

UNVEILING SECRETS: RETHINKING HISTORY THROUGH DOCUMENTARY FILMS

Nihan Gider Işıkman

Asst. Prof. Dr. Baskent University, Turkey

Abstract

The dominating ideology determines the historiography, as well as the media narratives created in line with dominating ideology plays an important role in consolidating the historical information. So, also cinema has a function to legitimize the dominating institutions and traditional values and to instill ideology. In this context, documentary, which, rely heavily on the truth as a genre and has the most credibility among its viewers, become an important arena for the execution of these functions. Today as the alternative narratives, that can be produced and distributed extensively with digital technology besides mainstream media narratives, small, personal narratives can be located against the big, official and historical narratives. Film and video becomes an effective carrier of memory and Gains historical value as audio and video recording gains prevalence. Thus, documentaries using these records to contribute to the social memory and make reminders against the official history, has come to an important point about historical issues. Documentaries, with the stories of individuals, so with a narrative from the private to the general, may, bring out important notes about the history, reveal secrets and raise questions about the accepted truths. Besides, the others in confrontation would have chance to hear each others voices, testimonies strengthens the acquaintances, intercultural dialogue increases even it is mediated. Bearing in mind the re-presentation of the reality in the documentary narrative and subjectivity of individual expressions, new comments and information emerged within the framework of testimonies find their places in time in social memory and so may contribute to the different interpretations of the history.

Turkish - Armenian relations, with the common history, provides an efficient field of work to analyze the formation and re-formation of historical events in the social memory, the official history and the 'other' official history. Therefore, in this paper, documentaries, realized as a result of the works of institutions such as the Armenia Turkey Cinema Platform, which tell the untold stories of decades through individual stories and show way to sides to recognize each other, will be analyzed with their narrative structures and discourses to better understand the potential of documentaries to contribute to the social memory and history, as historical testimonies.

Keywords: Memory, testimony, history, documentary film, Turkey, Armenia