A Performance of Time
The Intersecting Temporalities of Cinema and Dementia

A thesis submitted to the University of Manchester for the degree
of Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Humanities

2019
MaoHui Deng
School of Arts, Languages and Cultures
# Table of Contents

LIST OF FIGURES 4

ABSTRACT 5

DECLARATION 6

COPYRIGHT STATEMENT 7

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS 8

INTRODUCTION: THE DIFFICULTY OF THE CLOCK 9

Films about Dementia in the New Millennium 16
Moving Beyond Representations 24
The Celebration of Difference 31

**CHAPTER ONE: PERFORMING TIME/PERFORMED BY TIME** 37

Dementia and the Temporality of Agency 42
The Performance of Time 56
Normativity/Anti-normativity 71

**CHAPTER TWO: THE SHAPE OF DEMENTIA NARRATIVES** 82

Entangled Worlds and Difference in Itself 87
Confabulation/Hallucination and the Three Syntheses of Time 98
Sharing the World Differently 123

**CHAPTER THREE: HESITANTLY READING THE INDEX** 133

The Blurred Lines Between the Past and the Present 138
Temporal Collision and Hesitancy 148
A Rhizomatic Worldview 158
The Digitally Haunted Index 167
Reading Hesitantly 177

2
List of Figures

Figure 1: Su-jin in the kitchen in *A Moment to Remember* 44
Figure 2: Su-jin lost in *A Moment to Remember* 62
Figure 3: Piya refreshed by the rain and the wipers in *U Me Aur Hum* 67
Figure 4: Ajay refreshed by the rain and the wipers in *U Me Aur Hum* 74
Figure 5: Cheol-su at the beginning of *A Moment to Remember* 76
Figure 6: Cheol-su towards the end of *A Moment to Remember* 79
Figure 7: A different kind of textured surface in *Memories of Tomorrow* 90
Figure 8: Maria silently crying in *Memoir of a Murderer* 102
Figure 9: Bergson's inverted cone of memory 110
Figure 10: Eun-hee's view in *Memoir of a Murderer* 112
Figure 11: The mirror from Eun-hee's viewpoint in *Memoir of a Murderer* 117
Figure 12: Young Emiko in the foreground of *Memories of Tomorrow* 127
Figure 13: The close-up shot of the cup in *Memories of Tomorrow* 130
Figure 14: The grandmother in her armchair in *The Visit* 140
Figure 15: The visual irruption in *The Taking of Deborah Logan* 142
Figure 16: Subtitling Deborah in *The Taking of Deborah Logan* 145
Figure 17: Schematic diagram of the Todorovian fantastic 151
Figure 18: The grandmother by the oven in *The Visit* 157
Figure 19: The frame's inability to capture *The Visit* 162
Figure 20: Material degradation in *The Taking of Deborah Logan* 176
Figure 21: Ismail engulfed by Chung Cheng High in *Parting* 198
Figure 22: Temporal collision in *Parting* 213
Abstract

Analysing films about dementia in the new millennium, the thesis argues that people living with dementia, and people not living with dementia, experience time differently. The thesis works through this proposal by putting forward the concept of temporal identification, suggesting that a subject, always in a state of change and becoming, is performing time and performed by time. Then, expanding on this notion, the thesis asserts that a subject’s temporal identification is situated in a wider entangled web of temporal identifications on and off screen, and that the lifestories of people living with dementia can be understood as that of continual creation rather than of foreclosure.

In arguing that everyone and everything is experiencing time differently, the thesis puts forward a methodological approach that hesitantly explores, surfacing the temporalities indexed by the person living with dementia, and the person not living with dementia and other (non-)living phenomena, on a wider rhizomatic map. Finally, the thesis puts forward a case study of the treatment of dementia in Singapore and Singapore cinema so as to demonstrate the methodological potential of thinking about time through a philosophy of difference and the prism of performance. Ultimately, in exploring the temporal experiences of people living with dementia, the thesis paves the way for future research into the affective politics of ageing and biomedicine.
Declaration

No portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any university or other institute of learning.
Copyright Statement

i. The author of this thesis (including any appendices and/or schedules to this thesis) owns certain copyright or related rights in it (the “Copyright”) and s/he has given The University of Manchester certain rights to use such Copyright, including for administrative purposes.

ii. Copies of this thesis, either in full or in extracts and whether in hard or electronic copy, may be made only in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 (as amended) and regulations issued under it or, where appropriate, in accordance with licensing agreements which the University has from time to time. This page must form part of any such copies made.

iii. The ownership of certain Copyright, patents, designs, trademarks and other intellectual property (the “Intellectual Property”) and any reproductions of copyright works in the thesis, for example graphs and tables (“Reproductions”), which may be described in this thesis, may not be owned by the author and may be owned by third parties. Such Intellectual Property and Reproductions cannot and must not be made available for use without the prior written permission of the owner(s) of the relevant Intellectual Property and/or Reproductions.

iv. Further information on the conditions under which disclosure, publication and commercialisation of this thesis, the Copyright and any Intellectual Property and/or Reproductions described in it may take place is available in the University IP Policy (see http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/DoculInfo.aspx?DocID=24420), in any relevant Thesis restriction declarations deposited in the University Library, The University Library’s regulations (see http://www.library.manchester.ac.uk/about/regulations/) and in The University’s policy on Presentation of Theses.
Acknowledgements

I am grateful to my thesis supervisors and advisor, David Butler, Felicia Chan and Jackie Stacey, who provided excellent critical eyes and listening ears. I am grateful for their endless capacity to believe in my ability to complete the thesis.

I am grateful for the members of staff at the department of Drama, who were always collegiate and – importantly – offered me much paid teaching. Working with the students has been a treat, and conversations with them have also shaped much of the thesis. This thesis was generously funded by the University’s President’s Doctoral Scholarship, and this was only possible with the help and support of the lecturers in the department.

I am grateful for the people at the British Association of Film, Television and Screen Studies, especially the executive committee, who were not only fantastic mentors but were always happy to help out whenever I was in a bit of a BAFTSS pickle.

I am grateful to my friends in the UK – Adam, Karen, Rob, Fraser, Monika, Veronica, Bobby, Nicola, Nikki, Josh, Sarah, Sophie, Gwilym, Lynsey, Lola, Becca and Joelle, amongst others, who supported me throughout the process. Special thanks go to Jacqueline and Anthony, who not only found it bearable to live with me for so many years, but were also constant sources of creative energy that pushed me through. Thank you, too, to Sonny, who is always a great source of comfort.

I am grateful to my friends and family in Singapore, who not only visited me in Manchester but were also always there for me whenever I needed to speak to human beings. And, finally, to Rover, the best dog in the world.

All the good ideas in the thesis originated from conversations with these people. All the bad ideas are mine.
Introduction

The Difficulty of the Clock

The Clock Drawing Test (CDT) is one of the most common tests administered to people suspected to be living with dementia. The CDT requires the individual to draw a clock, fill in the numbers, and then set the clock to a specified time (usually at 10 past 11). The test is deceptively simple but actually examines multiple cognitive functions that highlight the neurodegeneration experienced by people living with dementia: it requires the person to have adequate auditory language skills in order to comprehend the verbal instructions; to retrieve and reconstruct the visual representation of the clock in their visual memory; to coordinate their visuospatial system with their graphomotor skills in order to translate their visual image into drawing; to possess a certain level of numerical knowledge so as to label the hours on the clock face accurately; to be able to think abstractly so that 10 past 11 can be understood temporally; to be able to resist and suppress the perceptual pull towards the number 10 on the clock face so that the hour hand can be positioned correctly; and, finally, to be able to concentrate.¹

A clock drawn by someone without dementia will largely be able to accurately lay out the numbers in an ascending order on the clock face and identify the correct prescribed time (though the length of the hour and minute hand might not necessarily be adequately distinguished). A clock drawn by the person living with dementia, on the other hand, might include extra numbers, have the hours laid out in an incorrect order, and not tell the correct time at all. Furthermore, as Morris Freedman et al observe, ‘patients with more severe dementia show more deficits on clock drawings as
compared to those with mild impairment’ (Freedman et al 1994: 63). Put differently, the chances of an individual being diagnosed with dementia become more certain when they are unable to tell the time on the clock, a device that conditions and locks us into thinking about time linearly and homogeneously.

Clocks, according to Kevin K. Birth, are cognitive artefacts that demonstrate ‘the potential of constraining thought through the mediation between thought and what is thought about’ but, in addition, ‘also hide the ways in which thought is directed and constrained’ (Birth 2012: 20). Expanding on this argument, Birth posits that the design of the clock ‘subordinated the determination of moments and timings to the measure of duration’, which in turn heightened the dominance of linear, homogeneous time to ‘the modern construction of knowledge’ (Birth 2012: 40 – 41). In addition to this, the simplicity of the clock’s design gave people an easy and quick way to tell time, which meant that the skills to calculate time through considering different temporalities quickly atrophied after the popularisation of clocks. Lastly, Birth also observes that although the clock gives off the impression that it is designed to measure the Earth’s rotation, clock-time is actually set to the atomic cycle of cesium atoms since 1967 as the Earth’s rotation was simply too irregular for time-keeping; in other words, this understanding of homogeneous, linear time as “natural” is actually a highly calculated and regulated consideration of time.

With the clock being a pervasively strong symbol of linear, homogeneous time, the CDT, designed to measure a wide variety of cognitive functions in a person suspected to be living with dementia,
becomes an example to highlight the ways in which the person living with dementia is subjected to the disciplines of linear, homogeneous time, and, in failing to conform to this chronological understanding of time, the person living with dementia is put under the watchful medical gaze. In addition to this, much scientific research has not only demonstrated that people living with dementia display a loss of temporal perception early on in the diagnosis, where ‘the temporal relationships and coherence of past, present and future were often unclear and vague’, but also suggested multiple techniques in which carers and people living with dementia can adopt to keep to linear, homogeneous time (Nygård and Johansson 2000: 89). In other words, as ‘time past, present and future blur together like watercolours washed in the rain’, the person living with dementia gets increasingly out of sync with modern society’s understanding of time that progresses in a chronological manner, and is in turn feared and stigmatised (Hayes 2011: 47). Clocks for the person living with dementia and their carers, then, become ‘another reminder of a shattered world’ as the tension/negotiation between linear time and non-linear time is exacerbated (Orona 1990: 1254).

Clock time as we understand it today, where a day is divided into 24 hours and an hour into 60 minutes, gained traction with the rise of the mechanical clock in Europe. Throughout the fourteenth century, church and public clocks were erected in European cities and towns throughout Europe, and they measured the passing of time visually and aurally, regulating the movements in the cities and towns with ‘militant imperiousness’ (Schafer 1994: 56). Gradually, clocks were introduced to the workplace during the Industrial Revolution, in part, as E.P. Thompson argues, due to the demands
of the changing technology that necessitated a highly regulated understanding of time, and in part ‘as a means of labour exploitation’ (Thompson 1967: 80). Concurrently, as trains and electricity became more commonplace in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, time began to be standardised across the world: for example, almost all English railway stations agreed to follow the Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) in 1848 so that people across England could have a standardised schedule to follow in order to catch their trains; the International Meridian Conference was held in 1884 and the GMT was adopted as the prime meridian (France only adopted the GMT in 1911 due to political differences with Britain) so as to facilitate global trade and communication; and the Eiffel Tower transmitted the first time signal to the whole world in 1913, which allowed the global synchronisation of time to happen. The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, therefore, saw an accelerated and dramatic change in the reconsideration of time in relation to space. As Stephen Kern writes, the ‘independence of local times began to collapse once the framework of a global electronic network was established’ (Kern 2003: 14). In turn, the Western world encountered a modernity characterised by the ‘empty, homogeneous time’ of the clock, where every single minute, hour, and day is the same, and where time is regulated linearly predominantly in the service of capitalism (Benjamin 1992: 244 – 255).

At the same period, cinema, as a brand new form of art/technology, began participating in ‘modernity’s reconceptualization of time and its representability’ (Doane 2002: 4). For Tom Gunning, early Western cinema – the cinema of attractions – had ‘one basic temporality, that of the alternation
of presence/absence which is embodied in the act of display’ (Gunning 1993: 6). According to Gunning, unlike films from the classical paradigm where narrative is dominant, the desire to display in the cinema of attractions meant that early cinema ‘is limited to the pure present tense of its appearance’ (Gunning 1993: 7). However, faced with the enormous growth of nickelodeon exhibition spaces and an economic reorganisation to regulate the film industry (the founding of the Motion Picture Patents Company) from around 1908 onwards, Gunning argues, cinema began to focus more on its capabilities to tell narratives. Consequently, the temporality of cinema moved from that of irruption to that of linear development (Gunning 1993: 7).

This process of empty, homogeneous time creeping into, and becoming dominant over, the temporality of cinema is furthered with the introduction of synchronised sound technology. Prior to synchronised sound, non-synchronised sound films were projected at different frame rates, ranging from 16 to 24 frames per second (fps). However, synchronised sound technology, with the introduction of the narrow strip of soundtrack running down the side of the celluloid film stock, ‘demanded an absolutely consistent projection speed of 24fps’, which meant that any non-synchronised sound films had to be sped up in order to be screened by the new projection technology (Napper 2017: 5 – 6). The strict adherence to a highly regulated frame rate, for Bliss Cua Lim, meant that cinema can be thought of as ‘a kind of clockwork mechanism’ that reduces time to the homogeneity of measurable space’ (Lim 2009: 11). Yet, beyond the linearity of the cinematic apparatus, as Mary Ann Doane observes, there is also the temporality of the diegesis, wherein ‘time is represented by the image, the
varying invocations of present, past, future, historicity’, and the temporality of the reception, which ‘encourages the spectator to honor the relentless temporality of the apparatus’ (Doane 2002: 30). That is to say, in cinema, there too is a constant push and pull between clock and non-clock time.

In this thesis, these messy temporal negotiations as evinced by cinema and the experiences of dementia that flit, constantly and consistently, between linearity and non-linearity, past and present, absence and presence, and there and here are filtered through the prism of performance. Performance, as defined by Richard Schechner, is ‘twice-behaved behavior’ (Schechner 1985: 36). For Schechner, performance is ‘living behaviour treated as a film director treats a strip of film’ (Schechner 1985: 35). These strips of behaviour, or strips of film in the case of the metaphor employed by Schechner, ‘can be rearranged or reconstructed’, like the ways in which each frame can be moved around within the reel to create, at each edit, a different film, as time is cut out of joint and re-joined again (Schechner 1985: 35). Or, as Elin Diamond puts it, performances are ‘always a doing and a thing done’ (Diamond 1996:1). They are cultural processes that ‘conservatively reinscribe or passionately reinvent the ideas, symbols, and gestures that shape social life’ – performances are, in a sense, intricate ‘negotiations with regimes of power’ (Diamond 1996: 2).  

Understood as performances in the widest sense possible, both the cultural processes and understandings of cinema and the experiences of dementia can be comprehended through the framework of temporal negotiation, where times are done onto and times are being done. Each interaction, as performance, Peggy Phelan writes, ‘in a strict ontological
sense is nonreproductive': each event is different, and each negotiation is ever-changing, in a constant state of becoming (Phelan 2003: 148). In cinema, film (itself a complex negotiation between the clock-like linearity of the mechanical apparatus and the multifarious temporal explorations of the film's formal properties and narratives) enact a certain kind of temporality onto the audience; likewise, audiences and their individual spectatorships bring to the mix different times, proliferating the ways a film might be varyingly watched. Similarly, the person living with dementia experiences and lives their sense of non-linear temporalities while the individuals of the wider society variously prescribe different intensities of linear clock time on to the person living with dementia. Consequently, films about dementia, in part concerned about cinema and in part concerned about dementia, surface the complex push and pull between multiple entangled times and temporalities, and highlight the ways in which the person living with dementia might be performing time and performed by time.

In analysing films about dementia, this thesis puts forward a rather straightforward argument: people living with dementia experience time differently. Yet, to make this proposition in a way that does not Other the experiences of people living with dementia requires a careful development and elaboration of a theoretical framework of change and ephemerality which suggests that everyone experiences time differently as multiple categories of temporalities come together to structure/affect/implicate an individual subject’s identification, where identification, following Jackie Stacey, is understood as a constant process of negotiation between the self and the other that take place within the psychic imagination and at the level of
cultural activity (Stacey 1994: 306 – 307). At the heart of my discussion of films about dementia, then, is an examination of the ways in which everyone and everything, enmeshed in extended and elaborate ecologies, is engaged in different performances of time, as they each negotiate with different temporalities in relation to their surrounding world.

Films about Dementia in the New Millennium

Dementia, as commonly understood, is an umbrella term that points to a wide range of neurodegenerative diseases that are variously characterised by degrees of memory loss, problems with communication and meaning, and mood changes. This refers to a wide range of diseases that include Alzheimer’s disease, frontotemporal dementia, dementia with Lewy bodies, vascular dementia, mixed dementia, Creutzfeld-Jakob disease, and Huntington’s disease, to name just a few. For this thesis, I consider films that explicitly identify characters living with dementia like Iris (Richard Eyre, 2001, UK/USA), Thanmathra (Blessy, 2005, India), The Savages (Tamara Jenkins, 2007, USA), Pandora’s Box (Yeşim Ustaoğlu, 2008, Turkey), Poetry (Lee Chang-dong, 2010, South Korea), A Separation (Asghar Farhadi, 2011, Iran/France), Amour (Michael Haneke, 2012, Austria/France/Germany), Robot and Frank (Jake Schreier, 2012, USA), Still Mine (Michael McGowan, 2012, Canada), Pecoross’ Mother and Her Days (Azuma Morisaki, 2013, Japan), Passage of Life (Diego Corsini, 2015, Argentina/Spain), The Olive Tree (Icíar Bollaín, 2016, Spain/Germany) and Shed Skin Papa (Roy Szeto, 2016, Hong Kong). I also examine films that have characters who display
traits of dementia but are never explicitly identified as living with dementia like *Nebraska* (Alexander Payne, 2013, USA), *Magallanes* (Salvador del Solar, 2015, Peru/Argentina/Spain), *The Mimic* (Huh Jung, 2017, South Korea), *Marjorie Prime* (Michael Almereyda, 2017, USA), and *Happy End* (Michael Haneke, 2017, France/Austria/Germany).  

Throughout, I refer to films made from 2000 and onwards, though there are, of course, films about dementia made pre-2000 like *On Golden Pond* (Mark Rydell, 1981, UK/USA), *Gray Sunset* (Shunya Itô, 1985, Japan), *Summer Snow* (Ann Hui, 1995, Hong Kong), *Travelling Companion* (Peter Del Monte, 1996, Italy), and *After Life* (Hirokazu Koreeda, 1998, Japan). In part, my focus on films released in the new millennium is due to a heightened awareness of the ageing population across almost every advanced industrialised country in the world as the Baby Boomer generation, a term which generally refers to people born between the mid-1940s and mid-1960s, began to enter their sixties in the 2000s, prompting the United Nations to describe the ageing population as ‘one of the most significant social transformations of the twenty-first century’ (United Nations 2015: 1).

For instance, in a parliamentary speech in 2011, Lee Hsien Loong, the Prime Minister of Singapore, cautioned against an impending ‘silver tsunami’, calling for a ‘national effort to plan ahead to be ready for it so that it does not wash [Singaporeans] away’ (Lee 2011). A few years later, Lee’s rhetoric changed from fear mongering to positivity: ‘Some fear that this will be a silver tsunami which will overwhelm us... but there are also opportunities in longevity’ (Lee in Tham 2015). In Japan, similarly, the huge ageing population – a quarter of the Japanese population in 2015 is over 65, and is
projected to increase to 40% by 2055, when the population would have shrunk to 90 million people – has prompted a very rigorous, and at times polemical, debate about encouraging immigration to set the country’s demography into equilibrium (Oi 2015). Likewise, in Italy, the ageing population coupled by the multiple recessions faced by the country in recent years prompted the Health Minister Beatrice Lorenzin to call Italy a ‘dying country’ that has ‘enormous implications for every sector: the economy, society, health, pension, just to give a few examples’ (Lorenzin in Squires 2015).^{10}

In turn, with the world’s population getting “greyer” in the new millennium, and with the ageing of stars and celebrities, there is a significant increase in films about ageing in later life.^{11} Cinema traditionally associated with the “younger” age group started to tell stories about the elderly. Genre films like The Expendables franchise (2010 – ), the Red series (2010 – ), Twilight Gangsters (Kang Hyo-jin, 2010, South Korea), Star Wars: Episode VII – The Force Awakens (J.J. Abrams, 2015, USA), and Blade Runner 2049 (Denis Villeneuve, 2017, USA/UK/Hungary/Canada/Spain) put old age at the front of the narrative whereas The Alzheimer Case (Erik Van Looy, 2003, Belgium), The Bodyguard (Sammo Hung, 2010, Hong Kong/China), Ashes (Mat Whitecross, 2012, UK) and Logan (James Mangold, 2017, USA) go one step further and feature characters who live with dementia at the core of these geri-action films. Likewise, geri-animations such as Millennium Actress (Satoshi Kon, 2001, Japan), The Triplets of Belleville (Sylvain Chomet, 2003, France/Belgium/Canada/UK/Latvia/USA), Howl’s Moving Castle (Hayao Miyazaki, 2004, Japan), Up (Pete Docter, 2009, USA), My Dog Tulip (Paul
Fierlinger, 2009, USA), and The Illusionist (Sylvain Chomet, 2010, France/UK) have also started telling stories about older characters whilst Wrinkles (Ignacio Ferreras, 2011, Spain), Ethel and Ernest (Roger Mainwood, 2016, UK) and Coco (Lee Unkrich, 2017, USA) specifically focus on the experiences of dementia.¹²

Concomitantly, cinemas across the world have also discovered the purchasing power of the “grey pound”.¹³ In the UK alone, for instance, films about old people primarily aimed at old people like The King’s Speech (Tom Hooper, 2010, UK/USA/Australia) The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel (John Madden, 2011, UK/USA/UAE), Quartet (Dustin Hoffman, 2012, UK), Philomena (Stephen Frears, 2013, UK/USA/France) and The Lady in the Van (Nicholas Hytner, 2015, UK) have proven financially lucrative and successful with the 55+ audience group. Significantly, 45% of the audiences for The King’s Speech in the year of its UK release were above the age of 55 and heralded a substantial upwards trend in film viewership for the 55+ audience demographics in the UK, going from 8.3% of the cinema admissions in 2011 to 11.5% in 2014 (BFI 2015: 4). Likewise, The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel made £20.4 million in the year it was released in the UK and 53% of the audiences were made up of people aged above 55 (BFI 2013: 169) whereas Quartet made £8.6 million in the year of its UK release and the 55+ audience group made up 87% of its audience demographics (BFI 2014: 162).¹⁴

Put differently then, following Christopher Gilleard and Paul Higgs, as the Baby Boomer generation is confronted with old age and as the world
becomes more conscious of the benefits and/or disadvantages of the ageing population,

ageing has come to occupy such a central position within postmodern culture because there is more ‘age’ about than ever before, more varied resources to shape its experience, more commonalities across the whole of adulthood established by post-war consumer culture and more sources of ‘conflict’ around the social regulation and expression of ageing (Gilleard and Higgs 2000: 9).  

Although, in drawing from Gilleard and Higgs, films about ageing in the later life made post-2000 do feature a wide array of themes and narratives, Sally Chivers observes that a substantial portion of these films – which she describes as the ‘silvering screen’ – regularly encourage audience members to ‘negotiate the cultural panic of the silver tsunami, personal fear at the prospect of aging, and social guilt about their own care choices in relation to older characters’ (Chivers 2011: 76). Further to the articulation of these anxieties about old age, Chivers notes that these films also demonstrate a ‘heightened awareness of time passing’ (Chivers 2011: xvi). For Chivers, these films ‘value and evaluate the present primarily in relation to a distant past’ and, additionally, ‘illuminate time’ by ‘continually featuring clocks, visually noting seasons, including birthdays in the plot’ (Chivers 2011: xvi).

Here, I focus on the silvering screen’s obsession with time – with clocks, with calendrical seasons, with birthdays – vis-à-vis ageing so as to make a point about films about dementia and their relationship with clock time. In his research into ageing and time, Jan Baars notes that although people are continuously aged by chronological time in culture, ‘aging is
poorly indicated by higher chronological ages’ (Baars 2009: 88). As an alternative to chronological time, Baars proposes to think about old age in terms of the biological clock, which has its ‘own rhythm of living and aging’ (Baars 1997: 289). Baars concedes that although the biological clock is not a specific “clock” to begin with because different people show signs of wearing and tearing at different stages of their lives, the metaphor of the clock used in gerontology is still unfortunate as it hints at a chronometric outlook towards ageing. This constant deployment of the clock as metaphor for ageing, Baars argues, can lead to the aim of transforming the human body into ‘a perfect clock’ that would ‘tick on forever without any functional “aging”’, in turn leading to ‘a neglect of finite life’ (Baars 2017: 288). Similarly, Naomi Woodspring, in exploring the Baby Boomer generation’s relationship with time and ageing, notes that ‘there was an evident tension between the chronological and cultural narratives of old age and the lived experiences of participants’ (Woodspring 2016: 170). On the one hand, the Baby Boomers acknowledge that, in following the modern, homogeneous understanding of time, they are now considered “old”; on the other hand, the Baby Boomers do not feel old. What both Baars and Woodspring highlight is the aged body’s constant negotiation between the body and the multiple forms of temporal experiences.

Expounding on this notion, Amelia DeFalco, in adopting a psychoanalytic approach towards old age, proposes that the process of ageing is achieved through ‘confrontations with temporality’ (DeFalco 2010: 7). According to DeFalco, the process of ageing in the later life creates a split in the subject as tensions between the body and the self become
increasingly evident, resulting in ‘a new or intensified awareness of the differences between the past and present selves’ (DeFalco 2010: 7). In turn, this split causes the ageing body to experience the profound sense of the uncanny as the subject adapts themselves to old age. Arguing along similar lines, Lynne Segal suggests that, in addition to the uncanny, ‘the timeliness of the unconsciousness, the persistence of the psychic past within the present’, accordingly ensures ‘that there will always be some sense of temporal vertigo within our experiences of ageing’ (Segal 2014: 183). For Segal, then, to really acknowledge old age is to recognise that there is more past than future, to be out of time, and to accept ‘that we are unlikely to remain the autonomous, independent and future-oriented individuals most of us once liked to imagine that we were’ (Segal 2014: 184).

Going even further, E. Ann Kaplan takes this argument towards ageing and time to the extreme and proposes to think of the ageing process as a form of trauma. She writes: ‘The trauma of aging consists in being in time and unable to get out of it’ (Kaplan 1999: 173; emphasis in original).

Whilst I would not go as far as Kaplan to compare ageing to trauma, I do want to highlight the common thread that is emerging from the discussions of the process of growing old in the later life. Synthesising DeFalco, Segal and Kaplan, as the subject ages, and as the tension between the body and time increases, the chasm between the past and the present becomes bigger while the prospect of a future diminishes; yet, despite recognising the failure of a linear understanding of time, where the present is preceded by the past and followed by the future, the subject is largely locked into this comprehension of linearity and is unable to get out of it. To age is to
get increasingly out of sync with (clock) time, and to age is to continuously engage in a particular performance of time, where the linear time done unto the subject is put in negotiation with the non-adherence to chronological linearity that the subject is doing. Where the silvering screen is concerned, then, with their general gloominess about old age and the abundant presence of clock and calendrical time, films about old age can therefore be seen as articulating the fear of losing control over and/or to time.

Seen in this light, films about dementia made from the year 2000 onwards, as a subset of the silvering screen, come to occupy a very interesting relationship with time and temporality. On one layer, following DeFalco, dementia can be seen as ‘a grotesque exaggeration of what human temporality, our condition as aging subjects, enacts’, as people living with dementia’s experiences of time increasingly pull away from the understanding of modern, homogeneous time (DeFalco 2010: 56). On another layer, it is important to note that dementia – more specifically, early onset dementia – does affect people who are in their thirties or forties; in fact, early onset dementia makes a regular appearance in dementia cinema through films like Beautiful Memories (Zabou Breitman, 2001, France), A Moment to Remember (John H. Lee, 2004, South Korea), Memories of Tomorrow (Yukihiro Tsutsumi, 2006, Japan), U Me Aur Hum (Ajay Devgan, 2008, India), Evim Sensin (Özcan Deniz, 2012, Turkey), and Still Alice (Richard Glatzer and Wash Westmoreland, 2014, USA/UK/France). Yet, as Patricia Mc Parland, Fiona Kelly, and Anthea Innes suggest, although dementia does affect “younger” people, the diagnosis of early onset dementia ‘has the potential to conceptually catapult the younger person into
the terrain or imagery associated with the most vulnerable old’ (Mc Parland et al 2017: 260). In other words, all dementia is synonymised with old age. Consequently, films about dementia heighten the fear of losing authority over/to time for dementia is suggested as something that can happen to anyone at any time in their life (despite significantly fewer cases of early onset dementia in comparison to – say – Alzheimer’s disease, which is a form of predominantly late onset dementia that affects people from aged 65 and onwards). As such, films about dementia in the new millennium can be understood as being doubly apprehensive with being out of time, in turn indexing and highlighting the temporal negotiations at work.

**Moving Beyond Representations**

In thinking about films about dementia in relation to the wider experiences and structures of time, I attempt to move beyond a significant portion of contemporary research about old age, dementia and cinema, which often reduces the issue of representation into a good-bad divide. Chivers’s monograph *The Silvering Screen* (2011), for example, focuses on onscreen representations of old age and argues for the need for characters to age better in cinema. Likewise, Pamela H. Gravagne’s *The Becoming of Age* (2013) explores negative portrayals of old age on screen and identifies the recurring thematic concern over the loss of cognitive control, which is exacerbated by the prevalence of dementia in these films, also calls for the celebration of ageing well. In a similar vein, Timothy Shary and Nancy McVittie’s *Fade to Grey* (2016) explores the changing representations of old
age throughout the history of Hollywood cinema, surfacing the socio-political factors in America that engender the largely negative portrayals of the elderlies. More directly, perhaps, is Raquel Medina’s *Cinematic Representations of Alzheimer’s Disease* (2018) which looks at the ways in which Alzheimer’s disease is represented on screen or used as a cultural metaphor to discuss certain societal issues. A common theme shared by a lot of the research involves the critique of ageism in screen cultures and a passionate plea to celebrate (active) ageing.\(^{17}\)

It is important to note that I am not dismissing these studies of cinematic representations of dementia as they have provided much foundational grounding for the field’s discourse. Rather, I want to highlight three potential pitfalls that come with this approach towards films about dementia, and discuss the ways in which the overarching argument put forward by the thesis addresses these concerns. First, as Segal (2014) notes, the call for the need to age well is itself ageist because it implies that, without intervention, elderlies are weak. This in turn encroaches old age with negative connotations and reduces the issue of gerontology and dementia to a young-old divide – not too dissimilar to the early stages of feminist (Madonna-whore) and postcolonial (East-West) film theory. This dualistic tendency also continues a trend in the historical development of gerontology. W. Andrew Achenbaum, in providing a *metahistory* of the theories of ageing, notices that gerontologists ‘conform to an age-old, ubiquitous mode of advancing knowledge’ by ‘framing conceptual issues and research problems in terms of dualism’ (Achenbaum 2009: 34).\(^{18}\) In doing so, Achenbaum avers
that discourses surrounding old age have continuously been framed in a dualistic nature.

Margery Hourihan cautions that in a dualism, ‘the inferior group is defined in relation to the superior; its members’ lack of the superior qualities is presented as the essence of their identity’ (Hourihan 2005: 17). However, I would suggest that the hierarchy in the dualistic categories identified by Achenbaum is less straightforward than what Hourihan would have suggested. A research piece by Amy J. Cuddy, Michael I. Norton and Susan T. Fiske found that the ‘elderly stereotype is widespread and resistant to change’ (Cuddy et al 2005: 278). The persistent stereotypes of the old as warm (wise, kind and loving) and incompetent (dependent and forgetful) result in an oppositional stereotype enhancement effect that is widespread across the world (they report of findings similar across countries like Belgium, Costa Rica, Hong Kong, Japan, Israel [both Jewish and Arabic] and South Korea). This effect, Cuddy et al explain, meant that ‘the negative aspect of the elderly stereotype (incompetence) resists change, while the positive aspect of the elderly stereotype (warmth) is more malleable’ (Cuddy et al 2005: 275). If an aged person had poor memory, they will be seen as incompetent but warm. On the other hand, if the same person had good memory, they will still be seen as incompetent though their warmth factor will drop considerably.

The oppositional stereotype enhancement, then, puts the representations of old people into an unfortunate and paradoxical catch-22 situation that complicates the straightforward hierarchical nature of dualism proposed by Hourihan and Achenbaum, demonstrating that both sides of the
debate in gerontology can be equally unhealthy, further underlining the
damaging perceptions around ageing in later life. The same situation applies
to the discourses of dementia; Jesse F. Ballenger (2006), in his history of
dementia in America, demonstrates very convincingly how the move to more
positive discourses about ageing not only did not allay the fear of dementia
but, rather, elevated the anxieties surrounding ageing and dementia.
Borrowing from Mitsuhiro Yoshimoto, this binary approach ‘abstracts the role
of power in the production of knowledge, and depoliticizes the structure of
domination’ (Yoshimoto 1991: 250). In studying the representation of old age
and dementia, people living with dementia are made victim.

The second problem: the study of representations of dementia very
often (and at times uncritically) uses cinema to illustrate the issues of
gerontology. All too common are statements like that of Andrea Capstick,
John Chatwin and Katherine Ludwin, where the filmic form is side-lined:

we are not so much concerned with the aesthetics of these [filmic] representations as with their ethics: the question of whether they do justice to the broader constituency of men and women living with dementia (Capstick et al 2015: 230; emphasis in original).

Likewise, the conventional approach for justifying the study of old age and
dementia in cinema by researchers goes along the lines of cinema as a site
of mass influence due to its affective force. Daniel Anderson, for instance,
writes that the cinematic portrayals of dementia and ageing in later life ‘can
evoke powerful reactions in those observing films about it which are taken
back to the wider community influencing opinions’ (Anderson 2010: 1289).
Concomitantly, Debby L. Gerritsen, Yolande Kuin and Jessika Nijboer write: ‘Film is a powerful medium in forming and influencing opinions and attitudes of the public’ (Gerritsen et al 2014: 276). All three statements highlighted suggest that, as cinema is such an affective medium, the audience simply absorbs whatever that is shown to them, ignoring, for one, the various modes of spectatorship that members of the audience might bring to the film.

In turn, minimal attention is paid to the filmic form and how cinema works to alleviate/exacerbate the anxieties of old age and dementia. This attitude towards cinema is most revealing and evident when the bimonthly journal The Gerontologist, published by The Gerontological Society of America (the oldest organisation devoted to gerontology), launched in 2012 a regular film and media segment in their journals as part of a wider aim to promote ‘scholarship on aging, humanities, and the arts as an important thread in the fabric of the study of aging’ (Kivnick and Pruchno 2011: 143). For the journal, the best way to go about promoting scholarship on ageing and the arts – it seems – is to ‘include full-length film reviews, reviews of thematic collections of films, and reviews of multipart instructional materials’ (Kivnick and Pruchno 2012: 440). In another example, A Guide to Humanistic Studies in Aging (2010), a collected book edited by Thomas R. Cole, Ruth E. Ray, and Robert Kastenbaum that aims to bring the humanities back into gerontology, contains 16 chapters that approach the issues of ageing from 16 different (inter-) disciplines ranging from philosophy and theology to history and literature. The final chapter by Robert E. Yahnke, however, is very tellingly titled ‘The Experience of Aging in Feature-Length Films: A Selected and Annotated Filmography’. The chapter does what the title
suggests, and, placed vis-à-vis the other parts of the book, this chapter betray the status of film scholarship in the hierarchy of humanities and emphasises the uncritical use of cinema to discuss issues of gerontology as a recurring problem.20

I caution against the danger of painting all researchers with this broad stroke for this will only undermine the work done by people like Benjamin Fraser (2016), who writes about the subjective shot in Wrinkles to highlight issues of senescence and dementia; Megan E. Graham (2016), who analyses the use of sound and music in Iris; and Amir Cohen-Shalev (2012), who discusses the representations of old age through a consideration of the “late-style” of auteurs like Ingmar Bergman, Akira Kurosawa, and Claude Sautet. These scholars, however, belong to the minority. The majority of the work, I suggest, pays very little attention to the ways the mise-en-scène, cinematography, editing, and sound and music – the formal aspects of cinema – might, for instance, show us how structures of identification produce ageing subjects.21 As a consequence, the conversation between cinema and gerontology is more often than not a one-way dialogue, where cinema is used in the service of gerontology and dementia studies.

Thirdly, the study of dementia in/and cinema through the framework of representation often understands the subject matter as mediated and constructed by the film’s form (despite the form’s seeming invisibility in these discourses). For Richard Rushton, these approaches see cinema as secondary to “real life”, where films ‘in themselves have no reality but can only refer to or reflect the realities of life that exist outside, beyond, or behind them’ (Rushton 2011: 8). By contrast, this thesis comes from a viewpoint that
takes cinema as *seriously* as the things outside cinema so as to treat film as the primary object of study and to ensure a genuine dialogic conversation between the disparate disciplines that I refer to.

In this sense, I find Gilles Deleuze’s characterisation of cinema helpful. For Deleuze, cinema is made up of what he terms ‘signaletic material’ that ‘includes all kinds of modulation features, sensory (visual and sound), kinetic, intensive, affective, rhythmic, tonal, and even verbal (oral and written)’ (Deleuze 2013b: 29). When language gets hold of the signaletic material, Deleuze writes:

> it gives rise to utterances which come to dominate or even replace the images and signs, and which refer in turn to pertinent features of the language system, syntagms and paradigms, completely different from those we started with’ (Deleuze 2013b: 29).

Simply put, cinema is not separate from the material world as a second order of representation. Rather, cinematic audio-visual images are no different from the world beyond the frame – cinema’s audio-visual images are affected by the surrounding material world and vice versa. From this viewpoint, when images on screen are not treated as secondary mediations of wider socio-political anxieties/fantasies/desires, cinema becomes similarly and equally entangled in multiple discourses. As such, throughout the thesis, discourses on cinema, dementia and films about dementia are treated in the same way as I draw from various disciplines and move from one to another, putting them in dialogue.
Consequently, in responding to the three concerns, I suggest that there is therefore a need to consciously place the analysis of the filmic form at the foreground of research into films about dementia. This is because, in aligning with Lee Carruthers (2016) and Matilda Mroz (2012), close textual analysis of films is a way to allow the duration and rhythms of cinema to surface. A focus on film form hence allows us to comprehend the temporalities in and of films about dementia, in turn unearthing the politics of knowledge construction in films about dementia so as to move away from discussions about good-bad representations of dementia; in addition, the focus on close filmic analysis is to also mitigate against the recurring problem of using cinema as a means to illustrate concerns about dementia. It is also a way to make interdisciplinary work dialogic. Cinema is an audio-visual medium of time. To this end, time is also an extremely important building block of the gerontological imagination. The focus on the film form, hence, is a way of teasing out one common underlying unit that underpins all these disparate disciplines – time – so as to formulate my framework on change and ephemerality, and to advance my argument about the temporal performances of people living with dementia.

The Celebration of Difference

Throughout the thesis, I pay close attention to the formal properties of the films about dementia that I analyse, often going into the minutiae of the audio-visual images – evoking and provoking – so as to lay the groundwork for thinking about time and identifications through the prism of performance,
in turn arguing that the person living with dementia, like the person not living with dementia and other (non-)living phenomena, is experiencing time differently. This attitude towards difference draws inspiration from Deleuze’s call to think of difference from that of negation to that of affirmation. He writes:

difference is affirmation. This proposition, however, means many things: that difference is an object of affirmation; that affirmation itself is multiple; that it is creation but also that it must be created, as affirming difference, as being difference in itself. It is not the negative which is the motor. Rather, there are positive differential elements which determines the genesis of both the affirmation and the difference affirmed (Deleuze 1994: 55).

This is to say, difference is not “not like this thing” but, rather, is almost the same but not quite. Seen from this point of view, difference as affirmation works to recognise the elements that are common between multiple animate and non-animate things, and the ways in which these mutual components might manifest in multiple actual forms due to different performances. Consequently, difference, celebrated, becomes a route to acknowledging a shared world despite the multiple variations of the actual forms that inhabit the world – in recognising the heterogeneous commonalities through a Deleuzian philosophy of difference, Othering becomes harder.

In this sense, thinking about the person living with dementia as experiencing time differently is to carefully work through the ways in which time might be one of these shared elements, where everyone and everything is embedded in multiple temporal performances. To work through the
different layers of this proposal, the thesis is structured like that of a scaffold, where the arguments put forward in Chapter Two are built on the arguments in Chapter One, and so on and so forth. Therefore, I recommend approaching the thesis in a chronological order so as to allow the complexities of the proposed ideas to slowly gain their nuances over the course of reading. In the remainder of the Introduction, I provide an overview of the structure of the thesis, laying out the route map of each chapter’s argument.

In Chapter One, I look at *U Me Aur Hum* and *A Moment to Remember*, two films that depict early onset Alzheimer’s disease, so as to examine the issue of agency in relation to the person living with dementia. I propose to think of the agency of the person living with dementia through the concept of change and becoming, and I link this discussion to Henri Bergson’s notion of pure duration, consequently articulating these concerns with agency and identification through the concept of time as performance. Ultimately, I put forward the notion of temporal identification and argue that a subject is always performing time and performed by time.

In Chapter Two, I expand on this notion of temporal performance alongside questions of narratives about dementia, and I assert that a subject’s temporal identification is situated in a wider entangled web of temporal identifications on and off screen. The chapter explores the narrative structures of both *Memories of Tomorrow* and *Memoir of a Murderer* (Won Shin-yeon, 2017, South Korea), two films that largely attempt to narrativise the experiences of dementia from the subjective viewpoint of the person living with dementia, alongside Deleuze’s three syntheses of time. I suggest
that the narratives of these two films about dementia can be understood as that of the virtual past (a pure past that is shared and experienced by all the actual entities in the world) returning differently, opening up the narratives of dementia to future invention and change. In turn, I demonstrate how this understanding of the temporality of narratives as that of continued creation draws our attention to how we can empathetically relate to our shared world differently.

Next, in Chapter Three, I look at the experiences of dementia through the lens of generic horror, exploring two found footage horror films – *The Taking of Deborah Logan* (Adam Robitel, 2014, USA) and *The Visit* (M. Night Shyamalan, 2015, USA) – and the ways in which the experiences of dementia threaten to explode the seeming separation between the past and the present. I propose that the temporalities indexed by the person living with dementia and the person not living with dementia, where the past co-exists alongside the present – are predominantly evinced and surfaced through a mode of hesitant encounter. Consequently, I suggest that to think about time through the prism of performance is to decentre a Western-centric worldview and to allow for a rhizomatic understanding of a world where anywhere can be centre and anywhere can be periphery. In turn, through thinking about the performance of time, the buried/neglected pasts across the world are surfaced.

In exploring the ways in which the person living with dementia experiences time differently through Chapters One to Three, the thesis gradually puts forward a methodological approach that hesitantly explores, where hesitation, borrowing from Alia Al-Saji, is ‘not only an interruption of
the present but also a *critical reconfiguration of the past* (Al-Saji 2018: 338; emphasis in original). To hesitate is to think through the entangled temporalities of the world, where everyone and everything is performed and performed by various intersections of time, and to hesitate is to open up new lines of temporal performances. In Chapter Four, I weave all these threads together with an in-depth case study of Singapore and Singapore cinema vis-à-vis *Parting* (Boo Junfeng, 2015, Singapore). In particular, I focus on the trope of the person living with dementia wandering, which is a regular feature in various films about dementia and in the wider cultural imaginary, and argue that the trope enacts a particular performance of time in relation to the film’s contextual surround so as to enter and traverse the nation’s discursive sphere of history and historiography. Ultimately, then, the concept of time as performance not only becomes a way to think of the world through a philosophy of difference but is also a category of analysis that offers the potential for hidden and forgotten pasts to be surfaced and remembered again, differently.

One final note: as is evident, although most of the films seem to fall within the umbrella of “Asian cinemas”, the films analysed in the individual chapters are grouped by their thematic concerns. This predominant focus on cinemas across Asia is largely due to the presence of existing research done on films about dementia across Europe, North America and South America, but it is also down to the intersections of my research interests and subjectivity as a postcolonial subject who grew up in Singapore and is now living in the UK. Here, in the analyses of all these films, I make no claims about anything that can be universally applied to all discourses about
dementia for, as has been much discussed, the concept of universality is a notion that privileges imperialist and western-centric worldviews.  Rather, the performances of time that I explore in the case-study films are all heterogeneously connected, each but a performance (or many singular performances) of time, variously different and variously related – it is in this spirit that I have titled the thesis A Performance of Time.
Chapter One
Performing Time/Performed by Time

In *U Me Aur Hum* (Ajay Devgan, 2008, India), Piya, a 28-years-old woman, is having dinner with her husband, Ajay, when a cake is delivered to their table. Surprised, Piya questions the purpose of the cake and Ajay, thinking Piya is joking, asks her to cut the cake. Her face displays a sense of confusion with the whole situation and she continues to insist that he explain the presence of the cake. Undeterred, Ajay maintains that she is pulling a prank on him and says that they have already discussed the purpose of the dinner yesterday. Piya looks even more confused and asks what conversation they had. Exasperated, Ajay announces that it is their first wedding anniversary. The film cuts to a shot of Piya in close-up. She still looks confused but, almost immediately, she breaks into laughter and jokes about how Ajay has become the ‘perfect scapegoat’ for her impeccable performance. It is only when Piya is diagnosed with early onset Alzheimer’s disease that Ajay finds out that she was genuinely confused at that moment in time, and that she was instead performing the act of putting on a performance.

This scene where Piya performs the notion that she knew that one calendrical year has passed since she got married despite actually unable to remember, this performance of conforming to an empty, homogeneous time despite clearly being out of it, is a typical senario that occurs in films about dementia. In *A Moment to Remember* (John H. Lee, 2004, South Korea), for instance, Su-jin, a 27-years-old woman who also lives with early onset Alzheimer’s disease, goes to the doctor as she has been displaying moments of forgetfulness. In her second visit, the doctor begins by asking...
her what the date is. As he asks, the film cuts to a close-up shot of him writing the date down on his diagnosis sheet. Su-jin pauses, slightly bemused, and laughs it off, saying that she always loses track of the date. The doctor immediately chastises her for returning to the follow up appointment a week late. He asks her how many siblings she has and she is able to provide the correct answer. She is, however, unable to state the age of her sibling. At first, Su-jin says twenty. Then she hesitates and says nineteen. She laughs awkwardly and explains that she has always been bad with numbers. The doctor asks her to state her sister’s birthday and the film cuts to a dutch-angle shot of her face, cinematographically signposting the confusion and disorientation that she is encountering.

Without giving Su-jin a chance to answer the question, the film cuts immediately to a shot of her beginning the process of a computerised tomography (CT) scan, as the laser beams are focused on her head as she enters the machine. The film cuts back to the doctor’s room as he continues with his line of questioning: what is colour for the walk signal that suggests it is safe for pedestrians to cross? Su-jin retorts indignantly and demands to know why the doctor is asking her these questions, trying to swerve her way out of the uncomfortable situation in the room. The doctor asks her to answer the question and she is unable to remember, consequently asking him to repeat himself again. The film cuts back to Su-jin entering the CT machine. She is in the background of the shot, out of focus, whilst the foreground is a shot of her brain imaging appearing on the computer screen. As that happens, the line of questioning continues. Significantly, through the aural editing, Su-jin is not given a chance to respond and the audience only hears
the barrage of oncoming questions on maths and logic directed at her as the film continues to show her undergoing her CT scan.

Here, like Piya, Su-jin’s out-of-timeness is highlighted, not least because of the fact that she is only given the chance to fail at answering questions specifically related to time (tell the date and remember the age and birthday of her sister). Yet, Su-jin’s inability to answer the questions does not stop her from performing in such a manner that attempts to cover up her inability to answer. She deflects and laughs sheepishly about how she is always bad with numbers and dates although the attempts to pass as being in time do not quite work and, paradoxically, the film immediately puts her under the medical gaze of the CT machine after she fails to answer the questions related to time. These attempts to perform as being in time further highlight the idea that she is no longer in sync with the empty, homogeneous time that the diagnostic tests require her to be.

These temporal negotiations/ambivalences displayed by Piya and Su-jin extend beyond the filmic. In analysing the conversational patterns of people living with frontotemporal dementia, Lisa Mikesell notes that people living with dementia often adopt strategies of repetitional response in their everyday conversations, where they would repeat back whatever that was said to them in order to advance the conversation. These ways of speaking, Mikesell notes, are regularly used by people living with dementia in situations where they are uncertain in order to appear as certain and confident, leading Mikesell to write that apathetic people living with dementia, through the conscious or unconscious act of repetition, ‘make an effort to present themselves as knowing or capable participants with the ability and rights to
assert their autonomy’ (Mikesell 2010: 493). Put differently, the speech pattern of people living with dementia, and how they interact in conversational situations, can never be straightforwardly read as a display of cognitive abilities or lack thereof; there is always a sense of ambivalence underlying it.

In bringing the research about people living with dementia together with the scenes above from *U Me Aur Hum* and *A Moment to Remember*, two issues that are pertinent to this chapter’s argument are highlighted. Firstly, Piya and Su-jin perform a sense of in-time-ness in order to convince the world around them that they are alright but, in the process of doing so, highlight the ways that their out-of-time-ness is actually performed by the empty, homogeneous time that their societies are subscribed to. It underlines the complex negotiation with multiple temporalities – clock and non-clock – that a person living with dementia has to go through on a daily basis. In other words, films about dementia offer the potential to challenge the dichotomies of linear/non-linear time and blur the boundaries that so many scholars, from Alison Kafer to Elizabeth Freeman, have set up.

Secondly, it raises the question of agency in relation to people living with dementia. If, as Steven R. Sabat (2001) observes, people living with dementia are regularly socially and culturally positioned as unable to care for themselves or make their own decisions, might they be denied their own sense of agency or is there something more complex at work? In synthesising these two points, this chapter attempts to explore the issue of agency in films about dementia through a temporal framework via an analysis of both *A Moment to Remember* and *U Me Aur Hum*, where both
young women are catapulted into the cultural “old” through their early onset Alzheimer’s disease, forcing them to renegotiate a radically new way of living very quickly. To work through the complexities of change as explored in the film, I put forward the concept of temporal identification, and argue that a subject is always performing time and performed by time. I propose that a person’s temporal identification is in a constant state of becoming and that looking at time through the lens of performance is an attempt to engage with the politics of intersectionality, as one’s temporal identification is not merely reduced to one kind of categorisation. Rather, multiple categories of temporalities intersect to form a complex understanding of a subject’s identification.

I begin the chapter by exploring the wider concept of agency in relation to time in order to highlight the push and pull between multiple times and temporalities that is manifest in the concept of agency. Next, I link this discussion to Henri Bergson’s concept of duration so as to demonstrate how his concerns with agency and identifications can be understood through the concept of time as performance. I then continue this line of analysis by surveying the ways in which time acts as a central concern to different forms of identifications in more contemporary scholarship, and demonstrate how films about dementia raise the question of how our identifications are always in flux, in negotiation, and in a state of push and pull between multiple times and temporalities. Finally, the chapter closes with a meditation on how the notion of temporal identification might challenge ideas on the politics of normativity and antinormativity.
Dementia and the Temporality of Agency

I begin by turning to an analysis of the ways Su-jin is characterised before and after her early onset Alzheimer’s disease diagnosis in *A Moment to Remember*, exploring the agency of people living with dementia as embodied and performative, and as personal and social. In one scene, just before she is officially diagnosed with dementia, Su-jin sits in the living room with Cheol-su, her husband. She is gluing the back of a photograph to add to her scrapbook. All of a sudden, she stands up and walks to the kitchen. She picks up a pair of rubber cleaning gloves and puts them on before walking to the refrigerator and opens it whilst taking off the gloves. She searches the fridge for something, puts the gloves in the fridge and then closes it again. Then, Su-jin walks to the front door, opens it, and looks out searching for something. All this while, Cheol-su looks on with bemusement, unable to understand what Su-jin is doing. She closes the door, turns around and sees her husband. She exclaims: “Where were you?” In response, Cheol-su starts laughing and what might be traditionally thought of as non-diegetic guitar music enters the scene. Here, the music is light-hearted and, through the music, Su-jin’s behaviour and meander around the house is coded as nothing out of the blue – she is just her usual absent-minded self who has got so engrossed in her scrapbooking that she forgot her husband has been sat behind her all this while.

As Su-jin finally finds her husband, she returns to her scrapbook. She picks up the photo that she has been gluing at the beginning of the scene, asks whether Cheol-su has glued it, and continues on with her scrapbooking. This is when Cheol-su begins to show signs of concern as he asks about the
doctor’s appointment which was meant to have happened during the day. Su-jin, not realising that she has forgotten about the appointment, answers that the doctor had asked her to come back next week, leading Cheol-su to become even more concerned. Aurally, the music does not stop and the implication that Su-jin might have dementia or any other form of head trauma is alleviated. In this scene, pre-diagnosis Su-jin’s warped temporality (she has forgotten the gluing that she has done a few seconds ago, and she is also unaware that a week has already passed since her previous doctor’s appointment) is audio-visually coded to be just part and parcel of Su-jin’s absent-mindedness, and not of serious concern.

By contrast, later in the film, after Su-jin is diagnosed with early onset Alzheimer’s disease, the same kind of “absent-mindedness” is coated with a more menacing undertone. Here, Su-jin is cooking a feast for her mother-in-law’s birthday. The scene opens with a close-up shot of a kettle boiling on the stove. It then cuts to a wide-angle shot of Su-jin chopping some spring onions. The whole kitchen is filled with post-it notes reminding Su-jin where things are in relation to her. Su-jin is positioned in the centre of the shot; in the background, the kettle is boiling and, in the foreground, the knife that Su-jin uses is prominently positioned. The film then cuts to a close-up shot of the knife chopping some spring onions. Very quickly, then, before the scene even proceeds, the wide-angle shot of Su-jin chopping vegetables is sandwiched by two close-up shots of danger, of potential accidents waiting to happen.
The film then cuts to a close-up shot of Su-jin as she continues chopping. She pauses, looks up, and turns her head. Immediately, music enters the film’s score. This music is markedly different from the relaxed melodic guitar that the audience has heard from the abovementioned scene; instead, this music is menacing, droning and dissonant, again furthering a sense of threat. Then, the film cuts to a point-of-view shot of a calendar. The shot is largely blurred, tunnel-visioned, with the calendar in sharper focus in the middle of the shot. The film cuts back to a reverse shot of Su-jin staring catatonically at the calendar, unable to make sense of it. At that moment, there is a knock on the door and Su-jin walks towards the it, still holding the knife in her hand. She opens the door. The film cuts to a close-up of her face, and the audience sees her facial expression change from happiness to displeasure. The film cuts to a reverse shot to reveal that it is Su-jin’s ex-partner from two years ago at the door. Very quickly, Su-jin breaks into a
smile and drags him into the house, asking him to get washed up as dinner is about to be ready. Throughout, the knife is prominently placed in the middle of the frame as Su-jin grabs on to her ex-partner, and the menacing atmosphere continues to permeate the scene.

Unlike the previous scene, where pre-diagnosis Su-jin’s multiple temporalities are dismissed as “absent-mindedness”, post-diagnosis Su-jin’s inability to comprehend a calendar and her re-living the past in the today are imbued with a sense of danger, as if the actions carried out by Su-jin do not belong to her, and that they have the potential to hurt and harm. Consequently, A Moment to Remember raises interesting questions regarding Su-jin’s agency as a person living with dementia: does dementia remove agency from the person? On the surface, the film would appear to do so, audio-visually coding her actions post diagnosis as that of not being controlled by her mind and, as such, renders her as having no agency. This view would draw affinity with the research conducted by Sylvia S. Fong et al (2017), who, in their neuroscience examination into the animacy (state of being sentient) and agency (which they define as the capacity for intrinsically-driven action) of people living with frontotemporal dementia and Alzheimer’s disease, suggest that people living with dementia not only displayed deficits of animacy but also demonstrated a significantly impaired sense of agency. If we were to follow Fong et al, Su-jin’s actions would not be seen as intrinsically-driven action and thus she has no agency.

On the other hand, Geraldine Boyle criticises this focus on the brain – and therefore the “rational” – in discourses around people living with dementia and their ability to possess agency. Instead, Boyle proposes to
think of agency as ‘the means by which the subjective self becomes a social self’ (Boyle 2017a: 2). Here, Boyle contends that agency should be measured by a person’s ability to be reflexive, and she proposes three ways to think about this notion of reflexivity: relational, dialogical and emotional. For Boyle, a person demonstrates agency if they display the ability to interact with people, negotiate their thoughts verbally or non-verbally, or convey their emotions (Boyle 2017b: 4). Agency, then, where people living with dementia are concerned, is embedded ‘within relationships of care and mutual dependence’, a constant process of negotiation with multiple groups of people (Boyle 2017b: 4).

In a similar vein, Julian C. Hughes puts forward the concept of the situated-embodied-agent (SEA) view of the person when thinking about people living with dementia. For Hughes, the SEA view sees the person living with dementia ‘as a human agent, a being of this embodied kind, who acts and interacts in a cultural and historical context in which he or she is embedded’ (Hughes 2001: 87). The SEA view, according to Hughes, does not separate the mind from the body, and views the person pre-dementia diagnosis and the person post-dementia diagnosis as connected ‘by embodiment and by the situatedness that the embodiment entails’ (Hughes 2001: 89). In short, the SEA view towards the person living with dementia suggests that agency in the person living with dementia should be thought of as embodied, and that agency occurs when the embodied person living with dementia acts and interacts with their situated surroundings.

Further expanding on the SEA view in relation to the person living with dementia, Hughes and Carmelo Aquilina suggest that the concept of agency
brings about the notion of intention – something that I touched upon above – into the debate. They maintain that whilst, on the one hand, the agent might act with something explicitly intended in mind; on the other hand, equally, ‘the intentional nature of an action can be taken to imply that which the action, being of this type, itself aims at’ (Aquilina and Hughes 2006: 156). That is to say, this approach shifts the discourse around agency from that of the mind to that of the embodied person living with dementia, where their actions can be read as filled with agency because they are intended to interact with their situated surrounding.²

In synthesising the ideas of Boyle, Hughes and Aquilina, agency, where people living with dementia are concerned, can be thought of in terms of both the embodied and the performative. The person living with dementia is considered to have agency because they are embedded within a larger network of care and mutual dependence, and their actions are largely intended to interact and negotiate with their situated surroundings. This means that there is a constant push and pull between different groups of people where one’s agency is negotiated with other subjects’ agencies. Viewed from this perspective, Su-jin’s actions in A Moment to Remember can be read as not losing her agency but, rather, as a display of a different form of agency: she is still holding on to the knife throughout the scene because she still intends to chop the vegetables to cook the feast for her mother-in-law’s birthday, and she is still holding on to the knife when she is asking her ex-partner to get ready for dinner because she intends to get dinner ready for the both of them. When she first sees her ex-partner at the door, she loses her smile because that is not her husband but then she
quickly gets it back again because he is now her current partner, as her emotions are reflexively negotiated with her embodied worldview. In a sense, then, Su-jin is moving from one perceived temporality to another and, because of the ways multiple temporalities coalesce in the person living with dementia, the audience is never aware of her state of being. Through the audio-visual coding the actions of post-diagnosis Su-jin to be threatening and menacing, *A Moment to Remember* heightens and highlights the idea that she is in a constant state of change, in a constant state of becoming, and in a constant state of actualisation.

From this viewpoint, agency can be understood ‘as a temporally embedded process of social engagement’ so as to capture the full complexities of social action (Emirbayer and Mische 1998: 963).³ For Judith Butler, to think about agency is to examine the process of signification. She writes:

The subject is not *determined* by the rules through which it is generated because signification is *not a founding act, but rather a regulated process of repetition* that both conceals itself and enforces its rules precisely through the production of substantializing effects. In a sense, all signification takes place within the orbit of the compulsion to repeat; “agency,” then, is to be located within the possibility of a variation on that repetition (Butler 1990: 145; emphasis in original).

Here, Butler is interested in the performativity of gender, where a subject’s gender identification is constantly performed and repeated. Consequently, the process of signification becomes a series of beings that are performed and agency emerges in the moments of the in-betweens, as the subject is
offered the potential to change that performance ever so slightly in order to take on a more radical/oppositional form of practice.

Further, Butler argues that agency is paradoxically initiated and sustained by subjection, which she describes as the ‘process of becoming subordinated by power as well as the process of becoming subject’ (Butler 1997: 2). Considering the psyche alongside wider socio-political power structures, Butler writes that the formation of the child’s subject is dependent on ‘a passionate attachment to those by whom she or he is subordinated’, and that no ‘subject can emerge without this attachment, formed in dependency, but no subject, in the course of its formation, can ever afford fully to “see” it’ (Butler 1997: 7 – 8). In other words, there are two sets of contradictory forms of factors at work here. On the one hand, power has the potential to suppress the subject’s existence. On the other, there is a desire to attach oneself to power so that one’s subject can be formed.

Seen from this angle, Butler suggests, ‘the agency of the subject appears to be an effect of its subordination’ (Butler 1997: 12). Consequently, due to the paradoxical nature of subjection, to work through the temporalities of agency is to think about the contradiction that underscores the subject, ‘in which the subject emerges both as the effect of a prior power and as the condition of possibility for a radically conditioned form of agency’ (Butler 1997: 14 – 15; emphasis in original). Agency, for Butler, thus demonstrates an ambivalent and oscillatory relationship to both the past powers that shape it and the future possibilities that may come. In this sense, the Butlerian agency is a ‘vacillation between the already-there and the yet-to-come’, ‘a crossroads that rejoins every step by which it is traversed’, and a ‘sense of
done over, done again, done anew' (Butler 1997: 18). Understood by Butler, agency is hence seen as an ambivalent moment of the present, which becomes a site for complex negotiations between the past (hegemonic powers) and the future (radical or oppositional potential). Once negotiated, the present moment becomes the past and a new set of negotiations between the past and the future happens through the subject’s agency.

Here, Butler’s concept of agency and subjection paves the way to nuance the understanding of the agency of people living with dementia and people not living with dementia as that which is relational and entangled. Responding to Butler’s arguments, Stephanie Clare writes that Butler ‘posits an image of the subject and insists that it is less than the subject before the subject was formed’ (Clare 2009: 56). Drawing from Saba Mahmood, Henri Bergson and Gilles Deleuze, Clare disagrees with Butler’s formulation of the paradoxical subject and contends that whilst on the surface, Butler’s notion of the real (the subject) appears to resemble the possible (from which the real was realised), Butler’s proposal really means that ‘the possible resembles the real’ (Clare 2009: 60). For Clare, Butler’s theory of power and the psyche is a retrospective reconstruction of the formation of the subject, where the pre-subject is seen ‘as quantitatively less than the subject itself’, where the becoming of the subject is described and constructed only after the subject has emerged (Clare 2009: 59).

This retroactive approach towards the subject, Clare suggests, has significant consequences for our understanding of the temporality of agency. The Butlerian agency emerges in the moments of the in-betweens, as the subject is offered the potential to vary their performance of identification so
as to adopt a different form of performance. For Butler, the ‘point is not simply that such an ‘effect’ is compounded through repetition, but that reiteration is the means through which that effect is established anew, time and again’ (Butler 2010: 149). This focus on the in-betweens as the site of temporal ambivalence that vacillates between the past and the present, Clare contends, ‘freezes time by formulating becoming as a series of moments or steps’ (Clare 2009: 57). In turn, this results in an understanding of agency that is similar to that of Zeno’s paradox, where movement is seen as a series of discontinuous and immobile points. According to Clare, Butler’s ideas ignore the ‘becoming of the subject as a continuous (though perhaps uneven) process’ where ‘agency emerges in the process of becoming, not in the mysterious moments between beings’ (Clare 2009: 59). The Butlerian agency, hence, ‘emerges in the discontinuity between performances’ and is unable to effectively map the ways that subjectivities change and emerge (Clare 2009: 59).

By contrast, Clare argues that it is useful to think about the ways in which the subject and agency is actualised from the virtual to the actual. For Clare, viewing agency as a process of actualisation rather than realisation means that we can understand agency as ‘a process of transformation’, where ‘virtual power actualizes itself producing a difference’ (Clare 2009: 60). That is to say, thinking about agency as a process of actualisation, rather than realisation (which is the Butlerian concept whereby agency is viewed as a series of beings that vacillates between the past and the present), means that we can think of agency as a constant process of change, of negotiation, of becoming(s). She writes:
Butler’s theory of agency and gender performativity is concerned with the meaning or signification of corporeality. This implies that she is concerned with the audience of action rather than an action itself. To focus on signification in this way is to consider corporeal action from the point of view of an observer, rather than from the perspective of the entity that acts. An observer’s recounting of action looks back on action, and therefore could, as Bergson argues, likely explain action as a series of points. However, as Bergson argues, during movement, from the point of view of the actor becoming, this motion is continuous (Clare 2009: 60).

Clare’s nuance of Butler’s theory of agency moves the conversation from the signification of the body to also that of the body as embodied practice. It is a theory that allows for greater application across multiple cultures. As Mahmood observes, Butler’s notion of agency and performativity – and the predominant approach towards agency in general – is seen more commonly as that of resistance, and this mode of resistance and agency faces significant conceptual problems when applied to non-Western cultures like Egypt, where Muslim women embodying and reproducing hegemonic Islamic religiosity challenge this understanding of resistance/radicalism. For Mahmood, agency should also be seen ‘in the multiple ways in which one inhabits norms’ (Mahmood 2005: 15; emphasis in original). In other words, then, this is to think of agency as embodied and performative, and as personal and social.

Films about dementia, in part concerned about cinema and in part concerned about dementia, contribute to this discussion of agency and temporality in a significant manner by highlighting and emphasising the complexities of temporal change. Synthesising the ideas put forward by
Mahmood and Clare ideas alongside those of Boyle, Hughes and Aquilina through an analysis of films about dementia, I propose to think of agency as the constant embodied and performative negotiation between the normative and the anti-normative (that does not necessarily result in either a reinforcement of the normative or the antinormative), as a complex negotiation between the past, present and future, and as a site where multiple times and temporalities meet, collide and/or co-exist.

I have already pointed to the ways in which this constant state of change is highlighted in *A Moment to Remember*. Likewise, this state of becoming is also foregrounded in *U Me Aur Hum*. Piya, in one scene, carries her baby to the bath to give him a bath. Whilst walking, she sings the lullaby ‘Hush, Little Baby’ to the child. Interestingly, this rendition of the lullaby is reverberated, which is caused by the multiple soundwaves being reflected off the surface of the wall, where sound continues to persist after the sound has been produced. Whilst reverberations happen in all kinds of spaces, the reverberated ‘Hush, Little Baby’ that the audience hears in the film is heightened, unnatural, and does not match the bedroom/bathroom setting that Piya and her baby are in. In turn, this suggests that the song that the audience hears is neither coming out from her mouth nor is it necessarily relegated to the film’s score without an identified source because her lips match with the lyrics. Instead, drawing from Robyn J. Stilwell (2007), this music that is neither here nor there occupies the ‘fantastical gap’ between the boundaries of diegetic and non-diegetic music, and the song becomes an aural manifestation of the multiple temporalities that the person living with
dementia experiences that allows us to map the temporal and emotional terrain of both Piya and her surrounding world.\textsuperscript{6}

Piya puts her baby in the bath, and turns on the tap to let the bath fill up. While waiting, Piya leaves the bathroom to go to her bedroom to begin preparation for the post-bath clean up. All this while, the audience continues to hear the music even though Piya has stopped singing the song – coupled with the visual images of her preparing for the post-bath procedures, the lullaby becomes a suggestion that Piya is still thinking about her baby. Once she is ready, she starts to leave for the bathroom again. But, before she is able to leave the bathroom, something catches Piya’s eyes as she stops and turns her head towards it. Immediately, the lullaby fades out and, in its place, fast-paced score music comprising brass and string instruments enters the film. Very quickly, the mood of the scene changes from that of haunted sereneness to that of action and danger. Likewise, the editing pattern of the sequence changes pace too. As the film cuts to shots of the bath rapidly filling up with the baby still in it, the film moves into a series of shot/reverse shots of Piya, standing completely still, looking at a lizard preying on an insect.

As that happens, Ajay returns home from work. The fast-paced music continues and, through the rapid editing, the stillness of Piya is juxtaposed with the disorder around her (the bathtub is rapidly filling up, the dog is running around the house barking, and Ajay is struggling with getting into the flat on his own). Amidst all the chaos, the music builds to a crescendo. As Ajay opens the door and enters the house, the lizard finally pounces and eats the fly. Momentarily, the fast-paced non-diegetic music fades out. The
The film cuts to a close-up of Piya’s eyes as she continues to stare at the wall and, at that moment, ‘Hush, Little Baby’ fades into the film before fading out again very quickly. In its place, the score music returns and Ajay runs into the room and past the still Piya into the bathroom to rescue the baby. The film then cuts to a wide-angle shot: Piya is positioned in the centre of the frame, still, staring at the lizard, significantly contrasted with Ajay running across the horizontal axis of the frame. At that particular moment, the fast-paced music fades out and, instead, the lullaby enters the film once again.

In this scene, Piya’s actions can still be understood as having agency. In one moment, her actions are intended to interact with her baby; in another moment, her actions are intended to interact with the lizard on the wall. Her actions, like Su-jin’s, can be understood as moving through from one temporality to another, and that she is in a constant state of change and becoming. This moment from *U Me Aur Hum* does, however, go one step further than *A Moment to Remember*. As Piya’s actions begin to negotiate with the actions of the lizard, the film aurally oscillates between the fast-paced score music and the slow and haunted lullaby. The score music is used to add to the suspense and tension in the outside world of Piya, as the chaos around her builds up, locking the audience into a sense of linear time and temporality as they are encouraged to will Ajay through time to save the baby. The lullaby, on the other hand, is used to give the audience an insight into her inner world, her psyche, as her experiences of multiple times and temporalities manifest aurally. The film’s choice to continuously switch between these two modes of music as Piya continues to observe the lizard, therefore, not only adds a certain level of pathos to the film as the baby’s
vulnerability is highlighted, but it also draws the audience’s attention to this constant state of change and becoming. The baby and his bath are still in Piya’s mind, and the lizard is also, simultaneously, on her mind too. As such, through the use of music, her agentic actions highlight the constant negotiation between the inside world and the outside world that a person living with dementia experiences.

Through the use of music, Piya’s agency as a constant state of change and becoming can be seen as a negotiation between different temporalities, as her embodied self and her inner psyche negotiate with the external world of actions: the outside world, and the empty, homogeneous time that accompanies it, performs unto Piya a set of expectations and identifications; the inside world, and the heterogeneous temporalities that accompany it, performs a different kind of expectations and identifications out of Piya. Piya’s agency – and agency in a wider sense – as a series of change and becoming can therefore be understood as a performance of time, as she is performing time and performed by time.

The Performance of Time

To elaborate on the concept of temporal identification that I am putting forward, I turn to Henri Bergson’s work on time and temporality in *Time and Free Will*. For Bergson, the time that the body experiences in the external world is a particular homogenised kind. It is time that is spatialised, where time is reduced to the homogeneity of space. Here, he uses the example of counting to illustrate his ideas. According to Bergson, we have fallen into a
habit of thinking that we are ‘counting in time rather than in space’ (Bergson 1950: 78). This approach towards counting, he argues, is misconceived. In order to count to the number 50, for instance, we have to firstly imagine that there are 50 individual ‘1’s. Then, we have to put these individual units in succession for fifty times so that we can ultimately arrive at the final outcome. As such, Bergson notes, this gives off the impression that ‘we have built up the number in duration and in duration only’ (Bergson 1950: 78). However, Bergson suggests that this is not the case, and that we are really counting in space rather in time. This is because we ‘involuntarily fix a point in space each of the moments which we count, and it is only on this condition that the abstract units come to form a sum’ (Bergson 1950: 79). For Bergson, the question of how we understand time in the external world is, really, a question of how we understand space; the understanding of time as linear, empty and homogeneous means that we think of number – and, by extension, the material world – as ‘a juxtaposition in space’ (Bergson 1950: 85).

In contrast to the understanding of time in the external world, Bergson introduces the notion of pure duration to characterise the way time might work in the inner self (of the psyche and of affect). He writes:

Here we find ourselves confronted by a confused multiplicity of sensations and feelings which analysis alone can distinguish. Their number is identical with the number of the moments which we take up when we count them; but these moments, as they can be added to one another, are again points in space. Our final conclusion, therefore is that there are two kinds of multiplicity: that of material objects, to which the conception of number is immediately applicable; and the multiplicity of states of consciousness, which cannot be regarded as numerical without the help of some symbolic representation, in which
a necessary element is space (Bergson 1950: 87; emphasis in original).

On the one hand, time in the external world, or what Bergson describes as homogeneous duration, is a distinct multiplicity where everything is laid out in space and not in time. Everything is clearly and distinctly spatialised. In contrast, in the inner world of the self, time as pure duration functions in a significantly different manner. For Bergson, the inner world of the self experiences multiple sensations and affects (often simultaneously). However, these experiences are not laid out in a successive and homogeneous manner as that of the outer world. Rather, they come together and clash in a heterogeneous manner.

Here, then, time as a force that affects the inner self is experienced as pure duration, which Bergson defines as ‘the form in which the succession of our conscious states assumes when our ego lets itself live, when it refrains from separating its present state from its former states’ (Bergson 1950: 100; emphasis in original). Put differently, the homogeneous time of the outer world spatialises everything and, in turn, bastardises the understanding of time. Conversely, as multiple sensory and affective forces are experienced in the inner self, things are not laid out in a successive manner as that of the outer world. The inner world’s experience of time is thus that of pure duration, where multiple times and temporalities come together. Unfortunately, Bergson avers, when this inner experience of pure duration is reflected on by the person, the symbolic world immediately shifts that articulation of time from that of pure duration to that of spatialised time. 7 In
thinking about the forces of time, Bergson suggests that we can work through certain issues of identification. For Bergson, the notion of identification is the absolute law of our consciousness: it affirms that what is thought is thought at the moment when we think it: and what gives this principle its absolute necessity is that it does not bind the future to the present, but only the present to the present (Bergson 1950: 207).³

Put another way, we need to stop thinking about identification in a causal manner, where the present is affected by the past and the present affects the future. Instead, paradoxically, Bergson suggests thinking of identification as a moment in the present, where time is not only heterogeneously experienced by the inner self but is also negotiated with the homogeneity of spatialised, linear time of the outside material world.⁴ This focus on one’s identification as that of the present (and not as a casual chain) is significant because it does not separate out the multiple temporalities that are coeval, and we can begin to think of one’s temporal identification as always in a state of becoming rather than in a state of being.

Here, drawing from Bergson’s analysis of time as a force that affects the self’s identification in the present, I suggest that it is helpful to think through the ways in which a subject performs time and is performed by time. For Bergson, on the one hand, there are the empty, homogeneous times and temporalities that perform a set of social expectations unto the subject. On the other, there are the heterogeneous times and temporalities that the subject attempts to perform. Expanding on Bergson’s ideas through an
analysis of films about dementia, I nuance his arguments slightly: instead of thinking about the self as being performed by homogeneous time and performing heterogeneous times – as I will elaborate below – I suggest that we can think of the subject’s temporal identification as relational, as interdependent on the different temporal identifications of different groups of people, and as a constant push and pull between multiple times and temporalities.

Where agency is concerned, thinking about the person’s identifications through the temporal present where multiple temporalities come together is significant; agency is no longer thought of as an ambivalent state of being in the present that vacillates between the past and the future, as that proposed by Butler, but rather as a constant state of change, of becoming, and of negotiation, as that proposed by Clare, Mahmood, Boyle, Hughes and Aquilina. Consequently, Su-jin and Piya, in drawing attention to the notion of agency as becoming, become really interesting case studies to think about the malleability of such temporal performances.

Su-jin, in A Moment to Remember, is a 27-years-old woman. She is, to a large extent, portrayed as an independent woman who navigates her way round the hierarchies of the South Korean society. The film begins with her left hanging by a married man whom she is having an affair with and follows her narrative as she actively pursues Cheol-su to go out with her, and then to marry her. She is a successful fashion designer, directs advertising campaigns, clinches business deals, and is more intelligent than her husband, managing to help him articulate his inspiration for his architecture designs in a coherent manner. Amongst all these achievements, she also
finds the time to clean the house and to cook for her husband, performing the role of a loving wife on top of a successful careerist.

Yet, all these change when she is diagnosed with early onset Alzheimer's disease. When Su-jin finally goes to the doctor for her follow-up appointment, the doctor delivers the news that she has been diagnosed with dementia. Confused, she asks the doctor to explain what that disease means for her. As he begins to explain the disease and its symptoms in more detail, the film cuts to a wide-angle shot of Su-jin walking amongst groups of people in their work-wear, lost in the sea of office workers, completely forlorn by the diagnosis. As the doctor continues to explain the situation to her, and she begins to realise the gravity of the whole situation, the film intercuts between the office, where doctor and patient converse, and the public, where Su-jin continues to walk through a sea of office-workers. Back in the office, the doctor advises her to quit her job because she will soon not remember anything; outside, completely devastated, Su-jin leaves the path of working passers-by and goes towards a pillar, leaning against it for support. Here, she is in the foreground of the shot, in sharp focus, whilst the workers are in the background of the shot, out of focus, and the two entities are now separated by a wooden fence. Su-jin’s dementia has caused her to exit the working life that she is accustomed to.

The film then cuts to the interior of her house as Cheol-su returns home from work. He enters the house and sees Su-jin, in her apron, standing at the kitchen cooking dinner. The film then cuts to Cheol-su in his workshop as he notices that Su-jin is standing there observing him at work. He pauses, removes his goggles, and looks at Su-jin. The film cuts to a mid-shot of Su-
jin, still in the apron, holding a tray of fruit for her husband, smiling, beckoning him to take a break. Visually, she is bathed in a pool of warm yellow light, almost angelic, and appears to have comfortably and happily taken on the role of the dutiful and faithful housewife. Quickly, the film cuts to a close-up of Su-jin, exposing the deep sadness that is hidden behind that performed happiness, drawing the audience’s attention to how her gender performance has shifted upon her dementia diagnosis, and that she is not necessarily comfortable with this new performance. In the previous scene, upon diagnosis, Su-jin breaks down completely and is separated off from the working culture that she used to be a part of. Instead of negotiating a balance between work and domesticity, Su-jin here is moved into the sphere of the domestic interior, where she cooks and waits on her husband.

![Image](image.png)

Figure 2: Su-jin lost in *A Moment to Remember*
Next, the film cuts to Su-jin and Cheol-su lying on the sofa cuddling as she asks Cheol-su whether she should quit her job and stay at home to be a housewife. Cheol-su replies and says that he would love that because it is a man’s job and that he will bring home the bread and butter. Su-jin announces that she is going to quit the next day and Cheol-su is immediately concerned, asking Su-jin what has happened. Instead of answering the question, Su-jin immediately changes the subject by kissing her husband. She pauses, looks into Cheol-su’s eyes, and asks him whether he wants a baby. He is unsure and she turns away, gazing into the ceiling with a pensive look on her face.

Here, Su-jin’s adherence to biological (have children) and domestic roles (do household chores) recalls the notion of chrononormativity as put forward by Elizabeth Freeman, where the ‘naked flesh is bound into socially meaningful embodiment through temporal regulation’ (Freeman 2010: 3). Chrononormativity, for Freeman, ‘is a mode of implantation, a technique by which institutional forces come to seem like somatic facts’, where ‘people are bound to one another, engrouped, made to feel coherently collective, through particular orchestrations of time’ (Freeman 2010: 3). According to Freeman, empty, homogeneous time not only conditions people to think collectively in a linear way, but it is also a means to maintain the hegemonic ideals of society, becoming a means of controlling and disciplining the desires and fantasies of individuals. Women are, for instance, largely reduced to the temporal rhythms of the body and the domestic, where they are encouraged to get married by a certain age so that they can have children before a certain age, where they are encouraged to stay at home to take care of the children and do household chores, day in day out, temporally conforming to a cyclical
pattern of domestic labour; men, on the other hand, are bound to the hours of capitalist labour time, where they have to leave the house by a certain time to start work in the day and can only come home when work ends.

Borrowing from Freeman, we can think of bodies being performed by chrononormativity (or empty, homogeneous time), where a set of social expectations is performed unto the people in a particular society. At the same time, these bodies can choose to perform differently, not adhering to the temporal expectations placed upon the bodies by society. For a young, middle-class, cis-gendered, able-bodied, white and heterosexual woman to choose not to have children or get married, for example, can be seen as the subject performing her own time in relation to/negotiation with the times that are performed unto her. I caution, however, and maintain that this is only one way to think about one’s temporal identification. As I will elaborate later, to think of one’s temporal identifications is to think of the performance of time as a constant process of negotiation, of becoming, of performing/performed by multiple times and temporalities. That is to say, the subject can be attempting to perform the linearity of empty, homogeneous time but is, instead, performed by the heterogeneous temporalities around them.

Whilst these constant becomings are often minute, miniscule and not necessarily noticeable in everyday life, films about dementia, with their concern with multiple temporalities intermingling, heighten the push and pull between multiple times and temporalities. When Su-jin proposes to quit her job, Cheol-su is unaware that she has just been diagnosed with dementia, and that her motivation to quit her job is due to her being performed by the curative time imposed upon her by the doctor. Curative time, for Alison Kafer,
points to a curative imaginary, which is ‘an understanding of disability that not only expects and assumes intervention but also cannot imagine or comprehend anything other than intervention’, that ‘casts disabled people (as) out of time, or as obstacles to the arc of progress’ (Kafer 2013: 27 – 28; emphasis in original). In essence, curative time assumes that disabilities need to be treated so that (dis)abled people can function and effectively contribute to the progress of society or, failing which, in the case of dementia where cure is still a dream, curative time casts these disabled bodies as completely out of time.

Yet, despite the curative time that is performed on Su-jin, where the doctor’s recommendation can be read as removing the futurity of her because she has to give up her dreams of living a long and successful hegemonic life ahead of her, Su-jin proposes to have a child with Cheol-su. On the one hand, by quitting her job, she is shifting her temporal rhythms from that of work time to that of domestic time, moving deeper into the traditional/conservative sphere of gender performance where her role is to stay at home, clean the house and bear children. On the other hand, however, Su-jin’s performance of woman’s time, of wanting a child, of becoming a stay-at-home mom, can be seen as a defiance of this removal of her futurity. She is performed by curative time which causes her to move into a gender role that she is not necessarily comfortable with. Yet, paradoxically, in performing her new gender role’s temporality, she is in turn performing an imagined futurity that tugs against curative time. Su-jin’s temporal identification immediately post-diagnosis, therefore, highlights the push and pull within multiple approaches towards time and temporality, as
she is simultaneously performed by and performing time, and different temporal rhythms come together.

In short, from the analysis of *A Moment to Remember*, the performance of time can be understood as intersectional, where one’s temporal identification is not merely reduced to one kind of categorisation, where multiple categories of identifications intersect to paint a more complex and nuanced understanding of the subject. Like *A Moment to Remember*, *U Me Aur Hum* makes the intersectionality of temporal performances evident. Here, I focus on the moment that the audience comes to realise that Piya is living with dementia. In this scene, Ajay and his friends are driving. It is raining heavily and their visibility is reduced. Whilst driving, Ajay and his friends do not pay much attention to what is on the road but that all comes to a halt as Ajay has to conduct an emergency brake in order to not hit a person on the street. The car screeches to a stop and the film cuts to a close-up of Ajay’s face as a look of perplexity and recognition slowly creeps over him. As that happens, the sound of the heavy rain falling fades out of the film and, in its place, a high pitch note enters the film. Concurrently, this high pitch note is layered with a reverberated track of a woman screaming confusedly.

The film cuts to a reverse shot, showing Piya dramatically turning around with a dazed look. Next, the film cuts to a close-up of her as she is shown to be completely drenched in the torrential rain, as if she is washed anew by the rain. The camera is positioned in the car as the audience sees the windshield wipers wiping away the rain on the windscreen, revealing a clearer image of Piya. The film cuts to a series of four jump cuts, each time showing Piya’s image being blurred by the rain and wiped afresh by the
wipers. At this very moment, then, through the rain, the use of the jump cuts, and the wiping metaphor, Piya’s performance of her temporal identification is visually coded as a state of becoming and change – there is a different Piya at every single moment that is negotiating with multiple times and temporalities.

Figure 3: Piya refreshed by the rain and the wipers in *U Me Aur Hum*

Aurally, these temporal negotiations are made even clearer. As she turns around, the sound of a glass shattering enters the mix and, immediately after, the slowed-down sound of water bubbling, an unintelligible voice of a man speaking, and a baby crying enter the sound design. As the film cuts back and forth to Ajay in the car and Piya in the street, the cacophony of sound continues to permeate the film. Finally, Ajay opens the door and steps out of his car. As that happens, this stylised soundscape
abruptly stops and the sound of heavy rain returns to the film. As Ajay steps out of the car and approaches Piya, she reveals that she is extremely lost and cannot remember any contact numbers (nor Ajay’s name) to call for help. Subsequently, Ajay brings her to a doctor and she is diagnosed with early onset Alzheimer’s disease.

Like the scene where Piya is transfixed by the lizard that I discussed above, the soundscape in this moment can be seen as giving the audience an insight into the subjectivity of Piya. This cacophony of sounds can be read as an aural manifestation of the ways in which Piya is performing time and performed by time, as her subjectivity is negotiating with the multiple times and temporalities – of change happening – as she is visually drenched and constantly washed anew by the heavy rain and the windscreen wipers. Firstly, through the amalgamation of the man’s and woman’s voice, there is a negotiation between two different kinds of gendered temporalities. Secondly, Piya’s role as a mother is also called into question through the sound of the infant crying; as the film reveals later on, Piya is pregnant and her pregnancy is making her condition deteriorate faster.

Thirdly, the sonic melting pot in the scene that explodes as Piya turns her face towards Ajay points towards the presence of crip time. For Kafer, crip time occupies the other end of the temporal spectrum in relation to curative time. Crip time, Kafer argues, embraces the notion that everyone follows different paces of living and that they should not be locked down into a standard understanding of how time functions. A disabled body, for instance, would take longer than an abled body to get somewhere, and crip time recognises and accommodates that. According to Kafer, crip time ‘is flex
time not just expanded but exploded’ and ‘it requires reimagining our notions of what can and should happen in time, or recognizing how expectations of “how long things take” are based on very particular minds and bodies’ (Kafer 2013: 27). At its core, for Kafer, crip time not only accommodates different paces of life but also challenges the empty, homogeneous clock time (and curative time). This exploded time that accommodates can also be heard in the soundscape as the different sounds all occupy different temporal rhythms: the woman’s voice is frantic and high-pitched, the man’s voice is slow and low-pitched, the high-pitch screech continues in a single note, the bubbling of water is slowed-down, and the baby’s cry is looped; and, despite the disparate threads of sound that are put together into this soundscape, none of the sounds are made less prominent for they all occupy different frequencies. In other words, the soundscape is crip time made tangible, times exploded and times embraced.

Fourthly, the sound of the infant crying also draws the audience’s attention to the time and temporality of ageing. As I have suggested in the Introduction, early onset Alzheimer’s disease conceptually catapults a person into the imaginary of the vulnerable “old”. In U Me Aur Hum, as Piya is diagnosed with dementia, she is put under constant supervision by a carer before being moved into a psychiatric ward that is predominantly populated by old people. Cultural notions of care that are mediated by dementia, Chris Gilleard and Paul Higgs note, have come to serve as signifiers of the fourth age, of ageing in the later life (Gilleard and Higgs 2017: 231 – 235).13 Piya’s early onset Alzheimer’s, as mediated through care, therefore culturally pushes her further down her chronological age, into the imaginary of the
fourth age and of frailty. Yet, the sound of the infant crying also enacts a different kind of temporal performance as Piya is also linked with the infantile. As the film’s narrative progresses, she starts to sheepishly hide behind Ajay, starts to gaze at Ajay with wide-eyed innocence, and starts to follow him around in constant need for guidance, ultimately highlighting the paradox of ageing for people living with dementia as they are both thrust into the category of the cultural “old” and pulled into the infantile/second childhood.14

For Margaret Morganroth Gullette, ageing is a cultural process. According to Gullette, there are parallels between the ways we age and the ways in which a child is socialised into a gender. She argues that the gender that children acquire ‘is usually like that of one parent, and so a parental “we” includes them’ (Gullette 2004: 12).15 Unlike gender, however, Gullette proposes that acquiring age is slightly more nuanced than that:

Having an “age,” when separated off by itself, is more puzzling, because subjectively children feel stuck so long at one lowly state quite distinct from the adult: their age changes but their stage of life seem static. Children collect contradictory age-tinged language and revelations about older ages and about getting older in general, often without guidance, from peers, from overhearing adults, from ill-informed educators, haphazard reading, or, more and more, via the mass media (Gullette 2004: 12).

Here, for Gullette, age is understood as a process of cultural socialisation and the ageing process detailed by Gullette, understood through a temporal lens, can again be seen as a performance of time. On the one hand, there is
the empty, homogenous time of the outside world performing its temporal expectations onto the body, as the self is aged linearly, and as they are expected to become an “adult” when they reach 18 or 21 and so on and so forth; on the other hand, the inner world of the body does not necessarily conform to this chronological notion of ageing and, as such, performs age in a different manner. Through the sound of the baby crying, therefore, this paradoxical nature of ageing is heightened and brought to the fore, as Piya has to temporally negotiate the push and pull of both becoming old and young.

**Normativity/Anti-normativity**

There are, hence, at least four different types of intersecting understanding of times and temporalities at work for Piya in this scene. The performance of time, therefore, is an attempt to engage in intersectional politics of identification. In the final portion of the chapter, I discuss how films about dementia, in gesturing towards the ways people are performing and performed by time, and in highlighting the constant push and pull between multiple types of temporalities, move beyond the dominant normative/anti-normative model of time that is put forward by many of the scholars of time (men’s/women’s time, work time/domestic time, curative time/crip time, straight time/queer time, white time/racialised time, young time/old time, middle class time/working class time). To do so, I turn to a discussion on the concept of normativity.
For Robyn Wiegman and Elizabeth Wilson, the concept of anti-normativity is largely predicated on the idea that the normative is ‘conceptually and politically limiting’, and that norms ‘have a readily identifiable outside, are univocally on the side of privilege and conventionality, and should be avoided’ (Wiegman and Wilson 2015: 12). This stance, Wiegman and Wilson contend, projects an imaginary of ‘stability and immobility onto normativity’ that reduces the ‘intricate dynamics of norms to a set of rules and coercions that everyone ought, rightly, to contest’ (Wiegman and Wilson 2015: 13). This viewpoint towards normativity, however, they argue, glosses over the logic of normativity. Drawing from statistical studies, they observe:

The norm is a dispersed calculation (an average) that enquires into every corner of the world. That is, the measurements, comparisons, adjudications, and regulations that generate the average man do so not in relation to a compulsory, uniform standard, but through an expansive relationality among and within individuals, across and within groups (Wiegman and Wilson 2015: 15).

That is to say, the statistical understanding of the norm is predicated on the average (mean, medium, or mode) of a wide range of data from all across cultures and societies, and that for the norm to be generated, the outliers have to be considered too. In that sense, for them, the outliers – which some might term as the anti-normative – ‘is contained in the very heart of the median’ (Wiegman and Wilson 2015: 15). With that logic of argument, where ‘the norm is already generating conditions of differentiation that antinormativity so urgently seeks’, Wiegman and Wilson instead propose to
focus on the ‘relationality that is at the heart of normativity’ (Wiegman and Wilson 2015 16 – 18).

Following Wiegman and Wilson, I argue that the notion of temporal identifications, where the subject is performed by and performing time, correlates to this understanding of the normative as relational. Put differently, I am not suggesting that the performance of time is limited to that of being performed by the homogeneous, empty time, and performing heterogeneous non-linear times and temporalities (something which Bergson would have suggested). Rather, I am arguing that one’s temporal identification, as a constant state of becoming and change, is always in negotiation with others. Su-jin’s and Piya’s temporal identifications in A Moment to Remember and U Me Aur Hum, for example, are predominantly negotiated with their families, husbands, and medical institutions, all of which are traditionally understood as associated with more hegemonic/conservative ideologies. By the same token, the same argument can be made about Cheol-su’s and Ajay’s temporal identifications – that they are also in negotiations with intersections of times and temporalities, and that they are also performed by and performing time.

In U Me Aur Hum, for instance, when Ajay nearly crashes into Piya, and before the film reveals that it is Piya in front of the car, the camera is trained on the face of Ajay, as a sense of recognition and confusion slowly creeps onto his face. Before the film cuts to Piya, the rich soundscape that I analysed above fades into the film as Ajay is first implicated in this performance of time before Piya. As Piya is repeatedly wiped clean and refreshed by the windscreen wiper, the film also shows the audience the
reverse shot of Ajay, who is also wiped clean and refreshed, too in a state of becoming, too negotiating his times and temporalities with that of Piya’s.

Figure 4: Ajay refreshed by the rain and the wipers in *U Me Aur Hum*

Here, through Piya’s early onset Alzheimer’s disease, Ajay, a successful psychiatrist, is thrown into the register of care. His previous temporal identification – oscillating between that of successful work time and that of leisurely pleasure time – is now in direct negotiation with Piya’s new and significantly different temporal identification. He is performed by Piya’s temporal identification and he, too, has to negotiate his understanding of gendered time, as he has to return to the interior world of the domestic home a lot more to help out around the house; has to negotiate becoming a (single) parent as Piya’s dementia progresses; and has to question his adherence to curative time and adapt to crip time, as he is forced to confront whether his
medical prescriptions for his patients’ care are necessarily the best and whether he would follow what he preaches and institutionalise Piya instead of putting her under care at home. At every stage of the film’s narrative, as Piya’s temporal performance changes, Ajay’s temporal performance changes too – there are no normative/antinormative dichotomies here but, instead, more of a relational negotiation as both their temporal identifications are interdependent on each other.

Likewise, A Moment to Remember also makes this relational model towards time and temporality clear. The film begins with Cheol-su sat at the train station with a desolate face. A man at the station asks Cheol-su whether he has a lighter that he can borrow to light his cigarette. In response, Cheol-su holds up a letter and pensively announces that the common cultural understanding is that a person’s soul and identity are gone when their memories go. The man at the station sarcastically replies and says that he clearly remembers Cheol-su smoking as he was walking towards the seat. As the man goes on a rant about the whole situation, the sound of trains fades into the film and gets increasingly louder as the camera slowly tracks towards the back of Cheol-su, and, concurrently, the man’s voice becomes increasingly echoed. Almost immediately, the sound of trains cuts out abruptly from the film and the echoed quality of the man’s voice disappears. The film cuts back to a shot of the man concluding his rant, as he asks for a lighter again. As he does so, the camera pans to the left, revealing the person that he is speaking to. Instead of Cheol-su sat there, as the audience would expect, Su-jin is sat that with a forlorn face. She is there, holding on to a pair of train tickets, waiting for the arrival of the man whom
she is having an affair with. Ultimately, she realises that she has been ghosted by the man and leaves the station.

Figure 5: Cheol-su at the beginning of *A Moment to Remember*

There are multiple layers of narratives and temporal performances at work here in the opening moments of the film. Su-jin is waiting – performing her own sense of time – against the backdrop of a train station, which has come to culturally symbolise clock time, as the development of empty, homogeneous time is tightly bound up with the development of trains.19 As such, viewed in this context, there is a layer of temporal relationality happening: Su-jin is waiting, where time drags, whereas the relentless clock time continues to move forward, and it is through this temporal negotiation that Su-jin’s temporal identification changes, as she comes to realise that she has been stood up. This, in turn, engenders two new sets of temporal
negotiations. Firstly, she is now no longer in a relationship with the married man. She is now single, and that therefore allows her to – as the film’s narrative progresses – have the free time to pursue Cheol-su. Secondly, she now has to return to her parents’ home to an angry and disappointed father, finding a compromise between familial and independent times.

In order to explain and elaborate on Cheol-su’s presence at the beginning of the film, I take a detour towards the end of the film’s narrative. As Su-jin is diagnosed with early onset Alzheimer’s disease, Cheol-su initially tries to maintain his life’s routine, continuing to go to work in the morning and returning home at the end of the day, attempting to not let Su-jin’s new performance of time be performed on to him. Yet, this does not mean that Cheol-su’s routine is uninterrupted. In one moment, Su-jin calls him by her ex-partner’s name and proclaims that she loves him; despite being devastated, Cheol-su keeps a straight face and acknowledges her words of affection, performing this ambivalent role of being both himself and Su-jin’s ex-partner. One day, when Cheol-su is out at work, Su-jin, alone at home, remembers this very episode and, out of sheer contempt for her actions, writes a letter to apologise, leaves the house and checks herself into a care home.

When Cheol-su returns home in the evening, he discovers the letter and realises that Su-jin has left him. He is completely taken aback by this development and breaks down completely. Su-jin’s decision to leave the house and check into a care home results in her embracing a new temporal identification, and this change in Su-jin significantly affects Cheol-su, as he is finally overwhelmed by the whole situation and is performed by Su-jin’s
temporalities. Here, in shifting from the normative/anti-normative understanding of time and temporality to that of multiple approaches towards times and temporalities coming together and negotiating – to that of the relational – we can think of Cheol-su’s temporal identification not as an unchanging, monolithic normative but, rather, as that too which is malleable and constantly changing, as he becomes unable to work even when he goes to work. Likewise, his father-in-law insists that Cheol-su signs the divorce letter so that he can be a single man, free from the burden of caring for and thinking about Su-jin, but he refuses to do this even though he is effectively living the life of an unmarried man.

Instead, Cheol-su begins to spend most of his time sat, in a state of melancholy, at the playground, at home, and at the train station. As he sits at the train station, he is approached by the same man at the beginning of the film for a light. As that happens, the film cuts to a wide-angle shot of Cheol-su and the man, revealing that they are sat in the same place and dressed in the same clothes as that in the opening sequence of the film. In other words, the very scene that begins the film happens towards the end of the film. Through the editing at the beginning of the film – the use of shot/reverse-shot between Cheol-su and the man, and the audio-continuity of the man’s rant – Su-jin’s temporal negotiations at the beginning of the film, set years before her diagnosis of early onset Alzheimer’s disease, are linked to Cheol-su’s situation towards the end of the film, whose temporal identification is significantly and noticeably affected by Su-jin’s dementia. In turn, I suggest, this not only highlights the relational aspect of people’s temporal performances, moving beyond the dichotomised view of linear and non-linear
time, but also suggests that temporal performances as a category of analysis has a wider application that affect people who do not live with dementia too.

Figure 6: Cheol-su towards the end of A Moment to Remember

For Sally Chivers, films about dementia ‘amplify the normative ravages of age, especially on the mind’ (Chivers 2011: 59). Chivers argues that as dementia is largely culturally associated with old age, those who do not live with dementia ‘can define themselves as not yet old’ and, as such, films about dementia can be rather cathartic for the audience; “normative” old age – and all the negative connotations associated with it – has not crept upon the audience yet (Chivers 2011: 60). As I hope to have demonstrated, my argument differs significantly from Chivers’s. The process of ageing and living with dementia should be thought of as something where multiple temporalities meet, clash, and/or co-exist, where the subject is constantly
experiencing and negotiating multiple temporalities. The self is performed by time and performing time. As such, instead of thinking about films about dementia as articulating and cathartically exorcising the fears of the “decrepit” and “normative” old age, films about dementia, with their heightened focus on the presence of multiple temporalities, offers the potential to think about the relationality of the normative, in turn encouraging us to think about how our temporal identification is always in a state of becoming, of change.

This will thus allow us to move beyond the us/Them, ageing as decline/ageing as healthy, good/bad representations that this thesis sets out to move beyond. Here, I recall Mahmood’s suggestion that agency should be seen as oppositional and also as the ways in which a subject inhabits norms. As identifications are deeply bound up in our understanding of agency, thinking about the performance of our temporal identifications would mean to think about the ways in which the subject’s agency can be understood through a reconsideration of what normativity might mean. Rethinking the normative as relational and dialogical through the lens of temporality, therefore, has significant implications and nuances on our understanding of what agency might mean for people living with dementia; it widens our conception of people living with dementia as being dependent on their carers to that of as being in negotiation with their carers, in turn restoring the agency of people living with dementia. In this chapter, I have focused on temporality of agency in relation to that of the actions of people living with dementia. In the next chapter, I build on this argument and focus on the narrative agency of people living with dementia, examining the ways in which
the narratives of people living with dementia are not prematurely closed off but, instead, like people not living with dementia, are continuously engaged in a process of change and creation.
Chapter Two
The Shape of Dementia Narratives

Memories of Tomorrow (Yukihiko Tsutsumi, 2006, Japan) begins in 2010 with Masayuki, in a grey shirt, sat in his wheelchair expressionlessly. He is lit by the warm orange light of the sunset and blends into the dull orange wall behind him. His wife, Emiko, shows him a corkboard full of pictures of people from Masayuki’s life but he neither acknowledges her nor the corkboard’s presence. She drinks from her cup and puts it back on the table. The film cuts to a close-up shot of the ceramic cup, handle broken off and the word “Emiko” etched onto the cup, before cutting to a two-shot of the couple sat on their chairs looking into the sunset. Throughout the sequence, the relentless sounds of birdcall permeate the film’s diegesis, paradoxically highlighting the still yet repetitive nature of Masayuki and Emiko’s situation. Slowly, the camera moves out of and above the house, providing the audience with a bird’s-eye view of the surrounding rural landscape. The film then dissolves to a shot of a mountain as it time-lapses and cycles through the four seasons. Gradually, the film dissolves to an aerial shot of a busy cityscape. As the camera moves through different portions of the city and then through a window where the film’s narrative begins, the buildings in the city begin to deconstruct and disappear. Here, time is moving backwards at the beginning of Memories of Tomorrow as the audience is brought to the narrative’s present tense in the spring of 2004, where a younger Masayuki is energetically leading a largescale advertising campaign.

Something similar occurs at the beginning of Memoir of a Murderer (Won Shin-yeon, 2017, South Korea) too. The protagonist, Byeong-soo,
walks out of a dark tunnel into a landscape of snowy nothingness. The film cuts to an extreme wide-angle shot from the inside of the dark tunnel as Byeong-soo is positioned within the frame by the arch of the tunnel’s exit, as he is visually isolated and enveloped by darkness. His hair is short and grey, and he is wearing his white shoes the wrong way around. His left eye starts to twitch as he begins to look around at his surroundings. Whilst that happens, a menacing low-rumbling drone enters the film’s score; concurrently, sounds of people screaming enter the film too. As the air of confusion builds up through the sound and music, the film cuts to the title page. In the theatrical edit of Memoir of a Murderer, the film subsequently cuts to a shot of Byeong-soo, with long, black hair, sat at a police station holding his bag as a police officer asks him whether he has forgotten his address yet again. In the director’s version of the film, which is structured significantly differently, the film cuts to a poorly Byeong-soo, with long, grey hair, lying in a hospital bed in a prison cell, as a prosecutor checks Byeong-soo’s mental faculties before proceeding to interrogate Byeong-soo about his journal and his lifestory. Either way, both versions of the film bring the audience back to the beginning of the film’s narrative, to the narrative’s present tense, as the film slowly builds up an atmosphere of mystery.

Put differently, both Memories of Tomorrow and Memoir of a Murderer begin by teasing the audience with a scene from somewhere in time before moving quickly to the film’s present tense. For M. Madhava Prasad, this narrative device can be understood as a fragment B, an fB, where ‘A and B represent the two principal narrative segments, and fB a fragment that is metonymically linked to B but separated from by segment A’ (Prasad 1998:)
According to Ashish Rajadhyaksha, the fB is ‘present not only at the beginning of the film, and hovering over it, but also more commonly right through’ (Rajadhyaksha 2013: 74). The fB, then, is ‘a kind of commenting track’ that is ‘embedded in the framing structures of the film’, reminding the audience of what is and what will be (Rajadhyaksha 2013: 74). If we were to follow Prasad and Rajadhyaksha, the opening moments in both Memories of Tomorrow and Memoir of a Murderer can be seen as an fB, as a form of prolepsis, where the pre-determined future of the person living with dementia is shown before the film’s primary narrative trajectory – the present – manifests.

This understanding of the opening moments in these two films as fB's echoes Aagje Swinnen’s observation that films about dementia usually ‘render the story of a disease in progress that reaches its nadir in the time span of the narrative’ (Swinnen 2013: 113). For Katsura Sako and Sarah Falcus, the opening scene of Memories of Tomorrow, with its depiction of Masayuki as still and wheelchair-bound, ‘determines the path of the narrative, with the whole film shadowed by this initial image of Masayuki, allowing the viewer to inhabit vicariously the time of prognosis’, as the audience is encouraged to see Masayuki’s character arc as a journey of decline (Sako and Falcus 2015: 111). Likewise, Philip Gowman, in his review of Memoir of a Murderer, observes how the opening shots of the film capture all the ‘stress and trauma’ of living with dementia, and of the fear that Byeong-soo’s ‘mind is falling apart and that he will become more dependent on others to look after him’ (Gowman 2017). In other words, both the opening moments as fB's signpost, rather quickly, an impending decline of the
characters’ cognitive abilities, and an acknowledgement that these minds are ultimately going to “lose it” as they battle with dementia.¹ Seen from this perspective, then, both Memories of Tomorrow and Memoir of a Murderer, films that largely attempt to narrativise dementia through a first person subjective viewpoint, are concerned with the ways the narratives of the characters living with dementia are gradually being closed off.

This chapter comes from a very different viewpoint. As I will explore in more detail later, I suggest that the opening moments of both films do not ineludibly work as a form of foreshadowing device, where the end-point of the narrative is already brought to the fore at the beginning of the narrative, where what has passed (the beginning of the film) is used to determine what is to come (the end of the film). Rather, by considering the ways in which the formal properties of Memories of Tomorrow and Memoir of a Murderer work vis-à-vis the corresponding narrative structures, I propose that the opening scenes can be understood as expressing the prospect of difference and of change, where the lifestory of a person living with dementia does not necessarily end with that of decline, and where multiple temporal potentialities are surfaced: Masayuki and Byeong-soo can be seen as not only journeying through a path of decline, but are also simultaneously seen as traversing many other narrative trajectories and pathways. Unlike the tendency amongst many critics to interpret narratives about dementia through the framework of decline and/or continuation, this chapter argues for a shift towards that of narrative creation.

This chapter is hence concerned with the shape of dementia narratives, and how multiple temporalities manifest and interweave in these
story-shapes. It builds on the argument that I have made thus far in the thesis, where I suggest a subject’s temporal identification can be understood as a constant and complex negotiation between multiple temporalities, where a subject performs and is performed by time. In this chapter, I continue with this line of thought and suggest that the notion of temporal identification, as a framework that is grounded in the complexities of change and becoming, draws our attention to the ways in which our lifestories are temporally narrated. The chapter begins by exploring the notion of temporal identification in relation to Gilles Deleuze’s philosophy of difference and difference in itself, suggesting that a subject’s temporal identification is situated and entangled in a wider web of temporal identifications. Then, I analyse different approaches to thinking about a person living with dementia’s narrative and lifestory before turning, again, to Deleuze’s three syntheses of time. I suggest that films about dementia challenge the first two syntheses of time (which are respectively oriented by the immediate past and the pure past present), and is instead more aligned with the third synthesis of time (which is invested in potentials of creative invention and change). I demonstrate how films about dementia are not necessarily invested in the closing off of the lifestories and narratives of people living with dementia but, rather, interested in opening up new and different futures. Ultimately, the chapter closes with a consideration of the ways in which this approach towards narrativisation for people living with dementia allows for a more nuanced form of empathetic engagement.
Entangled Worlds and Difference in Itself

This argument that I am putting forward, where a person living with dementia’s lifestories are in a state of change and creation, comes from a different viewpoint to that of many scholars working on the narratives of people living with dementia. Mark Freeman, for example, argues that a person’s dementia, with its inevitable cognitive deterioration, causes them to move ‘into a mode of being shorn of any sense of [their] own history and story, of past and future, indeed, of [their] very identity’ (Freeman 2011: 18). For Freeman, given that the person living with dementia ‘has only the most minimal sense of the future’, it is difficult to ‘imagine what it is that [they] might live for, if by “for” we are referring to some purpose, some motivating source of meaning and value’ (Freeman 2011: 13; emphasis in original). Subsequently, because of that, a person living with dementia leaves narrative behind, and this means that it is up to the carers to help find ways to make the life of the person living with dementia ‘dignified and worthwhile’ (Freeman 2011: 18). However, this exercise in compassion is not for the person living with dementia because they ‘will not be the one to look back on the trajectory of [their] late life to discern its value and worth’ but, instead, it will be us, the carers (Freeman 2011: 18).

Freeman’s argument, I think, is an exercise that is more focused on the self and continues to other the person living with dementia; his proposal propagates the notion that people living with dementia and people not living with dementia are closed-off and separate entities, where the responsibility to reopen/continue the narratives of people living with dementia falls to the burden of people not living with dementia. However, a person’s temporal
identification is not separate from another person’s temporal identification. One’s temporal identification and narrative are deeply entangled with the other person’s, where entanglement, borrowing from Karen Barad, does not simply connote ‘to be intertwined with another, as in the joining of separate entities, but to a lack of independent, self-contained existence’ (Barad 2007: ix). Unlike Freeman’s formulation, then, I propose that multiple temporalities are shared between the person living with dementia and the person not living with dementia, negotiating and enveloping one another to actualise into individual temporal identifications that shift and ebb.

I have already made this argument in detail in the previous chapter, analysing the ways in which the temporal identifications of the characters in U Me Aur Hum and A Moment to Remember are deeply entwined and intersectional. In this chapter, in my analysis of Memories of Tomorrow and Memoir of a Murderer, I go beyond the diegesis and suggest that these performances of time traverse the diegetic into the extra-diegetic, where the temporalities performing and performed by the person living with dementia on screen are also the temporalities performing and performed by the person off the screen, albeit at different levels of intensity. As filmic narratives about dementia, Memories of Tomorrow and Memoir of a Murderer take on a particular inflection that attempt – to a large extent – to narrativise the experiences of dementia through the subjective viewpoint of the person living with dementia. In Memoir of a Murderer, the film is complemented by Byeong-soo’s voiceover as the audience is given an insight into his subjectivity through him as an acousmêtre, where his aural presence via the voiceover narration is ‘neither inside nor outside the image’ (Chion 1994:
In *Memories of Tomorrow*, shots that come from Masayuki’s point of view regularly differ from the film’s typical aesthetics, giving the audience an insight into his sensory approach to the world. Consequently, the multiple times and temporalities performing/performed by the person living with dementia on screen and the audience off screen are entwined and entangled.

Here, I turn to an analysis of one particular moment in *Memories of Tomorrow* to elaborate. In this scene, as Masayuki makes his way down his office’s narrow corridor right after resigning, the film cuts to a point of view shot of him passing through a line of people walking in the other direction. Suddenly, the people start to look at him – into the camera – as the film cuts back to a mid-shot of the upper-half of Masayuki, who is trying his best to hide his paranoia/concern that people are staring at him. As that happens, time slows down and everything in the frame proceeds to move in slow-motion; a low haunting sound creeps through the score and Masayuki’s footsteps become heightened, reverberated, and extremely noticeable. Even though the audience is only shown the upper half of Masayuki’s body, the texture of the floor becomes clear and, through the sound, the haptic impact of each foot and shoe touching the ground is made palpable.

The film cuts to a reverse shot of the corridor as the people continue to stare back into the camera. Unexpectedly, at the end of the line of people, Emiko appears. The film cuts to Masayuki who glances back with confusion. Free jazz enters the score as Masayuki comes to a standstill and looks directly at Emiko. The film cuts back to his point of view as time – slowed down – returns to normal speed again. His echoed footsteps are gone and,
in place, the audience hears the usual pattering of the people walking. Emiko continues walking forward whilst gazing directly into the camera – at Masayuki, at the audience – as she chides Masayuki for never being there for the family whenever he goes on “work trips”. Her voice is also echoed as she walks past Masayuki. Again, time slows down and with every single step she takes, the sound of her heels is heightened, reverberated, and made tangible, despite the camera not showing the lower half of her body. Immediately, the film cuts to a shot of Masayuki standing in front of a large glass window. He is bewildered and is oscillating from side to side. A bass note drops through the score as a ripple-effect vibrates across the frame’s mise-en-scène, soaking up the aftermath of the bass note, distorting the audience’s understanding of the building’s texture and architecture.

Figure 7: A different kind of textured surface in Memories of Tomorrow
Through the manipulation of sight and sound, the tactility of walking, of the environment, and of the building are brought to the fore, as the audience is given an insight into the subjectivity of Masayuki. Vivian Sobchack, in writing about sensory cinema and the cinesthetic subject, argues that the audience both touches and is touched by the screen—able to commute seeing to touching and back again without a thought and, through sensual and cross-modal activity, able to experience the movie as both here and there rather than clearly locating the site of cinematic experience as onscreen or offscreen (Sobchack 2004: 71; emphasis in original).

For Sobchack, through synaesthesia (where the stimulation of one sense causes a cross-modal transference to another sense, where the colour yellow, for instance, might be experienced by a subject as the taste of iron) and coenaesthesia (where the different aspects of the sensorium are variously heightened and diminished), the cinesthetic subject can understand what is seen and heard vis-à-vis their other senses: they also smell, taste and feel the film. In other words, the audience is variably touched by the film.

Yet, as the audience cannot ‘literally touch, smell or taste the particular figure on the screen that solicits [the] sensual desire’, the body of the cinesthetic subject ‘will reverse its direction to locate its partially frustrated sensual grasp on something more literally accessible’ (Sobchack 2004: 76; emphasis in original). In hearing the heightened footsteps of Masayuki, for example, I become conscious of the haptic impact of the foot and shoe touching the floor in the film’s diegesis; at the same time, I am also
aware of my own foot touching the texture of my shoe, and, as that happens, the intentionality of my body towards the aural aspects of *Memories of Tomorrow* allows my foot to feel, in an intensified manner, Masayuki’s walk. As such, following Sobchack, not only am I touched by the film but the film is also touched by me. Due to this never-ending loop of touching, Sobchack suggests, the onscreen/off-screen space is blurred, and the audience is positioned both in the cinema and in the film; the person living with dementia’s sensory and subjective interaction with the film’s diegesis is shared and negotiated with the audience’s embodied experience beyond the diegetical world. As I elaborate later through my engagement with Deleuze, this understanding of cinema and dementia has the potential to critically examine empathy as a strategic site for fostering a shared world between the person living with dementia and the person not living with dementia.

For Sobchack, this phenomenological engagement with the film is unlike the ‘sensual analogies and metaphors constructed only “after the fact” through the cognitive operations of conscious thought’ (Sobchack 2004: 76). Instead, it happens in the present tense of film watching, as the audience’s film-watching experience becomes a process of becoming, a constant process of negotiation between the onscreen and the off-screen space. In *Memories of Tomorrow*, as Masayuki walks down the corridor, Emiko and everyone else look directly into the camera, gazing judgementally (and rather confrontationally) at him. Here, in looking directly into the camera, in directly addressing the spectator as Masayuki, the audience is not only given an insight into the experiences of living with dementia as Masayuki but is now Masayuki. The fourth wall is broken and, borrowing from Tom Brown, this
mode of direct address places the audience firmly in the temporal ‘present-
ness’ and ‘present tense-ness’, creating a sense of immediacy as what the
audience experiences can be taken as what the character is experiencing in
the present-tense of the film’s diegesis (Brown 2012: 16). In implicating the
audience in the experiences of living with dementia in *Memories of
Tomorrow*, the embodied spectatorship engenders and foregrounds a sense
of present-ness and present tense-ness, and involves the audience in the
process of narrativisation, where the viewer plays an equally important role in
coding and decoding the narratives of people living with dementia.

Consequently, the narrativisation of dementia in *Memories of
Tomorrow* becomes a project that concerns both the onscreen and the off-
screen, bringing all these different temporal performances into negotiation,
amalgamating the sensory realities (a concept which I elaborate further
below) of both the person living with dementia in the film and the audience
watching the film. The screen and the off-screen are thus not separate but
entangled. Patricia Pisters, in analysing the works of Barad and Deleuze,
argues that ‘screens and the images on our screens are not distinct from the
world (as second order representations at distance) but they form an integral
part with it’ (Pisters 2015: 125).³ These cinematographic images, Pisters
suggests, ‘are part of the fabric of the world that is woven between screens,
odies and brains and nonhuman phenomena’ (Pisters 2015: 125). In other
words, the temporalities performing and performed by the person living with
dementia on screen are also the temporalities performing and performed by
the person off the screen albeit at different levels of intensity.
In proposing that the worlds of the person living with dementia and the person not living with dementia on and off screen are not separate and closed-off entities, I am taking a very different approach towards dementia and the process of narrativisation from that of Freeman’s, maintaining that the multiple temporalities of individuals are entangled and in a constant state of negotiation. To elaborate further on my argument, I turn to Deleuze’s concept of difference and difference in itself. Difference, he writes, cannot be thought of in terms of negation – the person living with dementia is not the same as the person not living with dementia – because this reduces an Idea into a fixed, distinct and unchanging identity (Deleuze 1994: 30 – 35). This kind of approach towards difference, Deleuze suggests, promulgates an illusionary approach towards reality that celebrates being rather than becoming, where a subject as a being is disconnected to other beings, and where the process of change and becoming is not accounted for.

In contrast, Deleuze calls for a move towards an affirmative understanding of difference as ‘the element, the ultimate unity’ (Deleuze 1994: 56). Here, Deleuze proposes to think of difference as preceding an Idea rather than deriving from it so as to combat the notion of a fixed Idea. Instead, an Idea is a multiplicity, a variation, and Ideas are rhizomatically connected, ‘each being no more than a difference between differences’, open to continuous change and rearticulation (Deleuze 1994: 56). To work through this complex understanding of difference in itself, a difference that comes before an image, Deleuze introduces the notion of the virtual and the actual as both sides of the real. The actual is that which is actualised from
the virtual, where multiple virtual intensities negotiate and entangle to become the actual. Deleuze writes, and I quote at length:

Actualisation breaks with resemblance as a process no less than it does with identity as a principle. Actual terms never resemble the singularities they incarnate. In this sense, actualisation or differenciation is always a genuine creation. It does not result from any limitation of a pre-existing possibility. It is contradictory to speak of ‘potential’, as certain biologists do, and to define differenciation by the simple limitation of a global power, as though this potential were indistinguishable from a logical possibility. For a potential or virtual object, to be actualised is to create divergent lines which corresponds to – without resembling – a virtual multiplicity. (Deleuze 1994: 212).

For Deleuze, the concept of identity, and hence representation, is disagreeable because it moots the Idea as a singular and fixed entity. In thinking of identity as an unchanging behemoth, the real becomes opposed to the possible, where something possible could be realised into the real. This opens up a few conceptual difficulties. First, it assumes that everything that is real must be possible, where the possible is ‘retroactively fabricated in the image of what resembles it’ (Deleuze 1994: 212). Second, if everything that is real must be possible, how might one explain why that which is possible has not been realised into the real (what is the unreal)? Third, due to the possible as a concept developed in retrospect that occurs after the real has come into existence, we are forced to think of the process of “realisation” as ‘a pure act or leap which always occurs behind our backs and is subject to a law of all or nothing’ (Deleuze 1994: 211). This approach towards the possible and the real, thus, poses conceptual difficulties as it does not allow
for the process of transformation and change to be considered carefully, and it reinforces difference as negation.

As my analysis of Freeman’s argument suggests, the possible-real approach poses great challenges to understanding the experiences of dementia. It seems that a person living with dementia is no longer going to possibly have a real future because they do not experience time the same way as a person not living with dementia, whose future is possible because they have the memories to ground and organise their lifestories. In contrast to the possible-real approach, Deleuze argues that it is perhaps more productive to think of everything as real, as part of the fabric of our reality. He puts forward the virtual and the actual as both sides of the “reality coin”. The actual, the thing that materialises into existence in the present, no longer has an equalising relationship with the virtual (as compared to the real being always possible). Rather, for Deleuze, the virtual-actual relationship is one of asymmetry, where not all that is virtual will be actualised into the actual. The actual can thus be understood as a process of negotiation between different layers of virtual intensities that unfolds into a particular existence in the present moment. The actual, importantly, is never in a state of being and stasis but, rather, in a constant state of change and becoming. Two actual objects will never be the same at any one particular moment in the present because they were actualised through a negotiation of different levels of virtual intensities – of difference in itself – and these two actual objects are in turn negotiated through a wider network of other actual objects (and the virtual intensities that come before that).
At this moment, we can begin to understand the ever-shifting sense of temporal identification as that of an actual which is actualised through the negotiations of multiple virtual intensities: one’s temporal identification is never fixed and stable and is always performing and performed by multiple temporalities. A person living with dementia is different to another person living with dementia, a person not living with dementia is different to another person not living with dementia, and a person living with dementia is different to a person not living with dementia. Everyone is almost the same, but not quite. As I have demonstrated in my analysis of *Memories of Tomorrow*, Masayuki’s temporal identification predicates on a performance of his own times and temporalities, whilst he is also performed by the times and temporalities of the characters around him on screen. In addition to that, his sense of temporal identification is also performing/performed by the individual temporal identifications of the members of the audience off screen. Put differently, everyone is performing and performed by virtuality, and everyone is entangled in a wider web of virtual performances.

What then, does Deleuze mean by the virtual, by difference by itself, if it is not the possible? To begin to address this question, Deleuze returns to Henri Bergson’s discussion of the pure duration, of time that has not been spatialised. According to Deleuze and Bergson, there ‘is only one time (monism), although there is an infinity of actual fluxes (generalized pluralism) that necessarily participate in the same virtual whole (limited pluralism)’ (Deleuze 1988: 82). The time that is experienced in the present is intricately connected to the past and the future, and these different aspects of the pure duration, past and future, come together to actualise in the actual present.
That is to say, and I elaborate further below and in Chapter Three, the virtual is not quite here but somewhere there, and the actual present is, in turn, an index that is haunted by the virtual past (and, by extension, the future).

Confabulation/Hallucination and the Three Syntheses of Time

Formally and narratively, films about dementia regularly bring the actual and the virtual together into the same temporal plane. This suggestion that I put forward is largely brought to the fore and underpinned by the blurring and conflation of two predominant cultural imaginaries of dementia in cinema, of which both play important roles in the process of narrativising dementia: hallucination and confabulation. Hallucination can be briefly understood as having a sensory experience in the public space that others cannot experience. On the other hand, confabulation, in medical literature, is broadly defined as the subject incorrectly narrativising the past, present and future worlds around them due to certain faults/distortions of memory. For many medical researchers, the act of confabulation is not seen as conforming to linear chronology and is thus subjected to a medical gaze.

However, Linda Örulv and Lar-Christer Hydén, in observing the interaction of people living with dementia in a care-home setting, note that rather than seeing confabulation as an act of (unwitting) distortion, it could be understood as a ‘result of an active and creative meaning-making or sense-making process’ (Örulv and Hydén 2006: 649; emphasis in original). The person living with dementia, moving in and out of sync with clock time, attempts to make sense of the world around them by narrating their
confabulated life experiences in a manner that is as linear as possible. In turn, the act of confabulation achieves three things: first, it allows the person living with dementia to make sense ‘of the current situation by organizing one’s experiences according to a plot within the scope of a storyline that is familiar’; second, it is important to help one preserve and perform a sense of self ‘that is consistent with one’s life history and thus has some stability’; and, third, the act of confabulation should not be de-contextualised and seen as the enterprise of a single person, for confabulation as world-building requires an interaction with the people and things in the world around the person living with dementia (Örulv and Hydén 2006: 668). In essence, confabulation (and self-narrativisation) is, to a certain extent, a form of creative practice where something new and future is created.

In films about dementia, there is often a conflation of the two symptoms. In Memories of Tomorrow, Masayuki’s confabulated hallucinations are often born out of the surfacing of his buried memories, secrets, guilt, and anxieties, as he attempts to negotiate alien environments that he does not necessarily recognise in the present-tense, as his wife appears before him to chide him for cheating during his work trips just as he resigns from his job. Because Masayuki’s ability to recollect is diminished, the connection between his past and present is made loose and, as Deleuze would describe it, he is literally sinking back into the past, or emerging from it, so as to ‘make visible what is concealed even from recollection’ (Deleuze 2013b: xi). Here, at this very particular moment, through the confabulation/hallucination, the virtual past is brought into the actual in the present tense.
This act of confabulation/hallucination is also seen in *Memoir of a Murderer*, as Byeong-soo interacts and communicates with his sister, Maria, who is revealed to have committed suicide many years before the narrative of the film. Despite her having died during her teenage years, Maria, as experienced by Byeong-soo, is an adult nun who now lives in a convent. The audience is first introduced to Maria as Byeong-soo visits her at the nunnery. As he enters and sits himself on a bench eating his lunch in the foreground of the shot, the audience sees Maria’s back in the background of the shot as she hangs up the laundry. She asks Byeong-soo where her niece is and the film cuts to a reverse shot of her, showing the audience her face whilst she is doing her chores. Neither Maria nor Byeong-soo face each other and the audience is shown a series of shot/reverse shots, as Maria continues to put up the laundry. Byeong-soo reveals to his sister that he is considering checking himself into a care home because he has dementia and this announcement catches Maria by surprise. The film cuts to a shot of her as she, still, closes her eyes and registers a look of despair on her face. She makes the sign of the cross and stifles a cry, unable to verbalise herself in this moment. Then, Byeong-soo turns his head slightly, notices that Maria is crying, takes the cue and decides to leave.

Maria, who is revealed to be Byeong-soo’s confabulation/hallucination further down the narrative, largely exists in relation to her brother, for Byeong-soo continues to remain in the mise-en-scène despite Maria being the focus of the shot, suggesting that her presence is strongly predicated on having Byeong-soo in the frame. Their interaction is predominantly verbal and even when Maria is crying in silence, Byeong-soo still turns his head.
slightly to observe her; his confabulation/hallucination is not just sight, but also sound (in a later scene, this even extends to touch as Maria hugs Byeong-soo to comfort him). Byeong-soo is unaware that Maria is no longer alive and continues to narrate her presence into his lifestory. Yet, in cutting to a shot of Maria making the cross and crying in complete silence before Byeong-soo turns his head to take in the situation, the audience is offered a potential insight into Maria that appears to be not reliant on any sensory interaction/engagement with Byeong-soo, as Maria is allowed to emote independently from her brother (though this moment might still be read as a projection of Byeong-soo). Nonetheless, in this moment, Maria is actual and Maria is virtual; in being both actual and virtual at the same time, she becomes a crystal-image, which, for Deleuze, is ‘the point of indiscernibility of the two distinct images, the actual and the virtual, while what we see in the crystal is time itself, a bit of time in the pure state’ (Deleuze 2013b: 85).

Here, both *Memories of Tomorrow* and *Memoir of a Murderer*, with the use of confabulation/hallucination as a formal and narrative approach, pose questions to the ways in which one might understand and narrate their lifestories and the lifestories of people living with dementia. According to Angela Woods, in medical humanities scholarship, ‘narrative is understood to provide privileged access to the subjective experience of illness’ and is frequently used by the person living with illness to express their ‘changing sense of self and identity, explore new social roles and gain membership of new communities’ (Woods 2011: 73). Woods takes a conservative approach and thinks of narrative as ‘a specific form of primarily linguistic expression’, cautioning against the inclusion of ‘virtually all forms of creative self-
expression’ under this umbrella of “narrative” (Woods 2011: 74). For Woods, thus, there is a need to move beyond the narrative and consider other non-narrative approaches like metaphor, phenomenology and photography. These three approaches, Woods maintains, do not count as narrative as they ‘do not take storytelling as the starting-point or telos’ (Woods 2011: 76).

Figure 8: Maria silently crying in *Memoir of a Murderer*

Scholars like William King (1992) would perhaps question Woods’s suggestion that photography is not narrative or that photography does not take narrative as its starting point. Medical researchers might also question her premise that narrative is specifically a form of linguistic expression because this mode of thinking significantly affects people living with dementia as progressive aphasia, the gradual loss of language, is a possible outcome of living with dementia. In this chapter, however, I want to focus on
Claire Charlotte McKechnie’s response to Woods, as she suggests that narrative should be thought of in terms of a relationship or a set of relationships between two different worlds, and that ‘through reception of the medium, the recipient will make meaning by using narrative’ (McKechnie 2014: 120). Explicit in McKechnie’s suggestion is the notion of creation, of making, as an intricate part of narrativisation, and, for McKechnie, every time ‘we make an effort to produce an expression of suffering’ – in whatever means available to us – ‘we demand a cognitive engagement that requires the ordering information into narratives [sic]’ (McKechnie 2014: 123).

In following McKechnie, I think there is merit in moving to think about narratives beyond the purely linguistic – the literary and oratory approaches – to include a more considered examination of time and temporality. In thinking about narrative as the intermingling of different worlds, we can begin to think of the process of narrativisation as the negotiation between multiple temporal identifications, where the virtual is actualised into the actual, and the actual is negotiated in relation to another actual (and their corresponding virtual intensities). In other words, the process of narrativisation is deeply embedded in the politics of time, where information is required to be arranged in a temporal order so as to make meaning.

My proposal draws from Mark Currie’s observation that time ‘is a universal feature of narrative’ (Currie 2007: 2). It also draws from Paul Ricoeur’s proposal that ‘time becomes human to the extent that it is articulated through a narrative mode, and narrative attains its full meaning when it becomes a condition of temporal existence’ (Ricoeur 1984: 52). The circularity of the argument – the way we think about time affects the way we
think about narrative and the way we think about narrative also affects the way we think about time – works to further the imbricated nature of identification and narrative, where the ways in which one’s lifestory is temporally narrativised furthers our understanding of one’s temporal identification, and vice versa. In studying the shape of dementia narratives and teasing out the ways in which events and information are arranged in a temporal order, we become aware of what Jens Brockmeier describes as a process of temporalisation, which in turn challenges the understanding that the ways in which we order events “in time” is ‘a given natural kind’ (Brockmeier 2014: 82).

For Brockmeier, when we acknowledge that empty, homogeneous time is the predominant way that ‘we think and organize our experiences’ and ‘not as a given condition under which we live’, when we are aware of the process of temporalisation, we are offered the potential to move beyond looking at how we ‘localize ourselves “in time”’ to thinking about how we ‘localize ourselves in meaningful contexts by – possibly – using temporal assumptions and constructions’ (Brockmeier 2014: 82). Writing specifically about dementia, Brockmeier argues that the incessant focus on memory and the declining cognitive functions of people living with dementia alongside the personal and (auto)biographical in everyday culture is myopic. This is because the traditional and dominant medical model towards memory and dementia treats memory as a closed-off entity that can not only be measured in a systematic and scientific way but is also the fundamental building block of one’s (auto)biography; or, to put it another way: no memories of the past, no identification in the present (Brockmeier 2014: 70 – 74). This medical
model, Brockmeier avers, rests on the presumption that our lifestories have to be structured in a linear and chronological manner, and that any blip in memory would mean that the present identification cannot be properly narrated. Thus, when Freeman suggests that people living with dementia are shorn of narrative (and consequently time), there is an implication that this is because people living with dementia do not follow the hegemonic linear way of temporalisation.

But, as I have argued throughout the thesis, one’s temporal identification – and one’s lifestory – does not just correspond to either linear or non-linear times and temporalities. It is a complex process of temporal negotiations that is always in a state of change and becoming. Filmic narratives of dementia, in aligning with Brockmeier, provide the opportunity to think further about the narrative complexities underneath the performances of time that form the crux of the thesis, not least because all these different times and temporalities are brought to the fore of our attention. As my analyses of Memories of Tomorrow and Memoir of a Murderer suggest, the movement towards thinking about narrative and lifestories in all its complexities requires a break from the strict chronology to something that embraces all kinds of approaches towards time and temporality, where Maria’s presence in the present, as both virtual and actual, is both because of Byeong-soo’s non-linearity and his attempt to make his lifestory linear, of him performing time and performed by time.

For Simon Biggs, this effort to fracture the dominance of empty, homogenous time in the structuring of our everyday life is ill-considered. He writes:
The lifecourse, as a subject of inquiry, is inevitably temporally embedded and must be added to questions of social connect if later life is to be more fully understood. Temporal location is a key aspect of aging’s originality, its specialness as a lifecourse experience, a source of potential opposition to social norms and helps define its significant horizon. Memory and a connection to the past form a grounding for the self in an uncertain world, a reservoir to draw on for future judgement and an alternative basis on which to make a stand (Biggs 1999: 216).

Biggs goes even further and rejects postmodern approaches towards narrative, suggesting that the fracturing of narratives and, in turn, identities can be compared to ‘a sort of Stalinism for the postmodern mind: a denial of the past as an anchor, as a source of embeddedness for authentic identity’ (Biggs 1999: 218). Leaving aside Biggs’s claim for there to be an ‘authentic identity’, a notion which Deleuze rigorously rejected, and a claim which Aleida Assmann (2012) has described as a mark of ‘Western exceptionalism’, Biggs’s suggestion poses significant challenges for understanding the lives and experiences of people living with dementia, who do not necessarily remember and anchor their lifecourse through grounded memories or a seemingly “objective” past.

In response, Amelia DeFalco puts forward an understanding of identifications that embraces a ‘belief in multiplicity, in various, even contradictory selves’ that ‘makes selfhood possible without risking a plunge into the reductive dualism of inner and outer identity, of true cores and social masks’ (DeFalco 2010: 29). According to DeFalco, this narrativisation of multiple intersecting identifications – of ‘flux, contradiction, and ambivalence’ – works the best when the subject becomes increasingly aware that they are
‘subjects of time’, as time serves as a bridge to breach the divide between the postmodern, discursive subject and their lived experiences in time (DeFalco 2010: 29). For DeFalco, ‘narratives of dementia are unavoidably collaborative’ (DeFalco 2010: 59). Drawing from Emmanuel Levinas, DeFalco argues that dementia forces the person living with dementia and their responsive witnesses into a Levinasian interaction that subordinates the experiences of the witnesses in relation to the experiences of people living with dementia. In turn, DeFalco proposes, this interaction furthers the sense of uncanniness, where the person living with dementia’s ‘deteriorated memory produces a frightening strangeness’, and where the witnesses also ‘comes to recognize [their] own otherness in the process of collaborating with the afflicted’ (DeFalco 2010: 60). In other words, for DeFalco, the construction of narratives is increasingly based on a looser approach to the past, where the multiple pasts from both the person living with dementia and the person not living with dementia are put into negotiation and brought/surfaced/bubbled into the present.

In this chapter, I want to suggest that the proposals put forward by Biggs and DeFalco run into significant conceptual difficulties when the formal and narrative properties of films about dementia are taken into careful consideration, where the actual present tense of both films are not always linked to the past in a manner as described by either Biggs or DeFalco. The presence of Maria in Memoir of a Murderer, for instance, raises a few questions on the over-reliance of the past in the process of narrativisation. Maria, as discussed, is a crystal-image of time. Yet, the Maria that exists in the film who is an adult nun does not directly correlate to an image of the
past because it is revealed that she killed herself in her teenage years; here, Maria is an invented image from the future, and Byeong-soo’s present is more oriented by the future than by the past per se (I will return to nuance this proposition in a little bit). Therefore, the frameworks put forward by Biggs and DeFalco are not able to adequately explain the presence of Maria and her relationship to Byeong-soo’s lifestory and narrative present.

This chapter seeks to develop a framework that is able to account for, beyond that of continuation, the process of making – of creating – that is implicit in and integral to the process of narrativisation. To do so, I return to Deleuze, who puts forward three types of passive syntheses of time that actualise the virtual into the actual present. The first two syntheses of time draw heavily from Bergson. The first synthesis of time proposes that the past is contracted in the present through the habitual recognition of our body and our soul, where we will expect a clock tick- tocking to continue to tick and tock. Habit, for Deleuze, ‘constitutes our expectation that “it” will continue, that one of the two elements will appear after the other, thereby assuring the perpetuation of our case’ (Deleuze 1994: 74; emphasis in original). The first synthesis of time, therefore, can be understood as a rather straightforward linear connection between the past and the present that ‘constitutes time as a present, but a present which passes’ (Deleuze 1994: 79). This understanding of time coming into the present can be seen articulated in Biggs’s argument, where the suggestion is that the present needs to be rooted and connected to a very immediate and grounded past, and where the past can be actively brought up into the present through active recollection on top of the passive habitual processes. As I will explain more
in Chapter Four, this synthesis of time corresponds to what Deleuze terms
the movement-image; crudely put for now, movement-image narratives are
primarily linear and are advanced through movement and motion.

The second passive synthesis is significantly more complicated, and
is related to that of memory. For Deleuze and Bergson, the past is not
constituted after the present passes; it is the other way instead. To explain
this, Deleuze discusses the four paradoxes of the relationship between the
past and the present. First, if a new present needs to arrive before the
current present can pass into the past, then there will never be any new
presents because the current present does not have a reason for it to pass.
Therefore, for Deleuze, there must be a past that is contemporaneous with
the present so that the present can pass (rather than waiting for a new
present to appear before the current present can pass). For Deleuze, this is
the first paradox: ‘the contemporaneity of the past with the present that it
was’ (Deleuze 1994: 81; emphasis in original). But, for the present to
continuously pass as a flow and not a series of individual moments, this past
must not be accompanied with only specific points of the present but across
the entirety of the present as it passes. This is Deleuze’s second paradox:
‘the paradox of coexistence’ (Deleuze 1994: 81).

Thirdly, for the past to be contemporaneous with the present, it cannot
be a by-product of the present passing; it must exist before the present does
so that the present can pass into it. For Deleuze, this is the ‘paradox of pre-
existence’, where an a priori past exists (Deleuze 1994: 82). Lastly, building
on from the second and third paradoxes, if the past coexists with the present
and also pre-exists the present, then the past is not dependent on the
present to exist. The second synthesis of time corresponds directly to Bergson’s inverted cone of memory (see Figure 9) where the past (AB) itself is a dynamic interplay of virtualities ‘in an infinity of diverse degrees of relaxation and contraction at an infinity of levels’ and the present (S) is in turn understood as ‘the most contracted degree of the past’ (Deleuze 1994: 83).

Unlike the first synthesis of time, where a series of distinct elements of the past (tick tock tick tock) is contracted and synthesised in the present, the second synthesis of time can be understood as a contraction of the whole of the past in the present – more of an involuntary memory rather than an active recollection. This synthesis of time corresponds to Deleuze’s time-image, which narratives, again simply described for now, are advanced less predominantly through movement but more through different versions of the pasts and dreamscapes. This understanding of the past can be seen articulated in DeFalco’s argument, where a wider past is shared by both the person living with dementia and the person not living with dementia, and where different pasts interplay and are synthesised into the actual.

![Figure 9: Bergson's inverted cone of memory](image)
However, the presence of Maria in *Memoir of a Murderer* complicates this argument slightly as she, if we were to put her on a temporal plane, belongs to the realm of an invented future where her presence in Byeong-soo’s lifestory is neither that of the past being contracted in the present nor the whole of the pure past surfacing in the present. To work through the nuances of Maria’s role in complicating the approaches towards narrativization as proposed by Biggs and DeFalco, I turn to an in-depth discussion of two particular moments in *Memoir of a Murderer* so as to demonstrate how Maria’s presence can be understood as the past *returning differently*. In turn, this argument about Byeong-soo’s narrativization of Maria vis-à-vis his surrounding world offers an alternative way of thinking about the lifestories of the person living with dementia as that of continued change and creation.

In the first moment, Byeong-soo wakes up and, in a moment of extreme panic and concern for his daughter Eun-hee, rushes out into the living room where he finds Maria holding a tray of food waiting to serve breakfast for the family. Byeong-soo immediately hurries into Eun-hee’s room and drags her out of bed, asking her to live in the nunnery with his aunt for a bit so as to ensure her safety. The film then cuts to a shot of Byeong-soo running out of the house with Eun-hee’s suitcase and clothes. As he runs out of the shot, Eun-hee runs into the frame and, at this moment, the camera lingers on her as she looks on, confused and concerned. The film then cuts to a reverse-shot from over Eun-hee’s shoulder, as the audience is shown what she sees. In the background of the shot is a black taxi.
driver, in a blue shirt and black waistcoat, closes the boot of his car and walks towards the driver’s seat. At this moment, Maria stands right beside the passenger’s door and silently overlooks the whole situation.

Figure 10: Eun-hee’s view in *Memoir of a Murderer*

Byeong-soo then runs back towards Eun-hee and drags her towards the car. Just before she enters the car, Eun-hee protests and says, “appa”, calling her father in the hopes of changing her mind. He pushes his daughter into the car, closes the door and throws her scarf in through the taxi’s window. Maria opens the front door and enters the taxi. Before she closes the door, Byeong-soo looks directly into her and asks her to take care of her niece for a few days. The film cuts to a reverse-shot of Maria looking back at Byeong-soo, again not saying a word, as he closes the door. Upon which, the taxi driver drives off, leaving Byeong-soo alone as he proceeds to
complete his “one last task”, to kill Tae-joo, the person whom he has been pursuing throughout the whole film.

In having the camera linger on Eun-hee looking out of the frame at her father before cutting to a reverse-shot from behind Eun-hee’s shoulder, the sequence is filmed and edited in a way to not only show the audience Byeong-soo’s perspective but also Eun-hee’s. She is sharing the world and narrative with Byeong-soo, and, in that moment, the taxi, the taxi driver and Maria are all there for both father and daughter. However, later on in the film, Byeong-soo discovers a clip of his daughter voicing her support and belief in him in his digital voice recorder. Registering something, Byeong-soo runs out of the house attempting to get a taxi. As he opens the door and exits the house, the film cuts to a shot from a different scene – seemingly from the scene discussed above – of Byeong-soo dragging Eun-hoo towards a vehicle. Almost immediately, the film cuts back to Byeong-soo walking out to the streets calling for a taxi. As he mutters for a taxi, the film cuts to another shot of Byeong-soo pushing Eun-hoo into the black taxi before cutting back to the present moment. Once again, as Byeong-soo looks around for a taxi, the film cuts to a shot of him talking to Maria in the black car asking her to take care of her niece for a few days. However, in this shot, whilst the taxi is still black and the driver is still the taxi driver, Maria is not actually in the shot at all; rather Byeong-soo is shown looking at an empty space in the passenger seat, talking to his confabulated and hallucinated sister.

The film proceeds to cut back to the present-day Byeong-soo, who is uttering the number eight repeatedly, ostensibly trying to recall the number to call a taxi. As he does so, the film intercuts Byeong-soo’s attempt to
remember with out-of-focused shots of a car plate that slowly pull into focus, revealing the car plate licence number to be 8588. The film cuts back to present-day Byeong-soo as he stops and comes to a standstill, left eye twitching and hands clasping his head, realising and/or registering something different. The film’s score, consisting of string instruments played at an increasingly frantic pace, pauses momentarily as the film cuts to a shot of a silver car. At this moment, Tae-joo exits the car and asks Byeong-soo whether he has called for a taxi; as he does so, the score continues, emphatically imbuing Tae-joo’s entrance with a sense of revelation.

The not-present day Byeong-soo then walks to the car boot and puts the suitcase in. He pushes Eun-hee into the car and puts her scarf into the vehicle. Eun-hee, on the other hand, asks Tae-joo why he is there and proceeds to protest with her father, insisting that she does not want to leave the house. She tries to leave the car but is pushed back by her father. As that discussion occurs, the camera, positioned inside the car in the back seat, pans left to Tae-joo in the driver seat who asks Eun-hee to “pretend” and to “play along” with his father’s whims. The film then cuts to a shot of Byeong-soo speaking to the empty seat in Tae-joo’s car – to Maria – telling her to look after Eun-hee for a few days. Next, the film cuts to a mid-shot from over Byeong-soo’s shoulders to show Tae-joo looking sinisterly at Byeong-soo, who closes the door. As that happens, the film cuts to a shot of Tae-joo’s face in the car’s rear-view mirror as he registers a subtle smile on his face. Finally, the scene ends as the film cuts back to present-day Byeong-soo as he continues to mutter 8588.
This is a complex sequence of events with multiple temporalities in negotiation. Seen from Biggs’s argument, this sequence might be read as a foreclosure of Byeong-soo’s ability to narrativise his lifestory, as he is losing his cognitive functions to a point where he is unable to make sense of the world around him, hallucinating the presence of Maria and mistaking Tae-joo to be a completely different person, to be a taxi driver. In turn, the ability of Byeong-soo to protect – let alone be independent of – his daughter is brought into question. Filtered through DeFalco’s proposal, the sequence could be read as a continuation of Byeong-soo’s lifestory, as the number eight that he repeatedly mutters triggers a Proustian surfacing of a past, a suppressed/forgotten/misremembered memory, allowing him to realise that he might have put his daughter in harm’s way.

Both readings are grounded on the assumption that this sequence is constructed to be read as Byeong-soo’s flashback that relies heavily on the audience’s knowledge and recollection of a prior scene where Byeong-soo urgently pushes Eun-hee into a taxi. A flashback, for Maureen Turim, in the most general sense, ‘is understood as representing temporal occurrences anterior to those in the images that preceded it’ (Turim 1989: 1). For Nitzan Ben Shaul, this rather direct interplay between the cataphora (early cues) and anaphora (the later recall of these cues), where the present-day Byeong-soo’s lifestory is intercut with his flashbacks, can be understood as a way to narratively ‘narrow down and block ingrained options so as to impart an apparent sense that the chain of events was predetermined’ (Ben Shaul 2012: 41). Namely, because of the straightforward link between the past and present images through understanding the sequence as Byeong-soo’s
flashback, there is only one way to understand Byeong-soo’s dementia in *Memoir of a Murderer* because all other options have been cut off by the film’s formal and narrative properties – Byeong-soo’s dementia will ultimately cause the foreclosure of his narrative and lifestory as he no longer is able to remember or continue to remember.

But, as I have proposed earlier, due to the film’s cinematography and editing pattern, the earlier scene where Byeong-soo pushes Eun-hee into the taxi does not demarcate the diegesis to only the world of Byeong-soo but is instead a world that is shared and experienced by both father and daughter. Put another way, like Tae-joo’s suggestion to just “play along” (ignoring the derogatory connotation of the phrase), both father and daughter are involved in the process of shared world-building and creation. Through the interaction with Maria’s presence, their temporalities continue to entangle as they co-narrativise a lifestory that is oriented by a sense of futurity. In this sense, reading the later sequence as Byeong-soo’s flashback ignores the nuances of the shared world that is created by both Eun-hee and her father.

Moreover, positioning the later sequence as that of Byeong-soo’s flashback also runs into problems, again due to the film’s cinematography and editing pattern. As Byeong-soo closes the front of Tae-joo’s car after talking to Maria, the film cuts to a shot of Tae-joo’s reflection in a rear-view mirror. If we read this image as Byeong-soo’s flashback, then the inclusion of this shot would make little sense because of two reasons. Firstly, Byeong-soo has already closed the door and stepped away from the car. Secondly, the shot is captured from inside the car, from the back seat, from Eun-hee’s
point of view. The moment, however, is also clearly not Eun-hee’s flashback because she is not present in the later scene – only Byeong-soo is.

![Figure 11: The mirror from Eun-hee’s viewpoint in Memoir of a Murderer](image)

There is, therefore, an impossibility of positions and temporalities in this instance: the cut-away shots of the past do not belong to Byeong-soo’s flashback due to the presence of shots that do not come from his viewpoints; this is also not Eun-hee’s flashback despite the privileged shot of Tae-joo’s face in the rear-view mirror coming from her point of view; Maria, the taxi and the taxi driver are not merely a confabulated hallucination of Byeong-soo’s but belong to a world that is also shared and co-created by his daughter; and the past images that return keep changing, keep coming back differently (Eun-hee protests more in one instance than the other, and Byeong-soo
throws the scarf in through the window in one past whilst putting the scarf in the car before he closes the door in another, just to name a few).

How, then, might we understand this sequence in relation to Byeong-soo’s (and Eun-hee’s) lifestory? To do so, I turn to an elaboration of Deleuze’s third synthesis of time. For Deleuze, the first two syntheses of time (habit and memory) would only lead to a repetition where nothing changes, where the past contracts in the present and the past is surfaced into the present again. There is a circularity that does not account for the possibility of change in the future or of something new. Yet, clearly, things do change, and newness does get actualised. To explain this process of change, Deleuze introduces the third synthesis of time, which he describes as ‘time out of joint’ or, more fittingly for the purpose of this thesis, ‘demented time’ (Deleuze 1994: 88). For Deleuze, the third synthesis of time introduces a caesura, a cut, a moment ‘at which the fracture appears’, that breaks the link between the past and the present (Deleuze 1994: 89). Once cut, time unfolds; it is made linear no longer subordinated to movement (where time is measured by the cyclical movement of the hands on the face of a clock, for example). Through the caesura, time before and after is assembled and ordered, where certain portions of the past are consigned to the past forever and not return whereas other parts of the past get brought along into the future. Consequently, the possibility of change and creation happens.

Drawing from Fredrich Nietzsche, Deleuze argues that demented time, the third synthesis of time, is ‘the repetition of the future as eternal return’ where time is both linear and cyclical (Deleuze 1994: 90). Deleuze writes:
The eternal return is a force of affirmation, but it affirms everything of the multiple, everything of the different, everything of chance except what subordinates them to the One, to the Same, to necessity, every except the One, the Same and the Necessary (Deleuze 1994: 115; emphasis in original).

As I have suggested, Deleuze’s philosophy of difference is based on affirmation and not negation. If something is thought of in terms of the Same, then an Idea is reduced to a fixed, unchanging identity, where people and things will be treated as separate entities that are not entangled. According to Deleuze, if it is the same that repeatedly returns, then nothing will change, and life would become rather nihilistically pointless. Contrarily, Deleuze avers, it is not sameness that returns but instead difference and difference in itself. The eternal return, exemplified by the third synthesis of time, is in other words the death of sameness, where death, Deleuze argues, ‘is present in the living in the form of a subjective and differenciated experience’ (Deleuze 1994: 112). That is to say, the process of becoming, the process of change, is the dying of fixed ideas. What returns instead is difference in itself – the virtual – that is in turn negotiated differently to form the new. Through the caesura, the dramatic event, time is cut, assembled and reordered. Difference in itself returns and portions of the past are left behind.

Here, I suggest that Deleuze’s third synthesis of time, that which is focused on change and creation, is a useful way in to think about the shape of dementia narratives and the ways in which the temporalities experienced by people living with dementia are entangled with the temporalities of people not living with dementia. In Memoir of a Murderer, for example, Byeong-soo confabulates and hallucinates the continued existence of Maria into his
lifestory despite her having committed suicide years ago. In turn, Eun-hee performs and is performed by Byeong-soo’s world-building, by the (non-)existence of Maria. Her lifestory and temporal identification becomes entangled and negotiated with her father’s, and the presence of Maria becomes a caesura, a dramatic event, that cuts their past from their present.

Consequently, as the temporalities of both Byeong-soo and Eun-hee are cut, assembled and ordered, sameness and fixed ideas in the present pass away – die – whilst difference in itself returns in a different formulation. Everything is forgotten and remembered differently. As Byeong-soo runs out of his house trying to call for a taxi, the barrage of images that return that come from both his and his daughter’s viewpoints can in turn be understood as the eternal return of difference, as multiple virtual intensities coming back to negotiate with one another differently, creating the potential of a different future to be actualised – not just for Byeong-soo but also for Eun-hee and everyone in and out of the film. As the film’s narrative progresses, Byeong-soo’s moment of recognition afforded by the eternal return of difference changes the narrative trajectories of all the characters in the film and the ways in which the audience might have understood the film thus far: Tae-joo is thrust deeper into the realm of the villainous as the audience is encouraged to think that he has kidnapped Eun-hee; Byeong-soo calls his police friend Byeong-man, who then goes off to find Tae-joo, subsequently getting murdered; Eun-hee, in partaking in the world-building with Byeong-soo, is put in harm’s way and ends up almost killed in an abandoned house; and, lastly, Byeong-soo is momentarily moved into the realm of vindication, as his perceived suspicions about Tae-joo appear to become completely
correct. Understood from this viewpoint, through Deleuze’s third synthesis of time, the person living with dementia’s narrative is no longer one of foreclosure and decline but that of creation, where the complexities of change and becoming are embraced and accounted for, and where the lifestory of a person living with dementia is entangled with the lifestories of everyone else through that of difference.

This argument regarding *Memoir of a Murderer* is further underpinned by the respective endings of both the theatrical and director’s cut of the film. In the theatrical cut, after Byeong-soo has successfully killed Tae-joo, the film ends with Byeong-soo stepping out of a dark tunnel into a landscape of snowy nothingness, just like the opening sequence of the film. His left eye starts to twitch and the sounds of people screaming enter the film’s score. He reaches into his pocket and takes out a pendant with the face of Tae-joo on it. The film cuts to a mid-shot of Byeong-soo looking up straight ahead. Next, the film cuts to a reverse shot of Tae-joo standing there in the landscape of nothingness looking back at Byeong-soo. Then, the film cuts to an extreme wide-angle shot – this time round, only Byeong-soo is in the frame and Tae-joo is no longer in the landscape. Subsequently, the film cuts back to a close-up shot of Tae-joo looking at Byeong-soo, smiling sinisterly at him. Ultimately, the film cuts to a final reverse shot of Byeong-soo continuing to look ahead with his eyes twitching as his voice-over enters the film, asking the audience to not trust their memories. Rather straightforwardly, the film’s ending extends the opening sequence of *Memoir of a Murderer* and continues on with Byeong-soo’s narrative, as Tae-joo becomes the new Maria, as he is both here and not here, as the new act of confabulated
hallucination opens up the possibility of further narrative developments into Byeong-soo’s future.

More complicated, perhaps, is the ending sequence of the director’s cut of *Memoir of a Murderer*. After Byeong-soo seems to have successfully killed Tae-joo, he is put under questioning by the police, who wants to know how Tae-joo’s body has gone missing. Unable to extract a coherent answer from Byeong-soo, the police releases him. The film cuts to Byeong-soo stepping out of a tunnel into a landscape of snowy nothingness, just like above. His eyes start to twitch and, as that happens, a series of images from throughout the film return through a montage sequence. This time, however, instead of framing Tae-joo as the murderer and Byeong-soo as the pursuer of truth, both characters occupy the opposite positions in the montage: Byeong-soo is now the murderer and Tae-joo is now the person trying to pin down the former’s crime. By the end of the montage, the film cuts back to a close-up shot of Byeong-soo smiling sinisterly to himself as his voice-over enters the film, asking the audience to not trust their memories. Whereas the theatrical cut introduces Byeong-soo’s new confabulated hallucination as the beginning of a new creation and line of flight, the director’s cut goes beyond that and allows the eternal return of difference in itself. By the end of the film, not only Byeong-soo is unsure of whether he has committed the crime but the audience is also encouraged to question whether it is Byeong-soo or Tae-joo who is the murderer. Consequently, Byeong-soo’s continued narrativisation for the future becomes a formal device to further engender a sense of thrill and mystery to the film’s atmosphere as the audience is now invited to think of the person living with dementia in *Memoir of a Murderer* as
either the victim or the perpetuator, as the audience is given an insight into the multiple and diverse narrative trajectories that Byeong-soo can traverse, as the different worlds of the protagonist are surfaced.

**Sharing the World Differently**

In comparison to Martina Zimmermann (2017) and Marlene Goldman (2017), this chapter is less concerned in the ways in which the narratives of people living with dementia lead to negative or positive discourses of dementia. Rather, the chapter is more interested in the process of narrativisation and the temporal performances involved in the continued creation and entanglement of lifestories between people living with dementia and people not living with dementia, appealing itself to recent social sciences research about the future outlooks of people living with dementia, where people living with dementia do not all think of their future as that of lack and decline but ‘is something that is fluid and changing’ (Ashworth 2019: 18). Here, it bears to note that advocating for a continued creation of narratives does not propel my argument into a good/bad binary that the thesis is trying to move beyond – the narratives and lifestories that are created can be positive or negative, affectively happy or sorry. What is at stake here, instead, is the possibility for a more nuanced form of empathetic engagement between multiple individuals.

Empathy, Anne Whitehead argues, is often understood by many as ‘an attribute that needs to be cultivated’ so as to help understand the other person better (Whitehead 2017: 7). For Whitehead, in thinking about empathy as a ‘model of perspective taking’, boundaries and binaries are
continued to be set up so as to be crossed (Whitehead 2017: 9). A perspective taking model of empathy, for instance, might mean that a person not living with dementia needs to be able to cultivate a sense of empathy so as to understand a person not living with dementia; the reverse, however, where a person not living with dementia has to empathise with the experiences of a person living with dementia, does not quite work for this kind of approach. Put differently, this understanding of empathy relies on a perpetuation of prevailing power structures so as to function effectively.

Furthermore, as Matthew Ratcliffe explains, this kind of empathy assumes ‘that both parties find themselves in the same world’ (Ratcliffe 2012: 478; emphasis in original). This is to say that the perspective-taking approach insists on trying to find similarities between groups of people, and to find common viewpoints so that empathy can happen. In contrast to this form of empathy, Ratcliffe puts forward an account of – as he describes it – radical empathy, which acknowledges that everyone undergoes ‘shifts in the form of experience from time to time’ (Ratcliffe 2012: 486). Radical empathy, for Ratcliffe, ‘is a way of engaging with others’ experiences that involves suspending the usual assumption that both parties share the same modal space’ (Ratcliffe 2012: 483). Rather, it is an account of empathy ‘that can encompass how we relate differently and variously to our world in common’ (Whitehead 2017: 9; emphasis in original). Radical empathy, hence, is a kind of empathy that celebrates differences rather than sameness. To empathise with the other is to come to realise and understand how another person understands the world differently and that this sense of difference is underpinned by the complexities of change and becoming.
Where empathy in relation to dementia is concerned, this would mean understanding the shapes of narratives for both people living with dementia and people not living with dementia through a framework of change and difference so as to recognise the entangled temporalities that perform and are performed by each individual. As I maintained earlier in this chapter, the opening sequences of both *Memories of Tomorrow* and *Memoir of a Murderer* do not necessarily determine the narrative trajectories of the characters as that of decline but surface the potentiality of change and difference. Here, in the final section of the chapter, I analyse the concluding scenes of *Memories of Tomorrow* in order to forward this argument in relation to radical empathy.

Towards the end of *Memories of Tomorrow*, Masayuki hallucinates the presence of the younger version of his wife, Emiko. He follows her and wanders into the forest. Throughout the sequence, a haunting low reverberation enters the film’s score whenever the younger Emiko is in the frame; when the spectre Emiko is not in the frame, the reverberation cuts off, leaving only the natural sounds of the forest in the diegesis. As he wanders deeper into the forest, he comes to where Masayuki and Emiko used to attend pottery classes decades ago when they were still courting. The area is now desolate and crumbling. Masayuki looks around the area and realises that there is no one around. He comes to a standstill and turns his head towards an area. As that happens, the haunting sound fades into the score and the film cuts to a shot of a table with lots of pottery tools on it. The film then cuts to a shot of Masayuki sat at the area making a cup. The camera tracks left as he continues to etch the design into the cup whilst, out from the
frame, Emiko is telling Masayuki the origins of her name. Slowly, Masayuki pauses and looks towards his left. Simultaneously, the camera continues tracking to reveal the younger Emiko sat there talking to Masayuki.

The film cuts to another shot of Masayuki looking and talking to his hallucination. Emiko is sat in the foreground of the frame with her back facing against the camera. The haunting reverberation continues to permeate the score as, suddenly, a sound from off-screen enters, calling Masayuki’s attention. The film cuts to a close-up of Masayuki looking up – sans Emiko – realising that there is someone. As that happens, the reverberation slowly fades away, leaving only the sounds of crickets chirping in the forest. Then, the film cuts to a reverse shot, revealing the person to be an older version of Masayuki’s pottery teacher, who insists on knowing who Masayuki is, claiming that Masayuki is from the nursing home trying to get him back into care. The pottery teacher notices that Masayuki has made a cup and, together, both of them work to fire the cup.

The entrance and presence of the older pottery teacher is interesting. Even though the communication and interaction between Masayuki and the older pottery teacher appears, on the surface, to not be a hallucination as the haunting sound has faded away, the subtleties of the film’s form would suggest otherwise. The audience is first introduced to the pottery teacher not through a shot of his face but, rather, through a shot of Masayuki looking up. In the shot, spectre Emiko is still present in the foreground and the haunting reverberation continues. Unlike the previous moments where the haunting sound cuts out when Masayuki is in the “real” world of the forest, the reverberation fades off. In addition, before cutting to a shot of the older
pottery teacher, the film cuts first to a close-up shot showing Masayuki’s recognition and reaction, taking the audience further into his subjective space before cutting to the reverse shot of what he is seeing. The entrance of the older pottery teacher through the delayed reverse-shot, therefore, suggests that he is not necessarily not a hallucination, imbuing his presence with a sense of hesitancy that I discuss in the next chapter.

Figure 12: Young Emiko in the foreground of *Memories of Tomorrow*

In addition, the older pottery teacher is semiotically coded to live with dementia for he has escaped the nursing home and wandered into the forest, into his previous work area. He is physically and verbally aggressive and is also unable to recognise Masayuki, claiming that Masayuki is from the nursing home despite being told otherwise. If the presence of the pottery teacher is coded to be something more fantastic, more of a hallucination (or
not), the characterisation of the older pottery teacher as a man who lives with dementia and has just escaped the nursing home because it is too dreary takes on an added dimension: Masayuki not only lives with dementia but has, just prior to wandering into the woods, visited a nursing home to potentially check himself into care. Understood from this viewpoint, the older pottery teacher becomes, very much like Maria in *Memoir of a Murderer*, Masayuki’s confabulated hallucination that is largely oriented by the future (as the pottery teacher is significantly older and not of the same age as decades ago).

The presence of the older pottery teacher and the important role that he plays in firing the pot which Masayuki is making hence becomes a caesura, an event of change and creation that cuts, assembles and orders time differently. Further down the sequence, both Masayuki and the teacher spend the night together in the woods firing the cup. The old pottery teacher, in a moment of excitement, stands up and starts singing the popular melody ‘Tokyo Rhapsody’ (1936). As he does so, the film slowly cross-fades from one shot to another, showing him singing from multiple angles. Due to the slow cross-fade, the older pottery teacher from the previous shot often appears in the same frame vis-à-vis the teacher from the incoming shot, as, through the editing pattern, the passing away of the past shot for the future is made visceral.

In the morning, the older pottery teacher is gone, disappeared, and all that remains is the fired cup that has Emiko’s name etched into it. Masayuki looks at the cup and holds it dearly to his heart, expressing his care and love for the object, as it becomes a symbolic image that ‘constitutes the totality of...
time to the extent that it draws together the caesura, the before and the after’ (Deleuze 1994: 89). Consequently, the cup as a symbol of the third synthesis of time at work for Masayuki, as he forgets and remembers differently, becomes extremely significant as the film concludes with a final close-up shot of the hot, steaming cup on a table. This final shot of the ceramic cup is the exact same shot shown in the film’s opening scene as Emiko, years later in 2010, sits down in a room with her husband looking at the sunset. Once we accept that the narratives and lifestories of Masayuki, like Emiko’s, continue to be created through the entangled negotiation of difference in itself, of multiple temporalities, then the opening scene of Memories of Tomorrow becomes, as Whitehead would observe, ‘a form of double vision’ at work, requiring the audience ‘to hold in balance two different orientations towards the world’ (Whitehead 2017: 53). Both worldviews are connected by the image of the cup as it is visibly positioned in the middle of both husband and wife, connecting the two of them together. In turn, the audience is encouraged to experience a sense of radical empathy, where the audience, like the characters on screen, enacts a kind of contact ‘that engages with the other while remaining mindful of its own boundaries and limitations’ (Whitehead 2017: 53). Consequently, the opening sequence of Memories of Tomorrow is no longer one of decline but that where multiple narrative trajectories are embraced and acknowledged.
Memories of Tomorrow, then, as a title becomes extremely apt in encapsulating the notion of Deleuze’s third synthesis of time, of demented time, in relation to the person living with dementia. Like Memoir of a Murderer, the past returns, forgotten and remembered differently, so that the future can be changed otherwise. As Crystal Yin Lie argues, thinking about dementia and the experiences of dementia in “the now” can not only reframe the ‘constructions of memory-based identity but also deepen out ethical consciousness, radically challenging our perception of history and time’ (Lie 2019: 49). This chapter has offered a way of understanding the narrative trajectories of people living with dementia through a framework of difference and change in the present tense, exploring the multifarious performances of time that a person living with dementia experiences in relation to all the other
individuals in a wider web of relationality. Accordingly, the chapter opens up the prospect of empathetically engaging differently and variously in a shared world.

This discussion of the lifestories of people living with dementia is an important companion to the arguments about the agency of the person living with dementia as explored in Chapter One, where I discussed the agentic actions of people living with dementia through a framework of temporal change. This is because, as Catriona Mackenzie observes, a person’s identifications are inexplicably bound up in questions of agency for subjects form identifications and gain agency ‘within a community of agents and are constrained by complex networks of social norms, institutions, practices, conventions, expectations, and attitudes’ (Mackenzie 2008: 15). If the shape of dementia narratives is primarily predicated – paradoxically – through the denial of a future that closes off narratives, then the agency of the person living with dementia is also refused. Conversely, if the narratives of dementia are grounded on the premise of change and creation, then the agency (and identifications) of the person living with dementia becomes difficult to deny.

Thus, to think through the temporal experiences of dementia through the filter of performance is to not just think about questions of identifications but to also examine wider issues of narratives. Read together, in the analyses of the four films in Chapters One and Two, the experiences of dementia become indexical of the multiple temporalities in the present tense, as the person living with dementia emblematically gestures towards the amalgamation of these intersecting temporalities through a mode of hesitation which captures the uneasy relationship between the virtual (past)
and the actual (present). In the next chapter, through a discussion of two found footage horror films, I focus on this concept of hesitancy and the ways in which the horrifying treatment of dementia in both the case-study films and the wider cultural imaginary of dementia raise questions about the temporal characteristic of the indexical sign. In turn, the chapter paves the way for the thesis to think about the index as constituent of a larger rhizomatic map of temporal performances.
Chapter Three
Hesitantly Reading the Index

In *The Taking of Deborah Logan* (Adam Robitel, 2014, USA), PhD student Mia is making a research documentary about Deborah, who lives with Alzheimer’s disease. Deborah constantly mends the telephone switchboard locked up in the attic and continuously claims to see a dark figure from her past. Her daughter asserts that Deborah’s behaviour is nothing concerning for she is (re-)living the past in the present as she worked as a switchboard operator for the most of her adult life. As the documentary-within-the-film progresses, the filmmakers come to realise that the behaviour displayed by Deborah is not commonplace of people living with dementia. Deborah exhibits extremely violent and aggressive tendencies, her skin sheds like a snake, and her mouth is able to open wide enough to swallow the entire head of a young girl. In turn, both Mia and the audience discover that Deborah, who is characterised as slowly emptied of her personality and presence because of her dementia, is actually possessed by a man whom she had murdered years ago. In other words, in *The Taking of Deborah Logan*, through the lens of horror, the negotiations between the past and the present as experienced by Deborah, the person living with dementia, are surfaced and made visible.

Similar to *The Taking of Deborah Logan*, *The Visit* (M. Night Shyamalan, 2015, USA) sees teenagers Becca and Tyler visit their grandparents for the first time as their mother goes on a cruise trip with her boyfriend. Becca, who loves cinema and wants to perfect the art of film, decides to document the whole visit with both her digital video camera and
her Digital Single-Lens Reflex (DSLR) camera. The teenagers find that their bedtime is unusually early, and that they are instructed not to leave their room after 9:30pm. They soon find out why: when night falls, their grandmother goes into a maniacal fury and charges around the house naked scratching at doors. Throughout, though the film is shot to strongly evoke a supernatural film, with specific allusions to films like *Paranormal Activity* (Oren Peli, 2007, USA) and *Ringu* (Hideo Nakata, 1998, Japan) amongst other horror films, the affect of horror really comes from the idea that the grandparents are old and that the grandmother lives with dementia. As Shyamalan repeatedly asserts in interviews: ‘The subject of the piece is our fear of getting old, which is a variation on our fear of dying’ (Shyamalan in Blum 2015). The fear of old age, Shyamalan insists, is a ‘primal thing’ (Shyamalan in Blum 2015). When informed about their grandparents’ behaviour, the teenagers’ mother dismisses it as old age; when confronted, their grandfather explains that their grandmother behaves this way because she lives with sundown syndrome which is a possible symptom of dementia that causes increased confusion and agitation when the sun sets. Although the specific causes of sundown syndrome are still unclear, scientists suggest that sundowning occurs in part due to the body’s circadian rhythm – the internal body clock – clashing with the temporality of the outside world.¹ Again, like *The Taking of Deborah Logan*, a huge portion of the horror stems not from the suggestion of supernatural hauntings but from the multiple temporalities experienced by the person living with dementia.

These horrifying portrayals of people living with dementia extend from the silver(ing) screen to wider imaginaries of dementia. People living with
dementia have, for instance, been described as zombies and the living dead on multiple occasions, highlighting the ways in which the fear of people living with dementia can be boiled down to the fear of encountering/experiencing temporalities that do not correspond to the linearity of empty, clock time, where the person living with dementia gestures towards the blurred boundaries between the past and the present (Behuniak 2011; and Aquilina and Hughes 2006). Consequently, this recurring notion of people living with dementia becomes a cultural shorthand ‘for something that is incredibly frightening’, for ‘a complex, unknowable world of doom, ageing, and a fate worse than death’ (Zeilig 2013: 262). Both The Taking of Deborah Logan and The Visit, however, are films that explicitly relate the lives of people living with dementia to that of the horror genre. Semantically, these two films feature the monstrous body: the aged person living with dementia. Syntactically, these “monsters” are placed in diametric opposition to that of the “intellectual” and “rational” minds (a PhD student in The Taking and a teenager who thinks about cinema through technical jargon in The Visit), and that of younger people who are full of life. In both films, through the aesthetics of the found footage horror, the person living with dementia becomes an index of multiple temporalities in the present, and their dementia becomes a horrifying threat that surfaces and directs at the ways in which these multiples temporalities are coeval.

As understood by Charles Sanders Pierce, the index is a sign that shows ‘something about things, on account of their being physically connected with them’ (Pierce 1998: 5). A footprint in the sand, for instance, is an indexical sign that points towards the presence of someone having
passed by. Yet, by merely looking at the sign, we are unable to necessarily glean the most insightful conclusion about the nature of the person (who was the person, what were they doing while walking, what colour were their shoes, etc.), consequently leading Mary Ann Doane to note that indexical signs ‘provide no insight into the nature of their objects; they have no cognitive value, but simply indicate that something is “there”’ (Doane 2007b: 135). In turn, through its semiotic function as that of the pure assurance of a prior existence in the present tense, the index, Mary Ann Doane observes, ‘more insistently than any other type of sign, is haunted by its object’ (Doane 2007b: 134).

This object that haunts the index, borrowing from Gilles Deleuze, is understood here as a virtual object. As Deleuze writes, the virtual object is past as the contemporary of the present which it is, in a frozen present; as though lacking on the one hand the part which, on the other hand, it is at the same time; as though displaced while still in place. This is why virtual objects exist only as fragments of themselves: they are found only as lost; they exist only as recovered. Loss or forgetting here are not determinations which must be overcome; rather, they refer to the objective nature of that which are recovered, as lost, at the heart of forgetting (Deleuze 1997: 102).

This is to say, firstly, the virtual object that haunts exists as ‘shreds of pure past’ that are incorporated into the actual object (Deleuze 1997: 101). Secondly, the index – the actual – is a sign that embalms time and captures the relationship between the past and the present. Thirdly, the index, in gesturing towards the virtual object as that of loss and recovery, highlights the uneven process of actualisation where not everything in the virtual is
actualised into the actual. As such, to attempt to recover – to trace – the virtual past that haunts in the index is to discover a wider map of temporal negotiations and to open up the possibilities for different kinds of temporal performances.

This chapter is interested in the (often uneasy) relationship between the past and the present as manifest in people living with dementia’s experience of time through the framework of generic horror. These experiences of horror – as evinced in both *The Taking of Deborah Logan* and *The Visit*, and the wider cultural imaginaries of dementia as zombies and the living dead – Stephen Prince would argue, reside in the ‘confrontation with uncertainty, with the “unnatural,” with a violation of the ontological categories on which being and culture reside’ (Prince 2004: 2). In both films, the presence of the person living with dementia always threatens to uproot the “normal” and “universal” understanding of time as linear and homogeneous, and always confronts these understandings by strongly hinting at multiple and different ways of conceiving time. Building on the argument that I developed in the last two chapters, where I suggest that everyone is performing and performed by virtuality, and everyone is entangled in a wider web of temporal performances, this chapter argues that the found footage horror aesthetics as employed in both the case study films to narrativise the experiences of dementia opens up the prospect of thinking of the indexical as painting a rhizomatic map of temporal performances.

The chapter begins by exploring the ways in which both Deborah and the grandmother in *The Taking of Deborah Logan* and *The Visit* threaten to horrifyingly blur the line(s) between the present and the past, arguing that the
person living with dementia can be considered as an index that asymmetrically mistranslates heterogeneous temporalities into the fold of homogeneous, clock time. Then, through an examination of Bliss Cua Lim’s ideas on time and fantasy, I consider the ways a hesitant attitude towards this temporal mistranslation might engender a worldview which consists of multiple indices entangled in ecologies of temporal performances. Next, I link this understanding of hesitancy to David Martin-Jones’s hesitant ethics, arguing that the approach towards the index as temporal mistranslation is a way of decentring the Western world so as to allow all parts of the world to be treated and studied on an equal platform. Finally, I conclude the chapter with a discussion of the presence of the index in digital culture so as to refine my argument about the temporality of the index.

At stake here is the consideration of the ways in which the examination of the temporal experiences of people living with dementia through the prism of performance and a philosophy of difference might serve as a hesitant approach to understand the wider entangled temporalities of the world – buried and/or unburied – where everyone and everything is performing and performed by various intersections of time. In this chapter, I suggest that the hesitant approach offers a way to bring together the paranoid and reparative readings as observed by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick.

The Blurred Lines Between the Past and the Present

In both The Visit and The Taking of Deborah Logan, the relationship between the past and the present is volatile, where the past is always at the edge of
horrifying irruption into the present. In one scene in *The Visit*, for instance, Becca hears the grandmother in the next room laughing at a woman yodelling. Thinking her grandmother is watching television, Becca takes the opportunity to try and ask her grandmother more about her past. Becca, holding the camera, slowly creeps into the room and she finds her grandmother at the far end of the room. The room is dimly lit by the setting sunlight from outside, and the grandmother is sat in her armchair on the only spot in the room where the sunlight hits, laughing maniacally whilst facing the wall. As Becca and the camera slowly creep up to the grandmother, the sound of the floorboard crackling from the rocking armchair is clearly audible alongside the sound of a woman slow yodelling, and, very quickly, an atmosphere of dread punctuates the room.

When Becca approaches the grandmother, she puts her hand out to physically stop the grandmother from rocking the armchair, jolting the grandmother from her trance-like laughter. The grandmother monotonously greets Becca before announcing that she has the ‘deep darkies’. She slowly unties her headscarf and begins strangling herself with it. When stopped immediately by Becca, the grandmother responds by saying: ‘You have to laugh to keep the deep darkies in the cave’. As she is sat in the only sunlit spot in the room, the darkest secrets that threaten to engulf her are rendered visible through the scene’s lighting. In this moment, the grandmother’s agitated attempts to suppress her memories seem entirely unprovoked by anyone; instead, it is a result of her sundowning, as her dementia horrifyingly surfaces and gestures towards the presence of the multiple temporalities coexisting in her present.
Equally, this threat, this irruption and eruption of the past in(to) the present, is very much alive in *The Taking of Deborah Logan* as Sarah, the daughter of Deborah, and the documentary team discover Deborah sat in the dark attic by her switchboard. Deborah, who is completely naked, hugs herself whilst sobbing uncontrollably, crying for someone to help her. Suddenly, she goes quiet and becomes motionless. Gradually, she lets out a series of unintelligible growls, slowly and menacingly raises her hands to the switchboard, and then proceeds to furiously plug and unplug a telephone cable into the switchboard. This is not the usual vulnerable Deborah and the voice that comes out from this body is also not hers (later, everyone discovers that Deborah had been speaking French); at this particular moment, the audience, like Sarah and the documentary team, witness the highly aggressive Deborah being haunted by and possessed by, as everyone
will come to comprehend, a death from her past. Yet, importantly, neither Sarah nor the camera crew understands that Deborah is possessed by a supernatural being. Narratively, all of Deborah’s behaviour has been explained away rationally, perpetuating, as Andrea Capstick, John Chatwin and Katherine Ludwin argue, ‘the biomedical orthodoxy that everything a person with dementia says or does is “a symptom of the disease”’ (Capstick et al 2015: 229). As the cameraman exclaims for Jesus, and as Sarah waves her hands worriedly whilst deciding on the best way to get her mother to calm down, a dangerous threat is clearly registered by the film as Deborah – the person living with dementia – becomes a vehicle to volatilise the relationship between the past and the present.

The scene does not end, and Deborah’s violent assault on the switchboard continues, resulting in the switchboard combusting. Sparks fly out from the back of the machine and light up the whole attic as the camera crew goes into a panic. Amidst all the chaos, as Sarah runs towards her mother, as the film crew tries to make sense of the whole situation, and as the room oscillates between extreme darkness and brightness, the film cuts to an extremely brief shot of a man (dead and/or alive) staring into the camera with his mouth wide open – like that of a snake – followed by a quick negative black-and-green version of the same shot. Aurally, nothing changes and the audience continues to hear the chaos in the film’s diegesis. After this fleeting visual interruption, the film cuts back to Mia and Sarah tending to the unconscious Deborah. The scene ends, and nobody in the film acknowledges this brief interlude.
On one level, these two cut-away-shots can be understood as a visualisation of Deborah’s past being dragged into the present. Looked at from this perspective, these two shots would represent a privileged insight into Deborah’s inner psyche. Writing about this scene, Agnieszka Kotwasińska reads it as an example of a transageing narrative that moves ‘beyond the diachronic limitations of linearity’ and explores ‘transtemporal embodiments in order to resist melancholia’s paralysis’ (Kotwasińska 2018: 188). As the audience will come to realise later, the image that appears on screen is the man whom Deborah murdered when she was younger and, in this particular moment, for Kotwasińska, the roles that Deborah has embodied and performed throughout her life (single mother, businesswoman, murderer, and old woman) ‘are not temporally disengaged with from each other, but form one vibrant mesh that Deborah experiences simultaneously through her body memory’, highlighting the multiple and changing temporal
performances throughout Deborah’s lifecourse (Kotwasińska 2018: 188). Yet, on its own, this analysis is tenuous for it goes against the internal logic of the found footage horror, which rarely offers nor privileges the subjective experience of the filmed subject unless, as discussed later, the subject takes over control of the filmic apparatus. Conversely, the blink-and-you-miss-it shots, watched in relation to the scene, can be read as a technical glitch experienced by the digital camera that is caused by the cameraman’s frantic movements and the sudden changes in the amount of light in the room. As Deborah comes into the frame with her heightened experiences of multiple temporalities, the uneasy coexistence between the present and the past that cinema as a medium try to translate explode.

Through the technical glitch, cinema’s present is haunted by the presence of the past, and this digital glitch also works as a way in to the subjective experiences of Deborah. In similar ways to The Visit, in The Taking of Deborah Logan, through dementia, the indexical dispositions of Deborah and cinema as time embalmed are highlighted, underscoring the oxymoronic nature of the index, which Doane describes as ‘this was once the present moment’ (Doane 2007b: 140). The index, put differently, is a site that uneasily alludes to the presence of two (or more) temporalities in negotiation. The idea of temporal collision can be seen as a form of prosopopoeia, that is, the communication between the living and the dead. Karen Lury, writing about the figure of the child in cinema, suggests that the practice of prosopopoeia is ‘a form of ventriloquism in which the living speak for or through the dead, just as the adult revisits, reshapes and retells his childhood experiences as if he were (still) a child’ (Lury 2010: 111). For Lury,
this relationship between the dead and the alive is more clear-cut as the figure of the child is always positioned in direct relation to the adult. However, prosopopoeia as a concept that highlights the meeting of different attitudes towards time becomes significantly more nuanced when extrapolated to the other end of the age spectrum, especially in relation to the people living with dementia in the films I discuss.

Research has shown that people living with dementia who are bilingual frequently switch back to conversing in their first language, or ‘use the wrong language for the setting or interlocutor or produce what appears to be an inappropriate mixture of their two languages’ (Paradis 2008: 219). Similarly, in The Taking of Deborah Logan, Deborah utters French as she violently assaults the switchboard, a language that is intrinsically linked to her past. Yet, unlike that of the child in cinema, where the language they speak is primarily shaped by the adults in the surround, the French that Deborah garbles out of her system as she attacks the switchboard is not necessarily a form of ventriloquism. In a later scene, the film crew extracts the audio file of Deborah’s speech from the camera, modulates the inflection digitally, and puts it through an online translation programme. The camera zooms into the computer screen (which displays the digitised soundwaves of Deborah) and the crew plays the audio file. Everyone hears the (slightly clearer) French, and subtitles that translates what is being spoken appear on the screen. Visually, the subtitles read: ‘DEBORAH TRANSLATION: The eternal serpent will free you child’; ‘DEBORAH TRANSLATION: Be my fifth’; ‘DEBORAH TRANSLATION: I will wash you in the river’; and ‘DEBORAH TRANSLATION: Your blood will feed the river’. From the subtitles, there is a
suggestion that Deborah is saying all those words, which would suggest the ventriloquist form of prosopopoeia.

Figure 16: Subtitling Deborah in *The Taking of Deborah Logan*

However, from listening to the audio file itself, the audience can clearly hear two different pitches – one is higher and one is significantly lower – suggesting a conversation between two beings or, at the very least, two people speaking. The two different pitches speak to each other but, also, at the same time, over each other. As the film progresses, the audience – and everyone in *The Taking of Deborah Logan* – will come to realise that Deborah is haunted by Henry Desjardins, a notorious murderer murdered by Deborah during her younger days. The words that come out of Deborah’s mouth can then be in turn read a more complex form of prosopopoeia than that proposed by Lury (as it becomes clear later in the film, Desjardins is actually speaking through/with Deborah); it is not so much a conversation nor
meeting between the past and the present but, as the two vocal pitches clash with each other, more of a collision between these two entities.

As both the grandmother in *The Visit* and Deborah in *The Taking of Deborah Logan* demonstrate, the person living with dementia as index becomes a heightened site where the past and the present meet, clash, and co-exist (as discussed in the previous chapters, people not living with dementia, alongside other parts of the material world, are also sites where multiple temporalities come together – dementia intensifies and draws our attention to the temporal encounter). For Laura Mulvey, this understanding of the index as a translation of multiple temporalities also works well in relation to cinema. She writes, and it is helpful to quote at length:

In the cinema organic movement is transformed into its inorganic replica, a series of static, inanimate, images, which, once projected, then become animated to blur the distinctions between the oppositions. The homologies extend: on the one hand, the inanimate, inorganic, still, dead; on the other, organic, animate, moving, alive. It is here, with the blurring of these boundaries, that the uncanny nature of the cinematic image returns most forcefully and, with it, the conceptual space of uncertainty: that is, the difficulty of understanding time and the presence of death in life (Mulvey 2006: 52 – 53).

Mulvey’s contemplation of the uncanny in cinema here draws from both Sigmund Freud and Wilhelm Jentsch. The former suggests that the uncanny arises from the fear of the past whereas the latter argues that the uncanny stems from the new and unfamiliar (future). Mulvey notes that even though the arguments put forward by Freud and Jentsch are dissimilar, the two theorists agree on one thing: the uncanny occurs ‘whenever the animate and
the inmate becomes confused’ (Mulvey 2006: 38). Effectively, ‘the uncanny nature of the cinematic image’ that Mulvey discusses can thus be seen as a kind of trompe-l’œil, an audio-visual illusion of something of the real, and this notion of the “real” and the “realistic” (which is very much linked to cinema’s connection with the index) is created by cinema’s complex relationship with time.\(^4\) For Mulvey, this relationship between the past and the present in cinema is extremely porous, which results in the difficulty of separating the two types of temporalities into two coherent subsets; she rejects the dead/alive dichotomy and implicitly embraces the idea that cinema encompasses multiple temporalities.

Mulvey’s understanding of cinema vis-à-vis the index predicates on an understanding of cinema as a representational practice, where there is a more “wholesome reality” that cinema is not part of. As I have suggested throughout the thesis, I come from a viewpoint that does not see cinema as secondary to “real life” but, rather, as equally constituent of reality. Following Richard Rushton, the ‘reality of films does not lie behind or beyond them’ but, rather, ‘the reality of film is what films themselves are’ (Rushton 2011: 9). Reality, as such, is understood to be made up of the virtual and the actual (see Chapter Two), where multiple virtual intensities negotiate and entangle to actualise into the actual. Both cinema and the person living with dementia are performing and performed by time, imbricated in, to borrow and adapt a phrase from Baz Kershaw (2012a), ecologies of temporal performances.\(^5\) As I elaborate in this chapter, this understanding of reality as ecologies of temporal performances, as a process of the virtual unevenly actualising into the actual, has significant implications on our understanding of the index,
seeing it as a sign that opens up the possibility of change or, at the very least, provides a map of the multiple intersecting discourses they are entangled in a performance of time.

**Temporal Collision and Hesitancy**

In my analyses of *The Taking of Deborah Logan* and *The Visit* in relation to both cinema and dementia, I have argued that the index as trace and deixis, where the sign cannot be fully understood by its referent, induces a sense of temporal collision and hesitation where the lines between the past and present are seemingly blurred (for instance, the person living with dementia might be burying something, they might be possessed by a spirit, and/or they might be living with dementia), and in this chapter, I am interested in the ways that this notion of hesitation is a useful approach to think through questions of time.⁶ To work through this concept of hesitancy, I turn to a discussion of scholarly discourses surrounding fantasy and cinema, where the role of hesitation is intricate to the notion of fantasy.⁷

For Tzvetan Todorov, who wrote about fantasy as a literary genre, the ‘fantastic is that hesitation experienced by a person who knows only the laws of nature, confronting an apparently supernatural event’ (Todorov 1975: 25). For a text to be fantastic, Todorov identifies three conditions. First, the reader has to hesitate between a rational and irrational explanation. Second, the character in the text may, like the reader, hesitate too. Third, the reader has to reject allegorical and poetic interpretations of the text (Todorov 1975: 33).
For Todorov, in a fantastic text, the first and third conditions have to be fulfilled whereas the second need not necessarily be satisfied.⁸

Brian Attebery, in responding to Todorov, suggests that literary works that readers might recognise to be fantasies usually work in three ways: firstly, there is ‘some violation of what the author clearly believes to be natural law’; secondly, the structure of fantasy is comic for it ‘begins with a problem and ends with a resolution’; and thirdly, fantasy generates a sense of wonder (Attebery 1992: 14 – 16). In sum, Attebery defines fantasy as ‘a form that makes use of both the fantastic mode, to produce the impossibilities, and the mimetic, to reproduce the familiar’ (Attebery 1992: 16 – 17). Though the sense of narrative closure that Attebury proposes is at odds with Todorov’s principles of hesitancy, I think, at its heart, Attebery’s and Todorov’s understanding of fantasy is not all that different – the fantastic moves between the rational and irrational.

Different, however, is their approach towards genre, which in turn affects their notions of fantasy. Attebery proposes a fuzzy set approach towards fantasy, with a centre of core texts and with ‘boundaries that shade off imperceptibly, so that a book on the fringe may be considered as belonging or not, depending on one’s interests’ (Attebery 1992: 12). For Attebery, J.R.R Tolkien’s Lord of the Rings acts as the gravitational centre of the model because the book series displays his understanding of fantasy the most vividly. As we move further away from the core, readers might begin to include other novels like Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein, Ursula Le Guin’s Earthsea trilogy and Aldous Huxley’s Brave New World. As we move even further away from those texts, at the very fringe of the fuzzy set, fantasy can
just be anything that a reader might consider to be fantastic. This approach is noticeably similar to Rick Altman’s pragmatic approach to film genre, which ‘treats reading as a more complex process involving not only hegemonic complicity across user groups but also a feedback system connecting user groups’ (Altman 1999: 211). This would mean that, for instance, a psychoanalyst might read Basic Instinct (Paul Verhoeven, 1992, France/USA/UK) as a psychosexual fantasy whereas someone else might understand the film as an erotic thriller, neo-noir, something very different, or a combination of all the above-mentioned genres. In summary, Attebery’s model of fantasy allows for a more porous and permeable relationship with the reader.

In direct contrast, Todorov proposes a highly rigid understanding of genre with specific boundaries mapped out. The fantastic, for instance, is wedged firmly in between the uncanny and the marvellous (see figure 3.4). More specifically:

The fantastic in its pure state is represented here by the median line separating the fantastic-uncanny from the fantastic-marvelous. This line corresponds perfectly to the nature of the fantastic, a frontier between two adjacent realms’ (Todorov 1975: 44).

Bliss Cua Lim observes that Todorov does not actually designate a space for his definition of the fantastic in his schematic diagram and this lay-out, Lim argues, not only points to Todorov’s insistence on generic purity but, also, highlights the idea that the Todorovian fantastic only lasts ‘for a certain
duration of reading, while the reader is still in the grips of uncertainty’ (Lim 2009: 30). When the reader stops hesitating, they will have to decide whether the text is uncanny (the narrative can be explained rationally) or marvellous (the narrative can be explained away through superstition or other forms of irrational and/or archaic belief).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Uncanny</th>
<th>Fantastic-uncanny</th>
<th>Fantastic-Marvellous</th>
<th>Marvellous</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Figure 17: Schematic diagram of the Todorovian fantastic

The idea that surfaces repeatedly in discourses surrounding the literary fantastic and hesitancy is the movement between the rational and the irrational. Concomitantly, this is a comparable concern in the study of fantasy in cinema. Mark Nash (1976), in adapting Todorov’s work on fantastic literature, proposes the analogous ‘cinefantastic’, which is concerned with the audience’s inability to differentiate the ‘I’ point of view shots from the ‘non-I’ point of view shots in cinema. Sonically, Andrea Truppin (1992) points to several aural techniques employed by Andrei Tarkovsky in his later films – spatial signature that challenges onscreen images, and illogical parallel sounds that draw attention to the existence of other heterogeneous worlds, for instance – that challenge our understanding of what is assumed to be “real”. In a similar strand, James Walters, building on from Todorov’s thesis, defines fantasy as a genre of film that expands ‘the fictional world’s horizons
beyond reasonable expectations’ (Walters 2011: 20). Again, hesitancy – the oscillation between the familiar and the unfamiliar – is central to the debate surrounding fantasy in cinema.

This focus and insistence on the notion of hesitancy brings me back to Todorov’s work on the fantastic. He writes:

The classic definition of the present, for example, describes it as a pure limit between the past and the future. The comparison is not gratuitous: the marvelous corresponds to an unknown phenomenon, never seen as yet, still to come – hence to a future; in the uncanny, on the other hand, we refer the inexplicable to known facts, to a previous experience, and thereby to the past. As for the fantastic itself, the hesitation which characterizes it cannot be situated, by and large, except in the present’ (Todorov 1975: 43; emphasis in original).

Here, the uncanny-fantastic-marvellous schematic model proposed corresponds, according to Todorov, directly to the past-present-future understanding of time. Conversely, Lim suggests that Todorov saw the marvellous as a ‘placeholder for medievalism, while the uncanny corresponds to Enlightenment or post-Enlightenment skepticism’ (Lim 2009: 108 – 109). Lim’s reformulation of Todorov means that the same uncanny-fantastic-marvellous model would instead parallel a future-present-past comprehension of time. Either way the arrangement, following Todorov’s logic would mean the politics of temporality in fantasy is grounded in highly linear and disciplined homogeneous time. This observation is further compounded by Lim’s description of Todorov as ‘the great contemporary cartographer of the fantastic’ as he stakes ‘out the perimeters of contiguous but discrete genres’ (Lim 2009: 30). Lim’s comparison of Todorov to a
cartographer is interesting because, as her meticulous tracing of the advancement of modern time consciousness highlights, the development of linear, homogeneous time is inextricably imbricated in the renegotiated understanding of space, as ‘railroads, telegraphy, telephony, automobiles, electricity, and, not least, the cinema became ubiquitous in modern life’ (Lim 2009: 73). Todorov’s cartographic approach to genre therefore further highlights how much his understanding of fantasy is indebted to homogeneous time.

Lim, on the other hand, critiques this approach towards fantasy, and forcefully advances a postcolonial understanding of fantasy as a genre in response to the Todorovian fantastic. According to Lim, Todorov’s heavy dependence on linear, homogeneous time meant that cultures and societies that do not experience time in a linear way are omitted from the Todorovian fantastic. She writes:

Modern time consciousness is a means of exercising social, political and economic control over periods of work and leisure; it obscures the ceaselessly changing plurality of our existence in time; and it underwrites a linear, developmental notion of progress that gives rise to ethical problems with regard to cultural and racial difference (Lim 2009: 11).

In comparison, drawing from the works of Henri Bergson and Dipesh Chakrabarty, Lim works to complicate the Todorovian fantastic by questioning the role of aswang narratives – narratives in the Philippines about the shapeshifting creatures that incorporate aspects of a vampire,
witch, manananggal and corpse-eater, amongst many other guises – in relation to the fantasy genre and the Philippines’s socio-historical context. Lim’s argument is that aswang narratives do not just limit themselves to a fictional genre but have glided between history and story in the Philippines since at least the sixteenth-century (Lim 2009: 99). As Lim’s analysis points out, the aswang is a belief that is embedded in the living consciousness of the Philippines and is not – as Todorov would argue – confined to something of the past.

In highlighting the temporal limits of Todorov’s understanding of hesitancy, Lim proposes an alternative: the fantastic is defined as a narrative that juxtaposes two (or more) radically different worlds. The encounter with a forked world is registered within the narrative as an experience of limits, whether these be limits of epistemological uncertainty, cultural transparency, or historical understanding. Because the unfamiliar world most often takes the form of a supernatural realm in which the linear chronological time of clock and calendar does not hold, the fantastic has a propensity to foreground a sense of temporal discrepancy that cannot be entirely translated into the terms of modern homogeneous time (Lim 2009: 28).

According to Lim, the worlds are different because of their different attitudes towards temporality and the fantastic happens when immiscible times – times that ‘never quite dissolve into the code of modern time consciousness’ – come together (Lim 2009: 14). When these temporalities meet in fantasy narratives, the audience is confronted with an epistemological and ontological challenge. They are encouraged to rethink what and how they
understand something to be and, in this case, review their reliance on homogeneous, linear time.

For Lim, like Henri Bergson, as the hegemony of spatialised time – clock time – is so overarchingly strong, ‘all attempts to articulate pure duration are betrayed by language’ (Lim 2009: 17). The Limian fantastic hence works as ‘a kind of mistranslation operating between two asymmetrically ranked codes’ (Lim 2009: 31; emphasis in original). On the one hand, Lim argues, sits the “universal” homogeneous time that is rooted in Newtonian science and modern historical consciousness. On the other sits the local and archaic heterogeneous times of superstition, supernatural and the popular (Lim 2009: 31). Lim’s proposition of fantasy as that where multiple temporalities come together thus relies very heavily on ‘a refusal of anachronism, of a past left behind’ in order to ‘forge a more ethical, less distorting temporal view of otherness’ (Lim 2009: 14 – 16). The Limian hesitancy, therefore, points towards the notion of temporal mistranslation: to hesitate is to be aware of the multiple temporalities in/at translation.

In this chapter, I am interested in the ways in which hesitation allows us to think through the co-existence/collision of the virtual past in the actual present in relation to films about dementia. Where the treatments of dementia in relation to The Taking of Deborah Logan and The Visit are concerned, we can look at the temporal experiences of both Deborah and the grandmother through the lens of the Limian fantastic, where to hesitate is to pause and to unfurl the collision of temporalities into its multiple intersecting units. This is to say, I argue that the experiences of dementia in the two case-study films highlight the ‘trace of containment and excess’, and
gesture towards the presence of the past in and alongside the present, confronting the other characters and the members of the audience with a sense of ontological and epistemological uncertainty (Lim 2009: 32).

Here, I elaborate with a discussion of an example from The Visit, focusing on the moment when Becca first insists on interviewing the grandmother to know more about her past whilst they are washing the dishes together in the kitchen. When asked, the grandmother immediately leaves the sink. She walks towards the countertop and starts wiping the surface before registering the oven off the corner of her eyes. The grandmother pauses, walks towards the oven and removes the metal shelf from it. The grandmother, holding the shelf, stops and looks at Becca with a blank look on her face. As she does so, the metal shelf leaving the oven makes a clatter that reverberates through the atmosphere, adding a sense of tension to the scene. The grandmother asks Becca to clean the oven and she agrees. As she starts cleaning, the grandmother asks Becca to get further and further into the oven, and eventually, the whole of Becca is completely in the oven – à la Hansel and Gretel – in order to clean the kitchen appliance properly. As this happens, the grandmother stands right by the oven door watching Becca clean while she fidgets with the tea towel in her hand, pulling and tugging at it. When Becca finishes the cleaning process, the grandmother then agrees to the interview about her past.
Nothing menacing happens in this scene. Nonetheless, there is still an extreme sense of horror and dread engendered by the actions of the grandmother. This is further compounded by the deliberate soundscape – the clatter that reverberates, the water slowly dripping from the tap, and the intense scrubbing from inside the oven – that puts the safety of Becca into question. In this instance, through the affect of horror, the sense of hesitation is highlighted. The audience and Becca never quite know what the grandmother is doing or what her motives might be in large parts due to her dementia: she could be walking away from the sink so that she does not have to talk about the interview and, by extension, her past; she could be drawn to the oven because she was distracted, or she could be deliberately planning something treacherous in her head; and she could be tugging and pulling at her tea towel whilst watching Becca clean because she is contemplating to close the oven door trapping Becca in it, be genuinely concerned with Becca’s ability to clean the oven properly, or just merely
musing on whether she should do the interview to share the rich and hidden/buried/forgotten past she is mistranslating in the present.

In this instance, through hesitation, the temporalities indexed by the person living with dementia are highlighted and brought to the fore, where the grandmother’s past is present in the present tense, where the actual is haunted by the virtual. In a similar vein, as the person living with dementia is rooted in ecologies of temporal performances, the person not living with dementia (and other non-human species and non-living materials and phenomena) performing and performed by time is also (in a less intensified manner) an index that embodies multiple entangled temporalities. Here, as Becca enters the oven to clean it, putting her life in danger, the audience is also made aware that she is doing so because she is desperately searching for a past about her mother that she does not have access to. In this sense, Becca too, as an index of multiple temporalities, is haunted by the virtual object, by shreds of the pure past, and through her attempts to recover more of her past, her temporal identifications and narratives are directly joined to the temporal identifications and narratives of the grandmother’s.

A Rhizomatic Worldview

Seen from this perspective, the index, as trace and deixis, opens up the possibility of enabling a rhizomatic worldview that eschews hierarchies. For Deleuze and Félix Guattari, a rhizomatic worldview emphasises the fundamental principles of connection and heterogeneity, where ‘any point of
a rhizome can be connected to anything other, and must be’ (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 7). The rhizome, they propose, is a map:

The map is open and connectable in all of its dimensions; it is detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification. It can be torn, reversed, adapted to any kind of mounting, reworked by an individual, group, or social formation. It can be drawn on a wall, conceived of as a work of art, constructed as a political action or as a meditation. Perhaps one of the most important characteristics of the rhizome is that it always has multiple entryways (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 12).

In this sense, the person living with dementia is but one index on a map, a rhizome that surfaces all the virtual intensities alongside the actual present, drawing our attention to not only the ways in which they are performing time and performed by time but also opening us up to examine the ways in which everyone and everything else is performed by and performing time. New connections are drawn and made, new lines of actualisation from the virtual to the actual are created, and consequently, new temporal performances are enacted.

Accordingly, thinking of time through the framework of performance and the philosophy of difference is to be methodologically hesitantly aware of the multifarious ways in which all our temporalities are connected, and, more importantly, it is an approach that allows us to start with any one point – any one index – on the rhizomatic map, as we begin to make new connections and embed more indices in the discussion. We can begin by thinking about the temporalities of the person living with dementia on screen, we can begin by thinking about the temporalities of the person not living with dementia on
screen, we can begin by thinking about the temporalities of the individual members of the audience that watches the film about dementia, or we can begin by thinking about the temporalities of cinema – we can start the exploration process at any entry point – and, gradually, through linking one index to various other indices, we can begin to tease out a particular intersection of temporalities that is on the rhizomatic map (and more intersections as we begin to make more connections). Thinking about the performances of time, therefore, becomes a way to avoid canonical case studies that gatekeep and (re-)inscribe hierarchical power structures, to avoid tracing everything to one singular source/mythos, and to avoid the temptation to universalise ideas so as to achieve an overarching Grand Theory.¹⁰

Both *The Taking of Deborah Logan* and *The Visit* are interesting case studies here that audio-visually make this connection between the intersecting temporalities of the film and the temporalities of the surrounding world explicit for they are both found footage horror films that are unable to contain the action within the cinematic frame. As Cecilia Sayad argues, found footage horror cinema ‘collapses the boundaries separating the depicted universe from reality, and by extension challenges the ontological status of the fiction film as a self-contained object’ (Sayad 2016: 45). For Sayad, the found footage aesthetic works on two levels. Firstly, it draws attention to the cinematic apparatus and absorbs the camera and the screen into the diegesis. Secondly, the hand-held shaky camerawork highlights the ‘frame’s ability to quickly incorporate what is off-screen into the shot, just as it can easily relegate what is in the shot to the off-screen’ (Sayad 2016: 58).
This mercurial cinematography, for Sayad, reflects the inability of the cinematic frame to contain the actions within the filmic world as the events in the diegesis on screen bleeds into the extrafilmic surround, and vice versa.

For example, this is evident in *The Visit* as the teenagers acknowledge the camera’s inability to contain their grandmother’s night-time antics by hiding their camera on top of the mantelpiece in hope of catching their grandmother in the frame. Night time: the static camera in the living room captures a quiet living room and kitchen in deep focus as the grandmother wanders into the frame in the kitchen. She walks towards the living room and exits the frame on the right. The living room is empty and the audience hears the off-screen sound of footsteps, inviting them to think that the grandmother is going up the stairs. However, almost immediately, she pops up in front of the camera and screams into the camera, exploiting and playing with the audience’s expectations of the off-screen space beyond the frame, emphasising the unreliable nature of the frame in delineating the space beyond the screen.

The grandmother then grabs the camera and starts walking towards the kitchen. As that happens, the stable camera’s point of view is disrupted and the shakiness of the hand-held camera returns to the film. She grabs a knife and walks up the stairs. As she walks, the action that the teenagers hope to capture – the grandmother’s behaviour at night – is barely contained by the camera. Her white dress, made more prominent by the juxtaposition against the dark background, constantly enters and exits the left side of the shot whilst she climbs up the stairs, encouraging the audience to look beyond the screen. As she reaches the top of the stairs, the grandmother
drops the camera and walks towards the teenagers’ door with the knife. Immediately, the film cuts away to the other side of the room where the teenagers wake up to the sounds of the grandmother banging on the door. Instead of allowing the audience to see what happens, the audience is only allowed to hear what happens, further advancing Sayad’s assertion that the action in found footage horror occurs beyond the frame.

Figure 19: The frame’s inability to capture *The Visit*

This argument is similarly complemented sonically through the use of digital surround sound. Rebecca Coyle writes that the aural aspects in found footage horror films have the ‘doubly contrived role of appearing to be natural and spontaneous, while also being carefully constructed to carry much of the affective dimension’ (Coyle 2010: 234 – 235). Both the sound designs in *The Taking of Deborah Logan* and *The Visit*, which were mixed digitally for a surround sound system, fulfil this dual function. On the one hand, the
acousmatic thuds, screams and the fingernails scratching at the doors – source sounds that are heard off-screen – are spatialised through the Dolby Digital 5.1 Mix, giving the audience a 360-degrees understanding of where the events are in relation to the onscreen cameras and characters; on the other hand, these sounds are calculated to shock, scare and get under your skin.

In addition, like the failure of the found footage horror’s frame to contain the diegesis, the digital surround soundscape also pushes the sonic space of the found footage film beyond the screen to the audience, placing the viewer simultaneously in the film and the audience. As the grandmother in *The Visit* climbs up the stairs, the audience can distinctly hear the sound of her breathing, which is presented as from behind the camera. In the cinema, this breathing would have come from the speakers positioned behind the audiences. As the grandmother drops the camera and moves towards the door, the sound of the breathing becomes softer as she moves further away from the camera, shifting to the speakers at the front of the cinema. This surround soundscape is always in relation to the camera, in turn positioning the audience as the camera, which, as Sayad argues, has been absorbed into the diegesis by the found footage horror. Once again, as the audience is positioned in relation to, and directly as, the apparatus, the boundary between the diegetic and the extradiegetic space is lost, unable to contain the experiences of dementia to the filmic.11

In a different example from *The Taking of Deborah Logan*, Sarah is showing the documentary team a picture in the living room. As that is happening, a loud explosion of electrical current short-circuiting is heard from
above the house followed by the sound of heavy things falling onto the floor. Sarah leaves and climbs up the stairs to check on Deborah. As the camera pans to show a chandelier swaying on the ceiling, Sarah’s footsteps are heard clearly. The camera tilts down to focus on a door and the darkness beyond it. All of a sudden, Deborah, in her white dressing gown, appears and walks across the dark doorway. Luis, the cameraman, calls out to Deborah but she ignores him and continues walking. Luis, and in turn the camera, then frantically searches the living room to look for the next hallway to try and catch another glimpse of Deborah. When the camera finally settles down and finds another door, the audience is offered another quick appearance of Deborah as she continues to walk down the hallway in the dark. Instead of following her, Luis enters another room to try to find Deborah, evidently to no avail. Finally, he opens a door and notices Deborah standing on the opposite end of the dark room staring at something. Slowly, Luis walks towards Deborah in the dark whilst she continues to stare into the darkness. Luis reaches the end of the room, and the garden lights from outside switches on to reveal that Deborah is staring out of the window catatonically. After a moment of silence, Sarah’s voice enters from the left side of the screen and the camera jilt-pans to reveal that she has been standing there for a while. How Sarah entered the room is a mystery – there are no other doors in the room, and no footsteps are heard (in comparison to the loud footsteps of Sarah climbing the stairs). Throughout the scene, when Deborah, the person living with dementia, enters the shot, the spatial and temporal logic that is meant to be contained by the frame flies out of the window.
Through the audio-visual blurring of the extra/filmic spaces, the found footage film is ‘presented not as mere artefact but as fragment of the real world, and the implication is that its material might well spill over into it’ (Sayad 2016: 45). In both The Taking of Deborah Logan and The Visit, the found footage horror films only lose their ability to contain the action in the frame when the person living with dementia enters the frame, melding the temporalities of the filmic and the extra-filmic together, adding another layer of hesitancy to the film viewing experience (this world, that world, or both worlds), indexing a rhizomatic map of the world within and without the film. In hesitantly approaching dementia and found footage horror cinema, a map of multiple indices with no fixed centre is created; instead, hesitancy opens up an entangled and relational approach towards the world, where each index is treated as equally important and central as the other.

Through this consideration of the rhizomatic map of indices from an understanding of time as performance, the thesis finds affinity with the ethics of hesitancy as proposed by David Martin-Jones. For Martin-Jones, a hesitant ethics offers an encounter with a lost past:

Acknowledging the existence of such lost pasts – histories now recalled only as memories, times, fabulous beings, songs, myths, fables – renders histories previously thought to inform the present, universally, now only one amongst many: whether human or nonhuman (Martin-Jones 2018: 2; emphasis in original).
This mode of hesitant encounter as envisioned by Martin-Jones not only acknowledges the importance of the multiple pasts of all these (non)human phenomena, but also

encourages us to consider whether we should reorient the informing pathway through the world’s memories which shapes our present-day actions and interactions, to question whether we should affirm, or in fact critically reconsider, our faith not with \textit{this world}, but with \textit{this world’s history} (Martin-Jones 2018: 75; emphasis in original).

Martin-Jones, putting Deleuze and Enrique Dussel (amongst many others) in conversation, argues that in hesitantly appreciating a larger, entangled shared world’s history, we can work through the ways in which the present day reliance on capitalism, and the repressions that come along with all the multifarious forms of capitalism across the world, might be affected by colonial modernity (a term used to describe the emergence of modernity after 1492 – the year Christopher Columbus “discovered” America – that is built on the exploitation of the rest of the globe by Europe and the Western world). It highlights the centricity of the Western world as a concept put in place by Europe through its colonial expansions since 1492, and attempts to open up a wider understanding of the multiple histories that have been relegated to the past, as also discussed by Lim.\textsuperscript{14} Thus, to encounter various pasts via an ethics of hesitation is to decentre this worldview and to allow for a rhizomatic understanding of a map where anywhere can be centre and anywhere can be periphery. This approach, in aligning with Saër Maty Bâ and Will Higbee, ‘is about an increasing connectivity within zones of contact’ (Bâ and Higbee
2012: 8). Examining the performances of time through a philosophy of difference is a methodology that makes mess and embraces mess.

**The Digitally Haunted Index**

This argument that I have put forward about the experiences of dementia vis-à-vis indexicality, where I suggest that the indexical is key to engaging in a rhizomatic worldview where everyone and everything is embedded in ecologies of temporal performances, would need some qualification. Throughout *The Visit* and *The Taking of Deborah Logan*, the digital technology employed by the filmmakers is ever-present in the films’ mise-en-scène. In *The Taking of Deborah Logan*, for instance, we see the documentary crew install digital surveillance cameras in every nook and cranny of the house. Similarly, the audio file of Deborah that is discussed earlier has also been digitally modulated by the film crew. Equally, in *The Visit*, the digital cameras are continuously visible in the mise-en-scène as both Becca and Tyler document their stay at their grandparents’ house. In addition to the digital nature of the camera and the microphone, *The Visit* also highlights the nature of digital editing as Becca goes through the footage that the siblings have captured using the editing software Final Cut Pro on her laptop. In one moment, Becca puts together a sequence, separately contemplates whether she should add Les Baxter’s ‘Possession’ (1948) to accompany some moments of her documentary because that is their mother’s favourite tune, and concurrently draws up a moment of Tyler filming himself flexing his muscles to the camera in the same software, altogether
highlighting the asynchronous nature of digital editing. In both films, with the digital technology heavily foregrounded, questions are raised about the films’ indexical nature.

As has been regularly discussed by many, cinema’s ‘technologically supported indexicality’, though present in both celluloid and video mediums, is widely considered to be broken and lost in the digital era (Doane 2007b: 135). For André Bazin, cinema – as a photographic medium – ‘embalms time’ (Bazin 2005: 14). He writes:

> The film is no longer content to preserve the object, enshrouded as it were in an instant, as the bodies or insects are preserved intact, out of the distant past, in amber. The film delivers baroque art from its convulsive catalepsy. Now, for the first time, the image of things is likewise the image of their duration, change mummified as it were (Bazin 2005: 14 – 15).

Unlike the other art forms, cinema encompasses an uneasy tension between the dead and the living; cinema captures the dead and makes it come alive through the projected movement, through the twenty-four frames per second flashing before the audience. Bazin’s idea of cinema as ‘change mummified’ is hence an interesting oxymoron because it points towards a fascinating and tense relationship between the multiple temporalities that cinema experiences/translations, consequently highlighting the indexical nature of the medium.

Philip Rosen observes that cinema as change mummified ‘rests on a notion of temporality as a threateningly dynamic force, a threat registered especially in the high valuation placed on stabilizing relations between the
present and past’ (Rosen 2001: xi). On the one hand, the images mechanically produced by the celluloid strip appeal to the idea of preserving the tangible aspects of life, as time is stopped and perceived as actual by the camera. On the other, the actual itself has to be seen as flowing with time, therefore highlighting the paradoxical qualities of trying to preserve reality, as ‘that reality in some sense goes against that which motivates the desire to engage it’ (Rosen 2001: 28). In other words, the notion of the cinematic index as change mummified draws our attention to the presence of both the virtual and the actual.

Whilst Bazin’s arguments referred to the photochemical celluloid film strip, Laura U. Marks argues that this indexical nature of cinema did not diminish when the technology moved from celluloid to video. Marks demonstrates that the video camera electronically inscribes light unto the tape and ‘a calculable number of electrons move along a set of common wavelengths all the way from the object to the image’ (Marks 2002: 170). For example, when photons with the purple wavelength enter the analog video camera’s photoconducting layer, the lightwaves excite the electrons in the photoconductor, which in turn dislodge the purple photons ‘at wavelengths that continue to correspond to the color of the object being recorded’ (Marks 2002: 169). Like the way the celluloid strip reacts chemically to the exposure of light, different electrons in the video tape react to different aspects of light – electrons remember, and cinema continues to be materially haunted by its past.

In turn, Doane observes, with digital media and technology coming into play, the index faces ‘a certain crisis of legitimation’ (Doane 2007a: 1). In
contrast to the celluloid film strip and video technology, digital media and technology configure and store these data and images into discrete algorithms of 1s and 0s through a series of metallic and silicon strips. According to Marks, two steps intervene in digital imaging ‘to break the indexical bond: one that approximates analog information to a symbolic number, and one (repeated in every circuit) that obviates the wave-particle relationship’ (Marks 2002: 172). Because of this process of conversion, Marks argues, the indexical link is broken, or, at the very least, ‘quite attenuated’ (Marks 2002: 149). For Doane, like Marks and many other critics, what ‘is lost in the move to the digital is the imprint of time, the visible degradation of the image’ (Doane 2007b: 144). If we were to follow Doane’s proclamation, then my argument about the index would be tenuous because the imprint of time – the past haunting the present – is lost in the digital and the index is no longer a site where multiple temporalities interplay.

For Doane, the cinematic index’s privileged physical connection to the “outside world” is completely negated by the digital for ‘within the digital realm, there is no difference between original and copy, and information outlasts its material support’ (Doane 2007b: 143). Doane writes that the digital proffers

the vision (or nightmare) of a medium without materiality, of pure abstraction incarnated as a series of 0s and 1s, sheer presence and absence, the code. Even light, the most diaphanous of materialities, is transformed into the numerical form in the digital camera (Doane 2007b: 142).
Doane’s claim is two-fold. Firstly, the digital is immaterial because, unlike the celluloid or the video tape, it does not have any material constraints. Once translated into algorithms, the digitally stored images can be easily transposed wholesale into another digital storage when the strips of metals and silicon that are fundamental in digital technology wear out. Secondly, building on her first point, as digital information lasts longer than the material itself, and as there is no visible degradation of digital images at all in the process of transference, Doane argues that the indexical connection to the film’s material is lost.

My views diverge from Doane’s. Instead, I propose that the index is still present in digital filmmaking. Foremost, in responding to Doane’s charge that the indexical is no longer present in the digital (it must be acknowledged that her voice is only one out of the many critics here, who largely argue along similar premises), I draw from Martin Lefebvre and Marc Furstenau, who observe that the ‘anxious discourse’ surrounding the loss of indexicality is surprising because film studies has, for decades, argued that the film image was a ‘semiotic construct’, in which the images were understood ‘to have been intentionally produced according to specific aesthetic and semiotic protocols’ (Lefebvre and Furstenau 2002: 91 – 92). As an example, Lefebvre and Furstenau point to how apparatus theory argued that the world conveyed by the camera has already been filtered through a bourgeois ideology – the image is forced to look like that because of the implicit ideologies imbricated in the apparatus. This argument is similar to Peirce’s thoughts on the index, who writes:
Here is a view of the writer’s house; what makes that house to be the object of the view? Surely not the similarity of appearance. There are ten thousand others in the country just like it. No, but the photographer set up the film in such a way that according to the law of optics, the film was forced to receive an image of this house. What the sign virtually has to do in order to indicate its object – and make it its – all it has to do is just to seize its interpreter’s eyes and forcibly turn them upon the object meant (Peirce 1998: 380).

Braxton Soderman extends Peirce’s notion that the indexical link is a forced physical connection between the subject and the object into the digital realm. He posits that the law of computational execution suggests that a computer programme that translates a finite set of algorithms into images always has to follow the instructions given to it. Pressing the letter ‘m’ on the keyboard, for instance, will always result in the letter ‘m’ appearing on the screen if the particular computer programme has programmed it that way. A different computer programme might result in a different end product but, Soderman avers, that is similar to Peirce’s idea that the photographer has ‘pointed the camera at a different house’ (Soderman 2007: 163). Thus, Soderman, drawing from this idea that the index in cinema is always forced, proposes that there ‘is a physical connection between the image on a monitor and the code that created it, but this connection is mediated through conventional symbols’ (Soderman 2007: 164). In other words, for Soderman, the index – the existential link between the past and the present – is still present in digital technology.

I am in agreement with Soderman’s diagnosis and think that it provides a good defence to Doane’s first point about the lack of indexicality in digital filmmaking. Responding to Doane’s second point about the digital’s
immateriality, however, would require a little more unpacking. Doane suggests that the digital is immaterial because films captured with digital technology do not show signs of degradation, which consequently do not remind us of the medium’s material constraints. This, for Doane, means that the imprint of time is not evident and therefore the index is gone from the digital. As a counter-proposal, I want to point to two moments in The Visit and The Taking of Deborah Logan that highlight the material constraints that Doane suggests do not exist in digital technology.

In The Visit, Becca and Tyler are playing hide-and-seek at their mother’s old hide-and-seek place, which is in the small claustrophobic area directly beneath the house’s raised patio. Both Becca and Tyler, holding digital cameras in their hands, crawl into the area and the film cuts to their respective point-of-view shots as they crawl through the soil. As Tyler quickly gets into his hiding position, the film cuts to Becca as she addresses the camera announcing that whilst Tyler might be faster, she is significantly smarter than he is. Slowly, the sound of a low rumbling non-melodic drone enters the film’s score. Becca turns the camera away from her so that she can begin looking for Tyler. As the camera turns, the grandmother, with her hair down like Sadako from Ringu, starts crawling towards Becca. Becca screams and quickly crawls away. As she does this, the frame’s mise-en-scène becomes highly shaky. The drone slowly becomes louder and Tyler, in hearing Becca’s scream, realises that something is not right. As he calls out for Becca, the grandmother pops into his point-of-view and charges towards him. Tyler, like Becca, begins to furiously crawl away too as the grandmother continues to chase them under the patio. Finally, when the teenagers exit the
hide-and-seek area into the open space, the droning sound in the score stops and the grandmother comes out laughing because she had only been playing hide-and-seek with Becca and Tyler.

Throughout the scene, a clear threat is registered by _The Visit_ when the grandmother enters the frame, not least through the slow rumbling drone that sustains the tension that runs throughout the whole chase sequence. When the grandmother, the person who lives with dementia, enters the frame, both Becca and Tyler frantically run away. As they move, the images captured by their digital cameras become at times smeary and at times staccato. Here, what is happening onscreen is interesting. In digital cinematography, sequences become blurry because the camera’s shutter speed – the amount of light that is let into the camera before the shutter closes – is too slow. Conversely, if the camera’s shutter speed is too fast, not enough movement will be captured before the shutter closes, which results in a slight staccato effect. Therefore, in running away frantically from the grandmother, the camera’s automatic shutter speed has to adjust very quickly to the surrounding light sources, in turn resulting in this oscillation of shutter speeds. This change occurs when the person living with dementia enters the frame, and through her heightened temporal performance, not only draws attention to the digital technology’s material constraints but also highlights the link between the index and digital materiality.

In a similar vein, _The Taking of Deborah Logan_ highlights this material degradation. Towards the end of the film, Deborah kidnaps a young girl from the hospital, brings her to the mines where Desjardins had murdered all his victims, and is about to murder the girl in order to satisfy the ritual that would
have given Desjardins eternal life. Mia and Sarah track Deborah down and attempt to save the girl. Concurrently, they also aim to stabilise Deborah’s condition by breaking Desjardins’s ritual. In one moment, Mia and Sarah creep towards Deborah and the young girl in order to sedate Deborah. Mia holds on to the camera, which is set in night vision mode in order not to notify Deborah of their presence whilst Sarah slowly approaches Deborah with the sedative in her outreached hand. As Sarah gets closer to her mother, Deborah turns around and shouts directly into Sarah’s face. The young girl begins to scream and Mia begins to panic. The camera starts to shake about uncontrollably due to Mia’s frantic fumbling, and the film jump cuts repeatedly, losing frames in between shots. This chaos is further compounded by the shots of static fuzz that slowly creep into and haunt the sequence as this happens. The night vision mode fails and Mia is forced to turn on the camera’s lights, only to be violently attacked by Deborah. The camera and Mia drop to the ground as Deborah continues to assault Mia. At the same time as that happens, zebra lines – signs of a technical glitch – appear on the screen and a loud extended screeching feedback noise enters the audio. Deborah is forcibly removed from Mia and disappears out of the area with the girl. Almost simultaneously, the glitch – visual and aural – disappears from the sequence.
Rosa Menkman writes that the digital glitch ‘makes the computer itself suddenly appear unconventionally deep, in contrast to the more banal, predictable surface-level behaviours of “normal” machines and systems’ (Menkman 2011: 41). For Menkman, ‘glitches announce a crazy and dangerous kind of moment(um) instantiated and dictated by the machine itself’ (Menkman 2011: 41; emphasis in original). Following Menkman’s understanding of the glitch, we can think of the glitch, the visual deterioration of the digital image, as drawing our attention to the workings of the digital, to the strips of metal and silicon, to the 1s and 0s passing through the logic gates, to the electrons spinning up and down to create electrical signals, and to the computer programmes that ultimately determine what the images will look like. There is visible degradation in the digital images, and in the case of The Taking of Deborah Logan, glitches occur when Deborah, along with the threat to volatilise the relationship between the past and the present, enters
the frame, consequently drawing our attention to the continued presence of the index in the digital. Contrary to Doane’s claims, then, I argue that the indexical nature of cinema is not broken in digital cinematography. Rather, the digitally haunted index exists in a different form of intensity as compared to, say, the index of celluloid cinema, engaged in a different kind of temporal performance with the world.

**Reading Hesitantly**

In accounting for the indexical nature of digital technology, the chapter’s central claim about the index is refined and nuanced, consequently allowing a mode of hesitant reading to surface. This hesitant approach towards audio-visual images about dementia goes against many of the current scholarship of dementia, which is predominantly rooted in – to borrow from Sedgwick – a strict form of paranoid reading that is steeped in a hermeneutics of suspicion which seeks to anticipate and uncover the “hidden” ideologies/messages of the object of study. For some, like Capstick et al, this approach is explicitly referenced as they adopt ‘an interpretative approach which assumes that the surface meaning of a text is an attempt to conceal underlying political interests that are served by the text’ (Capstick et al 2015: 235). For others, like Raquel Medina, the paranoia is more implicit, as her monograph *Cinematic Representations of Alzheimer’s Disease* ‘aims to reveal’ the ways non-Western film cultures treat dementia in their cinemas (Medina 2018: 4 – 5). Either way, explicitly or implicitly, the language of revelation and exposé ripples through the scholarship on the cultural imaginaries of dementia.
According to Sedgwick, the paranoid reading depends ‘on an infinite reservoir of naïveté in those who make up the audience for these unveilings’, which assumes ‘that it will surprise or disturb, never mind motivate, anyone to learn that a given social manifestations is artificial, self-contradictory, imitative, phantasmatic, or even violent’ (Sedgwick 2003: 141). Some paranoid readings, at times, ‘do have great effectual force (though often of an unanticipated kind)’ but, Sedgwick proposes, many do not ‘and as long as that is so, we must admit that the efficacy and directionality of such acts reside somewhere else than in their relation to knowledge per se’ (Sedgwick 2003: 141). Effectively, Sedgwick suggests, one of the most palpable dangers of reading through rigid paranoia is that it requires ‘a certain disarticulation, disavowal, and misrecognition of other ways of knowing, ways less oriented around suspicion, that are actually being practiced’ (Sedgwick 2003: 144).

A strict form of paranoid practice, for Sedgwick, regularly renounces a reparative approach that is based on an affectively loving and intimate relationship with the text that is studied.¹⁷ Sedgwick writes:

Reparative motives, once they become explicit, are inadmissible in paranoid theory both because they are about pleasure (“merely aesthetic”) and because they are frankly ameliorative (“merely reformist”). What makes pleasure and amelioration so “mere”? Only the exclusiveness of paranoia’s faith in demystifying exposure: only its cruel and contemptuous assumption that the one thing lacking for global revolution, explosion of gender roles, or whatever, is people’s (that is, other people’s) having the painful effects of their oppression, poverty, or deludedness sufficiently exacerbated to make the pain conscious (as if otherwise it wouldn’t have been) and intolerable (as if intolerable situations were famous for generating excellent solutions)’ (Sedgwick 2003: 144).
Seen from this perspective, if I were to adopt a strict paranoid reading towards both *The Visit* and *The Taking of Deborah Logan*, and all the films that I have discussed in the previous chapters, then, really, the only conclusion and argument that I *can make and come to* is that the films’ overall treatment of dementia is horrifying and that this use of horror in relation to dementia is *wrong* because it continues to promulgate ageist beliefs.

But, as I hope to have made clear in my analyses of the formal properties of the films, I do take affective pleasure and intimacy in watching these films about dementia, and I do enjoy zooming into the micro details of the films to tease out the wider significance in which these minutiae might provoke and evoke a way of thinking about time that does not completely reject linearity nor non-linearity (in favour for one or another). As I approach the films about dementia through close textual analysis, exploring the implication of every tiny audio-visual detail, I pause, and hesitate, thinking about all the possible nuances and the wider temporal implications that might be attached to each detail. As I hesitate, I pause, and carefully tease out the multifaceted performances of time imbricated in the films about dementia, thinking through the networks of power and relations of cultural processes that are embedded in these temporal negotiations. Put differently, hesitation encourages a kind of closeness with the text that bridges both the paranoid and reparative practices as discussed by Sedgwick.
For Alia Al-Saji, there ‘is an unpredictability to hesitating, an interval that it creates, which means that what I make of my hesitations, or what hesitating makes of me, is a singular unfurling of time’ (Al-Saji 2018: 337; emphasis in original). In hesitantly thinking through the performances of time via the framework of performance and philosophy of difference in relation to films about dementia, as I link the temporalities of one index to another, my own subjectivities are equally implicated in the unfurling of time. The performances of time that I discuss are but one of the many possible performances of time. A different person coming to these films about dementia hesitantly thinking through the performances of time would engender a different unpacking of time. In turn, as I discuss in the next chapter through a detailed discussion of Singapore and a Singapore film about dementia, as more unfoldings and foldings of time occur, temporalities past and present thicken, opening up for the possibility of political change.
Chapter Four

Wandering across a National Time

In reviewing the treatment of dementia in films from 1970 to 2004, Kurt Segers observes that wandering appeared ‘to be an especially popular theme’ (Segers 2007: 58). This recurring trope, it seems, might perhaps be due to the fact that wandering occurs in 100% of ambulant people living with dementia who reside in a care home (Algase et al 1997); that up to 65% of all the people who live with dementia will display some sort of wandering-related behaviour after their diagnosis (Logsdon et al 1998); and that about 20% of people living with dementia will die due to their wandering (Wick and Guido 2006). Since 2004, little has changed, and wandering as a trope in films about dementia remains as common, appearing as an important aspect of the narrative in films like Pandora’s Box (Yeşim Ustaoğlu, 2008, Turkey) and The Mourning Forest (Naomi Kawase, 2007, Japan). For Segers, wandering gives ‘the screenwriter the occasion to change rapidly and unexpectedly the story’s location, to create tension and to introduce new characters or conflicts’ (Segers 2007: 58). Whilst this might be a plausible explanation, I look at the situation differently, and this chapter attempts to put forward a more complex understanding of this trope.

Writing about the silvering screen, Sally Chivers notes that dementia related conditions have ‘come to signify a fear of lack of memories that translates similarly into a fear of the loss of story’ (Chivers 2011: 60). Expanding on this notion, Pamela H. Gravagne suggests that this equation of dementia to a loss of narrative is largely due to logocentrism, where words and speech are significantly privileged over other kinds of communication. In
turn, Gravagne maintains that it is therefore not difficult to see how the lives, memories and identifications of people living with dementia, ‘whose ability to express themselves through either speech or writing is compromised’, are significantly devalued (Gravagne 2013: 150). Synthesising the arguments of Chivers and Gravagne, wandering in films about dementia, in their view, is therefore not only used as a device to move the narrative forward but can also further the horrors of living with dementia in the wider cultural imaginary.

In a similar vein, for the International Wandering Consortium, a group of scientists researching into dementia-related wandering, wandering is defined as:

A syndrome of dementia-related locomotion behaviour having frequent, repetitive, temporally-disordered and/or spatially-disoriented nature that is manifested in lapping, random and/or pacing patterns, some of which are associated with eloping, eloping attempts or getting lost unless accompanied (Algase et al 2007: 696).

This definition, unfortunately, presents a rather dim view of wandering in people living with dementia, seeing it as an activity that is not only spatially disorientated but also temporally confused, suggesting that there is not much cognitive activity behind the wandering, thus finding affinity with the arguments made by Chivers and Gravagne.

However, recent research has suggested that for people living with dementia, wandering may not necessarily be “aimless” nor as horrifying as researchers might make it out to be. Instead, wandering ‘can be linked to memories of familiar places’ (Brittain et al 2017: 279). For example, drawing
from interviews with carers, Katherine Brittain et al note that people living with dementia often wandered – or tried to wander – off to ‘places in their earlier lives or places they loved to visit’ (Brittain et al 2017: 278). In another instance, Elaine C. Wiersma, in conducting interviews with seven veterans who live with dementia, observes that their ‘experiences of place were viewed through the lens of the past’ (Wiersma 2008: 791). Likewise, Andrea Capstick and Katherine Ludwin argue that the place memories of people living with dementia ‘were often triggered because of associations with events in the present day’, suggesting that these memories of the past can often serve as a way in to understand their feelings about their environment in the present (Capstick and Ludwin 2015: 162).

If spaces and places are to be deeply connected with memories of the past conflating with the present for people living with dementia, then wandering becomes more than mere randomness. In traversing space, people living with dementia are also traversing both spatialised time and pure duration, enacting a particular performance of time, attempting to (re)connect with their pasts in the present. Viewed from this angle, the trope of wandering in films about dementia goes beyond just providing a catalyst for a change in location or an increase in dramatic tension, and it also becomes more than a mere issue of positive/negative representation of people living with dementia. Instead, wandering in films about dementia offers the potential for a nuanced articulation of issues surrounding memory – of remembering and forgetting – in relation to space and time in cinema.

In the previous three chapters, I laid out the theoretical scaffold to hesitantly think through the temporal identifications of the person living with
dementia vis-à-vis the person not living with dementia and other (non-)living phenomena, suggesting that the temporal methodology proposed offers a way to not only think through the ecologies of temporal performances but to also heterogeneously unfurl and surface the “hidden”/previously neglected aspects of the past in the present. In this chapter, I tie all these threads of argument together through the case study of Singapore and its cinema, and I explore the ways in which the trope of the person living with dementia wandering becomes a way to enter and traverse the nation’s discursive sphere of history and historiography.

Singapore and Singapore cinema have been chosen as the chapter’s focus because the nation and the nation’s cinema take on a particular inflection that results in an architectural environment that has apparently little or no history attached to it. This is an environment in which the nation’s revival cinema post-1995 displays a seeming amnesia and aphasia towards its cinematic history and bears little or no resemblance to the “golden age” of Singapore cinema from 1947 to 1972, where Singapore not only served as a hub for Malay-language film production in the region, but also as a “training ground” for Run Run Shaw before he moved to Hong Kong in 1957 to set up Shaw Brothers (which became the biggest film production company in Hong Kong).¹ In addition to this, the nation displays a peculiar habit of regularly banning and censoring films made about Singapore by people who live in Singapore because these films do not correlate to the state’s sanctioned history, forcing Singapore filmmakers to adopt pragmatic filmmaking strategies to avoid censorship (Khoo 2015).² In short, both Singapore and its
cinema rely heavily on unstable and often conflicting versions of the past in order to come to a certain understanding of the present.

In this chapter, through the analysis of the short film *Parting* (Boo Junfeng, 2015, Singapore), where the presence of the person living with dementia is integral to the film’s narrative, I explore the complexities of memory, of forgetting and of remembering, through the framework of temporal performance. I begin the chapter by situating *Parting* in a wider contextual surround, exploring the ways in which the film can be seen as engaging with the nation’s predominant narrative, The Singapore Story, which has a tendency to flatten the past of Singapore. Next, I examine the trope of the person living with dementia wandering in *Parting* alongside the notion of the *flânerie* as proposed by Walter Benjamin, arguing that the trope can be understood to enact a layered performance of time that brings the film’s diegesis, the cinematic apparatus, the audience and the wider rhizomatic world beyond the film together so as to bring various shreds of Singapore’s past (in)to the present. Finally, I suggest that the person living with dementia wandering, in bringing the past into the present differently, works to also thicken the national past that has been flattened, in turn allowing an entry into the textured layers of past that were previously unavailable to the people living in Singapore.

The issues at stake here are twofold. First, this chapter examines the trope of the person living with dementia wandering in relation to the film, putting forward an understanding of wandering as that of both traversing space and time, in turn offering a more nuanced understanding of wandering as compared to the seeming “meaninglessness” proposed by the other
scholars as discussed above. Second, the chapter dissects the ways in which the trope of the person living with dementia wandering in *Parting* works to surface a nation’s past(s) in and into the present tense so that it can be remembered again. In this sense, through an analysis of the temporal performances in Singapore and Singapore cinema, this chapter finds its place alongside a growing publication of revisionist history that offers a wider and longer history of Singapore (beyond 1965, the nation’s supposed “Year Zero”) that not only considers its colonial histories but also its place as a port island since 9th century Srivijaya.  

### The Flattening of Singapore’s Past

*Parting* is a short film part of the bigger portmanteau film *7 Letters* which features short film contributions from seven of the most prolific directors working in Singapore. It was released in 2015 as part of Singapore’s larger – and more frantic and pompous – commemoration of its fiftieth year of independence, which was forcefully thrust onto the nation when it was expelled from the Federation of Malaysia in 1965. The film is remarkable in part because it was commissioned and fully funded by the Media Development Authority (MDA) of Singapore and the Singapore Film Commission (SFC). Like all of the government’s arts funding bodies, the MDA and the SFC have a tendency to withdraw their funding for arts project partway if it were discovered that the projects did not chime with the state’s official discourses. Therefore, it is notable that *7 Letters*, which the film critic Maggie Lee describes as not ‘being flag-waving government mouthpieces’
but ‘are by turns argumentative, contemplative, passionate and ironic’, was released uncensored and celebrated by the government (Lee 2015). It is in these contexts that I consider Parting, and I suggest that, through the performances of time evinced by the trope of the person living with dementia in the film, the pasts that are buried/forgotten/flattened by The Singapore Story are brought to the fore and subsequently deterritorialised and reterritorialised.

Of particular interest in this chapter are the ways in which The Singapore Story buries and shapes the discourses of the nation’s history and historiography, and the ways in which the trope of the person living with dementia wandering in Parting might serve as a way to surface and reshape these shreds and layers of hidden past. The Singapore Story, as Kenneth Paul Tan observes, is the Singapore government’s official state narrative which focuses ‘on national vulnerability, constraints and challenges that transmits and preserves the survivalist mentality well into the present and also harness it for the purpose of justifying’ the ruling government’s authority (Tan 2016: 236). For Thum Pin Tjin, The Singapore Story paraded by the People’s Action Party (PAP), the nation’s ruling party since its independence in 1965, can be traced back to the nation’s British colonial origins, and is used to validate the government’s ‘intervention into the lives of Singapore’s residents; marginalisation of traditional or community sources of socio-political organisations; and expansion of arbitrary executive power’ (Thum 2017: 27). In turn, The Singapore Story promotes ‘a hegemonic account of an ahistorical middle-class generation that is anxious (even paranoid), materialistic and politically apathetic’ (Tan 2016: 236). As I explore below,
these discourses employed by the government have not only led to state-sanctioned censorship but also, on a more local level, varying degrees of self-censorship.

The Singapore Story, therefore, is a way to foster a national imagination that brings the people together through a discourse of pragmatism. To work through the temporalities of The Singapore Story so as to make my argument about the trope of the person living with dementia wandering in *Parting*, I turn to a discussion of a nation’s temporal performances as understood by Benedict Anderson, Lauren Berlant, Homi Bhabha and David Martin-Jones. The nation, Anderson, famously writes, ‘is an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign’ (Anderson 2006: 6). As Thomas M. Allen observes, Anderson’s ‘modern nationalism requires the invention of a stable and, crucially, empty temporal container within which national affiliation can express itself’ (Allen 2008: 7). This is to say, for Anderson, the nation is maintained by homogeneous, empty time; discussing the concept of the “mean-while”, ‘in which simultaneity is, as it were, traverse, cross-time, marked not by prefiguring and fulfilment, but by temporal coincidence, and measured by clock and calendar’, Anderson argues that even though people in the nation do not necessarily know one another, they are nonetheless bound up by the imagination that they are living in the same ‘clocked, calendrical time’ in the same society (Anderson 2006: 24 – 27). For instance, because they are living in the same clocked time, people can imagine that at 9am, many other people in the same nation are starting work together. They are, through their same attitudes towards time, imagined to be living in the
same nation – the ordering of time performs onto people in the nation a sense of psychical connection to one another.

Expanding on Anderson’s ideas, Berlant writes that the understanding of “the nation” as a nation is ‘communicated through the subject’s understanding that certain spatial and temporal experiences reflect, perform, and/or affirm her/his citizenship’ (Berlant 1991: 32). For Berlant, the fantasies provoked by nations – the national identifications of the citizens – provide ‘a translation of the historical subject into an “Imaginary” realm of identity and wholeness, where the subject becomes whole by being reconstituted as a collective subject, or citizen’ (Berlant 1991: 24; emphasis in original). This process of interpellation, Berlant argues, is negotiated through the National Symbolic, which she refers to as:

the order of discursive practices whose reign within a national space produces, and also refers to, the “law” in which the accident of birth within a geographical/political boundary transforms individuals into subjects of a collectively-held history (Berlant 1991: 20).

In other words, the National Symbolic is a space that consists of an assortment of strategies – of traditional icons, of metaphors, of heroes, of rituals and of narratives – that translates unto the citizen’s body a sense of totality that ‘mimics the nation’s permeable yet impervious spaces’ (Berlant 1991: 20 – 24). Berlant argues that the National Symbolic uses the nationalist mnemotechnique, which she describes as ‘a form of technology of collective identity that harnesses individual and popular fantasy by creating
juridically legitimate public memories’, to erase the citizen’s past in order to foster a sense of national identification (Berlant 1991: 8).

As Lily Kong and Brenda S. A. Yeoh (1997) write, the yearly National Day parades in Singapore that occurs on 9th August (the day Singapore became independent) becomes an emblematic means to erase the pasts of the different people living in Singapore so that they can – together – live out a national fantasy of “Singaporeanness” that is predicated on The Singapore Story, where an imagined narrative of Singapore progressing from a third world fishing village to a first world developed nation is propagated, and where the longer (cosmopolitan) histories of the island are filtered out. This eradication of the past, Berlant would suggest, results in an uncritical ‘occupation of the present tense’ that is ‘organized around the public spectacle of the will-to-not-know’ (Berlant 1991: 39; emphasis in original). Put differently, through the National Symbolic, which functions through the removal of the various pasts of people living in Singapore in favour of the present, citizens of Singapore are interpellated into a collective national imagination and fantasy that continuously perceives an Other that is going to steal their fantasy of the “good life” (this Other, as I elaborate later, is more often than not positioned as Malaysia).

Here, the approaches towards the nation adopted by Anderson and Berlant are predicated on a linear understanding of time that require the people of a nation to collectively imagine that they are, as it were, ‘moving steadily down (or up) history’ (Anderson 2006: 26). In complicating Anderson’s claims about the nation, Bhabha proposes to think of the nation
as ‘a contested cultural territory where the people must be thought in a double-time’ (Bhabha 2008: 297). He elaborates:

the people are the historical ‘objects’ of a nationalist pedagogy, giving the discourse an authority that is based on the pregiven or constituted historical origin or event; the people are also the ‘subjects’ of a process of signification that must erase any prior or originary presence of the nation-people to demonstrate the prodigious, living principle of the people as that continual process by which the national life is redeemed and signified as a repeating and reproductive process (Bhabha 2008: 297).

For Bhabha, there are two ways in which people are socialised into a nation – pedagogical and performative. On the one hand, the pedagogical approach ensures that the National Symbolic always has pasts (however empty) to ground the present in, in turn producing a dominant national narrative that allows the citizens to have an imagined lineage; on the other, Bhabha argues that people’s performance of their everyday lives have the potential to catalyse a reconsideration of a nation’s past. Drawing from Ernest Renan, Bhabha maintains that the identification of a national people can be made clear through the ‘syntax of forgetting’ (Bhabha 2008: 310). He writes: ‘Being obliged to forget becomes the basis for remembering the nation, peopling it anew, imagining the possibility of other contending and liberating forms of cultural identification’ (Bhabha 2008: 311). The nation, hence, relies heavily on the notion of forgetting to remember, on forgetting because there is nothing to remember, and on forgetting in order to remember.

Through this complex syntax of forgetting, the nation’s time and temporality do not function in a linear way. Rather, the double-time that
Bhabha speaks of works in a cyclical and circuitous manner, where the past is brought into the present through the pedagogical, and the performative brings the present back into the past, reworking the past in order to be brought back into the present again. The national identification engendered by this double-time, I suggest, can also be comprehended through the lens of temporal performance, where a subject’s national identification becomes but one aspect of their temporal identification, where the performance of their everyday life (through the push and pull between multiple entangled temporal identifications) has the potential to change the ways in which a national story might be narrated, and the nation’s time also affects the performance of the subject’s temporal identification. The nation, too, is performing time and performed by time.

For Martin-Jones, this double-time, this paradoxical relationship and constant negotiation between the past and the present, is not too dissimilar to Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s work on deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation. Martin-Jones, working on the way the nation and the national are narrated in cinema, suggests that deterritorialisation ‘enables a displacement of narrative into multiple labyrinthine versions’ whereas reterritorialisation ‘entails a constraining of a narrative into one linear timeline’ (Martin-Jones 2006: 4). According to Martin-Jones, reterritorialising narratives are evidenced by the presence of strong movement-images. For Deleuze, the movement-image ‘lies in extracting from vehicles or moving bodies the movement which is their common substance, or extracting from movements the mobility which is their essence’, and in capturing movement, the cinematic movement-image ‘puts bodies, parts, aspects, dimensions,
distances and the respective positions of the bodies which make up a set in the image into variation’ (Deleuze 2013a: 27). In movement-images, time passes linearly through movement.

Conversely, deterritorialising narratives point to the presence of strong time-images. In time-images, Deleuze suggests, the sensory-motor connections that chain time in movement-images are broken. In turn, opsigns (pure optical-images) and sonsigns (pure sound-images) arise, bringing the ‘objective and subjective, real and imaginary, physical and mental’ into constant contact (Deleuze 2013b: 9). In a time-image, we are confronted with not just the actual but also the virtual aspects of time, where various shreds of the pure past are surfaced, no longer secondary and shackled to movement, where ‘time is no longer the measure of movement but movement is the perspective of time’ (Deleuze 2013b: 22). For Martin-Jones, then, the deterritorialisation process criticises national narrative and the reterritorialisation process emphasises the narrative (Martin-Jones 2006: 35).

I am largely in agreement with Martin-Jones’s suggestion but I want to further nuance his ideas by returning to the original definitions provided by Deleuze and Guattari. In A Thousand Plateaus, deterritorialisation is defined as ‘the movement by which “one” leaves the territory while reterritorialisation is defined as not ‘a return to territory’ but the process in which these deterritorialised elements come together again to form a new version of the old (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 508 – 509). Drawing from Deleuze and Guattari’s definition, I suggest that reterritorialisation is more than merely reinforcing a territory but, rather, it reinvents the territory’s narrative (though, in many cases reinvented to further accentuate and emphasise the original).
Through the process of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation, and through a complex articulation of remembering and forgetting, the present of the modern nation grows to accommodate and/or appropriate new and updated pasts – in this sense, the constant state of becoming and change is taken into account in this multifarious performance of time.

Synthesising the ideas of Anderson, Berlant, Bhabha and Martin-Jones, we can begin to understand the overwhelming reach of The Singapore Story and the ways this national imagination works to disengage the past from the present tense of the subject’s national identification. The PAP government enacts a strict and tight control of the nation’s history, at times through violent clampdowns and at times through censorship. In turn, the older generations of people living in Singapore who witnessed or participated in the tumultuous struggle to steer the nation’s political direction immediately pre- and post-independence often resort to a form of self-censorship today, refusing to acknowledge their involvement in the turbulent period or buying into the state-sanctioned explanation of “brainwashing” so as to protect themselves and their families (Loh and Tan 2017: 47). Beyond self-censorship, some people living in Singapore simply do not remember or forget because, due to the complex interplay of state censorship and self-censorship, they were never provided with anything (or very little) to forget to begin with. All in all, then, the temporal performances enacted by The Singapore Story through the process of deterriolisation and reterritorialisation paint a very complex map of cultural aphasia in the nation.

Here, I borrow my understanding of cultural aphasia from Ann Laura Stoler, who suggests that the notion of aphasia ‘captures not only the nature
of that blockage but also the feature of loss’ (Stoler 2016: 128). For Stoler, aphasia emphasizes both the loss of access and active dissociation. In aphasia, an occlusion of knowledge is the issue. It is not a matter of ignorance or absence. Aphasia is a dismembering, a difficulty in speaking, a difficulty in generating a vocabulary that associates appropriate words and concepts to appropriate things. Aphasia in its many forms describes a difficulty in retrieving both conceptual and lexical vocabularies and, most importantly, a difficulty in comprehending what is spoken (Stoler 2016: 128; emphasis in original).

Unlike amnesia, which suggests that the past is forgotten, the concept of cultural aphasia as proposed by Stoler does not deny the presence of the past in the present. Rather, aphasia highlights the cultural process where people might be denied access to the past because the layered textures of the past have been reshaped so much – for Alia Al-Saji, in cultural aphasia, ‘we witness a flattening of the past, of the thick material trace of its reconfiguration’ (Al-Saji 2018: 345; emphasis in original). This is to say, the flattening process disregards the ways in which the past ‘is differentially weighted by its own duration’ (Al-Saji 2018: 345; emphasis in original). Or, to use a baking analogy (an idea which I revisit below), we can see the past of Singapore as a dough with many layers and folds, and The Singapore Story is a rolling pin that vigorously and violently rolls out the intricacies of this dough through time. In doing so, the textured qualities of the dough of the past are flattened (not removed or forgotten) and the points of entry into the various pasts of Singapore are no longer accessible to the people living in
Singapore, and what remains is a particularly shaped dough that most Singaporeans see and know.

**The Surfacing of Singapore’s Past**

If *The Singapore Story* overwhelmingly flattens the nation’s history and historiography, giving the people living in Singapore little or no way in to the nuances of a more textured past, *Parting*, through the trope of the person living with dementia wandering, makes prominent the shreds of the past in the present tense. The narrative premise of *Parting* is straightforward. Ismail, a man who lives with early stages of dementia travels to Singapore from Malaysia via the Keretapi Tanah Melayu (KTM) train in the hopes of finding an old sweetheart Swee Choo. Ismail grew up in Singapore but left for Malaysia in 1966, right after Singapore’s independence in 1965. For the first time in decades, Ismail returns to a Singapore completely foreign to him; in this city that Ismail has returned to, telephone numbers have one more digit than before, and housing estates have been torn down and replaced with taller ones. The Singapore in *Parting* is what Rem Koolhass describes as ‘the truly generic condition of the contemporary city’ where ‘history has been almost completely blotted out’ (Koolhass 1995: 1031). It is also the Singapore that Cherian George describes as possessing ‘an unsettling impermanence’, in which ‘the places you grow up in will not be the places you grow old in, and that you can never go back because what was there then is here no longer’ (George 2010: 190). It is, as David B. Clarke would write, ‘the world experienced by a stranger, and the experience of a world
populated by strangers – a world in which a universal strangehood was coming to dominate’ (Clarke 1997: 4). This is not the Singapore that Ismail remembers nor recognises, and this sense of alienation and disorientation is registered and reinforced by the film’s editing pattern, where the 180-degree rule that is usually used by filmmakers to maintain a cohesive relationship between a character and their surrounding is subtly broken – unlike the jump cuts employed by Jean-Luc Godard in Breathless (1960, France) or the consistent 360-degree use of space in the films of Yasujirō Ozu, in Parting, the editing pattern is still predominantly structured around the 180-degree rule with only a break in this adherence once in a while.

This not-remembering and unfamiliarity with the nation results in Ismail wandering around Singapore, lost, trying to find a fragment of his past. In one moment, Ismail sits on the bus looking out of the window and the film cuts to a reverse-shot of what he is looking at (the tall buildings of the city and the expressway that he is on). The film then cuts to various shots of the city, observing and taking in sights of the people living in this country: crowds walk around busily in the Central Business District as tall high-rise buildings loom over them, mixed-race families stroll around the city, and two men who may or may not be queer share a cold beverage from the same straw while walking down the street. These shots are not the point-of-view shots of Ismail nor is he present in the frame. Encouraged by Ismail’s wander, the film and the camera have gone on their own wander around the city.

In turn, the wandering body, the city, and the camera are intimately linked together, recalling Guliana Bruno’s claim that ‘the modern flâneur is the film spectator’ (Bruno 1993: 49). For Bruno, cinema ‘is the very synthesis
of seeing and going—a place where seeing is going’ (Bruno 2011: 245; emphasis in original). Likewise, James Tweedie puts forward a similar proposition:

Like a camera travelling carefully through the city, the body serves as a device for recording the going-ons throughout town. The city is imagined as an extension of the body in motion and the body as an extension of cinema (Tweedie 2013: 90).

Thus, for Bruno and Tweedie, the camera, in following the flâneur, the wanderer, gets caught in the act of flânerie too. This notion of site-seeing is echoed by Parting as Ismail’s search for his childhood lover brings Ismail to Chung Cheng High School and the film cuts to an extreme wide-angle shot of Chung Cheng High as Ismail, entirely dwarfed and engulfed by the school’s architecture, slowly traverses across the frame.

Figure 21: Ismail engulfed by Chung Cheng High in Parting
Here, this concept of the *flânerie* is useful as a starting point to think through the trope of the person living with dementia wandering. For Walter Benjamin, the act of *flânerie*, or the act of wandering, connects the *flâneur* with their past:

The street conducts the *flâneur* into a vanished time. For him, every street is precipitous. It leads downward – if not to the mythical Mothers, then into a past that can be all the more spellbinding because it is not his own, not private (Benjamin 2002: 417, M1, 2).

Three things from Benjamin’s description of the *flâneur* stand out when filtered through the framework of temporal performance as discussed in the previous three chapters. Firstly, the *flâneur* and their environment are inextricably linked, echoing Tim Ingold’s claim that in the act of walking, ‘landscapes are woven into life, and lives are woven into the landscape, in a process that is continuous and never-ending’ (Ingold 2004: 333). Second, *flânerie*, here, is seen as an active act of wandering as the *flâneur* uses their affective and sensory perception of the streets to create their own narratives. As Lucas Raymond proposes, the *flâneur* writes the city rather than reads it, and their ‘spectatorship is an active one’, as narratives are created as the *flâneur* wanders along the city streets (Lucas 2008: 171). In the same vein, Merlin Coverly suggests that the *flâneur*, who is bound to the developments of the city, ‘is a nostalgic figure who, in proclaiming the wonders of urban life, also acknowledges the changes that threaten to make the idle pedestrian redundant’ (Coverly 2006: 58). In looking at these two points for the moment,
the act of flânerie already exhibits a clash of temporalities. On the one hand, there is a tension between the past and the present as the flâneur longs for the past whilst simultaneously actively engaging with the present; on the other, there is a cyclical process of inscription, as the time and temporality of the city work its way into the flâneur only to be worked differently back into the environment. Through the act of flânerie, both the flâneur and the environment are performing and performed by time. In addition to the first two points, Benjamin’s description also highlights the notion that these temporalities and narratives that are perceived and written by the act of flânerie do not belong to the flâneur. These narratives are, as Benjamin argues, ‘not private’. Rather, they point to a wider shared and entangled narrative by the people who inhabit the spaces that the flâneur wanders. Thus, the flâneur can be seen as a wanderer that simultaneously forgets and remembers, and, in the act of wandering, a whole set of histories and pasts can be unearthed and told again, differently.²

Seen from this angle, the person living with dementia wandering might be understood as an act of flânerie, as the person living with dementia ‘goes botanizing on the asphalt’ (Benjamin 1997: 36). The flâneur is a figure that appears to be, on the surface, wandering aimlessly, allowing their pet turtle to set the pace of the stroll (Benjamin 1997: 54). Yet, beneath the surface, all their senses are at work, traversing space and traversing time, where it is, paradoxically, through the movement in time that time is unshackled from movement. Equally, the person living with dementia, whose wandering is often dismissed as aimless and senseless (see Chapter 1 on a discussion on the agency of the person living with dementia), can be thought of as
experiencing ‘a form of spatio-temporal disruption’ like that of the *flâneur* (Capstick 2015: 211).

For Capstick, this spatio-temporal disruption experienced by people living with dementia wandering can be understood in relation to the Situationist *dérive* – a concept made popular by Guy Debord – so as to ‘recognize the active agency of the wandering person’ (Capstick 2015: 212). Whilst I agree with Capstick’s call to bring temporality into the consideration of spaces that people living with dementia wander to or reminisce about, I am in less agreement with her adoption of the *dérive* as theoretical lens. This is because the *derive* – the drift – involves a ‘playful-constructive behaviour and awareness of psychogeographical effects, and are thus quite different from the classic notions of journey or stroll’ (Debord 1958). As Coverly notes, ‘Debord’s principle is nearer to a military strategy’ (Coverly 2006: 97). That is, the *dérive* occurs when the person decides to consciously and playfully drift around aimlessly. Contrarily, whilst *flânerie* can be seen as an active act of wandering, it is not *always* playful; when considered in relation to the person living with dementia, with all the potential sense of distress wandering brings about to not just the person living with dementia but also their carers, it becomes difficult to see how the wander can be as playful as the *dérive* demands.

It is thus more productive to think of the person living with dementia wandering through the lens of the *flânerie*, as a wander where the movement in time hesitantly surfaces time in itself. In turn, from this point of view, the trope of the person living with dementia wandering in films about dementia can be understood to enact a layered performance of time that involves a
combination of both movement- and time-images – a process of double-time, a process of reterritorialisation and deterritorialisation, and a process of remembering and forgetting – bringing the film’s diegesis, the cinematic apparatus, the audience, and the wider rhizomatic world beyond the film together, opening up the possibilities of new narratives and of different lines of flight.9

Where Ismail’s wander in Parting is concerned, it is therefore significant that it is at Chung Cheng High where he learns that Swee Choo has since moved to Australia, thus ending his attempt to reconnect with the Singapore before 1965, the year Singapore gained full independence. Here, borrowing from Mikhail Bakhtin, Chung Cheng High is thought of as a chronotope where ‘spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole’ (Bakhtin 2011: 84). In Parting, the role that Chung Cheng High occupies is not dissimilar to Bakhtin’s analysis of the castle that appears in Gothic literature; according to Bakhtin, the ‘castle is saturated through and through with a time that is historical in the narrow sense of the word, that is, the time of the historical past’ (Bakhtin 2011: 246). Further, the castle ‘is a constant reminder of past events’ (Bakhtin 2011: 246). Following Bakhtin, in order to understand the complexities of Ismail occupying the space of Chung Cheng High, I explore the ways in which the school comes to symbolise an important part of Singapore’s highly contested and forgotten past.

Though there were only nine Chinese middle schools in Singapore in the 1950s, and no opportunities for tertiary Chinese-language education, Chinese students were a formidable force in Singapore politics at that time.
In turn, Chung Cheng High, the biggest of all these Chinese middle schools, played a significant role in shaping the political course of the nation. C.M. Turnbull describes the Chinese-educated students of the fifties as idealistic people who ‘admired the Beijing regime and eagerly absorbed contraband books and communist propaganda from China’ (Turnbull 2016: 252). Kwok Kian-Woon, conversely, argues that this was an unfair label and that whilst there was a ‘strong presence of the Chinese-educated in leftist politics’, they were not ‘the equivalent of either “communist” or “pro-communist” (and pro-China or pro-Chinese Communist party at that)’ (Kwok 2001: 497). Nonetheless, the Chinese-educated students and the Chinese middle schools became a fertile playground for the politics of Singapore (from the securing of independence from Britain and the Federation of Malaysia to leaving a complex legacy in the nation’s linguistic policies) to play out.

In 1955, a general election was slated to happen for the first time in British colonial Singapore in the hopes of introducing the appetite for self-governance. The PAP put forward candidates to contest four out of the twenty-five available seats. Of the candidates were Lee Kuan Yew and Lim Chin Siong, who were two of the cofounders of PAP. Lee, who was English-educated, had just returned to Singapore after graduating from Cambridge with a law degree, and had a reputation amongst the people living in Singapore as ‘a left-wing lawyer’ (Turnbull 2016: 252). On the other hand, Lim was viewed as a highly charismatic and effective Chinese-language orator who could rally many Chinese students to fight for the causes of the left. Lim, as described by Clement Mesenas to be ‘Lee’s bastion in the Chinese community’, was not only able to communicate to the Chinese
community in Chinese vernaculars but was also able to mobilise a large amount of Chinese middle school students to canvass for the PAP during the campaigning period (Mesenas 2013: 160). As Turnbull notes, the ‘[a]utomatic registration of voters had increased the electorate from 76,000 to more than 300,000, of whom the majority of voters were working-class Chinese (Turnbull 2016: 260). This appeal to the Chinese community proved to be successful and the PAP won three out of the four contested seats. Both Lee and Lim were elected on to the assembly and that set the stage for Singapore’s independence in 1965.10

Singapore gained full internal self-governance from the British in 1959 and the PAP, winning 43 out of the 51 seats, went on to form the government. In 1961, Lim (and the left of the party) was expelled from the PAP as the moderates of the party (which included Lee) lost confidence in the left-leaning members. Lim went on to form the Barisan Sosialis in the same year, which became the second most popular party after the PAP. On 2 February 1963, in the name of national security, the PAP government launched Operation Cold Store in order to detain suspected communists under Singapore’s Internal Security Act. Over 100 people were arrested, of which many were Chinese student leaders (Turnbull 2016: 281 – 282). Lim was one of those arrested during the operation, where he was imprisoned without trial for a long period of time and kept in solitary confinement. During Lim’s detention, Singapore merged with Malaya to form the Federation of Malaysia in 1963 and was then expelled from the Federation on 9 August 1965, with independence forcefully handed to Singapore. Lee Kuan Yew
became the Prime Minister of the nation whereas Lim, who was released in 1969, lived a quiet life away from political life till his death in 1996.

The importance of the Chinese middle school students in Singapore’s politics should therefore not be underestimated, in part because they played a significant role in getting Lee elected into the assembly in 1955. Yet, today, the students’ contributions, like Lim’s, have been mostly written out of the nation’s official discourse and history, and many of these student leaders/campaigners have been politically exiled and described as communists (a derogatory label associated with the ghosts of the Cold War). For instance, when Chung Cheng High was gazetted in 2014 for its architectural significance, The Straits Times – the state-controlled English-language newspaper – described the school as ‘a hotbed for the leftish student movement under the influence of the communist underground’ (Cheow 2014). Regardless of Chung Cheng High’s rich history, its past is largely and consciously erased by the nation, and whatever shreds of the past that remains are in turn framed as a compelling threat to the stability of the nation – in this example, the history and historiography associated with Chung Cheng High is completely shaped by The Singapore Story.

For Sai Siew Min, a larger Singaporean public today not only perceives no political significance in the student activism of the fifties and sixties but also sees Malaysia, where many of the political exiles of Operation Cold Store live, ‘as a jealous and often times, adversarial neighbour’ (Sai 2009). Sai writes, and I quote at length:

---

11 For instance, when Chung Cheng High was gazetted in 2014 for its architectural significance, The Straits Times – the state-controlled English-language newspaper – described the school as ‘a hotbed for the leftish student movement under the influence of the communist underground’ (Cheow 2014).

12 Sai writes, and I quote at length:
This suspended “meaningless-ness” of detainees in Singapore is to me symptomatic of a collective amnesia, one that renders former political prisoners inconsequential to Singapore’s past, present and future. Brandishing The Singapore Story as national history, the PAP is often accused of remembering history in a loaded manner. Less obvious are the amnesias The Singapore Story has generated, not so much as a consequence of the PAP’s deliberate suppression of counter-voices through sheer coercion or neglect but rather because the story’s overwhelming dominance has ensured mass dissemination of its logic and acceptance of the historical consciousness underpinning its narrative. Historical amnesias of this type cannot be compensated for by journalism-type exposes or revelation of fresh documentary material since they do not connote simple loss of memory or attempts to put the past away. They indicate, rather, a society’s failure to generate meaning from its engagement with the past (Sai 2009).

Here, Sai’s comments highlight the temporal disengagement and cultural aphasia (though Sai uses the term amnesia, her argument corresponds more with Stoler’s understanding of aphasia as the difficulty in remembering) a lot of Singaporeans exhibit as the overwhelmingly dominant national narrative provided by The Singapore Story results in a severe disconnect with the nation’s past – the majority of people living in Singapore, in other words, live in the present that unceasingly refreshes itself, void of any historical attachment because the layers of the past have been flattened, and is continuously future-oriented. This collective aphasia predicates on an overpowering performance of empty, homogeneous clock time – and one that does not (or very minimally) meaningfully engage with the past at all – onto the subjects of the nation.

It is therefore very interesting that Ismail, having grown up in Singapore in the fifties and the early sixties, does not recognise the school in
Parting at all when he first hears about it, and the school – the chronotope that is saturated through and through with the time of the historical past – is also where his search for his past ends. Despite Ismail wandering to Chung Cheng High attempting to remember his past, despite being completely overwhelmed and engulfed by the school’s architecture, and despite the richness of all the pasts in the school waiting to be unearthed, the film does not allow that to be brought into the present per se – this is because the official narrative of the state does not allow that past to be remembered (and the audience would also probably not remember/know). Seen from this point of view, it could be argued that Ismail’s narrative is microcosmic of Singapore’s wider issue with forgetfulness, and therefore merely reinforces the inability of the state to remember its past.13

The Thickening of Singapore’s Past

However, I argue that in this moment, through the person living with dementia wandering into the school, occupying the space of historical time in the school, Parting begins the process of deterritorialising The Singapore Story for its reterritorialisation. As Ismail comes to realise that Swee Choo has moved to Australia, the film cuts to a mid-shot of him sat in the school processing the fact that he is not going to find Swee Choo in Singapore. As the camera lingers on his face, Swee Choo’s voice enters the film, continuing the letter that she wrote to Ismail in 1966. She says, in Malay, “Something else has changed, Ismail.” Indeed, though Ismail’s active search for his past comes to an end in Chung Cheng High, something does change after the
encounter in the school as Ismail begins wandering around Singapore again, making his way to the Tanjong Pagar Railway Station in an attempt to take the KTM train to return to Malaysia. Like Chung Cheng High, Tanjong Pagar Railway Station can be thought of as a chronotope that is equally overflowing with historical time as it had been the railway link between Singapore and Malaysia from the early 1920s, where it was the southern terminus for the KTM (Malaysia’s main rail operator).

On 1 July 2011, the KTM relocated its southern terminus to another area of Singapore. Before July 2011, the land that the railway station occupied had represented a site of unresolved tension between Singapore and Malaysia for, when Singapore was expelled from Malaysia in 1965, the PAP signed an agreement with the Malaysian government, allowing Malaysia to maintain ownership over the plot of land that the Tanjong Pagar Railway Station was built on. In turn, the railway station became an irregularity in Singapore that was not quite Singapore. Hence, as Liew Kai Khiun et al observe, the station ‘had never been officially legitimised as part of Singapore’s past’, becoming ‘an awkward reminder of the territorial presence of Malaysia on Singapore’s soil’ (Liew et al 2014: 765). The station, therefore, becomes an index of Singapore’s history pre-1965, a history that Singapore has been consciously trying to control since the removal of history as a subject from the primary school curriculum in 1972 so as to not rouse unpleasant collective memories between the Chinese and the Malays (Lee 2015: 135).

As Ismail enters the station, a group of people dressed up like they are from the sixties walks out of the station. At that moment, Ismail catches
the eye of a young man, who stops, momentarily, as he looks at Ismail with a look of recognition on his face. The sensory-motor schema of the movement-image that has brought Ismail’s wander to the Tanjong Pagar Railway Station is broken by the Deleuzian recollection-image. Deleuze writes:

Here, I abandon the extending of my perception, I cannot extend it. My movements – which are more subtle and of another kind – revert to the object, return to the object, so as to emphasize certain contours and take “a few characteristic features” from it. And we begin all over again when we want to identify different features and contours, but each time we have to start from scratch. In this case, instead of an addition of distinct objects on the same plane, we see the object remaining the same, but passing through different planes (Deleuze 2013b: 45 – 46; emphasis in original).

As Ismail and the man share a glance, music enters the film’s score. Whilst this moment could be seen as a form of hallucination from Ismail’s dementia, it could also be read as Ismail’s past walking right out of the station to meet him. Through the recognition-image that may or may not be due to the dementia, the man belongs to more than one temporal plane, and the shreds of the virtual past buried in the environment are surfaced and gestured towards. In turn, through the person living with dementia wandering, a sense of temporal indeterminacy – of temporal hesitation – is engendered and encouraged at the railway station, and the relationship between the past and present becomes blurred.

At this moment in the film, seemingly, the sensory-motor schema of Ismail’s physical movement through space is broken by the recollection-
image that is filtered through his dementia, and a sense of hesitation is generated. For Al-Saji, to hesitate is to slow down and modulate temporality. She writes:

The incompleteness, both of affect and of that to which affect responds, is here felt. To wait is to testify that time makes a difference for experience, that all is not given in the present. To wait, without projection, is not only to be open to a futurity that escapes prediction, but also to a past that can be dynamically transformed through the passage of events, and that grounds the creative potential of events. This breaks with the closure of the past and the predetermination of the future (Al-Saji 2014: 148).

To hesitate, then, is to unfurl time, as the linearity of the sensory-motor schema is broken, as the present tense is no longer chained by movement to a past that determines the future. Put differently, for Al-Saji, hesitation ‘makes possible transformations in habit, and the phenomenological opening that can be utilized and supplemented for such change to take place’ (Al-Saji 2014: 149). Seen from this point of view, I suggest that the mode of hesitation as proposed by Al-Saji draws parallel with Deleuze’s demented time (see Chapter Two), where the delayed gap induced by hesitation can be understood as the fracture – the caesura – that cuts time, allowing difference in itself to return whilst portions of the past are left behind.

This understanding of the virtual returning to be negotiated differently to form the new through hesitation and demented time is important to my suggestion that thinking of time through the framework of performance allows the past to heterogeneously surface. This is especially significant in relation
to Singapore and Singapore cinema, where the past is very consciously and violently suppressed, and where pragmatic practices of self-censorship are adopted by the people living in the nation. As the sense of hesitation is engendered by Ismail’s wandering encounter with the man, the film cuts to a shot of a Malay man entering the station walking towards a Chinese woman. This man and woman have been established earlier – through multiple close-up shots of a photograph that Ismail owns – to be the younger version of Ismail and Swee Choo. The young man asks the woman whether she will be following him to Malaysia and she is silent, sobbing, unable to answer his question. Concurrently, the score music continues to play but also, at the same time, the sound of trains running can be heard, giving the impression of this being a busy railway station. All in all, through the sound and music, and the choice of actors, this moment is signposted as Ismail’s flashback, where the movement-image narrative has given way to the time-image narrative.

Interestingly, then, while the man and woman look at each other, Ismail walks into the frame, in turn challenging the audience’s understanding of this moment as a flashback (and time-image), furthering the notion of temporal indeterminacy brought about by the person living with dementia. It is then revealed that Ismail has actually stumbled on to a camera crew filming a scene, and that the man and woman are merely actors (and not his flashback). As Ismail walks past the camera, the lights, the boom microphone, the production crew and the actors, the self-reflexive moment – driven, once again, by the movement of Ismail’s wander – creates a sense of double-time. With the same actors playing both the younger Ismail and Swee
Choo, and the actors on the film set, the past is brought into the present to be performed differently, enacting a particular performance of time that pushes and pulls at the deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation processes.

Ismail makes his way to the platform and sits down, waiting for his train – though, of course, the train will never arrive because, as the audience is already reminded at the beginning of *Parting*, Tanjong Pagar Railway Station is no longer the southern terminus for the KTM trains. As he waits in an almost Beckettian manner, the young man and woman walk towards the platform too, taking a break from filming. The man tries to get the woman to say something in Malay and it is revealed that she does not understand a single word of Malay, in direct contrast with the Malay-language voiceover from Swee Choo that the audience has heard throughout the entire film. Though Malay was officiated as Singapore’s national language in the Language Policy Act in 1965, Singapore’s education system had increasingly moved towards making English the neutral *lingua franca* that allowed all the different racial and ethnic groups in Singapore to communicate (the movement towards English as the preferred language of communication in comparison to other languages like Malay and Chinese played a huge part in erasing the histories of different communities in Singapore). The young woman, then, though dressed in a dress reminiscent of the sixties, very much represents the Singapore today and its inability to (re)connect with the past because the nation is too subscribed to The Singapore Story.
Yet, as Swee Choo’s voiceover insisted, something has changed through Ismail’s wandering. As the woman sits down, Ismail turns and looks at her. Likewise, the woman turns and looks at Ismail too. A shot/reverse shot ensues as both Ismail and the woman share a smile. On the one hand, this could be read as a polite correspondence. On the other, the look and smile can be read as a queer and knowing exchange that opens up the possibilities for the audience to “read against the grain” and to renarrativise the temporal identifications of both Ismail and the woman. As they share the glance, the horn of a train arriving enters the film, and, at that moment, the film fades to black, signalling the end of Parting. Importantly, before the film draws to a close, in darkness, the sound of the horn continues to linger and permeate the film, consequently imbuing a sense of ambiguity to the final sequence of events.
Through the psychical connection between the two characters, the station comes alive again, and the past – the virtual – is brought into the present, visually and aurally enacting the sense of actualisation as understood by Deleuze. In *Parting*, Ismail’s dementia catalyses a wander to Tanjong Pagar Railway Station, and this journey through space and time – this process of double-time, this process of reterritorialisation and deterritorialisation, and this process of remembering and forgetting – engenders new lines of actualisation, as shreds of the national past are surfaced differently into the present tense of the film. Moreover, the sound of the train arriving continuing to punctuate the film as the film fades to black can also be read as the various aspects of the present becoming part of the past, consequently reconfiguring the textualities of the past.

Here, I elaborate on this analysis of the final moments of the film by turning to Al-Saji, who, like Henri Bergson and Deleuze, sees the *a priori* past as co-existing alongside the present. For Al-Saji, as the present passes into the past, as the actual becomes virtual, the present ‘magnetizes the whole of the past of which it is a part’ (Al-Saji 2018: 342). This present passing, Al-Saji writes, can be understood as a process of virtualisation:

New relations are woven to the whole of the past; this past shifts as past relations are repeated–confirming and stabilizing them–and as others are diverged from. This shift in relationality means that the past may be redistributed or fragmented; while some “events” are pulled apart, others come into contact and begin to coalesce (Al-Saji 2018: 342).
Through the present passing, the past is reconfigured. Using the analogy of a baker handling a piece of dough, Al-Saji sees the process of virtualisation as the stretching out of the past dough and folding it, thickening the dough up again (this argument becomes particularly significant for Singapore and Singapore cinema when we recall that The Singapore Story is a rolling pin that flattens out the layers of Singapore’s history and historiography, leaving the people living in Singapore little or no entry points into the intricacies of the past). In the process of virtualisation, the dough is stretched out and folded onto itself, simultaneously fragmenting the past and bringing different and new regions into contact. In turn, Al-Saji notes, ‘new relations may form, producing a qualitative change in the relational whole’ (Al-Saji 2018: 343). Consequently, through the person living with dementia wandering in *Parting*, as Ismail wanders across a national time, and as the station comes alive again in both the past and the present, the film opens up ways to thinking about the past differently, forming fresh links with the now thicker past that was once flat, and providing the characters on screen and the audience avenues into this search for a suppressed past.

In *Parting*, the temporally flattening effects of The Singapore Story are in put in conversation with the temporal performances of the person living with dementia. In attending to the intricacies of these intersecting temporal performances critically and hesitantly, fresh relations with the past are forged, and new and different ways for the past to be remembered in the present are opened up. For Al-Saji, hesitating in a critical manner opens up the opportunity to transform the structures of lived possibility. Firstly, ‘hesitation interrupts the embodied past that we live as habit’, breaking the
sensory-motor schema of the movement-image (Al-Saji 2018: 347). Secondly, ‘in the interval that pries open habit, an attentiveness to the present can emerge’ (Al-Saji 2018: 347). Thirdly, in pausing, critical hesitation brackets ‘the teleology of progress and hope’ and suspends ‘the logic of utility’, allowing ‘superfluous and aleatory remnants’ to overflow the present (Al-Saji 2018: 347). In critically hesitating, then, movement-image gives way to time-image, allowing the temporalities of the hesitant subject to unfurl and to (re)connect differently with other indexes.

Correspondingly, the trope of the person living with dementia wandering in films about dementia becomes critical hesitation writ large (and not mere randomness or used to further/cathartically purge the horrors of living with dementia). Through Ismail’s wanders, the past thickens, and the people living in Singapore are in turn offered a way in to rhizomatically link their own temporal identifications with the textured layers of Singapore’s history and historiography, and to create new narratives from these temporal engagements. This, I believe, is the methodological potential of thinking about time through a philosophy of difference and the prism of performance.
Coda

My Grandparents

Towards the end of 2017, I returned to Singapore from the UK for a short break, and one of the first things I did was to visit my Ah Ma, my grandmother, who had been diagnosed with vascular dementia the year before. When she saw me walk into the room, my Ah Ma addressed me in Hokkien, a Chinese-language vernacular, and we talked:

Ah Ma: You’re back from school.
Me: I am.
Ah Ma: How was school?
Me: It was nice. It was cold.

My mother, who was in the room with me, got extremely excited with this conversation. For her, my Ah Ma announcing that I am back from school immediately when I entered the room was a sign that my Ah Ma still recognised me.

For my mother, ‘You’re back from school’ is attached with the narrative significance commonly associated with the verbal utterances in films about dementia. At the end of Still Alice (Richard Glatzer and Wash Westmoreland, 2014, USA/UK/France), for example, Alice, who lives with early onset Alzheimer’s disease, is sat beside her daughter as she is read a portion of the play Angels in America. At the end of the reading, her daughter asks Alice what the play was about. Alice, looking at her daughter, says, “Love”. Almost immediately, music enters the score, infusing the final moments of the film with a sense of affective significance. As the music
swells, the film cuts to a wide-angle handheld shot of the younger Alice walking on the beach with her daughter. This final image in the film is shot on Super 8 film, strongly suggesting that this is a flashback of both Alice’s and her daughter’s more nostalgic and carefree past.

Here, one understanding of the film’s last moments is that Alice, a linguistics professor who no longer has the ability to speak properly due to her early onset familial Alzheimer’s disease, is still Alice. She continues to remember, and that her enunciation of the word “Love” is imbued with all the audio-visual significance of Alice remembering how much she loves her daughter. This is not an uncommon reading and has been iterated by many critics. Kenneth Hepburn, for instance, writes:

> It allows the viewer to see that Alice, even far into her dementia, is still Alice; her person is still intact though the illness has stripped her of most of the trappings of talent, grace, and skills. She is, echoing lines Lydia reads from *Angels in America*, a soul ascending; she continues to resonate with love (Hepburn 2015: 329).

Despite Alice being unable to speak, she still has her memories to ground her presence and present, and the final line in the film becomes a way to authenticate her personhood. Through the word, her daughter’s relationship with her continues.

Likewise, my mother’s excitement about my conversation with my Ah Ma seemed to stem from the same point of view. In my mother’s mind, my Ah Ma announcing that I was back from school was a sign of her recognising that I had returned from Manchester, and that my Ah Ma’s memories had not
really disappeared. In this way, my mother found some momentary solace and comfort thinking that her mother was still here, and she was still the same mother.

At the risk of coming across as a terrible son, I am more hesitant about my conversation with my Ah Ma than my mother’s interpretation. On the one hand, at that moment in time, my Ah Ma could really be referring to me returning from Manchester, acknowledging that I had spent the last six years away from Singapore. On the other hand, the conversation could have been about anything. I could have been my younger self, at the age of six, for example, returning to my Ah Ma’s place after nursery (for a lot of my early childhood, I stayed with my grandparents as my parents worked). I could have been my Uncle (I look uncannily similar to my Uncle) returning from school and wanting to have some food. I could have been my mother, who, after school, usually goes to the cinema to help my Ah Ma out at her stall (my Ah Ma used to work at the cinemas in Orchard Theatres in Singapore, selling sweet treats and snacks to audiences before and after they watched the films). I could have been anyone and we could have been anywhere.

The point is: the verbal exchange between the two of us was so short that it engendered a sense of hesitancy in me which compelled me to pause and think more carefully about the event in the room. Suggesting that my Ah Ma was definitely addressing me as the prodigal grandson who has finally returned to Singapore only does my relationship (and my mother’s) with my Ah Ma a disservice for it flattens the layers of our past and reduces the possibilities for us to carefully think through the entanglements of our lifestories. Beyond that, pinpointing my Ah Ma’s exclamation to one singular
source or explanation becomes a means to further (re)affirm my mother’s sadness whenever my Ah Ma does not respond to her questions like “Do you remember who I am?” and “Where are you right now?”. For my mother, and the wider family in general, whenever my Ah Ma does not meet the requests that require her to occupy a fixed temporal position, it only serves to prove that her lifestory is gradually becoming foreclosed.

As I have argued in the thesis, the person living with dementia, like the person not living with dementia, is always in a state of becoming and change. We are always performing time and performed by time. If we were to insist on asking my Ah Ma to continuously remain on a singular and immobile temporal plane so that she can fulfil our fantasies of a fixed sense of linearity, she can only but be positioned as the threatening Other, as her lived experiences is pitted against our lived experiences. However, if we were to accept that my Ah Ma is experiencing time differently – as we are all experiencing time differently – then we can begin to engage with my Ah Ma and build a shared world together, performing our temporalities onto her and allowing us to be performed by her temporalities. In the same vein, Alice’s “Love” does not have to only be read as a reiteration of her love for her daughter; it could be an assemblage of many other things and the final shot of the film could, perhaps, be read as the past returning differently as Alice and her daughter continue with their creation of a collective world, where the lifestory of Alice is entangled with the lifestories of everyone else on and off screen through that of difference.

Years before my Ah Ma’s diagnosis with vascular dementia, my Ah Gong, my grandfather, also lived with vascular dementia for a while before
he passed away. In one of my visits, my Ah Gong, bed-ridden, had this conversation with me:

Me: Ah Gong.
Ah Gong: *(In Hokkien)* Aeroplane.
Me: Yes.
Ah Gong: *(In Hokkien)* You take care of my daughter.
Me: I will.
Ah Gong: *(In English)* Do not judge, or you too will be judged.
Me: Ah Gong.
Ah Gong: MaoHui.
Me: Have you eaten?
Ah Gong: *(In Hokkien)* Ask Ah Ma to make you food.

This exchange took me completely by surprise. In the short moment between my Ah Gong and I, at least three things happened as he performed his intersecting temporalities onto me. Firstly, he addressed me as my father, referring to me as my father’s nickname (aeroplane), asking my father to take good care of my mother. Secondly, he asked me to go have food, which was a regular refrain between my grandparents and I. Thirdly, and perhaps the most intriguing of them all, in English, he quoted from the Bible.

My Ah Gong was notoriously opaque as a person. Although he would always go on long bicycle rides by himself whenever his children and grandchildren visited, he would also never fail to make sure that the fridge will be filled with his handmade jellies so that we can snack on them. When I mentioned to my uncle that Ah Gong had quoted the Bible in English to me, he just shrugged it off and said that my Ah Gong could actually speak Dutch and English fluently, and could quote the Bible and the Quran at ease. This knowledge was a revelation to me because, growing up, I had never heard my Ah Gong speak any English or Dutch before, let alone have any
conversations about religion. It was, as I suggested in the thesis, a past that had been flattened and was not accessible to me for a variety of reasons, not least because both my Ah Ma and Ah Gong did not really speak about their pasts with me very much.

Yet, through Ah Gong’s dementia, shreds of his past and the nation’s past are thickened and made available to me. Upon more conversations with my family, I realised that it made perfect sense that my Ah Gong was able to speak so many languages. Ah Gong and Ah Ma grew up in Indonesia as children and subsequently moved to Singapore, which meant that they lived through both the Dutch and British Empires. My Ah Gong had a rather good education and was therefore not only fluent in the languages of both colonisers, but was also familiar with both Christian and Islamic thoughts. Somewhere along his lifecourse, however, he stopped displaying this knowledge to the people around him, and it meant that I never knew about this aspect of him.

My conversation with my Ah Gong reminded me of Sandcastle (Boo Junfeng, 2010, Singapore), a film which follows En as he tries to excavate his late father’s involvement with Singapore’s student politics in the 1950s and the early 1960s (the hidden past that neither his mother nor grandmother wants/is able to discuss). In the film, En’s grandmother lives with dementia and, when awake, completely refuses to talk about his father’s past. Yet, when asleep, she asks her daughter-in-law to persuade her son to admit that he is a communist – no matter the truth – so that he can come back to Singapore and live with the family (En’s father is a victim of Operation Cold Store – see Chapter Four – and is living in Malaysia in exile). Yet, despite En
hearing his grandmother sleep talk, he is unable to figure out what she is saying.

Nonetheless, again through the grandmother’s dementia, the formal properties of Sandcastle do allow En (and the audience) a way in to the grandmother’s subjectivity in order to have access to this flattened past. Towards the latter half of the film, En brings his grandmother to Malaysia together so that they can visit his father’s grave. At the end of the trip, both grandmother and grandson go to a jetty to look at the sea, where, in the far distance, the faint outline of Singapore can be seen. En walks towards the end of the jetty and, as he does so, the film cuts to a mid-shot of the back of En’s father taking a picture with his camera. This shot is not filmed from the grandmother’s point-of-view as her head is still in the foreground of the shot, suggesting that this is not necessarily a flashback. En’s father turns around and smiles at his mother, and the film cuts to a reverse shot of the grandmother who slowly looks up and realises that she is seeing her son. A look of surprise overcomes her as the film cuts to a close-up of two pairs of hands grasping each other. The film then cuts to a shot of the father looking at the grandmother, and back to another shot of hands holding. Finally, the film cuts to an extreme wide-angle shot of the jetty and the sea, and En is holding his grandmother’s hand as they both share a moment.

In this moment, in the close-ups, it is unclear whose hands the grandmother is holding, and she also does not initially realise that her son is standing in front of her. In turn, this suggests that by wandering with his grandmother, En is also experiencing this clash of temporalities as he begins to enter and traverse Singapore’s history and historiography. Through both
the temporal performances of En and his grandmother, the past of Singapore that was flattened by The Singapore Story is thickened. Accordingly, En (and the audience of *Sandcastle*) is hesitantly provided an opening to rhizomatically link his temporal identifications with the intricate layers of the nation’s history and historiography in order to create new narratives from these temporal negotiations.

Like En in *Sandcastle*, via the interactions with both my Ah Ma and Ah Gong, I am also provided access to the various shreds of my past that I was never privy to. For my Ah Ma, I had to remind myself that there is perhaps more past to what might be on the surface, as I examined the prospect that maybe she was not addressing me as me per se. For my Ah Gong, I had to ask around for ways to understand this past as I tried to figure out why he was quoting the Bible in English. In both instances, in hesitantly approaching these conversations, in allowing time to unfurl, I am able to slowly piece together bits of the familial and national past that I have been offered, and I am able to form fresh relations with a past that I had not really known was there. In a sense then, in examining the film form vis-à-vis filmic narratives about dementia, the thesis has become a way for me to work through these personal and hesitant confrontations with my Ah Ma, who lives with dementia, and my Ah Gong, who lived with dementia, as I learnt to orient myself as temporally relational to my grandparents.

Here, I am following Lauren Berlant’s suggestion that ‘all sorts of narratives are read as autobiographies of collective experience’ (Berlant 2008: vii). ¹ My interactions with my grandparents or my analyses of films about dementia, however specific and singular, are possibly also – to varying
degrees – what many people will encounter now and/or in the near future as the world’s population gets increasingly older. The World Health Organization, for one, estimates that there will be about 82 million people living with dementia across the world in 2030, and this figure is projected to rise to 152 million in 2050 (World Health Organization 2019). The Alzheimer’s Disease International, for another, predicts that there will be about 131 million people living with dementia by 2050, and that for people over the age of 65, the chances of being diagnosed with dementia is 5% whereas for people over the age of 80, the probability increases to 20% (Alzheimer’s Disease International 2019). No matter which organisational website or research paper you peruse, whatever the figures they predict, the common underlying agreement is that there will be more people living with dementia.

These numbers on the people who live or will live with dementia in the future, Kathleen Woodward would argue, contribute to the engendering of a sense of statistical panic, where ‘fatally, we feel that a certain statistic, which is in fact based on an aggregate and is only a measure of probability, actually represents our very future’ (Woodward 1999: 185). Following Woodward, focusing on the number of people living with dementia now and in the future only serves to exacerbate a sense of panic in people regarding ageing in later life. People do not want to be reduced to a mere statistic and would accordingly change their lifestyle to make it “better” in order to reduce their risk of being diagnosed with dementia.

Instead of proposing the adoption of healthy ageing practices out of a sense of fear and panic, where ageing in later life is again reduced to a
good-bad dichotomy, the thesis offers another way to work through the statistical panic regarding dementia: to understand that everyone and everything is performing and performed by time differently, and to acknowledge that these experiences of time are also underlined by a framework of change and ephemerality. To be clear, I am not saying that we should start drinking jars of lard just because we want to. I am also not saying that we should discount these projections on the people who will possibly live with dementia in the near future. Rather, I am suggesting that in approaching each singular temporal performance carefully and imaginatively, and that in linking each performance of time to more performances of time, we open up a space to further consider the affects of biomedicine, amongst other things, in a world that is gradually growing older.\textsuperscript{2} As Berlant writes:

Aesthetics is not only the place where we rehabituate our sensorium by taking in new material and becoming more refined in relation to it. But it provides metrics for understanding how we pace and space our encounters with things, how we manage the too closeness of the world and also the desire to have an impact on it that has some relation to its impact on us (Berlant 2011: 12)

From this viewpoint, the understanding of time through the prism of performance – as forms of aesthetic processes – is only but the first step into thinking more carefully about how our lifecourses and lifestories, entangled and relational, are structured by the circulation of personal and general affective forces, and this thesis paves a road for this future research.
Writing this thesis, I often think about the conversation I had with my Ah Ma in the bedroom that day, and I wonder what she would have said if the dialogue had carried on a little bit longer. Would she, like Ah Gong, have asked me to get some food? Would she have started addressing me as someone specific? Would she have said something completely different? Would the exchange have brought my mother and I joy and excitement? Would it have startled us? Or would it have evoked anger and distress? I do not know but I am always imagining. Maybe we would have a conversation that goes something like this, and maybe, we would all have been able to make perfect non-hesitant sense of it all:

Ah Ma: You’re back from school.
Me: I am.
Ah Ma: How was school?
Me: It was nice. It was cold.
Ah Ma:
Me:
Ah Ma:
Me:
Notes

Introduction


2 Diagnosis in relation to the patient’s relation to time does not apply only to people living with dementia. The French psychiatrist Eugène Minkowski, for example, diagnosed a case of paranoia based on studying the patient's ‘flawed temporality, specifically the patient’s sense of being cut off from the past and blocked from any possibility of change in the future’ (Kern 2000: 5). See the special issue on time and medicine in Annals of Internal Medicine 132: 1, especially Lee 2000, Shahar 2000, Murray 2000 and Hall 2000, for an introduction to this topic.


5 As Lawrence Napper notes, this technological development required an absolute adherence to regulated time and gave rise to the negative impression that characters in pre-synchronised sound films ‘ran around the screen at a chaotic and comedic pace, even in films that weren’t comedies’ (Napper 2017: 6). In actual fact, the characters ran around the screen at an awkward pace because they were not projected at the correct frame rate, in turn serving as an example of pre-synchronised sound films being “punished” for being out of time.

6 Richard Schechner takes a broad spectrum approach towards the theory of performance: ‘Theater is only one node on a continuum that reaches from the ritualizations of animals (including humans) through performances in everyday life – greetings, displays of emotion, family scenes, professional roles, and so on – through to play, sports, theater, dance, ceremonies, rites, and performances of great magnitude’ (Schechner 2003: xvii). For a more comprehensive overview of the concept of performance and the debates within the field of performance studies, see, too, Goffman 1990, Read 1993, Carlson 2003, Striff 2003, Harding and Rosenthal 2011, and Schechner 2015.

7 Rebecca Schneider’s Performing Remains (2011) is interested in the ways in which times and temporalities might remain after performance. In some sense, as I will explore in more detail, the ways in which the present is haunted by the past is also a central concern of the thesis.

8 As David Martin-Jones writes, the ‘realisation of difference is the recognition of coevalness, a chance to deny its denial’ (Martin-Jones 2018:
19). See Menon 2015 on a kind of universalism that is indifferent to
difference.

9 I am only concerned with narrative films in this thesis so as to keep the
project feasible. See Swinnen 2013 and Medina 2014 on the treatment of
dementia in documentary films.

10 This concern with the ageing population in Italy partly led to the “Fertility
Day” campaign that featured a series of unfortunate posters to encourage
the Italian population to have more babies. One of the posters shows a white
woman in a red dress. Her left hand is touching her belly whilst her right
hand is holding a sand timer. The slogan for the poster reads: ‘Beauty has no
age. But fertility does’. In a different example of the state intervening to
encourage more people to have children so as to combat the ageing
population, The People’s Republic of China repealed its one-child policy in
2015 as a response to the country’s dropping fertility and birth rate.

11 In 2016, a string of high-profile celebrity deaths – David Bowie, Alan
Rickman, Terry Wogan, Harper Lee, Nancy Reagan, Frank Kelly, Ronnie
Corbett, Victoria Wood, and Prince, to name a few – sent the British press
into a frenzy as they speculated whether 2016 was a bad year for celebrities
or there were merely more older celebrities due to the ageing populations in
the western world. On literature concerning ageing stars and celebrities, see
Allen and McCabe 2012, Boyle and Brayton 2012, Brown 2012, Fairclough
2012, Fairclough-Issacs 2015, Harris 2015, Holmlund 2010, and Jermy
2012.

12 See Christopher King’s essay ‘Baby You Can Drive My Bed’ (2002) for a
discussion of a pre-2000 Japanese anime Roujin-Z (Hiroyuki Kitakubo, 1991,
Japan) and the film’s representation of technology and old age.

13 Maktoba Omar, Nathalia C. Tjandra, and John Ensor observe that the
disposable income of consumers over 50 has increased 25% in 2012 since
the 2008 economic recession as compared to the meagre 2% increment for
those under 50 (Omar et al 2014: 754). Separately, the notion of films
targeted at the “grey pound” started to gain traction in British newspapers in
the early noughties (see Cox 2012, Clark 2013, and Anon 2014).

14 Josephine Dolan (2016) observes that the purchasing power of the
pension and the grey pound inadvertently makes its way into the narratives
of these films targeted at older people, and usually results in narratives that
are deeply neo-colonialist, heteronormative and postfeminist.

15 Gilleard and Higgs point towards a cultural turn in gerontology, which, as
described by Julia Twigg and Wendy Martin, is a movement that aims to
‘present a fuller and richer account, that locates older people and their
subjectivity at the heart of the analysis, expanding old age – or “later years”
as it is often termed in this literature – to encompass unproblematic old age
(Twigg and Martin 2015a: 354). Here, it is helpful to note that Twigg and
Martin deliberately refuse to define the term “cultural” so as to view it as ‘a
broad movement of ideas and theories focused around meaning, that have
together created a new field, encompassing work across the social science/humanities divide’ (Twigg and Martin 2015b: 2).


17 Ageism was first defined by Robert Neil Butler in 1975 as ‘a process of systematic stereotyping of and discrimination against people because they are old, just as racism and sexism accomplish this for skin colour and gender’ (Butler 1975: 35). This original definition was used specifically to describe unfair attitudes towards old people but the meaning of ageism has broadened subsequently to be seen ‘as a set of beliefs about how people vary biologically as a result of the ageing process’ (Bytheway 2005: 339). For more research on cinematic gerontology that aims to challenge ageist representations of dementia and old age, see Segers 2007, Anderson 2010, Van Gorp and Vercruyssse 2012, Cohen-Shalev and Marcus 2012, Wearing 2013, and Chivers 2015.

18 Metahistory is referred to by Achenbaum as looking ‘for dominant patterns of defining and categorizing issues found in historical perspectives on theories of ageing’ (Achenbaum 2009: 28).

19 See V. F. Perkin’s Film on Film (1972) and Dominic Lash’s (2017) response to Perkins’s work on the importance of close formal analysis in writing about cinema.

20 In one example, in a study, Tom Robinson, Mark Callister, Dawn Magoffin and Jennifer Moore looked at the representations of 93 older characters in 34 Disney animated films and concluded that ‘Disney’s animated films present older characters who are disproportionately white and male, who are somewhat incidental to plot development, who generally possess positive physical characteristics, and who possess primary positive personality traits, yet manifest a sizeable number of negative and stereotypical traits’ (Robinson et al 2007: 209). To come to this conclusion, the researchers address the question of representation from a social science positivist approach, asking six research questions whilst watching the films. Of the six questions, two stand out: ‘What personality traits do the older characters possess?’ and ‘Is the overall portrayal of old characters in Disney animated films positive or negative, and does the character’s gender and race influence the portrayals?’ (Robinson et al 2007: 205). The investigators assigned specific personality traits (helpless, eccentric, and senile/crazy, to name a few) that they felt represented the characters best and then proceeded to classify these attributes into positive and negative categories. Throughout, however, no mention whatsoever is made of the way in which the the formal elements of film affect how the investigators decide on the characters’ personality traits, which therefore runs into the danger of conducting research that is solely based on personal value judgement (this argument is further compounded by the fact that the distinction between categories may not necessarily be the most clear-cut – the line between eccentricity and craziness, for example, might be very indistinct). The bias
towards quantitative over qualitative research not only highlights a blindness to the way cinema functions, but also reduces the possibilities of nuanced readings of character representations that are firmly rooted in detailed analyses of the film’s formal properties.

21 See Dolan, Gordon and Tincknell 2009; Nair, Ramanathaiyer and Shoesmith 2000; and Orr and Teo 2015 for more instances.


23 This methodology – treating everything on an equal level of comparison, being indifferent to difference – also bears affinity with certain schools of thought in feminist science studies that do not necessarily agree with metaphors and analogies as an epistemological framework for multi-/inter-/trans-disciplinary consideration of both cultural and science studies. See Barad 2007 for a discussion of an epistemological framework that rejects analogies and representations. For some discussion on analogies and representations as an approach, see Boyd 1979, Stacey 1997, 2010; Ostherr 2005; Silverman 2015; and Griffiths 2016.


25 Baars defines gerontology as ‘the study of life under the specific aspect of the changes that take place when a living being has existed for (what is considered) a relatively long period of a principally limited time, which can be established in terms of the (average or maximum) life expectancy of the species (Baars 1997: 283). Yet, despite time being such an important factor in gerontology and dementia studies, Baars observes, there is still ‘an unreflected overemphasis on chronological time’ in these fields of studies, ‘as if the precision of chronological time would in itself give a solid foundation to the study of aging’ (Baars 2007: 2). McFadden and Atchley 2001, and Baars and Visser 2007 remain two of the rare edited collections that deal directly with the issue of ageing and time from a multidisciplinary perspective.

26 It is also important to note that by adopting a temporal approach towards films about dementia – and not necessarily thinking about dementia cinema through a memory studies framework – I am not dismissing the importance of memory (and the lack thereof) in dementia cinema. Rather, I take my cue from Marc Augé’s work on the nature of oblivion, where he suggests that ‘our relationship with time passes essentially through oblivion’ (Augé 2004: 25). Memories, as Augé writes, ‘are crafted by oblivion as the outlines of the shores are created by the sea’ (Augé 2004: 20). Expounding on this notion,
Augé argues that ‘oblivion is the life force of memory and remembrance is its product’ (Augé 2004: 21). He continues: oblivion – and in turn memory and remembrance – should be seen as ‘configurations of time’ that allow ‘time to be lived as a story’ (Augé 2004: 25; emphasis in original). Put differently, in following Augé, thinking about memory is thinking about how time is structured in our everyday lives, and therefore, approaching films about dementia through a temporal lens is intricately linked with the consideration of memory in dementia. On memories studies as a methodological approach towards cultural studies and film studies, see Sinha and McSweeney 2001, Grainge 2003, Landsberg 2004, Cook 2005, Van Dijck 2007, Mayer-Schönberger 2009, Kilbourn 2010, Radstone 2010, and Erl 2011

27 See Yoshimoto 2006 and Chen 2010 for such discussions about concepts of “Asianness” and “universality”.

Chapter One

1 Boyle has written extensively about dementia and agency. See Boyle 2013a, 2013b, 2013c, 2014a, 2014b and 2017b.


3 Human agency, Mustafa Emirbayer and Ann Mische write, can be understood as three different kinds of temporal orientations: the iterational, the projective, and the practical-evaluative. These three orientations can be respectively read as an alignment towards the past, where the agent looks to the past to decide what to do; the future, where the agent’s action is affected by the possible trajectories of the future; and the present, where the agent makes practical decisions based on the ongoing event (Emirbayer and Mische 1998: 971). Whilst Emirbayer and Mische argue that people often simultaneously draw on experiences from the past, project into the future, and make contingent, pragmatic decisions in the present, they maintain that for each action, ‘one temporal orientation is the dominant tone, shaping the way in which actors relate to the other two dimensions of time’ (Emirbayer and Mische 1998: 972). This approach towards temporality in agency proposed by Emirbayer and Mische, I suggest, espouses a linear view towards time and temporality that suggests that the past almost always affects the present which in turn will almost definitely have a knock-on effect on the future – the agent reflexively makes their decisions and actions based on this linear understanding of the temporal continuum, resulting in a rather straightforward demarcation of the complexities of temporal politics in issues of agency.

4 See, also, the responses to the Butlerian agency put forward by Benhabib 1995 and Kim 2007.

5 See Doane 2002: 172 – 205 for more on cinematic time and temporality’s complex relationship with Zeno’s Paradox, and motion as (dis)continuous.

7 As Suzanne Guerlac notes, there are two kinds of the self for Bergson: ‘a superficial self that conforms to social conventions and the pressures of language, and a passionate self, in touch with the heterogeneous real’ (Guerlac 2006: 70).

8 Whilst Bergson uses (or the translators use) the word ‘identity’ in relation to his understanding of time and subjectivity throughout his writings, I think his understanding of the self as a multiplicity of shifting and ebbing identities bears closer affinity with the notion of identification as explained by Jackie Stacey, where identification can be understood as ‘an active engagement and production of changing identities’ (Stacey 1994: 308).

9 Of interest here, though there is no space for a detailed discussion in this thesis, are the writings of Martin Heidegger and Sigmund Freud, both of whom lived and wrote in a period contemporary to Bergson, where the concept of time became increasingly homogenised and spatialised (see brief historical overview of clock time in Introduction). For Heidegger and Freud, though writing about very different subject matters from very different viewpoints, identifications were also seen as a push and pull between linear and non-linear time. See Heidegger 1962, Inwood 2000, and Noel-Smith 2016.


12 Seeing dementia through a (any) model of disability comes with many conceptual issues because the language regularly associated with disability rights cannot be neatly and easily mapped to the discourses and experiences of dementia. See Shakespeare et al 2019 for a discussion about this challenge and the ways in which thinking about dementia as disability might offer a more profound understanding of the experiences of dementia.

13 See Buch 2015 for an overview on the relationship between care and ageing in the later life.

14 See Covey 1993 and Miron et al 2017 for more on dementia and infantilisation.

15 See scholars like Cowie (1978), Doane (1987) and Stacey (1994) for very different – and more nuanced – approaches towards gender.

16 See Stockton 2009 and Uprichard 2008 on the time and temporality of childhood.
On a wider level beyond the films, we can also consider how temporal performances include, for instance, queer time as a push and pull against the empty homogenous time that characterises queer people as not having a future: Lee Edelman (2004) might embrace this notion and celebrate anti-futurity whereas José Esteban Muñoz (2009), on the other hand, might propose to think of a queer utopia in the future. On more literature on queer time, see Halberstam 2005; Dinshaw 2012, 2013 and 2015; and the special issue on queer temporalities in GLQ 12: 2 – 3. Temporal performances can also be seen in racialised and postcolonial time: as Alia Al-Saji (2013) notes, the racialised subject's time and temporality is seen being late in relation to the white, homogenous time; and, as Giordano Nanni (2012) observes, this perceived notion “lateness” or non-conformity to white time is also used to great effect in certain countries to counter the hegemony and power of their white colonisers. On class and time, see Wright and Shin 1988, Rabelo and Souza 2003, and Atkinson 2013. On time as a social practice, see Adam 1995 and 2004, and Moran 2015.

See also Kirby 2015 and Jagose 2015 on the normative/anti-normative debate.

See Harrison 2018a on the intersections between cinema, trains, and clock time.

Chapter Two

As William Ian Miller notes, though the phrase “losing it” can refer to a wide array of things. When applied to old age, “losing it” more often than not suggests a loss of mental faculties, though sometimes it will also refer to the general physical decay of the body. Miller wryly observes that when the elderly loses it, this “it”, whether mental of physical, is more general, and the process of losing it more drawn out, than when “it” stands for a cell phone or virginity, each of which can be lost in mere seconds of thoughtlessness’ (Miller 2011: 1 – 2). As my case study films demonstrate, this sense of loss is heightened when a person lives with dementia.

Byeong-soo’s voiceover in Memoir of a Murderer is different from the use of voiceover in films like Double Indemnity (Billy Wilder, 1944, USA) and Out of the Past (Jacques Tourneur, 1947, USA) where the aural presences of Walter Neff and Jeff Bailey are positioned as ‘offscreen in an imaginary “wing”’, where their voiceovers are signifiers of the films’ use of flashbacks (Chion 1994: 129). Byeong-soo’s voiceover, on the other hand, blurs the line between detached flashback and creative remix in his mind. In other words, Byeong-soo’s voiceover ‘is implicated in the action, constantly about to be part of it’ (Chion 1994: 129).

Putting Sobchack’s work, which draws heavily from Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology, in dialogue with Deleuzian scholarship would perhaps draw some criticism, not least because these two philosophical angles are often sharply contrasted. However, as Judith Wambacq (2017)
argues, these two philosophical approaches are not necessarily irreconcilable, and can still engage in productive conversations.


6 See, also, Wassan 2018, whose ideas overlap with McKechnie’s.

7 In addition to Currie and Ricoeur, see Eakin 2006 and Bitnec 2018 on the performance of identity narratives.

8 Illness narratives, in general, provide this opportunity to challenge traditional linear approaches towards narrative. See Edelman 1998 and Halberstam 2005 on the ways in which people who live with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) during the AIDS epidemic might find their futures significantly reduced and have to adjust to a new present of rapid compression that rejects linearity; Riessman 2015 on the ways in which a diagnosis with cancer might cause the person to retrospectively look back to the past to try and find a new beginning, highlighting the notion that the past does not always precede the present; and Raffard et al 2010 and Allé et al 2016 on the ways in which schizophrenia patients may experience a perturbed sense of personal continuity as their abilities to remember past memories or project future events are significantly diminished.

9 In analysing the times and temporalities in the narratives of both Memories of Tomorrow and Memoir of a Murderer, I am committed to analysing the process of narration through a detailed consideration of the film’s form. I draw this emphasis from David Bordwell’s cognitive approach towards film narration and, in particular, his distinction between the fabula and the syuzhet. In Bordwell’s formulation, the fabula refers to the ‘imaginary construct that we create, progressively and retroactively’, and ‘embodies the action as a chronological cause-and-effect chain of events occurring within a given duration and a spatial field’ (Bordwell 2008: 49). The syuzhet, on the other hand, ‘is the actual arrangement and presentation of the fabula in the film’ (Bordwell 2008: 50). Narration, in turn, comes together through the film’s audio-visual style, ‘whereby the film’s syuzhet and style interact in the course of cueing and channeling the spectator’s construction of the fabula’ (Bordwell 2008: 53). See, also, Branigan 1992.

Chapter Three

1 The deterioration in circadian rhythm in people living with dementia is in part due to the ‘decreased ability for the retina and optic nerve to transmit light’, amongst other factors (Zendehbad 2015: 607). This decreased ability for the brain to process light changes – described as circadian rhythm disturbances – results in a myriad of symptoms like fragmented sleep patterns, sundowning alongside heightened agitated behavior, and decreased daytime functioning (Jonghe et al 2010, Kume et al 2016, and

2 I draw this semantic/syntactic approach to genre from Rick Altman’s highly influential Film/Genre (1999).

3 A psychoanalytic approach towards ageing that highlights the role of melancholia, as Helene Moglen writes, is associated with ‘Freud’s vertical model of mind, to which repression is fundamental’ (Moglen 2008: 302). In contrast, Moglen proposes a horizontal approach towards ageing – transaging – that ‘takes place across a lifetime that begins with conception and ends with death’ (Moglen 2008: 303). She writes: ‘It is a multiple, ambiguous, and contradictory process, which provides us–continuously and simultaneously–with images of past, present, lost, embodied, and imagined selves. In shifting configurations, these images comprise the discontinuous yet persistent thread of our identities, which are not integrated, which are not merely split, and which can neither be reduced to nor separated from the limitations and requirements of the body’ (Moglen 2008: 303 – 304).

4 This concept of the “real” in relation to the indexical nature of cinema is not too dissimilar from Doane’s understanding. She writes: Indices ‘are limited to the assurance of an existence; they provide no insight into the nature of their objects; they have no cognitive value, but simply indicate that something is “there”. Hence, the “real” referenced by the index is not the “real” of realism, which purports to give the spectator knowledge of the world. The index is reduced to its own singularity; it appears as a brute and opaque fact, wedded to contingency – pure indication, pure assurance of existence’ (Doane 2007b: 135).

5 Kershaw writes: “Performance Ecology refers to performance being an integral process of ecosystems. Basic definitions of “ecology” support the following inflection: “performance ecology” also implies the interdependence of all the elements of particular ecosystems. It could also indicate the inter-relationship between performance qua performance and its environments, especially when understood to imply interdependence between them. The plural “performance ecologies” refers to the variety of different kinds of performance ecology as just defined. “Ecologies of performance” refers to the study of performance – and the understandings and knowledges it produces – as integral to ecosystems (Kershaw 2012a: 266 – 267). See, also, Kershaw 2007, 2012b and 2013.

6 Mary Ann Doane, writes: ‘the trace was only one genre of index, and not necessarily the most crucial or decisive. The pointing finger, instantiated in the “this” of language, incarnated the very ideal of indexicality, its purest form. The word “this” can only be defined, can only achieve its referent, in relation to a specific and unique situation of discourse, the here and now of speech. And in speech, its referentiality is contingent upon the pointing finger’ (Doane 2007b: 136).

7 This discussion of fantasy is limited to that of the generic. The psychoanalytic understanding of fantasy (or phantasy, to be more accurate)
is a rather different concept altogether. For psychoanalytic discussion of fantasy, see Cowie 1997; Žižek 1997; Lebeau 2001; Willemen 1994 and 2013.

8 Jackson 1981 argues that fantasy should be seen as a mode whereas Hume 1984 suggests that fantasy is an impulse.

9 For example, speakers of English, a tensed language, perceive time (especially the present) very differently from speakers of Chinese, a tense-less language. Research has demonstrated that the present in English-language speakers is significantly more discrete (and further away) from the past and future. Conversely, the present in Chinese-language speakers very often incorporates the recent past and the near future, and both the past and future are perceived to be closer to the present than the English counterpart (Chen et al 2013: 99).

10 On the politics of canon-formation, see Staiger 1985 and Harrison 2018b. On an example of the ways in which certain epistemological approaches might be more concerned with tracing a certain kind of genealogy to one singular source, see the criticism of psychoanalysis offered by Deleuze and Guattari 1983, where they argue that psychoanalysis can be too overly concerned with tracing everything back to the subject’s overwhelming Oedipal lack. On the universalising tendencies of Grand Theory, see Bordwell and Carroll 1996.

11 This argument takes on a more nuanced – but largely similar – face when a person is watching the film at home rather than at the cinema. See Klinger 2006 and Kerins 2011 for discussions about the home sound system.

12 Bliss Cua Lim, in tracing the historical development of modern time consciousness, notes that the regulation of time into fixed intervals coincides with the disciplined ordering of space: ‘This new spatiality is linked to speed, a temporal diminution that is registered as a shrinkage or overcoming of space. Actual distances are not annihilated; rather, prior experiential or perceptual paradigms relating time and space to human potentiality are eroded. The topos of travel yokes time and space in homogenizing terms, especially in the measurement of spatial distances as travel time, with important consequences for the synchronization of industries and markets, a reconfiguring of the national imaginary around both a new proximity to the metropolitan center and the rise of suburbanization’ (Lim 2009: 75). It is therefore significant to note that when Deborah, the person living with dementia, enters the frame, modern temporal logic – and in turn “organised” spatial logic – evaporates.

13 See Pinedo 2004 for a discussion on the ways in which postmodern horror films – films post-1968, according to Pinedo – might be considered as part of, and not separate from, the world that the audience lives in.

14 See, too, Fabian 2014 on the ways in which the denial of coevalness is a way of colonisation by the Western world.
It is important to note that cinema is not just purely indexical. C.S. Peirce frequently pointed out that the iconic, indexical, and symbolic aspects of signs overlap – a sign is a site of interplay and struggle between these three semiotic categories. As Peter Wollen demonstrates, in the cinema, the ‘indexical and iconic aspects are by far the most powerful’ whereas the ‘symbolic is limited and secondary’ (Wollen 2013: 120). However, Doane writes that what ‘is at stake is photography’s indexicality, not its iconicity (painting has always allowed for iconicity)’ (Doane 2007b: 89). In this chapter, I am only concerned with the index.

See Gunning 2008, Hadjioannou 2012, and Brown 2015 for more discussions about the index and digital culture.

It is important to note that Sedgwick has explicitly noted that the paranoid and reparative approaches are not in direct opposition. She writes: ‘Among Klein’s names for the reparative process is love. Given the instability and mutual inscription built into the Kleinian notion of positions, I am also, in the present project, interested in doing justice to the powerful reparative practices that, I am convinced, infuse self-avowedly paranoid critical projects, as well as in the paranoid exigencies that are often necessary for nonparanoid knowing and utterance’ (Sedgwick 2003: 128 – 129).

Chapter Four


2 For instance, Roystan Tan’s 15 (2002, Singapore) was originally banned by the board of censors and was only allowed to be screened with an R-rating (which significantly limited the venues that could exhibit the film and the age group of the audience) after Tan made 27 cuts to the film; Loo Zihan’s Solos (2007, Singapore) was banned because of its homosexual contents; Martyn See’s Zahari’s 17 Years (2008, Singapore) and Dr Lim Hock Siew (2010, Singapore) were banned for being political films.

3 The film has also been chosen because it is a good barometer to think through the ways in which Singapore is understood from within and without the nation. Parting, which is part of the bigger portmanteau film 7 Letters, was very well received by people living in Singapore. When the film first had its three-day limited release, all 6,000 tickets were sold very quickly, and the huge demand for the film led to multiple additional screenings that were extremely well attended. The film was also submitted by the Singapore government to the Oscars for the Academy Award for Best International Feature Film, again highlighting the national picture the film is painting for an international audience.

4 See Huang 2006 for a sweep of this revisionist effort/movement. See the edited collection Singapore in Global History by Aljunied and Heng (2011) for an excellent account of Singapore’s transnational history.
For instance, in 2011, the National Arts Council (NAC) withdrew a publishing grant for a collection of Chong Tze Chien’s plays because it included his 2010 play *Charged*, which dealt with the issue of racism in Singapore’s national service. Likewise, in 2015, the NAC withdrew an S$8,000 publishing grant for Sonny Liew’s *The Art of Charlie Chan Hock Chye* because of its ‘sensitive content’, primarily because it dealt with a largely suppressed history of Singapore (Lehoczky 2016).

For Kenneth Paul Tan, this is because ‘7 Letters escapes the rigidities of The Singapore Story and rides the popular wave of nostalgic pleasure’ (Tan 2016: 245).

The Singapore Story as the nation’s predominant narrative gains its name from the memoirs of Lee Kuan Yew, the first Prime Minister of independent Singapore. See Lee 1998 and Lee 2000.

Benjamin’s conception of the *flâneur* that engages with modernity, for Janet Wolff (1985), is a largely masculine term that denies the *flâneuse*. For Wolff, the *flâneuse* is an impossible notion of French modernity due to ‘sexual divisions of the nineteenth century’ (Wolff 1985: 45). Conversely, Elizabeth Wilson pushes back at Wolff’s characterisation and argues that there were indeed women who were able to wander the cityscape of nineteenth century Paris. Wilson writes: ‘The *flâneur* represented not the triumph of masculine power, but its attenuation. A wanderer, he embodies the Oedipal under threat. The male gaze has failed to annihilate the castrate, woman. On the contrary, anonymity annihilates him. The *flâneur* represents masculinity as unstable, caught up in the violent dislocations that characterized urbanization’ (Wilson 1992: 109).

There are of course other kinds of walking. For instance, there is the stalker (Sinclair 2003), and the voyeur and pedestrian (de Certeau 1984). There is also the *robinsonner*, which is a term that Coverly (2006) credits to the poet Arthur Rimbaud. The *robinsonner* is a mental *flâneur*, a person whose mind is doing the wandering instead of physically wandering around. Whilst this concept has a lot of legs for this chapter and the trope of the person living with dementia wandering in general, particularly in relation to non-ambulant people living with dementia – like Anne in *Amour* (Michael Haneke, 2012, Austria/France/Germany) – this chapter is more concerned with the physical wandering.


For instance, Tan Pin Pin’s documentary about the political exiles of Singapore’s tumultuous period, *To Singapore, with Love* (2013, Singapore), was awarded a Not Allowed for All Ratings (NAR) because the ‘legitimate actions of the security agencies to protect the national security and stability of Singapore are presented in a distorted way as acts that victimized innocent individuals’ (MDA 2014).
This condescending attitude that many Singaporeans have towards Malaysia and its citizens is due to The Singapore Story’s emphasis on Singapore’s strong survivalist instincts, and that if Singapore had not separated from Malaysia, it would not be as developed as it might have been today.

The architectural environment of Singapore is an interesting example of this aphasia. Due to the state’s desire to continuously develop, buildings and sites are regularly torn down and replaced with newer events. When the nation’s old National Library was torn down in 2004 and replaced with a motorway tunnel in order to ease the flow of traffic, the government left behind two tokenistic red-bricked entrance pillars near the tunnel that replaced the library, and these two pillars are largely forgotten and/or inaccessible to people living in Singapore to remember today.

Coda

Berlant’s arguments about the ways in which the personal is general is complex and spans over decades of research. As Heather Love notes, Berlant ‘aims not to integrate the particular and the general but rather to short-circuit the distinction between them’ (Love 2012: 322). For an overview of Berlant’s ideas on this debate, see Berlant 1991, 1994, 1997, 2008, and 2011; and Berlant and Warner 1995.

See Rose 2007 on the politics of biomedicine.
Bibliography


Boyle, Geraldine, 2013a. ‘Still a Woman’s job: The Division of Housework in Couples Living with Dementia’, in Families, Relationships and Societies 2: 1, pp. 5 – 21.


Capstick, Andrea, 2015. ‘Rewalking the City: People with Dementia Remember’, in Walking Inside Out: Contemporary British Psychogeography,


Hughes, Julian C., 2013. “Y” Feel Me? How Do We Understand the Person with Dementia?, in Dementia 12: 3, pp. 348 – 358.


Jokel, Regina, and Uri Wolf, 2017. ‘When a Duck is Not a Duck: Non-Organic Bases for Aphasia and Dementia, in Aphasiology 37: 1, pp. 100 – 121.


Kume, Yu, Ayuto Kodama, Kotara Sato, and Satoko Kurosawa, 2016. ‘Sleep/Awake Status Throughout the Night and Circadian Motor Activity Patterns in Older Nursing-home Residents with or without Dementia, and
Older Community-dwelling People without Dementia’, in International Psychogeriatrics 28: 12, doi: 10.1017/S1041610216000910.


Lim, Song Hwee, 2014. Tsai Ming-Liang and a Cinema of Slowness, Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press.


Menkman, Rosa, 2011. The Glitch Moment(um), Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures.


Orr, David M. R., and Yugin Teo, 2015. ‘Carers’ Responses to Shifting Identity in Dementia in Iris and Away From Her: Cultivating Stability or Embracing Change?’, in Med Humanities 41, pp. 81 – 85.


Woods, Angela, 2011. ‘The Limits of Narrative: Provocations for the Medical Humanities’, in Medical Humanities 37, pp. 73 – 78.


Filmography

15 (Royston Tan, 2002, Singapore)
A Moment to Remember (John H. Lee, 2004, South Korea)
A Separation (Asghar Farhadi, 2011, Iran/France)
After Life (Hirokazu Koreeda, 1998, Japan)
Amour (Michael Haneke, 2012, Austria/France/Germany)
Ashes (Mat Whitecross, 2012, UK)
Basic Instinct (Paul Verhoeven, 1992, France/USA/UK)
Beautiful Memories (Zabou Breitman, 2001, France)
Blade Runner 2049 (Denis Villeneuve, 2017, USA/UK/Hungary/Canada/Spain)
Breathless (Jean-Luc Godard, 1960, France)
Coco (Lee Unkrich, 2017, USA)
Double Indemnity (Billy Wilder, 1944, USA)
Dr Lim Hock Siew (Martyn See, 2010, Singapore)
Ethel and Ernest (Roger Mainwood, 2016, UK)
Evim Sensin (Özcan Deniz, 2012, Turkey)
Gray Sunset (Shunya Itô, 1985, Japan)
Happy End (Michael Haneke, 2017, France/Austria/Germany)
Howl's Moving Castle (Hayao Miyazaki, 2004, Japan)
Iris (Richard Eyre, 2001, UK/USA)
Logan (James Mangold, 2017, USA)
Magallanes (Salvador del Solar, 2015, Peru/Argentina/Spain)
Marjorie Prime (Michael Almereyda, 2017, USA)
Memoir of a Murderer (Won Shin-yeon, 2017, South Korea)
Memories of Tomorrow (Yukihiro Tsutsumi, 2006, Japan)
Millennium Actress (Satoshi Kon, 2001, Japan)
My Dog Tulip (Paul Fierlinger, 2009, USA)
Nebraska (Alexander Payne, 2013, USA)
On Golden Pond (Mark Rydell, 1981, UK/USA)
Out of the Past (Jacques Tourneur, 1947, USA)
Pandora’s Box (Yeşim Ustaoğlu, 2008, Turkey)
Paranormal Activity (Oren Peli, 2007, USA)
Parting (Boo Junfeng, 2015, Singapore)
Passage of Life (Diego Corsini, 2015, Argentina/Spain)
Pecoross’ Mother and Her Days (Azuma Morisaki, 2013, Japan)
Philomena (Stephen Frears, 2013, UK/USA/France)
Poetry (Lee Chang-dong, 2010, South Korea)
Quartet (Dustin Hoffman, 2012, UK)
Red (Robert Schwentke, 2010, USA)
Red 2 (Dean Parisot, 2013, USA/France/Canada)
Ringu (Hideo Nakata, 1998, Japan)
Robot and Frank (Jake Schreier, 2012, USA)
Roujin-Z (Hiroyuki Kitakubo, 1991, Japan)
Sandcastle (Boo Junfeng, 2010, Singapore)
Shed Skin Papa (Roy Szeto, 2016, Hong Kong)
Solos (Loo Zihan, 2007, Singapore)
Star Wars Episode VII: The Force Awakens (J.J. Abrams, 2015, USA)
Still Alice (Richard Glatzer and Wash Westmoreland, 2014, USA/UK/France)
Still Mine (Michael McGowan, 2012, Canada)
Summer Snow (Ann Hui, 1995, Hong Kong)
Thanmathra (Blessy, 2005, India)
The Alzheimer’s Case (Erik Van Looy, 2003, Belgium)
The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel (John Madden, 2011, UK/USA/UAE)
The Bodyguard (Sammo Hung, 2010, Hong Kong/China)
The Expendables (Sylvester Stallone, 2010, USA/Bulgaria)
The Expendables 2 (Simon West, 2012, USA/Germany)
The Expendables 3 (Patrick Hughes, 2014, USA/France/Bulgaria/Germany)
The Illusionist (Sylvain Chomet, 2010, France/UK)
The King’s Speech (Tom Hooper, 2010, UK/USA/Australia)
The Lady in the Van (Nicholas Hynter, 2015, UK)
The Mimic (Huh Jung, 2017, South Korea)
The Mourning Forest (Naomi Kawase, 2007, Japan).
The Olive Tree (Iciar Bollaín, 2016, Spain/Germany)
The Savages (Tamara Jenkins, 2007, USA)
The Taking of Deborah Logan (Adam Robitel, 2014, USA)
The Triplets of Belleville (Sylvain Chomet, 2003, France/Belgium/Canada/UK/Latvia/USA)
The Visit (M. Night Shyamalan, 2015, USA)
To Singapore with Love (Tan Pin Pin, Singapore)
Travelling Companion (Peter Del Monte, 1996, Italy)
Twilight Gangsters (Kang Hyo-Jin, 2010, South Korea)
U Me Aur Hum (Ajay Devgan, 2008, India)
Up (Pete Docter, 2009, USA)
Wrinkles (Ignacio Ferreras, 2011, Spain)
Zahari’s 17 Years (Martyn See, 2008, Singapore)