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From Divergence to Dialogue: Bridging the Gap Between Psychoanalysis and Schizoanalysis Through the Work of Charlie Kaufman

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From Divergence to Dialogue

Bridging the Gap Between Psychoanalysis and Schizoanalysis
Through the Work of Charlie Kaufman



MA Thesis Film and Photographic Studies

MA Film and Photographic Studies

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines whether psychoanalysis and schizoanalysis, after years of diverging paths, can converge in specific areas to generate new insights. To facilitate a dialogue between psychoanalysis and schizoanalysis, three specific films associated with Charlie Kaufman will be utilized: *Synecdoche, New York*, *I'm Thinking of Ending Things*, and *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*. These works of Kaufman will serve as a 'third philosophical voice'. The psychoanalytic and schizoanalytic methods will not only provide new insights into Kaufman's work. By allowing the films to speak for themselves, they also shed light on the connection between psychoanalysis and schizoanalysis through the subjects that the films themselves explore.

KEYWORDS: psychoanalysis, schizoanalysis, Kaufman, Freud, Lacan, Žižek, Deleuze, Guattari.

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INTRODUCTION

In the 1970s and 1980s, film was analyzed by applying grand theories to cinema, such as aesthetics, semiotics, ideological critique, and psychoanalysis (Metz 10). A critique arose from this approach; film became subordinate to theory. Film students knew their Marx, Freud, Althusser and Derrida but had never seen a Hitchcock movie (Weddle). After the 1980s, these grand theories became less dominant in film analysis, creating space for new perspectives, including the combination of film and philosophy. Film philosophy rejects the prejudice that philosophy is more important than art. Film, just like philosophy, is capable of ‘thinking’. Professor John Mullarkey argues in his book *Refractions of Reality: Philosophy and the Moving Image* that film, like philosophy, has its counterpart in reality: “both can (though don’t always) give us powerful depictions of reality, the one primarily through the use of words, the other principally through the visual medium” (Mullarkey ix). Film is very suitable for making statements about reality, in the same way as philosophers do. A distinctive feature of cinema is its ability to captivate the viewer entirely, due to the immersive nature of film (Mullarkey 1). This is a feature that film possesses to a greater extent than philosophy. However, this argument is also used against cinema; when the analyst becomes lost in the film, it comes at the expense of their reflection. Therefore, we need philosophy to provide reflection.

Film and philosophy influence each other mutually; philosophers frequently cite films to strengthen their philosophical arguments, and film theory often references philosophical thoughts. For example, philosopher Gilles Deleuze wrote two books about cinema in the 1980s: *Cinema 1: The Movement Image* and *Cinema 2: The Time Image*. In these books, Deleuze focuses on the combination of philosophy and cinema to approach film and film analysis in a new way. For Deleuze, film is more than just an example or illustration of his philosophy; Deleuze is also interested in how and what film itself thinks. Similarly, philosopher Slavoj Žižek frequently references films in almost all his books to clarify his theories, test certain theories, and even debunk theories. Both names and the methods they discuss will be frequently referenced and used in this thesis.

This thesis focuses on the cinematic work of Charlie Kaufman. Kaufman’s work is complex, difficult to interpret, and seems capable of independent thought. Film and philosophy share a highly useful similarity: “Both practices involve god-like constructions, ones where a reality is constructed through artistic means; others where a world, though perhaps no less fictional, is constructed through thought” (Mullarkey ix). Not all films

possess this quality, but Kaufman's films have a 'philosophical' quality that reflect on the notion that philosophers and cinema can create 'god-like constructions'. The work of Kaufman often entails characters who bring worlds into existence through their thoughts. Consequently, it can react to and engage in dialogue with other thinkers and philosophies.

According to Mullarkey, film has no essence, which sets it apart from modernism's pure forms of other arts like literature, sculpture, and painting (Mullarkey x). Film encompasses everything—montage, lighting, narrative, sound, etc.—resulting in too many candidates for a possible essence. Thus, film is sometimes described as 'the seventh art'; a synthesis of multiple arts, making it an 'impure' medium. For Mullarkey, film has more of an 'élan' than an essence; film analyses are inexhaustible (Mullarkey 3). There is always more in a film, and we can derive more from it than a single theory can distill. This means that when we apply theory to film, there are always elements within the film that cannot be encapsulated by that theory. When theorists speak of essence, they reduce it to the core of something, pushing it back to its definition. With "*élan cinématique*" (Mullarkey xv), a film always offers more that eludes analysis. This can be perceived as threatening, often from the perspective of philosophy, because it suggests that something non-philosophical can think. Deleuze flips this idea around in his conclusion of *Cinema 2: The Time Image*: "we must no longer ask ourselves, 'What is cinema?' but 'What is philosophy?'" (*Cinema 2* 280). Philosophy, therefore, can also be cinematic. Not only does film combine multiple arts within itself, but film philosophy can also be seen as a field where various philosophies converge: "film encompasses aspects from every paradigm of film-philosophy rather than being reducible to any one" (Mullarkey 11). The work of Kaufman specifies as *élan*, his movies invite the combination of multiple philosophies to arrive at new insights. And this invitation works both ways; when Kaufman's films can think like philosophy, they also become entwined in discussions surrounding philosophical thoughts and theories.

Starting from the next chapter, Kaufman's films will be used to explore the constant interaction of two major philosophical methods: psychoanalysis and schizoanalysis. Kaufman's cinematographic philosophical quality functions as a 'third voice' in the discussion alongside psychoanalysis and schizoanalysis. The psychoanalytic and schizoanalytic method will be extensively described in the next chapter. For now, it is useful to understand that both psychoanalysis and schizoanalysis have an affinity with film but approach film differently. On one hand, there is the psychoanalytic film approach influenced by thinkers and philosophers such as Sigmund Freud, Jacques Lacan, and Slavoj Žižek. On the other hand, the schizoanalytic film approach is influenced by mostly philosophers Gilles

Deleuze and Felix Guattari. Deleuze's books *Cinema 1* and *Cinema 2* can be described as anti-psychoanalytic, or as Deleuze states it himself: "I don't believe that linguistics and psychoanalysis offer a great deal to the cinema" (Deleuze *Brain* 366). In response, Žižek wrote *Organs without Bodies*, a book that challenges Deleuze and Guattari's ideas and theories: "In the past decade, Deleuze emerged as the central reference of (...) critique of psychoanalysis" (Žižek, *Organs* xxi), where Žižek once again uses cinema to 'expose' "the deadlock and impotence of the popular "Deleuzian politics"" (Žižek *Organs* xxi).

Psychoanalysis and schizoanalysis are thus interconnected, if only because over the past fifty years schizoanalysts have been reacting to psychoanalysts and vice versa (Mullarkey 73). This thesis will engage in the ongoing debate about whether psychoanalysis and schizoanalysis are indeed polar opposites to each other, or if insights can still emerge when both theories are brought into dialogue through Kaufman's films. This also raises the question whether there is a difference in how film is philosophical for Žižek compared to Deleuze.

Since film has the power to create realities, it is particularly suitable for reflecting on philosophical theories that stem from our reality. Film can 'carry out' certain theories by actualizing them in a cinematographic reality. Žižek argues that abstract theories must be carried out: "It is not 'how can we reach the true reality beyond appearances?' but 'how can *appearance* emerge in reality?'" (Žižek *Nothing* 36). Žižek emphasizes that the true power and problems of theories become apparent when abstract theories are actualized. Kaufman's films not only allow me to think about how both methods and Kaufman interact, but Kaufman also serves to actualize and critique certain theoretical concepts in this thesis. Not all the films discussed in this thesis are directed by Kaufman. In some cases, Kaufman wrote the screenplay which, deserves as much credit for the ideas the film addresses as the director. The work of Kaufman is so infinitely interpretable, complex, and interesting that philosophy is needed to understand why these films are so intriguing. Just as the "messiness of film" resists a singular theory (Mullarkey 11), Kaufman's films resist singular philosophical interpretations. Since a single theory encapsulates the analysis, multiple theories must be combined to gain new and deeper insights into his films but also into the connection between psychoanalysis and schizoanalysis. By dissecting various elements of the impure medium of film, this thesis demonstrates the practical and impractical implications of the psychoanalytic and schizoanalytic methods. If film can think, it does so in the way that philosophy also thinks (Mullarkey 4). Philosophy will not only be applied to film, but also examined in terms of how film reflects on multiple philosophical methods.

I. PSYCHOANALYSIS, SCHIZOANALYSIS, KAUFMAN

In the 1960s, protests erupted globally, predominantly led by young individuals challenging the status quo, notably in France during the significant May 1968 demonstrations. Driven by discontent with the educational system, French students mobilized. Subsequently, various other societal factions joined, amplifying the protest against the conservative establishment. During this time, philosopher Gilles Deleuze and psychoanalyst and philosopher Félix Guattari argued that the Freudian Oedipal structure was too deeply embedded in sociopolitical systems. It was around this time that Deleuze and Guattari realized that the sociopolitical systems needed a significant overhaul. As a result, Deleuze and Guattari wrote *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (hereafter abbreviated as *AO*) in 1972 and *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* in 1980. Their critical philosophy opposes, among other things, psychoanalysis, the Oedipal complex, and capitalism. Influenced by psychoanalysts such as R.D. Laing¹ and Wilhelm Reich,² who are often mentioned in *AO*, Deleuze and Guattari argue that as a society, we need to move away from the Oedipal structure. They reject Freud's doctrine and argue that psychoanalysis is close to a police state:

As to those who refuse to be oedipalized in one form or another, at one end or the other in the treatment, the psychoanalyst is there to call the asylum or the police for help. The police on our side!—never did psychoanalysis better display its taste for supporting the movement of social repression, and for participating in it with enthusiasm. (Deleuze and Guattari *AO* 81)

Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy had a significant impact on the view on psychoanalysis. David Cooper, a prominent figure in the anti-psychiatry movement, described *AO* as “a magnificent vision of madness as a revolutionary force, (...) by schizophrenia (they insist on this term) as opposed to a paranoid-capitalist pole and as a dépassment of the oedipian, familial neurotic state of non-existence” (138). The criticism expressed in *AO* hit hard, especially because both Deleuze and Guattari were no strangers in psychoanalysis. Their form of ‘schizoanalysis’ is often seen as a form that directly opposes established psychoanalytic norms. But are psychoanalysis and schizoanalysis truly an irreparable break?

¹ “Laing is (...) able to disengage himself from familialism” (Deleuze and Guattari *AO* 95).

² The Oedipal triangle “has been sketched out by Reich: it is social repression, the forces of social repression” (Deleuze and Guattari *AO* 11).

Or is there perhaps a basis within this break that could allow both methodologies to be brought back into contact with each other? The question of whether psychoanalysis and schizoanalysis are compatible or not is a lively debate that has been ongoing since the release of *AO*. Philosopher Aaron Schuster argues in his book *The Trouble with Pleasure: Deleuze and Psychoanalysis* that psychoanalysis and schizoanalysis are not as far apart as one might think: “Lacanian psychoanalysis and Deleuzian philosophy are unbearably close” (30). It is not the goal of Deleuze and Guattari to tear down psychoanalysis: “So not 'Freud is dead!'” (Schuster 161), but an attempt “to recover its properly subversive core” (Schuster 161). Deleuze and Guattari argue that there was a misstep in the development of psychoanalysis, the world became too Oedipal: “what Freud and the first analysts discover is the domain of free syntheses where everything is possible: endless connections, nonexclusive disjunctions, nonspecific conjunctions, partial objects and flows” (Deleuze and Guattari *AO* 70). Doctor in Philosophy Leen de Bolle states in the introduction of her book *Deleuze and Psychoanalysis* that: “Many commentators draw attention to the fact that Deleuze’s oeuvre cannot be read without accepting the profound influence of the theories of Freud, Lacan, Klein, and so on” (30). While there is also a group that maintains that “Deleuze’s philosophy can under no circumstances be reconciled with psychoanalytical theory” (De Bolle 30). Philosophers such as Joan Copjec and Slavoj Žižek, disagree with the views of Schuster and De Bolle. They argue that psychoanalysis and schizoanalysis are incompatible. Copjec states that “Deleuze maintains that relations are external to the terms they relate. For Lacan, on the other hand, relations are not purely external but 'extimate.’” (195). For Žižek, psychoanalysis and schizoanalysis are “two incompatible fields”, that can never form a dialogue (*Organs* xxi). I see psychoanalysis and schizoanalysis more as a difference in focal points that can still aid each other in certain areas.

Are psychoanalysis and schizoanalysis not as fundamentally divergent as has been claimed for many years? Although Deleuze and Guattari criticize psychoanalysis as a treatment method, I will examine psychoanalysis and schizoanalysis as analytical models. Are Deleuze and Guattari still not compatible with psychoanalysis when we push the treatment armchair out of the room? Or does a combination of both philosophies emerge? Because Deleuze and Guattari “used the psychoanalytic language and the discourse of Saussure (and his successors), linguistics against itself” (Cooper 138), it creates a view that schizoanalysis will always be connected to psychoanalysis. Considering schizoanalysis as a philosophy engaged in ongoing dialogue with psychoanalysis presents an opportunity for the acquisition of new academic knowledge. Schizoanalysis, while undoubtedly offering

innovative insights, is challenging to grasp without a basis in psychoanalytic theory. And it is precisely within this relationship that this thesis will position itself.

One of the main differences that Deleuze and Guattari highlight is the negative approach of psychoanalysis towards desire: “Desire does not lack anything; it does not lack its object” (AO 25). In Lacanian psychoanalysis, the concept of the endless pursuit of the ‘lost object’ or *objet petit a* carries a negative undertone. This perpetual striving to attain the object of desire leads to a continuous struggle, ultimately resulting in negativity because the subject can never achieve ultimate fulfillment. The object of desire always remains at a distance, equating lack with feelings of “impotence, pessimism, sadness, depression, [and] bad consciousness” (Schuster 147). Therefore, Deleuze and Guattari choose to approach schizophrenia, and therefore schizoanalysis, not as a neurosis, but as a form of production: “the schizophrenic process, which is not an illness, not a "breakdown" but a "breakthrough”” (AO 362). When the notion of lack no longer exists for schizoanalysis, something emerges where the “unconscious should be affirmed in its plenitude as an unlimited production of desire” (De Bolle 16). Here, too, a clear connection between psychoanalysis and schizoanalysis can be found; schizoanalytic infinite desire without lack can only be seen as infinite because it reacts to the lacking subject of psychoanalysis. If desire is considered limitless and infinite according to schizoanalysis, then it must always be a reaction to psychoanalysis, which places limits on desire. Schizophrenia is capable of breaking down existing structures because it breaks free from the Oedipal chains of social control and domination: “Freud doesn’t like schizophrenics. He doesn’t like their resistance to being oedipalized (...) they resemble philosophers—“an undesirable resemblance.”” (AO 23). In addition to this critique on Freud, Deleuze and Guattari also argue that Lacan took a wrong turn by incorporating language structures into psychoanalysis: “Lacan himself says "I’m not getting much help." We thought we’d give him some schizophrenic help (...) once we’ve dropped notions like structure, the symbolic, or the signifier, which are thoroughly misguided” (Deleuze *Negotiations* 14). Because the schizophrenic fails to integrate the signifier of paternal law and evades the name-of-the-father, it enables the schizophrenic to establish new unstructured connections that puncture through systems and orders.

To demonstrate the negative or positive potential of schizophrenia, Freud and Deleuze and Guattari use the case of Daniel Paul Schreber. Schreber’s case not only highlights the difference between psychoanalysis and schizoanalysis but also shows how both methods are interconnected as schizoanalysis reacts to psychoanalysis. Daniel Paul Schreber was a German judge who described his own experience with schizophrenia. Schreber’s book

Memoirs of My Nervous Illness became important for psychoanalysis through Freud's analysis. Freud states that "the basis of Schreber's illness was the outburst of a homosexual impulse" (2418). Deleuze and Guattari take a very different approach: "Judge Schreber feels something, produces something, and is capable of explaining the process theoretically. Something is produced: the effects of a machine, not mere metaphors" (AO 2). And this focus on machines is very important. According to Deleuze and Guattari, desire functions like "a factory, a workshop" (AO 55). Desire and all productive processes are "a matter of machines" (Schuster 158). These machines operate through tinkering or bricolage (Deleuze and Guattari AO 7). Deleuze and Guattari borrow this term from Claude Lévi-Strauss. According to Lévi-Strauss, the bricoleur is someone who uses "devious" (16) solutions to solve problems by making use of whatever materials are available, "because it has nothing else at its disposal" (Lévi-Strauss 17). The method of the bricoleur "can reach brilliant unforeseen results on the intellectual plane" (Lévi-Strauss 17). Because the schizophrenic works like a bricoleur, the schizophrenic is "closest to the beating heart of reality" (AO 87). And this notion of the beating heart of reality is not surprising when we follow the thinking of Deleuze and Guattari; when the notion of structure, the symbolic, or the signifier falls away, the bricoleur works with what is left; the beating heart of reality. Therefore, according to Deleuze and Guattari, schizophrenia should no longer be seen as a neurosis. Instead, it should be viewed as a concept that opens our minds to new ways of thinking and feeling about the world around us. Unlike Freud, Deleuze and Guattari see Schreber and schizophrenia as a mode with the potential for production. A good example of how the schizoanalytic schizophrenic forms new connections and moves outside the 'logical' connections of the symbolic can be found in an analysis by philosopher and psychoanalyst Cornelius Castoriadis. Castoriadis describes how a schizophrenic patient told him during a session about "a terrifying memory" (210), where she wanted to make love with her boyfriend in a hotel room:

This proved impossible, and even frightening, "because the sheets were so sweet they were on fire." To my question—a stupid one, I admit—how sheets could be sweet and why that made them burn, she responded quite rightly and with the tone of a great philosopher reprimanding a dull pupil: Mr. Castoriadis, if you never had dreamed, would I be able to explain to you what a dream is and what it is like to dream? In this response we see the schizophrenic's genius. (Castoriadis 210)

However, when schizophrenia manages to disengage itself from psychoanalytic desire, it does not mean that the schizophrenic does not encounter problems: “desire, not left-wing holidays!” (Deleuze and Guattari *AO* 116). ‘The schizophrenic machine’ is constantly in motion, open and creative, where “productions are not determined beforehand, nor are they the result of a determinate order” but are “heterogeneous and plural” (De Bolle 17). By translating desire into a desiring machine, Deleuze and Guattari demonstrate that desire possesses an infinity of uncontrolled productivity.

In a cryptic manner, Deleuze and Guattari suggest that it would be better not to be born: “From a certain point of view it would be much better if nothing worked, if nothing functioned. Never being born” (*AO* 7). This is not meant literally, but as a direct complaint to Lacan’s philosophy, where ultimately, we all move towards the symbolic after birth and encounter a sense of lack. As an alternative, Deleuze and Guattari suggest a world without lack: “What would be required is a pure fluid in a free state, flowing without interruption, streaming over the surface of a full body” (*AO* 8). This brings me to their notion of the ‘Body without Organs’ (hereafter abbreviated as BwO). Deleuze and Guattari refer to the schizophrenic body as the BwO, drawing from the ideas of Antonin Artaud: “When you will have made him a body without organs, then you will have delivered him from all his automatic reactions and restored him to his true freedom” (*Selected Writings* 571). The BwO is not a physical body but a theoretical concept: “The BwO is what remains when you take everything away” (Deleuze and Guattari *Plateaus* 151). When conventional structures and functions are stripped away, the body becomes a site of potential and experimentation. Artaud also supports this break with (linguistic) structures to some extent. According to Artaud, one must “break through language in order to touch life” (Artaud *Theater* 13). The BwO is not limited by predefined forms or structures. Instead, it is a fluid, dynamic space where new possibilities can emerge. Although we can “never reach the Body without Organs, (...) you are forever attaining it” (Deleuze and Guattari *Plateaus* 150), this does not mean that a path towards the BwO is automatically impossible: “you’re already on it, scurrying like a vermin, groping like a blind person, or running like a lunatic: desert traveler and nomad of the steppes” (Deleuze and Guattari *Plateaus* 150). A link can also be made between the BwO and Schreber: “he [Schreber] lived for a long time without a stomach, without intestines,

almost without lungs, with a torn oesophagus, without a bladder, and with shattered ribs, he used sometimes to swallow part of his own larynx with his food, etc” (Freud 2393).³

One of the major structures criticized by Deleuze and Guattari is capitalism. This is also what *AO* brought to light: the Oedipal is “the mode of social production in the era of capitalism; it creates subjects adequate to a world ruled by money and labor” (Schuster 170). The situation with capitalism is so severe that even the master-slave relation no longer applies: ““I too am a slave”—these are the new words spoken by the master” (*AO* 254). What Deleuze and Guattari warn for, or even point out, is that the master is ‘undermined’ by capitalism. Unlike capitalism that shapes a subject, the schizophrenic forms their own paranoid reactions (Moyaert 17), thereby liberating themselves from power structures like capitalism.

Although many differences between psychoanalysis and schizoanalysis have been discussed so far, I have previously indicated that there is more overlap between these methods than has been thought for many years. This brings me to the third element in this thesis: cinema. Psychoanalysis and cinema have long been a fruitful combination, and naturally, Deleuze’s interest in cinema contributes to its relevance in the discussion this thesis engages with. Schizoanalysis provides fertile ground for new interpretations of cinematic works: schizophrenia opens our minds to new ways of thinking and feeling: “It opens up the arts and literature to new works and challenges” (De Bolle 28), including cinema. In schizoanalysis “madness would no longer exist as madness, (...) because it would receive the support of all the other flows, including science and art” (Deleuze and Guattari *AO* 321). Deleuze and Guattari themselves propose using cinema to address this shift—or as they call it movement—in madness: “Perhaps the cinema is able to capture the movement of madness, precisely because it is not analytical and regressive, but explores a global field of coexistence” (*AO* 274).

Since it is not possible to cover the entire cinematic tradition in this thesis, a deliberate choice has been made to examine three specific films by Charlie Kaufman. Kaufman’s films contain elements that are applicable to both psychoanalysis and schizoanalysis. Kaufman’s films invite for philosophical interpretation, but when only one

³ Although Freud is not connected with the concept of the BwO, there is a connection here that Deleuze and Guattari see in Schreber as an example of the discussion between psychoanalysis and schizoanalysis. Deleuze and Guattari also cite this quote from Freud in *Anti-Oedipus* on page 8 to reverse Freud’s point: psychoanalysis has a negative view of Schreber, whereas schizoanalysis sees the potential of Schreber to perceive the world in a ‘skewed’ way. Additionally, it should be noted that Schreber *believed* he lived without these organs, his literal organs were still present. Deleuze and Guattari use the word ‘organs’ to refer not to literal organs, but to parts of the schizophrenic machine, which works as a bricoleur.

analytical model is applied to Kaufman, much is left unexplored. By applying both psychoanalytic and schizoanalytic frameworks to Kaufman's films at the same time, a rich discussion on the interaction of these methods emerges. However, the insights I gather from the films will not focus on treatment methods (if such a discussion even applies to schizoanalysis), but rather on what both methods say about the frameworks and relationship between psychoanalysis and schizoanalysis. I will rely on concepts and models suggested by the films themselves; the films suggest certain interpretative frameworks and ideas, this allows for a rethinking of both the concepts and the films.

Finally, I will describe the method I will use in this thesis. Firstly, the question arises as to which form of Deleuze I will employ for this thesis. There are many discussions regarding how Deleuze was before and after his collaboration with Guattari. According to Todd McGowan, there is no significant difference between Deleuze before and after Guattari. McGowan suggests that Deleuze has always been consistent, and he takes *AO* as a basis for understanding Deleuze both before and after Guattari (McGowan and Engley 00:03:03). I agree with McGowan; although Deleuze's earlier works are more closely connected with psychoanalysis, there are enough indications in his works before his collaboration with Guattari that point towards schizoanalysis, which I will refer to when needed. Deleuze describes his philosophical method as a "pick-me-up" method: "You should not try to find whether an idea is just or correct. You should look for a completely different idea, elsewhere, in another area, so that something passes between the two which is neither in one nor the other" (Deleuze and Parnet *Dialogues I* 10). In the same fashion, I will use various theories from psychoanalysis and schizoanalysis that are of interest, in order to move on and arrive at new insights. By employing this 'pick-me-up' approach, research does not become a form of opposition: "Instead of discussion, or polemic, philosophy thereby becomes a series of coordinations. Rather than saying 'Deleuze against Freud' or 'Deleuze against Kant' or 'Deleuze against Lacan,' we should say 'Deleuze and Freud' ... and Kant ... and Lacan" (De Bolle 9). Like Deleuze, I am therefore not seeking to find a solution to the 'problem', but rather I will explore whether it is possible to bypass the 'problematic opposition' between psychoanalysis and schizoanalysis and arrive at new insights.

In conclusion, Deleuze and Guattari are highly interested in the production of incoherent fragments, detached sensations, fleeting impressions that continuously shift and do not connect with each other (Moyaert 19). While Freud emphasized how pleasure centrally disrupted all structures related to the psyche, sexuality, and perversity, there was also another Freud who sought to map out everything and leave nothing to bodily affect. Deleuze and

Guattari aim to overthrow the structured elements of Freud and Lacan, among others, by moving away from the Oedipal and aim to create new connections: “what Anti-Oedipus aims to salvage is the Freudian notion of Trieb from its Oedipal domestication” (Schuster 161). Schizoanalysis “allows literature and art to discover new worlds underneath the clear surface of the distinct forms” (De Bolle 25). Kaufman’s films act as bridges that offer new interpretations of the relationship between psychoanalysis and schizoanalysis, framing it as a creative encounter. In this view, the two methods are not opposites but rather different readings of the same field. Kaufman’s films expose these tensions, bringing new insights not only about the psychoanalytic and schizoanalytic methods, but also about the combination of film and philosophy and Kaufman’s films themselves.

II. HYPOCHONDRIAC REPETITION OF THE ARCHIVED PRESENT IN *SYNECDOCHE, NEW YORK*

Freud and Deleuze and Guattari hold divergent perspectives on hypochondria. Charlie Kaufman's directorial debut *Synecdoche, New York* (2008) (Hereafter abbreviated as *SYNY*) seems to navigate between the psychoanalytic and schizoanalytic views on hypochondria and death. By examining hypochondria and the death drive from both psychoanalytic and schizoanalytic perspectives, it becomes possible to explore a new mode of creative production that the subject can possess. In this chapter, hypochondria and the death drive will be brought into contact with each other to arrive at psychoanalytic and schizoanalytic insights concerning introspection, time, repetition, and holding onto the present. The film portrays how schizoanalysis holds a negative view of the determination of conditions by psychoanalysis. However, at the same time, *SYNY* also demonstrates that schizoanalysis requires certain psychoanalytic theories to evolve into something new. It is precisely this combination of themes that lends the movie well to an analysis where psychoanalysis and schizoanalysis intersect, not only to contradict each other but also to reinforce each other in specific aspects. In this chapter, the argument will be made for how the psychoanalytic and schizoanalytic methodology differ in their views on hypochondria and death, but ultimately work together to provide new insights into *SYNY* and the two methods. This makes it relevant to ask the following questions: can hypochondria be seen as a schizophrenic mode of production, or does it need psychoanalytical aid? And how can this mode of production be shown and experienced through film and specific film forms? Before delving further into the theoretical part, a summary of the movie will be provided. Due to the density of the film, I will divide it into three parts. The first part depicts the family living together in their house, the second part shows Adele and Olive leaving Caden and moving to Germany, and the last part follows Caden as he works on his ever-expanding theater play.

Caden Cotard is a renowned theater director who is married to Adele, a painter who creates miniature paintings. Together they have a young daughter named Olive. In the first part of the film, it becomes clear that Caden and Adele mainly coexist without truly connecting. Caden is preoccupied with his own body and the illnesses he may or may not have. It is clear from the beginning that Caden is deeply fixated on life and death, which later becomes the driving force behind his theater piece. During one of the early scenes in the film, it is not immediately apparent that time passes rapidly. The radio states that it is September, but when Caden checks his mail, it is already October. As he walks back inside, several months seem to have passed. A few shots later, we find ourselves already in May of the

following year. This illustrates how repetitive and stagnant Caden's life is, where each day blends into the same repetition.

In the second part of the film, Caden develops various illnesses, yet it remains unclear whether these illnesses are real, since the doctors respond very vaguely to Caden's questions and symptoms. Adele decides to move to Germany for a month with Olive and without Caden. During this part of the film, it is uncertain how much time has passed since Adele and Olive left for Germany. When Caden claims that twelve days have passed since their departure, Hazel, who works at the theater box office, states that it has been over a year. Caden's symptoms seem to worsen; he stops producing saliva or tears, experiences spasms, develops rashes and lumps on his body, and has difficulty walking. Because Caden is so obsessively focused on his vague ailments, less and less attention is paid to the passage of time.

The third part of the film is set in motion when Caden receives a large sum of money, allowing him to create a new theater piece. This theater production takes place in an extremely large warehouse or hangar that never seems to end in terms of physical space. The play portrays Caden's own life and the people in it. Gradually, the theater piece grows larger and larger until it reaches megalomaniacal proportions: the play consists of multiple streets and blocks that are a one-to-one copy of parts of New York, hence the name of the movie; *Synecdoche, New York*. At this point in the film, the boundary between what is really lived and what is staged in the theater becomes increasingly blurred. Caden seems to want to repeat parts of his life or experience them multiple times. This causes his 'real life' to come to a complete standstill. He remarries with Claire, the actress from the theater piece who portrays Adele, and they have a daughter named Ariel. Eventually, roles even shift between individuals. Claire seems to increasingly portray herself rather than Adele. Caden has himself recast by another actor named Sammy. Ultimately, when Sammy, playing Caden, reaches the point where the real Caden sought a replacement for himself, Sammy seeks out a new actor for Caden again. As a result, the theater piece and the film continue to spiral inward indefinitely. Eventually, it becomes clear that the entire theater piece is being done anew within the theater hangar as a *mise en abyme*, within which another *mise en abyme* occurs. Finally, Caden takes on the role of Adele's maid, Ellen. At this point, it becomes clear that Caden cannot control the real passage of time as he wished. Time has caught up with him; his parents, Hazel and the second Hazel pass away. In his last years, Caden plays the maid. When Caden decides to leave the constructed apartment of Adele and return to the streets of the theater hangar, everything is destroyed. Something outside the theater hangar has occurred

that has also managed to penetrate Caden's theater play. Finally, Caden finds the actress who portrays Ellen's mother, rests his head on her shoulder, and passes away.

The film plays with a tension between reality and representation, as well as with a tension between obsession with the body and a lack of awareness of the passage of time. As a result, the film feels like it is constantly unfolding in the present, where Caden is always preoccupied with himself and trying to control the passage of time. Caden's fixation on his body and the persistent, vague, and potentially fictional symptoms of illness imply that he suffers from hypochondria. In addition, due to the film's lack of temporal progression, a hypochondriac motif can be felt throughout the entire film. Hypochondria is described by Freud in *Studies on Hysteria* as "anxiety neurosis" and a "fear of illness" (229). Anxiety is a crucial component here. Later, Freud states in *On Narcissism: An Introduction* that "The hypochondriac withdraws both interest and libido - the latter specially markedly - from the objects of the external world and concentrates both of them upon the organ that is engaging his attention" (2939). This means that the hypochondriac diverts their libido away from external objects (such as people, activities, or interests) and focuses it inward toward their own body. This is very clearly the case with Caden in the film, where hypochondria is intertwined with a loss of reality: Caden no longer perceives the passage of time. Here, we can draw a link to the previously discussed Schreber case from the previous chapter. According to Freud, Schreber also suffered from hypochondria: "We learn that Dr. Schreber had been married long before the time of his 'hypochondria'" (2389). What is already clear is that Freud views this form of—described by him as—paranoia as something that should be remedied as quickly as possible. And the film initially appears to align with Freud as well. It is presented as a pathology that is also connected to his creative blockage. After all, Caden fails to complete his theater piece. However, Deleuze and Guattari have a completely different perspective on hypochondria. In *A Thousand Plateaus* they propose that several 'bodies' come close to realizing the BwO. The first body they describe is the "*hypochondriac body*" (150). Thus, a schizoanalyst would not assert that hypochondria is a mental disorder (Reynolds 109). It is not coincidental that Caden Cotard's surname refers to the Cotard Syndrome: a rare mental disorder in which the affected person holds the delusional belief of being dead, delusions of absence of organs, negation, damnation, and or immortality (Berrios and Molina-Luque 218, 219). This description of Cotard Syndrome aligns well with the idea of a schizophrenic worldview and moving towards the BwO. The fear that Caden Cotard has of not having control over life—in the most literal sense of life and death—actually induces a

form of creative production in Caden.⁴ Due to his hypochondriac obsession with his own body and death, Caden creates a megalomaniacal theater simulacrum that even attempts to preserve time itself.⁵ This turns hypochondria into something that initially stagnates but ultimately generates a form of schizoanalytic production.

For Artaud, the theater of cruelty does not refer a performance before passive observers, but to an “active participant-audience” (Gorelick 276) which “wakes us up: nerves and heart” and overturns “all our preconceptions, inspires us with the fiery magnetism of its images and acts upon us like a spiritual therapeutics whose touch never can be forgotten” (Artaud *Theater* 84). The reason I involve Artaud in this analysis is not only because Artaud provided a kickstart to the BwO for Deleuze & Guattari, but also because the theater of cruelty aligns with what Caden aims to achieve: an experience that is as raw and honest as real life, blurring the boundaries between theater and reality. By rebuilding parts of New York, his life and dreams, Caden creates this Artaudian therapeutic world where the audience is invited into the play as active participants that can walk through the synecdoche of New York. As the film progresses, it becomes increasingly difficult to determine whether the actors are portraying their theater characters or actually having real arguments themselves ‘outside’ the play. This is evident in the scene where Sammy (playing Caden) sensually touches Claire (playing herself). Claire becomes frustrated and walks away from their simulated house. Whether this frustration was genuine because Sammy touched her, or if it was a scripted incident being reenacted, remains unclear. According to Deleuze & Guattari, schizoanalysis has the potential that “restarts the movement, links up again with the tendency, and pushes the simulacra to a point where they cease being artificial images to become indices of the new world” (AO 321). Deleuze & Guattari connect this notion of ‘pushing the simulacra beyond its boundaries’ to the theater of cruelty: “for it is the only theater of production, there where the flows cross the threshold of deterritorialization and produce the new land” (AO 321). Caden also hints at the simulacrum being a production of new land: “I was thinking of calling it [the play] Simulacrum” (1:07:26). As a hypochondriac, Caden possesses a ‘skewed gaze’ on the world, which produces the emergence of ‘new land’: “The hypochondriac is the subject who sees what he should not see and feels what he should not

⁴ However, the Cotard syndrome can also have negative effects on people, as seen in the scene where Caden tries to explain how plumbing works to the young Olive. Caden attempts to explain plumbing by drawing a metaphor between pipes and veins carrying blood. Olive then exclaims, “I have blood? I don’t want blood. I don’t want blood!” (00:07:48).

⁵ This is not the first time that Caden takes on theater productions where death is a central subject; we see Caden working on his interpretation of *Death of a Salesman*, and a poster of his adaptation of the Greek tragedy *The Bacchae* hangs at the box office.

feel” (Schuster 23). The hypochondriac in schizoanalysis is “without limits” (Schuster 24). Where in psychoanalysis one can still resort to the ordering of symbolic, or to the Other, this is not the case in schizoanalysis. Due to the absence of boundaries, the hypochondriac body experiences “shocks, difficulties, problems, and traumas that force one to think and create, and the violent shifts and ruptures these entail” (Schuster 24). These ruptures are the creative potential to create something new like Caden’s theater play. Caden unconsciously channels his hypochondria and anxiety about death into the creation of one of the biggest theater pieces ever made, pushing the simulation to the point where the theater play ceases to be artificial. Although Caden’s theater piece can be a bit too representative of reality for the theater of cruelty, it still contains elements that resonate with Artaud’s ideas. In Caden’s piece, the boundaries between actor and future visitors dissolve, aiming for a communal experience where both parties participate in the creation of meaning. However, Caden’s piece is not as overtly direct and ‘in your face’ as Artaud’s approach suggests. Instead, Caden creates a dissolution between actor and viewer through multiple instances of *mise en abyme*.

In a psychoanalytic approach, one might argue that Caden is driven by lack. For example, Caden projects his missing *objet petit a* onto other actresses, hoping that they can fill his lack, which is ultimately futile since the *objet petit a* will always produce a form of lack. It is therefore not coincidental that after the separation, Adele uses her maiden name, Adele Lack. But in schizoanalysis, particularly in the concept of the BwO, there is no notion of lack: “the body without organs, includes voids and deserts. But these are 'fully' part of desire, far from accentuating some kind of lack in it” (Deleuze and Parnet *Dialogues II* 90). For a Lacanian, this void is ‘too full’; it embodies an infinity of bursts of exploding desire without being hindered by adverse elements. Therefore, Caden is not driven by an absent or unreachable object but by the forces of desire produced by the hypochondriac body. However, it is important to state that this creative potential of the void is not purely positive. The hypochondriac body is unable to live in this world and “remains stuck in his own incomprehensible exile and worldlessness. Madness is an infinitely open dead end” (Schuster 176). This is also applicable to Caden’s theater piece, which seems to have no end and keeps on growing by spiraling inward upon itself. Although the hypochondriac body has the potential to draw creative power from the void, it remains a chaotic body caught in an endless cycle of repetitive desire towards infinitely open dead ends. In this regard, the hypochondriac body is not far from the psychoanalytic notion of the death drive, since for Freud the death drive’s aim is to “conduct the restlessness of life into the stability of the inorganic state” (Freud 4071). The hypochondriac body remains constantly driven by a Freudian ‘compulsion

to repeat', the need to expose itself repeatedly to distressing or painful situations without end: "compulsion to repeat must cause the ego unpleasure, since it brings to light activities of repressed instinctual impulses" (Freud 3725). This compulsion as a form of "detriment" (Freud 4710) is connected to the death drive because this endless repetition can only move towards destruction of the subject. Somewhere within the inexhaustible source of the desiring machine lies a madness that will lead to the downfall of the schizophrenic.

Although, schizoanalysis suggests that the death drive is less 'deadly' than how psychoanalysis views it. Deleuze describes his view of the death drive somewhat cryptically in his book *Cinema II: The Time-Image*. Deleuze uses the apologue of the scorpion and the frog from Orson Welles's film *Mr. Arkadin* (1955). In this scene, Mr. Arkadin tells a fable about the frog and the scorpion:

This scorpion wanted to cross a river... so he asked the frog to carry him. "No," said the frog. "No, thank you. "If I let you on my back, you may sting me... and the sting of a scorpion is death." "Now, where," asked the scorpion, "is the logic of that?" for scorpions always try to be logical. "If I sting you, you will die, and I will drown." So the frog was convinced and allowed the scorpion on his back. But just in the middle of the river, he felt a terrible pain... and realized that, after all, the scorpion had stung him. "Logic," cried the dying frog as he started under, bearing the scorpion down with him. "There is no logic in this." "I know," said the scorpion, "but I can't help it. It's my character." (00:29:31 - 00:30:17)

According to Deleuze "the scorpion's sting turns against itself, when it is directed in this case at the frog" (*Cinema II* 140). There is something remarkable here: while the psychoanalytic death drive will *always* occur, the Deleuzian death drive is an accident, or as Schuster describes states: "no drive seeks its own extinction" it is "self-destructive only *per accidens*" (70). When we apply this to the hypochondria, we can say that there is a possibility that the schizophrenic creates their own downfall through an endless madness caused by the overflowing void of desire and creativity, but full destruction does not necessarily have to occur. If we implement the death drive in the life trajectory of the schizophrenic, it *may* desire nothing more than a form of enjoyment that can ultimately destroy the subject, but it also desires life. In this sense, I suggest that every subject ultimately moves towards becoming a form of schizophrenic through a death drive that desires psychoanalytic destruction *and* schizoanalytic life. Therefore, I propose that there is an overlap between the

death drive and schizoanalysis. This overlap is even stated in the first chapter of *AO* Deleuze and Guattari state: “The full body without organs (...) The death instinct: that is its name, and death is not without a model. For desire desires death also, because the full body of death is its motor, just as it desires life, because the organs of life are the *working machine*” (8). According to Deleuze and Guattari “The experience of death (...) occurs in life and for life, in every passage or becoming, in every intensity as passage or becoming (*AO* 330). Or as Schuster states; the death drive is not extinction as a future event, but rather he argues that the catastrophe has already occurred; we are already dead: “Death is not the apocalyptic end point of the drive but its starting point, or rather lack thereof” (Schuster 38). As Caden himself states after the funeral scene: “I’m dead” (01:49:29).⁶ When the catastrophe has already occurred, we are already schizophrenic. We are already hypochondriacal. We are already ‘dead’. Therefore, there exists a combination of the hypochondriac body and the death drive that occurs *during* life, which I will call the *hypochondriac drive*. Because this schizoanalytic form of the death drive occurs *in* life, it is not a desire for an ending point but a starting point where seemingly negative conditions like hypochondria are transformed into a mode of production.

The idea that humanity as a whole is heading towards self-destruction as a species looms in the background of *SYNY*. In the third part of the film, the viewer is shown glimpses of what is happening outside the theater piece. In the real world, gunshots, explosions, and screaming people can be heard and people seem to be preparing for an attack or apocalypse. The destruction of civilization in the form of an apocalypse can be tied to the inward view of the neurotic hypochondriac: not only Caden, but even other characters do not seem to notice that the world is falling apart outside the theater. The ultimate cause of the apocalypse is not made clear, but what is evident is that the theater hangar has managed to withstand the self-destruction from outside for longer. However, eventually this self-destruction has also destroyed the massive theater set, including the actors. The death drive of the outside world manages to engulf everything. But within the theater hangar, Caden’s hypochondriac drive, instead of the classic view on the death drive, ensures that the simulacrum lives on longer than the reality outside the theater. The hypochondriac drive is thus something that is less ‘deadly’ than the psychoanalytic death drive. However, it carries a significant risk, as in the case of psychoanalysis and schizoanalysis, a return to a stable worldview is almost impossible.

⁶ This does not mean that Caden is literally dead, is in some form of heaven, or purgatory.

Due to the focus on their internal world, psychoanalysts Patricia Paraboni and Marta Rezende Cardoso state that the hypochondriac always lives in the ‘now’ which adds a temporal notion to hypochondria: “the hypochondriac seeks for eternity; however, this becomes a punishment, as eternal actualization” (Paraboni and Cardoso 479). The hypochondriac is always preoccupied with his neurosis and imaginary ailments that dominate the subject at that present moment. As a result, a hypochondriac always remains in the now without being able to place their illness in the past:

To suspend time (...) is a way to avoid what is inevitable in death; narcissistic fantasy of eternity in which underlies a time suspended and dominated by death. To be out of time, freezing all temporality, one refuses the traumatic excitation. If the time is frozen, petrified, then nothing can come from it, nothing will unfold; there is a movement refusal. (Paraboni and Cardoso 479).

Caden has the urge to petrify the present by creating an infinite loop in the theater play. Where Paraboni and Cardoso use the term ‘eternal actualization’ for this, I state that the hypochondriac drive is a drive for an *archived present*. The notion of archiving the present is a reference to Derrida’s book *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*. In this book, Derrida engages in a dialogue with Freudian psychoanalysis and the archive, arguing that the death drive is a negative thing due to the fear it evokes. At the same time, partially aligning with Deleuze and Guattari, Derrida also suggests that the death drive is not entirely negative and can create a form of creativity. According to Derrida, we experience an “archival desire” (Derrida 14), which he refers to as “*le mal d'archive*” (14). This urge for an archived present is fueled by the death drive: “Freudian psychoanalysis proposes a new theory of the archive; it takes into account a topic and a death drive without which there would not in effect be any desire or any possibility for the archive” (Derrida 24). The death drive “works *to destroy the archive*” (Derrida 14), which means that the death drive tries to consume and destroy everything in its path. Nothing is safe or stable when the death drive is met or takes over. To counter this, we archive to prevent being destroyed by the death drive. Derrida also makes the connection that the archive clings to a form of the present: “we can no longer ask the question (...) of the concept of the archive (...) in a temporal or historical modality dominated by the present or by the past” (26), and in addition “the archive should *call into question* the coming of the future” (26). Because the archive is no longer dominated by the present or the past, and is not yet ‘concerned’ with the future, I state it resides in ‘the now’; a state of constant

present. Just as the archive settles into the present, I argue that the hypochondriac drive situates itself in an eternal archived present. Similar to how Deleuze and Guattari see desire as an inexhaustible source of creativity and production, Derrida does not consider *le mal d'archive* as a shortcoming: “to be *en mal d'archive* can mean something else than to suffer from a sickness” (57):

It is to burn with a passion. It is never to rest, interminably, from searching for the archive right where it slips away. It is to run after the archive, even if there's too much of it, right where something in it anarchives itself. It is to have a compulsive, repetitive, and nostalgic desire for the archive, an irrepressible desire to return to the origin, a homesickness, a nostalgia for the return to the most archaic place of absolute commencement. No desire, no passion, no drive, no compulsion, indeed no repetition compulsion, no "*mal-de*" can arise for a person who is not already, in one way or another, *en mal d'archive*. (Derrida 57)

According to Derrida, we are all “*en mal d'archive*” (57), which aligns with my concept of the hypochondriac drive where we are already hypochondriac: ‘we are already dead’. By connecting the death drive to the archive, it becomes clear how Caden’s theater piece reaches its infinite archived present. Caden seeks to preserve an environment that must not age or progress the present. It is important to note that this does not result in a theater piece where a time loop is created, akin to, for example, the film *Groundhog Day* (1993). The archive of Caden’s theater play is not an archive where one can revisit an experience or memory from the past. Instead, Caden reconstructs the situations anew for each character every day. This is evident in the scene where Caden sits at an endless table covered with white notes he writes outlining the character traits for the actors that day. As a result, while the piece repeats itself daily, there remains a slight possibility for change within the repetition that persists in the archived present.

The hypochondriac drive not only portrays how characters are obsessed with the *archived present*, but the film also portrays the hypochondriac drive through the film form. *SYNY* does not make use of any flashbacks, and it is also unclear how much time passes between shots and scenes, as in the first part of the film where the monotony of Caden’s life is portrayed while months go by. Similarly, the viewer also remains in the ‘now’ in the form of the archived present. The fact that the film wants to stay in an archived present that never passes the present becomes even clearer when the film ends at exactly the same time as the

first shot of the film. The first shot of the film shows Caden's alarm clock displaying the time 07:44, and the final minute of the film is initiated by the words "Now you are here. It's 7:44" (1:57:21). As Caden says earlier in the film to Hazel: "I'm aching for it being over", to which Hazel responds; "Yeah. The end is built into the beginning" (1:41:43). That time does pass, is only evident at certain moments, such as when Caden or Olive have aged. This 'rapid aging' comes as a surprise to the viewer due to the experience of the archived present. A film form of the hypochondriac archived present thus repeats itself in the present without any notion of time and focuses on the subject's internal world fueled by the hypochondriac drive.

The repetition of the archived present shows an overlapping area between psychoanalysis and schizoanalysis. To further clarify this, I will use the psychoanalytic and schizoanalytic notion of repetition. Freud defines repetition in *Remembering, Repeating and Working-through* as a "compulsion to repeat" (2501) which is an unconscious tendency of a person to repeat a traumatic event. According to Freud, "the patient does not remember anything of what he has forgotten and repressed, but acts it out. He reproduces it not as a memory but as an action; he repeats it, without, of course, knowing that he is repeating it" (2501). This repetition can even take on a literal form of re-enacting the event. Lacan states in *Seminar XVII* that repetition is connected to jouissance: "Repetition has a certain relationship with the limit of this subject and this knowledge, which is called [jouissance] (*Seminar XVII* 4).⁷ Additionally, Lacan connects repetition with the death drive: "repetition is not simply the function of the cycles that life comprises, cycles of need and of satisfaction, but of something different, a cycle that involves the disappearance of this life as such, and is a return to the inanimate" (80). In Caden's case, he wants to repeat parts of his life in the everlasting present.

In *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze states that Freud is the driving force that caused repetition to be seen as a "constraint" and a "compulsion" (14). In contrast to psychoanalysis, Deleuze explores repetition in relation to the concept of difference. This is interesting because for psychoanalysis, repetition consists of a lack of difference. Deleuze suggests that repetition is not simply the recurrence of the same, but rather involves variations and differences that emerge within a repeated pattern: "repetition displays identical elements which necessarily refer back to a latent subject which repeats itself through these elements, forming an 'other' repetition at the heart of the first" (Deleuze *Difference* 25).

⁷ Jouissance can be best described as 'pleasure in pain'.

Psychoanalytic repetition is thus something that falls under a certain order according to Deleuze, something that he seeks to break through; repetition is no longer reproduction of the same for Deleuze. Deleuze's point is that not only unique 'encounters' produce something new, even repetition is capable of creating something new through variation. We can see this happening when Caden writes down the problems, motivations, anxieties, and emotions on the white pieces of paper every day. While the play has a drive for an archived present, there are these little opportunities where something new can arise through repetition. According to schizoanalysis, there is therefore a critical creative potential in repetition. When we apply this hypochondriac drive and its urge for repetition on *SYNY*, we see that repetition not only creates a theater piece where time keeps repeating itself, but the film itself is an expression of the creative potential of the hypochondriac drive, highlighting the repetition of the archived present and the creativity that comes with it.

In this chapter, it has been demonstrated that schizoanalysis indeed diverges from the views of psychoanalysis regarding neuroses and the death drive by linking the BwO with hypochondria. However, instead of moving away from psychoanalysis, schizoanalysis suggests that there is a more positive potential in hypochondria, the death drive, and repetition, which I have termed the hypochondriac drive. This drive does not move away from psychoanalysis as a whole, but adds more depth to the already controversial notion of the death drive. The hypochondriac drive can thus be described as a less negative and less 'deadly' perspective on schizophrenic occurrences that in psychoanalysis would be dismissed as needing immediate cure. Unlike psychoanalysis, the hypochondriac with a skewed worldview through schizophrenia holds a critical creative potential. While this remains a body of struggle, it can also spark genius, exemplified by Caden and his theater production that surpasses mere archival simulation. When we approach the death drive as a schizoanalytic potential for production, it becomes a force that can break through barriers, challenge conventions, and engage in acts of creation or innovation. This innovation even extends to the film form, where a new kind of temporal experience is presented to the viewer, aligning with Caden's play that 'wakes the audience up: nerves and heart'. Despite the theater piece holding its ground against the apocalyptic death drive that is already dominant outside the simulacrum, the death drive eventually manages to destroy the inner workings of the theater piece of the archived present. As Derrida states: "[the] death drive incites, everywhere, outside as much as inside" (Derrida 13). While the schizophrenic death drive did not initiate the destruction by keeping an infinitely open dead end, the death drive outside the

theater triggered an end of time that came sooner than the completion of Caden's timeless play.

III. SEEING IMPOSSIBLE MEMORIES IN *I'M THINKING OF ENDING THINGS*

Schuster states that “What Deleuze’s Bergsonism adds to the psychoanalytic concept is the accent on time” (60). Is psychoanalysis missing a concept of time? And if so, can schizoanalysis aid psychoanalysis by adding the accent of time to psychoanalysis? To answer these questions, Charlie Kaufman’s most recent directed film *I’m Thinking of Ending Things* from 2020 (hereafter abbreviated as *ITOET*) will be used. *ITOET* displays a unique experience of time and memory. The film portrays psychoanalytic concepts such as trauma, repetition, and memory. At the same time, the film presents itself in a way where time is not experienced chronologically but as subjective fragments. The film revolves around various (memory) images whose status is unclear; the memories and scenarios shown to the viewer seem to have both happened and not happened simultaneously. Additionally, *ITOET* raises even more questions as the protagonist reflects on himself from a secondary, focalizing position. This places the viewer in an interpretive puzzle; how should we understand memories that appear to have no origin? The aim of this chapter is not to solve all the mysteries of the film, but to analyze the theoretical issues at play in the film; the instability of memories. To do this, this chapter will focus on Freudian screen memories, the Deleuzian virtual and Deleuzian involuntary memories. While the previous chapter on *Synecdoche, New York* played with encapsulating time in the form of an eternal present, *ITOET* portrays the breaking open of the conventional notion of time and memory. *ITOET* shows several distinct phenomena that are rarely presented in this way in cinema, both in terms of narrative and film form. To analyze the uniqueness of *ITOET*, the following questions must be addressed: does psychoanalysis provide enough tools to interpret the experience of ambiguous memories in combination with unstructured time? Or does schizoanalysis offer a useful addition? This chapter will explore whether the psychoanalytic and schizoanalytic perspectives on time and memories, which *ITOET* invites to, can be seen as complementary to each other.

A summary of the film will be provided first. A nameless young woman is contemplating ending her relationship with her boyfriend, Jake, while on a trip to meet Jake’s parents for the first time. At the beginning of the film, the young woman thinks, “Feels like I’ve known Jake longer than I have” (00:03:00). During this scene, we see the back of an older man as he looks out a window at the young woman from a nearby flat. A few shots later, the same shot is repeated, but instead of the old man looking out of the window, her boyfriend Jake is now looking at the young woman. The film has a claustrophobic atmosphere from the beginning, giving the impression that the young woman is being

watched by an omnipresent entity, as seen in scenes where she looks over her shoulder in the car as if she is being observed or followed. During the film, the viewer stays connected to the young woman through the access to her thoughts. Notably, we never hear the thoughts of Jake. During the young woman's visit to Jake's parents' farm, the scenes are interspersed with scenes of an older male janitor working at a high school. This older man is the same man staring out the window at the young woman. As the film progresses, it becomes increasingly inconsistent. When the young woman sees a photo of Jake as a child, she is confused because she initially recognized herself in Jake's photo. That evening at the farmhouse, Jake's parents repeatedly change ages in a non-chronological manner, although no one seems to notice. At night, the young woman discovers the clothes of the old janitor in the closed off basement. While driving back home with Jake, he describes several events that seem never to have happened. The backstory of the young woman constantly changes, Jake refers to her by different names, and her accent and career seem to switch multiple times. The couple decides to stop at a drive-through called 'Tulsey Town', where they both get ice cream. Notably, several employees at this drive-through are students from the high school where the old janitor works. Unable to finish their ice cream, Jake decides to discard it at his old high school. When they start kissing, Jake notices another car is parked at the high school. He decides to get out and confront the person in the other car, leaving the young woman alone. Eventually, the young woman decides to enter the high school to look for Jake. Here, the young woman encounters the old janitor. When she attempts to describe Jake's appearance, it seems she has completely forgotten what he looks like. When she finds Jake in a hallway, they watch a dancing couple dressed as the young woman and Jake. The dance is interrupted by another dancer playing the janitor, who kills Jake's dancer. The old janitor leaves the high school. Instead of driving away, he appears to hallucinate; he sees his parents arguing and animations of Tulsey Town commercials. The old janitor takes off his clothes and walks back to the high school. In the following scene, an aged Jake, with stage makeup, wins a Nobel Prize and receives a standing ovation from an audience composed of people from his life, who are also wearing stage makeup. Eventually, the scene fades to blue. The final scene takes place the next day in front of the high school, where the old janitor's car remains. The young woman and Jake's car seem to have disappeared. The screen goes black, and the sound of an approaching snowplow can be heard.

Although the entire film has now been objectively discussed, many questions remain. It appears that beneath the different scenes, memories, and images lies another layer, that of the janitor, whose clothes the young woman also finds in the forbidden basement. When the

young woman finds the janitor's clothes, it reveals that young Jake and the janitor are the same person. At the end of the movie, it becomes clear that old Jake saw the young woman when he was younger, but he never had the courage to talk to her. The young woman is not Jake's girlfriend but a fragment of Jake's imagination. The fictitious young woman confronts old Jake with the fact that they never really met: "We never even talked, is the truth. I'm not even sure I registered him" (01:50:10). Jake regretted this so deeply that he created a fictional scenario where he could change everything about the young woman to test what would work in his hypothetical scenario when they visit Jake's parents (which never happened). That old Jake changes these hypothetical scenarios is apparent in the scenes where the farm house, Jake's parents and the dog change multiple times in appearance and age. In these moments, old Jake imagines another potential scenario that he creates for himself to see how a specific situation would play out. This is also reflected in the identity of the young woman; she is addressed by multiple first names and changes her appearance and accent at times. This is the effect of old Jake adjusting the scenario involving the young woman and young Jake in various ways and in a non-chronological manner. The young woman and Jake have a sort of supernatural connection, which is more than once noticeable throughout the film. For instance, when the woman first thinks "I'm thinking of ending things" (00:04:25) after which young Jake immediately interrupts by saying "Huh? Did you say something?" (00:04:27), even though the young woman only thought the words in her mind. However, we now understand that her thoughts are also the thoughts of both old and young Jake.

What the viewer sees seem like flashbacks to the time when Jake took the young woman to meet his parents. The film presents these flashbacks as reality, but as the film progresses further, it becomes apparent that it is more about different versions and scenarios that seem to coexist. The film offers almost no clues that make it possible to decide which of the given scenarios is real. We are focalizing with two characters that switch throughout the film; the young woman in the car and at the farm house and the old Jake in the school. Notably, we never focalize through young Jake, instead, we focalize through the young woman, who appears in the flashbacks. One can say that the viewer does not hear the thoughts of Jake, but this would be incorrect. Jake created the young woman through a psychoanalytic desire to find love, happiness, or his lost object; she only exists for and because of Jake. The thoughts of the young woman are the thoughts of Jake. The viewer experiences a reflection from Jake on himself through his fictional girlfriend. Knowing that the young woman wants to end the relationship and does not adore Jake makes the film even more depressing, revealing that Jake does not love himself.

The depressive thoughts infiltrate old Jake's fictitious memories, ultimately leading him to commit suicide by hypothermia. His entrapment in a cycle of overthinking all—for him—possible scenarios that could have happened in his younger years is evident in the scene where old Jake throws his ice cream into a trash can filled with the same ice cream cups. This indicates that it is not the first time old Jake has fantasized about his fictitious past in this manner. Ultimately, old Jake can reflect on himself by conversing with the young woman. This also highlights the fictitious nature of her existence, as there could be no timeline possible where the young woman talks to old Jake in the school. Jake determines his own fantasies and sees himself as the culprit, which is reflected in the dance scene between the happy couple that resemble the young woman and Jake. During this dance, the other dancer, dressed as the old janitor, kills the dancer who resembles young Jake. In the film, trauma disguises itself by being overlaid with another memory. But this form of trauma manifests as an endless array of different scenarios that appear to unfold non-chronologically. I will begin my deeper analysis from the perspective of psychoanalysis to see if it can provide enough insight into the creation of a fictitious plural past, or if schizoanalysis can offer more insight in this regard.

Although old Jake is not the main character or the primary focal point, he is the character that creates the fictional memories. Therefore, I will begin my psychoanalytic analysis with old Jake, and then delve deeper into the layered narrative to reach a conclusion. Old Jake yearns for a past where he could show a loving girlfriend to his parents, hoping that this would change his present and future, resulting in outcomes like winning the Nobel Prize. Although old Jake created the young woman out of his desire, things do not seem to be going well between the two; the young woman is thinking about ending the relationship. Fulfilling certain desires should lead to satisfaction, however, the arrival of the young woman rather disrupts old Jake's fantasies. This creates a sort of horror scenario: even though the young woman seems to be a fully functional human with her own thoughts and desires, she exists only because old Jake created her out of his desire for a suitable girlfriend to present to his parents.⁸ What the viewer of the film needs to realize is that the young woman does not actually exist in reality. The memories, which present themselves as a form of the present, seen from the young woman's perspective, therefore never took place in the past.

⁸ In the book *I'm Thinking of Ending Things* by Iain Reid, on which the film is based, this idea is even more explicitly addressed: the young woman slowly comes to understand that she is merely a manifestation of old Jake, and she realizes that her existence will end the moment he takes his own life.

This brings me to how psychoanalysis views memories. Is it possible to gain deeper insights into how fictional memories from the past work through psychoanalysis? Freud is particularly interested in memories that are not consciously remembered by the subject. In his essay *Remembering, Repeating and Working-through* Freud argues that the task of the analyst is to access repressed memories by uncovering “the resistances which are unknown to the patient” (2498). That Freud has a specific interest in memory is evident a few sentences later when he explains what the outcome of the treatment should be: “Descriptively speaking, it is to fill in gaps in memory; dynamically speaking, it is to overcome resistances due to repression” (2498). Freud is particularly interested in how memories are forgotten or repressed: “‘Forgetting’ becomes still further restricted when we assess at their true value the screen memories which are so generally present” (2500). Freud’s theory on “screen memories” (488) will be further examined. A screen memory is a vivid memory that hides the traumatic event: “the substituted [screen] memory will necessarily lack those important [traumatic] elements” (Freud 490). Instead of the traumatic experience, a new “mnemonic image” (Freud 490) takes its place, devoid of the traumatic memory. Because the trauma remains in the unconscious, the subject can function without being hindered by it. At the same time, the screen memory also deprives the subject of the power to process the trauma, with all the associated consequences. In the film, the basement can be seen as the location where the real trauma is buried. This is also why young Jake does not want the young woman to go into the basement of the farmhouse. In this basement lies the revelation of his true self: a depressed janitor. The janitor’s clothes also have another unique function. When the young woman finds old Jake’s janitor’s clothes, it does not refer to trauma in the past, but rather to a trauma in the present or even, because the farmhouse takes place in a fictitious past, a form of the future.

Old Jake functions by repressing the trauma of his failed (love) life, but this repression results in the creation of multiple screen memories. Freud states that “the patient does not *remember* anything of what he has forgotten and repressed, but *acts* it out” (2501). Note that acting out is not the same as a screen memory. Screen memories are not acted out but are visual memories that are distorted or altered over time. Acting out is a way for the subject to cope with inner conflicts or unresolved issues, and refers to expressing unconscious feelings or conflicts through repetitive actions. In the case of old Jake, the acting out is a form of self-sabotage. For example, the shot of the many milkshakes near the end of the film illustrates that old Jake is trapped in his form of acting out; old Jake drives to the school, meanwhile gets a milkshake, and continues to ponder over his unrealized past. This shows

that Jake is stuck in a loop where a distorted memory of a successful visit to his parents is played on repeat. As long as the subject does not break free from these forms of repetition, the subject keeps remembering the past in the present. We see this form of memory in old Jake; he remains in the present, pondering over what he failed to do in the past. Because the memories of the past did not actually occur, the memories we see are a form of screen memory, as old Jake is not thinking about how he never had a girlfriend. Old Jake thinks about how it would be if a form of the young woman had accompanied him to his parents. Jake uses certain elements from his memory for his screen memories; the girls working at Tulseley Town are based on high school students who mock old Jake in the corridors of the high school during his work as a janitor.

Following Freud, Lacan posits that memory “conditions the indestructibility of certain desires” (Lacan *Écrits* 479), but I would like to reverse this notion: not only do memories create desire, but the desire for a successful relationship with a woman conditions old Jake’s memory. However, we now encounter a problem; the memories we see did not happen and are scrambled through time. Since the young woman does not exist, there is no possibility that the young woman ever went to Jake’s parents’ house with young Jake. Like Freud, Lacan is interested in how the subject can logically structure their memories through what he calls “recollection” (Lacan *Écrits* 326). When a subject no longer suffers from repetition, they can reorder the timeline of memories and move forward in their life: “Analysis can have as its goal (...) the subject's realization of his history in its relation to a future” (Lacan *Écrits* 249). By solely applying psychoanalysis to *ITOET*, it is not possible to answer the questions posed at the beginning of this chapter; there is still a missing notion of non-chronological time experience.

To assist psychoanalysis in this regard, I will focus on how Deleuze views memories, time, and possibilities. To understand how Deleuze views the possibilities of memories, I will incorporate Deleuze’s theory of the actual and the virtual into this analysis. For Deleuze, psychoanalysis thinks too linearly about time. Deleuze tries to move away from this linearity. Without linearity, we can arrive at more complex ideas about fantasy, memories, and non-actualized possibilities. Although Deleuze and Guattari discuss the actual and the virtual in *Anti-Oedipus*, their remarks are brief, such as: the actual signifies “in action, as opposed to what is virtual and will come about under certain conditions” (Deleuze and Guattari *AO* 358). To gain a better understanding of the theory of the actual and the virtual, I will turn to another text by Deleuze. In his essay “Bergson, 1859-1941”, Deleuze describes more clearly what the actual and the virtual entail: “We must understand that the virtual is not something actual (...)

but that in which all actuality, all reality is distinguished and comprehended and takes root” (Deleuze *Desert* 28). The virtual is part of reality, but the virtual realm is not actualized. In other words, the virtual is an infinity of possibilities from which certain things ‘crystallize’ and become observable in reality. We are used to thinking of reality in terms of production, where we only consider things real if they are actualized. But the virtual is a real thing that is not actualized. The virtual can thus be seen as an infinity of possibilities from which certain parts are actualized. Therefore, it is not the case that virtual phenomena disappear when something from the virtual enters the actual. When we apply this to *ITOET*, virtual memories are experienced as actual by the viewer. A purely psychoanalytical interpretation of the film would thus only focus on the underlying (repressed) elements and not on virtual elements.

As we now know, old Jake is stuck in the repetition of his screen memory. Because he has not processed his trauma, he constantly thinks about other possible scenarios that could have occurred when he was younger. However, a noteworthy point is that while *ITOET* presents a series of virtual scenarios, they are not infinite. Jake’s trauma determines the infinite possibilities and reduces them to possible scenarios where the young woman still wants to end the relationship. In none of the shown fictive memories does the young woman want to stay with Jake. When the virtual is delineated, it becomes what Deleuze calls “the possible” (*Desert* 30): “the virtual is not the same thing as the possible (...) Because if everything [*tout*] is not given, it remains that the virtual is the whole [*le tout*]” (Deleuze *Desert* 30). In other words, the possible tries to think as a finished event. As soon as we start to speak about possibilities, we are fixing it *in* time, this is why the possible cannot correspond to the virtual. What we can now explain is that, due to his trauma, old Jake can only create fictitious memories where the young woman wants to end the relationship, thus distorting the virtual into the possible. This is because Jake’s trauma determines him and only provides the possibilities of negative scenarios. How these memories are presented to the viewer will be further analyzed through the film’s form.

In *Cinema II*, Deleuze defines two types of memories and immediately also how these are cinematically made known to the viewer. Deleuze calls these ‘the recollection-image’ and ‘the dream-image’. For Deleuze the recollection-image: “is necessarily a virtual image. But, in the first case, it becomes actual” (*Cinema II* 56). In other words, the recollection-image can be seen as a form of, a flashback. In flashbacks, it is clear to the viewer that we are transporting a memory from the past to the present in the narrative. As concluded earlier, this is not entirely the case in *ITOET*. Although virtual images are actualized, there is no real flashback. Although Jake is younger than the janitor, the film presents it in a way that makes

it seem like two different people experiencing something simultaneously at the same time. Perhaps Deleuze's notion of the dream-image provides more clarity. In the dream-image, the virtual "becomes actual in a different image, which itself plays the role of virtual image being actualized in a third, and so on to infinity" (Deleuze *Cinema II* 56). Dream-images, according to Deleuze, can be recognized by either "dissolves, super impositions, deframings, complex camera movements, special effects" or through "clear cuts or montage-cut" (Deleuze *Cinema II* 58). Deleuze states that "The dream-image is subject to the condition of attributing the dream to a dreamer, and the awareness of the dream (the real) to the viewer" (*Cinema II* 58). In *ITOET* it is never explicitly indicated that we are dealing with a dream. Dissolves, complex camera movements, etc., are never used throughout the film to indicate a dream scenario. The clear cut seems more applicable to understanding *ITOET*, except that throughout the entire film, there is no clear-cut indication of which storylines belong to a dream and which belong to reality in terms of dominance. The virtual scenarios actualize alongside old Jake's reality. Furthermore, it is not clear whether the viewer is even looking at Jake's fictitious memories because the focalization is shown from the perspective of the young woman. What *ITOET* does goes beyond the dream-image or the recollection-image, as evidenced particularly in moments where the virtual and actual converge. For example, the scene where young woman talks to old Jake in the high school. *ITOET* fluctuates between the actual and the virtual by presenting virtual scenarios that old Jake fantasizes about as actual, while they actually remain virtual; the memories we see are virtual because they never occurred in the past. The film's fluctuation between the actual and the virtual is also evident in moments where the narrative makes illogical leaps through time and space: at these moments, old Jake consciously or unconsciously traverses multiple virtual scenarios, all of which are presented to the viewer as actual.

Where a psychoanalytical interpretation would focus on a trauma and thus the 'real' event in the past, in a schizophrenic manner, old Jake traverses—for him—possible scenarios of how the encounter with his parents could have unfolded. As a result, the film shows glimpses of possible worlds that disappear just as quickly to make way for other scenarios. In this way, *ITOET* comes remarkably close to how Deleuze and Guattari analyze and appraise Marcel Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*:

In Search of Lost Time, (...) we are struck by the fact that all the parts are produced as asymmetrical sections, paths that suddenly come to an end, hermetically sealed boxes, noncommunicating vessels, watertight compartments, in which there are gaps even

between things that are contiguous, gaps that are affirmations, pieces of a puzzle belonging not to anyone puzzle but to many, pieces assembled by forcing them into a certain place where they may or may not belong, their unmatched edges violently bent out of shape, forcibly made to fit together, to interlock, with a number of pieces always left over. (Deleuze and Guattari *AO* 43)

Deleuze and Guattari view *In Search of Lost Time* as: “a schizoid work par excellence” (*AO* 43). According to Deleuze, memories in *In Search of Lost Time* are forced upon the main character, which he calls ‘involuntary memory’. Involuntary memory occurs when there is a form of forced intervention: “it intervenes only in terms of a sign of a very special type: the sensuous signs” (Deleuze *Proust* 53). In the case of *In Search of Lost Time* memories are forced by senses: “Combray for the madeleine, Venice for the cobblestones, and so forth” (Deleuze *Proust* 53). In *ITOET* certain elements also transport old Jake to his fictitious past; such as the different songs he listens to in his car, the poetry he reads and the movies he watches during his breaks. All these examples create involuntary memories of virtual pasts. Here, Freud’s screen memory and Deleuze’s involuntary memory can be connected with each other; when old Jake is triggered by certain signs, he creates a virtual screen memory where his trauma from his failed life is not present. Freud’s screen memory is thus also a form of a virtual past since the subject unconsciously remembers the past differently from what really happened.

When there is an oscillation between the actual and the virtual, Deleuze calls this the ‘crystal-image’. The crystal-image is “the coalescence of the actual image and the virtual image, the image with two sides, actual and virtual at the same time” (Deleuze *Cinema II* 69). The crystal-image is thus a shot or scene where the pastness of an event is fused with the presentness of its viewing. The subjective past is thus transported to the present through recollection. This transportation can come through involuntary memory that is invoked in the present. The virtual memory thus exists somewhere in a ‘timeless past’, ready to be recalled by an actual image, allowing past and present to exist in a non-linear manner. However, *ITOET* goes even further than the crystal-image. In *ITOET* it is no longer clear where the virtual ends and the actual begins, and vice versa. It is not clear anymore which form of actual or virtual past intrudes into the present in such a way that it is no longer clear whether we are in one or the other. Just as in *ITOET*; “in *In Search of Lost Time*, there is never a totality of what is seen nor a unity of the points of view” (Deleuze and Guattari *AO* 43). According to Schuster, this makes *In Search of Lost Time* unfilmable:

If one were to try to film this scene (Proust is notoriously considered unfilmable), the image of Combray would have to be shown in such a way as to indicate that while it is deeply part of the Narrator's subjective universe, it is not accessible from his point of view. A standard flashback sequence would not suffice; what is needed is neither a subjective nor an objective shot but to show the scene as "somehow 'subjectivized' without the subject being given." The trick would be to capture (...) a subjectivation without subject. (Schuster 59)

I assert that *ITOET* does succeed in adapting the 'unfilmable' notion of Proustian memory experience. *ITOET* does not show a standard flashback, but presents a virtual subjective environment that appears objective, without the viewer realizing that they are witnessing the visual scenarios of old Jake. The viewer is given the illusion of subjectivation of the young woman, but the true subject, old Jake, is absent in these scenes. According to Deleuze, the originality of "Proustian reminiscence [is that] it proceeds from a mood, from a state of soul and from its associative chains, to create a creative or transcendent viewpoint—and no longer, in Plato's fashion, from a state of the world to seen objectivities" (*Proust*, 110). Similarly to Proust, *ITOET* gives rise to a viewpoint that "signifies at once the birth of the world and the original character of a world" (Schuster 59), where the world is the fictitious past of Jake and the character is the young woman.

By analyzing the way memories are presented in *ITOET*, it becomes evident that schizoanalysis can add a dimension of time experience to psychoanalysis. A memory, as depicted in *ITOET*, is not an objective repetition of the past, but a repetition of trauma where past and present no longer merely oscillate between the actual and the virtual, but where time is out of joint and the line between the actual and the virtual becomes blurred. In *ITOET*, the Freudian screen memory and Deleuze come together; Deleuze's theory of the possible as determining the virtual is in connection with how old Jake's Freudian screen memory is formed. Although Jake wants to fantasize about the infinity of possibilities in his fictitious past, he can only create scenarios where the young woman wants to end the relationship with him. According to Schuster, "Deleuze distrusts memory" (60) because "there is an inherent risk for virtuality to turn into mythology, for the past to appear as something once possessed

and now lost” (Schuster 61).⁹ This is what happens in *ITOET*, but even worse: Jake never possessed a girlfriend that is now lost. Instead, Jake creates his fictitious past where he would have had a certain form of a girlfriend, which is not presented as a memory but as a truth in the present to the viewer. Here, psychoanalysis adds a dimension to Deleuze and schizoanalysis: the virtual is too utopian; the subject *can* only devise scenarios based on the possible. Jake is stuck because of his involuntary return to a fictitious past; everything reminds him of the things that never happened. In *ITOET*, subjectification without a subject can occur because the young woman focalizes, but she does not see her own representation of reality as she does not have one. A screen memory is a virtual memory that did not occur, causing the past to distort and present itself in the present. In *ITOET* the situations did not happen at all, neither in the past nor in the present, but are still shown by a subject that was born simultaneously with the fictional world. After watching the film, one might argue that it is clear what is an actual memory and what is a screen memory, but this is not entirely true. Through the scenes at the end in the school, it becomes even more unclear what is objective and subjective, as here old Jake speaks with the young woman from a virtual past. In this aspect, the film goes beyond the crystal-image by combining two times in one scene. We still focalize with the young woman but observe the ‘creating subject’; old Jake. The young woman transcends the standard notions of how a subjective memory can be shaped, making the creating subject less dominant and part of what Deleuze describes as Proustian reminiscence. Old Jake has never processed his trauma; he is haunted by the virtual images of what could have been. These virtual images of the past create an unbearable life in the present. Ultimately, Deleuze’s theory is too virtual and fragmented; not all of the virtual is open for the subject, when it can only think in a traumatic possible. The subject remains the anchor point. Perhaps the confrontation between the fractured self, between old Jake and the potential young woman in the school, is the key to breaking out of his traumatic repetition, ultimately leading to Jake’s tragic suicide.

⁹ This statement by Schuster can also be interpreted very well psychoanalytically; the “once possessed and now lost” seems to refer to Lacan's theory about the endless search for the lost objet petit a.

IV. IS THE *ETERNAL SUNSHINE OF THE SPOTLESS MIND* A BODY WITHOUT ORGANS?

Deleuze and Guattari assert that the BwO is not a mere metaphor, but something we can, or even must, strive for: “Find your body without organs. Find out how to make it. It's a question of life and death, youth and old age, sadness and joy. It is where everything is played out” (Deleuze and Guattari *Plateaus* 151). The BwO is already in the making when the body “has had enough of organs and wants to slough them off” (Deleuze and Guattari *Plateaus* 150). In other words, one can or should consciously move towards the BwO when one knows of its existence and potential. However, the question still lingers on *how* one can ‘slough’ their organs and move towards the BwO. This chapter will take this as its starting position: to what extent is it possible for an individual to consciously move towards the BwO, and is it even possible to destructuralize the subject in a structured, determined world?

Deleuze and Guattari remain unclear in *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus* about how the subject can practically move towards the BwO. This is striking since other topics, such as their critique of psychoanalysis, are much clearer and more assertive in their books. How can one know how to ‘strip’ oneself of their structured body? In this chapter, multiple theoretical attempts on how one can practically move towards the BwO will be discussed, thereby giving the BwO a more distinct aspect and making it easier for the subject to approach the BwO. In this chapter the film *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (hereafter abbreviated as *ESOTSM*) from 2004 will be used to research the practical questions that Deleuze and Guattari left unresolved. As a result, the film not only thinks about the schizoanalytic method but also serves as a platform for further exploration and experimentation of reaching the BwO. *ESOTSM* examines how we can detach and ‘reset’ ourselves from certain structures that dominate the subject. Consequently, this ‘philosophical’ film addresses the same issues discussed by Deleuze and Guattari. Consequently, *ESOTSM* will be used to investigate whether the ‘spotless mind’ is a route towards the BwO. But what is the effect of consciously tinkering with the body? In this chapter, I will relate this to a third voice, namely the critique that Slavoj Žižek expresses about the BwO. By doing so, three philosophical ‘texts’ will be brought into dialogue with each other.

While in the previous chapters I began by summarizing the film, this chapter will be structured differently from the previous ones. Before summarizing, I will first provide additional information on how Deleuze and Guattari perceive the BwO and how other scholars and philosophers describe the practical application of the BwO. By presenting the

film only after this contextual background, the summary of the film can be read with the BwO in mind.

As discussed earlier, the BwO is the effect of ridding oneself of external influences of the body: “The BwO is what remains when you take everything away” (Deleuze and Guattari *Plateaus* 151). ‘Everything’ sounds very rigorous, Deleuze and Guattari are aware of this and even provide a sort of warning that one should not strip the body too much or too quickly:

Dismantling the organism has never meant killing yourself, but rather opening the body to connections that presuppose an entire assemblage, circuits, conjunctions, levels and thresholds, passages and distributions of intensity, and territories and deterritorializations measured with the craft of a surveyor. (Deleuze and Guattari *Plateaus* 160)

Thus, Deleuze and Guattari argue that the breaking open of the structured body, and therefore the dismantling of existing structures, should be done in moderation; “since overdose is a danger” (Deleuze and Guattari *Plateaus* 160). Moving towards the BwO should therefore not be accomplished with a “sledgehammer, [but] you use a very fine file” (Deleuze and Guattari *Plateaus* 160). As artistic as this sounds, it stays unclear how one should approach this. This is surprising, since the use of metaphors is not entirely expected in a book written by Deleuze and Guattari. As discussed in chapter one, Deleuze and Guattari approach the BwO in *A Thousand Plateaus* as a theoretical concept rather than a metaphor. Deleuze himself even states in *Dialogues II* that he does not believe in metaphors: “There are no (...) metaphors (all metaphors are sullied words, or else make them so)” (Deleuze and Parnet *Dialogues II* 3). Approaching the BwO as a metaphor is thus not the intention, as the BwO itself should be stripped of any external linguistic structures such as metaphors. Using a metaphor to describe the BwO moves us further away from its definition rather than towards it. However, this does not mean that there are no practical ways to move towards the BwO.

According to Deleuze and Guattari, the BwO can be achieved by breaking down the rigid layers and structures that organize and control the body, thought, and thus life itself. They promote more fluid and dynamic forms of existence. By resisting the standard structures that predetermine the functioning of the body, they refer to this process as ‘destratification’: “the body without organs (...) flees and becomes destratified, decoded, deterritorialized” (Deleuze and Guattari *Plateaus* 4). Deleuze and Guattari conclude that destratification comes about through experimentation, but one must be cautious in how one

moves towards the BwO: “a too-sudden destratification may be suicidal, or turn cancerous. In other words, it will sometimes end in chaos, the void, and destruction, and sometimes lock us back into the strata, which become more rigid still, losing their degrees of diversity, differentiation, and mobility” (Deleuze and Guattari *Plateaus* 503). So far, the problem remains that Deleuze and Guattari do not provide concrete examples. This is quite logical, considering that Deleuze and Guattari oppose structures, established language, and psychoanalysis. According to Lacanian psychoanalysis, language is the primary body which is composed of signifiers: “Speech is in fact a gift of language, and language is not immaterial. It is a subtle body, but body it is. Words are caught up in all the body images that captivate the subject” (Lacan *Écrits* 248). According to Lacan, before we enter the symbolic order, the body of a subject is still fragmented. It is only after the mirror stage that the fragmented body gains its mode of functioning, as the ego is formed: “The function of the mirror stage (...) is to establish a relationship between an organism and its reality” (Lacan *Écrits* 78). For Deleuze, the ego exists even before the mirror stage: “The ego (...) is initially lodged in the depths, in the vesicle itself or the body without organs” (Deleuze *Logic* 203). For Deleuze, the ego precedes symbolic identification. Therefore, the BwO occupies a pre-Oedipal position, not determined by the Lacanian symbolic order. Deleuze and Guattari see the BwO as something where signifying chains are created that are “not themselves signifying” (Schuster 167). Thus, it is difficult to describe the BwO as a coherent (linguistic) construction because of its infinite, open, and ‘anti-structural’ connections. Deleuze also argues that “there are only inexact words to designate something exactly” (Deleuze and Parnet *Dialogues II* 3), in other words, the symbolic order is not the way to express the indescribable BwO because it would then fall into the very structures it is trying to break free from. Deleuze and Guattari thus resist the Oedipalization of, among other things, language structures and at the same time, the Oedipalization of the BwO. This makes it quite difficult to explain a concept that moves away from the linguistic body created through the mirror stage and entry into the Oedipal symbolic. Here, Deleuze and Guattari create a significant problem for themselves: if the BwO can only be explained by moving away from the ‘logical’—for Deleuze and Guattari, therefore, ‘restrictive’—language structures, we fall into a pre-Oedipal position where logic has not yet formed. This sounds more ideological than logical, as we can only explain ourselves in a way that is understandable through structures. If everyone were to ‘speak’ in a pre-Oedipal form, everyone would express themselves so chaotically and incoherently that clear communication would be impossible. Deleuze and Guattari seem to be secretly aware of this difficulty as they themselves ask the question:

“How can we fabricate a BwO for ourselves[?] (...) It is a struggle and as such is never sufficiently clear” (Deleuze and Guattari *Plateaus* 163).

Because Deleuze and Guattari explicitly emphasize that the BwO is a real concept towards which we can, or should, move, this creates a spark among authors and philosophers to try to figure out how to move towards the BwO without getting stuck in metaphors. Although much has been written about the BwO, there are few thinkers who are concerned with making the BwO practical. In the paragraphs to come, I will give some examples where authors have nonetheless attempted to approach the BwO in a more practical manner. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari provide some examples of how we can move towards the BwO: “Why not walk on your head, sing with your sinuses, see through your skin, breathe with your belly” (151), in contrast to “seeing with your eyes, breathing with your lungs, swallowing with your mouth, talking with your tongue, thinking with your brain” (Deleuze and Guattari *Plateaus* 150). Once again, this remains too metaphorical; I cannot literally practice any of these examples. Repurposing organs like sinuses, skin, and belly remains metaphorical so far, which is why I will now turn to other authors. Torkild Thanem, Professor of Management & Organization Studies, states in his essay “The body without organs: nonorganizational desire in organizational life” that examples of moving towards the BwO include breaking female/male dichotomies, as well as reversing work relationships where dress codes and job specifications are no longer stable entities, thereby destabilizing hierarchical power relations (Thanem 210). It seems that Thanem is suggesting a form of transgression, which could counter expectations. However, I find something like adjusting dress codes not radical enough to be called transgressive. Modifying a dress code or altering perceptions of certain dichotomies still constitutes a minor adjustment within an existing system. While certain beliefs may be broadened in their linguistic descriptions, I would not classify this as transgression. Additionally, the influence of the psychoanalytic Other plays a significant role in this process; when the subject breaks dichotomies or dress codes, it must be confirmed by the Other as transgressive. The confirmation of the Other thus has more influence on how the Other can move towards a BwO than the subject itself moving towards the BwO. Consequently, one ends up adjusting the Other and their views more than their own views.

Ronald M. Carrier approaches the BwO in his essay “The Ontological Significance of Deleuze and Guattari’s Concept of the Body Without Organs” in a very different way. For Carrier, there must necessarily and literally be a form of experimentation, trial, and error in a way where the BwO has a desire to push boundaries and has the potential for virtual action

and being: “the body without organs is not the human body conceived either objectively or subjectively, but is rather the virtuality of an individual human being, an open field of unactualized potential for acting or being acted upon in determinate ways” (Carrier 203). According to Carrier, one can use what one already possesses: “one is to take advantage of the affections one possesses in virtue of one's organization, to turn one's powers of acting and suffering back against themselves such that there takes place a de-differentiation of one's affections that produces a potential for active affections” (Carrier 201). In other words, one must use the emotions they have to free themselves from established paths. When emotions are used as a breeding ground, new, more limitless potential can emerge towards the BwO. However, even after reading Carrier's entire essay, it remains unclear how one can use their affections to bring about a form of experimentation. How to translate this affective notion into something else is beyond my grasp. This is especially challenging considering that affect precedes the translation into emotions, since when affect is captured in words, we are already moving towards the determined linguistic structure that it seeks to avoid being encapsulated in.

Finally, psychoanalyst Leon S. Brenner approaches the BwO by comparing it to autism. In his essay “Is the Autistic Body a Body Without Organs?” Brenner suggests that “the autistic body is truly chaotic, lawless, a body with which you could "walk on your head, sing with your sinuses, see through your skin, breathe with your belly”” (49) where the last sentence obviously refers to the phrase by Deleuze and Guattari from *A Thousand Plateaus*. Brenner concludes that the autistic body is one of the true manifestations of the full BwO (53), as individuals with autism have a subjective consistency to the image of the body and thus function “under a unique logic fabricated by the autistic subject” (Brenner 51). Brenner connects this to Deleuze and Guattari's concept of abstract machines: “Abstract machines consist of unformed matters and nonformal functions” (Deleuze and Guattari *Thousand Plateaus* 511). This is not that far-fetched, as abstract machines work against the formed (linguistic) structures, and individuals with autism often construct their own perception of the world without formed matters and formal functions. Therefore, autism and schizoanalysis are not far apart for Brenner. While I find this the most plausible approach to moving towards the BwO so far, it is obviously not a solution for many. One cannot simply become autistic, nor can one reconstruct the world through autistic traits, as most of us already exist within established (linguistic) structures.

In summary, we can say that Deleuze and Guattari see the BwO as something we can move towards by resisting the Oedipal symbolic wherein ‘organs’ have been given fixed

functions. By breaking pre-assumed functions, organs are liberated from their determined roles. Although Thanem, Carrier, and Brenner have totally different perspectives on how to approach the BwO, it all remains too abstract or too hard to be carried out by a subject. My addition to this discussion is that one of the possibilities of ‘stripping’ the body is presented in the *ESOTSM*, perhaps even the most obvious solution people would turn to if it were truly possible. Before I delve into how *ESOTSM* demonstrates how one moves towards a BwO, the film will be summarized.

When Joel Barish is waiting for his train to work, he has the impulsive idea to take a different train to the beach of Montauk. When he strolls the beach, Joel notices a woman with blue hair. He wonders why he is so bad at meeting women. When taking the train home, the blue-haired woman happens to be on the same train. They start a conversation and Joel learns that the woman is named Clementine. Although she is very different from Joel, he seems to like her. And this is mutual because Joel stays at Clementine’s place. They go on a second date the next day. A hard cut is made to Joel crying in his car. Joel drives back home. When Joel is asleep, two men enter Joel’s apartment with all sorts of computer equipment. We see a flashback where Joel remembers that he went to see Clementine, but she was with a new date and seemed not to know who Joel was. In another flashback, Joel tells his friends Rob and Carrie about his attempt to fix the relationship between him and Clementine. Against Carrie’s advice, Rob shows Joel a note that says “Clementine Kruczynski has had Joel Barish erased from her memory. Please never mention their relationship to her again. Thank You” (00:24:59), which comes from a company called ‘Lacuna Inc.’. Joel is very upset by this and decides to go to Lacuna to demand an explanation. After learning that Clementine has indeed had Joel erased from her memories, Joel demands to undergo the same procedure himself. Dr. Mierzwiak from Lacuna, suggests that Joel should take everything that reminds him of Clementine. The two men who entered Joel’s apartment work for Lacuna and are there to erase Clementine from Joel’s mind. The procedure works by first removing the most recent memories and then working back to older memories. It is important to note that Joel actively relives these memories in his sleep. The erasure procedure progresses steadily, but now that the procedure has reached memories of Joel being happy with Clementine, Joel realizes that he wants to keep these memories and wants to stop the procedure. Joel actively tries to manipulate his memories in such a way that he includes Clementine in memories where she was not present like his childhood. At this point, it turns out that the erasure machine connected to Joel has stopped working. Dr. Mierzwiak is called in to fix this issue. While Dr. Mierzwiak is busy fixing the computers, he kisses his younger assistant, Mary, from Lacuna,

who was also present during the procedure. At this moment, Mrs. Mierzwiak arrives and sees through that Dr. Mierzwiak and the assistant are kissing. When Mary claims she initiated it, Mrs. Mierzwiak reveals that this is not the first time she has kissed Dr. Mierzwiak. They apparently had an affair before, but Mary also requested an erasure procedure to move on. Amidst this chaos, Joel is still asleep and has reached the first memory he has of Clementine, from the time they were together on the beach. Joel actively changes his final memory to prolong his time with Clementine, causing her to whisper “meet me in Montauk” (1:30:50). Joel’s procedure is successfully completed by Dr. Mierzwiak. A cut occurs to the opening scene of the film, but this time the viewer knows that Joel and Clementine have a history and will meet again at the beach of Montauk. Mary quits her job as an assistant at Lacuna and steals all the files and tapes from the practice. After Joel and Clementine meet (again), they both find a letter from Mary to all of Lacuna’s patients, along with the tape recordings where they both express their desire to have each other removed from their memories. After listening to their own tapes, Joel and Clementine decide to continue dating, even though they know how it ended last time. The film ends with an open-ended scene where Joel and Clementine run through the snow at Montauk beach.

What *ESOTSM* shows is that Lacuna Inc. offers the possibility to remove certain memories. In the case of Joel and Clementine, these are memories they initially view negatively. But theoretically, one could also remove other memories or knowledge from someone’s brain at Lacuna. This means that Lacuna offers a practical intervention where ‘corrupted organs’ can become ‘spotless’ again, or to put it in Deleuze and Guattari’s words; Lacuna is a way to become destratified, decoded, and deterritorialized. So, Lacuna does not literally remove organs, but *ESOTSM* is a film about resetting, decoding, and erasing organs in the schizoanalytic sense. Lacuna thus offers a procedure that one can purchase to move towards the BwO. So, you could say that the organs causing suffering, or physical discomfort, are healed from the corruption that a subject has incurred. In the case of the film, it is a negative experience the characters want to get rid of. However, this does not imply that Lacuna can only remove negative experiences from the body. The negative experiences addressed in the film can just as well be replaced with other emotions, memories, thoughts, and beliefs that Deleuze and Guattari fight against and that the subject wishes to eliminate. One could approach Lacuna to remove certain power structures from the subject. For instance, the organ affected by capitalism. A patient at Lacuna could reset the notion that they must desire earning money, buying things, and pursuing material happiness. This would allow a subject to live a much more ‘spotless’ life than someone still trapped in the corrupt

capitalist world where everything revolves around capitalistic desire. A more rigorous example would be if the subject allows Lacuna to reset certain parts of the Lacanian symbolic order of language. This would enable language structures to avoid becoming rigid in their meanings, allowing the subject to freely experiment and create anew.

When comparing the procedure Lacuna offers to the previously mentioned examples of possible transgression, affect, and autism, one can quickly conclude that buying a treatment to move towards the BwO is a more practical and logical solution. Although so it seems. When one is aware of the BwO and actively seeks to move towards it, Lacuna seems like a wonderful solution; 'I want to get rid of bad influences that determine me, so let's remove them!'. Lacuna can offer a return to the schizoanalytic pre-Oedipal; if you file away enough without a sledgehammer, one can move towards the pre-Oedipal BwO that gives one the possibility to rebuild oneself in a new, unstructured way. Although this may be an understandable choice, especially in a capitalist world where almost any body modification can be bought, this way of trying to achieve the BwO is not a solution. And here I want to emphasize very clearly what I am saying; although Lacuna does not actually exist, the solution Lacuna offers would be a very popular choice for people who want a spotless mind and want to break away from their determined body to explore other paths. In my opinion, people would quickly opt for Lacuna's procedure, and may even think that this is the best solution for moving towards the BwO instead of transgression, affect, or autism. But ultimately, this solution will not work. While Lacuna's patients may have tinkered with their organs, essentially not much changes. Those who opt for adjustment by Lacuna create an 'illegal shortcut' to a spotless mind. Instead of contemplating how the body is determined by external effects such as language structures or capitalism, one can choose at Lacuna to erase knowledge of these issues, thereby avoiding further reflection on these structures is no longer necessary or even possible. However, this approach is not effective in the long term. In the film, treated patients inevitably encounter the elements they sought to cleanse. Consider Mary, the assistant, who has had countless affairs with Dr. Mierzwiak, despite having forgotten him due to Lacuna's intervention. Even though she no longer remembers Dr. Mierzwiak, the possibility remains to reconnect in exactly the same manner with what one has sought to cleanse from their organs. In other words, the film demonstrates that a treatment on an individual level is insufficient, as the characters inevitably find themselves trapped again in the same structures.

Patients who have been to Lacuna do not create a legitimate BwO, but rather something that becomes an artificial, problematic BwO. To discuss the effect of this

‘artificial BwO’, a specific chapter from Slavoj Žižek’s book *Organs without Bodies* will be used. In his chapter “Against Hyphen-Ethics” Žižek discusses how “biogenetic interventions” can emancipate humanity from its enslavement to genes (*Organs* 111). Although Žižek discusses genetic intervention, Lacuna in *ESOTSM* can be viewed as an intervention in established structures. This emancipation, however, comes at a price. According to Žižek, biogenetic interventions disturb the individual’s self-understanding (*Organs* 112). This is also the case in *ESOTSM*. When a company like Lacuna can offer to remove parts of the corrupted organs, the subject no longer needs to think about their shortcomings, these can simply be removed. In fact, Joel and Clementine are perfect candidates for psychoanalysis: both are struggling with problems that need to be addressed in order to remove the symbolic blockage, thus making a successful love life possible. However, Joel and Clementine do not choose a treatment to remove the symbolic blockage. They opt to address the final result of a series of causes by removing the pain or frustration stemming from the breakup. From a psychoanalytical standpoint, the core of the problem remains in the symbolic order, so nothing will change. Žižek provides the following example for this:

Suppose I am impotent because of some unresolved blockade in my symbolic universe, and I take Viagra instead of “educating” myself through the work of resolving the symbolic hindrance/inhibition. The solution works: I am again able to perform sexually. But the problem remains: how will the symbolic blockade itself be affected by this solution? (*Organs* 114)

Viagra or Lacuna’s treatment do not lift the symbolic blockage, thus causing the problem to resurface at a “more fundamental psychotic level” (Žižek *Organs* 114) such as paranoia. By taking a shortcut around the symbolic blockage, the root cause of the problem persists for Joel and Clementine, which “renders the very notion of education meaningless” (Žižek *Organs* 112): Joel and Clementine have not actually learned from their issues because they do not address them. Consequently, the ending of the film can be analyzed in a less optimistic manner. Instead of Joel and Clementine being aware of each other’s shortcomings but still choosing to love each other, it becomes not a matter of choice, but an obsessive repetition from which they will not escape because the underlying problems remain unresolved. No matter how many times one removes the outcome at Lacuna, they will continue to repeat the same moves when the underlying problems are not addressed. According to Žižek, we prefer not to know bad news after hearing it, but once we are aware of it, there is no return to an

“innocent ignorance” (Žižek *Organs* 115). Although this is still the case with current biogenetic interventions, what is interesting about *ESOTSM* is that one no longer remembers the bad news. So, one could argue that *ESOTSM* does something very positive for the subject, namely cleansing the body towards the spotless BwO without the subject even remembering the bad news. However, this is actually exactly the other way around: when we move towards the BwO, the Oedipal capitalism that dominates the body is not removed; it only removes the outcome of the ‘problematic’ Oedipal. This creates a new issue; when one can buy the route to the BwO through Lacuna, the authenticity of the subject is compromised. The ‘corrupted’ body then becomes subordinate to the body that is already moving towards the BwO: “Once we know that our natural dispositions depend on blind genetic contingency, every stubborn sticking to these dispositions is as fake as sticking to old “organic” mores in a modern universe” (Žižek *Organs* 112). Lacuna thus creates a shortcut to a form of a BwO, negating the autonomy of the subject. Additionally, the subject is also shaped by the experiences they go through in their life. Undoing traumas, structures, shortcomings, etc. could result in a ‘blank slate’ as envisioned by Deleuze and Guattari for the BwO, but it also leads to a loss of personality and autonomy. Despite traumas being very intense for the subject, it might be even scarier to no longer recognize someone after the intervention towards the BwO, as certain determined organs have been filed away and the subject’s personality is compromised.

In addition to the fact that consequences resulting from symbolic blockage essentially no longer exist and the autonomy of the subject is compromised, *ESOTSM* demonstrates another interesting element: the notion of repeatability without consequences. The endless resetting of one’s chances is described by Žižek in his book, *Sex and the Failed Absolute* as a form of “obscene immortality” that belongs to the “pre-Oedipal polymorphous perversity in that it delivers us from the constraints of our bodily mortality and finitude—we seem to float freely (...) without guilt” (Žižek *Sex* 171). What Žižek means by obscene immortality is that a possibility is created, where one can reset one’s body and mind at will, allowing for a fresh start whenever desired. Although the progression of time is not reset by Lacuna’s intervention, the subject is given infinite opportunities to tinker with and manipulate their organs. However, while this might sound appealing from a pre-Oedipal perspective in schizoanalysis, it is not the case: “There is always a symbolic price to be paid for such “unearned” solutions” (Žižek *Organs* 114). By being able to reset infinitely, we actually develop “a distance from our bodily immediacy; we are not immediately our body” (Žižek *Sex* 171), which perhaps could be defended by Deleuze and Guattari as a successful journey

towards a pre-Oedipal body. However, even if one transitions to a pre-Oedipal state, the only way forward is to (infinitely) reintegrate into the Oedipal symbolic: “the “pre-Oedipal” flux already presupposes the Oedipal cut, it is a preemptive reaction to it—in short, the much celebrated “pre-Oedipal” space is sustained by and reacts to something that comes after it.” (Žižek *Sex* 174). In *ESOTSM*, Joel can file away much of his (negatively) structured body, but when he wakes up after his treatment, he will once again move towards the Oedipal symbolic. We cannot help but embrace the Oedipal to some extent, even in the pre-Oedipal: “This is why we should (...) attempt to reinscribe Oedipus back into Deleuzian territory, (re)discovering in it an “abstract machine” (Žižek *Sex* 172). The answer towards the BwO does not lie in the pre-Oedipal symbolic at all; rather, the BwO must engage more with the Oedipal rather than reject it. The desire for a BwO, just like the desire for the pre-Oedipal, must always be seen as a consequence of the Oedipal. This is why we need to consider a ‘post-Oedipal’. In the post-Oedipal world, schizoanalysis acknowledges the existence of Oedipal structures without the urge to revert to a pre-Oedipal state. The path forward always leads toward the existing Oedipal world. Therefore, schizoanalysis should pay even closer attention to how Deleuze himself describes his philosophical method, as outlined in chapter one: “You should look for a completely different idea, elsewhere, in another area” (Deleuze and Parnet *Dialogues* 10). Therefore, schizoanalysis would be better off focusing on acknowledging Oedipal structures and countering them by incorporating them into a model that moves beyond the Oedipal rather than reverting to the pre-Oedipal.

When we focus more on the Oedipal structures in combination with the BwO, it becomes even more apparent how *ESOTSM* moves between psychoanalysis and schizoanalysis. If we truly figure out how to move towards the BwO, it will sooner or later be embedded in capitalism to be marketed and profited from in such a manner. So, the film revolves around two main themes: how characters remain trapped in (Oedipal) structures and how every solution, such as Lacuna, ultimately becomes embedded in a capitalist project. The fact that a procedure towards the BwO is embedded in capitalism is something that Deleuze and Guattari are obviously against, but it is the most logical outcome. Companies will offer courses on ‘walking on your head’, lessons on ‘singing with your sinuses’, workshops on ‘seeing with your skin’, and coaching sessions on ‘how to breathe with your belly’ in the same way that courses like ‘how to be truly happy’ are sold now. Capitalism will not be overthrown, even if people manage to move towards the BwO, as the BwO will also become a commodity. Just as Mary states in the film: “pre-Valentine’s Day is our busy time” (00:28:07). Valentine’s Day, which has been a capitalist day from the start, has now also

acquired an additional revenue model; not only love but also the lack of love and failed dates etc. have now become part of the profit-making scheme. *ESOTSM* demonstrates that even if there were a possibility of an obscene immortality towards the BwO, it not only does not benefit the autonomy of the subject but also will sooner or later be embedded in capitalism. For Lacuna, it is advantageous that people are unhappy due to, for example, capitalism, and for capitalism, it is advantageous that Lacuna constantly manages to make people happy again for a short time without capitalism having to justify or adapt. This is a rather dystopian worldview that aligns with Žižek's opinion on biogenetic intervention: "The prospect of biogenetic interventions and other forms of brain manipulations opens up the dark prospects of corporations misusing the free market to manipulate people and to engage in terrifying medical experiments" (Žižek *Organs* 118). Moreover, because Lacuna costs money, it is also something reserved only for those who have the means to buy an obscene immortality, while those without money will be seen as second-class bodies with 'old organic mores'.

In conclusion, *ESOTSM* reveals two main points. First; when we are able to move towards the BwO, the BwO should not be a return to the pre-Oedipal, but a leap forward to a post-Oedipal world. The fantasy of being able to completely erase something creates an illusion that the pre-Oedipal is a thing we should strive for. However, we can only strip parts of our body, which means that we always retain a portion of the Oedipal symbolic structures and ultimately move back towards them from the pre-Oedipal towards the Oedipal. The second point is that *when* an 'easy solution' like Lacuna is found, it almost instantly becomes part of capitalist structures so that people can profit from it. Hereby, the film can also be read as a critique of schizoanalysis, which so to speak reverses the starting point of this thesis. While initially schizoanalysis critiqued psychoanalysis, the Oedipal, and capitalism, *ESOTSM* now critiques how schizoanalysis cannot, and should not, avoid Oedipal, capitalist, and psychoanalytic structures. The film suggests that it is best for schizoanalysis not to reject the Oedipal but to incorporate it in order to progress further in to a post-Oedipal world. Tinkering with the body through buyable interventions remain the most plausible way one will move towards the BwO in a capitalist world. Despite the fact that the BwO exemplifies Deleuze and Guattari's concern with opening up the future, it remains a utopian future where a metaphorical BwO reigns. Once the route to the BwO is clear and known, it ceases to be a metaphor and can be bought and sold. *ESOTSM* criticizes the idea of a medical procedure that leads the subject to believe that psychoanalysis is no longer necessary; the 'solution' has become part of capitalism and can be purchased. Those who buy their way to the BwO will be disappointed over and over again; they only delete the outcome

of something, while the outcome will always remain the same. Adjusting the last link in the chain is truly a capitalist solution because it solves nothing in the long run. No matter how much schizoanalysis advocates for unstructured thinking, living, and communicating, it remains a utopian dream of Deleuze and Guattari. This is not necessarily problematic in philosophy, except that they themselves emphasize the need that we need to break free from Oedipal dominance in a practical manner. Firstly, they do not explain how to break free, and secondly, the consequences are unknown, which can be more frightening than liberating. When we place this in the broader context of the thesis, this chapter shows that we should not ignore the Oedipal in schizoanalysis; rather, we should connect the abstract machines with the Oedipal to create something new. But what is a solution when interventions like Lacuna are aimed towards achieving the BwO? For Žižek the only solution is that we limit our autonomy and freedom of scientific intervention: “I know very well what science claims, but, nonetheless, in order to retain (the appearance of) my autonomy, I choose to ignore it and act as if I don’t know it” (Žižek *Organs* 113). Consequently, it is not about getting rid of your shortcomings, but living with and becoming aware of your shortcomings. Joel and Clementine should not delete their hatred against each other but accept that there does not exist a perfect cleansed spotless mind. On the contrary, they must realize that bodies untouched by alteration also possess a form of strength. While we may be shaped by forces like capitalism, we must learn to coexist with them and make the best of our circumstances instead of endlessly seeking to erase the same structures from our body and minds, which prevents any real progress.

CONCLUSION

This thesis began with whether psychoanalysis and schizoanalysis, after years of opposition, can find common ground. To explore this, multiple films by Charlie Kaufman were analyzed, revealing a potential for reconciliation between these methods. Kaufman's films cannot be exhaustively analyzed within a single paradigm; they require a new analytical model that combines various methods, highlighting the interconnectedness of psychoanalysis and schizoanalysis. Using Kaufman's films has allowed for a clear examination and testing of the two methods in a cinematographic reality, closely mirroring how the subject might experience the world psychoanalytically or schizoanalytically. When these methodologies are combined with film, their practical implications become evident. As seen in Kaufman's works, the life of a schizophrenic is challenging and far from easy, placing Kaufman's films between schizophrenic power and psychoanalytic impotence.

Psychoanalysis and schizoanalysis are still closely intertwined in an ongoing debate. Schizoanalysis tends to be overly positive about schizophrenia and the subject's shortcomings, whereas psychoanalysis may be too negative. In this thesis, the debate shifts from a discussion where the two methods exclude each other to one where they complement each other's shortcomings. By using Kaufman as a 'third thinker' between psychoanalysis and schizoanalysis, it becomes clear that psychoanalysis and schizoanalysis illuminate each other's blind spots. Because of this, they are inextricably linked.

In psychoanalysis, there needs to be a greater openness to unstructured thinking, which psychoanalysis typically seeks to eliminate by labeling it as a neurosis. Psychoanalysis misses the aspect of unstructured (time) experiences. It always looks at the past from the present, whereas more can be gained if psychoanalysis operates not only from the present to the past but also considers the future or even abandons any structure for past, present, and future. This thesis shows that psychoanalysis uses the past to analyze present behavior; the past manifests in the present. However, this does not always have to be the case. For instance, in *ITOET*, Jake's trauma is discovered in a virtual past, pointing towards a future rather than the typical psychoanalytic approach of the past affecting the present. Each chapter of this thesis deals with time, memory, and how Kaufman's films depict the present through the past. In *SYNY*, Caden archives his memories to relive them continuously. In *ITOET*, virtual memories are presented as actual truth. In *ESOTSM*, memories are both erased and clung to. Kaufman's films emphasize cherishing the present through the past. Caden's archival efforts keep the past alive in the present. Old Jake's falsified past makes his present bearable and

unbearable at the same time. Joel and Clementine show that the experiences from the past shape the subject in the present.

In contrast to psychoanalysis, schizoanalysis primarily focuses on the now. Consider, for example, the hypochondriac's *archived present*. Because schizoanalysis focuses on the now, it becomes detached from past, present, and future, creating a subject that moves and thinks in all possible directions instead of a logical progression of time. But schizoanalysis does not provide feasible solutions for the subject to 'break out' of structures. Although Deleuze and Guattari advocate for an unstructured world where thinking is free from dominant systems, they must still contend with established linguistic structures. Despite their resistance, their works *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus* are written in structured language, highlighting an inherent contradiction. When certain theories about pre-Oedipal unstructuredness point to concepts outside the psychoanalytic symbolic order, such as the Body without Organs, schizoanalysis creates an abstraction. It remains too ambiguous because any form of logic embeds schizoanalytic theories within the Oedipal symbolic order. Schizoanalysis can bring forth creativity, but it comes at a price. While we might need to see more virtual scenarios as viable alternatives to actual reality, it remains difficult to avoid the symbolic without losing sanity.

Psychoanalysis and schizoanalysis thus illuminate each other's blind spots. Psychoanalysis examines films through the subject and narrative while disregarding film form and its potential for alternative time experiences. Schizoanalysis shifts towards film form and unstructured time, while disregarding narrative. And this ongoing discussion is also reflected in the holistic form of this thesis. While this thesis began as a critique of the Oedipalization of the capitalist world, the final chapter reveals that capitalism adapts to schizoanalysis and its concepts. Thus, just as psychoanalysts and schizoanalysts constantly respond to each other, this dynamic is also evident in the structure of this thesis.

However, psychoanalysis still 'overarches' schizoanalysis like an outer ring; when one returns to a pre-Oedipal state, they inevitably re-enter the Oedipal stage, creating a kind of loop. This loop is also reflected in the films. All three discussed films are, in a sense, in a loop; Caden creates a simulacrum where the progression of time can be experienced anew every day. Jake creates an infinite loop of scenarios about how he would have taken a woman to his parents. Joel and Clementine remain in a loop of dating and breaking up without ever learning anything. What the films demonstrate is that ignoring certain issues often results in a repetition of the same steps. This occurs when psychoanalysis and schizoanalysis only operate from their polarities. As Deleuze himself affirms, we must *bypass* the 'problematic

opposition', not regress to a pre-Oedipal state, but rather explore what lies *beyond* the Oedipal. Schizophrenics can create glimpses of genius not by returning to a pre-Oedipal state, but by pushing the Oedipal symbolic forward towards uncharted post-Oedipal territories. Žižek's solution, discussed in the previous chapter, might be the way forward for psychoanalysis and schizoanalysis to come together. Schizoanalysis should not strive to return to the pre-Oedipal but should integrate the Oedipal as something unavoidable. Instead of detaching the Body without Organs from the Oedipal, we should explore how the Body without Organs can break open the Oedipal, moving towards a post-Oedipal consciousness.

Finally, this thesis also demonstrates the difference in how Deleuze and Žižek use films in philosophy. Deleuze uses film to explore philosophical concepts of time and movement, seeing cinema as a tool to create new ways of thinking and experiencing reality. Žižek uses film to illustrate psychoanalytic ideas and critique ideology, viewing cinema as a means to uncover hidden societal and psychological mechanisms. Thus, what does film contribute to the theoretical debate? As stated in the introduction of this thesis: "It is not 'how can we reach the true reality beyond appearances?' but 'how can *appearance* emerge in reality?'" (Žižek *Nothing* 36). Like Žižek, I believe that abstract theories and methodologies—where schizoanalysis often excels compared to psychoanalysis—must be carried out. Žižek emphasizes that the true power and problems of theories become apparent when abstract theories are actualized. From Žižek's perspective, we should not move away from our existing reality, but rather expand it with new theories where the abstract theories like schizoanalysis reconciles with the Oedipal. While Deleuze and Guattari's theories sound compelling on paper as critiques of the status quo and new ways of thinking, their implementation is more challenging than the psychoanalysis they criticize. The combination of philosophy and Kaufman's films reveals that psychoanalysis and schizoanalysis complement each other. It's not one or the other, but rather their combination that allows us to gain new insights, not only into Kaufman's films but also towards a post-Oedipal world.

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