

Body and Space: In-Between Sight and Site

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Abstract

The study will explore dynamics of body in motion/emotion as exercised in architecture and cinema. The analysis as 'questions of space and body' will draw on Stephen Heath's 'narrative space', Barbara Bowman's 'habitual' and 'acute' space conceptions and Giuliano Bruno's provocative theory dwelling on the transformation from optic to haptic space. The emerging relationships of space and body will be exemplified and analyzed in filmic construction. Study will finally attempt to establish a connection between the nature of visibility of space-body relationship as a socio-cultural construct in the filmic constructions of Halit Refiğ.

Özet

Bu çalışma mimarlık ve sinema alanlarında yer alan beden-mekan ve hareket dinamikleri üzerinde duracaktır. Araştırma, mimarlık-sinema etkileşimi içerisinde, mekan ve beden ilişkisi sorgularken, Stephen Heath'in 'anlatı mekanı', Barbara Bowman'ın perdeye yansıyan 'alışlagelmiş' mekan ve 'anlatı vurgulayıcı' mekan kavramlarından hareket edecektir. Giuliano Bruno'nun son zamanlarda dikkat çeken bakış açısı ile algıyı optik'den çok haptik algıya yönlendiren yaklaşımına yer verilecektir. Çalışma görsel anlatımda mekan ve beden ilişkisinin sosyo-kültürel yapıyla olan bağlantısını Halit Refiğ sinemasından örnekleyerek kuracaktır.

Key Words: Space, Place, Body, Motion, Architecture, Cinema.

Introduction

Space is an interdisciplinary field. Space includes physical, socio-cultural and political considerations bound with acts of body in modes of production. The field of study which is most known to physically deal with space including encounters of the body with space through the art of building, is architecture. Architecture can be considered as "a body-centered art"[1]. Juhani Pallasmaa proposes that cinema is "inseparable from the architecture of space, place and time" and that "both cinema and architecture articulate lived space"[2,3]. Architecture and cinema feed each other. Cinema as the ordering of space and time incorporates motion and change into the elements of design. Framing can be regarded as the basic design order effective in structuring the film space. Directors like Capra, Lubitsch, Sternberg and Wyler, Greenaway and Wenders are exemplary in their design of filmic space. Stephen Heath defines mise-en scene in terms of space and movement. Film space is "realization of a coherent and positioned space, as that realization in movement, positioning, cohering and binding in" According to Heath who coined the term "narrative space" referring to the space of the shot suggests that "space becomes place; narrative as the taking place of film"[4,5]. Heath's claim is considered in a certain way, by Barbara Bowman. Bowman links motion to 'the narrative space'. She defines filmic space as "the entire illusory volume before as we watch a film, whether it be empty or filled with objects at rest or in motion"[6]. Bowman's differentiation of 'acute' and 'habitual' space can be

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connected to the notion of space and place respectively. Bowman subscribing to the communicative effectiveness of modification of space emphasizes on the visual intensification of space on the screen. Bowman proposes that “filmmaker’s goal is to make acute what has been neutral, to intensify the look of the screen” and “habitual space becoming visible becomes acute”[7]. Habitual space turning into acute can be taken to correspond to the transformation of space to place on the screen. Giuliana Bruno on the other hand considers “haptic space of cinema as habitable space” suggesting the shift of emphasis from vision to other senses in relation to space. Bruno underlines the relationship of cinema with motion and texture, reinforcing the tactile apprehension of space[8,9]. Filmic space is a construction in-between sight and site involving the dynamics of space and place. Bruno’s association of film, body and architecture is:

“a haptic dynamics, a phantasmatic structure of lived space and lived narrative; a narrativized space that is intersubjective, for it is a complex of socio-sexual mobilities. Unraveling a sequence of views, the architectural-filmic ensemble writes concrete maps. The scope of the view—the horizon of site-seeing—is the mapping of tangible sites” [10].

We could sum up that Bowman underlines the organization of the ‘narrative space’ through elements of space and spatial relations. Heath draws attention to effectiveness of mobility in the ‘narrative space’. Bruno stresses the importance of movement and focuses on the tactile value. Approaches to filmic space raises questions regarding forms of effect and affect, space and place with respect to motion and emotion.

Visual Experience of Space: Body and Space in Motion

As well put by Andrew Higson “narratives require space in which they can unfold”[11]. Film space as the ‘shot’, ‘editing’ and ‘sonic’ space [12] performs in terms of movement[13](1) of characters, (2) of camera (3) from shot to shot, in relation with look of the character, the look of camera and the look of the spectator as defined by Westley Lapslake [14]. Space unfolds in time in cinema. The relationship of body and space find expression and articulation in movement. Body moves in ‘time through a sequence of spaces’ [15]. The quality of space is in direct relationship with the spatial qualities of form, and hence enclosure of space [16]. The experience of movement in spaces find definitions in architecture as ‘approach’ and ‘entrance’ which can be articulated around the concept of path-space. The path-space relationship includes dimensions of the body and built space in its varied executions in relation to the spaces they connect such as ‘passing by spaces’, ‘passing through spaces’ and ‘terminating in space’[17]. Film accommodates several paths at different scales moving the spectator from space to space and from space to place. The act of movement calls for the interaction of body with the space. Both architecture and film are engaged in the act of movement and body-space relationship giving rise to a stronger union.[18]. Turkish cinema presented a certain kind of interaction between film and architecture based on space. The nature of representation of space in the productive years of Turkish cinema between 1960 -1975 ;is exemplary with its dependency on shooting on

location which can be referred as “real” settings. The practices of shooting in Turkish cinema has long been limited to the setting and the technology of production. Mise-en-scene, editing and sound were molded with theatrical practices and the fast pace of production. The constraints associated with the movement of camera influenced the film space. The practice of shot scales and view angles together with explorations in depth and lighting needed furthering. The ‘look of the camera’ together with the ‘looks of the characters’ have participated in the production of the characteristic filmic space of the Turkish cinema in the period of concern. The ‘look of the characters’ carried traces of theatrical mimicry and body language almost ignorant of the potential of the camera as the medium of production. Filming architecture posits opportunities to be seized. Murray Grigor suggests that “at its best architecture is a celebration of space...The idea of filming architecture seems therefore the axiom of cinema”[19]. Narrative space can be mastered with the punctuation of spatial relations and architecture. Setting can make the film[20]. City of İstanbul was the natural set the Turkish cinema dwelled on. Even if İstanbul was usually presented as a backdrop in most of the scenes, Turkish cinema, in time, portrayed the imagery of the city of İstanbul with its naïve and primitive modes of production offering a spectacle, documenting the urban views of İstanbul. The main challenge of the Turkish cinema was with the filmic space. The nature of visuality depended on the ability to explore and produce with technology in time across financial constraints. Barbara Bowman reminds us that “space is created between the director’s three dimensional vocabulary and the spectator’s projected emotional occupation with that space”[21]. A few directors namely, Ömer Lütfü Akad, Yılmaz Güney and Halit Refiğ stood out with their approach towards space in the Turkish cinema between 1960-1975’s[22]. Going along with Westlake’s theory, in the filmic constructions of these directors who challenged the infrastructure; ‘the seen’ is converted into a ‘scene’, and space becomes place[23]. Halit Refiğ’s *Broken Lives* (1965), *Kırık Hayatlar* is exemplary regarding the punctuation of the narrative with space. Analyzed in general, director’s other films such as *My Aunt* (1986)/*Teyzem*, *Hanim* (1989) and *Wedding Dress*(2000) */Gelinlik Kız* on the other hand, draw on socio-cultural mapping of space in time.

The story in Halit Refiğ’s *Broken Lives*(1965) belongs to the celebrated famous Turkish writer Halit Ziya Uşaklıgil. Events take place in the 1890-1900. The story is about westernization and life in the modern ‘environment’ in the Ottoman period. The feature film is shot in one of İstanbul’s ‘modern’ settlements (Yeşilyurt) of the time. The fact that the story is taken from the turn of the century but was shot in a ‘modern community’ in 1965, in itself calls attention to time-space relationship. The story in *Broken Lives* unfolds through a window. It is the opening to the fantasized world which is to shutter. It is the boundary between inside and outside acting both at literal and emotional levels.

The house in *Broken Lives* is one of the most popular and frequently shot houses of the time in the Turkish cinema between 1960 and 1975. The multistory concrete house with its garden is a fantasized place of modernity as the ‘home’[24] to be. With its ‘modern look’ it is at the center of events of the melodramatic setting. The house due to the privileged nature of its depiction on the screen, not only challenges most of the movies shot before and after its time in the Turkish melodrama cinema but also it competes with the protagonists in the film. ‘The house’

as location has the story of being the most popular setting in the Turkish melodrama. Refiğ breaks in the popular tableau shots exercised in films. The protagonists and the spectator move in the spaces of house and around the house. Openings and thresholds are architectural connectors directing the looks and making connections with spaces while creating depth clues in the house. Movement is emphasized typical only with the employment of the stair as a site of motion and emotion. Stairs form the sight and site of dramatic moments. The dynamic employment of space within the house in connection with the garden reveals certain spatial qualities. Unlike other films in the golden era of production of the Turkish cinema, seeing and experiencing of space is related to movement absorbing the spectator. The individual experience in space and embodiment is rendered visible. Transitions (from place to place) coupling with transparency through openings and thresholds, articulate the movement reinforcing the space and body relationship. Film accommodates path-space relationship of architecture in its depiction of motion. Movement of the protagonist is portrayed terminating at home through the garden repeatedly. Approach and entrance is constructed on the path-space relationships structured with the promenade[25] from the garden to the house. The duration, mode of the approach and entry underlines the penetration to the house. It is important to note here the loss of emphasis in the portrayal of path-space relation in the later films of Refiğ's; which can be taken as an indication of decay of articulation of space due to urbanization.

The film also portrays various other paths within the 'modern house' in *Broken Lives* establishing connections between inside and outside. Throughout the film, the spectator gradually learn the way in and around the house. Thresholds, paths, stairs and windows are the architectural elements instrumental in structuring the spatial construct. The promenade from the garden home is the space of hierarchy in competition with the living room as the 'habitable space' accommodating the stairs where dramatic events take place. In other words the promenade and the stairs are 'acute spaces' on the screen. The windows as architectural elements and glass as architectural material are the visual elements of transparency and transition establishing relationships between the interior and the exterior. Refiğ manages to get out of the melodramatic setting occasionally with shots of streets and facades of İstanbul offering glimpse of what the city is to become.

Socio-cultural Mapping of Space : Body and Space in Emotion

"Film provided the modern subject with a new tactics for orienting herself in space and for making "sense" of this motion, which includes the motion of emotions. By way of site-seeing, it offered a sensuous orientation to cognitive mapping, creating a spatial architectonics for mobile, emotional mapping. As a house of moving pictures, film is habitable as the house we live in. Its "architexture" in fact, designs the realm of bio-history—a map of bios, or life mode. It draws on its emotion to circulate history. And does so tangibly"[26].

Guiliana Bruno.

Image is a culture mediated form. The nature of visuality as perceptual, social and cultural phenomenon form a basis for knowledge in films. Space as an interdisciplinary field include physical, social, temporal, cultural and physiological inscriptions. Spatial perimeter interacts with parameters such as individual or

communal identity. Refiğ's cinema can profitably be considered with respect to the socio-cultural mapping of space. *My Aunt* (1986)/*Teyzem*, *Hanım* (1989) and *Wedding Dress* (2000) /*Gelinlik Kız* address subjective identity through the portrayal of space.

In *My Aunt* (1986) the protagonist is a woman. As stated by Deniz Derman, she is put spatially and hierarchically at the center where she is surrounded by walls and family members[27]. The family house is the specific other drive in the narration of the film. Refiğ makes visible in his compositions the spatial experience of the middle class woman who lives with her family but alone. The very opening of *My Aunt* shows the spectator protagonist's most celebrated space at the basement of the family home under the staircase where she kept her very personal objects, photographs and her memories. The story unfolds in this very defined space; place where her heart and soul lived. The spectator looks at the gender rendered streets and public spaces and see thresholds, stairways, doors and windows rendering visually and spatially the 'in-between-ness' experienced by the protagonist who is most of the time shot behind walls; indoors. The most notable event in the narrative of space is the transformation of the protagonist's secret place of affection into a storage space, only to hold consumer goods. The protagonist identifies herself with the traditional timber house which gets replaced with the new concrete apartment stripping off her hope to carry on in life.

The sense of belonging in connection with space-human relationship in *Hanım* (1989) is explored within the narrative of the home in the context of the city. In *Hanım*, the title of the film refers to the name of a cat. The main character's affection with *Hanım*, the cat, couples with the affection to her home and place in the city of İstanbul which appears to be losing its inherent socio-cultural and historical fabric. Here Refiğ makes visible the changing texture of architecture reconstructing the city of İstanbul. The spatio-visibility frames the city in various compositions of the transforming architectonics. If we were to name the protagonist in Refiğ's *Wedding Dress* (2000), we would have to say it is the young architect who is instrumental in the portrayal of what is left of traditional architecture. The story unfolds in 'architecture'[28]. The struggle involved in the shooting of the film in year 2000 on traditional, architectural(habitable) locations is a clear indication on the turn of the space-human relationship and the move of the urban culture of İstanbul in the 21st century. We develop our understanding of identity, notion of place and home in Refiğ's visuality of space, filmic and architectural.

Concluding Remarks

Scale, material, technology, form, color, texture and light are among the design elements which participate in the formulation of space besides the psychological and cultural factors. The relationships of space and body is portrayed in-between architecture and cinema, in motion and emotion. Architecture exists, like cinema, in the dimensions of time and movement[29]. Filmic space can define and be defined in architectural terms. 'Narrative space' can be articulated with architectural elements as 'seen' and 'sensed' in Refiğ's cinema who frames space and urban views through architectural form. Film accommodates tactile value in its depiction of space. The move from optic to haptic produces 'sights' of 'site' where events take place, through the application of visual and tactile texture in the spatio-visibility. Filmic constructions of

Halit Refiğ who uses architectural connectors visually instrumental turns spaces into places. Spectator is absorbed in motion and in emotion through the tactile value of architectural space. Construction of space in cinema can be analyzed in two folds with respect to design and with respect to cultural geography. Cinema can be considered as 'narrative space' and as 'the space of representation'. Film studies is an interdisciplinary field. Image is an event informed by a broad set of conditions and factors. Visuality involves relationships that can further relationships. As suggested by Panofsky "not only bodies move in space but space itself does, approaching, receding, turning, dissolving, and recrystallizing as it appears through the controlled locomotion and focusing of the camera and through the cutting and editing of the various shots" [30]. Conception of space include, people, place society and representation. The employment of space and portrayal of places produce cultural visualization *in-between sight and site*.

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