

Chapter 13

Dystopic Pleasure: Aestheticization of Fear

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ABSTRACT

*In the 1980s and 1990s, there were indispensable elements for the science fiction movies: cyborgs. This half-biologic and half-machine species had fully developed intelligence. And there was such a future fiction that appeared in these films that, on the one hand, raised admiration for the technologies that have not yet emerged, and on the other hand raised serious future concerns. The purpose of this study is to discuss the interaction of fear, artificial intelligence, and humans. And it is also aimed to research the way of representation of this interaction via aestheticization. Because of this, *The Lawnmower* (1992) has been chosen and analyzed within the context of *Production of Space Theory* by Lefebvre. *The Lawnmower* has an importance about the imagining of dystopic and aesthetic way artificial intelligence technology would affect human life in the near future.*

INTRODUCTION

Fear existed with the first humans and developed and grew with them in the historical process. People were constantly afraid of the things they saw in prehistoric times and sometimes of the events they could not see or understand. Fear created the need to take precautions and thus strengthened the survival instinct of humans. Especially people who could not understand natural events like lightning and thunder in the early periods of history developed some rituals to protect themselves from the wrath of the invisible/unknown. The fear that surrounds the whole existence of the human being fighting for survival, forces the human being to obey and respect what is feared. In prehistoric times - and even in the digital age of the 21st century - fear was seen as the ultimate human emotion.

While fear is sometimes as innocent as a child's, it can sometimes be a dangerous political tool that puts people under pressure, restricting their behaviour and way of life, interfering with their thoughts and, in short, turning their lives upside down. In its simplest form, fear is one of the most basic emotions, such as sadness, anger, joy and love, that make people human. Except for neurological exceptions, there

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is no one who does not feel fear, or is afraid of nothing. Just as loving, mourning, anger are human emotions, it is part of being human to feel fear. Anxiety is a feeling of concern caused by an existing danger or by thinking of a danger. This feeling has psychological and physiological effects on the individual. Symptoms such as the person's heavy breathing during the fear situation, sweating and acceleration of the heart and pulse rhythm describe the physiological manifestations of a psychological emotion.

In which situation, when, where or against what the fear will show itself depends on the knowledge and strength of the individual in relation to the outside world (Freud, 1994: p.226). Freud's explanation is not only psychological and physiological, but also adds a sociological dimension to fear. It ceases to be an innate, instinctive feeling and has a later learned, social meaning. In this context, fear functions primarily as one of the most important tools for unification, bringing people together, holding them together and forcing them to be united in order to survive. Fear unites individuals in the community in partnerships, unites them in the form of 'us' and creates enemies known as 'them'. Fear is thus defined as a process that embodies both the anxious and the feared and the norms of social behaviour, and transforms into a cultural phenomenon (Yurdigül, 2014: pp. 1-2).

The fear that exists in every moment of human life is also making itself felt intensively in the digital age of the 21st century. Compared to prehistoric times, however, fear is being aestheticized in the digital age and used as a marketing tool by brands, institutions and organizations. Fear is becoming a tool for drawing the public's attention to an event or product, and at this point the media undoubtedly account for the largest share. The media aim to convey a story or event to the audience within the framework of specific aesthetic interventions by making the best possible use of the fear factor in accordance with the objectives set, thus increasing the impact of the message from the source to the target audience. Particularly in the 21st century, where developments in artificial intelligence technology and the impact of this technology on human life in the future are the subject of current debate, media play an effective role in forming the thoughts and attitudes of individuals. The polarization between the advocates of the benefits of artificial intelligence technology and the groups who believe that this technology will bring the end of humanity in the future is increasing day by day.

Developments in artificial intelligence, nanotechnology and biotechnology have created an environment in which concepts such as transhumanism and posthumanism can be put on the agenda. The basic understanding behind transhumanist thinking is that it is possible and necessary to create immortal life through genetic engineering, nanotechnology, cloning and other technologies. Transhuman, this transformed human being, is a transition for the later phase, which is known as posthuman. Posthuman is a stronger, healthier person whose effects of ageing are all but eliminated and who has a high degree of physical, mental and emotional post-humanity. Although at first glance it seems frightening that machines, integrated into the place of limbs that do not work and are incomplete, and that as a result of this process humans are transformed into cyborg beings, the thoughts of transferring human memory to a chip through artificial intelligence and achieving immortality in the physical and virtual world, there are many science fiction productions based on these ideas. In these productions, in contrast to the dreaded ones, the mentioned transformation process is presented to the audience in an aesthetic way, and it enables the dreaded ones to become what they want to be.

The aim of this study is to analyze the interaction between fear, artificial intelligence and humans and to analyze how the change of this interaction process is represented by the genre aesthetics and horror in the context of Lefebvre's *The Production of Space Theory* through the film *The Lawnmower* (1992), which is included in the science fiction and horror genre category. In addition to the developments in internet and computer technology, which can be considered new in the late 20th century, and the signifi-

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