Spatial Encounters of Fantasy and Punishment in the *Deadman Wonderland* Anime

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ABSTRACT

This paper intends to contribute to the interdisciplinary studies of architectural discourse and anime as an art form.Being not limited to pure visual aesthetics and entertainment *per se*, anime narratives engage with theory by using characters and architectural spaces as a means to make social, political, and philosophical critique. As a case study, this paper focuses on the Japanese anime series *Deadman Wonderland* (2011), and argues that the architectural design in this anime is a deliberate maneuver to intensify the intended connotations and symbolic meanings, rather than being merely casual background settings and enrichments for the narrative. It is indicated that the anime uses the particular motif of amusement park as the primary metaphor of fantasy, and the specific motif of prison as the ideal metaphor of punishment.Drawing close associations with the views of Michel Foucault, Jean Baudrillard, and Louis Marin, this paper uses the narratives of prison and amusement park as a tool tounfoldthe concepts of power relations, social anxiety, uncanny, repression of trauma and memory.

Keywords: Architectural design, anime, cinematic narrative, amusement park, prison, Tokyo.

INTRODUCTION

Within the context of cinematic fiction and image, architecture plays a major role in transferring the narrative to audience in various scales, ranging from a city silhouette to an interior space design. Architecture contributes to cinematic atmosphere, as it helps the audience to be absorbed into the frames of space/time. Animation as a form of cinema, which is the scope of this paper, tackles with the issue of image in the broadest sense, since it expands beyond the conventional conceptions of space and time, and constructs spatiality by means of advanced technology (Ash, 2009).

Animeis abbreviated from the Japanese word *animeshon*, which is commonly defined as the Japanese form of animated production. Being a visual language, anime is considered as an art form, and is created as a two-dimensional movement-based medium (Hu, 2010; Nygren, 2007). Itcovers a variety of sub-genres, such as action, adventure, comedy, fantasy, hentai, history, horror, mystery, romance, science-fiction, and slice of life; thus, it addresses a wide range of audience from children to adults.Produced as early as the 1910s in the form of short commercials, first anime movies were released in the 1940s.Broadcast nationwide, anime television series, each episode of whichlasts for twenty minutes,became popular in the 1960s. The worldwidecirculation of anime dates back to the 1980s, owing to the expanding market of videotapes, video games, and toys.It was also the time whenthe narrative and illustration of anime movies developed higher standards in terms of producing complex stories and rich visual quality (Poitras, 2008; Suan, 2013).In the 1990s, the medium of anime moved from hand-drawn to digital production, which is defined as the computer-generated (CG) animation; yet not all anime illustrators entirely abandoned the pre-digital technique of pencil and brush (Cavallaro, 2007; Poitras, 2008). Handling political and philosophical issues, anime has been disseminated as a global phenomenon of the Japanese popular culture together with manga since the 1980s. Within the current medium of digital technology, anime shows are released in CDs, DVDs, blu-ray discs, and online anime video libraries, as a contribution to the culmination of the global industry of the Japanese visual medium.

Manga corresponds to the Japanese form of graphic and comic book, theorigin of whichderives from the creation of humorous cartoon handscrolls in the twelfth-century.In the seventeenth century, woodblock printingsbecame ubiquitousfor manga illustrations until the technique of oil painting took overin the eighteenth century (Nygren, 2007). After the Second World War, magazines that published manga series became popular among both children and adults. In these magazines, some of the manga series were written and illustrated by different people, making it more of a collaborative work (Ito, 2008).

Anime and manga illustrate aspects of Japanese history, culture, and social life. Several anime movies and series are adaptedfrom their manga, whereas some of them are directly written and produced as animation. Even though the narratives of some anime adaptations are loyal to their original storyline in manga, they still introduce new perspectives and messages due to the shift in the tools of the medium (Cavallaro, 2010).

Being not limited to pure visual aesthetics and entertainment *per se*, many anime narrativesengagewith theorybyusing characters and spaces as a tool to make social,

political, and philosophical critique. As for theanime characters, since the last two decades, the depicted personalitieshave psychologically developed further by focusing on more challenging and serious issues, and facing their dark pasts and neurosis in-depth (Napier, 2005). Furthermore, urban and architectural settings, lighting techniques, sound effects, and musical piecesbecome as important as the depiction of characters in the construction of an anime's main idea. As also pointed out by Suan (2013),"The environments the drama takes place in are so detailed and rich, with their own cultures, histories and rules that it is difficult to decide whether it is a show on the characters, the world they live in, or both."

Although anime has been a rich topic for scrutiny in architecture, the literature on the relationship of the medium of anime andthe theory of architecture is limited. This paper intends to contribute to the interdisciplinary studies of architectural discourse and anime as an art form. As a case study, it focuses on the Japanese anime series *Deadman Wonderland* (2011), which sub-textually attempts to make a sociological critique through its characters, architectural design, and urban settings. In what follows, it is argued that the architecturaldesign in this anime is a deliberate maneuver to intensifythe intended connotations and symbolic meanings, rather than being merely casual background settings and enrichments for the narrative.As this paper indicates, the anime uses the particular motif of amusement park as the primary metaphor of fantasy, and the specificmotif of prison as the idealmetaphor of punishment in order to construct a certain atmosphere forsocial and historical criticism.

Deadman Wonderland is an anime in the horror genre of the medium, produced by the Manglobe Studio and directed by Kōichirō Hatsumi. Before airing as an animeseries,it was published as a manga series in the *Shōnen Ace* magazine in 2007, written by Jinsei Kataoka and illustrated by Kazuma Kondou. The manga series concludes the story in fifty-seven chapters, whereas the anime series adapts the first twenty-first chapters of the manga into twelve anime episodes, yet leaves the plot incomplete. This paper focuses on the anime version of the series, since it aims at articulating the urban settings and architectural design, rather than making an in-depth analysis of the characters in the narrative content.

THE AMUSEMENT PARK

Deadman Wonderland anime takes place in 2004, ten years after the fictional Great Earthquake in Tokyo, the capital city of Japan. Denoted as The Red Hole Incident, the earthquake destroys the city and sinks most of it into the ocean, while causing the deaths of thousands. In the aftermath, Saitama, a city in the north of Tokyo, is chosen

as the capital of Japan. In the decrepit Tokyo, as the remaining people struggle to survive, an operation for the construction of a giant prison complex launchestwo years after the incident at the epicenter of the earthquake, called as the ground zero. The prison is named as the Deadman Wonderland, which is considered by citizens as nothing more than a privately-run amusement park, a touristic attraction, where prisoners work for the sake of Tokyo's renovation.

Aside from *Deadman Wonderland*, reflections of a dystopian future of Tokyo are represented in detail in many worldwide known science-fiction anime: The series *Neon Genesis Evangelion* (1995) takes place in the city Tokyo III, which is reconstructed after the demolition of the capital in the disaster called as the Second Impact, whereas *Code Geass: Lelouch of the Rebellion* (2006) and its sequel series *Code Geass: Lelouch of the Rebellion R2* (2008) center on Japan as Area 11, a colony of Britannia. The anime series *Bubblegum Crisis* (1998), its remake *Bubblegum Crisis Tokyo 2040* (1998), and OVA (original video animation) series *Parasite Dolls* (2003) take place in 2032 in the city Megatokyo, where robots and humans coexist. Furthermore, the anime series *Kuro no Keiyakusha* (*Darker Than Black*, 2007) represents Tokyo with high and solid walls, which are built to protect citizens from a mysterious spatial incident, called as the Hell's Gate. The series *Guilty Crown* (2011) portrays an invaded Japan in the aftermath of a biological hazard, called as the Apocalypse Virus.

The interest in depicting apocalyptic and cyber-punk images of cities in anime derives from the impact of Japan's history of fatal disasters. Along with civil wars, invasions, and coups, Japan has come across many tragicnatural devastations and nuclear incidents in the twentieth and the twenty-first centuries, specifically the Great Tokyo Earthquake in September 1923, which destroyed Tokyo and Yokohama,followed bythe massacre of Koreans,the imprisonment and killing of public by the military police,the Doolittle Raid firebombing on Tokyo in April 1942,the atomic bombs onHiroshimaand Nagasaki in August 1945,the massive Kōbe Earthquake in January1995,followed bya devastatingtsunami, the release of the deadly sarin gas in Tokyo subways as a tragic attack in March 1995, nuclear accident in Tokaimura in September 1999,theTōhokuEarthquake in March 2011,which is one of the biggest earthquakes and the most expensive natural disasters in the world,followed bya massive tsunami,and the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster triggered by the earthquake(Henshall, 2012; Kingston, 2013;Morton &Olenik, 2005).Due to these disasters, Tokyo has been destroyed and rebuilt twice since the last century.Ithas been erased by catastrophic incidents, yet reconstructed on its repressed history (Nygren, 2007). Following these devastations, the theme of destruction and reconstruction of Tokyo in *Deadman Wonderland*alludes to the

urban and cultural regeneration of Japan. In this sense, the common theme of disasterin science-fictionand horror anime represents the cultural anxieties and memories ofthe people, who had to face the tragedies in Japan.

Among the dystopian anime, the movie *Akira* (1988) recalls *Deadman Wonderland* more than others.With a sophisticated narrative, it is one of the oldest anime that stunningly elaborates post-apocalypse, or the theme of destruction by a massive disaster followed by reconstruction. *Akira* takes place in the new capital of Japan, called as Neo Tokyo, after a nuclear explosion and the Third World War. Neo Tokyo is an artificial island that is constructed in the middle of Tokyo Bay, and is connected to the old Tokyo with bridges. In the new capital city, techno-futuristic elements, such as skyscrapers that dominate the urban silhouette, flashing and glittering lights of main streets, roof top holographic displays, and laser shows refer to the highly advanced technology and welfare. The collective memory seems to be replaced and renewed around the techno culture, as if all traces and trauma of the war and nuclear explosion are thoroughly erased. As the movie progresses, the narrative reveals that anxiety and trauma are repressed and shrouded, rather than being erased and replaced. This impression is notablein the very slow narration of explosion at the end of the movie, which seems as if the director wants to inscribe even the smallest details of the destruction into audience's memory. The destruction scenes are aestheticized, and turned into a visual display, in lieu of a catastrophic perception. Moreover, the dominion of industrial capitalism through the exertion of political power pressure, tensions due to revolts and civil protests, unrest due to continuous bombing and fighting, increase in unemployment, neglected back alleys, dereliction and disrepair of old Tokyo proves that Neo Tokyo is merely the showcase of the country. The duality of the destructed and the reconstructed cities is the most noticeablein the scene, where the movie characters are seen passing through the bridges that connect the glamorous and sparkling Neo Tokyo to the devastated and unlit old Tokyo (Figure 1). This representation proposes that the bridge is not merely used as a random architectural element in the anime, since it symbolically becomes the interface of Tokyo's intended vision of future and its repressed dark past of traumatic experiences.

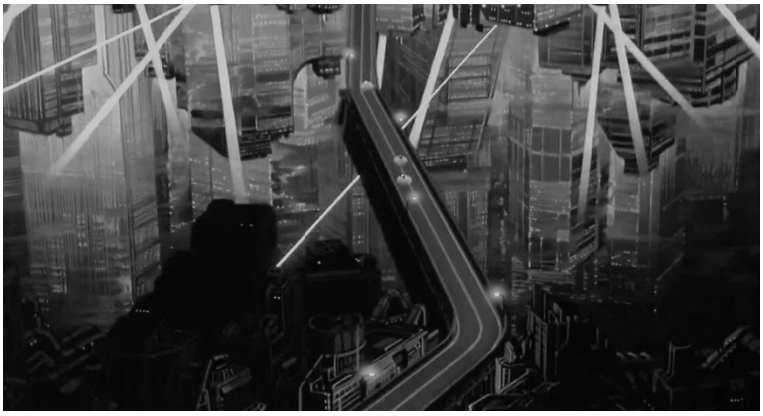

Figure 1. One of the bridges that connect Neo Tokyo and old city (Source: TMS Entertainment Co., Ltd., 1988).

In a similar vein, the *Deadman Wonderland* anime illustrates dualities through its architectural settings. The colorful and lively Deadman Wonderland prison and amusement park complex looks like an attractive and fascinating focal point from a distance, which is in contrast with the derelict and ruinedTokyo (Figure 2 and 3). Enclosed by fortified walls, the complex consists of amusement rides of a giant ferris wheel, a carousel, a rollercoaster, as well as an octagonal-shaped main building, a performance stage, a stadium, many warehouses and facilities, green areas, artificial volcanos, and a lake (Figure 4). The complex is constructed on an artificial island, which also forms the basement levels of the prison. The island is connected to the city with six bridges, which provide direct accesses from six gates through the walls. Visitors have the permission to access to the amusement park throughout the day, and enjoy a peaceful day around bird mascots, clusters of balloons, spectacular fireworkshows, and frequent announcements of upcoming events (Figure 5). At the end of the day, accompanied by playful bird mascots, theyleave happily and carefree.

Figure 2. Deadman Wonderland from a distance in Episode 1 (Source: Manglobe, 2011).

Figure 3. The devastated Tokyo in OVA (Original video animation) (Source: Manglobe, 2011).

Figure 4. Deadman Wonderland prison and amusement park in Episode 2 (Source: Manglobe, 2011).

Figure 5. Children enjoying the amusement park in Episode 2 (Source: Manglobe, 2011).

Deadman Wonderland is not the only anime that draws on the motif of amusement park, as the same motif was used as a tool for criticism in previous anime movies. In the movie, *Sen to Chihiro No Kamikakushi* (*Spirited Away*, 2001), written and directed by the famous director Hayao Miyazaki, the derelict and abandoned amusement park, which is seen at the beginnings of the movie, refers to the well-known economic crisis in Japan. The depicted amusement park is interpreted as one of the many others, which were

constructed in the 1990s along with new museums to boost the domestic spending, and then went bankrupt because of the collapse of the Bubble Economy (Gordon, 2003; Henshall, 2012). Deriving from the anime, Napier (2005) resituates the Bubble Economy in Japan and the following period in terms of simulacrum, as she relates it to the estrangement of Japan from its own history, memory, and freedom. Moreover, in the movie *Steamboy* (2005), directed by Katsuhiro Otomo, the carousel as an element of amusement park refers to the criticism of the idea of war as entertainment and amusement. The anime, which takes place in the period of the World Exposition in London in the nineteenth-century, questions the mission of science, as it expands the issue on its ethical, ideological, political, and capitalist dimensions. In parallel with the anime, Ho (2012) makes a critique of the capitalist system and the spaces of anxiety initiated by means of modern technology.

The Deadman Wonderland amusement park emerges as a display of fantasy, where reality is reproduced as an image.Drawing similarities from the remarks of the French philosopher Louis Marin (1977) on Disneyland, the walls of the Deadman Wonderland amusement park prominently separate the world of "fantasy" from the world of "reality", which is the devastated Tokyo. Furthermore, although the amusement park walls are the same walls that also enclose the prison, visitorswho stroll around haveneither a sense of fear and threat for being surrounded by criminals and ferocious prisoners nor a sense of despair and sorrow for the slums in Tokyo.In the fantastic and dreamy atmosphere of the amusement park, prisoners have their own backstages and access routes, much of which are hidden out of the visitors' sight below the ground (Figures 6 and 7).As argued in a later study on Disneyland, "The deliberate act of concealment is necessary for the Disney effect of unbetrayed fantasy. It is only in the exclusion of the 'messy bits' that one can fully participate in the seamless dream. Disney aims to guarantee the experience of being removed from your everyday working world. The outside world is completely obscured from your perception" (Short, 1998). In this sense, rather than being a place of avoidance and exclusion, Deadman Wonderlandbecomes more of a place for pleasure and fantasy that visitorsdesire to get in. Making them forget about the massive disaster for a day, the fascinating amusement park emerges as a spectacle at the epicenter of catastrophe.However, little do they knowof what is really going on beneath the sparkling surface of this peaceful dream world.

Figure 6. Prisoners' entrance in Episode 1 (Source: Manglobe, 2011).

Figure 7. Prisoners' work area in Episode 1 (Source: Manglobe, 2011).

THE PRISON

"Thrilling and exciting shows! Welcome to Deadman Wonderland! We show adults and children their dreams!"(Muto & Hatsumi, 2011a). The *Deadman Wonderland* anime begins with a commercial on the amusement park, which accords with the passion of its promoter to design the prison complex as a giant game in disguise of the Regional Restoration Project. The promoter of the prison, Tsunenaga Tamaki, is depicted as a former computer game addict, who decorates his office with a diversity of toys from virtual reality game glasses to stuffed toys and puppets.

With the aim of fund-raising for the renovation of Tokyo after the Great Earthquake, Tamaki and other prison directors organize deadly shows and races, in which prisoners are forced to take part and compete against each other, while audience place bets on competitors. In the Dog Race show, narrated in the second episode, contestants run for their lives by escaping from deadly traps, such as gun shots, swinging axes, and spikes in the pit.In the Carnival Corpse show, seen in the fifth and the sixth episodes, two death row inmates fight to death.If the loser is not dead in the fight, he or she is forced to play

the Penalty Game, in which a bird-shaped slot machine decides which organ the doctor will remove from the loser's body, asnarrated in the fifth and the seventh episodes. In order to boost the thrill for the audience, these races, which take place in the stadium or the performance stage, are dramatized by spotlights and stage sets. Accordingly, in the last episode of the anime, Tamaki explains that, "Deadman Wonderland is, good or bad, the miniature garden of society. With some light, you can see the truth beneath the system. The most violent fights lie behind a beautiful music" (Muto &Hatsumi, 2011c). Tamaki'sobservation recallsthe speculations of Jean Baudrillard (1994) on Disneyland as a miniature environment of American society, where one can witness all American values.From Tamaki's point of view, one can have an idea on the society as a whole by tracing the behaviors of visitors and prisoners in the Deadman Wonderland.The contrast between the two are introduced in as early as the first episode, asthe amusement park looks calm and pleasant on an ordinary day, while theprotagonists are surrounded by fear and threat, andare beaten to death elsewhere in the Deadman Wonderland.

During the races, audience is frequently reminded bypublic announcements that all they see on stage was just a show and not reality. Bird mascots enthusiastically advertise through broadcasts that the audience would witnessexciting and entertaining shows that no one had ever seen or heard before. Following these declarations, when contestants die or loose their limbs in the games, audience applause and cheer for the winners and take their photographs. Considering violence as special effects, in the second episode, they justify brutality by thinking that even if the contestants got hurt, they simply deserved it anyhow. MichelFoucault (1995) argues thatpublic executionand torture represent the triumph of power that authorizes the excessive violence, rather than justice.Concealed behind an innocent term like "game", punishmentemerges as spectacle, and execution becomes a public displayin the Deadman Wonderland amusement park.

Giving the assurance of protection and security for civil citizens, the promoter and other shareholders of the Deadman Wonderland claim to imprison all criminals in Japan. Yet their assertion is prominently an image to camouflage agiant underground facility,called as the G Ward, which is the real motive of constructing the Deadman Wonderland prison and amusement park.As narrated in the third episode,jail sections seem to consist of only six wards, whereasthe confidential G Ward as the seventh oneholdsthe death row inmates captive.These prisoners are named as the "deadmen", and are kept as secret from the rest of the prisoners, as well as civil citizens, since they have gained supernatural powers after the Great Tokyo Earthquake. The deadmen are captured and imprisoned in the G Ward with unfounded accusations,even if they have not committed a

crime. Considering Baudrillard (1994), who surmises that Disneyland is presented as a childish fantasy to persuade that the rest of the America is real and the adults are elsewhere, the Deadman Wonderland prison hides the fact that real criminals are not imprisoned but are directing the prison. Furthermore, the intention of raising money for the good cause of the alleged urban renovation,and the presentation of entertaining showscamouflage the underlying motivesof prison shareholders and scientists, whose only goal is to make research and experiments on deadmen for political and ideological grounds.

Behind the semi-private walls of the prison that separate the world of punishment from the world of catastrophe, deadmen are given a fake sense of freedom, as they are allowed to wander around and decorate their cells according to their taste (Figures 8, 9, and 10). On the other hand, they are forced by the prison promoter to kill each other in violent games accompanied by audience's applause and cheers. As Foucault (1995) remarks, prisons belong to the domain of political field, where prisoner's body is marked, tortured, maimed, and disciplinedthrough disproportionateforce. In this sense, punitive methods become foremost political rituals than judicial trials, through which power is manifested.

At the end of each game in the Deadman Wonderland amusement park, the winner is awarded with a specific amount of cast points, which is used in the prison as a substitute for money kept in cast cards. With a sufficient amount of points, inmates are able to purchase a wide range of items, such as food, furniture, and years off of one's sentence. The use of cast points in the Deadman Wonderland prison rather than the real money refashions Marin's comments on Disneyland money as a sign of the Disneyland language (Marin, 1977). A Disney visitor needs to buy the Disneyland money to participate in the activities, whereas a Deadman Wonderland prisoner needs to participate in the shows to earn cast points to get on with his life.

Figure 8. A typical prisoner cell in Episode 3 (Source: Manglobe, 2011).

Figure 9. The cell of a deadman in G Ward in Episode 6 (Source: Manglobe, 2011).

Figure 10. The cell of a deadman in G Ward in Episode 7 (Source: Manglobe, 2011).

Being used to the life in the Deadman Wonderland prison, Senji Kiyomasa, one of the deadmen in the G Ward, admits thatthe outside world was not better than this prison of madness in which they were imprisoned.To the extent that the rules of the prison are as simple as "be strong, fight, cheat, and survive", he describes the Deadman Wonderland prison as the easiest place to live on earth (Muto & Hatsumi, 2011b). In this sense, insofar asthe fortified walls of the prison keep and exclude prisoners inside, theyare perceived as the guarantee ofcivil citizens' security; yet they become comfortable and reliable enclosures for some death row inmates. A recent paper analyzes the wall as an instrument of power and an embodiment of authority by defining it as an impenetrable barrier and an obstacle (Fontana-Giusti, 2011). Yet for Kiyomasa, who worked as a policeman to ensure the safety of citizens eight years ago, it is the prison walls that makehim feel safefrom Tokyo, whichhas now achieved uncanny qualities.

The uncanny, or unhomeliness (*unheimlich*), is situated around the issues of identity and otherness by Sigmund Freud(2003).In Freudian psychoanalysis, the uncanny is defined by the reappearance of the familiar and the repressed in a peculiar and frightening way. Recently, the Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek (1991) elaborates the uncanny as follows:"Nothing is what it seems to be, everything is to be interpreted, everything is

supposed to possess some supplementary meaning. The ground of the established, familiar signification opens up; we find ourselves in a realm of total ambiguity, but this very lack propels us to produce ever new 'hidden meanings': it is a driving force of endless compulsion."The sense of uncanny in cities is associated with the feeling of alienation in all aspects of urban life. As further elaborated by Vidler (1994), the modern notion of uncanny is rooted in heterogeneous crowds and new scales of architecture. Attributed as a condition of modern anxiety, metropolitan uncanny links to individuals'sense of fear anddisorientation in the city. Vidler (1994) stresses that the uncanny took a traumatic turn during the Second World War, which actualized the Freudian unhomeliness and estrangementas homelessness. In parallel, the *Deadman Wonderland* anime represents a duality of Tokyo: On one hand, it signifies intimacy, freedom, and homeliness for its citizens; on the other hand, it signifies threat, insecurity, and estrangement for inmates and potential prisoners. Since the devastation of the earthquake in the anime, Tokyo has changed so much in terms of urban fabric, built environment, laws, regulations, and human nature. Withthe anxietycaused by the earthquakeand by beinghomeless in this strange new world, certain prisoners feel a sense of uncanny, and preferto live in theirfamiliar environment,which havedeadly rules, though.

CONCLUSION

Cinema as an art form is influenced by the society and the culture in which it is produced, while it makes a critique of its past and future, as well as its social and cultural values. In this context, the anime *Deadman Wonderland* is no exception. In the light of its architectural design and urban settings, the narrative evokes a sense of history, while the prison andamusement park complexbecomes the epitome of power relations, social anxiety, uncanny, and repression of trauma and memory. In the Deadman Wonderland prison, maladjusted people with "anomalies" and citizen"prone to evil"are imprisoned and punished in a Foucauldian manner.Punishment and penalty emerge through political power relations, while the limits of normality are determined by the will of the prison promoter, Tamaki.

The urban and architectural designof the anime unfold dualities: The derelict city that represents traces of history in contrast to the newly-built amusement park and prison complex that represses memory, the consecutive act of destruction and reconstruction as a reference to Japan's achievement of overcoming massive disasters, andthe prison walls as a metaphor of oppressionversus freedom. The superimposition of amusement park and prison demonstrates that the barrier between the amusement park visitor and the prisoner is a transparent one, rather than solid and physical like the fortified walls of the

Deadman Wonderland. In the prison concealed as an amusement park,spaces of fantasy flow into the spaces of detention; yet both reveal different aspects of society.Since the places of entertainment are embedded in the places of punishment,carefree bodies – that of the visitors – encounter with restrained bodies– that of the prisoners –.These intersectionsmay further implythe challenge of the Japanese, who endeavor to reconstruct their post-trauma identity.

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