

MEMORY IN SOCIETIES WITHOUT MEMORY
The Problematic Status of Memory in Films After 1990

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The Problematic Status of Memory in Films After 1990

HAFIZASIZ TOPLUMLARDA HAFIZA
1990 Sonrası Filmlerde Hafızanın Sorunlu Durumu

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to understand the meaning of ‘memory’ in societies of post-90s, that are getting memory-less every day and to understand the reasons and result of that problematic status of memory through the films of that era, which deals with the subject memory manipulation. Post-1990 is chosen to focus on because it seems that there is a breaking point in years between 1989 and 1991, both from political-economical and technological perspectives.

After 90s, in an era where not only the meaning of reality but even the meaning of hyper realities became uncanny and obscure, where human body is terrorized by the possibility of cyber bodies and where minds are under control of technology, memory seems to become both the most popular and most terrifying subject that we come across in every medium.

If so, what is the meaning of memory for societies, which are conditioned to ‘not to remember’, on the transition stage to 21st century. If memory deals with the creation of identity in order to allow experience to be remembered, are people becoming afraid of losing their identities? Films articulate secular fears of human beings. Therefore in the study, the problematic status of memory will be discussed and explained by tracing the films; *Dark City* (Alex Proyas, 1998), *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*

(Michel Gondry, 2004), *Open Your Eyes* (*Abre los Ojos*, Alejandro Amenabar, 1997), *The Forgotten* (Joseph Ruben, 2004) and other films of the period with similar approaches, which deal with the subject 'memory manipulation'.

ÖZET

Bu projenin amacı 1990 sonrası dönemde hafızasızlaşan toplumlar için hafızanın anlamını, hafızanın problemleri durumunun neden ve sonuçlarını yine bu dönem çekilmiş olan hafıza manipülasyonunu konu alan filmler aracılığıyla anlamaktır. İnceleme için 1990 sonrası dönemin seçilme nedeni ise 1989-1991 yıllarının gerek politik-ekonomik gerekse teknolojik açıdan bir kırılım noktası olarak görülmesidir.

Yalnızca realite ve hatta hiper realite kavramlarının tanımlanmasının güç bir hale geldiği, insan bedeninin siber beden kavramının tehdidi altında olduğu ve insan zihninin teknolojinin kontrolü altına girmekte olduğu 1990 sonrasında 'hafıza' hem en popüler hem de en kaygı uyandırıcı konu olarak karşımıza çıkmaktadır. O halde, 21. yüzyıla geçilen bu dönemde hatırlamamaya şartlanmış toplumlar için hafızanın anlamı nedir? Eğer hafıza kimliğin oluşması için gerekli deneyimin hatırlanmasını sağlamaktaysa insanlar kimliklerini kaybetme korkusu ile mi karşı karşıyadır? Filmler insanların dünyevi korkularını yansıtırlar. Bu nedenle bu çalışmada 'hafıza'nın bu sorunlu durumu hafıza manipülasyonunu temel alan; *Gizemli Şehir* (Alex Proyas, 1998), *Sil Baştan* (Michel Gondry, 2004), *Aç Gözünü* (Alejandro Amenabar, 1997), *Gizemli Parçalar* (Joseph Ruben, 2004) filmleri ve dönemin benzer özellikler taşıyan diğer filmleri incelenerek anlaşılmasına ve açıklanmasına çalışılacaktır.

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INTRODUCTION

“Memory is so important that without it there would be no qualities like development of language or intellectual functioning, that are associated with being human.” (Russell, 1997: 81) So it is possible to claim that, a study which deals with memory also deals with being human, directly or indirectly.

Besides, in philosophy “memory is a label for a diverse set of cognitive capacities by which humans and perhaps other animals retain information and reconstruct past experiences, usually for present purposes.” (<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/memory>) As a result issues related to memory are also expected to be related to past events.

Memory theories may be used to understand the mechanism and dynamics of the formation of memory. There are many different theories about remembering a past event but the common point of those theories is that “the output of human memory often differs-sometimes rather substantially- from the input.” (Schacter, 1997: 1)

According to Barlett:

Memory is a constructive process. Recall is not retrieval but a reconstruction, in which aspects of the content of previously presented material are woven into a coherent whole, with the aid of preexisting knowledge. Details may be distorted to increase coherence, rationalizations not present in the original may be introduced;

details that are consistent with the synthesized coherent story may be added; and details that are inconsistent may be dropped. (qtd. in Schacter, 1997: 69)

Additionally Neisser asserts that “perception and memory likens to the constructive activities of a paleontologist, who uses a collection of bone fragments as well as everything she knows about dinosaurs from previous experience to reconstruct the skeleton of a particular dinosaur.” (qtd. in Schacter, 1997: 69)

Another theorist Lindsay states that “when people witness a particular event and are later given misleading information about it they often fail to remember whether the critical information was part of the original event or was only suggested to them later.” (qtd in. Schacter, 1997: 14) And others-Brainerd, Hoffding and Freud-argue that “representations once formed, do not change by subsequent events, rather forgetting is a retrieval failure.” (qtd. in Schacter, 1997: 48)

Schacter also asserts that there are other theorists who claim that “representations do not remain crystallized but rather degenerate through decay, reorganization, substitution or some other mechanism.” (Schacter, 1997: 49) All of these theories state in common that the formation of memories includes encoding, storage and retrieval of information.

On the other hand, every description that excludes the importance of the psyche is a restricted approach from a psychological perspective. According to Freud “why we remember and what we remember, the motive and the content, are inseparable.” (qtd. in King, 1983: 1200) So, two

different people would remember the same event in different ways and would interpret them totally different from each other.

My basic purpose in this study is to analyze the problematic status of memory after 1990, where I see a breaking point from both economical and political perspectives. I also believe that the reason that brought memory and memory-lessness as major items to the contemporary agenda is the impressive developments in technology in the same period.

There is a devastating development in information, communication and digital technologies that separates post 1990 period from former decades. With the development of computers and digital technologies, a new medium that enables to record and store different types of data, has arisen. With the help of developed digital technologies, written documents, movies or still pictures and other information in different forms became easily recordable materials that can also be easily stored.

The term memory includes encoding, storage and retrieval of the information. So there seems a resemblance between memory and data storage, which is a basic instrument for recently developed information technologies. Therefore it seems not as a coincidence that the growth of these technologies and the growth of arguments about issues related to memory goes parallel to each other.

Andreas Huyssen (2003) calls today's societies as "contemporary memory culture of amnesia, anesthesia or numbing" by referring to other critics that describe this new type of society as unable and unwilling to remember. "The amnesia reproach is invariably couched in a critique of the

media, while it is these media – from print and television to cd-roms and the Internet – that make ever more memory available to us day by day.” (Huyssen, 2003:17) Today, people are surrounded by too much information that can be reached through many different ways. Jeffrey Pence’s words about that subject emphasizes another aspect that “contemporary memory’s greatest difficulty lies not in its weakness but in its strength: rather than an amnesiac disappearance of memory, recent technological developments promote an artificial and debilitating abundance of memory.” (Pence, 2002: 344)

Today people receive information willingly or unwillingly, since there is abundance even a pollution of information. Moreover, which information should be retained and which should be forgotten is being determined by the media- the most effective medium to gather and distribute information. Taking too much information in a short period makes people feel as being fed up with information. In many cases too much information causes a kind of amnesia. On the other hand that information, taken in a short period is also being lost in the same way. I prefer to call this situation as a form of memory manipulation. Information penetrates human mind and too much penetration distorts the remembering process. As a result, memory becomes manipulated.

In post 1990 period we come across to a group of films that took memory as their main subject. These new generation memory films, which usually deal with individual memory and related subjects, are different from the ones in 1950s and 60s that were mostly dealing with collective memory

or Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. What makes these new memory films different from former ones is also their approach to the loss of memory. In most of these new generation memory films people suffer from memory loss, but it doesn't mean that they forget as a result of a trauma or as a result of an illness. They forget as a result of memory manipulation, which is a striking component of those films. This approach seems consistent with the profile of individualized and isolated human of post 1990 period.

The situation in filmic world may be accepted as a metaphoric representation of the ongoing manipulations to memory that people face with today, in real world. While the manipulators of memory in the filmic world are aliens or other third parties, the manipulators of memory in real world may be denominated as; media, films, fast flowing lifestyle, developed technologies, consumer culture etc.

The most widely-recognized ones of these memory films are *Total Recall* (1990), *Johnny Mnemonic*(1995), *Strange Days* (1995), *Open Your Eyes* (1997), *Dark City* (1998), *Memento* (2000), *Vanilla Sky* (2001)(the USA remake of the film *Open Your Eyes*), *Paycheck* (2003), *The Manchurian Candidate* (2004) (the remake of the original film in 1962), *The Forgotten* (2004), *Final Cut*(2004) and *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*(2004). Although all those films deal with subjects related to this study, my aim is to focus on a specific subject, “memory manipulation”. Therefore I chose the films *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, *Dark City*, *Open Your Eyes*, *The Forgotten* and *Final Cut*(partially) as the basis of

my filmic analysis, since their main subject was “memory manipulation” which is a dominating subject in memory films of post 1990 period.

Additionally, I did not prefer to analyze the films *Total Recall* and *Paycheck* in this study since they are based on the stories of Philip K. Dick, who mainly deals with the subject memory and manipulation of memory just before 90s. All of the films, that I chose for the basis of my analysis are western (European and North American) oriented and this choice was made intentionally. I think that the technologies, that shaped the post 1990 era, has an important impact on the perception of the meaning of memory and since these new technologies are mostly consumed by European and North American communities it would be easier to observe this impact with the chosen films.

In the first chapter of this study I will deal with the relation between technology and memory. In the second chapter I will try to understand the spirit of post 1990 period that inserted ‘memory’ as the main subject into filmic world and will discuss that subject from different perspectives. In the third chapter I will try to argue about the term ‘memory’ through the theories of Jacques Lacan. And in the fourth chapter I will reveal the similarities of the chosen films and will focus on the narrational elements that were used in those films to generate meaning before I come to a conclusion about the causes and results of the problematic status of memory after 1990.

CHAPTER I: Technology Beside or Against Humanity

1. Technology & Memory

“Nothing remained unchanged but the clouds, and beneath these clouds, in a field of force of destructive torrents and explosions, was the tiny, fragile human body.”

Walter Benjamin, The Storyteller

Looking back to the last decade of 20th century gives the chance to understand the impact of the new technologies that were widespread in this period. An important impact of this revolutionary change is on the term ‘memory’. The term memory migrated to a new form which may be called as “postmemory”.(Pence, 2002) And focusing on the progress of technology may be the key to understand the changes about memory.

With a simple approach, memories may be described as private information which have been encoded and stored in the mind of the person by being filtered and altered through his/her perception. Since this altered information is totally subjective and extremely personal, it may be accepted as the codes that enable to understand the character of that person. On the other hand the definition of memory is directly related to information and

the technological developments which have an impact on the definition of information has also an impact on memory.

According Lenoir “information, which was a hardware before became a software [and this]...can also be described as [the] disembodiment of the digital information. (Lenoir, 2002: 203).

The change in digital technologies after 1990 necessitated to use new devices to retrieve and represent information. Consequently, personal computers widespread after 1990 with other devices like mp3 players, digital camcorders, electronic networks and many others for personal usage, all of which are agents to store and retrieve data. Because of the metaphoric resemblance of the data storage process in those devices and in human mind, human memory began to be compared with those devices. Computers are the most common ones, subject to this comparison. Jeffrey Pence paraphrases this situation as follows:

Such technologies offer the dominant metaphors for our understanding of interiority. [...]the brain . . . has supplanted the mind and soul as the most significant emblem of our own identity, the organic fact which seems to come closest to containing the irreducible evidence of our inmost nature. In fact, two of the more potent of contemporary emblems, the brain and the computer, are called into service to define one another. It is often not entirely clear which lends the greater prestige to the other. (Kuberski, 1992, qtd. in Pence, 2002: 346)

There's a hidden threat in those words of Pence, which implicates a possibility of a non-human entity that can be the substitute of human mind or the memory.

There are theorists like Ray Kurzweil, Hans Moravec, Richard Dawkins and Marvin Minsky, that focus on searching the consequences of the advanced technologies and their impacts on human beings. These scientist-theorists are trying to figure out a possible posthuman condition that may be faced to in the near future. Before going any further, the term posthuman, should be described and clarified. The term 'posthuman' is described by N. Katherine Hayles as follows:

First, the posthuman view privileges informational pattern over material instantiation, so that embodiment in a biological substrate is seen as an accident of history rather than an inevitability of life. Second, the posthuman view considers consciousness, regarded as the seat of human identity in the Western tradition long before Descartes thought he was a mind thinking, as an epiphenomenon, as an evolutionary upstart trying to claim that it is the whole show when in actuality it is only a minor sideshow. Third, the posthuman view thinks of the body as the original prosthesis we all learn to manipulate, so that extending or replacing the body with other prostheses becomes a continuation of a process that began before we were born. Fourth, and most important, by these and other means, the posthuman view configures human being so that it can be seamlessly articulated with intelligent machines. In the posthuman, there are no essential differences or absolute demarcations between bodily existence and computer simulation, cybernetic mechanism and biological organism, robot teleology and human goals.(Hayles, 1999: 2-3)

Although the description of a posthuman condition does not include a loss in humanity, it brings a revision to the definition of being a human. And this new posthuman condition states no essential differences between bodily

existence and computer simulation. It embraces a new form of memory, rather different than today's.

According to Ray Kurzweil (2000) "by 2099, human thinking and machine intelligence will have merged, with no meaningful distinction left between humans and computers". He also states that:

Up until now, our mortality was tied to the longevity of our hardware. [...] As we cross the divide to instantiate ourselves into our computational technology, our identity will be based on our evolving mind file. We will be software, not hardware. . . . the essence of our identity will switch to the permanence of our software. (Kurzweil, 2000: 128-29)

Another theorist, Moravec, also embraces the same perspective. He explains the situation as:

One salient feature of transformations includes the concept of "uploading," in which the parallels between neural pattern activity in the human mind and the capacity of advanced neural networking computing will enable humans to transfer their minds into more durable (read: immortal) hardware systems. All of this is made possible via a view of the body that places special emphasis on informational pattern. Once the brain can be analyzed as a set of informational channels, then it follows that that pattern can be replicated in hardware and software systems. (Moravec 1999: 109)

These theories also reflect into the filmic world. The possibility of a posthuman condition and its acceptance as a usual result of technological developments bring fear against the loss of humanity through the loss of both mind and body. Those reflections in filmic world can be traced simply in the films after 1990. In *Dark City* and in *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, memory is described as mere information, a kind of software, that can

be transferred from the brain to other medium, and that can be stored, retrieved and manipulated easily. A separate information entity as Kurzweil and Moravec described in their memory theories.

In *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, Mierzwiak and his team find out a cognitive map of Clementine in Joel's brain. Excluding all other chemical and physical factors that effect the formation and retrieval of memory. The film, like Moravec, embraces 'memory' as a kind of information file which is located in different parts of the brain. Joel, as a human, is almost totally kept out of this procedure. He tries to keep his memories and to stop the erasing procedure, but he cannot change the result. The procedure is only deletion of data files, whose locations are already designated on his brain map. From this perspective brain is approximately a substitute for computer and memories for data files.

Dark City adopts a similar approach about memory. Human mind is taken as a kind of computer from which data can be taken and to which it can be imported again. The brains of the citizens of this dark city are like computers whose software is being formatted and reloaded again and again. Each time new and different information files are being transported into these processors and every new combination of files changes the acts-attitudes-of that computer, creates a new person. In these memory films there is a new kind of description of human being, which can be called as a kind of posthuman, whose mind is malleable and whose memories are open to manipulation.

As it will be discussed in next chapter in detail, we may speak of a relationship between memory and identity. By manipulating the characters' memories, their identities are also being manipulated. As far as they lose their memories and their consciousness about that loss, the danger of losing human characteristics comes up. Technology, rather than providing benefit, appears to pose a threat to mankind. There appears technophobia as a by-product.

Technophobia is not a new term that mankind faced with in the last decade of 20th century. In years of World War I, Walter Benjamin was talking about technophobia already. He was talking about the term information which was a new subject of arguments for those years. According to him the most important result of the leap in technology was that the body's losing "the ability to exchange experiences." (Benjamin, 1985, 83) Benjamin was comparing the way that a storyteller talks about things, and the way people began to receive the story as a kind of information through technology (Benjamin, 1985, 83) and was giving this comparison as an example to show the effects of developing technologies.

Although this skeptic approach against information seems fairly anachronical today, there are many resemblances between that example where Benjamin indicates a threat for mankind and the new status of human memory under the shade of new information technologies of 21st century. There was a technological turning point about information like it has been in the last two decades. Benjamin was talking about the loss in experience and was emphasizing the birth of technophobia in a world where people were

beginning to chose information rather than experience. In today's societies things are getting more and more virtual without leaving any physical experiences left. People are being smothered by the abundance of information but there is a lack of experience. A situation that-according to Benjamin- leads to a rise in technophobia.

Again Benjamin writes that "the cardinal point for the unaffected listener is to assure himself of the possibility of reproducing the story, a possibility that comes true "only by virtue of memory" which "creates the chain of tradition which passes a happening on from generation to generation" (Benjamin, 1985, 97). But to be able to reproduce the story one should remember it. Remembering is a problematic issue in post 90s. It is easier to capture the information when there is few information to take. But there is too much information, most of which is untrustworthy today and the result is amnesia which may be declared as another important threat for humanity.

2. Consuming Memories Through The Help of Technology

Memory is not being fixed at the time of learning but it continues to change and be reorganized as time passes. In that way memory is linked to and influenced by new information. "The information may also be stored as a habit, as a disposition to behave in a particular way but without affording any conscious memory content" (Schacter, 1997: 208), which is also called unconscious memory.

Communication technologies today offer all kind of information to people without eliminating any and that much information causes too much stimulus. Especially the Internet creates that effect. The information loses its value and the memory is mostly being distorted. Some part of the 'real' information, that was stored in mind, is being lost. "As far as it becomes possible to store and retrieve more and more memory, the quality of that memory descends." (Pence, 2002: 347) A kind of unintended manipulation process occurs.

Information is also easily reachable through different media but most of the time that information does not carry reliable data. As a result it is possible to claim that people will not remember their past in the future since there won't be much information left in memory to remember.

Under these circumstances people might not be able to refer to their memories but they will have to call upon the recorded and stored information related to the past. Anton Kaes states that:

A memory preserved in filmed images does not vanish, but the sheer mass of historical images transmitted by today's media weakens the link between public memory and personal experience. The past is put in danger of becoming a rapidly expanding collection of images, easily retrievable but isolated from time and space[...]" (Friedberg, 1993, qtd. in Pence, 2002: 347-348)

Today, it is possible to talk about marketing and consumption of memory. Huyssen (2003) tries to explain the rise of the issue 'memory' in post 90s as an increasingly successful marketing subject by the western culture industry. Media continuously takes public's pulses and whenever it

detects a rise in the interest against a specific subject it analyzes that subject in detail, until no interest is left. If, for example, a disaster happens or if there arises a public interest for disasters, a lot of information about that subject is being gathered by the media, the interest is being pushed further artificially. Many documentaries and films are provided for the public's attention. All the data, related to that subject, become consumable and therefore promotional. The subject is analyzed and explicated from every aspect. On the other hand most of those information are misleading or inadequate. But too much information about a subject turns public's interest upside down. As a result the subject becomes consumed and it is thrown away. Although the threat-related to a possible disaster- is still there, public feels that they took too much and unnecessary information and no one wants to have more information about the subject. Besides, most of the information that is taken in a short period of time, is being lost in the same way.

Historical events are also treated similarly. The past is not a matter of memory any more, it is a matter of general trends. The most traumatic event, for instance, that changed the fate of nations in 20th century was the two world wars, especially the Second World War, in which millions of people died. The subject became an inspiration to books, films, documentaries and many other media products, all of which are only a representation or re-imagination of the real event. But with the time passed, representations or imagined forms of the war took the place of the real event. Mostly the films became a "fictional substitute for real history"

(Huysen, 2003: sf.124) Also Baudrillard claims that “[since] cinema passed into reality[,] [r]eality is disappearing at the hands of cinema and cinema is disappearing at the hands of reality”.(Baudrillard, 2005:125) Media and related technologies re-present the ‘real’ event.

According to Andreas Huyssen(2003) all kind of mass marketed memories can be called as “imagined memories”, that have no relation with real experiences and he claims that such memories are “more easily forgettable than lived memories.”(Huysen, 2003: 17)

Like the replicants in *Blade Runner*, people in today’s societies “are put in the position of reclaiming a history by means of its reproduction. ... In a world of fragmented temporality the research of history finds its image, its photographic simulacrum, while history itself remains out of reach.” (Bruno, 1987: 74).

The strange thing is that the 2nd World War is still one of the most preferred subjects for films and for other media products. A new generation has grown up by dealing with the subject. Most of the people living in 21st century still remember the war but that remembering occurs not through their experiences but through the films that they watched or through the books that they read. There is a new generation, keen on that subject but has no relation with it. “The past has become a collection of photographic, filmic, or televisual images.” (Bruno, 1987: 73) Imagined began to seem more real than the ‘real’ one.

German philosopher, Hermann Lübbe, mentioned about the term “musealization” in early 80s for the first time. He asserted that:

“Never before a cultural present been obsessed with the past to a similar extend. [...] The ever increasing speed of technical scientific and cultural innovation produces ever larger quantities of the soon-to-be-obsolete and it objectively shrinks the chronological expansion of what can be considered the (cutting-edge) present at any given time.” (qtd. in Huyssen, 2003: 22)

Today’s societies are unable to remember the past personally. The inspiration for the name of Lübbe’s theory seems to come from the spirit of the last decades of the 20th century. Not because there arose monuments everywhere. On the contrary, monuments, films and other related stuff act as mnemonics to make people remember the past. All those ‘monuments’ have also a mission, to prove that the forgotten is not forgotten at all, while in reality nothing is being remembered. History became a commodity for consumer culture and although it is always in the agenda it is totally lost in the real sense.

It seems that, as a result of media culture and its outcomes like imagined memories and musealization, societies of 21st century move away from having a private or public memory. The historical events and their traumas, memories and other remainders of the past, shortly all subjects related to the process of remembering became a part of the consumption cycle.

According to the theories of Neisser, Barlett, Lindsay, Brainerd, Hoffding and Freud about remembering process, which were summarized in introduction section of this study, there is a common point that; memories change while recollecting them. Besides if we again turn back to the

retrieval process of memories we face with the term “source amnesia”. New media carries all forms of information that are being stored in memory. On the other hand, in everyday life one often calls a fact or an idea but forgets the source of the information. This situation is called as “source amnesia”. (Schacter, 1997: 216) If the source of a memory is forgotten it cannot be possible to realize whether that memory belongs to that person or it has been adopted through other sources.

Memories, which were encoded in one’s mind may also be distorted when new information, new memories are being taken. That means too much information causes a distortion in memory and leads to the loss of existing or newly adopted memories.

The amount of misremembered information is parallel to the amount of received information. Too much information and too many stimulants effects memory in a bad way. These facts may be the explanation to the question, why the fear of losing memory is growing day by day. Huyssen specifies that: “for the more we are asked to remember in the wake of the information explosion and the marketing of memory, the more we seem to be in danger of forgetting and the stronger the need to forget.” (Huyssen, 2003: 18). On the other hand, “our secular culture today obsessed with memory as it is also somehow in the grips of a fear, even a terror of forgetting.” (Huyssen, 2003: 18)

Besides, memories are no longer need to be remembered as it was in former decades. Digital technologies enable people to record their experiences, to capture every single moment of their lives. And, information

technologies enable them to share those lived experiences with others. People have access to others' lives, life experiences through the Internet or other possible sources. Beside the experienced memories, imagined memories are also presented in the same way in the same environment side by side. The result is a mixture of undistinguishable data. And people take all of these data by filtering them through their perception mechanisms while forming memories in their mind. That leads to a total confusion about memory. People, who reaches so many different types of information, are facing with the possibility of memory distortion or amnesia.

Huyssen argues that:

Wherever one looks, the contemporary public obsession with memory clashes with an intense public panic of oblivion and one may well wonder which came first. Is it the fear of forgetting that triggers the desire to remember, or is it perhaps the other way around? Could it be that the surfeit of memory in this media saturated culture creates such overload that the memory system itself is in constant danger of imploding, thus triggering fear of forgetting?" (Huyssen, 2003:17)

The marketing of memory generates nothing but amnesia. Monuments, commemorations, films, photographs, and the things alike may be included into this category. Pierre Nora states that "we speak so much of memory because there is so little of it left." (Nora, 1989: 7) What would construct the memory is a part of the consumption cycle today. What is left behind is a new kind of generation, running out of memory.

3. New Technologies To Manipulate Memory: Soon In Markets

The technologies, which are being presented in the memory films are mostly not invented yet. But they will possibly come true in the future. Even with today's technological developments, similar processes are being experimented. There are studies and medical findings showing that 'memory manipulation' is not a dream. There are many newly invented medicines and methods that may be cited in this study. But I prefer to give a couple of examples to highlight the existing situation.

In November 2006, for instance, it has been announced a side effect of a prescription drug, called Propranolol. Although it was produced as a heart drug, experiments were showing that it was "inhibit[ing] the chemical rush that makes memories hyperconcrete".(<http://www.esquire.com/features/chuck-klostermans-america/esq0407>) The drug does not have the ability to erase memories, but it was making them more abstract and less painful. It is very sensible to think that upper generations of this and similar drugs may enable to erase the unwanted parts of people's memories in the future.

In another study, whose results were declared by the University of Colorado in 2007, scientists tried to help people to get over fear and anxiety by practicing to suppress a painful memory. In the study:

The brain imaging data show that the areas of the brain that support memory and underlie memory's existence in the brain are down-regulated. In the end of the study, the subjects' memories of images they suppressed were almost uniformly below the baseline and the ones they practiced recalling were almost without fail more vivid than those they deliberately tried to forget."

(<http://www.sciam.com/article.cfm?id=suppressing-memories-takes-practice&ref=rdf>)

Also another study about possible manipulation methods of memory was made at the State University of New York in 2006. The study was dealing with “the storage of Spatial Information by the Maintenance Mechanism of long-term potentiation (LTP)” and the scientific team succeeded to “reverse the LTP maintenance in vivo and produced persistent loss of [...] old spatial information.” (<http://www.sciencemag.org/cgi/content/abstract/313/5790/1141>) Testing was made on rats, but the results foresee that it may be possible to have similar results on human beings in the near future.

Although knowing that those technological developments are still being tested today, they will be realities in the future. In that way manipulating the memory will not only be a subject of science fiction movies any more. Being aware of the fact that it is not a chimera to manipulate memory, this exacerbates the fear related to technology. To picture a future, where both memory and amnesia are products that can be consumed in the market, is just an ordinary result.

CHAPTER II: The Spirit of Post 1990

When we look to post 1990 period, it is possible to say that people became very much concerned about the issues related to 'memory' in this period. The number of films, whose main subject was 'memory' may be accepted as an important evidence for that assertion. There are at least 12 memory films which were shot in years between 1990 and 2004. To be able to understand the reason of why there are so many 'memory films' in that period and what are they trying to connote, it is important to understand the spirit of post 1990.

The year 1989 was an important mile stone that changed the balances in the world. It was that year in that the first announcement about the end of the Cold War was made with the dismantling of Berliner Wall. The Cold War era that had begun in 1945, ended in 1991 with the dissolution of Soviet Union. Although that was the result of an ongoing process in Soviet Union, it was perceived as a declaration of the death of a bi-polar world order on the pole of capitalism. The result was a new uni-polar world order that was evolving towards globalization, which would be the key concept in later years.

While the political and economical balances were changing, the term 'postmodernism' was still holding its sovereignty at the turn of the 20th century. Featherstone describes the basic features of postmodernism as:

The effacement of the boundary between art and everyday life; the collapse of the hierarchal distinction between high and mass/popular culture; a stylistic promiscuity favoring eclecticism and the mixing of codes; parody, pastiche, irony, playfulness and the celebration of surface 'depthlessness' of culture; the decline of the originality/genius of the artistic producer; and the assumption that art can only be repetition.(Featherstone, 1998: 7-8)

The characteristics of Featherstone's definition may be accepted as still valid for 21st century. Especially it is easy to celebrate the surface 'depthlessness' of culture in today's media saturated western societies. From that point of view it is also possible to claim that postmodernism is still on the throne while humankind is preparing to knock down the first decade of 21st century. On the other hand there are counter arguments stating that postmodernism has already died. According to Alan Kirby (2006), for instance, "the shift from modernism to postmodernism did not stem from any profound reformulation in the conditions of cultural production and reception; [...]. But somewhere in the late 1990s or early 2000s, the emergence of new technologies re-structured, violently and forever, the nature of the author, the reader and the text, and the relationships between them." (Kirby, 2006:.2). Kirby (2006) calls this new period as "pseudo-modern." and describes "pseudo-modernism" as "consumerist and conformist, a matter of moving around the world as it is given or sold." (Kirby, 2006: 2) He also states that, "Whereas

postmodernism favored the ironic, the knowing and the playful, with their allusions to knowledge, history and ambivalence, pseudo-modernism's typical intellectual states are ignorance, fanaticism and anxiety." (Kirby, 2006: 5)

It is not possible to reach to a definite conclusion whether postmodern days are over or not. Before trying to determine whether post nineties can be criticized through the glasses of postmodernism, first of all it is useful to clarify why the term 'postmodernism' pops out of every corner.

1. A New Kind of 'Real'

There is the picture of a new world order in 21st century where boundaries between nation states are no longer visible as they were in previous decades. A world, in which the rapid change in technology caused a radical change in the way people live and the way people think. The invention of the Internet can possibly be compared to the invention of printing, which enabled the distribution of information to communities. As an outcome of this new world order, it becomes harder to call a thing as "real". "Real" enters more and more to the domain of ambiguity. What people claim that they know as real cannot be trusted. What mankind knows and describes as real is only a distorted or reflected version of the real while the real is hidden elsewhere. This situation is also parallel to postmodern condition where it is not possible to talk about a clean-cut definition of reality.

Baudrillard, who emerges as one of the key philosophers of postmodern era by dealing with 'the effacement of the real', accentuated

that: “new forms of technology and information caused a shift from a productive to a reproductive social order and that caused simulations and models.”(Baudrillard, 1983, qtd. in Featherstone, 1998: 3) He claims that as a result “the distinction between the real and appearance becomes erased” (Baudrillard, 1983, qtd. in Featherstone, 1998: 3) ‘real’ becomes “hyperreal”(Baudrillard, 1988: 171).

“Postmodernism implies the transformation of reality into images, and the fragmentation of time into a series of perpetual presents”.(Jameson, 1984: 15) “Postmodern everyday culture is therefore a culture of stylistic diversity and heterogeneity, of an overload of imagery and simulations which lead to a loss of the referent or sense of reality”.(Featherstone, 1998: 124) Jameson also calls postmodernism as “the cultural dominant or cultural logic of the late capitalism”(Jameson, 1984, qtd. in Featherstone, 1998: 4)

Although there has been a giant leap in technology, that changed economies, social relations, everyday life and ways of perception since 1990, it seems that some of the above mentioned definitions are still meaningful in the 21st century.

2. Thinking About No(t-)thin(kin)g

When an inductive reasoning is used to make an assessment about the period of post 1990, it can be reached to the conclusion that; since there are many films, that were dealing with the subject ‘memory’, there may be important factors that carried ‘memory’ to this problematic status. I will call these films as ‘memory films’ and I will prefer to talk about the subject

memory in this period as ‘postmodern memory’ or ‘pseudo memory’, as Jeffrey Pence does. Postmodern memory can be described as “corrupt, atomized, overloaded, externalized, fragmented, commodified, and dissipated”.(Pence, 2002: 348) If looked to the period, it seems that the most significant change in and after 90s took place in technology and that engendered the description of postmodern memory. It is possible to state that:

[While] mechanical reproduction; photography, cinema, and associated industrial processes like the assembly line, dominated the era of modernism, biocybernetic reproduction; high-speed computing, video, digital imaging, virtual reality, the internet, and the industrialization of genetic engineering, dominates [the] postmodern [age].(Mitchell, 2003: 486)

The biggest and fastest progress occurred in storage and communication technologies. Personal computers acquired their status of household. In 90s and in 21st century, development in digital technologies and information technologies engendered a new technology called the Internet, which can be represented as the touchstone of post-90 period. Although the first studies about the creation of Internet goes back to 1970s this network gained a public face in the 1990s. It has revolutionized 21st century and postmodern culture. That new information technology changed everyday lives radically. Different from television and all other media that enabled the spread of information, the Internet has given the chance both to reach data and to interact with other people. Not only information but also commodities have become easily reachable. It also served as the major

medium for the spread of popular culture in 90s. With the invention and widespread of the Internet physical distances between people in different parts of the world have been minimized.

Once it was possible to address the place of the information (the book, the film, the document etc.) today it is no longer possible. The book or the document or the concert or even the person is deterritorialized. They are at homes, beneath the fingers of people. Parallel to those changes, the value of the material has also changed. Virtual is substituted for the real. In this new world order, while there has been a total unification in virtual world, in real world people diverge from each other due to the rise in fundamentalism and chauvinism.

Also parallel to the development in digital technologies new devices to record and store data, have been introduced. Small digital camcorders, recorders, flash disks and similar small sized gadgets enabled to record audio and visual data with an almost perfect quality even by individuals.

New storage possibilities and increasing capacities made it possible to store huge amounts of data and retrieve them with total accuracy, which is an impossible action for the brain. Technology mostly developed in a direction where it began to substitute human mind.

The timeline of music after 60s is a good agent to show the incredible change in storage and retrieval ability of humankind by the help of changes in technology. Music, which was being listened through plates in 60s, began to be stored in cassettes in 1970s and 80s, in CD's throughout 1990s and at last in hard disks in 21st century. Although the visual or audio qualities and

many other qualifications of these new kind of data are totally different from former ones, they are used for the same purpose. From that point of view it is possible to claim that, the more technology progressed the less space is needed to store data. In that way music, films, books, written materials and all kind of information in different forms began to be put into small portable devices.

Considering these statements and the resemblance between memory and data storage, it is possible to claim that; 'data'- or 'memory'- became a portable, easily reachable and possibly marketable commodity.

In a postmodern era where the term 'real' is so unreliable and sublime and memory is under the threat of forgetting, it is problematic to rely on thinking to describe the existence. As a result the spirit of this new era can be described as thinking about nothing or not-thinking, or leaving thinking and storing the thoughts in computers.

3. Forgetting Through Manipulation

Focusing on the memory films of western(European and North American) cinema after 1990 reveals the parallel approaches that have been adopted by those films. The most common context which is encountered in those films is the manipulation of memory. At that point there arise a couple of important questions to be answered in this study. Could memory be manipulated? If manipulation is possible how and for what reason the memory is being manipulated? What kind of results and side effects may be

caused? What does a manipulated memory mean for the individual and for the society?

With a simple approach, memories may be described as private information which have been encoded and stored in the mind of the person by being filtered and altered through his/her perception. Since this information is totally subjective and extremely personal, they may be accepted as the codes that enable to read the character of that person. Manipulating that data means a kind of threat to the existence of that person.

In filmic world manipulation process is done by technological procedures, by aliens or by scientists. All of the films, that I have chosen for my analysis in this study state that if memories of a person is removed and new memories are put into the brain, whether this manipulation process happens with or without the will of that person, there arises a brand new life for him or her. And meanwhile the reality shrinks.

The blurred status of reality leads to the statements of Baudrillard. According to Baudrillard, modern society has replaced all reality and meaning with symbols and signs, and that the human experience is of a simulation of reality rather than reality itself. (Baudrillard, 1988: 166-182) For him, image became the substitute for the real in today's societies. Baudrillard explains this effect with a couple of examples. A person, for example, who watches a scene of two people kissing each other passionately in a film, tries to catch the same effect, same feeling in real life. In other words, s/he takes the virtual-the image- as the model for real. As a result the real turns to a simulation of the image. Presentation becomes the substitute

for the thing that is being presented. Not the real but the image that substituted for the real becomes the new reality for that person. (qtd. in Akay, 2007)

The information, that constitutes memories, is being distorted by the encoding and retrieval process of those memories. On the other hand, if the data that has been accepted by people as reality is only an image of the real, than the memories of those people are distorted from the very beginning. And the 'real' is lost. From that perspective, it is possible to claim that like the protagonists in those memory films, people of today's societies are subject to a kind of memory manipulation. They are in confusion about distinguishing the real from the virtual. They live in a perpetual virtuality.

Today, the problem about distinguishing the correct and precise information from others has become a cardinal problem. Considering the inflation of information Baudrillard (2004) invents a new term "fractal reality". He describes the dynamics of that new form of information as follows:

You bring a new information forward. This information is akin to the real as long as it is declared as false or untrue. And it will not be declared as so for ever since it is not at a breakdown point, and will stay reliable. Even if it is declared as false it will not be absolutely false since it is endowed with reliability. Reverse to the reality there is no boundaries of reliability, because it is virtual it does not decay itself. We are in such a fractal reality. (Baudrillard, 2004: 72)

Since real and virtual information lies side by side in the virtual environment, that problematic status of information makes it totally unreliable. In that way the cliff between real and virtual grows. As far as it

becomes harder to distinguish the real from the virtual, the information becomes both real and virtual at the same time.

Most of the time incorrect, non-existent or unreal virtual information is accepted by societies as real today. As a result this mis-information is being encoded as real into the minds of people. This new, unreliable situation of information contributes to the unreliable situation of memories. The unreliability of memory is also being highlighted in the filmic world. The conspicuous point is that, the unnatural extent of this unreliability of the memory in films, caused by manipulation, by the usage of technology, shows a resemblance with today's negative impact of technology on memory.

In *Dark City* (1998), aliens take people's memories and mix them to generate new memories. Those memories-or may be called in other words as the misinformation-which are manipulated through a biochemical procedure, are afterwards injected to people. In the film, memories are depicted as entities that can be taken in separate pieces which can be combined again to create a new life story. In that way the film designates memories as a kind of entity that can pass from person to person.

Mass production and consumer culture are criticized in the film mostly by metaphors. In one scene of the film, for example, the belongings of the citizens are shown on a production line. These belongings are special since they are being used as mnemonics, that act as catalysts for the remembering process. The whole process of remembering seems to begin on the production line, which means that 'new' memories are being created as a

part of the mass production cycle. Not only memory is something that can be passed through many hands also the triggers-the mnemonics-of chosen memories are part of this commodity notion. When thought about the new technologies and new services that are being offered today it is easy to see similarities with that scene.

There is a new platform on the Internet called YouTube since February, 2005. YouTube is a website where people can share and view video clips. A new generation, which is addicted to all kind of data, has arisen and YouTube is a result of this new data user generation. New digital recording and storage technologies enable people to record all kind of data, including their or others' life experiences. By using YouTube it is possible to reach the recorded materials of other people's personal experiences. Once there were only memories-which were recorded into the brains of people- to remember a moment, a scene or an experience. On the other hand today, recorded data or recorded experiences can be used for the same purpose. It is even possible to talk about a new form of remembering process-remembering through the recorded experiences. Therefore I prefer to call these recorded experiences as 'recorded memories'. Recorded experiences- or 'recorded memories'- are also open to be sold, bought, copied and changed. Value of the memory becomes downgraded since it is portrayed as a commodity.

The issue of original and copy entailed in "reproducibility." Benjamin famously argued that the advent of photographic copies was producing a "decay of the aura"— a loss of the unique presence, authority, and mystique of the original object. [...] Now we have to say that the copy has, if anything, even more aura than the

original. More precisely, in a world where the very idea of the unique original seems a merely nominal or legal fiction, the copy has every chance of being an improvement or enhancement of whatever counts as the original. The digital reproduction of sounds and visual images, for instance, need not involve any erosion of vividness or lifelikeness, but can actually improve on its original material. (Mitchell, 2003, 487)

While that approach, which attributes value to the reproduced or copied one, reflects the spirit of post 1990, it also devaluates the original one and eliminates the importance of uniqueness. In today's societies even memory is losing its uniqueness. Pence asserts that: "The expansion and acceleration of technologies of remembrance [...] separate individual experience from its identification with a remembering agency across time."(Pence, 2002: 348). Pence also summarizes Lyotard's words about the change of the status of knowledge as "the reduction of experience to the status of information".(Lyotard, 1984, qtd in Pence, 2002: 348) "In this reified form, memory has legitimacy or can be apprehended only insofar as it adapts to the tabular logic of technology and capitalism". (Pence, 2002: 348)

Under these circumstances both the value of personal memory and the uniqueness of the person become problematic.

4. Memory vs. Identity

Analyzing the memory films reveals that these films also deal with the relation between identity and memory.

In *Dark City* (1998), alien species is trying to survive. They think that their survival is hidden in the formula of humanity. They are searching for the thing that gives a human his/her humanity, or in other words the 'soul'. In the film, aliens have ostensibly no gender, they wear same style black clothes, they have no hair-and therefore no hair styles-they do not show any emotional characteristics. Only their bodily facets are different from each other since they use human bodies as transporters. Even their names are the names of objects like Mr. Hand or Mr. Book, as if they are objects rather than living creatures. And the most important fact about aliens is that they have a collective memory. They don't have their own individual memories. According to Pence:

Individual memory and collective memory [...] have a dynamic and mutually constitutive relationship. In this light, memory provides a template of perception and cognition that is supremely personal and simultaneously the axis on which the collective identities revolve. Therefore any investigation of what it means to be human must address memory to gain a purchase on a taxonomy of experience. (Pence, 2002: 345-346)

Considering Pence's description, it is possible to say that memory is essential for being human and therefore to gain an identity. Since aliens in the film do not have their individual memories, it may be claimed as a result that they do not have personal identities.

If memory is essential for having an identity then the questions of 'what do memory mean?' and 'what kind of a relationship do memory and identity have?' should be discussed and answered.

Memory is distortion since memory is invariably and inevitably selective. A way of seeing is a way of not seeing, a way of remembering is a way of forgetting too. If

memory were only a kind of registration, a “true” memory might be possible. But memory is a process of encoding information, storing information, and there are social, psychological and historical influences at each point. (Schacter, 1997: 348)

Therefore we can talk about a relation between memory and identity. “The brain does not function as a camcorder to capture replicas of individual events and store them at unique locations.” (Schacter, 1997: 382) Memories are not mere information. Their formation differs according to the person. A person is not supposed to remember past events with every detail of that event. “All acts of recall are also acts of imagination, retrospective reinterpretations, miniconfabulations.” (Schacter, 1997: 382) Distortion and loss of information is inevitable. It could even be argued that “a superior talent for veridical recall could constitute a sign of brain disease.” (Schacter, 1997: 382) At that point it can be useful to search for the answer of the question: If a person can not remember his/her past life, what differs him/her from another person that did not experience and remember those unremembered events?

According to John Locke, who is being called as a “memory theorist” today, “the continuation of a person is independent of the continuation of any substance, either physical (the body) or nonphysical (the soul).[...] Identity must be defined in terms of sameness of consciousness rather than sameness of substance.” (Locke, 1979, qtd. in Schechtman, 2005: 9-10) With that assertion Locke relates the identity of a person to his/her consciousness. Again Locke argues that; “I am the same person as someone who existed in the past, if and only if I can extend my current consciousness

back to that person's actions. [...] whatever actions and experiences a person can remember are, for that reason, her actions and experiences.” (Locke, 1979, qtd. in Schechtman, 2005: 9) According to that theory continuity of consciousness is essential for personal persistence. Locke gives a series of imagined cases to emphasize the force of this view. He asks people to imagine, for instance, the mental life of a prince entering and informing the body of a cobbler, and argues that everyone would see that the resulting person is the same person as the prince rather than the cobbler. He also asks to imagine “a man who has two distinct consciousnesses sharing his body—one by day and one by night—with no communication between them”, and says that “it is clear that there are two distinct persons sharing one body in such a case” (Locke, 1979, qtd. in Schechtman, 2005: 10).

If *Dark City* (1998) is being re-read considering Locke, it is possible to claim that aliens cannot have a personal identity themselves, since they do not have their own (individual) memories. All they can do is to share a collective memory-others’ memories- which put them to the same place, same personality with others. As mentioned before, aliens take memories of people, make a mixture of them and inject them to people that have no relation with those memories. In that way they create new lives. Afterwards aliens re-create the city according to that new memory coordinates to make those new lives fit in the surrounding. As a result the city becomes a stage and people become actors of a play, only with a simple difference that they are not aware of their roles. Although all of these are real memories, they do not belong to the people to whom they were injected. A virtual city and a

virtual reality arises. At that point *Dark City* enables to imagine a person who existed in the past but can extend his consciousness to another person that lives today (the same logic in Locke's imagined case). In other words, *Dark City* becomes a place where many people use the same body. The body becomes one day a thief's body while the other day a policeman's.

From a philosophical perspective, personal identity can be described as "the essence of a self-conscious person, that their uniqueness in any time persists over time despite superficial modifications." (<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/identity-ethics/#PsyCri>). According to that description we cannot talk about personal identities in *Dark City*.

To be able to talk about personal identity, self consciousness and continuity of the person's uniqueness is essential. Continuity of the person is being considered in different memory films. In Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* (1982), for instance, which also deals with the subject memory, the replicants try to prove their existence through the photographs they have. As Foucault argues; "Photographs are documents of existence in a history to be transformed into memories, monuments of the past." (qtd. in Bruno, 1987: 72). As a result "Photograph represents the trace of an origin and thus a personal identity, the proof of having existed and therefore of having the right to exist." (Bruno, 1987: 71)

Memories have a similar effect with photographs for people. Although they can't be used as physical evidence of the historicity of a person, as a matter of fact they are the strongest proof for the person about his/her historicity, in other words, about his/her existence.

5. Becoming Someone Else

An interesting point open to investigation is that, there are a couple of common subjects, one of which is the 'editing of memories', in memory films like *Dark City*, *Open Your Eyes*, *Final Cut* and *The Forgotten*. In *Dark City*, memory is being cut to shorter pieces and edited in different combinations. In *The Forgotten* and *Eternal Sunshine* or in *Open Your Eyes* some part of the memory is being erased. In *Final Cut* this editing process is being represented through a real 'film editing' case, that results with the creation of new identities.

In *Final Cut*, the story passes in a near future where small chips are being implanted into the brains of people to record all of their life experiences. This technology is supposed to make human beings behave in a better way since they know that everything they have done will be gazed on after they die. Additionally, since the editors, who are responsible for making a final cut of these recorded data after the person dies, create a film about these people's lives. This technology is also accepted as an opportunity to live eternally. The shortened sample of a lifetime record is to commemorate and to summarize the story of the lost one. However, those films are edited by the Final Cut professionals who are charged by decedent's relatives and editors decide which parts of that life will be included and which parts will be put aside. The result is not a reflection but an illusion of the decedent's life. That means; the decedent will gain an identity according to that video in the mind of a person, who has no

memories about him/her before. If we adapt this point of view to a person's memory, we face with the same reality. Personal identity is shaped according to the memories of that person, the things that he has in his mind about himself.

In *The Forgotten*, for example, people's memories are being manipulated- partially erased- by aliens. A woman, Telly, suffers from the loss of her son. But nobody remembers that she once had a child. Everybody, including her psychiatrist, tries to convince her against her memories. She does not believe the rest of the world and trusts her motherhood instincts. She insists on finding the truth and during her search she meets Ash, the father of another lost child who was his son's friend. At first the man is unable to remember his child. He is an alcoholic and is in a depression. Afterwards, by the help of Telly he succeeds to remember his daughter and he changes totally. He gets promoted from being a lonely alcoholic to being a lovely father. He puts on a new identity. The only thing that caused this change in identity is the situation of memories. Also people in real life gain a new social or symbolic identity by gaining memories. That logic works also in other films like *Dark City* in which people identify themselves through their manipulated/edited memories.

King states that, according to Freud "[...]memory misleads us because it stands in the service of the wish. What we take to be our true story is more like a pack of lies and half-truths. [...] we are the creatures who not only remember but also lie to ourselves [...]" (Freud qtd. in King, 1983: 1199).

When we look to *Dark City* from a Freudian perspective, there seems a relationship between memory and psyche. In the film, aliens are searching for the human soul by dealing with memory. They transfer memories from one person to another like an entity and they do not take the wish of the person into consideration. The new 'carrier' of the memory has the information, but s/he is lack of the wish that shaped this information. This approach also leads to reveal the relation between psyche and memory. King interprets Freud's assertion about memory as: "memory is not a psychical property among others; it is the very essence of the psyche. . . It is the difference between frayings (Bahnungen) which is the real origin of memory and thus of the psyche." (Freud qtd in King, 1983: 1198) What aliens miss is that point. In other words, if you take the memory of a person and put it to another person that memory cannot reflect the psyche of the second one because the psyche of the first person structured the transferred memory. It is not possible to find the secret of psyche by manipulating the memory, on the contrary the real manipulator is the psyche.

The second person, to whom the memories of another person was transferred, will not recollect those implanted memories in the same way as the first person would do, which means that the second one will not be totally the same person as the first one as Locke explained in his memory theory. On the other hand, although it is not as easy as Locke claimed, Locke's view still explains the possible alteration in one's social identity. The second person will declare himself as the first one and will have no consciousness about the loss of his former identity.

I will discuss the subject 'memory' from another psychoanalyst's, Lacan's, perspective in the 3rd chapter in detail but to understand the memory-identity relation in this chapter I prefer to take a look at his words about schizophrenia. Bruno, in his article about *Blade Runner* uses Lacan's theory and tries to explain the situation as follows:

Temporality, past, present, future, memory are of a linguistic order: that is to say, the experience of temporality and its representation are an effect of language. It is the very structure of language that allows us to know temporality as we do and to represent it as a linear development from past to present and future. The experience of historical continuity is therefore dependent upon language acquisition, upon access to the realm of speech. It is dependent upon the acceptance of [...] paternal authority conceived as a linguistic function.[...]

Schizophrenia, on the other hand, results from a failure to enter the Symbolic order; it is thus essentially a breakdown of language, which contributes to a breakdown of the temporal order. The schizophrenic condition is characterized by the inability to experience the persistence of the "I" over time. There is neither past nor future at the two poles of that which thus becomes a perpetual present. (Bruno, 1987: 70)

Bruno (1987) also identifies replicants as species which will neither have a past nor a future, as creatures which are denied a personal identity, since they cannot name their "I" as an existence over time. Same thing happens when some part of the memory is erased or memories of people are mixed and loaded to other people, it will not be possible to talk about personal identity in such a case.

6. Perceiving Time Through Memories

What if all memories about a period of people's lives were taken from them, they would go on living without remembering that time period. Although that time passed in reality, this period of time would be missing for those people.

Time is a very subjective matter. An unremembered time period may be accepted as not much different from an un-lived one. Memory is the key for the perception of time. If a person doesn't remember a six-month period of a year there isn't any difference with that person and any person who actually lived only that six months.

Also the senses of people change the perceived time from the real one. A person may perceive, for instance, the length of a 1-minute experience as 1-hour under stress and thereafter remember it as a long lasting, 1-hour, event or vice versa. In *Dark City* (1998) the period when Murdoch hits the glass with a fish in it and afterwards while it falls down and breaks into pieces, is perceived to pass slower than the period till he puts the fish into water again. Time can only be described through people's perceptions. Its length is a matter of memory.

In researches made about patients who have neuropsychological disorders like confabulation, it is discovered that these patients tell their life stories according to the memories they have in their mind. Some of these memories may be real and some of them may be illusionary. Patients assume all the information in their mind as real. And since this information changes in time each time the person comes with a new life story, identity,

that are re-formulated according to those altered memories. In a real confabulation case, a 61-year-old man who has a widespread damage in the frontal lobes of his brain gives totally wrong and misleading information about himself. Although he had been married for over 30 years with the same woman and had 4 children, he claims that he was married only 4 months ago and have adopted his children. (Schacter, 1997: 227) As a result he lives in a time-less virtual reality, which is generated by his own memories.

When we look at the filmic world again, in *Dark City* (1998) the whole city is like a playground of aliens. The buildings, roads, streets and all other places in the city are being reshaped every night by them. They also interfere time. Time stops every night at 12.00 a.m. and begins to pass again after lives and surroundings in the city are being altered. People become unconscious, they sleep while the city and the memories of its citizens are being changed. This process is totally un-rememberable. It is a lost time from the lives of those people. And perceived time changes totally if someone's memories are changed. A 40-year-old person may believe and 'become' 35 years old after his/her memories are changed. The people, that are victims of memory experiment in *Dark City* wake up and go on to their newly created lives, without any possibility of understanding whether that time they live in is real or virtual. There is a scene in the film metaphorically visualizing the memory-time correlation. A clock, with a face shape is opened and the tuning of aliens begin. All the memories are

being mixed and new memories are generated. Afterwards the face of the clock closes.

Another interesting fact about the film is the generation of a timeless situation. *Dark City* is a place which has characteristics of different time periods altogether. We see both skyscrapers and old-fashioned mansions side by side, dresses and entities of different time periods in the same moment anachronically, giving an effect of timelessness. The whole city is a mixture of other cities, times and lives. It is like postmodernism that uses and consumes things from former eras to create present one.

The meaning of time is distorted in this city. There is not a linear, continuing timeline. People have no memories, no pasts and in that way no future.

As defined above, time is related to the ability of memory formation and retrieval. Perception of time changes when memories change or when they are lost or manipulated. That subject is also discussed in other memory films *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (2004), *Open Your Eyes* (1997) or *The Forgotten* (2004). In *Eternal Sunshine* Clementine is taken from Joel's memories. Afterwards the time which he spent with Clementine is totally lost for him. With a similar approach, in *The Forgotten* the memories of the children are taken from their parents. Those memories are wiped away. All that time period, which was spent with the children is lost for the people whose memories are manipulated. In *Open Your Eyes*, when the protagonist, César, chooses to go on his life in a virtual reality, virtual

becomes real for him and the length of time in this virtual world becomes the only perceived time.

If there is only one day's information in someone's memory than for him his whole life consists of that one-single day. Therefore the term 'time' is totally dependent on how it is remembered.

CHAPTER III: Oblivion vs. Remembering in Film, and Beyond

To understand the memory films of post 1990 period, I prefer to look at the filmic world through the glasses of psychoanalysis in this chapter. I will try to focus on the chosen films by using the theories of Jacques Lacan, one of the most famous psychoanalysts of 20th century. Before using the Lacanian perspective it may be useful to make a summary of his theories.

Lacan denominates three registers-orders-through which he defines human psyche. According to him the human psyche is organized in terms of three sets of relations; the Imaginary, the Symbolic and the Real.

The period, before the body enters the field of signification is called as Imaginary. Zizekian interpretation of Lacan's term is being quoted in Kay (2003) as follows: "The imaginary provides the illusion of stability, content and wholeness. [...] [On the other hand,] the Symbolic Order is the realm of Law the domain of structure, difference and gap." (Kay, 2003: 169) "[It] is the site of distinction, negation and disconnection [...]." (MacCannell, 1986: 129)

Second register of Lacan, the Symbolic, is being described in Kay (2003) again with Zizek's words as follows: "The symbolic is realized in the interaction between the big Other-the radical alterity, the language and the law- and the Subject whereas the imaginary informs the construction

of all our objects, including the 'self'." (Kay, 2003: 169) To be able to understand the second register in a better way, it may also be useful to look at related interpretations. Lacanian term 'the big Other' is described by MacCannell as: "The big Other is not a person, but a principle; the locus of the 'law of desire', the locus of the incest-prohibition and the phallus."(MacCannell, 1986: 131)

The big Other is inconsistent or structured around a gap. That means; when the body enters the field of signification, it is castrated, restricted from enjoyment. With Zizekian words "the remainder of the enjoyment which we gave up in castration" (Kay, 2003: 166) is called as objet a and associated with the Real in the subject. According to Zizek:

The price we pay for our admission to the universal medium of language is the loss of our full body selves. When we submit to the big Other we sacrifice direct access to our bodies and, instead, are condemned to an indirect relation with it via the medium of language. [B]efore we enter language we are [...] "pathological" subjects [...] after we are immersed in language we are what [Lacan] refers to as "barred" subjects [...]. What is barred from the barred subject is precisely the body as the materialization or incarnation of enjoyment (*jouissance*). [...] For the subject to enter the Symbolic Order, then, the Real of *jouissance* or enjoyment has to be evacuated from it. [T]he Symbolic Order cannot fully account for *jouissance* - it is what is missing in the big Other. The big Other is therefore inconsistent or structured around a lack, the lack of *jouissance*."(<http://www.lacan.com/zizekchro1.htm>)

The third register, the Real, can be defined as the effect of the gaps and inconsistencies in the Symbolic Order. Kay translates Lacan's description of the Real as "the Thing that dogs our every step as if it is stuck

to the sole of our shoe” (Kay, 2003: 4). That means the Real is not all around us but we are always aware of it, although we are avoiding it to go on to our lives in the Symbolic Order. Zizek avows the interaction and relation between the Symbolic and the Real as follows:

The big Other was always dead, in the sense that it never existed in the first place as a material thing. All it ever was (and is) is a purely symbolic order. It means that we all engage in a minimum of idealization, disavowing the brute fact of the Real in favor of another Symbolic world behind it. (<http://www.lacan.com/zizekchro1.htm>)

Films are also elements of Symbolic Order. They use words- a filmic language- to tell their matter. “All uses of the word are metaphoric and language works on behalf of culture rather than on behalf of ‘meaning’. There is only one ‘meaning, the desire for recognition; any other use of language constitutes a metaphor.” (Lacan qtd. in MacCannell, 1986: 93) On this account films can be called as the members of the metaphoric system. They tell more than they seem to tell.

In *Dark City*, the Strangers make experiments by constantly changing the identities of people in symbolic system by manipulating their memories. They try to find out the thing that does not change although the identity changes. “The Strangers are searching for, to put in Lacan’s terms, the objet petit a of humanity.” (McGowan and Kunkle, 2004: 148) And they hope to find out the formula of humanity. On the other hand that may be the wrong way to reach the human soul, since as Zizek explains “the truth of our experience lies outside ourselves, in the Symbolic and the Real, rather than being buried deep within us. We cannot look into our selves and find out

who we truly are, because who we truly are is always elsewhere.”
(<http://www.lacan.com/zizekchro1.htm>)

The city is under the control of aliens, Strangers. They are the ruler. All the arrangements and transformations are done; all the rules and restrictions are set by them. The structure of the city, symbolic identities of the citizens or even the existence of this dark city depend on the Strangers. They function as the authority and create the entire signification in the city. And John Murdoch is the key for salvation both for Strangers and for the citizens of the city. As stated before according to Lacan, the Symbolic Order is the realm of Law, the domain of structure, difference and gap. Since the Strangers are not searching for the differences of the symbolic identities of humans, it is important for them to find someone who acts different from the others. The person at whom their control fails means a gap in this well designed symbolic system. Todd McGowan describes that situation as: “a resistance which indicates the presence of the soul or objet petit a, the part of the subject that remains the same despite constant changes in symbolic identity.” (McGowan and Kunkle, 2004:158)

Through Murdoch, Strangers hope to reach the secrets of human soul. Therefore Murdoch is the key for their salvation. On the other hand Murdoch is the only one that is aware of the ongoing virtual reality except from a former detective, who is now mentally ill and except from Dr. Schreber, who is working in cooperation with aliens. Murdoch is the only person who can possibly act to free himself from this prison and solve this riddle. Murdoch's freedom will literally mean also others' freedom.

(McGowan and Kunkle, 2004: 158) Although Murdoch seizes that, the reality by which he is surrounded, is deceptive, he still has to discover the truth. And there are things- his fantasy- that he has to sacrifice for that aim. “To gain his freedom [he] has to face with reality about the city and must traverse his own fantasy and encounter a traumatic Real in order to break the power of the Strangers”. (McGowan and Kunkle, 2004:148)

McGowan and Kunkle explains “the most important role of fantasy within the psychic economy” as “its ability to cover over the traumatic Real on which all ideology rests.”(McGowan and Kunkle, 2004:164) Therefore traversing the fantasy is a key factor for revealing the reality.

Zizek’s words are also helpful to clarify the situation. He argues that:

In order to avoid a clash of fantasies we have to learn to "traverse the fantasy" (what Lacan terms "traversing the fantôme). It means that we have to acknowledge that fantasy merely functions to screen the abyss or inconsistency in the big Other. In "traversing" or "going through" the fantasy "all we have to do is experience how there is nothing 'behind' it, and how fantasy masks precisely this 'nothing'".
(<http://www.lacan.com/zizekchro1.htm>)

The encounter of Murdoch with the reality about Shell Beach is a good example for the traversing of fantasy. When Murdoch discovers that his memories are made up by Strangers and Shell Beach is a non-existent place which is only a clipboard with an old picture promoting Shell Beach on it. Behind that clipboard there is a wall, the wall that separates the infinite space and the dark city. Beyond that wall there is only space, literally ‘nothingness’, the encounter with the Real. By traversing the fantasy Murdoch faces with the Real and symbolic system shatters.

Fantasy allows people to avoid an encounter with the Real that always threatens to swallow the subject. If the fantasy of one subject breaks down everyone's fantasy becomes questionable. It means that Murdoch's act affects the whole symbolic system in *Dark City*, the Real is no longer a hidden term, it is revealed. On the other hand, although Murdoch faces with the Real he still goes on to fantasize, to fantasize for instance to be with his wife. He creates a new world, a new symbolic order, like Strangers did. To survive in the symbolic he omits the lack and fantasizes himself and this world as complete. He disavows the brute fact of the Real in favor of another Symbolic World behind it.

There is a similar scenario in *The Forgotten*. The trauma of the protagonist, Telly, is caused by the death of her son, Sam, in a plane crash. She obsessively fantasizes to have her son back. Besides, all other people including her husband and her psychiatrist claim that she never had a son. They claim that she deems the lack as a loss. But Telly never hesitates about her memories. At the end of her search she realizes that the reality that they were living in had been manipulated by aliens.

Other similarities between the scenarios of two films are surprising. Like Murdoch, Telly is the only person that realizes the truth, the reality. And the doctor-psychiatrist- in *The Forgotten* is in cooperation with aliens, like Dr. Schreber. Aliens create a new symbolic order. They are the authority of that system. The period before their existence is unable to remember. They distort and change peoples symbolic identities. But still

they are searching for the possibility of finding someone who will resist this manipulation.

By facing the Real-the truth- it seems that she no longer needs to fantasize to avert the death of her son, since her son is not dead. Her fantasy is traversed by the revelation of the real. On the other hand she-or her memory-defeats aliens, like Murdoch does. Similar to *Dark City*, Telly's freedom means literally others' freedom. But she still has the fantasy of having her son back. And at the end of the film she takes him back.

In another memory film, *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, not aliens but Lacuna Inc. is the main authority that changes the coordinates of the symbolic order. Mary, who is the assistant of Dr. Mierzwiak, takes the procedure and gets her memories about her relationship with Mierzwiak erased. But she, like Joel and Clementine, gets attracted to the same person again. She begins to fantasize to be with Mierzwiak. But when she learns that they had a relationship and that Mierzwiak erased her memories she traverses her fantasy. She informs all of the patients of Lacuna about the procedure they have gone through. Lacuna's system collapses and the reality reveals. Her freedom becomes everyone's freedom. Besides, although Joel and Clementine know that their former relationship ended in pain and despair they still fantasize to succeed to be together this time. And at the end of the film they seem to be happy together. They omit the reality and choose to accept a new fantasy.

It is also possible to read the whole story in a similar way in *Open Your Eyes*. César gets involved to a 'Life Extension' program to get his

memories, which led to a trauma, erased. Although manipulating his memories creates a new symbolic order for him, with the return of the erased-repressed- this symbolic system collapses. There appears a stain in the picture.

All those memory films, which are dealing with the subject memory manipulation, indicate similar points in similar stories. Since the Real is not easy to bear, all of those films re-generate the fantasies of the protagonist to make them survive in Symbolic Order. Protagonists gain the power to change the symbolic system or to realize their fantasies. Even 'fate' helps them to reach their fantasies. John Murdoch comes together with his wife again. Although her wife does not remember her former life she gets attracted to him at first sight. Joel Barrish and Clementine Kruczynsky get attracted again to each other even though they don't remember their former relationship. Telly gets his 'dead' son back together with other families' missing children. César gets the chance to make his face fixed.

Like people of 21st century, the protagonists in these memory films are under the threat of memory manipulation. Even if they lose their memories- willingly or unwillingly- this situation does not harm them in imaginary world. At the end of the films they find a way to realize their fantasies. With this approach films follow the way that people chose to follow, they avoid facing with the lack, the fear and horror which is associated with Real and they take it as a loss. In that way they fantasize to re-gain the lost object. Memory films show a glimpse of the Real but then give a fantasy to avoid it and go on to survive in Symbolic order.

CHAPTER IV: Narrational Elements

Both storage and retrieval processes of memory are completed through chemical and physical interactions between different parts of the brain. Different types of memories are being encoded in these different parts and during the retrieval of a single memory other memories are also effective. Even though some memories are hidden in depths of the mind, a group of theorists argue that none of those memories are lost, they are faded or forgotten. They are like toys that will pop out of the boxes, they were put into, when something impulses them. Therefore it is not possible to say that remembering or the retrieval of stored memories occurs in a chronological order. Newest memories are not always easier to remember. But as mentioned in early chapters, when people receive new information, memory is affected from it. People retrieve their old memories considering all these new information. Therefore memories differ from the real events. So in general it is accepted that new memories are fresher and can be retrieved with more accuracy.

While analyzing the films *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, *Dark City*, *Open Your Eyes* and *The Forgotten*, I realized that in addition to their similar plot lines that deal with memory manipulation, there are also similarities in the way these stories are being told. The way they are told

help us to understand the 'processes of memory'. Focusing on the narrational elements of the films will also reveal that those films use narrational elements to tell their main subject.

1. Usage of Range of Knowledge and Voiceover

While protagonists' minds are manipulated by different ways-by aliens, scientists or physical attacks-spectators' minds are manipulated by the films' narrational choices.

In most of the memory films it is a common approach to restrict the range of knowledge of the spectators. The mechanism of perception process can be explained better in that way rather than making an explanation session in the film. A very good example to this approach can be seen in the film *Memento* (2000). Leonard, who suffers from a syndrome of short-term memory loss, forgets everything in a couple of minutes after they happen. By using narrational elements- by editing the film reversely- the spectators are put into the same situation with Leonard and until the end of the film they are unaware of the truth, like Leonard himself. Spectators watch an action without knowing its history, they face with the causes of that action afterwards. In addition to this, in most of the memory films spectators identify themselves with the protagonists and being put into the same status with the protagonist simplifies the process of identification of spectators with him/her.

In the first scene of *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* the spectators-like Joel-wake up by hearing the noises coming from outside without knowing where Joel is and what happened last night. When Joel steps out and sees that his car was hit, at that moment both he and spectators have no idea about what caused this damage on the car. In the next scene, when Joel takes the train to Montauk, again both spectators and Joel cannot understand why he did this. When Joel arrives to the shore in Mantouk he meets Clementine and says no word but suddenly he and Clementine get attracted to each other intensely. Like Joel, spectators have no memories about Clementine. She is a stranger to them as well. The range of knowledge of the spectators are restricted intentionally to put them in the same status with Joel.

There is a parallel approach in *Dark City*. At the beginning of the film John Murdoch is in a bath tube lying as if he was sleeping or was unconscious. A drop of blood is leaking from between his eyebrows down his face. He gets up and looks around, sees things that look unknown to him. At that moment spectators are in the same range of knowledge with Murdoch. They do not know why he is there, who he is and why there is blood on his face. Both films use the same entrance for the story, and restrict the spectators' range of knowledge to generate a parallel feeling of memory loss for the spectators. Both protagonist and spectators step up into a journey to find out 'the memories'. Mostly, editing is used to create this effect.

Another common narrational element that is used in the films, chosen for my analysis, is the voiceover. Both in *Dark City* and in *Eternal Sunshine* voiceover is used to create the same expression. Joel's voiceover emphasizes the emptiness in his mind and in his life. That emptiness gives the impression of an uncanny atmosphere. The same usage is seen in *Open Your Eyes* in the first scene. The first words come not from the image of César that lies in the bed but again from him as a voiceover while telling the story to his psychiatrist. In *Dark City* it is Dr. Schreber, whose voiceover talks throughout the film. The voice does not come from a face in the scene but comes from nothingness. The uncanny and uneasy feeling increases with that voiceover.

2. Rationality of the Irrational

Parallel to the memory formation process in real life, recorded memories cannot be retrieved without any distortion. Therefore memory films embrace the approach of mirroring that distortion and choose to visualize the retrieval process that is inside the mind.

In *Eternal Sunshine* Joel's memories are being erased in a chronological order from the last one to the first memory. But midway through the deletion process Joel changes his mind, decides not to lose Clementine both physically and mentally and tries to keep her memories by interrupting the process. The film visualizes the process in Joel's mind in a dream-like mounting. His consciousness is half open. He is aware that his memories about Clementine are being erased but he is captivated in his own

mind and therefore goes through a string of surreal events. He goes back and forth in his memories, tries to get out of the cognitive map of Clementine, tries to hide memories of Clementine into unrelated memories. But Lacuna's technology one by one finds the memories of Clementine and erases them. The scenes are created in a dream-like way. When Joel goes back to his memories, they are not retrieved as they were recorded. Considering also Joel's situation, being half conscious, the memories in mind look totally distorted and hallucinatory. There are scenes in the film that emphasizes the distortion of memories during retrieval and the effect of the unconscious condition of Joel. When Joel tries to see Patrick's face, his face can only be seen in a blurred and distorted way. In a similar scene the face of Dr. Mierzwiak seems blurred and blank.

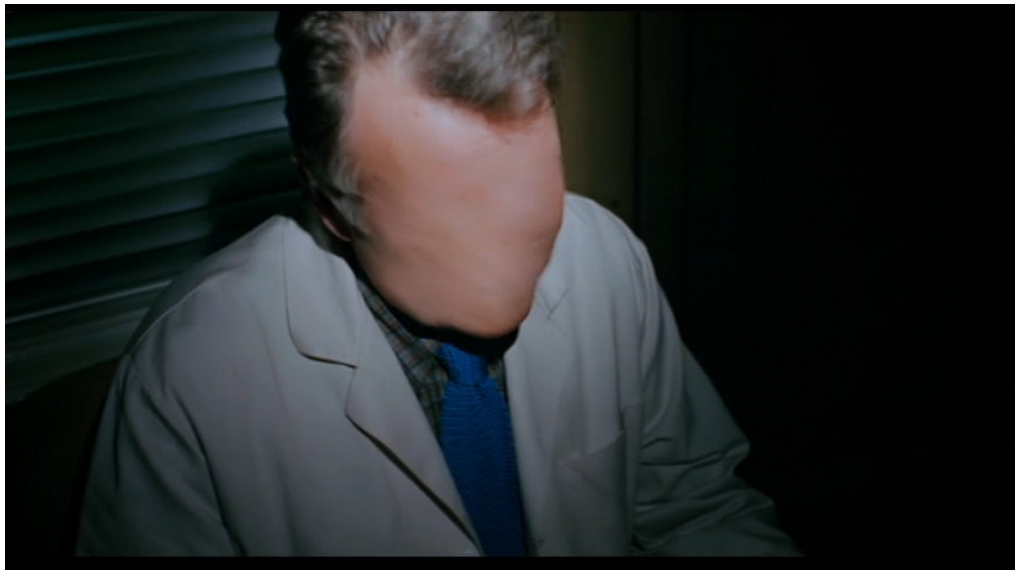


Figure 1: Distorted Face of Mierzwiak in Joel's Mind

Or when Joel remembers the moment that he was talking to Dr. Mierzwiak, Mierzwiak's voice sounds artificially as if Joel was listening to

a recorded voice which slows down and distorts the voice in some parts of the record.

In another scene Joel remembers himself in the Lacuna chair while others were trying to form a cognitive map of Clementine. That memory is also distorted, unrelated images penetrate into that scene. While he was sitting in the chair of Lacuna, he finds himself sitting still in the same chair on a pavement.



Figure 2: Distortion of Memories in Joel's Mind

One of the most impressive scenes that highlights the distortion of memories during retrieval is in *Open Your Eyes*. The whole film is a kind of retrieval and imagination process. While César tells his story to the psychiatrist he remembers the things that he experienced. And spectators watch this story through his retrieved memories. That approach both enables to restrict spectators' range of knowledge and to put them in the same perceptual status with César. On the other hand it is possible to see the

distortion in memories after being retrieved again. In a scene of the film, César sees a pantomime artist in the park and looks at her in a fascinated way as if he knows that person. That artist is Sofia to whom he would meet later. Since this is a retrieval process, since César's memories are manipulated and since César is living in a virtual reality it is rational to see that kind of a thing although in reality it is impossible to give a reaction like César's before meeting Sofia. Information does not stay the same as it was encoded once, it is distorted during retrieval or recall.

While remembering or while dreaming, things may seem different then their original status. The lighting, the place, people around may differ at each time when people retrieve and tell a memory. Even the actors of the story is open to change and distortion. Changes in memory may occur in extreme ways. The growth of a spider, for instance, may be perceived and recorded in memory 10 times bigger then its original size if the person suffers from arachnophobia. Psychological factors may effect both encoding-storage and retrieval phases. That subjective perspective of the receiver-the protagonist-is mostly used as the basis in memory films while generating the scenes of the film. By the help of this approach the spectators do not have to envisage the possible situation of the protagonist's memory, they gain the opportunity to see inside it literally.

In *Eternal Sunshine* while Lacuna technicians wipe the memories of Clementine from Joel's mind. Those scenes are visualized like a deconstruction process. While Joel follows Clementine, cars fall down and crash, while Joel and Clementine are in the car Clementine suddenly

disappears, while Joel and Clementine are lying on the ice Clementine is pulled back into the darkness which indicates that she has been wiped from Joel's memory. In the last scene of deletion process Joel and Clementine are in an empty beach house in Mantouk. While this memory is being wiped out the house is deconstructed in Joel's mind. It is filled with wind and sand.

In another memory film, *Open Your Eyes*, the tides between the visions of Sofia and Nuria or distorted and fixed face of César are seen by the spectators from inside the mind of César. In the scene, for example, when César goes to Sofia's house he looks at Sofia's pictures and sees that there is Nuria in all of the pictures where Sofia was previously. But right after that he sees Sofia coming with a glass of water for him. And afterwards while César and Sofia are making love, suddenly, César realizes that the woman in bed is not Sofia but Nuria. Also in another scene, while we see César's face in a totally fixed status, a couple of minutes after that he-and the spectators- sees his face on the mirror at the stairs, distorted again. Spectators understand César's situation much more clearly in that way.

3. Illumination

Usage of light and lighting in the chosen films play an important role to tell the main subject, the status of memory. In *Eternal Sunshine*, different kind of lighting is used to give different expressions and to generate different meanings. In the first scene where Joel wakes up in his bed, there is only sunlight coming from outside. Joel's bedroom is dim. By the help of

lighting the film generates a metaphor. Joel is left in darkness emphasizing the loss of his memory. The only light that illuminates the surrounding is the sunlight. The overexposed, out of the room illumination and the dim surrounding form an apparent difference between inside and outside. The inside is in darkness that makes it hardly possible to see the details in the room. That situation resembles with the ongoing situation of Joel's mind. The outside is overexposedly lighted that makes it uneasy to see around. Like Joel's situation when he steps out to the real world.

A similar usage of lighting is seen in *Open Your Eyes*. In a scene César wakes up and sits up in his bed. The overexposed sunlight, coming from outside through the window, leaves César as a silhouette in darkness. He is there but does not have a face, an identity, for the spectators. Everything is more visible and transparent under the light but César is left in darkness.

In *Dark City*, while Murdoch is waking up in a bath tube, there is a lamp swinging back and front, giving light on and off Murdoch. The lamp acts like a spotlight. That lighting does not allow us to see the room completely, implying the situation of seen and unseen parts. Murdoch is in the corner not under a stable light.



Figure 3: Joel's Waking Up



Figure 4: César's Waking Up



Figure 5: Murdoch's Waking Up

Protagonists are literally left in darkness in all three scenes(Figure 3-4-5) which indicates that their minds are in darkness.

In further parts of the film, *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, while Joel is experiencing the deletion process, camera puts the spectator into Joel's mind. During this process an unnatural lighting is used. Joel and Clementine, for example, are under the spotlight during their escape from being erased. The lighting is also used here to generate different meanings. Usage of spotlight metaphorically represents the visualization of the process of remembering. There are a lot of information, stored in people's minds. But while people remember some information, encoded in their memory, they go back to that data in their mind. We can say that they put a spot on the exact memory part. That metaphor is transferred to the filmic world in

Eternal Sunshine. On the other hand, the experience, which Joel is going through, is not a biological and natural process. Unnatural lighting also emphasizes that. The spotlight follows Joel as he recollects his memories. It is a technological interference to reality, the process of manipulation. The usage of lighting shows that even only the lighting reveals the ongoing situation.



Figure 6: Illuminated in Joel's Mind-1



Figure 7: Illuminated in Joel's Mind-2

In *Dark City* the whole city is in darkness. The city is only illuminated by unnatural lighting, by electricity. The city is left in darkness stating that the citizens of the city are both literally and metaphorically in darkness. Since people have no personal memories they have no information about their pasts or their real identities. They are lack of information, they are in darkness.

In *The Forgotten* lighting is used to differentiate the reality from memories. The scenes, in which Telly remembers her son, are lighted overexposedly. But that much of light, shining strongly gives an artificial effect. It emphasizes that this image does not belong to reality, it is only an image.



Figure 8: Illumination in Memories of Telly

Another common approach, that we see in all four memory films, is about the usage of sunlight. Sunlight is used generally to emphasize the reality, the real one, in filmic world. And the films *Dark City*, *The Forgotten* and *Open Your Eyes* close with scenes full of sunlight. In *Dark City* the

whole film passes in a dim, hardly illuminated atmosphere until the scene where Murdoch meets his wife on the pier. This is also the last scene of the film when the fantasy of Murdoch seems to be realized.



Figure 9: Usage of Sunlight in Murdoch's Fantasy

Also the illumination of *The Forgotten* is arranged to generate a bleak atmosphere. But in the last scene when Telly takes her son back, there is a warm sunlight illuminating the picture.



Figure 10-11: Difference in Lighting in The Forgotten

Although sunlight is used in all open air shots in *Open Your Eyes*, its brightness is stronger in fantasy sequences, for example, where César meets

Sofia in the park after the accident and when César kisses Sofia although he knows that all these are some kind of a dream.



Figure 12: The Overexposed Nature of Fantasy

These illuminations with the usage of sunlight are overexposed. That kind of a usage of sunlight brings an impression that it is not possible to believe what you see clearly. The brightness of sunlight that restricts the sight of the spectators may be understood as an assertion about the unclear situation of reality. What seems real may not be real.

4. Effects of Memory and Identity Relation

Although there is not even a totally successful experiment about memory manipulation today memory films, *Eternal Sunshine*, *The Forgotten*, *Open Your Eyes* talk about manipulating memory in today's

societies, not in a time in the future. Places and costumes belong to the time period that these films were produced. In addition to this, if the manipulation is done by scientists that science belongs to present time rather than future. In *Eternal Sunshine*, for instance, all of the devices that are being used to erase memory look like old-fashioned, cheap equipments of a dentistry clinic. Or the Cryonics-Life Extension organizations are working intensely on the subject since 1970s. That approach can be read as ‘memory is being manipulated today’. No need to go far away, minds of today’s societies are manipulated by today’s technologies like television, Internet and other stimulants.

While these memory films adopt ‘memory manipulation’ as a possible phenomenon for today, they also indicate a relation between memory and identity. Narration in chosen films also help to create that relation. In *Dark City*, while Murdoch was trying to remember who he is, he walks on the streets and stops in front of a shop-window. Inside the shop-window there are two display mannequins. When Murdoch looks at the window there he sees the figure of the lifeless body in front of him, on the place where his reflection should have been. That scene identifies the ‘memory-less Murdoch’ with the ‘lifeless mannequin’. By losing his memory Murdoch has no symbolic identity.



Figure 13: Reflections of Identity

In the film people are being transformed to someone else easily. A potential transformation is possible through manipulation, by implanting the right kind of data into his memory, for example. From that perspective Murdoch resembles the display figure, who may gain different identities by being clothed with the right kind of costumes. Losing memory is visualized as losing identity.

The ambiguous status of identity in post 1990s is highlighted in memory films of that period. A very good example for the description of the ambiguous status of identity in filmic world can be seen in *Open Your Eyes*. There are 12 mirror scenes in the film. Each encounter of the protagonist with his sight in the mirror implies a recognition of himself.

All mirror scenes may be accepted as a referral to the Lacanian theory of mirror stage. The protagonist identifies himself with the image on

the mirror and that image is always misleading. In the film César is living in a virtual reality. There are many scenes in which he remembers himself while waking up. In each of these awakenings César opens his eyes into a virtual reality. He is still in a dream. And in each awakening he goes to the bathroom and faces with himself in the mirror. Each time he attempts to find his identity again and again. And there is an inconsistency in these scenes. In one scene César wakes up and his face is fixed but when he looks at the mirror he sees his distorted face and at that moment he wakes up again goes to the bathroom and looks at the mirror. This time there is no defect on his face. In another scene after he kills Sofia-Nuria, his face seems normal but he looks at the mirror, he sees his distorted face. And in the last scene where his face seems distorted, he looks at the metal surface and sees his face fixed.



Figure 14: Mirror stages of César-1



Figure 15: Mirror stages of César-2



Figure 16: Mirror stages of César-3

In each of these scenes what seems as real is not real since César is unconscious and living in a virtual reality. 'How his face looks' changes according to his beliefs. What he sees on the mirror is unreliable since

reality is unreliable. Moreover, like reality identity is in the realm of ambiguity in a postmodern era.



Figure 17: The Ambiguity of Identity-César with his mask on the back of his head

CONCLUSION

Through this study I tried to underline that, the subject ‘memory’ became a problematic matter which has been continuously talked about in 90s and after. My trial was to reveal the reasons that led to this situation. There should have been factors, special to the period that caused a rise in the popularity of the subject.

Considering the analysis and theories which were discussed in this study, it is possible to claim that improvement in technology is the major factor that brought ‘memory’ to its new status. At that point revealing the areas at which technology has mostly improved after 1990 could give an idea about the reason that carried memory to its problematic status today.

As mentioned in earlier chapters, with the improvements in recording and storage technologies in post 1990 period individuals became able to record their own experiences by themselves, to edit them and to share them with other people easily. Although there are many differences between recorded materials and memory, it is also possible to say that there are many similarities as well. Considering at least both of these procedures, recorded materials have begun to be remembered more and more as substitute for memories. Considering this approach it is possible to say that, personal memories and private information are open to be shared with many other people through the Internet or through other media today.

Another important fact of the period is the change in status of information. Although there is a bombing of information that surrounds people in the last two decades, people cannot reach the true information as easy as it seems. The information seems always true, as Baudrillard states, but in reality it is hard to distinguish what is true and what is not. As a result the information which, is received under these circumstances is doomed to be lost shortly after.

The analysis in this study also emphasize that so much information have not a positive but a negative effect on memory. It mostly causes difficulties in remembering, memory loss and amnesia. Additionally, the 'event' is not perceived as an element of reality by the receiver today, it is perceived only as information. Like in Baudrillard's example depicting a case in which; "the subject watches the civil war in Sudan and the commercial of a toilet paper one after another in the same insensitive manner, as if both of them have no relation with the reality that s/he lives in". (Akay, 2007) Both situations are degraded to the status of information and that leads to a simulation environment.

Another important thing that affects the perception mechanism of people is the perception of the imaginary material. An imaginary data- a film for example or other visual materials - may be perceived by people as real. Therefore those kind of materials have an undeniable effect on memory and on the perception of the real. The rise in visual effects, films, 3D simulations and other visual materials gives an explanation about the distortion in memory in this period.

Films also represent its creators' perspective and distribute it. They have an effect to create a collective point of view on a subject. In today's societies films are not the only medium that is being received by people collectively. Even private images and information of other people are being received through different medium and those information cause people to have the same data in their mind or to remember the same events. This may be accepted as an- intended or unintended- memory manipulation towards a collective memory. So it may be asserted that personal or private memory is being lost and people are evolving towards a collective memory today.

It is important to understand at that point why the loss of memory is so important for mankind. When memory is manipulated, the things that are accepted as experiences of individuals change or sometimes they are being lost. Symbolic identities alter in that way. Also the things, which are perceived as real, change. As Baudrillard asserted, what is being perceived as real is mostly made up of delusions. And the loss of memory causes a delusion that changes the perception of reality.

On the other hand, if reaching the right information seems not possible as it is in today's societies, remembering the -erroneous- data already causes a kind of amnesia. It is hard to answer the question; how much can a person trust his/her own memory under the flood of information. There are computers that have the ability to think and to remember the information with exact details today. They are also used as the metaphorical substitutes for human mind. From that perspective, how memory of a person

functions, computers work in the same way for the same purpose. Like memory, computers are able to store different kind of data in different forms in a single environment. But the retrieval process of a stored data is totally different for human mind and for a computer. The data which is stored in human mind is filtered through that person's perception mechanism. The recalled data is not free from the wishes of the individual. Remembering is a kind of distortion process that includes the identity of the person. The way, in which stored data is subject to distortion, changes from person to person and hides the details of identity, and soul. Although remembering is a kind of distortion process by its nature, today distortion arises regarding many different external factors that are tried to be summarized in this study. In a world where people are not dependant to their memories as it was in former eras, where computers, databanks, mobile phones or memory sticks are used and embraced as substitutes for memory and where recollection is being described as the retrieval of the stored data in those devices, human memory becomes devaluated and those substitutions signal a loss in identity of the person. Forasmuch as memory is essential for the formation of symbolic identities, devaluation or loss of human memory constitutes a fear against the loss of identity. On the other hand there arises the search for a spotless mind that does not have the defects and weaknesses of a human.

Memory, with a Lacanian reading, may be accepted as the mirror of objet petit a. If there is an increase in the number of memory films with similar subjects after 1990, it is reasonable to claim that there is a growth in the thing that threatens the consistency of memory. Manipulation of

memory, the loss of the individual's sovereignty over his/her memory and the memory loss, that comes thereafter, may cause a sense of deep emptiness and a sense of a lack for the person. Components of memory that guarantees the continuation of the subject in symbolic order are put in danger by being manipulated. With the uncanny status of the memory every new data, new letter or image is doomed to be lost. What is taken into memory may be lost or distorted anytime.

As a result, that may bring a traumatic impact on the person who carries on his/her life by disavowing the brute fact of the Real in favor of another symbolic world behind it. It can be asserted that; this time there is a lack which is unavoidable and the threat of the 'Real' is closer. Therefore the sutures of the subject-the person-is about to come off. Considering both the hidden and apparent manipulators of memory like developments in technology and explosion of information, it seems that there arose a prevision in cinema about the possible loss of memory, which means a collapse in the prop and guarantee of identity in societies of post 90s. The number of memory films in this era with their subjects focusing on memory manipulation may be accepted as an early attempt to declare this prevision in symbolic system by using the power of words and images of filmic world.

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Spain&France&Italy, 1997.

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APPENDIX

Credits

Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind, 2004

Production Companies: [Anonymous Content](#)
[Focus Features](#)
[This Is That Productions](#)

Producers: Anthony Bergman
Steve Golin

Associate Producers: Linda Fields
Michael Jackman

Executive Producers: Georges Bermann
David L. Bushell
Charlie Kaufman
Glenn Williamson

Director: Michel Gondry

Story: Charlie Kaufmann
Michel Gondry
Pierre Bismuth

Screenplay: Charlie Kaufman

Directors of Photography: Ellen Kuras

Editor: Valdis Oskarsdottir

Production designer: Dan Leigh

Music: Jon Brion

Cast:

Joel Barrish: Jim Carey
Clementine Kruczynsky: Kate Winslet
Patrick: Elijah Wood
Stan: Mark Ruffalo
Dr. Mierzwiak: Tom Wilkinson
Mary: Kirsten Dunst

Running Time: 108 minutes
Country: USA

Open Your Eyes(Abre Los Ojos), 1997

Production Companies: Canal+ España
Las Producciones del Escorpión S.L.
Les Films Alain Sarde
Lucky Red
Sociedad General de Televisión S.A. (Sogetel)

Producers: Fernando Bovaira
José Luis Cuerda

Associate Producer: Ana Amigo
Alain Sarde
[Andrea Occhipinti](#)

Director: [Alejandro Amenábar](#)

Writers: [Alejandro Amenábar](#)
[Mateo Gil](#)

Cinematography: Hans Burman

Editor: María Elena Sáinz de Rozas

Music: [Alejandro Amenábar](#)
Mariano Marín

Cast:

César: Eduardo Noriega
Sofía: Penélope Cruz
Antonio: Chete Lera
Pelayo: [Fele Martínez](#)
Nuria: Najwa Nimri

Running Time: 117 minutes
Country: Spain & France & Italy

Dark City, 1998

Production Companies:	Mystery Clock Cinema New Line Cinema
Producers:	Andrew Mason Alex Proyas
Line Producers:	Barbara Gibbs
Executive Producers:	Michael De Luca Brian Witten
Director:	Alex Proyas
Story:	Alex Proyas
Screenplay:	Alex Proyas Lem Dobbs Davis S. Goyer
Cinematography:	Dariusz Wolski
Editor:	Dov Hoenig
Production designer:	George Liddle Patrick Tatopoulos
Music:	Trevor Jones
Cast:	
John Murdoch:	Rufus Sewell
Inspector Frank Bumstead:	William Hurt
Dr. Daniel P. Schreber:	Kiefer Sutherland
Emma Murdoch / Anna:	Jennifer Connelly
Mr. Hand:	Richard O'Brien
Running Time:	100 minutes
Country:	Australia & USA

The Forgotten, 2004

Production Companies: Revolution Studios
Jinks/Cohen Company
Visual Arts Entertainment

Producers: Bruce Cohen
Dan Jinks
Joe Roth

Executive Producers: Todd Garner
[Steve Nicolaides](#)

Director: Joseph Ruben

Writer: Gerald Di Pego

Cinematography: Anastas N. Michos

Editor: Richard Francis-Bruce

Production designer: Bill Groom

Music: James Horner

Cast:

[Telly Paretta](#): Julianne Moore

Ash Correll: Dominic West

[Dr. Jack Munce](#): [Gary Sinise](#)

A Friendly Man: Linus Roache

[Jim Paretta](#): [Anthony Edwards](#)

Eliot: [Jessica Hecht](#)

Running Time: 91 minutes

Country: USA