

A MODEL FOR READING ARCHITECTURAL NARRATIVE IN DIFFERENTTürkan Nihan HACİÖMEROĞLU¹¹ Eskişehir Osmangazi University, Faculty of Engineering and Architecture, Department of Architecture.

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Abstract

When Daniel Libeskind proposed the possibility of different dimensions of architecture other than length, height and width, he offered reading, writing and memory. Reading architecture as he explains is not about reading text but about trying to understand a not "clearly explicit language" of architecture. (Libeskind, 2004) The aim of this paper is to propose a model for reading architectural narrative in different media by using architectural criticism as a base. Initially, the study is based on discussions on architectural criticism, narrative and representation, in architecture, literature and cinema, in order to understand the similarities and differences between the concepts of time, movement and space. Using these concepts, a comparative analysis table is created and the outcomes of these comparisons are inserted as data for different, yet inter-linked, comparisons and analysis tables. A number of keywords are utilized to set a model for reading architectural narrative. Such alternative readings establish a ground to understand the narrative and cultural based conceptualization of space. The main discussion is executed through a case study. *L'écumé des Jours* by Boris Vian (*Foam of the Daze*, 1947), and consequently, its 2013 adaptation *Mood Indigo* by Michel Gondry, are selected as the case.

Keywords: Architectural criticism, architectural narrative, representation, adaptation, cinema and literature

FARKLI MEDYALARDAKİ MİMARİ ANLATININ OKUNMASI İÇİN BİR MODEL**Özet**

Daniel Libeskind mimari boyutların uzunluk, yükseklik ve genişlik dışında farklı bir ihtimalinden bahsettiğinde önerisi okuma, yazma ve hafıza olmuştur. Libeskind mimariyi okumak metni okumak değil `mimarlığın çok da açık olmayan dilini` anlamaya çalışmak olarak açıklar. (Libeskind, 2004) Bu makalenin amacı mimari eleştiri temelinin kullanarak farklı medyalardaki mimari anlatıyı okumak için bir model önermektir. Başlangıç olarak çalışma mimarlık, edebiyat ve sinemada zaman, hareket ve mekan kavramları arasındaki benzerlikleri ve farklılıkları anlamak için mimari eleştiri, anlatı ve temsil tartışmalarına dayanmaktadır. Bu kavramları kullanarak, karşılaştırmalı bir analiz tablosu oluşturulmuş ve bu tablonun sonuçları, farklı, ancak birbiriyle bağlantılı karşılaştırmalar ve analiz tabloları için girdiler olarak kullanılmıştır. Bu çalışmanın sonucu olarak mimari anlatıları okumak için bir model belirlemek üzere belirli sayıda anahtar kelimeler seçilmiştir. Bu tür alternatif okumalar, mekânın anlatı ve kültürel temelli kavramsallaştırılmasını anlamaya zemin hazırlar. Ana tartışma bir vaka çalışması vasıtasıyla yürütülmüştür. Boris Vian'ın *L'écumé des Jours* (Günlerin Köpüğü, 1947) ve Michel Gondry'nin 2013 uyarlaması olan *Mood Indigo*, çalışma için seçilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Mimari eleştiri, mimari anlatı, temsiliyet, uyarlama, sinema ve edebiyat

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Reading architecture and criticism

“Some time ago I meditated on the problem of what constituted the dimensions of architecture, besides the obvious dimensions of length, height and width. Architecture is indeed three-dimensional because it is a cross-section of the cultural world. So I investigated the idea that the three dimensions of architecture is about reading, writing and memory. Reading architecture is not reading text, but reading in the sense of communicating and deciphering texts that communicate something in no clearly explicit language. Writing architecture is not writing literary text, but writing in the sense of inscribing ourselves in the book of possibilities, which include unknown configurations of relationships, names, places, people, dates, and the light, which reflects and refracts with architecture. The third dimension, the dimension of memory brings architecture into reality.”

Daniel Libeskind

Reading architecture is not a new concept but an ambiguous term. How can one read architecture? In order to read anything it is necessary to have a critical approach to it. David Cunningham starts his article *Architecture as Critical Knowledge* with Manfredo Tafuri's 'a simple truth'; “just as there cannot exist a class political economy, so too there cannot be founded a class aesthetic, art, or architecture, but only a class critique of the aesthetic, of art, of architecture, of the city itself” (Cunningham, 2007)

Architectural criticism is an area that approaches architecture within an interdisciplinary diversity, functionalizes different disciplines' methods and notions and adapts them to architecture. According to Paul Jay “One result of the importation of critical theories developed in linguistics, literary criticism, political science, philosophy, and history into the domain of architecture criticism has been the blurring of the clear lines which have traditionally separated the discipline of architecture from these other disciplines.” He suggests that the more architecture is affected by the critical theories of other disciplines; the more separation between these disciplines will continue to dissolve. As a result architectural criticism will start to change and in the end transform the discipline or institution of architecture itself. (Jay, 1989a)

Jane Rendell suggests, “the objects and subjects, as well as the practices of architectural criticism, may come from beyond architecture and might include art, film, writing and philosophy.” According to her “each medium has an architectonics – a series of procedures for the material organization, structure and construction of space.” (Rendell, 2007)

There are different approaches and referential grounds in criticism. In 1980s Mary McLeod defined the current popular criticism as pluralistic, eclectic, and ad hoc. (McLeod, 1985) Tafuri on the other hand has a different approach towards criticism of architecture. According to Paul Jay Tafuri wanted to move architectural criticism back towards an engagement with history, but with a notion of “history” transformed by the insight of contemporary theory. (Jay, 1989b) Criticism and critical theory change constantly with

the demands and developments of current flows. New theories are added in time, which studies inter-relations between different disciplines and representation of space.

In the midst of all these Wayne Attoe offers another approach to architectural criticism not to theorize but to classify. Attoe wrote one of the first and significant studies on architectural criticism in 1978. At the beginning of his book "Architecture and Critical Imagination" Attoe, points at the lack of attention on architectural criticism as a discipline and accuses the insufficient and inconsequential criticism which do nothing to add or improve the understanding of the environment. He highlights that criticism is not something only done for academic or artistic purposes but it is a something everybody engages all the time. He insists that in order for criticism to be useful it should "inform the future rather than score the past." (Attoe, 1978a) Attoe displays an inclusive approach towards criticism and use many elements from other disciplines. In fact he bases his three methods of criticism on art and literary criticism, namely normative, interpretive and descriptive criticism. According to B.R. Tilgman Attoe wants to characterize the critic as a manipulator of perceptions. (Tilgman, 1979) In his book, Attoe also tries to define the reasons of criticism besides the methods of it. According to him architectural criticism should not only bound with text but photographs, drawing and other data should also be used. (Attoe, 1978b) Recent studies on architectural criticism adds visual and digital technologies to the list of data not only for their visual and virtual creative capabilities (3d models, virtual experiences, spatial mapping programs) but also for the additional end products such as 3d physical models created with 3d printers.

For some Attoe's work on architectural criticism may be outdated. But with his inclusive approach he categorizes the methods of criticism and emphasizes the importance of changing the main area of criticism, the method, the position of the critic and disciplinary references depending on the priorities. Therefore even though what he proposes may not be the ideal critical model for today, but it's prioritizing attitude may be an effective model for correlation of different disciplines. Attoe proposes taking a position and changing the main approach depending on this position.

Architectural criticism produces narrative through representation. During this process not all of the components of a design are taken into account but more like a part of the representation is selected. Therefore the end product, the narrative, just like in cinema, is turn into a subtext based on collage, reduction and fiction. What become important are priorities. Narrative is fictional. It is created within the selected context in relation with the position of the critic. Just like the choices made by the author and director.

So how does this criticism reflect on architecture? Here the central debate is about a field that is open to all various subtext generations towards the representation of architecture and space. The nature of criticism constructed in a fictional text as in cinema and literature. Architectural criticism constitutes a discussion ground for the regeneration of the value of spatial representation and meaning, according to the mentioned priorities beyond assigning a scientific accuracy and strict judgment. Therefore, it can be said that the representation of space gains a meaning through the position on the priorities defined by the author.

When criticism is taken as narrative, the decisiveness of the priority list, as seen in various narrative media, is also accurate for architectural criticism. This priority list consists of (1) narrative medium, (2) the position of the author (critic) and (3) fiction. These three variables are effective in the understanding and

evaluating of the architectural object and space. While the object is permanent, the imputed value and representational priorities can change accordingly.

1.2 Architectural narrative and representation in film and literature

As Rendell suggested before different media such as art, film and writing influences architectural criticism since they all have architectonics. In return many of these media are also influenced by architecture through architectural representation and narrative, especially cinema and literature.

The relationship between narrative and representation in architecture, literature and cinema differs. In architecture, representation is the principal element and narrative is something read through it. In literary narrative it is the opposite. Cinema combines them both. It uses narrative and representation simultaneously to tell the story. When the functionalization and prioritization methods of spatial perception in different media employed during the transformation process of narration to representation (and vice versa) are understood, the relationship between these media is also questioned. Is it possible to come up with a set of rules, or a model to read architecture (architectural narrative and representation) that can be applied to all of these fields?

Architecture, literature, and cinema are disciplines with their own methods of analysis and inquiry, different evaluation and criticism traditions. Thus architectural criticism will be functionalized as a model to understand the limits of architecture and the existence of architecture in various fields of representation.

1.3 Case study

One of the main intersections of literature and cinema is adaptations. Adaptations provide an opportunity to see the changes in the architectural narrative from verbal to visual. Therefore, the case for this study is an adapted work from literature to cinema that is selected using a set of classification criteria and a three-step elimination process (genre, assessment on adaptation, the role of architectural narrative within narrative of subjects) proposed specifically for this study. The selected case is *Lécumé des Jours* by Boris Vian published in 1947, (English translation *Foam of the Daze*, 2013) and its 2013 adaptation *Mood Indigo* by Michel Gondry.¹

Lécumé des Jours is a story revolves around Colin (a wealthy young man) and changes in his life and relationships with love of his life Chloe, friends Chick and Isis, his cook and legal counsel Nicolas, Nicolas' niece Alice and his pet mouse. Fantastic (some even call sci-fi) elements and Jazz music (Boris Vian is a jazz lover) are also very much present in the story. Any changes in Colins life is reflected to his surroundings; his house changes its shape, streets and other buildings cracks, crashes and moves. These facts make the adaptation of Vian's work a difficult but an enriching experience. Both *Lécumé des Jours* and Michel Gondry's *Mood Indigo* provide a fertile platform for discussing architectural narration and representation.

¹ There are three different English translations of *Lécumé des Jours*. *Froath on the Daydream* (Rapp & Carroll) translated by Stanley Chapman was published in 1967, *Mood Indigo* (Grove Press) translated by John Sturrock was published in 1968 and *Foam of the Daze* (Tam Tam Books) translated by Brian Harper was published in 2003. For this study Brian Harper's translation is chosen.

In accordance with the different aspects of literary and visual fields, their strengths, restraints specific to their media, expectation of a one-on-one transformation of literary architectural narrative to visual architectural narrative may not be sufficient. Thus what could be studied would be the transformation of the “representation” narrated in the novel to the movie that not only includes the physical aspects but also the emotional ones such as the atmosphere, related feelings, spirit of the novel etc. Thus, each analysis should also consider these data.

1.4 Analysis methods

The primary analysis of one-on-one comparison of the literal narrative and visual narrative could be accepted as the starting point to criticize the adapted narrative and should question not only the physical aspects but also the emotional ones.

Preliminary studies show that most common concepts come across when studying the relationship between architecture, literature and cinema relationship are mostly time, movement and space. Initially, the study is based on discussions on narration, narrative and representation, in architecture, literature and cinema, in order to understand the similarities and differences between the concepts of time, movement and space.

Throughout the study in order to differentiate the transformation of architectural narrative, it is decided to analyze the case study layer by layer, define the dominant factors, which may affect the perception of transformation of the architectural narrative. These principal factors are translation, media, stylistic choices, adaptation and narrative. In order to do a comparison between two works they are divided into sections. In the end against sixty-eight chapters of the book forty scenes are selected for comparison.

Using these chapters and scenes as base, a comparative analysis table is created in order to compare the literary architectural narrative with visual architectural narrative. Chapters and scenes in the table are matched based on plot. Comparative Analysis Table is composed of three sections: (1) novel analysis, (2) evaluation, and (3) movie analysis. The outcomes of these comparisons are inserted as data for following comparison and analysis tables: One-on-One Analysis, Spatial Analysis, Architectural Space–User Relationship, User/Space/Movement, Comparative Analysis of User/Space/Movement, Spatial Mapping, Topic Modeling for Space–Usage Frequency, Topic Modeling for Space–Usage Density. Outcomes of the above-mentioned analyses are used to propose a model for reading architectural narrative in different media.²

In this particular case (movie *Mood Indigo*), architectural elements and their unorthodox movements, which are the few things that are visualized exactly like in the book, (plus some additions) represent some of the emotions, such as house getting darker/dirtier/smaller; bedroom getting round, telephone booth closing in, the ice skating rink cracking, the operation hall constantly moving, Colin falling into wall (film stills), flower on the ceiling of Isis’ house. In this specific case, since the spaces also move, just like characters, the analysis of this movie could not be limited to frame-by-frame image examination. The

2 For detailed information Hacıömeroğlu, Türkan Nihan. 2015. “The Transformation of Architectural Narrative from Literature to Cinema: Differences, Continuities and Limits of Representation in Different Media” METU, Ankara, Turkey.

movement of architectural space not only makes it an important part of the cast but also gives the atmosphere with its changes (literally).

Literature and cinema has temporal differences. In literature actions and events follow one another even when they happen at the same time. As oppose to this linear behavior a movie has the ability to go from one scene to another than come back in a continuous action or go back and forth in time or juxtapose both scenes at the same frame. It can narrate them all at the same time.

As a result of the analysis of this case and regarding all these matters discussed above a set of keywords are defined during this study. These keywords establish the base for the model for reading architectural narrative. They are:

- Usage density
 - o Experiencing the space
 - o Usage frequency
- Spatial continuity-discontinuity
- Temporal continuity-discontinuity
- Continuity-discontinuity of narrative

The properties of the spaces, meanings imposed on them, and their importance as part of the narrative cannot be analyzed and understood only by studying their appearance in the text or the movie. The interaction of the characters with these spaces plays a major role. As discussed before, this cannot be studied only by analyzing basic architectural space-user interaction since it shows the characters' interactions with each space but it cannot give information about how many times, for how long, or for how many activities the space is used by the characters (usage frequency), or if the space is used more than once and/or at the same time by all these characters. In order to achieve more productive data, movement should be added to architectural space and user matrix, and the usage density should be analyzed in accordance with usage frequency. Usage density does not only refer to how many characters use the space but how it is used and how it changes during the course of the narrative. Taking Attoe's all-inclusive prioritizing attitude the keywords and analysis tables form a model that can be applied to different adaptations.

2. CONCLUSION

The proposed model can be applied to any of the three media that contains architectural narrative by analyzing various spatial representations to uncover time, movement and space relationship within the narrative. A set of questions are constituted in order to reach an understanding of usage density, spatial and temporal continuities-discontinuities, and continuity-discontinuity of the narrative which will produce a base for a visual diagram of time-movement-space relationship.

Possible subheadings for the keywords are

Architectural space as a narrative (continuity-discontinuity of narrative)

Do the changes in the number or order of narratives in the process of transformation from one medium to another change way, or limits of communication of the main atmosphere/spirit of the original work?

Does the transformation of the psychological aspects of the narrative bring a new meaning to the narrative?

Is the narrative bounded with the temporal and spatial changes?

The significance of architectural space in narrative (usage density)

How the relationship between user and events shape space/architectural narrative?

How frequently and in what density spaces are used by the characters/users?

How usage density shapes the relationship between user, space and events?

Architectural space as part of the event (spatial continuity-discontinuity)

Are single spaces used for multiple events or do multiple events happen in multiple spaces? (Is it also possible for single event in multiple spaces?)

How movements affect the spatial continuity of the architectural narrative?

Architectural space – time relationship (temporal continuity – discontinuity)

What is the temporal behavior of the users and events within the narrative?

How do the changes in the temporal continuity of literary and visual narratives (change of order, extraction in or addition to the chain of events) affect the overall continuity of the narrative?

In order to answer these questions aforementioned comparison and analysis tables are applied to the narrative and the base diagram is visualized. These tables are Comparative Analysis Table, One-on-One Analysis, Spatial Analysis, Architectural Space–User Relationship, User/Space/Movement, Comparative Analysis of User/Space/Movement, Spatial Mapping, Topic Modeling for Space–Usage Frequency, Topic Modeling for Space–Usage Density.

The base diagram will be a basis for a comparative analysis to understand how the concept of space and place are construed in different narrative media as a representation of architecture. The model will also provide a ground to uncover the disciplinary power of different media not only representing architectural space but also transforming it with reference to disciplinary privileges.

Proposed Model

Case

Could be an adaptation or a singular work
in either literature, cinema or architecture



Main keywords to search for

Transformation/Preservation
of the spirit of original work

Usage Density

Spatial Continuity-Discontinuity

Temporal Continuity-Discontinuity

Continuity-Discontinuity of the narrative



Subheadings for questions

Architectural space as a narrative

The significance of architectural space in narrative

Architectural space as part of the event

Architectural space – time relationship



Application of comparative and analysis tables

Using all the tables is not obligatory.
Selection of the tables are subjective.



Outcome

Base for a visual diagram

Figure 1. Proposed Model for Reading Architectural Narrative

The case is selected based on its architectural narrative qualities within the scope of this study. Both the novel and movie treats architectural narrative as one of the main characters. The architectural spaces in the narrative acquire this role not only because of their traditional representative qualities but also with their case-specific unorthodox movements. Therefore the proposed analyzing methods also include case specific questions. But regarding all the discussions above, this study does not propose a model only for this specific case. Taking Attoe's all-inclusive prioritizing attitude the keywords and analysis tables form a model that can be applied to different adaptations. This model aims to offer a positional prioritizing set for architecture, literature and cinema, where depending on the position of the author, director, critic or researcher, some elements of the model can be highlighted, while some elements can be dropped, and literal and visual representations can be formed as sub-texts based on collage within the narrative.

As mentioned before architectural criticism is an area that approaches architecture within an interdisciplinary diversity, functionalizes different disciplines' methods and notions and adapts them to architecture. Paul Jay suggests that the more architecture is affected by the critical theories of other disciplines; the more separation between these disciplines will continue to dissolve. As a result architectural criticism will start to change and in the end transform the discipline or institution of architecture itself. (Jay, 1989c)

Each genre in these art forms, whether it is romantic, horror, sci-fi, or else, has their unique representative images and signs, which in return gives feedback on architecture. What emerges is a gap between architectural representation in public memory established by art and architecture in its critical existence. To fill this gap, architecture should establish a more integrated conductive approach to feedbacks from other disciplines as much as other disciplines should establish a similar approach to each other and architecture. This model can also be used to analyze what is taken into account while choosing architectural narratives and representations as part of the collage within the narrative in arts, especially literature and cinema.

Lately there are signs of reciprocity between architecture and other disciplines. As a result of rapid developments in digital technologies any kind of space can be created now, in any field, especially cinema. Creating lost city of Atlantis or recreating ancient Rome puts architectural space in the center of a multi disciplinary formation, which includes many disciplines such as art history, sociology, etc. Architectural space is one of the main platforms, in which many disciplines intersect. Through its multi disciplinary nature, it constitutes a bridge between literature and cinema, cinema and sociology, etc. Therefore the continuity of interdisciplinary studies on architectural space in different areas, and discussions on the sustainability of spatial value is important.

It is suggested that having further studies based on the model proposed in this study in disciplines other than architecture, could be beneficial for understanding architecture and architectural space in different ways. Such studies could also be beneficial to produce valuable feedback for this study.

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