in technical codes. In written language the technical code encompasses words, sentences, propositions, photographs, graphics, etc. Whereas it describes including technical codes consisting of lighting, picture taking techniques, and the point of view of taking pictures. (3). Ideology Levels. All elements are organized and categorized in ideological codes such as individualism, patriarchy, race, class, materialism, capitalism, liberalism, socialism, feminism and others.

According to John Fiske, when we make a representation of a reality, it is inevitable the possibility of including ideology in the construction of reality.

RESULTS RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A documentary film “Miss Americana” was released on Netflix and in select theaters on January 31, 2020. “Miss Americana” a new documentary about the pop singer-songwriter Taylor Swift. The film was directed by Lana Wilson, and takes its title from “Miss Americana & the Heartbreak Prince,” a track on “Lover” Swift’s most recent album. The film covers Swift’s 25 entire life and career, but it lingers on recent events, including a political awakening in America, which was apparently hastened by an incident in 2013, in which she was sexually assaulted at a meet and greet by a radio d.j. named David Mueller. (He later sued her, for defamation, and lost.) In this documentary film, Taylor Swift's featured with Andrea Swift (mother), Scott Swift (father), Abigail Anderson Lucier (friend), Tree Paine (publicist), Robert G. Allen (manager), Joe Alwyn (actor; swift's boyfriend), Jack Antonoff (record producer), Joel Little (record producer), Max Martin (record producer), Dave Meyers (music video director), Brendon Urie (musician), Todrick Hall (musician, friend), Paul Sidoti (guitarist), Kamilah Marshall (singer), Melanie Nyema (singer). Additionally, the archive footages used in the documentary feature record producer Calvin Harris, singers Beyoncé, P!nk, Harry Styles, Shakira and Lenny Kravitz, music bands Dixie Chicks and Earth Wind & Fire, models Karlie Kloss and Kim Kardashian, rapper Kanye West, US senator Marsha Blackburn, US president Donald Trump, actors Taylor Lautner and Tom Hiddleston, drag queens Jade Jolie and Riley Knoxx, television personalities Barbara Walters, Dan Harris, David Letterman, Erin Robinson, Graham Norton, Hoda Kotb, Jedediah Bila, Jenny Johnson, Jimmy Fallon, JuJu Chang, Nancy O'Dell, Nikki Glaser, Phil McGraw, Sara Haines, Stephen Colbert, Sunny Hostin, Whoopi Goldberg, and the entire "Fab 5" cast of Queer Eye: Antoni 26 Porowski, Bobby Berk, Karamo Brown, Jonathan Van Ness and Tan France.

The data analyzed in this study were obtained from the results of John Fiske's semiotic analysis which prioritizes three levels, i.e.: the level of reality, the level of representation and the level of ideology. In reality levels the events are marked as reality, appearance, environment, behaviour, conversation, gestures, and expressions. In written language in the form of documents, transcripts, interviews and so forth

Reality Level

In the minutes 1:09 of Miss Americana the level of reality that is built through appearance that gives meaning to the main character. Taylor Swift as a singer-songwriter, who is known as a good girl, this can be consider as reality because In Miss Americana, revisits key events, but also digs into Swift’s self-imposed expectations. She reads these out from old diaries, and confirms they still hold true; whatever she does, she wants to be good at it. And most importantly – she needs other people to think so too.

In minutes 11:19 of Miss Americana contains the level of reality that is built through behaviour and a conversation that gives meaning to the main character. As we can see that Swift’s said “I know that without me writing my own songs, I wouldn’t be here”. This can be considered reality because in Miss Americana she puts up a glimpse of videos of her writing and making songs, through the process we can see Swift’s real life depends on writing and making songs

It is also seen in the minutes 49:19 that Taylor’s said “I don’t know if people want to hear my political views, I think they kind of just want to hear me sing songs about breakups and feelings”. This

is an interview of Taylor Swift when she's been asked about her political views and her statement was "Don't force your politics on people. Let people live their lives". Convinced that one wanted to hear the opinions of a young entertainer and cowed by the example of the Dixie Chicks, who alienated conservative country listeners by vocally opposing the Iraq War, Taylor Swift followed her team's advice to keep her views to herself. She said "Throughout my whole career, label executives and publishers would just say: 'Don't be like the Dixie Chicks!'"

Representation Level

Representation Level are described about camera, lightning, editing, and music which shape the representations of narrative, conflict, character, action, dialogue, setting, casting, etc

In minutes 3:57 of Miss Americana it contains the level of representation of people's narrative to the main character. As we can see that she said "I became the person who everyone wanted me to be". She mentioned the word everyone because in people's narrative she is doing what people want her to be and she feels like she is doing a good job being a musician and that's the path that she lives for. In minutes 16:57 of Miss Americana, it contains the level of representation of a conflict when Kanye West bounded onstage at the MTV Video Music Awards in 2009, after Swift had won Best Female Video for "You Belong With Me" and interrupted her acceptance speech by declaring, "Beyoncé had one of the best videos of all time!" As loopy and indefensible as West's action was, it was expressing the anger of a larger culture war, and Swift, who was 19 at the time, felt bulldozed. Suddenly, she was caught in a media "feud" she never asked for

In minutes 55:25 of Miss Americana, it contains the level of representation of the main character conflict and setting. Miss Americana covers Swift's entire life and career, but it lingers on recent events, including a political awakening, which was apparently hastened by an incident in 2013, in which she was sexually assaulted at her Red Tour meet and greet by a radio DJ. named David Mueller. This has become all over the news because as the reporter said in figure 8 "Swift says this picture shows the moment Mueller inappropriately grabbed her, putting his hand up her skirt" then Taylor and her team told Mueller boss, they did an investigation. He got fired then he sued Taylor Swift for million dollars but Taylor herself countersued for one dollar. In this case, Taylor Swift went to the courtroom for the first time of the sexual assault case

Ideology Level

This level is organized into coherence and social acceptability by the ideological codes, such as those of: individualism, patriarchy, race, class, materialism, capitalism, etc.

Minutes 1:35 contains the ideological codes that refer to main character individualism. Her life was full of plans and still continue achieving her dreams.

From the results of a semiotic analysis conducted by researchers in the documentary film: Miss Americana, researchers found that there is a representation of social criticism as a dominant representation in the film. Social criticism is an innovation which means that social criticism becomes a means of communicating new ideas while assessing old ideas for social change. Taylor Swift's social criticism was included in the documentary Film: Miss Americana. Social criticism displayed and described in the film through signs that represent a social criticism. By using John Fiske's semiotic analysis, the researcher analyzes through three stages, namely the level of reality, the level of representation and the level of ideology. At the reality level, researchers found that the true meaning of the social criticism in documentary Film: Miss Americana tells for most of her life, Swift has been obsessed with the idea of being a "good girl". In Miss Americana, the reality level that Taylor Swift presents of herself is sincere enough. Miss Americana" tells the story of a young star of singular self-esteem who must learn to grow up and become a mature pop star of even more awesome self-esteem.

Furthermore, at the representation level, the researcher discovers how social criticism is inserted in each video footage in the form of narrative, conflict, character, action, and dialogue. Such as conflict The Kanye West incident, and its resulting fallout, messed her up more than she let on but Reputation, an attempt to hit back at the haters and in all likelihood regain control of the narrative by authoring her own cartoonish, self-deprecating villain edit, was a case in point. The assault trial that was the catalyst for Swift's political outspokenness.

At the ideological level, researchers find the use of signs that present social criticism primarily a thrilling scene where she faces down a cabal of middle-aged white guys, including her father, who don't want her to come out against right-wing Tennessee Senate candidate Marsha Blackburn in the 2018 midterms (who would win a narrow victory despite Swift's efforts). She does it anyway, fans, managers and relatives who disagree be damned. Because, Swift insists, the election is a matter of "right and wrong." The conclusion according to researchers in the documentary: Miss Americana, Swift's brand of feminism and liberalism will definitely be of value to a younger audience, but she remains an enigmatic construct. Like so many documentaries and biopics that have been either produced or authorized by the star at the center, we're being shown exactly what they want us to see and there's something uneasy about what that represents. 51 Swift will remain a deservedly successful singer with a rare talent but we may never get to know her as anything more than that. As it turns out, Miss Americana is a relatively revealing and compelling portrait of Swift. She's at turns self-critical and self-confident as she opens up about things like a previously unmentioned eating disorder, the psychological work she's done and continues to do, her decision to publicly lean left, and her attempts to wipe her brain and body of inherited misogyny.

CONSLUSION

The researchers analyzed the representation of social criticism in the documentary film Netflix: Miss Americana with representation theory. Through those theories, the writer revealed representation of social criticism from Taylor Swift appearance, socialism, image, and also speech.

From the research that has been done, the researcher concludes that: (1) In Miss Americana, Taylor Swift did receive social criticism during 14 years of her musical career such as self-deprecating, hate speech, and negative framing (2) Miss Americana represents Taylor Swift as a good girl as well as a successful entrepreneur through her musical career. (3) The social criticism that was suffered by Taylor Swift began with the feud between her and Kanye West, resulting in self-deprecating and hate speech. Then, she suffered a negative framing as a result of social criticism when she decided to create a new environment surrounded by a high-class lifestyle. (4) Her social media has pushed Taylor Swift further to speak out what is right such as reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act, which tries to protect women from stalking, date rape, domestic violence and then obviously it's a no for gay marriage. (5) Her political view has inspired many people around her to do what she thinks right. Also, it has created pros and cons in mass media as well as in public. Even current USA president, Donald Trump threw a sarcasm regarding her comment about political mess in the country. (6) Since involving herself into politics, Taylor Swift showed that she was tired about all of the social criticism she received. But it did not stop her making way for her music to be heard and her political endorsement to be absorbed by her fans. (7) This social criticism suffered by her did not affect her musical career. As can be seen, her album, Reputation that was released during the making of this documentary, was sold two million copies in its first week and Taylor Swift's Reputation Stadium Tour became Swift's most successful tour to-date, the third highest grossing female concert tour of all time, and the highest-grossing concert tour in United States and North American history.

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