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**TRANSGRESSIVE MOCKUMENTARY AS A CRITIQUE
OF CONVENTIONAL FILMMAKING PRACTICES**

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APPROVAL

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DECLARATION ON RESEARCH ETHICS AND PUBLISHING METHODS

I, BERKAY ŞATIR; hereby declare

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- that this Master of Arts Thesis does not contain any material from any research submitted or accepted to obtain a degree or diploma at another educational institution;
- and that I commit and undertake to follow the "Kadir Has University Academic Codes of Conduct" prepared in accordance with the "Higher Education Council Codes of Conduct".

In addition, I acknowledge that any claim of irregularity that may arise in relation to this work will result in a disciplinary action in accordance with the university legislation.

Berkay Şatır

20.06.2022



To My Dearest Family...

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TRANSGRESSIVE MOCKUMENTARY AS A CRITIQUE OF CONVENTIONAL FILMMAKING PRACTICES

ABSTRACT

Mockumentary film is the parodic conjoint of fiction narrative with documentary-style narration, popularized since the 1980s with the release of the iconic *This is Spinal Tap*. While many mockumentaries take advantage of canonical documentary forms merely for comedic purposes, certain examples exploit their hybridism for critical purposes by the use of self-reflexive strategies. Certain critical mockumentaries instrumentalize the self-reflexive narration to indicate opponent statements about the filmmaking codes and conventions beyond the subversion of the canons. Counter-cinematic particularities of these mockumentaries share similarities with the transgressive characteristics indicated by the Cinema of Transgression Manifesto such as counter-cultural, shocking, and humorous narratives, anti-structuralist and anti-conventional narrations, and anti-authoritarian and independent filmmaking practices. Regarding the interdisciplinary use of the term transgressive, categorization of such critical mockumentaries as transgressive mockumentary is pertinent. Cinema of Transgression manifesto proposes a transformation through transgression that is liberating and transfiguring. Through parodical counter-practices on the margins of canonical forms and texts, the instrumentalization of self-reflexivity in transgressive mockumentaries raises a critique of conventional filmmaking practices. Their critique function as the unveiling of the illusionism and ideological and emotional imposition of conventional practices and is transformative for the spectator's understanding of conventional film.

Keywords: Mockumentary, Documentary, Criticism, Cinema of Transgression, Transgressive, Self-Reflexivity, Parody, Conventional Film, Counter-Practice

KALIPLAŞMIŞ FİLM YAPIM PRATİKLERİNİN BİR ELEŞTİRİSİ OLARAK
TRANSGRASİF MOKÜMANTER

ÖZET

Kurmaca anlatının ve belgesel tarzı anlatımın parodik bir birlikteliğinden oluşan mokümanter film, *This is Spinal Tap* adlı ikonik filmin ortaya çıkışıyla 1980’li yıllardan itibaren popülerleşmiştir. Birçok mokümanter örneği kanonik belgesel biçimlerinden yalnızca komedi unsuru olarak faydalanırken, birtakımı da mokümanterin melezliğini öz-düşünümsel stratejilere başvurarak eleştirel amaçlar için kullanır. Kimi eleştirel mokümanterler film yapımı kuralları ve kalıplarına karşı argümanlar sunmak adına öz-düşünümsel anlatımı araçsallaştırır. Bu mokümanterlerin karşı-sinemasal özellikleri, Transgresif Sinema Manifestosunun belirttiği karşı kültürel, şok edici ve mizahi anlatı, yapısalcılık ve kalıpcılık karşıtı anlatım, otorite karşıtı ve bağımsız üretim pratikleri gibi özelliklerle benzerlik gösterir. Transgresif teriminin disiplinlerarası kullanımı göz önünde bulundurulduğunda, bu tür eleştirel mokümanterlerin transgresif mokümanter olarak sınıflandırılması uygundur. Transgresif Sinema Manifestosu kural bozuculuk aracılığıyla özgürleştirici bir değişimi savunur. Kanonik biçim ve metinlerin sınırlarındaki karşı-uygulamalar aracılığıyla, öz-düşünümselliğin transgresif mokümanterlerde bir araç haline getirilmesi kalıplaşmış sinema pratiklerine dair bir eleştiri sunar. Bu eleştiri, kalıplaşmış pratiklerin illüzyonizmini ve ideolojik-duygusal dayatmalarını açığa çıkarma işlevi görür ve izleyicinin kalıplaşmış filme dair anlayışını dönüştürür.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Mokümanter, Belgesel, Transgresif Sinema, Öz-Düşünümsellik, Eleştirelilik, Parodi, Kalıplaşmış Film, Karşı-Uygulama

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1. INTRODUCTION

“Not only do parodies create ‘something’ (new textual configurations as well as modifications to pre-existing canons), they also foster ‘ways’ to view texts, developing and nurturing critical spectatorial strategies. While parody does indeed rely on and cannibalize other texts, its reworkings affect not only the viewing of previous textual systems but also the construction and viewing of future related canonical texts.” (Harries 2000, 7)

“We propose transformation through transgression – to convert, transfigure and transmute into a higher plane of existence in order to approach freedom in a world full of unknowing slaves.” (Cinema of Transgression Manifesto 1985)

Mockumentary, a derivative portmanteau word that originated from “mocking” and “documentary”, is used to describe the reflexive and parodical fictional documentary form. Mockumentary popularized since the mid-1980s, following the release of mockumentary classics *Zelig* in 1983 and *This Is Spinal Tap* in 1984. From earlier examples such as BBC’s April Fool’s Day spaghetti harvest hoax report broadcast (1957) to more recent mockumentary series on streaming services such as *American Vandal* (2017), mockumentaries have been produced and directed with various styles, modes, and budgets. Thus, the mockumentary form is difficult to generalize within certain particularities of narrative and narration since the subject matter may greatly vary with all manners of storytelling as well as the variations of replicated documentary codes and modes. A mockumentary can follow a dog beauty contest in form of an observational mockumentary (*Best in Show*, 2000) as well as a cultural expedition of a Kazakhstani journalist in form of a performative mockumentary (*Borat*, 2006). Therefore, I believe in the need for sub-classifying the mockumentary for studying within the limits of a Master of Arts thesis.

One of the most important aspects of mockumentary is its critical and satirical capacity to handle its subject matters; re-evaluate the replicated documentary modes and undertake a fault-finding function for filmmaking practices. In some mockumentaries, the critical satire of filmmaking and fault-finding operate in secondary importance under the domination of comedic narrative, in others, they have the primary prominence and become the major designatory of the humor. As a part of subclassification, seeking certain recurring motifs in mockumentaries that substantially critique the filmmaking practices

is an act of drawing boundaries to form a research subject. In my spectatorial experience of watching such mockumentaries, I've noticed firstly the on-screen representation of a fictional director in the film who comments on the film itself as well as the cinema in general. This has become my starting point for constituting my subject, the self-reflexivity of the director in form of a fictional variation of themselves or by reflecting on a different actor in the role of the director on-screen. Later, I understood that the embodiment of a parodical director figure is not the only way of critiquing the filmmaking in mockumentaries. As the on-screen directors rant satirically about the cinema and make many mistakes and misexecutions of filmmaking practices, the mockumentary films do the same in their forms and texts on purpose. Their dedication to unconventionality and unusuality has changed my perception of watching a conventional film. After watching *This Is Spinal Tap*, it was impossible to watch *Gimme Shelter* (1970) or *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018) with the same perspective as before. Destructing parody of the music film canon in form of mockumentary has reconstructed differently my viewing experience related to other films.



Figure 1.1: A shot from *This is Spinal Tap*, the band gets lost backstage while trying to go on the stage.

A similar instance occurred in my viewing experience with my introduction to No Wave films of the late-1970s from New York and its manifesting successor Cinema of Transgression movement which both had a similar critical approach. These films had an urgency to break as many rules as they can to create a new understanding and aesthetic

of cinema. They were still narrative films but refused established structuralism, archaic storytelling, naturalistic acting, and captivating formation of the diegetic. They were cheaply made shocking, humorous, rebellious, and bizarre in every aspect compared to conventional commercialized cinema. They made me think that a different cinema is possible, and filmmaking may be founded on the wrong fundamentals; the anti-conventional approach was not only about forming an experimental film but also about a vivid oppositional stance. Nick Zedd called this oppositional and counter-practical cinematic stance “the transgressive cinema” in the Cinema of Transgression manifesto (Zedd 2014). It was almost inevitable for me to see the similarities between this certain type of mockumentaries that prioritize the filmmaking critique and the counter-cinema of Cinema of Transgression. The definition of transgressive film and transgression is largely applicable to other art and film forms, thus applicable to mockumentary as well.

The initial focus of this study thus concentrates on the critical mockumentaries categorized regarding the oppositional characteristics of transgression, to coin the term, transgressive mockumentaries. Transgressive counter-cinematic critiques and self-reflexive critiques of mockumentary form embody in the transgressive mockumentary. The embodiment emerges an unrestrained and shocking satire, and subversion of the means of filmmaking to raise a cultural and industrial criticism through no-budget guerrilla filmmaking. Transgressive mockumentary instrumentalize and empower the inherent characteristic of the mockumentary form for a transformative oppositional stance. I argue that its emphatical oppositional stance is toward the conventional cinema and its empowered critique is opposing to the conventional filmmaking practices. In accordance with this critical purpose, transgressive mockumentary boldly instrumentalizes reflexive narration strategies in company with uncanny and shocking narratives. The reflexivity of transgressive mockumentary functions on various dimensions from emphasizing the production process to manifesting the constructedness of film, to degrade the privileged position of the director, the representation of actuality, and the storytelling.

Consequently, this study centers upon the critical aspects of transgressive mockumentary on the conventional filmmaking practices. The second chapter of the study after the

introduction, “Mockumentary as a Faultfinder”, argues the mockumentary form within the scope of the criticism by reviewing its definition and various examples. The third chapter, “Transgressive Mockumentary”, is a study on defining transgressive mockumentary through the categorization of certain mockumentaries that are compatible with the characteristics of the transgressive film indicated by Cinema of Transgression. The fourth chapter, “Reflexivity in Transgressive Mockumentary”, focuses on reflexive strategies in unconventional films by primarily examining Robert Stam’s work *Reflexivity in Film and Literature*, and frames the reflexivity in terms of the transgressive mockumentary. The fifth, sixth and seventh chapters of the study are respectively analyses of three transgressive mockumentaries from three different countries within the scope of self-reflexive critique on conventional filmmaking practices; *Man Bites Dog* (1992) directed collectively by Rémy Belvaux, André Bonzel, and Benoît Poelvoorde, *Fubar* (2002) directed by Michael Dowse, and *A Film By Tuğra Kaftancıoğlu* (2003) directed by Hasan Yalaz and Emre Akay.

These three films have been chosen because they focus particularly on the practice of filmmaking in their narrative and alter their narration argumentatively according to their critical narrative. Indeed, these three films are not the only transgressive mockumentaries, and not the only transgressive mockumentary that focus on filmmaking practices. The reason why these three films shined enough to be included in this thesis is that the filmmaking process is the main subject of these films and the whole narrative constructions of these films are constituted around this subject. Their way of handling the subject of filmmaking process is throughout critical in various aspects of production, narration and narrative. Therefore, their comprehensive critique on filmmaking processes and practices makes these films particularly suitable to be analyzed as part of this thesis. In the analyses, I will focus on their counter-practical and argumentative particularities in their narration which carries their critique prominently, instead of analyzing their narrative scene-by-scene. Since the mockumentary is a filmic construct that alters the standardized narration rules and forms its critique through such alteration, a formal narration analysis that combines various scenes without limiting itself with chronological narrative suits better for the methodology of the analyses.

2. MOCKUMENTARY AS A FAULTFINDER

In reasonably recent film history, a new genre, more precisely a hybrid genre appeared on the silver screen, then in film studies. Mockumentary film, as reflected in its name, is an eclectic narration form that derives from an expanded partnership of documentary form and fiction narrative. As such complex joint of filmmaking strategies is difficult to degrade to a genre formula, film studies and film criticism emerged and met with many terms to frame the unusual cooperation of fiction and verisimilitude. Hight & Roscoe suggest that the terms such as “faux documentary”, “pseudo-documentary”, “spoof documentary”, “quasi-documentary” and yet portmanteau word “mockumentary”, originated from “mocking” and “documentary” is the favorable term for it indicates two essentials of the hybrid genre at best:

- 1) Because it suggests its origins in copying a pre-existing form, in an effort to construct (or more accurately re-construct) a screen form with which the audience is assumed to be familiar.
- 2) Because the other meaning of the word 'mock' (to subvert or ridicule by imitation) suggests something of this screen form's parodic agenda towards the documentary genre. This is an agenda that is argued as inevitably constructed (however inadvertently by some filmmakers) from mockumentary's increasingly sophisticated appropriation of documentary codes and conventions. (Hight & Roscoe 2001, 1-2)

Hight & Roscoe's essential review of the term focuses on and clearly indicates two fundamental elements of this hybridism: Form and its parodic agenda. Documentary form is an inevitable narrational strategy for mockumentary. Documentary codes and conventions are replicated in mockumentary with appropriation and fault-finding at the same time.

To understand mockumentary, it is useful to cite here the most durable definition of the documentary by John Grierson, “creative treatment of actuality”. Grierson's definition is an invitation to consistently reinvent the documentary based on its flexibility and applicability. Addedly, it points out the tension between “creative treatment” and “actuality” which is carried out these days, in form of the mockumentary. Nichols argues

that the broadness of the creative element in Grierson's definition undermines the very case of truth and authenticity on which the narrative depends (Nichols 2017, 5). Elizabeth Cowie argues in the introduction of "Recording Reality, Desiring the Real" by citing Baudrillard, that there is a certain anthropological joy in the embodied narrative of a documentary image arising from the re-representation of actuality. Thus, the re-organizing narrative aspect of the documentary is an unavoidable instrument to re-represent the actuality in a filmic form. This means that the reality is only present in the documentary as a verisimilitude of a world shown in actuality. Any "truth" or "real" in documentary film has only an indexical connection with a mechanically reproduced instantaneity of actuality (Cowie 2011, 1-18). As indexical records of actuality are re-organized by any means of cinematography and editing to make into a documentary form, there is an ever-changing (with the narrative style of the filmmaker) yet systematic methodology of making a documentary. Having said that, mockumentary filmmaker reverses the functioning of that methodology to re-represent the actuality in mockumentary film. By following the "creative treatment" codes and settled documentary modes, mockumentary creates an indexical look-alike narrative base of a documentary to claim that what is represented is an actuality captured in instantaneity and spontaneity. The subversion of the bilateral relationship of recording reality and representing it in narrative form creates a playground for mockumentary to question the actuality of documentary, and to abuse its uncontested existence in film codes to create a mockery.

Since mockumentary's parodic agenda towards the genre itself is a result of the reconstruction of form, Nichols' argument on truth is receptive to questioning, or a counterpoint, since mockumentaries creatively propose intrinsic reflexivity addressing documentary and all non-fiction film forms (Hight 2015, 204). Therefore, the truthfulness in mockumentary is only a parodical starting point to examining the search for truth in documentary form. Mockumentary mimics its formal roots in a reconstructed, parodical, and reflexive fashion to disclose the substructures of documentary form and boldly critique them. Consequently, mockumentary's critique on documentary originates from its self-critique pointing to its core, the mimicked documentary form; since mockumentary is set to reproduce the form that is criticized, to be able to critique.

However, it is important to distinguish mockumentary from the reflexive documentary mode of representation which similarly "...calls attention to the assumptions and conventions that govern documentary filmmaking. Increases our awareness of the constructedness of the film's representation of reality" (Nichols 2017, 22). Whether it is mostly founded on improvisational acting or formed by a dictated script, the dissimilatory aspect of mockumentary is the fictional film text that drives the narrative storytelling. Mockumentary's duality in foundation makes the hybrid genre open to be studied by versatile film studies of narrative film and documentary. As it obtains the formal dynamics of documentary filmmaking, it could be studied by the terms of documentary studies as well as by fictional meaning-making analysis of film theory.

Applying Nichols' institutional framework approach to the documentary form (Nichols 2017, 12), mockumentary can be defined in relationship with mediatic surroundings, in interactions with media and film industries and their standards. Mockumentary emerges to criticise the diverse agenda of fictional media industries with a priori parodic and satiric approach to the industry itself. Mockumentary texts are nourished not only by documentary codes and conventions but by all forms of media, from the exploitation of rockumentaries to the myth of Kubrick's filming walk on the moon. Furthermore, mockumentary is convenient to create complicated forms of audience engagement through its inherent reflexivity which provides a significant consciousness of the media forms (Hight 2015, 205). So, even the narrational and narrative styles of such films differ according to their subject or the documentary mode they apply, their critique which relied on making the audience conscious of the fabrication of the media form stays apparent and persistent. This subversion in the application of form makes the audience experience dissimilar from what fundamentally is in the face of conventional narrative film, by creating a consciousness toward the simulation of filmmaking. Thus, the dissolution of an untold agreement between the film and the audience occurs; better told, the willing suspension of disbelief of the audience is violated by the mockumentary that is viewer becomes aware of his or her incredulity. In fiction films, such suspension is oriented to not seeing through the narrated story and thus standing by as refuse of the fiction-making means of the films. In documentary films in which the instrumentality of means is more

apparent compared to the fiction film, the suspension is in favor of the suppression of the intervening vision of the director to frame, filtrate, and stylize the represented actuality; thus assuring a sense of watching “a truth” in form of documentary. Therefore, the violation of the suspension of disbelief repositions the audience in a state of awareness of what they are watching is a produced audio-visual narrative or an arranged fragment of actuality in form of film.

Some films break through accepted film structures and push the disbelief purposely; rather than letting the audience into the diegesis of film, they force the audience out (Ferri 2007, 35-36). Mockumentary takes advantage of the audience’s disbelief to empower its critique of filmmaking practices itself. Mockumentary often critiques the crucial relations between documentary and textual authority it assumes (Juhasz & Lerner 2006, 2-3), but does not limit its critique to non-fiction films. Because mockumentaries are at least in part not documentaries, both imaginary and informal receptions are active throughout the viewing experience. A mockumentary is received as more than a fiction film plus a documentary; the two systems refer to, critique, and alter each other’s reception (Juhasz & Lerner 2006, 9). Therefore, the critique both towards narrative film and non-fiction film is an indispensable part of mockumentary, initialized in the construction of sub-genre. Additionally, by revitalizing the audience through consciousness to question what underlying fabrication of film is, despite the willing suspension of disbelief, the critique of mockumentary intertextually extends over conventional filmmaking practices of both narrative and non-fiction forms, beyond the intratextual critique of film itself.

It is also important that not all mockumentary films are not fundamentally focused on critiquing the documentary form -or fictional media industries or products. Therefore, accepting Hight & Roscoe’s suggestions on the definition of mockumentary as a strict framework would cause overlooking many examples of not so reflexive mockumentaries and be unfair to the spectrum of mockumentary texts (Wallace 2018, 19). Even if mockumentary proposes an uncanny terrain of film language, a filmmaker such as Christopher Guest favors forming a story-driven narration which makes it easier to comply with comedic mockumentary. Guest admits that he has never mocked anyone with hostility in his work, but his films include naivety with parody, embodied as an

“affectionate satire”, a comedy done in documentary form (Miller 2009) rather than a mockumentary in full capacity. Naïve comedy in documentary form outstretched to many other popular examples at the peak of exploitation of mockumentary; from *Surf’s Up* (2007), an animation following a young penguin who dreams of winning a surfing championship, to *Mascots* (2016), an inside look to a group of mascots who compete for the title of best mascot in the world.



Figure 2.1: A promotional photo of *Mascots* (2016) distributed by Netflix.

Affection in mockumentary eventually serves to intensify the transitivity of comedy to the audience. Yet, it weakens the critical aspects of the text as well as weakens the self-consciousness in the texts, because of the affiliation between the subject and the audience, even if these naïve comedies apply documentary form with reflexivity which inherently exists in the mockumentary. Therefore, mockumentary must lack certain affectionate storytelling if it is to fulfill its subversive and critical approach to the subject and the diverse dimensions of film form, the narrational aspects of documentary, the position of documentary in film industries, conventional filmmaking practices, and so on.

At first sight, the primary purpose of the mockumentaries is to make people laugh through comedic performances of actors and the texts which rely on the conventions of mediatic stylistics (Wallace 2018, 3), but also expand the narration of film to the absurd which found on real-life but not-so-at-large-told in fiction. This is mainly true for the popular examples of mockumentary, more precisely after its passage to television following its

popularization. Television series such as *Trailer Park Boys* (Canada, 2001) and *The Office* (UK, 2001) translated the hybrid genre to a more accessible comedic product, by putting forward the narrative and utilizing predominantly the documentary form as an instrument to serve puns and sarcasm in the narrative. Later, Hollywood's rediscovery of mockumentary with series such as the remake of *The Office* (2005), *Parks and Recreation* (2009), and *Modern Family* (2009) carried on the instrumentalization of the hybrid genre without a significant intention of neither self-critiquing nor critiquing of media conventions.



Figure 2.2: A promotional photo of *The Office* (2001), one of the very first examples of television mockumentaries.

This means that the television series in form of mockumentary does not extensively correspond to the defining characteristics indicated by Hight & Roscoe, more precisely, its parodic agenda toward documentary codes or parodic agenda through documentary codes. The echoing of mockumentary satire on television is only a partial extent of questioning media institutions and the unceasing evolution of television comedy. Corner notes that there is a recent tendency on television to apply Cinema Verité form in diverse manners (Corner 1996, 50), as this tendency is adopted aggressively by sit-coms for comedic purposes, Mills suggests the term *Comedic Verité* (Mills 2004, 75) redefine the sit-coms which resemble observational modes of documentary.

Nichols define the observational mode as a mode that “emphasizes a direct engagement with the everyday life of subjects as observed by an unobtrusive camera. The filmmaker

does not interact with subjects but only observes them.” (Nichols 2017, 22) Such way of narration is applied in various television mockumentary such as *The Office* (both UK & USA versions), *Modern Family*, *Parks and Recreation*, and also in many Christopher Guest mockumentary films. The term *Comedic Verité* which Mills suggest is in a reference with its name to the Cinema Verité, that is in fact far more participatory than to be considered as an observational mode. In observational documentary, the camera is in effort to be “a fly on the wall”, but Cinema Verité is interested in revealing the reality of people’s interaction in the presence of camera that is acknowledged (Nichols 2017, 142). Briefly, Cinema Verité is a joint use of observational mode and participatory mode that emphasizes an interaction between filmmaker and subject (Nichols 2017, 141). Even if Mills argue *Comedic Verité* as an observational mode of mockumentary filmmaking that is predominantly comedic rather than critiquing, the term suggests a certain interaction with the filmmaker and the subject. Regarding mockumentary sit-coms that rely on fictional interviews of acting characters for ensuring rapid plot-driven information, Cinema Verité qualities are occasionally pertinent in such *Comedic Verité* examples. Yet, the suggestions of *Comedic Verité* do not extend to any significant tension of criticism or self-criticism, therefore, such examples is not under the scope within the limits of this thesis that focus on mockumentary criticism.

The instrumentalization of observational modes of documentary in sit-coms does not particularly question the documentary form itself but only to some extent questions the convention and codes of sit-coms. For there is a tradition of experimenting with form to react against the restrictions of the television medium since the early experimental comedy series such as the well-established *Monty Python’s Flying Circus* (1969). Yet as we have seen in both recent and earlier examples, the constant recurrence of altering narration strategies such as *Comedic Verité* or mockumentary throughout numerous episodes inevitably creates a loss of self-consciousness and most likely results in being received without any real questioning of form. For that and many other reasons, it would be appropriate to consider television series separately and not to include their limited critical approach in this thesis, as well as not include mockumentary films with primal affectional comedic interest.

Such distinguishing discussions about the critique and the instrumentality of the mockumentary is concentrated in the grading system of Hight & Roscoe, described in their pioneering book *Faking It: Mock-Documentary And The Subversion Of Factuality*. Hight & Roscoe divide mockumentary into three degrees. The first degree of mockumentary is parodic, and refers to mockumentaries that aim primarily for comedic purposes and prioritize parodic use of film and documentary codes to perform comedy. The second degree of mockumentary is critical. This degree of mockumentary offers a critique of the documentary's privileged position in claiming to reflect reality by making use of the narration tools of the documentary. It blurs the boundaries between truth and lies and aims to make the audience question that they should not believe everything they see. The third degree of mockumentary is deconstruction. This degree of mockumentary transgresses the codes and practices of documentary aesthetics. Although these mockumentaries seem to focus on another subject, their main purpose is to provide a critique of the documentary. For this, they use filmmaking tools and strategies in a radical and reflexive way (Demoğlu 2014, 111-112). In this context, transgressive mockumentary is among the third degree of mockumentary, because of their reflexive critique of filmmaking practice with their counter-practical approach.

3. TRANSGRESSIVE MOCKUMENTARY

3.1 A Study on Defining Transgressive Mockumentary

The concept of “transgressive” mockumentary, which I will argue in this thesis, refers to several films that have been put forward by various directors in a wide time range, yet have a similarly critical attitude and a similar approach to filmmaking practices and means of storytelling. On the other hand, in the history of cinema, a significant filmic opposition took place in a much more organized and coherent manner and named themselves in a similarity that would form the fundament for the characteristics to define transgressive mockumentary here in this thesis. Dictionary definition of “transgression” is infringement or violation of a law, command, or a duty (Merriam & Webster, 2022). The cinematic terminology of transgression has a wider meaning than this definition even if they share a lexical connection in terms of violation and disobedience. Cinema of Transgression Manifesto, written by Nick Zedd in 1985 with a group of directors with a mutual approach and published in a fanzine of the period called *Underground Film Bulletin* (1984-90), defines the term transgressive with certain necessities for cinematic productions.

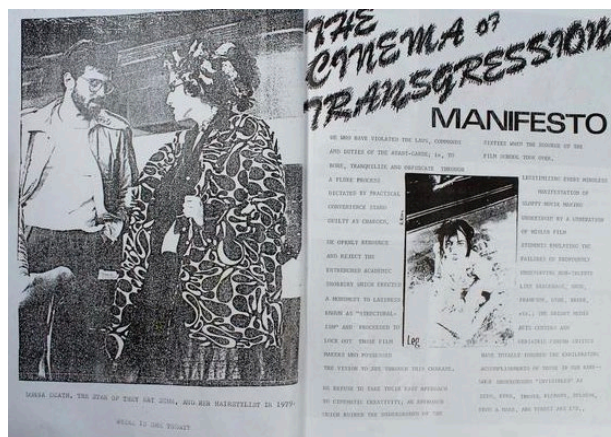


Figure 3.1: Initial publication of Cinema of Transgression Manifesto on *Underground Film Bulletin* in 1985.

Their principle based definition of the term makes the transgression an intertextual and interdisciplinary artistic stance rather than an abstract term to merely be used on film studies, for the term is coined by a practical and ideological manifesto of a movement. The Cinema of Transgression movement refers to a group of New York-based independent underground filmmakers who produced films on very low budgets and defied the stereotypes of filmmaking taught in film schools. Cinema of Transgression filmmakers set shock value and humor as their core values. Their stance against structuralism and form-setting in cinema was another important opposition of Cinema of Transgression.

We propose that all film schools be blown up and all boring films never be made again. We propose that a sense of humour is an essential element discarded by the doddering academics and further, that any film which doesn't shock isn't worth looking at. All values must be challenged. Nothing is sacred. Everything must be questioned and reassessed in order to free our minds from the faith of tradition. Intellectual growth demands that risks be taken and changes occur in political, sexual and aesthetic alignments no matter who disapproves. We propose to go beyond all limits set or prescribed by taste, morality or any other traditional value system shackling the minds of men. We pass beyond and go over boundaries of millimetres, screens and projectors to a state of expanded cinema. (Zedd 2014)

Manifesto of Cinema of Transgression advocates opposition to the film schools and stereotypical cinema. It argues that the shocking aspect is a key element in a film to be worth watching and that humor should be an essential element in cinema. A film can reach its true value if it offers a critique of all values and morals. Thus, transgressive film contains an inherent mockery, without limiting the subjects it critiques. The manifesto also argues that cinema cannot be limited, by referring to the importance of performing a cinema beyond the limits of millimetres, screens, and projectors, thus standards. Therefore, the independence, irregularity, and revolt of the Cinema of Transgression are not only extended to the scope of the issues discussed in films, but also to the image quality of the film, its standards, and the number of theatres in which it is shown, which are the criteria determined by the conventional film industry in valuing a film and dictating how films should be made and circulated.

Since there is no afterlife, the only hell is the hell of praying, obeying laws, and debasing yourself before authority figures, the only heaven is the heaven of sin, being rebellious, having fun, fucking, learning new things, and breaking as many rules as you can. This act of

courage is known as transgression. We propose transformation through transgression – to convert, transfigure and transmute into a higher plane of existence in order to approach freedom in a world full of unknowing slaves. (Zedd 2014)

The manifesto takes the word transgression out of its dictionary meaning and turns it into an attitude. This attitude is generally called transgression which emphasizes the transformative power of transgression. Therefore, the cinema of transgression is a constructive and regenerative movement as well as a destructive/pattern-breaking movement. It is the initiative of a group of filmmakers, who believe that cinema is built on the wrong foundations and argue that it is on the wrong path. Directors of the movement experimented consistently with the cinema; they broke many rules while making up some new ones (Danhier 2010). They reprised many familiar themes and sub-genres with transgressive approaches in their narrative films which were shot mostly with super 8 cameras, with no-to-low budgets, in collaboration with non-actors on lead parts, and by taking advantage of archival footage from various non-fiction sources to reflect the diegesis of the story.

As it could be seen in Richard Kern's 1985 film *You Killed Me First* which sets a family tragedy with a coming-out-of-age punk teenager, a familiar narrative pattern is narrated in a vicious, hyperbolic, and loosely consequent manner. Nick Zedd's *Police State* (1987) sets a story of a youngster reasonlessly taken into custody, again a not-so-unfamiliar story payoff, which gradually turns into an absurd violent comedy as the youngster is beaten up frequently by two different police officers for not behaving accordingly to their varied orders. It is even seen in earlier examples of No Wave films that flourished in New York in 1976 with the release of Amos Poe's *The Blank Generation*, a precursor experimental film movement that spawned the Cinema of Transgression (Danhier 2010); such as John Lurie's *Men in Orbit* (1979), a reckless science fiction experiment shot for 500\$ in Lurie's Manhattan apartment turned into a space capsule in which both Lurie and Eric Mitchell acted under the effects of LSD (Streible 2021).

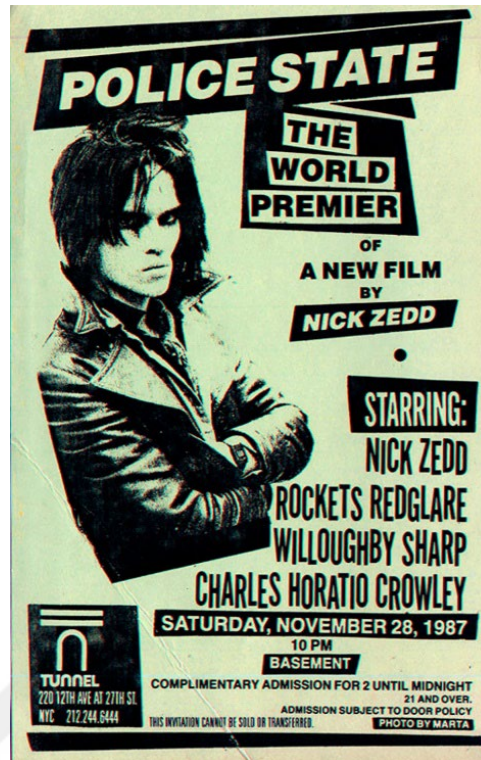


Figure 3.2: Original screening poster of *Police State* (1987).

Cinema of Transgression Manifesto stands out as definitive publishing for the term transgressive to be used in an art form that later became timeless and interdisciplinary. The term moves into many studies of diverse branches of art after the publishing of the manifesto, even if the history of transgression in arts is rather old and extensive to argue in this thesis. Recently, the terms transgression / transgressive entitle oppositional practices under the alibi of art that include many sub-genres and multiplicity of variations (Cashell 2009, 1-2). In 1990s, with the rise of video rental stores, New York based Troma Entertainment adopted the shocking humor of transgressive films into their renowned *Troma Style* films that are cheaply and unconventionally made with unpaid crews (Loscalzo 2003). Later, *New French Extremity* films show similarities with the aesthetics and characteristics of the transgressive film; taboo-breaking, shocking, gore, and sexually violent narratives told with highly aestheticized narrations. Even though the title of the movement does not involve any references to Cinema of Transgression, in the very first article that argue the movement, the term transgressive is used to identify the directors of the movement (Quandt 2004). Moreover, in certain comprehensive studies such as *Transgressions: The Offences of Art* (2003) by Anthony Julius, the term transgressive is

argued interdisciplinary by reviewing various counter-practical and counter-cultural works of art from various decades.



Figure 3.3: A shot from *Tromeo and Juliet* (1996), produced by Troma Films.

Here in this thesis, I borrow that tradition of adopting the term transgression intertextually by referring Cinema of Transgression manifesto and pronouncing transgressive mockumentary. Transgression reveals itself as varying images and narratives in a wide range of art forms. Therefore, generalizing transgressive art or setting well-round boundaries about transgression without dividing it into art forms and its practitioners may cause complete superficiality and misinformation. Yet it's clear what the manifesto says regarding the filmmaking: Transgression is shocking, free, cheap, satirical, humorous, and oppositional practice of filmmaking.

Cinema of Transgression's legacy to mockumentary films is revealed by the values and patterns it defends and opposes. Although the films produced within Cinema of Transgression have a unique aesthetic world connected to punk and no-wave culture of the 1980s and do not have a direct connection with transgressive mockumentaries in terms of narration strategies; the transgressive mockumentary borrows the counter-stance of Cinema of Transgression. Transgressive films are outside of the film stereotypes and standards; film production without the established order and rules of cinema is essential. There is no "taboo" that is avoidable to critique for a transgressive filmmaker. Criticism

amplified by shock elements and humor is destructive but liberating which eventually expands into conventional practices. Because of the mockumentary's self-reflexive aspects, critique of transgressive mockumentary expands to the filmmaking practices as well as to its subject matters which includes filmmaking practices is one of those, inherently. Shock is achieved by both the deformation of the form and the transfiguration of the subject in question. Due to its transgressive mockumentary stance, the value of a film cannot be judged based on the film industry standards, budget, or how many theatres it has been screened in. The transgressive mockumentary is a counter cinema. It stands against all structural impositions of fiction, documentary, and fiction-documentary.

Transgression in mockumentary is revealed primarily with the shock of the viewer. The audience's reactions to the work reveal the shocking and critical features of the work. The viewer is most likely familiar with the documentary codes that mockumentary has borrowed. From television programs to feature films and to many audio-visual narrations on streaming services, documentary codes are constantly reproduced to emerge in stereotypical or unique forms. Therefore, a mockumentary product first reveals its transgressive feature by being uncanny. So, is transgression in mockumentary an inherent feature of this hybrid genre in general? From this point of view, it is possible to claim that certain transgressive aspects find their place in mockumentary inherently because of the subversive formation of the genre. Even so, I argue that in terms of categorization of transgressive mockumentary, a mockumentary needs to emphasize its transgressive aspects multi-dimensionally rather than having glimpses of transgression dispersed in between its unrelated qualities.

Miller notes that mockumentary consists of one part humor, and two parts transgression (Miller 2009). Even if this statement indicates that transgression is an inherent part of the mockumentary formula, it takes more than relying only on a priori characteristics of the form to outline transgressive mockumentary, or better distinguish the transgressive mockumentary from the not-so-transgressive mockumentaries. It is easy to point out that there is an uncomplicatedly understandable, in fact visible, difference between mockumentary examples such as *Best in Show* (2000), which follows a dog beauty competition and its contestants, and *Man Bites Dog* (1992), following day to day life of

a serial killer; or between *Husbands and Wives* (1992), following ups and downs of a relationship on cut-off point and *Fubar* (2002), following ups and downs of two beer-swilling foul-mouthed headbangers. Facing off loglines of such films, which are severely different from each other, shows the dissimilitude of the degree of transgression in the same hybrid genre. While the criticism and subversion of factuality in more naïve examples such as *Best in Show* and *Husbands and Wives* remain still to some degree, that does not mean we can call them transgressive mockumentary. Both *Fubar* and *Man Bites Dog* will be examined as case studies of transgressive mockumentaries in this thesis, alongside *A Film By Tuğra Kaftancıoğlu*.



Figure 3.4: Main characters of *Fubar* (2002), Dean Murdoch and Terry Cahill.

The critique of mockumentary manifest itself as a social and cultural commentary, which is directed in a broad spectrum from fault-finding in ideologies, norms and values, audience and viewing habits to film forms and industries, filmmaking strategies and practices, and so on. As any mockumentary text can be somewhat characterized by the aims of the filmmakers or media producers who have worked on the text (Hight 2015, 206), the aim of the critique generated through mockumentary is based upon the filmmaker's vision to focus its critique to subjects in that broad spectrum. Thus, generalizing the degree and the target of the critique across the genre is rather impossible. So, the limits of mockery in mockumentary should be considered according to each text. Besides hybridity and subversion of codes and conventions, an essential point to understanding the mocking of mockumentary is the necessity of complex sets of forms

of audience engagement that rely variably on intertextuality and the visual, social, and political culture of the audience (Hight 2015, 208). Subversion of “the truth” in mockumentaries utilizing parody creates new ways to understand the text. Yet, understanding the subversion necessitates understanding the original framework of the subverted. Any means of subversion includes appropriation and reproduction of the elements of non-fiction codes and conventions. Therefore, subversion of factuality is a must for the appearance of mockumentary, as it even appears as a subtitle on the definitive work of Hight & Roscoe, *Faking It: Mock-documentary and the subversion of factuality* (2001). On the other hand, the transgression of mock-documentary goes beyond the subversion of factuality.

Both limitless mockery and filmmaking out of the standards of film industries are applied frequently in mockumentaries, transgressive or not. As I discussed earlier in this thesis, these applications function only as comedic motifs in some examples such as in *Comedic Verités*, on the other hand, in some other examples, they are significant motivations and conditions for such mockumentaries to exist. Thus, the subversive features similar to the characteristics that is indicated by the Cinema of Transgression manifesto functions broadly in the large part of mockumentary films. As Hight & Roscoe argue the subversion of mockumentary around the subject of factuality and fictional-documentary’s relation with the truthfulness, Amos Vogel argues the subversion in a wider perspective in his 1974 study *Film as a Subversive Art*. Vogel argues subversion cinematic art as a powerful form that breaks visual norms and taboo, outdated cinematic forms, and undermining value systems by examining numerous films (Vogel 1974, 1-5). Within this scope, the propose of subversive art and transgressive art seems similar yet they are far from being interchangeable. In fact, first paragraph of Cinema of Transgression manifesto takes the existing subversive art into consideration and condemn it by remarking it tranquilizing, boring and snobbish (Zedd 2014). Therefore, Cinema of Transgression is in an oppositional position toward the available avant-garde as well as it is oppositional to conventional commercialism. What the manifesto offers differently from the subversion argued by Vogel is that the indispensable will for the excitement in transgressive film that arise from shock and humor. Especially the emphasis on humorous essentiality in unconventional film puts the transgressive art into different position from subversive art.

Therefore, I prioritize the transgression over the subversion for the categorization in this thesis; for the emphatical humor of transgression is in coherence with the parodical satire of mockumentary.

Secondly, since the term transgression is coined by a counter-cinematic movement rather than a cataloging film study as for the term subversion, the transgressive film internalizes a transformative initiative that is attributed by the manifesto. Even though the films I refer to as transgressive mockumentaries are not made as part of the Cinema of Transgression movement and I also am in an effort to catalog certain films as Vogel on a smaller scale, the intertextual use of the term transgressive carries a transformative tendency different than the subversive because of the attribution of the manifesto. Having said that, the manifesto emphasizes a liberating and transfiguring transformation through transgression (Zedd 2014), thus appoints functionality to the transgressive film beyond the sole subversion of texts and forms. In this regard, the enforced instrumentality of subversion in a transformative manner identifies transgressive mockumentary apart from prevalent subversiveness of mockumentary. Therefore, the intention of the filmmaker to instrumentalize the subversion of filmmaking practices to force a transgression has key importance. Transgressive mockumentary filmmaking intends to critique the form and content and break many rules while making up some new ones as it is in transgressive film. Thus, the notation of transgressive mockumentary does not point out a brand new sub-sub-genre under the mockumentary sub-genre, it is rather a unique and experimental approach to the sub-genre, an oppositional characteristic emerges from altering practices. As transgressive films of No Wave and Cinema of Transgression movements are still narrative films, transgressive mockumentaries are still mock-documentaries.

Here, before proceeding to expand on transgressive mockumentary, it is important to outline the distinction between the subversive and the transgressive more precisely. For doing so, I will briefly discuss the two terms by comparison: Subversion suggests an altering of the filmmaking practices, while transgression suggests a certain radicalism of such alteration. Subversion proposes avant-garde over outdated forms, while transgression opposes predecessor avant-garde as well by finding it snobbish and tranquilizing. Subversion does not dictate elements to be involved in a subversive film,

while transgression sees the humor, the shock, the anti-structuralism, and the independency as indispensable essentials of the film. Subversion does not suggest a particular transformative instrumentality of the film, while transgression prioritizes an act of transformation through the transgressive film that is liberating and awakening. Subversion remains a more generalistic approach as a counter-practice, while transgression remains a more niche approach because of manifesto-based oppositions and advocacies. Every subversive film is not a transgressive film, but every transgressive film is subversive.

Mockumentaries have emerged in the film industries with generally lower budgets than industry standards. In many cases, even if there was not the sole idea of making “a low-budget film”; mockumentaries’ incompatibility with industry codes resulted in their being produced on no-to-low budgets. On the other hand, the act of low-budget filmmaking functions as an idea generator, it reflects innovative ways to narrate a story (Juhasz & Lerner 2006, 6). This was the main case for No-Wave films and Cinema of Transgression films as well; they reinvented new ways of narrative storytelling because of the impracticability of conventional practices (Danhier 2010). Imperfection is accepted in such films, and prettiness or sharp-looking stylized images are not a matter at all, but the ideological reasons are the key element for making a film: activism through film media, an expression of self and surrounding cultures. Documentary film has served similar roles throughout its history, besides its informative aspects. Advocates and activists frequently choose documentary filmmaking for its low-budget ways to stand against the authority and/or the mainstream (Aufderheide 2007, 78). Transgressive mockumentaries follow the same patterns as both documentaries and Cinema of Transgression production-wise. Many transgressive mockumentaries, like a significant part of mockumentaries, are self-funded, crowd-funded, or produced by minor production companies.

Fubar (2002) was shot on digital video and produced for around 10.000\$ in total, afforded by the credit cards of the director and lead actors of the film (Stagg 2017). *Man Bites Dog* (1992) was shot on 16 mm film, to be blown up later for screenings, as Remy Belvoux’s final project for INSAS film school which refused to fund the film, and it was initially

produced by funding of families and friends (“C’est Arrivé Près De Chez Vous” – Portail De La Culture En Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles” 2022). The whole film was produced for around 1.000.000 BEF, which is approximately equivalent to 33.000\$ (“Man Bites Dog (1992) – IMDb” 2022). Another example from Turkey, *A Film by Tuğra Kaftancıoğlu* (2003) directed by Emre Akay and Hasan Yalaz, shot with digital cameras and a super-8 camera taken from the university where Emre Akay was working; they collaborated with non-actors and friends, and used Akay’s family house and public areas such as ferries, streets and seashores as shooting location (Akay 2020). Thus, it is easy to point out that many of these transgressive mockumentaries are shot in guerrilla filmmaking style on low budgets without having multi-layered production teams, major actors of film industries, professional actors, equipment, etc. On the other hand, this way of filmmaking was not seen as a disadvantage, and in many, it even turned into an advantage.



Figure 3.5: A shot from *A Film by Tuğra Kaftancıoğlu* (2003), Emre Akay is shooting with a consumer-grade video camera from the reflection of the mirror.

This recurring way of production often provided an advantage to the transgressive mockumentaries and made the filmmakers the only decision-makers in the film. The fact that they are produced with non-industrial, guerrilla filmmaking approaches makes transgressive mockumentaries a counter cinema. So having unlimited critical power is linked to having limited budgets, through not being under the control of big corporate multi-national strictly structured production companies. However, having limited

budgets does not mean having limited visibility. Not only those in the mockumentary genre but also many different types of independent films shot in guerrilla filmmaking style have been regarded for their creativity and originality over time through independent distribution (Crisp 2015, 45). Therefore, many mockumentaries have the ability to speak out about the studio system while staying out of the system, they have managed to bring strong criticisms to the standards and practices of conventional film production with the rising strength of their visibility with independent distributions and the place they have gained in the history of cinema.

To call a film transgressive mockumentary around these discussions, it is necessary that it has been shot freely and radically outside the dictates of the film industries, that its critical and sarcastic impulse is at the highest level, and that this criticism reaches the cinema itself, the practices, and forms of film production. It should contain an element of shock and make the audience feel uncanny by shocking narrative/narration in a recognized yet subvert form. It should also question the audience's past watching experiences of the classically/conventionally structured films. Additionally, it should contain a humorous point of view, that is, be able to meet the mockery part of the mockumentary. In short, transgressive mockumentary is a creative collaboration of self-reflexive and oppositional practices in form of a fictional documentary sharpened with shocking, critical, and humorous elements.

Three films from three different countries have been chosen to be analyzed in this study to argue self-reflexive critique of transgressive mockumentaries about the conventional filmmaking practices. These films are *Fubar* (2002) directed by Michael Dowse, *Man Bites Dog* (1992) directed collectively by Rémy Belvaux, Benoît Poelvoorde and André Bonzel, and *A Film by Tuğra Kaftancıoğlu* (2003) directed by Emre Akay and Hasan Yalaz. The reason to choose particularly these three transgressive mockumentaries instead of other examples is that they take the practice of filmmaking as a prominent subject-matter of their narrative. Accordingly, they alter their narration more argumentatively throughout the film thus they carry their critique with narration-wise aspect instead of solely positioning it on narrative.

Alongside the chosen films, it is possible to state other mockumentaries as transgressive mockumentaries as well by considering their independence from studio systems, their shocking and humorous narratives, their self-reflexive and anti-structuralist narrations and their transformative and counter-cultural stance. These mockumentaries are noted as follows: *Punishment Park* (1971) directed by Peter Watkins, an avant-la-lettre mockumentary about a group of prisoners who tries to survive on the desert by trying to run away from the manhunter police officers; *The Falls* (1980) directed by Peter Greenaway; BBC documentary style short records of numerous victims who have been affected by the VUE (Violant Unknown Event); *Atomic Cafe* (1982) directed by Jayne Loader, Kevin Rafferty, and Pierce Rafferty; a found footage mockumentary about informing americans about the harmlessness of nuclear bombs; *Trailer Park Boys* (1999) directed by Mike Clattenburg, a prototypical no-budget mockumentary about a small-time felons Julian and Ricky which later evolved to a long-lasting popular TV show; *Shooting Bokkie* (2003) directed by Rob De Mezieres and Adam Rist, follows a week in the life of a 13 years old assassin in Cape Town; *Street Thief* (2006) directed by Malik Bader, an amateur filmmaker follows the life of a professional thief; *Behind the Mask: The Rise of Leslie Vernon* (2006) directed by Scott Glosserman, an inside look to a slasher-movie-fan killer's life.



Figure 3.6: A shot from *A Hole in My Heart* (2004), after the son shoots his father in the head.

3.2 Excluding Mondo Films

Before the emergence of mockumentary as a popular practice and term in the mid-1980s by Rob Reiner's frequent articulation of the term in various interviews, there was the era of Mondo films as the popular fake-documentary practice. Mondo films are fundamentally disturbing fake documentaries based on the cultures alien to western societies and such films are motivated to exaggeratedly expose them to create a thrill. Many questionable taboo scenes such as death, sex, brutal violence, and cannibalism are usually performed through *mise-en-scène* but presented as if they were genuine documentary recordings. The first examples that emerged in the 1960s were *Mondo Cane* (1962), *Women of the World* (1963), and *Africa Addio* (1966) films that laid out the foundations of the "super-genre", which are implying a general attitude rather than a set of well-formed borders (Persiani 2020). The reason to call Mondo films a super-genre is the difficulty to define them as a particular genre. They are neither documentaries nor fiction horror films, neither significantly ethnographic films nor snuff films; they have neither entirely non-fictive narration nor fictional narration. Instead, they adopt the foremost elements of every each of them to create a unique yet ever-changing narration throughout different examples and periods of Mondo films (Brottman 2004, 167-168). Therefore, I believe it is appropriate to call it a super-genre which means a composite of the genre, containing many sub-genres ("Supergenre" 2022). In that sense, it does differentiate in its genre-wise progression from mockumentary, since mockumentary is mostly named as a hybrid genre which refers to satirical cooperation of non-fictive and fictional narrations, or as a sub-genre of documentary filmmaking.



Figure 3.7: A promotional poster of *Women of The World* (1963).

Those first examples in the 1960s have the appearance of an ethnographic documentary, with the claim of showcasing “real” events, deaths, and violence; functioned as an “other” to mainstream horror films which show “actuality” rather than stylized horror in the mainstream (Brottman 2004, 168). Although later, with the superficialization and capitalization of this super-genre, they gradually turned into compilation films of real-life disasters, murders, suicides, and so on; generally consisting of unedited footage taken from various sources (Brottman 2004, 167), and eventually started to be called “death films”. Earlier examples were also called Shockumentary as they were called Mondo Film, a portmanteau word combined of “shocking” and “documentary”. This notation suits better terminologically, for it states the acceptance of cinema shock as an essential ingredient of the genre (Goodall 2006, 36), as well as it states the exploitation of documentary modes. Shockumentaries experiment with documentary filmmaking practices. An exploited anthropological gaze on unfamiliar cultures with expository voice-overs, a participatory positioning of the filmmaker to enhance the sense of experiencing the “real events” even if they are off-screen, and alienating uses of cinematography and editing exclusive to conventional documentary find their places frequently in shockumentaries to result as misanthropic, cynical, or negative representations of twentieth-century global cultures (Goodall 2006, 11-12). Yet, it is clear that experimenting with documentary modes is only motivated to enhance the shocking element of shockumentaries and alleged savage brutality of filmed cultures instead of raising any kind of critique of filmmaking practices or subjects in the film.

We cannot classify shockumentaries under the term transgressive mockumentary, even though, they transgress documentary modes and conventional filmmaking practices in their own way. Dissimilation between the two genres is evident even in their obvious name difference, named to articulate their key elements. Shockumentary does not contain mockery as a key element like mockumentary does, and none of the shockumentaries found their narrative around mocking storytelling. They are aimed at exploiting the issue they are dealing with, rather than establishing any criticism of narrated issues (Persiani 2020). The irony and sarcastic language found in mockumentaries are mostly lacking in

Shockumentaries; instead, a seriously produced replica of actuality, and sometimes the actuality itself, is dominant in such films. Although both mockumentaries and shockumentaries have transgressive elements, one of them greatly lacks critical and ironic aspects and serves particularly overstimulation through seeing.

A mockumentary that imitates an ethnographic documentary such as *Fubar* (which deals with headbanger culture through two men living in Canada) criticizes openly the ethnographic documentary form which it imitates while criticizing its supposedly ethnographic subject. We see that Mondo films imitate the ethnographic film not to critique the form itself but to critique popular western culture and imagination in the face of otherness; thus, take advantage of narration strategies of ethnographic film in a twisted manner to create its product (Staples & Kilgore 1995, 111). From this point of view, it is easy to understand that ethnographic documentaries coming from the Flahertian tradition of the early cinema era are referred to as proto-mondo films, because of their pro-active approach to filmmaking for the sake of persuasiveness and impressiveness rather than authenticity and truthfulness. Shockumentaries contain certain reflexive moments that emerged from the use of documentary modes, such as the interaction between filmmaker and subjects or sudden shifting between images from different sources. Nonetheless, it is rather difficult to call a shockumentary a self-reflexive film since they are utilizing the instruments of the ethnographic film with uncanny fashion and shock to illustrate difficult aspects of world culture, particularly as entertainment (Goodall 2006, 36), but not to mean of filmmaking. Thus, they have no intention to go beyond being entertaining fake documentaries with, shocking and gore elements. Contrarily, as discussed earlier, mockumentaries gain character by re-evaluating the glance they bring to their subjects, mediums, and forms. In this sense, when introducing the concept of transgressive mockumentary, it becomes necessary to exclude Mondo films from this definition. The differences between shockumentary and transgressive mockumentary outweigh their similarities.

Transgressive mockumentary is burdened with transformative critique of conventional film but also of structuralist, common and snobbish practices of all kinds of filmmaking, in coherence with the transgressive film. However, the critiquing means of transgressive

mockumentary varies in comparison with transgressive film because of its parodical hybridism that is distinctive to the unique conjoint of fiction and non-fiction in form of mockumentary. Amplified use of self-reflexive strategies is one of the most prominent components of both mockumentary text and form for expressing its critical statements. Therefore, it is indispensable to study on the formation and the functionality of self-reflexivity to comprehend the manners of transgressive critique through mockumentary filmmaking.



4. REFLEXIVITY IN TRANSGRESSIVE MOCKUMENTARY

4.1 Defining Reflexivity in Film

In 1985 Robert Stam published his momentous book of film studies, *Reflexivity in Film and Literature: From Don Quixote to Jean-Luc Godard*, a detailed analysis of reflexive narration on the basis of various issues from spectatorship to production, from self-consciousness to subversion. As the subtitle of the book suggests, reflexive narration dates back to the beginning of modern literature and found its place in modern cinema throughout its history. Stam's work examines more than 50 examples from diverse literary arts, from novels to musicals, from Dziga Vertov to Wim Wenders. Therefore, *Reflexivity in Film and Literature* will be used as the primary source to argue self-reflexivity and its connection to transgressive mockumentary, accompanied by more contemporary sources and other sources which deal with particularly with mockumentary around self-reflexivity. Even though Stam rarely cites the term self-reflexivity instead of reflexivity, I prioritize the term self-reflexivity in my study because of the indication of self. I understand that in many studies the terms reflexivity and self-reflexivity are interchangeable, yet the indication of self in self-reflexivity renders the term applicable for mockumentary form because of distinct involving of the filmmakers into narrative and narration either by self-representing a version of themselves or by embodiment of another actor in role of director, on and off screen.

I acknowledge that there is other important books on the self-reflexivity and film, such as *Metafilm: Forms and Functions of Self-Reflexivity in Postmodern Film* (2010) by Lisa Konrath, *Meta Film: Materialistic Narrative and Reflexive Cinema* (2018) by Christopher Carter, *The Memory of Tiresias: Intertextuality and Film* (1998) by Mikhail Iampolski, and *Intertextualities: Theories and Practices* (1991) by Michael Worton and Judith Still. Yet, I prefer to prioritize the work of Robert Stam to outline the self-reflexive strategies, for its precursor quality in the field and its comprehensive approach that scopes numerous examples from theater to cinema, to exhibit a pertinent definition of self-reflexive that is applicable to any literary and cinematic work of art.

Stam starts his book in its preface by calling the reflexivity “the other tradition” in literature and cinema, contrary to conventional narrations that aim to glamorize, captivate and hypnotize the audience. Reflexivity is an embodiment that points out the factitiousness of textual construct with the help of demystifying and deconstructing strategies. They interact with established norms and conventions in a mischievous, parodic, and disruptive way. A reflexive film is not a surrealist, expressionist, or futuristic avant-garde film but it functions on the limits of narrative, playing and mocking with it. Reflexive films deconstruct the narrative rather than entirely rejecting it with marginal practices (Stam 1985, xi). As extensively argued before, mocking is an inherent part of the mockumentary. Moreover, mockumentaries deconstruct documentary forms and filmmaking conventions by mimicking them in a satirical way. Thus, it is clear that mockumentary film is a reflexive film.

Bill Nichols defines the reflexive mode of documentary as follows “calls attention to the assumptions and conventions that govern documentary filmmaking. This mode increases our awareness of the constructedness of the film’s representation of reality” (Nichols 2017, 22) Reflexive mode is underrepresented, that is to say, it stands as “the other tradition” of documentary filmmaking. Reflexive documentary questions the principles that form other documentary modes, such as poetic, expository, participatory, observational, and performative (Nichols 2017, 110). Yet, it is rather common that different modes cooperate in documentary films, and it is rather impossible to call out a film made purely within a single-mode. In other words, a reflexive documentary may contain a considerable amount of observational or performative footage; a reflexive documentary may take advantage of a poetic narration (Nichols 2017, 114). Having said that, it is quite acceptable to claim that mockumentary functions with reflexive mode for its constant questioning and it takes advantage of other modes to form its replicating narration.

Mockumentary’s complex bidirectional relationship with both fiction and non-fiction filmmaking makes it suitable to be interpreted within the confines of both formats which are not so different from each other after all, as extensively argued by Dirk Eitzen in his

study “When is Documentary? Documentary as a Mode of Reception” (1995). However, according to the definition of both reflexive film by Robert Stam and reflexive mode by Bill Nichols, mockumentary film is a reflexive narrative film that is formed with the reflexive mode of documentary, and with occasional interplays with other modes. Both definitions substantially include criticizing, questioning, fault-finding and playful characteristics of reflexivity. Since the subject matter of this thesis is to examine the critical potentials and methods of (transgressive) mockumentary over conventional filmmaking, necessitating the reflexive critique, which gives mockumentary a significant characteristic, as the fundamental critical means is indispensable. The rest of this chapter will focus on outlining the reflexive critique strategies that function in various texts to constitute admissible guidance to analyse selected transgressive mockumentaries. To avoid straying in-between endless possibilities of the large universe of film art, the attempt to outline reflexive critique will be based on the main issues addressed by Stam in *Reflexivity in Film and Literature*, such as spectatorship, production, self-consciousness, carnivalesque, and subversion.

4.2 Aspects of Reflexivity in Film

4.2.1 Spectatorship

It is the spectator who turns filmic images into a “story”. There is a complicit relationship between the spectator and film, even though the spectator is the object of seduction for a film, there’s a great need of cooperation between the two for the film to function. The spectator must “eke out”, “piece out” and “mind away” to fulfil every absence of a film such as lack of third dimension, frame of the screen and technical flaws to create a “story” in mind. Through the will to believe of the spectator, embodiment of filmic images transforms into a narrative to follow and be fascinated by. Phantom-like figures of filmic images tends to catch our temptation to identify ourselves with characters, experience a thrill throughout the flow of constructed actions.

Contribution of the spectator to the functioning of film is the choice to be remain passive and accept the constructed narrative. The conventional fiction films impose a lowering of

wakefulness, a dream-alike state that calls out a withdrawal of connection with the external world and a focusing receptivity to phantasm and wish-fulfilment (Stam 1985, 34-36). The conventional film adopts the convention of naturalistic theatre (Stam 1985, 40), the spectator of conventional film is not challenged by being aware of the actors behind their roles, the constructedness of film, or means and process of filmmaking; thus, the illusion remains. Most Hollywood films, as well as popular cinemas from around the world, regard their audiences essentially as consumers—both commercially and ideologically—as the provider of predefined emotional reactions; put them in position of receivers and observers of constructed illusion (Juhasz & Lerner 2006, 85). On the other hand, anti-illusionistic art reminds us of our necessary complicity in artistic illusion (Stam 1985, 35). Breaking of the illusion in representational art will awaken the audience and will result as the end of complicity between film and spectator; moreover, it will start a chain reaction to question the film. It is important to directly quote here Dan Harris on spectatorship in *Film Parody* (2000), Harries suggests that, “Not only do parodies create ‘something’ (new textual configurations as well as modifications to pre-existing canons), they also foster ‘ways’ to view texts, developing and nurturing critical spectatorial strategies. While parody does indeed rely on and cannibalize other texts, its reworkings affect not only the viewing of previous textual systems but also the construction and viewing of future related canonical texts.” (Harries 2000, 7) Since transgressive mockumentary, as argued before, is a parodic and satirical text which imitates, deconstructs, transgress and critique pre-existing forms and practices, Harries’ suggestion is compatible with sub-genre in argument. Most importantly, his suggestion to the influence of parodic text on the viewing of previous and future related canonical text is one the key points for the critique that argued in this thesis.

The critique of transgressive mockumentary on conventional film is primarily founded on the revival of audience. The revival through viewing a new, parodic, questioning and criticizing way of filmmaking will conduct the audience to revaluation of past and future viewing experience. Thus, awakening from illusionistic conventional film will make the imposed illusion and its means visible to the audience and will create a self-awareness of the audience to witness its constant passivated position in front of conventional film. The intertextually expanding, experience-shifting critique through parodic text – in this case

transgressive mockumentary – will result in varying kinds of audience engagement to conventional film rather than predetermined experience.

4.2.2 Production

Films are commercial and/or cultural products that are produced by individuals or groups; they are connected to industrial production phases in essence, generally. Production of the film takes shape with multi-layered economic structures in consequence of the use of various means of filmmaking (Stam 1985, 71). Mockumentary follows substantially documentary filmmaking practices, thus production phases differentiate from fiction narrative film. This means that they tend to get produced on lower budgets, with smaller crews and equipment. Mockumentary follows these production patterns: a Miramax Film production mockumentary *Bob Roberts* (1992), about the election campaign of an emerging right-wing politician, has greater access to bigger budgets compared to many other mockumentaries. Yet the film was shot strictly in documentary filmmaking style for its look-alike-narration-strategies of direct cinema that follows politicians such as *Primary* (1960) because it contains certain scenes to be shot with small crews with a single hand-held camera, impossible to shoot otherwise (Hansen 2012, 139). Other than that, a mockumentary may use stock footage taken from various sources to create “realism” and continuity of the story. (Weiner 2012, 38). The non-fiction aspect of mockumentary allows for the intertextual functionality of stock footage, so the low-budget production of mockumentary film will be enabled. Many “tricks” and techniques are widely used in mockumentaries for both economic and ideological reasons. Transgressive mockumentaries with their experimenting nature take advantage of the flexibility of the documentary genre to use alternative practices of filmmaking to instrumentalize boldly both the existence of the film itself and the subversion of the means.

Representation of filmmaking practices, processes, industries, and filmmakers on screen – in the film is present since the very beginning of cinema. At times, they functioned as a comedic (yet still reflexive) motif in films as can be seen in Charlie Chaplin’s *Behind the Screen* (1916) or Buster Keaton’s *The Cameraman* (1928), and at times, as an

elaborative revelatory of the current situation of film industries as in Billy Wilder's *Sunset Boulevard* (1950). In the tradition of documentary filmmaking, one early example stands out for its reflexivity; highly appreciated even today, Dziga Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929) foregrounds its own process of production. While the illusionistic filmmaker hides their mark, a reflexive film like *Man with a Movie Camera* emphasizes them to render productive labor visible. Vertov was particularly against the "artistic drama", comparing it with drugs and religion for its illusionistic functions (Vertov 1984, 48). Thus, the film subverts the illusion by frequently using fragmentation and distortion of temporal and spatial aspects of narration. It is a film about film language, that aims to present the cinematic means rather than hiding them, an act of self-representation which demonstrate cinematic art to be complex signifier practice rather than pretending to represent the real. The film positions itself as a "film which produces a film" and represents the filmmaker from shooting on location to the editing room, and even the projection of the film (Stam 1985, 80-82).



Figure 4.1: A shot from *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929), editor Yelizaveta Svilova editing the film.

Self-reflexivity of filmmakers on screen is a recurring theme in mockumentaries. *Incident at Loch Ness* (2004), directed by Zak Penn, co-written by Zak Penn and Werner Herzog, follows Penn and Herzog's incompatible effort of filming the legend of the Loch Ness monster while mocking and demystifying Herzog's well-known extraordinary way of filmmaking. In *Forgotten Silver* (1995), directed by Peter Jackson who acts as the

storyteller and researcher throughout the film which claims that the known cinema history is based on wrong information. In one of the most popular examples, *This is Spinal Tap* (1984), director Rob Reiner opens the film by introducing it to the audience while acting a director-persona he created, Martin Di Bergi, and is visible on screen throughout the film. Transgressive mockumentaries take the on-screen filmmaker visibility theme even further and use it as a shock element and demystify the position of the filmmaker. In *Man Bites Dog* (1992) filmmakers gradually get involved in the crimes of the murderer they follow. In *Fubar* (2002), the director shoots the documentary of “headbangers” after he jumps into a shallow stream as a result of his subjects’ insistence to jump. In *A Film by Tuğra Kaftancıoğlu* (200?), we witness Tuğra Kaftancıoğlu’s bizarre and savage methods of filming, and even the real director of the film, Emre Akay, becomes a subject of his film methods.



Figure 4.2: A shot from *Incident at Loch Ness* (2004), Zak Penn points a gun to Werner Herzog.

4.2.3 Self-Consciousness

Self-consciousness and self-reflexivity are the two terms that are difficult to think apart. The self-reflexive film contains indispensably certain aspects of self-consciousness in its construct. Stam argues self-consciousness as a genre and cites it as “the other great tradition”. His positioning of self-consciousness is a counter stance against illusionistic,

realistic, verisimilar, and unchallenging conventional cinema. Contrary to the seamless narration of the conventional film, the self-conscious film exhibits systematically its authorial construct of a fictional world nurtured with literary and fictional conventions. It calls attention to its own artifice and strategies, denying a modest and settled film language. Freedom and creativity of film language are the essentials of self-conscious film, a play for the reflexive filmmaker to unbound themselves from illusionistic representational arts while reflecting on their process of figuring out things in the film (Stam 1985, 127-129). Parody has crucial importance in self-conscious narration, far from being a marginal sub-genre within the history of film but an ever-present tendency that functions intertextually. Parody produces itself on the subversion of outmoded cinematic codes, it emphasizes art historicity and performs the revaluation of modes and paradigms as a new cinematic form. Transgression takes further such subversion with radicalism by reshaping the modes and paradigms as far as they become humorous motifs by themselves. Transgressive version of paradigms in question appears as scoffed, unbarred and deconstructed replicas that functions as faultfinder.

Cinema which takes advantage of every known art form opens a window for intertextual references and collective interplays in a unique artistic product. Therefore, filmmakers choose sets of conventions to work with or obscure them, by hybridizing genres in a particular way to create interactive tension in-between them to force the audience to reflect on the ways of representing “reality” through the limits of exploited genres. Parody has crucial importance to process to play with, reconstruct and hybridize cinematic pastiches of self-conscious art (Stam 1985, 131-135). Mockumentary as a fundamentally form mimicking sub-genre with a parodic agenda, hybridizes primarily non-fiction and fiction narrations, various modes of documentary, referential texts, and original acts. Also, for its playfulness on the margins of film conventions and codes, mockumentary subverts and transgresses constantly established film languages. Therefore, it is obvious that mockumentary suits well the definition of self-conscious film.

Furthermore, in the chapter of “The Genre of Self-Consciousness”, Stam puts forward the destruction of illusionistic narration with great importance and emphasizes the self-conscious strategies used in various fiction narrative texts for that purpose. With the

nature of the documentary form used in mockumentaries, equal functionality of these strategies in mockumentaries will be beyond the realm of possibility. I will briefly argue certain self-conscious strategies below in following paragraphs.

Off-screen looks or gestures is a prominent strategy that remind us that there is another world beyond what we see on-screen. This means that off-screen gestures or even interactions expand the diegesis beyond the knowledge of the spectator. Limiting the rectangular of the screen loses its eminent position of distilling apparatus of events and actions. In the mockumentary, on-screen subjects' interaction with the off-screen filmmaker (real or fictive) is a frequent motif. In addition to this, because of the spontaneity and instantaneity of camera style in the mockumentary, subjects may be a part of interactions that the recording camera may not capture, intentionally or unintentionally.

Subsequently, the question of time and tempo is another component in the construction of reflexive film. Story time might cover an entire lifetime or even centuries, but the discourse time of the story is constructed by the narrated glimpses of the entire story. Russian formalists named this temporal distinction as *fabula* (story) and *sjuzet* (plot). While the conventional films are in a continuous attempt to hide away time gaps between the narrated parts, a reflexive film may choose particularly to point out the time gaps and the shifting relations between story time and discourse time. In the mockumentary, the filmmaker (real or fictive) may address these gaps and relations directly with self-conscious manners, or the subject of the film may reflect the filmed parts of his life and actions as well as not filmed parts.

Furthermore, the conventional expectation for narration tempo is that proportional division of discourse time according to the importance of "key" moments with an archaic, entertaining, and marketable tempo that leads to a cathartic satisfaction. A reflexive film may dominantly refuse to reduce the question of tempo to a certain simplistic proposition between action and transaction. Concepts of cinematic tempo are intrinsically linked to concerns about style and editing. The tempo changes depending on the number of images, the quantity of angle and focal length variation, and the variability of the music. A

reflexive film may choose to particularly represent all the instruments that function in tempo, contrary to conventional film in needs to constantly hide them. Mockumentary, with its flexible and intermodal structure, may question the time and tempo of the film itself, in front of its audience; may refuse to focus on key points of the story or construct an archaic tempo.

Reflexive art frequently reminds us of the many various styles that an artist might use. In the reflexive film, these styles are interchangeable, open to hybridization and reinterpretation. Instead of an unchallenging and convenient choice of style in conventional film, the reflexive film may prefer a unique and unexpected style to exploit the comic and tragic possibilities of narrative text. Intervening in a structured style with a self-conscious manner is a frequent pattern of self-correcting style in reflexive film. Thus, the style of a reflexive film is a self-criticizing form of narration. Mockumentary film, by choosing to narrate a narrative text in various documentary forms, is a product of a reflexive artist. Moreover, as argued extensively before in this thesis, mockumentary is a self-criticizing form of narration; criticizing both the form of narration it copies, but also self-criticizing throughout the act of copying the canonical form. It means that it parodies the canonical form without taking itself for granted too much.



Figure 4.3: A shot from the opening scene of *This is Spinal Tap* (1984), Rob Reiner introduces the film to the audience in role of Martin di Bergi.

In the reflexive film, the presence of the spectator is inscribed and signaled in text. The diegesis is no longer the primary focus of the narration but the channels of the relation between text and spectator are. The filmmaker may construct a direct relation with the spectator through various methods such as titles, intertitles, voiceovers or directly addressing the camera. The last one appears to be the most prominent method to be used in narrative reflexive films as the breaker of the fourth wall in cinema which indicates an invisible separating wall between the spectator and film to enhance the illusionistic power of film. In the mockumentary, dialogue with the spectator is more dominant than the occasional breaking of the fourth wall. Since the documentary form results in the use of “talking head” interviews of many characters in mockumentary or since the existence of a camera is a part of the knowledge of the characters in the mockumentary, breaking of the fourth wall with direct addressing to the camera is not a necessity to form a dialogue between film and spectator. Instead, the sole existence of a mockumentary film could be considered as a type of dialogue with the spectator for its playfulness with film forms and many varying methods of interacting and stimulating the spectator. Interacting with the spectator originates from the self-conscious motivation of the filmmaker to make the spectator critically think about what the cinema is.

4.2.4 Carnavalesque

Carnavalesque is a term originated by Russian formalist critical writer Mikhail Bakhtin with the reference to the carnivals of Medieval Europe which are the occasions where the political, legal, and ideological authority of church and state were temporarily inverted by virtue of the liberating and anarchic period of carnival (“Carnavalesque” 2022). Bakhtin describes the occasion of carnival as follows, “Carnival is the place for working out, in a concretely sensuous, half-real and half-play-acted form, a new mode of the interrelationship between individuals, counterposed to the all-powerful socio-hierarchical relationships of noncarnival life. The behaviour, gesture, and discourse of a person are freed from the authority of all hierarchical positions (social estate, rank, age, property) defining them totally in noncarnival life, and thus from the vantage point of noncarnival life become eccentric and inappropriate. Eccentricity is a special category of the carnival sense of the world, organically connected with the category of familiar contact; it

permits—in concretely sensuous form—the latent sides of human nature to reveal and express themselves.“ (Bakhtin 1999, 123). Bakhtin reflects the characteristics of carnival as the novelistic “carnavalistic” genre, next to the epic and the rhetorical genres (Bakhtin 1999, 109), taking its roots from Menippean Satire, a counter-tradition to the “epic” (classical) line of European prose in terms of thematics, stylistics, and narrative structure (Lachmann 1988, 119). The carnivalesque approach is brought to written texts in form of ritualistic violation of the sacred values, resulting in ritualistic laughter and clownishness, which are similar to the particularities of transgression. Transposition of authority and subject of authority occurs, and ritualistic parody takes place to mock the language and rituals of both sides in a self-parodying manner. Carnavalesque stays persistent as a characteristic of the playful, self-referential, self-parodying component of postmodern popular culture (Hoy 1992, 770-771). Playfulness and mockery of carnivalesque reach beyond self-examine but aims at taboo subjects such as sex, death, and violence; signifying that there is no sacred or meaningful to limiting the subjects of mockery. Everything that is important to the foundation of social-cultural values is exposed with their grotesque absurdity, by taking advantage of canonical and noncanonical literary systems to embody them in the performance of “real life” (Hoy 1992, 775).



Figure 4.3: *Morris Dancers* by Daniel Hopfer, an illustration from late 15th – early 16th century representing jesters of carnival.

Stam argues carnivalesque as a dominant anti-illusionistic strategy to absurdity by producing meta-real narrations and positions it as formal aggression of marginal and

subversive art with an antagonistic relationship with authorization and established culture. The linguistic equivalence of carnivalization is the liberation of language from decency and etiquette restrictions which resonates with the liberation of artistic practices from conventional structures (Stam 1985, 167-169). The carnivalesque aesthetic, however grotesque or bizarre, preserves a commitment to a certain realism (though not illusionism) that addresses ordinary life and speaks of current events (Stam 1985, 204). Thus, it is profoundly connected with every component of daily life, rather than favoring an exclusionist attitude toward everyday people for the sake of fantasy. Carnival suggests joyful affirmation to exist freely and become whatever/whoever, and express the self unrestrictedly; carnivalesque art represents, narrates, critiques, and mocks in a similar vein of freedom. On the other hand, carnivalesque suggests the function of a demystification instrument for every aspect of social formation and signifies a stance of creative disrespect, a marginal counter-stance to the power figures (Stam 1985, 208).

We can consider Bakhtin's carnivalesque term for literary aesthetic as a precursor of the term "transgressive", as articulated by Nick Zedd for Cinema of Transgression. Both terms have many in common: Both terms prioritize the limitless mockery and critique without knowing any sacred or taboo; both terms emphasize the importance to narrate the brutal, grotesque reality of daily life without glorification; both terms encapsulate a certain counter-stance against the power figures and dominant cultural norms and embody a playfulness toward established norms of storytelling. Furthermore, the half-real half-acted form of carnivalesque performance reminds mockumentary's ambiguous relationship with both non-fictive and fictive forms. Actors or non-actors who acted themselves on-screen and heavy improvisation which frequently accompanies the narrative in mockumentaries are the counterbalance of lively performance of carnivalesque. Stam argues carnivalesque as a reflexive aspect of narration. The subject matter of this thesis, the transgressive mockumentary, corresponds to the carnivalesque characteristics in both axes, for its transgression and its half-real half-acted mock-documenting hybridization.

4.2.5 Subversion

Stam argues the concept of subversion around the Marxist view, he sees the demystification of reflexive art as a grant for potential revolutionary use-value (Stam 1985, 210). Later, he builds on the essentials of subversion by studying Brecht's "alienation effect" which relates to the Marxist aesthetic and the critique of bourgeois ideology. Brecht believed in the importance of shocking the audience into an awareness that art is a construct of human labor, a human intervention to create a certain illusion to numb human perception in favor of bourgeois normality (Stam 1985, 211). Brecht's discourse of "alienation necessary to all understanding" seems like the main motif of subversion for Stam. Through the liberating alienation, Brecht tries to reveal false representations that are created with daily myths and experiences. The goal of alienation is to demystify and alert the audience with subversive art toward oppressive society, culture, or any dominating ideology. For the function of alienation, Brecht defends the reflexive art that should reveal the dynamics of its own constructedness by enforcing defamiliarization of acted events and an impression of fictive events that are strictly prepared.

Hight & Roscoe argue particularly about the subversion of documentary filmmaking codes and refer to reflexive documentaries on the margins of the genre, thus focusing on mockumentary because of its conscious deconstruction of factual discourse. Mockumentary complicates the audience engagement to the basis of the claims of the truth of the documentary and allows the audience to experience the subversion of their knowledge (Hight & Roscoe 2001, 22). Consequently, the subversion of means and strategies of filmmaking is a reflexive aspect of narration to create an awareness of constructedness by demystifying the magic of cinema.

As argued before, the transgression indicates a further functionality beyond the subversive demystification of the construct by suggesting a transformation through excessive alteration in filmmaking practices and film form. Here, I would like to emphasize that transgression is also a reflexive way of filmmaking in similarities with the subversion and the carnivalesque, but the all-around-refusal and self-entitled attitude of transgression puts it in a different position and makes it impossible to define except

addressing its manifesto. While the subversion may take place in films as an on and off strategy, the transgression refers particularly to a dedicated embodiment of a counter-practical, critical, and reflexive aesthetic.

In the case of transgressive mockumentary, forming a reflexive narration goes beyond specific techniques of alienation through certain instruments of the cinematic construct. Instead, the reflexivity of transgressive mockumentaries is an embodiment of carnivalesque aesthetics, subversion of means of filmmaking, self-conscious narration strategies, altering in production methods, and of course, prominence of shock and humor. In fictional cinema, reflexivity emerges through various moments, scenes, images, or various strategies. The illusionistic impulse of construction is reminded but the narrative and the diegesis may continue within its discourse time; the audience is likely to reconnect with the story because of the re-emergence of their repeatedly suspended disbelief, founded by past viewership experiences of conventional films. Therefore, I believe that true enlightenment about the imposing construction of cinematic illusion in conventional films is not possible with reflexive glimpses in fiction films.

In this regard, a marginal practice of reflexive filmmaking is needed to compel to create an immense awareness of the spectator about cinema which would lead to a critique of conventional filmmaking practices and their construct for imposing illusionism. There is a need for the critical dedication of a film rather than the occasional self-consciousness and self-reflexivity that are dispersed into selected layers of narration. Mockumentary filmmaking is one of those critical dedications in film history which address both fiction and documentary filmmaking. As argued before, not all mockumentaries use their reflexivity to raise criticism of cinema; some of them use reflexivity and subversion for not more than to amuse and affection. Therefore, I sub-categorize certain mockumentaries with the label of transgressive mockumentary by referring to the critical essentials of Cinema of Transgression, meanwhile acknowledging that there are other possible sub-categorizations to name critical mockumentaries. The key to reflexive criticism is the necessity of a cinematic embodiment of reflexive dimensions in a filmic product that will deconstruct the established narration structures on the margins of canonical forms so that it is accessible yet uncanny for the audience. The embodiment of transgressive

mockumentary that is indispensably self-reflexive with its oppositional existence does not degrade to isolated reflexive narrational strategies since its essence is genre-wise parodical and self-conscious. Therefore, it stands as a counter-cinema not only critical of documentary forms but also penetrating enough to critique conventional cinema practices extensively.



5. ANALYSIS OF *MAN BITES DOG* (1992)

Man Bites Dog, originally titled *C'est Arrivé Près de Chez Vous*, is a transgressive mockumentary directed collectively by Rémy Belvoux, André Bonzel and Benoît Poelvoorde, initially released in 1992. The film received International Critics Award at Cannes and was instantly praised for its playful takes on violence and horror, and its visionary discourse on the capturing capability of films (Turan 1993). On the other hand, it was banned in certain countries like Sweden and Ireland and released with an NC-17 rating in the USA. Yet, to this day, the film gained a cult status and is hailed as a “Controversial mockumentary, a disturbing masterpiece 30 years later” (H.C., 2021), because of its uncanny and brutal realism to depict the violence, its shocking experience on the audience with its forceful identification with the film crew and its exploration of sensational media and reality-television (H. C. 2021). These characteristics of the film make it stand as a unique magnum opus in cinema history. *Man Bites Dog* is included in Criterion Collection which is known as a catalog for classic, modern classics, and cult films (“Dark Comedies” 2022), and listed by filmmakers such as Steve Buscemi, Yorgos Lanthimos, and Bill Plympton as a favorite in their Criterion Top Ten lists, thus acclaimed by filmmakers as a cult.



Figure 5.1: Releasing poster of *Man Bites Dog* (*C'est arrive près de chez vous*) from 1992.

Man Bites Dog is a mockumentary that replicates the observatory and participatory documentary modes. The film consists of the footage of a young documentary crew who follows the daily life of Ben, a killer thief who is interested in cinema and poetry. As the film progress, we get to know Ben's daily routines, his family, and friends, as well as witness his many crimes and gunfights with his enemies. The film crew who follows Ben progressively starts to take part in Ben's crimes and becomes his partner; in return, Ben finances the crew's film and becomes a part of the crew. They all die together after getting shot by one of Ben's enemies.

Man Bites Dog, stands as one of most the suitable films for my thesis with its every aspect. First of all, it is independently and cheaply made outside of any studio infrastructure which is of the most prominent aspects of a transgressive film as it is defined in the manifesto of Cinema of Transgression. As indicated before in the chapter of "Transgressive Mockumentary" in this thesis, *Man Bites Dog* is produced for approximately 33.000\$ ("*Man Bites Dog* (1992)-- IMD" 2022) as an expanded version of Rémy Belvoux's final project to graduate from INSAS film school which refused to fund the film because of its subject matter and self-financed by the filmmakers and their

relatives and friends. It was shot on 16 mm film, like many films from Cinema of Transgressive and No-Wave movements and it was blown up to 35 mm for screening copies. “'est Arrivé Près De Chez Vou”-- Portail De La Culture En Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelle” (2022).

Juhasz & Lerner’s particular mention in their substantial study on mockumentary filmmaking, *F is for Phony: Fake Documentary and Truth’s Undoing* is about this low-product production feature and its reflection on narration strategies. They point out by quoting the filmmakers that fake documentary (or mockumentary) allows a cheaper and easier way to produce a textually rich film in a media-sophisticated era. The mockumentary narration choice thus may stand as a more accessible and applicable way of filmmaking but also results in a parodical multivoiced narration that addresses social structures and moral codes effectively and satirically (Juhasz & Lerner, 6 -7, 2006). In *Man Bites Dog*, mockumentary narration is a necessity for the film to be made but also provides the multi-voice which makes the film form a self-reflexive narration and an altering engagement with the audience that is not possible in the terms of conventional narration structures. In other words, a transgressive aspect of the production generates self-reflexive, parodical, and critical particularities in form of the mockumentary. In my analysis of *Man Bites Dog*, I will focus on two connected themes that emerge from such particularities in a stating manner, as follows: Media critique through misdoings and performing the filmmaker as an altered self.

5.1 Critiquing Media

Man Bites Dog parodies the television show *Strip-Tease* that is aired on the public service broadcaster of the French-speaking community of Belgium, RTBF, starting in 1984. The film replicates and parodies the norms of the show, designating it as a canonical form (“C'est Arrivé Près De Chez Vou-- Portail De La Culture En Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelle" 2022). The show offers documentaries using the codes of fiction narration without showing the filmmakers and by centering the ordinary people as its main character and by following their stories and evolutions throughout their day-to-day life (“Strip-Tease" 2022). A close look at the perception of the documentary studies will

notice that *Strip-Tease* is a series of observational documentaries shot in the style of fly-on-the-wall that is emphasizing dramatic moments in the life of its character with a selective fiction. Thus, it serves certain unexpected unfoldings of ordinary people hence its name *Strip-Tease* refers to these unfoldings.



Figure 5.2: A shot from the end credits of *Strip-Tease* (1985), that states “Strip-tease, the journal that undresses you”

The title *Man Bites Dog* is a shortened aphorism used in journalism to indicate that an event must be unusual to have a news value, which is stated first time by veteran journalist John B. Bogart in 1918 as follows, “When a dog bites a man, that is not news, because it happens so often. But if a man bites a dog, that is news.” (Bartlett 591, 2002). *Man Bites Dog*’s title thus provides a commentary on the unusuality of the events of the film as well as on the orientation of the news-making, which point out the critical relationship of the film with the news media and television. The original French title of the film “C’est arrivé près de chez vous” means “It happened in your neighborhood”, which emphasizes the connection of the film with the actuality. The original title points out the possible casualties of such events that may happen in every city and every neighborhood, which constructs bounds with reality. Such bounds function in two ways, first of all, it indicates the conventional mediatic look to everyday life and secondly, it self-consciously remarks on the documentary-like narration of the “real” life in film. *Man Bites Dog* functions as a faultfinder of this mediatic desire by creating a text that is running on the margins of this convention. It points out its statement not by caricaturing the practices of the form, instead it keeps its observational-participatory realism consistent, but by altering the narrative

under the scope and marginalizing the captured spectacle of actuality, with abrupt violence.

Man Bites Dog, seems like a malfunctioning version of *Strip-Tease* in every aspect. The logline of *Man Bites Dog* could be stated as “a film crew follows the ordinary life of a serial killer”; the act of following the ordinary life is protected in refer to *Strip-Tease* but the choice of a serial killer as a subject matter alters the filming process, radically. *Man Bites Dog* starts within the codes of observational filmmaking but the film crew cannot keep its distance from its subject thus the film gradually changes style to be a Cinema Verité with the active participation of the filmmaker in the events.

In reference to *Strip-Tease*, *Man Bites Dog* captures the daily life of Ben the killer alongside all the crimes of Ben; we witness his love for the poetry, his relationship with his family and his girlfriend, his interest in playing the piano, etc.; in this way, Ben unfolds as a human being with a daily life alongside his killer persona. He makes jokes, plays with children, and attends parties; the normalization of the murderer, in other words, making familiar a violent act in a daily life stands more shocking than the virtue of violence in a conventional film. The humanization of the violence instead of the demonization of the violator as in conventional film helps terrorize the audience; it is a counter practice to narrate a murder story. Thus, the narrative of *Man Bites Dog* rends transgressive by getting closer to reality because it breaks the dream-likeness (or nightmare-likeness) by lacking dramatization of acts.



Figure 5.3: A shot from *Man Bites Dog*, Ben the killer plays piano with his girlfriend.

It is rather appropriate to name *Strip-Tease* as a proto-reality show in consideration of its focus on the ordinary life of people and its residence on the television medium. In this perspective, *Man Bites Dog* stands as a media critiquing mockery that is focused on the instruments of reality-making. On the other hand, it raises a critique of the desire of the media to fulfill its runtime with violence, absurdity, and attraction. The media looks for the shock, the tragedy, and the spectacular, and television journalism looks to find these stories in actualities; this is the case of *Strip-Tease*. The act of parodying this particular television product internally involves parodying this particular desire of the media, an actuality that excites.

Two sound operators die in the making of Rémy's documentary about Ben the killer. Rémy gives two different speeches by addressing to camera for each sound operator after their deaths. These two speeches have a lot of undecomposable similarities; they are both shot in the same spot with the same lighting, and Rémy wears the same clothes and articulates almost the same phrases in each speech. He dedicates the film to both and talks about each of their girlfriend who has the same name Marie-Paule, and each Marie-Paule carries each sound operator's child. The absurd similarities between both speeches are self-conscious additions to the narrative which subvert the dramatical potential of the loss. The similarities empty out the emotional artifice of death and the remembrance. These scenes emphasize the superiority of searching the media spectacle over a person's life.



Figure 5.4: A shot from *Man Bites Dog*, Rémy talks after the death of the sound operators.

During the gunfight scene between Ben and his enemy Ricardo, the film crew and Ben encounters another film crew who apparently follows Ricardo like Rémy's crew following Ben. The other crew also consists of three people, the director, the cameraman, and the sound operator.

Ben: Holy Shit. A camera crew, do you know them?
Rémy: No
The Other Director: I'm a director. This is my team...
Ben: Holy smoke, André! Get a load of the big camera!
[Ben takes the camera from the shoulder of the other cameraman]
Ben: This real fancy material. Don't you want it?
André: No, it's video.
Ben: And what's ours?
André: Film.
[Ben relentlessly drops the video camera to the floor.]

Ben kills the other cameraman and hands a gun to Rémy and Rémy kills the other sound operator, then Ben kills the other director.



Figure 5.5: A shot from *Man Bites Dog*, Rémy kills the other sound operator while holding a light.

This particular scene contains many criticisms in various means. First of all, it is a direct media critique for its desire to look for shocking stories by indicating that Rémy and his crew are not the only ones who are after a killer and his evil actions; they are just one of the many filmmakers who are in search for ground-breaking and shocking stories, and

Ben is just one of the many killers who circulate in the society. The act of killing the other crew is about eliminating the ongoing competition between media-makers and dominating the media by being the one who tells the shock. Ben's overtaking Rémy's film by involving in the process of the making the film is concertized by the act of killing the other director. It is the announcement of Ben's position in charge as the director in his own violent way. Rémy's killing of the sound operator is also an indicator that he is the killer of the sound operators of his own crew as well, he was the reason for Partick and Franco's death by making this film about the serial killer; and here he does his trademark and kills another sound operator.

The scene also includes a comparison of the film and the video in a very early era of the conflict between both technologies in the 1990s, and André favors the film over the video. The recording technology is in direct relationship to the indexicality of the captured actuality. Recording on film is pronounced as "writing with light" because the analog camera registers the light rays that are reflected from the subject and entering through the lens which creates photochemical change on the strip of film. Therefore, the registration of the analog camera is related to the photographic truth which is in an indexical connection with the instantaneity of the subject and the movement. Contrary, the digital camera registers the light in a bitmap construction by digitally processing each pixel; hence functions with inevitable alteration of the image and makes the registration closer to a painting truth (Davies 2011). Accordingly, it is suitable to say that the analog camera has a more direct connection with the captured actuality than the alteration of the actuality through the digital procession.

André's choice of the film by disparaging the video is a statement about the actuality claim of the film. Mockumentaries are still in connection with the actuality alongside their constructed fiction because of their foregrounding of the documentary form. Documenting the provisioned actuality of the mockumentary construct assures the indexical connection to the shocking text. Transgressive text emerges primarily with the shock factor and the humorous critique; thereby, discussing on-screen the indexical instrument is a self-conscious strategy about revealing the parodying practice of shock-

making and a reminder of the technical aspects of the implementation of half-live half-acted carnivalesque aesthetic.

5.2 Performing the Filmmaker

As argued in earlier chapters, self-reflexivity is an initial and indispensable characteristic of mockumentary form. Its varying playfulness with canonical forms causes the emergence of self-consciousness in film and results in a parodical-critical text that addresses the spectator and its past experiences of viewing. In the cases of on-screen presentations of filmmakers in film, reflexivity goes beyond its alienating nature and appears more likely as self-referential self-reflexivity. Representation of filmmakers themselves adds another layer of voice to fake-documentary, as it turns out to be a narration strategy to self-criticism, it also creates an opportunity to raise a criticism of the idea and the image of the director and broadly the act of filmmaking. The ambiguity between the faked actuality and the factual actuality functions also on the level of spectatorship to push the spectator to re-position themselves in front of a challenging form of an ambiguous narration.

Man Bites Dog, is credited as co-directed, co-written, co-produced and co-starred by Rémy Belvaux, André Bonzel and Benoît Poelvoorde. All of them also take place in the film under their own name, Rémy as the on-screen director Rémy, André as the cameraman of their documentary, and Benoit as the killer Ben. Rémy is apparent on-screen throughout the film, as the interviewer, as the director, and also as a collaborative of the murders, rapes, and thieveries of Ben, as the film progress. André who actually films *Man Bites Dog* is also the cameraman of fictional-Rémy's documentary about serial killer Ben, and a collaborative of crimes like Rémy.

Since the sole film we see under the title of *Man Bites Dog* is taken from the single camera that is operated by André Bonzel in the meantime he acted as fictional André behind the camera, the operating motivation of the cinematographer remains ambiguous in between the fakery of a cameraman and actual cameraman. One of the main instruments that are channeling our attention becomes a matter of the question of performing real that is

reminding half-real and half-played carnivalesque aesthetic. Is our cinematographic attention channeled by a cinema student who tries to make a low-budget mockumentary about a serial killer or by a documentary cameraman who follows a serial killer and takes part in crimes? Such ambiguity resonates with the editing of the film as well. Including the arguments on the selective editing into the film is a mockery of the dramatic constructedness of *Strip-Tease* but in the meanwhile, it's an open reference to one of the most prominent reflexive documentaries of cinema history, *Man with a Movie Camera*. Seeing the editing in the film is a standalone self-reflexive strategy that reflects the perspective and the labor of the filmmaker. Yet, in *Man Bites Dog*, this strategy is more complicated to comment on, since the on-screen filmmakers are fictionalized with the intent of playing a marginalized version of themselves, and in the only scene we see the editing table, Ben the killer controls the editing.



Figure 5.6: A shot from *Man Bites Dog*, Ben the killer in front of the editing table.

The ongoing ambiguity of the self-representation of the filmmaker resonates in this scene as well, a discussion on the process of the filmmaking discussed on-screen with the fictional Ben the killer but the results of this discussion reflect on the film to reach the audience. It motivates to question the performativity of the act of filmmaking and injects an uncanniness and uncertainty into the film, a lack of filmmaker's authority; thus, the spectator is defenseless, and there is no real author to protect the spectator from the unknown. Watching a film made by fictional filmmakers under the patronage of a fictional killer who is described as a disturbed person puts the spectator into a state of

alertness, there is no place for illusion and soothing dream-alikeness of conventional film. I will argue this topic in more detail in the next subsection.

Therefore, the self-reflexivity of *Man Bites Dog* primarily emerges on-screen with the fictional-Rémy who is in an effort to direct the killer Ben for its documentary as well as off-screen with the fictional André who is in an effort to capture the reproduced actuality of the killer Ben. Active participation in the act of filmmaking of both Remy and André resonates as an ongoing self-consciousness that reminds the audience of the constructedness of the film, for they are performing themselves.

On the other hand, Benoît Poelvoorde who is one of the co-creator of the film acts as Ben the killer in the film. 30 years after the initial release of the film, Benoît Poelvoorde has pursued a successful acting career in various films and shined out as one of the most well-known actors of Belgium. Watching the film today in the company with this extradiegetic knowledge makes it impossible to confuse in-between the fakery and the truthfulness of Ben. Even if I speculate about the experience of viewing Benoît as Ben the killer in 1992 with the initial release, I would not address a certain ambiguity about the fictionalization of Ben because of his parodic and mocking acting on the edges of a jester. Yet, the brutal hyperrealism of the film to present the violence turns Ben's ridiculousness into a blood-curdling dead-pan black comedy that is more shocking than comedic.

The overall tone of the mockumentary that is created by replicating the codes of participatory mode transforms the ridicule into in-your-face savagery. In the narrative, as the film crew runs out of money, they accept Ben as their financier and thus their patron. Therefore, Ben's function in the film gets closer to reality as Benoît Poelvoorde who is in fact one of the producers and decision-makers of the film. In this way, Ben the killer becomes a participant in the construction of film rather than merely being a subject matter under the scope of filmmakers, which initially causes filmmakers to be a part of crimes under his patronage. As a result, the film changes its shape from being a film about a killer to being a film made by a killer. Power-shifting throughout the film makes the spectator stuck in the complicity of the filmmakers. Its constructedness is self-consciously reconstructed with the active participation of constructed fake filmmakers. Therefore, it

does not leave any alternative for the spectator but be a participant in crime because of the film's Cinema Verité aesthetic and participatory mode in which the audience canonically tends to identify with the examining and partaken filmmaker.

The collaboration between the film crew and Ben starts with the murdering an old lady who is living in low-cost housing. Ben introduces himself as a reporter by pointing to the film crew and claims that they are making a report about loneliness in high-rise apartments. The film crew, in the mode of fly-on-the-wall, does not interrupt Ben's claim. Ben gets into the house, talks like a proper reporter and suddenly yells to the old lady to make her have a heart attack and legitimizes the unorthodox method as a "saving a bullet". Then, he finds her money from where she hides and serves the crew as a contribution to the film budget. The film crew accepts unquestioningly and thanks him. After leaving the house, Ben wants to celebrate this collective achievement. When the crew starts to make up excuses, he insists that he is the one who should be invited by the crew for a celebration. The fact of sharing the stolen money makes it impossible for the crew to refuse that celebration dinner.



Figure 5.7: A shot from *Man Bites Dog*, the film crew and Ben the killer are having a celebration dinner together.

This scene is also the first scene we see Rémy on-screen having a dialogue with Ben, starting from that moment we keep seeing Rémy as a character, consistently in conversation with Ben. Thus, the film shifts from observational fly-on-the-wall style to

Cinema Verité starting from this scene. As in the celebration dinner, they sit all together around the dinner table having mussels together hence there are no boundaries between the crew and the subject anymore, they become one.

In the next murder, we see even a greater contribution of the film crew to the act of killing as Ben kills his enemy with the help of the zoom of the telephoto lens of the film crew, so the camera becomes a murder weapon. Another important particularity of the scene is that reminding the constructedness of filmmaking by separating each instrument during the scene. Ben lost his bracelet which has a sentimental value while chasing his enemy in the old factory. The crew disperse to different floors of the building to look for the bracelet while keep recording both the sound and the photography of the film, we follow the process of searching for the bracelets with the dispersed instruments that are still synchronized. So, the positions of the recording sources are in separate individual movements throughout this scene thus creating such moments like hearing but not seeing Ben, hearing the voice of the sound operator but not knowing where he is, etc. Hence, the space and time continuity is greatly distorted throughout this scene. While the two-layer of narration, sound, and image, is still in synchronization, the differentiation of the focus and the position of the instruments remind us of the performing individual who operates the instruments, instead of hiding them for the seamless narration as in the conventional film.



Figure 5.8: A shot from *Man Bites Dog*, Ben the killer is using the zoom of the telephoto lens to find his enemy.

The crew and Ben go drinking again, they get drunk and kicked out of the bar they have been drinking. Ben verbalizes the self-reflexivity of the film by loudly singing a song about his love for cinema. He remarks on his fictionality in subtext in the lyrics of the song.

Ben: I will go because I am cinema!
[Ben starts to sing]
Cinema! Cinema!
From screen to screen, film to film,
I gave you my life.
And you, Gabin,
Son of Lucien,
I made you a good boy again.
All together now!
Cinema! Cinema!

Following the singing, Ben finds some parts of a Santa dress and put them on. He suddenly invades a home and catches a couple who is about to have sexual intercourse. Ben and the crew rape the couple together and grotesquely murder them. The crew switches their positions in the acts from a facilitative complicit to an active participant in the crimes starting from this scene. In the following scenes, we see the crew carrying dead bodies trying to hide them under the mud under the direction of Ben.



Figure 5.9: A shot from *Man Bites Dog*, Ben the killer is using the zoom of the telephoto lens to find his enemy.

After getting beaten up in a boxing match Ben wears neck protection which limits his movements. We see a scene of Ben trying to tackle down a postman, but the postman runs

away. Ben blames Rémy for not helping him and expresses his disappointment by saying “Teamwork means being able to count on your colleagues, but I could not count on you this time.” Ben calls Rémy a colleague and the act of attacking someone is teamwork. It is emphasized that there are no boundaries between the act of filmmaking and the act of violence, between the filmmaker and the killer. The roles and acts are interchangeable; filmmaking is cited as an act of killing and the killer is making films. The film comes to its end in accordance with this coupling as the crew and Ben get shot to death together; a scene seems merely intended to conclude the topic by wrapping it up rather than having an effort to state “The Death of the Author” as it is in *Fubar* which will be discussed in more detail later. “The Death of the Author” theory as proposed by Roland Barthes in his homonymous essay dated 1967, indicates a multi-dimensional and multi-vocal reading of a text by refusing the sole authority of the author. Since in the end of *Man Bites Dog* the whole crew dies together as a conclusion, it does not signify a particular reference to the theory.

Man Bites Dog is one of the most prominent examples of the transgressive mockumentary. From its narrative to narrational strategies, it is formed on reflexive counter-practices on the margins of conventional media forms. It is independently produced without having any major corporate authority in charge through self-funding and self-handling. It critiques various documentary forms and media agendas by founding itself as an eccentric parody of an iconic and popular television show. Its critique is not limited to documentaries, but it expands to the practices of filmmaking and storytelling, particularly to television journalism and reality shows that search for spectacle in ordinary actuality. The parodical approach of the film to its own constructedness, instruments, and participants alerts and alienates the audience to question the illusionism of conventional film and the spectatorial passive-receiver position that is ordered by the codes of media. Debunker parody in company with transgressive narrative awakens the audience to a larger extent with the shock and taboo-less mockery in *Man Bites Dog*. By choosing its subject matter as a violent yet quasi-intellectual serial killer who crossover the position of the filmed subject and involves in the production, it transgresses the representational dynamics of observational documentary and Cinema Verité. It is equipped with the aspects of carnivalesque aesthetics through the half-lived half-performed self-

representations of the filmmakers, and their complicit involvement in crimes renders the film uncanny in a self-reflexive and self-referential way. The ambiguity of their presence in film makes the text impossible to accept with imposed codes of conventional film and resonates as the generator of critical aspects. The filmmakers' on-screen representation outside of its publicly acknowledged imagery as the precise decision maker destructs the understanding of the process of constructing a film.



6. ANALYSIS OF *FUBAR* (2002)

Fubar (2002) is a transgressive mockumentary, originally directed, filmed, and edited by Michael Dowse; produced by Michael Dowse, Paul Spence, and David Lawrence; starring David Lawrence and Paul Spence, music composed by Paul Spence. By looking at the credits of the film, we can say that it's a work of just a limited group of people. *Fubar* was shot in guerrilla filmmaking style on digital video and produced with a budget of 10.000\$ in total, self-funded by the director and lead actors: Dowse, Spence, and Lawrence (Stagg 2017). The film is distributed by Odeon Films and made its premiere at Sundance Film Festival in 2002 as an official selection of the festival.

Fubar follows two lifelong friends, Dean Murdoch (Paul Spence) and Terry Cahill (Dave Lawrence), through the lens of documentary filmmaker Farrel Mitchner (Gordon Skilling), a young director who tries to capture the life of two representatives (Dean and Terry) of head-bangers subculture. Farrel explores the depths of their relationship, the fragility of life, and the blooming possibilities of death while filming day to day life of Dean and Terry. Throughout the filming, Farrel discovers that Dean is hiding a serious case of testicular cancer and tells Dean's girlfriend Trixie who convinces him to see a doctor. Later, the film follows the examination process of Dean's illness and one last camping weekend before Dean undergoes the surgery. On the last day of camping, Farrel dies by jumping into a shallow stream bed because of the insistence of both Dean and Terry to persuade him to jump into the water. The film continues after the death of the director Farrel, encapsulating Dean and Terry's visit to the funeral house and Dean's post-surgery celebration.

Transgression of *Fubar* is based on certain themes that recurs throughout the film. To analyze *Fubar* in terms of the transgressive criticism, it is reasonable to focus on these recurring themes dispersed in various scenes rather than prioritizing an analysis that examines the film scene-by-scene. It is possible to specify such themes under two main category, transgressive narrative and transgressive narration which are in a constant co-

operation in the making of film, most importantly because of mockumentary film form that function on the interplay between narration and narrative. Therefore, I rather favor to focus on transgressive themes without sub-categorizing them as narrative or narrational but by encapsulating their interplay for the emergence of transgression. Such interplays occur in the following themes: intertwinement of fiction and actuality through carnivalesque aesthetic, degradation of the privileged status of the director, and the intended use of contrast to emphasize eccentricity.

6.1 Intertwinement of Fiction and Actuality

The relationship of *Fubar* with the actuality appears in two prepotent components of its construction. Firstly, the extradiegetic image of the film is based on the authentic representation of the pseudo-documentary which constitutes the mockumentary aspect of the film. *Fubar* claims itself as a genuine documentary by Farrel Mitchner who is in fact the fictional documentary filmmaker acted by the actor Gordon Skilling in the film, on various medias. It emphasizes its connection with actuality and factuality, although it is a film full of silliness and transgression.

The film was screened in Canada with an alternative title, *Fubar: A Documentary by Farrel Mitchner*. ("Fubar (2002) - Release Info - Imdb" 2022). Such an alternative title is in resemblance with the alternative title of *This is Spinal: A Rockumentary by Martin di Bergi* (*This Is Spinal Tap* (1984) - Release Info - IMDb, 2022). Pseudo-director claim of *Fubar* expands to its releasing trailer made in 2002 which *Fubar* credited as “a documentary by Farrel Mitchner”, and “a Busted Tranny Production” that is also mentioned in the opening credits of the film as its production company, which does not really exist ("Fubar (2002) - Trailer - Imdb" 2022). Another reflection of this pseudo-director claim is visible in the film's Letterboxd page. In the overview of the film, it is described as a genuine documentary work brought to the big screen by documentarian Ferral Mitchner ("Fubar (2002) - Letterboxd" 2022). The same applies for its DIY style eccentric film poster which cites *A Film by Farrel Mitchner* as well.



Figure 6.1: Releasing poster of *Fubar* (2002)

The film emphasizes the directorial claim in its very beginning as well which opens with series of announcement and a dedication, “to F.M.”. Abbreviation F.M. stands for Farrel Mitchner –the fictional director who dies during the process of making the film. So, “the Mitchner’s Film” is apparently finalized after its death. I assume that it is written in abbreviation instead of the director’s full name to preserve a certain enigma instead of directly revealing the death of the director. Later in the opening title sequence of the film, it is also indicated as “a documentary by FARREL MITCHNER”. Another announcement on black sets the main subject of the mockumentary, as follows:

In the summer of 2000, Farrel Mitchner documented the subculture traditionally known as “headbangers”. He chose Terry Cahill and Dean Murdoch as his subjects.

This announcement functions in favor of two connected aspects of the film. It signifies and legitimatizes the very reason why the filmmaker, and we the audience, follow Dean and Terry and their bizarre way of living. Also, it repositions *Fubar* as an urban ethnography film that examines a subculture. Our fictional on-screen director Farrel Mitchner is in an attempt to make a documentary about a musical-based subculture.

Such dedication to forming a “real” documentary impression both extradiegetic and diegetic seems to be motivated to persuade the audience to the factuality of the film and address their established spectatorship experience. Regarding the vicious absurdity of the film, the persuasion of the audience ensures a base for the uncanniness of the films on the margin of familiar replicated forms. Such uncanniness functions as a shock factor for the audience because it creates a certain ambiguity about the truthfulness of the film. Conventional codes of documentary spectatorship direct the spectator to have an insightful and informative experience of viewing through the guidance of the director. In the case of *Fubar*, the production of the film is visibly out of control, the subjects are uncooperative with the director, and the insightful narrative is rather disturbing, yet the film still pretends to be genuine; therefore, the transgressive deconstruction resonates through the contradiction between the factual expectancies that brought up by such claims and the actual carnivalesque chaos of the film. That is a parodical starting point for the film to raise its criticism of documentary filmmaking codes by radically altering the practice while still being on the margin of the form.

The second manner to interact with the actuality in *Fubar* is the fact that the film crew shot the film with the claim of a documentary in their interaction with everyday people of their surroundings who happen to be a part of the film. Therefore, the film includes not only the actors but also real participants of actualities. Even though the story of the film is based on a fictional narrative, practicing the documentary form in uncontrolled filming environments opens the film to connect with its documenting potential. The opening announcement of *Fubar* is a manifestation of responsibility for those who became a part of the film unknowingly its fictional aspect.

The following “documentary” is fictional. We apologize to any person appearing in the film who believed the documentary was real. Your agreement to appear in the film is greatly appreciated. –Odeon Films

Spence and Lawrence go beyond the boundaries of acting but starts to lively-perform Dean and Terry in spontaneity and instantaneity. In these scenes, the film puts forward his documenting particularity instead of an organized and scripted mockery. Encounters with unknowing participants vary from drinking with newly met people to vandalizing.

First scene with unknowing participants is a band rehearsal which Dean attends to be a part of it. The rehearsal with the bands is a real rehearsal which Paul Spencer performs with the band in the character of Dean. Participation of band members without having to know the truth about the production of film is understandable from the blurring effect on the faces of some of the members, which is most likely related with legal issues of representing them without a legitimate permission.

On their camping before Dean's surgery, Terry and Dean interact with many different people. It is visible that many of these encounters are spontaneous and unexpected. We see Dean bowling with some children; Terry and Dean encounter a real headbanger and they share some thoughts; later, the duo meets with some random youngsters, and they party together; lastly, they meet with a couple of bullies, one of them wants to fight with another one who ends up losing his tooth. These encounters and interactions are one of the most unique parts of the *Fubar*. Dowse, Spence, and Lawrence create two outrageous filmic characters Terry and Dean; but in their interaction with actualities, they seem accepted by society.



Figure 6.2: A shot from *Fubar*, Dean and Terry meets with a real headbanger.

Dean and Terry's encounter with a real headbanger is particularly important because it stands as a face-to-face encounter of the real and the fiction. Their nonseparable similarity makes the authenticity of the main characters more visible and points out the actuality of the narrated culture in *Fubar*. They look similar, the headbanger has long tail hairs like

Terry and Dean, wears a sleeveless shirt and rides a bike like Dean, and talk a unique broken English with an authentic vocabulary such as our characters. This kind of encounter is a matter of impossibility for any genre of cinema except mockumentary, an encounter of mocked and mocker, of faked and faker.

Alongside the encounters with unknowing participants, the violence and vandalism hold an important position in the relationship of the film with actuality. The real fight between certain strangers is presented in company with a cheerful cartoonish soundtrack. By choosing to score the scene with this kind of music, Dowse refuses to incorporate the intensity of the violated action, instead he satirizes the act of unprovoked violence and subverts the expectation of the audience which is created by the codes of conventional cinema filled up with accompanist soundtrack to enhance the desired affection. In another scene, Dean and Terry vandalize certain objects they found on the road with rage; they paint curses on the ground with spray paint and break the window of a bus stop and run away with the film crew. This sequence seems most likely shot improvised and half-acted, half-real. The boundaries between the real and the fiction get completely blurred through vandalism. In *Fubar*, the fictive inducement of Terry and Dean being in rage according to the plot causes a real act of vandalism, hence the fiction-making causes the destruction in the actuality. Terry and Dean's state of mind is not a reality, but the result of their rage is an actuality.



Figure 6.3: A shot from *Fubar*, Dean and Terry break the windows of a bus stop.

Spontaneous filming in an uncontrolled environment with the leading of a fictional narrative is a significant oppositional practice, it is a transgressive way of filmmaking by unleashing constructed characters into non-constructed occasions. It is a complete denial of structuralism that opens the film into unknown possibilities, a non-industrial guerrilla filmmaking practice that is out of the control of even the filmmakers themselves. In these scenes of encounters, the mockery comes from our diegetic knowledge of the fictitiousness of Terry and Dean that is mobilizing in between actualities without letting the counterpart know of the interactions. Thus, the comedy comes with the twisted knowledge that the audience of the film has but the participant of the film does not have. In these scenes, the audience has more knowledge about the non-factuality of actuality than the participants of actuality. Thus, the film puts the audience in a privileged position in knowledge, the privilege is awakening and triggering to activate the audience who has been put constantly in a passive position by the commercial Hollywood and such.

6.2 Degradation of The Director

Fubar criticizes broadly the role and the function of the director in the making of a film through the director figure of Farrel Mitchner, and Dean and Terry's uncooperative and degrading attitudes toward him. The frequent on-screen appearance of Farrel and his out-of-control process of making his film is a self-conscious target board for Dowse to embody his criticism through Dean and Terry's cynical and frivolous articulation.

The film does not spend any time raising its critique of avant-garde filmmaking and emphasizing Dean and Terry's disrespect to Farrel the director. The very first scene of *Fubar* includes Farrel's screening of his past fiction for Dean and Terry. They do not show any appreciation or respect for Farrel, instead, they insult his work. This contradiction between them shows itself throughout the film and later reaches its peak. Another earlier scene opens with Farrel's frustrated face, and later Dean who is holding the boom microphone of the film crew and wearing its headphones while yelling meaninglessly outside of the window of a moving car.

These two scenes are the indicators of two ongoing means to demystify the privileged position of the director through the interaction between Dean and Terry, and Farrel; such as the duo's apparent and verbal disrespect to the director and uncooperative attitude with the filmmaking. Such means that are connected and interwoven in many scenes show that Farrel is not the sole creator and/or the decision-maker of the film who controls every dimension of filmmaking, instead, he is incapable to direct his wild subjects.

On the first night of camping in the forest, Farrel gets drunk by shotgunning beers as the night goes on. Terry and Dean mess with the drunk Farrel and Farrel starts to mess with them as well. Later, Terry asks a question that is the last drop for Farrel who is already out of patience, "What are you doing when you don't make movies?". Farrel starts to interrogate them and attacks them both verbally and physically while both Terry and Dean do not take him so seriously. The breakdown of Farrel and the argument between them is about the cinema and the representation more than it's about Farrel. Farrel is situated as a passive, following tail of the duo throughout the film. His duty is to follow his subjects as a fly and his representation is limited to the single dimension of "filming director". Here, the film question itself and its single-dimensional representative choice. Subtexts of Farrel's verbal attacks in return reveal his vision of himself; he sees himself as a mighty creator and thinks that the duo needs to appreciate him because they are the ones he chose instead of the others. This argument emphasize the contradiction between the mythical image of the director that Farrel adopts and a transgressive counter stance that degrades the artistic dominance of the director that the duo performs.

On the last day of camping, Terry and Dean decide to go to Sasquatch Creek jumping point to jump into the stream and swim. It is a familiar activity for the duo, they used to do that many times and they are not afraid; Terry even indicates that "they don't fall on their necks and die", this is a self-conscious verbal interplay because this is the way the director Farrel dies. On the rocks of the stream, Terry and Dean try to convince Farrel to jump on the stream. The film crew accepts to jump on the water instead of Farrel, they hand the boom microphone and the camera to Terry and Dean. Finally, Farrel hesitantly accepts to jump into the water, he jumps and dies immediately; the film crew and the duo leave the equipment and jump after the floating body of Farrel. An intertitle indicates his

death, “Farrel Mitchner, 1975 – 2000”. The death of Farrel is the announcement of the death of the author who is already lost control over his subjects as we’ve seen in earlier scenes. Ironically, Farrel dies after he decides for the first time to incorporate with the duo who is a constant uncooperative attitude toward him.



Figure 6.4: A shot from *Fubar*, Farrel dies after jumping into water.

Killing the on-screen director as a part of a film is not a common theme to find in a conventional film. Such inclusion remarks a stating functionality instead of a sole narrative act because of its radicality. The constant degradation of the director turns into an ongoing theme throughout the film; it tends to become a humorous component rather than an awakening self-conscious strategy. Therefore, the death of the director functions as a pro-active anti-illusionistic shock in the diegesis of film that is full of self-reflexive demystification in its construct. As an earlier example, *Man Bites Dog* has a similar scene which the whole film crew dies at the very end of the film. In *Man Bites Dog*, the death of the film crew seems like an effort to sum up the story of the film. Yet, in *Fubar*, because the film continues after the death of Farrel, it stands as a statement. What is that statement? I believe it is possible to argue it as a refuse of the distilling dominance of the author on the creative work and a liberation of the text from interpretive tyranny of the director. The death of the Farrel is a salute to “The Death of the Author” theory that is argued by Roland Barthes in his homonym essay.

Since “The Death of the Author” argues the impossibility and incompatibility of limiting a text into a single, corresponding interpretation, it suggests a multi-dimensional and multi-vocal reading of a text. Such approach suits well with the anti-structuralism of Cinema of Transgression that refuses the formulaic ways of structuring a story. Refusing anti-structuralism for experimenting ensures indispensably a multi-vocal reading of the text that is suggested by “The Death of the Author”.

6.3 Use of Contrast as a Strategy

The contrast is one of the predominant particularities of *Fubar*. In the narrative, there is a clear contrast between Farrel and the duo, Farrel is in a calmer state with an idealistic view of making a film in contrast with the duo who is in a constant wild state and reckless about their life. There is also cultural contrast between the dominant culture of society and its norms, and the subculture of headbangers and its viciousness. In the narration, the contrast is reflected through the parallel editing between counterpart characters, ideas, and actions; and emphasized by sudden and unexpected cuts between discordant scenes.

Abuse of the contrasting storytelling function as a self-reflexive strategy in *Fubar*. The opening scene is a good example of such a use of contrast. It reflects the fictional aspect of the film *Fubar* over a dialogue about another film by Farrel which is a 6-minute long black and white fiction. The first three dialogues are heard in black, then the image appears, and we understand that Terry and Dean are watching a film that Farrel made a couple of years ago. A dialogue that seems first like devoted to *Fubar*, reveals itself as an argument on another film with the appearance of the image.

[ON BLACK]

Terry: Is this a documentary?

Farrel: No, it is not a documentary. It's a fiction, a drama.

Terry: It's not a documentary!

[IMAGE APPEARS]

Farrel: This is a film that I made about six years ago. The subject matter is a maybe little sensitive with some people.

Dean: What is it about like?

Farrel: Well, I won't tell you. What I'll let you do is watch it.

Dean: I'm guessing it's about uh...

Terry: Rockets!

Dean: No, I'm guessing it's about male itch!

By the way of introduction, the scene forms a self-reflexive commentary on the mélange of fiction and non-fiction aspects in the construction of *Fubar*, but also emphasizes the discordance between Dean and Terry, and Farrel.

Later, we see that Farrel interviews the guidance counselor Ron Melnyk about the headbangers subculture. He specifies some characteristics of headbangers, their look, attitude, and music taste, in parallel editing with Dean and Terry drinking and yelling in a baseball match and trashing a house while listening to metal music. This sequence adds a factuality to the film by including an “expert opinion” but because of the parallel editing of the interview with the rebellious attitudes of the subjects, it turns into a comedic contrast between the cultural studies and the culture itself, expository mode of talking-head documentary filmmaking and filming the unusual subject in fly-on-the-wall style. The scene challenges the privileged status of documentary to be capable of serving the truth with expository expertise and emphasizes the difficulty of depicting the “truth” especially when it’s unconventional.

Two consecutive sequences follow the reveal of Dean’s testicular cancer. The first of them consists of an overlapping composition of Dean’s mother reading Dean’s poem “Woman is a Danger Cat” and Dean peacefully playing his only song written for acoustic guitar. In the following sequence after the song and poem, we see Dean in a contrasting furious state of mind. He rises against, yells, and curses at a supreme being by looking at the sky while walking aggressively in his underpants during a lightning storm.



Figure 6.5: A shot from *Fubar*, Dean’s mother reads his son’s poem “Woman is A Danger Cat”.



Figure 6.6: A shot from *Fubar*, Dean rises against a supreme being by yelling at the sky in his underpants.

Alongside Dean’s contrasting mental states between sequences, both sequences work as a farce for the absurd contrast between conventional ways of narrating such scenes and the way they are narrated in *Fubar*. The absurdity of the combination of the lyrics of Dean’s poem and song overshadows his emotional state after just being learned his diagnosis of cancer, hence functioning as a comedic scene instead of a dramatic one despite the melancholic musicality of his song. Similarly, him being only in his underpants during his aggressive rebellion against the supreme power and his unique

curses such as, “Do you want a piece of me? How about your right nut, your fucking right nutty nut?” and “Bring it on. Shower that fucker!” makes the sequences farcical instead of dramatic. The farcical quality of both sequences is the result of an anti-illusionistic approach to creating them. Dowse does not let the spectator go under the influences of these states of melancholia and rebellion which have a high potential for identification. Instead, he adds absurd components to these sequences to break the illusion that is hard to overlook. That is a frequent strategy by Dowse throughout the film that recurs in other scenes as adding a cartoonish soundtrack to an actual fight scene or as Dean still has a mustache after his chemo treatment.

Such self-conscious and self-reflexive use of the contrast in and between scenes functions as a breaker of the dramatic illusion that puts the spectator in an active state through shock and humor. The contrast does not make the illusion completely disappear but instead, it makes the illusion distortedly visible. As argued before, revealing and distortion of the illusion reminds the illusionistic strategies commonly used by conventional narratives; therefore, the self-conscious farcicality of emotional scenes through the contrast reminds the captivating constructedness of conventional illusionistic strategies.

Fubar transgresses the established codes of filmmaking, documentary, idea of the director, production, and viewership with its marginal practices. Its camera work is hyper-indexical with documentary aesthetics because it is formed with spontaneity and instantaneity; it has a cheap, dirty, and grainy look in coherence with the lifestyles of its subject. The subject matter of the film is transgressive with shocking elements, violence, and boundless mockery. Both Terry and Dean are in constant aggression and a mood of outrage and uncooperating. The production is self-funded, uncontrolled, and unconventional. Its fast-paced editing is full of jump-cuts, time gaps, and contrasts in and between scenes, unconcerned about continuity and spectator attachment. Its narrative structure is rather shapeless and unstructured, for more than half of the film there is not a plot-driven story but moments and glimpses of actualities and absurdities unique to the characters. It constantly blends and disarranges the reality and the fiction through improvisation and real-life encounters of Terry and Dean with the other unaware participants of the “documentary”. Through self-conscious and self-reflexive narration

strategies it mocks documentary filmmaking but also with dramatic narrations of any fiction film may have. Mockery of conventions and marginal practices on the edges of canonical, and ambiguous playfulness with actuality holds the spectator alarmed, awake, and ready to question the film and the cinema in general. The pseudo-director claim and Farrel's positioning in the film open the matter of the director into questioning and broadly critiquing the author-director and their authority. It is clear that *Fubar* stands as a transgressive mockumentary, a practice of counter-cinema that is critical, reflexive, and marginal.



7. ANALYSIS OF *A FILM BY TUĞRA KAFTANCIOĞLU* (2003)

A Film by Tuğra Kaftancıoğlu is written, produced, and directed by Hasan Yalaz and Emre Akay in 2003. The film made its premiere at New York International Film and Video Festival in 2003 and had its commercial release later in 2008 in Turkey. The film is made with a budget of 1000 USD, with a crew of six people, and with the equipment contribution from Istanbul Bilgi University where Akay was working as a researcher. The film was shot with multiple consumer-grade cameras that apply various recording technologies from MiniDV digital cameras to Super-8 film cameras (“Tuğrul Kaftancıoğlu Filmi New York'ta” 2003). While certain scenes were shot in bars, and streets in the city of Istanbul and Istanbul Bilgi University, the majority of the film was shot in 4 days in Akay’s family house in Prince Islands (Akay 2020). The film has quickly gained a cult status in Turkey and was specially screened at !f Istanbul Film Festival in 2011 as a result of public voting (“Facetalk: Hasan Yalaz & Emre Akay” 2011).



Figure 7.1: Releasing poster of *A Film by Tuğra Kaftancıoğlu*, from 2008.

It is difficult to summarize the plot of *A Film by Tuğra Kaftancıoğlu* because of its chaotic, multi-layered, and eclectic narrative. Most simplistically, it is possible to say that it is a film about a totalitarian and self-obsessed director making a snuff-like violent film.

A Film by Tuğra Kaftancıoğlu starts with a series of casting records for a film whose subject is untold. A brief scene includes Emre Akay, the real director of the film, and someone assigns him to do casting videos with various people to choose one to follow. Later, we see a collage of women interviewed for the casting of a film. Subjects of these interviews vary from the talents and interests of these women to their questioning of Akay and the purpose of casting the video. Akay follows one of the women, Gülüm, in her theater play. Later, Akay meets with Tuğra Kaftancıoğlu on a ferry to Prince Islands. Kaftancıoğlu convinces him to join him to have dinner in his house and talk about film projects. In the house, Akay finds out that he is being filmed and Gülüm is in the house as well, acting for Kaftancıoğlu's film. After this scene, Akay disappears, and we follow the making of Kaftancıoğlu's film. For the sake of his film, Kaftancıoğlu drugs, torture, and abuse Gülüm; he threatens and degrades her, and chases her with his gun when she tries to run away. The film ends with Kaftancıoğlu pretending to rape her. The epilog of the film includes the screening ovation of the film in which the film crew goes on the stage.

In the opening titles that interrupt casting videos, Tuğra Kaftancıoğlu is credited for every component of production. The film credits itself as presented, produced, edited, sound designed, music arranged, written, starred, and directed by Tuğra Kaftancıoğlu. It fakes its own production team in coherence with the self-obsessed character of Kaftancıoğlu. Such dedication of the film to a single-dimensional creative vision of a person is a piece of preliminary information about the persona of the pseudo-director of the film.



Figure 7.2: A shot from the opening title of *A Film by Tuğra Kaftancıoğlu* that indicates Tuğra Kaftancıoğlu as the director of the film.

Every actor in the film performs an altered version of themselves under their name, from women who participate in the casting to Tuğra Kaftancıoğlu who is, in fact, a known television actor at that time. So, the film shares a similar motif of representation with *Man Bites Dog* in which the filmmakers perform themselves through a fiction narrative. The difference between the two is the lack of examined subject matter that is under the focus of the filmmaker; in *Man Bites Dog*, the daily life of Ben the killer holds this position. Instead, in *A Film by Tuğra Kaftancıoğlu* the filmmaker himself and his acts are under the scope. Since the footage of the film is taken from the cameras that are operated by the fiction filmmakers, and such footage captures the act of the performing filmmaker; what is documented in the film is the performance of filmmaking while revealing its fraud.

To understand the multi-layered construction of the film about the performance and representation, and to evaluate its critique of the filmmaking practices; I choose to argue the film under two prominent themes that shape the film: the camera as an actor of the film because of its power to capture and documenting the performing in form of the mockumentary. These themes are connected to re-establish themselves in both the narrative and narration of the film, yet they are distinct enough to examine separately.

7.1 Camera as an Actor

Yalaz and Akay indicate that re-positioning the camera as an actor in the film was one of the starting points for them to create *A Film by Tuğra Kaftancıoğlu* ("Facetalk: Hasan Yalaz & Emre Akay" 2011). This repositioning of the camera shows itself in the film in various ways; materialistically and authoritatively.

First of all, its materialistic apperency is an ongoing visual motif in the imagery of the film. The whole film is shot with multiple cameras recording synchronously except for a few scenes. Cameras are frequently located at the crossing or opposite angles; therefore, the operators and the positions of the cameras are captured by the other cameras. Certain scenes of the filmmaker shooting itself through mirrors or monitors also reflect the camera in function under the control of the filmmaker. The extraordinary use of the camera is also another aspect that reminds the instrumentality and materiality of the camera, such as involving the recording handheld camera in the brawl between Akay and Kaftancıoğlu or stringing out the recording camera on air and spinning it around.



Figure 7.3: A shot from *A Film by Tuğra Kaftancıoğlu*, while Kaftancıoğlu and his assistant are shooting in crossing angles, another camera shoots them in wide angel.

The editing that jumps from the footage of one camera to another emphasizes the motivation to point out the plurality of cameras that surround the subject in focus and reveals the difference between the recorder and the recorded or between signifier and

signified. Such panoptical surroundedness is also reflected by certain camera angles that are positioned in the house as surveillance cameras. The editing also prioritizes the camera that starts to record or goes out of the record by cutting to the footage of the camera that goes in and out of use; thus, the editing highlights the camera as an instrument by outlining its limits of capturing the actuality. Emphasizing the instrumentality of the editing through constant visualization of the imagery of the film constantly reveals to us the seams of the film and reminds us of the constructedness of film. Such apparency of the cameras forms an anti-illusionistic aesthetic that is coherent in the film. Since the function of the camera as an instrument is to record, such frequent remarks about the instrumentality of the camera highlight the recording fetishism of Tuğra Kaftancıoğlu.



Figure 7.4: A shot from *A Film* by Tuğra Kaftancıoğlu, the moment Akay stops recording, visualized by blue screen.

When Tuğra Kaftancıoğlu meets Emre Akay on the ferry to Prince Islands, he insistently asks throughout their conversation, “Are you recording? Please keep recording;” later during their dialogue in the house, he reacts aggressively when Akay stops recording. In other scenes with Gülüm, we see that many scenes start before the action starts or even before the set is ready with its components such as microphones and lights. The positioning of cameras in certain scenes as surveillance cameras amplifies the same aspect of being under the scope of the camera as well. That is the reflection of Kaftancıoğlu’s fetishistic obsession with capturing every moment of himself and his subject. Such fetish

is motivated by a narrative that points out Kaftancıoğlu's great desire of making a decent film in his distinctive terms.



Figure 7.5: A shot from *A Film* by Tuğra Kaftancıoğlu, a camera is positioned as a surveillance camera while another one is shooting handheld.

On the other hand, Kaftancıoğlu uses the camera as a tool of authority to abuse Gülüm. Whenever my Gülüm opposes Kaftancıoğlu, he uses his recording authority against her through the camera. This kind of authority enables Kaftancıoğlu to legitimize all his perverted acts under the name of art, for his film. His authoritarian actions lead to drugging Gülüm to get a better screaming response from her. In one of the scenes, we see that Gülüm comes back for the shooting after leaving the house the previous day. This scene indicates that the authoritarian power of the camera, which records and spreads and has the potential to make her famous, has taken over Gülüm enough to convince her to come back.

One of the scenes, shot outside controlled spaces such as the house, takes place in the streets of Prince Islands and at the ferry dock. Gülüm runs away from home and goes to the ferry dock, Kaftancıoğlu chases Gülüm with a gun in the streets and catches her at the dock. When Kaftancıoğlu enters the dock, he puts the gun on Gülüm's head and starts dragging her. Meanwhile, two cameras are recording all the action, and Kaftancıoğlu repeatedly says "Everything is fine, we're shooting a film". Although Gülüm does not say anything about the action being part of a film, the crowd that sees the cameras and hears

Kaftancıoğlu's claim does not react to the event. The presence of the camera obscures the presence of the gun and takes over the control of the probability of a violent action enough to restrain the crowd who does not know any aspect of the film. The irony is that the whole action is voluntarily participated by the actor as a part of the film, *A Film by Tuğra Kaftancıoğlu*, but for the film-within-film shot by Tuğra Kaftancıoğlu, the action is not voluntarily participated because Gülüm performs her altered version who tries to run away from the lunatic practices of fictional Tuğra Kaftancıoğlu. Thus, we know that everything is a part of fiction-making by watching the end result of the camera work as a spectator, the crowd that takes a witnessing part of the actuality concedes to not react solely by seeing the camera as a material in function.



Figure 7.6: A shot from *A Film by Tuğra Kaftancıoğlu*, Kaftancıoğlu points a gun at Gülüm at the dock while the others are watching.

Consequently, the camera which is one of the actors in the film undertakes certain other functions besides representing through recording. Its constant on-screen existence imposes an anti-illusionistic aesthetic on the film; its constant recording attributes a panoptical aspect to the film; it enforces an inducing authority to its captures, and it is a self-reflexive motif that is connected to the performing filmmaker. None of these varying functionalities of the camera pairs with the conventional instrumentality of the camera in the making of a non-challenging commercial film. Highlighting such transgressive possibilities of the meaning of an essential means of filmmaking practices infirm unidirectional and simplified position of the camera in the conventional film.

7.2 Documenting Performing

As argued in earlier theoretical chapters and also in the other film analyses of this thesis, the carnivalesque aesthetic is a recurring aspect in transgressive mockumentaries. Alongside the chaotic deconstructive formation of the carnivalesque text, half-lived half-acted improvisational performances that takes place based on a narrative construction find their place in the transgressive mockumentary. A strong example of such performativity resonates in *A Film by Tuğra Kaftancıoğlu* and stands out as one of the most important particularities of the uncanniness of the film.

Yalaz and Akay indicate that meeting Tuğra Kaftancıoğlu in person gave them the idea of making their film that focuses on an autotheist and authoritarian filmmaker ("Facetalk: Hasan Yalaz & Emre Akay" 2011). The impressive presence of Tuğra Kaftancıoğlu in real life with his bulky figure and bold voice has been twisted into his filmic persona who dominates and manipulates. His actual interest in cinema and acting carried into his filmic persona as well. Thus, the lead character we see on screen is not completely different from his real-life identity, except for his abnormal manners and artistic practices.

The same carnivalesque resonance of actual people through altered film personas applies to other characters as well. At that time, Emre Akay was a young emerging filmmaker who tries to get into the film industry; this is how he is represented in the film as well. Mehmet Demirtaş, who plays Tuğra's assistant Mehmet, was an actual close friend of Tuğra. Gülüm who is acted by Gülüm Baltacıgil was an emerging actress at that time and represented in film in accordance. Each person who gave an interview introduced themselves in accordance with their actual selves. So, what is the mocking fiction in a film which is so coherent with the actuality? I argue that it is the settled fictional diegesis of the film that creates an environment for the participants to perform an altered version of themselves. Tuğra Kaftancıoğlu's desire to make an unconventional avant-garde film in his house sets a fictive basis for every participant of the film to perform themselves on such occasion.



Figure 7.7: A shot from *A Film by Tuğra Kaftancıoğlu*, Gülüm is on stage for her theatre play.

Dirk Eitzen argues in his article “When Is a Documentary?: Documentary as a Mode of Reception” (1995) that fiction films and documentary films are not that different in their claim of truthfulness. We can consider fiction films as documentation of certain actors performing specific roles, or we can consider documentary films as a performance of certain individuals who acts as an insightful version of themselves about a certain subject. Alisa Lebow argues in her article “Faking What? Making a Mockery of Documentary” (2006) that the fake documentaries are not so different from “truthful” documentaries. She finds the claim of authenticity and truthfulness of documentary rather problematic and indicates that the documentary is itself already fake of sorts; thus, the mockumentary fakes the fakery of documentary as well and reaches a certain truth about documentary filmmaking. Both articles question the privileged status of the documentary that claims to capture reality. Both articles remark on the inherent fakery or fiction of documentary that reveals itself in the stylistic and selective organization of the images captured within the limits of means. Thus, what is in the claim of representing reality is in fact a result of creative production. On the other hand, fiction filmmaking is also a document because of the extradiegetic truth that accompanies the film. In the case of *A Film by Tuğra Kaftancıoğlu*, it is a document of the social and political environment that makes it possible to shoot and screen such a transgressive film in Turkey in 2003 before the rise of conservative politics, or the documentation of Tuğra Kaftancıoğlu’s acting outside his conventional work on national television series.



Figure 7.8: A shot from *A Film by Tuğra Kaftancıoğlu*, Kaftancıoğlu pretends to rape Gülüm by going back and forward on a pillow.

Performativity and documentation of performativity in *A Film by Tuğra Kaftancıoğlu* is suitable to examine around the argumentations of these two article highlights. Yalaz and Akay indicate that their film is a criticism of the people who say they are honest, rather than critiquing the well-known fraud of filmmaking ("Facetalk: Hasan Yalaz & Emre Akay" 2011). Their indication about the criticality of their film suits well Eitzen's and Lebow's critical approach to the truthfulness of documentary and documenting the performativity.

What is documented in the film is a group of people performing as actors and makers of a fake avant-garde film who films each other and themselves. The fact that this group of people takes part in the film as a reflection of their real selves for the fictional event of Kaftancıoğlu's filmmaking creates uncanny performativity that forms the mockumentary aspect of the film. Since the documentation of performativity is also a part of their fictitious performance through the camera operation by Akay, Kaftancıoğlu, and his assistant while they are acting in the film, the documenting vision remains ambiguous. Such ambiguity that arises from the carnivalesque half-lively half-acted participation of individuals in the making of the film with a self-reflexive attitude makes the film impossible to interpret with conventional codes of filmmaking. Rather, the film appears

suitable to be defined on to the blurred line between actuality and performativity of starring and making the film.



Figure 7.9: A shot from *A Film by Tuğra Kaftancıoğlu*, Akay is arguing with Tuğra Kaftancıoğlu while his camera shooting next to him and the camera behind Kaftancıoğlu is shooting him.

The fakeness of Kaftancıoğlu's film is also emphasized in the film through certain scenes. Such as Kaftancıoğlu repeats the same action of throwing a shopping cart over and over again until it's good; or in the chase scene, Kaftancıoğlu drops his fake gun and it breaks, and the crew talks that they should have a real gun instead of a fake one. The film carries the same self-reflexive attitude to its epilogue as well. The crew goes onto the stage for an ovation after the screening of the film while cameras are shooting but decides to re-do it because Gülüm's timing of going to the stage was not good. So, the fakeness (the film shot by Kaftancıoğlu in the film) of the fakery (*A Film by Tuğra Kaftancıoğlu*) is revealed throughout the film. The multilayered uncanniness and untruthfulness of the film function as a multidimensional critique of the constructedness of filmmaking practices. As the film indicates the constructedness of filmmaking, the film-within-film indicates the constructedness of the indicator as well. Such self-reflexive reflexivity of the film demystifies the illusion which arises from the violent intensity that emerges from the filmmaking practices of fictional-Kaftancıoğlu. Thereby, the capturing shock of Kaftancıoğlu's practices gets deconstructed for the alienation.



Figure 7.10: A shot from *A Film by Tuğra Kaftancıoğlu*, Gülüm is waiting to go on the stage once again for a better shot.

A Film by Tuğra Kaftancıoğlu goes beyond parodying documentary forms or modes, instead, it follows an avant-garde film that self-consciously includes its production process. Since the initial film we watch is presented as a film by Tuğra Kaftancıoğlu who edits and directs the film, Yalaz and Akay exhibit their playfulness by transferring their authority to pseudo-Kaftancıoğlu. Therefore, the act of filmmaking in the film is self-referential and parodical, the fictional narrative choice of designating Kaftancıoğlu as the director of the film alters the form of the film indexically parodical.

From its narrative of making an avant-garde violent snuff-like film by a self-obsessed and authoritarian director to its self-referential and parodical narration that is shaped with extraordinary use of camera and editing, *A Film by Tuğra Kaftancıoğlu* stands out as a prominent transgressive mockumentary from Turkey. The transgression emerges from its chaotic anti-structuralism that is impossible to ingest with conventional codes, from its self-referential parody that critiques the filmmaker and the filmmaking practices through the embodiment of Tuğra Kaftancıoğlu and his excessive practices, and from its multilayered construction of fakery that is alienating and anti-illusionistic.

A Film by Tuğra Kaftancıoğlu is critical of every aspect it includes in its construction. It openly critiques the idea of the filmmaker through the figure of Tuğra Kaftancıoğlu and ridicules avant-garde cinema with Kaftancıoğlu's film; it argues the authority of the

camera by highlighting its vivid materiality; it emphasizes the grey area between the fiction and documentary, the actuality and performativity. By concentrating particularly on a process of filmmaking in its narrative that is strongly connected with its narrational form, *A Film by Tuğra Kaftancıoğlu* comes forward as a critical argument on the filmmaking practices, and as a statement to put forward a transformative transgression.



8. CONCLUSION

It is possible to summarize the mockumentary film as an inherently critical and mocking fake-documentary. They are certain radical examples of cinema which is commonly and perhaps mistakenly divided into two with bold lines as fiction and non-fiction. A mockumentary film position itself in the grey area between these two bold classifications of conventional cinema. The bidirectional relation of mockumentary with both fiction and non-fiction forms puts this hybrid-form in an ambiguous taxonomy. Many documentary studies, including the renowned study of Bill Nichols on the fundamentals of documentary film, *Introduction to Documentary*, owns the mockumentary genre as a sub-genre of film. This installment of mockumentary as a “sub” makes the hybrid-form closer to the documentary genres, didactically. On the other hand, I believe that one who works on mockumentary films must question why there is this need to use a replicated documentary form to narrate a story. Mockumentary films are scripted fiction texts, or in some cases largely improvised with a provision of a story to narrate. There must be a particular motivation for choosing the documentary form as a narrational dialectic. Nonfiction models have a longer history than the documentary forms that trace back to *Essays* of Montaigne, to travel memories of ancient itinerants, manifestos, blogs, diaries, etc. All these models had something in common alongside their argumentative, descriptive, and informatic particularities, that is the self of the author, their style, pattern, wording, and point of view to handle actualities of the experienced world. The documentary film adopted these models in an audio-visual aesthetics to express the actuality as historical, essayistic, investigative, poetic, ethnographic documentaries, and many more. The need of handling actualities with the nonfiction models in the positivist world is the subject of another greater discussion. Yet, from this point of view, handling a fiction narrative with models of nonfiction and modes of documentary remains suggestive to examine. I found my outcome in the self-reflexivity of the filmmaker which is a clear motivation to express certain statements about the filmmaker, the filmmaking, the cinema, and its structures, more than a mere story to be told. The urge of the reflexive

statement in form of a film is a critical approach to constructing a film. Contextually, the mockumentary is not a sole format that is equipped with a reflexive statement. The reflexive documentary is praised for its critical approach to its construct and self-questioning metacommunication; and as is extensively argued by Robert Stam, the reflexivity functions in several fiction films as a self-conscious narration strategy to break the illusionism that is imposed by the conventional commercial films. Therefore, I cannot speculate about the mockumentary film as it's a sole format that takes advantage of reflexivity as a critical altering strategy of the mainstream format. Then, what's so unique about mockumentary critique and its relationship with reflexivity comes out as its multiform hybridism of fiction and nonfiction. Since reflexive documentaries tend to aim particularly on the documentary form and question various instruments and strategies of representation, its critique focuses on documentary filmmaking. Since fiction films involve reflexivity as a narration strategy that intervenes in the construct of an ongoing narrative without deconstructing the narrative to abstruseness, the critique is limited by the diegesis of the film. Mockumentary critique differentiates from both of its components by its expanding access of the critique through its multiform inter-playfulness with both common classifications of conventional cinema. Since the formality of mockumentary relies on the documentary modes and models while founding its text on fiction narratives, its bidirectional relationship carries a potential of a bidirectional criticism which is possible to articulate as a critique of conventional film practices in general.

Mockumentary film embodies the reflexivity in its entire narration instead of introducing reflexive scenes and moments dispersed throughout its discourse time. Mockumentary's replication of documentary form is a parodical take on constructing a narration that addresses the canons of conventions in a satirical way. The difference of mockumentary from pseudo-documentaries and fake-documentaries is the reveal of the fiction that takes part in the narrative, inevitably because of the constant mockery or willingly as a self-conscious interposition. The fiction narrative in mockumentary is also constructed reflexively because of the unusual narration choice of documentary models that provides unprotectedness to the story with the interruption and contribution of the actuality. Transmissivity between the fiction and the involved actuality constantly breaks the illusionism and the diegetic boundaries of the film. Another reflexive aspect in the

fictional narrative, which is the most important critiquing aspect of the narrative, is the represented director. Very commonly, the director of a conventional film is positioned behind the camera without reminding his existence in the filmmaking thus the spectator focuses on the imaginary illusion of the naturalistic aesthetics of film, without being interrupted from their willing suspension of disbelief. Contrarily in mockumentaries, the scripted and acted figure of the director is very present on-screen in most cases; sometimes acted by the real director of film and sometimes represented by another actor. Representation of on-screen director is a canon of various documentary modes such as performative, participatory, and reflexive. A fictionalized parody of an on-screen director thus provides a certain parody of replicated documentary modes, acts as a reminder of the constructedness of filmmaking, and also substitutes for a statement instrument of mockumentary filmmakers to reflect their vision and critique through an embodiment. Therefore, the self-reflexivity of the filmmaker and the instruments of filmmaking practices are vividly present in mockumentaries which participate in the emergence of parody and satire in the text. The parodical approach originated with such reflexivity and deforms the common understanding of the cinema by emphasizing the impose and the impressment. The intertextual nature of parody and hybridism of mockumentary interrelated with various forms of conventional cinema makes its self-reflexive criticism expansively pertinent for filmmaking practices of diverse conventions.

Transgression, as specified by the Cinema of Transgression manifesto, it stands as a much more complex aesthetic characteristic than any mere dictionary definition of the term. The manifesto forms the mean of transgressive cinema through contradiction to conventional and ongoing superficial underground cinema and remarks on certain necessities. They refuse the academic standards of film studies, structuralism, and common and conventional approach to cinematic creativity. It praises a new generation of filmmakers who attacks every value system that exists in society and culture. Furthermore, it points out a new form of underground cinema that features humor and shock as essentials which are typically left out by the canon of ongoing underground cinema. The manifesto calls for the entity of violence, sexuality, humor, shock, criticism, and anti-authoritarianism in cinema and names the embodiment of these entities as

transgression. Finally, the manifesto propose transformation through transgression; asserts that freedom will be provided through the bringings of this transformation.

I find that the term transgression, as it is defined by the manifesto, is in great resemblance with the term carnivalesque, as it is defined by Mikhail Bakhtin. Both terms put forwards a counter-cultural, counter conventional, and anti-authoritarian practice; both terms favor humor and criticism as an aesthetic essential of artistic creativity. While carnivalesque emphasizes the chaos and a representational ambiguity of fiction and reality, transgression emphasizes the shock and anti-structuralism; I find these emphasizes, even if they are articulated differently, serve the same purpose of unconventional counter creative practices. Both terms transition intertextually through different practices of art disciplines from literature to cinema and theatre. Therefore, I argue that they apply to various genres of these practices as well. In my study, I favor the recent term transgressive since it is primarily defined on the basis of cinematic creativity and categorizes certain mockumentaries within the scope of the assertions of its manifesto. I find that transgression functions in both components of certain mockumentary, the form thus the narration, and the text thus the narrative. The denomination of transgressive mockumentary is the indication of certain mockumentaries under the categorization of genre perspective; in other words, mockumentaries that carry the essential qualifications of the transgressive film.

Counter-practicality of mockumentary on the margins of canonical forms works out for fault-finding of such canons of conventions and for critiquing through parodying. Parodying and misdoing such conventions is an anti-structuralist stance in itself; through the inherent reflexivity of mockumentary parody turns out to be a satirical criticism of the authority of the director, and the ideological and emotional impose of the conventional mainstream film; therefore, parody functions as an antiauthoritarian practice. Critical use of cinematic instruments enforces the textual transgression as well, with the contribution of strategies such as style changes, shocking editing, unusual use of camera, etc. The narrative of transgressive mockumentary is also significant for its counter-cultural formation that is in contradiction with conventional stories shaped with dramatization and expected emotional responses. The humor, the shock, and the critique that plays a great

part in the transgressive text awaken the spectator and support to bring out the self-reflexivity and self-consciousness in the mockumentary. Transgressive aspects and aesthetics in mockumentary are in coherence with self-reflexive and anti-illusionist aspects and strategies of the mockumentary.

Subversion of cinematic apparatus is an inherent component of mockumentary, yet transgression of practices and strategies of cinema offers a self-conscious radicalization of filmmaking beyond comedic and reformist purposes. Transformation through transgression that is asserted by the Cinema of Transgression manifesto becomes prominent for the distinctness and the significance of transgressive mockumentary to be pointed out as a particular counter-practice. Therefore, transgressive mockumentary imports a critical statement toward conventional filmmaking practices through self-reflexivity and transgression. The subject of the critique diversifies in accordance with the subject matter, the diegesis, and the parodical narration, however, centers on the filmmaking, the practices, and the actors of the practices. The critique intensifies as a result of the alertness of the spectator by transgression and self-reflexivity, and reaches beyond the limits of the film, broadly to the cinema through the critical, satirical, and parodic representation of the actors of the film industry. Manifesto indicates the liberation through transformation, that is the liberation of the spectator from the illusionism and ideological-emotional impose of conventional cinema by revealing its constructedness with the help of shock and mockery. The liberated spectator is no longer the passive consumer of commercialized cinema, a perceptual shift occurs in the awakened spectatorship.

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Poe, Amos, dir. 1976. *The Blank Generation*. Film. USA: Poe Productions.

Reiner, Rob, dir. 1984. *This Is Spinal Tap*. Film. USA: Spinal Tap Prod.

Robbins, Tim, dir. 1992. *Bob Roberts*. Film. USA: Miramax Films.

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Vertov, Dziga, dir. 1929. *Man With A Movie Camera*. Film. USSR: VUFKU.

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Wilder, Billy, dir. 1950. *Sunset Boulevard*. Film. USA: Paramount Pictures.

Zedd, Nick, dir. 1987. *Police State*. Film. USA.



CURRICULUM VITAE

Personal Information

- Name and surname: Berkay Şatır

Academic Background

Bachelor's Degree Education:

- Galatasaray University, Communication Faculty
- Bordeaux Montaigne University, Information and Communication Studies

Post Graduate Education:

- Kadir Has University, Master of Arts in Cinema and Television

Foreign Languages:

- English
- French

Work Experience

Institutions Served and Their Dates:

- Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts (IKSV), Assistant, 2017 - 2018
- Beykoz Kundura Film Studios, Venue Manager, 2018 - 2019
- Filmloverss.com, Film Critic, 2019 - 2021
- Istanbul Kultur University, Cinema and Television Department, Research Assistant 2019 - 2021
- Galatasaray University, Communication Faculty, Research Assistant, 2021 - Present

Film and Video Projects

- Bakırköy Underground, 30', Documentary, 2022, <https://vimeo.com/660034717>
- Ateş Pahası, 3', Video Collage, 2021, <https://vimeo.com/583721133>
- Pasaj Works (in progress!), 1', Video Collage, 2021, <https://vimeo.com/549629260>
- Chiaramente, 4', Music Video, 2021, <https://youtu.be/AdWlUzYy8Pk>
- Thank You for Your Efforts, 3', Video Collage, 2020, <https://vimeo.com/494320931>
- Yonga: Making of Collective Student Film, 6', Behind the Scenes, 2019, <https://vimeo.com/384406353>
- Açıkppqqmm#2, 4', Experimental Documentary, 2018, <https://vimeo.com/255038258>
- Saint V, 2', Experimental Documentary, 2016, <https://vimeo.com/194777779>
- Les Esprits Libres, 4', Short Documentary, 2015 <https://vimeo.com/83360565>

Conference Presentations (Presented in Turkish)

- Representation of Underground Art Collectives in Turkish Cinema, New Trends in Turkish Film Studies Conference: 2021 XXI Marginal Minor and Local, 2021
- Non-Budget Film Production in Contemporary Turkish Cinema, CICMS III (3rd International Conference on Cultural Informatics, Communication & Media Studies), 2020

Publications (Published in Turkish)

Printed Publications:

- Alternative Art on the Street, Book Section, Kent Kitabı, Varlık Publications, 2019
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- Documentation: Mr. Gaga, Filmloverss.com, 2020, <https://filmloverss.com/dokumanasyon-mr-gaga/>
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- The Last of England, Filmloverss.com, 2019, <https://filmloverss.com/the-last-of-england/>
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- Introduction to Robert Altman's Works, Filmloverss.com, 2019, <https://filmloverss.com/robert-altman-sinemasina-giris/>
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