Science Fiction Film
and Architecture

A Postmodern Architectural Analysis
of THX 1138

Anthony Parsons
November 2011
# TABLE OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Cyborg manufacturing line.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Image of worker’s place of stay.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Opening shot of <em>Blade Runner</em>.</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td><em>Marin County Civic Centre</em> (1958-72, San Rafael, California)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>J.F. Sebastian and Pris. Note decrepit figure.</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Interior shot of Deckard’s Apartment</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>External Shot of Ennis House.</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>View of Superstructure in the background</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Frank Lloyd Wright’s Marin Civic County Centre on set</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Dilapidated and dirty furniture in THX and SEN’s unit</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>The clean white walls are full of graffiti and imperfections</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td><em>Villa Savoye</em> prior to restoration</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Detail of <em>Villa Savoye</em> prior to restoration</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Superstructure shot of <em>THX 1138</em></td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Le Corbusier’s Contemporary City</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Aerial of <em>Pruitt-Igoe</em> housing scheme (1950-56)</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Model of Le Corbusier’s <em>Radiant City</em> (1935)</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Part Floor Plan of Marin County Civic Centre</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Frank Lloyd Wright’s foyer and atrium space displaying the robotic nature of the humans.</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>The central atrium space presenting the surveillance motifs of <em>tech-noir</em>.</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Frank Lloyd Wright’s atrium space in <em>Gattaca</em>.</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>BACKGROUND</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>METHODOLOGY</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>LITERATURE REVIEW – THE ARCHITECTURE IN BLADE RUNNER</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Postmodern City – Pastiche and Schizophrenia</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spatial Pastiche</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Schizophrenic Temporality</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Memory and Identity</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The ‘Primitive Hut’</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nature, Technology and Frank Lloyd Wright</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>DISCUSSION</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Science Fiction Film Genre in THX 1138</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Architecture of Dystopia in THX 1138</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Dystopian Modernist Models</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Utopian Models</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Death of Modernism</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frank Lloyd Wright in THX 1138</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>CONCLUSION</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1.0 INTRODUCTION

For architects, the experiential nature in film, with its ability to surpass the banality life, is a fascination that extends far beyond that of the celluloid surface.¹ Rem Koolhaas, who identifies tangible similarities in architecture and film, was previously a screenwriter before entering the architecture profession.² Koolhaas believes there is little difference between the two activities. He states;

I think the art of the scriptwriter is to conceive the sequences of episodes which build suspense and a chain of events...the largest part of my work is montage...spatial montage.³

It is important to observe the distinction between film and architecture, as ultimately the creation of sets is only limited by the imagination of the writers, unlike the reality of the built environment. However, it is through the imagination in science fiction films that architecture and the built environment have a strong presence.

Science fiction movies, according to the writer and legendary pulp editor John W. Cambell Jr, should be "an effort to predict the future on the basis of known facts, culled largely from present day laboratories."⁴ With this in mind, creating a futuristic mood through architecture and the urban environment has been an extremely powerful concern in this genre. In films such as Metropolis (Fritz Lang, black and white, 1927, 153mins) and Blade Runner (Ridley Scott, Colour, 1982, 121mins), the anticipated mood for the film has been successfully implemented through the maximisation of the architectural spatial tool.⁵

With many science fiction films, the prediction of such futures are usually emphasised by that of utopic or dystopic properties.

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² Toy, Architecture and Film II, 5.
⁵ Toy, Architecture and Film, 7.
Nathaniel Coleman describes utopias as “an almost inescapable companion of architectural invention,” in which architectural projections have a close relationship to those of utopia.⁶ He further describes that architecture and utopias “both argue against inadequate existing conditions while drawing upon the past to augur a transformed future.”⁷ Carl Abbott believes science fiction is not about the future but “a format for serious and sometimes outrageous reflections about the past and present.”⁸

*Blade Runner* and *Metropolis* have been thoroughly researched and written about for their architectural dystopic *film noir*, leaving many other science fiction films the opportunity to further the examination of architectural representation in science fiction film. This leads into the subject of the current dissertation, which investigates these connections through an analysis of the film *THX 1138*. Currently, there has been little literature on the architectural aspects of this film.

*THX 1138* was George Lucas’ first professional film, written and directed in 1971. Originally named *Electronic Labyrinth: THX 1138: 4EB*, it won first prize at a National Student Film Festival, sparking producer Francis Ford Coppola to fund the film to have it professionally produced.⁹ A director’s cut version was released in 2004 adding several scenes and utilising Computer Generated Imagery (CGI) technology to strengthen the messages Lucas was intending. This particular film has been selected for study for two foremost reasons; the use of Frank Lloyd Wright’s architecture in the sets and the decade or era in which it was produced. *THX 1138* was written in the early George Lucas years, before the *Star Wars* and *Indiana Jones* eras. It provides opportunity for additional architectural literature on the popular writer and producer.

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⁶ Nathaniel Coleman, *Utopias and Architecture* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 48
⁷ Coleman, *Utopias and Architecture*, 48
This dissertation will investigate the architectural elements that George Lucas has used to convey ideas within the film, and how the society represented in the film can provide a new interpretation of architecture. With the highly theorised *Blade Runner* being produced in 1982, more than a decade after, the difference of age in the films further strengthens the significance of *THX 1138* due to the different technologies available in each era. Scott’s *Blade Runner* also features in its sets a building designed by Frank Lloyd Wright, the *Ennis Brown House* (1924, Los Angeles, California).\(^\text{10}\)

The significance of the study of architecture in science fiction film will manifest in this dissertation through the analysis of *THX 1138*. Similarly to the architectural writing on *Blade Runner*, in which a dystopic society has permitted an architectural interpretation, this dissertation aims to present another architectural understanding through the analysis of *THX 1138*. With production from highly reputable producers Francis Ford Coppola and George Lucas, as well as sets featuring the architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright and the *Marin County Civic Centre* (1958-72, San Rafael, California), the analysis of *THX 1138* is of significant importance to the scholarship of architecture and its influence.

2.0 BACKGROUND

*THX 1138* is set in “the not too distant future” where a technologically driven society is controlled through measures of stringent drug consumption, relentless video and visual surveillance and the presence of the cyborg police. People are assigned a series of letters and numbers as their identification and everything from their job to whom and where they live with is controlled. Worshipping is done through a “faceless” representation of a “god”, where one can undertake confessions in booths where a drone recording delivers messages of understanding and encouragement. Consumption is continually emphasised as an answer to happiness.

The plot is based around the character THX 1138 (or THX for short), who is one of the workers behind the manufacturing of the cyborg police units, a demanding task requiring constant monitoring and drug use to complete the task. THX is a model employee and consumer, utilising all methods of consumption, recreation and spiritual needs, and takes all the correct medication as required.

The opening scene is footage shot through a surveillance camera of THX looking into the camera. This surveillance is through a medicine cabinet every household has, opening the door of the cabinet prompts a question, “what’s wrong?” The scene further goes to LUH 3417, THX’s roommate which has been fittingly calculated via a computer as an appropriate match. LUH becomes attached to THX, and through altering the drugs that THX thinks he is correctly taking, the two begin a physical intimate relationship, which is highly forbidden in this invented society. With continuous constant surveillance, the two are caught out on camera footage. The alteration of THX’s drug use also causes a near radioactive disaster while he is on shift, causing an inquiry into a “drug evasion” crime, where the absence of drug substance is counted as drug abuse.
The plot further twists when another character, SEN 5241 desires THX to become his new roommate after his previous roommate was “destroyed,” and unlawfully reassigns LUH’s shift to help his quest for THX to become his new roommate. Due to the constant surveillance, all three are caught out for convictions including illegal drug evasion, sexual activity and program shifting. THX receives a trial for drug evasion and fails, and begins a “reconditioning” for jail. SEN also ends up imprisoned, and after a period of time SEN and THX embark on a journey to escape, with THX set out to find LUH. On the journey they meet SRT, who is a hologram who appears on holographic screens for people’s viewing and helps the pair escape the prison. The “great escape” saga ends with SEN and SRT getting caught, and THX escaping due to the pursuit reaching the maximum allocated budget allowed for the pursuit.

The architecture used throughout the film is that of the modernist “machine for living” featuring functional environments and clean lines. Frank Lloyd Wright’s Marin County Civic Centre in California is used in the set of several scenes, with predominant imagery taken around the central atrium space of the centre, which rises several stories high. The use of this particular building, designed by a prominent architect from the modernist era gives the analysis of THX 1138 architectural significance.

Figure 2. Image of worker’s place of stay.
Source: Film still, Lucas, THX 1138, 26m:36s.

*Blade Runner*, directed by Ridley Scott in 1982, has been broadly discussed throughout architectural discourse and acts as a benchmark for architectural film analysis in the science fiction genre. It is for this reason that a review of the architectural literature on the film is included in this research. *Blade Runner*, is based on a novel by Phillip K. Dick titled *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* The *mise en scène* is set in Los Angeles in 2019, where the “advanced form of robot (known as replicants) had been involved in mutinies in the ‘Off World’” leading to “*Blade Runners*” hunting down and “retiring” any replicants that manage to get back to earth. In this particular case, Deckard (Harrison Ford) has been appointed to hunt down four replicants who have escaped from their destined place. These replicants go on a search for Tyrell, the corporate mogul behind the creation of these replicants, in order to attempt to lengthen their already destined short lives.

![Opening shot of Blade Runner.](image)

*Blade Runner*, which, as Deborah Knight and George McKnight describe, is a film that “employs thematic conventions closely

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13 A french term for “placing on stage,” it is often used in film literature to describe the design characteristics of the film.
associated with film noir,” has the built environment of a dystopic city, with Mayan pyramid influences, which led to utilising built work from American architect Frank Lloyd Wright. In this particular case the Ennis Brown House provides the context for the Blade Runner’s (Deckard) apartment. It is this particular choice of work that has sparked interest for this dissertation.

The architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright has appeared in many films throughout and past his life, including Blade Runner and THX 1138. The Ennis Brown House in California has featured in no fewer than 20 films, ranging from commercial advertising for popular label perfumes to music video clips for international pop-artists. Another building that has been seen in film, and more interestingly, science fiction film, is the Marin County Civic Centre, which is featured in THX 1138 as well as the film Gattaca (Andrew Niccol, Colour, 1997, 106mins). It has also recently received a small feature in a music film clip for Dr Dre and Eminem in 2011, with the building becoming a reincarnation location of the American rapper.

![Marin County Civic Centre](http://gallery.photo.net/photo/7735461-md.jpg)

**Figure 4. Marin County Civic Centre (1958-72, San Rafael, California)**

Source: [http://gallery.photo.net/photo/7735461-md.jpg](http://gallery.photo.net/photo/7735461-md.jpg)

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15 Deborah Knight and George McKnight, “What is it to be Human? Blade Runner and Dark City,” in The Philosophy of Science Fiction Film, ed. Steven M. Sanders (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2008), 23.

16 Commercial advertisement for Calvin Klein’s Obsession perfume range, music video clip was for Ricky Martin’s Vuelve.

17 I Need a Doctor by Dr Dre featuring Eminem and Skylar Grey, from the Album Detox, Aftermath Entertainment and Interscope Records.
3.0 METHODOLOGY

This research will undertake the critical analysis of the film *THX 1138*. Unlike *Blade Runner*, where there is a large amount of literature on the subject of science fiction film, philosophy and architecture, there is little critical writing on *THX 1138*. This research dissertation aims to answer the question; through postmodernist analysis, do the societies and concepts represented in science fiction film allow a new interpretation of architecture? A critical investigation of the film *THX 1138* will be used as evidence in order to answer this question. The aim of the research presented in this dissertation is to act as an addition to the existing literature on the postmodern interpretation of science fiction film from an architectural lens.

The framework that structures this research will be that of a *Tripartite Cluster*, in which Linda Groat and David Wang describe this framework as “a number of much particularised systems of inquiry [...] that share common ontological and epistemological assumptions.” This particular dissertation will situate itself in the “emancipatory” cluster, in which it involves many streams of research discipline, but which all point out the “unconscious dominance of racial, ethnic, gender, and Western-focused biases in the vast majority of research.”

The main methodology to be used is critical theory, in which Groat and Wang describe as a theory which “questions hidden assumptions and purposes of competing theories and existing forms of practice.” This model of research methodology is widely used in architectural and film theory. It has been used in several readings of *Blade Runner*, for example theorist Giuliana Bruno analysed the psychoanalysis of Jacques Marie Emile Lacan,

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and identified the *spatial schizophrenic temporality* nature of the space in *Blade Runner*.

This dissertation will primarily take a detailed analysis of modernist utopian ideas, adapting post-modern techniques and ideas such as the cyberpunk and tech-noir genres and apply them to the pre-postmodernist subject of the dissertation.

Anthony Vidler’s *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely* 21 adopts a similar tripartite cluster framework where he applies a critical theorised methodological approach to the reality of homelessness and the perfectionism of the neo-avant-garde. Vidler is one of the most significant scholars in the field of architecture and film and his work has influenced the way that investigations of the subject are positioned. It is with an awareness of this influence, that Vidler’s literature has stimulated the research framework and methodology of this research dissertation.

4.0 LITERATURE REVIEW – THE ARCHITECTURE IN BLADE RUNNER

Blade Runner, an important film of the science fiction genre, has provided a new way of investigating architecture through the analysis of the film. Theorists have written about several varying architectural notions in Blade Runner, which assists in interpreting the architecture in science fiction film. This will help deliver a framework to investigate the architecture in THX 1138.

The Postmodern City – Pastiche and Schizophrenia

Unlike typical science fiction films, Blade Runner is a postmodernist approach to the portrayal of a dystopian built environment, with Giuliano Bruno describing the filmic vision as “spatiotemporal and the haptic” and the spaces in the film encompassing a “schizophrenic temporality and a spatial pastiche”. This belonging to both space and time is an acknowledgement of the representation and consideration of identity and history, and the postmodern mise-en-scène, which is clearly evident in Blade Runner.

Paolo Portoghesi claims that the image, audience reception and engagement with a film is the domain of postmodern architecture. He writes;

Postmodern in architecture can be generally read as the re-emerging of the archetypes and the reintegration of the architectural conventions and thus as the premise for the creation of an architecture of communication, an architecture of the visual, for a culture of the visual.

Portoghesi’s claim is clearly evident through the several postmodern analyses and identification in Blade Runner.

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Spatial Pastiche

The term *spatial pastiche* has been borrowed by Bruno from American literary critic Frederick Jameson. Bruno identifies Jameson’s view of postmodernism as a derivative from the field of architecture. Jameson writes;

> [it] is in the realm of architecture...that modifications in aesthetic productions are most dramatically visible, and that their theoretical problems have been most centrally raised and articulated; it was indeed from architectural debates that my own conception of postmodernism began to emerge.\(^{25}\)

Bruno identifies the visibility of *spatial pastiche* in *Blade Runner* through the “relationship between postmodernism, architecture and postindustrialism.”\(^{26}\) This relationship starts with the location of the film, Los Angeles in 2019. Ridley Scott, director of the film wanted “the film set forty years hence, made in the style of forty years ago.”\(^{27}\) Bruno suggests that this date is “a step away from the development of contemporary society”\(^{28}\) and the link is shown through the representation of postindustrial deterioration. She further describes this deterioration as “an effect of the acceleration of the internal time of process proper to postindustrialism.”\(^{29}\) Unlike other science fiction *mise en scene* representations of ultramodern environments, Bruno argues that *Blade Runner* is seen as a “development of the present state of the city and of the social order of late capitalism [with an] aesthetic of decay [and] process of disintegration.”\(^{30}\) This physical deterioration and disorder is interconnected with “patterns of consumerism, waste and recycling.”\(^{31}\) This consumerism and postindustrial effect has left the streets piled


\(^{26}\) Bruno, “Ramble City: Postmodernism and *Blade Runner,*” 62.


\(^{28}\) Bruno, “Ramble City: Postmodernism and *Blade Runner,*” 63.

\(^{29}\) Bruno, “Ramble City: Postmodernism and *Blade Runner,*” 64.

\(^{30}\) Bruno, “Ramble City: Postmodernism and *Blade Runner,*” 63.

\(^{31}\) Telotte, *Science Fiction Film,* 57.
with rubbish, leaving the public to constantly manoeuvre around the piles along their journeys, one of the replicants hides amongst the refuge awaiting a particular person, and Deckard (the *Blade Runner*) has a violent battle with a replicant, with his body being thrown up against large dumpsters placed incoherently on the streetscape. The postindustrialist condition has been seen as one that recycles; therefore it requires its waste. 32 This aesthetic can be seen in the representation of the character, J.F. Sebastian, a character whom the replicants use to attain Tyrell. His appearance is a literalisation of this postindustrial condition. “Accelerated decrepitude,” as one of the replicant describes, the genetic disorder has accelerated the ageing of his body, leading to a person of youth but with a dilapidated and tiring figure (see fig 5). 33

![Figure 5. J.F. Sebastian and Pris. Note decrepit figure. Source: Film still, Ridley, *Blade Runner*](image)

The postmodern analysis of *Blade Runner* by Bruno provides an alternative awareness to the architecture in the film, which provides a foundation for the analysis of *THX 1138*. A critical analysis of *THX 1138*’s modernist machine aesthetic can be undertaken to allow an understanding of the architecture derived from the dystopian society the film depicts. While the built environment in *Blade Runner* is seen as consequences of consumerism and industrialism, *THX 1138* has a built

32 Bruno, “Ramble City: Postmodernism and *Blade Runner,*” 64.
33 Bruno, “Ramble City: Postmodernism and *Blade Runner,*” 65.
environment of “technophobic” disorder, which is seen as a threat to customary social arrangements. This common science fiction theme in which \textit{THX 1138} represents precedes that of \textit{Blade Runner}, which exhibits through the years the two films were produced as well as the architectural representation of the scenes. This reinforces this dissertation’s argument of the architectural interpretation science fiction film embodies.

\textit{Schizophrenic Temporality}

The modernist representation throughout \textit{THX 1138} represents a dystopian society for the viewer. It is uncommon in this case for a dystopian society to convey a “high-tech” super functional environment, but through a postmodern investigation, much like the investigation of \textit{Blade Runner}, an interpretation can be made and identified.

Another postmodern investigation of \textit{Blade Runner} that privileges architecture is through the analysis of \textit{schizophrenic temporality}. Jean Baudrillard describes the postindustrial age of \textit{Blade Runner}, and distinguishes the replicant; the cyborgs in which the Blade Runners are in search for to destroy. He writes;

\begin{quote}
We are now in a new form of schizophrenia. No more hysteria, no more projective paranoia, but at this state of terror proper to the schizophrenic...The schizophrenic can no longer produce the limits of its own being...He is only a pure screen.\footnote{Jean Baudrillard, "The Ecstasy of Communication," in \textit{The Anti-aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture}, ed. Hal Foster, (Washington: Bay Press, 1983), 132.}
\end{quote}

Bruno identifies that \textit{Blade Runner} “presents a manifestation of the schizophrenic condition.”\footnote{Bruno, "Ramble City: Postmodernism and \textit{Blade Runner}," 70.} Jacques Marie Emile Lacan, a French psychoanalyst, declares that there is a linguistic order; temporality, past, present, future, memory. In other words, Bruno explains that “the experience of temporality and its representation are an effect of language.”\footnote{Bruno, "Ramble City: Postmodernism and \textit{Blade Runner}," 70.} This allows

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\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{36} Bruno, "Ramble City: Postmodernism and \textit{Blade Runner}," 70.  
\textsuperscript{37} Bruno, "Ramble City: Postmodernism and \textit{Blade Runner}," 70.  
\end{flushleft}
understanding of temporality—the linear form of the past to the present and ultimately the future. This particular order is lost in a schizophrenic, which leads to the failure of language, and ultimately the failure of temporality. Jameson explains that there is a lack of a past or present which in turn becomes an eternal present. He writes;

The schizophrenic does not have our experience of temporal continuity but is condemned to live a perpetual present with which the various moments of his or her past have little connection and for which there is no conceivable future on the horizon.\(^{38}\)

The replicants in *Blade Runner*, only have a life of present tense, since they have neither past nor memory, they are destined to have no future. But due to this experience, their life as it is intense and heightened, much like, as Bruno describes “a candle that burns faster but brighter”.\(^{39}\) At the ending of the film when the last replicant is on his final minute of his life, he tells Deckard “I’ve seen things you people wouldn’t believe”\(^{40}\). This is emblematic of schizophrenia, as Frederick Jameson explains;

[a]s temporal continuity breaks down, the experience of the present becomes powerfully, overwhelmingly vivid and ‘material’. The world comes before the schizophrenic with heightened intensity.\(^{41}\)

This schizophrenic temporality is evident in the pastiche architectural representation of erratic recollections of the past; Los Angeles in 2019 has the architecture of “retro” ancient reminiscences; Egyptian Pyramids, Roman and Greek columns, neon Oriental mythology. Deckard’s apartment, featuring Frank Lloyd Wright’s *Ennis Brown House* (1924), has common


\(^{39}\) Bruno, “Ramble City: Postmodernism and *Blade Runner*,” 70.

\(^{40}\) *Blade Runner*, Ridley Scott, 1982

\(^{41}\) Jameson, *The Cultural Turn: Selected Writings on the Postmodern*, 120.
interpretations of ancient Mayan palaces, with its textile concrete block construction.\textsuperscript{42}

This analysis of the schizophrenic nature of the replicant in \textit{Blade Runner} can provide an interpretation of the characters in \textit{THX 1138}, in turn can provide an understanding to the architecture in the film.

\textbf{Memory and Identity}

In order to escape this condition, or survive for the replicants, the linguistics need to be placed back in order, and in the replicant’s case, the past. This has been traced to Lacan’s concept, the \textit{Name-of-the-Father}, in which Bruno describes the concept as “a symbolic dimension has to be put together to release them from the trap of the present.”\textsuperscript{43} Desires to find their origins lead to a requirement in acknowledging paternal reception, which in turn the replicants accepting sexual difference and identity.\textsuperscript{44}

\textit{THX 1138} has similar identity crises to the characters in film, which starts at the name of the film, which is the assigned prefix and number given to the main character. There is also a sub-plot of the human ”hologram,” who are people in the cyber world who are there to purely there to entertain. They have no collection or experience of the “real” (superstructure) world and have no reaction to pain or feelings, although they are treated in the same judiciaries as real life humans.

The way a replicant is distinguished by a human is via a pupil dilation test, where the replicant will in the end “identify themselves by the inability to show the same level of immediate emotional response to certain questions.”\textsuperscript{45} This leads throughout the film to the question of identity. Leon, one of the replicants, at the start of the film undergoes this test, failing at

\textsuperscript{42} Bruno, “Ramble City: Postmodernism and \textit{Blade Runner},” 66-67.

\textsuperscript{43} Bruno, “Ramble City: Postmodernism and \textit{Blade Runner},” 70.

\textsuperscript{44} Bruno, “Ramble City: Postmodernism and \textit{Blade Runner},” 71.

\textsuperscript{45} Benjamin, “At Home with the Replicants: the Architecture of \textit{Blade Runner},” 24.
the point where he is asked about his mother. Rachel passes this test as she has a photograph of her “mother”. The replicants are implanted with memories, as Knight and McKnight describe a necessity “to give them a false sense of themselves.” By having this photographic implant of her mother, Rachel was able to pass the point where Leon originally couldn’t. Bruno describes photographs as “documents of existence to history to be transformed into memories, monuments of the past.” These documents are held tightly by the replicants, in which they are generally fascinated and obsessed by them, perhaps signifying the desiring need of memories. She further explains that “[photographs] assert [one’s] existence at that (past) moment when the person, the thing, was there in front of the camera.” From an interpretation of Rowland Barthes theory of photography, for the replicant, this becomes a confusion of the “real and live;” a testament that the object has been real. This asserts the replicant to believe that it is real.

The predicaments of identity in *THX 1138*, with the similarity of judiciary onuses to both humans and holograms, are expressed in the “great escape” that begins when THX 1138 meets the hologram SRT. THX encounters SRT in prison, with SRT claiming he was fed up with the virtual world and was punished for this reason. The ambiguity of the personality and identity of the hologram heightens when he fails to feel pain when they are tagged hiding in body bags in a morgue and also the inability to operate human functions such as motor vehicles in which he crashes to his fate.

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46 Knight and McKnight, "What is it to be Human? Blade Runner and Dark City," 29.
The ‘Primitive Hut’

The notion of the ‘primitive hut’ can be interpreted in THX 1138 as the built environment and society is a rendition of the turmoils of technology and control.

Scott Colman’s essay, *Drawing the Line between Technology and Nature in Architectural Theory: Blade Runner’s Critique of the Intention of the ‘Primitive Hut’* is an examination of the “struggle with the technology of architecture”. He looks into conceptions of the primitive hut by early architects such as Vitruvius and analyses *Blade Runner* to depict the desire of the separation between nature and technology. Colman describes the architecture of the “primitive hut” as the “striving to overcome architecture at all,” with architecture “desiring its own death”.

In keeping with this desire of death, Anthony Vidler in his writings explains the symbolic nature towards this. He writes;

> [A]s long as architecture remained symbolic, with its meaning bound up in its outer form an understood by a society that saw its built symbols participate in their struggle toward consciousness...then architecture was alive. Once it was forced to subject itself to uses, to subordinate form to use...architecture inevitably started to die.

This loss of symbolism and the substitution of nature for technology in *Blade Runner* is “an expression of humanity’s ‘struggle’ that is life sustaining for architecture.”

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Nature, Technology and Frank Lloyd Wright

Both *THX 1138* and *Blade Runner* feature the architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright. Wright, as with other modernists, had models of utopian societies he believed would work. It is of interest that architecture from this prominent architect has featured in both of these films, especially with the ideas Wright has presented.

Gottfried Semper, a German architect, wrote *The Four Elements of Architecture* in 1851. He aimed to explain where architecture originated from under the lens of anthropology. In this book he wrote:

> Architecture, like its great teacher, nature, should choose and apply its material according to the laws conditioned by nature, yet should it not also make the form and character of its creations dependant on the ideas embodied in them, and not the material.\(^{56}\)

Scott Coleman wrote that Frank Lloyd’s work has been seen as a “dialogue between the abstraction and representation of nature.”\(^{57}\) Frank Lloyd Wright’s *Broadacres* (1945), a contrast to Le Corbusier’s *Radiant City* (1935), another utopian model, was a rejection to the concentration of population, where Janet Staiger describes *Broadacres* as “everyone having a minimum one acre

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plot and had transportation occurring by car rather than by rail,”
and as a promotion of “individual ownership and decentralization”.
Coleman further described it as;

A textile tectonic literally projected over the face of the Earth...in
which culture and agriculture would once again be one and the
same.

Frank Lloyd Wright had a series of designs he called Usonian
Houses, and were designed as moderately priced single family
homes. These houses were models behind Wrights “single city
nation” of Broadacres. According to Kenneth Frampton, a
modernist architectural critic, identified that the Ennis House is
an ancestry to the era of Usonian housing.

Charles Jencks, an architectural critic and prime identifier of the
postmodernist movement saw the connection of Blade Runner
and the architecture used in the scenes. He describes the built
environment as a place of “ugliness, decay, banality [and] austere

Jencks also acknowledges the Mayan reminiscence of the Ennis-Brown house in the Hollywood Hills.

Wright mentions in his book Frank Lloyd Wright – A Testament
his desire to visit the ancient arts of the Mayan, Inca and Toltec.
He describes the masonry in the Mayan architecture as “beyond
conceivable need.” He also describes how magnificent he
believes the architecture is. He writes;

The architectural grandeur made one with the surrounding
features of the mountainous land; made by wasting away the
mountains; mountains moved at will by the simple persistent
might of human being multiplied...By such direct and simple

58 Janet Staiger, “Future Noir: Contemporary Representations of Visionary Cities,” in Alien Zone II:
The Space of Science Fiction Cinema, ed. Annette Kuhn (New York: Verso, 1999), 106-07
Runner’s Critique of the intention of the Primitive Hut,” 168.
60 John Sergeant, Frank Lloyd Wright’s Usonian Houses: the Case for Organic Architecture (New
61 Charles Jencks, The New Paradigm in Architecture: the Language of Postmodernism (London:
Yale University Press, 2002), 90.
multiplication of strength his buildings grew to be man-mountains.\footnote{Frank Lloyd Wright, \textit{A Testament} (New York: Horizon Press, 1957), 111-12.}

It can be proposed that this motif of “mountains wasting away” can be interpreted as the manmade mountains of the postmodern city of Los Angeles in 2019, only with the now ‘man made mountains’ being wasted away by technology.

\textit{THX 1138} can be seen as an early manifestation of this model of monumentality, but through postmodern analysis, in a different interpretation. The modernist built environment of the superstructure in \textit{THX 1138}, as well as the use of Frank Lloyd Wright architecture can attain this motif through finding similar connections.

![Figure 7. External Shot of Ennis Brown House. Source: http://www.flickr.com/photos/7294653@N07/2543443749/in/set-72157605382846322](image)

These several key architectural theories from prominent architectural theorists have arrived from the postmodern analysis of \textit{Blade Runner}. It provides an interpretation of architecture from the societies represented in the film. This approach will be taken in this dissertation as well, to establish whether the architecture and built environment can be understood through the analysis of identified theories in \textit{THX 1138}.

In order to identify specific theories in \textit{THX 1138}, recognition of the sub-genre and its theories will be of assistance in this identification.
5.0 DISCUSSION

Science Fiction Film Genre in *THX 1138*

In contemporary film societies, popular genres, whether they be either literary or filmic, all share particular ideologies. They are typically grounded in some form of myth, and have a relation to certain individuals “coming of age” through finding their place in society. Stuart Kaminsky describes genre as “a group of works sharing a set of motifs used to articulate a common theme.” In traditional Aristotelian literary character plots, the “coming of age” generally has a precedent of a medieval romance, with a complex, interlacing structure with overlapping plots and an exhaustive character list. An example of this type of literature is the mythology of *Oedipus the King*, a specific myth which influences many popular genres.

Emily Auger has identified the several key genres in science fiction film, but stresses on the singular representation of these genres. She writes;

There is no pure representation of any single genre...genre elements are borrowed and used and developed in accordance with the emphasis on different fields of discourse.

Auger further identifies there is consistent areas of discourse found in common genres, which are;

- Gothic Fiction – the gender focused discourse of psychology, which usually develops around a “central mystery” to sex and marriage;
- Detective Fiction – a focus on class with a discourse of sociology, with a basis around a crime, murder or theft;

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Science Fiction – The emphasis on the discourse of science, with a focus on race, dealing with the imaginary and less plausible settings;

Tech-noir – a genre with a discourse of aesthetics, with an emphasis on radical changes caused by technology.67

It is to be stressed that these areas of discourse are typically found in all areas of genre, but are emphasised in a particular way through which Auger describes as “conventions of generating sector, focus and agency.”68

THX 1138, as a film, is situated under the genre tech-noir, in a sense where the human character is embedded in a technological world. Auger explains in further detail, due to the radical technological alteration, “the simulacrum has become not only a field of discourse but also the object of discourse.”69 THX 1138 includes many agents that are in other genres, such as the detective fiction discourse of the crime, the gothic fiction of love and agents such as the robot in science fiction.

Tech-noir involves empowerment through technology, whether that is controlling different forms of socialism, behaviours and ultimately the world. Technology in tech-noir films are usually perceived as a threat to reality that is perceived as a destructive and dystopian force.70 Michael Ryan and Douglass Kellner state that “technology was frequently a metaphor for everything that threatened ‘natural’ social arrangements, and conservative values associated with nature were generally mobilized as antidotes to that threat.”71 The plots of tech-noir film, much like THX 1138, are central to one being a victim of this control, and in this case, the victimisation of THX, LUH and SEN.72

The kind of functions of the technology featured, in particular to a certain extent where technology is the basis of the creation and

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control of “artificial” beings, is primarily that of behaviour modification, and surveillance in several different manners.

Behaviour modification is common place in film typologies that involve the cyborg, virtual realities, clones and androids. Behaviour modification in humans has a general intent to make humans more normal and benign, or in most films of this genre, to make individual partake in activities or such that they may not normally desire or want to do. In *THX 1138*, it is drug consumption that modifies one’s behaviour to suppress any one’s sexual inhibitions, and to create a monotonous society that lives to serve and undertake the tasks assigned, in this particular case, THX performing long, dangerous and tedious task of manufacturing the cyborg police officers using highly radioactive material.

Surveillance, which can be both auditory and visual, is universal in tech-noir films, and is commonly used and justified in many ways by governments, corporations and criminals to emphasise and maintain their power. In *THX 1138*, surveillance is used for domestic contexts as well as information and control. Information and control surveillance is used as a method of gathering information in order to maintain a particular hierarchy. Domestic contexts surveillance ties in with this as well with the general use of Governments and/or corporates to monitor violations of civil liberties and privacy. In *THX 1138*, domestic surveillance is conducted with a purpose for the victim’s own good in a contradictory manner. An example of this in *THX 1138* is the constant surveillance of the home of THX and LUH leads to the pair getting caught performing a form of sexual act that later leads them both to captivity. This technologically driven failing society creates architectural interest in *THX 1138* through the representation of a dystopian built environment throughout the film. It presents a modernist portrayal of a functionalist environment in a deteriorating and subtle manner.
The Architecture of Dystopia in THX 1138

There are several modernist urban models that are the frequent foundation of the cinematic view of science fiction, whether or not they are of a dystopic or utopic nature. These visions have been described by Will Brooker as “large scale, metropolitan-wide, technologically rational and efficient urban plans, backed by absolutely no-frills architecture.” Insofar, this is poignant to the subject of the dissertation THX 1138, where the film uses modernist sets and buildings to convey a dystopian society.

Modernist ideals and interpretations suggest that the dystopian society depicted in THX 1138 provides a modernist understanding of the architecture. The date the film was produced, 1971, also suggests that it perhaps is a little too early to be situated in postmodern era, although, as identified, many of its traits indicate post-modernist suggestions and theories.

The machine aesthetic modernist design ethic which is everything is exposed, allows a postmodern literal interpretation of this, creating a dystopic emphasis; in THX 1138 machinery would constantly fail, and create colossal disasters killing masses of people such as the explosions and meltdowns at the factory where THX works; lifts are forever out of order. Voices over a loudspeaker inform people of lift breakdowns and ask them to move to an adjacent lift, the same voice notifies workers during an epic disaster that one is happening and to stay calm, once the disaster is averted they are told of the casualties and to keep working and stay safe. This form of interpretation, although not entirely architectural, emphasises the dystopian nature of the settings in THX 1138. This aesthetic has similar properties as William Gibson’s Count Zero, a cyberpunk novel identified by

74 Brooker, The Blade Runner Experience: The Legacy of a Science Fiction Classic, 206.
75 Sabine Heuser, Virtual Geographies: Cyberpunk at the Intersection of the Postmodern and Science Fiction (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2003), 54.
Heuser, where people occupy self-sufficient “archologies.” These archologies feature an autonomous society enclosed in geodesic domes, which represented “the engineering of human souls” but in a deteriorating and dystopic manner.

The cyberpunk genre suggests that the urban architecture of a primary fictional world has a link to cyberspace and implies a reworking of the topoi of a genre’s past, which in language terms, becomes specifically situated in post-modern architecture. The cyberpunk genre recognizes this particular form of architecture and thinking, with Hauser identifying it as “the failure of the International Style.”

In *THX 1138* the dystopian nature of the film is expressed through this “failure” of modernism. The imagery of the superstructure; the city beyond, has an technology embracing atmosphere, industrious and expressing the “machine age,” much like Le Corbusier envisages; with the different modes of fast moving transport systems such as raised highways with fast moving vehicles, monorail lines moving in all sorts of directions, external vertical transportation cars moving hastily up and down large hard materialised columns. The superstructure represents a city of modern architecture – pure functionalist and sterile (see fig 8).

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**Figure 8.** View of Superstructure in the background.
Source: Film still, Lucas, *THX 1138*, 28m:49s.

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77 Heuser, *Virtual Geographies: Cyberpunk at the Intersection of the Postmodern and Science Fiction*, 50.
Throughout the film several images show the distant landscapes of the city in the superstructure, utilising the same architectural language to convey a rational and working utopia. The only hint of any dystopian nature throughout the scenes is the lack of greenery or natural sunlight. The dystopian ambience is only truly displayed when this urban landscape is shown in more detail, such as in the homes of the people, the spaces where one works, and the closer detail of the public realms. The buildings and spaces speak of modernism; clean lines, white walls, glass, steel and concrete. Sabine Heuser identifies;

[TL]he particular way in which such building materials are presented attests to a certain critique of the implications inherent in modernity and its universalist claims.\textsuperscript{78}

The technological and material advances the International Style demanded, such as concrete, are expressed in a failing way. This representation is common in most cyberpunk texts, where concrete is often described as crumbling, cracking and reaching failure, contradictory to the longevity of the material the modernist movement preached.

There are several scenes in \textit{THX 1138} which show this “failing of modernist material.” This includes a scene revealing the internal space of Frank Lloyd Wright’s \textit{Marin County Civic Centre} (1962), superimposed over the cities vast urban dark landscape. The clean modernist walls show signs of wear and decay; cracks are forming showing levels of stress in an almost crumbling state (see fig9). Dirt and grime around the base contradicts the “revolution in the aesthetics of construction”\textsuperscript{79} Le Corbusier affectionately describes. The domicile where one lives with a computer generated flatmate has similar principles to Corbusier’s utopian ideas; a concept of \textit{Existenzminimum}, a space where one

\textsuperscript{78} Heuser, \textit{Virtual Geographies: Cyberpunk at the Intersection of the Postmodern and Science Fiction}, 52.

\textsuperscript{79} Le Corbusier, \textit{Towards a New Architecture}, 61.
can live on the absolute minimum of hygiene standards. This idea was made to a “human scale,” correct in proportion without any confinement or wastefulness, eradicating the sign of status through wasted space. The spaces where people such as THX, LUH and SEN live are small, modernist spaces, glass, steel and white walls. Furniture is kept to a bare minimum, emphasizing functionalism. There is no display or any ornament or decoration, pictures or anything to represent memory or identity.

These *machines for living* appear to be a functional and supreme space to reside. However when you look in even more closer detail, signs of dysfunction and disarray begin to appear, the walls are once again imperfect, graffiti and messages of hatred are scribed on the imperfect white walls, the white minimalistic furniture has dirty fingerprints all over the upholstery, sleek, second-rate stainless steel plumbing fixtures have black refuse liquid oozing out onto the walls (see fig 10 and 11). The clean and sterile environments appear tainted and soiled.

A real life example of the “failing of modernism,” in terms of representing a failure of the *machine for living* and “revolution in the aesthetics of construction,” is the perhaps the most recognisable representation of modernism, to both the public and architects alike, Le Corbusier’s *Villa Savoye*. Completed in 1931 in the suburbs of Paris, the house was the last part of Le Corbusier’s *promenades architecturales*, and represented his *Five Points Towards Architecture*; 1 – pilotis; 2 – flat roofs with gardens; 3 – free plans; 4 – free facades; 5 – the horizontal strip window.

It was a prime exemplar for the “International Style,” but over the course of the World Wars, the house fell into disuse and dilapidation, until acquirement in 1965 brought the house back to

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82 Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*, 84-86.
its original state. Fig 11 and 12 show the state of how Villa Savoye actually was before restoration, and showing flaws in modernist thinking and executions.

Figure 9. Frank Lloyd Wright’s Marin Civic County Centre on set
Source: Film still, Lucas, THX 1138, 28m:45s.

Figure 10. Dilapidated and dirty furniture in THX and SEN’s unit
Source: Film still, Lucas, THX 1138, 12m:36s.

Figure 11. The clean white walls are full of graffiti and imperfections
Source: Film still, Lucas, THX 1138, 29m:49s.

Figure 12. Villa Savoye prior to restoration.

Figure 13. Detail of Villa Savoye prior to restoration.
Source: http://www.e-architect.co.uk/images/jpgs/paris/ville_savoye_g090310_2.jpg
The Dystopian Modernist Models

Utopian Models

There are many different interpretations of utopia. Chasseguet-Smirgel interprets utopia as an unconscious "desire for eradication of the human species to the benefit of the single self." She argues that these utopian representations include "perfectly straight streets, the rigorous geometry of the buildings, the sameness off the houses, [and] the passion for numbers which exists in most utopia." This "turning away from difficult reality toward an imagined environment created in the image of unchanging or impossible original perfection," is very much apparent in *THX 1138*.

Throughout their careers, several town planners have given ideas and models for a "utopian" society, including Ebenzer Howard's *Garden Cities of To-Morrow* (1898), Frank Lloyd Wright's *Broadacre City* (1935) and Le Corbusier's *Radiant City* (1935). Robert Fishman saw the attentiveness of the models these three planners envisioned. He wrote;

[Howard, Wright and Le Corbusier] regarded the physical structure of the cities in which they lived, and the economic structure of the society in which they worked, as a temporary aberration which mankind would soon overcome.

This led to models of alternate societies and revolutions not just of the architectural kind but also revolutions in politics and economics. All three planners have a dominant value within them.

The urban environment *THX 1138* depicts show all 3 of these models in a contradictory and varying way, through the order

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86 Coleman, *Utopias and Architecture*, 50.
and visual representation of the built environment. *THX 1138* presents an paradigmatic moment in the representation of architecture in science fiction film and the embodiment of all three utopian ideas, but construed in a dystopic exemplification.

Ebenezer Howard’s *Garden City* was a model with a value of “co-operation.” His vision was a form of moderate decentralization; new cities that were surrounded by unspoilt shared countrysides, known as “greenbelts”. These cities would be capped at 30,000 people, and was envisaged that the countryside would be “dotted with hundreds of new communities where small scale cooperation and direct democracy could flourish.” In *THX 1138* the value of co-operation is one of a forced socialist model. People are assigned tasks and monitored through behaviour modification, the, conflicting the ideas Howard envisioned. This confliction can be architecturally interpreted through the lack of any form or natural environment, the built environment is made up of man-made structure and artificial light, the only potential rendition of the natural world is when THX finally escapes and reaches the outer world, where it is presented as a desolate empty wasteland.

Frank Lloyd Wright’s *Broadacre City* was a model of “individualism”. Like Howard’s *Garden Cities*, Wright’s model had a belief that individuality has a foundation of individual ownership. Everyone was entitled to as much land as they could use with a minimum one acre sized block. The people generally worked part time on their blocks and part-time working for the community, whether that be industrial, or commercial. Superhighways connected the “scattered elements of society,” with this “decentralisation” enabling one to choose the life they live on their land. This model has *THX 1138* conducting the same interpretation as previous, with the “decentralisation”

occurring at a contrary level, everyone is centralised in a large superstructure sharing a small unit with an assigned flatmate.

Le Corbusier’s *Radiant City* had the value of organization – he saw industrialization as a representation of great cities where production could be coordinated by large bureaucracies. His proposal for *Radiant City* included the levelling of major cities such as Paris to make way for skyscrapers of glass in steel, arranged in a geometrical manner around parks, gardens and superhighways. The government was one of technocracy, with the elite who he believed would bring beauty and prosperity to the city, such as planners, engineers and intellectuals, would live in luxurious apartments close to the centre. Le Corbusier believed Radiant City was “a city worthy of our time,” a place where “dignity, action, health, serenity, joy in living...can be part of our lives...” *THX 1138* manifests Le Corbusier’s ideas through the architectural representation of the built environment.

On a particular scene, one is shown the urban landscape of the superstructure. The scene shows people (who are all wearing the same all-white outfit and shaved heads) walking past a window which looks down over a part of the city which appears to be the centre of an urban area (See fig 14). The view through the window shows monotonous towers that appear to have unlimited heights, there are multiple levels of vehicle highways and walkways placed in a curvaceous and rational manner. The walkways are filled with masses of white clothing clad people, all circulating and leading to a central space where a mass transport hub (in this case a train station) is lucidly placed in the centre.

This short scene has a strong connection to Le Corbusier’s *Contemporary City* (1922), a preceding model to *Radiant City* (see fig 15). Le Corbusier described this city as not an imagination of science fiction, but a “city of our times.” He saw that it was time to omit the “leavings of a dead era, and this new

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city would define the “radiant hour of harmony construction and enthusiasm...a crucial act separating the past from the future.”

This model has a scientific approach and is an ideal type for a technologically rich city, and with *THX 1138*'s *technophobic* mood and the temporality set “in the not too distant future,” the superstructure of the city in *THX 1138* noticeably has the same principles Le Corbusier has, theoretically and physically.

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93 Fishman, *Urban Utopias in the Twentieth Century*, 189.
These three models of utopia are all forms of modernism; Le Corbusier and Wright were both strong advocates of the Modern movement. Michael Ostwald and Steven Fleming state that the basis behind the Modern movement is "the idea that functional solutions are available through the use of technology."\textsuperscript{94} Le Corbusier, who stated that houses should be "machines for living in,"\textsuperscript{95} is a strong advocator for technologically driven societies. Corbusier, with his \textit{Radiant City}, saw technology as a promotion for opposing trends. Fisher acknowledged this and stated:

\begin{quote}
Corbusier] made use of the skyscraper as a kind of vertical street, a ‘street in the air’ as he called it, which would permit intensive urban densities while eliminating the ‘soulless streets’ of the city.\textsuperscript{96}
\end{quote}

The modern movement became known as the "International Style" and with the radical rejection of ornament, the clean line and use of “engineered” materials such as steel and glass, modernism became a strong representation of one’s vision of a utopian society.

\section*{The Death of Modernism}

Charles Jencks, an architectural historian, was one of the first critics to denounce the International Style as a social failure. He identifies a precise moment when “The International Style” dies; the detonation of the Pruitt-Igoe housing project in St. Louis, Missouri on July 15, 1972 at 3:32pm.\textsuperscript{97} The Pruitt-Igoe housing project, completed in 1954 was designed by Japanese architect Minoru Yamasaki, who was also the architect of the World Trade Centre towers in New York. Pruitt-Igoe consisted of 33 identical towers in a geometric modernist manner. The project was heavily influenced by Le Corbusier’s utopian models, in which the urban environment of \textit{THX 1138} strongly resembles. Although the

\begin{center}
\textsuperscript{95} Le Corbusier, \textit{Towards a New Architecture}, 222.
\textsuperscript{96} Fishman, \textit{Urban Utopias in the Twentieth Century}, 13.
\textsuperscript{97} Jencks, \textit{What is Post-Modernism}? (London: Academy Editions, 1996), 9-10
\end{center}
project had the intention of encouraging good behaviour from the tenants, it lacked the social accommodation that the tenants required. Jencks wrote;

Pruitt-Igoe was constructed according to the most progressive ideas of CIAM...and it won an award from the American Institute of Architects when it was designed in 1951. It consisted of elegant slabs fourteen storeys, with rational ‘streets in the air’ (which were safe from cars, but, as it turned out, not safe from crime); ‘sun space and greenery’, which Le Corbusier called the ‘three essential joys of urbanism’ (instead of conventional streets, gardens and semi-private space, which he banished). It had a separation of pedestrian and vehicular traffic, the provision of play space, and local amenities such as laundries, crèches and gossip centres – all rational substitutes for traditional patterns.98

The deteriorating and dwindling of this housing project, which begun just several years after completion, had always had the myth of the fact that modernism and design was the main perpetrator to its falling, ignoring that actually social problems such as race, gender and economic factors were main contributing factors.99 In 1965, James Baily, an editor from Architectural Forum, heightened this denunciation by retracting all statements of praise from the original article in 1951. He identified that many of the design features that were originally of rigour and excellence, were actually dangerous and hazardous flaws.100 He wrote;

[t]he undersized elevators are brutally battered, and they reek of urine from children who misjudged the time it takes to reach their apartments. By stopping only on every third floor, the elevators offer convenient settings for crime...The galleries are anything but cheerful social enclave. The tenants call them ‘gauntlets” through which they must pass to reach their doors...Heavy metal grilles now shield the windows, but they we installed too late to prevent three children from falling out. The

100 Bristol, “The Pruitt-Igoe Myth,” 357.
steam pipes remain exposed both in the galleries and the apartments, frequently inflicting severe burns. The adjoining laundry rooms are unsafe and little used...The storage rooms are also locked – and empty. Hey have been robbed of their contents so often that tenants refuse to use them.\textsuperscript{101}

The Pruitt-Igoe condemned the failure of modernism. The project, with precedence from Le Corbusier’s utopian models, both architecturally and socially, as identified by the architect himself and Jencks, had failed miserably. The urban environment depicted in \textit{THX 1138} also has precedence from the same model, which through a postmodern analysis has been interpreted as a failing society, similarly to the Pruitt-Igoe housing scheme.

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Figure 16. Aerial of Pruitt-Igoe housing scheme (1950-56)
Source: http://images.suite101.com/2718287_com_cpruittigo.jpg

Figure 17. Model of Le Corbusier’s Radiant City (1935)
Source: http://www.filosofia.unimi.it/itinera/mat/saggi/img/or/mantovanip_architettura/fig7.jpg
Frank Lloyd Wright in *THX 1138*

It has been established that the architectural works of Frank Lloyd Wright have appeared in many films. As mentioned earlier, Frank Lloyd Wright’s *Ennis Brown House* nestled in the Hollywood Hills in Los Angeles was featured in *Blade Runner*. A postmodern analysis of this house in *Blade Runner* interpreted the ancient Mayan features of the house as an acknowledgement to the *Schizophrenic Temporality* and *Spatial Pastiche* of the film. In *THX 1138* the *Marin County Civic Centre* is featured as the place of work for the humans living in the superstructure.

The *Marin County Civic Centre* was Wright’s last work and was completed after his death in 1959. It consists of two wings that connect four hills together by large spanning arches that make the building appear to float. The building was Wright’s only government building, with the programme including the county’s administration building on one wing and a Hall of Justice on the other. Throughout the centre of the entire building are atriums that rise from the ground level to the roof. A plastic skylight covers the atrium weatherproofing the space. This central atrium space afforded every space in the building to allow access to natural light.\(^{102}\)

The central atrium space, which rises over four levels, is the choice of setting for the several scenes that appear in *THX 1138*. The use of this space brings the postmodern attention of several themes; the notion of the anonymous human and the *tech-noir* theory of surveillance.

*THX 1138* utilises the central atrium, with its circular ends to each side of the space. At the beginning of the film, several scenes show this space with the human workers circulating around the space, and ascending into the atrium space via an escalator. The workers, clad in the same white clothing and shaved heads, move

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around this space in a monotonous and robotic manner, evoking the controlling and modified behaviour personality the *tech-noir* genre depicts (see fig 19). These opening scenes use the architecture of this space to represent a first interpretation of a potential utopian society.


Figure 19. Frank Lloyd Wright’s foyer and atrium space displaying the robotic nature of the humans. Source: Film still, Lucas, *THX 1138*, 08m:25s.
Figure 20. The central atrium space presenting the surveillance motifs of tech-noir.
Source: Film still, Lucas, *THX 1138*, 08m:29s.

To further elaborate these scenes, the film also utilises the atrium space as a means of surveillance. This universal theme in tech-noir genre films has shots of the cyborg police, who have a different and robotic appearance to the workers, looking down Wright’s atrium space (see fig 20). Throughout the film the use of cameras and microphones are used gather information in order to maintain a hierarchy of power. However in these several scenes, the architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright is used to convey the message of surveillance.

This atrium space has also been used in a similar manner in the film *Gattaca* (1997), in which ones identity and fate is based entirely on their DNA makeup. Figures of high authority and elitist personification are shown looking down and observing the movements of the workers. The notion of moving humans in an orderly robotic way is also embellished through the use of the atrium space in the *Marin County Civic Centre* (see fig 21).
6.0 CONCLUSION

Through a postmodernist analysis of the science fiction philosophy in the film *THX 1138*, it is evident that the society and concepts rendered in the film can give an interpretation of architecture. The dystopian nature of society as depicted in the film, through the observation and interpretation of the appropriately identified *tech-noir* sub-genre of science fiction, we can see that the modernist “international style” and functionalist built environment can depict an unorthodox way of portraying a dystopian society.

The “failing of modernism” observations are evident in the architecture in *THX 1138*, which in turn provides the understanding of architecture as expected. The argument is further strengthened with linkages to real life examples, such as the Pruitt-Igoe housing scheme and Le Corbusier’s *Villa Savoye* depicting the same theories.

The postmodern analysis of *THX 1138’s* *tech noir* sub-genre, including the theories of behaviour modification and surveillance allowed the distinguishable acknowledgment for the use of Frank Lloyd Wright’s *Marin County Civic Centre* in its scenes.

An understanding of the utopian urban models and modernist principles from prominent architects of the modernist movement times has allowed this dissertation to critically observe the theories on the failings of modernism. The three examples of modernist utopian ideals presented in this dissertation have provided an interpretation of the society in *THX 1138*. The three focuses from each model; co-operation, individualism and organization, has revealed the dystopian *film noir* Lucas envisaged in a postmodern context.

Although *THX 1138* has been analysed from a postmodernist perspective in this dissertation, the era of production doesn’t situate itself in a postmodern context. Through the research...
presented in this dissertation, it can be proposed that films such as *THX 1138* can be described using the term *pre-postmodern*. *THX 1138* was George Lucas’ first professional work, although his more popular films have generally lacked any architectural analysis. *THX 1138* has allowed this architectural scrutiny, and this has some significance to warrant further *pre-postmodern* films to be studied under the architectural eye.
7.0 BIBLIOGRAPHY


