

## THE REPRESENTATION OF HETEROTOPIAS IN CINEMA

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### INTRODUCTION

Heterotopia is a rich concept identified by Foucault to represent highly real spaces against utopia. The term consists of combination of topos and hetero meaning place and different, respectively. It appears to be a medical term especially after the 1920s, and describes the fact that an organ is in a different place than it should be <sup>i</sup>. While defining the term, Şentürk places Albred Dürer's rhinoceros as a reality in the cross section of the fantasy, and regards the horn as a heterotopia <sup>ii</sup> Different interpretations astonish about heterotopia and it effects a range of disciplines including architecture, interior architecture, psychology, urban studies and film studies.

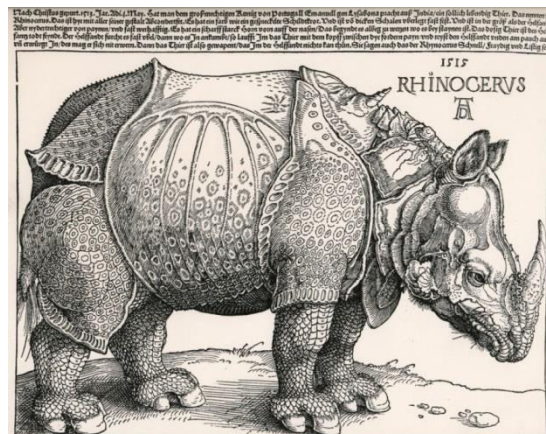


Fig 1 Albrecht Dürer's rhino<sup>iii</sup>

Foucault used this concept in three different contexts. Firstly, it was used in his book entitled “Words and Things” in 1966 <sup>iv</sup>. He argues that the things in Jorge Louis Borges’ book which is a fictional Chinese encyclopedia in which animals are classified in categories. According to Foucault the things are placed in so different spaces in Borges’ book that it is impossible to define a common space. He added that these groups of animals are juxtaposed only in the non-place of language. According to Foucault (fabula), narrative real events are added by Borges so it’s also unlike utopia. The concept of utopia is used when the things don’t have real spaces. However, all of the things are placed on plain and magical space, such as large avenues, cities with well-cared gardens, and countries that are reached easily. He names these spaces as heterotopias. The second use of heterotopia term took place in his paper called “Of Other Spaces, Utopias and Heterotopias”, which was published in *Architecture/Mouvement/ Continuite* journal in March 1967 <sup>v</sup>. The third one was used in a conference given to a group of architects in 1967 <sup>vi</sup>.

Foucault emphasizes that we live in a homogenous and empty space contrary to Descartes’ views by referring Bachelard’s opinions. According to him, Bachelard fills the space with his phenomenology. According to Foucault, utopias are the unreal spaces that have associations with real spaces, and there are heterotopias as the opposite of highly real spaces. In the mirror sample, the space obtained through

the mirror experience is both utopia and heterotopia. Indeed, there is no space behind the mirror. Therefore, it is the utopia. However, in reality, that space exists in terms of perception and presence. As a result, it is heterotopia. Foucault glimpsed a new direction of space. According to Knight, when evaluating linguistically, authors such as Calvino, Eco, Auster, Ondaatje, and Carter blur the boundary between reality and fiction <sup>vii</sup>. In the heterotopia concept, although heterotopia appears as more real space than utopian spaces, this boundary is blurred. The heterotopian void prevails not only as a physical space but also as a perceived and lived space in which the desires, hopes, thresholds, and bounds occur. Evaluating David Lynch's *Blue Velvet* through the concept of heterotopia, spatial pastiche, schizophrenic temporality and postmodern speed, Filiman identifies the postmodern space and time relation. Filmic style and its interpretations enrich the heterotopia concept of Foucault and endeavor to bring space-time relation. Representations in filmic space opens the audience mind through nonexistent spaces which seems existing. Film is actually an attempt to realize these concepts. According to Filiman, Lynchs' spaces are experienced in small-town and carries rich space-time relation of Foucault's concept. Contrasting characterization helps enrich it and added fragmentary weird, too <sup>viii</sup>. In fact heterotopia is a paradox including mirror, prison, library, garden, and brothel and never refers the real spaces or filmic spaces but inside its interpretation has a rich concept. We can read the filmic space in light of Foucault's heterotopia concept that corresponds Soja's concept of thirdspace or Lefebvre's space production diagram. Shane evaluates the concept of heterotopia over urban spaces and examines heterotopia systems formed by urban actor <sup>ix</sup>. Canzatti considers Soja's thirdspace concept and Foucault's heterotopia as spaces that differ in terms of meaning and context <sup>x</sup>. Thirdspace is both intersection and combination of perceived and conceived space based on trialectics of being and trialectics of spatiality developing on Lefebvre's three moments of space production (perceived, conceived, lived) . Urbach considers Foucault's heterotopia concept as an instrument for evaluating social exclusion and spatial formation <sup>xi</sup> Gomes tries to find a place for Avatar between utopia and heterotopia and considers that heterotopias are drawn in half-way with utopias <sup>xii</sup>.

### HETEROTOPIA IN CINEMA

The concept of heterotopia places itself on the intersection of space, which is one of the common objects of cinema in reality and in representation of reality. The space in cinema is the space which is seen through a screen within a real space. At the same time, it is one of the setup objects in cinema just like the people, light, and sound. While we experience the space by seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, and touching, we experience the cinema space only by seeing and hearing, but we complete the taste, smell, and touch senses in our minds. In cinema, what we live is a specific time and space while what we experience is another time and space. The space and time isn't continuous opposite to the real life. In cinema, it is possible to leap from one space to another in a short time. Firstly, the present, then a century before, and then two centuries later can be experienced. Within this context, although the film space isn't real, it is a representation of reality where it is experienced by visual and audial perceptions and created using setup, montage, sound, and light. The audience experiences the space and time to the extent that the director allows, and has no idea about the whole space. During the 90 minutes in a dark and noisy room in cinema experience, the audience isn't able to distinguish between the lived and experienced spaces. In cinema, the experience of space provides the audience with the opportunity to experience the emotions, thoughts, and activities that he/she can't in real life, and what excites audience is that it is an aesthetic phenomenon addressing individuals' feelings and thoughts <sup>xiii</sup>. At the same time, cinema is an expressive statement of our minds <sup>xiv</sup>. Among these reality representations,

utopia and dystopia are the nonexistent spaces which give the audience and architecture the opportunity to dream although they don't exist. They are the expressions of ideal or bad spaces and societies from an optimistic or pessimistic viewpoint. They are derived from the combination of Latin words 'eu' meaning good and 'eutopos' meaning good space, and the combination of 'ou' and 'outopos' meaning nowhere. The concept of dystopia is described as the bad utopia. The good/bad nonexistent spaces, u/dystopias, describe the door to heaven in More <sup>xv</sup>, the ideal order created by Hoh and his supporters Pon Sir and Mor in Campenella, and the dilemma between technology and nature in Bacon.

Foucault explains heterotopia in six principles <sup>xvi</sup>. The first principle; heterotopias exist in every culture, but in different norms. Foucault divides the heterotopias the first principle into two. The first one is crisis heterotopias. In cultures, there are spaces which are forbidden or privileged for people in specific periods (adolescents, menstruating women, pregnant women). Boarding schools and honeymoon hotels are among the examples. Şentürk expresses that crisis heterotopias depend on the obligation of "transition" experience that occurs "nowhere". The second one is heterotopias of deviation. The examples of second one are rest homes and psychiatric hospitals. Şentürk exemplifies the determinism of heterotopia spaces based on the closure function of many institutions from prison to nursing homes <sup>xvii</sup>.

The movie "Hababam Sınıfı" is one of the most fascinating examples of boarding schools in cinema. Hababam Sınıfı was adapted into cinema from a book which was composed of the collection of Rifat Ilgaz's stories called as "Stepne" and published in "Dolmuş" journal involving author's references to his own school years<sup>xviii</sup>. It was directed by Ertem Eğilmez in 1975. The movie tells the story of students of Literature 6-B classroom, who cheat on the exams, escape from the school, and make fun of teachers, and Mahmut teacher, who tries to discipline them. The movie was followed by other sequels. Many famous and cult actors and actresses such as Adile Naşit, Kemal Sunal, Tarık Akan, and Münir Özkul played in this movie. The dining hall, dormitory, and classrooms were used as the spaces. Adile Sultan Qasr was turned into museum of Hababam Sınıfı. Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone directed by Chris Columbus and Blindness directed by Fernando Meirelles are among the examples. Harry Potter and the Philosopher Stone was adapted to cinema Rowling's first book of a modern classic series entitled the same as the film and was directed by Chris Columbus. Harry Potter is a gifted boy and receives an acceptance letter to the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. The Blindness is adapted to cinema from Nobel Prize laureate Saramago's book and directed by Fernando Meirelles and tells a story about a dystopia that the whole world is blind because of an illness. Both films were chosen as an example for heterotopia as other places in the context of dystopia and utopia



Fig 2 Hababam sınıfı 03.54 and 08.56 frames



Fig 3 *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* - Sorting Ceremony



Fig 4 *Blindness* directed by *Fernando Meirelles* (2008)

The second principle; each society produces heterotopia of some function in different ways through history and attribute different functions to heterotopias. Foucault exemplifies these types of heterotopias by cemeteries<sup>xix</sup>. The movie *Buried*, which was directed by Rodrigo Cortes in 2010, was chosen as the representation of grave heterotopia. Although Foucault indicates different functions of societies in his example of cemetery, it is the heterotopia representation potential of a place where the struggle to survive occur which leads this movie to be chosen. The movie was shot in a single space (grave) with one actor. Paul Conrey wakes up in a coffin buried alive and his cellphone is the only tool that can save him. In *Kill Bill Vol 2* written and directed By Quentin Tarantino which tells the story of a warrior bride with two conflicting characteristics, Uma Thurman's grave scene was chosen as heterotopia.



Fig 4 The scene in which *Ryan Reynolds* wakes up in the movie *Buried*

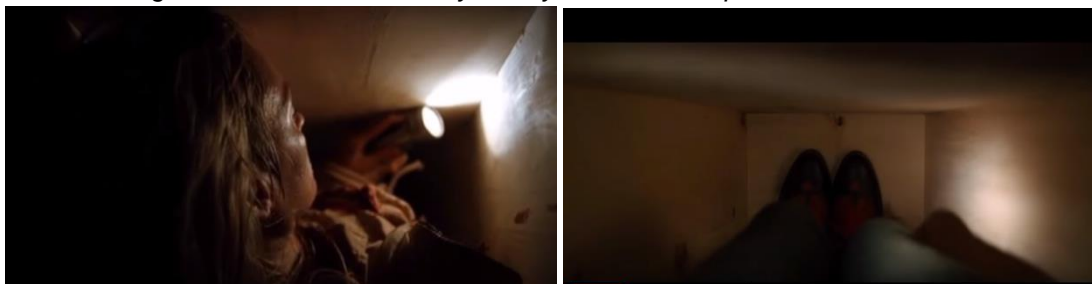


Fig 5 *Kill Bill Vol. 2* buried alive scene directed by *Quentin Tarantino* (2004)

Third Principle; Heterotopia involves many different spaces inside. Foucault exemplifies these types of heterotopias by cinemas, theatres, and Persian gardens <sup>xx</sup>. While only one heterotopia is produced in reality in cinema, the representation of cinema produces nested heterotopia spaces in cinema. This situation is similar to mirror example of Foucault. The utopic space in the mirror along with the real space in perception and its reproduction, bringing together two spaces which are distinct normally, and cinema space and its representation in a cinema movie theatre stratify the concept of heterotopia and remove the distinction between utopia and heterotopia drawn by Foucault. Shakespeare in Love, which was directed by John Madden in 1999 and involved Ben Affleck, Gwyneth Paltrow, Geoffrey Rush, Colin Firth, and Joseph Fiennes, was chosen as the example of this type of heterotopia representation. It is about William Shakespeare under pressure of the theatre and his becoming a great playwright with a girl he met in London of 1590.



Fig 6 Shakespeare in Love

Fourth principle; what is accumulated forever or become extinct is associated with time. They are the accumulated samples of a general time collection in a space. They are the historical documents of all time. Foucault exemplifies heterotopia spaces that depend on time collection by museums and libraries <sup>xxi</sup>. Foucault calls heterotopia spaces where the time disappears as festival heterotopia. Carnival, concert, and fairground are examples of this type of heterotopia. In these spaces, time is evaporated in space and the individual gets away from experiencing the time. Interstellar, which was directed by Christopher Nolan in 2010 and starred Matthew McCaughey, Anne Hathaway, and Jessica Chastain, was chosen as the example of this bipolar heterotopia. The movie was inspired by physicist Kip S. Thorne's theory of Wormholes. Cooper's decision for human's safety affects his relation with his daughter and he can see her again in her old age. Especially the library scene where the father communicates with his daughter in a library (2.20 - 2.35) becomes a space which collects their whole life story. The space evaporates the time and at the same time collects all of the memories as a festival heterotopia.



Fig 7 Scenes from Interstellar directed by Christopher Nolan (2014)

Fifth principle; Heterotopia spaces depend on conditions and they have specific starting and closing time <sup>xxii</sup> They are easily and freely reached and require some rituals. Headquarters and prisons are the examples of this type of heterotopias. The Cube movie, which was directed by Vincenzo Natali in 2001 and starred Julian Richings, David Hewlett, Nicole De Boer, Nicky Guadagni, and Wayne Robson, was chosen as the example. It is about people who found themselves in a prison composed of interlocked cube shaped rooms and their efforts to escape from deadly traps. The movie involved cubes, which were designed as killing machines, and time, which was given by the cubes for passage. The Experiment directed by Paul T. Scheuring is another example.



*Fig 8 Scenes from Cube*



*Fig 9 The Experiment directed by Paul T. Scheuring (2010)*

Sixth principle; Heterotopia spaces are related with all other spaces. An illusion creates the space <sup>xxiii</sup>. Although this principle is based on regular and specific rules, they are the spaces of others. According to Stavrides, otherness is mostly experienced through residing in interspaces and times <sup>xxiv</sup>. Within this context, boundaries and thresholds are important in creation of other spaces. According to Stavrides, the threshold character of heterotopia refers to the thresholds where the dominant order and control is ensured in space and time <sup>xxv</sup>. The movie Passengers, which was directed by Morten Tyldum in 2016 and starred Chris Pratt, Jennifer Lawrence, Michael Sheen, Laurence Fishburne, and Aurora Perrineau, was chosen as an example of this type of heterotopias. It is about the experiences of people who are travelling to another planet in a spaceship. A technical issue causes Jim Preston's (Chris Pratt) capsule to land 90 years earlier than the intended time. Jim Preston opens the author Aurora Dunn's (Jennifer Lawrence) capsule. The movie space is a spaceship. The threshold is the space. Although it is based on specific and regular roles, it is the space of the other. Prometheus directed by Ridley Scott is another example of thresholds as a heterotopia.



Fig 10 Scenes from *Passengers* directed by Morten Tyldum (2016)

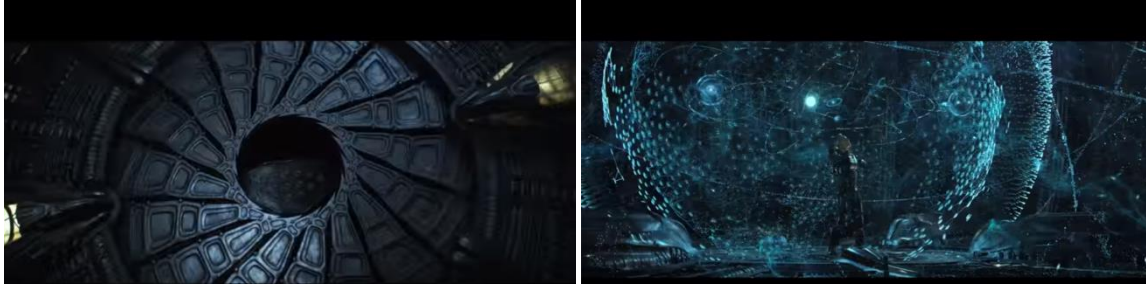


Fig 11 *Prometheus (Alien)* directed by Ridley Scott (2012)

## IN LIEU OF CONCLUSION

Spaces are produced conceptually while they are being produced formally. Whether they are real or cinema spaces, they create different images and concepts in each user's mind. Space and cinema space are produced through similar but different processes. However, cinema is an art which increases the possibility of spaces with its ability to make the unreal spaces seem real. Moreover, cinema space is a representation of the real space. The concept of heterotopia refers to the highly realistic spaces contrary to nonexistent spaces. They are the spaces of others at the same time. Classified as the spaces of others by Michel Foucault, the concept of heterotopia is associated with real life and lived space. Additionally, the spaces of others and threshold spaces involve the negotiation spaces between two distinct spaces. Within this context, cinema space was chosen for the representation of the concept of heterotopia in this study. The current study proposed a method to give meaning to a phenomenological concept rather than presenting precise and fixed information. In conclusion, cinema space is a tool of representation in architecture that can be used to visualize a phenomenological concept and create the real representations in unreal spaces.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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