

Reconstructing Social Reality: The Rhetorical Approach of Documentary Films to Social Problems in *Uncut Playing with Life*

Abstract

The constant innovations in media technology are creating both positive and negative impacts in human lives. The documentary film, which has been highly appraised because of its affinity with human lives as a mirror of social realities, has been affected by these technological innovations, leading to creation of documentary variants like mockumentary and docu-soap. These documentary variants which are usually seriously mediated, however, have caused documentary theorists to query the very basis of the documentary film which is its fidelity or truthful recording and presentation of realities. This query, therefore, has led to questions such as; how true is the documentary film's recording of human social realities? With the mediation of the director who must interpret the realities from his own point-of-view, how much of these realities are altered in the final analysis? With the new hybrids, is the documentary film still an effective tool of social change? This paper relied structuration theory of Giddens which saw social relations as a function and/or operation of structure. Therefore, the paper examined the structural attributes of the documentary as encoded in *Uncut Playing With Life* (2000) produced by Communicating for Change to address the issue of female genital mutilations in some parts of Nigeria. It employed the historical analytical method to evaluate the rhetorical and/or dialectical approach of the documentary to human social realities so as to determine its effectiveness as a tool of change. The paper argued that though the documentary variants have

indeed expanded their focuses beyond the scope of human realities, the mainstream documentary film, despite its reconstruction of reality and structural mediation, still gravitates towards truth as much as possible. The documentary, it posited, remains an effective tool of social change.

KeyWords:

Documentary film; Rhetoric; Reconstruction of reality; Social change; Mediation

Introduction

The documentary film has continued to engage the attention of scholars, most especially sociologists, who have been attracted by its residual attribute as an important instrument of social change. This important attribute of the documentary film owes largely to its intrinsic capacity to realistically record and present human lives and events as truthfully as possible.

Although, the feature film also draws inspiration from life by representing and/ or reconstructing events in human lives in a fictional mode, its influence and capacity to affect the human consciousness and induce change are not as potent as those of the documentary film. Therefore, the feature film does not provide the curious and probing excitement for researchers as much as the documentary film does. The documentary film since the days of Robert Flaherty has assumed such a functional role in the life of man that it is seen more as a potent tool that can be used to mirror and address the human multifarious social problems. Flaherty's works, *Nanook of the North* (1922) – which he expressively and creatively used to retell the excruciating experience of the Eskimos as seen through the eyes of Nanook – and *Moana* (1926), brought the sociological reference of the film genre to the fore.

But despite the great influence of the documentary film, the genre has not escaped the fireballs of critics who in the wake of the many variants like newsreel, cinema verite, have consistently queried its effectiveness in representing human realities.

Many film critics and scholars like Barsam (1979:582) and Rabiger (2004, 2007: 30), for instance, have queried the objectivity

and verisimilitude claim of the documentary film, saying that the general acclaim of its being a recording of actual occurrences is no more than the feature film's fictional presentation of events in terms of mediation, especially when viewed against a typical newsreel presentation of the US Army mission in Afghanistan by Chris Amanpour, an investigative reporter on the Cable News Network (CNN). The fact that the documentary film has to be subjected to the whims of the director, who views the social reality of his environment with his subjective eyes or from his point of view, they argued, has considerably vitiated the documentary film's claim of fidelity to actual events.

But while these arguments over the accuracy or otherwise of the documentary film to human socio-political realities have persisted, the documentary is increasingly being utilised to address human problems. The increasing cases of poverty ravaging health problems like HIV/AIDS pandemic, internecine wars and socio-cultural issues like female circumcision, culture-induced maltreatment of widows and other social problems that are bedeviling the developing countries, including Nigeria, have increased the search for convenient media to encode and send messages that could inspire change.

In Nigeria, where the documentary film culture has been grossly overshadowed by a rapidly developing feature film industry, the genre is beginning to creep into the nation's consciousness. With the rapid growth of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), the documentary film regarded as "... the most neglected — if not the most underdeveloped ..." (Ekwuazi, 2009: 7), is gradually finding acceptance among many of these NGOs that are embracing it "... as [a] handy and effective tool for advocacy ..." (Ekwuazi, 2009: 9). Some notable filmmakers like Ladi Ladebo, Mahmud Ali Balogun and Sandra Obiabo have been exploring the documentary film option as a tool for community action initiatives. And such films as *Against the Odds*; *Till Death do us Part*; *The Silent Sufferer* and *Nigeria: A Squandering of Riches*.

Though the documentary film is increasingly gaining more acceptance, the arguments about its being far removed from the reality it claims to mirror have also gained more intensity and are eroding its credibility as a "creative treatment of actuality" (Rotha

1952). These arguments have also provoked questions, such as does documentary film still represent and re-present the human social realities? Does the director's creative instinct and/or point of view alter the realities the documentary film is expected to codify in its reel attribute? In what ways have the reconstructed realities of the documentary film enhanced its objective of influencing social change?

The documentary film, *Uncut Playing with Life*, by Communication for Change, Lagos-based NGO is one of such social action initiatives produced to address the harmful cultural practice of female genital mutilation (FGM) in some Nigerian communities, particularly among the Benin people of Edo State.

This paper, therefore, examines the documentary film's functional notion of mirroring and presenting reality against the backdrop of growing reservations of the notion that it has veered away from truth. By using the documentary film, *Uncut Playing With Life*, as a case study, the paper undertakes a critical analysis of the structural components of the film to determine the level of its connection and disconnection with the human social realities it set out to document and project. It also seeks to determine whether or not the mediation of the mise-en-scene through the dramatic rearrangement of the events and point of view of the director indeed altered or reinforced the realities of the subject of its engagement and the effectiveness of these reconstructed realities in influencing change in the human social condition.

Documentary film: A definitional overview

The question about the truthfulness of the documentary film to its reality is not a new phenomenon. It is an issue that has engaged the attention of scholars since Flaherty's groundbreaking film, *Nanook of the North* (1922). Owing to the social influence the documentary film wields, there was also the problem of finding an acceptable definition that would accommodate its form and contents and still preserve its overall objective, which is to present events as truthfully as possible and in an affective manner. Since it is widely accepted that the documentary unlike other film genres has more socially edifying qualities, its forms and/or structures determine the manner of its approach to the human social realities

and even determine its outlook or its distinguishing features. But the emergence of documentary film hybrids and/or generic forms like cinema verite, newsreel, docudrama and, most recently, what Ian Aitken, in his introduction to the *Encyclopedia of the Documentary Film* (2005), termed "docu-soap" and "mockumentary" has intensified the controversy about its outlook, response and objectivity to its social realities.

Although John Grierson's definition of the documentary film as "a creative treatment of actuality" has become the benchmark for other film theorists like Rotha (1952: 30-31), Lindgren (1969, who shared the notion of the documentary film as being a record of true events, postmodernists' influence on the arts including the documentary film, spurred experimentations that altered and still altering the forms and contents of the documentary film. The introduction of new technologies, especially higher definition cameras, has also inspired documentary filmmakers to make daring artistic approach in their interpretation of realities. All these as Aitken suggested had given birth to documentary variations like docu-soap and/or mockumentary which seems to mock the reality essence of the documentary film. Although attempts were made to give a distinct and an all encompassing definition to the documentary film by The World Union of Documentary in 1948 (quoted by Rotha (1952), later interventions by documentary film theorists unfortunately overstretched the focus of the documentary film. The Union had defined the documentary film as:

... all methods of recording on celluloid any aspect of reality interpreted either by factual shooting or by sincere and justifiable reconstruction, so as to appeal either to reason or emotion, for the purpose of stimulating the desire for, and widening of human knowledge and understanding and of truthfully posing problems and their solutions in the spheres of economics, culture and human relations ... (Rotha 1952: 30-31)

Instructively, this definition, which is an extension of Grierson's view, has been modified, over the years, by theorists like Lindgren, Lorentz, among others. For instance, while to Lindgren, documentary film is "a type of non-fiction film utilising material, either actual or reconstructed, drawn from real life and based on

sociological theme or having sociological reference" (Lindgren 1969), Lorentz simply saw it as "a factual film which is dramatic" (*Wikipedia* online dictionary).

But while these definitions distinctly clarify the overall outlook of the documentary film as being a product of reality but which has to be reconstructed in a very creative manner to retain its veracity and connection with reality, the blanket categorisation by the *The New Standard Encyclopaedia* (1989: Vol 9, 557) that the documentary film is: "... a term that can be applied to all non-acted films [including films] – which showed actuality but had no story-line can be considered documentaries" has widened the scope of the genre beyond even Grierson's imagination and further the controversy about the documentary film's mirrored realities. The broad categorisation of all non-acted films as documentary films, however, has succeeded in given an insight into the reason why the misconception and doubts about the documentary film's responsiveness to realities have heightened in recent times. It simply suggests that any film that is not a feature film is documentary. In other words, a routine television programme detailing events in the community is presumed to be a documentary going by the broad definition of *The New Standard Encyclopedia*.

Importantly, it is such a broad categorisation that has given impetus to many filmmakers to label any semblance of reality in their films as documentary, leading to the many generic hybrids that have emerged in the documentary film. The experimentation of documentary filmmakers and the consistent interest of film theorists, Aitken submitted, in his introduction to *Encyclopaedia of Documentary Film*, have also helped to broaden the scope of documentary films and significantly extend its area of influence. Aitken (2005) confirmed this when he wrote that:

... perhaps the most significant development ... was the gradual re-emergence of the documentary film as a mainstream cultural form and the creation of new, popular genres. Today, genres such as the docu-soap, reality TV, the 'mockumentary' and others receive widespread broadcast coverage around the world and have significantly increased the audience for the documentary film, turning it from the preserve of intellectuals and activists into yet another form of mass entertainment.

Through Aitken's submission, it is obvious that the real and imagined fears about the documentary film disconnecting from its social realities are genuine. He confirmed through his observation the existence of hybrids and also referred to the fact that the documentary was becoming more of an entertainment medium than its traditional socially redeeming format or as a tool of change owing to its disengagement from reality.

Rabiger (2007: 105) while agreeing that the documentary film's reality has been a subject of controversy also declared that mockumentaries, which he also called fake documentaries had created more problems for the genre than imagined. He described this type of films as Trojan horses that were designed to deceive. According to him:

These films (mockumentaries) are Trojan horses that appropriate the documentary form to test the audience's credulity and to introduce doubts about the worth and trustworthiness of authoritarian documentary.

This indeed is the thrust of the controversy and concern of documentary film theorists like Philip Rosen, quoted by Rabiger, and Nichols (2000) who have consistently questioned the truth claim of the documentary film and Pare Lorentz (1986) who believed that the documentary film must be a tool of change in the society, that it must be able to alter the social structure of a given social group or the society as a whole.

For instance, while a documentary film like *Cry Freetown* (2000) about the deadly implosion in Sierra Leone which claimed many lives, produced by Sorious Samura who filmed the gory details of the Liberian war, jolted the conscience of the whole world to the tragic instances in the West African country with far reaching consequences, *Fahrenheit 9/11*, (2004 directed by Michael Moore which focuses on the September 11 terrorists attack on the World Trade center in the United States but with a far removed outlook on the real issue), though a commercial success, failed to effect much change owing to its detachment from reality as a result of "fanciful reconstruction" and the fact that the film "also exemplifies a characteristic common to much recent documentary film-making" (Aitken 2005), which indulges in stylisation of the documentary film at the expense of substance and its functional notion of change.

Rhetorical/Structural Reconstruction of Documentary Realities

While giving an explanation on Anthony Giddens' structuration theory, *Collins internet-linked dictionary of Sociology* (2000, 2005) defined structure as "any arrangement of elements into a definite pattern ... "(p618), positint that structuration is anchored on rules and resources that are involved in the reproduction of social systems. In the case of documentary film, reconstruction of social reality, essentially, involves the structural components of the film, which Ekwuazi (2009: 103) called "the architectonics of the documentary or how the documentary is built" and also likened it to the ".../structure/shape of the documentary" (103). Importantly, it is the structure that determines the composition of the images and overall outlook of the documentary film to its social realities. And the documentary film structure, according to Ekwuazi (2009: 115) could be rhetorical, categorical, narrative or dramatic and a combination of any of the three forms.

While the rhetorical structure presents reality in a persuasive and argumentative form, the categorical structure is patterned to merely present events as they are. The narrative structure, however, combines elements of drama with real events to articulate a given problem.

But while there is no clear pattern on the structure of the documentary film, film theorists like Winston (1995) observed that the documentary film is losing its society-redeeming influences owing to its contents, while decrying Grierson's films as too timid in its contents and approach to effect significant change in the society. To Winston, the documentary film must be consciously structured to affect humanity.

In essence, therefore, whether the reality of the documentary film is structured in a categorical, rhetorical, narrative manner or dramatically reconstructed, it must retain its truth elements and must be capable of influencing its social environment. In other words, the language of the documentary film must be directed towards social edification.

Instructively, *Uncut: Playing with Life* will be analysed based on its structural approach to the Nigerian social reality it claims to mirror. It will be analysed from the rhetorical and/or categorical

examination of social situations and the systemic presentation of the human social conditions in moving narrative, as proposed by Ekwuazi. Also its "... stylistic characteristics ... and themes ..." (Marshall, 1996 : 87-88) which also form part of its form and how they were applied in the film to effect and affect the human social conditions will be examined.

Rhetoric and Reality of a 'sacred Passage'

Uncut: Playing with Life (2001) focuses on female circumcision or what is now globally being referred to as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). Produced by Communicating for Change (CFC) a non-governmental media advocacy organisation based in Lagos Nigeria, *Uncut* was directed by Sandra Obiako who claimed to have been motivated by the huge success recorded by the Theatre for Development (TFD) efforts of Lagos State-based Performing Studio Workshop (PSW) owned by an African-American theatre director Mr. Chuck Mike. Through the PSW Chuck Mike had toured some states in Nigeria like Edo, Oyo, Lagos with an experimental play production entitled '*KPIICO*, which touched on the harmful effects of female circumcision.

Essentially, the story of *Uncut: Playing with Life* is, in part, a total recall of the PSW success story while the other part critically re-focuses on the loose details of that harmful cultural practice as a mop-up effort.

The story of Stella Omoregie, an Edo princess, is the inspiring spring point of the social action and change that *Uncut* typifies. Mrs. Omoregie is a professional circumciser whose social and professional experiences are shared in the film. Through Stela's point of view, the audience is taken through the harrowing experience women undergo as a result of some harmful cultural practices in most African societies. The hazardous details of subjecting a female child and grown up adult women to the lethal blade of circumcisers in order to fulfil perceived obligatory traditional requests are vividly provided in the film. The film visually recalls the pain, the agony and the consequences of allowing some harmful cultural whims to prevail, which can be either enduringly unpleasant or tragic, as the case often proves to be.

Through Stella, the audience is taken through the myth and

reality of female circumcision. The doors of cultural taboos that conditioned or decreed such a traditional practice are swiftly opened up to reveal the potency and impotency of idealised cultural essence, not just in the practice of female circumcision but as they affect other social attitudes and inter-relationships within the human social environment. The general semantics notion of *Uncut* is structured consciously to inspire change. Its stylistic characteristics is exploratory, employing an experimental design that utilised familiar cultural idioms by employing the story-telling technique. The film opens with a blank screen and an announcement that this is a re-invention of the African oral theatrical idiom of story telling: "Once Upon a time ...," the narrator methodically begins, to launch herself into her raconteur role.

The plot of *Uncut* is linear and is woven around Stella Omoregie who, no doubt, is an influential figure among her professional colleagues - circumcisers. Through her, other people, whose existence is sustained only by cutting off female genitals, are connected and their views on the issue are sought. This interconnection of people provides a melting pot for the different shades of views and ideas which the film carefully distilled, blended and thereafter served to the audience.

Significantly, *Uncut* utilises, wholly, the idea of planned change by consciously re-constructing social experience. The overall significance of its style is rested on the powerful effect of dramatic resonance and the dialectic structure of conscious action. The dramatic effects, as explored in the film, are consciously dialogic and/or interactive and polemical.

The dialogic effect is intended to make the issue conversational. The problem of female circumcision is not an individual one. It is a social issue that goes beyond the Edo people. The conscious effort of the film therefore, is to examine every factor of cultural and traditional nonns that supports the practice within the socio-cultural experiences of the people of Nigeria and not particularly restricted to Edo people alone. This seminal approach is further enhanced when Stella Omoregie was invited to Lagos at the instance of Performing Studio Workshop to participate in a conference on Female Genital Mutilation. There, she presented her own facts file on the seeming benefits of female circumcision just as other

participants, who were drawn from the academics and non-government organisations supporting women's cause.

The polemical notion of the film strives to make the issue of focus both convincing and acceptable and consequently creates the alacrity to change in the audience. The action, apart from its seminal outlook, also employs logical presentation of thoughts from the "actors". In other words, ideas are presented as a discourse where logical reasoning prevails. For instance, at the beginning of the film Stella, who only saw the issues of female genital mutilation as a mere business enterprise, a means to sustain her livelihood, says:

This work is very good. That is why I dey tell my people to try to learn it. If you work with it or not. It will benefit you. (Oladeinde, Appendix 4; Ekwuazi 2009: 194)

Then she continues, with a bluntness that contradicts the sharp edge of her small knife, when she is asked to describe the nature of her work that is "very good" and what it is that she cut though hesitant at first, (betraying both a reluctance to and her reverence for African tradition which forbids brazen reference to the human genitals) Stella responded bluntly:

Ah Ah the what do they can it...? The clitoris ... cut it off ... And this side and the other side. (Demonstrates the cutting of this side and the other side) (Oladeinde Appendix; Ekwuazi 2009: 195)

This bluntness on her part without imagined or ornamented innuendos adds to the quality of the film's realness, as opposed to its mechanical re-structuring through editing. It also makes the arguments for and against female circumcision as presented in the film plausible and comprehensible.

While people like Chief Nosakhare Ishekure (J.P.) The Chief Priest of Benin, Alhaji Muhammed Ighile, an Economist, Okunla Maithada, Grace Esemuede and Stella Omoregie invoked traditional and cultural causes, as factors responsible for the sustained practises of female circumcision and expressed their wholehearted support evidences to puncture the pro-cultural arguments.

One of such factors that have made people to continue the practice of circumcising female children, according to Chief

Nosakhare, is the need to restore dignity to women, by preserving their sexual purity. Chief Ishekure contends further as follows:

The essence of women circumcision is to remove, according to the traditional operators of circumcision ... certain issues in the vagina that may obstruct the free flow of birth, on the one side. Secondly, to ensure too that the woman is given her primacy in terms of dignity, in terms of ... sexual purity, because, according to traditional belief, a woman that is not circumcised is likely to be prone to promiscuity. (Oladeinde Appendix; Ekwuazi 2009: 196)

This supposed cultural belief is supported by all the circumcisers as being the primary reason they support the practice, apart from the economic reason that they derive their livelihood from it. According to Stella Omoregie and Grace Esemuede:

Woman wey no circumcise na dog ... Any Benin woman wey no circumcised, they call am slave (Oladeinde Appendix; Ekwuazi 2009: 196).

Stella also told Chuck Mike pointedly, when he asked her the consequence for anyone who refused to be circumcised, that, "person wey no cut am na slave", to defer the question on consequences, as there seems to be no consequence on defaulters except the big blot on her sexuality, which, as perceived public opinions indicate would be to label her as being promiscuous.

The opposing views from Professor Okonofuwa and Honourable Itulah Friday that female circumcision creates health hazard and consequent death to women during child birth are visually supported with real incident the scene showing a woman undergoing labour crises presents more than a moving reality. The image of the labouring woman apparently circumcised, is simply shocking. Her difficulty and agony in observing a safe delivery because her vagina has apparently contracted as a result of circumcision, causes even the viewer great distress and apprehension.

After this evidential presentation from both sides, a humbled Stella would later confess, after she had watched the presentation of *Ikpiko*, the dramatic re-presentation of her views and the views of other people, that she never saw female circumcision as being so

harmful to women in that way before. Stella says:

... I feel weak ... I felt sober... I felt so much ... Since then, I hands off. Inside there, Inside the theatre ... I was even weeping self. (Oladeinde Appendix; Ekwuazi 2009: 206)

And consequent upon the change-action process, the Edo State House of Assembly passed a bill that outlawed female circumcision in Edo State into law. And that finally put paid to the professional activity of Stella and her colleagues who before them had seen reasons and had embraced other means of livelihood.

Drama, Reality and Thematic Resonance

Just as Okome (1991:34) submitted that documentary film sometime employs role-playing to whenever such is necessary, *Uncut* effectively makes use of the theatrical elements to blur the perceived dullness of documentary film and to further its presentational style. In the film, scenes from the actual performances of *Ikpiko* are fused into the narrative not as a vacuum filler but as an illustrative reasonance to enliven the discourse and further dull the blunt edges of the circumcisers' knives as the pictures appear in their uncensored brutal form.

An equally significant attribute of the film is its deliberateness to shock its audience out of their perceived ignorance. Two visual instances are presented in the film which provide this shock therapy. The first instance is the scene of a baby girl being circumcised. The entire process of circumcision is visually presented in black and white. The unusuality of colour in the re-presentation of the scene in black and white adds to its lurid details. The sharp cry of the baby as the small knife descends on her private part, the brutal cutting off of the clitoris and the baby's agonising response, which echoes as the frame freezes on the crying little girl, reel out a most bizarre event that is designed to shock the audience into participating in the nightmarish experiences.

As the camera cuts to Okunla Maithada, one of the professional circumciser defending the practice, the feeling towards her is one of murderous intent, more so as the baby's agonising wail continues to echo in the background.

The second instance of deliberate shock treatment is in the scene

of the woman in labour. Though this scene does not last longer than seventy seconds, its effect hangs on, hovering there and conjuring an image both pathetically humane and inhumanly grotesque. The sight of the female vagina with the appearance of a head ready with the hands of midwives professionally engaged to have the baby's head struggle out of the small conffles, is intensely shocking.

Immediately after this sequence comes Stella Omoregie on the frame. The transition brings her on to the scene defending female circumcisers. According to her, "Nobody died through circumcision." But whatever her arguments or excuses, the previous sequence has effectively annulled her vehement defence. And like the first sequence, the second sequence is not without its own effects on the audience, who has been taking through the harrowing experience women undergo during child birth and who – if they are male or female – must support any action that would seem to make child delivery safe and healthy for women.

The film maximizes the resourcefulness of cinematic mise-en-scene by making use of effective shot synthesis to complement the audio sequences. Since the presentational style is proportionally orature, the story flows with the visual in sequential narrative, to reflectively underline the cause-effect relationship of social problems to the human elements and their society.

Since the characters – Stella Omoregie, Grace Esemuede, Okunla Maithada, Honourable Itulah Friday, Professor Okonofuwa, who heads the Woman's Health and Social Action Research Centre, Benin City, Chuck Mike, Bunmi lana, who was the Assistant Director in the *Ikpiko* project and Sandra Obiagio – are real people involved in real situations and not imitation, the dialogue, expressed in Pidgin English by the circumcisers (and Chuke Mike) who, sometimes, lapsed into Edo language, gives the necessary natural flavour to the cinematic experience. The reality of those characters' existence as potential opinion leaders in their own right, as manifested through their display of naturalness in their "actions," and their frankness, convictions and beliefs, which they express as the arguments for and against female circumcision become intensified, also gives the film some credible impetus. The audience can easily identify with these characters, analyse and weigh their individual

views in their subjective and objective outlook. Personalities like Professor Okonofuwa, who support every argument with medical facts and Honourable Mathew Eigbadon, Speaker of Edo State House of Assembly, are credible characters, because of their pre-eminence as distinguished scholar and respected legislator, and thus are accepted as respected opinion leaders, who have seen much of the world to see through the dark surface of professional interest which people like Stella Omoregie and her colleagues seek to protect.

The most significant attribute of *Uncut: Playing with Ufe*, however, is residual in its plot, which is consciously re-constructed and channelled towards effecting social change. Its thematic pre-occupations, though emphasising a re-adjustment of some harmful cultural practices, like female circumcision, also propose a re-appraisal of the values of womanhood, by men, especially, and women themselves. The film canvasses initiatives for more women interventions social action initiatives and seeks empowerment for women through education and provision of jobs. The success achieved through Stella Omaregie in effecting both attitudinal and professional changes in the female circumcisers was made possible through the process of education and enlightenment and by providing them with alternative sources of income.

In many scenes in the film, instances of the unbearable psychological effects circumcision has wrought on women are provided, especially effects that border on sexual responses, which in most cases are negative. This lack of sexual responsiveness or what can be termed induced frigidity in the women, to their husbands, is re-viewed as having caused more damages to families and created fractured homes. Examples of such scenes are the ones involving young ladies who shared their experiences. Blurred images of the girls, which were done to conceal their identities, confront the audience in a suggestive manner that conveys the impression that circumcision, indeed, has blurred some invaluable sexual instincts in the women and robbed them of a vital life-enriching ingredient that enhances and inspires self confidence.

Reconstructing Realities of Change

It is clear from the foregoing that that the misgivings about the documentary losing touch with the human social realities it seeks

to mirror are misplaced. Through *Uncut: Playing with Life*, it is apparent that while reconstructing the human social realities, it did not alter these realities but sought to enhance its message of change through drama and other stylistic devices. In the same way, while the director's point of view is critical to the overall presentation, it was not done to distort meaning or the realities of the film's subject.

Indeed through its formal structural outlook, *Uncut: Pigging with Life* effectively combines the narrative, rhetorical and categorical documentary forms to convincingly transmit its message. It follows accepted development pattern of exposition of the problems by critically probing a social structure, explaining the effects of the social problems on the human subjects and society, arguing about and offering necessary actions and solutions to the problems.

To make its message wholesome and appealing to the Receiver, the adoption of narrative pattern with a generous dose of reconstructed events gives explicit illustrations to the social contents of its message. There is a strong conviction upon its establishment of the problem and in the critical questioning of the rights of women, and of the cultural institutions that condition female circumcision practice. The dramatization of the events and the involvement of real characters give the film plausible impetus. The documentary film offers more than just an insight into the danger female circumcision poses to womanhood. Its physical expression of, and psychological conviction on social change are intense and all encompassing, as reflected in the dialectic manner of its visual discourse and responses in relation to its thematic and stylistic attributes. More important, also, is its response to the social reality of harmful cultural practice, which is reflectively natural and critically objective.

However, while the finding of this study is not conclusive, as there are indeed other documentary typologies that have caused the theorists to nurse doubts about the effectiveness of the documentary film in addressing human problems, it will no doubt stir further interest in the exploration of the documentary films to just as Aitken (2008) claimed the variants and or hybrids in the documentary have " ... significantly increased the audience of the documentary film, turning it from the preserve of intellectuals and activists into yet another form of mass entertainment."

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