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RE(-)PRESENTATION OF TIME, MEMORY, AND URBAN SPACE IN *SYNECDOCHE, NEW YORK* AND *THE TRUMAN SHOW* AS CRITIQUE OF MEDIATISATION AND VIRTUAL SPACE IN THE DIGITAL AGE

MA Thesis

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Tallinn 2020

I hereby confirm that I am the sole author of the thesis submitted. All the works and conceptual viewpoints by other authors that I have used, as well as, data deriving from sources have been appropriately attributed.

Signed:_____

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INTRODUCTION

Thinking of a past event – the act of remembrance – is always an exercise in reconstruction and representation. As human cognition is not capable of using abstracts for reference points, that is, perception has its limitations, the same applies for human memory, which is inherently finite. The reference points – to make sense of the world, to put events into temporal perspective, to create an identity and (self)narratives to follow – all have a spatial quality. Now that the digital age has added another dimension to the picture in the form of the immaterial virtual space, the interplay between memory and space is fruitful grounds for academic study. This present day situation, along with influx of information, placed in the reigning ideology of attention economy, has brought with it numerous shifts in how time, memory and spatiality function; some of the alterations have made their way into society inconspicuously, while others are heartily debated. This is the backdrop for the present thesis.

To begin with, the current research posits that memory and space are reciprocal social processes. Neither memory nor space are Kantian things-in-themselves: memory is not just there, but established, as highlighted above, by acts of remembrance, reconstruction, and representation. Also space, rather than being a ready-made container, is in continuous development. Memory and space, both bound up with time and continuous, cannot exist without the simultaneous relationship between: first, the perception of time and space, which relies on materiality; second, the thought concept where tropes work as symbolic reference points; and third, the lived social experience.

There has been a radical shift in how time and space are experienced and perceived in the present day. Every subsequent stage in modernisation has seen communication technologies and globalisation speeding up time and compressing space, eventually commodifying both. The contemporary capitalist daily life and the ideology of progress inevitably have caused new attitudes to emerge towards both the function and the representation of time and space. In addition, technology and mnemonic devices of the digital age have merged the temporal and spatial dimensions, first making time and memory spatially traceable, and second allowing the past to be visited via virtual space. Consequently, the thesis sees that there are two dominant memory practices and temporalities in the growingly mediatised present day society: retrospect and presentism.

With these sociocultural tendencies in mind – the acceleration of time, the occupation of several spatial levels, the omnipresence of technology, and the excess of information – the main goal of this thesis is to investigate how and to what extent the reciprocal processes of memory and space have changed in the digital age. The almost-universal scope of the concepts "memory" and "space" expects a methodological convex lens through which an adequate analysis can be provided. Hence the research is specifically interested in the interdependence that link memory with space in the context of the art form which is perhaps best equipped to convey the continuous mnemonic and spatial processes of everyday life – fiction film. But, just as the medium of film is spatiotemporally "framed" into a few-hour-long audiovisual cultural artefact, further focalisation is needed here as well. Since it is the city which serves as the main locale for cultural change, being both universal and particular, authentic and artificial, abstract and concrete, it provides a framework for the current task. The city, following the French sociologist Henri Lefebvre, creates a situation – "and sets free the essence of social relationships" (*The Urban Revolution* 117–118). Therefore, the thesis will analyse representation of time, memory, and space in diegetic urban setting as critique of the contemporary society.

In an attempt to carry out the current task, two films will be carefully studied via method of close reading. The fictional cinematic representations of urban space and memory relevant to this thesis are *Synecdoche, New York* (2008, hereinafter *SNY*), directed and written by Charlie Kaufman; and *The Truman Show* (1998 hereinafter *TTS*), directed by Peter Weir, written by Andrew Niccol. Indeed, when it comes to films set in urban space that deal with memory, there are plenty: anything from melancholic post-war Hiroshima in Alain Resnais' *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* (1959) or post-apocalyptic Paris in Chris Marker's *La Jetée* (1962) to David Lynch's Los Angeles in *Mulholland Drive* (2001) or Terrence Malick's 1950s Texas' small town in *The Tree of Life* (2011). Then there are the city-directors who manage to express the essence of a certain city in their films, be it Scorsese and Lee for New York, or Fellini and Pasolini for Rome. The medium of film itself developed in and with the urban, perhaps the most eloquent early examples evident in the work of F. W. Murnau and Fritz Lang.

What distinguishes Kaufman's and Weir's films from other cinematic representations which feature and heavily rely on urban space is that the two under scrutiny here create a model of an urban space from the start. *SNY* and *TTS* are both original screenplays, which means that the emphasis on spatiality was written into the story and production of the two films. Indeed,

every film has a setting and thus every production – especially narrative film – builds a model of a world which functions according to its own inherent logic. Yet, because the two films consciously focus, via form and theme, on the reciprocity between (urban) space and memory, they can be read as critiques of the two concepts. They are, what the German memory scholar Astrid Erll dubs "memory-reflexive films [which] address concepts of memory, and problematize and imaginatively realize acts of individual and collective remembering" (137). Space in these films does not only function as a background to diegetic action but has an agency and an impulse, they are the central points of reference, both diegetically and non-diegetically.

In the similar vein as Erll, cultural scholar Ann Rigney has proposed that "vividly mediated fictions have an important reflective component: they not only help produce memory but also use their aesthetic potential to produce critical reflection on dominant memory practices" (74). For her, the creative arts have a potential "to provide an important impulse to think at a metalevel about […] memory, how it works and what it means, and where it falls short or becomes reified and even morbid" (Rigney 74). Agreeing with Rigney, the study recognises that when artistically engaging, films – and perhaps culture in general – manage to reflect on prevalent problems in society. In addition to *SNY* and *TTS* being metalevel reflections of the inherently reciprocal social processes of memory and space, the artistic representation of time, memory, and urban space the two films feature can in turn be analysed within the framework of the processes of memory and space (materiality-tropes-social experience). Thus the diegetic urban spaces can be read as commentaries on the prevalent tendencies in the digital age, where mediatisation and virtual space are the two most important factors that have transformed the processes of memory and space in the last few decades.

In **Chapter 1**, the abovementioned concepts will be defined further in order to establish that the social processes of memory and space are reciprocal. For that, theories, mainly by Maurice Halbwachs and Henri Lefebvre, will be used. Here, ideas from Andreas Huyssen, Marc Augé, François Hartog, and Mark Fisher will be referred to when discussing how the progress-oriented 20th century sped up time and compressed space, turning both into commodities. Accordingly, experience and perception of time and space changed, altering the functioning and the re(-)presentation of the two in the contemporaneity. The thesis sees that in the image-centered digital age, tropes and the concept of nostalgia have a special importance in the processes of memory and space. On the topic of nostalgia, Svetlana

Boym's writing will be followed extensively. Based on Huyssen, the thesis uses the concept of "representation" in a twofold manner. Overall, the shared structure of the social processes of memory and space (materiality – linguistic trope – social experience) will be adjusted to frame the analysis of the fictional urban spaces of Synecdoche and Seahaven in Chapter 2.

Chapter 2 will analyse the representation and functioning of time, memory, and urban space in the diegetic cities of Synecdoche and Seahaven. The thesis differentiates between the two diegetic city models and between the two films in order to emphasise the detailed structures of the diegetic spaces. Here, two sets of cultural tropes will be incorporated into analysis: spatial "metaphor" and "metonymy," and mnemonic "(total) recall" and "(total) amnesia". In addition, the concept of nostalgia will be used on two levels: as a more personal affective state, and as a more generic capitalist commodity. Most explicit observations deriving from the films will be compared with memory and literary theory which support the interconnectedness of memory and space: the ideas of Arjun Appadurai, Elena Esposito, Fredric Jameson, and Friedrich Nietzsche, in addition to others mentioned in Chapter 1, will be included.

Chapter 3 will see how the critiques *SNY* and *TTS* make on their contemporary societies correspond to the processes of memory and space in the digital age. This chapter will also concentrate on two contemporary urban theories that are especially contrasting in terms of memory, the city as palimpsest and the Generic City. In addition Chapter 3 will restate the most evident factors – mediatisation and virtual space – that during the last few decades have shaped the perception and re(-)presentation of time, memory, and space, resulting in society acknowledging two dominant memory practices and temporalities: retrospect and presentism. A few questions that this chapter will focus on are: What can the fictional representations of space, time, and memory in *SNY* and *TTS* as dramatisations of their respective contemporary societies, although admittedly and explicitly exaggerated, tell about the fears and longings, the realities and illusions, the authenticity and artifice of the current century? How does re-presentation measure against representation and consequently alter the memory, and what could be the consequences of immediacy?

CHAPTER 1: Reciprocity of Memory and Space

1.1. Experiencing and Perceiving Time and Space in the Present Day

There has been a radical shift in how time is experienced and perceived in the present day. Naturally, the changes that have led here started long ago. Memory scholar Svetlana Boym points out that before the idea of progress started forming the perception and attitude towards the past, the present, and the future, the representation of the passing of time – until roughly the 17th century – was encapsulated in the allegorical images of the old juxtaposed with the illustrations of the youth (9). From then on the representative images of time, but also space, have gradually been "dehumanised" with every subsequent stage in modernisation: where the Industrial Revolution saw the standardisation of time in railroad schedules, succeeding communication technologies such as the telegraph, telephone, the radio, and television forwarded globalisation and compressed space. Eventually, starting roughly half a century ago, the digital age brought the computer, which added a virtual dimension to the perception of time and space. These periods sped up time and compressed space, turning both into currencies. Shrunk and commodified, time and space in contemporary capitalist daily life, in the ideology of progress, cause new attitudes to emerge.

Modernity,[1] as the German literary scholar and cultural historian Andreas Huyssen says, did indeed bring with it compression of time and space, yet "in the register of imaginaries, it […] also expanded our horizons of time and space beyond the local, the national, and even the international" (*Present Pasts* 4). Boym similarly mentions that nowadays one might occupy more spaces – especially virtual –, but this will come with the inevitable price of having "less and less time" (351). These tendencies are more relevant in contemporaneity, because digital media have become more ubiquitous during the last two decades that have passed since Huyssen and Boym voiced these opinions. Two aspects are important here, first, that the experience of time and space in the digital age has changed the function and functioning of human memory, and, second, that technology and mnemonic devices have merged the temporal and spatial dimensions, where memory and time are increasingly more spatially traceable, allowing the past to be visited via virtual space.

[1] Some of theorist who are quoted in this research – mainly Boym, Huyssen, and Appadurai – use "modernity" to denote the current progress-oriented period of history which roughly begun two centuries ago. The thesis itself will apply more exact timeframes in its specific discussions.

Thus abundance of events and excess of information bring paradoxical outcomes in the present world. Huyssen asserts that "as the territorial and spatial coordinates of our […] lives are blurred or even dissolved by increased mobility around the globe" (*Twilight Memories* 1–7), contemporary society has entertained a collective search for a mode of "temporal anchoring" able to lend an illusion of security to – and here Huyssen builds upon Adorno – a "culture [that] is terminally ill with amnesia" (Bond et al. 3–4). As an antithesis to socially produced amnesia Huyssen rather sees "productive remembering," which manifests itself by focusing on "both past and future to articulate our political, social, and cultural dissatisfactions with the present state of the world" and choosing between those memory practices that "regain a strong temporal and spatial grounding of life and the imagination in a media and consumer society that increasingly voids temporality and collapses space" (*Present Pasts* 6–10). In a sped-up world, establishing critical perspective is in decline.

The fluctuating relationship amidst different temporalities and the dichotomy between (supposedly) subjective memory and (supposedly) objective history has been a topic of interest for postmodernists alike. French anthropologist Marc Augé speaks of acceleration of time and argues that "[n]owadays the recent past – 'the sixties,' 'the seventies' [–] becomes history as soon as it has been lived"; adding rather bleakly how "[h]istory is on our heels, following us like our shadows, like death" (22). In his view the overabundance of information that the (digital) media broadcast as facts, are replacing memory with history and in turn could rob all meaning from the contemporaneity (23). Similarly the future, from the standpoint of current present, does not seem to hold much significance and is perceived rather as a threat than a promise. As the French historian François Hartog suggests, the future is seen as "a time of disasters, and ones we have, moreover, brought upon ourselves" (xviii). Such circumstances where there appears to be too much happening in too short of a time frame could lead individuals, but also whole communities to prioritize the seemingly more safe and solid past as a "temporal anchor" over both the overwhelming present and the uncertain future.

Such critique on the past being favoured over the present or even the future may appear odd at first: after all, in everyday media consumption, future seems to be as much in focus as the past. For every historical film there are two sci-fi films; for every classical music LP three electronic music releases; for every book a dozen gadgets. The question is, though, what purpose do these future-looking media, technology and narratives serve. Are they prospective in their apparent vision, or, by reproducing same truths and narratives, are they

providing for the needs of here and now, hence nourishing the "short-termism" widespread in contemporary culture, the sense that only "a present characterized at once by the tyranny of the instant and by the treadmill of an unending now" exists (Hartog xiv–xv)? Taking Huyssen's, Augé's, and Hartog's theses into account, current research sees that there are two dominant memory practices and temporalities in the growingly mediatised present day society: retrospect and presentism.

Being effective facilitators of memory, which, as time, has become traceable as well, digital media do not only mediate the consumption of events, but actively shape their production and the public mnemonic consciousness (Bond et al. 14–15). This impact of the media upon processes of social transformations – and dominant memory practices – is what sociologist and memory scholar Andrew Hoskins dubs mediatisation, which refers to everyday life being "increasingly embedded in the mediascape" (29). What distinguishes mediatisation from mediation is that the second does not necessarily depend on media (memory can be mediated between people), whereas the first is inseparable from it.

With the aforementioned changes in mind (the acceleration of time, the occupation of several spatial levels, the omnipresence of technology, and the excess of information), this research approaches memory and space as reciprocal social processes. Neither memory nor space are Kantian things-in-themselves: memory is not just there, but established by acts of remembrance, reconstruction, and representation. Also space, rather than being a ready-made container, is in continuous development: here the thesis follows Henri Lefebvre's theory of the production of space, which claims how space is a social product, simultaneously perceived, conceived, and lived (cf. *Production*). Largely, the processes of memory and space are not so different: both are bound in time and experience, neither is completely abstract nor totally concrete, and neither can function without symbolic reference points – (figurative) language, or, tropes – which direct the processes. The following theory concentrates on the structures of the intertwined processes of memory and space, with indicating the importance of tropes, re(-)presentation, mediatisation, and nostalgia, all of which unfold in the city.

1.2. Tropes in the Processes of Memory, Space, and Re(-)presentation

A closer look at language reveals how representation of time and the act of remembrance rely on spatial vocabulary: something "takes place" or "overlaps and intersects," time "flies

by," differences must be "mapped," a "mental image" created, and so on. Furthermore, one can "no more think outside of metaphorisations of space than [one] can live outside its representations" (Balshaw and Kennedy 2). More importantly, Lefebvre claims that in society and culture there are mainly two spatial tropes which see constant use: metonymy and metaphor.[2] For the French philosopher the two are not tropes a priori but "become" tropes only through use, which is constituted by social acts. These acts decode language, which, basing on Nietzsche, is not a system of accumulated univocal truths nor an "instrument of veracity" people believe it to be: this is why Lefebvre says that tropes "lose and overlook, set aside and place parentheses around even more" than necessarily naturalise or clarify (*Production* 138–140). He continues that in society's "ever-growing hegemony of vision […] these forms, functions and structures have complex spatial interrelationships" (*Production* 140). Put differently, tropes, as abstract or as concrete as they are, have an important role in shaping daily reality – yet, language on its own, in isolation, cannot create spatial thought.

This realisation marks a point of departure for Lefebvre towards his much acknowledged theory of the production of space.[3] In Lefebvre's treatment space is neither empty nor a ready-made container – instead, space is produced by social interactions. In order to understand this the Frenchman proposes a three-dimensional model of spatial production which is established by the interplay between spatial practices (perceived space), representations of space (conceived space), and spaces of representation (lived space). In short, perceived space is the materiality of space; conceived space is the ways in which space is planned, executed, and thought of; and lived space is the experience of space that develops, both on an individual and social level, through the imaginary and via lived experience of the first two spaces. (Schmid 35–37) Lefebvre does not favour nor separate any of the three dimensions, emphasising how space is at once perceived, conceived, and lived, none of which can be considered the "origin" of spatial thought and that "[s]pace is unfinished, since it is continuously produced, and it is always bound up with time" (Schmid 43). For Lefebvre this interconnectedness proves why there cannot be a fissure isolating the linguistic mental space from social space wherein language becomes practice. Here, parallels with the process

[2] Being influenced by Nietzsche's approach, Lefebvre understands society as "a space and an architecture of concepts, forms and laws whose abstract truth is imposed on the reality of the senses, of bodies, of wishes and desires". (*Production* 138–140)

[3] Christian Schmid's analysis guides the reader through the dense body of work the French sociologist managed to write in his lifetime (cf. Schmid).

of memory emerge, since the French memory theoretician Maurice Halbwachs also admits that memory is founded in lived social experience and the "activity of recollection [is] based on spatial reconstruction" (qtd. in Boyer 26). His famous statement posits that "a completely isolated individual could not establish any memory at all" (qtd. in Assmann 213). Ultimately, there is no possibility for memory to exist without the union of spatial reconstruction, language, and a social relationship.

Memory-as-a-process has its roots in *ars memoriae*, the art of memory,[4] which recognises the spatial and the visual quality of remembrance, where places serve as "*contexts* for remembrance and debates about the future, not *symbols* of memory or nostalgia" (Boym 77). During the progress-oriented mid-20th century the concept of memory, as the previous paragraph mentioned, gained a more social scale: memory became, like urbanist Christopher Schliephake notices, "a context-dependent social undertaking in which culturally decoded frames of meaning (e.g. narrative patterns, metaphors, symbols) play a fundamental role" (574). From individual recollection to daily social interaction, from imagined rhetoric to "concrete spaces of the physical world," memory was, metaphorically speaking, re-located (Schliephake 574). What has remained an integral part of the act of remembrance is the figurative nature of thought, with the tropes being predominantly spatial.

The connection between language, memory, and space becomes more apparent when Lefebvre, coming from a dialectical-materialist standpoint, says that space is constituted by "the process of social production of thought, action, and experience" (Schmid 40–41). Lefebvre regards the phenomenological version of perception as sceptical, since, stressing spatiality and spatial practice, it is his conviction that "perception not only takes place in the mind but is based on a concrete, produced materiality" (Schmid 37–38). Furthermore, the (social) space "includes *not only* a concrete materiality *but* a thought concept *and* a feeling—an 'experience' [and that the] materiality in itself or the material practice per se has no existence when viewed from a social perspective without the thought that directs and represents them, and without the lived experienced element, the feelings that are invested in

[4] Art of memory is an "art" in the Aristotelian sense, inhibiting the realms of rhetoric and logic. One of the most known stories that accompanies art of memory is that of the poet Simonides of Ceos. Attending a banquet where he sang hymns, Simonides briefly left the banquet only to return to a crushed venue site: the roof had collapsed leaving all the guests under the ruins. Simonides "remembered the places where the guests had been seated, and […] discovered the techniques of memory used by ancient orators, connecting places in the familiar environment (physical *topoi*) to stories and parts of discourse (rhetorical *topoi*); only the connections between them are often arbitrary, semiotic rather than symbolic," recognising "the accidental and contiguous architecture of our memory and the connection between recollection and loss" (Boym 77).

this materiality" (Schmid 40; emphasis added). In such thinking, space cannot serve as context, as reference point, on its own but only through the use of tropes which "direct and represent" these spaces and fuse the process of spatial reminiscence which inevitably relies on experience – on memory.

The use of tropes also determine how memory and space themselves are represented in the contemporary digital age. Here Andreas Huyssen differentiates "representation" from "re-presentation". For him representation and memory are interdependent: representation is based on memory and memory as an act of remembrance is always an exercise in reconstruction and representation. Re-presentation, on the other hand, always comes after representation, "even though some media will try to provide us with the delusion of pure presence. But rather than leading us to some authentic origin or giving us verifiable access to the real, memory, even and especially in its belatedness, is itself based on representation." (*Twilight Memories* 2–3) The act of remembrance, which results in representation, actually takes place in the present and must be articulated, be it in speech or text or image or imagination, to become memory. The idiosyncratic gaps separating experiencing and remembering are the interesting part of memory for Huyssen, since they allow for novel cultural and artistic renditions (*Twilight Memories* 3). However, Huyssen claims that "[m]emory as re-presentation, as making present, is always in danger of collapsing the constitutive tension between past and present, especially when the imagined past is sucked into the timeless present of the all-pervasive virtual space of consumer culture" (*Present Pasts* 10). Today, mediatisation acts as a facilitator of memory as re-presentation, thus subscribing to immediacy and presentism.

1.3. Mediatisation and Nostalgia

The ubiquitous distribution of miscellaneous information in whichever form and content in people's everyday lives is common knowledge. Already in 1964 the media and communications theorist Marshall McLuhan somewhat prophetically emphasized that "the personal and social consequences of any medium […] result from the new scale that is introduced into our affairs by extension of ourselves" (8). The scale now, more than half a century after McLuhan uttered his theories, is global and instantaneous, shrinking the world into a pocketable smartphone. Coinciding with McLuhan, the smartphone is considered an extension of oneself. Digitisation and technological transformation which brought all media

together within a single device also, in the words of media studies professor Dan Hassler-Forest, "flattened the traditional hierarchies that existed between media, which always privileged the old over the new" (16–17). Not that hierarchies have ceased to be, now they have just moved into a privatised sphere, where a handful of powerful media and technology corporations – Facebook, Google, Amazon, Apple, and Microsoft – decide over the "worth" and function of time and space.

The everyday effect consumption-media have on memory cannot be overstated. Choosing speed over depth starts from the very beginning of, for example, creating a new software application. One could compare reading a long book or watching a slow film or even journaling with tweeting, TikToking, and Snapchatting. These activities which unveil in the virtual space have already in their names allusions to the shrinking of time. Yes, reading a book and watching a film and journaling can also be done in a digital form, but the question here lies in concentration, quantity, and the passing of time. McLuhan's ideas on the impact media have on how society and individuals think and act, and "how the dominant medium of a society in any given time is the main agent of social change, altering the way people process information and think about the world" (Galician 26–27), find manifestation in present day media circulation. In addition to how content is created, received, and consumed, what can be problematic is the ability to put time into perspective – it is either the perpetual "now", but even more the romanticising "then".

Astrid Erll, configuring McLuhan, says that "the medium is the memory," and that media of memory also function as "'extensions' of our organic memories, bring[ing] about consequences in that they shape cultural remembrance in accordance to their specific means and measures" (115). It is the circumstance of human memory to be imperfect, it is designed – not to use "programmed" – to be faulted. But, as professor Viktor Mayer-Schönberger contends, today, digital memory, which "relentlessly exposes discrepancies between factual bits and our very own human recall, [causing us to lose] trust in the past *as we remember it*," might bring a sort of standardisation of memory and human experience (119). Because the distribution of information and the mechanisms of the digital age seem to have made it possible to have all the knowledge within hands' reach, visiting the past like space and creating an illusion of perfect memory, "issues of time, narrative and making meaning are much less relevant in the Internet model" (Boym 347). Be it massive digitisation of different texts and artefacts meant for storage, or technological tools that enable people to orientate themselves through the data labyrinths, the question whether mnemonic devices and

mediatisation rather propagate remembering or forgetting, (total) recall or (total) amnesia, remains a heated debate.

A concept that plays an important part between remembering and forgetting – and retrospect and presentism – is "nostalgia". Ever since the invention of writing in ancient Egypt, "memory aids have been viewed with ambivalence as tools of forgetting as well as remembering" (Boym 346). As with memory, there have been several interpretations of the concept "nostalgia". It has been considered to be a longing of sorts that could be both personal and political, both for a fixated place and time in mind, but also for something that may have never existed. Nostalgia has also been noted as having critical potential for keeping "constructions of a 'past future' alive," while measuring them against the present (Erll 52). Current discussion on nostalgia, though, will in large part follow the work of Svetlana Boym's 2001 monography *The Future of Nostalgia*.

The study starts with the origins of the pseudo-Greek word, which on the 17th century marked a medical condition, a malaise of displaced people. Supposedly the symptoms of this illness were "to produce 'erroneous representations' that caused the afflicted to lose touch with the present, […] confusing past and present, real and imaginary events" (3). Linguistically "nostalgia" (from *nostos* 'return home' and *algia* 'longing') marks longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed; it is a sentiment of loss and displacement, but also "a romance with one's own fantasy" (xiii). At the same time nostalgia is a notion which reveals itself on two levels: as a cultural phenomenon and as a subjective experience (Wilson 30).

Evident in Boym's research, nostalgia must not always be about the past; indeed, it can be retrospective, but nostalgia can also function prospectively. A reaction to contemporary lifestyle, a "rebellion against the modern idea of time, the time of history and progress," nostalgia is more a longing for a different time, rhythm and tempo(rality) than yearning for a specific place (xv). In fact, the nostalgic is someone lost in time (12). Simultaneously, nostalgia spreads through "popular culture, where technological advances and special effects are frequently used to recreate visions of the past," therefore re-telling the same old stories in a shinier wrapping (xiv). Modern ideology of progress, instead of curing nostalgia, worsened the condition. "Some thought that the modern metropolis would provide enough excitement and stimuli to quell people's longings for the rustic life," but, as Boym admits, "nostalgia accompanied each new stage of modernization, taking on different genres and

forms" (346). Overall, the 20th century, which started with the promise of utopia, ended with nostalgia.

1.4. Urban Representation

While subsequent phases of modernisation have been shrinking time and space, cities have been expanding. Modern urbanisation begun during the second half of the 19th century, coinciding with the developments in technology. During the last hundred years the urban has substituted the industrial, and, as the urban sociologist Walter Prigge recognises, focus "on everydayness and consumption, planning and spectacle" started to constitute reality (49). Urban historian M. Christine Boyer claims that together with the continuous growth in population density, last fifty years have increasingly seen urban fragmentation, gentrification and waning of public space due to the emergence of urban privatisation (9). The bustling and contradicting metropolis of the present day is a reflection of hectic times – the contemporary city can be conceived as a cinematic spectacle: comprised of "traveling shots, jump-cuts, close-ups, and slow motion" (Boyer 47). Film has altered the experience of urban space, which, similarly to the medium, is always in constant motion and transformation.

Lefebvre considered the city to be the fundamental space already in the beginning of 1970s when he wrote in one of his most known work *The Urban Revolution* that the urban form "has no specific content, but is a center of attraction and life[:] an abstraction, but unlike a metaphysical entity, the urban is a concrete abstraction, associated with practice" (118–119). Fredric Jameson, the American literary critic and political theorist notes that Lefebvre, underlining space as a central concept, "acknowledged the increasing share, in our life experience fully as much as in late capitalism itself, of the urban and the new globality of the system" (*Postmodernism* 364–365). The Frenchman himself continues:

> What does the city create? Nothing. It centralizes creation. Any yet it creates everything. Nothing exists without exchange, without union, without proximity, that is, without relationships. The city creates a situation, where different things occur one after another and do not exist separately but according to their differences. The urban, which is indifferent to each difference it contains […] itself unites them. In this sense, the city constructs, identifies, and sets free the essence of social relationships. (*The Urban Revolution* 117–118)

Lukasz Stanek's investigation of Lefebvre's theories on space and the city find that "[l]ike the commodity that in its most developed and differentiated stage reveals its most universal characteristics, the space of the capitalist city manifests a fundamental dialectic between the processes of centralization and dispersion, inclusion, and exclusion" (76). Reiterating the notion of spatial meaning making being a continuously changing process, social relations shape one's spatial surroundings and "the very same interactions are concurrently shaped by the spatial contexts within which they occur" (Harshman 283). Overlapping with the underlined meta-referential aspects in the fictional urban spaces of Synecdoche and Seahaven, such an approach admits how "we are actors within spaces who are simultaneously acted upon as we give new meaning to spaces" (Harshman 283). Out of numerous opinions and theories on urbanity, the thesis will focus on two that are especially contrasting in terms of memory: "the Generic City," coined by the Dutch architect and architectural theorist Rem Koolhaas; and the "city as a palimpsest," developed by Andreas Huyssen.

Hartog describes Koolhaas' concept of "the Generic City" as a globally replicated cityscape, the venue for absolute presentist experience (xviii). In his work, Koolhaas preaches a thought experiment he as an architect also tries to practice: what would result if homogenisation was the intentional and, *contra* to heterogeneity, the preferred process? The Dutch architect sees that history and historic value are increasingly more abused, thus becoming less significant: today's urban re-appropriation crosses out authenticity and the center-periphery binary binds the identity (1248–50). In Koolhaas' Generic City, movements in the public space are reduced to necessary minimum, city itself is an endlessly reconstructable "fractal," having in its toolbox the ability to "simply abandon what doesn't work – what has outlived its use" (1251–52). A city free of context, history, and identity, the Generic City is founded on a blank slate, tabula rasa, "allowing its inhabitants to make of themselves what they will" ("The Generic City"). Published originally in 1994, the idea of the Generic City is, at least partially, becoming a reality – Chapter 3 will further discuss these themes.

City as a palimpsest in Huyssen's treatment is the total opposite of the Generic City. It proposes that "literary techniques of reading historically, intertextually, constructively, and deconstructively […] can be woven into our understanding of urban spaces as lived spaces that shape collective imaginaries" (*Present Pasts* 7). Huyssen talks how since late 20th century when "memory and temporality […] invaded spaces and media that seemed among the most stable and fixed […] we have come to read cities and buildings as palimpsests of

space, monuments as transformable and transitory, and sculpture as subject to the vicissitudes of time" (*Present Pasts* 7). The city of Berlin, for instance, serves in this approach as an example of palimpsest, having gone through multiple eras of planning, development, prosperity, war, and renewal. Ultimately, palimpsestic cities are cities with diverse and constantly changing history.

One cannot look past the shifts the current century has brought to the urban form. Walter Prigge, analysing theories by Lefebvre and Hans-Ulrich Gumbrecht, discusses how due to the contemporary nature of (im)materiality – mobility, lack of depth for the body to register itself, surrounding screens and media – the "[i]mage, concept, and reality are dissociated to the point of provoking a crisis of meaning and representation" (59). That is why the contemporary technology-driven age produces "an immaterial spatiality of networked information, free-floating signs and codifications, which can no longer be symbolized with conventional representations of space, time, and world" (Prigge 59). Because of the overlapping ways in which urban space manifests itself, the film as a medium, manipulating time and space, is well-equipped to represent the contradictory character of the city, whether it is rather a generic one or a city as palimpsest.

1.5. Memory and Space

This chapter established the reciprocity between the social processes of memory and space. Memory and space, both bound up with time and continuous, cannot exist without the simultaneous relationship between: first, the perception of time and space, which relies on materiality; second, the thought concept where tropes work as symbolic reference points; and third, the lived social experience. Therefore, memory and cognition are inherently spatial and cannot successfully use abstracts for reference, making the act of remembrance dependent on materiality – a fact that is already known since the times of *ars memoriae*. Similarly, in the process of producing space, language-in-thought, as figurative as it might be, remains an abstraction without materiality and lived experience. One cannot materialise something that one cannot think of – and vice versa. Yet, the digital age has added another dimension to human comprehension in the form of the immaterial virtual space, and as a result the processes of memory and space undergo changes.

The ubiquity of digital media and information in the contemporary attention economy has prompted the temporal and spatial dimensions to merge, turning memory and time spatially

traceable. The growingly mediatised way of living in the present day has caused the public perception, and human memory, to acknowledge two dominant memory practices and temporalities in society and culture: retrospect and presentism. The supremacy of either the perpetual "now" or the romanticising "then" over thinking about the promise of the future is largely the consequence of the changed notion of progress, where the utopianism of the 20th century was replaced by a neoliberal mode of reproductive stasis – or, by what the British cultural theorist Mark Fisher calls "capitalist realism," a "cultural and political sterility" with no political alternatives to capitalism (*Capitalist Realism* 7). In his theories, Fisher somewhat mirrors the French philosopher Guy Debord, a contemporary of Lefebvre, who claims that capitalism has led to a society of the spectacle, where "the visual gain[ed] the upper hand over the other senses," and the power of capital overwhelmingly capsulated all of lived experience (qtd. in Lefebvre 286).

As Lefebvre talks about society's hegemony of vision, Huyssen emphasises the consumer culture's virtual space, and Debord posits that whole of society is ruled by the spectacle, it is clear how spatiality goes beyond vocabulary in the contemporaneity – image has surpassed word. As capitalism developed, in order to facilitate its "further success," space, but also time, were turned into fetishised commodities, "becoming at the same time homogeneous and fragmented" (Stanek 76).[5] If in Lefebvre's discourse every different society produces its own space then a society which is oriented towards homogeneity must produce a similarly homogeneous space (*Production* 31). Capitalism combined with technology and media which allow endless re(-)presentation, might result in the distribution of unitary truths and narratives with standardised memory, experience, but even urban environment. In the world of prefabrication and reproduction, retrospect and presentism obtain a monetary value and become lifestyles which mediatisation and virtual space propagate, while also altering the function and the re(-)presentation of time and space in the digital age.

Considering that the processes of memory and space are increasingly image-centered in the present day, tropes and nostalgia have a special importance in the processes' mechanisms. Both temporal and spatial, the two work on multiple levels: tropes and nostalgia on an individual scale remain subjective and widely applicable, yet media, in an effort to collectivise and standardise, often use tropes and nostalgia against their ambiguous character

[5] The commodity appears as natural, unsocial and out of history and commodity fetishism makes it difficult to imagine alternatives to capitalism. Lefebvre, however, is interested in a critique of the spatial dimension of fetishism (cf. Stanek).

for capitalist purposes. Being a nonconformist humanist thinker, Lefebvre adamantly opposes absolutes and for him the tropes that aim for homogeneity (ideology) contrast tropes that are based on circumstance (experience/daily life), but because of their "inexhaustible nature," tropes cannot be completely formalised or ontologised (Schmid 36). Here Lefebvre and Huyssen meet: the first claims that even if two persons are speaking the same language, their perception about time and space may differ from one another; the second marks that gaps between experiencing and remembering are the fascinating part of memory.

Second concept-seed sowed throughout current research, beside trope, is nostalgia. Nostalgia can function and will be approached in analysis as, first, a method of temporal anchoring – albeit an ambiguous one – that the amnesiac contemporaneity is applying, second, as an impulse for future momentum, third, as an ahistorical commodity. Mediatised nostalgia is a major sociocultural product and one of most exploited phenomenon in culture, with theorists describing it as "an empty trope" (De Groot 249) or as constituting a "nostalgia mode" (*Postmodernism*) which in turn raises more general questions of authenticity. Nowadays memory, heritage, and nostalgia are industries which trade in identity, confirming Huyssen's remark that "the past is selling better than the future" (*Present Pasts* 20).

The shared structure of the social processes of memory and space, materiality – linguistic trope – social experience, will be adjusted to frame the analysis of the fictional urban spaces of Synecdoche and Seahaven in Chapter 2. Both time and space are produced, represented, and experienced in these films differently, and, as the diegetic cities are essentially double productions, with Synecdoche being a theatre set and Seahaven a TV production, deviation from Lefebvre's "no-origin policy" helps to highlight the reciprocity of memory and space. One of the goals of this thesis is analysing what the re(-)presentation and functioning of time, memory, and space unfolding in an urban environment, latter itself a phenomenon that has been described by Svetlana Boym as "an ideal crossroads between longing and estrangement, memory and freedom, nostalgia and modernity" (76), tells about the changes in the processes of memory and space that the digital age has brought. Where Chapter 2 concentrates on fictional urban models, Chapter 3 will return to contemporary urban theories, the city as palimpsest and the Generic City. In addition Chapter 3 will restate the most evident factors – mediatisation and virtual space – that during the last few decades have shaped the notion and perception of time, memory, and space, resulting in society acknowledging two dominant memory practices and temporalities: retrospect and presentism.

CHAPTER 2: Mnemonic Spaces of Synecdoche and Seahaven

The premise of the city, however contradictory – but even more precisely because of its conflicting nature (never finished but nevertheless materialised; both concrete and abstract, public and private, uncanny and homey), – provides a compelling framework to address and analyse the reciprocity between memory and space. Guided by Jameson, the subsequent analysis, in order to position and situate the logic of the story-worlds, recognises that "there is nothing that is not social and historical [or] in the last instance political" in these diegetic spaces (*The Political Unconscious* 5). Largely meant as critiques of prevailing societal trends, the films feature a number of figurative representations of time, memory, and space that will be discussed in this chapter. (The thesis differentiates between the two diegetic city models – Synecdoche and Seahaven – and between the two films – *SNY* and *TTS* – in order to emphasise the detailed structures of the diegetic spaces.)

In the analyses of each respective film the diegetic worlds will first be approached with the emphasis on the spatial qualities: the re(-)presentation and function of the mnemonic spaces, consideration of appropriate spatial tropes, and nostalgia's role in producing the spaces (thus corresponding to materiality and thought concept in the reciprocal processes of memory and space). Secondly the respective memory-narratives that unveil in Synecdoche and Seahaven will be scrutinised: the questions of the passing of time, consideration of appropriate mnemonic tropes, the plasticity of identity, and the functioning of memory (the lived/experienced dimension). The analyses of space and memory are separated into two chapters not to deny the reciprocity of the two phenomena, but to structure the thesis. The analysis of *TTS* will include comparison with some of the overlapping themes with *SNY*.

2.1. *Synecdoche, New York*: Memory Producing Space

SNY follows Caden Cotard (played by Philip Seymour Hoffman), a forty-something neurotic theatre director living in the suburbs of Schenectady, New York. Feeling creatively stuck, anxious about time, suffering physical ailments, and growing alienated from his wife Adele (Catherine Keener), Caden soon finds himself alone: Adele leaves him to move away to Berlin with their four-year-old daughter Olive (Sadie Goldstein). While dealing with the loss, Caden starts losing sense of direction and along with it, the last remnants of his self-worth.

Soon, though, in part thanks to the successful production of Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* in the local Schenectady theatre, Caden is bestowed the MacArthur grant and with it relative freedom to pursuit novel and exciting artistic work. Caden finds a new purpose by producing a "brutally honest play," which would deal with the prosaic everyday life. He obtains a huge abandoned warehouse situated in Manhattan's theatre district with the objective to construct a replica of Schenectady and New York inside that space. So, he gathers an ensemble cast which includes some of the actors and staff he has already worked with in the past to help him realise his vision. At the same time, in his personal life Caden develops problematic relationships with two women from work, with the box-office ticket seller Hazel (Samantha Morton), and with Claire (Michelle Williams), the main lead from *Death of a Salesman*. Caden shortly marries and has a daughter with Claire, only to be continually tormented by the memory of his past life and broken first marriage with Adele.

Meanwhile, Caden is progressively losing touch with reality. As the scale of his warehouse-copy grows exponentially, Caden's personal life seems to merge with the play he is so determined to bring to stage. Fallout with Claire prompts a divorce, after which Caden really dives into the duplicate world he's trying to create; in parallel there are romantic disappointments, miscellaneous health issues, an attempt at suicide, and identity crises, while in the background the possibility of finishing the play still lives on. As the years rapidly pass, Caden buries himself deeper into his masterpiece. Populating the cast and crew with doppelgangers, he steadily blurs the line between the world of the play and that of his own deteriorating reality. As he pushes the limits of his relationships, both personally and professionally, the culmination of the film sees both Caden's world within a world and the world outside the warehouse come to a cataclysmic end.

If there has ever been a film that tries to portray the intricacy and ambiguity of memory, and the disorientation of mnemonic processes, then that film is *SNY*. All the complexities and miscommunications that come with human life are a trademark-subject for Kaufman, the writer-director of *SNY*. Kaufman's *ethos*, so to say, has always been about morals and truth – moreover, about how the two are rarely univocally defined in society. It is as if one cannot escape one's apparent subjectivity.[6] While common postmodernist themes – alienation, irony, and cynicism – are evident throughout *SNY*, Kaufman's 2008 film can also be read as

[6] Characters written by Kaufman, also in his other films, such as *Adaptation*. (2002) or *Anomalisa* (2015) often mishear utterances, are "trapped" in their self-created versions of reality, doubt that any reconciliation with their predicament (be it self-induced or caused by an outer force) is possible, and cannot make up their minds about what it is they actually want from their lives.

a stance against both the progress-oriented disposition of modernity and the abundance of events and information in the digital age.

2.1.1. Synecdoche as a Metonymic Copy

The first time Caden sees the gigantic warehouse in Manhattan, it is bleak and barren, an opportune empty canvas to apply his vision of an uncompromising and honest theatre piece on. What starts out as an idea for a massive play, a collective endeavour, dealing with the daily prosaic truths and the inevitable finitude of human life, does eventually end up being manifested in a physical form as a near life sized replica of Schenectady and New York City, the two important urban environments in troupe members' life. However, in his decades-long work, striving for an exact copy of the two cities, Caden does not complete the play, nor does he even manage to select a name for the work-in-process.[7]

The process of reproduction does take time: by the midpoint of the film, after a considerable period has passed since Caden started working on his idea – roughly six to seven years –, Synecdoche is just a large plateaued stage with grids dividing the rehearsing actors, already by then in hundreds, in their respective scenes. With only a few items which serve as reference points this sort of use of space resembles another film, Lars von Trier's *Dogville* (2003), which also presents a model of a town – more an idea than a physical setting – in a contained theatrical black-box space with no erect structures, but instead merely markings which contour the lines, separating indoors from outdoors. However, what comes to be represented in Synecdoche is not a small town like Dogville, but a metropolis. The plateaued stage is only an intermediate phase towards building an enormously detailed copy of reality (albeit still diegetic reality, as the only recognisable hint at the real New York in *SNY* is a brief glimpse at the Manhattan Bridge).

Gradually Synecdoche's *mise-en-scène* emerges in a manner that is proper for a theatre piece, with the stages for indoor scenes constructed as a box set with three walls, omitting the fourth one so the audience – or, rather the ever-growing production crew (since Caden's play does not progress beyond rehearsals there is no audience) – could see the action. Already by then even the details are precise copies of their diegetic story-world counterparts. Yet, as the never-ending production continues and the set expands, Caden, claiming that the

[7] Although Caden does not give an official name to his play, the thesis will nevertheless, following the title of the film, refer to the diegetic space inside the warehouse, the work-in-progress artificial city, as Synecdoche.

use of the box-set approach and the imaginary line of proscenium is a lie, orders the stage to be "walled up," thus materialising a physical "fourth wall". The production of space here, in addition to mnemonic devices such as photographs, maps, and plans, clearly has its roots in the ensemble's, but especially in Caden's, lived experience, that is, in memory.

The final third of *SNY* sees how the (re)construction has been expeditious, including downtown high-rises, whole city blocks, offices, and residencies which all go above and beyond a regular theatre set. Facing this self-imposed Sisyphean task, Caden ceaselessly broadens his scope, making sure that every nook and cranny, road and street corner, faucet and bouquet is meticulously planned in its correct place, with the production eventually involving thousands of workers, actors, and extras in his perfectionistic and narcissistic goal to produce something genuine. The diegetic space of the warehouse is as detailed, realistic, immense, and intricate version of its reference as humanly possible, a mirror or a reflection of the "world out there". During rehearsals ambient street sounds are played from a tape, actors' synchronised movements are practiced, and even man-powered elevators are installed in skyscrapers to keep the world of Synecdoche running. Eventually Synecdoche's size reaches absurdity: another warehouse representing the initial one that Caden started working in decades ago is built inside the original warehouse. Followed by more warehouses, these (re)constructions become worlds within worlds, mixing realities, both for the participants in the diegetic story-worlds and for those involved in watching the film.

Synecdoche, Caden's replica inside the warehouse, as the full title of the film refers to, becomes so vast that it could be considered a separate city in the state of New York. Of course, as *SNY* is a fiction film, the passing of time in it is stylised and spatiality exaggerated. In addition, the most obvious interpretation is, again, evident in the title, as the word "synecdoche" itself is a spatial trope, a class of metonymy, in which a part represents the whole or vice versa. For instance, when there is talk about "the head of state" it surely does not refer to the severed head of the leader of the state, but to the whole person who is running the country. Thus the warehouse, officially unnamed artificial city of Synecdoche, becomes a metonymic phenomenon – a multiverse – representing and duplicating the entirety of the reality outside of Caden's warehouse. While film (or theatre) directors and crews of the real world – in order to avoid the fate of, for example, Kubrick's *Napoleon* or Jodorowsky's *Dune*[8] and actually finish with what they started – have to make some stylistic decisions with

[8] Both projects were ultimately crushed under their own ambition, prohibitive cost, and enormous planned runtime.

fair amount of exclusion, Caden, on the other hand, is trying to create a wholly authentic, unaltered, and all-inclusive representation of reality, thereby opposing the usual methods of fictional retellings. In fact, it seems Caden does not want to produce fiction, but rather he is after the abstract truths of life: existence, death, identity, and free will. This results in a materialised synecdoche of an overwhelming scale.

2.1.2. An Illogical Representation

Caden seems to think that in order to reach "brutal honesty," the spatial level of his play needs to be an exact copy of where the past took place. For him, only after fixating the time in space, can the theatre piece start re-enacting the mundane truths of the everyday. Surprisingly, as technical as the produced space in Synecdoche is, here is where Caden's project can be analysed through a nostalgic prism. Svetlana Boym distinguishes two types of nostalgia in her approach, restorative and reflective: restorative nostalgia focuses on the first part of the word – *nostos* – and is characterised by truth, singular narrative, rebuilding of the lost home, and tradition; whereas reflective nostalgia is about *algia*, the process of longing itself (xviii). While the "two might overlap in their frames of reference," their stories and identity-trails are different (Boym 49). As "restorative nostalgia manifests itself in total reconstructions of monuments of the past," and is fixed on a singular plot, then the set that Caden is trying to build, "in an attempt to conquer and spatialize time," can be seen as being driven both by a restorative impulse and the wish to make sense of the passing of time (Boym 41; 49). In the context of Synecdoche these "monuments of the past" are for Caden entire environments and whole realities.

Synecdoche is as much Kaufman's experiment as it is Caden's. The director of *SNY* is interested in arguing against the modernist ideal of objectivity both on a spatial and temporal level. Hence, another technique that sees continuously employment in the film besides metonymy is repetition. Lefebvre is convinced that in contemporary urban environments everything resembles everything else, thus foreseeing the postmodernist credo of the end of originality in an architectural sense (*Production* 75). He continues how "repetition has everywhere defeated uniqueness" and how homogenous spaces "are the outcome of repetitive gestures (those of the workers) associated with instruments which are both duplicatable and designed to duplicate: machines, bulldozers, concrete-mixers, cranes, pneumatic drills, and so on" (*Production* 75). Indeed, in Synecdoche, in addition to the

whole premise of it being a copy, the repetitious spaces – almost-identical high-rises of the metropolis – are the result of continuous gestures: the daily rehearsals, the never-ending expansion and construction. Yet, being founded on memory, it is not Synecdoche the warehouse-play itself which is homogenous, but the original diegetic source for it, the hectic global city where everything resembles everything else. The insurmountable task that Caden has committed to – creating a copy of New York – is overwhelming: the bigger Synecdoche grows, the more disoriented and lost Caden becomes and the further he seems from realising his vision.

As a pedantic director Caden does not leave room for chance and openness, the positions of the reproduced space and the cues for the cast are physically marked and planned: he is not only reconstructing the world, he is creating a reality and a history that wishes to supersede individual memory. During one of many attempts to name his work, Caden mentions that it could bear the title of "Simulacrum". Simulacrum is an image that represents something, but more precisely, in the definition of Jean Baudrillard, simulacrum is directly connected to mass (re)production: it is a copy without an original (*Simulacra and Simulation*). It seems that Synecdoche fits this description, however, Caden's project is only a semi-simulacrum, since even after the warehouses themselves begin to be reproduced, they still are copies (of copies) that have originals. Baudrillard's "simulacrum" will be returned to when the thesis reaches the analysis of *TTS*, but nevertheless the space in Synecdoche is inhabited by similar postmodern concepts.

For instance, meta-referentiality is apparent in *SNY* on multiple times: actors re-enacting their own lives, actors playing other actors, and the theatre production becoming indistinguishable from life. The world of *SNY* has to be read both literally and metaphorically: oftentimes loose and fragmented use of diegetic time, illogical spaces, urban alienation, and search for meaning are all postmodernist tropes. One oddity out of many is the character of Sammy (Tom Noonan) who stalks Caden for two decades and ends up being his double in the play, acting as Caden's doppelganger. In parallel to what is happening throughout the years inside the warehouse, the diegetic world outside Synecdoche can seem even more puzzling: a good example is the house that Hazel buys being on fire and continuing to be lit throughout the film, thus literally foreshadowing Hazel's cause of death, smoke inhalation.

In fact, the diegetic reality outside of Caden's spatial experiment is collapsing, although the film itself does not bother to give any concrete explanation what causes the rupture: scenes with buildings in flames, an uncanny cyberpunk-like zeppelin illuminating the streets at night, and Caden mentioning that there are "nearly 13 million people in the world" paints a picture of a world both surreal and in decline. Moreover, what serves as a symbolic coincidence is that Caden lives in and is copying New York City, the sight which saw the collapse of an entire era when the Twin Towers became a ruin of capitalist modernity during the terror attacks of 9/11 (Hell and Schönle 5). This is mirrored in Synecdoche, where unexplained cataclysm at the end of the film leaves the mock-up metropolis in ruins, with carcasses lying around. Is the fictional debris just a postmodernist plot device? Yet, since space and time are in such an emphasised contact in *SNY*, the wreckage is also an allegory for the inevitable passing of time, as "[t]he ruin is not merely something that reminds us of the past; it is also a reminder of the future, when our present becomes history" (Boym 79). In *SNY*, time passes rapidly and Caden's present becomes history fast. Instead of using his past experiences as stimulus for liberating future momentum – and perhaps aim at artistic endeavours that can be achieved –, Caden remains stuck in the past and opts for restorative nostalgia.

Caden does not seem the nostalgic type but rather, his recurrent medical ailments and deteriorating mental clarity notwithstanding, a controlling and egotistical middle-aged white male. He is on a position of power and the expanding urban-cum-theatre space is simultaneously a testament to the idea of progress, with towering buildings and thousands of extras creating the illusion of a real city. At the same time nostalgia does reveal itself in Caden on a personal level as "a romance with one's own fantasy" (Boym xiii) – a fantasy that leaves Synecdoche, despite Caden spending half of his life working on it, unfinished, and Caden himself powerless before the absurdity of human life. Indeed, the world in *SNY* is absurd and contradictory, blurring the lines between reality and fiction, authenticity and artifice, linearity and intermittence, objectivity and subjectivity, identities and roles. As in the contemporary world mobility, urbanisation, and abundance of information bring paradoxical outcomes, so in *SNY* the real and the fake merge, the passing of time and the representation of space become surreal, and identities and memory turn ambivalent.

One reading of Synecdoche could be that Caden is trying to create a functional replica of an inherently dysfunctional world. Although, considering Caden's struggle to be a feat of collective empathy would be a disputable interpretation. First and foremost Caden's

Gargantuan project is about himself and in the attempt to create a universe a trope of science-fiction emerges: that of the hive mind. However, for Caden this becomes a spatial issue just as much as a narrative issue: the hive mind must be materialised and a collective consciousness must be formed, otherwise the truth remains unattainable. But, as Lefebvre claimed (*Production* 138–140), language, as figurative and vivid as it might be, remains abstract without materiality and lived social experience, even if recent sci-fi storylines claim the opposite.[9] By wanting to include everything, Caden's inability to actually finish the play confirms that absolute objectivity cannot be conveyed, with Synecdoche representing an illogical and expressively fictional attempt at authenticity.

2.1.3. Concrete Memories and Total Recall

Lefebvre has called space a "concrete abstraction" (*Production* 100–101). The word pairing sounds contradictory, just as "concrete memories" echoes totalitarianism. Memory is not set in stone (or in concrete) to be browsed through like an album: as past, so is the human memory fragmented, possibly unreliable, and context-dependent. In the words of Michel de Certeau, "memory is a sort of antimuseum; it is not localizable" (108). Or as Svetlana Boym has put it, "[f]rom Greek mnemonic art to Proust, memory has always been encoded through a trace, a detail, a suggestive synecdoche" (54). In *SNY* Caden's synecdoche is not suggestive, he is on a doomed mission to, first, locate memories, second, to install them in a physical form, and third, to re-enact them. Memories, in the case of Caden, go against their nature and become concrete, thus bringing focus to issues that stem from excessive remembering.

Already in 1874, Nietzsche, in his "On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life" pointed out the importance of forgetting, comparing the inability to forget with an unavoidable demise of both the identity and any future action. Nietzsche saw in society an excess of monumental, objectifying history, amplified by the science-based emphasis on facts and knowledge. He warned against the "accumulation of knowledge" and the cynicism which might be a by-product of an age oversaturated with history (Nietzsche 78). As a solution Nietzsche proposed that people use their "plastic power," the ability to instinctively decide when to remember and when to forget: he dramatically refers to this selection process

[9] One example out of many is HBO's series *Westworld*, where an abstract idea – in its case an interconnected intelligence, or, a hive mind – is materialised thanks to advanced technology, resulting in a futuristic robotic entity which predicts the future via virtual networked space based on data.

as “drawing a horizon” and dubs the practice as “feeling unhistorically,” as opposed to “feeling historically” all the time – which would be the same as experiencing constant insomnia (74–75). With his controversial opinions Nietzsche worried about the same problems Augé, Boym and Huyssen stress more than a century later: progress-oriented modernity – whose heyday Nietzsche was a contemporary of – causing changes in processing and perceiving both information and the passage of time itself.

Despite sharing the root of the issue, Huyssen has opposed Nietzsche, arguing that today Nietzsche's creative forgetting would just be selective memory. For him, Nietzsche’s “aristocratic intellectualism” is a lacking method to apply in the current age of socially produced amnesia (*Present Pasts* 6). Neither does Huyssen see a solution in returning to the promises of the future articulated by “neoliberal discourse of economic and technological globalization,” which essentially “is nothing but a form of uncreative forgetting that ignores the history of capitalist cycles and the crashes of technological utopias” (*Present Pasts* 6). Instead Huyssen underlines the importance of focusing on those memory practices that welcome temporal perspective, keep in mind both past and future, and differentiate between spatial practices. Needless to say, Caden does not follow any of Huyssen’s recommendations.

Caden himself does not have an infallible mind: quite the contrary, he is repeatedly shown to miss whole periods of time and events, demonstrating a similarly selective memory that Huyssen is condemning Nietzsche for. But everything connected to the quest towards brutal honesty – the play – eliminates the possibility of forgetting in Caden’s life. Perhaps that is also why he reconstructs every possible space in Synecdoche: for the environment to act as a memory cue, a memory palace realised. In general, with the act of remembrance a paradox emerges: although occupied with the past the process of remembering actually takes place in the present. This paradox converges with sociologist Elena Esposito’s account on human memory not *recording* the past, “which would be of no use and would only be an overload,” but *reconstructing* it “every time for a future projected in ever new ways” (185). In light of Esposito’s thesis, Synecdoche is supposed to be a spatial recording of the past re-enacted in the present, but, since the process of memory – just as the process of space – is in constant change, the past cannot be “visited” or presented in real time, it is against the laws of physics.

Consequently, the mnemonic trope of science fiction which finds a surreal use in *SNY* is that of total recall. Boym writes that, “independent of affect and the vicissitudes of time, politics

and history," with digital memory "two scenarios of memory are possible: a total recall of undigested information bytes or an equally total amnesia that could occur in a heartbeat with a sudden technical failure" (347). Total recall is one of the goals of Caden's warehouse-project: Synecdoche is the site where for decades memories are rendered as data, with the intention of turning them into history, into what Caden considers to be truth – with Caden himself calling the undertaking an "investigation". This restates the contrasting views on information surplus bringing outcomes either in the inability to remember or the inability to forget. Mayer-Schönberger has contended that total recall through digital remembering results in no more than one future scenario, because "the past captured in digital memory is constant, frozen in time" (106). Caden is truly trying to create a machine, a singular rendition where the past indeed would be "frozen in time".

2.1.4. Passing of Time and Denying the Present

A forthright critic of the modern idea of progress, Henri Lefebvre notes how time "may have been promoted to the level of ontology by the philosophers, but it has been murdered by society" (*Production* 96). For Caden time is certainly vanishing fast. The passage of time in this film is dealt in a very peculiar manner. At the beginning of the film, for example, the opening scene depicting a regular morning of Caden's family starts with the radio announcing the beginning of autumn. In the four-minute scene action revolves around the same setting – the Cotard household, the kitchen, the bathroom, and the mailbox in the front yard – and the sequencing is anything but noteworthy. Yet during the scene the morning newspaper Caden is browsing through metamorphoses from October 14 to October 17 to November 2 and the scene ends with Halloween being announced from the radio. When usually temporal ellipsis in film works via montage between scenes then here it is laid out during one scene, where time is not continuously linear but fragmented and illogical. *SNY* does feature "traditional" ellipses as well, where a certain amount of time has passed between scenes, but the unorthodox omissions are more significant: they are temporal tropes – the shrinking of time come to life.

Both the film and Caden are obsessed with time: clocks are shown throughout, whole periods are skipped, and the theme of death penetrates the narrative. The two-hour film encompasses five decades in total, the entire second half of Caden's existence. Representation of time in *SNY* fluctuates between preoccupation with the future and fixation on the past. Temporal

confusion and acceleration mean three things: one, time, both in diegesis and real-life has the tendency to fly by; two, surrounding environments and mundane everyday routine – that Caden later on in the film is so adamant to portray in his *magnum opus* – alter the perception of time; and three, based on the morning scene and most parts of the film, Caden is not really living in the present.

Death, the prevalent theme in *SNY*, completely takes the protagonist over: the film shows how Caden is struggling to come to terms with (his) mortality. The recurrent illnesses Caden suffers certainly do not help. Anxiety about the finitude of human existence and the unknowable future leave Caden to search for meaning in artistic creation. In the first part of the film, when he still has his family living with him, Caden does not pay attention to the everyday and the fact that his marriage is falling apart – the opening scene clearly illustrates this. Some might see Caden as ungrateful, but certainly as self-centered. More than a usual mid-life crisis, the main character's thoughts are continuously with the alarming future. Even for the morning newspaper, what he reads are the obituaries. Again, the film skilfully emphasises how concern over the future comes at the expense of the present.

Because the unequal rhythms and temporal focuses of the film in large part correspond to Caden's state of mind, then once Adele and Olive leave for Berlin, temporality gets even more mixed. Before his family separated, Caden rarely reminisced – only in dialogue does he mention his previous plays. After the familial fallout, though, retrospect finds its way to his perception of time and daily life: he remains so transfixed on details of the past and the haunting loss caused by his wife and daughter moving away from him that a year seems to him like a week. When Caden visits Berlin with the intention of seeing Olive, he meets with Maria (Jennifer Jason Leigh) instead, a friend of Adele's. In the conversation that the two have, Caden refers to Olive as a four-year-old, when really she has almost turned eleven. More than six years have passed without Caden even noticing. Residing in a different temporal dimension is evident also in Caden's second marriage with Claire, which does not bring any clarity either. This is illustrated by quite a vivid hyperbole, where Caden has not noticed a huge tattoo on Claire's back after five-something years of living together. Be it the inescapable faith of every human being, that is, death and worry for the future, or the long gone events of the past, that is, retrospect, Caden is denying himself the present both ways.

Realities begin to mix already before Synecdoche is more than a plateaued stage: during the same scene where Claire reveals her back tattoo, Caden talks of Olive as his "real daughter,"

hinting that he does not really care about neither Claire nor their mutual daughter Ariel, or that he just sees them as a part of his theatre production. At the same time this marks the wordplay the director of the film, Charlie Kaufman, so famously is known for. One could interpret this "real daughter" or in fact any kind of "real" as analogous to "meaningful". Surely every human prefers meaningful relationships, experiences, and goals over insignificant ones. Loss of meaning is considered to be a contemporary condition, in part deriving from the abundance of choices. As with information and memory, this contrasting relationship within choice, when unfiltered, can leave a person paralysed. How much freedom do humans have in daily choices? Kaufman poses the concepts of meaning and choice as philosophical questions, hinting via Caden's example that having too much (artistic) freedom does not bring any resolution.

The warehouse-city of Synecdoche becomes a replacement for Caden's inherently selective attention and faulty memory, a mnemonic device and a memory aid in itself, where he can "revisit time like space, refusing to surrender to the irreversibility of time that plagues the human condition" (Boym xv). Returning to nostalgia, Kaufman is actually arguing for a "rebellion against the modern idea of time, the time of history and progress" (Boym 12), the exact opposite of what Caden is doing on screen. Caden's endless expansion of space, which fails to bring him any joy nor sense of satisfaction, does not serve as a reaction to contemporary lifestyle, but as a confirmation of it. The copying process itself is, ultimately, a process that characterises contemporaneity the best: a production of commodity.

The irony resides, again, in language and in particular texts featured in the film. As a wry comment towards the often exploitative self-help industry, it is the books that his otherwise inconsiderate therapist has written that function as the only source in *SNY* that tell Caden to "Be here now" and "There is only the now". More than once the film shows a novel by Marcel Proust, *À la recherche du temps perdu* (translated into English as both *Remembrance of Things Past* and *In Search of Lost Time*). Hazel is shown reading it and the book is also used during rehearsals. The inclusion of Proust's novel is symbolic on many levels. First, it is one of the longest novels ever written. Second, as the title suggests, its theme is involuntary memory and looking back at already-lived times. The former mirrors the scale of Caden's own work, the latter helps to read Synecdoche as a site of reconciliation with and reconstruction of the "lost times" of daily routines Caden missed out on when he still was together with Adele and Olive. He is literally in search of those lost times.

Kaufman also refers to absurd philosophy by including Franz Kafka and Albert Camus. Another reading recommendation that Caden gives to Hazel is the Bohemian author's novel *The Trial*. Kafka's writing is much about the same questions as *SNY*: surreal sense of time and space, alienation, and existential anxiety. In Kafka's novel, the bureaucratic treatment of time, so characteristic of the progress-oriented modernity, creates in its protagonist a sense of aimlessness – a condition also visible in Caden. The influence of Camus, the French-Algerian writer-philosopher, is evident in dialogue as Claire, in a matter-of-fact demeanor tells Caden how her "mother died last night," thus paraphrasing the beginning of Camus' novel *The Stranger*, where the protagonist Meursault says "Mother died today. Or, maybe, yesterday; I can't be sure." Camus claims that the whole premise of life is absurd and that people mostly live in ignorance or denial. He uses the legend of Sisyphus condemned by the gods to perpetually roll a boulder to-and-fro a hill as a metaphor for the individual's struggle against the human condition. Camus sees two choices that people have before the absurdity of life: either the individual accepts the fact of this absurdity and rebels "by rejoicing in the act of rolling the boulder up the hill," thus gaining definition and identity, or – and here Camus is quite dramatic – the individual commits suicide ("The Myth of Sisyphus"). Caden, though, is depicted in *SNY* as a Sisyphean character by choice: no god has confined him to his arduous task.

For almost the entirety of the film, Caden does not rebel in the Camusean sense. He tries to overcome the absurd, to grasp it, to scrutinise it in a spatial form – but he does not accept it. In the process he denies himself the present: obsessing over death, Caden delivers a speech about dying in the beginning of the warehouse-project admitting how "We're all hurtling towards death. Yet here we are, for the moment, alive… each of us knowing we're gonna die… each of us secretly believing we won't." Abstaining from the "here and now," it is no surprise he is not able to finish his work in a medium that is spatiotemporally bounded in the present and unfolds in time linearly. Caden can be seen to come to terms with the absurdity of life and the passing of time once, at the near end of *SNY*, when he and Hazel, both in their 60s or 70s, admit their feelings for each other and Caden finally realises to appreciate, even if for a day, the present moment.[10] But even then Caden only partially "rebels," since, instead of gaining identity as Camus proposed, he soon loses it along with his memory almost

[10] It is worth mentioning that Sammy, Caden's double who is also in love with Hazel, commits suicide just after he sees Caden and Hazel kiss in recognition of mutual feelings. If, following Camus, there are two options to tackle absurdity, acceptance or suicide – and that Caden and Sammy are supposed to be the same person in the diegetic realm of the film –, then Sammy chooses the latter.

entirely: Caden changes roles with Millicent (Dianne Wiest), an actress who plays Caden's ex-wife's maid called Ellen, and consequently Caden (or, who used to be Caden) lives the last obscure years of its life as someone else. In addition, with Caden becoming a redundant extra in what originally was his life work, Kaufman applies another postmodernist trope: that of the death of the author, with which the film concludes.

In summary, time in *SNY* passes mercilessly and leaves Caden increasingly deteriorated. If hundreds of years ago the definition of nostalgia considered it an illness which produced erroneous representations and caused losing touch with reality and temporality, then, besides employing the nostalgic impulse in a spatially restorative manner, Caden also catches the illness of the 17th century. In addition to the ailments he suffers as he ages, Caden's inclination towards death in implied in his last name – Caden Cotard. Cotard's Syndrome, also known as walking corpse syndrome, is a rare mental disorder in which the affected person holds the delusional belief that they are dead, or do not exist (Berrios and Luque). Millicent describes Caden at the end of the film as being already dead and living "in a half world between stasis and anti-stasis," thereby making a meta-comment on the film's synopsis. Kaufman's film shows how absolute objectivity and universal truths cannot be conveyed and articulated, thus arguing against the ideals of modernism. While Lefebvre's claim of time having been murdered by society is true to an extent, the representation of time in *SNY* has a more subjective and even philosophical quality. Synecdoche is a manifestation that society and identity function through convention where both physical surroundings and one's sense of mind are inseparable in creating the perception of (the passing of) time, but also reality in general. As the next chapter will show, *TTS* also challenges and critiques society's conventionality.

2.2. *The Truman Show*: Space Producing Memory

TTS is a film about a regular man in his late twenties whose life is a reality TV show without him even knowing it. Truman Burbank (Jim Carrey) is supposedly living a normal life in an ordinary small island town called Seahaven. He has a desk job in an insurance company, a lovely wife Meryl (Laura Linney), a widowed mother (Holland Taylor), a best friend Marlon (Noah Emmerich), and some quite decent neighbours. But for nearly three decades he has not once left his town, and this is making Truman weary of his job and daily routine, eager to leave Seahaven to see the rest of the world.

Just as the film begins, the fictitious world of Truman starts to crumble: a studio light drops from the sky, to which a chain reaction of different on-set errors confirm the doubts Truman has. As the "glitches in the matrix" become more frequent, Truman realises that something is very wrong in his town and his community – but he cannot pinpoint what exactly is going on. One thing is certain: he fails to exit the town because every time he gets close to the town border a random mishap keeps him from going any further. As Caden in *SNY*, Truman seems to be losing touch with reality as well.

Unbeknownst to him, Truman is the first child in history to have been legally adopted by a corporation. He was selected from five other unwanted pregnancies to become a star for a new reality TV show. The show is, as the name that was given to its protagonist, of course, about the truth. Over 5000 cameras follow Truman's life 24/7, broadcasting globally to hundreds of millions of viewers. Pulling the strings and framing the truth, depicted in a God-like manner, is a producer, "the world's greatest tele-visionary," a man named Christof (Ed Harris). The mononymous creator of the show is adamant in his techniques to keep Truman confined within the biggest studio space ever built; after all, the ratings of the greatest show on earth must not drop. Truman himself, however, is determined to escape from the people who are acting increasingly more strange. After Meryl has left him because of a confrontation Truman had with her; after Marlon, repeating the words Christof narrates to his earpiece, has affirmed that he would never lie to Truman; and after Truman's "father" (Brian Delate) is "resurrected" after 20 years of presumed death, Truman decides to leave for good by avoiding the omnipresent cameras. Truman, overcoming his fears embedded in him since his childhood by the show's script, manages to exit the studio grounds, consequently ending both the show and the film.

TTS is one of the first dot.com boom fiction films which assesses its contemporary societal themes of privacy, endorsement, and (popular) culture in a similar manner to two other films released around the same time, *Edtv* (1999) and *Pleasantville* (1998).[11] Peter Weir, the director of *TTS*, gave the young screenwriter Andrew Niccol a chance to realise the latter's satirical script on networked entertainment industry.[12] Although reality TV is something evident already during the years following WWII, in those days it mostly stayed on the level of talent shows, hidden cameras for laughs, or attempts at *cinéma vérité*. The medium of reality TV became truly popular during the 1990s, as the equipment got smaller and cameras started to convert from analogue to digital, accelerating the process of filming and post-processing. Shows such as *The Real World* and the projects of Josh Harris paved the way for the exciting format.[13] The first decade of the 21st century saw reality TV eradicating privacy and intimacy even further, and gradually, with media(tisa)tion moving from the TV to personal computers and smartphones, self-presentation and exposure became the new reality (today people are constantly broadcasting versions of their lives and identities to the world via social media). Propelled by easy-to-access video sharing platforms like Youtube and Instagram, privacy and identity have become a major business.

2.2.1. Seahaven as an Entertaining Metaphor

All that Truman has experienced in life has taken place in Seahaven, a mock-up suburban town saturated with the style of 1950s America. As Synecdoche was a giant warehouse-turned-to-set, so is Seahaven a studio, an artificially produced space, but, in contrast to Synecdoche, Seahaven resembles more a prefabrication which is not being continuously built. Although *TTS* does not mention it in detail – and the whole film only corresponds to a few days in diegesis –, Seahaven undergoes perhaps merely minor embellishments to follow the narrative that is forced upon Truman. This makes Seahaven a production in many ways: first, a reality TV production, but in more general sense a production of memory and a

[11] *Edtv* is comedy where a media corporation starts a new network True TV, which will broadcast 24/7 the unedited life of an Average Joe (Matthew McConaughey). In *Pleasantville*, teenage brother and sister (Tobey Maguire and Reese Witherspoon) get transported from the 1990s into a 1950s sitcom.

[12] The script for *TTS* was actually Niccol's first, despite him completing *Gattaca* (1997) before the production for *TTS* begun. After *TTS* Niccol has continuously written and directed films with a twist of sci-fi about identity and nature of reality, such as *S1m0ne* (2002); *In Time* (2011); and *The Host* (2013) among others.

[13] First broadcast in 1992, *The Real World* is often credited with launching the modern reality TV genre. In it, seven to eight young adults are picked to temporarily live in a new city together in one residence while being filmed non-stop. The work of Josh Harris, American internet entrepreneur, include Pseudo.com, a live audio and video webcasting website founded in 1993, one of first of its kind in the internet.

production of a past set in a specific location. In a way, Seahaven realises and finishes the idea Synecdoche does not manage to: following a unitary story, the mundane daily lives are constantly performed.

Some 5000 cameras are installed all over Seahaven, in both public and private spaces, in transportation, in work, on the streets, even in Truman's bathroom, turning Seahaven into a panopticon par excellence: throughout the film many scenes have a visual peephole effect to stress the surveillance aspect of Truman's life. The diegetic commercial for the show announces that The Truman Show features "an entire human life recorded on an intricate network of hidden cameras and broadcast live and unedited, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to an audience around the globe"; making Seahaven equal in scale to Synecdoche, as with the Great Wall of China the Seahaven Island studio is supposedly one of two manmade structures visible from space. Truman himself, however, having lived under daily scrutiny for almost thirty years, is not aware of the cameras, or that the town is artificial, or of the fact that every person he knows is an actor.

But nearly three decades of lies eventually start collapsing under their own weight as the set and the fake reality begin to disintegrate at the very beginning of *TTS*. A few examples of this include the scene where Truman is entering his car to go to work, only to be startled by what seems large studio light equipment dropping from the sky and shattering on the road. Then, the next morning Truman sees his long-deceased father (i.e. the actor playing Truman's father) come-to-life on the street, to which a quick elimination by the show's extras follows. Another incident features Truman driving to work and the car radio picking up a frequency that the production team uses to communicate with each other, directing acting cues and updating extras on the whereabouts of Truman. Most vivid instance of Truman's life having been scripted to a spatial level occurs when, altering his daily route, Truman enters a building he was not expected to access and finds that the place where the elevator is shown to be, is instead only a facade, behind which part of the production crew are taking their lunch break. These and similar other moments of "error" make Truman question his reality.

By midpoint of the film, Truman has discovered that at least some aspects of Seahaven are organised – like, for example, that the movement patterns of other Seahaven residents are on a loop –, but he is yet to realise the extent of the whole operation. These incidents push Truman to continue to try to escape the bounds of Seahaven, but the town has been built to

keep Truman confined: after all, it is situated on an island. In the first part of the film these attempts have been unfruitful: the bus to Chicago does not start, the travel agency which has illogical anti-flying posters on its walls claims that they are fully booked – not to mention the fear of water which has been instilled in Truman in his childhood keeping him from leaving the island. In this world, spontaneity does not fit the equation and Truman's efforts at regaining some control over his life are cut short. Truman's second attempt to drive out of Seahaven himself gets halted by exponentially more ridiculous planned "roadblocks": a traffic jam, a bridge which exploits Truman's aquaphobia, a forest fire, and finally a nuclear power plant leak stop him once again. Back home, Truman has a fight with Meryl, which ends up with Meryl breaking character and thus also ending their relationship.

Truman's third try to break free comes in the final third of *TTS*, when he manages to outrun the omnipresence of cameras, initiating a massive manhunt where all the actors and extras of Seahaven start searching for him. Christof, the creator and God-like figure of the show, turns the artificial moon of the set into a projector, and, eventually, as the pursuit of the star of the show continues, Christof even transforms night into day, which highlights both the unnaturalness of the space and the symbolic allusions to religion and control throughout the film. Truman is found in the least likely of all places, the sea, sailing a boat into the unknown. Another divine act is performed as, analogously to staging the drowning of Truman's father decades ago, a weather program is used to produce a storm at sea to scare Truman into withdrawal. Barely surviving the great tide, Truman carries on and soon reaches "the edge of the world". The sharp bow of the boat literally breaks the "fourth wall," as Truman crashes into the studio wall which has been covered with paint to imitate the sky, creating an illusion of a horizon. Truman finds an exit door and despite all odds leaves the studio grounds.

Seahaven serves as a metaphoric space, reminder of the America which emerged from WWII victorious, securing its position as a world power. The clichéd environment is simultaneously a critique of New Urbanism (Seaside, Florida, the filming location for *TTS* is a model for the New Urban Movement), which, stressing orientation towards community, "is about building settlements at the human scale" (Razdan). New Urbanism is a philosophy of urban planning that sees itself as an answer to urban sprawl, the situation that the second half of the 20th century exhibited in low-density and poorly planned suburbs. Despite the movement's belief of "putting people first," the "idealised and utopian character" of their planned spaces and neighbourhoods has been questioned and the "possibility of building safe and socially healthy communities based on the premises of New Urbanism" has been

doubted (Łucka 24). In *TTS*, Seahaven is largely a reiteration of stereotypes: white male living in a suburb-like town with his blonde naïve wife gets occasional visits from his laid-back friend who wants to drink beer while talking about middle-class issues such as the dullness of work and "issues with the missus". For the viewers of the show, in the diegetic world outside of Seahaven studio, this represents an entertaining setting, both great for passive background static but also for a nostalgic trip to the past.

2.2.2. Mediatisation and Imagined Nostalgia

Nostalgia as a broadly definable phenomenon comes in many forms. One of such is the feeling the diegetic audience encounter when watching Truman's life: the show functions as a facilitator of nostalgia. Here one can think of such shows and similar nostalgic sentiment bestowed upon fictional works and characters in entertainment-saturated daily lives. In the particular case of Seahaven, the brightly coloured houses, the picket fences, and the small front yards are supposed to illustrate the resurrection of the American Dream which the show embodies. In this way, Seahaven functions as a part of the nostalgia industry, which itself belongs in the culture industry, where memories, heritage, and identity are for sale. The film originates from 1998, playing with the crisis of meaning at the end of the century where a return to the past – even if it is an untrue one like in *TTS* – might give some comfort.

The world of Seahaven is more connected to reflective nostalgia, which features "fragments of memory and temporalizes space" (Boym 49). Compared with restorative nostalgia which re(-)presents a singular narrative and reconstruction of the past, what needs to be stressed is that Seahaven as a space does not have a history of its own: it is not based on some specific place or memory, but is rather a version of a certain period in history. Moreover, Seahaven is an affirmation that generally "[o]ne is nostalgic not for the past the way it was, but for the past the way it could have been" (Boym 351). The producers of the show use Seahaven's faux appearance – the impeccably clean streets, the wide smiles of neighbours, the identical single family homes – to compose both an interpretation and a representation of the past which seems too good to be true and in turn promote it as authentic. Hence it is a "purer" simulacrum – a copy without an original – than Synecdoche in *SNY*.

Anthropologist Arjun Appadurai notes that mass media and popular culture industry constitute a situation where the longing for lost times is not based on lived experience, resulting in an inauthentic nostalgia: the industries produce "experiences of losses that never

took place, [and] create what might be called 'imagined nostalgia,' nostalgia for things that never were" (29–30; 77).[14] Since The Truman Show is broadcasted worldwide, the diegetic audience of the show include people who do not live in United States themselves: the American dream that the whole of Seahaven advertises is essentially an imagined one, a global product. Nevertheless, the viewers of The Truman Show – the families, friends, colleagues, and whole pubs dedicated just for watching the show – seem to be infatuated with both the romanticised past re-enacted in Seahaven and the amiability of Truman. Only a "very vocal minority," represented by Sylvia (Natascha McElhone), Truman's past love, accuses Christof and the production for keeping Truman a prisoner in an immoral experiment.

In such confined conditions, Truman himself is nostalgic for anything different than what has been around him for all of his life: he wants to get out of Seahaven. Later on in the film it becomes clear that he specifically wants to go to Fiji because of Sylvia, who did not fit the narrative the production team had for Truman and therefore was removed from the show years ago. This sort of not fitting the narrative bring the production crew closer to nostalgia's restorative impulse which only recognises a singular plot. Truman represents, although, following Boym's definition, the ultimate nostalgic – longing for something he never really had, a home that has never existed (xiii). More than searching for lost love, Truman is, like Caden in *SNY*, longing for genuineness and something "real".

Yet Seahaven and the show are the opposite of real, thus overlapping with Jameson's notion of "nostalgia film". Since the looks and feel of Seahaven, the apparel of the residents, the classic suburban housing, the retro advertisements, and even at times the manner of speech are a representation of the 1950s as the simpler and more "innocent age," then Seahaven is an ideal setting for Jameson's nostalgia film, a depersonalised pastiche, an appropriation of a missing past through "the emergent ideology of the generation" (*Postmodernism* xvii; 19). Yet the film itself, *TTS*, being critical of the themes of privacy, entertainment industry, and control is very much a representation of its contemporary trends, a social commentary, and the opposite of dehistoricising and depersonalised pastiche of Jameson's nostalgia film.

Because of the cameras and the non-stop livestream, Seahaven is a space under careful surveillance, a mediatised space throughout.[15] If the prevalent media in culture determine

[14] Appadurai has also defined "imagined nostalgia" as "ersatz nostalgia" or "armchair nostalgia" (78).
[15] In *SNY*, Caden is watched as well: Sammy, who follows Caden for twenty years is a personification of surveillance.

the dominant memory practices in society, then Seahaven is mostly occupying the temporality of "here and now," which is transmitted to the whole world, restating the theses of presentism, where the present has absorbed the future and the past. Yet, at the same time, overlapping with the previously mentioned perspective of Seahaven's stylised space, the digital archive of the recorded life of Truman (and other residents of Seahaven) enables to navigate in the past like in (virtual) space, manifesting itself in greatest hits tapes and weekly summaries of Trutalk, thus acceding to retrospect. Both are denoted in *TTS*, with little room left for the future – that is, for any change.

In such a scrutinised environment, privacy has been completely eradicated and the difference between public and private erased. In addition to thousands of cameras following Truman even to his bathroom, the production team and cast see no problem with such breach of privacy. Truman's wife Meryl admits in a behind-the-scenes interview that for her "there is no difference between a private life and a public life" and that "The Truman Show is a lifestyle. It's a noble life. It is a truly blessed life." Here the attitudes of today's increasingly mediatised way of living are mirrored: considering something to be a lifestyle and being "blessed" are the social codes of today's influencers, whose currency is presentism and the image of a successful life. Boym has approached the phenomenon of recording and broadcasting video via digital/social media as a "self-imposed panopticon scenario," where "being watched or being a voyeur" has no particular political reasons (349). Indeed, this ubiquitous sharing of images and videos in contemporary society does not usually serve politics, but rather promotes capitalist ideas and mechanisms, endorsing a product or a service.

In addition Seahaven is a space for showing and selling, or, a setting for spectacle and commercialism. As a consumerist space, Seahaven goes beyond plaques and boards: the whole town is an ad space, where commodification has reached its peak. Since The Truman Show is on air uninterruptedly, without any commercial breaks, then the show has earned its revenues via product placement. Everything on the show is for sale as what Boym calls "nostalgic readymades" (351). The kitchen tools, the lawnmower, and the cocoa beans Meryl is talking about in conversations with Truman; the chicken the in-world billboards depict; the beer Marlon drinks; even Truman's house itself is in stock and only a phone-call away. While the construction of Synecdoche was continuous and exponential, in Seahaven the only aspect of the urban space that really changes is the ads and posters which get cycled daily.

Seahaven is a living catalogue. Viewed from today, it is a spatial endorsement, which now has moved from the TV to online.

Christof is referred to as the show's *conceiver*, highlighting the use of an anthropomorphism to naturalise an innately inanimate phenomenon, the medium of television. In Christof a sense of ownership is mixed with a strange affection for Truman,[16] as if Truman was his biological son and their relationship was a regular one, when actually Christof has been controlling Truman for almost thirty years. As the "main architect" of the show, Christof is adamant that "Seahaven is the way the world should be" (Seahaven = safe haven / heaven). Christof's stance – and hence whole production's stance – seems to be that by keeping Truman in Seahaven, in the confinement of simpler and truer times of 1950s aestheticised America, is also keeping him safe from the "outside" which Christof deems dangerous. Even production team's T-shirts read "Love him protect him". Although admitting that "the world he inhabits is, in some respect, counterfeit," Christof insists that "there's nothing fake about Truman himself," thereby again bringing attention to Truman's name. During the final third of the film Christof is asked why Truman has not questioned the nature of his world hitherto, to which the "tele-visionary" answers that "we accept the reality of the world with which we are presented". This is similar to what the American urban planner Kevin A. Lynch claims: that "[w]e build our image of the world with data from our senses [so] that there are temporal manipulations of environment that will […] help us heal the breach between the abstract intellectual concept and our emotional sense of it" (163). This, in turn, reminds the processes of memory and space, which work in co-operation with materiality, linguistic trope, and social experience.

Overall, the story-world of *TTS* is separated not into two, but three levels: the credits read "Truman's World," "Christof's World," and "The Viewers". Nostalgia manifests itself differently in all of these. While it is true that the creators and producers are employing nostalgia as an empty trope for business purposes, temporalising space and constructing a history based on Seahaven (which is where similarities with restorative nostalgia can also be seen), the viewers of the show are the consumers of such fantasy, where longing is mediatised both on an individual and collective scale, making them nostalgic for a time they might not have experienced themselves, or for a place that is not genuine. In the middle of

[16] For example, Christof caresses the screen that's projecting Truman sleeping, and in a Trutalk interview, hearing out the accusations of Sylvia, Christof asks her whether she actually dares to question what is right for Truman with a tone of hurt irritation.

all this is Truman, "a displaced person who mediates between the local and the universal" (Boym 12), between Seahaven (the production team) and the world outside the studio (the audience). Truman, going beyond the retrospect and presentism binary, uses the nostalgic sentiment prospectively – longing for a change and a future – and manages to take back control over his own identity.

2.2.3. Plastic Stories and Scripted Lies

In *TTS* prefabricated memories are working as history – and they are utilised constantly, trying to create an illusion of a reality for Truman, while selling that spectacle to the (diegetic) viewers. Since the name "Truman" itself suggests that everything which is being shown is true, it once again underscores the ambition of reality TV and media in general. This is emphasised at the very beginning of the film, when Marlon, during a talking-head interview tells the show's audience how "It's all true. It's all real. Nothing here is fake … It's merely controlled." Whilst repeatedly admitting that they control and fabricate different aspects in the world of Seahaven, the production simultaneously insist that the controlling aspects do not change the truthfulness of neither the unveiling daily narrative nor Truman himself. Notwithstanding production's claims, Seahaven functions as a deterministic space where Truman's every move can be anticipated. Control goes beyond space: the fact that Truman works in insurance, an area that deals with statistics and risk management, that would instil in Truman a disposition for precaution and fear, is but one strategy of many which find manifestation in Truman's life with the goal to keep him tame.

If memory is said to be selective then one could say that the selection process has been done for Truman by Christof. A similar system that Caden is trying to create – the alteration of memory into a history – has been imposed on Truman. Yet, where truth for Caden has its origins in lived memory, Christof sees the basis for truth in fabrication, restriction, and mediatisation. In both ways the status quo is a singular narrative that leaves realities mixed. Everything is scripted in order to prevent Truman from even thinking about leaving Seahaven and Christof himself blatantly admits it, saying "as Truman grow up, we were forced to manufacture ways to keep him on the island". In addition to lies that would seem absurd in reality – such as his "show-father's" death in sea being staged when Truman is still a boy (so Truman would develop a fear of water) and his wife Meryl being an actor who considers living with Truman as a job without any real feelings –, constant smaller lies like

a badly faked photograph depicting a non-existent trip to Mt. Rushmore in Truman's childhood keep the hoax afloat. At the most critical moments, when the whole show is in danger of being exposed, it is Christof's recited words that the actors hear through their earpieces and utter them as their own in conversations with Truman to reassure him that Truman's reality, the town he lives in, and the people who live in it, is just as regular as any other equivalent town and community.

Except that the town is presented as anything but regular in Truman's daily life. The newspaper claims how Seahaven is "the best place on earth," the morning radio refers to it as paradise, and the evening TV-show praises small-town life. Another aspect is the immediacy and "the all-seeing" eyes of media which, again, are evident in either the radio or the newspaper discussing incidents which took place only a day ago, which deepen the doubts Truman already has about his reality. The media surrounding Truman are adapted to fit Truman's suspicions and worries, functioning more as personalised propaganda than a reliable source of information or entertainment. All these mechanisms compose an intricate network of surveillance and control leaded by one man – Christof. Ergo, Truman's whole perceived life, both on a spatial, but also on a temporal level – meaning memory, experience, passage of time, and sense of authenticity – is also mediatised via newspaper, radio, and television. In fact, diegetic media serve in both films as shapers of identity that the protagonists to an extent relate to. In *SNY*, Caden vividly places himself into the commercials and cartoons that play on TV, and in *TTS*, Truman begins to notice the dubious "actuality" of media around him.

In light of the ubiquitous media flow it would be fascinating to reinterpret Benedict Anderson's thesis on imagined communities to fit the current digital age. Anderson, when speaking of communities which are imagined, is doing so with nation states in mind, bringing examples from the 19th century, when the novel and the newspaper "provided the technical means for 're-presenting' the kind of imagined community that is the nation" (25). Capitalism has "provided the technical means" far more compatible and hybrid in its intrinsic qualities than the novel and the newspaper were one and a half centuries ago. It is precisely in the critique of such media technologies that Huyssen's amnesia-culture derives from. Huyssen combines theories from Anderson and Appadurai and claims how many of the mass-marketed memories being consumed "are 'imagined memories' to begin with, and thus more easily forgettable than lived memories" (*Present Pasts* 17). Locating the origin of memories in a world that functions through the rules of attention economy, filled with

images, stories, and spectacles, might not prove such an easy task – especially since people usually are certain that they remember correctly.

While Huyssen admits that "imagined memories" is a problematic concept since all memory is imagined, he assures that the term allows to "distinguish memories grounded in lived experience from memories pillaged from the archive and mass-marketed for fast consumption" (*Present Pasts* 166). Both films, in parallel to the questions of identity, tackle the themes of memory's sources and authenticity. What can happen to the identity in today's vast space of networked digitalised information? The German memory scholar Aleida Assmann questions the factuality of self-narratives based on memory, claiming that often "we have no definite way of knowing whether something that we remember is an experiential memory or an episode that has been told us by others and was incorporated into our fund of memories" (222). In *TTS*, this is taken to the extreme, both through scripted life and surrounding media, creating a world with no apparent authenticity whatsoever.

2.2.4. Real-Time Amnesia in Denying the Past and the Future

After Truman's suspicions about his reality extend, jeopardising the whole fabricated endeavour, Christof plans a scene to bring Truman back to "normality," the need for and possibility of a return being a characteristic of restorative nostalgia. Christof thinks that Truman seeing the man who plays his father, dressed as homeless, on the streets of Seahaven, is the main source of Truman's recent doubts. As a solution Christof decides to "resurrect" Truman's father who the production itself eliminated in Truman's childhood. Deploying his usual machinations that are connected to memory, Christof writes the reason for Truman's father's 22-year absence to be amnesia.

The trope of amnesia is the dominant memory practice in *TTS*, as by controlling the present Christof & Co. inevitably – moreover, in their case, consciously – also control the past and the future. Where Caden often cannot bring himself to forget, Truman is propelled to forget by the production team: to forget everything that was not scripted (although there supposedly is not any script to begin with); to forget those "glitches in the matrix"; all the inconsistencies evident in the daily staged reality; all the errors in continuity; all the people acting strange and rather speaking at than speaking to him; and all the dreams and ambitions which do not meet production's enforced narrative.

An example of imposed "truths" not working fully even in the most meticulous of strategies becomes clear when Truman is in the basement and going through a trunk filled with photos and memorabilia from the past. During that flashback-scene Truman reminisces about Sylvia, and a viewer of the show remarks that the production might have "got rid of her, but they couldn't erase the memory". This enduring memory of Sylvia is what essentially fuses Truman's future momentum to leave the town. Reiterating Elena Esposito, there is no real technique to forget, since realisation of that would still require presence of memory, thus it would be a technique that denies itself (181). Indeed, despite the efforts of show's production team to force Truman into a singular narrative by eliminating incompatible threads, total amnesia still remains unattainable.

Nevertheless, Truman's perception of time is bound with the materiality of Seahaven. The fake, plastic stories re-enacted in the setting of pastiche-like representation of 1950s are continuously traditional and stereotypical: a steady job, a wife, a planned baby, mortgage, and wholesome peers force Truman to live in the present and be wary of any sudden change. The perception of time for the producers and the viewers is wholly different from Truman's comprehension: in addition to the 24/7 coverage the former have the option to, like in Caden's ideal version of the warehouse-city, (re)visit the past via technology in virtual space. Playback devices enable to use recordings as mnemonic "extensions," doubling the notion of the spectacle, which with the replay option becomes a constant state, available at any time and, speaking from 2020, at any place.

In contraposition to *SNY* which diegetically covers half a century, the plot in Weir's and Niccol's media satire takes place during the course of a few days: at the beginning of *TTS* "Day 10,909" is shown, which marks that Truman and the show are just under 30 years of age. The representation of time differs greatly between the two films, thus illustrating what each film is critiquing: retrospect against presentism, total recall against total amnesia, and temporal fluctuation against temporal stasis. Time in *SNY*, despite Caden's efforts to materialise it, remains an evanescent abstraction, while time in *TTS* serves as a measurement and resource, with the day counter quite directly referring to the commodification of time in contemporary society. In this vein mediatised memory as well acts in *TTS* as re-presentation and as making present, since the non-stop broadcasting of Truman in Seahaven matches the conditions of memory practices in presentism, where "the timeless present of the all-pervasive virtual space of consumer culture" reigns (*Present Pasts* 10).

Cinematically, the editing in *TTS* is linear: that is, the film follows the logic of a live transmission, with the omissions being unnoticeable. One day ends, another begins. However, unlike in *SNY*, flashbacks are used to highlight the traumas of Truman's past: namely the aforementioned scenes of the drowning of Truman's father and the wooing of Sylvia. The use of flashback also corresponds to the greatest hits availability the diegetic audience have access to. Fans of the show – which seems to be the vast majority – might know and remember Truman's past better than the star himself: certainly Christof thinks he does, since he is the puppeteer framing Truman's past, present, and future.

Truman has a different attitude towards time than Caden: both, for instance, experience routine, but where Caden first "accelerates" through (in-scene temporal ellipses) and then tries to re-enact "the mundane" (the play), Truman, on the other hand, cannot wait to escape the temporality of the everyday. The scripted life and memories have denied Truman the past, while the bounded space have denied him the future, forcing him to face the everlasting, but never-changing present – the "tyranny of the instant" (Hartog xiv–xv). The same conditions are met by the auditorium of the show, who remain under the spell of the spectacle. Although both Caden and Truman long for a meaningful human contact, it is Truman who most probably actually reaches it.[17] While Caden, in the process of trying to grasp and physically fixate the passing of time instead gets more lost in it, nevertheless keeps constructing the world around him, Truman wants to break free of the spatiotemporal binds – and successfully does so, even if the contained city and the producers with Christof in lead have been restricting those urges for whole of Truman's life.

In the final scene of the film, just as Truman is about to leave the studio, Christof's megaphoned voice tries to persuade the star of the show to stay, claiming how "There's no more truth out there than there is in the world I created for you". Continuing that Seahaven and the outside world run on the same lies and the same deceit, Christof promises that in his world Truman has nothing to fear. Thus Christof is convinced of the ethics of his life work, which in reality would mean a monopoly on truth. Since Truman refuses to stay, *TTS* can also be read in the context of absurdist philosophy: exiting the studio, "Truman has recognized the necessary loss of childlike innocence and dependency, and accepted death as the ultimate cost of attaining selfhood" (Pratt and San Juan 201). Truman, unlike Caden, embraces the absurd finitude of life and the inevitable passing of time with open arms,

[17] The film does not actually show whether the reunion between Truman and Sylvia – after the former has finally managed to leave Seahaven – takes place, but it is indicated that it does.

choosing the unknown and abstract over the promises of safety within the frames of fixated truth presented as history by Christof and the whole show.

CHAPTER 3: Processes of Memory and Space in the Digital Age

When Chapter 1 was concerned with underlining the reciprocity between space and memory, and Chapter 2 scrutinised the representation of time, memory, and urban space in the diegetic cities of Synecdoche and Seahaven, Chapter 3 will return to the present day and see how the critiques *SNY* and *TTS* make on their contemporary societies correspond to the processes of memory and space in the digital age. This chapter will also concentrate on two contemporary urban theories that are especially contrasting in terms of memory, the city as palimpsest and the Generic City. In addition Chapter 3 will restate the most evident factors – mediatisation and virtual space – that during the last few decades have shaped the perception and re(-)presentation of time, memory, and space, resulting in society acknowledging two dominant memory practices and temporalities: retrospect and presentism.

A few questions that this chapter focuses on are: What can the fictional representations of space, time, and memory in *SNY* and *TTS* as dramatisations of their respective contemporary societies, although admittedly and explicitly exaggerated, tell about the fears and longings, the realities and illusions, the authenticity and artifice of the current century? How does re-presentation measure against representation and consequently alter the memory, and what could be the consequences of immediacy?

3.1. Creating and Inhabiting Meaningful Spaces

Synecdoche and Seahaven are not legitimate cities, but they rather function as artistic microcosms, where abstract ideas and cultural tropes (that in Lefebvre's treatment are interdependent with materiality and lived experience) find manifestation in urban form and memory-narratives. Neither of the films really belong under the science-fiction genre, nor can they be seen as totally realistic. Yet, striving in the use of unconventional and stylised methods to convey their respective stories and critiques, *SNY* and *TTS* include surreal elements. All the while, these anomalies in representation (or also re-presentation for *TTS*) of time and space are conscious, and with the absurd scales escaping laws of physics, *SNY* and *TTS* can be considered to be twofold meta-commentaries: first, on the production of film and/or television in general (the giant contained spaces of sets and studios, the performative aspect, the role of the spectacle), and, second, on prevalent societal tendencies (the idea of progress, consumerism, media and information networks).

Interpreting the meaning and influence of prevailing tropes in society and media has much to do with the skill of critical thinking, especially when today one is surrounded with mainstream "tropes," which are either restating some presentist statements – such as one should "live in the moment" – or lingering in retrospect, where the past represents the "good old times". The hyperboles both films use – total recall and total amnesia, reproduction and prefabrication, absolute truth and singular narrative, spatialising time and temporalising space – underline the corresponding sociocultural and -political hyperboles evident in contemporary reality: digital remembering, influx of information, immediacy of re-presentation in attention economy, and virtual space. Whilst the spaces in Synecdoche and Seahaven are distinctly fictional, the narratives that take place in them, at times, are not so far from present reality – current chapter will try to argue why.

Synecdoche, Caden's warehouse-play, is the locale where memory serves as a starting point towards producing space: seeking perfect representation of reality, space is continuously (re)generated, making the copy-paste world a physical metonymy – or, synecdoche – for the diegetic world outside of the warehouse; and a materialised metaphor for virtual networks of information, where the past becomes traceable. Like in the digital age, where technology and mnemonic devices have merged the temporal and spatial dimensions, so in *SNY* Caden turns the warehouse into a memory aid in itself, where he could "revisit time like space" (Boym xv). Synecdoche has a restorative impulse, but in the attempt at objectivity and truth, space in Synecdoche also resembles the copying process in the (re)production of commodity. The factor that time and space are nowadays resources and tangible measurements is relevant when discussing *SNY*, where the past and the passing of time in general is given a spatial quality. Because of – or thanks to – mediatisation the past "is now not a land to return to in a simple politics of memory," but instead the past "has become a synchronic warehouse of cultural scenarios, a kind of temporal central casting" (Appadurai 30). Time and memory in contemporaneity – as in Synecdoche – are perceived as data that is always available in the digital archive – the Internet.

In Seahaven the origin-story and the relationship between space and memory is the opposite of Synecdoche. Seahaven is a prefabricated space, wholly commercial and stereotypically romanticised metaphor embellished with the plastic of New Urbanism, where brightly coloured houses and picket fences illustrate the attempt to represent the American Dream. Boyer claims that the contemporary city is a City of Spectacle, where "[i]mages become aestheticized commodities representing livable cities for sale, placing products in lifestyle

stage sets, turning museum exhibitions and cultural entertainments into events for corporate enhancement" (65). Spectacle is the currency of the diegetic Truman Show. Since there is little that in Seahaven is authentic or based on some original experience or place, the town is a better example of a simulacrum than Synecdoche. What Seahaven and the show stand for, endorsing mass-production and standardisation, is homogenisation. Boyer also stresses that the ersatz emotions (and in the case of Seahaven also ersatz nostalgia) one gains in the City of Spectacle, spawn "historical amnesia and false reconciliations [which] does not allow for critical perspectives grounded in values formed outside of the marketplace, beyond the grip of the image, in opposition to the aestheticization of everyday life" (65). A controlled space where monitoring has reached its peak, Seahaven is a mediatised consumerist space throughout, where scripted memories are working as history – and they are employed constantly, trying to create an illusion of a reality for Truman.

The two fictional urban representations, with the warehouse-city Synecdoche in *SNY* subscribing to retrospect and total recall, and TV-studio Seahaven in *TTS* being guided by presentism and amnesia, bring the emphasis back to interpreting space and memory as social and reciprocal processes where, following Huyssen, focusing on "both past and future" and "regain[ing] a strong temporal and spatial grounding of life and the imagination" is the ideal (*Present Pasts* 6). Being far from ideal, the films' aberrations stress their main societal critiques. The absence of temporal perspective in *SNY* and lack of spatial history in *TTS* draw attention to both the fragmented interactions with and the uncertain origin of information in the present day.

Opposing the palimpsestic quality that written texts used to have before the typewriter and computer became popular, where one could literally perceive the history of the writing, digital media are characterised by the anonymous blank page, which often has no trace nor any memory. Information and time itself may be increasingly *traceable* in the digital age, but the questions of authenticity, adequacy, and pertinence behind the abstract veil of virtual space arise: all the more so when considering that these miscellaneous digital "texts" are mass-distributed. But texts are not the only format that can be read or where a history – or the lack of one – can be seen. The interpretation and comprehension of cities can be quite similar to reading a text. Where Huyssen proposes that after the modernist ideals of *creatio ex nihilo* had faded and urban spaces started to be read in context as palimpsest (*Present Pasts* 7), Koolhaas suggests an alternative, where the idea of the Generic City would represent a city free of context, history, and identity, founded on a blank slate ("The Generic

City"). Comparing the diegetic urban spaces against these two theories, neither Synecdoche nor Seahaven are completely palimpsestic or generic, but they nevertheless share some similarities with the city as palimpsest and the Generic City.

Huyssen uses the example of Berlin as being the appropriate palimpsestic city: in his treatment Berlin can be read as "a disparate city-text that is being rewritten while previous text is preserved, traces are restored, erasures documented, all of it resulting in a complex web of historical markers that point to the continuing heterogeneous life of a vital city that is as ambivalent of its built past as it is of its urban future" (*Present Pasts* 81). This makes most of the communities in the world palimpsestic: constantly changing and always in development, yet also location-based and context-dependent. Such spaces like to think that they have their own specific "something" – architecture, tradition, symbols, even cuisine and tourist attractions – that constitutes the essence of their being, a milieu which some film directors, for instance, Fellini or Pasolini for Rome, manage to emotionally convey in their films. One can feel nostalgic in the regular sense in these cities (or watching the films depicting these cities) and look back at the (urban) past with a bittersweet longing. The diegetic cities also develop their own inner-logic and temporality, but since Synecdoche is originated in memory, it is closer to being a palimpsest than Seahaven. In Synecdoche the never-ending construction leaves, perhaps even more explicitly than in a natural city, marks and markers of changes, such as rubble from the set or meticulously planned and documented blueprints. Caden's experiment is a palimpsest at work, with layered history of the space perceived.

Koolhaas' idea of the Generic City provides an urban typology of sorts that is the complete opposite of city as palimpsest. Since the Dutch architect sees that contemporaneity abuses history and urban re-appropriation denies authenticity, the Generic City follows homogenisation as its principle (1248–50). A site of a truly perpetual now with no history nor a real center, where inhabiting "space leaves no trace in our memories, because 'its refusal to freeze ensures instant amnesia'" (Koolhaas 1249; qtd. in Hartog xix), the Generic City promises anonymity and a new start. The urban space in *TTS* is more similar to a generic module city, since despite the spontaneous ambience Seahaven radiates, it has no real authenticity – on the contrary, the show consciously propagates either imagined nostalgia for its audiences or amnesia for Truman. Like the Generic City, Seahaven is a fixed space, where sudden change puts the power-relations that the producers have over Truman in danger. That is why Seahaven, endorsing reproduction via promoting its module-houses,

module-furniture, module-everything, is more in line with the Generic City than city as palimpsest.

But the Generic City is not something only apparent in eccentric manifests or surreal fictions. In a grandiose three-decade plan to urbanise the rural areas, present-day China is building hundreds of megalopolises throughout the country that by 2026 could accommodate more than quarter billion people (Mallonee). Dubbed "ghost towns," the cities are still mostly empty: when completed, they set the stage for people to move in and "action" to start. In such a life-imitating-art scenario the urban spaces themselves are twofold: either completely rootless with no history, only emitting the sense of a new ready-made; or, in rarer cases, as one of the cities is reconstructing an exact replica of Manhattan, the urban spaces are out-of-context artificial copies (Mallonee). Being guided by globalisation, progress, and culture of consumption, the scale of the megalopolises is the concrete abstraction not as Lefebvre understood urban space to be, but more like a materialised imagination resembling Caden's play in the warehouse. With the speed the skyscrapers are rising in China, reality might be changing places with (science) fiction.

The non-centeredness and homogeneity that Koolhaas proposes as an alternative to urban spaces with little historic authenticity remaining leaves one pondering like Hartog: "can one actually *live* in a presentist city?" (xix). On the example of Chinese megalopolises the answer is uncertain, yet in such terms as Koolhaas is describing – where the "urban plane […] only accommodates necessary movement" (1251) and the city has a political "relationship with a more or less authoritarian regime" (1255) – one envisages the image of the workers in Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1927). Both Chinese "ghost cities" and the concept of the Generic City promise a new start, a carte blanche, and an opportunity to sculpt one's identity as one wishes, while simultaneously following globalist and capitalist tendencies of reproduction and circulation of commodities. Is the Generic City a response to global climate crises which are caused by excessive (energy) consumption that goes into supplying and meeting the demands of the contemporary city, or is the endlessly reconstructable Generic City itself a capitalist enterprise?

The Generic City somewhat overlaps with Marc Augé's idea of non-place, which is where Augé's suggested contemporary period – supermodernity – finds its full expression in (88). Supermodernity simultaneously stems "from three figures of excess: overabundance of events, spatial overabundance and the individualization of references," while the ultimate

non-places are, similarly to Koolhaas, airports and other corridors of commute (Augé 88). Augé, whose concept of "supermodernity" Mark Fisher's "capitalist realism" shares a lot with, claims how "the same hotel chains, the same television networks are cinched tightly round the globe, so that we feel constrained by uniformity, by universal sameness" (Augé xii). The similar living quarters and whole suburbs in *TTS* – New Urbanism –, not to mention the stores, the malls, the daily commute in real life – the non-places – give evidence of rising "capitalist realism," the current neoliberalist era where the circulation of capital, both in culture, society, and politics, does not necessarily create anything of novelty, but rather keeps re-establishing the same conditions (*Capitalist Realism* 28–29). In Fisher's "capitalist realism" – like the concept says – capitalism fully constitutes reality and makes everything marketable, including authenticity (*Capitalist Realism* 7–10). In short, in capitalist realism time and space are totally standardised and commodified.

Whether a non-place, a Generic City, or the City of Spectacle, more important than the label is what these treatments share: functioning as spaces which offer little or contradicting history and context, they often subscribe to presentism and may leave their inhabitants – like Truman in Seahaven – in search of meaning which cannot be found within these superficial (urban) spaces. Neither do the prefixes "super-" or "hyper-" placed before "modernities" and "realities" to describe the contemporaneity change the fact that the present day digital age is characterised by the omnipresence of information, amplified by mediatisation and virtual space, thus creating paradoxical outcomes in terms of perceiving time, memory and space: beside the prevalent present the overwhelming past is traceable as well – abundance of choice and total recall leave *SNY's* Caden disoriented. Where in Augé's view the overabundance of information could rob all significance from the contemporaneity (23), and Boym is convinced that in "the Internet model […] issues of time, narrative and making meaning are much less relevant" (347), in the world of prefabrication and reproduction, both retrospect and presentism obtain a monetary value and become lifestyles propagated by all capitalist enterprises. Indeed, search for meaning and truth is far wider than only in the context of media(tisation) – as was just shown on the example of urban theories – but even today's cities are directed either by a state of perpetual "now" which echoes global capitalism's ahistorical *ethos* (that of enhanced mobility and homogenisation) or the romanticising "then" which sells an image of the past (pastiche and continuous gentrification). How to create – or live in – meaningful spaces? On the example of the

fictional spaces, neither of the extremes, total recall for Caden and (enforced) amnesia for Truman, bring mostly feelings of anxiety and (urban) alienation.

3.2. Being Out of Time

Absurd, abstract, and ambivalent, the re(-)presentations of time, memory, and space in *SNY* and *TTS* mirror the equivalent traits of contemporaneity, where the perception of time and space is dictated by technology and mnemonic devices which have merged the two dimensions, turning memory and time spatially traceable and allowing the past to be visited via virtual space. The notion of progress changed during the last decades of the 20th century, where utopianism was replaced by a neoliberal "capitalist realism," which in its toolbox has the power to make time, space, and memory into products (*Capitalist Realism*). Excessive mediatisation turn both the present and the past instantaneous and overwhelming, while capitalist principles of reproduction and commodification are concurrently employed in a manner like there is no tomorrow. In fact, the everyday denial of the threatening future – which, perceived as "time of disasters [that] we have […] brought upon ourselves" (Hartog xviii), seems to hold little meaning anyhow – results in two dominant memory practices and temporalities in the digital age: retrospect and presentism. The orientation towards progress is still there, only in the current neoliberal mode of reproductive stasis, the progress, instead of the future, serves the present. Simultaneously, the abundance of events and excess of information in contemporaneity often leave people seeking meaning and escapism in the past – the representations of which are also products of the culture industry. Therefore, future literacy, once so illuminating with creative energy, is eclipsed by either the perpetual "now" or the romanticising "then".

Time, as Lefebvre notes already half a century ago, "has been murdered by society" (*Production* 96). In the digital age, time is fleeing not only because of surplus of information, but also due to the emergence of several spatial dimensions where action takes place: in addition to unmediated life, the virtual space takes its mnemonic and temporal toll. Mediatisation as re-presentation, elevating immediacy, creates a cycle where the news influx is mostly characterised by image-centeredness and spectacle – an environment that surrounds people everywhere, at home, in the streets, and at work. Time in attention economy is an elastic and convertible resource which can be employed to create revenue. So does social media, for example, simultaneously promote instant gratification and short-

termism, while providing a platform for reminiscence and cataloguing. Such situations where both the past and the present are available might induce both (total) recall and (total) amnesia. As a reaction to too much information and remembering, "some may opt for the extreme and ignore the past altogether for the present, deciding to live just in the moment" (Mayer-Schönberger 126). Others, on the contrary, might too extensively focus on retrospection and get stuck in the past. In both ways, the "disease of this millennium," as Boym has noted, "will be called chronophobia or speedomania" (351). One of the panaceas against the modern illness, "[c]ontemporary nostalgia is not so much about the past as about the vanishing present." (Boym 351). Yet, continuing the metaphor, often the medicine that the pharmaceutical industry prescribes ends up being a placebo.

In addition to Huyssen, who emphasises the importance of "productive remembering," and choosing between memory practices which focus on "both past and future to articulate our political, social, and cultural dissatisfactions with the present state of the world" (*Present Pasts* 6), Mark Fisher expresses a similar demand for establishing critical spatial and temporal perspective to overcome the retrospect-presentism binary that plagues the mediatised public consciousness. During a lecture Fisher gave in 2014, he argues that on the 21st century, "the sense of culture belonging to a specific moment […] has disappeared" ("The Slow Cancellation"). Relying on Jameson's idea of the waning of historicity – which in Fisher's treatment the culture industry and branding deliberately produce –, more than nostalgically overrated past, the greater problem for the Brit lies in "overrating the present in lots of ways – and underrating our own dissatisfaction with it ("The Slow Cancellation"). The absence of this sort of critical stance in the digital age, accentuated by non-stop news and nostalgic readymades, is exactly what leaves people, whether real or fictional (Caden, Truman, but also the audience in *TTS*) stuck between two temporalities.

From the standpoint of today, linear time seems a relic of the analogue age – a nostalgic notion in itself. Yesteryear's one-dimensionality has been replaced by capitalist processes of homogeneity and fragmentation, which turn space and time into fetishised commodities (Stanek 76). As a vivid example of this, Fisher , talking about the students he taught during the 00s, deems them "a generation born into [an] ahistorical, anti-mnemonic blip culture – a generation […] for whom time has always come ready-cut into digital micro-slices" (*Capitalist Realism* 25). The availability of frozen moments in the digital archive and mnemonic devices that allow limitless playback option are not that old phenomena,

something that undoubtedly will continue to change and cause change, be it in the perception of time and space, or in the functioning of memory.

While the rapid developments in present day digital society are true, Huyssen reminds that new technologies have always been met by anxieties and fear – which later could prove to be even ridiculous –, and that our "age will be no exception" in transforming the human perception of time and space (*Present Pasts* 28). However, at the same time Huyssen emphasises that the "struggle for memory is ultimately also a struggle for history and against high-tech amnesia" (*Twilight Memories* 5). The question whether mnemonic devices and mediatisation rather advance remembering of forgetting, (total) recall or (total) amnesia, cannot be given a one-way answer. For Boym, technology is not and should not be a goal in itself, "but an enabling medium" (346). Erll, based on McLuhan's famous argument, argues that "the medium is the memory," and that the media of memory "shape cultural remembrance in accordance to their specific means and measures" (115). The German continues that in the constructions of past realities, the materiality of the medium is as important as the social practices where the "producers and recipients of a medium of memory" determine "the encoding and decoding of that which is (to be) remembered" (Erll 125–126). Certainly the digital (im)materiality of today's media of memory favour distribution and circulation above all else: the broadcasting of not only reality TV shows like in *TTS*, but creating a new sort of "imagined" global community, where personal lives are communicated next to news and entertainment is the fashion of the day. This loosens ties between physical materiality and lived experience, the two essential factors in the processes of memory and space.

The simultaneous relationship between materiality, language-as-trope, and social experience that the processes of memory and space share, have certainly changed. The acceleration of time, the occupation of several spatial levels, the omnipresence of technology, and the excess of information which mediatisation and virtual space in the digital age have caused, have also largely altered the ways how materiality, tropes, and social experience are being comprehended. Already since the times of *ars memoriae* memory and human cognition are known to be inherently spatial, lacking in ability to use abstracts for reference. Yet, the intangible and abstract-like virtual space, which, as the media professor Scott McQuire says, causes "blurring of boundaries between human perception and technological vision [simultaneously] asks us to rethink the space of consciousness" (10). Based on the two films that work as critiques of contemporary society and the digital age itself, and following

McQuire, the "spatial continuity" that ever since the rhetoric art itself has been the "historical 'ground' of social relations, has been replaced by the immediacy of the continuous space surrounding our bodies [–] intermittent, discontinuous and fluctuating" (10). Information, images and so-called everyday spectacles "follow" people everywhere, in public, yet also in private. This immaterial spatiality, as Prigge admits, "can no longer be symbolized with conventional representations of space, time, and world" (59), which is what the respective fictional and artistic representations of time, memory, and space in *SNY* and *TTS* also manifest: occupying the spaces that serve as metaphorisations of the digital age, the films' protagonists lose spatial and temporal grounding.

Second link in the reciprocal processes of memory and space – social experience – has also somewhat changed in the contemporaneity. Where Halbwachs admits that memory is founded in lived social experience, Assmann adds another perspective to it: she questions the factuality of self-narratives based on memory, and claims that often "we have no definite way of knowing whether something that we remember is an experiential memory or an episode that has been told us by others and was incorporated into our fund of memories" (222). In mediatised society of today these "episodes," in addition to being told by others, can have their source in cultural industry as well. Social experience is still an integral part of the processes of memory, yet it just might not be based on one's own personal experience. Illustrated by the diegetic Truman Show in *TTS*, one possibility of such ersatz emotion can come to life via imagined nostalgia, which in the service of the capitalist market is given a monetary value.

Third aspect which constitute memory and space are tropes. First, Lefebvre claims that tropes are ambivalent and "lose and overlook, set aside and place parentheses around even more" than necessarily naturalise or clarify (*Production* 138–140). This statement certainly is valid also half a century after the Frenchman uttered his thoughts: even if in the present day mediatisation – facilitating memory as re-presentation, as making present, as seemingly serving absolutes and "history" – has the technological means to reiterate similar slogans, tropes (in personal representation) remain idiosyncratic and exciting, compared to the blandness of language in, for example, advertisement. At the same time, language employed by capitalist urges and media still have a manipulative and even restricting quality to experience and memory. This is evident in *TTS*, where Seahaven is promoted to Truman via newspaper and television as the best place on earth to live in. In the film, this essentially propagandistic rhetoric is taken to the extreme as Truman has no way out of the materialised

metaphor. Here, tropes in the service of autocracy, in addition to standardising and homogenising memory also limit spatially: in Seahaven the Wittgensteinian idea[18] of limits of one's language meaning limits of one's world is represented. The programmatic language that echoes in Seahaven is admittedly limiting and controlling, and essentially creating the comprehension of the already equally programmatic world that surrounds Truman. This does not mean that opening the dictionary would free the protagonist. Albeit that Seahaven belongs to a fictional universe, what is important here from the perspective of the processes of memory and space, is to recognise that repetitive actions create convention in society: what is acceptable and what is the norm get challenged on a daily basis. Tropes have an important role to play in these processes, especially when mass-distributed via mediatisation. After all, one remembers best what one remembers often.

In conclusion, the processes of memory and space have changed in the digital age, causing representations of time, memory, and space to alter too. Technology and mnemonic devices have merged the temporal and spatial dimensions, making time and memory spatially traceable, and allowing the past to be visited via virtual space. Consequently, two dominant memory practices and temporalities in the growingly mediatised present day society – retrospect and presentism – have obtained a monetary value and became commodified by capitalist enterprises. The supremacy of either the perpetual "now" or the romanticising "then" over thinking about the promise of the future largely derives from the fact that progress now serves the present. In the neoliberal mode of "cultural and political sterility," or, what Fisher calls "capitalist realism," even the past is fetishised and sold under the veil of ersatz nostalgia. Considering that the present day is increasingly image-centered, tropes and nostalgia have a special importance in the processes of memory and space. Both temporal and spatial, personal and ideological, tropes and nostalgia have the power to create meaning and sense of authenticity, but also to cause confusion and alienation. While retrospect and presentism are the two main temporalities in society, the perception of time and space is almost always personal as well. Next to the fact that mediatisation has taken over people's lives, *SNY* and *TTS* also contemplate on processes of memory and space on a more humane level: the passing of time, routine, and the absurdity of life. In *SNY*, years pass

[18] The Austrian-British philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, in one of his earliest works, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1921), posits the logical and linguistic analysis of world-thought-language, which largely overlaps with Lefebvre's production of space theory where linguistic mental space cannot be separated from social space wherein language becomes practice. Essentially, what Wittgenstein is also arguing for is the recognition that (the limits of) language, materiality and lived experience constitute reality (cf. "Ludwig Wittgenstein").

rapidly as Caden tries to make sense of time through nostalgia as a restorative impulse. In *TTS*, Truman, himself the ultimate nostalgic, the being out of time – longing for something he never really had, a home that has never existed –, denies the imposed "truths" and manages to break free of the mediatised time and space that were forced upon him.

CONCLUSION

The point of departure for the research was the premise that the inherently reciprocal processes of memory and space have gone through a change in the digital age. The goal of the thesis was to show that mediatisation and virtual space are the most evident factors which have shaped the perception and re(-)presentation of time, memory, and (urban) space in contemporaneity. In an attempt to explore these viewpoints, the thesis analysed two films, *Synecdoche, New York* (2008, *SNY*), and *The Truman Show* (1998, *TTS*) through the method of close reading. The analysis was carried out on two levels: the films were read as both reflections of the inherently reciprocal social processes of memory and space, and as commentaries on mediatisation and virtual space in the digital age. In order to analyse the films on the first level, a theoretical basis, indicating the importance of tropes, re(-)presentation, mediatisation, and nostalgia in the processes of memory and space, was covered significantly in **Chapter 1**, "Reciprocity of Memory and Space". For the second level, **Chapter 3**, "Processes of Memory and Space in the Digital Age," extended the theory addressed in Chapter 1 and compared it with the figurative representations of time, memory, and space in *SNY* and *TTS* that work as critiques on their respective contemporary societies. Some of the most important observations resulting from the three chapters of the thesis will be emphasised here.

The theory-based **Chapter 1** established that the social processes of memory and space are reciprocal: both bound up with time and continuous, memory and space cannot exist without the simultaneous relationship between: first, the perception of time and space, which relies on materiality; second, the thought concept where tropes work as symbolic reference points; and third, the lived social experience. These processes have changed during the digital age, which has merged the temporal and spatial dimensions, and consequently turned memory and time spatially traceable via virtual space. As a result, there are two dominant memory practices and temporalities in society and culture: retrospect and presentism. More importantly, in the world of prefabrication and reproduction, retrospect and presentism obtain a monetary value and become lifestyles which mediatisation and virtual space propagate, while also altering the function and the re(-)presentation of time and space in the digital age. Mediatisation acts as a facilitator of memory as re-presentation, as seemingly serving absolutes and "history," thus subscribing to presentism. Few examples of re-presentation are 24/7 news and social media. The thesis also proposed that in the image-centered digital age, the concept of nostalgia has a special importance in the processes of

memory and space. Both temporal and spatial, personal and ideological, nostalgia has the power to create meaning and sense of authenticity, but also to cause confusion and alienation. Hence, to the shared structure of the social processes of memory and space (materiality – linguistic trope – social experience), nostalgia was added to frame the analysis of the fictional urban spaces in *SNY* and in *TTS* in Chapter 2.

After underlining the reciprocity between the processes of memory and space in Chapter 1, **Chapter 2** scrutinised the representation of time, memory, and urban space in the diegetic cities of Synecdoche and Seahaven. With the help of the aforementioned concepts, but especially tropes and nostalgia, the thesis analysed the films on a metalevel and restated the influence memory and space have on each other: primarily, where for *SNY* it is memory which serves as the point of departure for producing the space and spatialising time, then in *TTS* memory is the product of surrounding temporalising space. In addition, by incorporating two sets of cultural tropes into analysis – spatial "metaphor" and "metonymy," and mnemonic "(total) recall" and "(total) amnesia" –, the thesis interpreted the space in Synecdoche as a metonymic copy with a restorative impulse (thus subscribing to retrospect and total recall), and the space in Seahaven as a metaphor for clichéd or even imagined past (subscribing to presentism and total amnesia).

Having moved from film analyses back to the conditions of the digital age, in **Chapter 3** the research claimed that the tropes both films use – total recall and total amnesia, reproduction and prefabrication, absolute truth and singular narrative, spatialising time and temporalising space – concur with the sociocultural and -political tendencies evident in the digital age: digital remembering, influx of information, immediacy of re-presentation in attention economy, and virtual space. In such way, the thesis stressed that Synecdoche and Seahaven function as artistic microcosms, where abstract ideas and cultural tropes find manifestation in urban form and memory-narratives. Although neither of the films really belong under the science-fiction genre – nor can they be seen as totally realistic – the thesis nevertheless asserted that the absurd, abstract, and ambivalent re(-)presentations of time, memory, and space in *SNY* and *TTS* mirror the equivalent aspects of contemporaneity, where the perception of time and space is dictated by technology and mnemonic devices. One of major points that the thesis made was that in the mediatised digital age there is a need for critical spatial and temporal perspective to overcome the retrospect-presentism binary that plagues the mediated public consciousness. Ultimately, the thesis claimed that the trio materiality – trope – social experience that constitutes the processes of memory and space has changed in

contemporaneity: materiality now can be comprehended via virtual space, tropes can be in the service of mediatisation, and social experience can be embedded in imagined nostalgia.

SUMMARY (KOKKUVÕTE)

Aja, mälu ja linnaruumi (taas)kujutus filmides „Sünekdohh, New York“ ning „Trumani show“ kui digiajastu meedialisuse ning virtuaalruumi kriitika

Käesoleva magistritöö lähtepunktiks oli eeldus, et mälu ja ruum kui vastastikused sotsiaalsed protsessid on digiajastul muutunud. Töö eesmärk oli näidata, kuidas meedialisus ning virtuaalruum on kaks kõige tähtsamat tegurit, mis on nüüdisajal vorminud arusaamu kuidas aega, mälu ning linnaruumi tajutakse ning (taas)kujutatakse. Selleks et neid seisukohti uurida, analüüsiti teises peatükis lähilugemise meetodil kahte filmi – „Sünekdohh, New York“ (2008) ning „Trumani show“ (1998). Filme vaadeldi kahel tasandil: esiteks kui enesekohaseid peegeldusi mälu ja ruumi vastastikustest protsessidest; ning teiseks kui sotsiaalseid kommentaare meedialisuse ning virtuaalruumi positsioonidest digiajastul. Esimesel juhul toetus analüüs töö esimesele peatükile, mis käsitles mälu ja ruumi vastastikkust läbi teooria, rõhutades sealjuures mõistete „troop“, „(taas)kujutus“, „meedialisus“ ning „nostalgia“ olulisust mälu ja ruumi protsessides. Teisel juhul aga laiendas magistritöö kolmas peatükk (mis kõneleb mälu ja ruumi vastastikest protsessidest konkreetselt digiajastul) esimeses peatükis kirjeldatud teooriat ning kõrvutas seda aja, mälu ja ruumi kujutamisega kahes mainitud filmis, lähenedes kujutistele kui nüüdisaja kriitikale.

Töö esimeses peatükis keskenduti mälu ja ruumi vastastikkuse tõendamisele. Nii mälu kui ka ruum on üheaegselt sõltuvad: esiteks, aja ja ruumi tajul ehk materiaalsusel, teiseks mõttekontseptsioonil ehk troopidel, kolmandaks elatud sotsiaalsel kogemusel. Need protsessid on digiajastul muutunud: tehnoloogia ning (digi)meedia võimu tulemusena on ajalised ning ruumilised mõõtmed ühtinud ning sellest tulenevalt on aeg ning mälu muutunud virtuaalruumi kaudu üha rohkem füüsiliselt „käegakatsutavaks“. Seetõttu väitiski magistritöö, et ühiskonnas ja kultuuris on kaks domineerivat mälupraktikat ja ajakäsitlust: retrospektiivne ja presentistlik. Kapitalistlikus majanduspoliitikas omandavad need kaks mälupraktikat aga rahalise väärtuse mida digiajastu meedialisus ning virtuaalruum reklaamivad kui eluviisi. Nende kahe mälupraktika võimuses on ka aja ja ruumi endi funktsiooni muutmine. Kuna meedialisus (taas)kujutab digiajastul mälu vahetpidamata, proovides edastada absoluutset tõde, siis on meedialisust võimalik näha kui presentismi teenivat mehhanismi. (Taas)kujutamise alla käivad muuhulgas näiteks 24/7 uudised ning

sotsiaalmeedia, (taas)kujutamisele vastanduvad aga need mäluprotsessid, mida meedia ning meedialisus tingimata ei juhi – nagu näiteks isiklik mälu. Peale troopide, (taas)kujutuse ning meedialisuse lahkas töö teooriapeatükk ka nostalgia kontseptsiooni. Üha pildikesksemal digiajastul on nostalgial mälu ja ruumi protsessides eriline tähtsus. Nostalgia on rakendatav nii ajalisel kui ka ruumilisel viisil, ning läbi isikliku ja ideoloogilise prisma. Nostalgia võib luua tähendust ja autentsustunnet, kuid põhjustada ka segadust ja võõrandumist. Just oma plastilisuse tõttu leidis nostalgia mõiste laialdast kasutust töö teises peatükis.

Teises peatükis analüüsiti aja, mälu ja linnaruumi kujutamist filmides „Sünekdohh, New York“ ning „Trumani show“. Esimeses peatükis nimetatud kontseptsioonide abil vaadeldi käesolevas osas filme reflektiivselt kui peegeldusi mälu ja ruumi vastastikustest protsessidest. Juhindudes mälu ja ruumi protsesside kolmainsusest materiaalsus – troop – sotsiaalne kogemus, kinnitas peatükk mälu ja ruumi mõju teineteisele: kui filmis „Sünekdohh, New York“ on ruumi ning materiaalsuse tootmise lähtepunktiks mälu, siis filmis „Trumani show“ on mälu hoopis ümbritseva ruumi ja materiaalsuse tulemus. Siinkohal kaasati analüüsi ka kaks paari troope: ruumiline “metafoor” ja “metonüümia”, ning mnemooniline “totaalne mälu” ja “totaalne amneesia”. Läbi nende on võimalik tõlgendada ruumi filmis „Sünekdohh, New York“ kui metonüümset koopiat, millel on taastav impulss (mis kattub retrospektiivsuse ning totaalse mäluga) ning ruumi filmis „Trumani show“ kui klišeeliku või isegi teeseldud mineviku metafoorina (mis kattub presentismi ja totaalse amneesiaga).

Kolmandas peatükis liiguti filmianalüüside juurest tagasi digiajastusse – kus uurimus väitis, mil moel troobid mida mõlemad filmid kasutavad – totaalne mälu ja totaalne amneesia, reprodutseering ja valmistoode, absoluutne tõde ja ühene narratiiv, ruumiline aeg ja aja ruumilisus – ühtivad digiajastul ilmnevate sotsiaalkultuuriliste ja -poliitiliste suundumustega: digitaalne mälu, peatamatu teabe sissevool, (taas)kujutamine ja virtuaalruum. Nendele seostele toetudes üritas magistritöö rõhutada, et aeg ning ruum toimivad filmides „Sünekdohh, New York“ ja „Trumani show“ kunstiliste universumitena, kus abstraktsed ideed ja troobid avalduvad linnaruumis ja mälu-narratiivides. Ehkki kumbki film ei kuulu täielikult ei ulmežanri ega realismi alla, kinnitas filmidele läbi mälu ning ruumi protsesside lähenemine siiski, kuidas kahes filmis olevad absurdsed, abstraktsed ja ambivalentsed aja, mälu ja ruumi (taas)kujutused peegeldavad kaasaegsuse samaväärseid jooni, kus aja ja ruumi tajumine on dikteeritud tehnoloogia ja mäluseadmete poolt. Magistritöö üks peamisi kriitikaid oli üha aktuaalsem kriitilise ruumilise ja ajalise distantsi

puudumine tänapäevases ühiskonnas. Meedialisusest läbiimbunud nüüdisaja jaoks on taolist perspektiivi loomist tarvis, et ületada kahe domineeriva mälupraktika, retrospektiivsuse ja presentismi ülemvõim. Lõppkokkuvõttes väitis magistritöö, et mälu ja ruumi protsesse juhtiv kolmik (materiaalsus – troop – sotsiaalse kogemus) on digiajastul muutunud: materiaalsust saab nüüd mõista virtuaalruumi kaudu, troobid võivad olla meedia(lisuse) teenistuses ja sotsiaalsed kogemused peituvad ehk hoopis väljamõeldud nostalgias.

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