
Document and Documentary:
Identifying Ideological Documentaries Through Narrative Analysis

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- August 2017 -

MA Thesis Arts and Culture
Specialisation in Creative Industries
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First, I would like to dedicate this work to my family in gratitude for their infinite love and support. Even though being an ocean away, my mother, father, and brothers have been available all the time to give me the needed strength throughout this year abroad. My family in Holland, represented by my aunts and cousins, has been crucial for the moments I need to feel home.

Second, I want to thank all the teachers that lectured me during this year, providing me eye-opening and jaw-dropping learning that changed my perspective forever. I would like to thank especially my thesis supervisor, Tom Sintobin, for the comprehension and the guidance that really enlightened this research, turned way more interesting and coherent by his supervision.

Third, I cannot forget all the people that made this year unique and incredible, my Nijmegen family composed by friends. It was an intense year in all possible sectors and levels, and I was lucky that the amount of stress was surpassed by the good moments and the fun.

Finally, it is essential to mention the institutions that were responsible for this one-of-a-kind experience: Radboud University and Nuffic NESO Brazil which, through the Orange Tulip Scholarship, made this possible.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Does reality fit in a corpus of text? Is it possible to archive the truth of a historical event through a documentary? Does such a thing as an unbiased and impartial text exist? Each one of us perceives reality in a subjective way, based on our senses, present and previous experiences, and repertoire. There are non-human ways to document the world we live in, but the experience of reading these documents is always exposing it to a human interpretation. Ideological documentaries are the films inside the documentary genre that organize and edit recordings of the world in order to persuade the audience towards an ideology, demonstrating its correctness throughout its particular view of a historical event and, at the same time, promoting its version of reality as the most accurate. One can say that every documentary, or even every text, is ideological at some point; but in the case of these documentaries, which are the subject of this research, the demonstration and advocacy of an ideology is explicit and intentional, leaving no room for questions or misinterpretation. This research will dive deep in the structure of these films, aiming to understand its settings and provide a typology to identify and analyse them.

1. General description

Cinema is one of the languages through which the world communicates itself to itself. They constitute its ideology for they reproduce the world as it is experienced when filtered through the ideology.

(Comolli & Narboni, 1976, p. 25)

Cinema's capacity to endorse political ideas is something widely acknowledged. Distinguished cases include Soviet cinema, highlighted by *Battleship Potemkin* (Sergei M. Eisenstein, 1925) and Dziga Vertov's documentaries, Nazi propaganda documentaries by Leni Riefenstahl, the British Documentary Movement, the National Film Board of Canada, or even action-packed North American summer movies that advocate for the US imperialism and military power.

Documentaries occupy a distinct place regarding cinema and ideology. This happens because the genre carries a status of reliability for presenting an accurate representation of historical events instead of fictional stories or fictionalized and dramatized versions of the historical world. These films hold an imaginary contract with the audience about the accuracy of the images and actions showed, and supports this status by constantly presenting evidence of what is being said. By making use of cinema's persuasive techniques like screenwriting, image and sound editing, scoring, and dramatization, documentaries exhibit captured images of the historical world in a way that appeals to the audience's emotion, making the message more effective. Political events that the audience is used to follow daily via broadcast media, newspapers, online sources, social media, and TV, get another treatment in documentary, usually more artistic and emotional, showing different perspectives and frequently attempting to deconstruct the common view on a given subject.

This research aims to reflect on the persuasive narrative of the ideological documentary, a subgenre situated in the documentary domain, in which the films have the purpose of spreading an ideology, engaging people with it and promoting social change. My goal here is to approach the ideological documentary as a subgenre in the documentary genre, demonstrating how the documentary, as a form, can be a tool to indoctrinate the audiences. To define and delimitate the ideological documentary as a genre, I will come up with a definition and a model, set traits and narrative structures that can be used to define a piece as part of the genre or not. This setting will be built based on literature review on documentary, documentary representation, ethics and practices, using texts of film scholars Bill Nichols (2001) and Stella Bruzzi (2006), and drawing a bridge between the ideological documentary and the ideological novel (the *roman à thèse*), a genre that, besides being written fiction, also deals with the propagation of ideals through narratives, a subject in which Susan Suleiman provides, in her book *Authoritarian Fictions: The Ideological Novel as a Literary Genre* (1993), a useful methodology that will be appropriated for documentary.

After building the methodology, I'll perform a narrative analysis of two documentaries that I consider ideological: *The revolution will not be televised* (Donnacha O'Briain and Kim Bartley, Ireland, 2003), and *X-ray of a lie* ([*Radiografía de una mentira*] Wolfgang Schalk, Venezuela, 2004). Both films

represent the same historical event: the 2002 attempted *coup d'état* against the former Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez, but each one advocates to an opposite ideology. While the first one is a response to how the Venezuelan and global media covered the event, the second is a response to the first one. Each documentary investigates and re-signifies images and documents to construct a truth for itself, attempting to convince the audience of it. By analysing these movies I'll be able to reinforce my main point here: that documentaries can appropriate historical events to create its own version of it and disseminate ideologies.

2. Existing research

The relation between documentary and ideology is an extremely popular subject within a diverse range of fields of study. I must be strict and objective with the material I select for this research in order to delimitate my approach. During my preliminary research, a few authors have stand out as essential to this work. Their main concepts and relevance will be detailed further on this Chapter. The central references on which this research is based come from literature studies (Suleiman, 1993) and documentary theory (Nichols, 2001; and Bruzzi, 2006). These three authors give me the needed background on how texts appropriate narrative structures to disseminate ideologies, how documentaries represent reality, narrative structures and voice in documentary. The supporting texts were selected for their specificity among the aspects that come up in different moments of the research, providing sources that link the subjects when the connections are not obviously readable. In the next paragraphs, I'll introduce the texts I'll refer to throughout the research.

First, to reflect on ideology frameworks and their relationship with narrative structures, I'll make use of Suleiman's (1993) approach on the subject. Second, authors Comolli and Narboni (1976) will be useful to trace a relation between cinema and ideology on a broader level. Finally, the works of Nichols (2001), Bruzzi (2006) and Williams (1993) will help me think of ideology's relation not only to cinema, but more specifically to documentary as a genre.

Advancing to documentary theory, I'm using mainly Nichols' *Introduction to Documentary* (2001) and Bruzzi's *New Documentaries* (2006). Nichols (2001) and Bruzzi's (2006) writings are

simultaneously complementary and conflicting, providing this research a rich background. Before moving to the analyses of selected documentaries in Chapters III and IV, I'll return to documentary theory in Chapter II to review three crucial aspects: the relation between document, documentary and reality; the representation of reality; and the ideological documentary.

Moving forward from the ideology and documentary background, this research also relies on writings about the subjects/films that I chose as a mean to illustrate this approach and methodology: the documentaries *Revolution*¹ and *X-ray*². Because of the impact these films had, especially *Revolution*, among the documentary community, the questions it raised about media manipulation and truth, the popularity of Hugo Chávez, and the political instability of Venezuela, the films and the historical event represented have been subject of numerous pieces among a wide range of fields. My selection was based on, first, texts that are available in English language; second, the ones that are relevant to my research approach. From the book *Reclaiming Latin America: experiments on radical social democracy* (2009), edited by Lievesley and Ludlam, I'm using two texts that give background on the Venezuelan political state of affairs, and the country's influence over the continent and the world: *Venezuela: the political evolution of Bolivarism*, by Buxton (2009), and *Venezuela: reinventing social democracy from below?*, by Motta (2009).

After this needed framework on the Venezuelan background, I'll continue the research by using texts that directly address the documentaries. Couret (2013) revisits the attempted coups through documentaries, listing the pieces that were produced regarding the event (led by *Revolution*) and how these films' representation of it takes place. It might sound similar to the work I'm attempting to do here, but Couret (2013) uses a different framework and methodology aiming at a distinct outcome as well: to reconstruct the attempted coup using the documentaries, focusing more on the historical event and its representation than on narrative structure and ideological issues. Schiller (2009) provides an important context on the circulation of these documentaries, how *Revolution*'s reception and

¹ From now on I'll refer to *The revolution will not be televised* as *Revolution*.

² From now on I'll refer to *X-ray of a lie* as *X-ray*.

commercial release was followed by political appropriation and reaction from both the *chavista*³ and opposition movement in Venezuela, and around the world. This article reflects on possible outcomes of ideological documentaries among social movements and gives important information about the documentaries' production and distribution, as well as its influence over the years.

Samet's investigative piece (2013) regards Venezuelan polarization and how opposite political sides appropriate the same narratives — in this case, the death of a journalist during the 2002 attempted coup, that later became a martyr for both sides, each one blaming the opposite side for the fatality. More specifically, Samet (2013) approaches the use of victimhood within populism and polarization, a kind of appropriation that was also replicated in the way *Revolution* and *X-ray* appropriate the same events and, sometimes, the same images with opposites meanings and values.

Bill Nichols (2001), Stella Bruzzi (2006) and Susan Suleiman (1993): something common among the writings of the three main authors that give this research theoretical background is the fact the all of them demonstrate and reinforce their theories by analysing exemplary pieces. This setting is also suitable, or even crucial, for this work, giving me the means to explain and apply the research's findings.

What makes *Revolution* and *X-ray* perfect for my intent is the fact that both documentaries appropriate the same historical events, the 2002 attempted *coup d'état* against the former Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez, to advocate for opposite systems of values: one of them is favorable to Chávez and his revolutionary agenda, while the other gives voice to its opposition. Even more interesting is the fact that both *Revolution* and *X-ray* criticise versions of the event that differ from their own, which they claim to be the accurate, absolute truth. In fact, more than the failed coup, the subject of the documentaries is the ways through which it was spread to Venezuelan and global audiences: in the case of *Revolution*, via the Venezuelan and global media; in *X-ray*, via *Revolution*. While the first one represents the coup providing an inside look and an interpretation of the media narrative, as well as the

³ *Chavista* is the word used to describe Chávez' supporters. (Samet, 2013, 525) Sometimes also used to describe Chávez government and political style.

active influence of the media in the coup, the second one provides a revision and interpretation of *Revolution*, denouncing its manipulations and alleged lies.

I selected *Revolution* and *X-ray* from a bigger group of documentaries that have the 2002 attempted coup and/or Hugo Chávez as subject. The fact is that *Revolution* started a thread of documentaries regarding this event, crucial to Venezuelan and Latin American recent story. The broader list also includes: *Keys to a massacre* ([*Puente Llaguno: Claves de una massacre*], Ángel Fierros Palacios, 2004), *The war on democracy* (Christopher Martin, John Pilger, 2007), *South of the border* (Oliver Stone, 2009), *Mi amigo Hugo* (Oliver Stone, 2014). Some of the films in the list put the failed coup in a bigger context, approaching the North-American influence and neo-liberalist agenda regarding the whole continent (*The War On Democracy* and *South Of The Border*), while *Mi Amigo Hugo* focus on the former president and his relationship with the filmmaker Oliver Stone and *Keys To A Massacre* takes a similar approach to *Revolution* and *X-ray*, also investigating and interpreting images to create its own version of what happened.

More than for its aesthetic and artistic values, I picked *Revolution* and *X-ray* because of their polarized views and ideology towards the events. While *Revolution* is a documentary that circulated in the whole world⁴, being screened in film festivals, winning awards and even being commercially released and screened in TV channels in a few countries, *X-ray*'s circulation was more restricted to Venezuela, in political events, and TV. *Revolution* accomplishes an intriguing and sophisticated narrative that is even similar to the fiction film progressive narrative, making the experience to watch it pleasurable and intriguing. Meanwhile, *X-ray* is not very successful in the same standards: the film's structure is based on showing excerpts of *Revolution* and, then, interpreting and denouncing the manipulations and the "reality" of the facts. The film is heavily based on a filmed cine-forum⁵ about *Revolution* organized by Chávez' opposition. Instead of interviews, voice-over narration (which is present, but have a small role) and other settings that are common in documentary, the film is heavily

⁴ *The Revolution Will Not Be Televised* won 13 awards within cinema, documentary, and television awards, cinema, documentary, and television festivals, and was nominated to another 3 (IMDb, nd).

⁵ '*X-ray* was filmed at a 'cine-forum' held at the Metropolitan University in Caracas on 21 October 2003' (Couret, 2013, p. 508).

based on the recordings of the speakers interpreting the images to an audience in an auditorium, what makes it look improvised and amateurish. Besides these observations, these aspects are not relevant here. *X-ray* is crucial because, among this broader list, it is the only documentary that is ideologically positioned against the *chavista* ideology, sympathetic with the neo-liberalist agenda and the opposition that led to the failed coup.

Throughout the analyses of these films, utilizing the theoretical framework, this research intends to contribute to the overall studies on documentary and its relationship with ideologies, and the representation of historical and political events.

This work will be innovative in several ways. First, I could not find any existing research that applies the narrative analysis approach to ideological documentaries. As Suleiman (1993) points out, the narrative structure is crucial to make a text persuasive towards an ideological direction. Via the analysis of the documentary narrative, it is possible to unfold how the records of the historical events were organized and with which intention. Acknowledging how the manipulation of information works in documentary can change the way these films are seen and its reliability status. My goal here is not to denounce the manipulation, but to understand it and read it. It is not to point out truths and lies, but to outline which is the truth being told and how the filmmaker constructed it. Bringing Suleiman (1993) from fictional literature studies to the documentary field might sound eccentric in the beginning, but as both texts — documentary and novel — aim to illustrate an ideology towards a story (real or fictional), the typology presented is applicable, with the necessary adaptations.

Second, deconstructing and problematizing the reliability status of the documentary can be positive for the filmmakers, the documentary and the audience. In an approach that is closer to Bruzzi's (2006) writings than to Nichols' (2001), it is important to acknowledge that it is impossible for a documentary to contain the absolute truth about something, and the discussion about which kind of documentary is more accurate is pointless. Therefore, assuming that a documentary is one view of a certain topic — instead of the absolute one — makes the experience to produce and watch documentaries fairer in its relation to reality. This assumption is also important to create within the

audience a critical attitude towards these films, making the manipulation visible, and the structure and the intention readable. The fact that ideological documentaries are important tools for social and political movements, mostly because of its persuasive power, makes the awareness of its mechanisms something important inside these institutions as well, since documentary loses its reliability status in a proportional ratio as it starts to look like propaganda as the further discussion of the circulation of *Revolution* will illustrate (Schiller, 2009).

And, finally, the last feature that makes this research singular is the timing. Two aspects of this research make the topic extremely relevant this year. First, questions regarding the truthfulness and ideals behind news and cultural products are raising since the concepts of ‘post-truth’⁶, ‘alternative facts’⁷ and ‘fake news’⁸ is now part of the everyday vocabulary and being widely discussed since 2016, mostly because of the media covering of the 2016 US election, followed by president Donald Trump’s first year at the office. While the acknowledgment of the bias of the main media is growing, it is also interesting to think about the difficulty — or maybe the impossibility — of an unbiased media, something that is crucial to the debate around Nichols (2001) and Bruzzi (2006) writings on documentary theory, and to the discussion both documentaries - *Revolution* and *X-ray* - rise about media manipulation and its political and social implications. Second, Venezuela is back on the global spotlight because of an economic, political and social crisis that started in 2014 and seems to get worse every day (Al Jazeera News, 2017), as Hugo Chávez successor, president Nicolás Maduro, struggles to achieve the former president’s popularity and stabilize the country, in a context in which Latin America is not very open to the *bolivarian* ideas anymore (Phillips, Brodzinsky, Agren, Collins, & Goñi, 2017) and the left wave that took place during Chávez best years seems to be over. The polarization between

⁶ Oxford’s Dictionary defines ‘post-truth’ as ‘relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief’. (Oxford Dictionary, cited in Steinmetz, 2016) According to Steinmetz (2016), ‘the word dates back to at least 1992, but Oxford saw its usage explode by 2,000% this year, based on their ongoing monitoring of how people are using English’.

⁷ Kellyanne Conway, counselor to the president Donald Trump, used the phrase during an interview in January 2017. (Blake, 2017) The term ‘alternative facts’ seems to have the same or a very similar definition to ‘fake news’, since both play with truthfulness, but while ‘fake news’ is a negative term, used as an accusation, alternative facts seems to be defensive.

⁸ Fake news is defined as ‘a knowingly false headline and story is written and published on a website that is designed to look like a real news site, and is spread via social media’ (Rochlin, 2017).

chavistas and opposition, left and right, seems stronger than ever, and revisiting the documentaries about the attempted coup might be an interesting exercise to reflect about the current issues.

3. Research question

Whilst the *roman à thèse* creates fictional stories to demonstrate an ideology, ideological documentaries do the same based on documents and recordings of historical events. These documents and recordings can be archival and found footage; or footage captured exclusively for the documentary. The goal of this research is to reflect on how documentaries appropriate historical events to create their own version of it, and, in the case of ideological documentaries, with the purpose of influencing the audience towards a specific system of values. Documentary, as a film genre and narrative structure, provides the filmmakers the tools to manipulate authentic images and sounds captured from the historical world to build a specific version of it that, besides being subjective, is still an accurate representation. During my research, I was able to identify two main aspects of documentary that will be crucial here: (1) the representation of reality, that is the way documentaries approach the historical world; and (2) the narrative structure, that gives the documentaries the support to position an event towards a specific direction. In order to reflect on these aspects within ideological documentaries and to provide a methodology to identify and analyse this kind of documentary, this research will attempt to answer the following research question: **how the ideological documentary appropriates documents of historical events to create a persuasive representation of reality that advocates for an ideology?**

Followed by the sub-question: to what extent can *The revolution will not be televised* and *X-ray of a lie* be called ideological?

These questions will guide me through the literature revision and film analysis, in which I will be able to reinforce and demonstrate the aspects previously identified.

4. Methodology

The methodology for the analysis of the films will be built on literature revision and an appropriation of analytic methods picked from three authors:

1. From Suleiman (1993), I'll borrow the methodology of narrative studies for the *roman à thèse*, accordingly adapted to documentaries, that includes: (a) the traits to identify a piece as part of the genre; (b) the structural models; (c) the schema that makes possible to identify the redundancy within the levels of narrative. Inspired by the schema provided by the author, my version includes the following levels of narrative for a documentary film: the image (I), which includes documents and recordings, as well as letterings, aesthetic and artistic intervention; the sound (S), covering interviews, voice-over narration, sound track and sound effects, the documentary voice (V) and the historical event (H). Therefore, before performing the analysis, I'll set up a description of the film, its style and narrative structure, as well as an identification of the film's voice following the definition of Nichols (2001) and Bruzzi (2006).

2. From Comolli and Narboni (1976), the typology for a film's level of ideological commitment;

3. From Nichols (2001), the documentary modes of representation (Figure 1).

Besides the narrative analysis, a literature revision is needed in order to better understand the concepts and discussions about truth in documentary, documentary's representation of reality and the voice of a documentary. The next Chapter, *Setting the stage: the ideological documentary and the representation of reality*, will give the research an important background on the representation of reality and the relation between documentary and the historical events represented, focusing mainly on Bruzzi (2006) and Nichols (2001), while moving forward to a definition of the ideological documentary, therefore, also returning to Suleiman (1993). Finally, the analyses themselves will be performed in the end of Chapters III and IV, each one dedicated to one of the documentaries - *Revolution* and *X-ray*. Before the analyses, I'll give the reader some context about the films, using the bibliography and the framework from Chapter II. Then, I'll describe the documentaries according to the events represented and its narrative. With all set, I'll analyse them based on Suleiman (1993), Comolli and Narboni (1976), and Nichols (2001).

Documentary Modes
Chief Characteristics
—Deficiencies
<hr/>
Hollywood fiction [1910s]: fictional narratives of imaginary worlds —absence of “reality”
Poetic documentary [1920s]: reassemble fragments of the world poetically —lack of specificity, too abstract
Expository documentary [1920s]: directly address issues in the historical world —overly didactic
Observational documentary [1960s]: eschew commentary and reenactment; observe things as they happen —lack of history, context
Participatory documentary [1960s]: interview or interact with subjects; use archival film to retrieve history —excessive faith in witnesses, naive history, too intrusive
Reflexive documentary [1980s]: question documentary form, defamiliarize the other modes —too abstract, lose sight of actual issues
Performative documentary [1980s]: stress subjective aspects of a classically objective discourse —loss of emphasis on objectivity may relegate such films to the avant-garde; “excessive” use of style.

Figure 1. Reproduction of Nichols’ table of documentary modes (Nichols, 2001, p. 138).

CHAPTER II

SETTING THE STAGE: THE IDEOLOGICAL DOCUMENTARY AND THE REPRESENTATION OF REALITY

This Chapter presents another theoretical review on some of the aforementioned texts, aiming to clarify some aspects of the documentary that are crucial to the development of this research and to a better understanding of the further analyses. The three aspects are: the relation between document, documentary, and the event; the representation of reality; and the ideological documentary.

1. The document, the documentary and the event

Starting with the three-way relation between document, documentary and the event represented on a piece, the main aspect is the difference between document and documentary. According to Nichols (2001), ‘documentaries are not documents in the strict sense of the word, but they are based on the document-like quality of elements within them’ (Nichols, 2001, p. 38). A document is a record of an event: it can be pictures, video footages, sound tracks, written documents, or even the raw footage the filmmakers captured for the documentary, before its edition and finalization. These documents, besides being an authentic and — almost — unbiased representation of the world, usually don’t provide a clear narrative for the viewer, or a guide on how it should be read. That’s what the documentary provides: a meaning, a context, a direction, and an ideology. Bruzzi also approaches this aspect, stating that ‘the document – though showing a concluded, historical event – is not fixed, but is infinitely accessible through interpretation and recontextualization, and thus becomes a mutable, not a constant, point of reference’. ‘The document, though real, is incomplete’. (Bruzzi, 2006, p 26) Documentaries are always trying to convince the audience that the records and documents represent the filmmakers ‘point of view: ‘To make a documentary is therefore to persuade the viewer that what appears to be *is*’ (Vaughan, cited in Bruzzi, 2006, p. 17).

This research aims to show how these documents — in this case, mostly film footage — were appropriated again and again, first by the TV and then by the documentaries, always providing new meanings and interpretations. This aspect of documentary is central in this work, and that's why I named it '*Document and Documentary*': the document is the main element that constitute the documentary, it is crucial for the documentary authority and authenticity aspect regarding the reality, since it provides evidence of what is being said or showed, although it's acknowledged that these documents are always open to interpretation and re-signification. Besides being an accurate representation of an event, the document is limited by its form — which could be still or moving image, text or sound. As Bruzzi (2006) affirms, 'the potential differences between film as record and as representation, is the relationship between the human and the mechanical eye'. (Bruzzi, 2006, p. 15) Therefore, at the same time it provides information, it also raises questions about the other sides of it, what it's not shown by the document. Documentary approaches the event in another level, presenting a collection of documents, comparing and juxtaposing them, giving them context and interpretation. It provides, also, another level of bias: the documentary gives the filmmaker a way to construct a truth using these documents as evidence. In the document, on the other hand, the limitation of the medium is what compromises its accuracy with the event. Documentary takes advantage of these limitations to guide the viewer towards a point of view, taking advantage as well of all the means documentary as a medium provides: video, audio, editing, etc.

A striking example presented by Bruzzi (2006) is the so-called 'Zapruder film', an accidental footage of the assassination of the US president John F. Kennedy. The 26 seconds silent footage, filmed by the amateur photographer Abraham Zapruder's home-camera, presents a raw footage of the president being shot. According to Bruzzi (2006), 'footage that by accident rather than design captures material this monumental transgresses the boundaries between the official and unofficial uses of broadcast film, offering an alternative point of view, a perspective that is partly predicated upon the absention of the film auteur, the conscious creator of the images' (Bruzzi, 2006, p. 18). Therefore, to the accidental footage — which is a document — is given the authority of being unbiased, or the most accurate and value-free as possible. Although this footage is still 'incomplete' regarding its meaning, the amount of

information it provides is not as relevant as the possibility of numerous interpretations and appropriations its limitations enable. The 'Zapruder film' is an essential piece for North-American culture, that has been subject of numerous investigations, interpretations and conspiracy theories. One might say that it activates the curiosity more than it reveals the truth, making room for appropriations. According to Bruzzi, 'documentary has always implicitly acknowledged that the 'document' at its heart is open to reassessment, reappropriation and even manipulation without these processes necessarily obscuring or rendering irretrievable the document's original meaning, context or content' (Bruzzi, 2006, p. 16).

2. The representation of reality

This three-way relation between document, documentary and the event is also crucial regarding the definition of representation of reality. Documentary provides, as Nichols (2001) points out, a 'tangible representation to aspects of the world we already inhabit and share' (Nichols, 2001, p. 1), because of 'an assumption that the text's sounds and images have their origin in the historical world we share. Overall, they were not conceived and produced exclusively for the film' (Nichols, 2001, p. 35). Compared to fiction films, a domain in which a film can also represent reality if the subject is an event that genuinely took place in the real world, they are usually reenacted in a scripted way for the purpose of the film, while documentary is based on documents and recordings of events that also take place in the real world, outside the film. This is not a strict rule, since documentary can also rely on dramatization as a tool for its representation, but the bond with the reality outside the film is always strong.

According to Bruzzi (2006), 'the fundamental issue of documentary film is the way in which we are invited to access the 'document' or 'record' through representation or interpretation, to the extent that a piece of archive material becomes a mutable rather than a fixed point of reference' (Bruzzi, 2006, p. 17). This definition of representation endorses the idea that a documentary supports one point a view, is one representation among various possible ones, using documents to build narratives and to support a perspective by providing evidence. Nichols (2001) supports this view by affirming that 'documentary

re-presents the historical world by making an indexical record of it; it represents the historical world by shaping this record from a distinct perspective or point of view' (Nichols, 2001, p. 36).

This approach to the documentary representation of reality makes one point against the pursuit of an absolute truth in documentary, or even the most accurate representation possible. It is a way to approach reality, to deal with it, using recordings and documents of the world in order to re-tell something, aiming for one truth that is specific, and utilizing the medium as a tool to endorse this view, to make it plausible and credible. This representation aims to retell the story and, at the same time, to convince and persuade the viewer: 'we tend to assess the organization of a documentary in terms of the persuasiveness or convincingness of its representations rather than the plausibility or fascination of its fabrications' (Nichols, 2001, p. 30). By quoting Annette Michelson, Bruzzi (Bruzzi, 2006, p. 15) uses the term 'factory of facts', which I found fascinating regarding this aspect: can facts be fabricated? If it is fabricated, is it still a fact? The term summons the deal of documentary and reality, the way one fact is a mean to construct and endorse other facts, or truths.

Bill Nichols' heavy influence among the field of documentary theory relies mainly on his typology regarding the documentary modes of representation (of reality). This organization provides categories which can be used to classify and interpret documentaries. These categories are presented and organized following the evolution of the genre, in a way that also evolves along with the technological advances, creative and artistic movements, and documentary vanguard movements: 'Each mode may arise partly as a response to perceived limitations in previous modes, partly as a response to technological possibilities, and partly as a response to a changing social context' (Nichols, 2001, p. 34).

According to Bruzzi (2006), 'Nichols has offered the most influential documentary genealogy'. (Bruzzi, 2006, p. 3) Although recognizing its value and using Nichols' typology in her writings, Bruzzi (2006) is heavily critical to the categorization, pointing out to a 'false' (Bruzzi, 2006, p. 3) and 'hugely problematic chronology', that is also 'too reductive' regarding 'increased documentary heterogeneity and complexity' (Bruzzi, 2006, pp. 3, 4). Nichols (2001) acknowledges that 'the order of presentation for these six modes corresponds roughly to the chronology of their introduction. It may therefore seem

to provide a history of documentary film, but it does so only imperfectly' (Nichols, 2001, p. 100). Another problem is that Nichols' (2001) documentary modes also suggest an evolution in the way documentaries represent reality, suggesting that some modes might be more accurate than others, as if there was a correct way to approach reality. Because of the way Nichols (2001) negatively addresses some modes, features or tools documentary provides, this reading that some modes might be better is possible, as well as the belief in a utopian representation that would contain an absolute truth. Bruzzi, however, avoids this kind of assumption.

Documentary is seen by Bruzzi as a performative act, because the filmmakers and the public acknowledge the possibilities and limitations of documentary and its relationship with truths. Therefore, the relation filmmaker-text-public is not as straightforward as Nichols (2001) states: the filmmaker doesn't have the intent of representing an absolute truth and the spectator doesn't expect it. The use of the term 'performative' is another disagreement between Nichols (2001) and Bruzzi (2006), since Nichols (2001) uses it to define one of the modes, but ignoring that Judith Butler's writings (1990) on performativity completely changed the way the term is seen. According to Butler (1990), the performative is an unconscious 'stylized repetition of acts' (as quoted in Wissinger, 2016, p. 287), and what makes performance and performativity distinct is the fact that 'performance presumes a subject, but performativity contests the very notion of the subject' (Butler, cited in Wissinger, 2016, p. 289). Therefore, the performative is a performance that takes place without the awareness, acts that are repeated because "that's the way of things", although a performance is taking place. That's how Bruzzi interprets the documentary, as an exchange between filmmaker, the event and the public in which every part acknowledges its role and the outcomes of the act. For Nichols (2001), the performative documentary is one of the documentary modes of representation, in which the filmmaker is present in the film and performs to the camera, a subjective kind of documentary that, regarding Butler and Bruzzi, would be more related to performance than performativity.

'that documentaries are inevitably the result of the intrusion of the filmmaker onto the situation being filmed, that they are performative because they acknowledge the construction and artificiality of even

the non-fiction film and propose, as the underpinning truth, the truth that emerges through the encounter between filmmakers, subjects and spectators’.

(Bruzzi, 2006, p. 11)

Concluding this part, I agree with Bruzzi (2006) that documentaries don’t have to be the pursuit of an absolute truth but, instead, a defense of one possible truth about determined event. Acknowledging that there are various possible, relative truths, a documentary advocates for one of them, presenting it as the absolute truth (considering that the audience is aware of the role of a documentary as campaigning for one truth among other existing ones). Acknowledging this criticism regarding Nichols’ (2001) writings is important here, since I’ll be using his typology.

In *Introduction to Documentary* (2001), Nichols presents an updated version of the documentary modes of representation, providing new categories that follow the increasing complexity of documentaries. Nichols first introduced four modes in *Representing reality: issues and concepts in documentary* (1991) and, during the ten years that separate the two books, two new modes were added. Besides Bruzzi’s criticism that the modes and the categorization can be reducing (Bruzzi, 2006, p.3), Nichols (2001) asserts that the use of the typology shouldn’t be so straightforward, since one documentary doesn’t necessarily have to fit completely in one of the categories, but contain elements from others as well:

A film identified with a given mode need not be so entirely. A reflexive documentary can contain sizable portions of observational or participatory footage; an expository documentary can include poetic or performative segments. The characteristics of a given mode function as a dominant in a given film: they give structure to the overall film, but they do not dictate or determine every aspect of its organization.

(Nichols, 2006, p 100)

The six documentary modes of representation provided by Nichols (2001) in his updated typology are:

1. The **poetic mode**, that is more interested in transmitting a mood or a tone than information. Therefore, it ‘sacrifices the conventions of continuity editing and the sense of a very

specific location in time and place'. It 'affect much more than displays of knowledge or acts of persuasion' (Nichols, 2001, pp. 102, 103).

2. The **expository mode**, which is what usually comes to mind when one thinks about documentary. It assembles records of the world and interpret to the audience, 'addresses the viewer directly, with titles or voices that propose a perspective, advance an argument, or recount history' (Nichols, 2001, p. 105).

3. The **observational mode**, which is a direct outcome of technological advances, that providing portable equipment, made possible to capture images and sounds without a huge team and machinery (in the beginning of the 1960): '16mm cameras such as the Arriflex and Auricon and tape recorders such as the Nagra that could be easily handled by one person' (Nichols, 2001, p. 109). The result were films that intended to film the world as it is presented, without any interference (the term "fly-on-the-wall" is common to refer to these films), and minimal manipulation in the post-production, with discret editing, no sound track, voice-over narration or intertitles. The movies of *direct cinema* movement belong here.

4. In the **participatory mode**, the filmmaker interacts with the subject in front of the camera, abandoning the "observer" and "interpreter" role. The filmmaker, here, represents the viewer in the film: an outsider participating and interacting with the contingency. The encounter between filmmaker and subjects, and sometimes even the negotiations, are now recorded and presented in the final film. The films of *cinema verité* movement belong here.

5. In the **reflexive mode**, documentary turns the focus on itself, discussing the way it represents reality and inviting the audience to think about it. 'Instead of seeing through documentaries to the world beyond them, reflexive documentaries ask us to see documentary for what it is: a construct or representation' (Nichols, 2001, p. 25).

6. Within the **performative mode**, the filmmaker's approach takes an intimate, subjective and emotional turn. The role of the filmmaker in front of the camera is stronger than in the participatory mode: here the filmmaker itself — or a specific aspect of his perception and experiences — is the

subject. 'Performative documentary underscores the complexity of our knowledge of the world by emphasizing its subjective and affective dimensions' (Nichols, 2001, p. 132).

Another feature of the documentary that will support the analysis of the films I have selected is the assumption that every documentary has its own "voice", something that both Nichols (2001) and Bruzzi (2006) endorse. The voice of a documentary would be a joint of the filmmaker's point of view and of their stylistic decisions. It would be the outcome of a documentary, its speech, or discourse: 'the voice of documentary conveys a sense of what the filmmaker's social point of view is and of how this point of view becomes manifest in the act of making the film' (Nichols, 2001, p. 45). It is important not to confuse this concept of voice with the literal role of a voice, meaning the sound of a human voice, in a documentary. A big majority of documentaries relies on the voice-over, 'an extra-diegetic sound track that has been added to a film' (Bruzzi, 2006, p. 47), to interpret the images and documents being showed. Although this voice is an important feature to the "final" voice of a documentary and sometimes represents the point of view of the filmmaker, the voice of a documentary is something bigger: 'is not restricted to what is verbally said, either by voices of unseen "gods" and plainly visible "authorities" who represent the filmmaker's point of view' (Nichols, 2001, p. 46).

The role of the voice-over is, indeed, an important issue that will be crucial while analysing the films, and one point in which Bruzzi (2006) and Nichols (2001) disagree. Nichols (2001) sees the voice-over as authoritarian and limiting, especially the so-called 'voice of God', the unidentified and omniscient voice, very common in traditional documentary, more specifically the ones belonging to the expository mode. Among documentary scholars, it is usual the assumption that this voice is corrupting the films, in a way that the sound overcomes the image. Bruzzi (2006) disagrees with that: 'most of the time voice-over is perceived as a threat, as didactic and anti-democratic' (Bruzzi, 2006, p. 48). 'Most to blame for this negative perception of voice-over documentaries has been Bill Nichols' definition of the 'expository mode' as didactic, the oldest and most primitive form of nonfiction film' (Bruzzi, 2006, p. 48). Regarding ideological documentaries, the voice-over, as a guide to interpreting the images and events presented by the films, turns to a positive view, since it can guide the viewer to a certain point of view and interpret itself and by making its point crystal clear, as is the case of the *roman à thèse*, in

literature. The same features that might be interpreted in a negative way by Nichols (2001) and other authors, regarding its authority and manipulation, can be viewed as positive here when thinking about the intention of a film, but as well in a way in which the audience is not completely passive, but acknowledges the context of the documentary, its intention and how it represents the world. Once again, the relation between filmmaker, documentary and viewer doesn't need to be that straightforward and limiting: adopting the documentary as a performative act, it can be presumed that one film represents one point of view among others, instead of the definitive, absolute one. In this way of thinking, it makes sense that a documentary makes use of all the tools available to persuade the audience in one direction, since it is dealing and competing with other ideologies outside of the text itself.

Identifying the voice of a documentary is crucial in the act of watching a documentary: throughout this exercise, the audience is able to identify the point of view of the filmmaker, the documentary speech and the means the filmmaker used documentary tools and narrative structures to get to this outcome. Identifying the voice of *Revolution* and *X-ray* will be essential in the further analyses.

3. The ideological documentary

What makes a documentary ideological? Stating a definition of the ideological documentary is crucial to this research, as this definition will be the basis for the analysis of the films I have selected. To come to a definition, first I'll go through Susan Suleiman's (1993) writings, in which the author attempts to do exactly what is my goal here: defining a genre - in her case, a literary genre, which is called *roman à thèse*, and analysing some of the works that follows the genre rules. Suleiman's work (1993) is also crucial because, as well as the ideological documentary, the *roman à thèse* is a text that has the purpose of promoting an ideology, making her writings on narrative and ideology applicable to the selected movies.

While setting the traits for the study of the narrative structure that makes the *roman à thèse* a literary genre, Suleiman (1993) wisely narrows her approach on ideology, avoiding broad and confusing

concepts, stating a definition that fully fits its intent. In this definition, she refers to ideology as a ‘sense in which we might call a discourse ideological if it refers to, and identifies itself with, a recognized body of doctrine or system of ideas’ (Suleiman, 1993, p. 1), instead of ‘the broad sense in which we can say that any representation of human reality depends on, and in some way expresses, a more or less consciously defined ideology’ (Suleiman, 1993, p. 1). Therefore, the main point is that the *roman à thèse*, as an ideological text, is ‘primarily didactic and doctrinaire in its intent’ (Suleiman, 1993, p. 8). Nevertheless, a question is raised by this assumption: how can one say that a piece is ‘primarily didactic and doctrinaire in its intent’? This question is the origin of the method created by the author, in order to come up with a model that has identifiable traits and structures. The texts, authoritarian, interpret themselves to the reader, leaving no margin for misinterpretation. In a way, it infantilizes the audience with its didacticism, with the goal of providing ‘a single reading’ instead of ‘plural readings’ (Suleiman, 1993, p. 55).

Suleiman (1993) defines the *roman à thèse*, as ‘a novel written in the realistic mode (that is, based on an aesthetic of verisimilitude and representation), which signals itself to the reader as primarily didactic in intent, seeking to demonstrate the validity of a political, philosophical or religious doctrine’ (Suleiman, 1993, p. 7). Novels that feature a ‘recognized body of doctrine or system of ideas’, ‘concerned with having an effect on its readers’ and ‘organized around specific historical events or political points of view’ (Suleiman, 1993, pp. 1-16). All these traits are suitable to the ideological documentary.

Besides giving the basis to define the genre, Suleiman (1993) also provides the tools for a study of the narrative structure of the *roman à thèse* which is also a way to prove if a piece fits in the genre or not, and a method to analyse each work. Although novel and film, and thus the *roman à thèse* and the ideological documentary, are disparate forms of storytelling, it is possible to appropriate Suleiman’s (1993) method in documentaries with some minor adaptations. What makes it possible is the fact that the traits and models are based on the relation between the narrative and the doctrine, something that exists in both written text and moving image.

As a criterion to categorize a novel as a *roman à thèse*, Suleiman (1993) proposes three modal traits that she calls ‘the essence of the genre’ (Suleiman, 1993, p. 63):

1. Unambiguous, dualistic system of values;
2. Call of action;
3. Doctrinal intertext (the doctrine needs to exist outside of the text).

In this work, I’ll appropriate the same traits to identify a documentary as ideological.

The main point of the definition of the *roman à thèse* and the traits Suleiman (1993) sets is to narrow down the genre, in a way that is ‘specific enough to provide a basis to the analysis’, but ‘general enough to include works in which ideological content may vary’ (Suleiman, 1993, p. 7). The *roman à thèse*, therefore, is subgenre of the realistic novel, a genre that already has its definitions and traits, the same can be said of the ideological documentary as a subgenre of the documentary. In order to introduce the crucial concept of exemplary narratives, the author refers to two primary models of fiction: the parable and the fable. Both are narratives in which the story has the intent to discipline the audience, leaving no room for misinterpretation. In that sense, the author compares the *roman à thèse* to a speech act, based on the relation between the speaker/text and the audience - there is a manifested intention.

Another trait of the *roman à thèse* that I’ll appropriate to analyse the ideological documentary is the redundancy. Redundancy is a linguistic term that has, most of the time, a pejorative approach. In linguistics, it is something to be avoided, regarding its features of being excessive, superfluous, unnatural (Suleiman, 1993, p. 150). It can be a useful and positive trait though, as the view from linguistics of information points out: because of noises in communication, parts of the messages can be lost, therefore redundancy and repetition would take place, making a successful communication possible (Suleiman, 1993, p. 150). For ideological texts like the *roman à thèse* and the ideological documentary, the usefulness of redundancy lays on the level of meaning: it reduces plural readings and ambiguities leading toward the desirable single correct reading (Suleiman, 1993, p. 150): ‘In the *roman à thèse*, where a single “correct” reading is required (or, more exactly, is posited as desired effect), we can expect that there will be a considerable amount of redundancy’ (Suleiman, 1993, p. 150). Therefore,

identifying these redundancies, and possible types and levels of it, can also be a trait to categorize a piece as ideological, and analyse it.

Suleiman (1993) provides a schema for identifying redundancies among the levels of narrative text, which I'll attempt to explain in a simplified version. There are two main levels of narrative, the level of story (S), which unfolds in characters (C), context (Co) and events (E); and the level of discourse (D), which unfolds in narration (N), focalization (Foc) and temporal organization (T). This is the basic structure to identify different types of redundancy, as long as the repetitions occur within different levels of narrative (after this basic structure, the levels unfold to other categories, which I choose not to go further). Although it could be applicable to documentary, I think that in regards of moving image there are other traits that should be given importance in an adapted and simplified schema that I'll introduce detailedly in the methodology. Mainly, the level of image and sound are crucial in documentary, along the documentary voice (similar to discourse) and the historical event.

Finally, concluding her methodology, Suleiman (1993) appropriates narrative structures from other literary genres to state the two structural models of the *roman à thèse*:

1. The structure of apprenticeship
2. The structure of confrontation

The structure of apprenticeship borrows from the *Bildungsroman*⁹ the narrative structure about self-discovery, self-knowledge. It's a style of story based on character's transformation, a coming of age approach in which the protagonist-hero (that usually begins the story very young and ends it mature), changes 'from ignorance to knowledge', 'from passivity to action', through a series of adventures, proofs and tests, 'to find its own essence' (Lukács, cited in Suleiman, 1993, p. 65). The appropriation of the model by the *roman à thèse* is based on the opposition and dualization. The apprenticeship can be positive, when the hero finds and follows the correctness, or negative, when he finds and follows wrong, evil purposes, becoming the villain.

⁹ The term *Bildungsroman* designates 'a type of story that emphasises the formation (*Bildung*) or the 'self-education' of the hero' (Suleiman, 1993, p. 265).

The structure of confrontation is based on confrontational and antagonistic stories, focused on conflicts in which good and evil are well defined and recognizable. In this narrative structure, adversaries that are not in the same ethical or moral plane: the hero and the enemy have opposite values and both fight for them. The main difference from the structure of apprenticeship is that, here, the main focus is on the conflict, instead of the protagonist. The hero is also distinct: there is no transformation during the narrative. The antagonistic hero begins the story already expressing the values defined as good and sticks to it until the end. Another important trait of the antagonistic hero is that he represents or is part of a group, merged with a group, in a way that, besides having the characters of the hero and its helpers, the protagonist of a confrontation narrative is the collective. Another important trait of the model is about the ending: 'the outcome can never be the definitive victory of the enemy' (Suleiman, 1993, p. 112). The defeat of the hero is never definitive: whether it is a moral victory, a spiritual victory or a delayed victory. The hero's victory is never definitive as well: the ending is open for new enemies and battles to come, since the object is not only the conflict but also the moral and the ideal.

Moving forward to Comolli and Narboni (1976), the text I'm using here, *CINEMA/IDEOLOGY/CRITICISM*, was originally published in the French magazine *Cahiers du Cinéma*, of which they are former editors, in October 1969, providing the film critic community a typology for a film's endorsement with ideologies. This endorsement regards a wider level than the *corpus of text* of the movies, approaching the economic system in which a piece is produced and distributed as well, because a movie, 'as a result of being a material product of the system, it is also an ideological product of the system' (Comolli and Narboni, 1976, p. 24). Although it is interesting to acknowledge this point, the relation between ideology and cinema at this level is not my subject here, and going forward on this aspect can be confusing. I rather focus on what the authors have to say about ideology and movies as texts.

The version of the text that I am quoting was published in *Movies and Methods: An Anthology, Volume 1* (1976), edited by Bill Nichols. In the introduction to the text, Nichols (1976) states that the piece is 'politically motivated' and 'arose from the broad redefinition of the purpose of film criticism that followed the events of May-June 1968 in France' (Nichols, 1976, p. 22). Nichols (1976) summarize

the seven categories of the typology, adding that ‘categories: (a) through (d) exhaust the possibilities of ideological endorsement or criticism at the levels of form and content, but perhaps *Cahiers*’ most interesting comments relate to categories (e) and (f), where the films seem wholly determined by the ideology but turn out to have an ambiguous relation to it’ (Nichols, 1976, p.22). Therefore, categories (a) through (b) will be more applicable in this research, since they are limited to the films themselves, while the other three relate to the movies within their external contexts and the economic system in which they were produced.

Going forward, Comolli and Narboni (1976) state that ‘it is the nature of the system to turn the cinema into an instrument of ideology’ (Comolli and Narboni, 1976, p. 25). Besides approaching cinema and ideology with a different purpose from this research, the authors’ seven categories for a film’s endorsement with ideology will be helpful to this research. The first category (a) includes the films that propagate the dominant ideology and ‘give no indication that their makers were even aware of the fact’; (Comolli and Narboni, 1976, p. 25) the second (b), films that attack an ideology both in the content and the form; a third category (c) covers films in which the content might not be explicitly political but its form is; the fourth (d), films that are explicitly political in the content but not in the form, ‘because they unquestioningly adopt its language and its imagery’ (Comolli and Narboni, 1976, p. 26); the fifth (e), films that initially seem to endorse an ideology, but turn out to have an ambiguous relation to it, that present an ideology instead of promoting it — the ideology only exists in the text; the sixth (f) and seventh (g) categories approach specifically two movements of documentary history: *direct cinema* and *cinema vérité* (although being an important part of documentary history, it is not relevant to go further in these movements here — while explaining Nichols’ (2001) documentary modes of representation, further in this introduction, I’ll briefly explain its concepts).

Although some of the categories might seem too specific to certain movie vanguards or to the relation between the films and the ideology in which they are produced, the ones that only regard the movies as texts will provide this research a useful categorization. While Suleiman’s typology (1993) approaches literature and, therefore, needs some adaptation, Comolli and Narboni’s (1976) — which is much simpler — is directly related to movies.

Following this line of thought, the relation between documentary and ideology becomes more and more explicit. Although not every documentary fits in the definition of ideological documentary that I'm constructing and using in this research. As Comolli and Narboni (1976) text indicates, every movie has some level of endorsement with ideologies, sometimes even without the acknowledgement. If we refer to Suleiman's (1993) approach to ideology, as well and her traits for defining a piece as ideological (in the case of the *roman à thèse*), it is possible to separate the ideological documentaries, the ones that have an ideology as the central subject and advocate for it, from documentaries that approach ideologies in other levels. Both aspects mentioned in the previous section of this Chapter — namely the three-way relation between document, documentary, and the event; and the representation of reality — are important for the ideological use of documentary, because they make room for appropriation and redetermination. Bruzzi (2006) makes a precise statement by affirming that 'a documentary is a negotiation between reality on the one hand and image, interpretation and bias on the other' (Bruzzi, 2006, p. 6).

It is important to point out that, although the terms appropriation, manipulation or re-signification might sound negative, especially when used to reorganize documents and register them to guide the audience towards an ideology, it is not my intention to denounce this power of documentary or even approach in it a negative way. My aim is to acknowledge this phenomenon and provide a possibility of analysis and a theoretical framework on how documentaries accomplish that. This acknowledgment is an important feature to pursue as a documentary researcher, viewer or producer, for its honest approach, positioned in the middle of the 'absolute truth' approach and the 'manipulation of truths that results in lies' approach. Williams (1993) makes an interesting point regarding this aspect, affirming that 'it has become an axiom of the new documentary that films cannot reveal the truth of events, but only the ideologies and consciousness that construct competing truths, the fictional master narratives by which we make sense of events' (Williams, 1993, p. 13). Therefore, the main truth contained in the documentary, stronger than the reality it represents, is the documentary itself, its version of the world, its voice — in Nichols (2001) definition. As Bruzzi (2006) affirms, 'documentary's 'greatest strength is its availability for the purpose of analysis and ideological critique' (Bruzzi, 2006,

p. 19). Illustrating this possibility of documentary, with a mighty positive view on the bias, Bruzzi (2006) provides an example that perfectly fits the aspect, by commenting the documentary filmmaker Emile de Antonio' work.

‘the use of didactic narration; they use archive material provocatively and dialectically and compel audiences to think, to question and to seek change. De Antonio is a strong advocate of bias and of the foregrounding of opinion, thereby undermining the notion that documentary is principally concerned with transparency and non-intervention’ (...) ‘de Antonio’s films are furtively didactic. Despite his films’ democratic intention (not wanting to teach but to reveal) de Antonio wants his audience to arrive at the same conclusion as himself, a method he calls ‘democratic didacticism’.

(Bruzzi, 2006, p. 29)

Emile de Antonio is an example that perfectly fits the idea of a positive aspect of bias, which is conscious and makes its intention transparent, but does not lose its value as an accurate representation of reality.

4. Conclusion

My aim with this Chapter was to clarify important features regarding the ideological aspect of documentary and my approach to it, to provide a value-free perspective on the persuasive feature of the genre. Besides the fact that the example of Emile de Antonio presents a possible positive view on the bias, this view is only complete if the viewer is aware that the documentary is trying to convince him instead of informing how one event took place. This perspective meets, once again, Bruzzi's (2006) notion of documentary as a performative act, which makes possible an approach that doesn't condemn the manipulation of recordings towards a point of view or system of values. Through the next Chapters, focusing on *Revolution* and *X-ray*, it will be possible to see how these aspects are presented in one specific documentary, and by comparing the different treatments of documents in both movies, how these registers are re-signified towards opposite representations of reality.

CHAPTER III

THE REVOLUTION WILL NOT BE TELEVISED: EMBRACING THE STRUCTURE OF CONFRONTATION

1. Theoretical framework

This theoretical review regards writings about the documentary *Revolution*, as well as the state of affairs of Venezuela in April 2002 and some of the precedent months — the period covered by the film. I'll return to five texts already introduced in the Chapter I, from the authors Buxton (2009), Motta (2009), Samet (2013), Schiller (2009) and Couret (2013), aiming to give a detailed background to the further analysis of the film.

First, Buxton's article, which was published in 2009 — the year in which president Chávez celebrated his tenth year in power, focus on the historical and political context that made Chávez' election possible, as well as how the government politics evolved during this decade and its influence over Latin America: 'President Hugo Chávez was the first of the 'leftist' presidents to assume executive authority, his election triggering — depending on one's ideological leanings — fears of a domino effect and regional leftist contagion, or evidence that a leftist political alternative was possible in Latin America' (Buxton, 2009, p. 2). Regarding the outcomes of a decade of Chávez in power, Buxton (2009) states that it 'has without doubt seen a significant redistribution of economic and political power from an elite majority to the politically excluded and economically marginalized majority' (Buxton, 2009, p. 57). The author divides the government of Chávez (until 2009¹⁰) in three phases, one being an evolution of the previous one, regarding the aims of the *bolivarian revolution*¹¹: 'There are three separate stages in the evolution of *Bolivarianism*: its moderate social democratic beginnings; its more radical left-of-

¹⁰ Hugo Chávez (1954 - 2013) was the president of Venezuela from 1999 until his death in March 2013, being followed by the vice-president Nicolás Maduro, who still in office.

¹¹ The bolivarian movement 'takes its name from the famed 19th-century 'liberator' of Latin America, Simón Bolívar' (Schiller, 2009, p. 483). In the texts and films presented in this research, *bolivarian* have a similar meaning to *chavismo*, since is always referring to Chávez political position and so-called revolution. There are other possible meanings of the word, which are not relevant here.

centre proposition; and, the final, third, stage — of creating a model of Twenty-first-century Socialism’ (Buxton, 2009, p. 57). Besides being embraced by other countries, the *bolivarism* has a specific, deeper connection with Venezuela: ‘owing to the country specificity of the variables that underpin *Bolivarianism* (identified as the influence of pre-Chávez political legacy and the dominance of the oil economy), the revolution cannot be replicated or transposed to another country contexts’ (Buxton, 2009, p. 58).

Both documentaries to be analysed in this research regard the period Buxton (2009) recognizes as the second phase of Chávez’ government, or the second phase of the evolution of *bolivarianism*, when the president turn from a moderate posture to something more radical, prioritizing the poor and introducing a different distribution of capital, while assuming a strict posture regarding the resistance to neoliberalism, since ‘anti-Americanism and anti-neoliberalism became important elements of the rhetorical and policy agenda’ (Buxton, 2009, p. 63). These changes were followed by attacks from inside and outside the country — out of both right and left. This shift, and how Venezuela and the international community reacted to it, is what caused the failed coup in April 2002, also mentioned in Buxton’s piece (2009): ‘Anti-government forces called on the armed forces to intervene to end the Chávez ‘dictatorship’, a call that was heeded by some sectors in April 2002 when an alliance of anti-government groups launched a failed coup attempt’ (Buxton, 2009, p. 67).

Second, Motta’s article (2009), published in the same book as Buxton’s piece (2009), relies on the relation between *chavismo*, defined by the author as ‘Venezuela’s contemporary political process’ (Motta, 2009, 75), populism and social democracy. The concept of populism, which is commonly seen as negative, is frequently used to describe Chávez political style. What is interesting in Motta’s text (2009) is the fact that the author deconstructs the concept of populism as a mean to disqualify a certain government or politician, providing a gaze on Venezuela’s case that approaches its complexities and ambiguities. An interesting connection is the one regarding the ‘academic discourse of *two-lefts*: ‘one that is realistic and responsible and aware that the only alternative is to work within the hegemonic limits of neoliberal globalization; the other outdated, authoritarian and irresponsible in its challenge to the ‘politics of the possible’ (Motta, 2009, p. 76). This discourse of ‘good left’ and ‘bad left’ makes

room to a disqualification of governments without a further investigation on the real issues and ramification, and to cases in which the left itself opposes to another left-wing movement. According to Motta (2009):

‘The forms of democracy and development that are being created by Venezuela’s popular classes demonstrate the counter-hegemonic practices that are the progressive kernel of *chavismo*. This reinvention of utopias challenges the discourse of the ‘two lefts’ which seeks to disqualify, debilitate and silence political projects that rupture the ‘end of story’ dystopia of political and intellectual elites’

(Motta, 2009, p. 90).

In some extent, this discourse makes a ‘good left’ something impossible to achieve, something that applies to the opposition to Chávez.

Populism is also a central topic in Samet’s article (2013), the third work reviewed here, which links the concept to the Venezuela’s polarization and the use of victimhood in both sides, Chávez supporters and the opposition. Like Motta (2009), Samet (2013) aims to approach populism regarding the complexities that the term raises, instead of a plain negative view, rejecting ‘the assumption that populism is a mass delusion that relies on a charismatic leader’ (Samet, 2013, p. 526). According to the author, political polarization is a characteristic feature of populism because of the antagonism caused by its logic. Victimhood plays a major role because each side identify itself as victim, in constant suffering, oppressed by its opposition. The article takes a personal approach, following the way one specific fatality was appropriated by both *chavistas* and opposition: the assassination of the photographer Jorge Tortoza, shot in the head while covering the demonstrations that preceded the coup.

The figure of the journalist has a complex position within the polarization of Venezuela, especially in April 11, 2002: they represented the private media, Chávez’ main enemy, and therefore faced hostility from the *chavista* side. But the fact that a journalist works for the private media doesn’t make him part of the opposition *per se*: maybe he’s just doing his job. According to the author’s investigation, as a result of interviews with the photographer’s family and fellow journalists, Tortoza was a Chávez supporter, besides working for ‘the enemy’. Therefore, the reason Tortoza was killed was

his function, because, as Samet (2013) points out, journalists were clearly targets in the conflict: ‘anyone who was carrying a camera or who looked like a journalist was a potential target’, ‘no fewer than seven journalists were wounded covering the events of April 11’ (Samet, 2013, p. 530). Who it was that shooting journalists is still a mystery (at least, until Samet’s article), a fact that creates the opportunity for both sides to associate the violence with the opposite one, claiming the victimhood for itself, since ‘both the opposition and *chavismo* adopted him (Tortozza) as a martyr’ (Samet, 2013, p. 526). This aspect of Samet’s text (2013) have a clear relation with this research for two reasons: first, the death of Tortozza was captured in video and the footage is present in both *Revolution* and *X-ray*; second, because the way both sides appropriate the narrative of Tortozza’s death is similar to what happens with the footages and the historical event itself in both cases, *Revolution* and *X-ray*.

Therefore, Samet’s (2013) conclusion about how populism is based on the antagonism is useful here, and also brings Suleiman’s (1993) definition of structure of confrontation to mind. According to Samet (2013):

For most of the Chávez era, Venezuela was home to two competing populisms. Scholars have paid close attention to the populism of Hugo Chávez, the best example of a charismatic leader since Juan Perón. What has gone un-acknowledged is that the opposition, and especially the private press, was also a case study in populist mobilization.

(Samet, 2013, p. 527)

Populism goes both sides, and the narratives of victimhood are an important way to build the figure of the enemy and put the blame on it: ‘through their association with the victims of April 11, both the opposition and *chavismo* portrayed themselves as legitimate responses to the illegitimate use of force’, ‘both movements adhere to a populist logic in which they define themselves as victims in opposition to an external enemy’ (Samet, 2013, pp. 532, 535).

Fourth, moving to the articles that have the documentary as the main subject, Schiller (2009) deeply investigates the context in which *Revolution* was produced and filmed, as well as its circulation within film festivals, social and political gatherings, television, and the commercial distribution:

Financed by the Irish Film Board and an Irish public service broadcaster, with post-production funding from the British Broadcasting Company, a slightly shorter version of *Revolution* was first broadcast on television in Venezuela, Ireland, Canada, Japan, Germany, England, Holland, Finland, and Denmark in 2003 before the film circulated at film festivals and was distributed theatrically in the United States in 2004.

(Schiller, 2009, p. 479)

The article aims to ‘draw attention to the ironies and complexities’ (Schiller, 2009, p. 478) regarding the film’s meaning and circulation among all actors and institutions involved.

Another striking point of Schiller’s writing (2009) regards how the documentary was received by different audiences. Among film critics, ‘the film reviews legitimized *Revolution* as a serious and worthwhile documentary that, although biased, presented a revised historical account and a riveting narrative.’ (Schiller, 2009, p. 488). More interesting is the reception among Venezuelan government and its supporters, that embraced the film in a way that almost places it under a propaganda label. Several *Revolution* screenings, followed by Q&A sessions, were organized by the Venezuelan government aiming to ‘spread the word and promote the truth.’ (Schiller, 2009, p. 492). However, this appropriation is not positive to the documentary: it threatened its authenticity regarding the representation of the historical event, and makes the bias explicit. As Schiller (2009) points out, ‘the involvement of official Venezuelan government representatives in the distribution and framing of the film threatened *Revolution*’s authority. Opposition activists pointed to the Venezuelan government’s involvement in *Revolution*’s circulation to undermine the film’s independent status’ (Schiller, 2009, p. 493) Ideological documentaries are fragile to this kind of appropriation, since filmmakers can’t control the outcomes and the circulation of their films that, after being embraced by a certain group or institution, will be always linked to and it, and will receive a propaganda status that decreases its values regarding the representation of reality.

Finally, Couret’s article (2013) examines how *Revolution*, *X-ray*, and a third documentary, *Keys of a massacre*, appropriate televised footage to revisit the coup. The focus is the relation between television and documentary, and how these documentaries attempts to give new meanings to footage

originally intended to be showed on TV, revisiting, as well, the major role TV had in the so-called media coup — both private and state TV channels. The main title of the text, '*The Revolution was over-televised*' plays with the title of *Revolution* while makes an interesting statement regarding the relation between media and the coup: first, the media had an organizational role in the development of the coup; second, it had a major function during the coup itself: media provided Venezuela and the world information about the unfolding event, through the filter of its own ideology; third, it investigated the coup, its origins and its developments years after it occurred, going back and forth on this images, finding new meanings, new footages and new clues. This over-mediatization is followed by an excess of truths, with every documentary providing a new 'absolute version' or 'ultimate finding'.

Because 'the time of television is that of an insistent 'present-ness', a 'This-is-going-on' rather than a 'That-has-been' (Couret, 2013, p. 505), it is disparate from the time of documentary, a medium that can calmly investigate all the available footage and meticulously construct its version of reality. The documentaries denounce the lies of the media, or the lies of another documentary, as a way to bring the authority of truth-owner to itself. Although this abundance of truths gives the audience enough material to reflect and make its own assumption, on the other hand it can also give the impression than the absolute truth gets distant in a proportional ratio to the new interpretations that appear.

Following this review, I'll provide a description of the *Revolution* and its narrative style, giving the reader an idea of the documentary and my perception of it before moving to the analysis.

2. Description and narrative structure

Revolution starts with a brief introduction of its point of view, something that will be reinforced during the whole movie: the antagonism between Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez and the media. This introductory clip begins by introducing the audience to president Chávez focusing on his popularity within Venezuelan population. It shows a specific sample of the population: poor, non-white, presented in impoverished and/or rural areas. These images contain lots of Venezuelan flags, while the sound track plays music with rhythmic drums that might sound typical Venezuelan, with the voices of the

crowd in the background. The idea is clear: Chávez is a politician that truly represents the people, that looks like the people, in which the people trust and count on.

Following this introduction, Chávez gives a speech to a huge crowd, shouting his resistance against the neoliberal pressure over Venezuela and Latin America. Black screen. The sound track suggests tension. A North-American TV host announces that Chávez was forced out from office. A montage of diverse North-American TV news excerpts regarding the event follows, justifying the forced exit due to his controversial positions against the US and close relation to Cuba, finally mentioning the US interest on the Venezuelan oil industry. Then, the main title occupies the screen: *The Revolution Will Not Be Televised*. In less than 5 minutes, this opening sets the stage for what will follow: the hero, the enemy, the conflict; and predicts the historical event of April 11: the viewer is already warned that Chávez will be forced out of office. The title of the documentary makes a statement itself: this piece is not only about politics or history, is about media representation. Even if the viewer doesn't realize of these aspects immediately, it is important that they are introduced like that, because it already makes some short statements that will return in numerous moments of the film. Mentioning the date of April 11 in this introductory clip is also crucial, since the date of the attempted coup is a turning point to the film itself. *Revolution* is always marking the time by letterings, building a time index that is organized around this date. When April 11 comes in the documentary, it marks a turn to a style of narrative disparate from what has been presented before.

The first part of the film regards the events and actions that happened before April 11, focusing on the figure of president Chávez, building the character, presenting his allies and the opposition. Following the introductory sequence, which ended with suggestion of tension and conflict, the documentary lowers its tone to something more didactic and descriptive. The voice that narrates the film comes from one of the filmmakers itself, Donnacha O'Briain, who describes, in first person, the goals of the documentary and the experience of filming it, while also providing information about Venezuela's history, it's international relations (focusing on the USA), and biographical background regarding Hugo Chávez and his trajectory to power. In this first part of the film, the time indexation

functions monthly, from September 2001 (there is even a commentary from Chávez addressing September 11 terrorist attacks) to February 2002, and then jumping to April 11, 2002.

O’Brian’s voice-over narration starts explaining the choice of the Venezuelan president as the subject of the film: ‘Seven months before the coup, we have come to Venezuela to make a documentary about president Hugo Chávez. We wanted to get behind the layers of myth and rumor that surrounded this larger than life Latin American leader’ (transcript from O’Brian’s voice-over narration in *The Revolution Will Not Be Televised*, 2003). In this moment, the documentary, once again, recalls the coup as a mark to the film’s narrative. Thus, the time index advances as a countdown to April 11. The audience follows Chávez’ routine acts as the president: attending to public events, interacting with supporters, attending to meetings with his team, filming a TV show. During this part, the documentary is able to draw the personality of the president in a way that is appropriated for the narrative: an extremely positive image, always mentioning the revolutionary political position against neo-liberalism as a goal for life, an ongoing battle. After making it clear that Chávez is the hero, this first part of the film also brings to the game his allies, the enemy, and the enemy’s allies.

The polarization between Chávez and the media is, therefore, present in the documentary since the introductory montage. In *Revolution*’s version of reality, president Hugo Chávez is the hero and the Venezuelan private media — with its high influence among the national and international view on the country, extremely aggressive position regarding the president, and the power to manipulate information in his opposition — is the enemy. Schiller (2009) affirms that ‘Chávez’s popularity sunk from 80% in 2001 to 30% in 2002. There is general agreement that the private media played a significant role in this decline’ (Schiller, 2009, p. 484), while Samet (2013) also endorses private media’s active role on the opposition to Chávez and the coup itself, affirming that ‘there can be no doubt that Venezuela’s mainstream media outlets threw their weight behind efforts to oust Chávez.’ (Samet, 2013, p. 531). The president’s supporters, presented as working, non-white, poor people that struggles to survive and are victims of the country’s neo-liberalist history in the pre-Chávez era, are the allies, in a list that also includes part of the Venezuelan army, the state TV Channel — Channel 8, the president’s team and the filmmakers. The enemy’s list of allies includes the international media, the opposition to

the president — represented by an angry elite of protesters afraid of the possibility of a communist regime — the politician Carlos Ortega, Pedro Carmona (introduced as president of Venezuela largest business federation, which has a huge influence among private TV channels), and a group of high hierarchy Venezuelan generals.

When Chávez announced a redistribution of the oil revenue aiming to privilege the poor population, it was the starting point of the events that unfolded in the coup attempt. The aforementioned dissident generals sent a warning message to the president through all private TV channels, threatening to assume the power. Pedro Carmona, then, calls the population to a demonstration opposite to Chávez on April 11, in Caracas. The documentary, then, states that the coup was predicted and planned by Carmona, the generals and the private media, a plan in which this demonstration had an important role. All the private TV channels circulated callings for the April 11 demonstration, spreading the news within Chávez opposition.

April 11, 2002. The demonstration of the opposition starts, furiously marching to the state oil company, while a group of Chávez supporters shows solidarity to the government outside the presidential palace. Then, the opposition demonstration decides to march to the presidential palace as well. The conflict is inevitable, ‘there was a general sense that if the two groups met, there would be bloodshed’ (Samet, 2013, p. 530). This first part of the documentary lasts approximately 30 minutes and sets the whole context of the conflict that resulted in the coup. It doesn’t only explain the context: it also guides the viewers towards a system of values and an ideology, presenting the characters and institutions as good or bad, allied or enemy, leading to the filmmaker’s point of view in a way that is explicit in some points and subtle in others, regularly providing evidence that support its thesis. The treatment given to the Chávez supporters and opposition is noticeably disparate: the opposition mainly speaks through other means than straight to the filmmakers (private TV, public speeches, narrated on voice-over) while the supporters are given voice and opinion. In the sequences that precede the conflict, the documentary builds an increasing tension, and this manipulation becomes explicit: while the opposition demonstration march to the palace, *Revolution* intercalates the images of the two demonstrations, and while Chávez supporters are represented as cheerful and pacific, the opposition is

portrayed as aggressive and hateful. These representations are clearly a result of the selection of footage, the editing and the sound track. As Schiller (2009) states: ‘*Revolution* uses visual cues and music to portray Chávez as a popular hero and his supporters as noble and brave, whereas the government’s opposition is depicted as light-skinned, well heeled, and aggressive’ (Schiller, 2009, p. 485).

With all set, the documentary moves to its second part, an immersive view on the bloody conflict followed by the coup. From this point on, the narrative adopts a different time structure: the didactic tone in and the countdown structure gives place to a ‘everything-happening-in-the-same-time’ feeling, as the documentary assumes an intense and participant position regarding the sequence of unforeseeable events that follow, since the filmmakers are located inside the location of the events.

I’ll make a pause here to point to this important aspect: the filmmakers went to Venezuela with the aim of making a documentary centered on Hugo Chávez, as a president, a political, historical and public figure. The filmmakers received unlimited access to Chávez, his routine, his team, and to the presidential palace. This access was given because a positive representation was expected. According to Schiller (2009), ‘the Venezuelan government granted Bartley and O’Brian privileged access to Chávez. Their project of making an intimate and generally favorable documentary portrait of Chávez, which no doubt helped secure their privileged access to the president, was interrupted when the president was briefly ousted from power’ (Schiller, 2009, p. 483). These aspects were negotiated before the documentary started its filming, and are crucial to its developments. What we see during the first 30 minutes is what this movie would be if things happened as planned, and a *coup d’état* didn’t take place in the way. *Revolution* would be a slightly traditional documentary (probably with a completely different title), that would still be ideological for the way it aimed to portray the president and his enemies, but without the force gained by the event that followed.

The transition between following the president’s routine to filming a live and exclusive version of a *coup d’état* demanded a change on the filmmaking style — during the filming stage, and the narrative style — in the post production. It is like the didacticism from the traditional documentary model that are presented in the first 30 minutes has the function to prepare the viewer, information and

feeling-wise, to what follows: an inside look on the coup and the violent conflict, edited in a way that appropriates features from fiction filmmaking and appeals more to the viewer emotional side rather than to the spread of information. The second part consists in a non-stop sequence of events, build-in tension and suspense that, supported by the polarization and construction of figures such as the heroes, the allies and the enemy, creates a feeling that is rare in documentary.

Returning to the conflict itself, when the opposite demonstrations encounter each other, the violence begins. The documentary makes a clear point that violence first came from the opposition and, then, Chávez supporters reacted. Shots can be heard and protesters started being shot in the head, indicating the presence of snipers in the high buildings. Images of wars follows: dead bodies being carried, people running around, blood on the streets. Then, a footage that is crucial for this research appear: a Chávez supporter shoots unstoppably from the top of Llaguno Bridge, in a direction from which, according to the private TV, opposition demonstrators were coming (Figure 2). *Revolution*, then, presents some new footage (Figure 3) that shows another perspective of the scene, stating that the direction to which the gunned man was shooting was empty, and the demonstrators were already gone by that time. Supporting this perspective, a former head of news production for a private TV channel affirms, in an interview, that this footage was manipulated against Chávez supporters, *X-ray* also provides its own signification to the same footage, as I'll show in the next Chapter. Who's to blame for the massacre in April 11, which resulted in 19 deaths, is an unanswerable question, that still opened for interpretation, manipulations and conspiracy. The immediate response of the private media, blaming the Chávez supporters and showing the Llaguno Bridge footage repeatedly on TV, was an important aspect to justify the coup within the population.

The Revolution shows the footage recorded by Venevisión and explains how the images, which failed to disclose visually who was being shot, were used to imply that the armed men were shooting into the opposition's protest. The footage is replayed, formatted to fit within a black frame shaped into an ovoid rectangle that echoes the television frame; the image this time includes the network branding (Venevisión) at the top left corner and the commentary of the anchorman (mis)narrating the events

onscreen. The documentary filmmakers subsequently reveal an alternative angle of the same space, a different vantage point that reveals that the armed men were not shooting at protesters.

(Courret, 2013, p. 508)



Figure 2. The footage of a Chávez supporter firing a gun from Llaguno Bridge. Screen capture of *The revolution will not be televised* (2003).



Figure 3. *Revolution* introduces this footage affirming that, in the moment the previous footage was captured, the street under the bridge was empty, and the opposition demonstrators took another route and never passed by this location. Screen capture of *The revolution will not be televised* (2003).

While the conflict unfolds outside the presidential palace, filmmakers are located inside, following the political development of the coup. The documentary affirms that the state TV channel was sabotaged, therefore the only information available to the Venezuelan population came from the private TV channels, manipulated favorably to the coup. From inside Miraflores palace, people could see that the building was surrounded by the army. A group of military man entered the palace to demand

Chávez resignation. After hours in a private discussion, with the filmmakers and Chávez government team waiting outside the room, we are informed that the president did not signed the resignation and handed himself to the army to avoid the bombing of the palace. The tension only grows as the events unfold, with people mentioning the possibilities of being bombed by the army or of a bigger massacre following the coup, assuming that Chávez supporters would not accept it. Chávez is taken under the custody of the army. Pedro Carmona becomes the interim president.

A lettering appears indicating the 12th of April. Another crucial footage (Figure 4) follows: in a morning TV show from a private TV channel, journalists celebrate the coup and congratulate the media for being responsible for it. Then, they explain the coup in detail, admitting the planning and execution of every phase. Meanwhile, the filmmakers still have access to the palace while the interim president and his team take over the place. They are friendly with the filmmakers, permitting being filmed and giving interviews. Outside the palace, the tension only increases, with Chávez supporters protesting the new government and being heavily repressed by the police. At this point of *Revolution*, the events, the way that they were filmed and the editing end up creating a feeling of entertainment, with a highly emotional appeal, similar to fictional thrillers or action films. It is the climax, the moment when the narrative is well defined, heroes, villains, the whole context and environment, actions unfolding in different locations (the palace, the streets, the tv, Chávez hidden captivity). A level of uncertainty endorses the tension. It is a moment when the villains are in power, but the sequence of events starts lead us to think that something favorable is coming.



Figure 4. On the day after the coup, private media and dissident general ‘confessed’ on live TV how the coup was planned and executed. Screen capture of *The revolution will not be televised* (2003).

April 13. Chávez still kidnapped, and the lack of information about the president’s location is a crucial tool for the tension. People is still demonstrating the support to the president in the street. The voice-over informs the audience that a part of the military which still supports Chávez came up with a plan to retake the palace. This group surrounds the palace, waiting for a sign, while another part is responsible of bringing the president from the captivity. In the sequences in which the palace is retaken by this military group, the *Revolution* finds its higher level of appropriation of fiction film features, with a fast edition of scenes that goes from allies to villains, to people running around inside and outside the palace, with an intense sound track endorsing the suspense. When the palace is taken, Chávez ministers and allies start to arrive. The scenes are intensely emotional, proclaiming the victory of the people and the good side of the battle. Meanwhile, the movie informs that the private media is still pretending nothing happened, holding the information that the palace has been taken. In one specific and crucial scene, it turns to a lie when a TV host interviews the interim president Pedro Carmona by phone and he affirms that he is still in the palace and the demonstrations are under control. In *Revolution*, people that are actually in the palace are shocked to see this scene on live TV (Figure 5).



Figure 5. The interim president, Pedro Carmona, lies on live TV by saying that he is still in the palace and the demonstrations are under control, with people that are inside the palace watching it. Screen capture of *The revolution will not be televised* (2003).

As the movie starts moving towards a happy ending, some political procedures still need to take place: the lack of a president in charge is the cause of many confusion like Carmona's call on live TV. Therefore, finding the vice president, which was hidden, was a priority. While the palace has been taken by a military group, the dissident generals are still in control of the overall situation, putting the life of the president at risk, as well as the supporters that still on the streets — potential dangers that are clearly mentioned to endorse the suspense. Things finally start working out for the hero's side definitely: the state TV channel starts broadcasting again, the vice president arrives in the palace and assumes the office. Chávez finally returns, followed by a lot of celebration inside the palace and in the streets.

The lettering marks that is already April 14 when Chávez makes his first pronouncement after the coup. The movie shows a close-up to the tranquil face of the president, focusing on his emotions. His speech starts aiming to tranquilize the population and to calm the whole situation, followed by a defense of democracy and Venezuela's constitution, addressing his opposition, for whom he leaves a precise message regarding the media: 'don't let them poison you with their lies' (Hugo Chávez in *The revolution will not be televised*, 2003). This scene (Figure 6), followed by loud applauses and celebrations from the crowd, closes the documentary reinforcing the antagonism between Chávez and the media, their roles as hero and enemy, good and evil, and the triumph of good over evil. After a first screen with the filmmaker's credits, we are informed of the destiny of the villains, namely Pedro

Carmona, Carlos Ortega, the dissident generals and the US government. Once again, the documentary reinforces the antagonism and the sides, also providing evidence that they chose the right side by showing that all of them were punished in some level, but was still involved in the opposition to Chávez by the time the movie was released. This short clip is also important to emphasize the feeling that, even though the coup was a failure, victory is never definitive. It was one — big — victory in a battle that never ends, between neoliberalism and *bolivarianism*, between Chávez and the media, between good and evil.



Figure 6. In the last scene of *Revolution*, Chávez leaves a message to his opposition regarding the media's manipulation. Screen capture of *The revolution will not be televised* (2003).

3. The documentary voice

The documentary voice of *Revolution* is a joint of the filmmakers' point of view with a didactic approach, that is just slightly subjective. The fact that the documentary crew was unexpectedly exposed to a *coup d'état* demands them to tell this part of the story as well and to explain how the situation took place. It is also important for the credibility and accuracy of the film that the filmmakers speak for themselves, because this unique circumstance present in the film would arise doubts about its authenticity if it wasn't addressed in a corpus of text. With that being said, besides presenting the voice-over narration from one of the filmmakers and a few interventions regarding their position within the actions and the brief interactions with Chávez, O'Briain and Bartley are discreet regarding putting themselves in the film. As Schiller (2009) points out, '*Revolution* argues that Chávez's opposition, led

by the corporate media, planned and orchestrated the 2002 coup with complicit support of the U.S. government' (Schiller, 2009, p. 485). There are three main narratives that I could identify in *Revolution*: the one regarding the antagonism between Chávez and the media; the one centered on the coup, and the one about the documentary itself. These 3 narratives are always present in parallel, but the documentary provides some hints about a possible hierarchy: the narrative of the antagonism seem to be privileged over the others, since it is present in the movie's title, in the introduction and in the closing scene. The other two narratives need to be there for a complete and accurate understanding of the action and the events, also supporting the main one. The point is how the media influence can shape the society and its politics, and to what extent it can get. The coup narrative demonstrates what can happens, and how the media can make use of this game of truths and lies to influence the politics, showed in an extreme level here. The narrative of the film itself needs to be there to explain how such an extreme coincidence took place and the role of the filmmakers in the story.

Because it is a movie that approaches manipulation of reality towards a system of values and the implications and possible consequences of this phenomenon, *Revolution* inevitably arises questions about its own manipulation and bias. The movie is mostly successful in providing strong evidence, like the footage in which the coup conspirators explain all the plan and how they managed to execute it, and convincing the audience of the its perspective through an entertaining and emotional appealing narrative structure.

4. Analysis

Moving forward to the analysis of *Revolution* according to the proposed methodology, I'll start approaching Suleiman's (1993) typology to categorize a text as ideological. The three modal traits are clearly present in *Revolution*:

1. Unambiguous, dualistic system of values: there is no doubt that *Revolution* picks Chávez side on the media battle, and this perspective is present in every aspect of the film. Even when there is space for the opposition to talk, like some interviews with protesters or the numerous excerpts of private TV channels, these footages were selected to endorse the film's view on the opposition instead

of providing it of a voice or problematizing the perspective. As Schiller (2009) affirms, this aspect was defined before the filming started, and was actually decisive for the amount of access was given to the crew. This is also made clear for the audience before the film starts by its title, already affirming the thesis of media manipulation and influence that will be reinforced and demonstrated during the whole documentary.

2. Call of action: in *Revolution*, this call of action works in two levels: one regarding the political aspect, including the relations between Venezuela and the USA, which is constantly trying to force its neo-liberal system in the country, while Venezuela's resistance is something relatively recent, brought by Chávez and his endorsement of the *bolivarian* revolution. Besides the fact that the Venezuelan case is more specific and radical, this relation with the USA is similar around the whole Latin America, making the call of action for a more protective and social policy applicable for other countries. The movie can also be effective in this extent outside Latin America, making people aware of the issue and constructing a mind-set towards the anti-imperialist side. The second level is broader and can be applicable everywhere: the bias of the media, the way it manipulates reality and its persuasive and alienating power. *Revolution* demonstrates this thesis by showing an extreme example of how the media can define the politics and historical events of a country, providing the audience an opportunity to reflect on the topic and take a position. Also interesting, but not obvious, is the awareness that the movie also manipulates the recording guiding the viewer to a certain perspective, an aspect that can extend this reflection to the narratives of truth and lies, the bias of the media and the representation of reality.

3. Doctrinal intertext: when approaching the *roman à thèse*, Suleiman (1993) makes a clear point that, in order to meet the criteria for this trait, the doctrine needs to exist in the real world, outside of the text. The fact that in documentary it is not possible to contain a doctrine that doesn't exist outside of the text, since these films have its subjects in the real world, and the events represented exists as independent of it. In *Revolution's* case, this doctrine is clearly the *bolivarianism*.

The next phase of the methodology intends to find traces of one of the structural models presented by Suleiman (1993). *Revolution* clearly finds in the structure of confrontation the basis to

build its narrative, since the antagonism between Chávez and the media is present in every aspect of the movie, good and evil are easily recognizable and the antagonists are not in the same moral plane. While Chávez is presented like a true representative of the people of Venezuela, somebody that fights for the poor, facing powerful enemies like the USA and the private media, his enemies aim is to sabotage him to stop this plan to continue, victimizing the poor people and benefiting the elites. In this structure, the hero is already ready when the narrative begins, there is no transformation. In the case of Chávez, the movie even brings his background story in a few scenes to explain where he came from and create some intimacy, but he doesn't change during the events of the documentary. Chávez also has a few heroic scenes, like the powerful speeches and the decision to surrender to the army without signing the resignation. The end of the film also contains another trait of this structure: the fact that the battle continues. All the characters represented as villains are punished in some light level, but still advocating against *bolivarianism* and representing an opposition to the president. In the structure of confrontation, victory and defeat is never definitive, because the battle between good and evil is endless.

For the analysis of possible redundancies between the four levels of narrative proposed, first it is important to provide a brief summary of these levels, namely the image (I), the sound (S), the documentary voice (V) and the historical event (H). On the level of the image, some aspects are characteristic from *Revolution*, like a raw aspect of untreated and spontaneous footage, consisted of a shaky camera, a framing aspect that doesn't seem planned or aesthetic concerned, and natural and functional cinematography. An aspect that has a clear function is that the documentary uses a different framing to reproduce footage from TV. This is a visual indication of which footage is from the documentary and which ones are from TV. Since a big majority of the images shown from TV shows comes from the private channels, portrayed as the main villain of the film, the viewer is leaded to relate this aspect to Chávez opposition and, therefore, constitutes the representation of evil in the documentary. The sound track, composed mostly by the voice-over narration and background music, is a crucial tool to guide the audience's interpretation of the images, making the films perspective explicit. Therefore, the redundancy between image and sound (I = S) is very common, whenever the voice-over describes and point to a certain interpretation of the images shown or when the sound track is used to

make sure the viewer feels a certain way. Whenever this redundancy happens, it also endorses the documentary's overall voice, which is a joint of all the stylistic features and the filmmaker's perspective, resulting in a three-way redundancy including image, sound and documentary voice ($I = S = V$).

Regarding the level of the historical event, my interpretation is that the redundancy only happens when the events have a meaning that is clear about which side is right and which is wrong, that is independent of the documentary's interpretation and perspective. Let's take, for instance, the massacre that preceded the coup: the movie presents its version, blaming snipers that were supposedly related to the opposition, and picturing the opposition demonstrators as highly aggressive, affirming that the violence from Chávez supporters was a response and defense. The private media said exactly the opposite and, since both are biased representations, it is impossible to state which one is right. On the other hand, the failed coup is officially recognized as a *coup d'état*, an illegal act, and had its planners punished and the victims put back in power. It is in these moments in which the event supports the film's voice, there is a redundancy ($H = V$). Because the representation of the events happens through image and sound, it is also a four-way redundancy, ($I = S = H = V$).

Moving to the categories of a film's endorsement with ideology provided by Comolli and Narboni (1976), category (d) is the one that fits *Revolution* better, since it includes films that are explicitly political in the level of the content but not in its form. *Revolution* clearly makes use of the language and traits of both documentary and fiction cinema to construct its persuasive narrative and to make its perspective convincing. Even though it questions the media influence and manipulation, it is not self-reflexive and doesn't invite the viewer to question its authority. Because it's a movie that problematizes the media in the aspect of representation of reality and construction of truths, a reading that question its own authority is possible, but it is something that depends more of the audience than of the documentary as a corpus of text - actually, the documentary makes an effort to avoid this kind of reflection, with the high level of emotional appeal, that can be distractive, and with evidenced indicating that its versions are verified and faithful to reality.

Regarding Bill Nichols' (2001) typology, since it is possible to find features of more than one documentary mode of representation in the same documentary, I consider *Revolution* a mix of the expository mode and the participatory mode. The expository mode is dominant, since the film's narrative is didactic, focused on an interpretation of the events to the audience and using all the available tools to convince the viewer of the film's perspective. The voice-over, which is a strong indicator of the expository mode, is present and, besides being a narration from one of the filmmakers, sometimes mentioning aspects of the film and their interactions with Chávez and perceptions as a foreigner, he narration is mostly informational and didactic about Chávez and Venezuela. Because of the unexpected unfolding of the events represented in the film, the filmmakers often turn the attentions to themselves, explaining their situation and participation within certain moments of the film. The role as an observer and interpreter is a trait of the participatory mode that is present in a few moments of *Revolution*, but the expository mode still dominant.

5. Conclusion

Throughout this analysis, it was possible to identify *Revolution* as an ideological documentary and to evaluate how does this ideological aspect takes place, and the features used to make the film highly reliable and persuasive, besides being clearly biased.

The adoption of the structure of confrontation is a profound feature of *Revolution* that is strongly responsible for the effects caused on the audience and further engagement. The antagonism and the tension between hero (Chávez) and villain (private media) is present since the very beginning and is reinforced throughout the whole movie. This battle is the basic structure in which the film narrative is built on, in a way that sometimes 'the enemy is often more clearly defined than the movement itself' (Samet, 2013, p. 527). The choice for a narrative that mixes two of Nichols' (2001) documentary modes of representation, the expository and the participatory, turns out handy for the ideological purposes. The features of the expository mode fit the purposes for its didactic features and reliability impression. The moments of participation of the filmmakers in the documentary are important to situate their position within the unusual circumstances that take place. Also, by assuming the

participatory position, another level of authority is given to the filmmakers and, then, also to the film: instead of telling a story that happened somewhere with someone, it is something they experienced, making their version more valuable. However, the choice to be discreet in its approach to the participatory features is also important to maintain a distance, and the hierarchy of narratives. Besides being needed, their perspective and participation could be an indicative of bias, if it had more space in the film.

Last but not least, it is striking how *Revolution* raises questions that are similar to the aforementioned debates around the concepts of representation of reality, bias and the documentary as a performative act, in Nichols' (2001) and Bruzzi's (2006) texts. The fact that the documentary advocates against media manipulation, denouncing its bias and influence power, by making use of the same tools — manipulation and bias — is ironically and controversial, being intentional or not. *Revolution* is not only biased, but by an extreme adoption of the structure of confrontation and some feature from fiction cinema, it also appeals to the emotions in a way that invites the viewer to engage with the film and story in a way that is not only rational and informative, like is common in documentary, but exciting and entertaining. Viewed from this perspective, *Revolution* provides another reflection, more sophisticated and less obvious than the ones regarding politics and the manipulation of the media: the construction of truths and the coexistence of diverse truths, that are even sometimes opposed to each other. As Schiller (2009) points out, 'how media organizations and producers do not simply report the truth, but rather play a fundamental role in producing truth' (Schiller, 2009, p. 481). It is not a topic that is explicit in the documentary, maybe not something the filmmakers aimed to raise a conversation about as well, but a reading that is possible given its subject and the context, especially that of documentaries, scholar research and other investigations that followed *Revolution*, opening the field to a numerous variety of truths about the same event. Again, it goes right back to the main debates about representation of reality.

CHAPTER IV

X-RAY OF A LIE: A DOCUMENTARY RESPONSE

1. Theoretical framework

X-ray haven't been subject of as many research as *Revolution* did, but some of the text selected for this research approach or mention the documentary, always among *Revolution* and other films. Because the texts by Buxton (2009) and Motta (2009) are not specific about the documentary, but approach Venezuela in a in a social and political sense, it is not necessary returning to them here. Moreover, I'll use some of the theoretical framework from the Chapter III, when the texts specifically mention *X-ray*. Schiller (2009), and Couret (2013) are very useful because both includes thoughts and information about the documentary. It worth mentioning that, since *X-ray* is a documentary that has another documentary as its subject — namely *Revolution* — the approach to this documentary is always comparative, therefore I'll be referring to *Revolution* constantly throughout this Chapter.

According to Schiller (2009), 'Venezuelan filmmakers affiliated with Chávez's opposition participated in the production of a counterfilm called *X-Ray of a Lie* (2004), which examines *Revolution* scene by scene to uncover the film's narrative strategies and use of artifice' (Schiller, 2009, p. 485). Couret (2013) also provides some background information, by saying that *X-ray* 'was filmed at a 'cine-forum' held at the Metropolitan University in Caracas on 21 October 2003, and mostly depicts the filmmakers and a panel of experts presenting their findings' (Couret, 2013, p. 508). The documentary's approach is similar to *Revolution* regarding its goal: to point out the lies told by a mediatic product. Although, *X-ray* makes use of a completely different narrative style that doesn't give much context about the political contingency and doesn't make an effort to tell a bigger story through the denouncing of *Revolution* lies: the main point is to show footage of the previous documentary and, then, argument of its contradictions and the way it fails with truth. In some sense, it is demanded that the viewer have watched *Revolution* before *X-ray* to acknowledging what is being said. In this extent, *X-ray* is not only about *Revolution*, but also depending on it.

X-ray is, basically, a filmed cine-forum, composed by experts on politics and film, sharing their thoughts on *Revolution* and the results of investigations performed regarding how the documentary manipulates documents. According to Couret (2013), *X-ray* ‘faulted *The Revolution Will Not Be Televised* for its manipulation of images and in turn re-appropriated the news footage of the events to articulate a different narrative of the 2002 coup’ (Couret, 2013, p. 502). Schimmer’s article (2009) is focused on *Revolution*’s meaning and circulation, and therefore mentions *X-ray* as a response, a ‘counterfilm’, but doesn’t go much further on it. Couret’s (2013) piece, on the other hand, provides a further analysis and debate around the movie and its relation to *Revolution*, since his article focuses on how the coup was represented in documentary, covering *Revolution*, *X-ray* (and a third film, *Keys of a massacre*) and therefore will be handy in the further description and analysis of the film.

2. Description and narrative structure

X-ray starts by introducing its perspective on the events of April 11, 2002, and the previous months. Just like in *Revolution*, the documentary provides a nearly 5 minutes clip presenting a summary of what will be shown in the following 75 minutes (approximately). A text read in voice-over narrates the events, supported by a montage of footage. According to *X-ray*, the demonstration against Chávez on April 11 united one million people from all sectors of society. Following a 2 days strike, people went to the streets demanding Chávez resignation. On the other hand, a group of fifteen thousand Chávez supporters stayed outside of Miraflores palace, some of them endowed with guns or lighter weapons, backed by the National Guard. Meanwhile, Chávez makes a pronouncement in chain broadcast, an arrangement that obligates all TV and radio channels to broadcast it. Whenever a private TV channel attempts to split the screen to show the events unfolding on the streets of Caracas in half of it, the signal was cut for this channel.

An audio shows that Chávez demanded the army to use force against the demonstrators and take tanks to the streets. After the tanks were taken to the streets, the order was disobeyed by high hierarchy generals, that didn’t take the plan any further. Following this action, the army demanded Chávez resignation. The president did not resign, but surrendered himself to the army. Pedro Carmona

assumed the power as the new president of Venezuela and immediately made serious mistakes and constitutional omissions. Following this action, serious sectors of society that was demanding Chávez resignation distanced themselves from the new government, like the part of the army that was on this side. The army demanded Carmona to resign, and so he did. On April 13, nearly 60 hours after being taken off power, Chávez returns to presidency.

After providing the film's perspective on these events, *X-ray* denounces that one documentary that provides a distorted version of it is being spread world widely: *Revolution*. The voice-over narration affirms that *Revolution* was sponsored by Chávez government and distributed by the Venezuelan embassies around the world, and that the circulation within respect European TV channels and film festivals gave the documentary an undeserved credibility status. Following this circulation of the film, several demonstrations favorable to Chávez started to happen all over the world. The event that originated *X-ray*, on the other hand, had the aim to expose *Revolution*'s alleged lies. The cine-forum exhibited the film and, then, provided a roundtable talk with experts, also showing footage from other sources as evident of the films unethical manipulation of documents, aiming to represent both sides of the polarization in the debate. *X-ray* summarizes this event in a documentary form, presenting footage of the talks, intercalated with excerpts from *Revolution* and Venezuelan TV channels.

After this introduction, the voice-over narration affirms that *Revolution* presents 4 basic ideas about Venezuela that are all untruthful: first, that the elites composed by privileged white, rich people, oppress the majority of people, which happens to be mostly poor and ethnical; second, that president Chávez was elected by this majority and defend this group from the evil white rich people; third, that in April 11, 2002, the elite performed a *coup d'état* against Chávez, supported by the private media; fourth, that in April 13, 2002, millions of Venezuelans rescued Chávez and restored his power. Then, the documentary affirms that *Revolution* is spreading this lies among 'unsuspected world audiences'. The movies' goal is, then, to call out these lies and provide an accurate version of the events. The investigation starts by saying that there are different versions of *Revolution*, and some minor variation was made to make it more appealing to specific audiences. Moving on, that images were used out of context and re-signified to endorse the *Revolution*'s statements in support of Chávez.

Advancing, the next topic of *X-ray* regards the relation between Chávez and the Venezuelan private media (it worth remember that, in *Revolution*, the private media is the main antagonist), and does so in a classic *who-shot-first* style: by affirming that the media only reacts to Chávez posture against them, something that happens since he's first day in office and that is reproduced by his supporters. Several images of reporters being attacked by *chavistas*, mostly in demonstrations, are shown, as well as footage of the president verbally assaulting the media in public speeches. Samet's article (2013), which is focused on the death of a photojournalist during the conflicts of April 11, provides a multifaceted view on the complex relation between the president, *chávistas*, and the media: the aggressions, and the position of the journalists in the middle of the battlefield. According to the author, 'Tortosa's death came as tensions peaked between the private press and the Chávez government. It is no small irony that the private press became the president's most visible adversary' (Samet, 2013, p. 530).

Another aspect not included in *Revolution* that worth mentioning are the *cadena*s, which are pronouncements from the government that are chain broadcasted by all Venezuelan radio and TV channel obligatorily. *X-ray* accuse Chávez of abusing of this power, broadcasting numerous and long *cadena*s frequently. The existence of the *cadena*s problematizes *Revolution* affirmative that the state TV channel was the only mean for the president to speak with the population. In fact, Chávez was speaking in *cadena* mode during the conflicts of April 11, as Couret (2013) affirms: 'This *cadena*, from 3:45 to 5:15 pm on 11 April 2002, omitted from the chronology of events in *The Revolution*, receives much attention in the latter two documentaries (*X-ray* and *Keys of a massacre*) and becomes a televisual moment that best illustrates how the television screen becomes a virtual space contested as forcefully as the physical space surrounding the presidential palace' (Couret, 2013, p. 504).

The documentary moves, then, to an interpretation of a footage that seriously questions the ethics of *Revolution*. The referred scene is the main sequence used by *Revolution* to represent Chávez' opposition as a desperate and futile elite, and does so by interviewing people in a resident association meeting. The interviews present an alienated view on the country, showing prejudice against the poor and unprivileged. *X-ray* argue that these interviews were shot months after the coup, in a context in

which these people were afraid of being attacked by alleged gangs formed by *chavistas*, and the words represents a ‘desperate media class’ as the only people participating on the opposition demonstrations, a much more multifaceted group. The strongest denounce is that the filmmakers gained access to this meeting and performed the interview presenting themselves as reporters from BBC, which they are definitely not. A serious accusation that demanded a strong evidence, something that *X-ray* doesn’t provide: the speaker at the conference mentions the action saying that ‘he was told that...’, which sound insufficient since documentary, as a mode, provides numerous ways to present proof. Moving forward to the relations between Chávez’ opposition and the US, something that *Revolution* uses to link the US government with the coup, an international analyst goes in defense of the northern neighbor, stating that making this link is irresponsible and that having meetings with other countries’ oppositional politicians is common since the US is interested in relationships with both political sides of a country.

It is interesting to note that this documentary has a problematic approach of the words ‘revolution’ and ‘coup’, something that its perspective makes explicit. Unlike *Revolution*, *X-ray* is more discreet to embrace on side of the polarization, but is does so during the analyses by showing a strong opinion against the president and its followers. Having a revolution as a final goal is an important aspect of Chávez’ politics and affirms its national and local (regarding Latin America) resistance against the US influence and neoliberal system. In *X-ray*, the word ‘revolution’ is always presented in a negative way. Until this part of the film, the word ‘coup’ was not mentioned to refer to the events of April 2002 — which I found weird, until the documentary clarifies their approach later on.

As the documentary goes on, April 11 finally arrives in the narrative, once again attempting to answer the one big question: who’s to blame for the deaths and the violence? The effort to answer it starts by showing how the conflicts takes place in *Revolution*: the previous documentary affirms that the responsibility for the deaths belongs to snipers located in the top of the buildings with unknown connections or motivation, shooting people straight in the head. A military speaker at the cine-forum affirms that the snipers are part of the army, and the use of the snipers to contain demonstrations is part of the military plan Chávez called to contain the demonstrations on that day (the same that included the tanks). But, since the army was divided between Chávez’ supporters and opposites on that day, it still

difficult to put the blame on one of the sides. *X-ray* doesn't present evidence of that, but shows footage of helicopters surrounding the conflicts during the massacre. These helicopters belong to the police and have cameras below its cabin - therefore, the government have access to the footage they could have the answer. The movie, then, accuses the police of being hiding something.

Following, *X-ray* moves to Llaguno Bridge, investigating the same footage already interpreted by the private media and *Revolution*. While in *Revolution* the new meaning for the footage aims to state that the *chavistas* was shooting to defend themselves and the opposition demonstration never passed by, *X-ray* attempts to support the media version that they were shooting pacific demonstrators, and does so by creating a time indexation on clues that the footage gives of the time of the day it was recorded. This part and follows an artifice that *X-ray* makes use constantly in its narrative as a way to accuse *Revolution*: close analyses of footage that making the documentary unfaithful timeline explicit. Specifically, in this scene, the speakers resort to shadows (Figure 7) and a blood mark on the street as time index, as Couret (2013) also observes:

'After the forum, the filmmakers revisited the footage because a bloodstain on the alternative footage, which was absent from the Venevisión footage, undermined their chronology. Using the bloodstain as a temporal marker, they determine that the alternative footage was captured nearly an hour after the Venevisión images by referencing the longer shadows of the individuals in the image. Material traces become temporal and spatial coordinates in these efforts to articulate a precise chronology of events'

(Couret, 2013, p. 508).



Figure 7. *X-ray* utilize the position of a shadow as time index. Screen capture of *X-ray of a lie* (2004).

Regarding the political unfolding of the conflict, *X-ray* provides a version that is disparate from the one presented by *Revolution*, and that also differs from the one widely accepted as history. As I commented before, the documentary avoids the word coup, and when it does mention it, it does so to neglect the coup narrative or with irony (even making use of inverted commas). In *Revolution*'s version, represents of the army had a meeting with Chávez to demand it's resignation, threatening to bomb the palace if he refuses to, and then the president, although not resigning, surrenders and is taken by the army, suggesting that he was kidnapped. The documentary doesn't provide any evidence of what it says about this closed meeting, but it's supported by the distraction caused by the emotional intensity of this moment of the film. In *X-ray*'s version, Chávez abandoned the palace to discuss his resignation with high hierarchy generals, aiming to be allowed to go to Cuba. Supporting this version, the documentary presents pictures of the president in a meeting with military man and footage of him arriving to Tiuna Fort, a Venezuelan military base.

After a public announcement from the army saying that Chávez signed the resignation, Pedro Carmona was empowered the Venezuelan interim president. Carmona's hours-long government was marked by the dictatorial power was given to him and by the disrespect with the constitution. He dissolved the National Assembly, the Supreme Court, the Attorney General, the head of the Central Bank, the Ombudsman, and the national Electoral Board. Repeating the interim government, the army demanded the resignation of Pedro Carmona, which resigned. Following this, the documentary turns to

Revolution's affirmation that, whenever things started evolving towards Chávez' return to power, the private media was playing silent about it. *X-ray* justifies this silence by stating that the media companies were unable to broadcast because they were being attacked by *chavista* groups, showing footage of these attacks and of journalists that was hidden to assure their security.

The voice-over narration introduces, then, the footage that closes the film (Figure 8), in which — according to *X-ray* — Chávez takes the responsibility for the conflicts and the coup to himself. This footage immediately relates to the one in *Revolution*, in which TV presenters congratulate the media for the coup and explain how it was planned and took place. Chávez' version of it presented in *X-ray* is not that strong, a speech that makes possible numerous readings: the one provided by the documentary is even possible, but definitely not obvious. Chávez says, in a public announcement, that 'many times crisis are necessary' and 'even have to be guaranteed', assuming that some of his action had the aim to provoke the opposition, and then 'they responded, and the conflict begin' (Hugo Chávez in *X-ray of a lie*, 2004). End credits.



Figure 8. Last scene of *X-ray* in which, according to the documentary, Chávez assumes the responsibility for the events of April 2002. Screen capture of *X-ray of a lie* (2004).

3. The documentary voice

According to the film credits, *X-ray* was produced and edited by Wolfgang Schalk and Thaelman Urgelles, which are also the main speakers of the cine-forum. Both has plenty of screen time

and are responsible for most of the explanations and interpretations the film provides. There is also the voice-over narrator which, according to the film credits, was written by Urgelles. As exposed by the film's title, the intention is to make the allegedly lies of *Revolution* transparent like in an x-ray and by doing so, it gives *Revolution* samples plenty of screen time so it can be interpreted by the speakers, providing more contextualization and a different perspective.

Unlikely *Revolution*, *X-ray* makes an effort to hide its bias against Chávez and his *bolivarian* political project, but does not succeed. Its tone may sound a bit defensive and personal on the commentaries and, when it does so, it's never favorable to Chávez and his supporters. Although saying that the cine-forum intends to discuss the events impartially, the debate is completely partial by defending all the characters and institutions painted as villainous figures by *Revolution*: the Venezuelan elites, the private media, the dissident generals and even the US. The denial of a coup and repression to the word 'revolution' also helps to identify the bias and, as the *coup d'état* narrative is something widely accepted in a worldwide range, this denial also affects the credibility of *X-ray*. In the first minutes of projection the viewer can realize that the movie is not only a reading/interpretation of *Revolution* to its audience, but it represents an extreme opposition, a literal antithesis.

The film succeeds in clarifying that the events represented in *Revolution* are far more complex than the way it was presented, providing a deeper acknowledgment and broader context on the general state of affairs in Venezuela in April 2002. But the film's structure is affected by the decision of explaining only selected points and of following *Revolution*'s chronological timeline, in a way it goes back and forth on time and subjects, sometimes resulting in confusion. The impression that *X-ray* expands the complexity of the issues is very positive, but the bias is also easily perceptible. The lack of an engaging and flowing narrative structure, like the one in *Revolution* makes the movie less appealing and, sometimes, monotonous. The narrative presented in the documentary is based on revealing the lies, one by one, and then giving pieces of information about the context throughout the film. As a result, it doesn't seem like a whole. Without a bigger story that connect the points and the emotional appeal that *Revolution* provides, *X-ray* ends up being less convincing.

The documentary voice, then, promotes itself on the preposition of denouncing *Revolution* lies and, therefore, telling the true. But what we see sounds more like another perspective, an opposite one, that fails in hiding its bias and ends being less appealing and convincing as the ‘liar’ one.

4. Analysis

Starting the analysis with the aspects regarding Suleiman’s writing (1993), I could recognize the three traits that makes a text ideological in *X-ray*:

1. Unambiguous, dualistic system of values: just like *Revolution*, *X-ray* is clearly a product of Venezuela’s polarization, representing values that are opposite to the ones in the previous documentary. The antagonist is clear: the documentary *Revolution* and its filmmakers, backed by the president Chávez, the Venezuelan government and its supporters. *Revolution* is pictured as a product of manipulating filmmakers and Chávez government, intending to spread the lies around the world, taking advantage of the credibility gained with the exhibition in TV channels and film festivals. Since the documentary is focused on uncovering the lies of *Revolution*, there’s is not enough space to build the figure of a hero — the good is not delimited or embodied. Besides that, the movie gives some tips that it is on the opposite side of Chávez and its supporters, and does so by the defensive position that seems to protect the private media, the opposition demonstrators, the dissident general and even the US. This position is also made clear by the lack of explanation of the *bolivarian* revolution or mentions to the neoliberal pressure the US forces on the country, and also by neglecting the *coup d’état*. In the end, *X-ray* condemn Chávez as the responsible for the violent conflict and for the event that took him off power for nearly 60 hours.

2. Call of action: *X-ray* is a truly political piece, already an action being performed to counter *Revolution*’s perspective. The movie was produced in a period, as described by Schiller (2009) in which *Revolution* was successfully circulating world widely, gaining prestige and making people engage with the *chávista* cause. With the international exhibitions of *Revolution* becoming political acts favorable to Chávez, the opposition started to react. According to Schiller (2009), the theatrical debut of *Revolution* in the Film Forum of New York City, in November 2003, had the presence of demonstrators, pro and against Chávez:

The pro-Chávez demonstrators at the Film Forum passed out a flier that encouraged theatergoers to denounce censorship of the film and to sign an online petition in support of *Revolution*. Meanwhile, an anti-Chávez opposition group passed out pamphlets that questioned the “impartiality, precision, veracity, editorial integrity and ideological independence of the documentary.

(Schiller, 2009, p. 488)

The cine-forum registered in *X-ray* was an event organized as a response to *Revolution*, but dealing with the limitations of being a presential, local event. Making a documentary of it, it was possible to wider it’s approach and circulation, spreading the word to other audiences. Also, in the end credits, *X-ray* invites the public to send footage and information that they might have against *Revolution*, amplifying the call of action to another level of participation.

3. Doctrinal intertext: besides dealing with doctrines that are existent in the historical world, *X-ray* is clear about which doctrine it is against (the *bolivarian* revolution, the *chavismo*). By not makes its point explicitly, the documentary makes room for interpretation, making some readings possible: like that it is favorable to the neoliberal agenda, to the Venezuelan elites, etc. But these remains suppositions. The important aspect here is that, besides the fact that the documentary is unclear about what it advocates for, doctrines from the real world are the subjects, as well as the judgement of which is negative and suppositions of what would be positive.

The structure of confrontation, as described by Suleiman (1993), is clearly identifiable in *X-ray* but, again, is not well defined as in *Revolution*. The antagonistic side is represented by *Revolution* and its filmmakers, having Chávez, his supporters and the Venezuelan Government as allies. While the heroes are not well defined, being aware of how the polarization in Venezuela takes place, and the information provided by *Revolution*, one can say that, in some level, *X-ray* speaks for the sectors that compose the *chavista* opposition. About this group, Samet (2013) affirms that ‘in the case of the opposition, the performance of collective identity has proved more challenging. Unlike *chavismo*, the opposition is not associated with any single person but, rather, with a heterogeneous collection of institutions, parties, and public figures’ (Samet, 2013, p. 529). Therefore, according to this analysis, *X-ray* reflects the complexity of Chávez opposition, which makes difficult to visualize the group as a whole. Like in the traditional structure of confrontation, *X-ray* exhibits an ongoing battle that will never

end: the battle between truth and lie. Clues that the documentary represents a continuum effort to demoralize *Revolution* and Chávez government are present, like the screen asking people to send possible new footage and information, before the end credits, and the mention of ongoing lawsuits against Chávez. In fact, after *Revolution*, other documentaries and investigative journalist pieces turned back to April 11 and Llaguno Bridge to re-investigate the images and give them new meaning, like the aforementioned *Keys to a Massacre* or numerous videos regarding the topics that can be found on *YouTube*, as well as the academic pieces quoted in this research.

Moving to the analysis of the levels of redundancy, in the image level (I), *X-ray* includes numerous footage from *Revolution*, a considerable variety of archival and found footage, mostly coming from TV channels, but also from personal archives; and the covering of the cine-forum. The lettering screens have an important role, since the documentary is organized using a question-answer structure, and each question is presented written in the screen, marking a new ‘chapter’ of the film. In the sound level (S), an interesting point is the presence of various voices narrating the film: the film’s voice-over narration and, because of the numerous excerpts of *Revolution*, the voice-over from the previous documentary is also constantly present, besides used in a way in which everything it says will be interpreted and neglected in sequence, and the speech of the speakers in the cine-forum. Dramatic music is also present, but is not particularly strong or emotional driving. Reaction from the cine-forum’s audience, the vibrant sounds of the crowds at demonstrations, and characteristic sounds of the TV footages presented are also constantly in the sound track. *X-ray*’s documentary voice (V) was described previously in this Chapter.

The redundancy between image and sound (S = I) is very common, since a numerous scenes of the documentary have the intention of interpreting the images to the viewers, therefore, voice-over narrating images. Sometimes these images are shown again and again, even fast-forwarded and rewind, to reassure some aspects that might be missing for the viewers, and in other moments at first, we see the original footage of *Revolution* and, then, the interpretation from the voice-over or the forum. Because all these interpretations reaffirm the thesis of *Revolution*’s allegedly lies, which is the main point of the documentary voice (V), they are redundant in this level, therefore resulting in a redundancy

(I = S = V). Regarding the historical event, *X-ray* presents a controversial version of it, neglecting the widely accepted *coup d'état* title to the political unfolding of April 11. Besides this fact, it presents some relevant material regarding aspects of the events that was omitted from *Revolution*. Chávez free access to national chain broadcast via the *cadena*s, for instance, confronts *Revolution* affirmation that he had no voice in the private channels and the state TV channel was his only mean to access the population. The revelation of the military plan partly executed with the aim of confront the demonstrations shows how the images of tanks at the streets was appropriated and given new meaning by the previous documentary: *Revolution* show the tanks like it was part of the *coup d'état*, while the military reveals that it was part of Chávez' plan to contain the demonstration. It also shows how the conflicts between Chávez, followed by his supporters, and the media was two sided. In this moments, the film presents a redundancy in the four levels (I = S = V = H).

Regarding Comolli and Narboni's (1976) typology for a film's endorsement with ideologies, I identify *X-ray* as belonging to category (b), in which movies utilize both form and content to attach an ideology. Unlike *Revolution*, that attacks the manipulation of the media in a broader sense — and mostly broadcast TV, *X-ray* target is a specific documentary, and therefore being a documentary as well indicates a direct confrontation. By pointing out the allegedly lies of *Revolution* and recognizing its success on spreading this perspective around the world, *X-ray* reflects on the possibilities of manipulation and bias in documentary, which is slightly different from what happens in TV and, therefore, to the approach and the accusations presented in *Revolution*. By having the goal of unveiling another documentary unfaithful representation of reality, *X-ray* ends up dealing with issues of documentary in a broader level.

Concluding this analysis with Nichols' (2001) documentary modes of representation, I could identify the same mixing of expository mode and participatory mode in *X-ray* as in *Revolution*, but now with inverted weights: in *X-ray*, the participatory aspect is stronger. Also, its approach slightly involves aspects of the reflexive mode, by turning the attention to the possibilities of manipulation in documentary. The dominance of the participatory mode is given by the absolute presence of the filmmakers as speakers in the cine-forum. Besides being supported by other speakers, the voice-over

narration, archival and found footage, the role of interpreter is completely embodied by Schalk and Urguelles, and the movie is heavily based on their speeches. The expository mode is also strong, mostly when the movie retells the events of April 2002, relying on appropriated footage and voice-over narration, characteristic features of this mode.

5. Conclusion

The documentary feud between *Revolution* and *X-ray* presents an interesting connection with Bruzzi (2006) and Nichols (2001) opposition about documentary and reality. Going back to the discussions reviewed on Chapter II, *X-ray* position regarding ‘what a documentary should be’ is quite conservative when approaching *Revolution*, but its own presentation as a documentary, as well as the utilization of the documentary as a modal, features the same manipulation and bias it denounces in the previous documentary. Some of the arguments presented against *Revolution* are serious and strong, like the omission of Chávez access to broadcast media, the lack of evidence to key aspects of the narrative and the antithetical approach to Chávez opposition (the fake BBC identification badges case). But others seem to be performing a reading of the film that, although presented as negative, explains how *Revolution* successfully appropriates the possibilities documentary offers, as a model, to tell its perspective in the most convincing and engaging way.

This analysis is similar to what I’m doing in this research, actually: *X-ray* succeeds to shows how a documentary can be used to ideological means by constructing a narrative that guides the viewer towards one specific way of thinking and system of values. By pointing to a negative view on the documentary persuasive and manipulative power, *X-ray* meets Nichols’ writings (2001) — or one possible reading of them, that affirms that this kind of documentary lacks on an absolute truth, and that the bias is bad for the viewers. Confirming this perspective, at one point of *X-ray* the voice-over narration affirms that *Revolution* is being spread to ‘unsuspected world audiences’ (voice-over narration in the documentary *X-ray of a lie*, 2004), endorsing the assumption of a passive audience, that fully believe in everything a documentary shows. Bruzzi (2006), on the other hand, affirms that the bias can be a positive aspect when is acknowledged that documentary is always one perspective of reality,

something that is clearly the case in both cases, *Revolution* and *X-ray*. Therefore, seeing the documentary as a performative act (Bruzzi, 2006, p. 11) is an interesting way to approach both documentaries, also how one is related to each and how the engagement of audiences and demonstrators with it, as noted by Schiller (2009).

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Throughout the analyses performed in this research, I could test the typology created to identify and analyse ideological documentaries based on Suleiman (1993), Comolli and Narboni (1976), and Nichols (2001). Directly addressing the research question, ‘how the ideological documentary appropriates documents of historical events to create a persuasive representation of reality that advocates for an ideology?’ and the sub-question, ‘to what extent can *The revolution will not be televised* and *X-ray of a lie* be called ideological?’ the analyses has shown that documentary recurs to narrative structures intending to build an ideological text based on documents and registers of historical events. Documentary, as a modal, provides the filmmakers numerous tool to access these documents and re-signify them, resulting in a product that spreads the intending meaning. Besides the fact that the typology demands further experiments, expanding it to sectors I could not cover in this piece, I found the results of this research effective. Both movies fit in Suleiman’s (1993) traits for an ideological text, engage with one of the modal structures (both appropriate elements of the structure of confrontation), and utilizes of redundancy as a way to avoid multiple readings; through the typologies provided by Comolli and Narboni (1976), and Nichols (2001), it was possible to dive deeper in its narrative and how it connects with the doctrines.

Evolving to a comparative analysis, I was able to note that, by fully engaging with the structure of confrontation and employing it in its narrative structure, *Revolution* is more explicit about its involvement with the doctrine, entirely taking Chávez side in the feud, and, consequently, making a bigger effort to convince the audiences about its ‘rightfulness’. The way the plot of how April 11 was slowly built, the polarization plot, the gradually progressing timeline (which *X-ray* accused to be unfaithful to reality), the strong emotional appeal, and suspense building are elements that stay in the background, but are crucial for the flowing of the narrative. In parallel, the documentary presents the main point of the film, the bias and manipulation of the private media, that is reinforced by the other

plots. All the narratives work and evolve together, presenting the doctrine — *chávismo/bolivarianism* — in a way that is easy and pleasurable to what and to engage and sympathize with.

Most of the accusations raised by *X-ray* involves a sense of manipulation that doesn't consist in a lie, but in a selection of which aspects and facts will be in the documentary, and which ones will be intentionally left out of it. This selection might consciously omit important aspects of the historical events, like it happens constantly in both films, but this omission is a storytelling tool, aiming to make the documentary more objective and straightforward. To simplify and summarize complicated aspects of an event is important to make the message more effective and, in most of the cases, the representation of reality resulted is still one version of the truth, instead of a lie. *Revolution* slightly assumed bias makes room for this interpretation and, therefore, enable this reading of one-perspective-among-many to the audience

X-ray's endorsement with the structure of confrontation is shy, but clearly perceptible. The treatment given to *Revolution* and Chávez is absolutely villainous, while all sectors of the opposition receives a kind and comprehensive perspective. The movie makes an effort to show that Chávez opposition is a joint of all social sectors, races and classes, but is not so convincing for the lack of evidence, for instance the cine-forum's speakers and audience are almost completely white. The accusations against *Revolution* are understandable, and some of them really serious, but *X-ray* provides, mainly, a reading of *Revolution* that shows how the narrative appropriates the historical events to tell its version of the story: which is, basically, what documentaries do.

The fact that the film is organized in a question-answer logic, going back and forth in the timeline and to the subjects, makes its narrative fragmented and sometimes confusing. Consequently, difficult to engage. The rage against Chávez and *Revolution* makes a clear point of where the wrongness is, but the lack of a hero or a right side makes it more difficult to engage with the cause. Like the analysis following the typology created for this research shows, *X-ray*'s engagement with the structure of confrontation is weaker than the one in *Revolution*, and this might be what makes the documentary not as convincing, or not in the same level of persuasion as O'Briain and Bartley's film. The way *X-ray*

provides another layers and perspectives are rich in information and context, but, by not being clear of the subjects it is advocating for, it missed its ideological force.

Some of the scenes in *X-ray* have a direct parallel in *Revolution*: the introduction, in which each documentary provides a summary of its perspective of the event (very useful to identify the documentary voice) and in the ending of *X-ray*, exhibiting a scene of Chávez supposedly assuming responsibility for the events of April 2002, links to the one in which the private media does the same in *Revolution*. While both opening sequences have similar narrative strength, *X-ray*'s ending fails to face its parallel in *Revolution*: while Chávez speech is no specific and enables numerous readings, the TV excerpt in *Revolution* is explicit and direct about the event, only one reading is possible.

According to Schiller (2009), 'the 2002 Venezuelan *coup d'état* and its reversal was the fastest overthrow and return of a government ever documented' (Schiller, 2009, p. 482). This fact makes the unique event and its documentation subject of curiosity not only in Venezuela, but world widely. Not only for the politics, but also regarding media representation and manipulation, its influence among politics, economy and social issues. Couret (2013) also approach this aspect by affirming that 'the proliferation of documentaries only underscores how these events are always-already mediated, perhaps even that these events are only generated by the tele-technological medium and its distinct mode of temporal structuration' (Couret, 2013, p. 508). The way the *coup d'état* was allegedly caused by media manipulation, and the documentation of the event originated numerous mediatic products years after the event happened links, again, with the very definition of documentary and the aspects discussed in Chapter II: the three-way relationship between document, documentary and the historical event, the representation of reality, the limitations of the mechanical eye related to the human eye, and the impossibility of an completely unbiased representation. The movies selected for this research provide a certain example of that. As Williams (1993) states:

'An overly simplified dichotomy between truth and fiction is at the root of our difficulty in thinking about the truth in documentary. The choice is not between two entirely separate regimes of truth and fiction. The choice, rather, is in strategies of fiction for the approach to relative truths. (...) documentary can and should use all the strategies of fictional construction to get at truths'.

While Couret (2013) affirms that a ‘media battle’ was the responsible for a media coup’ (Couret, 2013, p. 505), the consequence of these events was something we may call a ‘documentary battle’, in which every documentary claims to have the absolute truth using as evidence different interpretations of the same source material, sometimes introducing new footage or documents that only makes sense if compared or connected to the ones already in debate. Historical events and documents are always susceptible for interpretation and appropriation but, as Couret (2013, p. 508) points out, this aspect works in distinct ways in broadcast news and documentary, since the first have the urgency of tell what is happening while is happening, whilst documentaries have a slower production, resulting in more time to construct the truths in a careful and sophisticated way.

With the boundaries between truth and lie so blurred, it is important to remind (as obvious as it can be) than ‘reality does exist’ (Bruzzi, 2006, p. 5) and, therefore, there are room for diverse truths perspectives, versions or representation of reality), but lies and unfaithful representations are still possible and all around. The current war of information and the aforementioned new concepts (post-truth, fake news, alternative facts) can benefit these lies, giving them reliability to be more persuasive among audiences. To bring together the information wars the world is experiencing in the present moment within news and social media, and documentary is a fascinating topic, but also a tricky one. It is so mainly because, in documentary, the assumption that one mode of representation is more accurate than other, or that the documentary form evolved to be more accurate, is not helpful for the community of filmmakers, for the films and for the audience, since it endorses the expectations of a utopic, unbiased representation of reality. The post-truth discussion, on the other hand, end up messing up with facts and beliefs: instead of a version of an event, the outcome can be completely inaccurate and fabricated. As Rochlin (2017) affirms, ‘as we enter the post-truth era, in which facts and evidence have been replaced by personal belief and emotion, the nature of news, and what people accept as news, is also shifting towards a belief an emotion based market’ (Rochlin, 2017).

The relation between documentary and the debate the ‘truthfulness’ of media in the post-truth era is one of the subjects that I was not able to give enough attention in this research. In fact, the reason I mentioned this issue is, first, to endorse how relevant this topic is in the present moment, and, second, because it is a debate so overwhelming this year that I just couldn’t ignore. Thinking about further research following this work, this is the first topic that I think it should (and I believe it will) be widely research within the following year among a diverse range of fields. I would like to bring the attention to the relation between broadcast media and document and how both forms deal with the issues of ‘truthfulness’ and ideology.

Going further, another topic that deserves attention is the narrative structure analysis approach regarding ideological documentaries, specifically using Suleiman’s (1993) framework. Because of the limitations of this research, I was only able to reach the structure of confrontation, although I could identify the structure of apprenticeship - aiming ideological goals - in several documentaries, especially the ones presenting a biographical approach to a certain historical character, group or movement. There is plenty of room for critics, improvement and appropriation regarding this research, since the ideological approach to documentary is so vast and widely discussed throughout the years, and here I attempted to create new links and mechanisms to analyse these films.

A third crucial and burning topic in 2017 is Venezuela. The current crisis in the country is unfolding to unpredictable directions, with other countries threatening to step in if the violence and the authoritarian position of the government proceed, while worldwide and local media representation still a main issue, having high levels of influence in the crisis and conflicts, and how the world sees it. The country, that was once an example to be followed by the fellow Latin American lefts, keeps writing its irregular history, while there is still blood in the streets and oil interests in backstage. Scholar from diverse fields should keep paying attention to the next steps. I choose *Revolution* and *X-ray* (and, therefore, the Venezuelan context) because of the opposition and intertextual relation between them, which make the documentaries the ideal subjects to demonstrate this methodology. But, because my subject was the ideological documentary and its narrative structure, I wasn’t able to dive deeper into

Venezuelan history and politics, a topic that is already popular within academic research and should keep this status - or even increase - according to the new developments.

Concluding, Bruzzi (2006) affirms that 'it's a fine line between the real and the fake, and what is of far more interest to documentarists at the moment it seems to me is the complexity and productiveness of the relationship between the two'. (Bruzzi, 2006, p. 5) I entirely agree that this relation with reality and all the possibilities of representing it is what makes documentary such a fascinating topic. The ways the ideological documentary utilizes the tools provided by the genre to retell history are delightful to analyse, but the outcomes go to different ways: it can enchant the viewers that supports the ideology represented, anger the ones that are positioned against it, and indoctrinate unaware audiences. Furthermore, it is one way of dealing with the impossibility of fully representing the truth. The fact is that all we have are perspectives.

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