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Do Tread on My Dreams: The Perception of Cityscape in Science Fiction Films

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What are the dangers of the forest and the prairie
compared with the daily shocks and conflicts of civilization?

Charles Baudelaire

The city, the urban landscape with its idiosyncratic skyline and bird's eye presentations, has been one of the most dominant and recurring images of the cinematic representations of the science fiction genre. This preoccupation with the city and its visual depictions is hardly coincidental. An analysis of science fiction films with regards to their utilization of the cityscape and individual works of architecture reveals that there is a correlation between the meaning created by the science fiction film and the works of architecture shown on the screen. The architectural elements used in science fiction films are primarily compelling representatives of the modernist architecture and urban planning. Therefore, they make a visual commentary on the meaning created by the film in parallel with the ideology and mentality of the modernist thinking. Nevertheless, a survey of prominent examples of the science fiction genre reveals that these films make use of modernist architecture and urban planning to depict an inhuman, oppressive and totalitarian world; a view remarkably in contradiction with the basic tenets of the modernist ideal.

That cinema and architecture borrow from and are influenced by each other since the emergence of cinema is by no means a novel idea. As a matter of fact, there appears to be a close affinity between the art of cinema in general (and science fiction genre in particular) and architecture (and urban design in particular). In this symbiosis, architecture seems to have been influential in the set design in filmmaking and creating cityscapes, i.e. urban space where the action takes place (Albrecht i-vii), whereas films have given architecture inspiration, a test-bed and a playing ground where abstract concepts can be

visualized in spatial forms.[1] In his Introduction to *Architecture and Film*, Mark Lamster declares, "the architect and the filmmaker have much in common" (1). Stating that the members of both professions have similar work environments and methods, Lamster goes on to argue that filmmakers "insert architecture into their films," and thus use their camera to make statements about the built or unbuilt environment. On the other hand, architects, other than merely creating sets to be used in films, are profoundly influenced by films in the way they "envision their work and the way the public consumes architecture" (2). Lamster provides an illustrative definition of the cinematic architecture:

> Today, we often hear of architecture that is "cinematic"—that is, theatrical in effect and thematic in nature; the vast hotels of Las Vegas, the new Times Square in New York . . . are primary examples. . . . [Also, a] number of avant-garde practitioners have sought more abstract inspiration from the medium of films, finding in its use of montage, sequential progression, and spatial composition devices applicable to their own work. (2)

Finnish architect Juhani Pallasmaa adds, "Films are studied [by the architects] for the purpose of discovering a more subtle and responsive architecture" (i) and "even artistically more serious architecture today often seeks its inspiration and visual strategy from the language of movies" (ii).[2] As both cinema and architecture make use of light, movement and space as the basic elements of such language, architects do study and learn how the cinematic medium utilizes light in space to communicate mood, atmosphere and finally meaning in the film (Knox 2). Giuliana Bruno goes further and states that architecture, the design of space, generates a "cinematic narrative" and the city taking shape under the influence of cinema becomes what he calls "Cine City" (5), a place which is designed in accordance with the perception through the ocular of the film camera. All kinds of movements in and observation of such

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[1] Cinema, within this context, serves to "exercise the imagined" (Uluoğlu et al. 2), i.e. visualizing the architectural design.

[2] Pallasmaa states that the cinematographer knows more about the application of light in spatial mediums and of optics than the architect. For further information see Pallasmaa, Juhani. *The Architecture of Image: Existential Space in Cinema.* Helsinki: Building Information Ltd, 2001. 155.

a city, especially the walking and sightseeing of the individual on the streets[3] and panoramic or bird's eye visions from a high point[4] thus acquire a cinematic quality: The walker's movement is that of the camera and the watcher's vision is what is seen through the ocular. Similarly, individual works of architecture, such as the buildings and interior designs, do have a cinematic quality, i.e. their experience by the eye and the movement within them is a sequential experience in space (Knox 2). The artistic and political implications of these statements are manifold and elaborately discussed by various scholars and critics. At this point it is crucial to refer to Walter Benjamin, in whose "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" the philosophical unification of the both arts and extrapolations on the issue of modernity can be found.

In his seminal work, Benjamin analyses the prospects of the new cinematic medium and defines the relationship between cinema and the modern city in a period when cinema was increasingly used by oppressive social and political forces, i.e. fascism. Touching upon the unrealized liberating possibilities of the medium, Benjamin purports that certain cinematic techniques, such as time-lapse, close-up and slow-motion, have caused a complete alteration in the

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[3] At this point it is not possible to overlook the character of *the flaneur*, the urban wanderer of the modernist city as defined by Walter Benjamin. The flaneur, a figure of modernity, was the literal walker of the streets, the man inhaling the experience of the modern city. Benjamin found the ultimate example of the flaneur in the identity of poet Baudelaire, whose walks in the labyrinthine streets of Paris have become what Benjamin calls searches for "profane illuminations." For further elaboration on the issue, see Walter Benjamin's "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire."

[4] The political significance of an individual's acts in the city is most notably dealt by Michel de Certeau in his "Walking in the City." As de Certeau focuses on the political side of man's daily activities, he focuses on the act of walking as a form of expression on the side of the individual against institutions. For him, the individual may react to the restrictions of the system he lives in merely by walking. De Certeau's reliance on the individual as the primary agent who shapes the city or causes a change has interesting parallelisms with (albeit with significant differences from) the flaneur. While de Certeau's individual writes the text of the city, the flaneur is a wanderer, who takes more than he gives. The all-seeing power of the individual who watches the city from a high place, the second observation by de Certeau, is more compatible with and relevant to the imagery used in science fiction films. A similar rhetoric is presented by Roland Barthes and his observation of Paris from the top of the Eiffel Tower. For further information, see Roland Barthes. *Eiffel Tower and Other Mythologies*. New York: Noonday Press, 1979.

way man sees and understands outer reality.[5] The introduction of this novel perception, according to Benjamin, is a more democratic mode of perception, one that will save man from the suffocation of the modern city life (236).

Benjamin concludes that "modernity cannot be conceived outside the context of the city, which provided an arena for the circulation of bodies and goods, the exchange of glances, and the exercise of consumerism" (Schwartz 30).[6] In other words, the summary of modern life was the imagery of rapid change and the rapid change of images. It is an amalgamation of the modern city and the cinema to such an extent that both can be interpreted as the same phenomenon taking place in different mediums. The image captured by the camera is the manifestation of the disorientation inherent in modern experience as observed in the city. As Anna Clayton states,

> [T]he city has become such an aesthetic focus for cinema. Like the cinema, the modern city is an iconographic form of the twentieth century and shares many of cinema's obsessions with speed, light and movement: the cinema and the city are kindred expressions of modern humanity. (57)

Benjamin's rhetorical question is a declaration of the unification of cinema and architecture within the concept of modernity: "Couldn't an exciting film be made from the map of Paris? . . . From the compression of a centuries-long movement of streets, boulevards, arcades, and squares into the space of half an hour?" (qtd. in Schwartz 30).[7] The answer is an almost anatomical unification

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[5] In "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," Benjamin remarks;

> Thus technology has subjected the human sensorium to a complex kind of training. There came a day when a new and urgent need for stimuli was met by the film. In a film, perception in the form of shocks was established as a formal principle. That which determines the rhythm of production on a conveyor belt is the basis of the rhythm of reception in the film. (175)

[6] It must here be noted that Benjamin owes a great deal of this observation to Georg Simmel's *Metropolis and Modern Life*, where Simmel's observation of the modern city; "the rapid crowding of changing images, the sharp discontinuity in the grasp of a single glance, and the unexpectedness of onrushing impressions" (410) is also very much parallel to his own definition of cinema's basic qualities that has caused a change in the perception of the modern man.

[7] For more on this point, see Hansen, Miriam B. "Benjamin, Cinema and Experience: 'The Blue Flower in the Land of Technology,'" *New German Critique* 40 (Winter 1987): 179–224 and "Benjamin and Cinema: Not a One-Way Street," *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 25, No. 2, (Winter, 1999), 306-343.

and fusion, i.e. the blending of the architectural element—both the building and the city—with the image constructed through the lens of the motion picture camera. It is at this point that the Swiss architect Le Corbusier's[8] application of the "architectural promenade" becomes quite illustrative.

Remembered as the most prominent representative of the modernist architecture and urban design, Le Corbusier made use of "cinematic juxtaposition of images in architecture as the changing views obtained by movement through space over time" (Knox 2). His cinematic perception of the architectural design—the architectural promenade—and the whole urban area are most visible in his projects of concrete and plastered unit masonry design Villa Savoye and Paris-based urban design and conversion projects *Ville Contemporaine* (The Contemporary City), and *La Cite Radieuse* (The Radiant City). As the modernist architectural theorist Siegfried Gideon concluded in 1928, looking at works by Le Corbusier, 'Still photography does not capture them clearly. One would have to accompany the eye as it moves: only film can make the new architecture intelligible" (qtd. in Penz 2). It is this cinematic quality of the finished architectural work and the city itself which resulted in science fiction's interest in the depiction of these elements in films. A synopsis of Le Corbusier's "cinematic architectural modernist philosophy" and ideals reveals the paradoxical but striking parallelism between this progressive mode of architecture/urban planning and science fiction films' use of such works to define oppressive social systems.

Emerging out of a demand for a corrective intervention, Le Corbusier's architectural philosophy was mainly based on a certain progressive vision and call for revolution.[9] Architectural modernism, for Le Corbusier and many others, was more a social project than an aesthetic one (Scruton 70). It considered urban

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[8] Le Corbusier is the pseudonym for the Swiss-born Charles-Edouard Jeanneret-Gris (October 6, 1887-August 27, 1965).

[9] As Le Corbusier concluded,

> The history of Architecture unfolds itself slowly across the centuries as a modification of structure and ornament, but in the last fifty years steel and concrete have brought new conquests, which are the index of a greater capacity for construction, and of an architecture in which the old codes have been overturned. (1986: 267)

and architectural design as a means to construct a new space for its vision of the modern society[10]. Therefore, the modernist society and the city, from the very beginning, were parts of a social utopia with a certain Jacobin progressivism (Bowman 72). Le Corbusier's vision was a transformative and messianic mission and he worked on the existing and established cities to transform and liberate them, sometimes through demolition (Jencks 38).

Nevertheless, Le Corbusier was acting in accordance with the revolutionary's dilemma; a belief in a complete change for the good of the man and the society and the necessity to have the authority to be the agent of this change. While escaping from the authority of the past, Le Corbusier's architecture brought its own mechanisms of censure and imposition. The members of an elite class were to challenge the norms and shape urban space as their individual creative faculties directed.[11] The realization of such an ideology was to be achieved on both the greater scale, i.e. urban design, and the smaller scale, i.e. interior design and architecture.[12]

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[10] Jane Jacobs in her *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* provides a detailed outlook of a city concept as defined by Le Corbusier:

> Le Corbusier was planning not only a physical environment. He was planning for a social Utopia too. Le Corbusier's Utopia was a condition of what he called maximum individual liberty by which he seems to have meant not liberty to do anything much, but liberty from ordinary responsibility. In his Radiant City nobody, presumably, was going to have to be his brother's keeper any more. Nobody was going to have to struggle with plans of his own. Nobody was going to be tied down. (2-3)

[11] Charles Jencks, at this point argues that modernist architecture is "suicidal." He argues, "[The modernist] can't face the destruction inherent in development, the deracination and cultural annihilation which Marx and Nietzsche expose. . ." (38). Jencks names Le Corbusier's "constant invocation to 'start again from zero,'" together with Roland Barthes' "anti-bourgeois zero-style" two contributing factors for the appearance of later simplistic and puristic modernist style (38).

[12] Of course, not all modernism was this totalitarian in attitude and there were many positive examples as well. For instance, Frank Lloyd Wright's Broadacre project and Fallingwater house were good and well-known examples of a modernist's trial to create residences that are in harmony with nature. Nevertheless, as architect Roger Scruton, among many others, maintains, when it came to urban design and city planning, it was Le Corbusier's ideas that were very dominant and to a certain extent it was his mentality that summarizes the project modernity's approach towards creating cityscapes best (73).

The primary characteristics of this vision were openness, utility and function, spaciousness and well-lightedness. In other words, the modernist architecture, from the very beginning, was trying to create what a later modernist Ernest Hemingway would title one of his stories, *a clean, well-lighted place;* an environment in which light and space provides a sense of relief for the modern man. The modern city was going to be a hygienic dwelling place of the classless and egalitarian society. Everything in the city was to have a function as the city was a huge machine itself (Jencks 37). At the center of the city-complex was a huge transportation center at the top of which stood an airport.[13] Le Corbusier put transportation at the core of the living complex; the multi layered transportation center was a hub to trains, highways and stations; a concept which is heavily employed by the futuristic science fiction films. There was a heavy reliance on the usage of individual cars as the primary means of transportation, a clear indicator of Le Corbusier's vision that an affluent society was based on private car ownership. The circulation of population and cars required an efficient and utilitarian traffic planning. Since he favored the car as the standard mode of transportation in the age of mechanization, everything in his city was organized so as to facilitate car traffic, which meant wide and strait streets dedicated to car traffic with no junctions.

Le Corbusier presents a vivid narration of his concept of the city. His vision follows the camera's movement, starting from an establishing shot of the whole city and descending onto the street level, a typical cinematographic technique very frequently employed by the science fiction films to establish the setting of the film:

> Suppose we are entering the city by way of the Great Park. . . . Our fast car takes the special elevated motor track between the majestic skyscrapers: as we approach nearer, there is seen the repetition against the sky of the twenty-four skyscrapers; to our left and right on the outskirts of each particular area are the municipal and administrative buildings; and enclosing the space are the museums and university buildings. The whole city is a Park. (29)

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[13] Le Corbusier had a passion for the image of flying machines in the skies of the city he designs, as can be seen in his book *Aircraft* where he professed "The airplane…indicts the city," and added, "[it] embodies the purest expression of the human scale and miraculous exploitation of material" (18).

The offices were to be located at places which are convenient, i.e. central, well-lit spaces with great panorama. His *La Cite Radieuse* concept was similarly based on his modernist principles based on "reason" with a penchant for pure geometry to overlay a rationalized system for living on urban citizens (Hall 222-225). He believed that geometric forms were the way to civilize the mob-city of Paris and the modernist's geometric forms were thus bringing order and sanity to the disorder and randomness and chaos. He wanted a clear and functional city composed of straight lines, a city which is more a machine than a part of nature.[14] In Le Corbusier's vision, the city runs in a perfect choreography and hierarchy. In a very atavistic and authoritarian manner, he demanded that the city be organized on the basis of allotment. That is, business and offices were to be in the city center, factories at the outskirts, residential areas shaped like huge parks in between. The stratified city-either vertically in the shape of layers or horizontally within a grid pattern-was fundamental to Le Corbusier's perception. Unplanned and random foliage cannot be tolerated as it disturbs the balance of the geometric design. As the developments in material, i.e. glass, concrete and steel, led to the ability to build higher at the same time, the skyscraper emerged as the epitome of the new society (Kaes 147). The modernist utopia was to be composed of skyscrapers standing shoulder to shoulder.

There have been various explanations offered for the so-called failure of the Le Corbusier-style modernist project in the field of architecture and urban design (Clayton 58). The criticism surfaced only in the 1960s and various architects for the first time accepted that modernist architecture was too sterile, too elitist and too universal, i.e., it lacked local elements that would enrich it and give a better sense of individualism (Jencks 35-39, Scruton 77). Ironically, in its attempt to flee from the pretensions of the earlier styles, approaches and architectural concepts, modernist architecture created a mannerist style.

Filmmakers of the early twentieth century were direct witnesses to the emergence of the Le Corbusier style cityscapes and transformation of public

[14] "Paris, Rome, and Stamboul," Le Corbusier wrote, are "based upon the Pack-Donkey's Way," which meant they were of curvilinear type. He added,

> Man walks in a straight line because he has a goal and knows where he is going. . . . The pack-donkey meanders along, meditates a little in his scatter-brained and distracted fashion, he zigzags in order to avoid the larger stones, or to ease the climb, or to gain a little shade; he takes the line of least resistance. . . . The Pack-Donkey's Way is responsible for the plan of every continental city; including Paris, unfortunately. (1996: 44)

places. Therefore, science fiction films did not use the works of modernist architecture as a part of their meaning creation processes[15] only to show the audience nice looking places for aesthetic reasons. The works of modernist architecture have been used to give a sense of coldness, sterility and alienation. The city is depicted as a place of emptiness, as symbolized by the vast open spaces and geometric designs or a concrete jungle where invasion of the private space is commonplace. In other words, in science fiction films, the city evokes a sense of either agoraphobia or claustrophobia. Man is shown in clean looking and truly well-lighted environments but can hardly be called happy or in harmony with this environment.

In science fiction films, modernist architecture is shown as a part or the agent of the oppressive or dehumanizing surroundings. The cities have gloomy skylines dominated by high-rise buildings and most of the time a single skyscraper stands out among the others. This single skyscraper is generally associated with the authority and the ruling class/corporation/individual. In some of these science fiction films, this system eventually collapses, which is symbolized by the destruction of the skyline and/or appearance of sunlight, demolishing of the buildings and most notably a total destruction of the dominant skyscraper.[16]

There is a layered social system and class divisions are generally visible. The proletariat lives either on the ground level or underground, whereas the ruling class lives in high-rise buildings. The buildings are in conformity with the principles of modernist design with unpainted concrete slab look or glass facades. Geometric shapes stand out and define the contours of both the public places and the interiors, while white-colored ambient lighting supposedly gives a sense of clarity. Nevertheless, no individual is presented to be happy in this atmosphere and the central character is alienated not only from the whole cityscape but also from

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[15] It must here be noted that Eric Mahleb's 2005 article "Architectural Representations of City in Science Fiction Cinema" presents a very comprehensive account of the case discussed in this article. While the basic argument and the case studies from the science fiction genre are different, Mahleb's article helped as a source of inspiration to form the science fiction part of this article.

[16] The image of the city when watched from a high-rise building has political as well as artistic connotations. Most notably, Michel de Certeau, in "Walking in the City," argued that such a God-like panoptic vision has voyeuristic qualities. This macro-perspective is strategic as it leads the observer to perceive, think and organize the components of the city from the point of view of a power holder, i.e. a shaping institution. The dominant skyscraper and the panoramic image of the city from the skyscraper in science fiction films are powerful images representing the power struggle taking place within the city.

his private living quarters. In other words, these films make use of the modernist style to show that such an architectural approach is more in conformity with an oppressive and authoritarian corporate system than a humanistic one.

The first and quite possibly the most striking example of the films to make a commentary on the new city designed in accordance with the modernist perspective was Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1927). Lang's portrayal of the Metropolis city was based on his first glimpse of lower Manhattan during his visit to New York City in 1924 and this imagery formed the basis of his bleak and machine dominated society of the future (Kaes 146-7). *Metropolis* was a warning for the audience of what a true metropolis would have been like if the modernist mentality had been permitted to realize its agenda (Claydon 63). Made in a modernist-expressionist style, *Metropolis* presented, beginning from the first seconds into the film, the city as a machine. Composed of various architectural elements such as skyscrapers, pyramidal Babelesque structures and even Gothic looking buildings, Metropolis was in total conformity with Le Corbusier's vision and projects. David Edelstein states that the similarity between Lang's and Le Corbusier's visions was not coincidental:

> Lang was no doubt cognizant of Le Corbusier's utopian "Radiant City," and his skyscrapers represent a Futurist ideal of transcendence via machine: The city's sharp angles and vertical thrust are arrogantly anti-Nature. The editing is meant to dislocate: Lang cuts between the towers and pleasure domes and fair-haired athletes in Greco-Roman poses and the Gothic Expressionist underworld, with its faceless bodies that move as no human bodies should.

In *Metropolis*, the society was composed of two strata; the workers who work and dwell in underground cities designed in and ornamented with geometric shapes and the wealthy who live on the surface in gigantic skyscrapers. Above the ground level lives a perfectly ordered clockwork city, which has a polished look. The skyscraper is the norm and the cars and pedestrian walkways are separated while aircraft fly freely among the buildings. Large geometric patterns and carefully placed lighting define the interiors. The city has an immense infrastructure which is a clear indicator of industrial and capitalistic progress. Nevertheless, typical of modernist style, it is cold, detached and alienating. The city, the machine keeping it alive, and the skyscrapers, hence the whole social system they represent, collapse in the final scene. Metropolis became the exemplary work for the future science fiction films and its imagery has been used throughout the genre.

Jean-Luc Godard's *Alphaville* (1965) is a prominent example of science fiction films which use modernist style glass, concrete and light combinations and cold looking interiors to define an inhuman environment. The film takes place in a city controlled by a computer called Alpha 60, which "rules in the name of scientific logic" (Woolfolk, 192) and has banned all poetry, emotion and love. As Woolfolk observes, "Godard uses a variety of images centered on the theme of dehumanization or, more precisely, spiritual disenchantment and desecration to communicate the essential nature of [Alphaville]" (192-3). Le Corbusier's Villa Savoye-style cold interiors are the central elements of this imagery of dehumanization: the modernist "featureless functional architecture" reveal "the inner darkness of this world" (193) of hypocrisy, pretension and deception. The geometrically shaped buildings and interiors create a sense of claustrophobia and are presented more like cages that imprison man. There are no skyscrapers shown but the elite and the lower class distinction is obvious from the plot and dialogue. *Alphaville*, according to Chris Darke, interestingly does not depict a dystopian future; it presents a future "already taking place" (30). The modernist architecture of Paris of late 1950s and early 1960s was sufficient for Godard to present his vision without any special effects. Modernist architecture of *Alphaville* presents a city-image which is "almost entirely made up of architectural non-places [and] of empty transitional spaces" (33), that is, a city without identity. At the end, the protagonist presents Alpha 60 a riddle which leads it to self-destruct and enabling him to run away. The agent of oppression is destroyed but the city remains the same.

A similar theme of strict control of a city by an authoritarian body is presented in Michael Anderson's *Logan's Run* (1976), which makes extensive use of modernist architecture and cityscape as well. Set in 2077, the film depicts a city where the population, among many other things, is kept under strict control. The exterior shots at the beginning of the film reveal that there is a closed and controlled society within the dome structures which put a barrier between the interior of the dome-city and the nature outside. Reminiscent of Le Corbusier's philosophy, i.e. *Ville Contemporaine* and *Villa Savoye*, the buildings of the well-lighted futuristic city are made up of geometric construction blocks, such as pyramids, spheres and various prisms and transportation is the most visible element of the cityscape as can be observed in the dedicated carrier lines that convey bubble shaped transportation modules. High-rise buildings and geodesic constructions are representations of the modernist ardor of purist monumental constructions. The multi-storey interior of the dome-city is again flooded with artificial lights and has a polished appearance, almost to the degree of a worship of light and light-emitting objects. The disease-free and eternally

juvenile society is composed of young people who look happy. Yet, they are under strict demographic control and everyone reaching a certain age is terminated, i.e. killed, so as to maintain the population at a manageable level. Thus, behind the seemingly jovial and ecstatic daily life of the people lies a form of oppression which leaves no room for free will. Despite this conformist appearance, the system is based on unsound foundations. The resistance and rebellion of one individual causes the demise of the whole system at the end of the film, a scene depicting the fall of an inhuman civilization. The fall of the oppressive society and establishment of a seemingly more egalitarian and humane system happen only after a total annihilation of the modernist cityscape, architecture and sculpture takes place. The end suggests that the society will leave the enclosures and go into nature to establish a new and more humanistic system.

In a similar fashion, Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) employed the modernist style of interior design to present the audience with a sense of coldness and hyper hygiene. In order to create an ethereal atmosphere, the interior of the space station Hilton is decorated with ultra modernist furniture and shiny white walls and glowing floor tiling. The individuals move over not in a natural looking hotel lobby but on a curvy space based on a x, y, and z planes of coordinates. The setting has no ornaments save for frames on the walls. At the Hilton lobby, characters sit on the modern style lava-red Djinn chairs. The plain-looking scene is designed to give the audience a sense of numbness: individuals with emotionless faces and speech, sitting in an environment completely inhuman and insipid.

The same glowing floor tiling is also used in the final scene in a very ambiguous manner. The indecipherable vision of the space-hotel room, decorated in kitsch Renaissance style, is actually set against a modernist background with the same cold white walls and floor. Thus, the bland purist modernist background and the objects of classical aesthetic conception are offered in an inharmonious and blank container. The homogenous ambient light does not seem to be emanating from an identifiable source. Thus, the allegedly refreshing modernist well-lighted atmosphere does not clarify human vision, nor does it create an environment where man can live in peace with his surroundings. Interestingly, there is no sound and dialogue in this long final scene, where Kubrick makes his own cinematographic contribution to the modernistic purism as advocated by Le Corbusier.

The audience is naturally encouraged to derive a meaning from the final scene but as no dialogue, sound or any meaningful action is offered, he is forced to focus on the environment, i.e. the space that surrounds the character.

Nevertheless, the artificiality of the atmosphere—as there are no windows—renders the whole scene much more unearthly and timeless. The scene depicting the interior space is in one sense nowhere and the time is never. However, this eternality, while serene, is far from being peaceful. In the renowned final scene, the protagonist is transformed into the star-child after he touches the mysterious and uncanny monolith –another modernist object of pure geometric shape without any detail. Nevertheless, the dualist nature of the set design creates a sense of remoteness instead of one of intimacy.

Le Corbusier's principle of land allotment, social stratification and interior design are also prominent elements in *Soylent Green* (1973) by Richard Fleischer. The film depicts a dystopian New York of 2022, where overcrowding and scarcity of food are the foremost concerns. New York, the established symbol of modernist architecture and lifestyle, has become a divided city of chaos where the poor and the rich residential areas are separated by empty canals crossing the city. While environmental degradation is the central issue of the film, the portrayal of the living quarters of people is a noteworthy part of the narration. The rich areas are composed of either high-rise tenements or detached garden houses, while members of the working class, such as the police officer protagonist, have to share cramped one-room apartments. The streets, where supposedly the modern man was to stroll and enjoy the city, have become arenas of riot and police action. The interior of the rich apartments are composed of cold white walls and with glass facades and illuminated by carefully placed light fixtures which give the rooms a purportedly warm atmosphere. The plot revolves around the true nature of the staple food of the society, the soylent green. As the protagonist reveals, the soylent green is made from cadavers of people most of whom willingly chose to commit suicide at euthanasia clinics, a practice which is encouraged by the administrative system so as to provide people with food. The corrupt system and the aristocrats who keep it under control live in Le Corbusier-inspired urban design and modernist style buildings. At the end of the film, the truth is uncovered by the protagonist and while the collapse of the corrupt system is not observed, it can be inferred that it will soon disintegrate. Thus, *Soylent Green* presents an anti-thesis of modernist thinking or to put it more correctly, a disaster the modernist architecture has become and led to.

Among others, it is *Blade Runner* (1982) by Ridley Scott which best illustrates what a Le Corbusier-inspired future urban environment will look like. The opening of the film presents Los Angeles of 2019 as a complete dystopia; a city as the complete antithesis of the modernist ideal, where the cityscape is dominated by eerie looking skyscrapers standing erect in a toxic atmosphere. The opening

fly-by shows a Los Angeles modeled after Le Corbusier's philosophy; segmented zones and stratified transportation and flying machines above buildings. The dominant element in the cityscape is the ziggurat-shaped high-rise complex, which houses Tyrell Corporation. Similar to other science fiction films, the high-rise or the skyscraper is the symbol of the power or the ruling class that dominates the means of production, i.e. the manufacturing of replicants. Nevertheless, *Blade Runner* makes the commentary that most of the upper class has already migrated to "off-world colonies" and the world cities are overtaken by the middle class and the proletariat. In other words, the modern city per se, or as a project of modernity has been abandoned. Los Angeles has become the victim of an Asian invasion and waste-laden streets have been converted into permanent open bazaars where Japanese is the standard language and exotic animals are bought and sold. The inflow of immigrants and the flux of urban space have brought about a version of architecture and city where the issue of harmony and peace can no longer be questioned.

The inspiration from Lang's *Metropolis* is obvious. Like Lang, Scott prefers to use a ziggurat, i.e. a pyramidal structure to visualize the corporate ruling class and social stratification.[17] Nevertheless, the dark and noxious atmosphere of the Los Angeles of the future is the ultimate nightmare or cul-de-sac of the modernist thinking and creativity. *Blade Runner*, thus, presents a city where modernist authority has gone out of control and created an urban atmosphere of lunacy and incomprehensibility. The project modernity, while aiming at creating a union with the whole world, has resulted in a complete disintegration and degeneration in the cosmos of *Blade Runner*. The modernist progressivism, in an ironical manner, produced a state of inertia where, despite its original mission, constant activity and advancement are no longer possible. As director Ridley Scott confessed, "We're in a city which is in a state of overkill, of snarled up energy, where you can no longer remove a building because it costs far more than constructing one in place" (Kennedy). Blade Runner marks the end of the modernist dream as it presents the audience the ultimate stasis in the shape of commotion.

Blade Runner presents the world through the perspective of a white male protagonist, Deckard, who finds himself alienated from his environment. Deckard looks at his environment as a stranger and cannot communicate with the inhabitants of the city. In other words, the man in this city can no longer interact with and comprehend his surroundings. Furthermore, Deckard is

[17] As David Clements observes, "The creators of the *Blade Runner* cityscape . . . openly acknowledged their heavy debt to Lang's vision."

troubled and challenged by the notion that his existence as a normal human being is at stake due to his affair with replicants. The city, apart from being inhumane itself, deprives man of his own identity. Despite the fact that the owner of the Tyrell Corp. is killed by the replicants, at the end of the film, the system does not collapse and the dystopia continues to exist.

The chaos of urban life as an indispensable part of modern city is the dominant element in *Johnny Mnemonic* (1995) by Robert Longo. The streets of Beijing, Newark and other cities of the future are places of anarchy and disease, drug use, an epidemic caused by drugs, and gang warfare. The city has become a malevolent place where a single skyscraper is the symbol of power and corruption again. The skyscraper in the film belongs to a pharmaceutical company which holds from the public a very important medical discovery; a new drug that could eradicate the epidemic, but the formula is not revealed for financial reasons. Almost every single character in the film is an outlaw or outcast and the city is a quintessential symbol of decadence with its trash covered streets. Naturally, in the final scene, the skyscraper is destroyed by the resistance movement and the said drug becomes public property. The leaders of the resistance and the protagonist watch the destruction of the corrupt corporate skyscraper as if the destruction is the ultimate solution to the corruption of the system. It is possible to state that the film is another manifestation that the modernist epoch, both as a philosophy and design movement, is closed. In another sense, the modernist approach towards architectural and urban design has caused the end of human cities and created a hubbub of human societies which are no longer possible to "correct and manipulate."

A different sort of criticism of a perfectly functioning future city was presented in *Gattaca* (1997) by Andrew Niccol. The film takes place in the near future where the society is controlled on the basis of genetic predilection to future career and social status. The film uses modernist architecture to augment its criticism of a concept of social hegemony. The issue of social control and class society is visualized in the form of buildings, workspaces and various elements of interior design. The hypocrisy of this social layering and classification is shown in parallel with modernist, cold and inhumane looking architecture. The buildings are made of crisp colorless concrete panels. The vast openings and squares are shown more than once but instead of providing the characters with a sense of spaciousness, peace and solitude, these well-lighted vistas belittle human beings and are shown as the arenas where the artifacts reminding the oppressive system haunt the individuals. The interiors resemble labyrinths in which the characters are confronted by ever-present social conditioning and

boundaries of work discipline. Artificially lit workspaces are clear indicators of monotony and an ideology based on over-standardization and dehumanizing professional success. Geometric shaped objects, a la *Metropolis*, adorn the *Gattaca* world, which is based on a worship of human genius produced by eugenics. Nevertheless, while the central character achieves his aim of going to space by deceiving the Gattaca corporate-institution, this success is ambiguous as the character's flight is only temporary and the system withstands individual exceptions. Hence, the modernist architecture symbolizes a system which is too strong and well-rooted to be destroyed by a simple destruction of a building or object.

Le Corbusier's vision of an ever-changing city which is an alienating force is best exemplified in the director Alex Proyas' *Dark City* (1998). In the film, the whole cityscape is designed to be an alien artifact rather than urban space created by man. In this city, people lead lives unconscious of the truth that the city they live in is constructed by an alien race, which every night at twelve o'clock reshapes the city according to their needs. As one of the aliens manifests later into the movie, "We build the city based on peoples' memories of different cities in different times." Thus, the city is the product of an urban planning process, i.e. a form of social control. The city is the means of deception the aliens use to control humans and the constantly changing city is what keeps humans alive. With its iconography of reason-worshipping as symbolized by the overlooking human head, the imagery of the living quarters of the aliens is in conformity with the modernist style squares as envisaged by early modernists and it does bear a striking resemblance to the imagery of *Metropolis*. Le Corbusier's influence is obvious in the metamorphosing cityscape. As he declared in 1947, "New York is not a completed city. It is a city in the process of becoming," one of the characteristics of the modern metropolis is its being in a constant state of the transformation and flux. The modern city, Le Corbusier professed, is a city of transformation carried out by the all-powerful architect. Nevertheless, in the film the metamorphosing city is what keeps its residents as prisoners and prevents their seeing the truth. At the final scene, the protagonist causes the destruction of the city and the dream-life led by the people. Following the destruction of the alien cityscape and aliens themselves, the city for the first time sees the sun, the symbol of liberty and truth.

A perfectly functioning social engineering system in a machine-like city as envisioned by Le Corbusier modernism sees it necessary that, to achieve such a balance and equality, its inhabitants should not have any emotions that make them differ from each other, as in the case of Kurt Wimmer's *Equilibrium*

(2002). The film uses the cityscape as a symbol of the ruthless and emotionless system of government of a city-state where everybody is forced to take a daily drug which eliminates human emotions. Thanks to this drug, the society has allegedly achieved a state of equilibrium, which is a concept championed by the modernists themselves (Milovanovic). As there are no emotions, there are no books, music, art and love. People are indoctrinated daily so that the system can maintain its credibility and survive. Drawing heavily from Orwell's *1984*, the Big Brother-like never-seen ruler of the city turns out to be an artificial impersonator and the system turns out to be based on the issue of deception of people for the benefit of an elite class that uses force to maintain the status quo. While borrowing heavily from Weimar architecture and Nazi iconography, the architectural planning and design of this modern city is also very much like *The Radiant City* by Le Corbusier with spacious public places and wide streets. The vast public squares are places where ideological indoctrination sessions and martial-arts based meditations are carried out. All the objects, icons and buildings denote power.

The colossal buildings disparage the individual identity and the protagonist feels he is reduced to his basic function, i.e. law enforcement officer responsible for the maintenance of the status quo. The interiors are again decorated with modernist furniture and lighting arrangements which are shown in a scene which shows the detachment and emotionless relationship between a father and his son. Carefully placed fixtures cast light on an otherwise empty hall. Workspaces, decorated with cold steel furniture give the audience a feeling of coldness and uniformity where individual differences are not permitted. Towards the final scene, the protagonist who has quitted taking his drug for some time, begins to feel human emotions, sees the sun and learns the truth about his true nature. The skyscraper, which symbolizes the oppression and the cityscape which brings to mind the modernist urban projects with its elevated transportation lines and segmented zones, are both destroyed in the final scene of the film.

How a city that is designed like a beautiful park can also hide a system based on class struggle and lack of free-will is the central theme of *I, Robot* (2004) by Alex Proyas The film depicts a city composed of closely located skyscrapers and other similar high-rise structures located along a central avenue-park. The incredibly tall US Robotics skyscraper has a glass-steel slick modernist body but a gothic or medieval looking top section which hosts the brain team of the society which is based on robot labor. The robots are presented as the proletariat, and one of them is in search of his individual identity and free-will and in the sub-

layers of the city a war takes place for the assurance of man's freedom against a devilish robot uprising. The interiors are steel-lined and walls are made of glass and passageways are lit with fluorescent light. Transportation takes place on underground motorways which are designed in geometric shapes. While the system is destroyed at the end, the skyscraper stands erect but is taken over by the protagonist, who watches the change taking place from the top of the skyscraper.

"The whole city as a park" approach is most notably depicted in the film *Aeon Flux* (2005) by Karyn Kusama. The story of the film revolves around a futuristic society which is living in an enclosed city called Bregna, which is separated from the surrounding nature by lofty walls on top of which run disinfectant sprayers. The whole world population is supposedly killed by a disease and the survivors live in the circular shaped city completely isolated from the nature outside. Reminding the closed and strictly controlled society of *Logan's Run*, the society and the city are champions of careful planning which leaves no room for chance and spontaneity. The city is amply supplied with parks, waterways and open spaces with carefully spaced foliage and other recreational areas. Nevertheless, despite its utopian outlook, the city-state is based on an authoritarian ideology of genetic reincarnation and population control. In complete conformity with the science fiction genre's usage of modernist architecture and city planning to symbolize totalitarian and dehumanizing social and political systems, the film makes frequent use of buildings, interiors and artifacts of modernist style. Buildings are made from concrete slabs, the interiors are decorated with glass, and geometric shapes are the dominant pattern in the design. While there are high-rise buildings that tower above the avenues and parks, the symbol of the authoritarian state is the flying egg-shaped library where the genetic heritage of the society is kept. The resistance movement and the protagonist who fight against the administration of Bregna cause a revolution and the object crashes into the wall that separates people from nature outside.

The films outlined herein suffice to reach the conclusion that the science fiction genre's affinity with modernist philosophy and modernist architecture and urban design in particular is intentional and resolute. Science fiction films make use of modernist architecture to associate it with the issues of social control, authoritarianism and oppression. Modernist architecture is presented as cold, dehumanizing and unnatural and beyond the visual aesthetics of the buildings and cityscape lie a cold and emotionless world which, in many cases, hosts individuals who yearn for a return to nature or the past. The future which modernist architecture symbolizes—or the very present it stands for—

is catastrophic and dystopian. Regardless of the form it assumes, the place is either claustrophobic or agoraphobic; a complete antithesis of the project modernity's dreams and aspirations. The failure of the project modernity, and thus of Le Corbusier, was the idea that the world could be shaped according to modernity's understanding of the concept of order. The issue of planning or bringing order to disorder, which Le Corbusier believed is what differentiates man from animal, is against nature. The demise of the oppressive system, the collapse of the skyscraper, the disintegration of the authoritarian computer/ mechanism as shown by science fiction films is the very failure of modernist vision envisioned by Le Corbusier. History has shown that the fall of modernist ideal was not followed by a restoration of a more humanitarian or environmentalist perspective for a long while, and, actually the fall was exacerbated, at least in the sense of the city, by a more chaotic social and cultural perception of human environment that has created further problems. Science fiction had made its first warning for such a future as early as the emergence of the modern city and it is likely that the solutions offered by the genre are yet to arrive.

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