

THE REPUBLIC OF TURKEY

BAHÇEŞEHİR UNIVERSITY

THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

FILM AND TV

**CINÉMA VÉRITÉ ELEMENTS IN
DOCUMENTARY CINEMA**

Master's Thesis

SEZİN BAYKAN

Supervisor: Assist. Prof. Dr. KAYA ÖZKARACALAR

İSTANBUL, 2013

ABSTRACT

CINÉMA VÉRITÉ ELEMENTS IN DOCUMENTARY CINEMA

Sezin Baykan

Film and TV

Thesis Supervisor: Assist. Prof. Dr. Kaya Özkaracalar

January 2013, 25

According to documentary filmmaker Joris Ivens, documentary film's purpose is to declare, educate, convince, exhilarate, activate, motivate, inspire and amuse. On the contrary, documentary in Turkey mostly perceive as boring, unexciting, emotionless movies that broadcasting as a punishment to television channels. Prior aim of this thesis is to introduce documentary cinema, which generally misunderstood in Turkey and add a new source to the field of documentary cinema that has few sources. This thesis will study cinéma vérité's distinctions in documentary filmmaking in comparison to other documentary modes which represents the 'reality' more than other genres of documentary.

Keywords: Documentary cinema, Cinéma vérité, Realistic tradition, Observational Mode.

ÖZET

BELGESEL SİNEMA'DA CINÉMA VÉRITÉ UNSURLARI

Sezin Baykan

Sinema ve TV

Tez Danışmanı: Yrd. Doç. Dr. Kaya Özkaracalar

Ocak 2013, 25

Belgesel yönetmeni Joris Ivens'e gören belge filminin amacı, görevi; bildirmek, eğitmek, inandırmak, coşturmak, hareketlendirmek, isteklendirmek, esinlemek, oyalamaktır. Türkiye'de ise belgesel çoğunlukla bu düşüncenin tam tersi şeklinde yani sıkıcı, heyecansız, coşkumsuz, ders ve ceza niteliğinde olan filmlerdir. Bu tez çalışmasının amacı öncelikle Türkiye'de yeterince ilgi görsterilmeyen, anlaşılmayan, araştırılmayan bir alan olan belgesel sinemayı tanıtmak ve az sayıda olan araştırmalara bir tanesini daha eklemektir. Esas olarak bu tezin çalışma konusu; belgesel sinemadaki 'gerçekliği' en olduğu gibi gösteren belgesel modları ve farklarıdır. Tezde varılan sonuç; cinéma vérité tarzının değer benzer iki tarzdan bir çok açıdan daha farklı olduğu ve 'gerçekliği' en çok yansıtan model olduğudur.

Anahtar sözcükler: Belgesel sinema, Cinéma vérité, Gerçekçi gelenek, Gözlemci model.

**THE REPUBLIC OF TURKEY
BAHCESEHIR UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
FILM AND TELEVISION**

Name of the thesis: Cinema Verite Elements in Documentary Cinema
Name / Last Name of the Student: Sezin Baykan
Date of Thesis Defense: 1 / 2 / 2013

The thesis has been approved by the Graduate School of Social Sciences.

Assist. Prof. Dr. Burak Küntay

Director

I certify that this thesis meets all the requirements as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts.

Assist. Prof. Dr. Kaya Özkaracalar

Program Coordinator

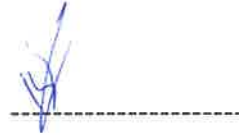


This is to certify that we have read this thesis and that we find it fully adequate in scope, quality and content, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts.

Examining Comittee Members

Signature

Title Name and Surname



Thesis Supervisor
Assist. Prof. Dr. Kaya Özkaracalar

Member
Lecturer Ayşegül S. Taşkent



Member
Assist. Prof. Dr. Murat Akser



CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-----------|
| 1. INTRODUCTION..... | 1 |
| 2.DEFINITION AND HISTORY OF DOCUMENTARY..... | 3 |
| 2.1. DEFINITION OF DOCUMENTARY..... | 3 |
| 2.2.HISTORY OF DOCUMENTARY CINEMA..... | 7 |
| 2.3. DOCUMENTARY CINEMA IN TURKEY..... | 8 |
| 3. OBSERVATIONAL MODE | 11 |
| 4.REALISTIC (CONTINENTAL) TRADITION..... | 15 |
| 5. CINEMA VERITE..... | 18 |
| 6. CONCLUSION..... | 24 |
| REFERENCES..... | 28 |

1. INTRODUCTION

This thesis will study cinéma vérité's distinctions in documentary filmmaking in comparison to other documentary modes, which claim to represent the accurate 'reality' with examining four documentary films related with these modes; *The Play*, *Transasia*, *Volga Volga* and *Rashid*.

Human beings are in search of 'truth' and capturing the moment from the very beginning. Art is the most affective way to capture 'actuality'. Human beings always try to capture special moments with every type of art. This started with painting in the caves with the first men and continues with painting, sculpture and photography. Cinema is one of the best ways for capturing and sharing the 'actuality'. But since Melies, the innovator of special effects, no one can claim that cinema shows accurate 'truth' because special effects and editing obviously kill pure 'reality'. On the other hand, documentary cinema, which appears as opposed to fiction, is the subversion of cinema that represents the 'actuality' more than other genres. Moreover, even documentary lost its credibility with time. There is even a subgenre named mockumentary, which is actually a fiction film that has no relation with reality but presented as a documentary film.

Before Melies, there was Lumiere brothers, the earliest filmmakers in history, and their films were the only films that show the reality as it seen with the naked eye; because they did not use editing, furthermore, they even don't change the position of the camera while shooting their films. In addition, the first films of Lumiere brothers can be considered as the first documentary films and the first examples of cinéma vérité. Georges Melies, French illusionist and filmmaker did discover special effects and editing; with these innovations 'pure reality' is no more viable in all types of cinema, meaning, 'pure reality' vanished with these discoveries.

In documentary cinema, there are three types that still represent the ‘actuality’ more in comparison to other documentary types. These types are; realistic tradition, observational mode and cinéma vérité. This thesis examines which type of documentary reflects the reality more than others. Definition and history of documentary cinema and documentary cinema in Turkey will be the subject of the first chapter. Three documentary modes and documentary films will be examined in-depth in the following chapters. Conclusion chapter sums up all the chapters and explains why cinéma vérité is different than other documentary modes.

2. DEFINITION AND HISTORY OF DOCUMENTARY

2.1 DEFINITION OF DOCUMENTARY

“Get two documentarians together, and the chances are high that they will argue about what documentary is. Even though documentary has evolved continuously from its inception, its purview and methods remain ambiguous, and its parameters keep enlarging. Uncontested, however, is what remains central to documentaries spirit – the notion that documentaries explore the mysteries of actual people in actual situations.”

Michael Rabiger (Rabiger 2004, p. 4)

The date of the beginning of the documentary cinema is the same with the beginning of the cinema. Documentary can easily be regarded as the first genre of the cinema. According to John Grierson; *La Sortie Des Usines Lumiere (Employees Leaving the Lumiere Factory)*, one of the first films which directed by Louis Lumiere and publicly screened in the Grand Café in Paris in 1895 is the first documentary film as well. First movies mostly last one minute and have no editing. Lack of editing, makes the first movies documentary films and the first examples of cinéma vérité. Even though documentary cinema’s past is that old, there is still uncertainty about the definition. As Michael Rabiger also mentions above, many film theorists claim different definitions for documentary cinema.

“Lacking a good definition of its essence, it could be an idea to look at the etymology and history of the term. The word documentary has its root in the Latin word "docere" which meant to teach or instruct. We also know the more modern and common phrase that something is "a document" (e.g. an important piece of paper presented in court) and we may ask someone "to document" his identity or statements.” (Grierson 1932, p. 8).

John Grierson, who is the founder of the British documentary movement and documentarian, invented the term of ‘documentary’ on 8 February 1926. The term of ‘documentary’ derived from the French word ‘documentaire’ used by the French to

announce travelogues to describe Robert Flaherty's film 'Moana' in a film review for the New York Sun. Grierson states that 'Moana' had 'documentary value' in his essay named 'First Principles of Documentary'. Grierson's famous description for documentary is that; "Documentary is the creative treatment of actuality." (Grierson 1932, p. 5).

British documentary filmmaker, film theorist and critic Paul Rotha states a more detailed definition:

"Documentary defines not subject or style, but approach. It denies neither trained actors nor the advantages of staging. It justifies the use of every known technical artifice to gain its effect on the spectator... To the documentary director the appearance of things and people is only superficial. It is the meaning behind the thing and the significance underlying the person that occupies his attention... Documentary approach to cinema differs from that of story-film not in its disregard for craftsmanship, but in the purpose to which that craftsmanship is put. Documentary is a trade just as carpentry or pot making. The pot-maker makes pots, and the documentarian documentaries."

American film critic and theoretician Bill Nichols indicates in his book that,

"'Documentary' can be no more easily defined than 'love' or 'culture.' Its meaning cannot be reduced to a dictionary definition in the way that "temperature" or "table salt" can be. Its definition is not self-contained in the way that the definition of "table salt" is contained by saying that it is a chemical compound made up of one atom of sodium and one of chlorine (NaCl). The definition of "documentary" is always relational or comparative. Just as love takes on meaning in contrast to indifference or hate, and culture takes on meaning in contrast to barbarism or chaos, documentary takes on meaning in contrast to fiction film or experimental and avant-garde film. Were documentary a reproduction of reality, these problems would be far less acute. We would then simply have a replica or copy of something that already existed. But documentary is not a reproduction of reality, it is a representation of the world we already occupy." (Nichols 1991, p. 20).

Nichols adds that; “every film is a documentary. Even the most whimsical of fictions gives evidence of the culture that produced it and reproduces the likenesses of the people who perform within it (Nichols 1991, p. 20). German writer, film director and producer Hartmut Bitomsky argues, “a documentary should not reveal the reality, but articulate and structure it”. Moreover, “documentary is consciousness of art of cinema” for Joris Ivens, a founder of the Dutch film industry, who describes it as “dramatizations of daily life.” (Cereci 1997, p. 13). Frank Beaver, the Professor of Communication Studies and Professor of Screen Arts & Cultures, defines documentary in his book as; “A nonfiction film. Documentaries are usually shot on location, use actual persons rather than actors, and focus thematically on historical, scientific, social, or environmental subjects. Their principle purpose is to enlighten, inform, educate, persuade, and provide insight into the world in which we live.” (Beaver 2009, p. 119).

Turkish documentary directors have also made their own definition of documentary. For instance, Doğa Kılıcıoğlu says that,

“I think documentary has a lot of function and can be defined in hundred ways. But in my opinion, the most important function of documentary is to make the people asking ‘is that so?’ to their own truths that they undoubtedly believe or at least to grab them into different worlds.” (Erdin 2010).

According to Melis Birder, “documentary is cinema. And it gets its power from reality. This reality is subjective reality and cannot be said that it shows the accurate truth, it is completely a product of subjective point of view.” Mihriban Sezen indicates that;

“Documentary cinema is basically interpreting the truth in a creative way. Documentary directors interpret the truth by his or her point of view, attitude and preference. Documentary cinema is subjective, not objective. It always discussed that ‘should it be or not’, but I think it is not possible, it’s not even necessary.” (Erdin 2010).

Moreover, Funda Özyurt Torun's idea is that, "documentary is life, it is reflection of everything related with life through director's perspective." Semra Güzel Korver adds that there are essential features of documentary cinema and the rest of it is the director's creativity and approach; reality, profoundly research which means scientificity, aesthetic means art of cinema and ethic. Additionally, another Turkish director Elif Ergezen states that;

"Documentary is much related with director's personal perception. It is actually how the director interprets an occasion. Sometimes it needs director's intervention to show the reality. In my opinion, documentary is totally personal perception of the director and creating his or her own way to show the audience what the reality is. It is showing the reality by using all the facilities of cinema. Director should show the reality to the audience by searching ways and of course doing this in an aesthetic way." (Erdin 2010).

Lastly, Nezahat Gündoğan specifies that;

"Documentary is reshaping the document with art. Documentary is the meeting point of reality and aesthetic. It based on reality and documents but director uses his or her own creativity while creating and editing the film. Everyone can create different story from the same reality. Director's sense of aesthetics, political view and creativity will be reflected in his/her documentary film." (Erdin 2010).

In these several definitions there are some words that are in common. Most common words are 'reality' and 'subjectivity'. It is obvious that documentary cinema is 'non-fictional' and certainly different form 'fictional' cinema. Fiction is opposed to fact, something fabrication, a made-up story includes imagination. On the other hand, nonfiction is the opposite of fiction; means it is true; based on real events, real people, and real places. Hollywood cinema is the most apparent example for fiction cinema. On the other hand, Lumiere brother's first movies are the first examples of non-fictional movies, which can be considered as documentary films. Furthermore, they are the first examples of the *cinéma vérité*. On the contrary, the first fictional

movies belong to Georges Melies and Thomas Edison. Because they use editing in their films and, of course, editing affects reality.

2.2 HISTORY OF DOCUMENTARY CINEMA

Similar to the definition of documentary, there is also an ambiguity in the history of documentary cinema. Nobody can estimate an accurate date for the birth of documentary cinema. According to many sources, *Nanook of the North*, which is directed by Robert Flaherty in 1922, considered as the first documentary film of the history. This silent film is about Nanook - his real name was Allakariallak and Nonook means polar bear in Inuit language (Akbulut 2012, p. 11) and his family's primitive life for one year and their struggle with the wild nature in Canadian Arctic. It exhibits their houses, life styles, trading, hunting; basically their way of life.

On the other hand, there were many examples of documentary before 1920's that helped birth of this cinema type. Lumiere Brothers, the earliest filmmakers in history, and Thomas A. Edison, American inventor and businessman, did shoot more than hundreds of movies from the end of nineteenth century to First World War (Akbulut 2012, p. 9).

Those movies are mostly one minute long and untrimmed films; the camera stands still and shoots during one minute and did not include editing even viewpoint of the filmmaker. For example, as noted above one of the first films of Lumiere Brothers shows their workers leaving the Lumière factory that belong to their own; Auguste Lumière and Louis Lumière. This film was also the fist example of hidden camera (Akbulut 2012, p. 27). Their camera did shoot the life as it was, meaning, how everything was seen with naked eye, there were no special costumes, actors, lighting, studios and etc. In this form, it can be said that Lumiere Brother and Edison's first films are also first examples of *cinéma vérité*. These first examples were 'actualities' showing famous people, news events, disasters, people at work, new modes of travel and technology, scenic views, expositions, and other leisure activities. These movies

are so real and represent the reality as it was that people even scared and run away. (Akbulut 2012, p. 30).

2.3. DOCUMENTARY CINEMA IN TURKEY

Almost every country in the world had started its works of cinema with a documentary movie and then continues with topical and dramatic movies. Likewise, Turkey had also begun with a documentary movie named 'Demolition of the Monument at San Stefano', but this genre lost its effect with time and there are not many documentary films produced for many years (Cereci 1997, p. 38).

Cinema had come to Turkey by Sigmund Weinberg, a Polish Jew Romanian origin and representative of the Pathé Frères Company. Weinberg had shot short films that display Enver Pasha's horses and his newborn baby. He made the first film screening in Istanbul in Yıldız Palace for the Sultan Abdulhamit, then at the famous beer hall named Sponeck for public screening, and the second public screening in a coffee house that located at Sehzadebası in Istanbul. Turkey also owes him for the first movie theater in 1908 (Cereci 1997, p. 40).

Fuat Uzkınay; who soon to be considered as pioneer of Turkish cinema - was one of the employers of the movie theater and very interested in cinematography and then he organized many screenings at Galatasaray High school with his teacher Sakir Seden (Cereci 1997, p. 41).

'Demolition of the Monument at San Stefano' - although there are also many discussions about the existence of the documentary because nobody has seen it - which was directed by Fuat Uzkınay on 14 November 1914 in Yesilkoy, Istanbul is Turkey's 'first film' and 'first documentary film', too. Additionally, Fuat Uzkınay was a soldier while he was shooting the film, and Ottoman Empire had bad memories with this Russian Monument, which locates in San Stefano / Yesilkoy; because Russians built it in the farthest point that they've reached after their victory in 1876 - 77 Russian- Ottoman War (Cereci 1997, p. 43).

Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (TRT), the public corporation, and television and radio provider of Turkey for many years was founded in 1964, started to broadcast in 13 January 1968. It concentrates on local documentaries since its establishment. TRT had many important roles but one of the most important roles is that it introduced documentary to Turkey and made a connection. It is the first channel that provides this channel and today there are still not many channels that have the purpose of just broadcast documentary.

Nowadays, TRT has many supplementary channels and TRT Documentary is one of these channels. It only broadcasts documentary films. Besides TRT, there are some other private channels that had begun to broadcast documentary films. For instance, the first private documentary channel of Turkey is İZ TV, founded in 2006. There are also some other channels partly broadcast documentary films such as; Yaban TV, Natural Life channel and IMC TV. In addition to documentary channels, there are also festivals, foundations and groups about documentary such as; DocIstanbul, Filmmor, Women Cooperative, Documentarist, BSB (The Association of Documentary Filmmakers) in Turkey. The numbers of these foundations and channels are very few in comparison to developed countries. This is a reasonable reason why numerous Turkish people might still think that documentaries are boring and only show the lives of wild animals.

There is a visible boom in Turkish documentary cinema in terms of directors, spectators and the products in recent years. Nevertheless, the numbers are still not enough in comparison to developed countries. Many Turkish people still do not know what documentary is and assume that documentary films only display lives of wild animals and their hunting. Lecturer and writer Uğur Kutay summarizes the situation by saying;

“If we need to describe documentary cinema’s essential object with one word; it would be ‘human’. To look at Turkish documentaries, you will mostly see films about archeological discoveries and natural life instead of human stories. I don’t say it is a bad thing but the situation is pretty exaggerated that people only think about how a lion eats antelope or ceramics of İznik. This situation is not only about the spectator but also unfortunately about many organizations

and people who claims that they produce documentary films.’’¹

A memory of Turkish documentary director Nese Sarisoy Karatay also reveals the viewpoint of Turkish people to documentary; once she was shooting a film children ask her what she was shooting, after her reply that ‘I am shooting a documentary film’, the children asks again; ‘are we animals, why are you shooting us?’ This little story tells a lot. Furthermore, committee member of 1001 Film Festival Ender Yesildağ indicates that;

‘The most serious problem of Turkish documentary cinema is production problem. We are having difficulties in finding source to produce documentary film. Nowadays, documentary films are broadcasting as a punishment in television channels. Documentary cinema solely continues with the support of Ministry of Culture. Television channels don’t broadcast documentary films except TRT. Other TV channels do not prefer to broadcast documentary films, moreover, they offer ridiculous amounts of money to filmmakers for broadcasting their films. RTUK’s (Radio and Television Supreme Council) way of punishment is forcing the television channels to broadcast documentary films. This is the viewpoint to documentary in Turkey. The only thing that people understand from documentary is that lions and tigers attacking to deer.’’²

Finally, another thought from Turkish film critic and documentary director Necati Sönmez perfectly describes the situation:

‘When someone hears that I am a documentary film director mostly says that: ³‘Really, I love documentaries, too. How they shoot that lions, crocodiles. I am even fascinated while ⁴watching.’ Turkish people like documentaries about animals but they can’t think any documentary that doesn’t narrates animals.’’³

¹ <http://www.sekans.org/belgesel.html>

² <http://www.birgun.net/>

³ <http://www.sekans.org/belgesel.html>

3. OBSERVATIONAL MODE

Every definition of documentary somehow includes the words 'real' or 'reality'. But do documentary films represent accurate 'reality' or are they objective? They don't and it can't represent the reality as seen with naked eye as it stated in various definitions and they are not objective enough. On the other hand, there are three documentary types that reflect 'actuality' more than other types of documentary cinema. These modes are observational mode, realistic tradition and cinéma vérité. Regarding the 'observational mode', Louise Spence says that;

“Observing reality is part of the effort to document the sociohistorical world. All camera operators must observe what they shoot. And yet, when we refer to a document as ‘observational’, we usually have something more precise in mind. An observational film is not simply a film that involves an effort to look attentively at particular subject. Most often, the term is used to designate a type of documentary filmmaking. Observational filmmakers, in other words, try not to interfere in what they see. They play the role of onlooker or bystander, rather than the part of provocateur or participant in the profilmic situation.” (Spence 2011, p. 194).

Bill Nichols, an American documentary theorist who seeks to distinguish particular traits and conventions of various documentary film styles, initiated observational mode. Nichols categorizes documentary films into six different modes; poetic, expository, observational, participatory, reflexive, and performative. Observational mode is the most realistic mode and the closest mode to 'actuality' (Nichols 1991, p. 55).

Observational mode arises with the question of 'what if the filmmaker was simply to observe what happens in front of the camera without overt intervention?' The mode can be defined as; emphasizing the documentary filmmaker's engagement in observing the subject's daily life and circumstances and documenting them with an unobtrusive camera. Nichols initiated this mode by inspiring Vertovian ideals of truth (Nichols 1991, p. 55). In Dziga Vertov's Kino-Eye manifestoes, he declares that, "I, a camera, fling myself along...maneuvering in the chaos of movement, recording movement, startling with movements of the most complex combinations." (Nichols

1991, p. 56).

As technology advanced by the 1960s and cameras became smaller, portable and lighter, able to document the life in a less intrusive manner, there is less control required over lighting etc, leaving the social actors free to act and the documentarists free to record without interacting with each other. Thanks to technology, speech could be synchronized with images without the use of heavy equipment or cables that tethered recorders and camera together. The camera and tape recorder could move freely and record what happened as it happened. cinéma vérité's attempt is capturing the 'objective by the filmmaker who is a neutral observer, who stays at the keyhole position. The filmmaker hides himself or herself behind the camera, ignored by the surrounding environment he or she neither changes nor influences the actions being captured. Filmmaker looks at the life and actions as it is lived. He does not try to create an action, he just follows what happens. The documentaries related with this mode generally don't include voice-over commentary, supplementary music or sound effects, subtitles, historical reenactments, behavior repeated for the camera and even any interviews.

Subjects communicate with one another and ignore the filmmaker. Often the characters are caught up in pressing demands or crisis of their own. This requires their attention and draws it away from the presence of the filmmaker. The scenes tend to be like fiction films to reveal aspects of character and individuality. Filmmaker makes inference and comes to conclusion on the basis of behavior that he / she observes or overhears. The filmmaker's retirement to the position of observer calls on the viewer to take a more active role in determining the significance of what is said and done (Nichols 1991, p. 70).

A very successful and well known Turkish documentary film 'The Play', directed by Pelin Esmer, in 2005, is an example of observational mode of documentary. 'The Play' is about nine uneducated peasant women, who finally discover theatre in their village of Arslanköy in Mersin. Then they decide to write a scenario based on their own lives and perform a theatre play. With the help of the town school's principle, they write a script and perform a play named '*Kadının Feryadı/ Shriek of Women*'. Filmmaker observes them and their struggle while they are creating the theatre play.

While showing lives of women and working on the play, their personal and emotional evolution also reveals itself and Esmer successfully reflects these emotions to the audience.

Pelin Esmer, who was born in Istanbul in 1972, is one of the most famous directors in Turkey. She directed both fiction and non-fiction films and won many awards. She solely gained seven awards with 'The Play'. She decided to shoot this documentary film after reading about these nine women's adventure in the newspaper. She had stayed two years with these women; Ümmüye, Behiye, Ümmü, Fatma K., Cennet, Saniye, Fatma F, Nesime and Zeynep and shared the same traditional clothes and meal. This could be the reason of the sincerity of the documentary film. Peasant women share their emotions and opinions clearly and honestly with the filmmaker and while sharing their emotions they also know and recognize themselves better. The audience does not see the filmmaker in the documentary film, she stands 'at the keyhole', meaning she just observes the 'actuality' and hides herself.

Standing 'at the keyhole' or filmmaker's hiding himself behind the camera is actually hiding the truth or lying, it is cheating the audience. Audience only watch the happenings in the eye of the filmmaker, but it is not the 'reality' because there are a filmmaker with his camera, following the characters and happening, which may also cause amateur-looking footage like *cinéma vérité*. In short, filmmakers hiding themselves equals to hiding the truth, moreover, it is cheating. - Nothing is staged for camera but there are also a camera which hidden from the audience.

The observational mode poses a series of ethical considerations that involve the act of observing others going about their affairs. Is such an act in and of itself voyeuristic? Does it place the viewer in necessarily less comfortable position than in a fiction film? In fiction, scenes are contrived for us to oversee and overhear entirely, whereas documentary scenes represent the lived experience of actual people that we happen to witness. This position, 'at the keyhole', can feel uncomfortable if a pleasure in looking seems to take priority over the chance to acknowledge and interact with the one seen. This discomfort can be more acute when the person is not an actor who has willingly agreed to be observed playing a part in a fiction. The impression that the

filmmaker is not intruding on the behavior of others also raises the question of unacknowledged or indirect intrusion.

In contrast to '*Volga Volga: Living With Schizophrenia*' and '*Transasia*', filmmaker is not visible in this documentary film; on the other hand, the existence of the filmmaker is noticeable. For instance, while a woman explains her emotions and problems with her husband, looking at the camera, she calls the filmmaker with her name. Esmer uses the camera by herself and the portable camera become like her organ, similar to Aysegül Taskent, she moves even the camera according to her reflexes. As an example, Esmer moved her camera to coughing woman while another woman was giving a speech.

4. REALISTIC (CONTINENTAL) TRADITION

The realist (continental) tradition initiated by Paul Rotha, is rooted in the French avant-garde tradition of the 1920s, headquartered in Paris. One of its preoccupations was finding artistic means for dealing with the interrelatedness of time and space. This tradition celebrated art for art's sake. While the naturalist tradition was grounded in nature, this tradition attempted to capture the modern world, within cities in particular. "Avant-garde as well as documentary started as a rebellion against fiction film, which had become the predominant artistic as well as commercial form." (Ellis and McLane 2005, p. 5). French avant-garde film producers are the pioneers of realist tradition. They did shoot numerous short movies that exhibit suburbs of France and lives of Parisians with neglecting camera tricks.

Rotha contrasts Flaherty's 'man against nature' films with the realist films of 'man against the street'. Among the films he talks about are Cavalcanti's *Rien Que Les Heures*, Ivens' *Rain*, Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera* and Ruttman's *Berlin*.

"With some thirty personal films made between 1931 and 1962, BFI Awards at home, gold medals from the major European festivals and two Oscar nominations, Paul Rotha, (1907-84) was once recognized as a world renowned documentarist. He was creatively involved in some 87 films, ranging from short information and educational films and documentaries of the Griersonian pattern, to full length 'films of argument' and 'true story' semi-fictional feature films. Rotha was also an innovator, experimenting with new techniques and formats and at the close of the cinema documentary age, he was BBC Television's first Head of Documentary. Yet half a century later he is at best seen as a marginal character and very much in the shadow of John Grierson. The breadth of Rotha's activities as a director, producer and theoretician of the documentary generally demand a reappraisal. There has been no systematic, extensive and scholarly consideration of Rotha in his own right, either as a filmmaker or as a writer. With a legacy that has been largely neglected since his death, Rotha only appears as a somewhat peripheral, faintly odd, figure in the standard histories of the British Documentary Film Movement. Yet

many of his ideas and working practices were well ahead of their time and were well outside the Grierson-dominated mainstream. His place in the development of the documentary, in a new and broader theoretical, aesthetic and institutional framework, is clearly overdue for reassessment. It is also both timely and potentially fruitful in terms of further research, not the least because Rotha was 'an archivist' as Grierson remarked. He meticulously preserved an extensive collection of papers spanning the whole of the 'rise and fall' of the British documentary and this archive ranks in importance alongside Grierson's own papers. It is a major new source, now held in the USA, and has recently become fully available to researchers."⁵

'*Transasia*' is an example of realistic mode, which is directed by Bingol Elmas in 2008. '*Transasia*' is the name of a train, which transports numerous passengers between Turkey and Iran, which are contiguous countries. This documentary film is basically about the passengers in this train and going to Iran, who are from different ages, nationalities, political views and religions.

Bingöl Elmas is very successful and well-known woman filmmaker who was born in 1976 in Erzurum, She has a strong political view and sensible personality that is clearly seen in her documentary films and in personal her life. She has many documentary films that reflect her opinions. For instance, '*My letter to Pippa/ Pippa'ya Mektubum*'; is about an Italian artist Pippa Bacca, who was raped and murdered by a truck driver in Turkey during her journey to spread a message of peace with her white wedding dress. Elmas continued Pippa Bacca's trip with a black wedding dress and filmed it to raise awareness about society's attitudes toward women. This movie obviously reverberates her sensible character and views. Her other documentary films are '*Bir Avuç Toprak*', '*Ant of August*' and '*Play House*' and she did gain a lot of awards with her documentary films.

Elmas states about documentary;

"Documentary cinema, as a social and public realm, is attempting to share of the people who are wondering happenings around him/her, sensible to the society he / she lives in. 'Documentary tells absolute truth' perception is a bit confusing. I am not sure of this. We should not forget that

⁵ (<http://iamhist.org/tag/past-event/page/7/>)

everything; existence in there, location of the camera, editing is all interruption to 'truth' and reshaping the 'truth'. As a filmmaker, you do not record everything, you interpret the actuality but without lying and ruining it. You need to be loyal to document because you have responsibilities, you are only a guest in 'real lives'. (Erdin 2010).

The documentary film solely shows the passengers in the train and their random conversations. Even though the location was determined before shooting, the film improves spontaneously. There is not any script or arranged dialogues for the subjects and there isn't reenactment; passengers merely talk and express their opinions, emotions and ideas randomly and freely. Moreover, there are not any arranged storyboard, scenes also follows each other in the order of time. Timing is not also neatly coordinated, also not totally unordered.

Elmas is visible and dominant in the film; she joins some of the conversations. Audience sees the director, crew, and the camera. Train was not specially arranged for shooting and subjects don't wear special costumes and make up for documentary film. Filmmaker Elmas also wears ordinary clothes, and does not wear make-up.

5. CINÉMA VÉRITÉ

"There are two ways to conceive of the cinema of the 'real': the first is to pretend that you can present reality to be seen; the second is to pose the problem of reality. In the same way, there were two ways to conceive cinéma vérité. The first was to pretend that you brought truth. The second was to pose the problem of truth."

Edgar Morin

Cinéma vérité is a French film movement initiated by Jean Rouch in the 1960s, inspired by Dziga Vertov's theory of Kino-Pravda and influenced by Robert Flaherty's films. "In homage to Vertov, the film makers called their technique cinéma vérité – translated from kino-pravda, film truth." (Barnouw 1993, p. 254) Jean Rouch, was an ethnographer, a filmmaker and most importantly considered to be one of the founders of cinéma vérité in France. He was born in 31 May 1917 in Paris and died in 18 February 2004 in Niger. He left behind over 120 films, most of them recorded in West Africa. Rouch's interest in Africa began during World War II. In 1941, he was sent to the French colony of Niger as an engineer from *L'école des ponts et chaussées*. In 1947, he filmed his first film in Africa: *In the Land of Black Magi*. Over the next several decades, Rouch continued filming in Africa while working as a research director for the National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS). Rouch was an innovative and important figure in the French post-WWII film scene, working alongside French directors of the New Wave, serving as President of the *Cinematheque Française*, founding the *Comite du film ethnographique* at the *Musee de l'homme* in Paris, and inspiring the Direct Cinema movement in the U.S. His best-known film, one of the central works of the Nouvelle Vague, is *'Chronicle of a Summer / Chronique d'un été'* (1961) which he filmed with sociologist Edgar Morin and in which he portrays the social life of contemporary France.

'Cinema real' or 'truth cinema' can be considered as exact translation of cinéma vérité, which concerns with the notions of truth and reality in film. "The French cinéma vérité practitioners took on the objectivity problem directly and tried to solve

it by putting themselves into their films.” (Winston 1995, p. 164). This style gives the impression of ‘directly portraying the reality’ by using hand-held cameras that sometimes wobble and the voice over narration is dispensed with in favor of allowing viewers to make their own interpretation of what they see and hear. It combines improvisation with the use of the camera to unveil truth or highlight subjects hidden behind crude reality. It showed people in everyday situations with authentic dialogue and naturalness of action. Rather than following the usual technique of shooting sound and pictures together, the filmmaker first tapes actual conversations, interviews, and opinions. After selecting the best material, he films the visual material to fit the sound, often using a hand-held camera. The film is then put together in the cutting room. The movement was criticized for too often degenerating into reportage rather than artistic expression. Nevertheless, it continued the movement toward greater realism in films and demonstrated a different approach to documentary filmmaking. The purpose is actually capturing of the reality of a person, a moment, or an event without any rearrangement for the camera. ⁶

Stephen Member claims that cinéma vérité should be a different type of cinema apart from fiction and non-fiction in his book ‘*Cinema Vérité in America*’ and describes cinéma vérité as;

‘At its very simplest, cinéma vérité might be defined as a filming method employing hand-held cameras and live, synchronous sound. Cinéma vérité has been practiced throughout the world, most notably America, France, and Canada. The term first gained popular currency in the early sixties as a description of Jean Rouch’ Chronique d’un Ete. The essential element in cinéma vérité is the act of filming real people in uncontrolled situations. Uncontrolled means that the filmmaker does not function as a ‘director’, nor as a screenwriter. In cinéma vérité film, no one is told what to say or how to act. A prepared script, however exiguous, is not permitted, nor are verbal suggestions, gestures, or any form of direct communication from the filmmaker to his subject. The filmmaker acts as an observer, attempting not to alter the situations he witnesses any more than he must simply by being there generally with another person who records the sound. Cinéma vérité has a faith in the spontaneous; the unwillingness to assert control goes so far as to refuse to recreate actions for

⁶ <http://www.slideshare.net/crosswaysfederation/types-of-documentary>

the sake of being filmed. Interviews are also not employed, since their use, in effect, is a form of directed behavior. The meaning of the term 'real people' develops from the commitment to uncontrolled shooting. 'Real' indicates not only avoiding the use of professional actors but also not placing nonactors into roles selected by the filmmaker, even to 'act' themselves. Cinéma vérité asks nothing of people beyond their permission to be filmed. The need for portable equipment is a result of the desire to shoot in controlled situations. Instead of having people come to the camera, the camera goes to them. The filmmaker must be free to allow action without dominating it through sheer mechanical presence. Tripods, heavy lights cables, and the rest of the paraphernalia of studio shooting are eliminated. The filmmaker is a reporter with a camera instead of a notebook." (Mamber 1974, p. 5).

According to Mamber, cinéma vérité is an attempt to strip away the accumulated conventions of traditional cinema in the hope of rediscovering a reality that eludes other forms of filmmaking and reporting. Cinéma vérité is a strict discipline only because it is in many ways so simple, so 'direct'. The filmmaker attempts to eliminate as much as possible the barriers between subject and audience. These barriers are technical (large crews, studio sets, tripod-mounted equipment, special lights, costumes and make up), procedural (scripting, acting, directing), and structural (standard editing devices, traditional forms of melodrama, suspense, etc.). Cinéma vérité is a practical working method based upon a faith in unmanipulated reality, a refusal to tamper with life as it presents itself. Any kind of cinema is a process of selection, but there is all the difference in the world between the cinéma vérité aesthetic and the methods of fictional and traditional documentary film. Unfortunately, it can be claimed that cinéma vérité practically makes other film methods obsolete. This view should be seen in a dialectical spirit, for while this kind of filming questions many assumptions of fiction films as well as providing fiction filming with new devices to exploit, it will certainly never displace fiction film any more than photography has replaced painting. Cinéma vérité is more than a mutant offspring of documentary techniques, it deserves a special place of its own as an alternative kind of cinema- neither nor fiction. Its relative newness (primarily due to the recent development of the necessary equipment) does not necessarily mean it is the wave of the future that will drown all past efforts. Nevertheless, it must be

reckoned with as an extension of the present limits of cinema, an independent form raising its own critical questions (Mamber 1974, p. 5).

Cinéma vérité did not sprout full-grown in the early sixties. A broad historical approach could locate traces of similar concerns from the beginnings of cinema, and such an approach would give the misleading impression that cinéma vérité is the culmination of a sixty-year search for a new cinematic form. However, the supposed influences generally depart from cinéma vérité in crucial areas, and the links are often rather tenuous (Mamber 1974, p. 6).

There are not many examples of cinéma vérité in Turkey. In very few examples the most well known and successful example is ‘*Volga Volga: Living With Schizophrenia*’ that was directed by Ayşegül Selenga Taşkent. Taşkent is both filmmaker and full time instructor; teaching Documentary Film & Video lesson at Bahcesehir University, Faculty of Communication in Istanbul. She earned a BA degree in American Literature, an MA degree in Media, in England, and an MFA degree at the State University of New York, USA. As a director of ‘*Volga Volga: Living With Schizophrenia*’ and ‘*Girls of Hope*’, her documentaries won awards at Ankara International Film Festival and Rome Independent Film Festival.

Taşkent states about documentary that;

“Documentary is an essential work of art of the seventh art, because non-fiction mainly begins with imagination, creativity and ‘reality’. But these notions are changeable when studying cinéma vérité. My Graduate Professor at the State University of New York at Buffalo, a well-known director and anthropologist, Prof. Sarah Elder, once said that; ‘‘Truth’ is a word that I dislike very much’. Then I started to think about cinematic truth and how true is the ‘truth’ in documentary cinema. Documentary cinema aims at displaying the truth of conditions and situations as true as possible. Social documentaries are more important for me.” (Erdin 2010).

In her documentary ‘*Volga Volga : Living with Schizophrenia*’ Ayşegül Selenga Taşkent turns the camera to her own family and to the life of her brother. There are also some other women directors who thematically turn the camera to their own lives.

Another example is Aslı Ertürk was also inspired by her own insecurities with her body in her 'Body But Nothing' documentary film. That most women directors are inspired by their own lives and emotions. It can stem from a woman's need to express herself. *'Volga Volga: Living With Schizophrenia'* is about the filmmaker's brother who suffers from schizophrenia and the effects of his illness on the entire family.

Volga was thirty-five years old in 2007 when the movie was shooting and still in care of his parents especially his mother Meral Taşkent. While the documentary film monitoring Volga's life, the spectator can easily recognize the illness of schizophrenia and comprehend the feeling of living with a person who suffers from schizophrenia in the same house. Filmmaker uses cinéma vérité style while filming this documentary film. It won't be wrong to say that cinéma vérité is the most appropriate style for this movie. The documentary film had become more effective thanks to this style. *'Volga Volga: Living With Schizophrenia'* is more than a documentary film, it is clearly a cross-section from Taşkent's own life, so what audience see on the screen is more than 'reality', it is 'what is seen with the naked eye', meaning, if the camera wouldn't exist there the lived actions most probably would happen in the same way except expressions and information about the illness of Volga and Volga himself given by his mother because it is obviously their daily life.

Even though the film represents the actuality and uses the style of cinéma vérité; the most realistic style of documentary, it also amazingly affects the audience in an emotional way. Nothing truly objective can emotionally affect people this much. Documentary is mostly known as 'boring' just because it exhibits reality more than other styles of cinema.

The film touches the audience's hearts from the first scene with its subject and sincerity. The scene begins with the mother of Volga, Meral Taskent cooking and explaining her thought and feeling in a most open way, and then she cries. Filmmaker and the daughter of Meral Taskent did not try to calm her down and also did not stop shooting. This untrimmed crying scene deeply affects the audience and show how deep their pain and how real their scar is.

Finally, cinéma vérité's other important features can clearly be seen in this documentary film; filmmaker uses portable, small handy cam and uses it freely, without tripod and after a while the camera becomes like filmmakers organ. It is obvious that nobody is disturbed by camera, so they are so relaxed that Mrs. Taşkent even posing for the camera.

6. CONCLUSION

In this thesis, three documentary genres have been studied and distinction of cinéma vérité explained and exemplified with documentary films in this genre. As examined in previous chapters, there are three documentary modes that represent the reality more than other types of cinema, which are realistic tradition, observational mode and cinéma vérité and these genres resemble each other in many ways. But cinéma vérité is distinct than others and has special characteristics. Moreover, cinéma vérité represents the 'actuality' more than the other two genres and includes less point of view. This argument also proven by documentary film that directed with documentary film named '*Volga Volga: Living With Schizophrenia*'.

In short, observational mode of documentary reveals an answer to the question of 'what if the filmmaker were simply to observe what happens in front of the camera without overt intervention?' and can be defined as; emphasizing the documentary filmmaker's engagement in observing the subject's daily life and circumstances and documenting them with an unobtrusive camera. Nichols' observational mode developed by inspiring Vertovian ideals of 'truth' (Nichols 2001, p. 112).

The realist tradition finds artistic means for dealing with the interrelatedness of time and space. This tradition celebrated art for art's sake. While the naturalist tradition was grounded in nature, this tradition attempted to capture the modern world, within cities in particular. And the he realist tradition began by French avant-garde film producers. They put the tricks of camera aside and did shoot many short movies exhibiting suburbs of France and lives of Parisians.

Even though these three modes' definitions and styles have many similarities they have many differences in many aspects. The most different mode is cinéma vérité and it is representing 'actuality' as it seen with naked eye, in contrast to other two modes.

Attached to this dissertation as an appendix is a documentary which I made drawing on the cinéma vérité tradition is '*Rashid*'. Rashid is an eighteen years old immigrant boy who migrated from Afghanistan with his family to Turkey. Documentary film shows his one day in his working place - a small traditional Afghan jewellery shop in Grand bazaar. In random conversations with Rashid, he tells about his current life in Istanbul, his pre-life in Afghanistan, his traditions, his family, their migration adventure and future plans. There are also his neighbors around his shop in Grand bazaar that migrated from Afghanistan, too and they get involved and tell their stories as well.

In this documentary film, filmmaker and the crew are visible. They join to conversations, ask random questions, they don't hide themselves. There are also customers, who pays attention to their migration story, ask questions and involve to film in a way. Opposite to '*The Play*' that the 'reality' is not actual reality. Filmmaker Esmer hides herself and her crew so the reality becomes pseudo-reality. It is similar to re-acting. It is obviously seen in Pelin Esmer's '*The Play*' film. It is like a fiction movie; same scenes seen from different angles. This reveals that Esmer wanted from the subjects to re-act the action. Both in '*Volga Volga: Living With Schizophrenia*' and '*Rashid*' filmmakers do not hide themselves, they are there with their portable cameras which became like their organs that they forget they are handling it, moreover, subjects also get used to it and are not irritated by the camera.

REFERENCES

Books

- Armes, R., 2011. *Sinema ve gerçeklik tarihsel bir inceleme*. İstanbul: doruk yayımcılık.
- Cereci, S., 1997. *Belgesel sinema*. İstanbul: Şule Yayınları.
- Coşkun, E. E., 2011. *Dünya sinemasında akımlar*. 2. basım Ankara: Phonix Yayınevi.
- Cunningham, M., 2005. *The art of the documentary*. Berkeley: New Riders.
- Downing, I. & Saxton, L., 2010. *Film and ethics: Foreclosed encounters*. Oxon: Routledge Press.
- Kaplan, E. A., 2000. *Feminism & Film*. new york: Oxford University Press.
- Mamber, s., 1974. *cinema verite in america: studies in uncontrolled documentary*. Massachusetts: MIT Press classic.
- Nichols, B., 1991. *Representing reality*. Bloomington,USA: Indiana University Press.
- Nichols, B., 2001. *Introduction to documentary*. Bloomington,USA: Indiana University Press.
- Rabiger, M., 2004. *Directing The documentary*. oxford: Focal Press.
- Renow, M., 2004. *The Subject of documentary*. Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press.
- Roscoe, j. & Hight, c., 2001. *Faking it: Mock-documentary and the subversion of Factuality*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Rotha, P., 2000. *Belgesel sinema*. 1. basım İstanbul: İZDÜŞÜM YAYINLARI.
- Vaughan, D., 1999. *For documentary: Twelve Essays*. California: University of California Press.

Other Sources

Hümeyra Erdin, Türkiye’de Belgesel Sinemada Kadın Yönetmenler, Yüksek Lisans

Tezi

Ömer Tuncer - “*Belgesel Sinemada ‘Gerçek’ Kavramı Üzerine*”

Ozan Adam - “*Belgesel Sinema ve Sanatsal, Deneysel Sinema*”

Ayşegül Selenga Taşkent - “*Gerçek Ne Kadar Gerçek?*”

Sezgin Türk - “*Kadın Olmak, Belgeselci Olmak*”

Nilüfer Pembecioğlu - “*Başlarken: Neden Belgesel Film?*”

High school - Frederick Wiseman

Kuma - Emine Altaş

Doğanın Sırları - Yusuf Saygı

Oyun - Pelin Esmer

Fahrenheit 9/11 - Michael Moore

Supersize me - Morgan Spurlock

Born into Brothels-Zana Briski, Ross Kauffman

Transasya - Bingöl Elmas

Bir Avuç Toprak - Bingöl Elmas

Otel Odaları - Sevinç Yeşiltaş

Grey Gardens - Mayles Brothers

Nanook of the North-Robert J. Flaherty

Man with a Movie Camera - Dziga Vertov

Mamak’ta - Sezgin Türk

Klitoris Nedir? - Melek Özman

Namus Nedir? - Melek Özman