

ISTANBUL BILGI UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
FILM AND TELEVISION MASTER'S DEGREE PROGRAM

ANOTHER VERSION OF REALITY: YEARNING (BEN HOPKINS, 2015)
AND 10 TO 11 (PELIN ESMER)

Yusuf Emre YALÇIN
116603001

Prof. Dr. Feride ÇİÇEKOĞLU

İSTANBUL
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Gerçeğin Alternatif Bir Versiyonu: Hasret (Ben Hopkins, 2015) and 10 to 11 (Pelin Esmer, 2009)

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- 1) Faction
- 2) Esrik Gerçek
- 3) Sine-Göz
- 4) Sinema-Gerçek
- 5) Belgesel

Anahtar Kelimeler (İngilizce)

- 1) Faction
- 2) Ecstatic Truth
- 3) Cinema-Truth
- 4) Cinéma-Vérité
- 5) Documentary

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ABSTRACT

In this thesis, alternative realities produced by hybrid films using fiction and documentary methods are investigated. The controversies about the different uses of cinematic reality and the definition of the boundaries of documentary cinema will be analyzed focusing on two films: Pelin Esmer's *10 to 11* (2009) and Ben Hopkins' *Yearning* (2015).

The concept of 'faction' will be a key concept in questioning how fiction and reality may be merged in a film: Where does the fiction or reality begin in a film, and where does it end? Or at which point do they merge with each other? What is the impact of using reality and fiction in defining the genre in films? Considering these questions, the boundaries of documentary cinema will be explored. Other key concepts besides 'faction' are cinema-truth, cinéma vérité and ecstatic truth and the two films selected will be explored based on these concepts. Should a documentary film be merely concerned with the facts that stand before it, or should it be considered as an artistic expression of its creator's perception of the facts? The first approach, or the Cinema-Truth movement, inspired by the ideas of Dziga Vertov on Kino-Pravda genre and Cinéma Vérité concept, and the second approach, conceptualized by Werner Herzog's as Ecstatic truth are the theoretical references for analysis.

In conclusion, the attempt will be to figure out how the methods utilized in the selected films contribute to a new understanding of hybrid filmmaking beyond the boundaries of the traditional differentiation of fiction and documentary films.

Keywords:

Faction, Ecstatic Truth, Cinema Truth, Cinéma Vérité, Documentary

ÖZET

Bu tezde, melez filmlerin kurgu ve belgesel yöntemleriyle ürettiği alternatif gerçekler incelenmektedir. Sinematik gerçekliğin farklı kullanımları ve belgesel sinemanın sınırlarının tanımı hakkındaki tartışmalar iki filme odaklanarak incelenecektir: Pelin Esmer'in *11'e 10 Kala* (2019) ve Ben Hopkins'in *Yearning* (2015) filmleri.

'Faction' kavramı, bir filmde kurgu ve gerçeğin nasıl birleştirilebileceğini sorgulamada kilit bir kavram olacaktır: Bir filmde kurgu veya gerçeklik nerede başlar ve nerede biter? Veya hangi noktada birbirleriyle birleşiyorlar? Filmlerde türü tanımlarken gerçeklik ve kurgu kullanmanın bu tanımlamadaki etkisi nedir?

Bu sorular göz önüne alınarak belgesel sinemanın sınırları araştırılacaktır. 'Faction' kavramının yanında diğer yararlanılacak kavramlar sine-göz, sinema-gerçek ve esrik gerçek kavramlarıdır ve seçilen iki film bu kavramlardan yararlanılarak analiz edilecektir. Bir belgesel film yalnızca önündeki gerçeklerle mi ilgilenir yoksa yaratıcısının o gerçekleri algılayışının sanatsal bir dışavurumu mudur? İlk yaklaşım, ya da Dziga Vertov'un Sine-Göz tarzından esinlenen Sinema-Gerçek akımı ve Werner Herzog'un tarafından 'Ecstatic Truth' olarak kavramlaştırılan ikinci yaklaşım karşılaştırma için teorik referanslar olarak kullanılacaktır.

Sonuç olarak, bu filmlerde kullanılan yöntemlerin kurgu ve belgesel filmlerin geleneksel sınırlarının ötesinde yeni bir karma film yapımı anlayışına nasıl katkıda bulunduğunu bulmak için çaba sarf edilecektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler:

Faction, Esrik Gerçek, Sine-Göz, Sinema Gerçek, Belgesel

INTRODUCTION

Where does the fiction or reality begin in a film, and where does it end? Or at which point do they merge with each other? What is the impact of using reality and fiction in defining the genre in films?

When I finished watching *Yearning* (Hopkins, 2015), these questions were on my mind. I was wondering how much of the film is based on facts, how much is fiction, which characters are real and which characters are fiction. As soon as I left the movie theatre, I searched the director on the internet. The director had the same name as the director's character in the film, and when I saw the photos I was sure that he appeared as himself in the film. The fact that the director was the first singular person in the film increased my curiosity on which parts of the story were real and which parts were fiction. Because the film's story-based narrative was poetic, kneaded with dreams. In order to better understand the hybrid forms, I wanted to make a short film about the questions in my head before reaching Ben Hopkins and doing an interview with him that would be the starting point of this thesis. The starting line of my film *Sisyphus* (Yalçın, 2017) was as follows:

Well, what will happen now? I need to do something. But, I don't know what. I need to know myself first. For example, which genre am I? Documentary? Fiction? Do I need to choose one of those? Can't I be all of them?

We heard the film's voice over as first singular person. These questions appeared as a monologue through the film which make sense of its own existence. And the film continued with creating two characters and made callback interviews with the characters. Then film chose one of the characters and put him in a narrative, which consisted of the director's memories. As the narration progressed the character Ekim also improvised some dialogues from his real life. For the audiences who don't know me or Ekim in real life, the film might be perceived as

fiction, experimental or mockumentary but for me it is a faction, which I will elaborate in the coming chapters as the main concept of this thesis. *Sisyphus* could also be considered as a documentary about a certain part of my personal history with the real pictures, spaces and characters. My point was to underline the uncertainty of the boundaries in the faction concept so I made the film ask itself about its existence regarding the boundaries of its form. The questions the film asked itself must have stalled and lingered in the minds of the juries of the festivals as well, because the film was categorized in the fiction category in some festivals and in the experimental category in some others. Some asked whether this movie was also called a mockumentary. Also in my second short film *Barysphere* (Yalçın, 2018), I faced several situations regarding the genre of the film. *Barysphere* competed both in fiction and documentary categories in different festivals as well. And mostly, in Q&A sessions or interviews they called it as experimental documentary. The reason of this polyphony about the form of the film was that I had put my character, who was an artist of Sinop Biennial, in a fictional scene.

Actually I was shooting a documentary about the production process of Philippe's artwork and I was approaching the film with an observational manner mostly. But towards the end of the shooting process I had noticed that my character Philippe was showing me his positive and professional side when I turned on the camera and I knew there were issues regarding the installation of his art piece which he didn't want to reveal so that the film would show him as perfect at the end of the day. But I was also aware that this manner would make the film look superficial. So I had convinced him to shoot a fictional scene and I edited the final edition by using this fictional element in order to reach the hidden strata in the film, and I defined this approach as 'sculpting personal realities' in my article on *Dynamic Archive* conducted by HFK (Hochschule für Künste), The University of the Arts Bremen ("Dynamic Archive," 2019).

After all, these arguments brought me to the starting point of this thesis. Where are the limits that determine whether a film is a fiction or a documentary? And how strictly are these limits framed? Or, let's ask; is it a betrayal of the documentary film using fictitious elements in documentary film? Considering these questions, there are different views on the limits of documentary cinema or the area of freedom in setting the boundary between documentary and fiction.

In the history of cinema, *Nanook of the North* (Flaherty, 1922) is known as the first documentary film (Grimshaw, 2014, p. 4). In *Nanook of the North*, we watch a film which seems observational and non-invasive on the surface. In fact, Flaherty made those native Eskimos enacting some former rituals in order to reach the impact he desires; he made them wear old traditional clothes for instance, in order to give the audience an ethnographic sense of Eskimo everyday life (Nichols, 2001, p. 3). At first glance, this intervention of Flaherty can be perceived as a betrayal to documentary cinema. But even in one of the oldest definitions of documentary, which belongs to John Grierson, it is stated as the creative interpretation of actuality (Ward, 2005).

When considered along this definition, it can be said that a documentary does not necessarily need to be completely observational and uninterrupted in narrating real life.

Patricia Aufderheide¹ answers the question of how documentary film can be defined as follows:

A simple answer might be: a movie about real life. And that is precisely the problem; documentaries are about real life; they are not real life. They are not even windows onto real life. They are portraits of real life, using real life as their raw material, constructed by artists and technicians who make myriad decisions about what story to tell to whom, and for what purpose (2007, p. 2).

¹ Patricia Aufderheide is University Professor of Communication Studies in the School of Communication at American University in Washington, D.C.

There are concrete and abstract aspects of realities. So the truth should be sought in a mixed methodology of empiricism and intuitionism, in cinema as well:

...whilst the intuitionist realists believe that forms of empiricist methodology, which lead only to a fragmented understanding of the world, should be abandoned, they nonetheless regard empirical experience per se, and as depicted within film, as the essential foundation upon which a more advantageous synthesis of rational, empirical and intuitionist modes of comprehending reality must be established (Aitken, 2007, p. 106).

That's the dialectic of concrete and abstract as Bazin called it:

If the paradox of the cinema is rooted in the dialectic of concrete and abstract, if cinema is committed to communicate only by way of what is real, it becomes all the more important to discern those elements in filming which confirm our sense of natural reality and those which destroy that feeling. On the other hand, it certainly argues a lack of perception to derive one's sense of reality from these accumulations of factual detail. It is possible to argue that *Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne* is an eminently realistic film though everything about it is stylized (1967, p. 110).

And this does not mean one is more important than the other. Actually they rein each other in order not to be superficial. Because the film we watch is not a mere narration of pure facts that appear on the surface, but a form of artistic interpretation/expression as an interpretation of how the director perceives those facts. This brings us to the concept of 'faction', where truth and fiction are used together. This thesis will examine the concept of 'faction' in two selected films which combine facts and fictional elements. The first of these films is *Yearning* (Hopkins, 2015) which was the inspiration for this thesis in the first place, and the second one is *10 to 11* (Esmer, 2009).

After the concepts are defined, *10 to 11* (Esmer, 2009) and *Yearning* (Hopkins, 2015) films will be analyzed focusing on how the method of ‘faction’ has been utilized in these films. The reason for framing these two films to study the concept of ‘faction’ in the thesis is that both films use documentary and fiction together. Moreover, the fact that *11'e 10 Kala* is categorized as fiction and *Yearning* as documentary, strengthens the idea that the concept of ‘faction’ is a concept of representation of cinematic reality rather than representing a particular genre. Another concept to be mentioned while analyzing these films will be the concept of flaneur, which will be used to trace the characters' transition between reality and fiction in these films. Another common point of the films is that both films take place in Istanbul. This will be discussed too in the analysis as a background theme. Because Istanbul, as a subject was another triggering point for me to choose *Yearning* and *10 to 11*. Both films have characters that try to find their ways in Istanbul. While they are struggling, both films show us the multilayered structure of Istanbul through the conflicts of the characters. Not just with the main characters but also with the side characters. This is something that made me bonded with the characters in the films as an outsider and as a person who is trying to find his way in Istanbul. I will be elaborating this subject in the analysis sections.

In addition to reading the films during the analysis, interviews with the directors will be included in the analysis.

CHAPTER 1

In cinema, the use of facts, fiction and the combination of these two varies according to what the creator wants to evoke in the audience. When it comes to documentary cinema, the general perception of the audience is based on the assumption that everything that appears in the film is pure reality. However, the reality given in the film is a representation of what is meant. “They give a sense of what we understand reality itself to have been, of what it is now, or of what it may become” (Nichols, 2001, p. 1).

For this reason, the concepts of Cinema Truth, Cinéma Vérité and Ecstatic Truth, as different representations of reality, will be discussed before moving to the concept of ‘faction’, where facts and fiction are used together.

1.1.Cinema Truth and Cinéma Vérité

Cinema Truth is one of the well-known movements in cinema. The original name of the movement is Kino-Pravda. Dziga Vertov starts his book with this sentence; “We call ourselves kinoks-as opposed to “cinematographers,” a herd of junkmen doing rather well peddling their rags” (1984, p. 67).

Vertov proclaims that “the old films, based on the romance, theatrical films and like, to be leprous. Cinematography must die so that the art of cinema may live” (1984, p. 7). He is against certain elements like editing, music, literature and acting in cinema. “Keep away from them! Keep your eyes off them! They’re dangerous! Contagious!” as he puts (1984, p. 7).

However this movement considers aesthetic elements as contagious, it confronts a contradiction as most of the other documentary approaches do. Because, the camera itself is an aesthetic device. Thereby, as a medium which creates aesthetic images, anytime where a camera exists, reality changes and starts being reproduced by the person who stands behind it. If one intends to transpose the reality, one should embrace the fact that there is a camera between the subject and audience, and also should admit there is a person behind the camera who decides what to shoot at and what not. At the same time, deciding what to leave out of the frame also means that reality is limited, some part of it is not shown. As far as showing a part of life by a camera means reproducing the cinematic reality in a creative way, to admit the existence of a camera means honesty and it would serve truth than hiding it. So a documentary doesn't mean that it presents pure actuality. Paul Ward puts it this way:

The assumption seems to be that a proper documentary aims to render actuality purely, accurately and objectively, and that the imposition of any 'creative treatment' inevitably gets in the way of this project. However, this is not the aim of documentary, and nor should it be. What makes a documentary a documentary resides somewhere else, in the complex interaction between text, context, producer and spectator. In other words, one cannot point to so-called 'fictional' devices (narrative trajectory, cross-cutting) in a documentary and state that these devices, in and of themselves, invalidate that film's documentary status. Likewise, one cannot point to handheld camerawork or certain types of voiceover in a fiction film and state that these devices alter the film's fictional status (Ward, 2005).

Besides, although Vertov defines every moment which is shot secretly or a similar way as the 'fact', he also generates an anti-thesis in the very same sentence by saying "Every instant of life shot unstaged, every individual frame shot just as it

is in life with a hidden camera, “caught unawares,” or by some other analogous technique-represents a fact recorded on film, a film-fact as we call it” (1984, p. 57).

In other words, he declares the fact that he transposes as the fact of the film, which means a new reality, a cinematic reality. In spite of that, by declaring uses of aesthetic elements in cinema as contagious, he debar himself from the opportunities of filmmaking.

In 1960's, Jean Rouch invented Cinéma Vérité stream inspired by Dziga Vertov's theory about Kino-Pravda.

Cinéma vérité, ‘film truth’, drew on Vertov’s description of a kino pravda, a cinema or film dedicated to representing truth in ways not achieved in the fictional cinema (Beattie, 2004, p. 83).

Jean Rouch makes a citation from Vertov’s Kinok Manifesto and declares his inspiration as follows:

This pioneering visionary thus foresaw the era of cinéma-vérité. “Cinéma-vérité is a new type of art; the art of life itself. The ciné-eye includes: all shooting techniques, all moving pictures, all methods without exception which will allow us to reach the truth in movement” (Kinok Manifesto). Vertov was talking about the “camera in its natural state” not in its egotism but in its willingness to show people without makeup, to seize the moment (Rouch, 2003, p. 32).

At this point, it brings us to Werner Herzog’s ‘Accountant’s Truth’ definition about ‘Cinéma Vérité’ and the ‘Ecstatic Truth’ definition about his way of filmmaking. Herzog says “By dint of declaration the so-called Cinéma Vérité is devoid of vérité. It reaches a merely superficial truth, the truth of accountants” (Herzog, 1999).

1.2. Ecstatic Truth

Werner Herzog (1999), describes ‘Ecstatic Truth’ as the way of telling situations by creating new realities when we are not able to tell them through simple facts. Herzog tries to make his audience perceive a particular feeling by the very new reality which he creates in the film.

In order to establish his point of view on the subject, by using the power of editing as well, he creates a new reality hiding in deeper layers which he thinks he is not able to reach by just an observational approach. For instance, in a scene of *Grizzly Man* (Herzog, 2005), Herzog listens to the sound recording of moaning of a man who was eaten by bears. While Herzog listens to the sound recording, on the screen, we see a very close friend of the person who died; she watches Herzog with a very curious and anxious facial expression. After Herzog finishes listening, he tells her that she should not to listen the recording in order not to freak out. The camera zooms out smoothly and we see Herzog there for the first time. Until that moment, the director who is there only with his voice, suddenly appears on screen and becomes a part of the film with his image as well. After this intervention by the director, she decides not to listen to the recording. Right after this scene, Herzog adds a scene of a bear fight which was shot by the dead man. While we are still trying to imagine the moaning of that man, watching this bear fight makes it easier for us to imagine how it must have felt like to be eaten by a bear. Thus, we get a stronger image in our minds and it makes us understand that man’s suffering better.

What if Herzog had shot it without his intervention and interpretation, then what would it look like? A woman would be talking to the camera and telling how she is upset about that bad event. If we would watch it that way, probably *Grizzly Man* would not reach such a wide-range audience as it does now.

There is a very clear touch by the director in order to create film's reality. Couldn't Herzog hide this touch? He could have chosen not to appear in the film and try to keep the film in an observational tone. At this point I could say that, one of the reasons for his involvement in the film is to underline that the reality he represents is his/film's reality, instead of pure truth- if such a thing is possible. As we will read in Ben Hopkins' interview in a further chapter, it could be read as a contumacy against Cinéma Vérité by interpreting the facts and creating a new reality that belongs to the film itself.

Brad Prager says:

Herzog irrefutably concerns himself with the search for something less mediated and more authentic than the everyday life-world we inhabit. Perhaps for this reason he has argued repeatedly against cinéma vérité, or filmmaker's attempts to depict the world 'as it actually is', claiming that such attempts are entirely without vérité and that cinema of this sort plies only stones (Prager, 2012, p. 15).

For this reason, Herzog defines Cinéma Vérité's approach as '*Accountant's Truth*'. That is to say that Herzog is interested in new realities which emerge by the creative use of facts instead of simple facts, and he calls this creative approach as '*ecstatic truth*'.

He uses this term specifically to make a negative reference to Cinéma Vérité. In fact, he goes one step further and claims that "filmmakers of Cinéma Vérité resemble tourists who take pictures of ancient ruins of facts" (Herzog, 1999).

At this point, this study proceed with another concept which is similar to Herzog's Ecstatic Truth and also gives the opportunity to mix both documentary and fiction elements in the same film.

1.3.Faction

1.3.1. What is Faction?

One of the best definition of mixing facts and fiction in cinema is Faction. According to the Oxford Dictionary the term “faction” was originated in 1960s as blend of fact and fiction and defined as “a literary and cinematic genre in which real events are used as a basis for a fictional narrative or dramatization” (English Oxford Living Dictionaries, 2019).

Nevena Dakovic² says,

Faction, as the meaning of the word or as cinematically refers to the situation that a work is a mix of truths and fictions. Documentary fiction has the capacity of creating nearly synonymously alternative realities and to reveal the truths which are hidden till that time by equally convincing ways (Dakovic, 2011, p. 106).

In *10 to 11* (Esmer, 2009), Pelin Esmer creates a narration based on her uncle’s true life story and puts him in a narration as himself, as Mithat Esmer. This film gives the opportunity of comparison with the previous film of the director, *The Collector* (Esmer, 2002), which is a documentary about Mithat Esmer, shot by Pelin Esmer mostly in an observational manner. So the clues of where reality ends and fiction starts can be traced comparatively. This film will be examined in another chapter elaborately.

The other film *Yearning* (Hopkins, 2015) which will be examined in this thesis is also a good example of faction. Director Ben Hopkins appears as an alternative version of himself in this film. There is a director who goes to Istanbul to shoot a documentary about the city but as he discovers the dark side of Istanbul, he also

² Nevena Dakovic is professor of Film Theory/Film Studies at the Dept. of Theory and History at the University of Arts/Belgrade.

goes on a journey into his inner world. In this second film also, there are clues as to where reality ends and fiction starts, by dint of the interview I made with the director. These two films also have a common sense in creating their own realities, which could be called as ‘*ecstatic truth*’.

Here is another commonality which emerged when analyzing these two films. When analyzing a film that we would call faction, we need some information outside the film in order to distinguish and define the facts and fiction in the film. I used interviews I made with director Ben Hopkins for the analysis of *Yearning*. For the analysis of *10 to 11*, I used both the director's previous interviews and the film she directed *The Collector* (2005) about the main character Mithat Esmer.

1.3.2. Production of Faction Films and First-Person Documentaries

Films made with the Faction approach may be different from the classical documentary or fictional structures that the audience is accustomed to. This creates a challenge for the film to reach the audience and to be screened. Because the risk of not having a commercial return on the film may make it difficult to find investors in the film. However, with the improvement in the quality of digital cameras, film production has become more affordable. Therefore, as the spent budget decreases, the worries on its financial return decreases. Thus, apart from the mainstream films that are based on audience appreciation and risk-free, production of films with different structures and narrative styles has become more possible than before. As Patricia Aufderheide says, “The advent of video dramatically changed who could capture reality and expanded the range of people telling stories” (2007, p. 125).

Digital video and editing tools have contributed to a more free and original space for film production. Apart from the classical approaches, it has helped to increase the number of films in which different voices and personal stories appear. These developments have been instrumental in the creators' use of the faction approach.

Thus, the roles of producers and directors in the classical sense have changed over time. A director can often be seen as the cameraman and/or editor of his/her own film, and there are examples in which the director evolves into the role of filmmaker who co-operates the art and the craft.

The development of the concept of a filmmaker rather than traditional producer/director roles turns into a process that goes contrary to the mainstream trend just mentioned and contributes to the production of more personal and original films. Kevin J. Corbett mentions that a new trend started in the early 1990's as one of the consequences of the cheapening of camera and editing equipment in which filmmakers brought themselves into the film developing a story structure about themselves and even tending to transform these stories into a construct. He also mentions that this trend deals with films with a post-modern approach deconstructing the traditional methods (Corbett, 2016, p. 51).

Thanks to these new approaches, filmmakers began to make films in which they narrated their own personal histories and the period in which they lived based on their own personal experiences producing their own cinematic representations of ways of perceiving the facts in front of them.

Patricia Aufderheide says,

The first-person documentaries that have burgeoned over the last few years have developed in several ways and styles. There is the confessional video, a first-person diary or meditation, drawing on a long history of independent and art film (Aufderheide, n.d., p. 1).

Aufderheide attributed the development of the first-person documentary trend to the launch of video cameras, and notes that the method, which she defined as "first person video storytelling", is a combination of essays, general interviews and well-known stories emerging as a new genre.

The First-Person Documentary approach will be used besides fiction and ecstatic truth concepts to analyze the film *Yearning*.

CHAPTER 2: ANALYSIS OF YEARNING (2015)

The film *Yearning* by Ben Hopkins was defined as fiction by some and docudrama by others, and documentary by some others, and has been the subject of a lot of discussion in terms of its form. I even organized a screening of *Yearning* to a targeted group and I handed over a survey to find out their perception regarding to the genre of *Yearning*. The targeted group was consisted of film students, art students and architecture students whose common interest was cinema. Their answers were quite different than each other. I was surprised by this polyphony. After the film, I screened the interview that I made with the director Ben Hopkins to the same audience. The answer of Hopkins regarding to the film's form is as follows:

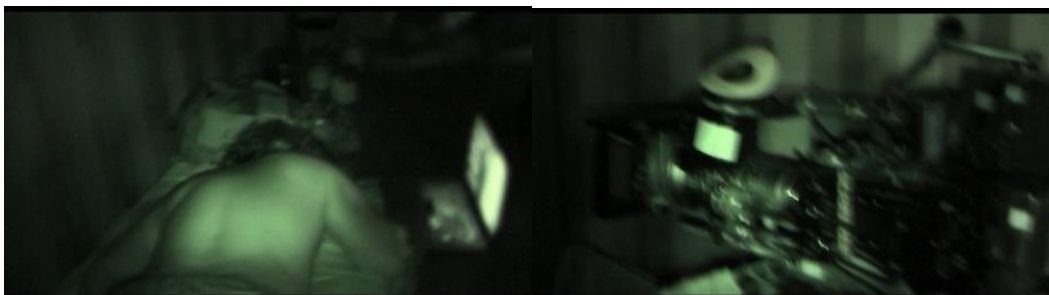
For convenience mainly I term the film myself documentary because the main point of the film was documentary. I talked about an actual thing, talked about Istanbul. That is more important element for me the film than the fictional story that us arriving Istanbul and having argument as a crew and the crew leaving me, me carry on my own, that's the side issue. The main point of the film is to talk about the soul and spirit of Istanbul and as a real thing that really exist in the world. The fictional elements are sideline to that. For me that makes the facts more interesting, to have this kind of fictional elaboration, this fictional improvisation. It's like the main theme of the film is the fact of Istanbul but around that main theme there are improvisations, fictional ones which make the main theme more interesting. But the main trust of the film is documentary. A documentary about Istanbul, that's why I called it documentary. I think you are kind of forced by the market place to decide whether it is documentary or fiction and in this case I choosed documentary but really there is a third form which is the hybrid form and there is some festivals and some critics who recognise this third form which is getting more and more important in the filmmaking at the moment, hybrid form which is a mix of fiction and

documentary. So that mine is of course is a hybrid film, a fictional documentary. (Personal interview)

In the film, Ben Hopkins appears as another version of himself and he plays a character who is a director that has come to Istanbul to shoot a travel show. Throughout the film, we begin to see the dark side of the city as we go down deeper from the visible touristic surface of Istanbul and take on a journey towards the inner world of the director himself. As the alternative version personified by Ben Hopkins in the film presents references to his actual life and his connection to Istanbul, as well as some facts about Istanbul, it can be stated that this film is a hybrid film with fiction and first-person documentary features.

The film begins with the journey of a film crew traveling to Istanbul in a container. While watching the segmented footage of the crew waiting to arrive in Istanbul in the container, we hear the voice of Ben Hopkins and he begins to tell the story of the film from first person's voice over. So the film starts as a first-person documentary from the first scene.

“We are travelling to Istanbul from Germany in a containership. Just like illegal foreigners, like ghosts. Not because we are immigrants or refugees, but because we are filmmakers with low budgets.”



However, although we are not hundred percent sure of the fact that Hopkins is not going to travel from Germany to Istanbul in a container, but we feel clearly about the hint that he has put himself in a fictional story. Of course, if we don't know that the voice we hear belongs to the director, we can assume that the film is completely fictional. It is necessary to have some information about the life of the narrator or main character which is the common feature that is necessary for defining a film as fiction.

As they leave the container ship, they interview the people who opened the container. Here we see the sound man and the director on the screen. For audiences who do not know about the director's appearance, the film may still seem as completely fictional. But the minds of the spectators who know a little about him start to get confused. The real Ben Hopkins seems like he is going to Istanbul to shoot a film, but the film opens with a scene which does not look like as it is real.



Moreover, in the next scene when they start moving from the port towards the hotel in a vehicle, Hopkins introduces the production assistant who joined the crew in Istanbul to other crew members. We see the whole crew in that scene.



This is a way Hopkins uses as a method of alienation effect on the spectator. Rather than enabling the spectator to experience a catharsis, he wants the audience to feel that they are shooting there. At the same time, this is the reproduction of reality with a deconstructive approach. The director, who was there to shoot a film with his crew, reestablishes this reality as a structure within the film itself. Hopkins is actually taking a step closer to reality by including the film crew in the film. Because if it had been otherwise, by being observational and choosing objective shots to create the impression that you are not there to get to the reality much closer creates the illusion that a 'reality' is created by hiding it from the audience that you are shooting a film there, and this creates a belief for the audience that everything in the documentary is objective, and there is no commentary included in it. However, as mentioned at the beginning of the thesis,

even choosing to locate the camera in a certain place is a comment of director in itself.

Hopkins responds to my question about this issue as in ‘Why did you choose to use such a method?’ with the answer below;

In 2002, I was shooting a normal documentary in Afghanistan. I mean by normal that there were no fictional elements in it, I did not appear in the film, there was no narrator voice included, it was completely observational. But when I went to that little Afghan village with my crew, I felt that I was changing the atmosphere and the reality of the place there, and that bothered me. I got the feeling that I was fumbling with the fact that I was already there and filmed what was in front of me. So in my next movie ‘37 Uses of a Dead Sheep’, I got myself into the film to get rid of the uncomfortable impression of changing reality and we became part of the story with my crew. And then I went a step further with the film *Yearning* and used real fictional elements in the story. Do you know why? Because the subject of the film was a gigantic Istanbul, which was too large to tell in a normal documentary. This was no longer about telling the facts about Istanbul because it is a very big and complicated situation to tell the facticity. It was more about capturing the atmosphere of the city, and capturing the identity of the city, so I thought I can frame a portrait of Istanbul that is more realistic, more truthful and more interesting just by using some elements literally such as songs, dreams and imagination, rather than just using the basic fact. Sometimes facts may not be enough. Sometimes the truth can be approached more accurately by the imaginative and poetic use of facts. This is something that Werner Herzog, my greatest inspiration in terms of documentary, often refers to as the “ecstatic truth.”

Hopkins' attempt to capture the personality of the city rather than simple facts about Istanbul transforms the film *Yearning* into a process of rediscovery of

Istanbul with the created alternative Ben Hopkins personality and some facts about Istanbul are presented with an artistic approach in a fictional story. From this point of view, it is possible to say from the first scenes that the film is a fiction film with facts and fiction features. Besides being in the film as an actor he also uses his own voice as a first person narrator. This shows us that Hopkins approaches to the film as a first person documentary in terms of storytelling.

Upon arrival at the hotel, the bellboy at the hotel shows Hopkins his room. Ben asks the bellboy, where they can start shooting a documentary about Istanbul. The bellboy suggests that they start it at the Bosphorus Bridge.

In the next scene, Hopkins starts to narrate some information about the Bosphorus. We watch images of the Bosphorus and Hopkins continues to convey some information about the Bosphorus to us. He talks mostly about mythological and literary stories. This is a clue to the film's approach to Istanbul. He refers to the Bosphorus as the place where Jason in Greek mythology, and the Argonauts passed through while they were searching the Golden Fleece.

He also says in the film:

...in Voltaire's bitter, cynical book *Candide*, the character of the novel Candide and his friends after going through several tests and troubles end up by the shores of the Bosphorus at the end of the novel and travel there to sequestering themselves from the world to spend time watching a garden in peace.

This could be considered as an example that the film's approach to Istanbul connects with his own inner journey. Because Hopkins, in his actual life had come to Istanbul to shoot a film and met the woman he was going to marry. He got married and had a child. During this process, he had left his home, which is the UK and lived in Istanbul for 4 years. The stories he refers to in the film presents

references to his adventure in Istanbul ending with a peaceful marriage in his journey of his life story. We will keep on watching clues regarding this in the following scenes of the film. I will continue with my analysis in the fictional order for now.

As the continuation of the film proceeds in chapters, it will be examined in sections in the thesis study.

Part 1: Data and Cities

In this part of the film he provides some demographic information about Istanbul. He also tells us what the TV station wanted him to shoot which would include scenes of big crowds in Istanbul, touristic locations, techno music...

That is something I normally would not do but I was just recovering from depression and that was the best job I could find then. I had come here several times before and it always seemed very layered and strange to me. It seemed like a hidden, unknown darkness was hiding behind the city of trade and tourism visible during the day.



The clues are given for the inner conflict that the alternative Ben Hopkins in the film will later experience. This gives a reference to a situation that the actual Ben Hopkins had experienced with Istanbul. Vivid and impressive Istanbul that is visible on the surface, and the darkness waiting to be discovered as you go deeper into the lower layers...

Part 2: Thrash

In the first part, we had seen the Istanbul on the surface which was what the TV station wanted from Hopkins. However Hopkins instinctively wants to explore the other layers and takes us along with him on this journey too. His voice over says:

In order to see the actual city that lies underneath the surface, you have to look at it at dawn and see who is cleaning it up following the entertainment that took place during the night before it. Bertolt Brecht, in *The Good Person of Szechwan* says, 'If you have not seen your city at the moment when she has risen from her bed like an old, earnest worker reaching for her tools filling her lungs with fresh air, then you have missed a lot.'

We feel the conflict much more clearly that is between the images that the station wanted and the images that he is inclined to shoot. He points to Istanbul, the city of trade and tourism on the surface, and there are the garbage men cleaning away the traces of the night at one layer below it. We watch how the garbage men start working at the time of dawn. Hopkins has brought us one level deeper.



Then he takes us one more level down and there are the illegal garbage men, thrash paper collectors known as handcart men. He interviews a couple of those thrash workers.



While we, as the spectators think that these illegal garbage men will talk about how the state creates trouble for them, they bring us one level deeper and they start talking and complaining about the illegal immigrant handcart men. They

mention in a very angry manner how the Syrian and Afghani handcart men work for a very low wage not knowing the value of money in Turkey and how this has a bad impact on their own business.



With this very scene, we start to feel that Hopkins has a commentary on how multilayered Istanbul is and its darkest corners. This is a commentary by Hopkins on the facts of Istanbul.

Part 3: Resistance

The handcart men appearing in the previous scene are from Gazi neighborhood. The voiceover of Hopkins tells us that they had been shooting around Gazi neighborhood and Küçük Armutlu.

He talks about the majority and density of Alewites residing in these neighborhoods and we watch an interview conducted with a young Alewite. Zeki Çolak is an actual person and he presents his own commentary.



He explains how Alewites have been oppressed since the Ottoman Empire and have been crushed both under the fascism of the Ottomans and Turkey. He also mentions how they have been supporting democratic and progressive elements due to that fact. Right after that particular scene, we watch a news excerpt by Abdullah Gül, who was the president of Turkey at that time. This is from a public rally in which he explains the name of the third Bosphorus Bridge. Another Alewite citizen states that naming the third Bosphorus Bridge after Yavuz Sultan Selim (Sultan Selim I or Selim the Grim), who had slaughtered especially Alewites and even Sunnis in the 16th century, is a message. Ben Hopkins' voice over explains this matter as follows:

Urban transformation has been initiated in areas densely populated by Alewites telling them that they are under the risk and threat of an earthquake. The city that I have known from 4 years ago has totally changed now. Many of the places I loved have disappeared and destroyed. Is the old Istanbul being lost?

Then he shows other districts that have been evacuated due to urban transformation. People are moved and located in dead-pan, soulless TOKİ³ buildings outside the city. They shoot and show the construction sites located in the neighborhood of Fikirtepe. In the following sections of the film while watching one of these scenes shot, they will see a woman in a white dress who was not there during their shoot. The woman appears in an empty construction site. This woman symbolizes the soul of Istanbul. It is very meaningful that she especially appears in these construction sites for the very first time.

Part 4: Ghosts

They return back at the hotel. While they chat with the bell boy of the hotel who is a fictional character, the bellboy says: “Only the boss knows that I exist and am here, nobody else knows”.

Then they start searching for workers employed illegally, not registered in the social security system. Hopkins’ voice over says:

We see workers queuing at dawn to find a job in the construction sector. I am sure that these are the images that the TV stations do not want to see at all.

3 TOKİ is Turkey's government backed housing agency.



Illegal immigrants and refugees are in majority among them. A group of workers from Turkey say, “What the Prime Minister did is not something that is good, he should take them away from here. We fight each other.” Right after that one of the Afghan workers says “the Kurds are beating us up, we cannot work.” Once more the multilayered structure appears before our eyes.

Immediately after that we switch to a totally fictional story scene. In a more affluent part of the city we see a crowd waiting for an acting job. One person from the crowd says, “We are here for an extra job in TV shows acting as the background crowd. Take me in too.” Hopkins says, “We don’t have actors in our film, we are shooting a documentary.” Right after that a minivan shows up, picks up a couple of random people and the only person left behind is an old man.



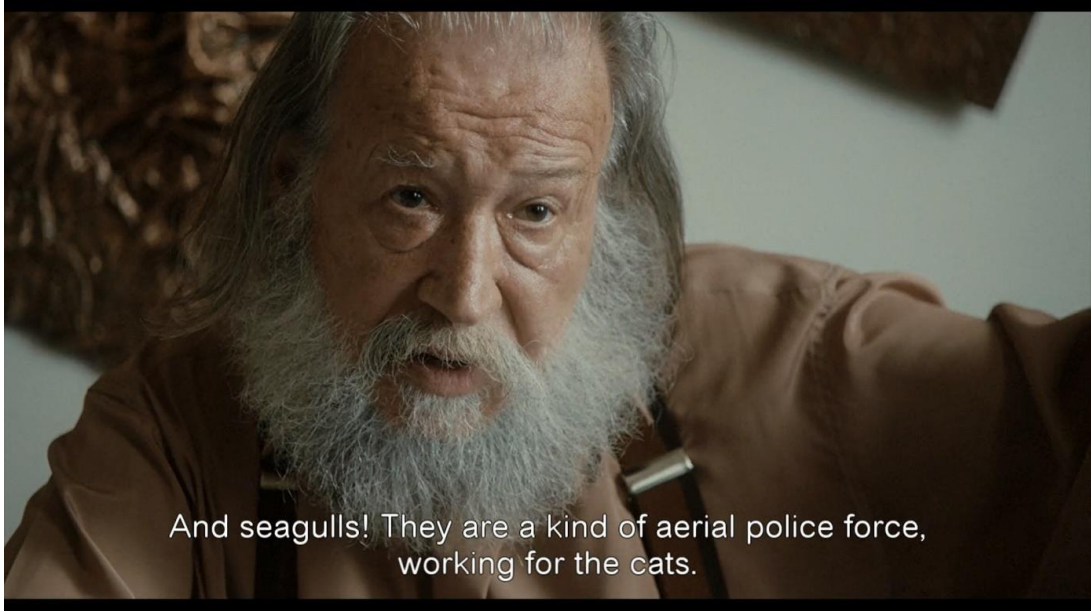
This character is Faruk Korkmaz who is totally fictional. This information is also not known by the audiences. It was revealed in the interview that I have made with the director. They go to his house and start talking about Istanbul. Hopkins presents this character as the crucial point, the knot that would tie him to the fictional story. Faruk Korkmaz starts to recount fantastic stories about Istanbul.

Part 5: Cats

Faruk Korkmaz says “Cats are our superintendents questioning us both in this world and the afterlife. The seagulls are the aerial police force.”

Ben Hopkins answers “This is a bit of an eccentric character but there is a touch of truth in what he says.”

Hopkins shows us that he is interested in the world recounted by this character. And he crystallizes his position between reality and the fiction too. This is the first clue that he will become a flaneur who wanders between fiction and reality.



Part 6: The City and the World

We see a map of artists said to be connected to all the computers of the world. Artist Tuğba İlkinönü, a fictional character, explains the map as follows;

On this map, the lights flash on the map as soon as Istanbul is mentioned on social media around the world. Sometimes the light is lit even in Siberia. This means that apart from the physical existence of Istanbul, the idea of Istanbul shows itself in this map with flickering lights. I mean, her spirit, her ghost, goes around the world.



Istanbul is characterized by this scene and the soul of the city is mentioned. Behind the concrete city we see what is mentioned is a city spirit created by people's mental and emotional activities. Hopkins sets the stage for telling us about Istanbul as he perceives her.

Part 7: Graffiti

When the crew is shooting graffiti during the protests at Gezi Park, someone who seems to walk by stops and asks whether they know what these symbols meant. Hopkins is in the frame and that random person speaks directly to Hopkins since this is his journey. This is about the fictional Hopkins discovering Istanbul. Of course, we know that what the actual Hopkins already knows and wants to tell the audience is that the information is reconstructed in an alternative reality. In this scene the crew is still in the frame.



Part: 8 Supermallization

In this section, the film covers topics such as the expansion of the city to capital, gentrification issues, Fikirtepe transformation and Haydarpaşa restoration. Then the film returns to Faruk Korkmaz.

Faruk Korkmaz says, “If you are going to shoot a film about Istanbul, then you have to talk to the dead first” and hands Hopkins out a list of telephone numbers belonging to interesting dead people.

This is a call to discover the invisible face of Istanbul. We see the traces of the director's personal tendencies in the character Faruk Korkmaz. Because Hopkins will take what Faruk Korkmaz says serious. This character symbolizes completely the opposite of whatever the TV station symbolizes to Istanbul that sends him to make a touristic film initially. In this sense, it can be said that Faruk Korkmaz is an alternative version of Hopkins. If you remember that the scene where we see Faruk Korkmaz for the first time is the scene after the one Hopkins says while

shooting about the illegal workers, "I do not think the TV station would like to see these images." Faruk Korkmaz is perhaps the rebellious version of Ben Hopkins.

We hear Faruk Korkmaz say the statement below while checking the shot images in the hotel room together with the cinematographer; "If you live in Istanbul for 99 days and you will be one of us. This is the city of ghosts, dreams and impenitent lovers".

This is a reference to an incident Ben Hopkins had experienced in his actual life. This also just revealed in the interview I have made with him actually.

Ben Hopkins says:

This is actually in some way about the 90-day tourist visa I am getting to enter Turkey. One time I stayed an extra week longer and so I had a lot of problems, my entry into the country was banned for 6 months and it took me a lot of money to remove the ban. The woman I would marry and all my belongings were in Istanbul.

Right after this scene, he watches the shootings conducted at the construction site in Fikirtepe and realizes the female ghost for the first time there. The female ghost represents the soul of Istanbul as well as her real life partner, and Hopkins chases after the ghost. In the following chapters, he will be following this ghost wandering around the unknown aspects of Istanbul, discover the soul of the city and fall in love with the old Istanbul, which the spirit represents.



Hopkins answers the commentary about this subject during the interview that the author made with him;

Many poems written by Istanbulite poets about Istanbul, the city is depicted as a woman. That's why the woman who looks like a ghost in the film *Yearning* is somehow a reflection of Istanbul's spirit and also a strange reflection of my wife. When I came to this city, I didn't expect to marry a woman and stay there. In its simplest terms, I came here and I could not leave. I left my own country to live here and this was reflected in the film like that. The fictional Ben Hopkins in the film travels to Istanbul to shoot a documentary and gets stuck there, trapped, cannot leave. These are some fiction and poetic ideas that revolve against the backdrop of the film. As I said earlier, the musical elements contribute to the factual documentary elements.

He will show the old Istanbul photographs shot by Ara Güler at the end of the film and make us listen to the 1930s tango song *Hasret (Yearning)* as a reference to the old Istanbul which he has fallen in love with.

He also gives the haunted ghost woman, namely his wife, a reason for him to discover old Istanbul. Hopkins in the film says; “Perhaps Faruk Korkmaz was right. Perhaps the ghost girl was a messenger from the other world.” He gives us a sign that he is about to surrender himself to his personal inclinations.

Part 9: After Life

The voiceover by Hopkins says;

The city is so big and eternal that I feel like I am falling into a dark hole.
But I wonder whether I approach the hidden face of Istanbul, the ghosts,
the messengers who vaguely are visible as I go deeper underground?



He makes a telephone call to Faruk Korkmaz. As Hopkins explains, “There is a girl in the shot images that looks like a ghost, a strange intuition...”, Faruk Korkmaz tells him that he has to go and hangs up.

Here, we feel that this journey is his personal journey and he has to continue on his own. He says, “I don’t want to sleep anymore, and don’t want to miss the hours of darkness.”

Because the city of Istanbul visible during the day time is superficial and the new city of Istanbul. Night time represents the part where the deeper layers of the city, unknown aspect of the city emerge towards the surface and the part where Hopkins has his personal experience of Istanbul. Hopkins wants to experience what he wants to experience, not the one dictated to him. In the section that was quoted from the interview, Hopkins had stated that the facts were most of the time not enough and may not always include information on the soul of that thing. The distinction between day and night is a reference to the superficial and the personal and Hopkins tries to discover that spirit in his own experience of the city.

At the same time, Hopkins prefers to use black and white images for the night scenes in which he comments on his personal inner journey. He says;

I no longer have the desire to shoot touristic places for a TV station. I really don’t ever want to leave this shadow town where I feel at home between the melancholic traces of an unforgotten history drawing me towards it.

This part is the section where he openheartedly speaks out about which road he will choose.

Part 10: Songs on Death of Children

They follow children entering a building and we watch the children dancing. We see everything stable and in a very colored format where the camera sits still. This is the objective view or the view of the film crew.



The next scenes are shot in black and white and by a hand held camera. This is how Hopkins sees things evolving. Hopkins sees the pain of child mortality behind the visible image, while something else happening on the surface of things. Because he no longer looks at the surface but looks at the city's hidden sufferings. This reinforces the feeling that the film is related to Hopkins' own personal experience in Istanbul and being a first-person documentary.



Another reason for this particular view on events could be because Hopkins has a child too. He gives a hint on this later on in another scene; he sees that he is a father and a husband in his dream. Hopkins in the film, sees his alternative version that he experiences as a fact, and he sees his actual version that lives outside the film as an alternative reality in his dream.

In the meantime, of course, the crew starts questioning the shots. They ask whether the scenes in which the children dance will be included in the film when edited. If not, they ask why they work 15 hours a day. Then Ben tries to return to ‘normality’ because the crew is unhappy. We see the images of Büyükada (Prince Islands) and Ben Hopkins in the film says “The TV station wanted us to shoot at the Prince’s Islands, and the peaceful sea atmosphere could soothe my team's rebellious feelings.”

But this attempt doesn't work and the crew members find themselves in front of a deserted former Greek orphanage building.



The suffering related to the children deaths he felt in the previous scene does not leave him alone and leads him here. It is not described in the film, but the history of this building is also multilayered and is a symbol fit for Hopkins' multi-layered Istanbul perception. The building is designed as a casino-hotel during the Ottoman period but it cannot be used. It becomes an orphanage. Later, during World War I, it was used as the new location of Kuleli Military School and later Greek immigrants were relocated here. Russian refugees who have fled the Bolshevik revolution lived in this building for a while. According to a rumor, a small fire broke out in the building when it was used as an orphanage and some children died in this fire. A child had fallen into the well while running away from the fire and was forgotten there and died. Rumor has it that the child's screams are still heard ("Büyükaada Rum Yetimhanesi'nin Etkileyici Hikayesi," n.d.). This is a painful and abandoned building which draws Ben towards itself. Because, he now explores the darkness.

The crew starts to complain about having come to this depressing building and wants to leave at least to watch the second half of a football game.

Hopkins sends the crew members away and continues to shoot by himself all night with his hand held camera. “I am about to lose myself. I can feel the return of my horrible friend melancholy coming back from the darkness.” he says.

He is trapped between the two worlds and returns to his personal experience to escape this maze and decides to look for the dead. He decides to shoot in a house where the ghosts of two children killed by their father in the 1930’s are said to be haunting. There, he will dial the numbers given by Faruk Korkmaz and search for the dead. One of the crew members says, “You don't really believe this nonsense, do you?” Hopkins answers, *“I do not know what I believe in, I will give it a try.”* He starts calling the dead. The first person he talks to is a man, and he says he's standing behind him. The second call he makes is to a girl and she yells at him “I want to play in the garden. They shut me down here but I want to play in the garden. I don't want to stay here. Save me! ”



The calls are made on Hopkins' cell phone, and we don't know anything about what the crew is hearing or seeing. Only after this scene the crew decides to leave. They get in the container and leave. We never see the film crew again.

Ben continues shooting with the hand-held camera and only shoots at night. The film is now only about Ben's individual personal journey. The team's departure has been the event that saved him from daylight shooting sessions, that is, from the superficial thing he was asked to do. Ben Hopkins' voice over says:

I called the ghost girl. One night I heard a music coming from the window of an old building on the back street. I look at the record player, and it said Yearning. A tango piece from the 1930s.

We see people dancing in the building. This is a scene shot in black and white. The rest of the film continues to be in black and white after this scene. This is also one of the signs that it is the personal experience of Hopkins.



A woman in the building says;

People always care only about themselves. Life of a person compared to the time of the universe is like a grain of sand in the sea. Istanbul is an ancient and eternal city, that is true. Everything that happened to each and every ancient city will happen to it too. It will fall in ruins.

This is perhaps a warning about what pursuing values on the superficial level will do to Istanbul eventually.

Part 11: Dreams

We hear the voice over by Hopkins and we see a woman and a child in his dream: “In my dream, I was living in Istanbul; I had a wife and a child. Then, I am reborn in someplace else and in some other time as a baby again.” The images are in black and white and blurred.

Hopkins sees part of his actual life in a dream. This is an alternative reality created by the version of Hopkins in this film. With this scene we witness the questioning of his existence in a way that is very similar to the philosophy “Am I seeing a butterfly in my dream or am I a butterfly who sees that I am human?” This is a reference to different alternatives of reality and the fact that they exist all at the same time in nested layers. The voice over by Ben Hopkins says:

After waking up, while I was walking through the streets and through the graveyards, I felt the presence of another Istanbul under a vibrant, modern city.



Part 12: 99 Days

He runs out of money and moves into the empty haunted house after leaving the hotel and starts talking to the dead. He decides not to leave the city. While he is watching previously shot images on his computer at the haunted house, his voice over says:

I remembered the fact that Faruk Korkmaz said, if you live in Istanbul for 99 days, then you will become one of us, and I realized that it was 98,5 days already and I started to run. The city, which is normally alive and full, has turned into a ghost town. No man, no animal, no car, nothing. This part is about the dark reflection of Istanbul which I constantly felt the presence of.



This depiction of Istanbul is the alternative reality in his dream - that is, Hopkins' real life – it can be a reference to a submission on how the melancholic world of Hopkins would look like if it had not been realized. His longing and yearning for things that are good in a selfish, brutal world could be the representation of his wife and his child he sees in his dream.

As Hopkins runs through the empty streets, the sun is up and he reaches the Eminönü pier. The ghost girl appears at the pier and dances as she gets closer to the camera. We hear the voice over by Hopkins:

It feels like I've crossed a gate and I've arrived at the other Istanbul that has always been waiting for me, a beautiful and strange land. When I wake up from this dream, I will find myself in the waters of the Golden Horn. The ghost girl I see in my dreams will be there. She will be there to save me, to pick herself up without any shame or feeling troubled. Soon, we will all be ghosts one by one. The stars and suns will shine one last time and then fade out. We, the ghosts, will be dancing under this glittering show of the heavens. Until we and everything else were buried in a peaceful darkness.

The ghost girl approaches to the camera dancing and says, "I love you, stay with me."



Hopkins went to Istanbul to shoot a film and then fell in love with a woman there and established a deeper bond with the city. This is the event that takes place in his actual life. In his interview, he refers to Istanbul as the place where he has found love. He has shown his connection with the city in the alternative reality in the film by following the ghost woman who appeared during the process of him discovering the deeper layers of the city. In the film, some facts about Istanbul, general interviews and a poetically structured good story are intertwined. We watch the story in the film first hand from Hopkins, and Hopkins is also visible in the film as an alternative version of himself. These aspects of the film are consistent with the fiction, ecstatic truth and first-person documentary features.

CHAPTER 3: ANALYSIS OF 10 TO 11

The second film that will be analyzed in the thesis is *10 to 11*.

This film is chosen for analysis because we are able to explore the fictional and actual sides of the story based on how much we know about the real life of characters or director through fiction. Because it is almost impossible to know what part of the film a person has quoted from his/her life, who acts as himself/herself in the film, and from which part he/she later constructs, without having at least some superficial knowledge about them. We know the main character of the movie *10 to 11* from the documentary *The Collector* (2002). One of the other reasons in order to choose this film is Istanbul was used as a background element which is almost a subject of the film. There are two different characters who approach differently to Istanbul. One is an outsider who is trying to find his way in the city and the other one is a native who wants to preserve his way of living. And the main character again wanders as a flaneur between facts and fiction.

In *The Collector*, we meet Mithat Esmer, who is the uncle of the director Pelin Esmer, and his passion for collecting to which he has dedicated his life. In this film, the director keeps her observational distance as much as possible. As the film progresses, we learn a lot about the life of Mithat Esmer and we witness a short section of his life. In *10 to 11*, Mithat Esmer enters into a fictional story as well as appearing as himself. The subject, which is determined as the tension point of the character, is a fact known about Istanbul. So there's an imminent earthquake hazard. The inhabitants of the apartment are offered a certain amount of money so that they would accept the urban regeneration projects that are planned due to this danger, and with that excuse, and all residents, except for Mithat Esmer, are already willing to evacuate their homes. We watch the oppression by the other inhabitants that Mithat Esmer is exposed to because he does not want to leave the house because he is concerned of damaging the

collections he has brought together throughout his whole life. We also watch the story of the superintendent, Ali (Nejat İşler) as a side character in the film. The tension for the character named Ali is to be able to move to a better home to bring his wife and daughter back to Istanbul and therefore find a new job. Because we learn that his wife and daughter had been sent to their homeland village some time ago due to the health of his daughter, who has asthma as their house in the basement has humidity. The way we learn it is very interesting. The masterful use of the film's mixed technique of facts and fiction masterfully enables the paths of Mithat Esmer and Ali to cross each other. The fact that we know Mithat Esmer from *The Collector*, and also the interviews made with Pelin Esmer give us the opportunity to analyze the facts and fictitious elements intertwined in the film.

The film starts with diegetic sounds that we understand belong to Istanbul: the sound of a ship, bird sounds, crowded human voices... Mithat Esmer enters a second hand bookstore with a bag in his hand. He asks for the 11th volume of the Istanbul Encyclopedia. When he can't find it, he goes on his way. He goes to the market and looks for a flashlight with magneto. He negotiates the price for it and buys two of them. He goes to another peddler and asks if he has large framed glasses. When he finds out that the peddler doesn't have the glasses, he says; "Can't you find it? I will buy two of them." Then he goes to a newspaper stand. He buys two the newspapers.



The film we've seen so far is just like the scene at the beginning of the film *The Collector*. In the other film, we see Mithat Esmer as he goes to the dealer and negotiates and chats with them. We continue to watch him from the same observational point of view. In this first scene, we make sure that Mithat Esmer is the same Mithat Esmer. In the film he appears as himself. We even wonder what we are going to watch different than what we have already seen in *The Collector*. We can say that the reason why Pelin Esmer started the film in the same way as *The Collector* is to consciously keep the audience with a dilemma. Is it documentary or fiction?

In the next scene we see Mithat Esmer at his house. This house is like his own house in his actual life. There are masses of newspapers everywhere and the house is full of other collection pieces. The only difference to what we have seen in the documentary before that this house is a bit more tidied. There is a wider space to walk between items.



Those of us who know Mithat Esmer from *The Collector* or in real life may think that this is a documentary when they have been watching the film until this part. Until the doorbell rings...



When Mithat Esmer opens the door, Ali, the superintendent, appears at the door. A very famous Turkish actor Nejat İşler appears as Ali. Now we get the clue that we will dive into a fictional story. He has brought Mithat Esmer's orders. As Ali appears, the conflict in the film appears too.

He has been carrying messages between the apartment manager and Mithat Esmer. The apartment manager meets with the residents for the apartment building to be destroyed, but Mithat Esmer does not attend any of these meetings. The manager convinces the inhabitants of the apartment by presenting them the earthquake risk as a reason. On the other hand, it will be a more valuable building when it is rebuilt, although it will be smaller in terms of its square meters, it will have parking lots, children playgrounds, gardens. We will see these details from Ali's point of view in the following scenes. Therefore, along with the fictional character, Ali, also enters the fiction of the inhabitants into the film and a conflict is formed over the sensitivity of Mithat Esmer in his real life.



Actually Mithat Esmer does not want to leave the house as his collection will be damaged and it will be difficult to move so many items to a new place. Besides, when the risk of earthquake was first mentioned, he called for two engineers to study the building, and he learned that the danger of collapse in the earthquake will be eliminated with a few minor renovations.

Ali is almost hopeless in finding a new job in Istanbul as he has not stepped into the city except for the apartment building in which he works, and so Mithat Esmer's insistence on staying in this house will also work for him and so a partnership will be established. While Mithat Esmer appears as a mature and experienced citizen in Istanbul, Ali represents a backwoodsman who is about to be defeated by the big metropolitan Istanbul. The city Istanbul represents completely different backgrounds for these two characters.

As this conflict is established in the film, we watch the characters' private lives for a while. We see Ali as someone who sits at his house and has tea when he is not doing the daily chores for the building, and talking to his wife on the phone once in a while. His wife pressures him to find a better job. Ali complains that there is no opportunity for him to go out because of the work in the building. He is accessible at all times by the residents directly through the speakerphone inside his apartment, and when someone calls out to him on the speakerphone, he leaves whatever he is doing to respond to it.

Mithat Esmer spends his time at home with his collections, archiving some materials or watching TV quiz show "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?"

In a scene we see him listening to a tape on an old tape recorder. This is the voice of Mithat Esmer himself. He sounds very young. We listen to a woman's voice on the phone. After listening to it for a while, he writes a note in his notebook; "Phone call with Cahide. Ankara 1966."



We understand that he is making an inventory of the audio recordings he has. From this point onwards, we will learn the biography of Mithat Esmer from the recordings we will listen to from time to time in the film. The woman we heard in this first talk was his ex-wife Cahide.

For example, we see Mithat Esmer at an electronic store in one of the scenes. He has taken a non-rewinding broken recording device for repair. We'll listen to another recording when he checks the device. We hear from the voice of Mithat Esmer, “27 May 1960. It is 17.40” as an announcement followed by the statement below;

“Dear citizens. Today, our democracy falls into the crisis ...” and the recording continues. This voice belongs to Alparslan Türkeş. He mentions the campaign in 1960. The chat with the mechanic continues as follows:

Mechanic – We walked on Istiklal Street that day and there was a tank.

Mithat Esmer – On Istiklal Street? That is unbelievable!

As we learn about the biography of Mithat Esmer, we also learn about some historical facts about Turkey in the background. Of course, here again the fictional repairman and real Mithat Esmer exist in the same story.

In another scene we see Mithat Esmer at the restaurant. They are friends with the woman who is the manager of the restaurant. The woman sits at the table of Mithat Esmer while they chat and she stuffs vine leaves. They start talking about Mithat Esmer's ex-wife, Cahide, and the woman asks him; "Was Mrs. Cahide jealous of you?" And Mithat Esmer answers:

Yeah, but not of women. Of my collection. She said, it is either me or the collection. I chose the collection. Actually, the house wasn't as full as she exaggerated. One day she was gone. She said she wouldn't come home until the house was emptied. I tried to unload things but it was not possible. She did not return.

As we watch this scene, we understand that Mithat Esmer is so attached to the collection that even the separation from his wife that will affect a very important part of his life does not cause him to give up his collection. We also understand that he cares about his wife. Because he says he tried to reduce the collection. But he couldn't succeed. He has to live with that too. This information tells us at what rate Mithat Esmer will be in conflict with the inhabitants during the rest of the film.

In the next scene Mithat Esmer contacts the apartment manager. He asked the manager to call for a mechanic because of the water dripping from the ceiling but somehow the mechanic doesn't come. The manager wants to look at the problem in his house. But Mithat Esmer says that he is not available and does not want to allow the apartment manager into his house. Because he does not trust the manager.

Afterwards, we see Mithat Esmer at the house watching “Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?” The doorbell rings. When Mithat Esmer goes to the door, we hear the sound effects of the program in the background creating tension; ticking sounds of the clock, such as heartbeat. Mithat Esmer sees Ali through the doorway. The two men stop for a while and the tension continues in the background. Mithat Esmer does not open the door. This scene captures the main tension in the film very well. There is the building residents who want to demolish the apartment and build a new one because of security and increase the value of the house, and then the battle a man gives not to leave his house who has even dared to leave his wife for his collection. And then there is the apartment attendant caught up in this battle.



The tension of the film is created in a very creative way between the fictional character Ali and the real personality of Mr. Mithat. We feel extra respectful for him as we know him and we are already connected with Mr. Mithat and knowing that he is a real character. The subdued attitude of the superintendent, and the manager's insulting attitude towards the superintendent...

All coupled with the music in the background manage to capture and express the tension in the film. Since the water dripping from the ceiling becomes quite bothersome in the following scenes, Mr. Mithat is forced to let the apartment manager into the house. Of course after the manager sees the house, he complains about Mithat Esmer at the municipal office, the municipality says that there is a threat of the house collapsing due to the high amount of items. This development causes Mithat Esmer to decide to remove some of the things in the house out of the house. Since he has to stay at home to pack the items he is getting rid of, he cannot be outside to pick up the items he has to pick for his collection. For example he has to buy a newspaper every day. He offers Ali some money to run this errand for him. Ali will be working for 2 hours every day and earn 20 Turkish Lira for it. At first since Ali is intimidated by the manager and the residents of the apartment building, he doesn't accept this offer. He tells him that he cannot leave the building. But in the following scenes, an unnamed partnership is established between him and Mithat Esmer as they both want to keep staying in the apartment building and Ali accepts his offer eventually. He already needs the money anyway.

For the first time we see Ali outside the building. He goes to places Mithat Esmer sends him. When he goes to the mechanic's shop, he also listens to a piece of the audio recording on the tape recorder. As the film progresses, we listen to and hear about Mithat Esmer leaving for the USA in 1945 thanks to a scholarship he receives from Sümerbank to study electronic engineering and mathematics. He has travelled on a freighter with 15 students for 22 days. Because the passenger carrying ships were transporting soldiers coming back home from war.

Shortly as the fictional story progresses along with the film, we get to know Mithat Esmer in layers by listening to the audio recordings and watching his daily routine. We also get to learn about the Turkey of the early Republican era and the features of current day liberal Turkey in the background.

Interestingly, we hear about the story of fictional character Ali related to his daughter and his wife from the audio recordings we listen to. As Ali leaves the mechanic's shop he had accidentally pressed the record button on the tape recorder. When he stops by at the restaurant which Mithat Esmer asked him to stop by, the woman who is the manager of the restaurant chats with him and tells Ali about her thoughts on Mithat Esmer. Then Ali tells her about his own situation, how he will need a new job, and how he is looking for a better apartment for his own daughter.

In the next scene Mithat Esmer listens to this accidental recording when he checks the repaired tape recorder and that is how he learns about the story related to Ali. Reality and fiction have fascinatingly been intertwined and mixed with each other. Because the audio recordings from which we listened about the actually happened incidents until that moment, say something about the fictional character Ali for the very first time.

There is so much more we can say about the film, and how the character development and conflicts continue during the film. But I have tried to touch upon the points where the use of reality-fiction are most obvious since this is the main point this thesis is interested in.

This film is biographical fiction story of Mithat Esmer. Mithat Esmer appears as himself in the film, he presents facts about certain parts of his own life and enters into a fictional story through certain facts about Istanbul. We can say that this film is a faction film. But as it was mentioned in the beginning, the purpose of this thesis is to understand through which features the film uses fiction and facts together in terms of its form rather than trying to include this film into a genre.

As fiction and reality are intertwined with each other in the film, even listening to the story of the fictional character at one point from which we listen actual incidents, also gives a reference to how facts and fiction are intertwined in our real lives and this boundary is not certainly set with definitive lines anymore.

Therefore it is required to redefine reality. What is reality and fact? Can we talk about a same reality for everyone? When Mithat Esmer's reality is about his collection getting damaged, Ali's reality is to be able to keep his job or find a better job. The residents of the building, on the other hand want to obtain profits and choose the option which they believe will also keep them secure. This film makes sure that the path for these stories cross each other in the apartment building and does not say 'this is the reality' for any of these stories. Actually it even sends a white dove between different realities.

CONCLUSION

Faction concept that was discussed in this thesis through *Yearning* and *10 to 11* is proposed as a creative approach in hybrid filmmaking. This approach suggests to question the differentiation of genre as fiction and documentary, focusing on creating cinematic representations of the reality or realistic representations of the imaginary as the case may be, rather than applying the strict rules demanded by the definition of genres. This is why the films chosen for analysis in this thesis were *Yearning* and *10 to 11*: *Yearning* is a film that was made by documentary techniques and *10 to 11* is a film made by fiction techniques. And the critical feature framing these two films as examples of faction is the fact that their protagonists are actual characters wandering in fictional narratives. As we see in these films, faction is a key approach in order to reach the hidden strata of the characters or the subject.

When the director establishes his/her narration on the basis of mixing facts and fiction together, this makes the audience more curious regarding the reality or the actuality of the film's subject. So using actual characters as protagonists and putting them into fictional narratives, as in these two films, establishes a query language for audience. When the film asks the audience to question whether it is reality or fiction, it is no longer the object of consumption but transforms into a triggering factor for further involvement with the film. When the film is over, if the blurring or hidden forms of expression become intriguing for the audience, if the events unfolding in the film, and the characters in the film trigger further research after the film, this can be perceived as an accomplishment of the film.

Regarding the two films that analyzed in this thesis, two protagonists function as flaneurs wandering between facts and fiction so that audience cannot trace at first where the reality or fiction starts and where they end by observing the characters. But still the blurred zone between facts and fiction is quite wide. So the audience needs to make research if they want to reach further knowledge about the film.

I find this blurriness fertile since it creates a feeling for the audience to understand that the film is the work of a creator and it needs to be questioned. This, in the long term saves the audience from the risk of making a mistake of thinking that documentaries only tell pure facts and truth. Because even if a film is an observational documentary without any fictional elements, it still represents the creator's perception of the facts about real life rather than presenting the real life itself. The moment a camera or any narration is involved, we cannot talk about the real life anymore. And fiction underlines this fact in a creative way.

In terms of the film production, fiction films liberate directors from the clear-cut borders of the documentary and fiction in the traditional way they were differentiated from one another and they enable creative potentials to emerge as well. As an alternative to the history that examines an event in terms of economic, sociological and political aspects of the society in a way that will be of general interest, the filmmaker creates his/her personal history creatively in a study where he/she combines artistic and fictional methods called upon to tell abstract sentiments alongside presenting an incident through his/her own experiences by appearing as a narrator in the film, and at the same time he/she actually creates an alternative history for society in general.

In *Yearning* and *10 to 11*, Istanbul was used as a background element in order to establish an alternative history. Istanbul is a huge, multilayered and complex subject, impossible to represent only by simple facts as Ben Hopkins says. By using only simple facts we can only reach popular opinions, which are in the surface. But these two films sculpt personal histories by using characters' conflicts as they faced in Istanbul so an alternative history emerges out of their experiences. And this personal/alternative history also becomes a multilayered text of common interest to witness an experience from a different perspective for those audiences who know Istanbul or just wonder about Istanbul. In *10 to 11*, we witness two different Istanbul experiences: One from an outsider's point of view and the other one from an insider's point of view. Since the insider is an actual

person wandering in a fictional narrative, we as audience are intrigued by his experience. This is also something that makes audience question what they see.

Besides, when the subjective approach of the first-person documentary is added onto the power of the faction to creatively suggest new realities, the process becomes one that allows witnessing a very personal history. In the first-person documentary, the filmmaker creates a documentary about himself/herself or his/her own story with a person or an object - in *Yearning*'s example, it is the city - and in this way one creates a personal history study of oneself with oral, written and visual elements which are all combined together. Hopkins interprets the events and the phenomena that exist in reality from his point of view. This takes the audience on a journey to the inner world of the director. Accompanying the inner journey of a person makes the audiences feel how a fact that is out there in the open can be perceived in different ways through different points of view.

When the director wants to go into a comprehensive artistic production process about the subject of his/her choice, one can obtain the impact he/she desires to achieve by using all the potential of cinematography rather than trying to fit oneself within the sharp boundaries of documentary or fiction genres. In this way, one can reach beyond the knowledge on the surface and reach the deeper reality by creating his/her own original language of storytelling. And faction concept as a hybrid filmmaking approach provides this kind of creativeness.

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