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## Introduction

In the history of film there have been a number of genres—the fantastic film, the horror film, the giallo, the slasher, the psycho-thriller—whose purpose has been to control the threat posed by the irrational by assigning specific and reproducible meanings to it. In the first decades of the twentieth century European silent film directors argued for film's status as an art form by emphasizing film's unique potential to represent alternate realities, identities and temporalities, thereby associating *the irrational* with *film art*. As Casper Tybjerg (cited in Prince, 2004, p.5.) has argued, "in many national cinemas, an aesthetic of 'the fantastic film' was equated with the unique potential of cinema to be an art form." Horror films in the fantastic tradition—*Der Student von Prag, Der Golem, Homunculus, Der Andere, and Caligari*—derived their status as art works by positioning themselves as heirs to German Romanticism, thus making *horror* and *film art* more or less synonymous. The themes of the Doppelgänger and of the unreliability of perception and memory, both essential to the fantastic genre, provided a bridge to the horror genre, while also establishing the association of the irrational with the artistic potential of the cinematic medium. The irrational came to be regarded as 'evidence' of film's claim to the status of art; in short, the irrational/madness was aestheticized. While film 'used' madness to boost up its own artistic credentials, the notion of 'madness' underwent what I would call a process of 'fictionalization', for precisely insofar as film proved indispensable to recording madness, it deprived madness of its objective reality and opened it up to theatricalization[1]: madness became a matter of performance, style, or film art (special effects). The Italian giallo would take this *aestheticization* of madness to the next level by distracting us from questions of etiology (the serial killer's motivation) and foregrounding instead the 'aesthetics of murder', ultimately associating madness with *visual excess*. On the other hand, and more recently, Hollywood has been instrumental in the *depathologization*[2] of madness and mental illness through the appropriation of the symptomatic language of one particular mental illness, multiple personality, to create a new genre I call 'the multiple film': films dealing with multiple—stolen, assumed or

mistaken—identities, realities, or temporalities. In what follows I will suggest some possible reasons for our current fascination with 'the multiple' and for the 'depathologization of madness', sketch out the characteristics of the new genre of the multiple film, provide some representative examples of the genre and, finally, inquire into possible reasons for the Hollywood 'epidemic of the multiple.'

**The Depathologization of the Double and the Multiple**

Although discipline-specific histories of doubling and multiple personality—Karl Miller (literature), Paul Coates (film and literature), Paul Antze and Michael Lambek (anthropology), and Ian Hacking (philosophy)—attribute the emergence of the double and the multiple in public discourse to different historical, social, cultural and political factors, ultimately they all testify to the transformations these two phenomena have undergone under the influence of new technologies of reproduction, such as photography and cinema. Specifically, having left the confines of the nineteenth century illness model doubling and multiple personality have gradually acquired a more general, philosophical, cultural or metaphorical meaning.[3]

Our current fascination with the multiple is symptomatic of the persistence in the (post)postmodern age of the Romantic fascination with 'the Double'. In *The Double in Literature* Paul Coates draws attention to the Romantics' ambivalent attitude toward the Double: on the one hand, the Romantics were afraid of the Double since it demonstrated "the feasibility of the self's total reification by science" while, on the other hand, they embraced it because it stood for the unconscious (1988: 3-4). The doubling of the self was a reflection of the increasing mediation of reality, to which cinema contributed by producing a boundless, self-perpetuating and continuously frustrated desire. Cinema—the art of doubling par excellence—eventually rendered the Double in literature redundant and trivial:

> The antithesis between the 'here' of the individual and the 'there' of others is translated into internal space. Perhaps its main agents are the media, which create a society that is all mediation and phantasmagoria, never encountered directly. … The structure of imagination is one of frustration. But if frustration evokes

> aggression as a response, the only aggression here is directed inwards, toward self-splitting. The overdevelopment of the sense of sight in the modern era is bound in with this frustration: you can look, but you cannot touch, it says. (5-6)

Doubling was not only an effect of the rise of a mass culture that stripped every object of its individuality; it was also linked to nineteenth century national and colonial projects, for the Double appears under two conditions, "when other people begin to be viewed as akin to ourselves; and when the self is projected into a space hitherto defined as other" (32). According to Coates, then, far from being limited to a particular mental illness the Double is constitutive of personal, national, and supra-national identity.

In the latter half of the nineteenth century urbanization and industrialization created the necessary conditions for the emergence of 'the double' as a coping mechanism, whose function was to preserve the privacy and unconventionality of the self. The current cinematic epidemic of the multiple suggests that we have inherited the Romantics' ambivalence toward the Double. If the Romantics were afraid of the Double since it demonstrated "the feasibility of the self's total reification by science," we fear the multiple because it epitomizes the sense of *de-realization* characteristic of postmodern experience. In this respect, the obsession with the unreliability/multiplicity of memory and with retrieving the past—consider the ubiquity of films involving amnesiac protagonists—is a symptom of the vanishing of immediate experience, for which memory serves as an inadequate surrogate. The inability to remember one's own actions or feelings, or to identify with one's own memories—the sense that they are false or manufactured—epitomizes the experience of living in an increasingly mediated and mediatized culture, which continuously projects upon us images, memories and desires that we do not recognize as 'our own' but that we adopt nevertheless. If, on the other hand, the Romantics were also fascinated by the Double, insofar as it stood for the unconscious, we embrace the multiple because it stands for autonomy, agency, opportunity, and for our belief in second chances. The idea of multiple identities and realities is part of the currently dominant self-help rhetoric of increasing one's opportunities, reclaiming one's agency, taking control of one's life.[4]

In *Doubles: Studies in Literary History* (1987) Karl Miller extends the meaning of 'multiplicity' beyond esoteric and psychiatric definitions, specifically beyond the dominant Freudian interpretation of doubling as a symptom of the fear of death (the self invents a double in order to compensate for its own insufficiency or mortality), its interpretation as a form of "primitive and prehistoric narcissism" or, more recently, as the postmodern subject's overcompensation for his powerlessness (26). As Miller himself puts it, he is concerned with both "the clinical phenomenon of multiple identity and the cultural phenomenon of a multiple identity" (21). The increased visibility of the double in the second half of the nineteenth century was, he argues, a result of the radical change in demographics brought about by urbanization: sheer population growth enhanced the individual's fear of the mob and provoked in him the desire for a secret, private life that would grant him the freedom to circumvent the conventions of public life. Generally speaking, however, doubling is an instance of the genre of Romance, which is itself rooted in duality or equivocation i.e., in a universal, *non-pathological* incongruity between reality and desire: "Duality and romance can be studied…as one and the same; they are among the strange compounds to which duality itself attends and of which it is constituted. Romance has often been equivocal, and the Romanticism of modern times has drawn on the dualistic outlook established in the ancient world" (23). By positing duality as "a response to [the often conflicting] demands made by the environment" (23) Miller, like Coates, abandons the pathology or illness model of duality and multiplicity: as far as he is concerned, duality and multiplicity are nothing but "general [instances] of contradiction, hazard, and uncertainty" (25).

According to Paul Antze and Michael Lambek, editors of *Tense Past: Cultural Essays in Trauma and Memory* (1996), the current proliferation of illness discourses, the multiple personality discourse in particular, points to the crisis of the collective in American culture: "There are few explicitly bounded forms of social organization beyond the (shrinking) nuclear family and the individual. This loss of the collective may bring new forms of illness. One curious feature of multiple personality is that it resurrects elements of social, political and family life within the sufferer" (xxiii). In this reading, the epidemic of the multiple disguises processes of disintegration taking place at all social levels, including the family, the nation, and the state. An analogy can thus be drawn

between the recognition of autonomous alters within a multiple personality and, on the other side, the political recognition of ethnic groups within nation states. The rise of therapeutic discourse in North America testifies to a general political indifference manifest in the escape from collective guilt through the medicalization of personal experience (xxiii-xxiv). On the other hand, however, in Western societies the construction of individuals as forensic subjects tends to enhance the link between memory and accountability: memory becomes problematic i.e., linked to multiplicity, only when there is a possibility for re-describing past actions under new descriptions not available at the time of the original events.[5] Thus, contrary to Antze and Lambek, in *Trauma and Recovery* (2001) Judith Herman reads our preoccupation with memory, particularly with traumatic memory, politically: "every time we have taken trauma seriously," she argues, "it has been 'in affiliation with a political movement'" (qtd. in Hacking 55).

In *Rewriting the Soul* (1995) philosopher Ian Hacking traces the history of the multiple from a fascinating marvel, through an object of scientific knowledge constructed by the new sciences of memory, to a mere instance of the general phenomenon of indeterminacy. Hacking contends that the first multiple personality 'epidemic' was precipitated by the emergence of the new sciences of memory in the latter half of the nineteenth century (the second epidemic 'broke out' in the 1970s).[6] The new sciences of memory popularized the idea of memory as an object of knowledge, the idea, that is, that there are facts to be known about memory, that there are specific ways in which memory functions and, consequently, that there must be deviations from the normal functioning of memory, a 'pathology of memory' encompassing a whole range of memory dysfunctions. The fact that the new sciences of memory became possible only after multiple personality was linked to memory failure suggests that skepticism—doubting that what we observe naturally is *not* the 'natural' or the 'proper' state of things—is constitutive of scientific discourse: only after people began doubting the proper functioning of memory did it become a proper object of knowledge, the multiple being posited as pathological. However, as Hacking's history of the social construction of the concept of multiple personality demonstrates, the discourse of multiple personality disorder gradually redeemed it from an illness to a culturally sanctioned way of expressing distress, or a

choice of a different 'lifestyle'. Most importantly, the multiple epidemic provoked a major shift in philosophy: doubling and multiple personality compromised the idea of a noumenal, transcendental, autonomous self persisting, without change, through time.

While early definitions of multiple personality emphasized the multiplication of personalities, regular revisions in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders—for instance, the substitution of '*dissociated* identity disorder' for '*multiple* personality disorder'—shifted the emphasis from the *multiplication* of autonomous, integrated personalities to the *fragmentation* of the personality and the attempt to reintegrate it.[7] In turn, *fragmentation* was gradually recuperated as 'an expressive idiom', which promised to reveal aspects of self and reality that had remained obscured. Multiple personality came to be construed in terms of a proliferation of opportunities or perspectives, *the opening up of new possible ways of being*—hence Paul Antze's question, "What kind of expressive and reflective possibilities [does multiple personality] open?" (1996: 6). Associating multiple personality with 'fantasy', 'moral ambiguity' and 'a sense of agency', Antze argues that alters open up expressive possibilities that are usually suppressed by recovered memory therapy: "Here…the imaginative, *theatrical* dimension of multiple personality as an expressive idiom offers a way of loosening and compensating for the frozen sense of the past implicit in recovered memory therapy" (18, my italics). In his Introduction to *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat* (1985) neurologist Oliver Sacks takes the refusal to treat mental illness as illness to its logical extreme by suggesting that mental illness is actually the patient's attempt to deal with his condition, to preserve his identity. For Sacks mental illness is a symptom of something else: rather than the illness exhibiting itself through symptoms, *the illness itself is a symptom* of the disorder or chaos of the patient's condition. Mental illness is the patient's own strategy of imposing order and coherence on the chaos that has become his life. Sacks concludes that we must not try to 'cure' the patient but help him maintain his coping strategy as best he can so he can continue to adapt to his condition.[8]

Indeed, from the 1960s onward multiple personality in American culture and cinema has been evolved from a *disorder* to a socially acceptable way of expressing distress or unhappiness. Two of the most insightful films of the 1970s dealing with multiple personality—*Sybil* (Daniel Petrie, 1976) and *I Never Promised You a Rose*

*Garden* (Anthony Page, 1977)—encouraged viewers to see multiple personality as a means of discovering oneself, 'an expressive idiom' that reinvests the subject with *agency*, thereby serving a *therapeutic purpose*. *Sybil*, based on Flora Rheta Schreiber's novel, tells the true story of 'Sybil' and her 16 alters. The film deals with a prototypical case of multiple personality: a young woman develops a set of alternate personalities as a means of coping with a childhood sexual trauma (she was sexually abused by her mentally unstable mother). Sybil's multiple alters ranged in age, from Peggy, who represented Sybil at the age when the trauma happened, to Vicky, who was Sybil's current age. Sybil's therapist, Dr. Wilbur, hypothesized that Sybil invented the other alters in order to preserve in each one of them some of the skills or aspects of her character that she cared for but that were repressed as a result of the trauma: for example, one alter played the piano, another was a sophisticated young lady, a third one was a free-spirited, romantic young woman, and so on. The film represents Sybil's transformations into her alters as involuntary: she regularly blacks out, loses time, and comes to her senses in new places, wearing new clothes, unable to remember how she got there or how much time has passed. However, once Sybil begins treatment, there is a slight but definite change in the way the film represents her alternating personalities: she begins to miraculously transform into the alter that best matches the specific social situation in which she finds herself i.e., she is (unconsciously or consciously) assuming (choosing from a range of options) different social roles or different personas. For example, when the neighbor across her apartment invites her to go out with him, the repressed, shy Sybil cannot go but, the voiceover tells us, the fun-loving, outgoing alter Vicky can. When Sybil seeks to impress Dr. Wilbur or seeks intimacy, she assumes the 'role' (the alter) that one would expect a young woman trying to impress her mother would assume: she turns into a sophisticated young woman or into a young girl who sings and plays the piano beautifully.

The notion of multiple personality as role-playing or social histrionics is, in fact, incorporated into the plot. During one of the sessions, Dr. Wilbur informs Sybil that she must leave town for a while. Sybil responds to the news by 'confessing' that she invented her multiple personality, that she was pretending the whole time and that once she had learned what kind of response Dr. Wilbur expected during hypnosis, she would train

herself to deliver it. A few scenes later, Sybil admits that she lied, and that she was so afraid she wouldn't be able to function in Dr. Wilbur's absence that her only way of dealing with her terrible sense of abandonment was to pretend she invented her illness. The astounding level of self-consciousness and knowledge Sybil demonstrates about her illness corroborates Hacking's argument that recovered memory therapy works by developing a false consciousness in the patient, who adopts the vocabulary of her therapist and learns to conform to the therapist's expectations. In fact, contrary to Hacking's assumption that the patient remains unaware of her own conformism, Sybil is well aware of her false consciousness, including the reasons why she invented it. Thus, she appears more knowledgeable about her own condition than her own therapist. Paradoxically, she is not aware of her own alters, but she is quite knowledgeable about the process by which a patient can objectify her illness.

Although the film does not shy away from representing Sybil's desperate attempts to lead a normal life, it is also clearly fascinated with her wide range of alternate personalities. The ending celebrates the reintegration of Sybil's alters in a way that presents them as enriching her personality rather than being an obstacle to her personal development. By the time we get to the final sequence we no longer see multiple personality as a mental illness but as an invaluable means of self-discovery. In the film's climactic moment Sybil declares, "I am Sybil and I remember," her proud response to Socrates' dictum "Know thyself." Sybil's struggle with multiple personality disorder assumes the metaphorical, and thus universal, dimensions of the subject's search for identity: *mental illness, we are led to believe, provides the most reliable means of discovering who you really are*.[9] Only someone whose sense of self has been completely shattered, who cannot seem to 'collect' herself from one moment to the next, who is constantly forced to account for herself through time, in spite of the periods of 'lost time' and in spite of her alienation from her own memories, only someone who is never who she is, can really claim to be herself. Multiple personality is thus redeemed from an illness to a precious opportunity for rethinking, expanding and reaffirming the self.

In *I Never Promised You a Rose Garden* Deborah, a psychotic teenager is sent to a mental asylum after attempting to commit suicide. Since Deborah hears voices and has elaborate visions of another reality she is diagnosed as schizophrenic rather than a

multiple; however, she shares many of Sybil's symptoms, particularly the loss of time (represented, as in *Sybil*, by quick, abrasive cuts between temporally and spatially unrelated scenes). The voices Deborah hears come from another world called (what else?) 'Dreamland'. In Dreamland she assumes the persona of a Native American girl and plays out various scenarios in which she is punished by the angry 'gods' of an imaginary cult. Like Sybil, who lies to her therapist that she invented all her alters, thus displaying an unusual self-awareness and knowledge about her illness, Deborah is very adept at analyzing her own condition: she seems to have read Freud, whom she mentions in one conversation with her therapist, and she adopts her therapist's persona quite easily (in one scene Deborah 'plays' the therapist to her therapist).[10] The film's overall dark tone is undercut by a motivational rhetoric, which reinvests the character with a sense of agency. We are familiar with this kind of optimism from popular self-help books, for instance Rhonda Byrne's *The Secret*, which assures readers that all it takes to achieve something is to want it really bad, so bad that it will come true, like a self-fulfilling prophesy. In one scene Deborah hears her therapist's voice—which at this point is indistinguishable from the other voices she has been hearing—which assures her that she can ignore the voices in her head, she can choose to be sane: after all, if she created that cult she surely can destroy it. She can simply 'choose' not to be insane, like a dreamer 'choosing' to wake up (*Vanilla Sky*) or a dead man eventually 'resigning' himself to death (*The Sixth Sense*).

**The Hollywood Multiple Film**

Over the last several decades Hollywood has become adept at borrowing the symptomatic language of doubling and multiple personality, characterized, among other things, by trauma, memory loss, and blackouts, to create what appears to be a new genre of films structured around multiple—stolen, assumed or mistaken—realities, identities or temporalities. The phenomenon of multiplicity occupies a privileged place in this new cinematic landscape of delusions, including the Capgras delusion, the Fregoli delusion, inter-metamorphosis, the subjective doubles syndrome, lycanthropy, reduplicative paramnesia, autoscopy, and others. Films in this category—for instance, *Identity*, *The Butterfly Effect*, *The Bourne* trilogy, *Vanilla Sky*, *The Sixth Sense*, *The Mothman Prophecies*, *Dragonfly*, *The Jacket*, *The Forgotten*, *Suspect Zero*, *The Village*, *Stay, The*

*Machinist*, *The Lake House, Premonition*, *Session 9*, *Memo-r-e*, *Déjà vu*, *The Return*, *The Number 23*, *Donnie Darko, The Matrix* trilogy, *The 13th Floor*, *The Island, The Astronaut's Wife*—are distinguished by a narrative punctuated by memory gaps and various forms of 'time-travel', a 'pathology' of narrative which is, nevertheless, ultimately empowering and de-mythologizing. The 'multiple film' is representative of a 'de-mythologization craze' in Hollywood cinema i.e., the tendency of many Hollywood films to play with logical/chronological confusion (multiple temporalities) or with ontological confusion (multiple realities or identities), claiming to de-mythologize the Cartesian notion of a self-transparent subject and the notion of an ontologically stable, transparent reality, while in fact relapsing into a mythology of agency and free will. In his book *Warped Space: Art, Architecture, and Anxiety in Modern Culture* (2002) art historian Anthony Vidler analyzes the warping of modernity's psychological, cinematic and architectural space reflected in the spatial phobias peculiar to the nineteenth century (agoraphobia and claustrophobia) and in twentieth century theories of spatial alienation and estrangement (Simmel, Kracauer, and Benjamin).[11] While spatial phobias are symptomatic of the radical changes in demographics brought about by urbanization and the rise of mass society, the multiple film emphasizes the opposite (or perhaps complementary) warping of time that characterizes contemporary public culture. In the Hollywood multiple film late capitalist therapeutic culture of customized consumption intersects with chronophobia (fear of time) and with the techno-delusional discourse of psychosis, ultimately perpetuating a notion of time, reality and identity as open to 'indefinite redefinition.'

The films discussed below as examples of the Hollywood multiple film (1) treat reality/identity/temporality as a confusing multiplicity which has to be reduced, through a process of elimination, to an essential, singular reality underlying the multiplicity of alternate realities; (2) approach multiple realities *therapeutically*, reducing them to strategies for coping with psychological trauma and for investing the protagonist with agency—in this respect, the films freely *borrow the symptomatic language* of multiple personality, extending the medical diagnosis of multiple personality as a mechanism for coping with psychological trauma to scenarios and characters that often have nothing to do with the mental illness in question; (3) borrow the premises of idealistic philosophy,

specifically Bergson's theory of memory, for the purpose of reinvesting characters with agency—specifically, by eliminating time and memory as reliable criteria for distinguishing the real from the unreal, the films multiply the options, for action or interpretation, available to characters; (4) use the chronotope of multiple realities for the purpose of constructing an elaborate self-referential narrative structure. In these films, I argue, multiple realities are not, strictly speaking, 'multiple'; rather, they are subordinated to a single *real* reality even if they originally have precedence over it by obscuring it.

Hollywood multiple films tend to follow the two-way amnesia model. I am using the term 'two-way amnesia' in a broader sense to refer to the fact that regardless of the number of realities involved—two or more—they are treated as self-sufficient i.e., 'amnesiac' of one another. Such films rely on a spectating or objectifying relationship among alters/multiples: the resolution of the plot depends on the successful identification of the difference between these realities, and on the reaffirmation of a single dominant reality, which eventually becomes knowledgeable about its own construction of the other realities. One important implication of the two-way amnesia model is that the act of acquiring knowledge or access to knowledge about the difference between multiple/alternate realities constitutes the central driving force in such narratives. The multiple becomes a mere pretext for exposing errors of judgment: reality *appears to be multiple* simply because somewhere down the line the protagonist and the film viewer have made a *judgment error*. In some of the films discussed below the difference between alternate/multiple realities is erased so that they appear to be mutually exchangeable. In those cases the multiple shades into the virtual, not the Bergsonian but the Baudrillardian virtual i.e., the simulacral. Multiplicity is posited as a problem of *knowledge* or *judgment*—being able to tell the matrix from reality, for example. The *illusion* of a plurality/multiplicity of realities disappears once access to knowledge (about the difference between these realities) has been attained. Accordingly, such films are structured like games as characters and viewers try to guess which reality is 'the real one'. In *The Matrix Trilogy, Virtuosity, Total Recall, Donnie Darko, The Truman Show*, *The 13th Floor*, the chronotope of multiple realities operates through the specularization or virtualization of the real. In *The 13th Floor*, for example, a woman falls in love with a

simulation modeled on her real husband. She eventually manages to get rid of her real husband and brings the simulation unit she is in love with to the real world, the assumption being that the ontological difference between the two lovers (she is 'real,' he is not) is irrelevant, even though the whole film was premised on the allegedly irreducible difference between reality and simulation. The film confuses reality and simulation to such a degree that the very notion of 'alternate' or 'multiple' realities is rendered meaningless.

Although the Hollywood multiple films seems to participate in the postmodern discourse of indeterminacy, multiplicity understood as *indeterminacy*—e.g. in European theories of realism, which construe indeterminacy as 'ambiguity', a deliberate frustration of the desire for totalizing meaning, a tendency toward semantic minimalism—should not be confused with the Hollywood appropriation of multiplicity, which functions through an *excess,* rather than a *dearth,* of meaning. Instead of refraining from attributing any specific meaning to the reality they represent, Hollywood multiple films offer us several possible versions of reality i.e., they are grounded in the familiar logic of the multiple choice test: some of the answers (some of the versions of reality) are clearly meant to confuse us but their sole reason for being is to be eliminated as ultimately implausible, incorrect or simply undesirable. The Hollywood multiple film seeks to reinvest the subject with a sense of agency by creating the illusion that there are multiple choices from which he still has the freedom to choose. In this respect, the cinematic discourse of the multiple might be seen as a last attempt at re-enchanting late capitalist secularized culture (consider the recent flourishing of the fantasy genre and the popularity of films about magic, e.g. *The Prestige* and *The Illusionist*), an attempt, that is, to reinvest the world with magic, not the supernatural magic of old times (making the visible invisible or vice versa) but a modern kind of magic that involves envisioning a series of alternate worlds, in which a supposedly powerless or traumatized subject continues to function in surprisingly effective ways.

Many of these films are structured around essentially negative mental states i.e., states defined by absence or loss (the absence or loss of sleep, sanity, or memory) such as insomnia, amnesia, paramnesia or multiple/dissociative identity disorder. The films work through various processes of restoration, recovery, repetition, recollection, recuperation

and reconstruction, all of which imply a certain *corrective* or *de-mythologizing* function i.e., the purpose of the films is to expose, overcome, or correct some sort of deception or self-deception. Hollywood is obsessed with repetition, with events that have already happened, will have happened, might not have happened, events that are relived, forgotten or prefigured, events that feel like déjà vu or like self-fulfilling prophecies—as far as Hollywood is concerned, the present is the least interesting modality of time. This preoccupation with reordering, restructuring, and reediting events, with multiple or alternate pasts and futures, with shifting identities and unreliable narrators, might appear liberating and optimistic. However, the assumption that thoughts, memories, previsions or intuitions are recordable, that the future can be designed and the past erased, suggest a rather sobering understanding of time as essentially foreclosed: there is no future, because the future is already available (*Minority Report*) or because the future, even if presented as real, nevertheless continues to exist in a suspended state, awaiting confirmation from the past that will make the future 'really' possible and real (*Back to the Future, Terminator*), and there is no past precisely because everything past is preserved, stored, recordable and, if need be, erased (*Paycheck, Total Recall*).

In the nineteenth century the hidden social agenda behind the invention/construction of multiple personality had to do with the changing gender roles in the new urban culture: women were far more likely to be diagnosed as 'multiples' than men, an imbalance representative of the contradictory social roles attributed to women at that time. Later multiple personality became associated with childhood sexual abuse. Thus the structure of the family, the nature of work, and the problems surrounding these have always informed the discourse of multiple personality, which dramatizes the conflicts between socially incompatible roles. If the hidden agenda behind the invention and popularization of multiple personality in the nineteenth century had to do with changing gender roles, and from the middle of the century to the present, with childhood trauma, how do we account for the Hollywood 'epidemic of the multiple'? One could perhaps argue that Hollywood cinema of the multiple simply extends one of the generic characteristics of the American science fiction genre—the preoccupation with other worlds, other planets—beyond the limits of the genre, projecting it onto other genres often semantically distant from it. While science fiction films set up our world in

opposition to other possible worlds or planets, Hollywood cinema of the multiple brings those other multiple alternate worlds 'down to earth' and locates them within the self or within reality itself. We could even single out a particular theme within the science fiction genre—*the invasion theme*—that has been gradually dissociated from the genre. The invasion theme, which dominated the 'golden age' of American science fiction cinema (the 1950s) can be seen as the American cinematic equivalent of the nineteenth century Double motif in European literature of the fantastic and in European gothic fiction. Stripped of their historical, political and cultural connotations, invasion, doubling, possession and multiplication (along with their attending paranoia) operate as metaphors underwriting a common rhetoric of metaphysical or ontological falsification, as well as anticipating Hollywood cinema of the multiple. If science fiction cinema's fascination with other worlds and with space travel reflects our existential loneliness, then the 'domestication' (bringing those *outer worlds* 'down to earth' in the form of *alternate realities*) and 'virtualization' of outer worlds (*extra-planetary* worlds are replaced with *virtual* worlds) is symptomatic of a different type of malaise, an attempt to overcompensate for the disturbing sense of metaphysical insufficiency that currently passes for 'a sense of reality.' Ironically, Hollywood cinema of the multiple addresses this sense of metaphysical insufficiency by 'pumping up' our skepticism as if to suggest that only by doubting reality can we congratulate ourselves for 'waking up' from the dream, that only by mystifying reality can we 'demystify' it and rest assured in our self-enlightenment. In sum, a common premise of this cinema is that the protagonist has been duped, tricked or manipulated—he must, therefore, 'wake up to reality.'

But what does it mean to 'wake up'? In a totally mediated world in which all our desires and needs have been produced for us, even as we continue to believe they are our own, the flippant admission that our world is a construct, that perhaps nothing is real, perpetuates the even more dangerous illusion that merely becoming conscious of the illusion-making mechanisms controlling us is enough to eliminate them. In this respect, films dealing with multiple realities, identities or temporalities participate in the 'de-mythologization craze' in American cinema. The multiple film claims to de-mythologize the Cartesian notion of a self-transparent, self-spectating subject and the notion of an ontologically stable, transparent reality, only to *relapse* into a mythology of agency, free

will (e.g. in ‘resurrection’ films like *The Jacket* and *Vanilla Sky*) and an ontological certainty in the singular nature of reality. The de-mythologization craze in American cinema could be seen as a delayed side-effect of the shift, at the turn of the twentieth century, from ‘the art of memory’, understood as a techné, a knowing *how*, to the new sciences of memory, a knowing *what*, from surface knowledge (Foucault’s *connaissance*) to depth knowledge (Foucault’s *savoir*), from “milieux de memoire” to “lieux de memoire”, from memory as “a context, a landscape inhabited” to memory as a “ ‘site,’ a monument visited” (Pierre Nora qtd. in Antze and Lambek 1996: xiii).[12] Many of the films discussed here draw on the discontinuity constitutive of memory to introduce multiplicity in the narrative. If there are two different types of memory obsessions—1) the obsession with not forgetting anything, with inputting and storing every piece of raw, immediate experience, and 2) the obsession with unblocking something assumed to have been blocked or hidden, or with revealing a secret, a hidden truth essential to one’s identity—American cinema of the multiple exhibits the symptoms of the second type of obsession, “a kind of parody of the Enlightenment will to truth’” (1996: xxvii) insofar as the very notion of self-deception presupposes a Truth beneath the fiction.

The majority of multiple films that deal with some kind of memory dysfunction are more interested in the problem of *blockage* and *access* to memory than in the act of recalling as an immediate, spontaneous experience or, for that matter, in the particular content of the experience that has to be retrieved. The films’ narrative structure confirms this: very little time is usually spent on presenting what has been lost or forgotten, and the films quickly move on to the retrieval process. For instance, we never witness firsthand the mother-child connection in *The Forgotten* (it is suggested only through flashbacks); likewise, *Memento* focuses on getting *access to memory* rather than on the nature and significance of *what* is being remembered. Films in which the multiple is the result of memory dysfunction or memory loss—e.g. *Memento, Vanilla* Sky, *The Sixth Sense, The Forgotten, The Butterfly Effect* and others—appear to follow the idea established by Ribot and his peers that precisely that which has been forgotten constitutes the most essential aspect of identity. However, although forgetting is essential to these films, the forgotten does not reveal, even after it has been recalled, something about the identity of the characters. For instance, although at first glance *The Butterfly Effect* and its sequel

seem like textbook examples of the process of reinscribing past actions under new descriptions, the point of these reinscriptions is not to reveal something about the protagonist but merely to play around with narrative structure.

**Examples**

In an early scene of *The Bourne Identity* Jason Bourne looks at his reflection in the mirror and demands, in French, German and English, that "it stop messing around" and tell him who he is. Soon enough he is presented with a number of possible identities —literally a stack of foreign passports—from which he must choose the 'right' one by a process of elimination of unlikely, narratively uninteresting or morally reprehensible identities. Identity is assumed to be knowable and singular even if it is, for the time being, obscured by other identities. The film proposes that identity cannot be fully erased since it automatically inscribes itself on the body in the form of kinesthetic memory. However, Bourne has to go beyond his kinesthetic memory and find out *why* his body 'remembers' certain behaviors in order to discover who he really is. The film presupposes, and reaffirms, the existence of a singular, essential identity, which simply needs to be excavated, remembered, reconstructed and, most importantly, distinguished from other, mistaken or illusory, identities. For example, Bourne is able to recall his first mission (the assassination of the Russian diplomat Nevsky) only via another assassination that is mistakenly attributed to him (the assassination of two CIA agents in Berlin). It is only when he is accused of a murder he did not commit that Bourne recalls the murder he did commit i.e., it is only by exposing a series of identities as mistaken or illusory that he is able to access his 'correct', singular identity. *The Bourne Identity*, *The Bourne Supremacy* and *The Bourne Ultimatum* emphasize the individual's freedom to assert himself, to choose himself regardless of who he actually is. The multiple identities and temporalities Bourne's amnesia presupposes are simply a distraction on his way to self-affirmation. Dissociative amnesia is a convenient chance for the protagonist to separate himself from his morally questionable past self. That the film fails to challenge the notion of a singular, stable identity, and instead merely creates the *illusion* of a fragmented, indeterminate identity, becomes clear when we consider that Bourne's 'moral awakening' begins, in fact, long *before* he loses his memory. Even before Bourne

loses his memory he has already made his moral choice by 'failing' to shoot the African political leader he has been instructed to assassinate. He is always already 'a good guy' and he knows it; all he has to do is 'remember' it in a true neo-Platonic fashion.

In *Unknown* five men wake up in an abandoned building in the middle of the desert with no memory of who they are (later the memory loss is explained as a side effect of inhaling some kind of gas) or how they got there. Gradually they figure out that they are all involved in a kidnapping, but neither of them can remember whether he is one of the kidnappers or one of the victims. Predictably, they take turns staring at their reflections in the mirror, demanding, à la Jason Bourne, "Who the fuck are you?" and, at precisely that moment, having an intense but fragmentary flashback, which (purposefully) does not reveal much. As they struggle to recall who they are, victims or aggressors, and form arbitrary alliances based on intuition, they gradually begin to piece together what might have happened. The general consensus seems to be that, in the words of one the characters, "It is not what we eventually remember that's going to determine who we are; what we do from now on will." The implication is that a criminal can reinvent himself as a victim or even a hero—memory loss is simply a pretext to wipe the slate clean and ask 'dignifying' moral questions. However, the film's ending falls back on the past as essential to the construction of identity: as it turns out, it does matter who one was and what one did in the past. Memory loss is nothing but a convenient 'window of opportunity' the characters use to unburden themselves of their guilt—thus, one of the kidnappers is given a second chance to make 'the right choice' i.e., not to kill those he has kidnapped. Once he has chosen himself (through action) as 'a good guy', his memory returns and conveniently corroborates his innocence: he suddenly remembers that he is a police officer working undercover. However we want to read the final twist, which suggests that the character might, in fact, be a criminal posing as a police officer, the point is that the alternation of identities—good guy, bad guy—is premised on the notion of a singular identity, which cannot accommodate any contradiction or multiplicity (one interpretation excludes the other until it is proven wrong and replaced by another interpretation, and so on ad infinitum).

*Identity* begins as a simple story about a group of strangers stranded in a motel during a thunderstorm; the story turns macabre when someone starts killing them off one

by one. The strangers are actually mental projections of the different identities 'housed' in the mind of a convict (Malcolm) suffering from dissociative identity disorder. Malcolm is undergoing a special treatment which forces all his identities to confront one another, inevitably leading to a reduction in the number of identities as more powerful identities eliminate weaker ones. If he realizes that all these identities—among them an escaped convict and an ex-detective—are parts of his fractured psyche, and if his 'good' alter-ego, the ex-detective, manages to kill his 'evil' alter-ego, the escaped convict, Malcolm will be sent to a psychiatric hospital instead of being executed. At the end of the film one of the character's alter-egos, Malcolm as a child, whom we have mistakenly assumed to be harmless, kills Malcolm's 'good' alter-ego, a female prostitute, because he cannot forgive her—just as the young Malcolm never forgave his own mother—for being a prostitute. Producing a clear narrative reason for the confusion and multiplication of identities (childhood trauma), the film uses the multiple to ultimately re-affirm the *singular* and e*ssentially* criminal identity of the protagonist.

*Session 9* starts out as a realistic film but gradually reveals that characters we took for real are, in fact, projections of a single host personality, which remains unidentified until the very end of the film. Five asbestos workers are hired to clean up an old mental asylum. The asylum was closed down following a famous case involving a female multiple who, after undergoing memory recovery therapy, was able to recall a series of traumatic sexual experiences from her childhood; however, subsequent medical exams proved that her 'recovered memories' were, in fact, made up. As relationships between the workers become strained and strange things start happening, one of the men comes upon old records of nine therapy sessions with a woman, Mary, suffering from a multiple personality disorder. Gradually, and mostly through editing, we realize that four of the men are actually voices within the mind of the fifth man, a multiple (though we don't know which one of the five he is) who must 'wake up' or recall who he really is (like the protagonists in *Identity*, *Unknown*, *Vanilla Sky* and *The Bourne Identity*). The story unfolds as a recovered memory i.e., the premise is that Gordon will discover something about himself and about the past he has suppressed. However, the analogy between Mary's case and Gordon's case, on which the whole story depends (since it is through that analogy that we find out Gordon is a multiple too) cannot shake our memory—pun

intended—of that early scene in the film in which the very notion of recovered memory was exposed as sham.

*Identity* and *Session 9* exemplify the de-mythologization craze in Hollywood cinema insofar as they suggest that multiple identity is ultimately unreal: the reduction of multiple personality to a singular self is represented as a process of *self-awakening*, *de-mythologization* or *enlightenment.* Although in both films the protagonists are actually multiples, the emphasis is not on the medical aspect of multiple personality but rather on the thriller genre's clever appropriation of multiple personality's particular narrative structure. In other words, the gaps in memory and knowledge characteristic of multiple personality are put in the service of the genre: since a multiple is, by definition, unaware of all his alters, an alter can be conveniently summoned at the very last moment (as it is in *Identity* and *Session 9*)—a sort of an updated *deus ex machina*—to solve the narrative puzzle in an appropriately surprising and thrilling manner.

Hollywood films often draw on the discontinuity constitutive of memory to introduce multiplicity in the narrative; ironically, they also rely on memory to reduce this confusing multiplicity to a single reality or truth. *The Forgotten* is a case in point. The film follows a woman's quest to uncover what actually happened to her son who died in a plane crash. Her psychiatrist diagnoses her with paramnesia (a distortion of memory in which fantasy and objective experience are confused). Apparently, Telly lost her son a year ago, in a miscarriage, but the loss was so traumatic that she convinced herself her son was not dead and invented a whole new life for him. While Telly's paramnesia is central to the dramatic premise—everything depends on whether or not she is suffering from paramnesia, which would make some of her memories real and others invented—the film eventually denies the alternate realities produced by her paramnesia and affirms only one of them as real. Ironically, having used memory as a destabilizing narrative device, the film restores memory as the single most reliable source of knowledge by making Telly's first memory of her son—her memory of him in her womb—the final, uncontestable evidence of her son's existence. The ending sweeps aside the complicated alternate worlds structure constructed thus far, attributing it all to an alien conspiracy: Telly must simply 'wake up' or 'see through' multiple deceptive realities (the work of

aliens) in order to uncover 'the real reality' (in which children don't die but are simply hidden away for a while).

*Vanilla Sky* provides another example of the de-mythologization craze in Hollywood cinema insofar as it celebrates the self-awakening of its protagonist, David. The premise of the film is that David can become a free agent only if he wakes up from his lucid dream. It is implied that the ultimate, informed choice he makes (once he becomes aware of the constructed nature of his world) is the only real choice, the only free choice. However, saying "I am dreaming" does not necessarily mean that I am awake. Moreover, if we follow the logic of the film's narrative structure, we would have to conclude that David never wakes up from his dream because the very process of waking up must be part of the lucid dream. The film opens with a psychologist interviewing David. At the end of the film the psychologist is revealed as part of David's lucid dream, which means that all sessions with the psychologist have been dreamed. And since the psychologist plays a major part in David's recovery of the memory of his own death, his recovery of his memory must be a dream too. The film asks us to read the therapy sessions scenes as real—for instance through the use of multiple flashbacks, which presuppose that the point in time from which David flashes back is real—but, at the same time, it insists that we accept their unreality because David's final enlightenment or self-awakening depends on it. Even if we accept that David does wake up, his awakening is nothing but a *self-fulfilling prophesy*: while the waking dream program does everything possible to conceal from him the fact that he is living a dream, his unconscious is, from the very beginning, trying to become conscious by means of inventing the figure of the psychiatrist (who exists only in David's lucid dream). By inventing the psychiatrist David's unconscious incriminates itself insofar as the presence of such a figure presupposes that the person is hiding something from himself. Thus, by an odd gesture of doubling—the dream points to its own unreality by inventing the typical framework (psychiatrist—patient) within which dreams are analyzed—the unreal manages to reconstruct *imaginatively* the moment of its own appearance, the moment when David was made to forget that he is dead. Although the film takes the form of a flashback—David recounting his memories to the psychiatrist—it is only an imaginary flashback since in reality David is not in a penitentiary and there is no psychiatrist.

(Eventually it becomes clear that David did not kill his girlfriend, who simply died in the car accident; there has been no murder and no trial and there is no reason for him to be in a psychiatric penitentiary.) However, since the contract he signs with Life Extension (LE) offers him the opportunity to write the script for his own life, we must assume that everything that happens in the film *must have been his choice*, including the imaginary flashback he has in the presence of the imaginary psychiatrist. Thus, he is dreaming but at the same time he knows that he is dreaming, and from the very beginning of the film he wants to wake up from the dream, which is why he invents the person most likely to help him wake up, a psychiatrist. Since all events must have been invented by David, it follows that he has unconsciously planned his eventual awakening from the dream—the process of de-mythologization (revealing the constructed nature of reality) is a myth (the subject himself constructs the means to expose the constructed nature of reality). At the end of the film the helpful LE staff informs David of the specific point at which his lucid dream began (the 'splice', a term appropriately borrowed from the technical vocabulary of film editing). David is, supposedly, dead, his memory of his death erased, an important piece of information of which he is, once again, supposed to have no recollection. And yet throughout the film he flashes back to real events preceding the 'splice' except for remembering the most crucial event, his own death. In other words, the film assumes memory is not co-extensive with consciousness: apparently, you can remember things that happened before your own death. Films like *Vanilla Sky*, *Memory*, and *The Return* cleverly appropriate various aspects of idealistic philosophy (e.g. Bergson's note of 'pure memory') to reaffirm our belief in agency.

*Matter and Memory* (published in 1896, a period associated with the proliferation of multiples and with the birth of the new sciences of memory), in which Bergson describes memory as essentially impersonal, multiple and infinite, anticipates the de-pathologization of multiple/dissociated personality and the reconceptualization of the self as multiple rather than singular and internally unified. From a Bergsonian point of view, a multiple's experiences can be seen as merely an intensified representation of the normal work of memory. The multiple's sense of lost time—suddenly finding oneself in a new place, with no idea of how much time has passed, because everything that has happened in that time gap was experienced by one of the alters—simply demonstrates the central

role the impersonal plays in the construction of memory and identity. According to Bergson, normal perception and voluntary memory (which for him does not even qualify as 'true' memory) are entirely determined by the intellect, an organ of pragmatism: for example, perception works by cutting our parts of the real—the parts that serve our immediate, practical needs—and relegating everything else to the background. The life of the mind, however, far exceeds what we know through the intellect: thus Bergson privileges the unseen, the inexperienced, the forgotten, the impersonal, that which remains on the margins of perception, that which can be grasped only through intuition, not through the intellect, in a word, that which does not belong to me but to a vast, indeterminate memory that we can tap into occasionally.

It is precisely this notion of memory as essentially disembodied and impersonal that informs a great many Hollywood films of the multiple, especially those dealing with some kind of memory dysfunction. The past, Bergson insists, is not dead: it preserves itself automatically in the present, which it can infiltrate at any moment (hence the connection to Freud's 'uncanny'). Since the past is not integrated into one's consciousness, it is not individualized: *it is not my past but an impersonal past that belongs to no one*. Films like *Memory* and *The Return* extend the multiple personality model to an inter-subjective one. As we saw, the multiple personality debate demonstrated the obsolescence of the idea of a transcendental self, refiguring the self as a field populated by multiple selves or alters, each with its own personality and each with varying degrees of awareness of other alters. This model makes it impossible to continue speaking of 'personal' experiences or memories insofar as some of the multiple's experiences are registered only by some alters, others by other alters, certain memories are stored while others lost, certain experiences are shared while others are limited to particular alters, and so on. When this model of personality is projected onto the inter-subjective level (indeed, the reappearance of the multiple personality model can be seen as an attempt to revive the notion of 'community') it becomes possible to speak of a common memory from which individual memories are dissociated and whose relationship to that common memory is analogous to that of alters within the mind of a multiple. And just as the memory of a multiple can no longer be called strictly personal, because it is fragmented and indeterminate, so the memories of individual people are not

strictly personal either but can ‘travel’ between people and become embodied in this or that person.[13]

*The Return*—tagline “The past never dies. It kills.”—and *Memory*—tagline “Sometimes memories can kill.”—rely on the Bergsonian idea of memory as essentially inter-subjective and impersonal. Not only can you remember things that happened before your own death (*Vanilla Sky*); you can also remember things that happened long before you were born: at least this is the premise of *Memory*. In *Memory* Taylor Briggs, a medical researcher studying Alzheimer’s, stumbles upon a special powder used by an Indian tribe. The powder induces so-called ‘sacred dreams’ allowing the Indians to see the past through the eyes of their dead relatives. When Taylor accidentally spills some of the magic powder on his hands, he begins to be haunted by visions and memories, which are clearly not his own but which he cannot yet attribute to anyone in particular. Like *The Butterfly Effect*, *The Return* and *Memory* borrow the symptomatic language of multiple personality—lost time, black outs, amnesia, childhood trauma—without the illness itself (Taylor is not a multiple), though they also modify it: in both films the person recalling the traumatic experience is *not* the one who actually experienced it. In both films, as well, the abuse is displaced several times. In *The Return* the protagonist, Joanna, remembers someone else’s traumatic sexual experience, which happened when Joanna herself was a child i.e., the film follows the prototype of multiple personality (childhood abuse) but *divides it between two characters*—the child Joanna and the woman whose memory of sexual abuse is transferred to Joanna and repressed, as though she herself had been its victim—*rather than having the abuse split a single victim into multiple personalities*. In *Memory* the victim is actually *double*: the original victim was Taylor’s mother, who was kidnapped and raped by a man, whom she eventually killed. Upon her release from the psychiatric asylum she assumes the identity of the angel of death, a curious quasi-mythological figure who was, we are told, cast out of heaven and who has taken it upon himself to look over young girls and protect their innocence. This protector turns out to be a serial killer: she kidnaps and kills little girls, locking them up in a little room behind her closet and making casts of their faces. Taylor is able to track down the serial killer, his own mother (who pretends she is not his mother, convincing a female friend of hers to secretly adopt her son, the son of the man who raped her) by reliving her memories.

We could read *Memory* as the latest attempt to reinvest post-secular reality with some form of quasi-religious faith or spirituality by disguising it as a new science: genetic memory. (This is true even of a blockbuster like *Déjà vu*, which proves that time travel is possible not because the technology for it exists but because of a 'leap of faith'…even if it's a leap of faith in technology!) Since any notion of a good-natured, omniscient God who sees and punishes every evil deed would strike modern day skeptics as incorrigibly naïve, belief has to be stripped of its religious connotations. It is not God who sees every injustice; genetic memory does the job just as well, even better, in fact, because it carries the favorable stamp of science. The film pushes an idea of *genetic memory* strongly reminiscent of the Bergsonian idea of Pure Memory. The past is never dead, Bergson tells us—it's alive, flowing like a river beneath the present and capable of erupting in the midst of it at any moment. The past is not dead, *Memory* chimes in, for everything that happens is automatically stored in the giant bank of genetic memory, which we carry within us until the moment of our own birth and which can suddenly re-emerge into our lives at any given moment.

Like *Memory*, *The Return* relies on the Bergsonian idea of inter-subjective memory. Joanna's memory is not her own—she keeps recalling/reliving another woman's (a dead woman's) memories. Although she doesn't suffer from multiple personality, Joanna exhibits some of the familiar symptoms (black outs, memory loss). *The Return* and *Memory* are reminiscent of *The Sixth Sense*, but they also depart from it in a significant way. In *The Sixth Sense*, we find out that the protagonist is dead but it is still his memories that we see projected on the screen. Conversely, in the two other films it is not the dead character that does the recalling but a completely different character. In this new version of 'invasion of the body snatchers'—here modified as "invasion of the memory snatchers"—Joanna is 'taken over', her memory 'invaded', by another. She is merely a vehicle for the return of the dead woman's memories: the film drives home this point by letting the dead woman gradually displace Joanna both narratively and visually (in the final sequence).

While *Memory* tries to come up with some quasi-scientific explanation for the transfer of memory, *The Return* expects us to believe in the possibility of a spiritual transference of memory as a result of pure physical proximity (i.e. the proximity of the

two cars, one with Joanna and the other with the dead woman, at the moment of the car crash). The film does not offer any explanation as to how, specifically, the two memories are 'compounded', whether the other woman's memory neatly replaces Joanna's memory or is 'added' to it. When she goes back to her childhood home, Joanna discovers that everything she thought was hers is in fact an echo or a reproduction of the dead woman's life and memories: her childhood drawings, every object in her childhood room, are modeled on the exact same objects in the dead woman's room. We are to believe that the girl, under the influence of the dead woman's memories, wanted her own room decorated in exactly the same way. There is nothing really to tell us that these objects were not already in her room before the car accident. We are left wondering which of these two rooms echoes which, and why it matters.

Despite the obviously central role of memory in *The Return*, this is not a film about memory and identity. The lack of chronology does not seek to convey the fragmentary work of individual memory but simply to create obstacles to narrative comprehension: when the pieces of the puzzle finally fall together, we understand why Joanna has been acting so strangely but we don't know her any better. The film relies on a series of echoes and repetitions of visual details that cannot be assigned a specific point of view or a specific time. There is no stable point of reference from which Joanna recalls the past. For example, in the opening sequence Joanna, 11 year old, hides under a table in an amusement park and relives the memory of the dead woman right before she is murdered, an event which has not happened yet given the timeline of the film. As we learn later, the memories of the dead woman 'invaded' Joanna's memory after the car crash i.e., the girl cannot be reliving the memories of the woman who is still alive. The next scene reveals that the scene we have just seen represents the memory of the now older Joanna who is standing in front of the mirror (the typical set up for any sort of identity search scene). She is in the process of remembering something that hasn't happened yet (the other woman dies after the amusement park scene).

There are various ways in which we can read these films' preoccupation with the impersonality of memory. We could perhaps see it as a kind of 'metaphysical altruism'—indeed the story of *The Return* is premised on the idea of solidarity between women as victims of sexual abuse. As I suggested earlier, the multiplicity epidemic has been

interpreted as an attempt to resurrect the collective within the personal. *The Return*, which treats memory as impersonal and inter-subjective, confirms this interpretation. By imagining memory as traveling between individuals, as a sort of a secret, intangible link between people, the film revives the notion of community, and, more importantly, not the kind of community built upon a shared memory (e.g. the nation) but a community of strangers, of people who have nothing in common, except, as in *The Return*, a shared problem (abuse of women). Since close relationships don't seem to be possible in the real world (consider Joanna's awkward, alienated relationship with her father), the next best thing is a community of the dead or a community of spirits, a community reflected, for instance, in the ability of the dead to communicate through the living.

Unlike *Donnie Darko*, in which time travel cannot change the past, or *The Butterfly Effect 2*, which does grant the protagonist this power but only at a great cost (his life), *Déjà vu*, a fairy-tale of second chances, is quite optimistic. In *Déjà vu* a ferry filled with crewmen from the USS Nimitz and their families is blown up in New Orleans on Mardi Gras. ATF agent Doug Carlin is brought in to assist in the crime investigation, and gets attached to an experimental FBI surveillance unit, one that uses a time warping technology to look back into the past.  It is difficult to think of another film, let alone an action film, that offers such a literal illustration of Bergson's idea of the co-existence of the past and the present. Despite several jargon-laden explanations of how the time-warping program (appropriately called 'Snow White', with all the connotations of waking up the dead, of second chances) works, the film enthusiastically suggests that "maybe it's not just physics". Even though we recognize that we can't circumvent the laws of physics —e.g. it's physically impossible to change the past, and a man cannot live in two different realities at the same time—maybe there is a spiritual way to beat physics, to let man live in both realities just long enough to find a way to make the reality with the happy ending take precedence over that with the lousy ending. The theory of branching times is used precisely to that end: introduce a significant enough event in the linear flow of time and you create a new branch (the one with the happy ending). The old one (the one that ends with the explosion) can continue parallel to it but most likely it ceases to exist.[14] Doug dies in the alternative reality created through his time travel but then he is miraculously resurrected in the same reality (the one in which his love interest is saved)

thus violating the law of branching universes, according to which the alternate reality runs parallel to the old reality but eventually displaces it completely. Regardless of the logical and ontological implications of time-warping—regardless of the multiple temporalities to which it gives rise—in the end there is only *one reality*, the one in which both Doug and the woman he loves are saved. While *The Butterfly Effect 2* at least acknowledges that time-warping must have *some* real consequences i.e., someone has to die—whether it is Nick or his girlfriend—*Déjà vu* rejects such an ending as a 'downer': both 'shall live', the film promises, even if that demands sacrificing the basic philosophical premise of the film and making a mockery of the theory of branching universes.

The films discussed so far reinvest their protagonists with a sense of agency by reducing the confusing multiplicity of realities, identities or temporalities to an essential, singular reality. Another group of films exhibiting the Hollywood chronotope approach multiple realities therapeutically, reducing them to strategies for coping with psychological trauma. *The Machinist* plunges us into the maze of fantasies, hallucinations and suppressed memories of the insomniac Trevor Reznik, a sickly-looking man working in a machine shop. Although the film blurs the distinctions between the real and the imagined, the present and the past, the conscious and the unconscious, eventually it offers a neat explanation for Trevor's paranoia and schizophrenia. The strange man (Ivan) Trevor believes is pursuing him, but whose existence everyone else denies, turns out to be Trevor himself: Trevor 'created' his alter-ego 'Ivan' in order to attribute to him a murder Trevor himself committed (he killed a little boy in a hit-and-run accident). The multiplication of realities is a result of Trevor's failure to fully repress his guilt and, at the same time, a symptom of atonement.

*Stay* repeats the same formula. A New York psychiatrist becomes obsessed with one of his patients, Henry, a disturbed student who intends to commit suicide in three days. As the psychiatrist tries to track down his patient and prevent his suicide, he begins to doubt his own sanity and drifts into a surreal, hallucinatory world where the dead and the living cross paths. The ending reveals that this whole story of multiple realities and confused identities was composed of the partially perceived, partially remembered, and partially fantasized images that happen to cross Henry's mind in the last several minutes

before his death, and his parents' death, in a car accident for which he feels guilty. Once again, the multiplication of realities is both a symptom of guilt and a form of self-therapy the dying man practices retrospectively.

*The Butterfly Effect* offers yet another take on the same dramatic premise. The story is told from the point of view of a protagonist who, we discover at the end of the film, is actually dead. The whole story world is revealed, retrospectively, as entirely unreal, existing only in the protagonist's mind. The problem of multiple realities is treated as essentially *psychological* and its resolution as *therapeutic*: despite the fact that Evan was never actually born (we discover at the end of the film that he was stillborn), the film goes out of its way to explain the psychological reasons for Evan's mysterious black outs (which produce multiple versions of the past)—he invented them in order to deal with the guilt over accidentally killing a woman and her baby. Nick Larson, the protagonist of *The Butterfly Effect 2*, regularly 'loses time' and experiences black outs, which allows him to travel through time as he tries to deal with the consequences of a traumatic experience (his girlfriend's death in a car crash). The film borrows the symptomatic language of multiple personality while remaining indifferent to questions of etiology. Here multiple personality is not a medical condition but a metaphor for the character's difficulty in dealing with a traumatic experience, a defense mechanism he invents in order to deny the reality of what has happened to his girlfriend. His circumstances might change (every time he changes a detail in the past, he provokes a change in the present or rather, what would be the future from the point of view of the past)—he might be a powerless employee in one scenario or the boss in another—but his personality remains the same. There are no multiple personalities here, only multiple scenarios in which Nick, through the power of wishful thinking, inscribes himself. Like David, the protagonist of *Vanilla Sky*, Nick demonstrates a considerable awareness of his existential confusion: he embarks diligently upon internet research on multiple personality and post-traumatic stress disorder; at the same time, like Lenny, the protagonist of *Memento*, even as he acknowledges the real source of his confusion—post-traumatic stress—Nick refuses to attribute his 'time travels' to it. After a while, he simply gets used to traveling through time and waking up in new places with no memory of how, and when, he got there—and he continues to function in remarkably rational ways in all

of these forking pasts. When all his attempts to correct the past bring him to naught, he chooses the only version of the past in which his girlfriend does not die, the one in which he dies instead of her. We are expected to believe that the whole film is Nick's flashback right before his death (as in *Stay*) but then we have to wonder why, if he was the one dying (true) he flashes back to an opposite scenario, in which his girlfriend is the one dying (false); conversely, if the flashback is true (she is the one dying) then his death in the end must be false, just another alternate reality with no referent from which we can view it (it belongs to no one). In the final analysis, the film grants Nick the agency and freedom to decide his fate, to deal with the trauma that caused the emergence of alternate realities, but his 'self-therapy' demands his own death and thus cancels, retrospectively, the alternating of realities.

*The Mothman Prophecies*, the story of a man trying to cope with an unexplainable car accident that caused his wife's death, bestows on the protagonist, John Klein, powers of pre-cognition which help him predict disasters and save people. The strange premonitions, prophecies and encounters, which Klein experiences as an increasing fragmentation of his identity and reality, function as a kind of unconscious self-therapy: he eventually realizes that the radically alternate reality the mothman seems to represent is actually his own alter-ego, a manifestation of his guilt for his wife's death which he tries to atone for it by saving others from certain death.[15] *Dragonfly* tells the story of a doctor dealing with the death of his wife in a Red Cross bus accident in Venezuela. When several of her former patients communicate to Joe their 'meetings' with her during near-death experiences, he begins to believe his wife might not be dead. Although the film suggests the existence of an infinite number of multiple realities—'grades of consciousness' between being fully alert and being dead—these alternate realities are in the end reduced to strategies for coping with the death of a loved one. In all these examples, the multiplication and apparent confusion of realities, identities and temporalities is given a clear (usually subjective) narrative reason (guilt, love, personal suffering etc.).

In *The Number 23* Walter Sparrow, a dog-catcher, becomes obsessed with a novel about obsession (an obsession with the number 23). Walter becomes increasingly aware of the eerie similarities between the life of the novel's protagonist, a detective by the

name of Fingerling, and his own life. The fictional character of the detective Fingerling proves to be an appropriate unsconscious/fictional surrogate for Walter. Fingerling's function is similar to that of the fictional psychiatrist in *Vanilla Sky*: just as David invents his psychiatrist to help himself wake up from the lucid dream, so Walter invents Fingerling to help himself investigate/recall the murder he has himself committed thirteen years earlier. Like other films in this vein (*The Bourne* trilogy, *The Machinist*, *Stay*) *The Number 23* suggests that the painful process of recalling the horrible past, or retrieving repressed memories, is a form of atonement. Although this pervasive obsession with remembering might appear as an obsession with bearing witness, doing justice, atoning for one's sins, there is so much stress on the process of recall (which takes up the whole film) that in the end the painful, even traumatic process of recalling replaces, or outweighs in importance, the original trauma. In this film, as in *Premonition*, that which creates the problem also provides the solution, in the manner of a self-fulfilling prophesy: the obsession with the number 23 leads Walter to murder but it is also a coping strategy (only by recalling his own obsession with the number can Walter atone for his sin). Despite the confusion of multiple possible scenarios—events and characters straddle different ontological and narratives frames (reality, dream, fantasy, memory) freely swapping places—in the end this multiplicity of scenarios is reduced to a childhood trauma (Walter's father's suicide and Walter's desperate attempts to comprehend this event in the absence of any rational explanation: his father, an accountant obsessed with numbers, did not leave a suicide note, only the number 23). The sole reason for the multiplication of realities, identities and temporalities is to invest the character with a greater sense of agency, with more choices that would allow him to redeem himself from a murderer to a worthy father and husband and a worthy citizen (he turns himself in). "Some choices are easy, some aren't," Walter muses in the film's concluding voiceover. "Those are the really important ones, the ones that define us as people…Thirteen years ago I made the wrong choice. I had to put it right."

The protagonist of *The Number 23* declares wearily that "Time is just numbers, with a meaning attached to them." The screenwriter of *Premonition* couldn't agree more. In the special commentary included in the DVD edition of the film, he tells us how he got inspired to write the story. "What if," he asked, "the days of the week were like playing

cards, and you threw them up in the air, and wherever they landed that's how the whole thing would play out?" Time-warping or time-travel, and the multiple branches of time it gives rise to (in one branch, Linda reconciles with her husband, in another she doesn't forgive his betrayal and lets him die, etc.) are used as strategies for coping with marital problems. As the film's writer explains, "The strange phenomenon of 'premonition provides the character with an insight into what's going on in her life at this time that otherwise she wouldn't have had a glimpse of." The film conflates past, present and future, leaving no stable point of reference—in time—from which to follow the story. Any element in the evolving narrative can be, at one and the same time, a foreshadowing and a flashback; every moment of story time can be, at one and the same time, in the past ("Honey, Jim is already dead") and in the future (Jim is about to die, in the future, and his wife can prevent his death). This is a familiar 'nesting' or 'Russian doll' narrative, except that we cannot identify the biggest doll (i.e. the outer narrative frame within which the other frames are nested).

When Linda senses she is on the verge of madness, she dutifully makes an appointment with a priest who instructs her that "it is never too late to decide what is important in your life and to fight for it." The odd metaphysical phenomenon of which we had assumed she was a victim—premonition—actually grants her the power to interpret events however she wants to, specifically to imagine a reconciliation with her ever more distant husband and to justify, retrospectively (or should we say both retrospectively *and* prospectively—as if to be on the safe side) what seemed to be a failing marriage. The premonition is not an objective fact that happens *to* her but a symptom of her marital problems and, at the same time, a solution to those problems i.e., we see here the familiar narrative pattern of a self-fulfilling prophesy parading as 'de-mythologization' or 'enlightenment'.

Finally, the Hollywood chronotope uses multiple realities to construct an elaborate self-referential narrative structure. Jack Starks, the protagonist of *The Jacket*, an amnesiac soldier just returned from the first Persian Gulf War is tried for the murder of a police officer. He is sent to a hospital for the criminally insane where he is subjected to a harrowing 'treatment' which involves putting him in a straight jacket and locking him up in a drawer to force him to remember what really happened. The drawer turns out to be a

sort of a mini 'time-machine' which transports Jack to various points in time in the future, from where, armed with the foreknowledge of his own impending death, he struggles to reconstruct the events leading up to it. The confusing mixture of different narrative times serves a purely decorative and therapeutic function: the film hints at a political allegory but really it is far more interested in the purely formal pleasure of a looped, self-referential narrative which ends precisely where it began, while, at the same time, allowing Jack to redeem (have a therapeutic effect on) other characters. In *Suspect Zero* the fragmentation, multiplication and mirroring of identities—the FBI agent's identification with Suspect Zero, an elite special agent who might or might not be a serial killer; on the other hand, Suspect Zero's identification with the victims of the serial killers he is responsible for tracking down—is used to create a self-referential structure decorated with a clever framing device, which reveals that 'Suspect Zero' has foreseen his own death with the help of the same remote viewing skills he has been using to capture criminal offenders.

**Conclusion**

Whereas at the moment of the birth of cinema and in the 1970s—the two main 'epidemics' of the multiple—multiple personality disorder was an illness with particular recognizable symptoms, the current epidemic of the multiple in Hollywood cinema has outgrown the illness model. The symptomatic language of multiple personality now describes an increasingly unstable, ontologically vague, dissociative objective reality. Borrowing the symptomatic language of multiple personality Hollywood has created a new genre of films suggesting new creative ways of dealing with all kinds of problems (rather than with strictly mental problems), from psychological (*The Mothman Prophecies*) through marital (*Premonition*) to ethical (*The Bourne* trilogy). Within the old illness model the multiple was the result of trauma; in these films, however, the multiple is both the result of trauma (or of another more mundane problem) *and* the solution to the trauma/problem. Thus, even though characters find themselves in increasingly confusing situations, where they cannot even distinguish reality from dream and have to literally keep a calendar of events—e.g. Linda in *Premonition*—this confusion is not debilitating; on the contrary, what appears as a confusing multiplicity of realities and temporalities

enlarges the pool of options available to the characters and helps them cope with their problems. In an increasingly mediated culture, narratives involving multiple realities provide an outlet for the anxiety we feel over our passivity and powerlessness. They redeem the negative connotations of multiplicity—instability, groundlessness, and relativism—by treating multiplicity as a reassuring surplus of possibilities. Hollywood cinema of the multiple would have us believe that as long as we manage to arrange events in a chronological order, as long as we learn to distinguish the real from the unreal, all problems will be solved or, put differently, that problems—marital problems, the meaningless of life, unresolved feelings of guilt, loneliness etc.—are caused either by a lack of chronology and/or by an ontological confusion of the real with the unreal, that the problems are metaphysical rather than existential. In other words, such narratives distract us from the real roots of the problem (e.g. the ennui of middle class marriage or the unfairness of gender roles in *Premonition*, where the threat to the housewife's marriage seems to be the only excitement in her routine life) and force us to focus on the purely intellectual task of arranging events on a timeline (ironically, the ennui and predictability of marital life in this film are eventually solved by producing a schedule/calendar of events, an appropriate metaphor for the predictability of marital life). *Premonition* is about 'getting the dates right' rather than about questioning the institution of marriage, in whose name the protagonist labors diligently at the absurd metaphysical puzzle she is presented with.

In *Genres in Discourse* Todorov distinguishes several principles of narrative organization, including succession and transformation (1990: 38).[16] The simplest type of transformation is negation: the changing of one term into its contrary (e.g. a project is accomplished or not). A more complicated type of transformation involves the movement from ignorance to knowledge: "an erroneous perception of an event is opposed to an accurate perception of that same event" (31). Todorov refers to narratives based on the logic of succession and transformation as "*mythological*." On the other hand, there are "narratives in which the event itself is less important than our perception of it, and the degree of knowledge we have of it: hence I propose the term *gnoseological* for this second type of narrative organization (it might also be called *epistemological*)" (31).[17] The second type of narrative unfolds through transformation of knowledge rather than

through a sequence of events or actions: “passages recounting actual events are often preceded by passages in which those same events are evoked in the form of a prediction”; “suppositions prior to the event are matched by others recalled only after the event has taken place”; “the announcement [or prediction of events to come] is a transformation, not of supposition, but of knowledge: it consists in a reinterpretation of events that have already taken place” (32). When we get to the end of the story “we are in possession of the truth and not deceived by appearances” (33). This preoccupation with the transformation of knowledge—manifested in the emphasis on prediction, recollection and reinterpretation of events—is the dominant structuring principle in the ‘multiple film’, in which premonitions, visions, memories (including false memories) and other strategies of deception perform the same function of building a ‘narrative of knowledge’.

Hollywood cinema of the multiple suggests that the meaning of events lies in whether or not the events are real (multiple realities) and/or in what order they occur (multiple temporalities), and who we are depends on whether we remember everything, regardless of what exactly it is we remember (the act of remembering is more important than what is remembered). As long as we maintain we are absolutely free to choose ourselves, we can choose ourselves as essentially good, as Jason Bourne or Jean Jacket (in *Unknown*) do; as long as we believe the loved ones we have lost are not really lost but continue to exist in some alternate world, we can deny the reality of death (*The Mothman Prophecies*); as long as we doubt the reality of the world we are distracted from acting upon it with the intention of changing it; instead, we remain absorbed in the game of guessing the boundaries of the real (*The Thirteenth Floor*). In the ‘multiple film’ the multiplication of realities, identities or temporalities does not lead to skepticism, as one might expect, because every illusory reality, mistaken identity or a-chronological sequence of events is eventually given a clear narrative or psychological justification, having been ultimately designed to reinvest characters with a sense of agency.

One cannot help but wonder to what extent the current obsession with what are essentially ‘time travel’ experiences might be seen as a reflection of the fatigue and ennui of postmodern urban life. I would argue that the numerous experiments with non-linear narrative time are not a symptom of the increasingly dense, maze-like nature of our temporal existence as much as they reveal its repetitious, boring nature. Responding to

our desperate desire to escape the predictable, mechanical nature of our entrenched, habituated lives, filmmakers seem to have no choice but to recast, and thus *redeem*, *predictability as something out of the ordinary (e.g. premonition*) so that our daily experience might appear not automated and banal but, in fact, unpredictable and chaotic. The obsession with premonition, déjà-vu and self-fulfilling prophecy artificially infuses our daily existence with a sense of semantic depth or meaningfulness, making us believe that our banal existence, which appears meaningless on the surface, has actually always already been waiting to be justified by a specific event in the future (premonition) or the past (déjà-vu), or somewhere in-between (self-fulfilling prophecy). Once that special event has retrospectively made our life (and the film) meaningful, the meaninglessness of life (and of the film) will appear to be just an illusion. In other words, it's all a question of timing: *we shall be saved from time by—ironically—time*. Overwhelmed and constantly bombarded by sense impressions in the sensibly and semiotically bloated contemporary environment, we have gradually lost our ability to distinguish between them. Faced with an onslaught of myriads of simultaneous impressions, each aggressively claiming our attention, our only defense strategy is to treat them all as one common source of irritation rather than exhausting ourselves psychologically by responding to each one individually. As our minds try to defend themselves in the most efficient way, they begin to ignore spatial and temporal distinctions and treat all external stimuli as basically the same. From this point of view, experiences like déjà-vu and premonition are not 'magical' or special experiences that only certain kinds of people have; rather, such experiences reflect our increasing inability to register the new in our lives. The sense that events in the present have already happened to us (déjà-vu) or the sense that we already know what is going to happen to us (premonition) suggests that we have reached a point where we experience everything as mere repetition. The appealing 'magical' elasticity of *narrative time* conveniently disguises the fixed, repetitious nature of *existential time*.

What I described above amounts to an attempt to import what is essentially a religious worldview—the religious belief that the ultimate truth of our existence will be revealed at some vague point in the future, not in this finite life—into our secular, technologized existence. Münsterberg's explanation of the social conditions which gave

rise to the anti-intellectualism and superstition of his time—the stress on materialism and business success left the soul unsatisfied so that deeper spiritual longings were pushed to mystical extremes (1914: 134-135)—are very much applicable to our own time. The experiments with the temporal structure of contemporary films can also be seen as a reflection of our unsatisfied spiritual longing, of our longing for meaning. In order to fulfill these spiritual longings, the pure experience of time is transformed into a charged spiritual experience which lends our ordinary, bland existence a level of profundity or meaningfulness: to have a spiritual experience no longer means to communicate with some extra-human power but rather to 'feel time'—to feel time passing, stopping, freezing, reversing etc. In this respect, we can view contemporary films experimenting with time as religious films in disguise: they attempt to distract us from the banality of our daily existence by securing a modicum of meaning in our experience of narrative time, which our experience of existential time no longer provides.

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Notes

[1] In *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter* Friedrich Kittler analyzes the contribution of the new discourse network of 1900—specifically the chronophotography of hysterical patients—to the theatricalization of 'hysteria' (an early term for 'multiple personality') and to the development of psychoanalysis. Kittler asserts that cinema's recording potential made madness possible or that, at the least, it kept alive the *belief in madness* by providing reliable records of it. This argument is by no means new. As early as 1910, Dr. Hans Hennes of the Provinzial-Heil-und Pflegeanstalt Bonn, in his treatise *Cinematography in the Service of Neurology and Psychiatry,* singled out cinema as the only proper medium for recording 'hysterical motion malfunctions'. He observed that "in all cases…it was typical that distraction from the symptoms of the disease and the suspension of external stimuli were sufficient to reduce, or almost completely eliminate, [hysterical] movements. By contrast, it is enough to draw attention to phenomena, or for the physician to examine the patient, even just step up to him, in order for dysfunctions to appear with greater intensity. […] How often does it happen to the professor that a patient fails during lecture, that a manic suddenly changes his mood, a catatonic suddenly fails to perform his stereotypes movements. […] Other patients show their interesting oddities 'maliciously,' only when there are no lectures. […] Such occurrences, which are frequently disturbing to the clinical lecturer, are almost completely corrected by the cinematograph. The person doing the filming is in a position to wait calmly for the best possible moment to make the recording. Once the filming is done, the pictures are available for reproduction at any moment. Film is always 'in the mood.' There are no failures" (Hennes cited in Kittler 145). Extrapolating from Hennes's view of madness as a sort of self-fulfilling prophecy, Kittler goes on to argue that not only do new media technologies create new illnesses—they are also capable of putting an end to them once they have been recorded. Kittler attributes the disappearance of the 'great hysterical arc', at least in part, to the availability of its record on film: once 'the hysterical arc' had been safely stored on film, the inhabitants of mental asylums could abandon their 'performances' and stop flaunting their 'oddities'. In short, cinematography modernized psychiatry: under its influence psychiatry began to 'produce new beings' (hysterics), with multiplicity becoming increasingly viewed as a construct. New technologies of reproduction, and the discourse associated with them, not only confirmed the reality of multiple personality but also contributed to the evolution of a new discourse of the self as inherently multiple and reproducible. In 1885, ten years before the first film screening of the Lumière brothers, the first clinical case of a multiple, Louis Vivet, was photographed in his ten personality states (Hacking, *Rewriting the Soul* 5). Two years later the first person whose dissociative fugues were studied in detail, Albert Dad, was photographed in his three states (normal, hypnotized and during a fugue). Thus, multiplicity "was made visual from the very beginning, and faithfully followed new technologies. After movies had been invented, they were used to record switches (31). Photography and film provided incontrovertible evidence of the obsoleteness of the idea of a transcendental ego: multiple selves appeared to co-exist within the same person without the need for a central coordinating agency.

[2] Recent technological innovations have made mental malfunctions available to anyone interested in experiencing virtually what it is like to be a schizophrenic, for example. In 2007 drug makers, psychologists and psychiatrists gathered at Janssen Pharmaceutica headquarters in Titusville, New Jersey, to create a new type of virtual reality experience, *Mindstorm*, a 3-D virtual reality simulator that allows viewers to experience an average day in the life of a schizophrenic. We should also note the uncanny confluence between the recent cinematic epidemic of the multiple—the growing number of films envisioning multiple realities, identities or temporalities that are often the result of amnesia—and the steadily growing experimental research on memory and amnesia, which is then 'publicized' by the next memory blockbuster. For instance, researchers at Harvard and McGill University have been working on an amnesia drug that blocks or deletes bad memories. The technique seems to allow psychiatrists to disrupt the biochemical pathways that allow a memory to be recalled. In a study published in *The Journal of Psychiatric Research*, the drug propranolol was used, along with therapy, to 'dampen' memories of trauma victims. The fact that this was the premise of the 2004 film *Eternal*

*Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* once again foregrounds the looping effect between cinema and scientific research.

[3] As early as 1907 Emil Kraepelin already approached madness and mental illness as social metaphors: "L'étude de la folie ne nous devoile pas seulement une quantité de lois generales; elle nous ouvre encore des apercus profonds sur l'histoire du développement de l'esprit humain, que nous envisagions l'individu en soi ou la race tout entière; elle ne donne enfin la clef grâce à laquelle nous serons en état de comprendre les nombreuses manifestations intellectuelle, morales, religieuses et artistique de notre vie sociale." Emil Kraepelin, *Introduction à la psychiatrie Clinique* (Paris: Vigot Freres, Editeurs, 1907), 6. Microfische. Bibliothèque National de France.

[4] See Mellencamp, P., 2001. The Zen of Masculinity. In J. Lewis. ed. *The End of Cinema as We Know It: American Film in the Nineties*. New York: NYU Press, 83-94. Mellencamp discusses *The Matrix* in terms of multiplicity as a synthesis of various media (theater, film, graphic arts, television, computer games, live action and CGI). She argues that films like *The Matrix*—films that offer us multiple realities, multiple deaths, and lives—are empowering, not escapist.

[5] The most intriguing part of Hacking's critique of the simplistic etiology of multiple personality and of memory recovery therapy is his detour into a philosophical discussion of the constitutive indeterminacy of the past, an inescapable phenomenon of which memory recovery therapy takes advantage. See Hacking, I., 2000. *The Social Construction of What?* Harvard: Harvard University Press.

[6] He attributes the rise of an epidemic to the 'looping effect' inherent in every discourse: an epidemic is precipitated by a significant transformation in an object of discourse in response to the evolution of the *discourse* itself. Because the object of discourse is placed under new descriptions that were not originally available, the object as such is, however slightly, modified. For instance, in the case of multiple personality, the 'looping effect' refers to the way in which the discourse of the multiple contributed to the 'production' (the 'making up') of multiples, who, in turn, 'learned' to behave in ways conforming to the discourse that had produced them. The increasing vagueness and instability of diagnostic criteria in the second half of the 19th century eventually created the conditions under which it became possible for an increasing number of people to be diagnosed as multiples.

[7] At the same time, the shift from 'personality' to 'dissociation' has brought multiple personality closer to schizophrenia: in 1994 the criteria required the 'presence', rather than the 'existence' of more than one personality. Insofar as 'presence' is the word used to refer to delusions typical of schizophrenia, alters are made to appear analogous to delusions (Hacking, *Rewriting the Soul* 19-20).

[8] Paul Bretecher notes the gradual disappearance of the word "madness", denoting a more general state, and its replacement with a series of terms referring to particular cases (psychosis, neurosis, depression, perversion, autism). He traces the history of the effacement of the word "folie" from the birth of the sciences of the mind in the beginning of the 19th century, through the effacement of old religious view of madness as a matter of possession under the influence of the new positivistic worldview, to the influence of Foucault on the anti-psychiatry movement and, finally, the introduction of psychotropic drugs, psychotherapy and the emergence of art brut. Paul Bretecher, "Folie-Actualite." *La raison en feu, ou la fascination du cinéma pour la folie*. Ouvrage coordonné par Carole Desbarats (Saint-Sulpice-sur-Loire: L'ACOR, 1999), 15-19. Bibliothèque National de France.

[9] For example, Karl Miller's reading of Sybil's case treats multiple personality as an instance of the intrinsic fictionality of identity: "Every life is made up, put on, imagined—including, hypocrite lecteur, yours. Sibyl's life was made up by Sybil, by her doctor, when she became a case, and again, when she became a book, by her author. Sixteen selves were imagined. But it is not even entirely clear that there were as many as two" (348).

[10] Deborah's treatment is supposed to help her distinguish between reality and Dreamland as well as between real and invented memories (e.g. the false memory of killing her own sister—something she wished for but never actually did). While the first few times the transition between reality and Dreamland is made very obvious precisely by making it metaphorical (opening a door to another

world), gradually the jump cuts and illogical cuts between scenes begin to happen not only between real and psychotic scenes but also between real scenes i.e. sometimes we see Deborah in the real world, there is a jump cut and we suddenly see her in one of her dream scenarios, but there are also times when we see her in the real world and with a quick cut we are transported to another scene, also taking place in the real world but spatially and temporally removed from the preceding scene. Thus, if temporal and spatial dissociation serve, originally, as markers or visual cues that help us keep the two worlds Deborah straddles separate, when these same cues are used within the world of the real only, they tend to de-realize it so that even scenes taking place in the hospital become open to being read as psychotic episodes. Here, as well as in *The Thirteenth Floor*, the multiplication of realities and the gradual 'phasing out' of reliable cues used to distinguish between them renders all realities equally unreal.

[11] According to Vidler, affective states that become dominant at a particular point in history reflect the culture of the time: melancholy was the privileged affective state in the Romantic period, multiple personality or hysteria (originally MP was not distinguished from hysteria) in the latter half of the 19th century, schizophrenia and depression in the 20th century.

[12] The notion of memory as an object of retrieval is central to psychoanalytic thought, for which it is access to memory rather than initial input or storage that is problematized. In the majority of cases of multiple personality the initial experience might not even be as harmful as is usually supposed; it is only its recollection that produces memory dysfunction.

[13] On the one hand, the ongoing process of globalization has clearly contributed to this reconceptualization of self and community: the notion of the Internet as a global memory bank has already become a cliché.

[14] The film abounds in time paradoxes. First, if the current branch of time, the one from which they send a warning note back to the past, ceases to exist after the note creates a ripple in the flow of time, and thus a new branch, then doesn't that mean that they never sent a note to the past since the previous branch in which they supposedly did it, has now ceased to exist? The first time Doug goes to the woman's house, after her death, he finds words on the fridge—'You can save her'—which should not have been there since he would have written these words only later in the film, after he has been sent back to the past. In another scene, Doug is watching the woman on the screen while another team is looking through her house. One of the other agents jokingly says that Doug's prints are all over the place: but this cannot be since at this point in the narrative he has not been sent into the past yet and thus would not have yet left any prints. The prints suggest that he has already been there, which in turn renders his later time travel superfluous: the present and the past become echoes of each other, neither of them having an ontological priority over the other.

[15] This comes through in his phone conversation with the mothman which reveals that the latter knows things only the man himself can know ("What do you look like? Depends on who is looking. You have already met me."), or in the regular shifts in the resolution of the image whenever the camera is recording him.

[16] Todorov argues that these remarks about narrative do not refer only to literary texts but to all symbolic systems, and in fact most of all to cinema because what he examines here is not 'text' but 'narrative'.

[17] Todorov adds yet another type of narrative, Henry James's tales in which the transformation is from "primary ignorance to a lesser ignorance" (33). In James, the process of acquiring knowledge (the mark of the epistemic narrative) is essential but also complemented by yet another process—subjectivation, a personal reaction or response to an event.