

HYPER-REALITY OF A THREE-DIMENSIONAL CINEMATIC
EXPERIENCE WITHIN POSTMODERN ERA

A Master's Thesis

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Graduate School of Economics and Social Sciences
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COMMUNICATION AND DESIGN
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I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.

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I certify that I have read this thesis and that in my opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in Media and Visual Studies.

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ABSTRACT

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This research aims to analyze hyper-reality of three-dimensional cinematic experience within postmodern era. In the study, (illusion of) realistic aspect of a cinematic experience is taken into account in order to examine the ‘shifts’ occurred in the expectations and the understanding of a cinematic experience due to changes within the social paradigm. In this mentioned context, the movie *Avatar* (2009) is analyzed through its hyper-realistic characteristics with respect to postmodernist notion of understanding. As a result, it could be said that, due to changes on the mode of thought, any understanding could be shaped inevitably, under the effect of the ‘norms’ that came with the mode of thought. In this study, the point tried to be shown is that the changes in the mode of thought has a reflection on the understanding of a cinematic experience.

Key Words: Realism in Cinema, Postmodernism, Hyper-Reality, *Avatar* (2009)

ÖZET

POSTMODERN DÖNEMDE ÜÇ BOYUTLU SİNEMA TECRÜBESİNİN GERÇEKLİK ÖTESİ ANLAYIŞI

Günışık Sungur

Yüksek Lisans, İletişim ve Tasarım Bölümü

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Bu araştırma, postmodern dönemde üç boyutlu sinema tecrübesinin gerçeklik ötesi anlayışını analiz etmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu çalışma, sinema tecrübesinin (ilüzyonsal) gerçekliğini göz önünde bulundurarak, sosyal paradigmalara dayalı değişimin sinematik tecrübeye karşı beklenti ve anlayışındaki yer değişimini incelemektedir. Bu belirtilen içerikte, *Avatar* (2009) filmi, postmodernist anlayışta gerçeklik ötesi karakteristik özelliklerine dayanılarak incelenmiştir. Sonuç olarak söylenebilir ki; düşünce modundaki değişiklikler, kaçınılmaz olarak yeni düşünce modunun ‘norm’ları aracılığı ile her türlü anlayışa yön verebilir. Bu çalışmada, düşünce modundaki değişimin sinematik tecrübeye yansıması gösterilmeye çalışılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Sinemada Gerçeklik Kavramı, Postmodernizm, Gerçeklik Ötesi Anlayış, *Avatar* (2009)

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Among all art forms, visual arts can be counted as the most effective ones. First of all, it should be considered that cinema is such a medium that includes both entertainment and visual aspects. Furthermore, bearing in mind that cinema is a medium, which differentiates itself from other mediums of visual mass culture, and it can be said that its power lies in the notion of ‘illusion of reality’. However, shifts occur on this mentioned ‘illusional realism’ of cinematic experience, with respect to the changes taking place in the social context.

The aim of this thesis is to explore the attitudes and understandings shaped towards a cinematic experience, in which ways and under which social contexts.

In order to make a thorough analysis of the mentioned subject, the very first thing is to construct a relationship between cinema and its characteristics

such as its power, which is rooted from its illusiveness.

On the other hand, when the times that cinema as a medium has firstly appeared are considered, the major points that differentiate cinema from other forms of visual representations or visual art forms were different from today's considerations.

Cinema was born in the late nineteenth century, when the resemblance to nature is looked for within visual art forms. Thus, Bazin's analogy "of mummy complex", with the aesthetic fear of death that is expressed through artworks, can reveal the attitude towards the visual representation during modern era. The mentioned attitude towards visual representations affects the understanding of them; therefore, it is important to examine the notion of realism from a wider and a discursive perspective.

In Chapter Two, it is explored that the relationship between modernity and cinematic experience is important for understanding the characteristics and power of cinema. Moreover, the point 'illusion of reality' is such an aspect that it should be examined as an autonomous system. It should be put forward that the notion of realism within modernity seeks for a 'life-like' reality. Within the mentioned Chapter, modernity is introduced and its relation with visual arts is examined on the basis of Andre Bazin's thoughts and views. Andre Bazin's point of view on the subject is specifically chosen for the purpose of his descriptive attitude of the notion realism in modernity.

When the notion of realism within cinematic experience is deeply analyzed, it leads the research to another point from the continuum of cinema, which can be called as hyper-reality, instead of a 'natural, life-like' reality. Thus, Chapter Three examines the notion of hyper-reality and its relation with postmodernism. In this chapter, French sociologist, philosopher and theorist Jean Baudrillard's thoughts and views are followed up in order to understand the 'norms' of the postmodern. It could be said that, within the postmodern era, audience become ready to integrate the hyper-realness of a cinematic experience. From a postmodern point of view, Baudrillard's definition of modernity could be counted as enlightening for understanding the shifts occurred within the cinematic experience.

In that respect, modernity is associated with social classes and groups to pass over the 'exclusiveness of signs' and to cause a rapid increase in the number of 'signs on demand'. To be more specific, Baudrillard (1993: 54) puts forward as follows:

Imitations, copies, counterfeits, and the techniques to produce them (which would include the Italian theater, linear perspective, and camera obscura) were challenges to the control of signs. The problem of mimesis here is not one of aesthetics but of social power, a power founded on the capacity to produce equivalences.

Owing to the mentioned fact that any kind of reproduction; thus, representation creates and owns its own reality. For cinema, it can be said that represented images on the screen has its own realism, and realism on

screen is not dependent on the present realism, meanwhile the real-time shooting place, time, events and acts. As a result, realism within cinematic experience is a social process, neither a technological nor an aesthetical.

Furthermore as Baudrillard (1993: 65) puts forward;

At the moment that touching loses its sensory, sensual value for us ('touching is an interaction of the senses rather than a simple contact between a skin and an object'), it is possible that it might once more become the schema of a universe of communication but this time as a field of tactile and tactical simulation where the message becomes a 'message', a tentacular enticement, a test.

Moreover, due to the postmodernism, hyper-real becomes a notion which does not need the 'real' anymore.

A case study is chosen in Chapter Four, in order to gather more specific data for this research. The movie *Avatar* (2009) is the chosen cinematic experience for understanding the interaction of a hyper-real movie from a postmodern perspective.

The movie *Avatar* contains hyper-real elements on the basis of both the technique and within the narrative.

While analyzing the movie *Avatar*, it becomes more clear that the characteristics of hyper-reality is accepted by the audience; thus, the shift on the status of the observer is obvious at this point.

It can be said for any cinematic experience from a postmodern point of view (Baudrillard, 1993: 72);

The Hyper-real represents a much more advanced phase insofar as it effaces the contradiction of the real and the imaginary... Irreality no longer belongs to the dream or the phantasm, to a beyond or a hidden interiority, but to the hallucinatory resemblance of the real to itself.

Based on the given reference, the movie *Avatar* is surrounded by the postmodern environment of today's.

As a result; cinema is a medium in which the cinematic experience is the subject itself, whereas the audience joins this (hyper)reality while watching the movie.

Another point that should be emphasized is simulation; thus, hyper-reality is at least as real as reality or even more real. To be more specific; "The simulacrum is never what hides the truth - it is truth that hides the fact that there is none. The simulacrum is true. -Ecclesiastes." (Baudrillard, 1994: 1)

Bearing in the mind that, all those emphasized subjects can only arise or live as long as the social context is convenient to maintain it.

CHAPTER II

THE NOTION OF REALISM WITHIN CINEMATIC EXPERIENCE

The main objective of this chapter is firstly to put forward the etymology of cinema with respect to its illusional aspect. Moreover; this chapter will discover the relationship between realism and cinematic experience in the context of modernity. In many ways, it can be put forward that cinema has credible strength amongst visual media with its multilayered structure. To be more specific, cinema is such a medium in which shelters different socially shaped layers like arts, ideology, aesthetics... take place within the same audiovisual medium.

However, the idea of cinema has firstly appeared in 1589 by Giovan Battista Della Porta, in his book *Magia Naturalis*, the practical appearance of cinema belongs to the late 18th century, which causes it to take its characteristics from the early 19th century; the era of modernity. The use of camera obscura is well described by Della Porta (Williams, 1996: 34) as he stages;

Under the bright light of the sun, photographs, (by the means of lens of the camera obscura), projecting the two-dimensional, luminous image of the original action onto a screen before an audience. He enhances the visual show with sound effects. He assures the focus, amending the distance by the magnitude of the glass.

Based on the description that Della Porta portrays, cinema as known in today is capable of reproducing a live act on screen. In the 1650s the ‘magic lantern’ was started to use to screen movement lacking images through a lens system like in camera obscura. Then, sliding discs were used to give the illusion of movement on screen like a continuous movement with Phenakistiscope in 1833. Later on, Zoetrope in 1867, and Edison’s Kinetoscope in 1894 have contributed to cinematography and it can be said that cinema has reached a peak point with Lumiere brothers’ with the method of combining the Kinetoscope with the magic lantern. Lumieres’ first demonstration to a paying audience was on 28 December 1895, (Parkinson, 1995: 16) in Salon Indien, a basement room of the Grand Café in Paris. For most of the scholars, the birth date of cinema is accepted as Lumieres’ Cinematographe so according to that era, cinema belongs to modernity.

To be more specific under the contextual frame of modernity, it can be explained as cinema has been shaped due to the cultural and intellectual movements with the help of industrialization and technology.

In order to overlook the relation between realism and cinematic experience, it should be clearly put forward the characteristics of modern era.

2.1 Modern Understanding of Arts

Modernism is the flow that can be identified with two major meanings (W.Richard, 2010: 424);

1. Modern practice; a thing of recent date, especially a modern usage or mode of expression.
2. A type of artistic movement, dating from the early twentieth century, characterized by a deliberate departure from traditional forms and a questioning of contemporary moral and social values. Dadaism and surrealism were among the first modernist movements.

Whereas; modernity is the historical period that can be understood as “largely shaped by worship of the machine god and the conflicts of the modern era as contests for technological superiority.” (Dora, 1983: 209)

The technological machinery innovations that took place especially in the late 18th century changed all social structure in the path of separation from medieval traditions and shifting towards the industrialized ‘modern’ set of new traditions. It should be emphasized that this shift is not only on the technological basis, rather than technical improvements, but social shift is also the key point that directs the flow in both micro and macro levels.

It is inevitable to mention that the changes, which has brought up by modernity are not only on the basis of technology; moreover the attitudes and perceptions towards life, are also changed due to its social impact.

From a Marxist point of view, technological aspects of modernity are highly criticized. According to Marx (1947: 47), modernity can be distinguished by

...a mode of thought, an understanding of the world, in which technology becomes a problem. That is, the machines that, since the Industrial Revolution, have shaped the processes of production and imposed new divisions of labour have posed questions that have forced us to reassess the meaning of existence and experience; to examine how our knowledge of the world is shaped, not only by science, but by the uses to which we put the products of scientific understanding.

‘Life’, as Marx and Engels (1947: 48) say, “is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life”, which puts a significant emphasis on the importance of instrumental functionality that brings the profit in the end, shapes our all way of perceiving, conceptualizing, thus the way of living.

It can be said that, under the influence of capitalism, modernity turned into a system with its own limits (especially when compared to postmodernity) that, “everything which is symbolically exchanged constitutes a mortal danger for the dominant order” (Baudrillard, 1993: 188).

In the case of cinematic experience, when signs of the real action is recorded and represented on the screen, there occurs a symbolic exchange. Thus, the symbolic exchange causes a shift in the order of signs and the whole semiotics of both the present and represent systems go through a shift. Orders of the signs are changed due to the symbolic exchange.

The ideas put forward starting from West, spread through the rest of the world. Meanwhile; modern era has hosted many thinkers and writers with such as; Marx, Freud, Brecht, Joyce, Woolf, Eisenstein, Kuleshov and so on... They all have shaped the whole flow of the world and thus the understanding of arts. 'Modern' set of traditions influenced the cultural agencies; thus, the meaning and value given to arts have also changed. The influence of modernity amongst art can be put forward as Shaw (2008: 3) suggests;

It is organized according to the development of new technologies that changed patterns of work and social life and influenced cultural institutions and their expression in art forms like painting, architecture, dance, drama and literature. The arts that we produce not only provide us with enjoyment but also provide us with a focus for working through our responses to cultural change and can be read as representing the state of knowledge about the world in any given historical period or in any given culture. Thus, certain cultural artifacts can be analyzed as instrumental in both structuring and reflecting responses to the impact of technologies on social organization and everyday life.

The mentioned art forms can be extended with adding photography and later on; cinema.

The notion of arts under the influence of modernity considers a lot on; ‘the originality’, in other words, the authenticity of the ‘masterpiece’. Furthermore, it is expected for a modern artwork to be consistent within itself, portrayed by Levenson (1999: 3);

As we acknowledge the full compass of the work, it will prove better to be minimalist in our definitions of that conveniently flaccid term *Modernist* and maximalist in our accounts of the diverse *modernizing* works and movements, which are sometimes deeply congruent with one another, and just as often opposed or even contradictory.

In other words, a modernist artwork is expected to work as ‘Gestalt’ in which, each and every piece of the work is expected to work for the perception of the ‘whole’.

To be more specific, understanding of the art works, under the influence of modernity, is based on the totality that maintained from harmony. This mentioned aspect of artworks’ perception under the influence of modernity grounds the overlooking the pieces of the total; hence, the notion of illusion gains strength. In order to make it clear, when pieces become meaningful only through perceiving the whole, meanings of individual pieces on the basis of effectiveness is repressed and caused a deviation. As a result, the modernly perceived art works conceive an illusional apprehension.

Another point with respect to modernity for artworks, especially for photography and cinema, is the technique. It is the seeking point within a masterpiece. Technique on the basis of modernity refers to the 'whole'. As Levenson (1999: 3) specifically explains;

Much of the artistic passion of the period was stirred by questions of technique, where 'technique' should not suggest attention to 'form' as opposed to 'content', but should imply rather the recognition that every element of the work is an instrument of its effect and therefore open to technical revision. Nothing was beyond the reach of technical concern: not the frame of a picture, not the shape of a stage, not the choice of the subject, not the status of a rhyme. If a new medium such as film was extravagantly bound up with problems of technique, so too was an ancient genre such as lyric poetry.

All visual art forms including paintings, photography and cinema have followed mentioned traditions of modernity. The essential point on the subject is that all those traditions put certain limits to arts. A two-dimensional traditional film is expected not to brim over the limits.

2.1.1 General Overview on Cinema in Modern Era

Considered through today's perspective, modernity seems to belong to the past when compared to postmodern contemporary cultural impacts of today's, even though both of them are the dots from the same continuum. Whereas it is important to comprehend the essence of the cinematic experience, especially with two-dimensions, which has strong bonds with modernity.

The films produced on modern era represent the modern conditions and traditions. The characteristics of that period can be explicitly seen, within the art works of the modern period, which have affected from living in the way of 'modernity'.

In this respect, self-reflexivity can be counted as one of the main characteristics of the visual artworks made under modernist movement. At this point, it is inevitable to put some emphasis on the relation between paintings, which can be counted as the roots of photography, and cinema, which can be counted as the next generation of photography.

2.2. The Notion of 'Realism' in Cinema With Respect to Its Roots

In order to mention on a cinematic experience, understanding its ontological aspect is important. When roots of cinema are considered, the relation between paintings and photography is crucial.

Especially in the nineteenth century, artworks were the complete imitations of nature under the flow of modernity. This was a way of challenge against the passing time, like waxing a dead body for preserving artificially what has been lost or going to be lost.

To be more specific, artworks of modernity was the medium of expression. Artists expressed their fears, emotions, impressions, and other realities of life through artworks.

At this point, it is inevitable to assert the biggest fear of mankind: the death.

Death is the biggest unconscious fear at least for human beings, whereas it is an inevitable fact of nature.

On the other hand, a living body is the most significant display of life; therefore, nature itself. Artists tried to imitate the nature with copying the nature.

Andre Bazin (1967b: 10) draws an analogy of “mummy complex” with the aesthetic fear of death that is expressed through artworks of modern era:

If the plastic arts were put under psychoanalysis, the practice of embalming the dead might turn out to be a fundamental factor in their creation. The process might reveal that at the origin of painting and sculpture, there lies a “mummy complex”.

Mummification is the religion of ancient Egypt, aimed against death, saw survival as depending on the continued existence of the corporeal body. It can be inferred from Bazin’s (1967b: 10) words that many genres of art have the purpose of one of the most basic instinct of all living creatures: overcoming the death with preserving the appearance of body.

Mummy complex basically aims, as Bazin (1967b: 10) defines “the preservation of life by a representation of life”.

Throughout the time, plastic arts played an important role for this preservation. From this perspective, this role is valid from the time of modern paintings, continued with the invention of photography and for today; it comes up to a point of moving image, in other words, the cinematic experience. Bazin (1967: 19) exemplifies as follows; “The frescoes or bas-reliefs of Egypt indicate a desire to analyze rather than to synthesize movement. As for the automatons of the eighteenth century, their relation to cinema is like the relation of painting to photography.”

One of the obvious critiques that can be directed to the modern paintings is they are deadlocked within the arguments on whether they are more close to reality or symbolism. The invention of photographic image put an end to the mentioned arguments, but it brought up new questions on the degree of realness, which can be maintained with a photographic image.

The reason behind this newly shaped argument can be answered with the fact that photography is the best way to express the existential reality and nature as a complete imitation of them.

It should be taken into consideration that cinema with two-dimension is the extension of the photography, therefore; it carries many common features

with photographic image as a newly hired form for the position of the death-challenging modern paintings.

They both give the dramatic expression of the moment that holds the reality, in other words, they both assume that there exists an initial point, the origin for the subject. Particularly, both admit the value of the 'originality'. In this case, a nature imitator agency like cinematic experience copies nature itself or in other words, what is imitated carries weight as the top importance. Based on this argument, reality denotes with the perfect copy of the original. In fact, it is impossible to maintain such perfect copy to substitute for the reality if such possibility would ever had existed, then the artist could have gained the ability to overcome the death. The mummy would be alive within all components of its; mind body and soul. It is impossible to overcome the natural fact of death, but even the people who accept this mortal truth of life, their search for the (illlusional) reality did not ceased.

It is obvious that the nineteenth century witnessed the beginning of the crisis of realism of which is freed from the 'resemblance complex'; "The modern painter abandons it to the masses who, henceforth, identify resemblance on the one hand with photography and on the other with the kind of painting which is related to photography." (Bazin, 1967b: 13)

This was the truth about the understanding of realism in modernist sense; especially for the early times that photography was accepted as a medium, the originality of the photography depends on its resemblance to painting on

the basis of composition. But later on, painting as a medium starts to be affected by photography. On the other hand, photography can be counted as 'the winner by far' against paintings on the basis of reaching masses by the technique of reproduction.

It needs to be highlighted that, with a mechanical apparatus called camera, the era of reproduction is opened. The provided three-dimensional space, (not in the sense of three-dimensional cinematic experience), from Da Vinci's camera obscura is different from the usage of 'perspective' as a technique in modern paintings. Because the ability of creating illusions of camera obscura is much more stronger on the basis of its closeness to the way of things appeared and displayed in which our eyes can see in real life.

It is conspicuous that, unlikely the paintings used to be working as direct representations of the nature, cinema with two-dimensions is few steps beyond paintings.

At least, it should be accepted that the photographic image, furthermore the moving image is the closest form for representing what is real, but it cannot be thought that any kind representation will prevent the secondary death of an already died human being, rather than this; it only maintains a symbol or a sign for remembering the subject with the power of resemblance;

“It is no longer a question of survival after death, but of a larger concept, the creation of an ideal world in the likeness of the real, with its own temporal destiny.” (Bazin, 1967b: 10)

At this point, it should not be forgotten that photography was different from the other forms of arts or other sources of reflexivity, especially on the time of its first appearance. The insufficient satisfaction or unsatisfaction of paintings’ struggle for overcoming the death has started to be occupied by the new ‘realism’ provided by the photographic image. Because with photography a new dimension appeared, which is much more closer to ‘reality’, when compared to paintings, sculptures and other already existing plastic art forms.

First of all, the way of representing nature became more ‘indexical’ and modern paintings remained more ‘iconic’ and far from the realism.

Furthermore, photography creates such a medium, where the ‘real’ is represented symbolically, but this symbolic environment appears as indiscoverable from the viewer’s aspect. The reason is that “the photograph mechanically repeats what could never be repeated existentially.” (Barthes, 1981: 4) In fact, photography is *death* itself, even though it works as a resistance to death.

The furthest point that this plastic realism has reached and can be defined as cinema using Bazin’s (1967b: 24) words;

Under the heading plastics must be included the style of the sets, of the make-up, and, up to a point, even of the performance, to which we naturally add the lighting and, finally, the framing of the shot which gives us its composition.

It should be added that especially in the Hollywood Cinema, the editing is done as 'invisible' in the purpose of audience not to be aware of the setting and juxtaposition of the images.

Moreover, Bazin (1967a: 13) strongly emphasizes in his writing; *The Ontology of the Photographic Image*, that the photography has the purpose of imitating nature in the way as it is displayed in the real world. Those words are valid for moving images too even with more powerful key points. "Photography affects us like a phenomenon in nature, like a flower or a snowflake whose vegetable or earthly origins are an inseparable part of their beauty".

For the mentioned above reasons, modern paintings tried to find itself a new position between the categories of aesthetics and psychology. Because the symbolic attributes dedicated to paintings are torn up by the exact duplication of the world with photographic image. It is important to consider the genuineness of the information above is mainly based on photographic image, which cannot be deviated from the ontology of the cinema, as long as what is called cinema, factually and technically means showing the moving twenty-four photographic images within a second.

Before photography was invented, painting was the most sufficient way to maintain a mummy-complex within art forms, but a painting has always been an inferior way for obtaining a 'likeness' as pointed out by Bazin (1967b: 14); "Only a photographic lens can give us the kind of image of the object that is capable of satisfying the deep need man has to substitute for it something more than a mere approximation, a kind of decal or transfer".

With inventing the moving image technology, the transferred substitution becomes more close to the real life. Because the difference between the mediums, where the transfer takes place less when compared to the difference between the mediums of real life and a painting.

2.2.1. The Notion of Reality Within Cinematic Experience During Modernity

The tasks given to visual arts are higher than those of other arts on the basis of reality. In André Bazin's book, *What is Cinema?*, cinematic experience is deeply investigated in many different aspects and compared to literature, poetry, philosophy and religion by scattering allusions.

Especially for the early times of cinema, audience imagined that what is displayed on the wide screen is "a total and complete representation of reality; the reconstruction of a perfect illusion of the outside world in sound, color" (Bazin, 1967b: 20).

Body movements, facial expressions, vivid colors, the tone of the speech and the color of the sound are the essential companions of nature, of reality, of life.

The idea of perfect imitation of nature in cinema is foreshadowed by the photographers who feel the need of movement in their photographs that will become a picture of real life that always changes and always moves. The need for more powerful and faithful copy of nature is appeared, which the audience will take those as if it were real. As Michel Eugène Chevreul wrote in 1887; “My dream is to see the photograph register the bodily movements and the facial expressions of a speaker while the photograph is recording his speech” (Bazin, 1967b: 20). Those kinds of writings significantly show the need for a higher level of enthusiasm for “a total cinema that is to provide that complete illusion of life” (Bazin, 1967b: 20).

When today’s point of views are taken into account on cinema, the relationship between the reality and two-dimensional cinema can be best identified with the similarities of two-dimensional cinematic experience and other art forms during the time of modernism.

Likewise the photographic image, the moving images have searched for the ‘true realism’, which appeared from a confusion between the aesthetic and the psychological paradox, the need that is to give significant expression to the world both concretely in its ‘essence’, reflected by Weber (1996: 20) through the following;

The search for the essence caused a separation between the pieces of the whole. The reason can be best defined with; the Kantian notion of aesthetic judgment, Gestalt psychology can be explained as the perception of the whole is different than, when the whole is broken into its pieces, the perception of the individual pieces is different from the whole.

To be more specific, when the origins of photographs or moving images are considered, the image itself becomes out of context. Image itself is pushed to remain as a side effect and its usage cannot go further from being just a 'helper' for being an object of a subject. Whereas, for moving images, the perception is much more beyond this mentioned understanding, and the reason can be explained as cinema works more autonomously when compared to photography or any other visual medium. It can be perceived as both the beginning and the end is aligned within the cinematic medium itself.

The extension of human imagination is a never-ending process which requires time. It happens with adding new pieces to the already existing form. Small changes the fact of cause by big ones over time. Thus, two-dimensional cinema is moving photography which takes its traditions from modern paintings. Yet, for photography it is the main novelty added on the painting; "between the originating object and its reproduction there intervenes only the instrumentality of a nonliving agent. For the first time an image of the world is formed automatically, without the creative intervention of man (painter)" (Bazin, 1967b: 13).

There lies the reason why photography is more ‘realistic’ than its ancestor paintings.

When an origin or essence is regarded as it preserves the ‘true realism’, the discourse of moving image is condemned into a limited imagination. So, even the science fiction movies with regular two-dimensional cinematic attributes include the characters as aliens which look like human beings.

The best example can be given is the movie Steven Spielberg’s *E.T.* (1982), *E.T.* is an alien but even his physical appearance is very similar to a human.

Because people can only shape even their imaginations according to real existentialities.

The great power lying under cinema can be strengthened by people’s never ending obsession for feeling of realism. Based on this argument, photographic image and moving images are the tools for satisfying the certain fetishistic needs of people. Audience likes to satisfy themselves with a substitution of the real, and the most ideal way is having a cinematic experience among all other art forms.

From a wider point of view, cinema is not just an art form, but it is one of the safest ways of satisfying certain needs. The understanding of moving image by audience can be defined as “completely satisfying the appetite for illusion

by a mechanical reproduction in the making of which man plays no part. The solution is not to be found in the result achieved but in the way of achieving it” (Bazin, 1967b: 12). Because cinema has enough technological abilities for a higher degree of falsification of the psychology.

Another powerful element for the relation between the notion of realism and cinema is the ‘style’ or more terminologically, the ‘genre’.

Movies have certain styles, which means they can be put into certain categories based on their characteristics. One of the best ways to separate a movie from other movies and at the same time holding it within a certain category is defining its style.

In fact, it is no different than an individual’s belonging to a certain subculture, sharing some major common values with the other members of the subculture, whereas differentiating the self from the other subcultures’ members. This method of categorization is important for recognizing the need of feeling ‘safe’. If a movie is completely different from one another, the process of its approval and acceptance by audience become impalpable. Because audience feels insecure of being a status which opens the path for increasing awareness of the fact, that the realism in a cinematic experience is illusional.

Moreover, the habitual codes of the realism obtained from cinematic experience are changed, so decoding process also differs from what has perceived till the new chain of data has entered the human perception system. Bazin (1967b: 19) puts forward as;

Besides, just as the word indicates, the aesthetics of *trompe-l'oeil* in the eighteenth century resided more in illusion than in realism, that is to say, in a lie rather than truth. To some extent, this is what the early cinema was aiming at just like paintings and photography do, but this operation of cheating quickly gave way to an ontogenetic realism.

Another point on the subject is a Lacanian approach; “The avid eye of the spectator is tricked (*trompe-l'oeil*) into feeding on the ‘Imaginary’ fruit of the visual representation so as to enable the painter to tame the adversarial force of the other’s insubordinate gaze.” (Levine, 2008: 91)

To be more specific, the symbolic aspect of a visual representation is ignored by the receiver. In fact, the visual representation is the castration itself. It is the process of passing away of signifier from the vivid real life.

It is accepted the seen continuous images are the direct and exact reproductions of nature, which belongs to the real world. Actually, when moving image is purified from its illusional aspects, what is represented and reproduced is a setting, on the basis of time and space. Cinema uses this

time and space difference in the advantage of creating realistic impressions.

At this point, Bazin's "mummy-complex" re-appears. It is impossible to be at the time and the place of the real event and the time and the place of the reproduced material at the same time.

Cinema cannot go further from the waxed mummy in order to preserve its spirit, rather than this; what is reproduced acts as if it were preserving the aliveness. If what is imitated or reproduced is able to maintain the continuity of life, there would be no necessity for mummies. To be more specific, cinema denies its birth-giving source and challenges it. This point can be considered as an irony like the way the whole cinematic experience works upon audience.

2.3. Realism From the Audience Perspective Within The Cinematic Experience

After the very early times of cinema, the moving image itself turned into the object, which can be accepted as a free object with no bindings to the original time and space. This argument should not cause a development of such an idea that; after a while, moving image started to be perceived as an illusion rather than itself is the perfect reproduction of the reality. It has never been worked like that because people never prefer to have such consciousness and awareness over cinematic illusion.

The moving image itself becomes the object freed from its origin means it might be thought separately from its real time and space, but it does not mean that audience never tries to connect the moving image with some other origin.

It is possible for the audience to connote the sensed moving images with a certain real event, but on the basis of time and space, the audience want to substitute for the original time and space's positions. It is believed that a still image or 24 still images in a second holds the set of moment in its own time and transmits it to the eternity. As Bazin (1967b: 14) gives point to this perspective, "the cinema is objectivity in time". When the realism of cinema is considered, hierarchy strikingly takes an order with primarily the image itself, which is believed that it preserves the time and space, then the aesthetic apprehensions appear, unlike in other art forms.

The aesthetic value of a painting depends on the skills of the painter, whereas in photographic image and cinema, it depends on up to which degree the reality is represented.

If a closer look is given to cinema, it can be visible how essential the hidden role of the cameraman and director's skills are. However, audience hopes what is represented in cinema is the reality and nature itself. Nature can only be counted as the equivalent of the artist, which means the combination of the cameraman and the director's skill for the case of cinematic experience.

From the spectator's point of view, this important role of the director is supposedly taken by the images. Hence, the real creator of this illusional reproduction (cinema) can easily mislead the audience and omits the viewers to its illusion like trickery environment. When spectator's point of view is taken into account through Bazin's (1967b: 16) notion;

Photography actually contributes something to the order of natural creation instead of providing a substitute for it. Every image is to be seen as an object and every object as an image. Hence photography ranks high in the order of surrealist creativity because it produces an image that is a reality of nature, namely, a hallucination that is also a fact. The fact that surrealist painting combines tricks of visual deception.

Foucault makes an emphasis on the subject as follows; "The absence of the observing subject from the observed object, an object that was imagined to exist in the world independently of the subject's act of observation." (Levine, 2008: 93)

Reality in moving image is the stronger version of the photographic realism, because it has the sufficient abilities for multiplying the features of the photography by the shots' juxtaposition.

But, actually there takes place a powerful invisible touch of the photographer for the still images and the cameraman plus the director for the moving images. Because "the camera cannot see everything at once, but it makes sure not to lose any part of what it chooses to see" (Bazin, 1967: 27), neither our

eyes can see everything at once, so someone has to choose what the audience can observe in a cinematic experience in place of the vision that can be seen in the real life.

Audience prefers to neglect those agencies in order to protect the ‘almost perfect reality’ provided by the moving images.

As a result, the myth of the total cinema aims to have the perfect imitation of nature. Furthermore, the “shots are evaluated not according to what it adds to reality but what it reveals of it”. (Bazin, 1967b: 28)

At this point, it can be claimed that cinema, which consisted of moving images, has brought new comprehension to human psychology of the images.

In order to feel ‘realism’ in cinema, audience needs to complete the stages of identifications. There are mainly two identifications called as primary and secondary identifications. While living a cinematic experience, the images usually substitute for what is lack or loss. Secondary identification is the process that audience identify themselves with the characters and events by inserting themselves on the characters’ position and situations.

Moreover, in order to identify with the characters, first the audience needs to identify with the camera, which can be defined as the primary identification.

The essential point about primary identification is that it so subtly happens within the unconscious of the audience. Otherwise, the audience cannot focus on the secondary identification, so the illusion of the cinema is broken by the awareness of the existence of cinema, but this does not change the fact of accepting the viewpoints of the director and cameraman. Because the cameraman and the director of a movie are in fact 'active' participators even their role for a movie seems 'passive' from the audience's point of view. It should be added that this active participation is obligatory requirement in order to give the sense of realism.

Watching a film as a cinematic experience is like dreaming. Images are watched in darkness for the purpose of taking the whole attention of the audience onto the wide screen. Also the characters and the heroes on the film are such subtle designs that audience would like to be in their displayed attributes and situations.

In cinema, what is on the screen is not the reality but only an impression or representation of a reality.

The point of view of the camera means that audience see a reality from someone else's point of view, but this process takes place unconsciously. If the audience becomes aware of what s/ he sees on the screen is an illusion of reality, neither the primary nor the secondary identification can occur.

So, the cinematic experience would not be completed and reach its goal, because when identification does not take place, the audience cannot have any satisfaction from this delusional experience.

2.4. The Illusive Power of Representation Within Cinema On The Basis of Reality

While the realism obsession of the mankind is fulfilling by a reproduction through a mechanical apparatus, the objects displayed on the screen go beyond from just being objects of their own time and space; moreover, they are bought by their new owners, by audience who is ready to impose their own data. When it is considered the real time and space of the shootings of a movie, the reproduction occurs at least two times. First reproduction is turning the present, meanwhile the real time and place of the shots, into a representation through recording those shots sequentially. The second essential reproduction process follows the first one with the participation of the audience as it has already deeply explained with the terms of ‘identifications’. What is tried to be mentioned at this point is that a movie served to audience has already gotten through certain reproduction stages without the interaction with the audience.

As a specific example, it is notably common for a movie to be adapted from a novel. But even it seems like the origin of that movie is fixed by the novel, the movie is always much more different from the literary origin. This puts emphasis on the reconstruction cause the deviation from the origin and the real.

From a wider perspective, whole cinematic experience works the same of the beforehand mentioned process.

Emphasized misleading aspect of the cinema is just a striking example of the difference between what the cinema gives and what the audience takes or wants to take. In addition, the uniqueness of the director and the cameraman, which will later on turn into the uniqueness of the audience's imaginations at the time of the movie meets with its audience.

Taking into consideration of those mentioned points, it can be said that cinema is a very successful tool for producing 'allegories' in the sense of Plato's way of thinking. As a result, it is impossible to talk about a 'pure cinema' which gives the truth, rather than there is the cinema which gives lies or cause the insertion of lies, or in other words 'illusive elements'.

On the contrary, cinema is like a universal language which serves to each audience as an individual within the individual's own language. Cinema treats its audience as if it only served that specific person. For, that person who watches the movie gives contribution from him or herself, and the lacks

in the movie are fulfilled by the individual audience's own imagination, own background and own demographics. As Bazin (1967b: 50) takes into consideration as follows; "It is simply a question of respect for the spatial unity of an event at the moment when to split it up would change it from something real into something imaginary".

At this point, it should not be forgotten that the overall realism is independent from its pieces. This process of fulfillment is understood or misunderstood by that specific spectator as; it is the reality of the world, in other words it is a universal fact. The subjectivity is ignored, and instead of considering the given contribution by an individual spectator to this realism effect, it is mostly supposed that the whole thing is maintained by the realness of the representation on the wide screen.

In order to maintain a satisfying prove for the realism of a cinematic experience is based on illusions; even the words used for defining this experience of cinema, as 'cinematic realism' is sufficient. Since the word "realism" can not show any differences from person to person, if something is real, it needs a certain amount of existence, it requires a basis with scientific facts, and it can be proven from at least one of our senses. Based on the emphasized point, provided cinematic experience's realism firstly starts with audience's audiovisual senses the stimuli turns into 'something' through the decoding process within the brain. On the other hand, a term which can be altered with its variations, in other words, which can differ from person to

person can be defined with the word 'truth'. Truth is relative notion based on the ethical point of views, so we choose the word 'realism' for a cinematic experience. However, the cinematic realism differs from spectator to spectator, (which will be uttered in Chapter 4 in detail with a case study of James Cameron's *Avatar*, (2009).

The only common point is that; most of the audience lives realism through a cinematic experience but the way and with the content that, each of them understands differ from the others. In Barthes' (1981: 40) words; "... 'punctum' is the detail, that may differ from one audience to the other, which takes the attention in each frame".

This is one of the best ways of defining the production of the subjectivity in photography as well as it occurs in cinematic experience.

The detail which catches the audience is such a subjective issue. When the ontology of the cinematic experience is considered, this subjectivity has a great impact on the understanding process among the audience as individuals.

At this point, the aim is not questioning whether a cinematic experience provides realism or not. For sure, it provides realism, especially from the audience's point of view, yet the fact that the form of this realism is based on the power of representation should not be ignored. When the components of a movie are analyzed on the basis of its concrete way of physical appearance,

still images are moved in a sequenced order with the application of certain editing techniques, and the colorization of the frames are arranged, the storyline, sound design etc. Those are the major settings for a movie and each of them has many numbers of small pieces as its components. The physical appearance aspect of a movie is fixed and displayed in the same form, shape and physical attributes. Even the same movie with the same physical appearance in its components, in other words, the movie as a “Gestalt”, people are able to have differently shaped feelings of realism from the same movie.

This is the proof of the realism effect of a movie that does not come from the movie itself. On the contrary, the source of the realism is the audience itself. It is a process of self-reflexivity, in which the audience’s contribution is its own realism, which is loaded to the moving images on the screen. But cinema never allows audience to reveal its secret. If the ‘magic’ of the cinema is expressed, the truth about the representation of cinema is an illusion that would slap to audience. In this case, the result of the cinematic experience turns out into a disappointment and unsatisfying experience.

For the mentioned, reasons cinema prefers to keep hidden its illusional structure, even more it follows certain methods on the purpose of hiding this aspect of false realism. A charming story and actors as characters of the movie are some of the used elements in order to appeal to audience and take their focal point into those alluring elements instead of the falsifying realism

as a characteristic to be considered a distinct feature. People always avoid especially facing with themselves and this is what cinema actually does.

For no doubt, the mentioned ontological knowledge is eligible for the classical sense of moving image, in other words, the two-dimensional cinematic experience. The subsequent form of moving image with a third dimension will be mentioned separately with a different understanding of the sense of reality.

CHAPTER III

LOOKING INTO RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HYPER- REALITY AND THREE-DIMENSIONAL CINEMATIC EXPERIENCE AND UNDERSTANDING THE PARALLELISM WITH POST-MODERNITY

3.1. How Is the Notion of Realism Shaped Today?

For today, it can be said that the notion of realism has shifted due to the changes occurred in the whole sociological flow. To be more specific, the aspect of realism was put forward in Chapter II in details. It was sought for a 'life-like' reality especially in the 1930s and the 1940s, whereas for today, the norms of the notion of reality is shaped due to 'hyper-reality'. As Jean-François Lyotard (1989: 24) defines; "Incredulity regarding 'metanarratives'. Meanwhile; metanarratives are discourses that legitimate what comes to be accepted as truth."

Moreover Connor (2004: 3) adds to the mentioned subject as follows;

Some accounts of postmodernism are dependent on the argument that not only had the conditions of social and economic organization

changed, but so, as an effect of those changes, had the relations between the social and economic and the artistic-cultural.

The bonds between the variables are completely changed and turned into floating individual elements with interacting each other. This is obvious in most of the three-dimensional films.

Jean Baudrillard is one of the most important thinkers who declares the new accounts for what is 'postmodern' within a world surrounded by consumer societies.

Baudrillard briefly used the term 'postmodern' in the early- to- mid 1980s before expressing deep dissatisfaction with it and seeking to disassociate himself from it.

When the need for using the term 'postmodern' first appeared, according to some theorists like Daniel Bell, the term was still having bounds with modernity. Even though the thinkers later on became aware of the fact that postmodernity is an autonomous system which can give birth and rebirth endlessly from its own (non)roots. "The derivative character of postmodernism, the name of which indicates that it comes after something else- modernism, modernity, or the modern- guarantees it an extended tenure that the naming of itself as an *ex-nihilo* beginning might not."

As it can be understood from Conner's (2004: 1) point of view mentioned above, the system works without feeling the need of neither an initial point nor an ending point. Postmodernity needs infinite freedom, and the rate of freedom is at such a point the postmodern has the ability to escape from itself. This damages the modern cycle of symbols and signs.

Another one of the most significant features of postmodernity can be said as the provider of 'being not fixed' situation, since seeking for an origin, like it is in modernity, is no more a necessity from a postmodernist point of view. Moreover, when this characteristic of postmodernity is related with the concept of time, it is obvious that postmodernity only regards the present. Neither the past nor the future is required to exist in the range of postmodernity. Unlikely the effort of modernity for carrying the past into the present, in postmodernity the situation of 'being not fixed' is also valid for the notion of time. "You can credibly inaugurate a new beginning only for a short so long, whereas you can carry on succeeding upon something almost indefinitely, catching continuing success from your predecessor's surcease." (Connor, 2004: 1)

To be more specific; postmodernity carries intertextual, hybrid, non-linear and hyper-real attributes. Understanding those attributes is important for comprehending the relation between three-dimensional cinematic experience and hyper-reality. Hybridity without seeking for an origin puts 'now' on the center with a newer understanding, as portrayed by Latour (1993: 73) below;

Postmodernism apprehends the unevenness of times, the mingling of old and new that belongs to the premodern or amodern apprehension, but, clinging to the habits of modern thinking, sees it as a new development in the flow of time, a new kind of 'now'.

This is what three-dimensional cinematic experience directly gives to audience 'now'. All the digital technologies applied to a three-dimensional movie serve the audience satisfying moments, while watching it.

3.2. Origin / Lack of Origin

Origin requires a fixed center. This is essential for modernity, which is under the influence of Western way of thinking. Jacques Derrida mentions in his essay *Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of Human Sciences* (1966) western philosophy and science take its roots from metaphysics of presence, which always seeks for an origin thus a fixed center.

The point is that fixed center puts certain limits, which draw an outer frame to the structure. Even though the 'center' seems like trapped, the 'center' has the potential of escaping from its structure, and therefore it can escape from itself. So, the center preserves its position within both inside and outside of the structure. Derrida declares that 'a full presence' is mandatory for "origin", and also for the substituted variable names of the origin such as "the arche", "the eidos", "the telos".... In western philosophy, even the

transcendental state uses the metaphors of the full presence. Western languages are also influenced by “logocentrism” of Western thinking.

Derrida (1976: 12) puts forward that Phonocentrism of Western languages is the representation of the ‘natural presence’:

We already have a foreboding that phonocentrism merges with the historical determination of the meaning of being in general as *presence*, with all the subdeterminations which depend on this general form and which organize within it their system and their historical sequence (presence of the thing to the sight *aseidos*, presence as substance/ essence/ existence[ousia], temporal presence as point[stigmè] of the now or of the moment[nun], the self-presence of the cogito, consciousness, subjectivity, the co-presence of the other and of the self, intersubjectivity as the intentional phenomenon of the ego, and so forth). Logocentrism would thus support the determination of the being of the entity as presence.

According to Jacques Derrida, “deconstruction” is consisted of two oppositions, which are hierarchically organized and commonly accepted by the society, which are called “binary oppositions”. Furthermore, one side’s presence in a binary opposition requires the other side’s absence. Culler (Derrida, 1976: 93) exemplifies this point as follows:

In oppositions such as meaning/ form, soul/ body, intuition / expression, literal / metaphorical, nature / culture, intelligible / sensible, positive / negative, transcendental / empirical, serious / nonserious, the superior term belongs to the logos and is a higher presence; the inferior term marks a fall. Logocentrism thus assumes the priority of the first term and conceives the second in relation to it, as a complication, a negation, a manifestation, or a disruption of the first.

Derrida states that one of the obvious deconstruction occurring in the system of language is a self-deconstruction, it deconstructs itself.

Like Saussure (1993) mentions “language is a system of difference without no positive terms”. So, when we look at the common two applications on usage of language; speech and writing, from Derrida’s *différance* point of view, there are two different sides of the same binary opposition. While we can connotate speech, with presence and life, on the other hand, writing connotates with absence and death. When the hierarchic order considered in this binary opposition, speech is the primary and hegemonic one, whereas writing has a position of being only an imitation of speech such as Earth vs. World. Actually, writing is a symbolic system within a symbolic system (language itself). If we start with Derrida’s method of finding an origin, we can begin with the point of where we already are like taking language as the infinite, then we can go in-depth through subsystems and oppositions beneath the infinite, by this way we can examine speech vs. writing. When it is considered that writing is a representation, loss of origin might generate. Derrida (1976: 36) states that:

What is intolerable and fascinating is indeed the intimacy intertwining image and thing, *graph*, *i.e.*, and phone, to the point where by a mirroring, inverting, and perverting effect, speech seems in its turn the speculum of writing, which ‘manages to usurp the main role.’ Representation mingles with what it represents, to the point where one speaks as one writes, one thinks as if the represented were nothing more than the shadow or reflection of the representer. A dangerous promiscuity and a nefarious complicity between the reflection and the reflected which lets itself be seduced narcissistically. In this play of representation, the point of origin becomes ungraspable.

One of the obvious distinctions between speech and writing is speech is a present act and writing is a representative act. This might be the reason for why speech is narrowcast whereas writing is broadcast. When something is represented, the ability of reaching much more people at the same time or at different times in more than one place is possible.

Since the origin became ‘ungraspable’, the relation between the structure and the center has distorted. When the communication system changes, path of the message from signifier to signified becomes non-linear, whereas it is expected to be linear in a logocentric communication system.

According to Derrida (1976: 92), deconstruction is not only about Western languages and thinking, but also it has changed the whole structure and the myth of origin:

The origins of these movements and these historical regions dissociate themselves, as they must for the rigorous delimitation of each science, only by an abstraction that one must constantly be aware of and use with vigilance. This complicity of origins may be called arche-writing. What is lost in that complicity is therefore the myth of the simplicity of origin. This myth is linked to the very concept of origin; to speech reciting the origin, to the myth of the origin and not only to myths of origin.

Based on Derrida’s arguments, one side of the binary opposition disposes the other side of itself. This is valid for every binary opposition including the Westernization. What is called ‘Westernization’ cannot exist without the East, yet the important point on this; ‘Westernization’ is the name given by the

West itself for themselves. Deconstruction itself is both the survivor and the killer of its own. Therefore, the center becomes autonomous, in which the straight distinction between the cause and effect is blurred. Besides, at this point, cause works as the 'origin', because of deconstruction. Culler (Derrida, 1976: 88) states:

If the effect is what causes the cause to become a cause, then the effect, not the cause, should be treated as the origin. By showing that the argument, which elevates cause can be used to favor effect, one uncovers and undoes the rhetorical operation responsible for the hierarchization and one produces a significant displacement. If either cause or effect can occupy the position of origin, then origin is no longer originary; it loses its metaphysical privilege. A nonoriginary origin is a "concept" that cannot be comprehended by the former system and thus disrupts it.

On the other hand, a present act is alive and happens among people who share that moment at the same place and at the same time with the present performer of that act. In other words, it is alive and only loss during this aliveness is not experiencing other things, the situation of 'impossible'. To be more specific, a person cannot experience two differently located events at the same time, because the existence of a person is adequate for only existing at one place at the moment.

Being representative and reaching many people at many places are the essential descriptions of the cinema. Cinema both enables broadcast with bringing the far to the very close, and at the same time as the deconstruction requires, it causes a false-reality. This false-reality or illusion in other words, might be very dangerous if audience loses the awareness of that; in fact, any

kind of screen display is a reproduction and representation of (previously) present things. All components of a cinematic experience are representative, for audience still sees what camera allows them to see and also there is always a delay, since even the most technological systems are not able to show at the same time with the real place and the real event.

As long as audience is aware of the fact that cinema is not reality itself, then; the cinema preserves its inferior positioning to reality (speech). But when audience loses this conscious, the binarism of the speech vs. writing or cinema gets damaged, because representation acts as if it were present and took the place of present.

Another point of view Derrida (1976) suggests in his book *Of Grammatology*, “différance is nothing but something at the same time”. A cinematic experience is also nothing from the ‘speech’ side and something at the same time from the ‘writing’ side.

3.3. Understanding Cinema with Respect to Norms of Postmodernism

People are living in such a world that everything is ready to be bought and to be sold. Postmodernity is fed by this conjunctural situation. It is inevitable for cinematic experience to be affected by this systemic cycle. Thus, the norms of any understanding are shifted, including the cinematic experience.

Besides, it can be said that cinema with three dimensions carries the attributes of postmodernity more significant than two-dimensional cinema. Jean Baudrillard and Fredric Jameson strikingly commented on the relation between cinema and postmodernity.

In the previous chapter it is explained that cinematic experience aims to give the “reality”, which in other words means the direct copy of nature; thus, the real. Based on this argument, it can be said that cinematic experience refers to modernity, which preserves traditions coming from paintings and photography.

In Baudrillard’s compilation, *Simulations*, he brings a new approach to the relation among art forms including the images of the cinema and the notion of reality. When it is considered that the two-dimensional cinema constituted from still images, modernity gives the account of image which is the copy of the real, whereas Baudrillard (Connor, 2004: 43) puts forward with the notion of simulacrum, “image has ontological priority and thus precedes the real.”

According to Baudrillard (1983: 75), especially Hollywood films are disastrous on the basis of;

It is pointless to laboriously interpret these films by their relationship with an ‘objective’ social crisis... It is in the other direction that we must say it is the social itself which, in contemporary discourse, is organized according to a script for a disaster film.

The 'reality seeking' objective of films has become old fashioned when the postmodernity's freedom is considered. Freedom in this sense can be more specifically defined as being not fixed, and lack of origin. Two-dimensional cinematic experience tries mimetically copying the real; thus, it has always a referent origin. On the other hand, most of the three-dimensional films are made in the genre of fiction, fantasy or animation, which significantly means origin is not a concern anymore. Moreover, even the most referential genre documentaries are considered, it can be regarded as a three-dimensional documentary still lacking the origin. To be more specific, cinema itself as a medium is hyper-realistic; in addition, when a medium is improved with some technological cooperation, the signs of the 'real' are substituted by the signs of the 'hyper-real'. With respect to the aforesaid assumption, for sure, it is not only about the genre, even when the same two-dimensional film is produced as three-dimensional with the same cast and plot, because the thematic origin is substituted by freedom of being 'lack of origin', it carries postmodern attributes. The point is that three-dimensional films have more potential to fit into the name 'postmodern' in both contextual and conceptual senses. The reason is that both the applied digital effects and the perception of the audience change due to technological impacts; therefore, the notion of reality is distorted or reoriented as hyper-reality.

As Baudrillard (1988: 56) suggests; "The effect of granting precedence to the disaster movie, and other images, is that the real itself becomes film-like."

Moreover, filmic reality becomes a different kind of reality with respect to the

understanding of an already existing modern sense of reality. To be more specific, the boundaries between real and non-real shatters within a cinematic (hyper)reality are mingled thoroughly. The fixed truth, thus the origin in the sense of modernity, loses its firm basis. “Baudrillard’s analysis of America demonstrates this point in which he views the country through the lens provided by Hollywood cinema.” (1983: 76)

Taken into consideration that everything turned into a commodity within Jameson’s (1985: 113) notion of “Consumer Society”, everything is made to increase the market share of it. So the understanding of reality also turns into a commodity, then the system is able to work vice-versa. What is called reality becomes the commodity of some other commodity. This technique allows the implementation of postmodern interpretations within a postmodern world where the search for an origin is forgotten and multi perspectives from multi angles such as fluidity, flux, hyper-reality and all kinds of marketable commodities are celebrated.

In this case, filmic reality in two-dimensional cinematic experience is the commodity of cinema itself. On the other hand, in three-dimensional cinema, hyper-reality eradicates the traditional realistic concerns for good. It can be explained as; even though three-dimensional films are still commodities of cinema itself like two-dimensional ones, neither the audience nor the production crew of the film regards whether it is a commodity or not. Furthermore, modernist sense of reality is pervaded by postmodern mixture

of multi-functional flux. There is no necessity for origin, reference point, linearity, mimetic imitation, and the effort for copying nature. Unlike the efforts of modernity, the only effort in postmodernity can be named as 'being effortlessness'. This significant point can be grounded on the Audience's 'hyper-satisfied' when the hyper-reality of a three-dimensional cinematic experience embeds them to itself throughout the duration of the film. It can be called as 'hyper-satisfaction' with respect to the satisfaction provided by the notion of the reality of two-dimensional cinematic experience. Even the term 'hyper-reality' can be both interpreted as a metaphorical use of (not)over real, (not)beyond the real, or it just hyperboles with emphasizing of its realness. At this point, characteristics of postmodernity again rise out as not considering the effort of finding a fixed meaning.

Whether it is a metaphor or hyperbole, from a postmodernist view, it makes no difference. Besides, what matters is what the reader understands, which works as the real. Thus, the intention (coding) has no importance, rather than this; each different interpretation (decoding) decides the final determination independently and individually. Connor (2004: 45) suggests; "The exponential proliferation of interpretations can be seen to display the catastrophic logic of the spiral because it ultimately results in the destruction of meaning itself."

It can be said that the system mentioned above is the firm basis of postmodernity.

Taking into consideration of those ‘tricky’ differences between modernity and postmodernity within linguistic system, the cinematic implementation works in the parallel path. Baudrillard (1994: 10) connects the global capitalism with postmodernity in his book *America* through self-referential filmic country, the United States of America, where the whole country is the bigger model of Disneyland;

The real as the alibi of simulation. In Disneyland, ‘imaginary stations’ conceal that it is a simulation. Simulation is not a question of the truth or falsity of signs like Disneyland. Its purpose is to mask the fact that real is not real.

To be more specific, its purpose is to ensure that the already existing modern reality principle is the alibi of simulation which enables hyper-reality. The whole three-dimensional cinematic experience works on audience on the hyper-reality basis, which has not been singled out the different interpretations on film. Moreover, all signs in a three-dimensional cinematic experience, which provides to audience hyper-reality are interchangeable and self-referential.

As Baudrillard uses the term within the linguistic system, it turns from ‘film as real’, into ‘real as film’. Reality is used to be the subject, but in this case it turns out to be the object. On grounds of postmodernity, symbolic chain system is changed. As Guy Debord (2006: 14) puts forward in his article *Society of the Spectacle*; Art was initially a sign of prestige, now it is simply a consumption of signs. No unique relations exist between object & place &

function. Objects are freed from their bounds with traditions, origins, and most importantly from themselves. Object itself is less important than its value.

The need for satisfying the audience was giving them the real, but it was once upon a time ago. Now, the hyper-real works for satisfying the needs of audience. Three-dimensional films do not concern about the 'authenticity'.

Thus, Baudrillard (1994: 83) speaks on the mentioned subject as follows;

A total simulation, without origin, immanent, without a past, without a future, a diffusion of all coordinates (mental, temporal, spatial, signaletic) - it is not about a parallel universe, a double universe, or even a possible universe - neither possible, impossible, neither real nor unreal: hyperreal - it is a universe of simulation, which is something else altogether.

In other words, as authenticity is a kind of certain origin, with postmodernity it loses its old significance.

3.4. Hyper-reality

When Jean Baudrillard's thoughts are taken into account from his books, *Symbolic Exchange and Death* and *Simulacra and Simulations*, it can be inferred that throughout postmodernity art has been playing its own disappearance. Moreover, rather than representing, art started to simulate.

Art so is the cinema abstracted in the 20th century and took its place in social space. The traditional understanding towards art works and artists are changed from ‘masterpieces’ and ‘geniuses’, into ‘commodities’ and successful ‘recyclers’ as reflected by Jameson (1991: 16-17);

As a result, art can no longer be the expression of a ‘unique private world and style’. Postmodern artists cannot invent new perspectives and new modes of expression; instead, they operate as *bricoleurs*, recycling previous works and styles. Thus, postmodern art takes the form of pastiche: in a world in which stylistic innovation is no longer possible, all that is left is to imitate dead styles, to speak through the masks and with the voices of the styles in the imaginary museum.

The sign system of artworks has turned into commodities, which no longer carry symbolic values as moral or psychological.

In addition to that, three-dimensional cinema is aestheticized with preserving the characteristic of being a simulated art with hyper-reality.

Postmodern artists Jeff Koons and Mark Kostabi played the artist-as-creator. Kostabi paid his students \$7 per hour to produce the paintings sold at \$20,000, all signed Kostabi. (Connor, 2004: 70) This is the great example of art turned into commodity. In this postmodern era, cinema is also a commodity but furthermore; it is a simulated art. In simulation there can be no references or meanings. Art gives a meaning to something which is meaningless. That is its failure and strength, at the same time. But it might survive by becoming absurdly expensive .

Based on Baudrillard's (1994: 12) associations on postmodernity and specifically visual forms, including cinema, emphasize that the destruction of reality of images can be understood in four phases;

In the first, the image performs its traditional mimetic function and operates as 'the reflection of a basic reality.' The second phase references a Marxist conception of mass culture as that which covers over the material conditions of productions. This image has an ideological function in that 'it masks and perverts the basic reality.' Baudrillard argues that the decisive break occurs at the third phase, in which the image is said to mask 'the *absence* of a basic reality.' The annihilation of the real is laid bare in the fourth phase, where the image 'bears no relation to any reality whatever: it is its own pure simulacrum.'

For the case of three-dimensional cinema, it should be clearly defined what can be called 'reality' anymore. In this case, 'reality' is the notion of experience. Reality is the 'Event', which is experienced in the *chronos*, contradicting with Deleuze's (2006) point of view, on the definition of the event as it happens in the '*aion*'. Based on Deleuze's definition, *aion* is the infinite time without fragments and without sharp transitions between the past, the present and the future. Also, *aion* is the effects of the event. Whereas *chronos* is the cause itself of the 'event' and is a system of timing which our watches show, it is humanly designed and fragmented with the centered notion of the present. In other words, *chronos* offers a linear relative relation with respect to the present. In this sense, *aion* is independent when compared to *chronos* as drawing a non-linear floating path. Depending on the defined sentiment of reality, during the cinematic experience, people can produce their realities themselves due to *chronos*. Here within lies the question; can simulacra totally kill the event?

3.4.1. Can Simulacra Totally Kill The 'Event'?

Baudrillard's simulacra is based on substituting the signs of the real for the real to form a hyper reality. According to Baudrillard (1994), this is "a real process by its operational double". Built on this statement, 'Event' should not have to be really existing, just like he assumes in his book: *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place* (1995).

If we separate the 'event' into its units, it is possible to obtain two main parts, the event itself and the effects of the event. The event itself can be defined as; at the real time, in the real place what really happens, in other words, the real time experience which can be sensed. For a cinematic experience, while the film is producing, everything is present. On the other hand, effects of an event can also be sensed, but it can also be affected by other experiences. In this case, what the audience sees on the screen is only the effect of the already produced film. To be more specific, the mentioned point is about the effects which are psychological and abstract processes, that firstly starts at the human mind from a sensorial stimulus and then distributed to other organs and expressed through acts and behaviors or it can give a birth to another set of experience.

It is impossible to separate these two units of the event from each other, for if one of them is lacking, then the other one cannot work either, just like the

binary oppositions. If a film has not been produced, then nobody can watch it, because a non-existing film cannot be seen. Starting from this point of Derrida's criticism on Baudrillard's simulacra, it is understandable. According to Derrida (1976), in the article *Artifactualities*, simulacra can never totally kill the event. It can be agreed up to a point. Yes, if there are simulacra, then there should be an origin, yet it should be considered that the effect (effect in the sense of mentioned above, not the physical effect) of an event can work independently from the event itself. Media have the power of separating the effects from the event itself. Some call this manipulation, some call ideology and some call deviation. From a very large perspective, there is an origin but its medium can be different from what really happened. The boundaries between the origin and its effects are distorted or reoriented. Even our imagination is based on different views of already experienced or already existing things. As a simple example, in science fiction novels or movies, aliens or unknown flying objects are described and depicted in a similar way of humans or differently designed war planes. People are not able to produce from non-existence. Besides, mankind has biological limits, at a single look people can only see what their eyes allow them to see. Whereas the depicted or described human-like aliens could be different from what they really look like, if there were really aliens. This puts emphasis on the lack of knowledge and information. Audience can easily accept without questioning what is given to them on what they do not have enough knowledge and information. Media do the same thing by using the weakness of lacking information. Media give what it wants and people have given two

choices; believing in what is given or denial of what is given, and there is also a third way constituted of mixture of both; denying some parts of what is given (substitution of some parts with new ones are also included) and accepting some parts of what is given. All of these three choices can be obtained under the condition of accepting which contains both an origin and the effects of it or completely another origin and the cycle works endlessly. If The Gulf War is analyzed from this aspect, the origin lies under that there is something called 'war' in the world but it doesn't have to be at the same time with The Gulf War's assumed time of happening or the content of The Gulf War was really a war, yet it can never be known. In order to know these, people should have been one of the soldiers or victims in the place and at the time of The Gulf War. Thus, especially a three-dimensional cinematic experience is as (hyper)real as The Gulf War. As long as the audience perceives the images on screen and interpret them whether consciously or unconsciously, what is interpreted is hyper-real and during the cinematic experience its reality exists as nature exists on Earth. A cinematic experience with three-dimensions, obviously accelerates the movement of the perception more closer to hyper-real level. The reason can be explained as what the audience perceive is artificially in the sense of hyper-reality, but no one is aware of its artificiality and it is not a concern anymore with respect to postmodernly surrounded environment of today's.

Today, people are not looking for an origin, because the effects whether they really exist or artificially produced make the same sense. What is perceived

and felt in a certain way is the only reality that can be reached. If it did not work like that, then there would not be wars because of humanly mapped land pieces on Earth. In other words, Baudrillard's simulacra is as real as Heidegger's "worlding of the world". People are killed as this worlding requires, women are suffering in many countries all around the world as being inferior. When audience tries to get away from a rain drop coming towards him during a three-dimensional cinematic experience, the reflex action towards the rain drop is no different than falling object coming towards the head in the real life. To be more specific, as long as people feel some effects, what is felt is real. Because, the only reality is what is experienced at the present. And at the present, what is felt or in other words experienced is constructed by the effects, so for the present, origin is out of consideration. Origin can only be considered before or after the present. Origin matters in aion not in the chronos. As long as we live in chronos, simulacra is the only reality. On the other hand, reality on the basis of nature, thus modernity, is valid within the range of aion, in other words, its validity is infinite.

Unlike Deleuze's (2006: 2) employment of the term, utopic understanding of event, which is rooted from the never accessible time, according to Baudrillard (1994: 2); time is not that important, because we all live in a simulacra. "The simulation is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal". The difference between experienced real and unreal is lost. For, unreal can work as real as long as it gives the effects of

experienced reality. “This representational imaginary reality is produced from the models of reality” (1994: 3), like constructing identifications with characters on the screen. In fact, no one can know the reality of the given information on the characters of films. Audience has only one chance of taking what has already given to them by the director and the cameraman.

People easily generate the effects of the real and maintain a simulation while watching a film. Only assumptions can be made on the reality of the cinematic experience.

It has no more importance that the displayed identities, places and the filmic elements are whether real or not, as long as the “signs of the real is substituted for the real” (Baudrillard, 1994: 4) . It works as if it is real.

In simulation, the situation of hyperreality takes “the reality’s artificially resurrected sign, so the real is no longer imaginary” (Baudrillard, 1994: 4). The realness of the displayed film is so out of questionability that, as previously mentioned, the term ‘real as film’ becomes in service.

In Baudrillard’s (1994: 5) words: “Someone who feigns an illness can simply go to bed and make believe he is ill. Some who simulates an illness produces in himself some of the symptoms.” If the symptoms exist, the existence of the real illness lost its meaning. Because, in a simulation, only the symptoms are sufficient for being ill.

The case above is the subversive operation of how simulation works. The audience decides upon the lack of symptoms depending on the film which is on screen.

Today, as the virtual world is so integrated with real world, people start to live their lives virtually, and more importantly, today the lives are hyper-real. A film with two dimensions, when it is first founded, has an aim of giving the audience the perfect copy of nature and reality, but now, it turns into a medium where people forget the reality and integrate with the hyperreality. Especially in three-dimensional cinematic experience, the whole film with its components such as sound and effects are designed for audience to live the perfect hyperreality during the film.

Baudrillard (1994: 4) mentions in his book: *Simulacra and Simulations*; “it is no longer a question of imitation, nor of reduplication, nor even of parody. It is rather a question of hyperreality, henceforth sheltered from the imaginary”.

It comes up to a point that simulation is at least one step beyond the real life in the sense of experience. Simulation of three-dimensional cinematic experience is at least as real as a hurricane, or a flood, or in other words, nature itself; furthermore, even more real than the experienced events.

Then, which elements activate the simulation of operation of three-dimensional films?

When the subunits of the three-dimensional film simulation is considered, it is inevitable not to mention both the technological and social potentials. At this point, technological potentials can be counted as only the accelerators of the social ones. The social aspect includes psychoanalytical and demographic units. Fabricated identities that published on screen require the acceptance from the audience. Even though filmic experience works as a simulation, its operational process is ensued by a decoding process. Baudrillard (Horrocks, Jevtic, 1999: 49) states the cultural effects among a simulation process as “Nowhere do signs carve out and organize reality more effectively than in culture”. The decoded codes have the need of common acceptance by the society. From Baudrillard’s (Horrocks, Jevtic, 1999: 49) point of view, culture should involve a symbolic function in order to actualize the simulation. In addition to cultural requirements for simulation, “culture is described by dynamics of consumption- fashion cycles, ambience, codes”. All audience who went through a filmic experience, apply those encoding necessities while identifying with the characters on screen. Furthermore, most of the audience is not even aware of this route of demand and supply. In other words, people treat themselves as commodities with the culturally linked symbolic meanings and market themselves to the public via living a cinematic experience.

One of the most conspicuous signs on this particular piece of the ongoing cinematic simulation is making the audience believe in what is displayed on

screen is objective and real. Like any other social context, especially the three-dimensional cinema develops its own social meanings and conventions, so the users of it can reflect themselves and mediate through the screen, but as we are at the age of simulation, the social meanings and conventions take the original models as reference and then replace with them.

Postmodernity fusions in different ways such as hybridity, intertextuality, pastiche, non-linearity, parodies and mixing the binary oppositions with each other. All those fusions distort the notion of reality which is bounded with modernity. Distorted reality is freed from modern sense of reality, since it is beyond reality itself, and it is now hyperreal !

CHAPTER IV

THE MOVIE AVATAR (2009) AS A CASE STUDY FOR HYPER- REAL ASPECT OF A CINEMATIC EXPERIENCE

4.1. The Movie *Avatar*

Avatar is a movie which was written and directed by James Cameron, and released in 2009. It is an American movie and its genre can be mainly categorized as science fiction with epic characteristics. It is one of the most successful movies with different formats of three-dimensional cinematic technology.

Avatar can be counted as a movie with a 'long duration', of 162 minutes. Narrative of the movie can be summarized as follows:

Jake Sully (Sam Worthington) is a discharged Marine due to his paraplegia. Whereas he is put on a duty for the place of his twin brother's on the project Avatar. Jake Sully is chosen for his genetic compliance with his twin brother with a promising offer for having an operation that will fix his legs. Soldiers

who are on duty are carried from Earth to a different planet called Pandora with some aircrafts which are much more different than planes or helicopters that we have today on our planet Earth. In Pandora, there are natives called “Na’vi”s, which have human like appearances but are bigger in size and their bones are made of Carbon. They have their own language and they respect their planet and Mother Nature very much. On the other hand, humans that come from Earth are after some mine which is too valuable for them. Thus, humans plan to wage up war against Na’vis. Humans use digital machines, which synchronize human DNA to Na’vi bodies. When a human is synchronized with its Avatar (Na’vi body), the Avatar body is controlled through a simulator within the complex of a military base in Pandora. It should be emphasized that all the work proceeded within the military base is surrounded with complete digital and cyber machines, even the map of the forest area appears in cyber space, which is a crucial example of simulation.

The narrative continues with Avatar of Jake’s acceptance amongst the Na’vis and he becomes one of the natives. Later on, he falls in love with the daughter of the natives’ chief. When the war day comes, Jake takes his place with the natives, against humans. Both sides of the war lose lots of their people. Despite the Chief’s death and all other problems, humans are defeated by Na’vis. At the end of the movie, Jake Sully becomes a real Na’vi without a human body replica, his human body is dead, but he continues to live as the new Chief of Na’vis in Pandora.

Based on the narrative of the movie *Avatar*, there are some aspects of it to be examined within the context of hyper-reality, besides considering its three-dimensional specialty.

4.2. Hyper-real Characteristics of the Movie *Avatar*

First of all, it can be said that the movie *Avatar* is an example of hyper-realistic attribute of cinematic experience on the basis of both the form (three-dimensional) and content (narrative contains many simulation scenes). To be more specific, the movie *Avatar* has strong visuals with respect to its three-dimensional cinematic technology, because while watching the movie, audience is able to believe the ‘realness’ of visuals on screen. Moreover, it is possible for the audience to flee from the giant and wild animals of Pandora forests, while watching the movie. The point is that visuals might be even more powerful than real life (hyper-real). For in real life, most of the audience do not have an opportunity to meet those giant wild Pandora animals; besides, those animals can only attack people within a simulation of a movie like *Avatar*.

At this point a review from *Time* can be helpful to analyze the situation. Richard Corliss ([http:// www.metacritic.com/ movie/ avatar/ critic-reviews](http://www.metacritic.com/movie/avatar/critic-reviews)), says: “Embrace the movie -- surely the most vivid and persuasive creation of a fantasy world ever seen in the history of moving pictures -- as a total sensory, sensuous, sensual experience.”

Furthermore, another notable review with respect to 'hyper-real' environment of the movie *Avatar* is from David Denby ([http:// www.metacritic.com/ movie/ avatar/ critic-reviews](http://www.metacritic.com/movie/avatar/critic-reviews)), *The New Yorker*.

He declares his opinions as;

The movie's story may be a little trite, and the big battle at the end between ugly mechanical force and the gorgeous natural world goes on forever, but what a show Cameron puts on! The continuity of dynamized space that he has achieved with 3-D gloriously supports his trippy belief that all living things are one.

On the other hand *Avatar* contains hyper-realistic attributes within its content. In the movie, Jake Sully has partial paralysis; thus, he cannot move his legs but when he is synchronized with his Avatar body, symptoms of paralysis disappears. As Baudrillard (1994: 4) puts forward in his book *Simulacra and Simulations*, as long as the signs of the simulation are replaced with the signs of the 'real', what is real loses its importance, because hyper-reality does not need any sign, which belongs to the 'real'.

Furthermore Baudrillard (1994: 4) enlightens the concept 'simulation' with an example:

Whoever fakes an illness can simply stay in bed and make everyone believe he is ill. Whoever simulates an illness produces in himself some of the symptoms (Littré). Therefore, pretending, or dissimulating, leaves the principle of reality intact: the difference is always clear, it is simply masked, whereas simulation threatens the difference between the 'true' and the 'false', the 'real' and the 'imaginary'.

As it can be understood from the given example during the cinematic experience ‘illusion of reality’ appears as the inserted signs of hyper-reality, thus simulation.

4.3. Illusion of Reality Within *Avatar*

The ideas that Richard Rushton (2011: 2) puts forward in his book *The Reality of Film: Theories of Filmic Reality* emphasizes the approach of “films are abstracted from reality and can thus only offer a deficient mode of reality, films as part of the reality we typically inhabit, as part of the world we live in, as parts of our lives.” He mainly argues that reality in a cinematic experience shapes the ‘reality’ in the real life and there is a very slender and gentle distinction between the reality and the illusion in cinematic experience.

Based on the fact that cinematic experience is a representation on screen, its reality could only be in the degree of secondary. Thus, the notion of ‘realism’ works as a process through the means of ‘make-believe’ process.

For the movie *Avatar*, the statement above can be clearly related with a notable review as follows:

Miami Herald reporter, Rene Rodriguez writes;

([http:// www.metacritic.com/ movie/ avatar/ critic-reviews](http://www.metacritic.com/movie/avatar/critic-reviews))

“Whatever faults *Avatar* may have -- and there are many -- the movie succeeds in immersing you in a photorealistic, painstakingly detailed world more fully than any science fiction movie before.”

Furthermore, according to Rushton (2011: 3), the main discussion on the notion of reality within a filmic experience should be on the basis of its “truth and adequacy” to real world.

Therefore, it can be assumed that the notion of reality within a cinematic experience is beyond its representational aspect. To be more clear, when considered that cinema is a way of visual representation, it might be expected that its non-real attributes would be more dominant, but it should be forcefully emphasized that cinematic experience exceeds the limits of an object and works as a subjective semiotic system.

At this point it is inevitable to mention Bazin’s thoughts on the indicated subject. Bazin’s (1967: 10) one of the famous quotation conceptualizes his attitude towards the cinematic experience; “the creation of an ideal world in the likeness of the real.”

For Bazin (Williams, 1996: 230), “both the cinematic image and the real world share in the divine presence and the divine voice; in which matter is a bridge.”

To make it more clear with a different point of view, social sciences gained new visions through psychoanalytic and semiotic theories, thus linguistic system also scientifically regarded as a symbolic system. Based on the works of Charles Sanders Peirce and Ferdinand de Saussure, “human communication can be recognized through the material presence of the ubiquitous and irreducible sign.” (Williams, 1996: 230)

Consequently, there is a parallelism between the linguistic system’s operation through a symbolic sign system and cinema’s operation as visual and verbal systems of signs. Represented images on the screen also represent the reality.

Cinema is such a medium that it includes both the entertainment and visual aspects, so the illusion of reality from the lived reality, within the medium touches both the emotions and social meanings through the semiotic procedure.

Assumptions made on the ‘reality of film’ should obey the fact that it is beyond the representational aspect of cinematic experience. Besides, when the notion of reality within cinematic experience is examined, if the result is only related with ‘reflection’ of the real world and ‘representation’ of the present, as Rushton (2011: 10) puts forward, the main of the examination would be missed.

To be more specific on the missed aspect of the subject, it would be accurate to say that; from such a perspective, a film can only ever reflect or represent issues that have their foundation in the 'real' social world. It is as though, by drawing these comparisons, film scholars and critics express a need to maintain a strict division between what happens in the 'real' world, like Rushton (2011: 6) discusses;

On the basis of this division, the 'real world' is always the realm by virtue of which films themselves are judged; in one way or another, films are measured by their adherence or faithfulness (or lack of adherence or faithfulness) to the real world.

One of the reasons that filmic reality is so important to understand is the mentioned point of view by Richard Rushton, which is; within the film schools most of the time, filmic reality is decided upon its 'truthful' aspect of representation or vice versa, its 'untruthfully' aspect of representation. However, it should be remembered that any notion of realism within filmic experience is an autonomous process which is able to both start and end in the cinematic experience.

Furthermore, from a postmodern perspective, which was discussed in chapter three in detail, cinematic experience carries 'hyper-realistic' attributes. In other words, the notion of realism does not have to be rooted from a source which is outside of the film itself like 'real world'. To sum up, realism within a filmic experience should be looked for within the film itself.

In that respect, D.N. Rodowick puts forward his opinions on the subject. As modernity, D.N. Rodowick in his book *The Crisis of Political Modernism: Criticism and Ideology in Modern Film Theory* (1994), calls it “political modernism”, brings up a clear distinction between illusion and reality. From some point of view, this distinction has eaten up its importance due to (hyper) realness of an illusion. It is no more important that a film represented on screen is whether illusion or real.

Furthermore; with this idea of “political modernism, it can be distinguished between transparency and reflexivity in cinema.” (Rushton, 2011: 8)

“According to this logic, films which claim diegetic transparency are offering illusions to their audiences –the ‘illusion of reality’-.” (Rushton, 2011: 9)

The offered perspective on reality of cinematic experience by Rushton clearly directs the attention to going beyond the aspects of mentioned political modernism, because when realism in a cinematic experience is investigated through the distinction between illusion or reality, it can only reach a point that relies only on the notion of representation.

In this manner, for instance, Andre Bazin’s (1967) *Ontology of Photographic Image* and *Myth of Total Cinema* are essential for understanding the notion of reality within cinema, with respect to its representational aspect but not only on representation, in addition to that the camera’s role, cameraman’s role, and filmmaker’s, meanwhile the director’s, role are also considered. It can be

said that Bazin's (1967a) interest on the subject is not limited with cinema's representational capacities, rather than this, he is more interested in the "modes of life offered by cinema".

On the other hand, from a postmodern point of view, the subject can be analyzed by Baudrillard's (1994: 4) statement as follows; "A hyperreal henceforth sheltered from the imaginary, and from any distinction between the real and the imaginary, leaving room only for the orbital recurrence of models and for the simulated generation of differences."

The process of sentiment 'illusion of reality' can be completed with the participation of the audience. As a result, audience's status is important for understanding the whole cinematic experience with its hyper-real functions.

4.4. Shift in the Status of the Observer Due to the Norms of Postmodernism

Within the nineteenth and twentieth century modernity, perception of visual representations has shifted. To be more specific, the reason behind this shift can be explained through the changes among the representational conventions.

Jonathan Crary (1990: 8) clearly interprets the perception shift during modernity on the means of visuals, in his book *Techniques of the Observer*. According to Crary, observer's status has changed based on the changes occurred in the optical instruments. In his words:

Optical instruments, in particular the stereoscope, as a means of detailing the observer's transformed status. The optical devices, most significantly, are points of intersection where philosophical, scientific and aesthetic discourses overlap with mechanical techniques.

Each of the overlapping discourses puts the fact that technical aspect of the medium is a less effective element. Social causes and effects are much more intelligible on the domination of mentioned shift among the observer.

However, it seems like especially cinema is given direction by technical improvements, in other words, as a medium, cinema is dependent on technological determinism, and it can be said that technology is always a concomitant or the minor determinant of social forces.

On the subject, Gilles Deleuze (1987: 90) mentions; "A society is defined by its amalgamations, not by its tools, ... tools exist only in relation to the interminglings they make possible or that make them possible."

In this case, any mechanical apparatus used on representing the reality is just a tool for the reproduction. Observer's shifting status cannot be reduced into the changes on technology.

Meanwhile, technology as a tool has reconstructed the notion of 'realism' within mass visual culture. It can be said that optical experience strengthens the role of the observer, supported by Abrams' (1953: 57-65) expression;

A certain notion of 'subjective vision' has long been a part of discussions of nineteenth-century culture, for example in mapping out a shift the role played in the mind in perception, from conceptions of imitation to ones of expression, from metaphor of the mirror to that of the lamp.

Underlining the point that the notion of realism in cinema as a visual mass medium is dependent on the productivity of the observer. With respect to the mentioned point, polarized arguments on the 'realness' of the medium, through technological determinism or aesthetic perspective is pointless on the basis of a subjectively perceived an autonomous medium. Cinema is such a medium that different areas of knowledge and practices are able to exist concurrently within it. Observer, in other words, audience produces the realness in cinema.

According to Crary (1990: 9), "observing subject is both a product of 'it' and the same time constitutive of modernity in the nineteenth century." What happens to the observer in the nineteenth century is a process of modernization; he or she is made adequate to a constellation of new events, forces, and institutions that together are loosely and perhaps tautologically definable as 'modernity'.

For the same emphasized subject above, it is possible to approach it with a different perspective as follows; Baudrillard's simulacra is one of the significant appliances of how the Heidegger's 'worlding of the world' works in an effective way. Cinematic experience is also a worlding in which people depict themselves in certain fabricated identities and after some process, which is called simulation in Baudrillard's terms, the fabrication visuals become the reality. "It is a mask, playing a role... It is in these roles that we know each other; it is in these roles that we know ourselves" (Goffman, 1990: 30)

It can be said that from consolidation of Goffman's and Baudrillard's point of view, people maintain simulations of their perceptions through cinematic experience, by bringing their back stage identities (experienced reality), with an input of settings (seen visuals and heard sounds), and the whole thing ends with an output of front stage which fits into hyper-reality. As long as we are at the age of simulations, we can never escape from the masks and perversions of the real reality, yet it makes no difference, for the place of the real reality has already taken by the effects and signs of hyper-reality.

When Baudrillard's attitude on the subject is considered, it can be said on a three-dimensional filmic experience from the audience's perception that "visual effects are terrific but the narrative does not work" (Baudrillard, 1988: 57)

To be more specific, the image itself and the narrator are the keys which function as the satisfier of the audience during a three-dimensional cinematic experience.

Crary (1990: 1) clarifies; as technology helps to the mentioned autonomous procedure with its functional branches;

Computer-aided design, synthetic holography, flight simulators, computer animation, robotic image recognition, ray tracing, texture mapping, motion control, virtual environment helmets, magnetic resonance imaging, and multispectral sensors are only a few of the techniques that are relocating vision to a plane severed from a human observer.

Modes of seeing become surrounded by a virtual environment, but there is always a need for a ‘buyer’ who is ready to accept. Without a ready society, technology would stay as a passive instrument.

4.5. Social Readiness of Mode of Thought

Formerly uttered reviews are emphasizing the three-dimensionally rooted hyper-real aspects of the movie *Avatar*, whereas when the medium is cinema, it should be put forward that the technology and techniques are just tools for applying a perspective. Meanwhile, without a social acceptance of such a movie, *Avatar*, which is produced due to a complete digitalization, it would be impossible to speak of such a movie.

However, for today, it is possible to speak of the movie *Avatar*, even with compliments for both technological and cinematic basis, but it should not be forgotten that those compliments can only be made under socially accepting the thought of such a technique and digitalization. One of the reviews on the movie *Avatar* can be directed as an example for socially accepting and internalizing its technical attributes.

Wall Street Journal writer Joe Morgenstern ([http:// www.metacritic.com/ movie/ avatar/ critic-reviews](http://www.metacritic.com/movie/avatar/critic-reviews)) mentions on movie as follows: “Much of the time, though, you're transfixed by the beauty of a spectacle that seems all of a piece. Special effects have been abolished, in effect, since the whole thing is so special”

Being socially ready for a thought can be aligned at the contrary point of ‘technological determinism’, which can be explained as follows from a Marxist point of view: Marxist materialist form of technological determinism- as though the camera lens were condemned forever to the instrumentalism of registering “bourgeois ideology” (Williams, 1996: 232), in other words the situation that is determined by the machines, in this case the camera, and all other technological instruments shape the whole life including the social one.

On the other hand, for today, cinema can be counted as one of the biggest areas of market of economy and at the same time one of the greatest ways of

entertainment. Cinematic experience is a popular activity whether cinema is considered as an art form or not. When the technical aspect of cinema is taken into account, the cinematic apparatus provides an optical illusion. “Cinema is, therefore, the first art form to rely solely on pscho-perceptual illusions generated by machine” (Parkinson, 1995: 7).

When subject is a movie with \$237,000,000 (estimated) budget and gained a gross of \$2,782,275,172 (Worldwide) (25 November 2011) ([http:// www.imdb.com/ title/ tt0499549/](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0499549/)), it is important to point out that this popularity is not a product of only technology, rather than this audience is socially ready for accepting the technique of *Avatar*.

In order to complete a cinematic experience, people insert the signs of what they believe as real, and their simulations are based on their own realities. However, technology is required only to make this process easier.

We should keep in mind cinema has a history, which was most of time aiming at only a scientific evolution of projecting moving photographic images, but during cinematic history, scientific aim turned into realism phenomena. When cinema’s social consumption through perceived ‘realism’ is considered, it is inevitable to mention about social perception of the medium.

The first movies were not intended to be projected or silent. They were sponsored by Thomas Alva Edison, (1847-1931), who was the head of West Orange Laboratory. Nevertheless, the socially acceptance of cinema did happen in the late 19th century and with a lower technique of Edison.

As D.N. Rodowick (2007: 1) mainly put forward in his book, *The Virtual Life of Film* that “ ‘film’ as a photographic medium is disappearing as every element of cinema production is replaced by digital technologies.”

Moreover, technology has to wait until the audience is ready to accept it, and it can be pointed out that in the movie *Avatar*, a developed technology is used but only with respect to people nowadays are taken as a reference.

The reason for socially accepting a thought or a vision can be best explained through a notable review on the movie *Avatar*. Reporter of *Chicago Reader*, J.R. Jones ([http:// www.metacritic.com/ movie/ avatar/ critic-reviews](http://www.metacritic.com/movie/avatar/critic-reviews)) writes; “A quantum leap in movie magic; watching it, I began to understand how people in 1933 must have felt when they saw ‘King Kong’ “.

This statement might be valid for the movie *Avatar* maybe fifty years later, when people are ready to accept a different technology of *Avatar*’s.

To sum up, when it is considered that James Cameron's *Avatar* is an interactive movie in the sense of its three-dimensional digitalized environment, its three-dimensional aspect functions as a surrounder for the audience, which embeds the audience with the cinematic experience.

Although, cinema with three-dimensions had appeared several times throughout the history of cinema and the technology of it had been available for so long, it became effective and accepted as of 21st century. Thus, simulation within the narrative of the movie *Avatar* can be adapted to the whole cinema as a medium.

Cinema itself is the Pandora and audience is Avatars. During the cinematic experience, audience is no different from the Avatars, who lives the hyper-reality through synchronized Na'vi bodies. For the audience hyper-reality is lived through the audiovisual signs of the cinema. For sure, without socially accepting it, even the most developed technology would be useless.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The aim of the thesis is to examine the hyper-real understanding of a three-dimensional cinematic experience within postmodern era. The subject took its roots from firstly understanding the cinema as a medium, which led the research to discover the power of cinema. Interrelating the shifts in the mode of thoughts and its reflections on practical basis, leads to acceptance with respect to social context.

When we underline the point that cinema is a discursive subject which includes human expression, it is inevitable to relate it with real life with present actions, but when the present is recorded and reproduced, then the notion of 'reality' becomes open for a discussion.

In Chapter Two, starting from the emphasized discussion, 'realist approaches' towards the cinematic experience is examined, which is shaped due to the modernity. Discovering the journey that cinema as a medium went

through from its birth and during specific periods of social movements, it is important to understand the 'shift' occurred on the basis of both the audience perspective and the notion of realism.

Whereas, in Chapter Three, the research continues with a postmodern point of view. Looking into the relation between hyper-reality and three-dimensional experience provided a postmodern attitude towards cinematic experience. The mentioned attitude is important for understanding the procedure of how the system of signs turns a visual representation into an autonomous system which is able start and end within its own margins. Moreover, it can be understood that in which ways postmodernism shapes the notion of realism within a cinematic experience.

Those mentioned arguments on the subject is integrated with the chosen movie, *Avatar* in Chapter Four. While the findings of the research are included in the case study, relationship that this research was aiming in the beginning is started to mean more on the basis of practical implementation of those mentioned arguments within Chapters Two and Three.

Also, in this research, the notion of realism with regard to visual representation's roots is analyzed. Furthermore, this study puts forward how to approach a visual mass medium, which is affected from the social characteristics of a specific period of time. In this manner, cinematic experience is firstly analyzed due to modernity, and secondly it is followed

by the postmodern attitude towards the subject. In addition to that, illusive power of cinema is an inevitable aspect of the whole study. Under the guidance of 'illusion of reality', the interaction between the audience and cinematic experience with respect to social conditions is examined.

On the other hand, it seems like the visual aspect of a cinematic experience is dependent on technology and in this research, main discussions take place within the social basis with respect to the strengthening power of being socially ready for a mode of thought, including an attitude towards the cinematic experience.

As a result, today's mode of thought takes its characteristics from postmodern environment; therefore, there is no need for the 'origin', the real reality, and any kind of referential point. Thus, cinema as a medium has the power of both being the subject and the object, and works as an autonomous system. Audience joins this system during the cinematic experience and shares its autonomy through its hyper-real illusions. The most important aspect of the mentioned subject is, in order to put this system into a process, society needs to be ready to comprehend and accept the mode and the norms that come with this social procedure.

In conclusion, hyper-reality of a three-dimensional cinematic experience within postmodern era is under the concern of the social context rather than the technological developments.

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