Time, Space And Body Reading In Terms Of Cyberpunk Style In Science Fiction Cinema: The Case Of The Island Movie

Sonay Ayyıldız, Senem Müştak

Abstract

Space is a concept which takes place in architecture-cinema intersection and which is a base for both of the disciplines. Cinematic space, which can be counted as important as an actor for cinema, is an element in architecture which organizes human life and makes it meaningful. Different from other types, Science fiction cinema presents utopic and dystopic future foresights which differs radically from today's modern description. Improving technology starting from 1980s has introduced a sub-branch called Cyberpunk by affecting the science fiction cinema base. Cyberpunk while presenting a critical approach to basic changes faced in the modern public, discusses the near future foresight, hi-tech, miserable life, chaotic world subjects and creates its own spaces. In Cyberpunk, giant companies according to their economic and political benefits, they try to rebuild people technologically and mentally.

Cyberpunk is the product of the clearance between the body with boundaries and the mind with unlimited imagination and is the derivation of the resistance of the body with life instinct to the weakness of the body and death. "The Island" movie directed by Michael Bay has an important place among the contemporary movies having Cyberpunk movement in science fiction cinema. Movie criticizes capitalism with a pessimistic scenario in which it shows even human body can be commodified from his body and how he can be shaped with a control of giant companies. In the movie, legalizing human cloning by ignoring the social and ethical values for continuation of the individuals of high income group's effects on public and identifying these clons as a product not a human are the points in question. In this concept, the aim of the study is to evaluate by discussing the concepts of time, space and body in Cyberpunk as a sub-culture according to "The Island" movie in architecture and cinema intersection.

Key words: Dystopia, Utopia, Science Fiction, Cyberpunk, Cinema, Architecture, Time, Space, Body, Interdisciplinary

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1. Introduction

> Then came the movie and burst this prison-world asunder by the dynamite of the tenth of a second, so that now, in the midst of its far-flung ruins and debris, we calmly and adventurously go traveling.[1]
> *Walter Benjamin*

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Throughout history; science, art, philosophy, and their different forms have always been in an interaction with each other. Disciplines started to be privatized with the increasing knowledge after Industrial Revolution at the end of 19th century. Architectural discipline has been associated with the areas such as design, urban planning, history, art, philosophy, archeology, technology and politics and by time; these interactions , which were created by different disciplines in theory and in practice, have increased. With the invention of the cinema in 19th century, a new discipline with which architecture is associated appeared. According to Anthony Vidler, among all arts, architecture has the most privileged and the most difficult relationship with the movie.[2] In the time course until today, cinema and architecture created their own techniques by finding too many common impact areas between each other and made new productions. One piece of cinema which reproduces itself in certain forms is that it provides new sight forms in an alternative time-space relation.[3]

Human has been surrounded by space since his/her birth and can't exist without a space. As Merleau-Ponty's dictation "Existence is spatial.".[4] According to Tümer existence not only with its physical aspect but also with its spiritual aspect is spatial.[5] Space concept creates the basis of two disciplines in architecture and cinema intersection. While architecture builds real buildings in real world, cinema produces artificial representations of these spaces. In science-fiction cinema, different from the others, it can be seen that produced spaces reflect the utopic and dystopic future fictions which differ radically from today's spaces. In advanced industry and technology nations, it defines the expectation and fear points which are the results of the lived time and human-technology nation relation in the produced cine-space fictions. Therefore, future perception is emphasized with an alternative point of view.

Rapidly improving technology in the world has affected Science-Fiction cinema deeply and it created Cyberpunk movement as sub-branch. While Cyberpunk has a critical approach to the main changes lived in the modern nations after the industrialization, it discusses advanced technology, miserable life, chaotic world subjects in future foresight and identifies humanity with a dark life in dystopic world. Cyberpunk is a product of reckoning between the mind with an unlimited imagination and the body surrounded by borders. It is the outpouring of the resistance to the death and the weakness of the body through life instinct.

The aim of the study is to evaluate time, space and body concepts in cyberpunk as the subculture of the cinema in the intersection of "Architecture & Cinema" through "The Island" movie directed by Michael Bay in pessimistic future foresight by making criticism about capitalism in which even human can be commodified and can be formed by being controlled in the hands of big companies.

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2. Utopia, Dystopia And Architecture in Science-Fiction Cinema

In the timewise and spatial perceptions witnessed transformations with the invention of cinema, there are similarities between architecture and cinema.[6] Architects have made comments on the movies which are their source of inspiration but as the cinema reaches a wider crowd than the architects, it forms their expectations and point of views to the architecture. Especially in science-fiction cinema, utopic and dystopic fictions have an important place in this context.

Utopia is generally defined with the meanings such as no-place, not existing place, imaginary place, earthly paradise, ideal city. The first thing that comes to human mind when utopia is said is an environment, space, place or city even it is imaginary. Place is an essential element of utopia which gives priority to life.[7]

Utopic order gives importance to place rather than the breakdown placelessness and gives importance to needs rather than the passion. It is in search of collective combination. That's why utopia is generally an island or creates itself in a closed, bordered city. When we look it as timewise, this space design is the time total which includes timeless and forever change. Utopia is the death of flaw.[8]

While utopias build the future related to today but in a more optimistic style which goes beyond today, anti-utopias (dystopias) builds the future as reflectionof today and in a more pessimistic style.[9] Dystopia points an order in which happiness is reserved for only elits and social classes who are not opposing. Therefore, dystopists try to confute ideals which are not possible to happen in utopias, by using satire, criticism and irony arts and they try to show the realities with different original ways. Cultural and social elements, division of labor and differentation are under the control of government in dystopias as well as in utopias. The mission of the individuals are to buckle under the rules. If a reaction to the current order perception in the society occurs, government removes it with pressure. These pressures create the starting points of dystopias.[10]

Different from what it is in literature, Utopia fiction which we can observe through different classifications in cinema presents some signatures that includes generally dystopia. Technological companies having the power also in dystopic movies, salvation stories and saviors appearing in the rage and chaos moments against the power expressions by the undefined forces are in the struggle of showing their strength's presence after the power battles.[11]

Since the second half of the 20th century, reaction towards modernism have started to show themselves by concentrating on postmodern art and especially in this time, dystopic fiction has started to display themselves with a new discourse. The importance of dystopia in terms of modernism is to examine the bad circumstances and psychological state of person.[12]

Utopias and dystopias are generally presented to audience through science-fiction films. While science-fiction films creating alternative answer to " How will the future world be like?", question which is asked by people with some fear and wonder at the same time they do critic of technologic improvement and progress

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openly. Technological improvement is symbolized spatially at the beginning. In science fiction movie like the utopia projects created by architect, images presented by science-fiction give ideas which are pushing the limits of imagination about future's architecture. In most of the movies "ideal future" and " inevitable end" intermingles, future is processed within the frame of Utopia and Dystopia conflict.[13]

There is a big similarity between science-fiction's world creation process and architectural design. Common features of a science fiction artist and architect basically is to create a new world which is a divine work. In the origin of the relatively new type science-fiction, there is the ability to dream imaginary world which is human-specific. Science-fiction is an art of experimental allienation in which the hypothesis about radical changes of something's specific to today in future lies.[14]

Cyberpunk Concept

20th century defined as communication, control, speed and pleasure age, started to find more impact area in science, art and literature areas and started to affect human life with the improving technology more and more day by day. In this content, with the combination of "cyber" emphasising on high technology and "punk" emphasising on illegality, rebellion and street style life, a new science-fiction sub-branch started to show itself in 1980: Cyberpunk. Cyberpunk which is a science fiction movement and finds production area from the unbelievably confusing and weird future ideas, presents descriptions of the world which turns into a global village with its giant communication webs.

Cyberpunk is such as to mirror the main changes that happened in the modern societies after industrialization in 1970's. It feeds itself from the period's social, economic, cultural, political and technological improvements and states near future foresights. According to Fredric Jameson, Cyberpunk is "The supreme literary expression if not of postmodernism then of late capitalism".[15]

Cyberpunk, even though it proceeds with technology without being a technology lover (technophiliac) or technology coward (technophobic), couldn't entegrate with it fully. During 80's, much-ballyhoed literary works were written around the world and the movies were released.[16] Cyberpunk which has a brandnew modern style, changed within time, improved and had lots of mutations. In 1984 when Neuromancer, called masterpiece of Cyberpunk, by William Gibson was published, IBM company introduced first personal computer, Motorola company introduced first mobile phone in America and Sony company introduced first camera and first compact disk was designed.[17]

Almost in every Cyberpunk work, invasion, collapse and breakdown is a phonemenon which happens from outside. Generally, source of the use of force is a multinational capitalism which desires a more superior creature then mistaken human kind. In the works can be called as Cyberpunk; while the theme of the

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body's getting attacked (invasion) takes place as prothesis organs, cycles in the bodies, cosmetic surgery, genetical modifications, the theme of mind's getting attacked (invasion) finds response as brain computer interfaces, artificial intelligence, neurochemistry which defines human nature and self radically.

Cyberpunk, decreasing its speed in the least since 1990, gave chance to personal computers' and internet's becoming widespread and with the changes that happen in technology as well as new approaches in cyberpunk production. As the reflection of the improving technology, changes in current social order have occurred. When you look on the period's science-fiction themes, a virtual disaster, which has already happened and where the informatics is the foreground, and despair and social breakdown as a result of it have been processed. The common points of all the works of the period are having the spaces which can be called as big city, mega city or global city and having many different nations' people sharing the same location and being in a globally attached situation.

In 2000's subject motives related to technology have been started to be used more dominantly as in 90's. When we've examined since 2000's, while important developments in space and technology areas have been made, there has been important loses in ecological and global economy areas. Scientific and technological developments, such as personal computers going above 1 Ghz speed, completion of the human genom project, having first images of the brain, internet usage's reaching its high levels, and cloning of human stem cell, and space search such as having the first special flights to space, many countries' starting the space research, mobile robot's launching on Mars and finding water in liquid state on Moon have been determinant on movie subjects.

3. Time, Space and Body in the Movie 'The Island'
The Island, directed by Michael Bay and production of 2005,takes place in 2019's world where cloning procedures are allowed legally in the light of these developments in the cloning studies which is a topic of genetic science.[18] People such as politicians, sporters and models who are creating the elite class in the society are able to have themselves cloned to be an insurance policy for themselves in a sense. As it is a quite expensive procedure, it is a matter of only people who belong to high-income group to benefit from this service and they attain the ability to extend their powers and elite lives of society via their clones.[19] In this study, the content of the movie is evaluated through time, space and body concepts in cinema-architecture intersection in postmodern culture.

Time
According to Sütçü, In the time, there is one past, one present and one future. Time can be thought as a three-piece whole in which one piece existed before but not mentioned anymore, the other piece doesn't exist yet will exist and present takes place between them.[20]

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Existence of time will be possible with the comprehension of before and after. In the movie of 2019's world, standardization in clones lives is being talked about. Everybody moves according to a specified mono type timetable and wear mono type clothes. Clones defined as products are provided to have maximum one young person's education. Clones, whose minds are occupied with daily production line works and entertainment facilities, are provided to idle around what the order has brought them without questioning the outer world.

According to Heidegger, human exists in the world; while human kind is in the world he lives in, set up of the world comprises of human's own experience.[21] In the movie, such like eachother and non-real memories produced for all the clones are transferred to their minds with the birth of clones. As clones live in a space which work like a machine closed to the outer world, it causes them to continue their daily lives with the artificial time, in which there is no natural and physical time perception such as day and night, defined by the company.

Space

In cinema; subject in relation with body and space through the time image and movement image indicators, is spatial. Cinema, where we can see space productions in different scales by combining the past and the future, gathers time and space in this context. Actually non-space in cinema lives in the present time.[22]

In the main theme of the movie, emphasising an utopic island fact actually non space is remarkable. In the reality of these clones the island remained as the only nature piece saved from the big disaster unaffectedly in the world and gets the utopia quality by creating the idea that a free life from which all the borders have been removed can only be lived there. To be sent this place, it is a must to win the draws organized in some periods and every clone lives by dreaming to go this island. In the movie, the main aim to make clones believe in such a natural place's existence is to send them volunteerly to the place where the clones will be cut and used as a product and to provide the system work regularly.
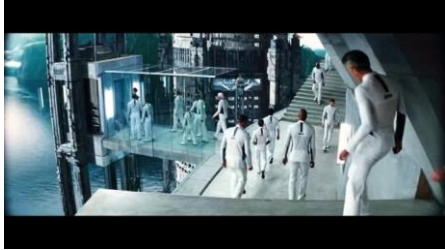
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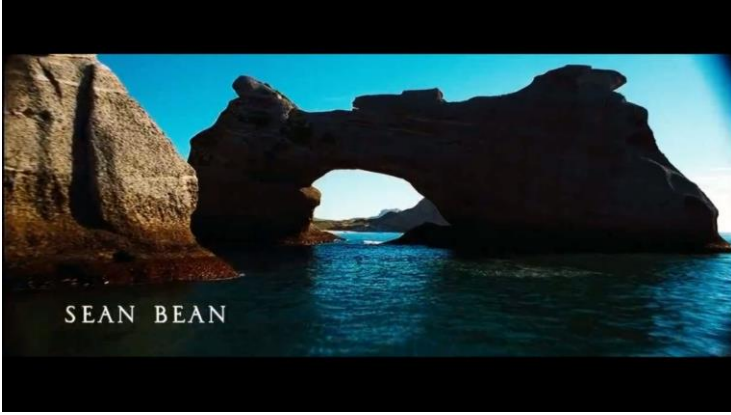
Image 1: The Island mentioned in the movie

In the facility, which is circular form built as the main space in the movie, everywhere is under the control of security staff and cameras. In the main assembly area, there are many screens and through these screens, it has been called out to clones. The outstanding detail in all spaces is the restriction of color usage. With the materials such as exposed concrete, glass and steel, stable and hygienic spaces of modernism have been created.

Image 2: Main Assembly Area   ***Image 3:*** Circulation Area

In the spaces, white and blue lights have been used in lighting equipments. Again in this case, it's been emphasised on the stable spaces which reflects the high technology in a forward time zone.

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Image 4: Manager Room

Image 5: Food Court

Outer world, we could see towards the end of the movie, has the city description quality which belongs to 2019. High buildings in the city center, dirty and chaotic urban space, train routes going through different heights in the air creates a dystopic city image.

Image 6: 2019 City Description

Image 7: 2019 City Description

Image 8: The Moment of the Clones going to real world from the facility

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In the final scene of the movie, as the facility under the ground is damaged, clones find the exit to earth surface by following the light which enters the assembly area.

Body

In '*The Island*' movie, for the mind, power and rulership's continuity, human's reckoning with his mortal body is seen. Reaching immortality, life instinct and on the other hand weakness of the body and finiteness has made creation of a resistance to death necessary. In the movie's theme, immortality fiction which is possible for the elite class of high income group of the society have been provided by these created clones. The body concept, by being rendered into a commodity in the hands of big companies, becomes worthless under the effect of capitalism.
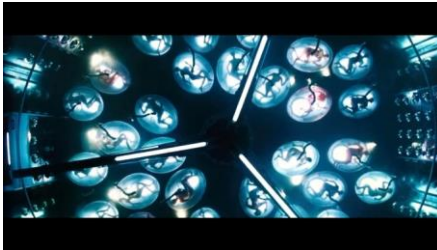

Image 9: Clone Production Area   *Image 10:* Clone Production Area

In The Island clones mercilessly being cut and mowed down when their time comes, or in other words in case the people whom they are insurance policy for, need their organs clearly shows that company degraded them to a consumption material. Even the clone names' having serial and model numbers, as in the movie heros Lincoln-6-Echo and Jordan-2-Delta is another indicator how they have been commodified. Observance and fiction reality touch appears to keep under the control with the illusion of its own reality and product stock including a few thousand people in an underground built special facility.

Image 11: Clones as Embryos   *Image 12:* Clone Production Area

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Such like each other stories are imprinted on clones' minds, this situation prevents their questioning. Also by creating illusion in physical reality with giant hologram projectors in business around the facility, this situation is supported.

Clones live in the shadows of their data bases kept about them through bracelets. Clones even while sleeping under the control of system, they face the observance and intervention of system after they wake up; for example even in the toilets they are analyzed and as a result of these analyses results, their diets are defined. On the other hand clones, starting to question the reality they live in are suddenly neutralized and order continues.

Image 13: Physical Intervention to Clones **Image 14 :** Clone Production Area

Conclusion

The Island, attracts the attention to double standards that exist in both today's societies and the described dystopic system, warns about the discrimination between the classes and observance and control machines as system doesn't treat everyone equal and these discriminations can increase by time. The film shows city and life style of 2019 with dystopic elements.

Contrary to a chaotic urban space, stable and hygienic inner spaces, modernism and postmodernism conflict are also brought to light in spatial fiction. For clones, who are imprisoned in an unlimited "now" where there is no past and future, time has lost its meaning. They are left as convicted to live suchlike lives under control and observance in mono type timetable.

In the movie, there is criticism on how future capitalism system and genetic engineering can be used in commodification of human. It attracts attention for effects of the applications about cloning in social life and what rights produced livings will have. Clone bodies, who see themselves as a person and believe that they live in an equal space, actually turned into and organic commodity for human.

Capitalism system, which is not based on equality as its nature to produce new market for itself by using these new techniques and applications and for the sake of creating new superior class people can be used as a step or consumption material for this system examples can be seen.

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Notes

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[2] Michael Dear, 'Between Architecture And Film', *Architectural Design, November-December, vol. 64, no. 11/12*, (1994): 8-15.

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[4] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Phenomenology of Perception* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd,1962) 293.

[5] Gürhan Tümer, *İnsan-Mekan İlişkileri ve Kafka* (İzmir: Sanat-Koop Yayınları,1984)

[6] Aslı Doğay Örs, *'*Sinematografi ve Mimarlık', *Arredamento Mimarlık 11*, (2001): 73-79.

[7] Köksal Alver, 'Ütopya: Mekan ve Kentin İdeal Formu, Utopia: The Ideal Form of Place and City.' *Sosyoloji Dergisi 18* (2009): 139-153.

[8] Şafak Şilan Ülker, 'Mimarlık ve Sinema Ortak Alanında Zamansallık ve Gelecek Mekanları' (Master Dissertation, Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University, 2011).

[9] Ülker, 'Mimarlık ve Sinema Ortak Alanında Zamansallık ve Gelecek Mekanları'.

[10] Ülker, 'Mimarlık ve Sinema Ortak Alanında Zamansallık ve Gelecek Mekanları'.

[11] Ülker, 'Mimarlık ve Sinema Ortak Alanında Zamansallık ve Gelecek Mekanları'.

[12] Nihal Polat 'Bir Kent Vizyonu Olarak Ütopya Olgusunun Sinema Bağlamında Analizi'(Master Dissertation, Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University, 2012).

[13] Gökhan Kınayoğlu 'Saniyede 24 Kare Ütopya' *Arredamento Mimarlık 11* (2001): 80-82.

[14] Özakın, Özgür.'Bugünün Dünyasını Geleceğe Yansıtmak' *Arredamento Mimarlık 11* (2001): 82-87.

[15] Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernizm ya da Geç Kapitalizmin Kültürel Mantığı,* trans. Nuri Plümer (İstanbul : YKY, 1994), 24.

[16] Oğuzhan Ersümer, *Bilimkurgu Sinemasında Cyberpunk* (İstanbul : Altıkırkbeş Yayın, 2013), 17-25.

[17] William Gibson, *Neuromancer, trans. Gonca Gülbey (İstanbul: Altıkırkbeş, 2012)*

[18] The Island, dir. Michael Bay, California : Warner Bros Pictures, 2005. DVD.

[19] Tuna Başaran, 'Soğuk Savaş Sonrası Bilimkurgu Sinemasında Distopik Sistemler ve Kontrol Mekanizmaları' (Master Dissertation, Ankara University, 2007)

[20] Ülker, 'Mimarlık ve Sinema Ortak Alanında Zamansallık ve Gelecek Mekanları'.

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[21] Martin Heidegger, *Varlık ve Zaman,* trans. Kaan H. Ökten (İstanbul : Agora Kitaplığı, 2008), 109-119.

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