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Nolan's Memento, Memory, and Recognition

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Adrian Gargett, "Nolan's _Memento_, Memory, and Recognition"
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Abstract: Adrian Gargett, in his paper "Nolan's *Memento*, Memory, and Recognition," analyses Christopher Nolan's film *Memento.* Gargett employs Deleuzian film theory in a general consideration of the relationship between thought and film. Gargett proposes that *Memento* acts as a type of intellectual stimulant that has the viewer deciphering a puzzle in process: what is identified in *Memento* is the way in which memory and the work of memory are presented in the film's narrative construct. In his analysis Gargett argues that memory is not added on; rather, it is already present, and that the Deleuzian abstract quality does not lie in the negative relation to representation, externality, and figure. And it is there in the way memory is present: abstraction is not present simply because memory lacks a given determination, and thus all that is apparent in the film is memory in the abstract. Abstraction here means a particular type of filmic presentation and it is the employment of abstraction as an already determined form of film construction. This presentation and what allows the film to be abstract is the confrontation with the conventions of abstraction. Engaging with abstraction within abstraction must be understood in terms of the construction and in terms of a response to the construction/structure of the film, in which narrative/subject matter can only be identified with their emergence from the way in which particular sequences/scenes work.

Adrian GARGETT

Nolan's *Memento*, Memory, and Recognition

Perhaps it is possible to start with memory. With memories that are placed before the eye. What has been remembered here? In Christopher Nolan's film *Memento* (2000), although the recognisable becomes far distanced from the describable, it never becomes totally separable. The increasing frailty of reference the more tenuous those links, the more that becomes the subject matter itself. Reverberations, the chaos of multiplying associations (conscious and subconscious), memories of an already-known, especially an already-narrated the traces of a describable, all conspire towards the instability of what is assumed to be perceived. Memory thus not as a pleasant reverie but as anarchic.

In an unstable creation where fugitive chains of associations undermine a hold on perception, repetitions of all kinds are a provisional order. Interruptions, shifts and collapsings of endless recurrence move considerations from the spatial to an unfolding of time. Repetition is itself a metaphor since nothing can be repeated. Some thing is always surrogate for something else. Temporarily speaking, actions extend backwards in memory and forwards in expectation. They can never coincide. So repetition automatically engages with duration, and more particularly duration attended to -- time that makes itself not invisible. Time structures via repetition in a one plus one sense, a molecular sense, hence its form making capacity. Repetition's simultaneous capacity to order and disorder, neither less anarchic, its attendant meaning no less so. The narrative is structured in a one plus one molecular way, but a form -- that which is differentiated, knows where to stop. Some other process or event limits or changes that multiplication. It differentiates the undifferentiated or deconstructs that form that limits.

Residues of past disturbances forever bear their trace. Present and potential events register cause, effecting new casual repercussions. As imprints of an event, representations present evidence of time and contingencies to come. The narrative line changes form, but there is no possibility of unravelling such chains of complexity. The interchangeability of cause and effect -- the indecipherable -- produces acute anxiety, haunting the narrative. This failure to mediate meaning induces deep insecurities as to the attaining of significance. "I suppose I was looking for Marlowe's ghost in modern L.A.": What if the grasp of one's life story were incomplete through neurological disorder? It is this problem which is excellently dramatised in *Memento*. Nolan's film is probably the first film about a revenger -- here of a raped, murdered wife -- who can only glory in his bloody vengeance for a matter of seconds because he has lost his short-term memory. Because the artificial style in which the story is presented identifies it as a fiction, its status as a creation of the human imagination can become its subject. The film proposes an ironic re-interpretation of the private-eye genre in which the conventional pattern of heroic self-determination played out by Leonard Shelby is contradicted by a self-conscious critique of the formula carried by the film's structure, a critique that sees the hero's control over his world as an illusion.

In his celebrated private-eye manifesto *The Simple Art of Murder*, Raymond Chandler contrasts Dashiell Hammett's putative realism with the artificial contrivances of the classical detective story. As Chandler saw it, "Hammett gave murder back to the people who commit it for reasons, not just to provide a corpse; and with the means at hand, not with handwrought duelling pistols, curare, and tropical fish. He put these people down on paper as they are, and he made them talk and think in the language they customarily used for these purposes" (16). In contrast to Chandler's emphasis of realism, Nolan's version of the formula involves the nostalgia of *noir* as a means of undercutting the generic experience itself. In *Memento*, Nolan evokes the basic characteristics of a traditional genre deliberately in order to bring the audience to see the genre as an embodiment of an inadequate and destructive myth. Although *Memento* features a milieu that is ostensibly realistic, its self-conscious visual style qualifies this assumption.

The protagonist is an insurance investigator and what the reverse chronology of the movie brilliantly achieves is the ironic, gradually unfolding suspicion that the loss of short-term memory can be a semi-willed insurance policy as well as brain damage. A series of overlapping timed

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sequences each offer us a more complicated view of the protagonist's history. *Memento* understands that one method of communicating the behaviour of memory is to create a parallel activity for the audience to experience. For once the "objectivity" of the reverse chronological sequence convention feels both legitimate artistically and morally creepy because we repeatedly have access to the immediate past which our hero's brain crucially denies him.

"We drove out Highway 70 and started moving past the trucks into rolling ranch country. I was driving; Degarmo sat moodily in the corner, his hands deep in his pockets. I watched the fat, straight rows of orange trees spin by like the spokes of a wheel. I listened to the shine of the tires on the pavement and I felt tired and stale from lack of sleep and too much emotion" (Chandler, *The Lady in the Lake* 158) ... "There are no individual statements, there never are. Every statement is the product of a machinic assemblage, in other words, of collective agents of enunciation (take 'collective agents' to mean not peoples or societies but multiplicities). The proper name (*nom propre*) does not designate an individual, it is on the contrary when the individual opens up to the multiplicities pervading him or her, at the outcome of the most severe operation of depersonalization, that he or she acquires his or her true proper name. The proper name is the instantaneous apprehension of multiplicity" (Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* 37-38). "Cinema," writes Deleuze, "does not give an image to which movement has been added, it immediately gives us the movement -- image" (*Cinema 1: The Movement Image* 215). This is not so much time frozen, but time infinitely speeded up, not so much movement arrested as movement anticipated.

Anticipation functions predominately throughout *Memento*. The narrative may be seen as an indeterminate map in which conceptual and material "densities" co-exist offering new models for the use of textual/filmic information. The narrative lines which flow through the film are partial maps which only imperfectly predict perceptual experience. They play with instrumentality at the same time they use instrumentality to disrupt the conventions of narrative. The chaotic universe in which the viewer is submerged is on the verge of collapse. One consequence of this collapse is that it is no longer clear what is and is not a sign. The perceptual space of the film is not simple and homogeneous: there are rifts and inexplicable transitions, abrupt appearances and disappearances which set up indeterminate conditions and render information segments incomplete and tentative. They effect a kind of blockage, making the narrative go blank right at the moment when conventional composition would dictate some kind of resolution. The structure of *Memento* is determinedly non-linear. The same sequences are seen from difference viewpoints, alternatively clarifying and confusing perceptions. It is edited like a random selection of mosaic tiles, but when the last section eventually snaps into place, a surprise sets the whole intrigue in motion again.

In *Cinema 2* Deleuze works towards a re-inscription of temporality across every element of film. According to Gilles Deleuze, this new image, this new mutation strives to become "truly thought and thinking, even if it has to become 'difficult' in order to do this": "What is in the present is what the image 'represents,' but not the image itself, which ... the system of the relationships between its elements, that is, a set of relationships of time from which the variable present only flows" (*Cinema 2: The Time Image* xii). Deleuze indicates the malleable quality of time in cinema where "sheets" of past can co-exist in a non-chronological order. The question then becomes: not how are Forms extracted from or released in things, but under what conditions can something new or singular be produced "outside" them? This concept of the abstract Deleuze develops along with Guattari with the "abstract machine" -- opposed to the abstract in the ordinary sense -- the "And" which moves outside. To move from the primary/critical sense of the abstract to this second "affirmative" version is to transform the idea of the abstract. For as long as one regards the abstract as Form withdrawn from Matter, one things in terms of 'possibilities' and their 'realizations' (or transcendental or dialectical conditions of such possibility). The basic assumption remains that the world is logically congruent with possibilities given by abstractions, even if all such possibilities are not realised or instantiated or all the categories under which they fall are not known. But once one allows for a world that is dis-unified, incongruous, composed of multiple divergent paths, one can think of abstract "virtualities" which in contrast with abstract "possibilities," are quite real, even though they are not "actualised." One starts to see the force or

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potential of things for which there exists no abstract concept, since their "effectuation" would go off in too many directions or "senses" at once. In *Dialogues*, Deleuze and C. Parnet call such potentials "virtual" (64-84). Thus, the virtual may be said to be abstract in a different sense from the possible: abstract machines are said to be real although not concrete, actual although not effectuated. They have the abstraction of immanent force rather than transcendental form -- the abstract virtuality within things of other different things, of other possible worlds in our world, other histories in our history. They are rhizomatic, serial, differential, complications rather than categorical generalising and purifying.

It is this concept of the abstract that Deleuze applies to cinema. If he sees films as abstract it is not because they remove all narrative or digesis and retreat into pure filmic self-reference, but because they take singular elements from all over, past and present, and reassemble them, mixing them up in the strange non-narrative continuity of a sort of "abstract machine." The motivation is thus not the removal or absence of narrative, but an attempt to attain an "outside" of other enigmatic/strange connections through a free, abstract *And*, which takes over the movement and time of the film. One must put this sort of abstraction first, see it as first, and so take narration as only "an indirect consequence that flows from movement and time, rather than the other way around" (*Cinema 2: The Time-Image* 222-23). For film is not a "code" of which abstraction would be the self-reference; it is an abstract machine that has movement and time as specific abstract "virtualities" which then get "effectuated" in particular conditions -- narrative is only one restricted possibility.

A significant process in the Deleuzian "time-image" is the "recollection-image" (an actualisation of a virtuality) as in the life of the recollector, stretching the structure of the film, fragmenting its linearity. It does not give us the past, "but only represents the former present that the past 'was'" (*Cinema 2: The Time-Image* 54). This effect can be seen in the memory sections of *Memento* where these images are moving the narrative back and forth through virtual time spaces. The immediate now presence of the cinema is perfect for the form of the recollection-image, as, "it is in the present that we make a memory, in order to make use of it in the future when the present will be past" (*Cinema 2: The Time-Image* 55). Developing this image analysis Deleuze recognises two possible types of time -- image, one grounded in the past, the other in the present. In this situation the past is preserved in time and should not be seen as un-actualised recollection-images: "it is the virtual element into which we penetrate to look for the 'pure recollection' which will become actual in a 'recollection-image'" (*Cinema 2: The Time-Image* 98). Deleuze derives this cinematic feature from his philosophic thought concerning the perception of memory: "Memory is not in us; it is we who move in a being-memory, a world-memory" (*Cinema 2: The Time-Image* 101). Via extrapolation Deleuze suggests that in film there are circles, or sheets of the past, which coexist between past and present, each sheet having its own characteristics, "accents" (peaks of view) and "aspects" (regions/layers): its "shining point" and its "dominant themes." Film can place us in the past, and then choose one of these sheets.

When we are placed in a certain sheet of time, that time, whether it is past, present, or future "becomes" present. Thus, in a film such a *Mement*, the past/present/future are no longer in any semblance of succession, but are implicated simultaneously. The film is structured with separate and different sheets of time -- which for us become the different "presents" of the film, each sheet can then be contradicted, obliterated, substituted, re-created, and returned. Here in the peaks of the present, the time-image shows its signifying power to push the ineffable, to make "actual" placed "de-actualized" in being related and aligned with virtual sheets of the past. *Memento*'s narrative lines define and construct continuums within "memory-ages." What are unclear "flashbacks" become more like recollection-images of our independent memory world. With *Memento* Nolan creates a film which has one single character: thought. What Nolan achieves is a utilization of the concept and feel of memory without impoverishing it by simply making it the object of flashbacks. Thus the stretches of sheets of past can just as viably be false recollections or imaginations or a past that is forgotten but that we have been given access to -- an opening up of "past" and therefore "time" in the film.

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The feelings of Leonard Shelby are spread over different sheets of the past, forming an interlocking sheet of their own. The film goes beyond the central character's construction towards feelings and beyond feelings towards the thought of which his is a character. Shelby is thus a character "of" thought, of film-thought. In the opening sequences of *Memento* sections of scenes appear later to re-appear in a wider context to form a more cohesive whole and thus become an echo of an earlier echo of what was to come. From a basis in space and movement the image has moved to occupy topological schemes centering on time and thought, and in Deleuzian terminology the screen has become "the cerebral membrane where immediate and direct confrontations take place between the past and he future ... independent of any fixed point" (*Cinema 2: The Time-Image* 126).

Deleuze's "crystalline image" encompasses de-actualized peaks of the present and virtual sheets of past actually "describing" the setting being a "cinema of the seer" (*Cinema 2: The Time-Image* 137). This form develops into crystalline narration, of pure optical and sound situations, with sequence takes over from sensory-motor montage, and wherein movement is "zero" or "incessant" such that the anomalies of movement become the essential point. This is part of the scheme of the time-image from which movement derives, which is then "false movement" produced by direct time-images, and thus non-chronological time (movement = time, false time therefore false movement). Deleuze positions the power of the "false" at the centre of a new style of cinema. This falsifying narration structures *Memento*. The elements of Nolan's film change constantly with the relations of time into which they enter and the terms with their connections. This regime of the image works to arrest the presupposition of reality, stops narration vainly attempting to refer to a true/correct form, and replaces these with the cinematographic "powers of life." In Nolan's private-eye story the hero's position as spectator is not always a privileged one. Conversely, in the Deleuzian scheme objective and subjective images are stripped of their division and identification in favour of a new circuit where they are completely replaced, or contaminate each other, or are decomposed and recomposed. Thus in *Memento* the image (op and son; image and sound) in echoing that to come, includes the before and after and also the personal and impersonal in one present. This practice is the process via which the direct time-image, breaking with indirect representation and the flow of time feeds a free indirect discourse, operating in reality.

Since the rape and murder of his wife, former insurance investigator Leonard Shelby has no short-term memory. Having vowed to seek out and kill his wife's murderer whose initials he knows to be "J.G." and whose car-registration number he has tattooed on his body, he writes notes and takes Polaroid pictures to remind him how the investigation is progressing. The story unfolds in reverse chronology:

> L.A. Shelby sits on his bed in a shabby room at the Discount Inn motel, talking to an unknown person on the phone. 'You say we've talked before?' he mutters. 'I don't remember that ... Yeah, it was summer. I remember that. I remember everything up until my injury. I just can't make new memories. So I can't remember talking to you. What did we talk about?' He gets up from his bed and wanders through the bathroom, the receiver tucked under his chin. 'Oh Sammy Jankis. I guess I told you about Sammy to help you understand. Sammy's story helps me understand my own situation. He paces around the bathroom. 'Sammy wrote himself a tremendous amount of notes, but he got mixed up. I have a more graceful solution to the memory problem.' He begins to undo his shirt; his upper body is covered in tattoos of names and date. 'I'm disciplined, and organised. I use habit and routine to make my life possible, Sammy had no drive. No reason to make it work.' In the bathroom mirror, we see Shelby remove his shirt, across his chest in a huge tattoo. It read JOHN G RAPED AND MURDERED MY WIFE, Shelby stares at his reflection for a second before continuing his conversation. 'Me? Yeah ... I got a reason'.

The implications of Nolan's self-conscious view of fantasy/memory are most fully expressed in the way he depicts his hero. As a detective, Leonard Shelby embodies the values such heroes represent. He aspires to actions on a grand scale, ostensibly motivated by ideals of courage/justice/altruism. By self-consciously playing against the "hard-boiled" formula's realist pretentiousness; however, Nolan at a deeper level calls these values into question. In *Memento* the private-eye mythology is revealed as inadequate and destructive. Primarily, *Memento* is a detective story, as Leonard makes clear to the undercover cop Teddy, who claims to be helping

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him to track down his wife's killer. "Facts," he says, "not memories. That's how you investigate." Keeping track of his search with scribbled notes, clues tattooed on his body and sheaves of documents, Leonard anchors his investigation in what he believes are concrete givens. But each time, the film reveals the context for his suppositions, Leonard is shown to be mistaken. *Memento* progresses to deconstruct the *noir* genre -- a remarkable psychological-puzzle film, a crime conundrum that expands the narrative possibilities of *noir*, and in the film its detective hero Leonard Shelby turns into a surrogate for the spectator, the reverse narrative logic forcing us to embark on the kind of investigative work Shelby is engaged in. *Memento*, in contrast to earlier versions of the genre in which the narrative was constructed to validate the hero's values, concludes by revealing them as paranoid projections cloaking the protagonist's own sense of impotence in the face of the byzantine complexity and evil of modern life.

Nolan engenders the genre's tendency to confound our expectations, with the conceptual twist of linking the flow of narrative information to Leonard's mental condition. One of the ways Leonard attempts to navigate the series of unconnected instants that constitute his experience of time is by taking Polaroids. Each image has a scribbled addenda: Teddy's reads "Do not believe his lies" the picture of Natalie, the waitress Leonard hooks up with, has "She's lost someone too. She'll help you out of pity." For Leonard and the viewer these memory cue-cards are clues in the murder hunt but there is substantial and detailed evidence positioned throughout the film's convoluted narrative structure to suggest that Leonard's "facts" do not necessarily relate the complete story: needing to assert his own sense of power and control over a threatening world, Shelby constructs repeatedly theories from inadequate and ill-digested information and these theories are invariably at odds with the actual situation, making him ultimately responsible for the disaster that concludes the action. His vulnerability and "moral" deformity appear metaphorically in his neurological condition:

> In his room at the flea-bitten Discount Inn motel, Shelby pieces together photographic fragments of his life on a wall-sized map of the City tacked above his bed. First he produces a Polaroid of he motel itself. 'Discount Inn.' He sticks the photograph to the map. Then a picture of a young brunette woman. 'Natalie.' That too is attached to the map. Next Shelby produces a photograph of a polished silver Jaguar. 'My car.' He glances up at the Polaroid of a middle-aged man, pinned to a far corner of the map. Shelby reads from the bottom of the picture 'Teddy.' Getting down from the bed, he glances at a photo copy of a driver's licence on his chest of drawers. The same man peers out from the mugshot at the top of the page. Shelby notices his name. 'John Edward Gammel.' He looks perplexed then quietly angry. 'This guy told me his name was Teddy.' Standing on his bed again, Shelby pulls down the picture of Teddy/Gammel, and turns it over. Taking a felt pen, he writes in capitals on the white plastic strip on the back of the picture 'DON'T BELIEVE HIS LIES'.

L.A.'s grid-like network of streets makes it easy to get close to your destination, but very difficult to locate it precisely. Most side streets look the same and sometimes when you?re just a couple of blocks away you might as well be in another universe. *Memento* is like a filmic jigsaw puzzle which enlists the spectator's imagination in assembling the fragments supplied by the narrative, but which also provides its own "solution" at the end. On Natalie's Polaroid, for example, a line has been scribbled out, a detail that instils doubt about her faithfulness long before it becomes clear she is exploiting mercilessly Leonard's condition for her own ends. In the best *noir* tradition its hard to trust any of the characters.

The film's opening sequence establishes the narrative pattern: a hand holds up a Polaroid photograph of a murder scene which slowly un-develops, fading to darkness. Subsequently a murder plays in rewind -- the victims blood seeps up a wall back into his head wound, bullet cartridges spin back into the gun's chamber -- erasing the act of killing. At this point the film reverts to a forward motion, events leading up to this murder are told in sequences that appear in reverse order. Fragments of scenes which initially appear incomprehensible. It is only when the film loops out from small details to a larger context that the narrative line begins to form a more cohesive whole. *Memento*'s prelude ushers the viewer into a wonderous piece which imitates brain function in itself being like a sizzle of connections across the collective synapses as it takes you on multiple detective trails into the past. Leonard's reliance on his remembered past -- he claims to recall his life before the murder of his wife -- is one of the films structural foundations. Running parallel with the fractured eternal present of the Leonard's real-time existence is the story of a

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case he investigated when working for an insurance firm: that of Sammy Jankis, who was afflicted with similar short-term memory loss.

In an extended black-and-white sequence, Leonard relates by phone (to a cop we assume is Teddy) how he was suspicious of Jankis who despite his condition could nonetheless administer the correct insulin doses to his diabetic wife. The claim was refused; Sammy's wife attempted to snap her husband out of his amnesia by making him repeatedly inject her with insulin shots. However this strategy fails tragically, leaving her dead and Sammy adrift in a memory-less limbo. Confined, like Leonard, in the film's looping reverse trajectory, we invest this sequence with validity. Subsequent events come to undermine such verisimilitude: at gunpoint Teddy relates that he has comprehensively revised Leonard's memory of the Sammy Jankis case to avoid the facts that his own wife who survived the assault, died after he over-administered insulin to her. Jankis was a conman whom Leonard, in a psychological state of extreme denial, has reconstituted as a pitiful victim:

> The lobby of a cheap motel. Shelby is greeted by his friend Teddy. 'Lenny.' Shelly turns unamused. 'It's Leonard. Like I told you before."
> Teddy holds the door open for him. 'Did you? I musta forgot.' 'I guess I already told you about my condition.' 'Ah well, only everytime I see you.' Outside, Teddy steps towards a car. Shelby sakes his head. 'My car.' 'This is your car.' 'Oh you're in a playful mood.' Shelby produces a Polaroid of his own car, a Jaguar. The real thing is parked next to the first car. 'It's not good for you to make fun of someone's handicap.' 'Just trying to have a little fun.' In the Jaguar, the two men drive along a suburban road. Teddy turns to Selby. 'So, where to Sherlock?' 'I got a lead on a place.' Shelby produces another Polaroid. He hands it to Teddy. 'Oh, what the hell you want to go there for?'
> 'You know it?' 'Yeah, it's just this fucked up building. Why'd you want to go there?' 'I don't remember.' Eventually they pull up outside the building. Teddy heads towards it. Shelby walks behind. He pulls another Polaroid from his pocket. It shows Teddy, smiling. He flips it over. On the reverse is written, in neat capital letters: DON'T BELIEVE HIS LIES. HE IS THE ONE KILL HIM.

Teddy tells Leonard he is the cop who helped investigate the rape of his wife. Since the police dropped the investigation, Teddy has been finding criminals with the initials "J.G." for Leonard to kill. He elaborates this version of the narrative to a now distraught Leonard. The film's apex is to end with a questioning of its protagonists innocence: "Do I lie to myself to be happy?" Leonard asks after Teddy recounts his version of Catherine Shelby's death. "In your case Teddy, I will," he says as he writes down the cop's car-registration number, incriminating falsely him as his wife's killer and signing effectively his death warrant. It is the height of the film's achievement that this final scene -- which apparently completes the narrative jigsaw -- should cloud Leonard's motives. The conclusion is tantalisingly enigmatic, scattering any sense of certainty that may have become apparent during the multiple lines that comprise the narrative structures.

In *The Maltese Falcon* Humphrey Bogart's explanation of events unlike Shelby's, does not reflect his own inadequacies; instead it is presented as an accurate re-creation of the actual state of affairs. Bogart is always right, and he always acts for the best. The "hard-boiled" formula is constructed to excuse the hero's behaviour by means of such rationalizations. Nolan's version of the story, however, allows no such refuge in thematic assertions of verisimilitude or morality. Faced with the condition of his own limited vision Shelby can only look confused and defeated: trapped in his destructive rationalizations and unable to comprehend the insecurities that lie beneath them, he cannot imagine how he could have contributed to an alternative outcome: "The rains are over. The hills are still green and in the valley across the Hollywood hills you can see snow on the high mountains. The fur stores are advertising their annual sales. The call houses that specialise in sixteen-year-old virgins are doing a land-office business. And in Beverley Hills the jacaranda trees are beginning to bloom" (Chandler, "The Little Sister" 5).

Deleuzian film theory engages a general consideration of the relationship between thought and film -- the image should "force thought to think itself as much as thinking the whole" (*Cinema 2: The Time-Image* 158). *Memento* acts as a type of intellectual stimulant that has the viewer deciphering a puzzle in process. Deleuze identifies the concept with image; the image is for itself in the concept. Violence, for example, should be of the image in its vibrations rather than in representation, while the notion of fractured perception should be brought out by composition.

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Thought is positioned as the object of the image, becoming the higher purpose of the essence of cinema. Deleuze suggests that cinema should not just film the world (narrow) but rather "belief" in this world (wide), for as in philosophy we should relinquish attempts to discover absolute truths and replace the model of knowledge with belief in the "crystalline image."

The "interstice" between images in the time-cinema is vital -- a spacing which means that each image is extracted from the void and then reverts into it. The interstice is like a space/instant between images, and therefore an operation of "differentiation of potential" that engenders something new. These images break any join between them, a shock to get the viewer to choose living thinking over dead thought. A film such as *Memento* attempts to remove the reading of images by association (montage) which makes the succession of images into a chain, each slave in meaning to the next by a replacement with a division of this one-being mode of film for "the method of 'and' this and that." This leads to irrational cuts engendering false continuity. The image itself becomes reflective, living. An attempt to mirror the process of thoughts is now replaced by the irrational cut, and independent images, each deframing the previous, thus creating and inducing thought immediately in film and viewer: "The outside or obverse of the images has replaced the whole, at the same time as the interstice or the cut has replaced association" (*Cinema 2: The Time-Image* 214). Deleuze views cinema as being the highest exercise in thought, extracted from and in a sense integrated with the basic images and sounds. The time-image gives a direct representation of time in its pure form. Movement-images are subsumed/subordinate to time. In the time-image aspects of the movement-image gain a new sense of montage/frame/sound take on the appearance of something "different" such that cinema becomes "analytic of the image": Deleuze's cinema is a plastic mass, an a-signifying and a-syntaxic material. What can film "essentially" do? Deleuze re-inscribes cinema virtually with its own philosophical apparatus which comes to the fore in films such as *Memento*.

What is identified in *Memento* is the way in which memory -- the work of memory -- is presented by the way the film works. Memory is not added on., it is already present. The Deleuzian abstract quality does not lie in the negative relation to representation/externality/figure. It is there in the way memory is present. Abstraction is not present simply because memory lacks a given determination, and thus all that is apparent in the film is memory in the abstract. Abstraction here means a particular type of filmic presentation. It is the employment of abstraction as an already determined form of film construction. This presentation and what allows the film to be abstract is the confrontation with the conventions of abstraction. Engaging with abstraction within abstraction must be understood in terms of the construction; in other words in terms of a response to the construction/structure of the film, in which narrative/subject matter can only be identified with their emergence from the way in which particular sequences/scenes work. What is significant is that *Memento* affirms the presence of memory by holding and presenting memory within timed space; the dual presence of memory within the film forms part of the timing of space. Timed space is part of the way in which the film works.

Film works in remembering in the abeyance of destruction and by figuring complex relations. Within the generalised field of film this relation may be generic, or it may involve the specific subject of the specific work. With *Memento* there is a dual work of memory -- two interrelated forms of memory are present. The first emerges as part of the film narrative itself. The film allows time and memory to figure as an essential part of the film's work. Both the structure and the narrative itself, enact different takes on the question of memory. It is thus that memory is already implicated in the work. It is this enactment that bring into play another aspect of memory. Here what is remembered and then played out is that particular manifestation of abstraction that is linked to negation and autonomy. The complex presence of the disjointed relation of sequences enacts a shattering of the notion of autonomy.

Autonomy/immediacy/negation are not themselves subject to negation. It is alternatively that they are no longer appropriate to the way in which the film works. The fracture that results in their abeyance is effected by timed space. Timed space becomes the enactment of other abstractions/possibilities.

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The aesthetic gratuitousness of *Memento* is that of images swept away by a succession of unwielding neologisms: a retinue of visual replicants, ceaselessly modified refrains and circuitous re-configurations. Nolan demystifies and challenges *noir* through an exclamatory, puzzling, and unexpected filmic syntax that explodes into a cacophony of mixed metaphors that are at once discontinuous fragmented and fluid. In *Memento* he re-circulates different possibilities of the detective genre and we are exposed to a legacy gone askew. A world of unruly, seemingly haphazzard dissonances, mixing narrative directions, styles, and technical protocols distinctly punctuate the film with excessive and translogical "break-outs" of form. Through a visuality suspended in ambivalent quotation, or in elipses of eternal returns and departures *Memento* proposes a kind of acutely conscious, but also incidental nomadism, without guide across film form. Perturbed expressly this visuality enunciates a range of enigmatic and ambiguous variations, invoking double-edged, back-and-forth-transformations as an inventive re-animation of film form. The dense, often difficult narrative lines of *Memento*'s rhizomatic inter-textualities retain an expressive dynamic -- a challenge to the encoded "I" (or eye) of presence. Strange and unreliable promissory narratives, they are fulfilled inasmuch as their finely tuned signing remains conflicted and in resistance to systematic categorisation. They are signed from within the paradox of mercurial and indivisible relations, and are liable to an uncertain outline of otherness.

Memento is at once indebted to the history of the *noir*/detective genre and crediting its future inventively. The broken promise of a formalist structure and closure is also its *rapporchement*, a promissory value of otherness to the film form. Agitating hetero-referentiality in conflict between an inside and an imaginary outside, between specular immediacy and filmic distance, self-referentiality, and self-reflectivity, between abstract and a-real, monologue and dialogue, abstract filmic intensities and rhetorical devices, *Memento* becomes a promissary address that invites diffusely its creative impulses to participate in the invigoration of the film form.

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