MEMENTOS OF (UN) REALITY: THE METAMORPHOSING SUBJECTIVITY IN CHRISTOPHER NOLAN'S FILMS

Thesis
submitted to the University of Calicut
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in
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DECLARATION

I, Rajesh James, hereby declare that the dissertation titled **Mementos of (Un) Reality: The Metamorphosing Subjectivity in Christopher Nolan's Films,** submitted to the University of Calicut for the Degree of **Doctor of Philosophy in English Language and Literature**, is an original bonafide work of research carried out by me under the supervision of Dr.V.Prathiba, Associate Professor, Department of English, University of Calicut and it has not formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma, or similar title.

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled **Mementos of (Un) Reality: Metamorphosing Subjectivity in Christopher Nolan's Films,** submitted to the University of Calicut for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English Language and Literature, is an original bonafide work of research carried out by Rajesh James at the Department of English, University of Calicut under my supervision and that it has not been previously submitted for the award of any degree, diploma, or similar title.

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Certified that the corrections/suggestions from the adjudicators have been incorporated in this copy of the thesis.

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Introduction

Subjectivity has been a puzzling philosophical concept and a much deliberated subject-matter which is closely connected to consciousness, reality, agency and selfhood. The question of subjectivity is axiomatic to all cultures and their inquisitive enquiries. The philosophical question of 'who am I' is a much deliberated question in the history of all epistemological speculations. Subjectivity can be seen as a composite of perspectives, individual and collective, specific to a person in context. It includes all that constitutes an individual. Subjectivity is both a process of individuation and socialization. Subjectivity of an individual is composed not of private and personal elements alone but also the social and structural elements that constitute an individual's disposition. As an ontological term, it includes the questions of origin, death, meaning and existence. Thus, subjectivity is an intersectional phenomenon, an interior space linked to the external world.

The irresistible questions of subject and its existence have been the archetypal concern of all ages and cultures. For the early Greek thinkers subjectivity is an essential thing which linked humans to the ideal world. This Hellenistic notion of reality as the essential semblance of the ideal, is continued in the middle ages too. With Renaissance, the idea of free choice and individual's role in determining one's subjectivity become prominent. For the Enlightenment thinkers subjectivity is an authentic and organic entity that can be rationalized. But such notions of subjectivity has been interrogated and revisited by 20th century thinkers like Freud and the Existentialist philosophers, Kierkegaard, Sartre and Heidegger. With the emergence of postmodernism and its attendant perspectives, subjectivity has been looked at as nothing but an effect constructed. All the essentialities attributed to humanistic subjectivity are replaced by cyborg and digital variants of

subjectivity in the age of machines. With the budding potential of inhabiting in online worlds have sustained to undermine and replace the traditional notions of humanistic and anthropocentric subjectivity. Such traditional formulations are deeply critiqued for artificially binding, limiting, and reifying the essential human subjectivity in a world that functionally unbind the essential aloof. Online worlds have significantly complicated the subjectivity of the (post)humans of the day and even blurred the taken-for-granted distinctions between the human, bestial and the mechanical. Such cultural shifts force us to think and revisit the notions of what might constitute the subjectivity of an individual. So the questions concerning subjectivity continue to be even more significant in a world dominated by technology and driven by the digital.

Cinema as an art form of the 20th century has been significantly trying to represent and historicize the age into which it is born. Cinema has always been a technology- driven artistic medium. It has creatively used the technological developments in the world. The artistic and the aesthetic dimensions of cinema can be traced back to the history of western painting and photography. As an art form cinema has supposedly believed to have an edge over its counterparts. Being a medium counterpoised with technology, when one structurally evokes the schematics of a postmodern subject, it is no wonder that cinema has become people's medium and the prospectus in their creative adventures. Cinema engages questions concerning subjectivity in myriad forms though its filmic structures are invariably different. Philosophy behind the origin of cinema may be traced to mankind's attempt of coming to terms with the passage of time and the temporal shifts in reality. Cinema can be seen as an attempt of an individual or the collective self to arrest the passage of time and also as a way to overcome his/her sense of loss. Cinema of all times tries to address the existential questions of an individual in crisis and in motion. Subjectivity, thus, has been a continuous area of enquiry in

cinema. In cinema, subjectivity is conventionally reflected in characterization. The characters become existential ciphers and ideological tools in the hands of the filmmakers to communicate the consciousness of the text. Subjectivity in cinema is something that refers to consciousness of the characters or the text itself. It is conventionally conveyed through individual's/character's consciousness. In the conventional formats characters are nothing but existential tissues of the filmmaker's consciousness. From realistic to surrealist and fantasy to magical realist many narrative conventions have been used to address the subjectivities in its waxing and waning. The idea of subjectivities have under gone radical changes down through the centuries. Classical Hollywood Cinema underlines a coherent and a linear narrative based on the Enlightenment notion of subjectivity that propagates the notions of causality, continuity and verisimilitude in the classical realist literature. Such representations of subjectivity is visible in the depiction of characters in the cinematic frame. These films have used moving bodies and conscious layering of complex narratives to show that their characters are real and authentic. It also discreetly shows characters with thoughts, feelings and desires. Such characterization has its philosophical base in the Enlightenment understanding of subjectivity.

American silent cinema of the 1920's has used narrative flashbacks as an artistic tool to depict the subjectivity of the characters within a symbolic pictorial mode of representation. Later filmmakers have challenged the stock character subjectivities and employed more organic subjectivities. These filmmakers use wide-angled lens, repeated images and distorting devices to render the subjectivity of the central character. Such externalization of the inner turmoil provides a new dimension to the representation of subjectivity in films. The later 20th century filmmakers have used fast cuts and other editing techniques and innovative camera angles to communicate the complexity a 20th century subject has heir to. With the emergence of Sci-Fi

films and the postmodern cinema, the perception of reality has become different in the reel space/time. When the truth and verisimilitude have become a feeling of nostalgia in the age of post-Truth, the critical and creative space of the subject has undergone a radical change. The possibilities of a cyborg subject and the possibilities of multiple subjectivities have completely undermined the Enlightenment realism and its corollary humanism. Cinema, being the medium of the 20th century, echoes the transition of perceptives concerning subjectivity. Films of 1930s like *Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920) and the films of Hitchcock echo this fragmentation. With the rise of the superhero films, an idea of a new subjectivity is born. Superhero characters like Superman and Batman have celebrated the potentiality of a superhero subjectivity. The super heroism of these subjectivities was a filmic reply to the crisis society went through. But when these superhero subjectivity became over blown and too fantastic, technology was called in to justify its outlandish excesses. Thus cinema celebrated the possibilities of a man-machine mix. Films like *Matrix* (1999) have questioned Cartesian idea of rational subjectivity and philosophized the possibilities of cyborg subjectivities and their threats. The fall and the rise of subjectivity from a rational, humanistic and authentic subject to a cyborg subject is a philosophic shift of the times. Cinema as medium of the 20th century has recorded this interesting yet philosophical twist of humanity. These assumptions are ground breaking and it questions the very paradigms that supposedly have constituted subjectivities of humanity. The dismembering effects of the metamorphosed 'subject' and its possibilities run through Christopher Nolan's films. The break of the usual boundaries of the rational and the fictional realms in Nolan's films are cinematic renderings of Nolan's philosophy of the world and the subjectivities that he addresses. The project attempts an analysis of Nolan's movies in general as mementos of (un)real subjectivities that metamorphoses from an

existential self in crisis into a post-humanist subject that exhilarates the possibilities of a man machine mix.

Unlike many of his contemporary filmmakers, Nolan began his career as an independent filmmaker. His early films were serious critiques of the capital centric films of Hollywood and its studio-aligned films. His characters are frail, weak and traumatic. His films echo the crisis and complexity of being in the 21st century. Just as other filmmakers like Ridley Scott, The Watchowskis Brothers and Darren Arnowsky, Nolan focuses on the quandary of a subject who lives in a postmodern world. He problematizes the arch macho-masculine subject of the Hollywood. By showing the subjectivity in crisis, Nolan interrogates the existing stereotypes of masculine subjectivity legitimated and propagated by the Hollywood. Influenced by Existentialism, his early films illustrate the predicament of a post/modern subject who is displaced from the comforts of theoretical and ideological safe zones. He questions in his opening film the capitalist lineage of Hollywood cinema and shows how the individual's desire and subjectivity are crushed under the ideology of capitalism. His early films-existentialist films- can be seen as an attempt of the individual who struggles with capitalism to establish ones identity in a technologized world.

Trauma is an authorial trait in Nolan's early films. He communicates structurally this trait in his films. Such semiotic traits are unveiled through various cinematographic and editing techniques. He uses montage and acute canted angle to show the psychological disposition of the characters. He also uses the physical appearance of characters and complex narrative techniques to tell the meaning of the traumatic symptoms. It can be observed that the emergence of physically and emotionally traumatized male characters is a common recurrence of post 9/11 cinema. All the characters in Nolan's films are driven by some trauma. They are perturbed by some existential angst,

especially in his early films. There is a consistent preoccupation in the films of Nolan with the conflicts and traumas of his male protagonists. Filmic rendition of this crisis is usually expressed through flashbacks, amnesia and other psychological disorders. It can be seen that these psychological disorderliness comes from the character's feeling of grief or guilt.

The project looks into the films of Nolan from three different points of view. The first perspective is to view a category of films, especially his early fiction films, which depict the existential crisis of a traumatic subject. The causes for the trauma in Nolan's films are very unusual, unlike other filmmakers of his period. The causes are more psychological than physical. Implications of the fragmented subjectivity in these are philosophical and are of cosmic significance. Films like *Following* (1998)*, Memento* (2000)*, Insomnia* (2002) and *Prestige* (2006) problematize the Cartesian subject and shows how fragmented is a 20th century subject. These films show how the rationalisation of the characters goes in vain and how they strive out existentially. As Cartesian subjects, they terribly fail and perform as beings of the moment. The subjectivity these characters encompasses is existentialist and modernist. The second perspective is an attempt to interrogate his *Batman Trilogy* as films that celebrate the possibilities of cyborg subjectivities. Unlike other superhero films of the period, Nolan's composition of Batman is very realistic. The superhero is haunted by some traumas. His subjectivity is fragmented. He gets out of his fragmentation by appropriating technology. It's technology that makes him Batman. Nolan, thus celebrates the possibility of man-machine mix in these films. The third category of films explores the later films of Nolan that critically look into the future of humanity and theorizes how technology is helping humanity to go beyond its limitations. These films of Nolan are driven by the possibilities of science and technology. In these films Nolan shows how is human subjectivity constructed and how a person's

subjectivity can be systematically manipulated to construct a person of creator's choice.

The world represented in Nolan's films is a fallen world. He employs fallen characters to explore the fragility of existence and the absurdity of being alive. Through the extrapolation of narratives, Nolan has pitched issues of subjectivity in films. Subjectivity being a puzzling philosophical concept closely connected to consciousness, reality, agency and selfhood, Nolan deals with different dimensions of subjectivity in his films. It's through characterization and narratives that Nolan discusses different questions of subjectivity in his films. He begins his filmmaking career as an Indie filmmaker who addressed the existential crisis of a subject in a ruthless context. His Hollywood films explore the nuances of subjectivity in a more cosmopolitan ambience. He switches to superhero films in his second phase of career which can be seen as his early Hollywood films. From an existential subject to a cyborg subject his characters evolve in these films.

Nolan is a postmodern filmmaker who problematizes logocentric discourses of subjectivity. His films envision the possibility of a postmodern subject completely delinked from the classical definitions of an essential human being and classical Enlightenment idea of subjectivity. The philosophical perspectives that echo in his films are post-humanistic and post-truth perspectives that question the explicit and implicit paradigms of the existing narratives that fantasise a teleological world. Fragmentation of the Cartesian subject and the celebrations of the constructed, metamorphosed and multiple subjectivities are central to the postmodern persona. Postmodernism celebrates the fall of the rational subject and the rise of the technologized subject as cyborg and digital entity. This metamorphosed subjectivity from a rational and organized self to a digital self, significantly enmesh the paths of the contemporary cinematic narratives. In Nolan, subjectivity is a serious

matter of deliberations. Being a filmmaker who is philosophically oriented and scientifically complex, he couldn't escape subjectivity questions that are crucial to his times. Though he deals with questions of subjectivity in his films, we can critically decipher a pattern in his treatment of subjectivities.

The focus of the project is an analysis of Nolan's treatment of subjectivity in his three categories of films. While he deals with the anxieties and crises of fragmented subjectivities in his early films, his *Batman Trilogy* counters this fragmentation by adhering to technology, and celebrate the possibilities of a man-machine mix. This cyborg subjectivity as Donna Haraway would call it, envisions a postmodern subjectivity which celebrates a post-humanistic philosophy of subjectivities; that gives way for technologized human/masculine beings. His later treatment of subjectivities continue his fascination with the possibilities of scientific theories. These films schematically propose the anti-essentialising nature of subjectivities and their constructedness. Although he proposes the endurance of humanity in these films, he never approves authentic subjectivity to machines. The project is an attempt to explore this metamorphosis of subjectivity from an existentially fragmented pieces to a digital space, artistically curated. The project also explores the ideological facets involved in this metamorphosis. The project uses theories of existentialism and Donna Haraway; Heidegger's notion of Authentic and Inauthentic subject; Todd McGowan's notions of Subject of Knowledge and Subject of Desire; Lacan's definitions of subjectivity and other readings of subjectivity, to explore the tropes of subjectivity implicit in the films of Nolan.

First chapter "Who We Are: Genealogical Survey of Subjectivity" is genealogical study of the evolution of the concept of subjectivity. As a genealogical survey, the attempt is to look at theories of subjectivity as an object of analysis. The chapter deals in detail the evolution of the concept of

subjectivity from the early Greek thinkers to the post/modern theorists. As a theoretical survey, the chapter discusses different questions of subjectivity from Plato's notion of subjectivity as the reflection of the idea or pre-ordained truth to contemporary postmodern notion of subjectivity as an effect or performance.

The second chapter "Reeling Self: Subjectivity in Films" traces the technical and the conceptual development of cinema and the parallel evolution of the treatment of subjectivity in films. It also discusses how film theorists have analyzed the concept of subjectivity in characterization and the medium itself. The chapter argues that the search for subjectivity in cinema is the ontological explorations of the consciousness of the filmic texts, the characters who expiate the theme and the context in which it is set.

The third chapter "Subject of Knowledge / Subject of Desire: Subjectivity in the Early Films of Nolan" problematizes the classical definitions of subjectivity and shows the predicament of an existential subject. These films deal with subjectivity as traumatic and fragmented. All the characters in these films are either traumatic or persons without identity. *Following* films the predicament of a subject who believes in the dominance of rationality. The protogonist's subjectivity is explored in his obsessions. He is a person who believes that subjectivity is nothing but the totality of a persons' visceral obsessions. He finds his sense of self in randomly following others. This act is undertaken with a rational intent of understanding them. But his rationalisation fails and he is trapped by his own logic. Bill's failure is seen as the failure of an enlightened self who is anchored in one's own rational impressions.

His next film *Insomnia* features trauma of the character who suffers from insomnia. The film illustrates the predicament of a traumatic character who is psychologically fragmented. He is a typical existential being under

angst. His psychological instability is narrated through the non-linear narratives. Insomnia is a motif in the film that explicates the fragmentedness of Dormer. The nonlinear narrative structure of the film communicates the fragility of Dormer's subjectivity. Film also problematizes memory and shows how faulty it is and thus questions the notion of subjectivity as the collective of past and memories. His film *Prestige* takes further the concept of subjectivity and shows how performative is subjectivity. He uses the concept of the double to exploit this. Nolan employs the binary of reality/illusion, apparent/actual and change/permanence to explore the performance of subjectivity, though he never positions himself with any sides. *Prestige* challenges the Enlightenment notion of an organised and unquestionable self with inconclusive illusion of the single/double subjectivity in the art of magic. The chapter argues that the representation of the fragmented self and the attempt of the characters to maintain the illusion of a unified identity are Nolan's way of filming the predicament of the contemporary subjectivity which is under continuous crisis. This chapter also looks into the fragmentation of the narrative structure of the film *Memento* as a cinematic way of telling the fractured subjectivity of the character Leonard. *Memento* explores more the situatedness of a fragmented, modernist self. Leonard uses polaroid photographs to establish his due course of action. These polaroids are seen as the externalized representation of the Leonard's disconnectedness, a subject disconnected from his everyday action. This chapter argues that the fragmented structure of the text reduces the film into a series of presents that mirror the model of schizophrenic experience which is both a thematic and aesthetic model of postmodern subjectivity. The chapter also closely examines Leonard's struggle as a victim of capitalism.

Next Chapter "From Playboy to Batman: Cyborg Subjectivity in Batman Trilogy" focuses on the characterisation of Batman in Nolan. As an analytical study the chapter concentrates on how Nolan deals with the

questions of subjectivity in these superhero films. His Batman trilogy is very unlike of other superhero films in Hollywood. Nolan does a realistic portrayal of Batman in his films and first time in a film, Batman is given a back-story to detail his origin and growth and the final emergence as a superhero. The superheroic powers of Batman is acquired by intensive training and it is not something which he is born with. Nolan realistically explores and justifies why Bruce Wayne chose Batman as a symbol of protection for Gotham city. He brings a back-story of Wayne's phobia of bats. He even redesigns Batman's costume to make it more realistically convincing. Nolan continues his preoccupation with reality/fantasy play in the trilogy too. He perfectly mixes the realistic elements to the fantastical Batman.

The chapter explores how Nolan deals with trauma in his Batman films. Batman is a person who grapples with his confused self to reconcile the conflict of evil/good divide in Gotham City. He is an existential hero who is fallen to the core and fragmented in his subjectivity. In his *Batman Trilogy* Nolan tries to address critical questions of masculine subjectivity and finds technology as an answer to all the questions that haunted humanity in the postmodern period. Nolan's statement of subjectivity as performative and the propositions like it's the subjectivity on display which define who a person is-not what he/she actually is- make him a postmodern filmmaker. Nolan propounds the idea that subjectivity is to be understood not as something that belongs to the persons individually but as something that is produced between people and within social relations.

But Nolan's Batman films undermine the uniqueness of Nolan's cinema. Wayne as Batman eschews all the decadent subjectivity in him. He uses black suits and different armours to establish his subjectivity as an authentic self and a futuristic Heideggerian self. He establishes his subjectivity by relying on tools and machines to effect the change. He

establishes himself as the man of future or subject of desire by authenticating his existence as Batman. He escapes his inauthenticity as a playboy by establishing his space of masculine potentiality as Batman. Wayne escapes all his fragmentariness by recourse to technology. Batman with his super human speed, animated by the providence of technology, overpowers his enemies. He metalizes his body, challenging the classical nostalgia of the western models of superheroes and masculinity. Batman as a cyborg with his speed gives a promise of future for the city of Gotham. Thus Batman becomes a man of social reality and a creature of fiction. It is the technologized environment that strengthens the traumatic subjectivity of Wayne.

Batman in Nolan is more of a cyborg than a superhero in Nolan's trilogies. He convincingly portrays how Wayne becomes Batman one day with the help of technology. It is technology that empowers him. Nolan schematically shows how Wayne is able to authenticate his masculine subjectivity with the help of technology. Nolan has used new technologies to reinterpret Wayne's identity and even Batman is interpreted from technologies terms. Thus technologically modified subjectivity of Batman can be seen as a cyborg as Haraway addresses him or as 'terminal identity' as Batman calls himself in the film. Nolan, thus invests hope in the power of technology to renovate life from the liminal existence. The chapter looks at this use of technology as an attempt of Nolan to bypass human limitation by celebrating the possibilities of technology. Nolan's Batman trilogy gives a futuristic perspective of human subjectivity made possible as half machine and half human.

The last chapter "Spinning Memories: Digital Subjectivity in *Inception* and *Interstellar*" is an analysis of Nolan's sci-fi films. These films foreground Nolan's belief in the endurance of a future digital human being. These films show the futuristic vision of science and technology in constructing

subjectivity despite all the fragmentariness. The protagonist in *Inception,* called Dom Cobb, is traumatized by the memory of his wife's death. Just like other characters in Nolan's films, Cobb's subjectivity is fragmented. He is haunted by the memory and guilt of his wife's death. Cobb thinks of replacing his memories with those memories he cherish. Unlike in cyborg films, it's not a technological addition. It is a digital replacement of one's consciousness. Nolan dreams of a subjectivity that is digitally constructed. In his cyborg films, Nolan imagines technology as something that adds to one's subjectivity. In *Inception,* Nolan removes all the biological and social dimensions of subjectivity for a digital replacement. Subjectivity thus become a digital data that can be installed or uninstalled at random.

Nolan dreams of a near possibility of constructing people's consciousness and subjectivity as desired by the filmgoers. The film envisions a postmodern world where people's subjectivity can be easily monitored and constructed. The chapter problematizes the idea and the fantasy *Inception* propagates and shows how the film belittles the breach of privacy and the frightening spectre of mental manipulation. The film deals so casually with the terrifying ideology of breaking privacy and it justifies violation of privacy for individual motives. Nolan never problematizes the violation of Cobb's attempt of manipulating people's memory and subjectivity in his attempt of freeing himself from guilt and traumatising memory. The chapter analyses how Nolan propounds the argument that there is nothing called authentic subjectivity but just technologically-driven stimuli. Subjectivity is thus nothing but an extension of the digital world one lives in and the persons who control it. It is a digitally boosted space/data that performs according to some stranger's plans. Nolan also legitimizes the corporate intrusions into the privacy of individual's personal spaces which is a contestable position. The chapter also analyses Nolan's obsession with masculine quintessence in *Interstellar*.

The protagonist, Cooper, in the film is in an existentialist crisis. He is vexed with his facticity and past. He is distressed by lack of choices he could turn to. He feels his existence limited and subjectivity trifled. His passion for engineering finds no place in a world under crisis. His techniques that master his oddities fails. He is rather forced to give up his desire and invests himself in Agriculture. Hunted by this loss he is frustrated. He overcomes such frustrations in his interstellar journeys. The conventional notions of subjectivity as something that is constituted in the present and the end result of one's past deeds are contested and Nolan envisions in this film subjectivity as something that can be altered and curiously manufactured through male rationale. Unlike his early films where characters are trapped in temporality and trauma, Cooper emerges out of his crisis and establishes his subjectivity. Cooper escapes the catastrophe that awaits him by exploring further possibilities of life in another space. Subjectivity that is usually addressed in his earlier films is absent or partially absent in *Interstellar*. Cooper is very much convinced about the endurance of the male quintessential subjectivity irrespective of the crisis he goes through. Cooper reasserts the lost spirit of masculinity and subjectivity with the aid of technology. Subjectivity that is usually addressed in his earlier films is absent or partially absent in *Interstellar*. *Interstellar* proposes a world view which re assures a post-humanistic world which could overcome its crisis through digital and technological means. It is the hyper sensitised technologically aided masculine subjectivity that thrives in this film. The solution that Nolan gives for the crisis that human's face is so anthropocentric, patriarchal and capitalist. The essential idea that humans can afford to change their homes after ruining resources and destroying their habitats in *Interstellar* has been critiqued because it is a disenchanting ideology that Nolan propagates in this film. As a filmmaker who questioned enlightenment subjectivity in the initial phase of his career, in *Interstellar* he reassures and reshapes the subjectivity

once he questioned. From a subjectivity in crisis, he switches to masculine subjectivity on the move in his later films. He sees technology as the extension of masculinity. Nolan theorises that only the essential man can get rid of the crisis that humanity undergoes. *Interstellar* exemplifies the sugar coated philosophical vision that celebrates male success story.

Thus the project "Mementos of (Un) Reality: Metamorphosing subjectivity in Christopher Nolan's Films" is an attempt to explore the treatment of subjectivity in Nolan's films. Subjectivity being an axiomatic principle in philosophy and film studies, Nolan as a postmodern filmmaker, tries to address many questions concerning subjectivities of the day. He begins to address higher questions concerning subjectivity in his early films from an existentialist perspective. In later films, he removes his characters from the systems of crisis to a cyborg substantiality, where a mechanized subjectivity is permissible and essentially possible. He even looks at subjectivity as an extension of the digital world we live in. His ontological questions concerning subjectivities include the jouissance of perceiving subjectivity as a digital data that can be carefully curated and systematically twisted. This project is thus, an attempt to explore and critique this metamorphosis of Nolan's performance of subjectivity.

Chapter One

***Who We Are*: Genealogical Survey of Subjectivity**

Genealogy is a form of historical perspective and method of investigation which traces the constitution of the knowledge throughout the course of history. It's a critique and a form of resistance. As a perspectival enterprise, not a holistic project, it traces the origins and questions the transcendental meanings of the object it traces. This genealogical survey on subjectivity takes the theories of subjectivity as the object of analysis. It is an attempt to explore how the theories and debates on subjectivity do define the sensibilities, expressions and representations of modern self. It is not a metaphysical endeavor that looks into the transcendental meaning of the object it traces.

As a historical perspective, genealogical survey of subjectivity takes the theories of subjectivity as the object of its analysis. The chapter attempts a genealogical study of the history and evolution of subjectivity. The question of subjectivity has been central to all cultures and its inquisitive enquiries. The philosophical question of 'who am I' is a much deliberated question in the history of all epistemological pursuits. Derrida writes: "the pressing questions of subject and living have been the archetypal concern of all ages" (1991:115).The speaking voice 'I' have been the focus and *fin-de-siècle* phenomenon of many of the contemporary debates.

Questions like the origin of self, its nature as accidental or preordained, the role of public sphere in conditioning subjectivity, the relationship between the self and the other etc. have been consistently occupying the debates of intellectuals and populace of contemporary times with emergence of multifarious disciplines. As an era that consistently explicates its positions,

the questions of subjectivity and subject positions are central to contemporary times and its academic pursuits.

Etymologically the word 'subject' comes from the Latin word '*subiectus*' which means 'to be placed under or thrown under'. One is always subject to or of something. Such understanding of subjectivity foregrounds subject as one that functions at the intersections of general truths and shared principles and is not completely different from the context it is placed. Subject is not a separate and isolated entity different from all beings it is associated with. Although words like subject and self are interchangeably used, the two doesn't capture the same sense. As Vincent Descombes says "'I' in the Cartesian *cogito ergo sum* was not limited to Descartes' 'I' but was referring to the faculty of reflection that links human interiority everywhere" (1991: 126-127). The word self doesn't capture the social and cultural situatedness that is implied in the word, 'subject'. Rachel Fensham writes thus:

> Subjectivity refers to an abstract and general principle that defies our separation into distinct selves and that encourages everyone to believe or understand why our interior lives inevitably seem to evolve other people, either as objects of needs, desire and interest or necessary shares of common experience. (Mansfield 3)

Such understanding of subjectivity foregrounds the position that subject is a subject if it is always connected to something outside of it like an idea or principle or the society of other subjects. Subject is defined by its relation to the external world. The linkage between the subject and the world outside is the basic meaning behind the word, 'subject'. But Regenia Gagnier discredits such implication of subject as connected to the external world. She writes thus:

> Subjectivity in today's parlance means many things simultaneously like subject is a subject to itself, although it is invisible outside. Simultaneously the subject is also a subject of and to others. It is sometimes an 'Other' to others. It also can be the discourse of social institutions that demarcates its own being. It can also be sensed as a body closely dependent up on its physical environment, a body which is physically different from other human bodies. (8)

Unlike other theorists, she points out the physical and psychological impact that the subject is able to create. "Self or identity can be viewed as a set of traits, beliefs and allegiance that gives one personality and the modality of a social being. But subjectivity is more of a thought process and a form of self-reflexivity about one's self, providing unknowable and unavoidable constraints on one's ability to comprehend one's self" (8). As a critical concept, subjectivity quarters questions concerning the origin of self and the extent of its comprehensibility and degree of one's ability to regulate it.

Subjectivity is an individual's active and interested engagement with the external world and his/her position within that world; an individual's experiences and his point of view, rather than objective facts are essential to understand subjectivity. Since the concept of subjectivity is related to the articulation of individual experience, it is analogous to the notions of identity and the process of meaning making. However, there are also important differences. While identity draws our attention to one's perceptions of oneself, subjectivity tends to emphasize one's experience of oneself in the social world. While construction of meaning enables us to interpret the social world, subjectivity requires us to interpret our own engagement with the world. Subjectivity is thus primarily an experience open to inconsistencies,

oppositions and unselfconsciousness. So subjectivity and identity formations are interrelated but different (Mansfield 6).

The problematics of subjectivity originates from its epistemological and ontological significance. Ross Murfin and Supriya Ray write: "subjectivity means that which we would (but may be unable to) know, that which we do (or believe ourselves to) know, and individual or cultural ways of knowing – or of trying to know" (388). So the notion of subjectivity as a concoction of epistemology (the study of how we know that we know) and ontology (the study of our nature of being and existence) is not just limited to religious or philosophical or political domains, but a driving impulse behind critical examination of all aesthetic expressions like cinema, painting and other literary and non-literary forms. These profound questions that belonged to the religious domain once are now seriously explored in all aesthetic/creative expressions. The nuanced growth of the meaning of the term text beyond its traditional implications and the notion of text as an apolitically loaded aesthetic construct have thoroughly complicated the process of engaging texts. While exploring subjectivity in contemporary times, the self is explored as a text, subjected to critical analysis beyond its relationship to the traditional texts of literature and culture.

The questions concerning the responsibility and agency in the creation and continuation of the self, have always been significant throughout history. Much pondered questions like who am 'I' and where do 'I' come from? have been there from the beginning of civilization. But the questions concerning the agency of 'I' in the creation of selfhood has problematized the notions and nuances of the meaning of self across ages. Such dramatic shifts in the perspectives concerning the idea of selfhood have classified sensibilities of the selfhood as pre-modern, modern and postmodern. The intellectual, social, psychological and aesthetic structures have considerably influenced the

progress of subjectivity. The classical notions of human subjectivity as authentic and original has got a remarkable shift in the renaissance notion of selfhood as a culpable art process and as something that can be manipulated (Greenblatt 1).

In pre-modern eras, philosophers and poets often invoke some outward reality in their search for coming into terms with the idea of subjectivity. In historically specific ways Greek philosophers have gone beyond their self and sought meaning outside. Plato has stressed the importance of reason in human actions and endeavors. To be ruled by reason is partaking of a pre-existing rational order. The notion of subjectivity in Plato has adhered to preordained truth and patterns resonates in his theories of the self. Even for Aristotle, a serious critic and revisionary of Plato's theories, subject is ethically correct only when s/he acts for the fulfillment of preordained purpose. Human subjectivity gets its meaning only when it is clearly linked to reality above him/her. Individuality has been problematized and conformity as well as acquiescence to divine law are seen as a solution. The parameters within which the philosophers have explored the conflict between individuality and conformity has got a promising shift during the early centuries of Christian era, though not significantly different. Genesis' notion of original sin problematizes the notion of the authentic individual pursuits and the defiance of divine law. St. Augustine in his *Confessions* has continued the platonic notions of conformity with the ideal order and celebrated the joy of submission. The idea of self-construction and the agency of changing self is absent in him.

The rise of individuality has got a lot to do with historical events like *Black Death* (1348-49) and *Peasant Revolt* (1381) in medieval era which made laborers aware of their own values and mobilized them together for profound upheaval. But according to Jeremy Black "the ultimate goal of the rioters was not to overthrow the system or claim their rights but the protest was done as a pressure tactic to change a few discreet policies of the state,

mostly concerning taxes" (65-66). But peasant revolt signaled the possibility of disobedience of the supposedly divine mandate and the exertion of individuality. Geoffrey Chaucer in *The Canterbury Tales* explored the many idiosyncrasies and individual impulses underlying human behavior and identity irrespective of the rational superiority attributed to him/her. Characters like Wife of Bath, Knight and Franklin have negotiated their own rules within and regarding social structures like marriage for personal sake. Contemporary notions of subjectivity can be traced in Joan of Arc as one who followed her own path, deviated wholly from the norms of her day. She was very courageous enough to fight in the battle, wear men's clothes, and challenge the king. The viability of her individualism and the tenacity of her self- made ethos have a lot do with modern notions of subjectivity, though her claims to be an individual was completely dependent on her claim of divine mandate. However the way she is read today, she seems modern and individualistic in how she threatened the stability of class and gender definitions.

The agency in subjectively knowing and incorporating Biblical truth is at the center of protestant reformation. In his treatise "Concerning Christian Liberty" Martin Luther writes thus: "a Christian man is the freest lord of all and subject to none; a Christian man is the most dutiful servant of all, and subject to everyone" (363). In breaking with Catholic Church's hierarchy, he opened the door for individual interpretation of the biblical texts and agency in the creation of individual truth. For the first time the inextricable connection of subjectivity to textual interpretation can be seen in him. He finds a place for the self in the interpretation of morality. Myriad ways of experiencing and understanding the self and its relationship to the world have been the contribution of protests and revolution as far as the historical trajectory of the concept of subjectivity is concerned. The split of Catholic Church into Catholicism and Protestantism, the invention of printing press and the movable type that increased literacy rates and ever-widening circulation of new ideas and different perspectives of the world, scientific

growth in the experiments of Galileo and Copernicus that demonstrated man's lack of centrality in the universe destabilized earlier perception of a certain and cognizable world. Urbanization, migration, overseas travel and colonization brought increasing number of people in contact with each other and complicated their insight on themselves and others. As a result divinely formed and statically placed notions of the self were questioned and the idea that through concerted efforts one's subjectivity can be changed and, if needed, can be constructed emerged. Machiavelli, in his *The Prince* (1513), emphasized the importance of successful and tactical creation of self. Machiavelli wrote thus: "I believe it is probably true that fortune is the arbiter of half the things we do, leaving the other half or so to be controlled by ourselves" (79). His treatise on how one should deal with the self under control has significantly addressed the constructed structure of the self. Donald E. Hall observes:

> In locating half of the responsibility for one's success or failure in the world in one's own ability to adapt one's self to the times and to formulate appropriate strategies for securing and maintaining power, Machiavelli points toward a form of self-consciousness and self-reflexivity that is modern in the sense of its unabashed secular pragmatism and implicit amorality. (19)

For Hall, Machiavelli's philosophy of adapting oneself to the situations with a view to obtaining power is secular and amoral in the contemporary sense.

The Enlightenment notion of subjectivity propagated the idea of a free and autonomous individuality that is unique from all its externalities and that can be developed in its natural encounter with the world. The idea of subject as a self-contained being that develops in the world as an expression of its own unique essence is a typical Enlightenment notion of the subject. Though Enlightenment is not a single entity and it is full of contradictions, the early Enlightenment notion of subjectivity has its roots in the theories of René

Descartes.   After removing all the essentialities of what constituted human being, he came to the conclusion that the ability to think distinguishes human from other beings. This led him to suggest a sharp split between the thinking subject and an external world of objects they think about. Following Descartes, subjectivity is defined as an agency that thinks about and perceives an objective world. This approach often leads researchers to make a clear split between subjective perceptions and objective facts. Descartes considered knowledge in terms of the meaning of the word "I". He said individuality, even the very existence of the self cannot be taken for granted as incontestable. He threw everything into doubt and said acceptance is directly proportional to the verification of the first principle. The inseparable link of knowledge and the "I" pioneered a new understanding of self in the world. The emphasis on self as the source and origin of knowledge has prioritized 'I' as unified rational self in deciphering meaning in the world. In his fourth *Discourse on Method* (1637) he writes thus:

> [A]s I wanted to concentrate solely on the search for truth, I thought I ought to . . . reject as being absolutely false everything in which I could suppose the slightest reason for doubt, in order to see if there did not remain after that anything in my belief which was entirely indubitable.. . . [Thus] I rejected as being false all the reasonings I had hitherto accepted as proofs. And . . . I resolved to pretend that nothing which had ever entered my mind was any truer than the illusions of my dreams. But immediately afterwards I became aware that, while I decided thus to think that everything was false, it followed necessarily that I who thought thus must be something; and observing that this truth: *I think, therefore I am*, was so certain and so evident that all the most extravagant suppositions of the skeptics were not capable of shaking it, I judged that I could accept it without

> scruple as the first principle of the philosophy I was seeking.
> (53-54)

Descartes has a formula that the ability to think is the first defining characteristic of a human subject. According to Descartes thinking in subjective way is the very basis of a being. Self's differences and particularities are the central defining features of being a human. His non-authoritarian and subjective reasoning has put his books on the list of church's banned books. According to Mansfield 'Cartesian cogito has freed individual subject from its authoritarian clutches and permitted individuals to seek for him/herself' (15). He has also asserted the subjective agency in the making of the meaning. It is very difficult to find such a statement even in literature of Renaissance. In Descartes, we can see "the Enlightenment image of the self as the ground of all knowledge and experience of the world (*before I am anything, I am I*) and the notion of the self as defined by the rational faculties it can use to order the world (*I make sense*)" (Mansfield 15). The questioning and doubting self we see in Descartes for the first time in Renaissance literature. And for him if one person thinks and works hard s/he can be a better person. Subjectivity is a vital and dynamic force that determines one's existence in Descartes. Though church has attempted to curtail subjective agency to perpetuate the human dependence on this divine institution, the thinking Cartesian cogito stands at the helm as the crest jewel of all later formulations about the self. According to him it is the acquisition of knowledge and the role of societal interactions that give rise to a subjectivity. Cartesian philosophy can be thus reduced to two major claims. Firstly, he assumes self to be the ground of all knowledge and experience of the world. Secondly, the self is defined by rational faculties through which acquisition of knowledge takes place.

It is Descartes

who considered knowledge in terms of the meaning of the word 'I'. Cartesian notion of a thinking hero can be seen in the writings of Shakespeare. Shakespeare's Hamlet is a thinking hero. He self-consciously attempts to think his way into action. Hamlet even says that 'man is defined by his ability to look before and after with capability and godlike reason' (Shakespeare 203). He is a kind of philosopher who seeks the reasons behind his existence. But Hamlet is also read as the tragedy of a thinking man. Rousseau's work, on the other, hand is the fruition of the emphasis on the self as the ground of human existence in the world. In his *Confessions*, he emphasized the uniqueness and autonomy of individual experience. He writes thus:

> I have resolved on an enterprise which has no precedent, and which, once complete, will have no imitator. My purpose is to display to my kind a portrait in every way true to nature, and the man I shall portray will be myself. Simply myself. I know my own heart and understand my fellow man. But I am made unlike any one I have ever met; I will even venture to say that I am like no one in the whole world. I may be no better, but at least I am different. Whether Nature did well or ill in breaking the mould in which she formed me, is a question that can only be resolved after the reading of my book. (17)

Unlike other memoirs and confessions, Rousseau in *Confessions* gives an unapologetic and uninhabited representation of himself. He underlines the uniqueness of the individual self as being different from others. He says 'I may be no better but at least I am different'. He stressed the importance of being an individual in his *Confessions*. The individual that he speaks of is a total and inclusive phenomenon, a sort of massive and dynamic unity.

Personal intuition became the way of judging the world in Rousseau. On contemplating the fallen nature of human beings he writes thus:

> I dared to strip man's [sic] nature naked, to follow the progress of time, and trace the things which have distorted it; and by comparing man as he had made himself with man as he is by nature I showed him in his pretended perfection the true source of his misery. Exalted by these sublime meditations, my soul soared towards the Divinity; and from that height I looked down on my fellow men pursuing the blind path of their prejudices, of their errors, of their misfortunes and their crimes. (362)

Human kind was born into this world with more or less perfection. Its history and social life have debased him/her. All his writing thus aim at recovering this lost individuality which eluded with history. Rousseau has explored the idea that individual is a naturally occurring unit that is preyed upon and entrapped by society. So, true freedom and fulfillment can only be gained by rejecting social pressures and by giving individuality uninhabited expression (Mansfield 18). Rousseau has a vision of the absolute freedom of individual experience that produces an autonomous subject and subjectivity. Such a privileging of individual experience is in agreement with Descartes "I" as the product of knowledge gained through experience. The Enlightenment emphasis on the self as the ground of human existence in the world is the completion of the Rousseau's notion of an absolutely free self. Everything in the subject's life is of interest and value. Individual is a total and inclusive phenomenon, a sort of massive and dynamic unity (Mansfield 17). For Rousseau individual is a naturally occurring unit that is preyed upon and entrapped by society. According to him a free subject can achieve his/her freedom only by rejecting social pressures.

The Enlightenment era gives a pivotal position to human and his/her selfhood. The autonomy of the self has never been given more emphasis than this period. Philosophers like Kant and Locke have sought the secular path of reason to define the self. Locke's reason is uninfected by the infectious pestilences of the prevailing customs, traditions and institutions. Locke's 'self' is one that was founded on consciousness or memory. Locke's theory goes against the Cartesian position, which assumes that human beings have innate knowledge. For Locke, one's mind is a *tabula rasa* or an "clean slate" on which impressions are made. Though Locke's voice is only one among the multitude of voices that address the issue of identity, it continues to be one of enduring importance. Immanuel Kant in his 'critiques' has explored what makes human beings know the world outside. Each and every sense that human beings makes of the world is grounded in 'I' that perceives it. He writes: "it must be possible for the I think to accompany all my representations" (152). And for Kant 'I' in the 'I think' is a conscious one. The kind of one's connections with the world should cross this thinking "I". For him consciousness is the defining faculty of the self. Kant's subject is not just in the world. It's an active self that engages with the acts of the world. Kantian notions of the self, give a strong, unified and purposeful sense of selfhood. Self in Kant is not a natural/self-sufficient self of Rousseau or a religious discourse, but a thinking self. Subjectivity is fulfilled only with the awareness of the world. But, Kantian structuring of human subjectivity around self's awareness of the world suppressed the irrational, inconsistent, obscure and unknown contours of human self which is an indirectly addressed in the self-sufficient self of Rousseau. For Kant, awareness of the world is the prerequisite to developing subjectivity. The "I" for him is different from the individual identity. It is a mere skeletal apparatus on which the identity develops. It was Kant who laid the foundations for later theories of inter-subjectivity. "Dare to think, and all our knowledge begins with the senses, proceeds then to the understanding, and ends with reason. There is nothing

higher than reason." as stated by Kant envisages the Enlightenment spirit of enquiry and reason (152).

For Hegel history of the world is nothing other than the progress of the consciousness of freedom. He differs from the Enlightenment thinkers who see identity as a self-certifying one. To him, an individual's self-consciousness always requires an "other" to legitimize its existence. The inception of the "other" is a new and fresh conception. It can never thrive and progress in exclusion. However, the synthesis formed as a result of the dialectical relationship between thesis and antithesis, is not a smooth one. It involves violent class struggle and domination. Hegelian ideas are further advanced by Marx who propounds a solid theory of class exploitation. With him the notion of self-consciousness metamorphoses to class- consciousness. The seeds for the development of politicized subjectivities are sown during the French Revolution of 1789, where power is seized from the powerful. French revolution signaled several movements against class oppression and it has also evolved a consciousness of the causes and consequences of violent revolution.

Interestingly the norms of gender, identity and social beliefs that justify the prejudicial treatment against women are also seriously interrogated during this period. The categorical exclusion of slaves and the devaluation of people on the basis of race in the early modern and Enlightenment theories of subjectivity have been questioned in the centuries that followed. Race has been always ignored in the theories of subjectivities, or at best remained as a tangential topic, even when it is referred to. A close examination of the subjectivity theories of the early Enlightenment philosophers makes it clear that they figure out subjectivity in white and male terms and abhor, colonize and exploit human beings who are not this (Gates 408). Such hypocrisy gets questioned in the later writings. Aphra Behn's *Oroonoku or the Royal Slave* has depicted a fearless slave who challenges the racial prejudices. She writes thus:

> Nor did the perfections of his mind come short of those of his person, for his discourse was admirable upon almost any subject; and whoever had heard him speak would have been convinced of their errors, that all fine wit is confined to the white men, especially those of Christendom, and would have confessed that Oroonoko was as capable even of reigning well, and of governing as wisely, had as great a soul, as politic maxims, and was as sensible of power, as any prince civilized in the most refined schools of humanity and learning, or the most illustrious courts. (2,175)

By emphasizing the heroic qualities of the slave, Behn has politically repudiated the racial prejudices that existed in the theories of the white male subjectivity. The voices of the abolitionists and former slaves and black commentators on racism offer significant insights into the theories of subjectivities which are unseen in the categorical inclusive theories of white male theorists. In *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, Douglass powerfully narrates the daily horrors of slave existence and the effect of slavery on the life of the enslaved. He writes thus:

> The slaveholders have been known to send in spies among their slaves, to ascertain their views and feelings in regard to their condition. The frequency of this has had the effect to establish among the slaves the maxim, that a still tongue makes a wise head. They suppress the truth rather than take the consequences of telling it. (20)

Such experiences are far removed from the ideal and universal categories of subjectivities envisages by Immanuel Kant. Experimental bases of Jacob's and Douglass's makes them explore the unvisited contours of the particular subjectivities which are unavailable to Kant, Locke and others. W.E. Dubois

has also explored the sensibility of being a black slave. He writes in his *The Souls of the Black Folk* thus:

> ….born in a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness, – an American, a Negro, two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder….The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife, – this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge this double self into a better and truer self. (3)

By claiming that, he wants to affirm his African and American identity, he can be rated as the first writer who consciously affirmed the possibility of multiple subjectivities. As he envisages identity for some is not a universal whole but hyphenated, at times conflicting and elusive. The protracted legacy of slavery and its impact on subjectivity in USA, Africa and across the globe have explicitly reveled in Dubois' intellectual expositions.

Theories of subjectivity have neglected the female subjects and their selves in the existing literature of the period. Mary Wollstonecraft has brought a subversive elucidation that counteres the theories of Enlightenment thinkers with her seminal work, *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792). It is not only a vehement critique of prevailing gender norms in the society, but also an eye-opening analysis of how social oppression that gets ingrained in the psyche of women leads to the development of a subservient self. She gives voice to a marginalized subjectivity. She feels that the writings of the

philosophers of Enlightenment haven't provided very fertile ground for the feminist thought and response. Mary Wollstonecraft, in reaction to the theories of Locke and Rousseau has written extensively on the socially constructed nature of gender and also has spoken on the impact of social oppression on the subjectivity of woman. She writes thus: "Novels, music, poetry, and gallantry, all tend to make women the creatures of sensation, and their character is thus formed in the mould of folly" (61). Such a new feminine perspective on the marginalized feminine subjectivity from the inside of oppression has been quite debilitating the existing orders of Enlightenment male subjectivity. She argues thus:

> Asserting the rights which women in common with men ought
> to contend for, I have not attempted to extenuate their faults; but
> to prove them to be the natural consequence of their education
> and station in society. If so, it is reasonable to suppose that they
> will change their character, and correct their vices and follies,
> when they are allowed to be free in a physical, moral, and civil
> sense. (194)

She is one of the first theorists of social constructionism that challenges the traditional social definitions and socialization process of gender by arguing that subjectivity is acquiescent. Unlike the Enlightenment thinkers, English Romantic poets like Wordsworth, Keats and Shelley have poetically propounded that truth is an aesthetic experience and it's beyond their rational faculties. Thus a poet's subjectivity is an irrational subjectivity that takes hold of the irrational and the unconscious. The disjunction between the rational and irrational dimensions of subjectivity, between conscious and unconscious, has emphasized the unknowable dimensions in our selves. 19th century has seen many number of activities that explicitly politicized discussions on subjectivity.

Intense anxiety about the structure of the subject and the security of its lodgment in the world is a common 19th century phenomenon. Writers like Mary Shelley, R.L Stevenson, Hoffman and Dostoevsky have reflected on the potentially fragmented interior life and the play of irrational impulses that truncate and destabilize the existing social order and common notions of sexuality. A new version of subjectivity that dramatized the self's radical distrust of itself, fear of isolation, hidden desires and easy breakdown has become a common place notion. In contrast to the 18th century rationalist like Kant, who has placed conscious mind as the defining attributes of human relationship with the world, 19th century fiction often presents the dark and uncertain impulses that rule as the rational. The rational and the irrational are inextricably bound in the theories of the last decades of 19th century and it is Freud who systematized the new versions of subjectivity that have been accumulating for some time. Freud stands as a turning point in the history of subjectivity that has been committed to the Cartesian notions of self as the rational process of the conscious mind. Freud in his *Interpretations of Dreams* (1904) has argued that existence is not only a part of conscious mind but very much entangled in the unconscious. The strong menacing thoughts that consciousness struggled with have been pushed away and suppressed in the unconscious. But through dreams, slips of tongue and jokes these suppressed or incongruous materials surface unexpectedly or reveal abruptly. Such manifestations of the unconscious are beyond the control of the conscious mind. So the neurotic symptoms are the actions of the unconscious uttered in a louder and clearer language. Psychoanalytic interventions can be seen as the most powerful illustrations to comprehend the inner recesses of mind and to tame the subjectivity. However, a strong presence of contradictory strains of logic runs across this argument. Though psychoanalysis bestows infinite power to subjectivity on the one hand, it curtails it on the other. The inescapable pull of forces, drives and desires which lie hidden as the

unconscious can only be manipulated and not erased. The Freudian model of subjectivity confers more agency to the trained psychoanalyst than to the subject himself. Though Freud has prescribed scientific methodology to analyze subjectivity, his theories contest the possibility of complete control over one's subjectivity. Freud's claim that our identities are shaped and mediated by interactions with the past, becomes a powerful tool to comprehend subjectivity. To him, the neurotic subjectivity is the loudest exposition of a turbulent unconscious. He sees the feminine subjectivity as an irresolvable mystery.

According to Freud, 'subjectivity is not simple presences and absences but of potentially violent energies and conflicts where negative feelings don't merely lapse from the conscious mind but where they are kept in place by force against which they constantly struggle. For him, subject formation is correlated to the set of familial and social relations dominant in culture' (Mansfield 30). He has questioned the idea of subjectivity as a privileged essence or innate spiritual life existing well in advance of the historical conditions in which it appears. His theory of 'Oedipus Complex' establishes gender and sexual identifications of the child's environment as the key contributing factor of the production of subjectivity. All the norms that determine subjectivity in Freudian terms like gender, sexuality, body and family relationship have all proven to be ambiguous, unstable as argued by the theorists who came after him.

Phenomenology as school of thought explores how different faces of organizations are constructed through on-going activities. Structuralism on the other hand, asserts that the 'subjects' who interpret the social world are actually the product of deeper and more enduring social structures. These structures are made up of deep underlying cultural structures. These structures are usually composed around oppositions such as between masculine and

feminine, day and night, capitalist and worker. These structures consign certain actors to either side of the opposition. When a person is assigned to a position in the social structure, they adopt a 'subject position'. This involves a whole scheme of how one should perceive the world, patterns of thought, ways of talking, and morality. According to structuralists, subject positions are produced by a whole range of intersecting social structures. These include the formal hierarchical structure of the organization which assigns positions like manager, gender relations which assigns positions like man, and class relations which assign positions like middle class.

Phenomenological and structural approaches are thought to be two diametrically opposed approaches to subjectivity. While phenomenological approach emphasizes how subjectivity is produced through the on-going action and interaction of agents, structuralism emphasizes how subjectivity is pre-packaged in subject positions. In an attempt to balance these contrasting positions, Anthony Giddens has argued that the construction of subject positions is a recursive process. This means that individuals confront pre-fabricated subject positions which provide them with certain rules and resources that enable and constrain a certain subject position. But this subject position must be actively performed and enacted by the subject. Through this action the actor is able to reconstruct the subject position. He further states that we seek out a subject position in order to assuage feelings of anxiety and insecurity (Mestrovic 49-50).

Freud and his followers have celebrated the new subjectivity they found in the unconsciousness. But existentialists who believed in the notion of *existence precedes existence* privilege the influence of the conscious in creating the subjectivity of an individual. According to Camus "What matters – all that matters, really – is the will to happiness, a kind of enormous, ever-present consciousness" (128). Nietzsche on the other hand in his *The Will to*

Power (1901) has argued "The influence of 'external circumstances' is overestimated by Darwin to a ridiculous extent: the essential thing in the life process is precisely the tremendous shaping, form-creating force working from within which utilizes and exploits 'external circumstances" (344).The self, according to Nietzsche, is something one aspires to become, and becomes. Nietzsche endows paramount significance to the self's agency to create and transform itself. Self for Nietzsche is something one becomes, something one constructs not a steady and invariable entity (Nehamas 7).Thus by foregrounding *Ubermensch* as the all-powerful culmination that mankind can achieve, Nietzsche confers limitless and unbound agency to subject. Sartre has echoed this Nietzschean notion when he says "man is nothing else but that which he makes of himself" (349).

But for Heidegger, Western Philosophy since Descartes has comprehended the essential nature of human connectivity with the world in terms of a consistent, self-identical and a lucid entity called subject. Self has been previously defined in terms of reason, knowledge and experience. For Heidegger life has to be interpreted in terms of the most fundamental aspect of life: being. While most others of his time emphasize how subjectivity is constructed and filled in, Lacan however accentuates how subjectivity is usually lacking or deficient. According to Lacan, subjectivity only works because something is missing. This approach shows us that any attempt to achieve or act out a subject position is bound to fail. Because there is always a 'constitutive gap' at the center of any subject position, then it is impossible become a fullfledged and determined subject. Though influenced by the Freudian notion of psychoanalysis, he departed from his use of psychoanalysis in pathologization and normalization of culture. He questions the notion of psychoanalysis as the whisperer of truth. "There is nothing doctrinal about our office. We are answerable to no ultimate truth; we are neither for nor against any particular religion" (Lacan 316). He focuses his

studies on the intersections of language and psyche. His analysis of language provides a model for the structure of the unconscious. Human subject is constituted by language. We learn who we are through the acquisition of language. Through the use of language, we internalize the laws of the world. We are also divided within ourselves through the use of language. In this perspective, the self becomes subject and identity becomes a linguistic paradigm. So the human subject is located at the intersection of language and existence. The subject internalizes the values of society through language.

Lacan attempts to approach the abstract unconscious by comparing it with the concrete medium of language. He describes the unconscious as 'structured like a language' (21). This means that like language, its power arises from a sense of openness and play of meaning. When one reads language one may identify gaps in what is signified as evidence of the unconscious. This is because language is a mixture of fixed meaning representing the conscious and metaphor representing the unconscious in part. In Lacanian view, the unconscious is opposed to the ego or the internalized object relations. It is the fundamental base of psychic life. This linguistically constructed and structured unconscious is the source of subjectivity and sexuality (24). Subjectivity, for him, emerges out of the unconscious. It is constituted in terms of difference or opposition between the sexes. This opposition is linguistically structured and not biologically. We are born into a linguistic setting which makes our developmental situation inevitable.

In Lacan's view, a person assumes his place as a subject in the world through his entry into the Symbolic, i.e, into language and culture. This acquisition of subjectivity takes place through the intervention of a third person into the realm of the Imaginary. The father, symbolized by his phallus, constitutes the symbolic intervention. Thus the phallus stands for entrance into the Symbolic. In this view, subjectivity is sexually defined, in terms of

the presence or the absence of the phallus. So sexuality and subjectivity are rooted in the unconscious. In Lacan's view, gender difference becomes relevant to define selfhood or subjectivity (61). This is experienced and cognized in terms of sexuality. Subjectivity and sexuality are thus interdependent. Sexual constitution and subjectivity are different for he who possesses phallus and she who lacks phallus. So phallus makes all the difference; the phallus stands for itself in the realm of desire. A woman becomes a subject not in her own right, but as a symbol in the masculine psyche.

Sexuality is incomplete and fractured for both sexes in Lacan's theories. Men and women remain on the opposite sides of linguistic/sexual divide. This is because there is no subjectivity outside sexuality. Any subject locates himself or herself in relation to the phallus. Women's lack of sense of the self or her sense of being the Other is related to her objectification in culture. One's subjectivity is determined in relation to one's position in the phallocentric culture and language (93). It is therefore argued that subjectivity is also culturally constructed. Critics like Julia Kristeva state that the subject is in process. This perspective deconstructs the Freudian concept of unitary subject and posits that subjectivity is in the process of making and remaking. This linguistic process of subject formation is invested with desire. The social formation of subjectivity is a linguistic process. Lacanian psychoanalysis connects subjectivity to the unconscious and therefore to the language and an understanding of sexual difference as constituted at the unconscious level (127).

Lacan's notions of the unconscious as structured like language and the relationship between the symbolic order and the subject, lead to a new way of understanding the play of unconscious desire in one's subjectivity. Lacan's important contribution in psychoanalysis constitutes his identification of

different stages in the development of human psyche. Lacan's foregrounding of the unconscious helps us to understand the mechanism of consciousness. The first stage of development of the human psyche is called Omelette or Imaginary stage. This is up to six months of age. At this stage the child exists in a realm where there is no distinction between the self and the other (133). The child does not have the sense of self or maturity. The child thinks that it is an inseparable part of the mother. Therefore it exists in a kind of idealized identification with the mother. The next stage, between six months and eighteen months, is called Mirror stage. At this stage the child sees its own reflection in the mirror and begins to conceive of itself as a unified being separate from the world. The child begins to develop a sense of the self or maturity (134). After eighteen months the child enters the stage called Symbolic. At this stage the child enters the language system essentially concerned with lack and separation. The acquisition language takes place at the early Symbolic stage called the acquisition phase. The Symbolic stage also marks the beginning of socialization and prohibitions and restraints associated with the law of the father. In every child there is an innate urge to learn first language in order to acquire the power and authority exercised by the father. Therefore the urge to acquire first language is also called Oedipal or libidinal. But the Imaginary is a pre-Oedipal stage in which the child has not differentiated itself from the mother and not learned language which is the Symbolic order to be taught by the father (136). The Oedipal crisis marks the entrance of the child in the world of the language controlled by the Symbolic order where everything is separate: conscious and unconscious, self and Other, male and female, word and feeling. In the realm of the Symbolic order, we are confined by rules. In the phallocentric universe men are in control of the world, marking the disappearance of the mother.

The Mirror stage corresponds to Freud's stage of primary narcissism when the subjects are in love with their own images and their bodies which

precedes the love of others. The identification of the image is usually accompanied by pleasure. The child initially confuses its image with reality but soon recognizes that the image has its own properties and finally accepts that the image is its own. During Mirror stage the child becomes aware that its body has a total form. The Lacanian stages often overlap: for example, the Imaginary and the Mirror stages may extend to the realm of the Symbolic. This often challenges the fixity of the Symbolic. The Mirror image is often called the Other (152). In overlapping phases, the mother is also identified as the Other. The Other anticipates the mastery of the child's body and stands in contrast to the experience of fragmentation/separation the child undergoes. The Mirror image or the Other is often confused with the self and even takes the place of the self. According to Lacan, the ego emerges at this moment of fascination with the Mirror image. The ego is the effect of images. Lacan insists that ego is based on an image of wholeness and mastery. It is the function of the ego to maintain this coherence in mastery. In other words, the child refuses to accept the truth of separation and fragmentation. When the image is placed in opposition to the experience of fragmentation the subject is established as a rival to itself. Thus a conflict is produced between the infant's fragmented sense of the self and the imaginary autonomy of the image out of which the ego is born. This conflict is extended to a rivalry between the self/subject and others.

According to Lacan, the Symbolic is a stage when language skills begin to develop. Through listening the child realizes that father is more vocal in the exercise of language or his performance of language is better. The child quickly understands that language is a source of power or authority and there develops an innate urge to acquire the language spoken at home (first language). This spontaneous urge, according to Lacan, is an attempt to rival the father. This motive is therefore Oedipal or libidinal and it breaks the unity between the child and the mother (153). Lacan insists that the phallus should

not be confused with the male genital; it connotes the power and privilege associated with a male in a patriarchy. Phallus is primarily a privileged signifier and it operates in all Lacanian registers like the Imaginary and the Symbolic. As the system develops, it becomes an indispensable signifier that anchors the chain of signification. Phallus is a particularly privileged signifier because it inaugurates the process of signification. Since phallus is psychological both man and woman can represent the phallus, the privileged signifier, the source of language or signification (157). As man is nearer the phallus by virtue of his privilege in a patriarchy, it is easier for man to become a subject than for a woman.

According to Lacan, subject has no permanence or persistence. Subject is not a position or a state of being. Subject is only a process of becoming. Subject is something always arriving or having just arrived. At no point of time subject emerges as a stable and complete entity. It emerges through a continuous process of subjectification (173). There is, therefore, a continuous movement from signifier to signifier in which the subject alternately appears and disappears. The subject is conditioned by desire. No subject is distinct from desire. Lacan describes death drive as a desire to return to the pre-Oedipal relation to the mother. In Lacan's view, the most insistent fact of the world outside or beyond consciousness is death. In Lacan death has its place at the base of being and identity. Encounter with death in some form is essential to become a subject. It represents either castration or a challenge to the law of the father. When the subject asserts identity through its mirror reflections the Symbolic is created. It regenerates a perspective, a subjectivity that valorizes life, mind and consciousness.

Based on the modern-day notions of psychoanalysis Louis Althusser reworked Marxian notions of ideology in the late capitalist society. Althusser in his analysis brought out the direct and indirect means by which human thought and activity are conveyed into conformity. According to him the most

direct means are those of "Repressive State Apparatuses" or RSAs: "the police, the courts, the prisons; but also the army . . . and above this ensemble, the head of State, the government and the administration" (Althusser 137). RSA functions "'by violence',. . . massively and predominantly *by repression* (including physical repression)" (145). Unlike RSA, the most insidious repressive measures invisible from the critical distance is "Ideological State Apparatuses" or ISAs. These work covertly to nurture and cajole a "submission to the rules of established order" (132), and include:

> The religious ISA (the system of different Churches), the educational ISA (the system of the different public and private "Schools"), the family ISA, the legal ISA, the political ISA (the political system, including the different Parties), the trade-union ISA, the communications ISA (press, radio and television, etc.), the cultural ISA (Literature, the Arts, sports, etc.). (143)

ISA operates through forces but through a willing conveyance. And according to Althusser "the reproduction of a class structure requires not only "a reproduction of submission to the ruling ideology for the workers, [but also] a reproduction of the ability to manipulate the ruling ideology correctly for the agents of exploitation and repression" (132–33). Such Marxian notions of Althusser have shifted the notions of subjectivity into the agency by which individuals acquire their meaning in society. According to Althusser, 'an interpellated subject is no more a center of initiatives as Enlightenment perceived, author responsible for its actions; but a subjected being who submits to higher authority and freely accepting his submission' (182). Gramsci calls such position as 'Hegemony'- the belief systems that dominate and control the consciousness of individuals in which they are programmed to do so. Thus, for Althusser subject is no more an autonomous, rational self or an authentic individual who acts and speaks by rational freedom but a programmed self that functions and operates according to commands of the impersonal structures of domination.

Theories of subjectivity in the second half of the 20th century can be looked at from two different perspectives. Theories that attempt to define the nature of the subject and those that attempt to understand subject as the product of culture and power. Michel Foucault has attempted to understand the subject as the product of power and culture. The image of subject as authentic and naturally occurring has consequentially changed as a mirage or ruse of power in Foucault. For Foucault subject is a construct. Subject never comes into world with all its nature in its embriyonic form. Subjectivity is formed from the context it performs. Broad determinations of power and relationships form the nature of the subject. Foucault writes thus:

> The individual is not to be conceived as a sort of elementary nucleus, a primitive atom, a multiple and inert material on which power comes to fasten or against which it happens to strike, and in so doing subdues or crushes individuals. In fact, it is already one of the prime effects of power that certain bodies, certain gestures, certain discourses, certain desires, come to be identified and constituted as individuals. The individual is not the *vis-à-vis* of power; it is, I believe, one of its prime effects. The individual is an effect of power, and at the same time, or precisely to the extent to which it is that effect, it is the element of its articulation. The individual which power has constituted is at the same time its vehicle. (98)

This Foucauldian notion of subject stands at loggerheads with Rousseau's notions of an authentic subject that individual comes first almost producing itself and power comes after almost corrupting the self. But for Foucault power comes first and the individual is the effect of power which is designed for us than by us. So individual is vis-à-vis with power not against it. Subject is the very material of power by which it finds its expression. For Foucault power and knowledge are not two different realities without any connectivity

but complimentary and coordinated tools that work together. Foucault collapsed both into single term power/knowledge for one cannot exist without the other. Power has to derive some knowledge or truth justifies what it seeks to do. Distinct categorical division of human population into different sects is the function of power. One such clearest case is the development of modern day prison. Prison functions as the manager of modern day subjectivity. The spectacular and public display of absolute power has been the early measures of torture by which the systems of power visibly controlled the self under digression. But such dramatic and stunning notions of power are systematized and rationalized in the court proceedings making it inextricable or invincible part of the logic of the society. Prison operates in the level of the subject. The prison does not function arbitrarily and it functions systematically according to the codes of laws and those who do crime becomes non-enlightenment individuals and become something else altogether: criminal. Thus the criminal becomes a social type of further analysis. So the individual is not free and becomes a focal point of analysis. By using the idea of panopticon by Jeremy Bentham, Foucault explained how the system isolates and monitors the body placing it in the context of maximum visibility based on the reigning knowledge about what is and is not illegal or anti-social behavior. The prison plan has got a lot to do with medieval notion of correcting the criminal's soul. So the concept of prison involves not just making sure that the criminals repeat the certain act but to cure them and changing their subjectivities. Foucault thus reverses the Christian notions of banality "soul is the prison of the body" (Foucault 1979: 30). The subjectivity of the person who is in the street and prison is scrutinized and measured. According to him subjectivity is a fiction and it has no intrinsic reality or structure.

It is not something given to us at our birth or something that comes out of the relationship and experiences of our daily lives. As a result, this fiction can be remodeled or exploded as a subversion of the demand of power

play on us. In his effort to undermine the existing notions of subjectivity, he changes his focus to discourse –a broad concept he uses to refer to language and other forms of representations unlike the notions of Enlightenment. Foucault asserts that we can only come to know our "selves" through historically specific categories of truth, propriety, and normality. As a theorist he does not predict the fulfillment of self-knowledge or empowerment of our self. Instead, he calls for critically examining old templates and proliferating the possibilities for different forms and manifestations of subjectivity in the future.

Deluze and Guttari completely reject the idea of a coordinated selfhood. To them self is merely the collection point of infinite and random impulses and flows that overlap and intercut with one another but that never form any but the most transitory and dynamic correspondence. Instead of the Freudian psychoanalysis, they mount a whole alternate theory of psychoanalysis which they call schizoanalysis. The notion of reality as knowable and consistent is contested and the notion of all knowing subject is rejected. They reject the subject of absolute knowing (Derrida 1981: 219). They attack the simplicity of dividing world into coordinated parts like fixed truth, knowing subject and simple representation. Deleuze and Guattari aim to see the complexity, the mixture and interpenetration of things as the fundamental basis on which we live and in which all things subsist. According to them human is not something to be defined in it either in terms of the values, rational faculties and sensibility that enchanted neither Enlightenment humanism nor the predetermining interior structure to which Freudian psychoanalysis always returns. A person has to be looked from the perspective of the relationships and interconnections towards the world and the instabilities and contingencies that create such connectivity.

To postmodern thinkers especially in the second half of the 20th century, modernist notion that comprehensive philosophical, cultural and political principle can reinvent and reinvigorate humanity has felt irrelevant and for them what characterized the contemporary life is as Jameson calls the lack of 'cognitive maps' (theoretical base that we relied up on to critique the systems of knowledge). Postmodern self cannot feel intensely as it felt earlier. This dissipation of emotion 'waning effect', as Jameson calls it, is a typical postmodern condition. Jameson writes thus:

> As for expression and feelings or emotions, the liberation, in contemporary society, from the older *anomie* of the centred subject may also mean, not merely a liberation from anxiety, but a liberation from every other kind of feeling as well, since there is no longer a self present to do the feeling. This is not to say that the cultural products of the postmodern era are utterly devoid of feeling, but rather that such feelings . . . are now free-floating and impersonal, and tend to be dominated by a peculiar kind of euphoria. (1993: 72)

As Jameson says postmodern subject is doubly disoriented self. It performs in a world that is incomprehensible and lost its sense of intense feelings and belongingness. As a contemporary way of thinking that appropriately represents the cultural crisis of our time, it is concerned with the ways to understand and constitute the self and culture without binary modes of representation. The epistemological and ethical contradictions that confront postmodernism are issues of identity and difference. Postmodernism is engaged in the re-examination of the Enlightenment concept of subjectivity as self-determination. Postmodernism sees the subject as myth and master narratives of history as illusions. It is concerned with the revelations of a decentered subjectivity. Art or literature, like any other form of knowledge, in

postmodernism is a cultural construct. The French philosopher Jean Francois Lyotard argues that the concepts of society as an organic whole (conceived by Durkheim) or as a functional system (postulated by Parsons) or as a fundamentally divided whole composed of two conflicting classes (presented by Marx) no longer stands in the context of a teleology provided by the new system of knowledge production and the consequent transformation of social structure. Lyotard observes that "the status of knowledge is altered as societies enter . . . the postindustrial age and cultures enter . . . the postmodern age" (3). For him knowledge production has become the major source of capital in contemporary times: ". . . the miniaturization and commercialization of machines is already changing the way in which learning is acquired, classified, made available, and exploited" (4).

The conventional concept of knowledge and pedagogy as inextricably linked is replaced by the new concept of knowledge as a commodity. Lyotard observes thus: "Knowledge is and will be produced in order to be sold, it is and will be consumed in order to be valorized in a new production: in both cases the goal is exchange. Knowledge ceases to be an end in itself; it loses its use value" (5). Lyotard argues that postmodernism is an attitude of skepticism towards grand narrative-narratives that gives meaning to others. Such postmodern experiences cast off previous grand narratives for the violence they have infuriated. Postmodernism calls for the total rejection of all grand narratives. Postmodern subjectivity is defined as the 'meaningless' celebration of all exhausted apparatus that claimed to be ostensibly heroic and ascendant. To Postmodernists human subjectivity is conditioned and controlled by chance and accident than by humdrum rhetorics. Postmodern subject is a subject of wandering without the precise idea of locating itself in the general drama of world time. Traditional values have been discredited without replacement. Uncertainty is the dominant mood of postmodernism and what we see is an uncertain subject that flourishes without roots. To

Massumi postmodern subjectivity is defined by its place in the market. He writes "the act of purchasing defines our selfhood: 'I buy therefore I am' is one of the axioms of the present" (7). Postmodern subjectivity is inextricably linked to the act of consumption thereby propagate the idea that identity is not an expression of interiority but something that is attributed and showered on us. Subjectivity is external to us. Thus a postmodern subject is in search of an identity in the form of repeated purchases in absolutely groundless and meaningless world. Massumi puts thus: "Identity is an act of purchase predicated on a condition of groundlessness' 'our generic identity . . . is the accident form; our specific identity . . . is the sum total of our purchases" (7). Human subject is an individualized, random and meaningless attempt to save its own defeat.

Postmodernist thinkers in general reject Enlightenment and its grand theories. According to Lyotard the accepted truth confirms its authority when it is located in the larger stories of humanity in the world. The objective verification of facts, ideas and theories are not what matters but how far they tend to develop the fundamental visions of the world by which the societies used to develop itself. There is a general teleological belief in the world that society is progressing. The validation of ideas is directly proportional to how successfully it asserts the old idioms of progression. Such abstract aesthetic, religious and economic teleological quantums have been questioned. The paradigms, 'grand narratives' as Lyotard calls, by which these teleological quanta have been valued, are questioned. Enlightenment need for a macro-historical model that could make human experience of time and society momentous is thus theoretically challenged. The hunt for the larger narratives to reground human experience has been a 20th century phenomena. Such efforts can be seen in the search for cultural primitivism in the visual art of Picasso and in the music of Stravinsky. Writers have gone back to the classical or Christian tradition which once they dismissed. T.S. Eliot explored

the futuristic possibility of fertility myth beneath the heart of medieval Christianity as a new way of tackling contemporary meaninglessness. Joyce in *Ulysses* has linked the random events of the contemporary urban life to the wanderings of the ancient Greek warrior-hero Odysseus. Such attempts effort to universalize their experience.

But postmodernism has rejected such grand narratives. It doesn't see world as progressing through history and rejected grand narratives for the destruction they have caused. It rejects trans-historical models of what human society has to be. Without having been replaced by any other value postmodernism discredited all values. Postmodernism is thus a celebration of decentered subjectivity. While the modernists like Eliot and Pound have struggled to produce integrated texts out of apparently fragmented narratives, the postmodernists revel in the fragmented and ruptured nature of narratives. The chaos and randomness that appear in the narratives are only the manifestations of the chaos and disorder evident in the external world. Incoherence is therefore inherent in the textual strategies of postmodernist writers and artists. Thus postmodern subjectivity is based on the growing sensibility of "incredulity towards grand narratives" and a preference to "legitimating metanarratives" (Lyotard 5). Narratives of grand origin and grand teleology like *The Bible* (by extension all scriptures), *The Communist Manifesto* (by extension all Marxist theories), and History (as a discipline) are called grand narratives. Lyotard uses master narratives as synonymous with grand narratives in some contexts. But they are popular assumptions accepted without criticism throughout the world. Two of the influential master narratives are the idea that knowledge is produced for its own sake (German idealism) and the idea that knowledge is produced for a people-subject in quest of emancipation (French liberalism). They are deemed to be universally valid and represented in a symbolic form. But master narratives are different from metanarratives which provide a teleology, legitimizing the social

organization and the role of science and knowledge in relation to it. Metanarratives provide a credible purpose for knowledge, science, action or society at large. Metanarratives are self-reflexive or self-consuming narratives. They are cannibalistic in the sense that they consume most of the narrative space for validating and legitimising their purpose. They challenge the concept of stable worlds strenuously created by religions and Marxism and the artful narratives of History. Metanarratives are pervasive in all genres including poetry (meta-poetry), theatre (meta-theatre), fiction (metafiction), criticism (meta-criticism), film (meta-film), and even language (meta-language). But metafiction is the most productive genre and the most serious object of study in postmodernism. It is a laboratory of narratives which deals with the fabulistic nature of fantasy used as a narrative strategy. Metafiction challenges realistic modes of representation and exposes the contradictions latent in a text and the limitations of language as a medium.

In its attempt to play and perform in a meaningless world, postmodernism is concerned with the problematics of reality and its representation. Postmodern thinkers have recoursed to scientific theories for the theoretical justification of the philosophy it held. One of the scientific theories that influenced postmodernist subject position is Einstein's theory of relativity which states that everything except the velocity of light is relative. This theory is founded on the new concept of space/time which is a single physical entity that replaces the two separate physical entities, space and time. This radical concept leads to the conclusion that reality is not absolute or ultimate. That is, reality is never monovalent; reality is polyvalent and multi-perspectival. It depends on the angle or context of perception and perceiver. So there are as many realities as perceivers. Another scientific theory that influenced postmodernism is quantum mechanics that suggests a Quixotic race to an unattainable cryogenic state of Absolute zero temperature. Quantum mechanics has impacted postmodernism in the problematic relation

between reality and illusion: they are two sides of the same question. Illusion, like reality, is an experience based on knowledge.

But Marxist philosophers look at postmodernism from a critical angle. For them postmodernism revives the Enlightenment tradition of knowledge. In the Marxist perspective, knowledge is objective: that is, knowledge can be experienced objectively through the senses. But postmodernism admits that knowledge is not entirely objective; knowledge can be even subjective and intuitive. Postmodernism respects the experience of knowledge irrespective of its source. Reason is never the acid test for knowledge. Yet another scientific theory that influenced postmodernism is Heisenberg's uncertainty principle which states that it is impossible to determine precisely the position and velocity of an electron at the same time. This theory influenced the postmodernist concept of the self. Discrediting the modernist's notion of self as rigid, stable and fixed, to the postmodernist self is a flux in a process of becoming. It is a field of possibilities which cannot be precisely located within a space.

Increased awareness of intertextuality is a characteristic of postmodern condition. The idea of intertextuality refers to the citation of one text within another as an expression of enlarged cultural self-consciousness. The intertextual quality is a historical blurring in which the representations of the past and the present are displayed together in a bricolage that juxtaposes previously unconnected signs to produce new codes of meaning. According to Julia Kristeva, intertexuality refers to the accumulation and generation of meanings across texts where all meanings depend on other meanings generated or deployed in alternate contexts (Barker 101). Textual meaning is always unstable and cannot be confined to single words, sentences or particular texts. Meaning has no single original source, but it is the outcome of relationships between texts, leading to intertextuality. So the concept of

intertextuality stresses the instability of meaning, its deferral through the interplay of texts, writing and traces. In a postmodern text different kinds of texts or heterogeneous discourses are incorporated.

Frederic Jameson views postmodernism in terms of periodization. He finds a correlation between new developments in western capitalism and the emergence of the postmodern. The emergence of new formal features in culture is related to new types of social life and economic order. He thinks that postmodernism is related to the periodization of the analogous structures of culture, economy and society. The postmodern culture expresses the deeper logic of a particular social system (Foster 125). This is characterized by a conflict between the apparent irrationality of the surface structure of a text and the rationality of its deep structure. Jameson finds that postmodern art and culture are characterized by a schizophrenic discontinuity consequent to a radical fragmentation: there is "a stylistic diversity and heterogeneity" (Foster 114). This is not limited to high art; it also pervades mass culture like films. Jameson finds that some historical films are paradoxically ahistorical and he calls them "nostalgic films." He observes:

> The very style of nostalgic films invading and colonizing even those movies today which have contemporary settings: as though, for some reason, we were unable today to focus on our own present, as though we have become incapable of achieving aesthetic representations of our own current experience. (Foster 117)

Such movies present the real in terms of simulations. That is, the present day experiences are represented in terms of modified experience of the past. According to Frederick Jameson, postmodernism also discusses Lacan's view of schizophrenia as a language disorder resulting from the subject's failure "to accede fully into the realm of speech and language" (118). It is language

which gives us the sense of time and space. Language offers us "experience of temporality, human time, past, present, memory, the persistence of personal identity" (Jameson 119). The subject's failure in language skills leads to an absence of the experience of temporal continuity. The subject then becomes a patient condemned to live in a perpetual but discontinuous present. So Schizophrenia can be defined as an "experience of isolated, disconnected, discontinuous material signifiers failed to link up into a coherent sequence" (Jameson 119). Schizophrenia consists in the inability to produce a coherent sense through signification of signs. In Jameson's view, postmodernism constitutes "the transformation of reality into images, the fragmentation of time into a series of perpetual presence" (125). In spite of material signifiers, the experience of time and reality remains incoherent. This leads to a situation of fragmented subjectivity. Lacan's theory of the subject reminds us that because subject positions are lacking, they are always possibly open to challenge.

The question of agency remains at the centre of discussions of subjectivity today. It is not an abstract concept that is just an academic subject alone but something which is genuinely vital for our times. Modern era has been an era of the subject. Self has been the focus of all esoteric and aesthetic theories of the past few centuries. The notion of spontaneous subjectivity is categorically questioned in postmodernism and it is termed only as obscure and shifting impersonal spaces of relationships. Modern day politics and bodies determine selfhood. Contemporary academia has favored uncertainty and open endedness against the destructiveness of big answers. Modern day society has propagated a capitalist individualism. The obsession with the isolated interior life has got a lot to do with the market need of autonomous subject who can freely move without any restrictions and baggage more like a Rousseauvian free subject. But the subject also faces dislocation and alienation and stress because of migration, urbanization and exploitation.

Such bifurcations have found its expression in the theories of subjective and psychological disorientation, loss and desire.

Since Lacan and Foucault, subjectivity has been seen from the point of language. According to Roland Barthes from the middle of the 19th century onwards Europe's literary culture became obsessed with the problem of language and language is no longer a vehicle of communication but a situation fraught with conflict (Barthes 83). Language has attained social and subjective intensity in which shifting possibilities of both political and interior life were somehow invested. The writers and critics have to address the obscure and volatile self with which all intellectual speculation, social planning and personal expression have to come to terms with. The supreme insistence on textuality disposed whatever is not articulated or expressed. With the emergence of the conflicting notions of logical positivism and absolute relativism, the authority of truth or the questions of truth have reached the high pedestals of debate. In the 20th century, truth has varied from absolutism to cynicism. And with postmodernism the fragmented truth has offered immense possibility of marginal truths and its celebrations.

The question of agency and our act in accordance with the knowledge of it, raises the question of our responsibility in engaging in a particular action. Though as Butler argues "the knowledge of subject as the non-identical self is no more respected in postmodernism" (1993:230), the subject who commits murder, rape and violence is put into question and makes it responsible for actions. The most important and delicate question is how far a subject under ideological formation is responsible for the inchoate action that s/he is doing? The complexity of such questions has paved way for some to dogmatism and religious conservatism. But non-definite nature of contemporary subjectivity guides the analytical self to a critical and dialogic position of future self as expressed by Lawrence M Friedman as one even

chooses (within limits) a race, gender, and a form of sexuality (Friedman 1999: 240). But one is also aware that such choice is circumscribed with the limited contexts of where one is situated limiting the space of a responsible self behind an action. For Anthony Giddens there is no self-aware agency that is responsible for every action we do; but offers a mediated self that is able to experiment with many affiliations with help of technologies and web. Such free choices of the privileged world have clearly excluded the possibilities of the poor, displaced and non-techno-centric lives. But For Stjepan Mestrovic there are certain mysterious, often hidden and powerful forces that drive the self beyond the mediated self that Giddens acknowledges (49–50). Such positions arguably foregrounds that every aspect of the subjectivity cannot be explained.

Judith Butler is so optimistic about the agency of many psychic forces that radiates human agency. But at the same time we are subject to discourses and not simply through discourse with ability to turn around, contemplate, and rework our subjectivity at will. It is difficult for us to estimate the legacy of agency when we recognize the fecundity of interpellation. But for Butler this agency exceeds the power by which it is enabled. Agency is the assumption of a purpose unintended by power (Butler 1997:14). But that exceeding subject is not situated in a free zone of its own making. Exceeding is not escaping and the subject exceeds precisely that to which it is bound (17). Butler in her theories never explored the effect of interpellation at work. But for Butler there is a potential being that remains unexhausted by any particular interpellation (1997:131). The notion that interpellation fails, gives as more a futuristic notion of more dynamic self. "Subject produces its own coherence at the cost of its own complexity, the crossing identification of which it is itself composed, then that subject forecloses the kind of contestatory connections that might democratize the field of its own operation" (Butler 1993: 115). If the subject can choose to foreclose the

contestatory connections, it has an always limited but still significant ability to allow those contestatory connections or at least to recognize their possibility. Butler says the 'persistence of power is reiterated through subject, though it is not a mechanical process' (1997:17).

With the contemporary conditions of postcolonial gender and race, subjectivity itself is treated as textual. Such attempt of denaturalization of selves is an attempt to disrupt and discredits the automatism of its relationships to the grand old theories of the past and its fixed prints. In an attempt of textualising subjectivity with all its engagements and exclusions, it opens up certain responsibility for the subject to such positions and exclusions. Such contemporary positions brings back agency in subject for its exclusions and adventures. Such positions argue that subjectivity is neither diachronically static nor synchronically one-dimensional. Such position of subjectivity brings the future possibility of seeing subject as the interface between human and animal, human and machine. With the new recognition of the complexity and multiplicity of our social performances, the notion of subjectivity as a potentially knowable and conceptually one dimensional is tend to be seen as fractured and indefinite. With the development of science and technology in the past few decades the discussions of who we are and the extent to which what we owe ourselves on many aspects have complicated the notions of subjectivity. In his book *The Rediscovery of the Mind* John Searle has initiated a few pertinent issues about the interfacing of technology and human selfhood. He writes about the possibility of altering brain with a few silicon chips. Such future changes may limit the earlier dimensions of consciousness and conscious intent. But with a few experiments that he had done with machines, he comes to the conclusion that external behavior donot derive necessarily from intent or conscious intent necessarily or directly lead to behavior (Searle 1994: 65-71). Ours is an age that does not use machine in a traditional way. In this context Deluze and Guattari write thus:

cybernetic and informational machines form a [new] age that reconstructs a generalized regime of subjection: recurrent and reversible "humans-machines systems" replace the old nonrecurrent and nonreversible relations of subjection between the two elements; the relation between human and machine is based on internal, mutual communication, and no longer on usage or action. (1987: 458)

With the coming of the TV, human sensibilities are directly affected. Television viewers are no longer consumers or users or someone who have created it. But they are the component pieces or the constituent parts of wider systems of input and output or one of the many agents of transformations and exchanges of information (458). Thus, intentional or conscious choices are false determinants. The self-sufficient agency of a conscious intent is no more acknowledged. It's a matter of choice not an act of determination on the part of unified subject. The choice is the outcome of the overall dissipative systems with its plurality of selves. It is originated in the causes of chance and indeterminacy (Massumi 1992: 81). On man/woman-machine interface Donna Haraway writes thus: "the late twentieth century, our time, a mythic time, we are all chimeras, theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism; in short, we are cyborgs. The cyborg is our ontology; it gives us our politics" (1991: 150). Thus, for Haraway, human beings are ontologically linked to varieties of non-human entities like computers, televisions, artificial limbs and organs and created environments. A new form of subjectivity and politics has come out from this human-machine mix. So, for Haraway there is no other way for a postmodern human except a conscious embracing of 'permanent partiality' (173). So the idea of a universal and totalizing theory is no more valid in postmodern technological times. She also says an anti-science metaphysics is no more valid and a demonology of technology loses the possibility of restructuring the boundaries of daily life. Haraway's

conception of subjectivity is based on shifting, mobile, simultaneous, multiple and critical positions which are taken in response to domination which is a typical postmodern position. So the postmodern subjectivity is a technologically complicated, evermore emotionally and politically charged. According to Haraway, the notion of postmodern cyborg subjectivity addresses the questions like who or what possesses subjectivity. The idea of cyborgism directs our politics in emotionally charged and complicated ways.

Haraway has challenged the traditional left wing dependence on organic and essentialist models of humanity especially their arguments like contemporary economic and social conditions are dehumanizing because they shatter the existing social relationships by intruding the profit motive into every aspect of human life. Technology accelerates dehumanization in relationships by accelerating the economy and society into ever less human dimensions where the hands and eye of the individual worker are thrown into the junk heap by their inability to compete with their speed of microelectronic interfaces. Thus technology is anti-human and must be controlled or countered by a culture that should recover its connections with its own inner truths and authentic values with nature. Haraway counters this argument with the ambitious figure of cyborg. Cyborg is a part cybernetic machine and a part living organism. This breaching of the distinction between nature and machine is the feature of the postmodern subjectivity. For Haraway 'the rejection of technology and the nostalgic recourse in nature or in a repressed authentic humanity, is an escapist idea. For Haraway cyborg is a techonologised reality of our current self and it is a rhetorically useful metaphor. It is both the creature of social reality and as well as creature of fiction (1991: 149). To have an effective politics to counter and socially connect with the modern day realities, Haraway argues that the future that awaits human beings is the fabricated world of cyborgs. She thus argues it is

only from here, the techonologised world, contemporary debates on subjectivity can be dealt with, and not from the distant dream of Rousseau.

With the turn of the twentieth century the aesthetics of representations gradually evolved to accommodate so far un-represented or repressed. Different mediums of artistic/political forms are introduced to accommodate the silenced and marginalized. Mediums like photography and film has got popularity with the passage of time and film is seen as the medium of 20th century. Next chapter traces in detail the technical and thematic development of cinema and the parallel evolution of treatment of subjectivity in films. It attempts to inspect the myriad self, deviant and sane, as portrayed in different films across ages and also traces how film theorists have analyzed the concept of subjectivity in characterization and in the medium itself. Since question of subjectivity in film covers a broad area, the focus of the chapter will be on how filmmakers explore subjectivity textually through film techniques and characterization.

Chapter Two

Reeling Self: Subjectivity in Films

Cinema has been perceived as a mixed territory, a point of confluence and a point of fusion of many genres and perspectives. It is a meeting of many minds/consciousness. It works on the substrate of images and sounds. Cinema is the medium of the century that best informs and mirrors everyday reality, surpassing every other literary genre in terms of influence and unitability. No other genre bestows supremacy on subjectivity like cinema does. The multi dimensionality of many, its ability to synthesize the real and the phantasmal and the structural, make it a unique art form that venture a prosaic and poetic journey into the human mind. It equips the human mind to cognize an 'other' and decipher the nebulous workings of the self. The characters in cinema are a kind of ciphers which help us to decode collective racial memories and individual subjectivities at the same time. The subjectivity of the actors unveils through their performance and point of view narrations in cinema. One meaning of subjectivity in cinema is about creating the experience of what it is to think out of characters' mind. Thus, this chapter is an exploration of how cinema addresses and reflects the much-deliberated term/concept subjectivity.

Subjectivity is a philosophical issue and a crucial object of thought in all the epistemological enquiries. Apart from that, it also is a major concern in psychology, psychoanalysis and cognitivism. Though film and philosophy belong to the two different academic domains, they are strongly connected in various viewpoints. Both these academic perspectives explore and critically enquire the meaning of subjectivity in their respective ways. In cinema, subjectivity is generally reflected in characterization. The characters become existential ciphers and ideological tools in the hands of the filmmakers to

communicate the consciousness of the text. Subjectivity in cinema is something that refers to consciousness. It can be the characters' or the text itself. Subjectivity in cinema can be easily understood only in connection with individual's/characters' consciousness. Subjectivity in cinema is something that refers to the consciousness of the text or consciousness of the characters. "There is no subjectivity without consciousness and there is no consciousness without subjectivity" in cinema (Chateau 162). From a liberal humanist point of view, characters are nothing but existential tissues of the filmmaker's consciousness. In his elucidation of subjectivity, John Searle distinguishes subjectivity from subjective judgments. He says thus:

> Van Gogh is a better artist than Mattisse is an example of subjective judgments. While I now have a pain in my lower back is an exemplification of how subjectivity works. Subjective judgment means the truth or falsity is not a simple matter of facts. It is something that depends on certain attitudes, feelings and points of view of the creators and the listeners of judgments. This is an epistemic mode. Subjectivity, while, is an ontological category. The comments on the lower back pain is completely objective in the sense that its true by the fact that pain is a fact and is not dependent on any stance , attitudes or opinions of the observers, though pain has a got subjective mode of existence. (57)

So the search for subjectivity in cinema is an ontological exploration of the consciousness of the filmic texts constituted by the filmmaker who makes the film; the characters explicate the theme and the context in which the film is also set.

Dominique Chateau defines "subjectivity as essential mental states and contents as long as they really take place in someone's mind and are really

experienced as such by someone" (162). So subjectivity is both an objective and internal experience. In his article "Rethinking Subjectivity in Film" Chateau gives three meanings to the notion of subjectivity in film: 'Subjectivity as consciousness, subjectivity as internal representation and subjectivity as the position of the subject. Subjectivity as the consciousness is the ability to connect mind to the environment and to be conscious of one's feelings or ideas and also to the ability to reflect on one's existence. Subjectivity as internal representation explores the sensations, perceptions, feelings, mental images, dreams and ideas of film's characters. Subjectivity as the position of the subject is an attempt to look into the identity of human being as a unified source of external and internal representations and also as the source of self-representation' (12). Pere Salabert writes thus:

> Subjectivity is closely related to subject which in turn is the individual –his ego or self'. The term subjectivity refers to the subject itself in everything that constitutes his/her being in himself/herself and for himself/herself, in his/her natural disposition, aptitudes, feelings, wanting, thinking, melancholy, love, suffering and faith. Subjectivity is nothing but subject's inner world. For him it has got nothing to do with outside world. (qtd. in Chateau 85).

In his essay "From Aesthetic Experience to the Loss of Identity, in Three Steps", Salabert speaks about three cases of subjectivity: 'Subjectivity as an aesthetic event, subjectivity related to the mental disorder involving obsessive jealousy and subjectivity that is as complicated and ambiguous as a dream which he calls personal subjectivity' (Chateau 86).

There are many ways by which subjectivity is exemplified in films. The consideration of a shot or a sequence of shots as sign of subjectivity is depending upon when the source of subjectivity, human or human like, is

represented or presupposed. Point of View Shot is one such that shows what character are looking at. In POV shot such source of subjectivity is presupposed, for example, when it is taken over the shoulder of a character with the combination of the two shots, one represents something looked at and the other representing someone who looks at. POV is also possible even when the viewer is not present in the shot. As in the POV, there are other representations of subjectivity in films like the representation of the inner state of characters through memories, thoughts or dreams. Cinematic rendition of subjectivity can be seen in representation of the characters altered state of awareness. In the cinematic landscape of reality presentations certain characters tend to experience the abnormal world in normal day in the midst of other cinematic normalities. Such experiences are shown as the expanded power as in *Limitless* (2011), heightened cognition of genius in *Sherlock Holmes* (2009) or heightened fixation of things and in words as in *Black Mail* (1929). It is also shown in the ability to see the phantasmal in *Sixth Sense* (1998), matrix vision in *Matrix* or the uber realist aesthetics in *Saving Private Ryan* (1998). The film problematizes the real world and the represented real dichotomy, and questions the realistic vision of Normandy Landing shown in the film. The Normandy landing is not an exact rendering of the events happened but a subjective portrayal of the emotions and expressions of the living moment. Such emotions are depicted not by capturing the objective documentary reality. Hallucination is another technique used in cinema to explore subjectivity. Such explorations posit the question thus: is there the monster out in the world as we have seen in the film? The filmic representations (un)realistically convinces the realism in such phantasmal. Film places such subjectivity position by arguing that is what the characters brain is doing to them. Examples are *Birdman* (2014), *Fear and Loathing in Las Vagas* (1998), *The Shining, Throne of Blood, Altered States* (1980)*, Odd Man Out* (1949) *and Fight Club* (1999)*. The film *Fight Club* presents

subjective hallucinations as reality. Camera functions as narrator's eye to trick the audience as it tricks the character and there is no tilt shift, or crazy colors but shows the man in the brilliant lighting with necessary settings. The film uses super heady foreshadows, single frame flashes. Mental illness is another technique by which subjectivity is narrated in the film. There are more things in mental illness than what are seen things on the stage. Obsession in *Black Swan* (2010), psychosis in *Spider* (2002), hypochondria in *Synecdoche, New York* (2008) and schizophrenia in *Clean Shaven* (1993) show the internal experiences that characters go through.   *Clean Shaven* shows the rift between what is seen and heard to express the schizophrenic self. The film shows the sounds, the feelings, paranoia and the anxiety to explore further the real schizophrenic self. Low Angle Shots are another camera angle that functions to express the idea of domination. In Orson Welles' *Citizen Kane* (1941), in his conversation with Susan Alexander, Kane assumes the position of master when he filmed in a low angle shot. In *The Lady in the Lake* (1998) camera has a detective look. What character Scottie sees is very short which gives the feeling of dizziness. Such look distances the spectator and makes him/her almost impossible to identify with the character. Dominic Chateau writes "the representation of dizziness is not a representation of an interior landscape as such, but a representation of the way according to which the inside changes the outside" (163). We see what the character sees and we see the way he sees it. Hallucination is also a filmic mode of subjectivity, which is more or less successfully represented in films. Joghn Cssavetes' *Opening Night* (1977) depicts the hallucination of the character by allusively using light strokes. Christian Metz defines "the relationship between hallucination and film as a paradoxical hallucination; because we take films fiction for a kind of reality. Such representations are paradoxical, unlike a true hallucinations, it is not a wholly endogenous physical production: the subject, in this case, has hallucinated what was really

there, what at the same moment he in fact perceived: the images and sounds of the film" (104).

In any case of subjectivity in films, human or human-like, source of consciousness should be asserted. Usually films use modulation of shots to represent what is happening in the characters mind. Vertigo effect in Hitchcock's *Vertigo* (1958) is executed through such modulations. Hitchcock shows vertigo effect by using dolly zoom method which involved the physical movement of the camera away from the subject while concurrently zooming in. As a result, the subject remains in the frame with same size while the background perspectives change. This is used in the film to show Scottie's disoriented self. The modulations in camera frame can be seen as the elucidation of the viewpoint of the character inferred in the diegesis. Such outlook can also be of the storyteller or the author. "Filmic point of view is very clear when the director of the film can completely identify the viewer's vision with the character's, position his camera lens not only alongside the character, but inside" (Chatman 159).

It was Jean Epstein (1897-1953), a filmmaker and film theorist from France, who spoke of subjectivity in films, long before Godard, Deleuze and Frampton. He writes thus:

> ....an intelligent machine. It is not simply a spectacle but a special knowledge, because it represents world in a continuous motion. It changes spatio-temporal dimensions so that it creates a new effect on brain different from ordinary perception. He claims it has its own subjectivity insofar as it doesn't represent things as they are seen by the human eyes. It sees them itself. It has become an intellectual robot and a mechanical brain developing its own philosophy irrelevant to the rules of human intelligence of which is indirectly born. (224)

Film has got a very complex structure and its internal interactions are almost similar to human consciousness. For Epstein, film is not something that reflects the functioning of human consciousness, rather film has got a unique world of consciousness of its own. So subjectivity is not something which is attributed to film but something which is part of its internal structure. So he posits the idea that subjectivity is the inherent quality of the filmic structure itself (244). This self-reflexive nature of film is well echoed by Jean Paul Sartre when he says "cinema is a Bergsonian art so that we can apply to it what Bergson said of music: it's a consciousness like ours" (389). Cinema can be seen, as Stanly Cavell argues, 'as a self-reflexive art since the objects projected on the screen are inherently reflexive and they occur as self-referential reflecting upon their physical origins' (xv).

Though there is a similarity between the functioning of human consciousness and cinematic self as observed by Epstein and Sartre, many theorists after them pointed out that there is a difference between subjectivity in film and subjectivity in human beings. Dominique Chateau writes "though subjectivity is an essential property of human beings, subjectivity in film is metaphorical. When we speak of subjectivity in film we project on to an inanimate object-physical image and sounds- a property normally belonging to an animate object" (165). Though Epstein has referred to film's subjectivity as functioning like human mind, such comparison is metaphorical for Chateau. Though filmic subjectivity is a metaphorical usage, it has been observed as object external to mind. It can be observed like any other thing. Searle writes "there is no way I can observe someone else's consciousness as such; rather what I observed in him and his behavior and the relations between him, the behavior ,the structure and the environment" (97). Film gives a space for us to experience the consciousness of the extended self. As fitting to the outside world, film would test the viewer as any other entity in the world.

The structural condition of cinema is something that distinguishes it from all art. For Sartre, it's the motion that places film above its contemporary art in terms of reflexivity and consciousness. Motion is the common denominator that justifies film as a thinking subject. For Chateau, 'if film has something to do with subjectivity, it is to the extent that its moving form bears the imprint of subjectivity. The touchstone of subjectivity in cinema is its movement' (97). According to him 'there are three levels of subjectivity in film. Subjectivity as an ontological category, subjectivity as signs and subjectivity as texts. Subjectivity as ontological category refers to the mental activity of human being who reacts to the environment, or reflects on the other objects or texts. Subjectivity as signs refers to the results of the mental activity, both its product and its signs. Subjectivity as text refers to the organized structures of representations in film. It is subjectivity at a third degree. This is because it involves the first two and it is designed to activate human minds which points to the fact that there is an agency behind its formation' (97). This has been perfectly exemplified by Mrgurite Duras in the following conversations with Godard:

> Godard: I feel that what makes me less afraid of cinema, with the camera and the editing table; it's that the film thinks. Me, I don't have to think; whereas, if I write I have to think.

> Duras: Don't ramble. The film doesn't think alone. Without you there is no film. (Chateau 167)

Conversation between Godard and Duras brings forth two crucial notions of cinema. For Godard film is essentially conscious and structurally thinking medium. But for Duras it's the creators' thought that makes cinema a thinking/conscious subject. But such extreme positions miss the opportunity to analyze the semiotics of cinema. The conscious self in cinema is presupposed when cinema has been looked at as a semiotic process. Cinema

can be thus perceived as a pure consciousness in itself. So Chateau says film is self-conscious and it does think (168). At the same time it also transmits human thought through its own structural patterns. Though cinema has been looked at as a consciousness in itself, the consciousness working behind this medium of art is impossible to ignore.

The analogy between the human mind and the cinema is as old as the history of film theory itself. The similarity between mind and cinematic process has been pointed out by philosophers like Henri Bergson. In his book *Matter and Memory* he has used a cinematic metaphor to describe the process through which memory functions in the mind. He writes thus:

> Whenever we are trying to recover a recollection, to call up some period of our history, we become conscious of an act *sui generis* by which we detach ourselves from the present in order to replace ourselves first in the past in general, then in certain region of the past - a work of adjustment something like the focusing of camera. (171)

Though cinema has been called as an objective medium of reality representation, it has been also called the art of the mind. Through the mechanisms of dreams, of memories, of interior language, film reproduces concrete reality both externally and objectively so as to be considered as a privileged vehicle of subjectivity and interiority. It is Hugo Munsterberg's *The Photo Play: A Psychological Study* that raised perhaps the problem of subjectivity for the first time in film studies. He observes 'how films can picturize the internal representation of characters. He makes a distinction between the subjectivity of the spectator and that of the character, between objective images which are modeled on the mental process of the spectator and subjective and mental images which visualize what the characters in the film see in their own minds. The screen may produce not only what we

reproduce or imagine but what the persons in the play see in their minds' (42). He writes thus:

> If a person in the scene remembers the past, the past which may be entirely unknown to the spectators but which is living in the memory of the hero or heroine, then the former events are not thrown on the screen as an entirely new set of pictures, but they are connected with the present by a slow transition. He sits at the fire place in his study and receives the letter with the news of her wedding. The close up picture which shows us the enlargement of the engraved wedding announcement appears as an entirely new picture. The room suddenly disappears and the hand which holds the card flashes up. Again when we have read the card, it suddenly disappears and we are in the room again. But when he has dreamily stirred the fire and sits down and gazes into the flames, then the room seems to dissolve, the line blur, the details fade away., and while the walls and the whole room slowly melt, with the same transition the flower garden blossoms out, the flower garden where he and she sat together under the lilac bush and he confessed to her his boyish love. And then the garden slowly vanishes and through the flowers we see once more the dim outline of the room and they became sharper until we are in the midst of the study again and nothing is left of the vision of the past. (Munsterberg 42)

Munsterberg has theorized the mental images which visualized what the character imagined. He has written just as we can follow the reminiscence of the hero or heroine, we may share the fancies of his/her imagination. In this, spectators are passive witnesses to the wonders which are unveiled through the imagination of the persons of the play. Films not only picturise the

characters memory and imagination, but it also explores the peculiar ability to represent fantastic dreams. In his cognitive theory of film he has proposed that 'film can picturize the reminiscence and fancies of characters though he doesn't mention the shots which adopt the subjective point of view of a film character' (42).Though he has theorized about the capability of film to reflect the inner self of the characters, he hasn't mentioned the filmic techniques by which the subjectivity can be portrayed. Filmmakers have used different methods to demonstrate and rightly externalize the inner tumult of characters. Godard has used jump cuts to show the constructed nature of films and the commotions that characters go through. Russian filmmaker Andrei Tarkovsky has used extensively long takes in his films to represent the segment of life and to lay life bare before the camera. Many filmmakers have used closes ups to heighten the impression of the characters. Orchestrated settings are also used in many films to explore the moods of the characters. The subjectivizing of the surroundings, to use a term by Munsterberg, can be seen in films like *The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari* (52). According to Munsterberg 'such imaginative setting can be only the extreme, they would not be fit for the routine play' (52). He writes thus:

> There is a girl in her little room, and she opens a letter and reads it. There is no need of showing us in a close up the letter page with the male handwriting and the words of love and the request for her hand. We see it in her radiant visage, we read it from her fascinated arms and hands; and yet how much more can the photo-artist tell us about the storm of emotions in her soul. The walls of her little room fade away. Beautiful hedges of hawthorn blossom round her, rose bushes in wonderful glory arise and the whole ground is alive with exotic flowers. (52)

Munsterberg finds the two means of expressing emotions in film. One is the formal side by which he means the conditions in which the content is exhibited. Other is the material condition which means the material shown to us. He mentions out of focus shot to refer to formal change, fast and slow motion to refer to the temporal formal change. Even the methods of editing can create particular emotions (54). He writes thus:

> We might use the pictures as the camera has taken them, sixteen in a second. But in reproducing them on the screen we change the order. After giving the first four pictures we go back to picture 3, then give 4, 5, 6 and return to 5 then 6, 7, 8 and go back to seven and so on. Any other rhythm is equally possible. The effect is one which never occurs in nature and which could not be produced on stage. The events for a moment go back and forward. A certain vibration goes through the word like the tremolo of orchestra. Or we demand from our camera a still more complex service. We put the camera itself on a slightly rocking support and then every point must move in strange curves Anderso Rey motion takes an uncanny whirling character. (54)

It is only in the beginning of the 1970s that the concept of subjectivity in films has become serious part of the academic debates though it has been addressed in films. It is Jean Louis Baudry who explored the concept of subject by theorizing spectator's position in relation to the film apparatus so systematically though his concern was more on how film creates a 'ideological subject' out of the viewer. He is looking more into the subject's connection to the technical devices that make the film appear on the screen like theatre, projection and screen. He has argued that the technology of cinema has defined the subject as space and location on the basis of filmic

images. Different images define the spectator's spatial location on the varieties of its practices. For example still frames give the viewer an absolute point of view. He writes, "based on the principle of a fixed point of reference, to which the visualized objects are defined, it specifies in return the position of the 'subject', the very spot it must necessarily occupy" (Baudry 289). Film apparatus, Baudry says, creates an identification of the viewer with the subject on the screen. Here he takes the theory of Laccanian mirror stage and argues that screen functions as mirror. As mirror combines the fragmented body as an imaginary world of self, the cinematic apparatus, which Baudry calls the transcendental self, clubs the discontinuous remains of the lived life into comprehensive meaning. Baudry writes thus:

> Lacan's mirror stage confirms and reinforces the idea of the subject as a location defined by visual data. Regarding this point, cinema manifests its ideological nature, since it constitutes the 'subject' by the illusory delimitation of a central location […] It is an apparatus destined to obtain precise ideological effects, necessary to the dominant ideology: creating a phantasmatization of the subject, it collaborates with a marked efficacy in the maintenance of idealism Regarding this point, cinema manifests its ideological nature, since it constitutes the 'subject' by the illusory delimitation of a central location […] It is an apparatus destined to obtain precise ideological effects, necessary to the dominant ideology: creating a phantasmatization of the subject, it collaborates with a marked efficacy in the maintenance of idealism. (295)

Baudry's theory has been critiqued and interpreted by many scholars who came after him. Vivian Carol Sobchack has argued that it's not just the spectator but the film itself is a subject and also takes authoritative positions.

For film is a perspectival introspection on the everydayness of the self just as the spectator. So Sobchack writes "it is a dialogical and dialectical engagement of two viewing subjects who also exist as visible objects (if of different material and in different ways to be elaborated further" (23). Sobchack critiques Baudry for not accepting film as a form of subject. As a result, cinematic experience becomes an ideological act of forming subjectivity with passive spectator. She counters Baudry's argument that the subject is defined in Baudry's theory from the outside by stating that subject is also defined from within. Many theorization on first person shot as an intermediary position lead to the further discussions on the idea and subjectivity subtly involved in Film Studies. First person shot picturises the body in motion as a result it posits the dynamic nature of the subject. Since it shows the fragmented body it requires editing. So the viewer is constantly reminded to check the flashes of the shots to have coherent viewing experience. So subjects are not passive onlooker of events portrayed but an essentially alive subject that produce meanings.

The essay entitled *Cinematography,* written under pseudonym Yhcam, has looked at cinema as an art form that is able to represent mental process. It's an analytical exposition of what is going on in the mind of the characters in cinema. In the composition of scripts for the cinema the writer is in dilemma, for his characters can and cannot think. It is only through their manner of acting that they can deliver what is going on inside their minds. The writer has the freedom and resource to project clarifications for their act but such act leads to spectacle and it will break realism. So Yhcam says "the best thing would be to reach the point of being able to compose a completely intelligible film without any further explanatory spectacles" (75). Yhcam envisions 'the cinema as a new narrative mode of subjective expression whose technological means will serve to represent the inner life of fictional characters. He advocated soft focus images, super impositions in order to

materialize and objectify a characters state of mind. He never mentioned camera movements or editing techniques like dissolve or fade or cut in expressing the subjectivity of the characters' (75). Maureen Turim writes thus:

> Vision scenes were common in lantern slide shows from the 1860s through the turn of the century. Photo image techniques were used to connect an image of a character to a remembrance from his or her past. In all probability earliest flashbacks in films used this image with in image technique rather than an edited cut to past. This doubling of image could be achieved by a kind of double stage scenography which located the scene from the past in the background of the pro filmic scene, by using slides or filmic rear projections or by double exposing the image using mattes. (24)

There is a difference between Yhcam's and Munsterberg's approach to subjectivity in films. The cinematic means for objectifying the mental process of characters on screen for them differ. For Yhcam soft focus images, lighting variations are technically enough to objectify the state of mind of the character. But for Munsterberg camera movements and editing techniques are essential for exposing the subjectivity of characters. Moreover for him effectiveness of cinematic experience is based on the subjective experience of the spectator and film. But such position has overlooked the creative force and subjectivity of the filmmaker.

Ever since its inception, cinema has captured the interior-scapes of its subjects/characters. The intensity of this exploration has become more pronounced and explicit. Each shot is a convergence point for numerous consciousnesses and subjectivities. The subjective nature of shots is facilitated by multiple significations that each image-text embodies within it. Later

theorists have distinguished between the subjectivities of the spectator and that of the character. The filmic representation of experience and spectator's experience were explored individually as two different, but mutually overlapping entities. Subjectivity is the film's soul that communicates to activate the spectator's mind. The synonymous relation between mental processes and cinematic processes inform filmic theories and studies. Theorists like Henri Bergson has vouched for the comparability of memory and cinema as both are composed of a "series of images" (2). Emile Vuillermoz writes thus:

> ….thousands of tiny frames in a moving film strip act like the cells of the human brain: the same overwhelming rapidity of perception , the multiplicity of many faceted mirrors which effortlessly juxtapose the farthest horizons , suppress distances , abolish the bondage of time and space embrace all the Sardinian points simultaneously and transport us in a fraction of a second from one extreme point of the universe to another. (3)

The significance of the idea of subjectivity was so much so that it provided foundations for a new filmic theory, the spectator theory and the narrative film theory.

Thinking and theorizing about film have the history and age of the medium itself. Manifestos and reflections have come out even during the screening of the films in the beginning stage. Later such analysis and studies have paved the way for beginning of the discipline called film studies in Europe in 1970s. Thus film critics and scholars have explored the structures and semiotics of cinema. Critics like Bazin have postulated the objectivity of film as a medium. For him cinema is a making of objective meaning images because as a temporal accomplishment of photography, it's programmed or mechanic. Cinema is an automatic and objective representation of what is

existing in the world. He has never assumed cinema as a medium that reproduces the subjective ambitions of the characters and the intentions of its makers. Such perspective of cinema has led him to look at cinema as an objective medium that is out of the subjective impressions of the actors and the crew. But at the same time there are filmmakers like the Nouvelle Vague (working years) who see cinema as a subjective art form. There are signs of self-consciousness and personal impressions in films that rhetorically places an inclusive range of relative aspects with its own means. Such facets include the representation of characters' individual connection to the (un)real world outside. Now we are looking into the history of cinema to explore further how filmmakers have addressed subjectivity in their films across ages.

The question of subjectivity/consciousness has been an explicit object of fascination and exploration in films. Filmmakers across ages have addressed questions concerning subjectivity in their respective ways. According to Kawin and Bordwell "the most obvious stamping ground for the representation and exploration of the conscious mind has been the tradition of art cinema" (qtd. in Smith 45). One of the defining features of such cinema is its emphasis on the depiction of subjective experience. Art cinema has evolved the techniques by which the subjectivity of the characters can further very well be executed. It doesn't mean that such techniques are anathema or absent in the classical traditions of filmmaking but rather visible in certain periods and genres. The Lumiere brothers have represented reality at its best while neglecting the subjective side and avoiding its penetration to the screen. Their films like *Workers Leaving the Factory* (1895) and *Train Arriving at the Station* (1895) are attempts to reproduce reality on screen. These films ten no story. They replicate a place, time and atmosphere so that the spectators engaged themselves to perceive this reality rendition. However the movie, *Watering the Gardener* (1895), stands out with its authentic attempt of addressing subjectivity though unconsciously. Set in the standard tableau

style, incorporating simple images like that of a gardener watering a lawn and the gardener's questioning peer, the Lumieres film, *Watering the Gardener,* employs the chords of subjective perception. The decoders of this magnificent medium, are drawn into a world of subjective realism where the gardener's peer and spectator's subsequent intrigue set foundations for the myriad of characters whose ulterior realisms will come in a long chain of succession and of spectators who will be molded are re-molded to assimilate the on-screen personas. Unlike Lumieres, Melies incorporates fantastic elements to his films. The first dichotomy in the aesthetics of cinema can be seen between the films of Lumiere and Melies. Melies has stressed the knack of cinema to alter reality. His *Voyage to the Moon* (1902) is the best representative of his cinematic form of illusion. James Monaco writes "many of his films had the words nightmare or dream in their titles" (319). These differences between Melies and Lumieres have repeated in the films in the later films of them. Scholars consider Lumiere and Melies as originators of two different tendencies in filmmaking. These two disparate tendencies are replaced by the new transitional cinemas which are a bold step in articulating subjectivity.

The era between 1908 and 1917 in American cinema is generally referred to as the period of Transitional cinema. It has been called 'cinema of attractions' by Tom Gunning. This period has seen widespread changes in film form, genres, filmmaking techniques and screening. With the beginning of transitional cinema the formal part of cinema has become secondary to the narrative part. Story in cinema has gained prominence and psychologically credible characters are made integral to the narrative structure of the film. Transitional cinema has seen the birth of 'well rounded characters' unlike the one dimensional stock characters of the early cinema. Filmmakers during this period decreased the distance between camera and actors which emphasized the individuality and facial expression of the characters. Editing has been used during this period to accentuate the psychological intensity of the characters

and to externalize their outlooks and thoughts. Filmmakers even encouraged close cuts to engage viewers more in characters emotion. In the film *The Lonedale Operator* (1911) there is a change in the cut from a three quarter shot to a medium shot to expose the fearful expression of the telegraph officer intimidated by a thief. Editing is used more explicitly to convey characters' subjectivities. This period has also seen the emergence of point-of-view shot which is most closely associated with character' subjectivity. Filmmakers during this period also have endeavored various means of showing what characters saw. Griffith in his films has used cuts between the character's look and what they see though it's not an eye line match cut. It is transitional cinema that so analytically begin the odyssey into the protagonist's mind inspecting and analyzing the trauma and ecstasies that reside deep inside the character's mind. *The Abyss* (1910) in Denmark has inaugurated the portrayal of psychological trauma in Cinema. In the transitional period the psychological struggle of a character made visible on the screen for the first time. Janet Bergstrom notes that Asta Neilsen, actress in the film, "embodied individualized unconventional women who conveyed their entanglement within and their resistance to, an invisible web of confining class and sex roles" (qtd. in Pearson 26).The actress has been an active agent in the shift of cinemas towards conveying the psychological conflict. The movement from naturalism that characterized cinema of the times was visible. Her troubled claustrophobic subject was one that represented the suffocation that women of her times experienced in the patriarchal captivity. Close-ups were used to intricately absorb the agony of the subject. Films like *The Lonedale Operator* (1911), *Life of an American Fireman* (1902) have relied on editing to convey the inner complexities, a trait that was carried over to transitional cinemas. This convention is visible in films like *The Life Drama of Napoleon Bonaparte* (1909) and *The Empress Josephine of France* (1909). The period has witnessed close associations between character subjectivity and editing. In

The Lonedale Operator (1911)*, Enoch Arden* (1911) and other films, Griffith's technique of "showing" what the character sees helped to bring in narrative coherence in addition to portraying the inner turbulence. Griffith is credited with bringing formal sophistication to the medium, exploration of societal pressures, changing gender roles and so on. Through formal means Griffith explore the American self of 1930s. Roberta Pearson opines that 'he is perhaps most closely associated with the deployment of cross-cutting in his last minute scenes. She observes that his films exert a major influence upon the codification of editing devices such as cutting closer to the actors at the moments of psychological intensity' (30). Through cross cutting means Griffith has traversed into the hidden self of his characters so far unrevealed in the screens of Hollywood cinema. His formal means are effective ways of revealing characters persona to the spectators. With the character's "vision" gaining ground, the spectator has began to see life through the eye of the character. Munsterberg has observed that as the spectator follows the hero, we also become active agents involved in his fanciful imaginations. Films portray fantastic dreams and hallucinations along with visualizing memory and imagination (2011:33). He also emphasizes on more intimate performance styles, giving subjectivity precedence over every other cinematic element. His movies visualize what the characters imagined. According to Friedberg the narrative cinema that developed in America in the first half of the 20th century was more linked to the realism of the 19[th]century (Friedberg). Just as Catherine Belsey says subjectivity is a major concern of the classic literary realism. Early Hollywood cinema posited an autonomous subject which is rational, cognizant and a coherent individual. Classic Hollywood cinema after Melies has portrayed an Enlightenment model of subjectivity as done in the classic realist literature. Critics like MacCabe in "Realism and Cinema" postulates the link between 19th century literature and Classical Hollywood cinema (7). Classic Hollywood Cinema has underlined a coherent and a linear

narrative based on the Enlightenment notion of subjectivity which propagate the notions of causality, continuity and verisimilitude in classical realist literature. Such representation of subjectivity is visible in the depiction of characters in the frame. These films have used moving bodies. As Laura Mulvey writes "conventions of classical Hollywood cinema focus attention on the human form. Scale, space, stories are all anthropomorphic" (9). She writes thus: "….curiosity and wish to look intermingle with a fascination with likeness and recognition: the human face, the human body, the relationship between the human form and its surroundings, the visible presence of the person in the world" (9).

Such representations of humans are in the form of characters in these films. As Richard Dyer writes, "these characters are constituted by a series of qualities. These are particularity, interest, autonomy, roundness, development, interiority, motivation, discrete identity and consistency" (93). Narrative cinema makes conscious efforts to show that its characters are real and authentic. It also discreetly shows characters with thoughts, feelings and desires. Such characterization explicitly go hand in hand with Enlightenment notion of subjectivity. Cinematic conventions like close-ups and voice-over are used to construct character's interiority during this period. According to Dyer, 'point of view shot has been used to construct the illusion that characters in the films are subjects who are capable of having point of view' (121). Dyer continues, "this is one of the ways by which the construction of character as an apparently autonomous existence is achieved" (121).

American silent cinema in the 1920's has used narrative flashbacks as an artifice and has depicted the subjectivity of the characters with in a symbolic pictorial mode of representation.

Lois Weber, who succeeded Griffith, gives life to characters that were fully developed personas as opposed to easily comprehensible stock-

characters. Germaine Dulac is another major filmmaker who combined surrealistic and impressionistic techniques in her experimental films. She has associated herself with a group of intellectuals including Louis Delluc, Marcel L'Herbier and Marie Epstein. Her best known works are *La Souriante Madame Beudet* (1923) and *La Coquille et le clergyman* (1928). Her *Ames de fous* (1918) uses atmospheric effects to express an interior psychological state of female duality. She has employed wide-angled lens, repeated images and distorting devices to render the subjectivity of the central character. The externalization of the inner turmoil provided a new dimension to subjectivity. Dulac employs double exposures, superimpositions, masks and distorting lenses and gauzes to write a new cinematic language. She fabricates a language that is fresh and novel, one that expresses transgressive female desires. Epstein's application of children's subjective point of view in *Peach Skin* and *Heart of Paris* (1932) is a fresh start into the exploration of minds through a child's unfiltered perspective. Filmmakers like Abel Glance, Louis Delluc and Jean Epstein attempt to transpose mimetically on the screen the subjective mental process of memory, imagination or emotion which Munsterberg analyzed in his psychological study of cinema. Delluc's cinema *Le Silence* (1920) is one of the first cinematic attempts to address the stream of consciousness mimetically. Not only does it demonstrate the memories of the protagonist through disconnected, monotonous, and associative-subjective flashbacks that burst into the life of the protagonist, but also defines the working of his imagination through cerebral images which do not denote to any actual event, either past or present, but exclusively resemble to what the character envisages. Dellucs apprehends his whole film as an interior monologue of the character. He has thus transferred all supremacy to the subjective narrative than to external realities. British silent films have remained associated to theatre, stripped of the subjective accoutrements that now form a central part of American cinemas. French films also have largely

remained as metaphorical, pictorial replicas of the respectable entertainments. While American filmmakers scourged in the inner recesses of human minds for subjects, its counterparts remained complacent with being mere replicas or extensions of existing modes of art.

Silent films in the U.S have been principally a matter of comedy. The silent comedies have translated the political problems of the day. These films address the situation of an individual and his inability to cope with the industrial civilization and power politics of the times. The quintessential representative of the styles and concerns of silent comedy is Chaplain's tramp. The tramp is a spontaneous creation that not only catapulted him into fame, but also became a "universally recognized fictional representation of human kind- an icon both of comedy and movie themselves" (Robinson 84). The tramp has assimilated the turbulent experiences that Chaplain underwent in his own life. *The kid (1921),* a sentimental comedy is the poignant presentation of the pain that Chaplin himself endured as a helpless child. The tramp acts as Chaplain's own voice which critiqued the social injustices covered in mockery and humor. William Barret wrote that Chaplain "is the real subject of the movie", referring to his movie *Limelight* (1952), in his article titled "Chaplin as Chaplin". Not only does Chaplin represent his subjectivity, but also has incorporated the collective minds, the crushed spirits that yearned for peace and freedom in a fascist regime in his films. Ferlinghetti famously claims that Chaplain's tramp represented the free individual. He also adds that he represents the subjective in everyone. For him the tramp represents the eros, the love seeking, life seeking, pleasure seeking, free speech seeking spirit that is constantly under attack by the state. He defines the poet or the artist as a subjective being, free creative spirit that by definition has to be the enemy of state. (1991:41). Charlie Chaplains' *Great Dictator* (1940) has launched the idea of a spilt self, one of tramp and the other of a completely contradictory tyrant in films. It presents the audience

with two antithetical subjectivities acted out by two selves, one by the barber and other by Hynkel (both played by Chaplin). It is evident in the silent comedies of the 1920's that the edifice of subjectivity is not just matter of narrative or framing but something which is also close to acting. According to James Naremore "the job of mainstream acting is to sustain the illusion of the unified self" (5). Acting should establish the 'organic unity of the acted image'. Such Enlightenment perspective on subjectivity has encouraged to view the acted images of Charlie Chaplin and Keaton as true to life (2).

German expressionism has been looked as a radical break from the notions of cinema as life representation. It has explored the dark side of the human mind. It is more an intuitive look into human mind. It is a creative cinema movement originated in Germany in the 1920s.This filmic movement has attempted verisimilitude in the depiction of external reality through some formalistic means to expose the inner subjective experiences of its characters. It is an attempt to covey the very subjective in the 1920s Germany in 1920's.*The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari* by Robert Wiene is a truly brilliant work satisfying the conditions of expressionist techniques. Filmed in 1920, it's about Francis who recounts his life and experiences in a festival. He speaks about his experience of meeting Dr. Caligari, who can influence people while they sleep. A nightmarish enunciation of insanity, Caligari offered a visceral cross section of a troubled mind foregrounded by a grim dark and bleak ambiance. A pioneering work in horror which intrigued the audience with pinnacles of violence and insanity, *The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari* is a filmic adventure of revealing the horror of a conscious self in the early part of 20th century. Expressionism as a movement has questioned the stylistic and artistic elements of Modernism and employed the expressionistic/artistic tools to explore the relativity in perception, the disconnectedness between subjectivity and the real outside. The movements explore the situations of an anxious, uneasy and suspicious self in a world

affected by the war theories of the Europe. Techniques like exaggerated movements of the characters, the distinctions in the upper and lower metropolis are all filmic means used to explore the pure subjective experiences of self-affected by the anxieties of war. The use of settings to explore moods and "subjectivization of surroundings" as noted by Munsterberg to externalize the mental condition is an impressive feature used in expressionist films (2011:33). Robert Wiene has used bizarre sets and attenuated perspective to weave a macabre and chilling story that electrified the audience. Though *Metropolis* (1927) by Fritz Lang is not an expressionist film in its strictest sense, the film is a reaction of a self, affected by the chaos, tension and intensity of cities. The film picturises the tumultuous and tough periods of German history and expresses the distrust, disillusionment and isolation experienced by the self in that period. Expressionist films thus through its dark and jaggedly irregular images reveal the inner reality of the brooding and disturbed characters. The films of this movement collectively explore the macabre and the nightmarish part of personal subjectivity. Unlike in the classic Hollywood cinema where the characters are the primary means of expression, Expressionist films with its graphical compositions, stylized surfaces, canted angles and abstracted geometric forms have accentuated the disturbed internal turmoil of the lead characters.

Soviet Montage filmmakers of the 1920s on the other hand have developed a new approach to cinema that expose the contradictions of capitalist social structures and demonstrate more radical revolutionary social aesthetics. Films like *Battleship Potemkin* (1925) has attempted to depict the epic heroism of the masses through creative concurrence of incongruent imagery in dynamic and astonishing ways. These early Soviet filmmakers have believed in a unified social self, fractured by capitalist invasions. So they attempt a retrieval of the lost/colonized self that could be recuperated through revolutions. These propaganda films prioritize social variances over personal

stories. Editing techniques like montage have been used to bring out the collective communist social consciousness. They prefer a collective social psyche over individual self. They see characters as social agents defined by class interests and less psychologically motivated individuals. Characters in these films have stood for social subjectivity leaving all the concerns of the individual psychological self. For Vertov and Eisenstein cinema has to celebrate proletarian consciousness through the use of amateur actors and real locations. These filmmakers has used techniques like montage, jump cuts, elliptical editing and non-diegetic inserts to explore collective consciousness/subjectivity of a society colonized by capitalism.

The popular American cinema's emphasis on editing rather than *mise-en-scene* with its new performance style has led to the creation of individualized, well- rounded characters. American silent cinema has used narrative flashbacks to depict the subjectivity of characters in a symbolic pictorial mode of representation. 'They pervade the contemporary with the heaviness of the past, permitting an already subjectively rendered site to give way to another that is even more subjective. Memory is the locale that offers explicates or accounts for the "dark subjectivity" that the character is bombarded with in his present' (2011:36). By 1930s American cinema has colonized world screens. Between 1930 and 1946 history of film is the history of Hollywood (Monaco 327). Alfred Hitchcock has became the most influential and popular filmmaker in 194o's. He has refined the basic sense of political paranoia in films. His films can be seen as a reactions to the political insecurity and economic frailty that the country has been going through in the 30s. His films thus depicted the paranoid subjectivity which is very emblematic of the American society. His *Saboteur* (1942) is about the relationship between the individual and state in wartime. The film shows how one has to sacrifice one's self for state for absurd reasons. His films like *Shadow of a Doubt* (1943) and *Spellbound* (1945) and *Notorious* (1946) are intense personal exploration of the effects of the paranoia engendered by war. Alfred Hitchcock has begun his directorial ventures with *39 steps* (1935),

Sabotage (1936) and *Secret Agent* (1936). The horrendous and grotesque find a glorious niche in his films. The compulsive murderer in *The Shadow of a Doubt,* the struggle for survival in *Lifeboat* (1944), the psychological murder mystery in *Spellbound* (1945) exemplify Hitchcock's obsession with the with the psychological themes. Representation of paranoid fantasies has reached its peak with *Vertigo* (1958). The physical vertigo also manifests as a mental state, infecting even the spectators. The film rewrites the traditional aesthetics and dynamics of film spectatorship in the sense that it drives the spectator to the point of unease and dizziness. Hitchcock uses non-realistic depictions of events that supposedly occur in extra mental terrain. Technical interventions like painted sceneries and back projections are employed to give expression to the incongruous relationships between the reality and the unreal in Hitchcock.

According to Chateau 'film as a medium represents more than it depicts on screen' (3). Films represent the off screen existence of its characters without actually depicting them. This he calls 'the stretching of the medium' (3). Such a non-depiction may fall into the subjective realm of the viewer as it is in the receiver's mind that the character finds expression in Hitchcock's films. During this time filmmakers like John Ford (*Stagecoach*), Howard Hawks (*The Big Sleep*) through their tightly woven concerns and styles have addressed the existential angst of a cosmopolitan self. Jacques Rivette in his essay "The Genius of Howard Hawks" writes about the heroes of Hawks films thus:

> Heroes of his films pursue their goals according to a tenacious logic. This logic provides a proof that the body is a coherent whole harmoniously following the consequences of an action out of loyalty to itself. The strength of the heroes' willpower is an assurance of the unity of the man and the spirit, tied together on behalf of that which both justifies their existence and gives it the highest meaning. (131)

Rivette's position points to the notion of an Enlightenment subjectivity which purportedly categorizes an autonomous creator subject and autonomous and coherent heroes. Such polemics suggest that the classical Hollywood cinema inherits its concept of subjectivity from the Enlightenment.

The characterization of Marlyn Monroe has marked the culmination of female objectification and commodification in Hollywood Cinema. Though Monroe is treated as a mere sex-symbol, she is metaphorized a new subjectivity that craved to free itself from the hegemony and institutional incarceration. Her subject subverts the usual male expectations. It has emerged out of an intersection with "post –war hyper masculinity" and an unconscious urge for an altered femininity. Viewed with both awe and anxiety, her passion has reigned unbridled and untamed. She remains a "floating signifier for stardom" and a synonym for sexuality. She has acquired a home wrecker status and the identity of the 'other' that is maleficent. She becomes a femme fatale, obnoxious and condemnable. Her subjectivity has been underplayed as her sexuality is overemphasized

Though cinema is an aesthetic form that examines different magnitudes of the outside world, it has got its own customs of making public the inner world as well. Historicizing film studies shows that studies have given importance to images than sounds. Filmmakers like Sergei Eisenstein and Poudovkin have theorized about the link between images and sounds. Even Chaplin and Jacobson consider sound as important constituent of making films. Michel Chion has examined the importance of sound in films, the kind of effect they produce on the picture and narratives. He writes thus:

> The photogrammatic process only represents one of the five materials of cinematographic expression, besides voices, noises, text and music. Within the semiotic plurality of the medium, it seems that voices are a decisive component … for many

different reasons, they constitute an essential factor of talking film's discursive organization. This function is most obvious with voice over or when the voice is disconnected from the film's universe: It comments, narrates, gives us access to another environment, or helps us penetrate the consciousness of a character. (17)

Robert Bresson is supposedly believed to be the first filmmaker who subtly expressed the torments and obsession of one's consciousness without necessarily identifying with the main character. As a filmmaker, he doesn't crowd the film with his subjectivity and there is a Bressonian Style in his films which Deluze has called free 'indirect subjectivity' (Scemama 100). His films like *Pickpocket* (1959), *A Man Escaped* (1956) and *Diary of a Country Priest* (1951) let the viewers to experience the movements of someone else's inner experiences without ever putting oneself into someone else's position. There is a disjunction between body and speech in his films. His films don't stick sound to the bodies. Even the characters voices are not rooted in their bodies. But without empathy, psychological exploration or compassion he manages to mince out the characters subjectivity. In the opening scene of the *A Man Escaped* the protagonist's face or even his sound is not clear in the film. The world outside is revealed through noises. This sequence is not talking or silent. It is through the sound that the character picturises the place outside his prison cell. Nothing is seen in an objective way, all evidences come through the character's consciousness. He never uses point of view shots or subjective hearing, but brings out the subjectivity of his characters subtly.

With the development of sound, variation of stage musicals has emerged in cinema. The performers have directly looked in the camera and performed the songs. *The Wizard of Oz* (1939) is considered to be one of the

musicals of all times in Hollywood cinema. Musicals like *On The Town* (1949) have brought a fresh change in the film world. Jean Feuer in her article, "Spectators and Spectacles", notes that there is no direct dialogue between performer and audience in a musical (2002:242). The excesses of narratives and music are a much extolled trait of musicals. MGM, RKO and Warner Bros were important producers of musicals. Movies from *Easter Parade* (1948), *High Society* (1956), *Tender Trap* to *Moulin Rouge* (1955) share the same formula with a difference only in terms of technical sophistication. Music in itself in the film carried a subjectivity of its own. Musical films have embodied a double subjectivity- one that the music provides and other contributed by the narrative. Munsterberg's idea that cinema is an art form of the mind particularly suited to express subjective process finds a better echo and illustrations in the impressionistic films in the French avant-garde. These films are often expressions of the mental state of anguish, ennui, or desire. Images are transmitters of emotional charges, sculpted to convey the fusion of external environment and inner states of mind. Mise-en-scene and camera angles portray the interaction between the subjective states of the characters and the atmosphere they inhabit. The objective world is subsumed in a subjective response to it. In this context flashbacks have played a key role in expressionist films. They infuse the present with the weight of the past, allowing an already subjectively rendered site to give way to another that is even more subjective , in that it is constituted as a memory image. 'If subjectivity is the site of these fictions, memory is the site that offers explanations for the dark subjectivity one experience in the present' (Turim 66-67).

The view of 'cinema as an art form of the mind that express the private in the self' (2011:36) resonates well with the impressionistic films in the French avant-garde. These films are often expressions of the mental state of anguish, ennui, or desire of a being in a postwar scenario. Images are sutured

together to transmit the fluid and spectacular configurations that different minds take. A counter current that developed with the breakdown of Hollywood studio was the French New Wave. Also called the Nouvelle Vague, it had in its helm the titans like Claude Chabrol, Francois Truffaut, Jean-Luc Godard and Alain Resnais. Their cinemas have addressed the young audiences more than any other traditional forms. The fragmented structure of the film is congruous to the fragmented souls they represented. Godard's first film, *Breathless* (1960) is shot in natural lighting. He has abandoned the strict structures and usual Hollywood formulas to bring about strong political articulations. The free spirit confused selfhood of millions of young adults got an expression in the 1960s explosion. French New Wave can be seen as a kind of practical illustration of the ideas and theories of *Cahiers du Cinema*. Existentialism has been a major influence on French New Wave. As a philosophical movement existentialism advocates the importance of individual choice and an authentic sense of subjectivity born out of free will. They question the preordained role of a subject dictated by the rational order of the society (Nottingham 2). As influenced by this movement, filmmakers of the French New Wave have addressed the relevance of individual in a society affected by fascism. In Truffaut's *The 400 Blows* (1959) this existentialist dimension is so evident. The film interrogates subjective experiences of Antoine and the relevance of his life and sense of subjectivity in Postwar France so as to question the rational narratives of that time. Though the society sees his behavior as delinquent, the filmmaker gives a very blatant attack on such moral standards by encouraging the spectators to look at the contradictions of such morality through Antoine's consciousness. Godard in *Pierrot le Fou* (1965) explores the disenchantment of a self in a bourgeoisie society. Through artificial lighting and one dimensional sets Godard brings out the stifling experience a being goes through. He uses a red

filter shot to convey the "real life banality of consumerism" as seen by the character Ferdinand to show how people are thinned by consumerism.

Under the influence of the French New Wave, German and American cinemas have absorbed its traits. The notions of classical Hollywood paradigms subjected to major changes especially after 1960s. During this time university educated filmmakers like Martin Scorcesse and Coppola have made films that question the classical notions of cinema. 1970s have witnessed the rise of New German cinema heralded by Jean-Marie Straub, Danièle Huillet, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Wim Wenders, Werner Herzog, and others. Fassbinder's films can be seen as intense studies of the marginalized in the society. His films explore the subjectivities of the weak, (ab) normal, bisexuals and criminals. His films are clear cut divergence from the ugly moralizing sensibilities of his contemporary filmmakers. His films echo the feelings of rejection and alienation. Through austere and minimalist style, he questions the repressive economic miracles of West Germany. He has been called the most important subjective filmmaker in the history of cinema especially in his exploration of his own sexuality in consummate bluntness. Through his idiosyncratic styles he questions the normative logic of the mainstream cinema. His characters are from the margins. His film *Love is Colder than Death* (1969) is a subjective statement on loneliness, desire for companionship and fear of betrayal. Alienated characters who are unable to escape from the forces of exploitation people his films. The characterization of Jorgos in *Katzelmacher* (1969) is an exploration of the subjectivity of a nomad. The theme of betrayal is often recurred in his films. His films echo the subjectivity of a betrayed German self. Franz in *Gods of the Plague* (1970) is betrayed by his own lover. His films are completely outside the customs of cinematic realism. Unlike other filmmakers in Europe who adapted realist novels, Fassbinder has made genre films countering the gangster films of Hollywood. Through his films he has tried to explore the inner world in which

the characters confront each other. He dislikes the idea of searching locations and refused to see the locations before he begins his films. Thomas Elsaesser writes thus:

> One of the characteristics of his work, which furnishes proof of his political acuity and testifies to his sense of history, is precisely this subtle but pervasive awareness of representation always generating a space of media-reality. Two distinct moments are implied: first, Fassbinder never pretends to be giving us people as they 'are', but as they represent themselves, be it as the image they have of themselves or the image they want to give to others. Second, all social reality in Fassbinder already bears the marks of the (mass-) media, so that in each instance the medium has its own material force and does not simply function as a transparent vehicle. (23)

Subjectivity has also been explored and addressed in avant-garde filmmaking. This structural filmmaking, which is essentially a replication of the minimalist art of the 1960s has been looked at as metaphors of consciousness and examples of self in crisis. Filmmakers like Jonas Mekas, Michael Snow, Andy Warhol and Luis Bunuel foregrounded experimental, radical and unorthodox perspectives on art and culture. They question the statusquo both in art and life. Michael Snow's *Wavelength* (1967) was a contemplation of self-consciousness itself. The formal structure of the film instills a contemplative thought in the spectators' mind about human self-consciousness. The film uses stammering zoom not just to represent the objects and occasional events but conscious subjectivity itself which captures particular objects and events. Through drastically minimizing what we normally see and cognize through consciousness that cinema addresses consciousness/subjectivity. Filmic style of slow motion is one such attempt in the film to see what is missed in natural

speed (Smith 46). Such cinematic review of subjectivity/consciousness is not just the feature of avant-garde cinema alone. Popular cinema has also tried to address the subjectivity in its narratives.

Many contemporary science-fiction films employ many aspects of subjectivity in different forms. Films like *Jaws* (1975)*, Star Wars* (1977), *Sex Lies and Videotapes* (1989) and *Pulp Fiction* (1994) have inaugurated a post-classical turn in Hollywood cinema. These films both thematically and structurally moved away from the classical axioms of coherence, continuity and verisimilitude. Elements of this cinema demonstrated the concern of postmodern subjectivity. Ridley Scot's *Blade Runner* (1982) explored the existential angst of a 21st century subject who can't rely on memory. The protagonist of the film is continuously troubled by the fact of death and losing his consciousness. American filmmaker Terrence Malick in his films has been using voice –overs to perform certain narrative function and for giving a dense insight of the motif and subjectivity of the characters. In the film *Badlands* (1973*)* the character Holly uses voice over to share with viewer her thoughts on the events shown in the narrative. *Days of Heaven* (1978) employed a young female voice over of Linda, protagonist, to express her naïve perspective of the events happened. He uses voice over to represent the subjectivity of the characters by which a psychological layering can be provided   to the characters which would be otherwise absent. Malick also employs flashbacks in his films to delineate the subjectivity of a character who performs in the cinematic present. Mike Nichol's *Who is Afraid of Virginia Woolf* (1966) is an important film when we discuss the concept of subjectivity in films. The movie is a clarion call that marked the beginning of a new era where the lines between reality and fiction blurred like never before. George and Martha, protagonists in the film, 'invent' a son who is not only a figment of their imagination but also an unfulfilled manifestation of all their desires. The film is succeeded in the projection of fragmented

postmodern subjectivities that wish to attain stability and coherence in the silver screen for the first time. The mercurial and volatile postmodern self is well addressed in the movies of the 1990s. Though the word postmodern has been used in philosophy and arts in general, postmodern cinema has been understood as micro narratives with several layers which have to be cognized with varying degrees of attention. The space/time continuum gets blurred due to the intrusion of memories and intertextual references in these films. The postmodern cinema has a high affinity for a spectator as an active participant of the complex language games that the uncertain narrator forces him to follow. The spectator not only sees what happens on the screen, but he is also aware of the fact that he is seeing she also notes that intertextual and hyper textual streaming are defining characters of postmodern cinema. Each frame becomes a point of conjunction for multiple narratives and various digressions. The digressions propel postmodern cinema. Esposti observes that the process of communication supersedes the content of communication in postmodern cinema (3-16). The force of the narrative does not get attenuated. It instead gets amplified. As a result a segmented, reconstructed time evolves in the spectator's mental trajectory whose visibility is magnified multiple times. Due to the presence of shifting narration and de-centering, the text becomes a multi-vocal one. Just as Linda Hutcheon observes about postmodern fictions, narrations in the film is either discerningly multiple and hard to locate or resolutely provisional and limited-often undermining their own seeming omniscience" (277).

Memory is a very delicate and a common theme in postmodern cinema. Theorists like Frederic Jameson have commented that the postmodern world's obsession with memory is due to a lack of memory of its own (Esposti 12). Postmodern films obsession with memory is an attempt of relocating their lost consciousness. This has led to an assemblage of films where replication of the past gives birth to a multiplicity of signifiers which

recurs in the characters in non-extinguishable manner. *Memento* and *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (2004) are two postmodern films that engage seriously with time, memory and subjectivity. Both these films have explored what is subjectivity without memory and history.

Classical Hollywood films are master narratives of dominant ideologies and hierarchy in arts. They were texts of easy signification and rationalization. They are based on dichotomous or bipolar value systems functioning in the context of the rigidity or fixity of the self and uniform identity. Early Hollywood films are grounded in the objectivity of knowledge and centric subjectivity that lead to the conclusion of monolithic reality. They are manifestations of brokered realism with the possibilities of alternative realities. Postmodernist films, on the other hand, have challenged many Enlightenment notions like objectivity of knowledge, fixity of the self/centric nature of subjectivity, bipolar construction of values and uniform identity, hierarchy of art and monovalent reality. Postmodernist films like *Lost Highway* (1997), *Mulholland Drive* (2001) and *Inland Empire* (2006) have celebrated decentred/fragmented subjectivity. They deconstruct the dichotomy of reality and illusion on the one hand and admit the possibility of intuitive/subjective knowledge on the other. They also entertain a fantastic idea of fabulation that challenged the Cartesian co-ordinates which determined the nature and meaning of constructed realities/subjectivities. Postmodernist films have three major characteristics. First, they are a pastiche of different genres and styles. This means that postmodernist film narratives are transgeneric and intertexual. They are an amalgam of different genres and texts. Second, the postmodernist films are self-reflexive. Self-reflexivity in films means the relation of a constructed image in the narrative to other images in the same narrative. It also connects the constructed images in the medium to other images in other media, verbal and visual. This interrelatedness of the image is self-referential. Third, postmodernist film

narratives deconstruct the hierarchy of high and low culture or high and popular culture. They also deconstructed the grading of knowledge, styles and media. They rule out the validity of value judgments based on monolithic reality and explore the possibility of polyvalent reality based on different types of experienced knowledge. In postmodernist films contradictions of all kinds are relevant. They expose the contradictions in values, styles, methods, techniques and realities and leave them as irreconcilable.

Presentation of the female subject sees revisions as women entered the directorial arena in the early 21ˢᵗ century. The era has seen the revitalized depiction of female subjectivity where the usual surveillance of the female body by the "patriarchal panopticon" is subverted and questioned. Jane Campion's *The Piano* (1993) is one such telling example where Ada decides to remain mute to insulate herself from succumbing to societal norms. Though the "to-be-looked-at-ness" remains attached to her body, she exerts her agency in a patriarchal world my preserving her supreme control over her body.

Aberrant psyches, typical notion of postmodern subjectivity, is found an important niche in the contemporary Hollywood cinema. The deep, dark inner recesses of human minds loomed as an all-pervasive subject matter around which cinema centered on. The depiction of the uncanny, according to Pere Salabert refers to a mental state that arises from the gap between "the subject's inner world" and the objective world (Chateau 16). He points to the depiction of phenomenon like "depersonalization" in movies like *The Night of Iguana* (1964) and *The Dead Man* (1995) that renders an uncanny situation. Threats to inner-outer worlds of the subject culminates in weakening of the self's identity or depersonalization. Such a depersonalization, the *unheimlich* as Freud puts it, may arise from a mental disorder or from an uncanny situation (74). Psychological thrillers use objective observational realism and

subjective realism either separately or in combinations. Subjective realism is used to represent dreams, hallucinations, altered states of consciousness and mental disorders.

Darren Aronofsky in his films like *Pi* (1998), *Requiem for a Dream* (2000), The Wrestler (2008), *Black Swan* (2010) have dealt with the intricacies of a postmodern self. *Black Swan* conceptualizes the turbulence of an aberrant mind placing at centre stage, Nina's ballet performance. All his films are informed by the protagonist's search for perfection, which can also be understood as a search for a coherent self. His films are visceral representation of an atypical subjectivity which gets a manifestation through a projected double, a schizophrenic self. Frederic Jameson writes about the experience of a schizophrenic self thus: "It is an experience of isolated, disconnected, discontinuous material signifiers that fail to link up into a coherent sequence. The schizophrenic thus does not know personal identity in our sense, since our feeling of identity depends on our sense of the persistence of the "I" and the "me" over time." (7)

With the emergence of cyborg, there emerged a new subjectivity of in-betweeness. The cybernetic organism partly resides in a virtual domain and occupies a liminal space. Garfield Benjamin theorizes thus- "The gap between physical and digital worlds is thus formed as an irreducible gap of consciousness. …formulation of the cyborg, as such a gap, spanning the two perspectives of physical and digital reality within one functioning consciousness" (ix). The blurring boundary between human and non-human subjects has been explored in movies like *Blade Runner* and *The Terminator* …where cyborgs are considered as miscreants or agents of destruction. While some movies emphasize their in-betweenness some show them as entities without memories and identity.

Christopher Nolan is a filmmaker who comes in the long tradition of filmmakers who addressed subjectivity questions in their films. His are narratives of alternative realities and metamorphosing multiple subjectivities. As specimens of postmodernist filmic narratives, they dissolve the boundary between the rational and the fictional and perplex the audience with a spectacle of ambiguous and polyvalent experience. His films are polyphonic and dialogic which incorporate the fantasy of dreams and the ambiguity of space and time. He is a British-American film director and screenwriter. His films include *Following* (1998), *Memento* (2000), *Insomnia* (2002), *Batman Begins* (2005), *The Prestige* (2006), *The Dark Knight* (2008), *Inception* (2010), *The Dark Knight Rises* (2012) and *Interstellar* (2014) and *Dunkirk* (2017). Nonlinear narrative structure, flashbacks, philosophical and sociological ideas, identity crisis and fragmented subjectivity, self-deception, unreliability of the human memory, meta-fictive elements, ambiguous endings and morally ambiguous characters are some of the major characteristics of his films. Nolan's films also incorporate elements from existential philosophy. Nonlinear storytelling and flashbacks are employed in *Memento*, *Batman Begins*, *The Prestige* and *Inception*. Nolan's protagonists experience identity crisis and fragmented subjectivity. Nolan's films have an urban setting with the protagonists on the run seeking redemption. The line between reality and fantasy is blurred in Nolan's film and his protagonists are put in a difficult situation. They often prefer fantasy to reality and become vulnerable to self-deception. The viewers also find it difficult to distinguish between fantasy and reality in his films. Nolan has tried to engage the scientific, psychological and cultural issues of contemporary man. His films question the concepts of reality and subjectivity and leave the viewers bewildered. In this context, Nolan states: "I think audiences get too comfortable and familiar in today's movies. They believe everything they're hearing and seeing. I like to shake that up" (*USA Today*). Nolan's filmmaking style is influenced by the film genres like noir, sci-fi, psychological thriller and crime drama. Obsession, deception and guilt often form the central themes of his films. Nolan has

blended scientific, psychological and film theories into his filmic narratives. He makes use of theories of different schools ranging from Freud to Lacan, Einstein to Hawking and Godard to Kubrick, in his films. He has created parallel worlds of dream and reality in his films and tried to show their interconnectedness. His films show a radical transformation in his career: he has developed from a conventional realist filmmaker to an experimental postmodern auteur. He prefers to use circular narratives rather than the surface artificiality of animated films or the surrealist appeal of kitsch visual cultures. He tries to create a critical distance between his filmic world and spectators. This is accomplished through unconventional spectacles, but not the ones created by computer graphics. The lexis and opsis of his films are conventionally created and not technologically simulated. His films portray the existential predicament of the contemporary man, especially in the context of his cultural dilemma. Nolan believes in the distinctive quality of his films. Though they are a genre by themselves, he refuses to confine them within the parameters of a genre. Nolan argues that genre is fetish; it codifies and ritualizes the patterns into a rigid set. In such contexts, according to Nolan, the power of impact and the signification of the film cease to be completely functional. He wants to create contemporary equivalence of tropes or events, past and present, real and imagined. There is a complete integration of reality and illusion in his filmic narratives. So the audience fails to recognize the contradictions in their experience: they may take the world they see and live for reality. But this is not the situation of the characters who are confronted with the perspectives of reality. If the spectators identify with the characters, they experience different kinds of reality: one from their identification with the character and the other from their identification with other audience, a kind of double identification. Nolan always emphasizes the postmodern possibility of multiple and fragmented subjectivity in the universe as well as in the fictive multiverse. The next chapter explores further how Christopher Nolan addresses subjectivity in his films.

Chapter Three

Subject of Knowledge/Subject of
Desire: Subjectivity in the Early Films of Nolan.

Nolan quite comprehensively deals with questions of subjectivity in the early films of his career. His philosophic visions in these films are put into the epistemic shoes of its protagonists/characters. An extensive analysis of how he employs cinematic means to communicate subjectivity of the characters in these films and how he discredits the Cartesian notions of self and explores further the existentialist notions of subjectivity through his unconventional characterisations, have, thus, been a serious concern of film researchers. Todd McGowan's notions of self as subject of knowledge and subject of desire are used in these analyses of characters and the *mise en scene* that Nolan uses to demystify the Enlightenment notions of epistemic self and establish a postmodern ontic self of desire. Heidegger's existentialist notions of authentic and inauthentic selves are also resonated to expostulate Nolan's treatment of subjectivity in his early films.

Born to an American mother and a British father in London on 30 July, 1970, Christopher Nolan spent his childhood both in America and in England. Nolan displayed extraordinary interest in filmmaking from a young age and used to shoot videos with his father's super 8 cameras. As a young man interested in film making, he is influenced by the dystopian films of Ridley Scott and George Lucas's *Star Wars* trilogy. After completing his graduation in English literature from University College, London, he has ventured into full-time direction, making corporate and industrial training videos. Simultaneously, he has been working on his first feature film *Following* (1998), which took him 14 months to complete. Just as his films, Nolan was detached from the public space. He rarely gave interviews and was close to Kubrick, his major influence that way. In his interview to the *Hollywood Reporter* he says thus:

I don't want people to know anything about me. I mean, I'm not being facetious. The more you know about somebody who makes the film, the less you can just watch the movies-that's my feeling…I mean, you have to do a certain amount of promotion for the film, you have to put yourself out there, but I actually don't want people to have me in mind at all when they are watching the films. (Fienberg 2015)

Just as Alfred Borden warns a young boy about the dangers of revealing the secrets of the magic in *Prestige* "they will beg you and they will flatter you for the secret, but as soon as you give it up, you will be a nothing to them. You understand? Nothing. The secret impresses no one, the trick you use it for is everything", Nolan does not want to reveal the secrets behind his filmmaking. He always favoured an undisclosed self. He finishes his film without final answers and much philosophical positions that contradicts any ultimate and inert position. He always wanted to sustain the ambiguity of the ending in his films. The spinning wheel at the end of *Inception* is a typical case of the flexible philosophic perspective of Nolan's films. This particular shot has generated serious debates and discussions on what it means to be that suggestive spinning of the totem? He adds further why he is ambiguous in an interview for the *New York Times* thus:

The only way to be productively ambiguous is that you have to know the answer for you –but also know why objectively speaking. If you do something unknowable, there is no answer for the audience, because you didn't have an answer. It becomes about ambiguity for ambiguity sake. There has to be a reality in the film. If you don't have rules, then what I am doing would be formless. I feel better with consistent rules. (Lewis –Kraus 2014)

As a filmmaker Nolan is an unconventional storyteller who supposedly uses shaky narratives in his films. Paradoxical combination of lie/truth is used in

his complex narratives as an ontological method of constituting truth. The world depicted in his films is a disturbed and a fallen world. He uses fragmented and fallen characters to explore his philosophy of the world and self. His characters live in a world of lies and illusions. Protagonists in his early films are suffering from paranoia. His films are structured as lies and characters in his films face an epistemological gap. The obsessive compulsions of his characters are leading them to their own doom. Deceit is a common and often recurrent theme in his early films. Nolan's films echo the philosophical and scientific debates of the century.

Nolan's first feature film *Following* is about a person who experiments extraordinarily to be a creative subject. It is about a struggling subject, an aspiring writer, the Young Man (called once Bill in the film), who walks around the streets of London, following strangers, in order to get inspiration for his new writing. In the beginning, he follows all kinds of people, but later, zeros in on a well-groomed, handsome man in a black suit. Knowing that he is being followed, the man confronts Bill. The stranger introduces himself as burglar named Cobb. Bill tells Cobb that his name is Bill. Cobb allows Bill to follow him around and study his life style. Bill is fascinated by Cobb's life. Cobb is not interested in the material stuff that he steals from his victims. Instead he has a passion for the shock and sense of violation burglary generates in people, which force the victims to re-examine their lives. Young Man, inspired by Cobb, begins to imitate Cobb and attempts several other burglaries. He takes a fake name, Daniel Lloyd, from one of the credit cards that Cobb gives him. Young Man falls in love with a Blonde, who was the girlfriend of a gangster- Bald Guy. Bald Guy blackmails Blonde with some inappropriate pictures of her in his possession. Bill breaks into Bald Guy's house to retrieve the pictures. He is caught in the act by an unknown man. Bill stabs him to death. Bill escapes with the pictures, but they were just photos from the Blonde's modelling days. When confronted she reveals that she and

Cobb tricked him into mimicking Cobb's burglary so that he could arrest suspicion with regards to the murder. Cobb wanted the suspicion to fall on Bill who was a copy of himself. Bill goes to surrender himself to the police. Blonde tells Cobb about her success. But Cobb tells her that the whole thing was planned by Cobb and the Bald Guy to kill the Blonde, and the story about the murdered woman was a made-up story. Cobb kills the Blonde with the same bludgeon used by Bill to kill the unknown man at Bald Guy's house. Bill is accused of murdering the Blonde and the police arrest him and Cobb vanishes into the crowd. As a neo-noir thriller, the film was a success in the festival circles.

The film is shot over the course of a year with minimum budget and majority of the crew were working in different firms and the film was shot only in weekends. His preoccupation with the narrative structure, the films fractured time line and characterisation, testifies Nolan's interest in the new school of independent cinema that experimented with narratives. Through the extrapolation of the narratives, Nolan has creatively pitched issues of subjectivity in this film. As a psychological drama *Following* is a journey into the conscience of his characters. Playing with time, memory and identity, Nolan has dealt in detail with the psyche of his characters. Steve Soderbergh writes thus: 'Nolan's cinema takes you inside the central character's experience' (Bowles 2002). Stuart Joy writes: "characters in Nolan's films frequently struggle to define themselves beyond the narratives they communicate to others" (11). Bill who follows others in *Following* is confused about who he is. Such identity crisis in Bill points to the fragmentation of a subject so far established in cinema and other narratives as a rational individual who establishes himself/herself by solving a crisis that s/he is into. Bill is an existential self who lost the meaning of his existence and who tries to find the rationale of his existence. Todd McGowan calls such existential self as subject of Knowledge (40). According to him "Subject of

Knowledge refers to a self that seeks to learn about a world in front of it. It believes that world is out there to be seen by a knowledge subject" (41). Subject of Knowledge believes in the correspondence theory of truth which argues that "truth consists in the agreement between the represented object and the nature of object in the world" (McGowan 186). *Following* questions such belief of correspondence theory and demarcates the failure of a subject of Knowledge in its belief that truth can be reached through rationality. The character of Bill exemplifies how a modernist self in the 20th century is fragmented by the failure of reason he believed in.

Following is a distinct film of Nolan in terms of its production. It is made over a number of weekends while he himself and other crew members worked regular jobs. Just like every other film of Nolan, *Following* raises some serious questions on the subjectivity of a 20th century human being entrapped in his/her own obsessions. Film begins with a series of close-ups to reveal the obsessions of the protagonist. Close ups on pair of hands or small objects reveal the inner moorings of the character. Film also shows a box which is so mysterious. Such a mysterious box functions as the inner self of Bill. It is the collected conscience of his past life. Bill has the habit of following others to in order to learn about their real life buried under their performative lives. He is a typical subject of knowledge who believes in the myth of understanding the objects and situations outside through one's cognition. He seems like a Freudian who believes that 'real' truth of a person lies in their hidden activities and secret possessions. He is also a person who invests himself in the project of uncovering truth, a continuation of Enlightenment project. His search for truth establishes his subjectivity. But such subjectivity puts him in a trap in the end. Search for truth in the secrets of others becomes his own trap. Bill is a subject of knowledge who believes that a truth about a person can be known from the search of his secret behaviours. There is something there in his secret behaviours to know about

his self. Nolan questions the notions of subjectivity as wholeness and the shades of subjectivity has got nothing to do with context in which a being is situated.

Bill in the film is a writer who is not employed-a person who walks through the crowd to sense the crowd and to know them. He follows those people whom he feels interesting. It's his inclination to follow others that makes him interested in some persons and he is driven by his personal motives. Choice of following others is his personal/subjective choice. But he is found by a person whom he followed which leads to the building of a companionship between the two and they join hands together for minor thefts. Meanwhile Bill develops an affair with a woman, Blonde. Bill breaks into Blonde's early fiancées office and it leads to the murder of Blonde. When the film ends he confesses the truth about the murder to the police, though what he says is a lie. There is a split within Bill between the subject of enunciation and the subject of apathy. Bill becomes a person who invests himself in the act telling truth which is not true. The box of secrets shown in the beginning of the film drives the consciousness of Bill and it completely takes over him. Here the box functions as a metaphor which Plato calls 'agalma' (1997: 457). Agalma is the secret cache that a subject possesses and that which attracts the attention of others. It's this hidden knowledge of secrets that attracts Bill to others.

The secret box, shown in the film, also functions as the essential kernel of Bill that constitutes his subjectivity. The box functions as the collective unconscious of him. It's the totality of Bill's past. As a subject of knowledge, Bill thinks that he can understand the character of a person whom he follows by looking closely into his/her present behaviour conditioned by the unconscious past, now preserved as memory. But Bill terribly fails in this attempt and becomes a victim to such a perspective. Nolan thus establishes

the failure of a subject of knowledge who believes in the theory that a person can be understood by examining his past now potentially collected and preserved as memory. Bill reverberates what Cobb says "everyone has a box . . . sort of an unconscious collection of a display . . . each thing tells something very intimate about the people. We are privileged to see it. It's very rare" (Following). When Cobb looks through the box, camera is focussing on him, not on the object he looks at. Camera never zooms to the object that he looks at; rather it zooms in to the character who looks at the object. Film thus reiterates Nolan's obsession with his character's inner self. The angle of the camera very consciously keeps away the desire of the spectator to see what the objects in the box are. Bill's failure is the failure an enlightened self who believes in one's own rational impressions. "He accepts what he sees. He fails to think through his own engrossment of what he thinks" (McGowan23). Nolan very suggestively shows the subject's involvement in what is seen in the film. The film uses Bill's voiceover to explain the meaning behind the act of following others. Nolan executes this by editing together Bill's voice and the image that he shows. He states: "Other people are interesting to me. Have you never listened to other people's conversations on the bus or the tube, seen people, seen somebody on the street that looks interesting or is behaving slightly. . . . oddly or something like that, and wondering what their lives involved, what they do, where they come from, where they go to? " (Following). Bill is what he sees. Act of seeing is an act of constituting his self. When Bill describes a person who walks in the street, film shows the movement of Blonde. When Bill pauses, Nolan employs a reverse shot in which Bill is looking at the woman entering the restaurant. Such a reverse cut establishes the subjectivity of the follower; here it is Bill's, not Blonde's. He is the product of the act of looking not just what he sees. McGowan writes thus: "By emphasising the subjectivity of the follower this way, the film makes clear that what the follower sees is not simply there to be seen but is

also a product of act of looking" (24). His failure to understand his actions is the result of a script laid out for him. Though Bill feels that he is moving on with his jurisdictions, he becomes a pawn in the hand of Cobb. Nolan thus shows the predicament of a modern subject who lacks an authentic subjectivity. Bill is a failure in understanding the plot designed for him. The rationality that he attributes to his selections and choices is chimeric and becomes unconsciously a victim of his own (in) authentic decisions. 'Authenticity' comes from a German term *Eigentlichkeit* which means the possession of what is really one's own and what really belongs to one. What make an authentic self is the possibilities that it has and can pursue. For Heidegger, self is inauthentic when it loses its possibilities. According to him inauthenticity consists of two parts: fleeing from one's own possibilities and the forgetfulness of one's own possibilities. Forgetfulness of possibilities means the state of not doing what is expected of a self. Inauthenticity is something that blocks self from discovering and creating possibilities. Authenticity is a persuasion against forgetfulness, temptation and ignorance (Heidegger 69). Bill's act of following others can be seen as an authentic exploration of possibility. But when such an act of following others becomes the consequential act of Cobb's plan, he falls to be an authentic self or becomes a subject who flees from the authentic act of establishing one's identity.

Even the very act of finding the key in the first break in with Cobb itself is part of a plot designed for Bill. "Finding the key is a part of Cobb's script. Bill cannot see it because he fails to grasp how the world that he sees includes him within it and anticipates his involvement, even though he experiences this involvement as the product of his own free act" (McGowan 25). There is a break in Bill between himself and what he sees. In the film for the subsequent break in, Bill shows his own apartment to find out the secret of his being which he himself doesn't know. Nolan, thus, through such

suggestive reactions of Bill, postulates the fragmented self of Bill who is unable to decipher what happens around him though he consciously claims he is the master of all his actions. But when Cobb looks over his rooms and values the objects there he says: "There is all fuck here" (Following). He concludes that the person who lives here is "a sad fucker with no social life". Such reactions confound Bill. "The despondency that Bill shows in his reaction to Cobb's comments unveils the failure of Bill's understanding of himself" (McGowan 26). His sense of self is completely taken away by Cobb's perspective of him. *Following* can be seen as the predicament of a person who sees oneself through others' sense of subjectivity. Cobb becomes a mirror image for Bill where he sees his subjectivity as divided. Nolan thus establishes the split of a subject in his failure of understanding his own participation in the situations/things he sees. All his attempts in the film like the act of following, encroaching apartments, relationship with Blonde, are his methods of finding his real self, the very foundation of himself. He is a person who inherited the Enlightenment notion of truth and reality as a teleological end. But he fails to understand that the very essence of his self is in the act of following itself.

Martin Heidegger in his *Being and Time* explores human condition and the predicament of a being situated. He examines different elements of human concern, identity and temporal nature of existence along with indeterminate surety of death that overlaps in everyday life (52). According to him an authentic existence looks at death as individual's most potential possibility. Death is not an end but a significant and anticipated goal towards which choices becomes so relevant. Awareness of death is a moment of recognising ones individuality (27). The awareness of death as one's ultimate possibility will relive the self of the sober anxiety of individuality. Bill, in following others, is living a life conditioned by others. It is through following others that he establishes his subjectivity. He cannot establish his own life. According to

Heidegger, "The primary phenomenon of primordial and authentic temporality is the future" (378). But sense of past is essential for establishing an authentic self in future. Such authentic sense of past is absent in Bill. He is a person who cannot rely on his memories. Past is almost absent in his present self. Nolan establishes his inauthentic subjectivity by three distinct timelines and cuts, though all are narrated by Bill himself. These three narratives can be differentiated by Bill's appearances. These three narratives are telling accounts of his inauthentic self and existence. He sticks his subjectivity to a dark-suited man named Cobb and an unnamed Blonde and executes their ideas as his own. It is the boredom and loneliness that force him to follow other people. The act of following was not an authentic choice. It was a just an inauthentic act from him to escape his own fragmented self.

According to Erin Kealey 'Nolan structures *Following* in a way that is anecdotal rather than chronological' (221). Each part is structured as if in a jigsaw puzzle linked to other pieces. Each intercut in the film functions as an individual yet interconnected story line. Hesitation is common feeling of Bill used in the film. When he explains at the station he hesitates as if he doubts his existence in the story. Such hesitation is very symptomatic of the gap that he feels in himself. He reports the influence of Cobb has got over him. Bill appears to have no sense of subjectivity in the film. He constructs his subjectivity only in connection with Cobb and Blonde. He introduces himself by the name on the theft credit card (Kealey 221). The anonymity of Bill in the film is a structural encoding that vivifies the identity crisis that Bill experiences. The screenplay of the film never mentions the name Bill in the film except for one time.

Heidegger has explained conventionality and routine behaviour as expressions of inauthentic selfhood (43). According to Ortega Gasset 'human beings are not static forms of beings that they should discover a project of

existence to establish their subjectivity' (156). The greatest dilemma that Bill faces in the cinema is whether he should develop his self or should depend on others to develop his sense of selfhood. Even Cobb himself looks at Bill that way. When Blonde speaks about the violation of secrecy by Bill, Cobb says "nothing personal, he couldn't help it. He is a born peeper" (qtd. in Kealey 222). Cobb refuses to see any identity in him. He even distances his actions from the subjectivity of Bill and establishes the inauthenticity of his existence. In fact both Cobb and Blonde develop their sense of selfhood by cheating Bill.

According to Kealey 'Nolan attributes an impersonal trait to all the major relationships in the film' (222). Though the film has been reviewed as a serious exploration of the meaning of existence, he never explores more on the character of Bill by placing him in a larger context. Many critics have pointed out the absence of establishing shots in the film. Critics like Erin Kealey points out that such absences indicate that Bill has no view of who he is at any given moment (222). Such absences also point out the subjectivity of a person who is completely away from the context in which he lives. Thus Bill is a person having a sense of self without historical awareness and memory.

The film has been taken from Bill's perspective, though ironically he does not have a perspective of his own. Camera is blindly following his perspectives in the film. So as Kealey says even his occasional wanderings are captured from Bills circumspective involvement. The visual limit that Nolan employs in the film is exactly the cinematic rendering of the mental status of Bill. His fractured and limited subjectivity is visually explained in the minimum use of external images using establishing shots or wide angle shots. He also establishes the inauthenticity of Bill through associating him with other personas. There is sticker at the front door of Bill's Flat. He uses

the image of Batman just to bring out the stark contrast he has got between himself and Batman (McGowan 23). Batman is a figure that shakes people from their everyday apathy. But Bill is that sort of person who sacrifices his identity and subjectivity for someone else's game. There is also an image of Marilyn Monroe on his wall which is very symptomatic of his situation. Just as a Marilyn Monroe who left his invidious identity for the sex symbol persona, Bill here leaves his private self for Cobb's sake. Cobb is like a modem day capitalist who exploits the poor with their consent.

Just like the character in Stanley Kubrick's film *The Shining* (1980)*,* Cobb says "Bill has allowed himself to be our man" (Following). Such association can easily explain the lack of identity in the character. According to Kealey 'it becomes a display of his own unconscious collection to illustrate his personality' (223). Bill is represented as an inauthentic person with impersonal identity. Image of box that appears at the beginning of the film plays an important role in the narrative of the film. The secret content of the box suggestively refers to the past that people carry along with them. The secrecy behind the content of the box establishes the intimacy of it to the people's nature. The secret box represents their past. Consciously or not people carry it to the present and it influences their vision of present and future considerations. Bill conceals his past and he even sheds his identity for the immediate without personal loss. He has no sound impression of his past life. As a result nothing much is awaited in the present or in the future. He is completely blind to the directions in his life. As result he falls a victim in the hands of Cobb and he is exploited by ulterior motifs of Blonde. Even before Bill is finally caught, Cobb had made his intentions clear that he is not going to get caught. Yet Bill is not able to decipher the implied intentions of his comment. According to Heidegger true personal insight germs from the knowledge of the future for individual existence (65). He has no such awareness. His subjectivity is completely conditioned by a false myth of

following others. His (in) authenticity derives from his association with Cobb and the Blonde. He takes his existences for granted. Cobb breaks into his life and steals his self-hood. Only at the hours of doomsday that Bill realises that he has falsely assumed his actions as his own choices. Rather than establishing his identity, he becomes a decoy in the hands of Cobb which is necessary for him to vanish the uncaught. Erin Kealey writes thus: "Bill cannot see himself in his own situation. An authentic view of the future would anticipate such relations and see how apparently distinct events inform each other, but Bill's inauthentic view waits for others to reveal the hidden order of things" (226).

Bill's inauthentic temporality is characterised as a lack in Bill. He is unaware of the plans of Cobb. The choices of the past are no longer available as possibilities in the present and future. In the film the anonymous Bill is losing himself in the subtle machinations of Cobb. He feels an empty identity in himself. He brings Cobb into his own flat to fill the emptiness he felt in himself. He wants his existence to be classified on the basis of his property and the material conditions of his existence. Bill asks Cobb when he notices an ancient typewriter. Do you think he is a writer? To which Cobb scoffs: "If he wanted to write he would have a word processor. He doesn't want to write, he wants to be a writer - and that's two. Completely different things" (Kealey 226). Such superficial involvement establishes the inauthentic subjectivity that Bill suffers from. An authentic subject would engage in relationships and commitments depending on his/her own individuality rather than playing on someone else's fancies. But Bill exists only as what Cobb envisions about him. According to Kealey "existence toward one's own ending shapes authentic selfhood" (227). But he cannot frame such an authentic self because he is obsessed with finding real answers in other's revelations. According to Heidegger, "authentic subjectivity is like a big you-are-here sign that maps the surrounding environment, exposes where an individual has been, and

indicates the direction that the individual is going toward a personally ultimate destination" (65).

In his early films, Nolan has used non-conventional narrative structure in his films. Existential situation of a human being in the 20th century is not sequential. So Nolan has employed more dynamic and fluid narrative to address the overlapping temporality and indeterminacy of life. His early films deal with themes like temporality, space and memory. *Following* is about the predicament of a person who fails to have authentic memory which is the typical modern predicament of existence. Thus *Following* is a critique of a Modernist subject who lacks an authentic subjectivity built on memory, history and context. Nolan has employed different timelines giving every shot a past and future significance. Though he speaks about himself as a follower, he couldn't identify the relevance of his action. According to Kealey authentic selfhood has a concerned involvement in the present, an acceptance of the limitations of the given past and an understanding of the possibilities of the finite future (228). The authentic sense of his self and its temporality would have liberated Bill from his clinging engagement in the activity of *Following* and would have revealed such an in authentic act of following as "illusory and destined to fail in the end" (228). Bill never establishes an authentic perspective of his own. Without an authentic selfhood and no context to understand the whole of his subjectivity, he was unable to build a meaningful and conscious sense of himself. He was manipulated to the extent of changing his appearances and behaviour. He was made part of a murder in which he was not involved. This was made possible because of his lack of the sense of temporality. He turns to be an object of deceit. Even though initially he states that he is supposed to follow random objects, he leaves his self-made rule for Cobb and Blonde. Thus the film establishes a foundation for his narrative techniques and his complex temporal presentations continue to challenge viewers to think about the generally accepted but derivative chronology of

events in standard plots (Kealey 229). Peter Deakin writes thus: Nolan's films are driven by a deep-seated desire to satisfy the so-called masculine malaise in which it will be understood that he offers his male anti-heroes the fictional means and pathways to untruths to transcend the limitations of their fractured male existence (85).

Following represents two kinds of villains, archetypal models that recur in his films. First is a kind of yuppie villain (Deakin 86), a capitalist Cobb. Bill's identity becomes fractured and doomed in the film because he assimilates his villainy. He steals a credit card and assumes a co-yuppie identity both in materiality and desire which leads to his final doom. In fact *Following* is about what follows when patriarchal cords are broken and fractured. The theme of alienation and individuality arises from this fracture. Kobena Mercer writes thus: "identity only becomes an issue when it is in crisis, when something assumed to be fixed, coherent and stable is displaced by experience of doubts and uncertainty. From this angle the eagerness to talk about identity is symptomatic of the postmodern predicament" (64). In this sense *Following* is a postmodern cinema that problematizes the identity of a man who inauthentically follows a capitalist moron. As a filmmaker who is born into the circumventing anxieties of greed and good yuppie idealisms, the ornamental culture in Nolan's films echoes the larger postmodern concerns of masculine subjectivity in crisis carries. He explores in *Following* what it means to be a masculine subjectivity in a postmodern world. He problematically concludes the crisis that has its root in feminine and capitalist desires. *Following* thus propounds the political position that one's identity can be adjusted and maladjusted to create a new sense of subjectivity (Deakin 87).

According to Fran Pheasant-Kelly "a consistent preoccupation of Christopher Nolan's films is the psychological afflictions of their male protagonists, who variously experience flashbacks, hallucinations, amnesia, or

hyper vigilance and whose signs of emotional damage often stem from grief or guilt" (99). Psychologically disordered characters are a recurrence in Nolan's films. Such representations of masculinity signify the unstable mental state of 20th century protagonist. Nolan's films are a charade with fractured and fragmented subjectivity. The mental breakdown that the characters face is a recurrence in the narratives of his films. As Will Brooker says "Nolan's authorial interests in psychological drama, his recurring themes of fear and memory and his characteristic experiments with narratives have now become established traits of postmodern subjectivity" (22). His representations thus speak about the crisis of a masculine subject contextualised in the 20th century. Trauma is a continuous theme in his films and his male protagonists are traumatic. It's not just a 9/11 aftershock or nightmarish reflection but an explicit rendition of contemporary subjectivity. As Roger Luckhurst says "trauma in Nolan's films disrupt memory and therefore the traditional sense of identity and subjectivity" (11).

The film *Following* has employed two villains. The first villain of the film is an embodiment of the malefaction of greed. He steals a credit card and assumes the identity of another person and his desire for a fitted suit and tie. He encapsulates the other persons' festishistic desires and material cupidity. It's this greed that leads him to his final doom, theoretically the breakdown of his subjectivity. In this film Nolan places a dead female body that initiates the action in place of a living hero. Nolan has employed theme of individuality, alienation, the duality and alienation that a character undergo. Deakin writes thus "His films are concerned with identity; its transformation and reinventions and its fracture and disjunction" (87). Nolan's films need to be discussed in the context in which it is being made. Nolan's films are made in a period of yuppie idealisms, ornamental culture and the so-called feminisation of labour (Deakin 87). Deakin writes thus: "*Following* places the idea that neither women nor capitalism can be trusted and with those

femininity or soft masculinities often in imbrications. Alongside that, one's identity can be adjusted and maladjusted to invoke a new sense of self" (87). As a film released in the context of postmodern culture that challenges the traditional notions of subjectivity and selfhood, Christopher Nolan's *Following* interrogates many questions concerning subjectivity and initiates postmodern sensibility in addressing the questions concerning subjectivity. In spite of its postmodern contexts the film echoes Heidegger's philosophy in addressing the predicament of an existential self that lacks the authentic sense of future. Bill is an existential 20th century being who lacks authentic sense of past and futuristic sense of possibilities.

As a follow up to *Following* in 2002, Nolan directed *Insomnia*, a psychological thriller set in the Alaskan wilds. It was a retelling of the 1997 Norwegian film of the similar name. The film pivots around two LAPD detectives, Will Dormer and Hap Eckhart who are sent to investigate the murder of the 17 year old Kay Connell in Alaska. In Alaska, Eckhart tells Dormer (played by Al Pacino) that he was offered an immunity deal by the LAPD if he testified against Dormer in an internal investigation. Dormer was being investigated for fabricating evidence to trap a man who was he suspected in a murder. Dormer creates a situation to catch the suspect in Kay's murder. However the suspect escapes into the fog. The police chase him and one of them gets shot in one leg. Dormer sees a figure in Eckhart and shoots in the fog thinking that he is the suspect. Dormer finds the suspect's gun in the woods which is a .38 pistol. Fearing that he would be blamed of killing Eckhart (because of the on-going investigation), Dormer updates other policemen that he was attacked by the suspect. Ellie Burr, a young detective, is asked to investigate Eckhart's murder. Meanwhile, Dormer suffers from bouts of insomnia because he feels guilty about Eckhart's death. Dormer replaces the bullet in Eckhart's body with a bullet from .38 pistol. The police finds that Kay was an admirer of a detective fiction writer named Finch. The

police go to Finch's apartment to catch him. But he escapes. Dormer plants the .38 pistol at Finch's house. But Finch calls Dormer and threatens him with the fact that he saw Dormer murdering Eckhart. Finch asks for Dormer's help to shift the suspicion from himself to Kay's abusive boyfriend Randy. Burr finds a 9mm bullet at the crime scene. Going through old case files, Burr realises that Dormer uses 9mm pistol. Finch gives false testimony against Randy and plants the .38 pistol in Randy's house. Dormer tries to save Randy, but he is too late. Randy gets arrested. Dormer realises that Finch plans to kill Burr because she found Kay's letters. In the final fight between Burr, Finch and Dormer, the men get shot down by each other. Dormer dies asking Burr to let him sleep while he dies.

As a film that is contextualised in the detective attempts of two Los Angeles men to investigate the murder of a local teenage girl, the film also explores the Dormers effort to provide evidences for convicting a paedophile. He is afraid of the fact that bureaucratic forces and their red tape will undermine the case. As a re-creation of the Norwegian film, *Insomnia* can be considered to be one of the key films in Nolan's body of work to engage with themes of trauma and memory, which are central concerns of his films (Joy 143). According to McGowan "Nolan has transformed the unrelenting pessimism of the original into a typical Hollywood moralistic thriller" (68). The film is about a police detective who in the process of investigating a murder, murders his partner accidentally. He covers up the murder resorting to more and more subterfuge. The protagonist Will Dormer is suffering from insomnia which results from his feeling of guilt. His name is so suggestive of 'sleep' (dormir). Nolan represents the psychological trauma he faces through the disruption of the linear chronological order of the narrative. The opening scene itself shows the traumatic temporality that he faces. In the opening scene dark red blood oozes out and spreads through fabrics of white thread. Then the film shows the effort of an unknown person in removing the blood

stains. According to Stuart Joy "the blood-stained fabric represents the traumatic memory that returns to the conscious self of the protagonist" (135). The seeping blood is a metaphor used in the film to suggest the irrepressible guilt of the protagonist. The time scheme of the film is so close to the way time functions in the protagonist's subjectivity. The repetition of the bloodletting motif is very suggestive of the mental agony that Dormer is going through. Bloodletting motif is very suggestive of the self in crisis. Dormer is a post/modernist self who fails as a master of all meanings. Jonathan Culler observes thus:

> Post/modern self is broken down into component systems and is deprived of its status as source and master of meaning. It comes to seem more and more like a construct. As a result even the idea of personal identity emerges through the discourse of a culture. The 'I' is not something given but comes to exist as that which is addressed by and relates to the other. (33)

The failure of Dormer as a detective and the final turn out of him as the murderer points the very constructed nature of self and reality. Though Dormer begins as a detective he ends as a killer though it was falsely charged on him. As a subject of knowledge Dormer engages himself in the act of finding culprits behind the murder. He continues the Enlightenment expectation that the reason and its logic will bring the knowledge of 'real'. He begins as a subject of knowledge who believed in the cognitive potentials of his intellect to uncover the truth behind the murder. The insomnia of Dormer is a break in the cognitive potential of his self. Nolan has used traumatic memory as a theoretical tool to expose the fragmented subjectivity of Dormer. As a subject of knowledge, he is not able to decipher the killer behind the murder. He fails terribly in his rational pursuits when he is made to believe that he has killed Eckhart, his detective partner. Like his other films, Nolan

has used identity, guilt and deception in *Insomnia* to expostulate his theories of self. Dormer is very like a Hollywood hero, who is determined and (ir)rationally equipped to resolve in the project he is entrusted to. Irrespective of all crises a conventional macho hero will furnish the act which he is into. The traditional Hollywood cinema is result-oriented and so it is linear. Nolan breaks such linearity and questions the linear sense of temporality and spatiality and problematizes the Hegelian notions of teleology. He places his heroes in utter chaos and confusions and victims of situations and period. Such enunciation is to explicate the crisis an existential self is going through. Nolan challenges the very identity of Dormer in *Insomnia* as a successful detective. He questions even the semiotic significance of his name as a person with insomnia. As a rational being he is unable to move forward and become a victim to so many irrational incidents. Insomnia shows the subjective mental state of Dormer as trapped between the transitional state of waking and sleep. Nolan has used Insomnia as a motif to elucidate the fragmented status of his subjectivity.

The film *Insomnia* marked Nolan's entry onto Hollywood cinema, though he continues his stylistic innovations in the film. The film has been reviewed as cautious entry into the studio systems of Hollywood. According to Stephen Hunter, "both in his first film, *Following* and in his break out hit *Memento*, Nolan showed an edgy creativity and willingness to bend the rules. . . . but in *Insomnia* he seems overwhelmed by the budget, the ego of the stars, the thinness of the script, and he does not impose much personality on the picture" (2002). Such criticisms emerge from the critical position of looking at *Insomnia* as a Hollywood version of a European cinema, which is more critically suggestive. In spite of such criticisms, Nolan has kept several key narrative points of the original. But as a creative director Nolan uses his artistic licence to explore differently the trauma of a person who kills his partner. But Nolan is more potentially invigorating when he eludes the

intentions of Dormer in shooting his partner. The film is so ambiguous about the motif of Dormer in shooting his partner. This ambiguity makes the film more complex, unlike its European original. This ambiguity has got a lot to do with the subjectivity of Dormer. The film never elaborates the subjective details of Dormer. It just establishes him as a troubled being. Stuart Joy writes thus: "The undercurrent of an internal affairs investigation alluded prior to the death of Eckhart is allowed to permeate the narrative adding another dimension to the film previously lacking the original" (133).

Though *Insomnia* is stylistically varied from other films on Nolan, it has similar preoccupations with the themes that generally recur in the films of Nolan. Very creatively the film discusses about time, identity, guilt and self-deception. Unlike his other films like *Memento* and *Following* that engaged the 'general psychoanalytic outlook' explicitly, *Insomnia* discusses these issues so subtly. In the first scene of the film, Nolan establishes the central theme of the film. Through a serious of close-ups the spreading of dark blood on the white fabric is shown. Then the film shows the ariel shots of the landscape interspersed with the motif of oozing blood. The visual space between these two shots creates a liminal state (Joy 135) of consciousness and unconsciousness. The ariel image of the glaciers suggest, the subjective mental state of Dormer which is blocked between conscious and unconscious states. The first sequence of the film ends with the effort of an unknown man to rub away the stains of blood that fell on his shirt cuff. The film uses fast cuts and the significance of such shots is revealed only in the later elaborations of the shots. Between these moving shots there is a visual association established through intercuts. Camera switches from Dormer, analyzing the crime photos to the effort of an unidentified person to remove the blood stains. According to McGowan "it is a common editing technique that is used in many detective films" (81). At the end of the film we come to the realisation that the unidentified person is nobody other than Dormer

himself. McGowan continues thus:"It is this type of casual linkage that is seemingly present in the opening sequence, which deceived the spectator by operating at the level of the deceptive cinema" (82). Such structural innovations are not just to develop spectatorial fantasies alone. But Nolan has used conventional detective logic of searchers versus the sought.

He, then establishes how Dormer fails in it and finally the searcher and the sought becomes one. The filmic text is so ambiguous even in the final shot where Dormer is falsely convinced of the murder of his companion Eckhart. The film thus questions our conventional notions of truth and reality. Dormer is not in his rational sense. He is insomniacal. Text is less interested in exploring the motives behind Eckhart's murder. It also doesn't seriously delve into the psyche of Dormer. All that the text explicates is that his subjectivity is fragmented and, thus, as an inauthentic being he cannot be trusted. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* Freud writes:

> ….explores trauma as a historical wound to discuss how mind responds to the traumatic events. Mind develops a special membrane to limit the stimuli of the person concerned. Organisms float about in an outer world which is charged with the most potent energies, and it would be destroyed by the operation of the stimuli proceeding from thugs world if not were furnished with a protection against stimulation. (30)

According to Freud every traumatic event breaks the protective membrane of consciousness. He writes thus:

> Such external excitations as are strong enough to break through the barrier against stimuli we call traumatic. In my opinion the concept of trauma involves such a relationship to an otherwise efficacious barrier. An occurrence such as an external trauma

will undoubtedly provoke a very extensive disturbance in the working of the energy of the organism, and will set in motion every kind of protective measure. But the pleasure principle is to begin with put out of action here. The flooding of the psychic apparatus with larger masses of stimuli can no longer be prevented: on the contrary, another task presents itself - to bring the stimulus under control, to bind in the psyche the stimulus mass that has broken its way in, so as to bring discharge of it. (34)

Insomnia deals symbolically and structurally with the concept of trauma through the motif of blood oozing out. Freudian trauma as bodily wound is explicitly shown in the bold motif scene. The blood oozing scenes have their structural relevance when it is associated with the Dormer's past. Symbolically it points to the breakdown of the membrane of consciousness of which Freud referred to. The opening scene can be seen as the explication of Dormer's subjective mental state. The mixing of a turbulent plane sound and images with Dormer construing evidences are consciously done to expose his traumatic subjectivity. The filmmaker has used Dormer's insomnia as a symptom of his fragmented subjectivity. He does (not) murder and engages in all sorts of efforts to hide it. But such efforts become symptomatic of his neurosis. Stuart Joy writes thus: "Though Nolan abandoned overt pro-filmic manipulation of narrative time lines associated with *Following* and *Memento*, in structural terms, *Insomnia* can still be understood in terms of how the narrative explores the mechanisms of traumatic memory" (141).

Insomnia's relationship to trauma and memory can be seen in the narrative structure of the film. Nolan, through a deceptive narrative structure evokes the crisis Dormer faces in his life. McGowan writes thus:

The structure of the credit sequence perpetuates a similar deception in the fans relationship to the spectator. The juxtaposition of the bloodied white fabric and the plane flying over the Alaskan wilderness leads spectator to associate the fabric with the crime that Will is going to investigate, not with his own act of fabricating evidence. In this way, Nolan links the necessary lie of the police investigation with the deceptiveness of cinema. (82)

Through this deliberately edited visuals, Nolan structurally communicates the impossibility of trusting memory, which Maureen Turim calls "lying flashback" (168). Flashbacks are conventionally used in cinema to reiterate a narrative truth. Here Nolan uses flashbacks as a strategy to reveal the fragmented subjectivity and the necessity of distrusting Dormer's reflections. Nolan writes about the importance of this scene as a commentary available on the films DVD release:

It is crucial to the understanding of the narrative and what the narrative of the film represents because to me, at this point, you realise that you are really seeing the last act of the story, not the whole story and that everything that is really going on with this guy (Dormer) relates to something that happened before the film even began. That to me was a very interesting notion narratively speaking. ....beginning the film with this bloody imagery and coming back to it at this point heels get that across. (qtd. in Joy 142)

The film has used flashback to narrate Dormer's past. But that is done with subjective point of view shots and images from a third person point of view. Accordingly, spectator is positioned in Dormer's place and experience the trauma that Dormer experiences. Though *Insomnia* is a deliberate turn way

from the independent productions he has done, there is a thematic continuation and preoccupation in the film. There is a parallel between Dormer attempting to remove Eckhart's blood from his shirt and the beginning shot of Dormers attempt of rubbing away the stains. In both these acts there is an attempt of denial of truth and this scene so systematically communicates the trauma of Dormer. Just as Primo Levi writes in *Survival in Auschwitz,* it seems better for Dormer of 'having no memory at all' (16). He owes a fragmented self, due to his memory of his killing of Eckhart.

The troubled identity is a recurrent theme in the films of Nolan. Nolan's characters are fragmented/wounded either psychologically or physically. Sometimes physical wounds are very suggestive of the psychological wound his characters have. Such physical and psychological fissures   problematize the Enlightenment notions of self and subjectivity in Nolan's films. His characters are either psychologically disrupted or their sense of self is effaced by trauma. As Kwasu David Tembo writes "The disruptive effect of seemingly unameliorable trauma in Nolan's protagonist ultimately presents them to the viewer as unreliable mediators of aesthetically and narratalogically complex sequences of events" (201). Anterograde amnesia in *Memento*, guilt driven *Insomnia* and inability to distinguish between conscious and subconscious realities in *Inception* are Nolan's semiotics of explaining the disturbed subjectivity of his characters. In all these films the narratives and innovative aesthetics centralise the psycho-emotional dissonance, multiplicity, non-linearity, paradox and overarching fracture in a way that reflects the hypostatic themes of guilt and psycho- physical trauma experienced by all his protagonists (201).

His next film *Prestige* deals with the performative nature of subjectivity. The film narrates the story of two magician combatants-Alfred Borden and Robert Angier. As magicians they have professional rivalry and

they hunt each other's secrets and chastise each other. They simultaneously strive to be successful by destroying the other. And in such attempt they lose their wives. They die at the end of the film as a result of the same rivalry. Nolan uses the concept of 'double' to explore how subjectivity is performed. He uses the binary of reality/illusion, appearance/actual and change/permanence to explore the performance of subjectivity, though he never positions himself with any sides. The film discusses in detail the existential reverberations of the mechanical reproduction of self. Magic, thus, becomes a thematic platform for Nolan to delve more into the poetics of postmodern subjectivity. Through the image of Jess who believes in the vanishing trick of Cutter, Nolan initialises the conflict of reality versus illusion. Jess's wonder is set against the rationalist and the empiricist impulses to denigrate the concept of illusion. But later such impressions are counterpoised with the image of Sarah's nephew. When the magician smashes the cage where the canary is caged, he cries. When the magician reveals the canary, he asks 'where his brother is'? Through these two reactions, Nolan critiques the whole history of western philosophy that engaged in reality-illusion debate.

Borden in the film is a magician who is able to perform illusions. He always doubles himself in the performance. He is able to protect this plurality of his self by so dedicatedly performing a single identity. 'As magician he eschews all organic expressions of his self and by diligently conjuring his past he becomes another self' (Tembo 203). Nolan has used magic as a metaphor that stands out there representing a postmodern self. Canary also represents the double or the uncanny self of the other which is smashed by the magician. The paradox of the canary image is that each canary is unidentifiable from the other, which leads to the false thought of predicting each canary as unique and authentic. Fallon performs as Borden's identical twin. They complement each other and stand in place of each other. Nolan suspends Borden's individuality

and distinctness to the extent that the viewers are confused to see which Borden s/he is perceiving at a given time. As Tembo writes, "the troubling of subjectivity in *Prestige* is resolutely maintained in that the Borden seen at the conclusion of the film neither confirms nor denies Angier's assumption that the Bordens were in fact twins is accurate" (214). Though the film performatively purports the singular sense of subjectivity in the case of Borden, it is just an illusion and Nolan cinematically challenges the inclusivity of such illusion through the medium of magic. *Prestige* challenges the Enlightenment notion of an organised and unquestionable self with inconclusive illusion of the single/double subjectivity in the art of magic. The doubled self of Borden is evident in the argument that his wife makes with him. She yells and says "I know what you really are. Alfred" (*Prestige*). Kwasu Tembo problematizes Sarah's use of the word 'what' instead of 'who'. He also interpretatively comes to the suggestion that she committed suicide because she came to know the double in Borden. She hangs herself because she can no longer writhe the torment of experiencing half a life, half a lover and half a marriage with two identical yet distinct men sharing her life, her trust, that takes turns loving her and being able to tell the difference in what should be the intimate declarations of love that both men present to her, whose veracity varies from day to day (205). As it is essential for magic, the doubling of self is established in the film for Borden. In order to be a successful magician he can establish his singular identity only through this doubling effect. He can be singular and authentic in magic only by dispensing his ideal and authentic identity in life. He can perform the series of transported man without the death of the illusionist as a single and unitary subject. Kwasu Tembo writes thus: "Through the doubling of self, and using doubles to maintain the illusion of a single identity, Nolan establishes the subjectivity of an inauthentic double self which is in a state of perpetual crisis in the modern west" (207). Douglas Kellner writes thus: "From the

postmodern perspective as the pace, extension and complexity of modern societies accelerate, identity becomes more and more unstable, more and more fragile" (233).

Angiers in the film constructs his double and destroys it immediately after the performance. In this act of constructing and destructing his self, he no longer exists as a unitary and authentic single self. His subjectivity is rather hyper real. Through this mechanical process of self-production, Nolan destabilises the Heideggerian notions of authentic self or the modernist demarcation of original and copy differences. Man becomes a machine and the magic produces the contents over and over again and there is nothing that limits its production again and there is nothing original in these productions that unarrest further reproduction. There is no transcendent essence that defers the process of in authentic reproduction. According to Kwasu David Tembo machine is an apparatus that simultaneously demystifies and mystifies the self. It writes and erases the self at once. It reproduces and destroys the self simultaneously (207). Eventhough there are many possibilities for Angier's to reproduce self through the work of machine, he come to the knowledge that machine can't give her any solace in the pain that he suffers. Every reiteration of Angier's senses "an inexplicable void, stemming from the fact that he has been volitized, stripped of his reality, his life and his voice" (Tembo 208). According to Tembo, 'Machine and the double it produces in *Prestige* alienates that which is being reproduced from itself' (208). Angiers has lost his complete sense of self in the film. He couldn't distinguish whether a man is on the stage or someone buried in the box. He seems lost to himself. Though he loses himself and his subjectivity miserably fails, the images of his drowned wife come to his mind. He couldn't even escape this trauma even through the mechanical reproduction of his other self. The process of doubling was Angiers attempt of cleansing his memory and a way of escape

which Tembo calls 'existential cleansing' (208). But such reproductions lead only to some concrete homologues not to some heterogeneous identities.

Angier views magic as a way of existential escapology. When he is shot by Borden he says: "You never understood, did you? Why we did this? The audience knows the truth-that the world is simple. Miserable. Solid all the way through. But if you could fool them, even for a second, you could make them wonder. Then you got to see something very special ….it was the look on their faces" (Prestige). Tembo write thus:

> We should be careful of thinking of the double as a sign of the thing itself, namely unified and singular subject. The double is a supplement of the absence of a subject that can no longer be encountered in any singular way, a subject that is delayed and deferred through the mechanical process of its doubling. The doubles are thus self-sufficient, as well as supplementary. As such after the work of the machine is initiated, identity, personhood and subjectivity are all splintered. The only trace that can be encountered is the trace of diffused essence through the performance of self. (211)

Prestige brings out the idea that magic is possible only through the figurative and literal sacrifice of the self. In the process of mechanical reproduction the machine has restructured identities. It has redefined identities into multiple ones. According to Tembo "Nolan's use of the double suggests that the subject construed in any unitary, authentic, or essential way is infinitely delayed or displaced" (211). *Prestige* was released in the year 2006. As a film that concerns with the themes of modernity, uncertainty and facades of subjectivity, it explored the life of two magicians who compete with each other to perform best illusion through disruption and deception. The stage performances of these two magicians communicate the historicity about the

growth of science and its after effects. Though magic/science has been used as a weapon to energize the everyday performances of the magic of the duo, thy fall into depression and obsession. Though audience is overwhelmed by its oeuvre, they lose their sense of self and authentic subjectivity. They become double to themselves. Though audience believes illusion, they fall victim to their illusionist techniques. As magicians who knows the trick behind magic, they couldn't accept each other's technique. Angiers in fact tries to understand the secrets behind Borden's 'Transported Man'. Angier's and Borden represent modern man who is disillusioned with modernity and its accompaniments. Borden himself is a double in the film. He performs as the magician and also as the assistant of Fallon, who is costumed flamboyantly. Uncertainty is an important theme in the film. Though Angiers cannot escape the guilt feeling of the death of his wife, the film never makes the exact agency behind her death clear. The film explicates the magical life of two performers who sacrifice their life for performance sake. Angiers dedicates his life under the name, "The Great Danton" to become the best magician in the world. Both magicians in the film work hard to establish themselves as magicians who perform superior techniques. They are completely driven by their project and are obsessed with it. They are unable to derive the authentic reason behind their performance. Their fixations encumber them from finding meaning from other sources. The disillusionment with the present and the sense of subjectivity split they encounter is the crisis of an inauthentic self.

For McGowan "Borden and Angiers represent two sides of the magicians" (104). As a magician, Borden is able to create illusion and believes in the fact that the success of a magician depends on his sacrifice. But Angiers is a show man who knows how to sell his tricks to the audience. As a magician he prefers audience's reaction over the act of magic itself. He believes that it's in their reaction that there is something that transcends the illusion. At the lukewarm reception to Borden's "transported man", he

bellows: "He is a dreadful magician". He even reacts to his mentor's reaction that Borden is a wonderful magician by saying "He is a dreadful showman. He doesn't know how to dress it up, how to sell the trick" (Prestige). The relationship that develops between Borden and Angiers is not the typical rivalry. It does not involve two competitors seeking the same object but instead two fundamentally different modes of conceiving magic (105). McGowan continues thus:

> Borden sees Angier's emphasis on spectacle as betrayal of the art and as a refusal to embrace the sacrifice that the art demands. Angier, as Borden sees it, wants the spectacle without the cost. For his part, Angier views Borden's failure to sell his illusions as an inability to appreciate the creative power of their art. Borden doesn't understand the transcendence that occurs when the magician compels the audience to believe the fiction. (105)

Borden's identity is illusionistic. Borden is not one person but he is two. He is a pair of two identical twins who switches between Borden and his silent friend Fallon. They sacrifice each other's life for the performance of a magic trick called 'The Transported man'. He is able to disappear at one place and appear at another place because he is two people. Borden sacrifices his independent public identity for magic's sake. When Angiers shoots off two fingers of Borden, the other has to chop off his finger to sustain the similar look. The act of performing 'The Transported Man' demands more sacrifice from Borden. Even those who are connected to also has to pay for him. Borden's wife kills herself since she is so distressed about the fact that she has been living with two men performing one. His divided personality blocks him from any genuine/authentic connectivity to others.

Diaries often appear in literature and films as reverberations of the inner self of the characters. Reading a diary is an intrusion into the private self

of a person which is not visible to the public eye. The engrossing fact about accessing diary is that it gives the reader a feeling of truth. Conventionally diary has been used as a narrative technique to assert truthfulness. But the use of diary in *Prestige* is to obscure truth and to establish the illusion. "Rather than permitting the diary to validate the veracity of the filmic illusion , The *Prestige* as a fiction functions to impugn the truthfulness of the diary as such" (116). The intended diary in the film is one written for deception and illusion. Bodren writes his diary to deceive Angiers. Thus *Prestige* as a film questions the categorical concept of self and subjectivity. It establishes the performative stature of subjectivity by exploring the concept of double. He employs the traditional binaries like reality/illusion to question the essentiality that these binaries refer to. Nolan foregrounds how self and the concept of subjectivity are performative unlike the Enlightenment notion of subjectivity as unique and authentic essence. He even questions the essentialism attributed to the objects like diary and films how it is used radically different from all the meanings attributed to it. Thus *Prestige* foregrounds the postmodern philosophy of subject as performative.

In 2000, Nolan made *Memento*, a sleeper hit that he adapted from a short story written by his brother Johnathan. It employs reverse-order story-telling to mirror the fractured psyche of the protagonist. Leonard suffers from anterograde amnesia. The symptoms include an inability to form new memories and a short-term memory loss. Leonard is an insurance claims investigator who lives with his wife who is diabetic. One day two junkies break into his house, rapes and kills his wife. Leonard suffers from a brain damage in the scuffle. *Memento* is about Leonard's need to avenge his wife's murder. Leonard uses an intricate system that involves the use of Polaroid photographs and tattoos to hunt down his wife's killer. He believes that the murderer's name is John with a last name that begins with G. Teddy, an undercover cop (whose real name is John G), meets Leonard and befriends

him to exploit Leonard's need for revenge to attain personal gains like getting rid of criminals like Jimmy and make money. When Leonard realises that, he is being used by Teddy, he comes to the conclusion that he is the John G, the second junkie involved in his wife's rape and murder. Leonard makes up a memory technique to remember Teddy as John G and finally kills him with the help of Jimmy's girlfriend Natalie. The film has two narrative lines: a black and white visual narrative and a colour visual narrative. *Memento* secured for Nolan an Academy Award nomination for the Best Original Screenplay.

Memento is known for its s experimental structure. The film has been called a postmodern narrative in contemporary cinema. It has restructured the emphasis of conventional cinema on causality and coherence. The film has also experimented with narrative, perhaps one of the best films in the 20th century that experimented with the narrative so ingeniously. In conventional sense, *Memento* is a story that follows the quest of a man to avenge the murder of his wife. As he suffers from 'anterograde amnesia' Leonard Shelby is a person who is unable to form new memories. The hit that he had on his head during the altercations with his wife's killer is the cause behind his amnesia. He explicates his situation in the film as "I have no short term memory. I know who I am, I know all about myself. I just . . . since my injury, I can't make new memories. Everything fades". According to Jo Alyson Parker Leonard does make short-term memories, but he is unable to retain them for longer than a few minutes at a time (242). As Parker says he has lost his 'memory consolidation' power (242). As a result he is unable to keep his memory apart from the pre-trauma life. He is thus unable to remember his past as a comprehensible set of happenings leading to the present-day. Leonard says "I can't feel time". He is thus forced to negotiate the Enlightenment notion of life as a series of connected events.

Memento is an ambiguous film with a nonlinear narrative. Memento is more than a movie that tells the life of Leonard Shelby in the reverse order. Memento has got two narratives one colour and the other in black and white that move in the opposite directions. The fragmentation of the narrative has got a lot to do with the breakdown of the subjectivity of the character. The alternative colour and black and white sequences in the film establishes the fragmented nature of the film as well as the fragmented subjectivity of the protagonist. This temporal disjunction is syntactically structured as the weird subjectivity of Leonard in the film. According to Adrian Gargett "the fragmentation of the narrative into this mosaic form is significant for the representation of Leonard as a fragmented character" (7). Through this non liner and fragmented narratives, the film questions causality and continuity that Enlightenment model of subjectivity establishes. The disintegration of the classical Hollywood narrative in *Memento* can be seen as a challenge to the Enlightenment model of subjectivity that recurs in the general drama of conventional filmmaking. The film thus questions the coherent, steady and free subject established in the Enlightenment narratives.The protagonist of the film is a weak inauthentic self who is outside the inclusive definitions of a conventional hero. Rosalind Sibielski recounts the fragmentation and the critique of rationality in *Memento* to Jameson's analysis of schizophrenia. She writes thus:

The temporally fragmented narrative structure creates a series of present time that can be read as analogous to the model of temporally fragmented schizophrenic experience. In this sense Leonard can be seen as a representation of the fragmented schizophrenic postmodern subject who is unable to organize the heaps of fragments of his own past into coherent experience (86).

For Sibielski, crisis of Leonard is crisis of the fragmented postmodern schizophrenia (86). The crisis that Leonard faces is the crisis about significations. He completely fails in establishing connection between signifiers. He uses Polaroid photographs to establish his navigation. Sbielski calls "polaroids as the externalised representation of the Leonard's subjective disconnectedness" (86). She writes "Leonard's inability to unify the past, present and future of his biographical experience within the film results largely from the breakdown in the chain of signification comprised by his photographs" (87). It is not just because the photographed images are the subtle records of reality, but his headers on the photographed images are swotted and altered which tells about his subjectivity in change. He changes the initial inscription of Natalie: "Do not trust her, in to she has also lost someone. She will help you out of pity" (Memento). Such re-inscriptions points to the fact of his fluxing consciousness and the lack he experiences between the photographs and the referents. The photographs lack an evocative signification in the life of Leonard. The signification that these cards give is not stable in Leonard's life. His belief in the photograph and its signification is the illustration of his belief in the ideology of the Enlightenment project. But his failure in such an effort is a thematic concern of the film. The film can be seen as a text that criticizes the failure of Enlightenment. The lack of meaningful signification in Leonard's life is an exemplification of the failure of the theorisation of the conventional selfhood.

The breakdown of Leonard's subjectivity shows in the black and white sequences especially in motel room scenes. In the first scene when Leonard wakes up in a motel room he asks:

> So where are you? You are in some motel room. You . . . . You just wake up and you are in a motel room. There is the key. It feels like may be the first time you have been there but perhaps you have been there for a week, three months; its kind hard to say. I dunno; it's just an anonymous room. (Memento)

Motel room has been used as an abandoned signifier in the film removed from all other signifiers, though Leonard is able to identify that it's a motel room with many facilities. But he is not able to connect it to other signifiers in his life. He doesn't know how motel room functions in his life. It performs as a symbol for his experience of space/time as a series of fragmented present. The setting of the film is so strange. The film is set in an anonymous place. The industrial space of the film is never revealed unlike other films of Nolan. Brent Laytham writes about it as "a nondescript, menacing city" that is "claustrophobic and confusing" (80). For Roy "content it is any town whose motels have drab and anonymous rooms and whose streets are lined with seedy bars and featureless coffee shops" (41). There is nothing significant and unforgettable about the place. William Little writes thus: "Like much of American landscape, it appears to be stripped of any cultural specificity and historical making" (77). The strangeness of the place and the inaccessibility of the geography points to the fragmented self of Leonard who is unable to connect to the others and the situations in which he lives.

In addition to the anonymity of the place there is lack of clarity about the name of the characters. In the initial phase of the film it is possible to identify the name of the characters of the film. But once the film moves further these names become unclear. The link between name and individual subjects degenerates when the film goes forward. The name of the individuals blooms into numerous alternates. Teddy becomes Edward Gammel and John G. Moreover name John G is used to refer to two people in the film. Gimmy Grantz is also called John G. There is suggestion in the film that Leonard might have encountered many other John G. and might have murdered them too. The name of Natalia is also uneven. When she is first introduced, her name is clear. It's been clearly written beneath her photograph. In the scene where Leonard inscribes the captions on the photograph, she lies to him in order to stimulate his backing in resolving the score with Dodd which gives

us the idea that she is lying about her name. The film also establishes an indistinguishable link between the name of Natalie and Ann Moss through the photograph of Natalie that Leonard carries. Their photos are indistinguishable. There is also instability between the names of Leonard and Lenny. Leonard disavows the connection between himself to that name. Hells says to Natalie: "My wife called me Lenny. I hated it" (Memento). Leonard's name is more profoundly questioned with the counsel that he may be neither Leonard nor Lenny but Sammy Jankis, though the film establishes Sammy and Leonard as two distinct individuals throughout the film. But in the closing minutes of the film where the image of Guy Pearce as Leonard is inserted over the image of Stephen Tobolowsky as Sammy, they are diligently associated. Such framing forces us to interpret the link between Sammy and Leonard and interconnections of the mental situations of both characters. So remembrance of Sammy is the remembrance of his own self. Leonard's identity is almost like the coverless pages of novel that his wife reads initially. People could discern its genre not name. Thus *Memento* establishes the postmodern condition of fragmentation and disjunction of subjectivity in Leonard. As Sibielski has argued "the fragmented structure of the film has reduced the film into a series of presents that mirrors the model of Schizoprenic experience described by Jameson as a suggestive aesthetic model of postmodern subjectivity" (86). The subjectivity of Leonard in the film is the product of a traumatic loss of his wife (McGowan 55). In *Memento* the murder of Leonard's wife functions as the privileged object behind Leonard's trauma. Though he burns his wife's things to forget the trauma, he is unable to quit her. He speaks to himself, "I can't remember to forget you". He is bound traumatically in the death of his wife's. The he desires to escape the memory of his lost object he fails in his attempt of accessing forward moving temporality. For him time is still and he is unable to escape further into the future as he appears as a refuge of time itself.

According to Peter Deakin 'Nolan's films are loaded with desperate men and the moments that drive them to extremes; visceral representations of the fractured male heroes and antiheroes, duel identities and male identity complexes' (85). Seemingly tinched with a nourishing fear of female empowerment and a masculine loss of control, Nolan's cinema is a continual engagement with masculinity in a critical state (85). It has been said that Nolan's films are driven by a deep rooted desire to satisfy the so called masculine malaise in which it will be understood that he offers his male anti-heroes the fictional means and pathways to untruths to transcend the limitations of their fractured male existence (85). According to Kravitz '*Memento* depicts the individual's struggle with late capitalism in order to establish identity in a decentred world' (Kravitz 29). He even says that late capitalist rationale is the source of Leonard's condition:

> Leonard in *Memento* is completely left alone with himself to make his own truth and master narrative, an effect which has implications for his representational masculinity. His quest seems Sisyphean. It presents delayed gratification and is endlessly stalled by deceit, a lack of place and so on. His deferred and perpetually wanton vengeance also gives him an immutable sense of masculine utility. (Deakin 88)

At one point in the film Leonard realises that Teddy is not the actual John G. that he is looking for, he says "Fine, then you can be my John G…Do I lie to myself to be happy? In your case Teddy…yes I will" (Memento).

Such attempts, can be seen as his method escapist clause or self-fictionalisation. The film ends with Leonards haunting narration: "I have to believe that my actions still have meaning, even if I can't remember them. I have to believe that when my eyes are closed, the world is still there" (Memento). This situation of Leonard is a metaphor for the crisis he goes

through. Deakin writes thus: "To overcome a society that has rendered him useless, Leonard's anterograde amnesia allows him to seek utility, a sense of worthiness and an affirmation of meaning that can be grounded, even if not in the concreteness of reality. The truth imagined, fictionalised give him a sense of order and control in a perverse postmodern world" (88). According to Joseph Bevan, "Nolan seems to suggest that its man's ability to fictionalise himself into whatever he wants to be can redeem him" (2012). Adding several extra dimensions and considerable confidence to the 29 year-old Nolan's tricky first feature *Following* (1999), *Memento* can be seen as a film that explicates the philosophy of existentialism. The film offers incredulity towards earlier definitions of subjectivity. The movie is a tour de force of frustration, a perverse tribute to the tyranny of cinema's inexorable oneway flow. It is also an epistemological thriller that is almost serious in posing the question: "How is it that we know ourselves?" (Hoberman 2001). Hollywood cinema has been conventionally structured as a movement from ignorance to knowledge. In romance's the characters begin their life without any knowledge of their love towards someone. But when the film ends there will be a revelation of love. In the Murder Mysteries the detectives are in search of a truth for which he has no initial knowledge and finally ending by resolving the mystery. Even in the action films, the adventures of the heroes will have no clear-cut rationale behind their jesters until the moment of revelation comes. He will have no idea about who is the villain and the villainy in his companion's actions. As the film progresses the characters gain knowledge about the actions that he goes through along with the spectators. The idea of heroes as the subject of knowledge is the continuation of the Enlightenment notion of a thinking and knowing subject. According Todd McGowan "in traditional Hollywood cinema characters or subject of knowledge begins in a state of ignorance and approaches the world as an object of enquiry exist prior to and apart from that enquiry" (40). He argues that *Memento* shows the

failure of such Enlightenment position still Hollywood cinema sticks on to. According to him *Memento* explicates that we are not just subjects of knowledge but subjects of desire (40). By subject of desire he means the world is not just something different from the look of the beholder rather it is essentially structured in the very first look of the seer. Subject of desire manipulates what s/he sees and even jumbles the external world. *Memento,* thus questions the notions of truth and falsity which is embedded in the very structure of typical narrative film. Its nonlinear narratives and reverse narratives purport the idea that there is no neutral truth, no truth that involves the distortion of subjectivity.

According to McGowan, "Cinema is perhaps the most fertile terrain for the myth of the subject of knowledge. It allows the spectators to hide themselves in the dark-sit at a distance from the screen-in order to sustain the idea of ontological separation" (41). *Memento* represents the failure of the ultimate cinematic achievement in establishing a character as apparent subjects of knowledge (41). *Memento* is a two part film that moves in reverse chronological order and a forward moving narrative that depicts Leonard's talk on the phone in the hotel room. The part which moves in the reverse order is in colour and the part that progresses in time is in black and white. Both these narratives meet at the end of film when Leonard believes that he has killed his wife's murderer. Such realisation of Leonard prompts the narrative to be in colour.Nolan has explored the intimate connection of time and knowledge in *Memento* through the employment of this complex narrative. Time appears in this narrative as something to be filled in the future that the subject lacks in the present. Future appears to be a space of possibilities. The narrative has placed Leonard as a subject of ignorance who hopes to gain knowledge at the end of the film (42).

The inherent progressivity implied in the narrative is finally scrambled when he fails to execute his purpose. Nolan has thus questioned the notion of progressivity implied in the traditional notion of subjectivity in the west. He consciously questions the conception of subject as a subject of knowledge. Leonard's amnesia supposedly speaks aloud the failure of progressivity implied in the traditional narratives. Martin Heidegger in his *Being and Time* questions the notion of subject as subject of knowledge. He used even a term called 'Dasein' as an alternative to subject to disassociate subject from the act of knowing. According to him "the subject of knowledge represents the basis for philosophy's flight from being" (qtd. in McGowan 43). *Memento* at times echoes this Heideggerian disbelief of subject as subject of knowledge. Though the film creates the image of Leonard as subject of knowledge or a subject bent on discovering the truth whatever the cost to himself personally, it destabilises such teleology at the end by completely rejecting progressive potential of the notion of the subject as subject of knowledge in search of truth. His conscious pursuit of knowledge is failed in his inability to decide what exactly he is searching for. To quote McGowan: "He is unconsciously working to avoid knowledge rather than acquiring it" (43). The seemingly autonomous search for truth is toppled by an unconscious desire in the film. Leonard appears as a person who is unable to make new memories. As a subject of knowledge who is unable to remember. Leonard performs the Cartesian sceptical method in order to arrive at the clarity regarding his wife's death. Just as Descartes, he can't believe the opinions of others or he can't even trust his own personal experiences. He even doubts the search based on memory. McGowan writes thus:

> Memory is not perfect. It's not even that good. Ask the police. Eyewitness testimony is unreliable. The cops don't catch a killer by sitting around and remembering stuff. They collect facts. They make notes, and they draw conclusions. Facts, not

memories, that's how you investigate. I know, it's what I used to do. Look, memory can change the shape of a room; it can change the color of a car. And memories can be distorted. They are just an interpretation; they are not a record. And they are irrelevant if you have facts. (44-45)

Leonard's insistence on verifiable fact is an existential dimension of him as a subject of knowledge. Memory cannot be trusted in the project of Knowledge. But Cartesian notion of objective truth gets derailed when the film proceeds. His structural inability to remember puts him at the mercy of those people who interact with him. They can easily misdirect his investigation as he is not able to retain his memory, though he takes pictures of people whom he interacts with. He was even deceived by Natalie for her selfish interests. The initial introduction of Natalie in the film is as person who can be trusted and film justifies such belief by placing her as a person who informs Leonard about the identity of John G., the name of his wives' killer. They also share a sense of intimacy. When she leaves him at the hotel she says to him: "you know what we have in common? We are both survivors. You take care, Leonard" (Memento). Leonard has written on the back of Naltalie's photo that "She has also lost someone. She will help you out of pity" (Memento).When the film moves further, such affirmation of Natalie gets lost and she appears to be a fraud and she uses Leonard as a tool that she can use at her disposal. She never shows signs of tenderness in the coming scenes. She even asks Leonard to kill Jimmy's associate Dodd for her, which he refuses. She then abuses him in the exchange:

> Natalie: You pathetic piece of shit. I can say whatever the fuck I want, and you won't have a fucking clue, you fucking retard.

> Leonard: Shut your mouth.

Natalie: You know what; I am going to use you. I am telling you now because I am going to enjoy it so much more because I know that you could stop me if you weren't such a fucking freak. Did you lose your pen? That is too bad, freak. Otherwise you could write yourself a little note about how much Natalie hates your retard guts and I called your wife fucking whore.

Leonard: Don't say another fucking word.

Natalie: About your whore of a wife. I have read about your condition, Leonard: You know what one of the causes of short-term memory loss is? Venereal diseases. May be your cunt of fucking wife sucked one too many diseased cocks and turned you into fucking retard. You sad, sad freak. I can say whatever the fuck I want, and you won't remember. We will still be best friends or may be even lovers. (qtd. in McGowan 46-47)

At the exchanges Leonard punches her. She goes to the car and comes back and says that she was beaten up by Dodd. She thus assures Leonard's care against Dodd. The film thus exposes the character who appears to be more trustworthy in conversations. The film clearly thus identifies the failure of Leonard's sceptical method and reliance on facts. According to Todd McGowan, "the aim of *Memento* is just to show the potential obstacles in the path of the subject of knowledge. It is rather to show that the subject of knowledge does not exist" (47).

Memento uses two narrative forms. One narrative moves backward in time that depicts the actions that Leonard goes through. The forward narrative explicates the situation of Leonard and it makes explicit the crises he goes through. Nolan has associated with the forward moving narrative with a sense of knowledge. It gives the hope that the subject of knowledge which is

ignorant will one day come to knowledge. Such narrative is inclined to derive more knowledge as the time passes. But such perspective is shown as a terrible failure in the film. The convergence of the forward moving narrative and backward moving narrative is very significant in subverting the privileged status of knowledge as something that goes so linear in the time scheme. Todd McGowan writes thus:

> By initially separating the part of film that imparts knowledge from the part of the film that depicts actions, Christopher Nolan establishes knowledge as a pure and unassailable domain. Both Leonard's search for knowledge and the spectator's appear to be just that: an effort to know for the sake of knowledge itself, divorced from any relation to desire. When the two narrative lines come together at the end of the film with an imperceptible transition rather than a distinguishable cut, the purity of the subject of knowledge begins to come into question. (49)

Teddy debunks Leonard's version of the story of Sammy about killing of his wife, he also establishes that Leonard's quest for the second interlocutor ended up last year.

> Look, Lenny, I was the cop assigned to your wife's case. I believed you. I thought you deserved a chance for revenge. I am the guy who helped you find the other in your bathroom that night, the guy that cracked your skull and fucked your wife. We found him. You killed him. But you don't remember, so I helped you started looking again, looking for the guy you already killed. ..I gave you a reason to live and you were more than happy to help. You don't want the truth…Cheer up, there is plenty of John G.S for us to find. All you do is moan. I am the one who has to live with what you have done. I am the one that

put all things together. You, you wander around, you plenty detective. You live in a dream, kid. A dead wife to pine for, a sense of purpose to your life, a romantic quest that you wouldn't end, even if I wasn't in the picture. (qtd. in McGowan 49)

However, the film does not affirm his version of the story as conclusive. The film even gives a space that questions Teddy's version of events that happened in the film. It never prioritises any perspective over others. Through the backward movement of the film the 'story' unfolds in the style of a detective film. But the 'whodunit' question of a conventional detective narrative is never rationally justified in the film. In fact through fragmentation of the narrative and reordering of time Nolan breaks such rational end expected of every conventional detective narrative. Anna Kornbluh writes thus:

The film works by mobilising in the spectator the desire to decide whodunit and, simultaneously, rendering this desire not only impossible to fulfil but false, and as such, irrelevant. It is as if the spectator is forced to experience from within the disintegration of an ideological universe: the film's texture undermines its own explicit project. (135)

The desire to know the original crime in the movie is finally (un)revealed as not inextricably linked to the events portrayed in the film. The film problematises the traditional binary of truth and falsehood. It fails in its traditional narrative progress to reveal the truth/falsehood behind Leonard's adventures. The very subject of knowledge that explores the culprit behind his wife's murder himself fails leaving the spectators a vacuum of knowledge. Melissa Clarke contends thus: "there is certainly no universal truth awaiting either Leonard or the audience at the end of *Memento*. There is no way to

verify either the real vs. the imaginary or any of the many questions as to the true vs. the false" (179).

The entire film has been structured in the effort of Leonard to escape the trauma of his wife's death. After his encounter with the prostitute, he goes to an industrial area. He sees there pieces of old woods that he used before to burn his wife's things. The setting of the scene is exactly reflecting the internal turmoil he goes through. The dilapidated industrial area corresponds to the dilapidation he faces in himself. For Todd McGowan "The concrete slabs and rotted boards that populate the scene function as the objective correlative of Leonard's fragmented and traumatic subjectivity" (57). Leonard and his wife represent two modes of subjectivity. Through the flashback sequences the film establishes them in their respective modalities. Leonard is a person who is completely devoted to future and whatever future offers. His wife, on the other hand, enjoys repletion for repletion's sake without expecting anything new. She indulges herself completely in fiction. In a flashback scene the film shows an argument between Leonard and his wife. Their conversations make explicit the differences in their perspective:

> Leonard: How can you read that?
>
> Leonard's wife: It's good
>
> Leonard: Yeah, but you read it like a thousand times.
>
> Leonard's wife: I enjoy it
>
> Leonard: I always thought the pleasure of a book was in wanting to know what happens next.
>
> Leonard's wife: Don't be a prick. I am not reading it to annoy you. I enjoy it. Just let me read, please. (Memento)

Leonard is a person who finds pleasure in the unpredicted future. He is a subject of knowledge who has a linear perspective of time. But his wife, on the other hand, finds pleasure in repetition. She finds happiness in things that don't surprise her. For her, pleasure is an end in itself. Leonard is a typical modern man who is attaching teleology to every action that he does. Leonard is a Hegelian who believes that meaning lies in the transcendental realm. For him pleasure comes as a reward for an activity. But for his wife enjoyment comes out of activity itself. For Leonard objects are tools to achieve that which he lacks now. But the film affirms the failure of such subjectivity in Leonard's failure of retaining memory and in his failure to avenge his wife's murder. Nolan shows his sentiments in close ups which show her intently reading the book. Nolan uses medium shots to establish the subjectivity of Leonard. Thus the text establishes Leonard as a subject of knowledge, who fails in his epistemological endeavours while dealing with postmodern realities.

The trauma of the murder of his wife is constitutive of Leonard's subjectivity. But his act of vengeance cannot deliver him from this trauma. The teleological progression of the subject of knowledge is blocked thus. As McGowan writes "No truth can repair the loss that constitutes his subjectivity" (60). The revenge that he indulges in is a conscious attempt to escape from the trauma that he is in, the fragmentation that he experiences. But every such attempt becomes a violent return to the inescapable trauma that he is in. Accordingto McGowan, Leonard becomes a murderer not because of the lost object. But because he wants to transcends the loss and achieve a goal. And this goal is revenge" (61). *Memento* echoes many traits of a revenge film. But textually it fragments all the logic of a revenge film. It thus becomes a revenge film that weakens the rationale of a revenge film. He thinks that he can repair the trauma of the murder of his wife by resorting to revenge. But his inability to remember the acts done makes his acts futile and

meaningless. He even thinks that the monumental act of violence might give him some impression of it, irrespective of his forgetfulness. But such understanding becomes futile when he is unable to decipher the truth behind Teddy's position. McGowan writes thus:

> Leonard's lack of memory concerning the act of vengeance reveal reveals the complete futility of the act. His dead wife can't know about it, he can't remember about it, and no one else in the film cares. Even the spectator finds no satisfaction in the act of vengeance because it occurs-if in fact there was a second assailant and Leonard actually found the right person –a year before the events in the film take place. *Memento* permits no one to find satisfaction in the act of vengeance. (61)

Memento as a film questions all the established notions of a traditional narrative and its hero as a rational subject. As a subject of knowledge the hero of *Memento* fails in all his teleological endeavours. From a subject that finds meaning in transcendental signification, he completely falls short of in his epistemological pursuits. Even his very act of vengeance becomes irrelevant since he is not able to memorise his act of vengeance. The film, thus, shows the predicament of a fragmented subject who is unable to perform schematically. Next chapter is an exploration of how Christopher Nolan deals with the contours of subjectivity in his Superhero films.

Chapter Four

From Playboy to Batman:
Cyborg Subjectivity in Nolan's _Batman Trilogy_

Signs as well as performances of superheroes have dominated 20th century cinema, especially Hollywood cinema. Iconic defenders and heroic performers like Batman and Superman have become heroic names in the households and other filmic spaces. The socio- cultural reasons behind the rise of such figures can be primarily traced back to the frustrations of the 1930s Great Depression. The rise of such figures can also be seen in the reactions against the spread of fascism in Europe. Superhero is all powerful in maintaining the family mentality/balance of the state. With the rise of Communism in Russia after the Second World War, there emerged a new fear in American psyche. By 1960s people has come to know about the futility of American Dream. During this period America had seen most number of gang violence (Rossen 174-177). According to Corey Shaw "Superman is a God-like figure sent from the heavens to protect the nuclear family from annihilation, a symbol of religious patriotism and escapism, the poster-boy for the American Dream. Superheroes have become a way for humanity to escape, project, and manage the real world. They are us, and we, them" (3). Superhero films after Second World War has become a space of fantastic escape for Americans. It has been a space of escape for people from the frustrated experiences of their everyday life. Movies of that period has started adapting DC and Marvel comics. Thus DC's Batman and Superman and Marvel's Spiderman and X-Men have flourished in the celluloid space. It is Superman who is to be filmed as the first Superhero in the Hollywood screen. Batman is the second superhero filmed in the celluloid space of Hollywood.

The idea of Batman is introduced in 1939 in an issue of Detective comics. Drawn by Bob Kane and written by Bill Finger, Batman shows the

influence of Superman. But Unlike Superman, Batman is completely human. He is Bruce Wayne, financial heir to Wayne enterprises. He becomes Batman out of an existential need of protecting order in Gotham. Corey Shaw writes thus "Batman had a far more sinister look than the sparkly-looking Superman. Unlike Superman, Batman has no superpowers at all. Batman's abilities derive mostly from his intelligence, special gadgets, and training as a fighter" (5). Unlike other superheroes, he is haunted by the murder of his parents. He is a less powerful hero and his heroism is made possible by his brilliancy of using gadgets and his access to modern machines. Though many versions of Batman have hit the screen, Christopher Nolan's version of Batman was different. He has turned Batman into a psychologically realist character. Nolan's Batman was very different from his predecessor's. Batman was very realistic in him and first time in film Batman was given a back-story to detail his origin and growth and the final emergence as a superhero. Nolan's films tie all his superhero powers to the intensive training he had undergone with Ra's al Ghul. Unlike other Batman films, Nolan's trilogy is a psychological exploration of what made Bruce Wayne turn out to be Batman. Nolan realistically explore and justify why Bruce Wayne choose Batman as a symbol of protection for Gotham city. He brings a back story of Wayne's phobia of bats. He even redesigns Batman's costume to make it more realistically convincing. This human rendition of the super hero has made the Batman trilogy a popular hit.

Though Nolan's Batman narratives come in the traditions of superhero narratives, Nolan's Batman is an exception. Unlike other superheroes, Batman in Nolan's trilogy is a consciously chosen identity. Bruce Wayne in Nolan's narratives consciously chooses to be a Batman. He is very much mundane and human and has no super powers. The villains who appear in Nolan's narratives are not one-dimensional. They are ambiguous and semantically vibrant. Nolan's villains are more authentic than Batman at times. The good

and evil duality of superhero narratives are often undermined in his films by bringing psychological dilemma in situations which are otherwise seen as black and white. Nolan has depicted Batman in a more abstemious and realistic way than other filmmakers. Though Batman is less heroic than other superheroes, Tim Burton's and Joel Schumacher's portrayals of Batman are more heroic than Nolan's. According to Roger Ebert heroic portrayal of Batman was wonderful to look at. But it has nothing authentic to its core (Walker 6). Nolan's Batman is more authentic and boorish.

Hollywood has used superheroes films to condone American setback in Gulf wars and economic recession. Superhero films are used as an escapist logic to bypass its fall from capitalist claims of super nation. Superhero films thus function as the double indemnity against such failure. These films have used large scale explosions, super natural heroes, flamboyant costumes and mighty villains to camouflages state's failure. These superhero films couldn't explore realities of the times. It gives an overarching perspective of life. There is a scene in Spiderman where Green Goblin gives a choice to Spiderman to choose between saving Mary Jane or a car full of children. But film superficially shows how he saves the two. The film easily bypasses the ethical dilemma faced by the character. Such portrayal is so naive and just a morally over-simplified day dream. Kaylin Walker writes about conventional portrayal of superheroes in Hollywood movies thus: "a super-human in colorful spandex, endowed with incredible powers must wrestle with the hell-bent villain on the clearly-drawn line between good and evil to save the world" (9). Nolan, on the other hand, gives a very realistic portrayal of Batman. Nolan's Batman is traumatic. Batman is a person who grapples with his confused self to reconcile the conflict of evil/good divide in Gotham City. He is an existential hero who is fallen to the core and fragmented in his subjectivity. The extraordinary attribute that Batman has is his mortality; he has no super powers or outlandish capabilities, only human limitations, which

ironically are made limited. He was born from Bruce Wayne's traumatic experience at an early, impressionable age that ended his childhood: the death of his parents. This is where the ubiquitous theme of good versus evil is introduced and as the Hero's Journey would account for, Batman is the common man who undergoes the three stages of an epic hero: departure, initiation, and return. Wayne is separated from his parent's side by a madman's bullet. He finds new hope and faith in the myth of the Batman.

According to Kaylin Walker, "Wayne's battles are ones of deception, ambiguous choice and responsibility rather than larger-than-life battles of strength and wit" (10). Prior to the release of *Batman Begins* Nolan remarked "The great part was that they wanted to refresh and invigorate the franchise, but didn't have any specific concepts and were essentially looking for someone to come in and tell them what to do. It's pretty unusual to have this sort of movie up for grabs," (qtd. in Walker 7). Against the inauthentic and inaccurate representation of Batman on screen, he attempts an intense and realistic representation of Batman that reflects the predicament of a modern man. Nolan's Batman is an everyday man who lives in the real world. According to Kaylin Walker, Nolan is the first to interpret the Batman franchise as a trilogy, spanning from Wayne's rising transformation into Batman in *Batman Begins*, across his stint as Gotham's sliding resident protector in *The Dark Knight*, to his transition downward into something harder to understand in *The Dark Knight Rises* (12).

Nolan's Batman Trilogy is set in Gotham. It's a postmodern city in chaos and has lost its meaning of existence. Bruce Wayne's parents were symbols of hope in Gotham. But their death puts Gotham in absolute despair. Their death in the hands of an assailant is a telling account of chaos and degeneration. The name Gotham means unstable public. City of Gotham is different from the city of other super heroes like Superman's Metropolis.

According to Frank Miller, "Metropolis is New York City in the daytime; Gotham is New York at night" (qtd. in Walker 14). Gotham is more desolate, deserted, and more realistic in Nolan. Nolan has depicted the bizarre nature of Gotham using tight shots. He used shadowy and scruffy setting to evoke the uncanny in the city. Bright and light up shots are used only in flashbacks of Wayne's childhood. Shot become brighter in sequels as the situations at Gotham get better, though Nolan uses an overriding black shade. In the absence of any order Gotham is under the control of Falcone. Under him Gotham falls into raging nihilism. It's a city of fear and corruption under him. Against the nausea of chaos and cynicism, Wayne makes an existential choice to be Batman to exercise his will of saving Gotham at his disposal. He makes a conscious choice to be Batman. As an existential being, he construes his own subjectivity. Unlike the mad man who raves in Nietzsche's *Gay Science* as where are we moving? Away from all suns? aren't we falling constantly? Backwards, sideways, forwards, in every direction? (Walker 18), he decides to be an authentic being in creating his own future and the future of Gotham.

In *The Dark Knight,* there are two existentialist villains who are deranged by existential angst. Film details in length the transformation of Dent into Two-Face. From a pragmatic idealist to an existential villain, he transforms. He mocks chance by carrying a coin of two heads and parodies people's choice by asking them to 'flip for' while knowing the outcome would be always heads. He is typical postmodern man who claims he constructs his own subjectivity and destiny. When Dent's girl friend is killed, he questions the idea of fairness in the world. He becomes a killer who flips his special coin to decipher whether his victim has to be freed or killed. He seethes to Wayne, "You thought we could be decent men in an indecent world. You thought we could lead by example. You thought the rules could be bent but not break. You were wrong. The world is cruel. And the only morality in a cruel world is chance: unbiased, unprejudiced, fair" (The Dark

Knight). Two-Face is modern representative of an existential self who is completely disillusioned with and detached from the world. Joker is the character in the film disenchanted with world. But he celebrates his disillusions. He is absurdity personified. He celebrates chaos to reveal the meaninglessness of life. His clownish appearance and bright clothes explicates absurdity of life. Film never explores the back ground of Joker. His subjectivity is something which he creates for himself. His existence represents the fate of a modern man. Both these villains are placed against sense of self and subjectivity of Batman.

Nolan's Films are usually built on contested subjectivities based on the complexities of perceived memory (Joy 10). His early films are rooted in the fear of doubting his own memories. Dark Night trilogy rejects the intricately structured narrative deceit evident in his other films in favour of a more conservative approach. According to McGowan there exists a fundamental conservatism in the figure of the superheroes. Nolan's Batman legend is one that transforms and ultimately undermines the uniqueness of Nolan's cinema (Joy 10). Nolan augmented his vision of his male characters ability to create or fictionalize another cathartic self with even more vigour, it's a human batman film grounded in a relatable world (Deaken 82). Nolan tries pleasant in the beginning of Batman as an agent of goodness in Gotham more realistically than the representations of Tim Burton's and Joel Schumacher's previous filmic attempts. When *Batman Begins* (2005) was released it was reviewed as a realistic take. According to Will Brooker "Nolan has transposed the very notion of realism to imply a more violent and crucially more hyper masculine kind of heroism" (qtd. in Deaken 89). Except for the conflict between Batman, Falcone and Scarecrow and the final fight between Ra's al Ghul, *Batman Begins* is more about Wayne's conflicts with himself and expressing the difference between him and his imminent assimilation to

Batman than any other superhero battle with strong villains. Deaken writes thus:

> Expressing himself as a dichotomy in order to save the city and to save himself from detection and a seemingly more destructive and nihilistic revenge, Wayne fictionalizes himself into a dyad of near-binary proportions and predicates the success of his desire on his enduring performance of hyper-decadent Wayne on the one hand and Hyper-masculine Batman on the other. (90)

In one half of the story Wayne performs his feminized, decadent and playboy subjectivity in crisis which is very reminiscent of Christian Bale's performance of Patric Bateman in *American Psycho*. By showing his vulgarized desire for parties, women and material decadence, he is a complete incapable male. He even becomes an object of ridicule by being a playboy. His White collar suits function as cloaking device to mask his fragmented subjectivity as a decadent playboy.

On the other side of the film Wayne as Batman eschews all the decadent subjectivity in him. He uses black suits and different armours to establish his subjectivity as an authentic self and a futuristic Heideggerian self. He establishes his subjectivity by relying on tools and machines to effect the change. He establishes himself as the man of future or subject of desire by authenticating his existence as Batman. He escapes his inauthenticity as a playboy by establishing his space of masculine potentiality as Batman. The possible reason why Nolan chooses Batman will be as Will Brooker asserts: "What distinguishes Batman from his counterparts is that he's a hero anyone can aspire to. You could never be Superman, you could never be the Incredible Hulk, but anybody could conceivably become Batman" (Brooker 90). From a playboy Wayne transforms him into "a superhero with no superpowers [whose] ambitious quest to forge his mind and body into a

living, breathing weapon against injustice inspires both fear and admiration" (Brooker 90). From a young man in distress who wants to avenge the death of his father and mother, Wayne becomes 'more than just man'. From a modernist man in crisis he becomes a postmodern performative subject in his Batman suit who insists that 'this is not me…I am more' (Batman Begins). He even re-defines his notions of subjectivity as 'it's not who you are underneath, it's what you do that defines you'.

Nolan has continued the concept of dual identity and the un-desirability of truth in his Batman trilogy especially in *Batman Begins* and *The Dark Knight* in 2008. *The Dark Knight* follows the conflicts of two subjectivities: The Batman and The Joker. Joker appears with face paints and he is a committed person who wants to celebrate his inner chaos in Gotham. The Joker asserts: "nobody panics if it's all part of the plan … I'm an agent of chaos … and you know the thing about chaos … it's fair" (The Dark Knight). The scar on his face is an objective correlative of his fragmented subjectivity. The apparent reading of Joker as a fiend agonistic to the derelictions of teleological capitalist subject is structurally foregrounded in his battles with Batman. Nolan uses joker as the formidable other who heightens the masculine virility of Batman. According to Charles Taylor Joker provides a scarred face to the invisible logic of capitalism ….pure desire without an object, paradoxically making the impersonal and invincible visible (Deaken 92). Joker's mannerisms are outworn in the city of Gotham. He is a representative of the working men who opposes the bourgeoisie. According to Taylor, Joker brings to the film the normally repressed and invisible elements of the capitalist system. As the embodiment of the "senselessness of the capitalist social system in which death and destruction are tolerated as long as they can feasibly be understood as part of a plan" (qtd. in Deaken 92).

From a decadent world of subjectivity, Wayne transforms himself into Batman combating against his own decadence. He overcomes his 'masculinity in crisis as well as the traumatic subjectivity by orienting his masculine prowess and valor. Batman finds his authentic subjectivity, which he calls as performative, in counterfeiting the decadence of Joker. Joker can be seen as the alter ego of Batman, the decadent self of Wayne. Batman establishes his prowess in his attempt to overthrow Joker. As Krin Gabbard explains, 'in the climax Batman overcomes his desire to kill the murderous Joker and hands him over to the agents of patriarchal law on the police force, his heroism, rationality and masculine resilience all intact' (Gabbard 53). He thus willingly submits his decadent self to patriarchy for its scrutiny.

The history of superhero films has the general paradigm that its superheroes have an essential keenness for truth. They cannot swindle because they are not fragmented subjects. According to Todd McGowan, "to become a superhero is to overcome the division that the signifier creates in subjectivity and to embody a fantasy of completion for the spectator" (168). Superheroes can certainly suffer, but they do not have the limitations with which ordinary subjects must contend. They can avoid traffic jams, eliminate powerful weapons and even defy the laws of physics; but most importantly, they have the capacity – unlike every divided and lacking subject – to overcome traumatic loss. Their superheroic status emerges at a moment of traumatic loss, but the loss magically produces the power of overcoming loss in the superhero (168). Nolan's Batman trilogy establishes what McGowan speaks about superheroes. Batman is wrought initially by a trauma. It occurs when he was a boy. He falls into a cave occupied by bats. The films have used bats as a sign of trauma in Wayne's life. But when he becomes Batman he overcomes his trauma and employs it as a way to establish his power. He uses the image of Batman, an image which traumatized him once, to traumatize his opponents. He uses the same image which fragmented his subjectivity to

destabilize his opponents. When *Batman Begins* ends the space of his fragmentation as he walks over the burrow into which he fell as a child. The film shows though his house was burned down by the villain, he was shown less interested in rebuilding it. On the other hand, it's shown that he is engaged in covering the den in the courtyard into which he fell once. McGowan writes thus:

> This scene metaphorically reveals the fundamental capacity of the superhero: this capacity isn't so much defying the laws of physics but those of subjectivity. Without the necessity of traumatic loss, one is not a divided subject and instead occupies a position of fantasmatic completeness. The completeness of superheroes is the basis for their identification with truth. Only a complete being can avoid the fiction that accompanies all subjectivity. (169)

It is the fragmented self that prevents any subject from speaking the truth or having an authentic identity. Split in the subjectivity disconnects the subject from the signifier by which it is represented. A fragmented self can never be authentic because it is not identical with itself. As Jacques Lacan says, 'the subject cannot unify its meaning and its being unlike the Enlightenment notion of a subject as an authentic rational self-capable of meaning-making'. In Seminar XI, Lacan lays out the impossible dilemma that confronts the subject and leaves it divided:

> If we choose being, the subject disappears, it eludes us, it falls into non meaning. If we choose meaning, the meaning survives only deprived of that part of non-meaning that is, strictly speaking, that which constitutes in the realization of the subject, the unconscious. In other words, it is of the nature of this meaning, as it emerges in the field of the Other, to be in a large

part of its field, eclipsed by the disappearance of being, induced by the very function of the signifier. (qtd. in Mc Gowan 169)

According to Lacan a subject achieves his symbolic identity only by fragmenting his being. An ordinary subject can't escape this forced choice. But super heroes being extraordinary subjects do escape this compulsion and accomplish an extraordinary unity. But superhero does experience reality of fragmentation in Batman Trilogy. According to McGowan 'the fragmentation that superhero experiences is more external than internal' (170). McGowan's argument is evident in the case of Batman and Superman. They have a doubled/fragmented self like Clark Kent or Superman or Batman and Bruce Wayne. This dual self explicates the fragmentation of the subject. Just as Lacan says if subject is the division between meaning and being, Wayne is the meaning and Batman is the being (McGowan 170). In spite of the fragmentation between being and meaning in him, Batman could escape such subjectivity by feigning himself as Wayne to hide his identity as Batman. Fragmentation thus becomes a performance in Batman to function more effectively as Batman. Such performance is his strategic turn to accomplish his undivided self; not limited by the public knowledge of his divided self. Unlike his other films, Nolan has to establish an undivided identity for his Batman characters. All the superhero characters are ideologically framed as authentic, original and true in Hollywood films; to which Nolan also had to submit. Unlike super heroes ordinary subject establishes his/her subjectivity through their failure to possess an ideal and authentic subjectivity. Todd McGowan writes thus:

They are subjects because they cannot be identical with their symbolic identity. The subject identifies with a signifier that it cannot fully take up, but it nonetheless presents itself as identical with this signifier. This is the subject's fundamental

lie. Falsity inheres within subjectivity, and Nolan's film making project continually returns to this necessary falsity. (171)

Unlike other films of his Nolan cannot employ a 'false hero' of fragmented subjectivity to perform Batman as a superhero. Though deception works in his attempt to hide his true identity from the people of Gotham and his involvement in the murder of Harvey Rent, Batman is a different hero unlike Leonard Shelby in *Memento* and Alfred Borden in *Prestige*. He makes explicit his identity as Batman to the spectators thereby establishing his complicit subjectivity as Batman. McGowan writes thus: "In Nolan's superhero films, the falsity occurs within the diegesis. Nolan's formal concern with falsity manifests itself solely in the content, and the result is that spectators see the power of this falsity rather than succumbing to it themselves" (171).

Although he deals with an always victorious Batman character, his fantasy with fragmentation is not completely left in Batman trilogy. Nolan's Batman is very unlike of other superheroes. All he has is his ability to disguise his real self from others. His super heroism come from his reliance on physical training and technological devices to oust his opponents. It's his attire that constitutes his subjectivity. He countered his falsity and fragmentedness by constructing his identity subsiding to training and machines. By making explicit how Batman achieves his appearances, Nolan shows the fragmented subjectivity of Batman and how he counters that by aiding the support of the machines. By showing thus the realistic origin of Batman's super power Nolan shows the fragmented subjectivity of Batman. Unlike other superheroes and other Batman figures, Nolan's Batman is not more than an ordinary subject with sophisticated weapons and technical training. He is less powerful than other super heroes. According to Todd McGown Nolan's Batman is just an ordinary person with sophisticated

training and technological gadgets, not someone who posses actual super power (171).

As a filmmaker who dealt with the crisis of a postmodern subject in his early films, Nolan fails to represent the typical Batman persona of the Hollywood in his Batman trilogies. Nolan's Batman is very realistic and he is more human. General schema of Batman is someone who is intrinsically linked to truth. Batman's subjectivity has been established in the Hollywood films as someone who is truth per se and someone who restores truth once it is toppled down by the enemies. Though Batman restores the order in Gotham, in Nolan's Batman trilogies he is intrinsically less powerful and exercises his essential duty of serving the people and establishing order in Gotham by resorting to technology and practice. He is more of a cyborg subject than a superhero Batman. Only when he is able to establish his subjectivity as a cyborg he is able to exercise his superhuman power and succeeds in escaping from his existential predicament. There are scenes in *Batman Begins* where Batman fails when the enemies overpower him with more sophisticated weapons. The films schematically show how machines and weapons help him to override his enemies. Machines like the uniform, bikes and tanks free him from the limitations of ordinary man who is traumatized. As Donna Haraway writes in the late 20th century Batman is a chimera, theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism; in short, he is a cyborg. Cyborg is Nolan's ontology; it justifies his politics to counter the traumatised subjectivity of an existential being (150).

The dimensions of human experience and the identity of humanity in general are always at stake in the 21st century. Notions of subjectivity as uni-dimensional and potentially predictable have been waived and fractured by more sophisticated theories in the light of our complex redefinitions sociability and cultural exchanges. With the development of science and

technology, early categorisations have been problemtized and new vicissitudes were suggested to bypass the fragmentations inscribed on the body. New developments in science and technology have redefined the scope of physical bodies. Speed has reconsidered the limits of the human body. Speed has extended the limits of human bodies. According to F.T. Marinetti, "the splendor of the world has been enriched with a new form of beauty, the beauty of speed. A race-automobile adorned with great pipes like serpents with explosive breath . . . a race-automobile that seems to rush over exploding powder is more beautiful than the Victory of Samothrace' (qtd. in Chipp 286). Batman with his super human speed, animated by the providence of technology, overpowers his enemies. He metalizes his body challenging the classical nostalgia of the western models of super heroes and masculinity. Batman as a cyborg, with his speed, gives a promise of future for the city of Gotham. Thus 'Batman becomes a man of social reality and a creature of fiction' (149).

Batman in Nolan's version is very realistic and his films are exodus from the campy versions of his predecessors. From Bob Kane to Nolan the image of Batman underwent changes. Nolan has used villains of extreme depth and made them metaphoric and emblematic of capitalism and archetypal crusades. He transported his characters beyond the verisimilitude of comic books. But his Batman is less superheroic and at times languishing in his masculine subjectivity. His male characters, who are predominantly white, are subdued to the phallocentric perspectives. Superhero films not only highlight the hero's muscles but his sexual features too. Unlike other superhero films masculine subjectivity is inherently fragile in Nolan's films. Batman is not an exception. Masculinity built on Batman is of no value of its own. It is less superheroic of all masculine heroes. He is a weak subject who faces disintegration in himself. Only in contrast with his powerful villains that he establishes his masculine virility. Batman in these three films uses heavy

gadgets to inflate masculinity. Masculine subjectivity is never a stable entity in Nola's Batman films. It switches between Batman and Wayne. Batman's omnipotence as masculine superhero that defends Gotham exists only in connection with Wayne. Wayne's character shows the flows and failures of the masculine subjectivity.

Besides such a figure, masculinity of Batman is empty and fragile. According to Wharton endurance, strength, and competitive spirit are the established masculine features (75). For Schrock and Schwalbe a decisive factor in establishing masculine subjectivity is the ability to exert or resist control (280). *Dark Knight Trilogy* is about the world of male subjectivities. The film focuses only on masculine agencies. Such male agency is established through male body. Michael Kimmel writes thus:

> Men's bodies have long been symbols of masculinity […]. They reveal (or at least they signify), manhood's power, strength, and self-control. […]. Maybe it's no longer through doing hard work but by working out, and maybe now its chemically or surgically enhanced, but still men believe the title of that feminist health classic: Our bodies are ourselves. (224)

The film has used certain codes to establish the subjectivity of its characters. Film has used ripped body to refer to physical strength showing physical prowess is a masculine attribute essential for upgrading masculine subjectivity. Masculine subjectivity is celebrated in the films as long as the protagonist is in control of himself. The films have used scars and prostheses as discernible emblems of the turbulent subjectivity of its characters. Men of Gotham celebrate scars and prostheses. Scars in Gotham are never a symbol of distress and failure but unending spirit of perseverance. Batman trilogy shows that it's not the behavior or mannerisms alone that are shown as the expressions of masculine subjectivity. Heterosexuality is the key component

of hegemonic masculinity/subjectivity (Wharton 212). According to Mary Holmes, "[h] egemonic versions of masculinity [in turn] are closely tied into capitalist values of rationality, calculation and self interest[…]" (58). Batman thus performs as a masculine rational subject who acts for the interest of society flushing out all his individual motives. This is made possible by making others invisible. Gotham's men propagate the dogma that masculinity can strive only by subjugating the absences of masculinities. For the Gothamites it's their economic potency that furthers them forward. Therefore, the base of white masculine subjectivity in Gotham is nothing but capital (Deleuze and Guattari 182).

The masculine subjectivities of Gothamites are socially constructed ones. Many scientists shown in the film are physically weak to work further; they resort to machine for the continuance of their activities. All kinds of masculinity delineated in the film are full-fledged only in its associations with the machines. Masculine subjectivity in machine's absences is under crisis. Success of a male Gothamite depends on the performance of his masculinity. Masculine subject in Gotham is under crisis and Batman performs as a safety valve for the degraded masculinity of the Gothamites. According to Solomon-Godeau "almost all anthropologists and ethnographers agree that masculinity appears transculturally as something to be acquired, achieved, initiated into – a process often involving painful or even mutilating rituals […]" (71). Wayne's fall into the Bat's well and the Bruce's fall and the death of his parents are initiations to his masculine subjectivity. He is well-initiated and trained by family's butler who regulates his masculine subjectivity. He finds his lost self in a man greatly feared by the criminal underworld" , Ra's Al Ghul. He functions as the completion of a masculine subjectivity left uncompleted by his father. Ra's convinces him that theatricality and deceptions are powerful agents of constructing ones masculine subjectivity. Wayne thus tries to build a self by convincing him that you must become

more than just a man in the mind of your opponent". Since revenge has been not all seen as an expression of masculine prowess he finds his sophistry in the masculine dresses of Batman. He uses the league of shadows as the launching pad of his masculine subjectivity to accomplish the task of being an ultimate masculine answer to all the degenerations in his subjectivity. Later when the league of shadows became a threat for his own assumed masculine calculations, he kills them as the champions of masculine subjectivity in Gotham.

There is an important question in this *Batman Trilogy*. Why does he perform superheroic activities? His Batman motif really for fighting against the crime or is it a compensation for his traumas or is it just a masculine way proving to others that he is man enough to defend others from the vicious crimes?. As a capitalist he finds his compensation for his parent's death at investing in military equipments. Machines like Bat-mobile supply boost his masculine other. His business partner Fox also supplies him with a Bat suit which was initially made for the soldiers; a plan which was later given up because it was very expensive for mass production. Bruce becomes a superhero only because he can afford the luxury of a batman. Bat-suit thus represents the hyper male financial potency. It has got all the theatricality mentioned by Ghul. Nolan has used the word theatricality not in the sense of a dramatic performance in the film. But it has been used as masquerading one's true identity by technical skills. Nolan has used the word theatricality in three different senses in his films. In *Batman Begins* he uses it as something desirable. Members of the league of shadows exploit it to divert the attention of the opponents. But people of Gotham uses theatricality to refer to artificial and inauthentic appearances of Batman in Gotham. Bat suit is so reflective of what Deleuze and Guttari say 'it can be seen as a body without organs' (4). It performs as a symbolic corpus with semantic functions. His Batman body can be seen as a walking metaphor used to overcome trauma and also a space of

envisaging emotional scars. Deluze and Guttari writes that "body without organs" is "desire, it is that which one desires and by which one desires" (165). Batman suit is designed after a macho body that makes explicit the abs. Bat-suit helps Wayne to cover up his true self and perform his masculinity. Wayne cannot fight against the crime in Gotham as everyman. He rather becomes Batman as a symbolic überman because "as a symbol, [he] can be incorruptible, [he] can be everlasting" (40:33). Being the richest man in Gotham, he has all the material base for semantic enhancement. He emphasizes his supremacy in Gotham by showcasing his heterosexuality as an expression of his masculine subjectivity. But he fails before his friend Rachel. Rachel's denial points to the loss of masculinity in Wayne. As he wants to reestablish his masculinity he asks Alfred what "somebody like [him]" does to which he replies "drive sports cars, date movie stars, buy things that are not for sale" (Batman Begins). Wayne, thus, becomes cameo and starts flirting with his own secretaries and moves with two women in a sports car. He casually moves with them and when he was asked send her maids out of the hotel, he buys the hotel. According to Hilary Lips 'masculinity is usually demonstrated in films by showing the exercise of power' (14). Wayne shows his masculinity by demonstrating his financial superiority. But he terribly fails before Rachel and talks to Rachel as "Inside I am more". She looks at him with contempt when he was told by his attendants that "Bruce, we have some more hotels for you to buy" (Batman Begins).

In *The Dark Knight* too Bruce continues his definitions of masculine subjectivity in financial terms. When he listens to Harvey Dent remarks about the difficulty of getting reservation at a fancy restaurant in Russia, he makes a claim that he owns the place. As he is jealous of Dent, he wants to weaken his masculinity by demonstrating Dent's financial weakness. He thus defines masculine subjectivity in financial terms. He is in an existential need to reassure straightness and masculine subjectivity as he is denied by Rachel.

Though through his theatricality and inauthentic appearance that establishes his masculine subjectivity in the film, he is rejected by Jane and she chooses Harvey; thus challenging the self assured straightness of Wayne. His physicality as well as wealth fail before her. As she is beyond the limits of his masculinity, as a Batman film it's essential that she has to die. Nolan thus establishes Batman's authenticity by killing Jane who is beyond the borders of Wayne's subjectivity. The narrative also brings out the traumatic phase of his masculinity when in the final fight with Ra's al Ghul, he tells Batman that Bruce is just an ordinary man in a cape. Wayne establishes his masculinity on conceit and pecuniary means; thus it's so illusory and prone to fragility. Alfred indeed presages him that 'he is getting lost in the monster of himself'. But he becomes more megalomaniacal. In his confrontations with the corrupt police Flass, he asks him to swear in his name than God. There are scenes in *The Dark Knight* that Batman proclaims "Batman has no limits" which is proved to be wrong later. He sees masculine subjectivity as something that comes at fiscal, corporeal and collective cost. He lives in estrangement at the end of *The Dark Knight Rises* in anonymity with his lady love. It shows the final conflict between the masculine subjectivity of Wayne as a symbol as in Batman and as a playboy as in billionaire philanthropist. Annette Schimmelpfennig writes thus:

> The symbol is an abstract entity, much like the signified in a structural sense, whereas the wealthy playboy depends strongly on materialism and is therefore favoured by the capitalist structures of the city. A successful masculinity, at least in Gotham, cannot be an omnipotent, an omnipresent, masculinity, which is why he has to let go of the control over his hometown. (8)

In another scene when Crane and Batman confront each other Crane tells him "you look like a man who takes himself too seriously" . Batman couldn't respond creatively to this insult and falls before Crane's invectives. Crane's idea of masculinity is different from that of Batman/Wayne. For him the base of masculinity is brain not muscles. In an encounter with Rachel, Crane asserts that "I respect the mind's power over the body. That's why I do what I do" (The Dark Knight). He never indulges himself in physical labour unlike Batman. In spite of their difference in their concept of masculinity they share a common space in their desire for theatricality. They perform their masculine subjectivity more in masks. But crane fails at the high theatricality of Batman's Masculine subjectivity. But at the mock court scene in *The Dark Knight Rises* he assumes a superior masculine subject position so theatrically by being a scarecrow. His masculinity is very well-established in the court where he is in a superior position. But his masculinity remains so fragile as it depended on an influential man named Bane.

Bane's characterization is unlike from all other characters in the trilogy. Bane appears not in masks and he establishes his masculinity so authoritatively and he doesn't hide it under any disguise, though he wears a mask which wraps his face partially. Bane uses his mask not to hide his identity but establish something new. His masculine subjectivity is beyond the masks. Unlike Bat-suit, his mask functions as an emblem of his subjectivity which tells about the trauma that he underwent and also defines a mark of his subjectivity. He says thus: "No one cared who I was till I put on the mask". Scar that is seen on his back also reveals the trauma he suffered.

Bane builds his subjectivity by questioning and challenging the subjectivity of other men. In *Dark Knight Rises* there is a scene in which Bane questions the authority of Daggett. To Daggett's authoritative comment "no, stay here. I am in charge, Bane replies "do you feel in charge?" (The Dark

Knight Rises). He induces a sensation of loss of control in Dagget and thereby builds the feeling of the loss of masculine subjectivity in his opponent. Schimmelpfennig writes thus:

> He combines physical power (in the course of the film he snaps various necks and Bruce's back with his bare hands) with mental one (he manipulates the people of Gotham into anarchic behavior) and is therefore the epitome of controlling masculine subjectivity. (18)

But the film has to compromise its powerful character in its aura of superhero narrative and places the traumatic Bruce at victory in the end.

Nolan's *Batman Trilogy* in a wider scale deals with the pertinent existential questions of a 20th century traumatic self. Nolan addresses critical questions of masculine subjectivity and he tries to find technology as an answer to all the questions that haunted humanity in postmodern period. He thus paints a different shade of masculine subjectivities in his films. As a postmodern filmmaker who questions all arch theories of subjectivity, Nolan explores further possibilities of a masculine self though he compromises modern notions of masculine subjectivity for the superhero masculine subject who wins over others and establishes his kingdom. Nolan introduces different masculine subjects in these films. Though they differ in their particularities, all they have in common is that they prefer to hide behind masks. Their masculine subjectivity is played and performed under masks. Masks of particular choice define and determine the subjectivities of his characters. All his male characters are potential symptoms of weakness and failures. As weakness is a deadly sin in the definitions of masculine subjectivity, masks are used as devices to tackle the symptoms of weaknesses. Since the city of Gotham demands strong masculine subject, the traumatic self of Bruce is repaired using technology. Masculine subjectivity is seemingly in flux in

Gotham. Masculine subjectivity is constantly under threat in Gotham. The existential logic of the city is that every masculine subject is supposed to antagonize the other to establish his masculinity over the other.

The characterization of Batman's subjectivity in Hollywood films is usually one dimensional. The conventional Batman stories have looked at masculine subjectivity as either heroic or villainous. Batman has been an embodiment of all goodness and order. But Nolan problematizes such one-dimensional representation and makes his heroes vulnerable. His villains are ideal masculine subjects unlike his heroes. It is often technology that empowers his heroes and comes to their rescue. Nolan has thus questioned the essential theories usually attributed to subjectivity in mainstream films. But, although Nolan theorizes about the performativity of subjectivity, subjectivity for him is all about masculinity and its attendant qualities. Subjectivity is nothing but expressions of masculinity. He defines subjectivity only in terms of masculinity. He also establishes the theatricality of one's subjectivity and the more performative, the more successful subjectivity is. Batman finally succeeds because he exceeds in performing his masculine subjectivity over others though it is technology aided. When Batman finishes his mission he has to withdraw from his superhero suit and he leaves for a deserted cave. Gotham is not a country for old, weak and traumatic masculine subjects. In Gotham success of masculine subjectivity lies in the capacity of diminishing others authority. In Gotham masculine subjectivity is expressed through power and control, though Batman is a strong and wealthy individual, he has to torture and demolish others. It's the armour and Bat suit that give Bruce his authenticity as a super hero subject. Without these his masculine subjectivity is vulnerable.

Nolan explores the constructed nature of subjectivity in the characterization of Joker in *The Dark Knight*. According to Vilja Johnson "the

film has shown the identity of Joker as empty. Story of his origin constantly shifts in the narrative" (964). Though the narrative perfectly identifies the cause of Wayne's trauma, it has no clue about the cause of Joker's scar. The absence of such finite causes is very intelligently used by the Joker to invite pity among his followers. The narrative, thus, questions the need for back stories for characters. His subjectivity is beyond the definitions of Gothamites and functions as an antidote to the definitions of masculine subjectivity in Gotham. Tyree writes thus: Joker's narrative is "a fairly pointed mockery of the need for back-stories for villains in the first place, the easy psychoanalysis that reduces every choice to an after-effect of some early trauma" (31). Such complex subjectivity of Joker mocks at Wayne as his subjectivity is originally traumatic but replaced by a subjectivity animated.

Joker is an unmotivated villain. His subjectivity is not the end result of his desire. He has no monetary desire. Unlike Batman he could easily burn a stack of money. He is not a man who searches for something or lives for specific ends. He wants only to watch how the world burns. He questions both mob and police and their notions of masculinity. He says he wants to show them "how pathetic their attempts to control things really are". He questions all the definitions of subjectivity in Gotham. For Gothamites subjectivity is all about control. But Joker prefers to be a flamboyant dandy (Barounis 310). When he goes into the hospital where Harry Dent is admitted, he dresses himself as a woman and tries to seek out his plans. Unlike Batman, Joker deals with his mission in a way that is against the hyper masculine notions of Gothamites. He takes a feminine role to perform his missions unlike Batman who becomes hypermasculine to reach his goal. He aligns himself with Dent. He could figure out subjectivity in Dent where he can associate. Dent is disfigured, physically imperfect and less masculine like him. As a superhero film *The Dark Knight* overcomes the traumatic subjectivity of Wayne by making his opponents less masculine, physically imperfect and disfigured.

When the film begins Dent is a successful masculine figure who wins the heart of a lady Wayne loves. He was called a white Knight. It's not the merit of Wayne's subjectivity and masculine prowess that he wins over his opponents. But it's possible by the weakening of the celebrated masculine subjectivity of other characters in Gotham. Wayne's success is also made possible by the financial advantage that he has over others. The idea of masculinity narrated in *Batman Trilogy* is problematic and postmodern. Masculine subjectivity is narrated in this trilogy as something that has lost its essentiality and that can be easily achieved with the aid of money. In the postmodern city of Gotham masculine subjectivity is nothing but the eccentricities of money. Bruce Wayne becomes Batman not because of any spectacular reason but because of only financial reasons. Nolan thus defines masculine subjectivity in capitalist terms. Subjectivity is nothing but the effect of wealth and theatricality.

It is quite interesting to explore why Dent, in spite of being called a white Knight is a failure?. When Batman fails in his attempt of defending his mission, a family patriarch comes to his rescue. The narrative has been structured in the way that the system and its protectors come in defense of Wayne when he is in crisis. But the situation is different for Dent. He has no patriarch to rescue him from his confusion. In his confused mind, Dent loses his control and submits himself to the logic of the coin. His subjectivity is completely altered with the death of his wife and he exhibits his trauma/pain in his disfigured face. With the death of Rachel his purpose of masculinity is lost and falls from the pedestals of qualified masculinity of Gotham. Annette Schimmelpfennig writes thus:

> Once Rachel is dead, Dent parades his scarred face as a reminder of the pain he has suffered. His masculinity has lost its purpose, namely to protect her and the city in general, his

eigenwert as the white knight is gone. Additionally, re-territorialisation is impossible, as the city already has enough villains, so there is no role left for him to occupy. Dent is a victim of the city's hegemonic structures and needs to die. He fails as a potential leader and does not manage to take revenge upon the people who caused his misery; he therefore does not live up to Gotham's expectations of masculinity. (14)

These traditions of doing good and overcoming evil is the archetype of the mythological hero and the cultural phenomenon and ubiquitous theme people have come to know (Wierzchowska 108).

Bruce Wayne struggles both internally and externally to identify his authentic subjectivity. To achieve his authentic subjectivity he performs an alternate persona. Thus Batman becomes a source of redemption for him to find his authentic subjectivity. Mahesh Krishnan writes thus:

Batman is another facet of Bruce's identity, helping make him into the person he is, rather than a completely separate identity. This also suggests that multiple narratives guide each person's identity, although they are intricately related. The playboy and Batman both exist because Bruce Wayne can fund them, and because each narrative provides a crucial part of his overall identity. (250)

It was Bruce Wayne's existential choice to become Batman. He says "people need dramatic examples to shake them out of apathy. I can't do that as Bruce Wayne – as a man. As flesh and blood I can be ignored. I can be destroyed. But as a symbol, as a symbol I could be incorruptible. I can be everlasting." Bruce identifies that he needs to perform a new subjectivity to become what he wants to be. He, thus, constructs his subjectivity as Batman to be an authentic being and to escape from his traumatic self. Nolan has used flashbacks frequently so that he could incorporate both present and past self

of Wayne. When the film begins he is with young Rachel playing in the garden. The film then switches over to the elder Bruce in Chinese prison camp. Then the film again switches back to the incidents that lead to the fall of Bruce into the well.

In the *Batman Trilogy*, Wayne is forced to perform a subjectivity which is more socially acceptable. He was regulated by Rachel and corrects him for plying his natural role as a play boy. She says "it's not who you are underneath; it's what you do that defines you." The film thus points forward the idea that it's the subjectivity on display that defines who a person is; not what he/she actually is. Nolan thus propounds the idea that subjectivity has to be understood not as something that belongs to the persons individually but as something that is produced between people and within social relations. The subjectivity of the character established in the trilogy is never established authentic and stabilized. *Batman Begins* doesn't have a clear ending. It continues with the questions it raises and leaves it unresolved. Jim Gorden speaks about the imminent danger awaiting Gotham. Batman/Bruce at the last sequence of the film is not a fully victorious as one who is authentically established as a successful subject who is accomplished in all his missions. Mahesh Krishnan writes thus:

> The victory is not conventional or rather a victory evades Bruce, rather he has passed through a philosophical turbulence to be a changed human being. Placing this as the last scene of the film, rather than the lighthearted dénouement in the ruins of Wayne Manor with Alfred and Rachel, Nolan has chosen to challenge the audience's ideas of good versus evil by suggesting that Batman's war against crime is unfinished. There is not a space for victory and happiness in Nolan's work. (250)

Nolan's Batman is not one-dimensional. His subjectivity is not one-dimensional. In the final scene of the *Dark Knight* Batman unlike the

superhero of the Hollywood cinema refuses to kill Joker. He even tells Gordon that "sometimes truth isn't good enough. Sometimes people deserve more. Sometimes people deserve to have their faith rewarded." Nolan thus foregrounds a postmodern perspective of identity. Batman's identity is never postulated as a Black and white character. The question of hero/anti hero is so creatively addressed in the film. He is called a Dark Knight. Gordon notes Batman is "not a hero. He is a silent protector, a watchful guardian, a dark knight" (The Dark Knight).

When Wayne is introduced, he is affected by a trauma. He is affected by fear. He is afraid of Bats. Ducard advices him "to conquer fear you must become fear, and men fear most what they cannot see" (The Dark Knight). He even suggests theatricality and deception as methods of overpowering his trauma. Though the film shows Wayne initially out of trauma, the trauma again recapture in him in his encounter with Scarecrow. The fear never leaves him. Wayne is inescapable from trauma and it talks about the predicament of a modern self. He thus becomes an existentially bound self who is unable to trespass his temporality. Though Wayne tries to master his fear, his mastery dissipates, and he fails.

As a filmmaker who has dealt with the crisis of a post/modern subject in his early films, Nolan fails to represent the typical Batman persona of the Hollywood in his Batman trilogies. Nolan's Batman is very realistic and he is more human. General schema of Batman is someone who is intrinsically linked to truth. Batman's subjectivity has been established in the Hollywood films as someone who is truth per se and someone who restores truth once it is toppled down by the enemies. Though Batman restores the order in Gotham, in Nolan's Batman trilogies he is intrinsically less powerful and exercises his essential duty of serving the people and establishing order in Gotham by resorting to technology and practice. He is more of a cyborg

subject than a superhero Batman. Only when he is able to establish his subjectivity as a cyborg he is able to exercise his super human power and succeeds in escaping from his existential predicament. There are scenes in *Batman Begins* where Batman fails when the enemies overpower him with more sophisticated weapons. The films schematically thus show how machines and weapons help him to override his enemies. Machines like the uniform, bikes and tanks free him from the limitations of ordinary man who is traumatized. As Donna Haraway writes, "in the late twentieth century Batman is a chimera, theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism; in short, he is a cyborg. Cyborg is Nolan's ontology; it justifies his politics to counter the traumatised subjectivity of an existential being" (150).

The dimensions of human experience and the identity of humanity in general are always at stake in the 21st century. Notions of subjectivity as uni-dimensional and potentially predictable have been over glossed and fractured by more sophisticated theories in the light of our complex redefinitions of sociability and cultural exchanges. With the development of science and technology early categorisations have been problemtized and new vicissitudes were suggested to bypass the fragmentations inscribed on the body. New developments in science and technology have redefined the scope of physical bodies. Speed has reconsidered and extended the limits of human bodies. According to F.T. Marinetti "the splendor of the world has been enriched with a new form of beauty, the beauty of speed. A race-automobile adorned with great pipes like serpents with explosive breath . . . a race-automobile that seems to rush over exploding powder is more beautiful than the Victory of Samothrace' (qtd. in Chipp 286). Batman with his super human speed, animated by the providence of technology, over powers his enemies. He metalizes his body challenging the classical nostalgia of the western models of super heroes and masculinity. Batman as a cyborg with his speed gives a promise of future for the city of Gotham. Thus Batman becomes a man of

social reality and a creature of fiction (Haraway 149). It is the technologized environment that strengthens the traumatic subjectivity of Wayne.

Batman in Nolan is more of a cyborg than a superhero in Nolan's trilogies. He convincingly portrays how Wayne becomes Batman one day with the help of technology. It is technology that empowers him. Nolan schematically shows how Wayne is able to authenticate his masculine subjectivity with the help of technology. Nolan has used new technologies to reinterpret Wayne's identity and even Batman is interpreted from technologies terms. Thus technologically modified subjectivity of Batman can be seen as a 'cyborg' as Harawy called or as 'terminal identity' as Batman mentioned. Nolan thus invests hope in technologies power of renovating life from the liminal existence. Mark Dery has called it as techno-transcendentalism (Short 163). It can be seen as an attempt to surpass the human limitation by introducing technology. So Nolan's *Batman Trilogy* gives a futuristic perspective of human subjectivity made possible as half machine and half human.

Chapter Five

**Spinning Memories:
Digital Subjectivity in *Inception* and *Interstellar***

Of all Nolan's films, it is *Inception* (2010) that took the longest time to be hatched. The idea of the film has been there in Nolan's mind even nine years before its release. Critics have found a similarity between *Inception* and Alain Resnais's *Last Year at Marienbad* (1962). Though there is a similarity in themes, the treatment and the philosophy of film are substantially different. Nolan says thus: "There are bits of *Inception* that people are going to think I ripped that straight out of *Last Year at Marienbad*" (Itzkoff). *Inception* can be seen as Hollywood version of a celebrated European cinema. The protagonist of *Inception,* Dom Cobb, is suffering from the traumatic memory of his wife's death. He wishes and struggles to escape from that memory. Memory is a recurrent motif of the film. It is been critiqued much for its deliberations on memory, which has been looked at as something that can be reverted and manipulated subjectively. Though the concept of memory has been much deliberated and authenticity of memory has been critiqued, Nolan's proposition of memory as an implanted variant is not much debated. Memory has been looked at as something that constitutes one's authentic self. Subjectivity and memory are inextricably connected. A person without memory is considered as inauthentic. Just as memory plays a significant role in constituting the subjectivity of a person, the deep structure of the film is constituted by the play between memory and dream. Cobb is part of a big capitalistic espionage who is able to penetrate into peoples mind and able to either steal or implant ideas, thereby constituting subjectivity in the persons concerned according to the desires of the capitalist firms; he is so powerful to construct the subjectivity of others in his terms and the ideology he believes in. The film has been structured as his psychological imaginings. Cobb is

equipped with the possibilities of entering into the inner psyche of persons. The film envisions a postmodern world where people's subjectivity can be easily monitored and constructed. Through the process of inception, Cobb could create a disposition that could be appropriated at his will. Not only that, Cobb could also disclose his repressed memories while engaging in the process of entering into others' dreams. Fran Pheasant Kelly writes thus:

> Even though Cobb enters these dream states with the narrative premise of stealing or incepting ideas, the process is clearly akin to hypnosis, not only in the reclining figure positioning of the protagonist, and the fact that they experience a changed mental awareness, but also because Cobb's repressed memories are uncovered. (110)

Sometimes these repressed memories come to his dream as if it is normal memory. The film opens with an extreme close up shot of Cobb who is lying on the beach unconsciously. From that camera switches to a low angle shot where shot is framed as if Cobb is looking at the play of children. Such subjective use of camera can be seen as an effective means of communicating the perspective of the character. As a filmmaker, Nolan has strategically used filmic techniques to analyse and estimate his philosophy of filmmaking. It can be also perceived as director's way of organising spectator's perceptions. But Nolan leaves that narratives halfway and the narrative breaks. The objects of narrative disappears. Children in the narrative function as the object of memory. It is their presence that gives him the meaning of his existence and it is the memory of his children that makes his life worth living. By showing the narrative breakdown, Nolan explicates how shattered is his subjectivity. When memory breaks he feels fragmented. His subjectivity is incomplete in their absence. But narrative breaks often and children disappear abruptly. There is a constant invocation in the film of Cobb's memories of his children

and of dead wife in flashbacks. Therefore, there is structural confusion in the text whether Cobb is experiencing dream or he is experiencing the real. When he is induced into dream, he experiences the projections of Mal, his wife in the form of flashbacks. In her fight with Mal in one of the dream sequences, Ariadne says "Cobb has some serious problems that he tried to bury down there" (Inception). It is this memory problem Ariadne mentions constitutes his search.

Nolan has used some camera techniques to show the mental instability Cobb faces. He used some canted angle to signify the trauma he suffers. The conflict between dream and reality is the central focus of the film. In fact there are characters in the film who are unable to differentiate between reality and the dream world they are in. The image of totem has been used to distinguish between dream and reality. Cobb prefers to be in dream to be with Mal. Dream has been a way for Cobb to retrieve his memory and the reality lost. In one of his dreams, Mal tells him "You know what you have to do to find me". In fact, he uses certain dream equipment to get access to the memories of his wife and children. He tries to get such access in order to be with them. Film thus switches between trauma and hypnosis. In a conversation between Mal and Cobb in a dream, Mal asks Cobb about his feeling to which he responds: "Guilt I feel guilt Mal. The idea that caused you to question your reality came from me". So the film text justifies the idea that it was Cobb who planted the idea in her mind that world that she dreams is real. Nolan thus challenges the idea of modernist notion of memory as authentic and as something that can be trusted. Memory thus in *Inception* is nothing but mechanical product that is boosted through technology. Memory in *Inception* is nothing but a space of mental topography constituted by persons who are accessible to technology. Nolan gives a postmodern perspective of subjectivity as something which lacks originality and authenticity and that which can be created or constructed by someone else's

designs. Unlike Leonard in Memento, Cobb in *Inception* is less modernist in his sentiments and fragmentation of subjectivity is never worries him. Fragmentation of self and subjectivity is seen as a possibility of escalating and exploring many ways of subjectivity. Though Cobb struggles to get out of his traumatic memories, he celebrates and makes use of the possibility of inception. The possibility of incepting subjectivity is used by Cobb for his personal motives.

Nolan's *Memento* can be seen as attempt of a 20th century man to recover his lost memories and reconstruct his lost identity (Lisa K. Perdigao 120). Nolan's films in general, not just *Memento*, is devoted to the issues of memory, identity and grief. Identity and grief have got a lot to do with memory. In *Memento* and *Inception,* memory loss can be equated to identity crisis. In *Inception* Cobb identifies his subjectivity and desire in discovering his lost memories. Its memory that constitutes Cobb's identity and it is the source for grief in *Inception*. Cobb without his traumatic memory is nothing but an extension of capitalist firms. He is mere an ideological tool in their hands. The attempt of construing memories in his mind as well as his targets are an attempt from his part to escape from his liminal space where he is worried over the loss of his wife and the fact that he is away from his children. Based on Freud's *Mourning and Melancholia* Tamy Clewell writes thus: "Grieving entails a kind of hyper remembering, a process of obsessive remembering during which the survivor resuscitates the existence of the lost other in the space of psyche, replacing an actual absence with an imaginary presence" (2004: 44). Though end of grieving is usually consolation, Cobb is unable to achieve reconciliation. According to Lisa K. Perdiago, "Cobb insists on the reality of objects that he can manipulate, surrogates for the lost objects at the centre of his lives and narratives" (120). Cobb couldn't distinguish memories from reality and engage himself completely in the act hyperembering. He loses himself in the hyper reality of dream. As a person

who lacks memory he tries to construe memory of his wife and even incept memory in the mind of his wife Mal to live a hyper real life. Memory thus becomes an existentialist must for him to churn out the subjectivity he wants and wishes for. He finds dream as a way to enhance this desire.

According to Lisa K. Perdigao "the story of loss permeates Nolan's filmography" (121). Loss of memory is a constant focus of his films. In *Memento* the crisis of Leonard is to retain his memory which is essential for him to arrive at the meaning of his existence as a subject who is nothing but an extension of his revenge. He couldn't authentically execute his revenge without memory. But in *Inception*, he wants to retain the good memory of his personal self, memory which he caters to; moves away from the memory he is haunted by. Hyperremembering thus becomes a way for him to travel into a world he actually lost. Memory is hyperrememberd in *Inception* to transgress the loss of Cobb's wife. He sustains the unreal dream world where he can live in his memories, though it is a construed one. Nolan has presented Cobb as an architect who is able to create a world of reveries where he can enable either to extract or implant ideas in the mind of the subjects. With the death of his wife, Cobb refuses to move out of the limbo and loves to live in the permanent memory of his wife. In Freudian terms 'to keep her memories alive and to continue his projections of his wife, Cobb tries to live in the world of dreams (2004: 44). According to Clewell such attempt of taking the lost other into the structure of one's own identity, is a form of preserving the lost object in and as the self (2004:61). In *Inception* dream has become Cobb's reality. Dream has become a means of accessing whatever is denied to them. Incepted memory is a kind of reiteration of the lost through dream images. It is these unreal memories that determine Cobb's course of action as well as his subjectivity. But such dream images don't give him an escape from the grief and trauma he suffers. According to Laura E Tanner "The image of the absent body in memory expresses the subject's desire without fulfilling it; the shape

of memory constructs an outline that gestures toward the animating and embodied presence the image lacks" (2006: 90). Thus his memory points to the absence of the remembered objects rather than their presence. Such belief in the reality of dream images makes Cobb's subjectivity an inauthentic one.

Inception can be seen as an exploration of the labyrinthine structure of the mind (Perdigao 125). It can also be seen as a probe into the effects of planting ideas into the minds of the subjects. Though Cobb is part of corporate espionage and wanted to implant ideas in the mind of others, he is affected by some loss. Ariadne authenticates this when she says 'Cobb has some serious problems that he's tried to bury down there'. Ariadne later says that what Cobb engages is not just dream but memories'. All his attempts to get rid of his memories of Mal fail. Ariadne tells Cobb thus: 'You're trying to keep her alive. You can't let her go … Do you think you can just build a prison of memories to lock her in? Do you really think that's gonna contain her'? She makes it explicit that Cobb is haunted by memories. Cobb tells Ariadne that he obsessively revisits these memories because 'these are moments I regret. They're memories that I have to change,' but later tells his team: "We all yearn for reconciliation, for catharsis" (Inception). There are conscious efforts from his part to escape from the trauma he faces. The attempt of revisiting his memories are his ways of recapturing the world he lost. The attempt of sustaining and deleting the memory he wanted can be seen as an attempt from his part to create and crucially determine his course of subjectivity. It is a moment when he wanted to see their faces but couldn't wait; he had to leave the country because the authorities thought that he had killed Mal. Cobb says: "I realise that I'm gonna regret this moment … that I need to see their faces one last time. But the moment's passed. And whatever I do, I can't change this moment" (Inception).

The conflict between illusion and reality is a major theme in *Inception*. Nolan has used objects to maintain this reality /illusion conflict. Objects play key roles in sustaining the illusion as well as breaking its spell. As Arthur and Cobb tell Ariadne, "a 'totem' is essential to navigating the space between reality and the dream world. Ariadne acknowledges that it is 'an elegant solution for keeping track of reality". Arthur tells Ariadne: "When you look at your totem, you know beyond a doubt that you're not in someone else's dream" (Inception). However, Cobb's totem is actually Mal's, as he admits: "She would spin it in the dream and it would never topple. Just spin and spin.' Cobb's sense of reality is predicated on an object that is a reminder of Mal's absence. However, the totem's grounding in reality is always tenuous, as Fisher notes: "The top – that ostensible token of the empirical actual – first of all appears as a virtual object, secreted by Mal inside a doll's house in limbo" (42). Cobb's top, like Leonard's mementos, complicates the relationship between reality and illusion, the living and the dead. The film ends with an enduring spin of totem leading him into a perpetual state of dreaming.

It's through objects that Cobb sustains and breaks illusions and fantasy in the film. Arthur and Cobb tell Ariadne in the film "a totem is essential to navigate the space between reality and dream world". Ariadne reassures that point of view by saying 'it is an elegant solution for keeping track of reality'. Arthur then talks to Ariadne: "When you look at your totem, you know beyond a doubt that you are not in someone else's dream" (Inception). But Cobb's totem that helps him to differentiate between what is real and fiction is actually Mal's. He even acknowledges that she would spin it in the dream and it would never topple'. Thus Cobb is a person who lives more in fantasy than in reality. His sense of self and subjectivity is just an extension of his traumatic association with the memories of his wife and children. He finds his reality in the fantastic world of Mal where totem spins and spins. According to Robert Samuels "*Inception* is symptomatic of Cobb's

increasing inability to differentiate between fantasy and reality. In *Inception* he is in a dream that is in a dream that is in another dream, and the result is that by the end of the film, no one knows if he is in reality or still in a dream".

According to Todd McGowan "one of the key features of Nolan's film is the trustworthiness of the protagonists" (2012:147). The film *The Dark Knight* ends with batman assuming the guise of a criminal. In spite of such depiction, audience is so confident about his intentions. But in films like *Following* and *Memento*, deception works within the diegesis of the film. In *Inception* Nolan focusses on the central character. It has been structured as spectators believe and follow him. But later Nolan makes it clear how deceptive is Cobb's perspective. The attempt here for Cobb is not to find the culprit behind the murder of his wife. He wants to remove his name from the death of his wife. He wants to sustain his life in dream to regain his life. The real attempt of Cobb is to escape from the trauma he finds in the dream world by returning to reality. According to Todd McGowan, *Inception* represents a further move in Nolan's filmmaking through its association of trauma with fiction and flight from trauma with reality (2012: 150). The truth in *Inception* is not found in reality but in dream. Dream is more real in *Inception* than reality itself.

Critics observe that memory has been a serious concern of the 1990s culture. Memory has been a constant preoccupation for many filmmakers in the 90s. Harrison writes thus:

> Memory and nostalgia are therefore integral to the sensibility that gave rise to periodising by decades, but they also took on a special significance in the 1990s, when it was not simply that the past was rapidly disappearing but that the very modes of remembering and representing it had become problematic. Preoccupations with memory were widespread in 1990s films like Recall. (Harrison 2010: 3)

1990s is a period of instability in the history of the world. Revisionism was the periods' call. This period saw an ongoing fight with memory and nostalgia. Memories and nostalgia were fraught with an ardent call to revise or modernise the present. Irrespective of the protest Ted Turner's colourisation project got a widespread approval with the digital ages flourish, with its endless touch ups and cinema re-releases. With the coming of VHS, aura of memory and nostalgia vanished and this home-viewing format popularised repetition, compilation and rerecording (sorcha Ni Fhlainn 148). Such technological development has constantly framed Nolan's notions of subjectivity and identity. In Nolan's films memory is a spot of uncertainty and raw emotion (Sorcha Ni Fhlainn 148). With the rapid development of technology and the fear of the non-functioning of the time with attack of Y2K bug and many apocalyptic predictions, realty and self were radically under change during this time. William J. Palmer writes thus:

> In the 90s contemporary social history and the media actually collaborated to define a shared metaphor for the age. Their metaphor was the phenomenon of spin. Public intellectuals, media pundits, and cultural historians (as well as filmmakers) embodied the nineties leading up to the traumatic turn of the new century. It all had to do with an age-old philosophical question 'what is the nature of reality? By the nineties, reality had become such a slippery issue, such a babel of contesting narratives that the deconstructive metaphors were the only ones that made sense. (2009: xi)

Many of the films produced during this time which Fhlainn calls 'Clinton years' (155), echoed deceit and trickery of times. Inauthentic and manipulative nature of the contemporary culture has resulted in espousing extreme deceit in film structures too. Fhlainn writes thus:

From the Clinton era onwards we are expecting to find a covert truth beneath the narrative lie in cinema, or, or more worryingly, our entire existence (which becomes split between the virtual and real with the rise of information technology)'. Our world at the rise of digital age seemed increasingly one of simulacra, computational avatars, interconnected virtual existence, fabricated yet vital to modern life. (155)

But Nolan's films make use of this virtual possibilities of the waning gap between reality and fantasy. He works on the possibilities/fear of the impossibility of distinguishing between the boundaries of real and simulated human memory. As in *Matrix,* Nolan also perceives world we live in as a simulation and every attempt to wake from it is traumatic. In *Inception* the dream world described is more real than the real world and its reality effect is more functional than the actual world. As a master of inception, Cobb incepts the idea of real world in Mal and she is unable to grasp the idea of reality. She later commits suicide in her impossibility of distinguishing between the real and the fantastic. Cobb's existence is also stuck in the dream world though he wants to erase his part in the suicide of his wife; he is stuck to his memory. The final spin of the totem again points to the fact that he is again in the dream world. Only his father-in-law reminds him to come to reality. It's only him who never appear in his dreams. Nolan thus places him against Cobb.

Inception can be seen as a psychological narrative about a corporate plan of stealing or implanting ideas in the mind of other powers. Such attempts can be primarily seen as very innovative and speaks about how advanced is science and technology. Nolan's films have been praised for its exceptional scientific accuracy and outlook. Though *Inception* is conceptually innovative, the idea it propagates supposedly becomes complex. The film belittles the fear of privacy and the frightening possibility of mental

manipulation. The film deals so casually with the terrifying ideology of privacy and it justifies violation of privacy for individual motives. He justifies, though not explicitly, violating Cobb's attempt of manipulating people's memory and subjectivity in his attempt of freeing himself from guilt and traumatising memory. It is his failure to respect the private space of his wife that led her in committing suicide. Fhlainn writes thus: "Invading a person's mindscape by deceptive means is fundamentally an assault but in *Inception* it is neutralised by achieving Cobb's singular goal of returning home" (157). The film never explores the predicament of Robert Fisher. Fisher is betrayed, his identity is altered and subjectivity is fragmented. The inception team implants doubts concerning his relationship with his godfather. They even insert false idea in Fisher's mind that strategically turns his subjective perspective. Though the act of implanting an idea is technologically a success, the result it produces is drastic. A person's memories, desires and thoughts are manipulated by intruding a person's private space. Thus Nolan proposes the idea that a person's subjectivity constituted of his memory, thoughts, desires and his circumstances are just the gifts of those in power. There is nothing called authentic subjectivity but just a technologically driven sensation. So subjectivity is thus nothing but an extension of the digital world one lives in and the persons who control it. Nolan in *Inception* questions the idea of an unmediated, absolutely rational and authentic self that exist of its own. Subjectivity is thus digitally boosted space/data that performs in some stranger's plans. According to Drew Winchur, "At one level, the film works as a corporate propaganda….By disguising such aggression as the benign setting of a private turmoil, inception coerces the viewer into legitimizing behaviour that she might otherwise find morally and politically revolting" (47). Nolan legitimizes the corporate intrusions into the privacy of individual's personal spaces. The idea of privacy has its roots in the notions of subjectivity/individuality as unique and original

entity which distinguishes a person from the crowd. In an age of digital tracking and unlimited surveillance authentic and unique subjectivity is just a myth. The adventures of Cobb's team in *Inception* speaks about an individual's subjectivity as just the outcome of some legitimate targets. Subjectivity thus becomes nothing but an ideologically constructed essentiality which is nothing but an expression of someone's desires and can be seen as digitally controlled sensation.

Nolan's films have been critiqued for its spin around male sensations. Beginning with *Following*, his films have been a masculine space. Subjectivity question that is raised in his films is very exclusive and it addresses only masculine subjectivity. Mario Liong writes thus:

> Nolan's films have been surrounding a (male) hero, suffering from psychological losses – loss of the parents for Bruce Wayne (Christian Bale) in *Batman Begins* (2005), death of the wife for Dom Cobb (Leonardo DiCaprio) in *Inception* (2010), and leaving the intimate daughter on bad terms for Cooper in *Interstellar* (2014) – striving against all odds to restore humanity – justice, parental love, and the survival of the human race". (3)

Just as in the earlier films of Nolan, in *Interstellar* Cooper, the protagonist, suffers from a loss. Though there is an absence of a wife in the narrative, Cooper is less traumatised by her absence. On the other hand he is in an existentialist crisis and scrapes with his facticity, his past and the lack of choices he could turn to. He feels his existence limited and subjectivity trifled. His passion for engineering finds no place in a world under crisis. His techniques that master his oddities fail. He is rather forced to give up his desire and invests himself in agriculture. Hunted by this loss he is frustrated and says:

Cooper: Well, we used to look up in the sky and wonder at our place in the stars. Now we just look down and worry about our place in the dirt.

Donald : Cooper, you were good at something, and you never got a chance to do anything with it, I'm Sorry. (Interstellar)

Cooper feels that his future is too limited and had to submerge his true-self in the context of his facticity, i.e., his environment does not permit him to embrace his true self, exercise his subjectivity. His aspirations and desire for his future self-seem bizarre. He comes to know that earth has become uninhabitable and to keep his daughters future intact he leaves his space. He thus embarks on a journey alienating himself from family and his roots with the realisation that he may not return. Nolan as a well-researched filmmaker plays with time and he questions the traditional concepts of time in the film. The essentialist notion of time as linear and one dimensional is questioned in the film and he offers more postmodern notions of time and even theories how future can change your past. Traditional notions of subjectivity as something that is constituted in the present and the end result of your past deeds supposedly seem outdated in the new theories of Nolan where subjectivity is not essential but something that can be altered and curiously manufactured. The extreme possibility of changing one's past self and the sense of subjectivity in the possibility of the future is a moment in the subjectivity studies. Cooper demonstrates how our choices can change and shape our future and past. In the tesseract, the past and the future intertwine and the future can change the past. The choices Cooper make in the future, impact the past. Though time-travel paradoxes are often frustrating in terms of creating a narrative, in this instance they serve to drive home this fundamental existentialist principle: our future is not defined by our past unless we allow it to be. Cooper tells his father-in-law that human race was

not meant to die on Earth just because it was born on Earth; in order for humanity to move forward, it must shed itself of its past, confronting and resolving the species' existentialist crises. Unlike his early films where characters are trapped in temporality and trauma, Cooper emerges out of his crisis and establishes his subjectivity by recoursing to technology. Cooper escapes the catastrophe that awaits him by exploring further possibilities of life in another space.

Interstellar is a typical space exploration movie that uses theories of Physics and postulates that "gravity can cross the dimensions, including time". Joseph Cooper and his daughter Murphy Cooper are seen to experience effects of gravitational anomalies from the beginning of the film – the cause of Cooper's earlier aircraft crash, the ghosts that pushed books off Murphy's shelf, the stray drone, the error with the tractor combines etc. Unlike his other films, *Interstellar* manoeuvers through a lot of issues regarding personal as well as social responsibilities and proposes that humankind will one day solve the complex unanswered questions regarding time and space and thrive in a five-dimensional reality. This is very unlikely of all Nolan's early films. His early films like *Memento* and *Following* proposed a subject who is traumatic and completely lost. But in *Interstellar* Cooper is so futuristic and teleological in his perspectives. What he exhibits is an Enlightenment subjectivity. Nolan proclaims that humans are their own saviours when Cooper says that a more advanced human community helped them to save themselves.

The film, *Interstellar*, features a dying Earth and a humanity that is intent on outliving it. Joseph Cooper is a man of science who laments the shift of human priorities from space explorations to digging the Earth. He eventually exercises his freedom of choice and creates his own subjectivity as a Space Ranger tasked with the mission of securing a safe home for the human race. Had he stayed home with his daughter Murphy, he would have

died just as Cobb said in *Inception*, "an old man filled with regret". Cooper exercises his ultimate freedom to construe a subjectivity he dreams and becomes a man of technology and establishes himself as post-human subject. Subjectivity that is usually addressed in his earlier films is absent or partially absent in *Interstellar*. Unlike other films subjectivity that is addressed in *Interstellar* echoes the spirit of renaissance notions of humanism. Cooper is very much convinced about the endurance of the classical subjectivity irrespective of the crisis he goes through. Cooper reasserts the lost spirit of humanity and subjectivity with the aid of technology.

Cooper tracks down and takes control of the Indian surveillance drone which he finds flying low over his fields, stating that he is "going to give it something socially responsible to do" , i.e., use its components to help the farming effort. Cooper says that the drone "needs to learn how to adapt…like the rest of us" (Interstellar), ending its past identity and forging a new one as there is no longer need for drones. The drone must reject its past identity and create a new one in order to remain relevant and reinvent themselves in the present, rather than continuing to hold on to the past. Here what cooper perceives about drone becomes so connected to his idea of forging new subjectivity as essential to live further. The concept of adaptability or the metamorphosing possibility of subjectivity is asserted here. Such assertions of adaptability and metamorphosis, though apparently futuristic, are nothing but a return to the much repressed and fragmented concepts of Enlightenment subjectivity. A similar situation arises again when Cooper interacts with a robot named TARS at the NASA centre. Cooper knew that such robots were designed by the military, but the NASA team had made sure that the programming of the robot accommodated their new needs. They kept the robots relevant without letting their past purpose define their future use. All of Nolan's lead characters are self-created individuals - Dom Cobb, Ariadne, Joseph Cooper and Murphy Cooper. Cooper joins NASA expedition team and decides to pilot the inter galactic probe to have an existence and subjectivity

free from fears. He strives thus to establish a life in unity with his subjectivity unrestrained by existential pressures. He thus chooses to have an authentic existence. Yet this sense of authenticity in Cooper's life is ambiguous since the premise of his decision to man the mission stemmed out of his intense desire to save humanity and secure a safe and inhabitable planet for his children. Later in the movie, Cooper realises that he was never in fact given a fair choice, which leaves him disoriented and in the depths of regret. Cooper makes a choice based on false information and is unable to make the choice he would have wished to. Amelia's father essentially robs Cooper off his choice, thereby forcing him to assume a subjectivity he might have otherwise rejected. Then film thus complicates authenticity attributed to Cooper's choices of saving himself and humanity.

The film shows that the motif for the space travel is Cooper's love for his family and humanity. But his choice of travel is purely accidental as he unconsciously falls into the NASA's project. His choice was not wilful but forced. Unlike the other films of Nolan, *Interstellar* never doubts the limitations of humanity. *Interstellar* on the other hand proposes a world view which assures a post-humanistic world which could overcome its crisis through digital and technological means. The solution that Nolan gives for the crisis that human's face is so anthropocentric and capitalist. He says man is capable travelling across planet and can easily leave earth behind. Mario Liong writes thus:

> It can be expected that humans will change their homes constantly after fully depleting the resources and ruining their habitats if they are lucky enough to find or found other new sites fit for human habitation. This may be a good idea for producing infinite sequels of the film but this is definitely a disenchanting ideology put forward by a 21st century apocalyptic work. (3)

As a filmmaker who questioned Enlightenment notion of subjectivity in the initial phase of his career, in *Interstellar* he reassures and reaffirms the subjectivity he once questioned. Films like *Memento* and *Following* proposed a fragmented subjectivity that questioned the functionality of a rational, male and white Cartesian subject. But in *Interstellar* he cinematically questions his own positions and scientifically establishes his positions on subjectivity as authentically capable of transcending all limitations and fragmentations. He establishes nothing but an idea of anthropocentric subjectivity which was questioned and found destructible. He asserts that human beings are unique and they are superior creatures in terms of rationality and love. Nolan doesn't believe in any other beings or superhuman powers in *Interstellar* who can save the humanity from total destruction. He even philosophises that how earth and other planets are hostile to human sentiments and existence. It's not the extra-terrestrial beings that lead humans into other galaxies through worm holes, but its technologized/digitalised future humans. Nolan theorises that only the essential man can get rid of the crisis that humanity undergoes. As Mario Liong writes, 'the human struggles that we see in *Interstellar* are emotionally engaging but the philosophy it propounds is unfortunately limiting Nolan's vision for a film that is situated in the post human condition' (3). When the film begins it's shown that a catastrophe is awaiting humanity. But Nolan never looks at this disaster as a human-created one. Rather he celebrates the essential humanity and 'his' rational and un-daunting subjectivity. Questions concerning anthropocene is not there in Nolan's mise-en-scene. Nolan reconstructs a subjectivity of humanity as distinct from all other beings and he even positions a much-criticised and deconstructed philosophy of anthropocentrism that propagates the idea that human beings are superior to all other beings. As Youatt writes, 'this construction of human subjectivity to be different from and superior to that of non-human, treats the nature as resources and considers non-humans, including animals and machines, expendable and replaceable is outdated' (Youatt 2014).

The film does not recognise any authentic subjectivity and agency of robots in the film. Nolan's philosophic visions in his later films were anthropocentric and though robots like TARS and CASE function in their own authentic way, Nolan never appreciates an independent existence of these machines. But he looks at them as tools that can be used to carry out human plans. Nolan's vision of human subjectivity in the 21st century is a machine controlled mechanism that solely establishes often his subjectivity so as to survive. Though Nolan recognises human's use of technology and robots, he refuses to give them an independent subjectivity. It's clear when TARS, a robot in the film, says: "Try to remember that as a robot, I have to do anything you say" (Interstellar). Mario Liong writes thus: "In *Interstellar* non-humans are made to work and even sacrifice for humanity and all successes are only attributed to unique human qualities. Humans remain the ultimate reason and solution in the film" (4). Being a filmmaker who works in the 21st century, Nolan holds on to a much contested principle. Nolan's treatment of subjectivity in *Interstellar* stems from post-humanist sentiments of the Cartesian superiority of human being as the primary locus of concern. Nolan reasserts humanist notion of self and subjectivity as superior. The film is interesting because of its visual effects and its cinematic elements. Though the film is emotionally engaging, the ideology it propagates supposedly seems outworn. Pepperell writes thus:

> Although the movie is very emotionally engaging with state-of-the-art visual effects, its core message is rather disappointing. Nolan does not offer a new perspective in dealing with human existence, let alone a glimpse of post-human subjectivity which rejects the "long-held belief in the infallibility of human power and the arrogant belief in our superiority and uniqueness. (1995: 176)

Thus the film establishes the conventional belief in an ideal world made possible by a white heterosexual man. Nolan even goes to the extent of

glorifying stereotypes. Such assertions of subjectivity based on the belief in superior, unique and arrogant human power is very regressive and excludes all the critiques and knowledge that these perspective entails.   The conventional humanist idea of subjectivity as autonomous, self-conscious and self-determining seems irrelevant and exclusive in a period that recognises hybridised varieties of life and anthropocene. According to Nayar "it's necessary to recognise that human is just an assemblage, co-evolving with other forms of life, enmeshed with the environment and technology" (2013: 3-4). In fact his Batman trilogy recognises this post-human subjectivity though it's rooted in capitalist ideology. In *Inception* he has continued his technological brilliance even to the extent of philosophising how human subjectivity is just a matter of manipulation. The notion of authentic subjectivity is radically questioned and postulated how one's subjectivity can be manipulated in *Inception*. But in *Interstellar,* he reverses his positions and recast the traditional anthropocentric notion of a rational and superior self though the film is set in a post-humanist context. It thus becomes a humanist story with the gimmick of space travel and exploration (Mario Liong 6). The film is still relying on superhuman escape from a critical space with an idea for the future humanity. Such stereotypical human success story is continued and no space for an all-inclusive world vision is not given in the film although it is set in a post-humanist phase.

Conclusion

The metanarratives of easy signification and rationalisation fall short of the incomprehensible and the magnifying literary theories of the twentieth century. With the failure of the grandiose dreams of realism and all its manifestations, the earlier touchstones of reality and its representative mechanisms were systematically critiqued and problematized. Theories like the Quantum Theory, Uncertainty Theory in physics and other significant events in history have questioned the centers which guaranteed meaning to all the epistemological efforts of the existing scientific and theoretic discourses. Since the easy logic of all realistic transactions seemed absurd and futile, western logomachy in general endeavored for the alternative possibilities of the post-real. Thus, this postmodern celebrations of the post-humanistic and post truth perspectives disregarded the explicit and implicit paradigms of the existing narratives which fantasize a teleological world. Fragmentation of the Cartesian subject and the celebrations of the constructed, metamorphosed and multiple subjectivities became the postmodern zeitgeist. Postmodernism has been celebrating the fall of the rational subject and the rise of the technologized subject as cyborg and digital subject. This metamorphosed subjectivity from a rational and organized self to a digital self, significantly monitors the paths of the contemporary narratives of all disciplines.

Cinema, being the medium of the 20th century, has echoed this fall of subjectivity. Films of 1930s like *Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* and the films of Hitchcock reverberated with these fragmentations. With the rise of the superhero films an idea of a new subjectivity is born. Superhero characters like Superman and Batman have celebrated the potentiality of a superhero subjectivity. The superheroism of these subjectivities was a filmic reply to the crisis that society went through. But when these superhero subjectivity

became over blown and too fantastic, technology was called in to justify its outlandish additions. Thus, cinema celebrated the possibilities of a man-machine mix. Films like *Matrix* questioned Cartesian idea of rational subjectivity and philosophized the possibilities of cyborg subjectivities and its threats. The fall and the rise of subjectivity from a rational, humanistic and authentic subject to a cyborg subject is a philosophic shift of the age. Cinema as a medium of the 20th century has captured this interesting yet philosophical twist of humanity. These assumptions are ground-breaking and are interrogating the very paradigms that supposedly constitute subjectivity and humanity. These dismembering effects of the metamorphosed 'subject' and its possibilities run through Christopher Nolan's films. The break of the usual boundaries of the rational and the fictional realms in Nolan's films are cinematic renderings of Nolan's philosophy of the world and the subjectivities that he addresses. The project has the perspective of Nolan's movies in general as the mementoes of (un)real subjectivities that metamorphose from an existential self in crisis to a post-humanist subject that exhilarates the possibilities of a man-machine mix.

The world or the present depicted in Nolan's films across his career, is a fallen world. He has used fallen characters to explore the fragility of existence and the absurdity of being alive. Through the extrapolation of narratives, Nolan has pitched issues of subjectivity in films. Subjectivity is a puzzling philosophical concept closely connected to consciousness, reality, agency and selfhood. Nolan successfully deals with the different dimensions of it in his films. It is through characterisation and narratives that Nolan discusses different questions of subjectivity in his films. He begins his filmmaking career as an Indie filmmaker who addressed the existential crisis of a subject in a ruthless context. His Hollywood films explored the nuances of subjectivity in a more cosmopolitan ambience. He switched to super hero films in his second phase of career which can be seen as his early Hollywood

films. From an existential subject to a cyborg subject his characters evolve in these films. Being a filmmaker now completely hollywoodized, Nolan's films too are subtexts that carry the idylls of White, American, masculine ideology. His films have been critiqued for its conspicuous absence of women characters. Nolan's narratives never significantly places women characters on the pivotal spots of the narratives. They are constantly marginalised and made carriers of masculine rhymes. Though the project is exploring Nolan's treatment of subjectivity, the focus of the project is restricted to masculine subjectivity alone. His treatment of feminine subjectivity and the ideology involved is a matter of further research. The project has also been undertaken with the assumption that subjectivities that Nolan discusses in his films are quintessential qualities of masculinity.

Trauma is an engaging trope in all the films of Nolan. All the characters in his films are driven by some trauma. They are perturbed by some existential angst especially in his early films. There is a consistent preoccupation in the films of Nolan with the conflicts and traumas of his male protagonists. Filmic rendition of this crisis is usually expressed through flashbacks, amnesia and other psychological disorders. It can be seen that these psychological disorders come from the character's conflicting conscience. The project looks into the films of Nolan from three different points of view. The first perspective is to view a category of films, especially his early fiction films, which depicted the existential crisis of a traumatic subject. Causes for the trauma in Nolan's films are very unusual unlike other films of his contemporary filmmakers. The causes are more psychological than physical. Implications of the fragmented subjectivity in these are philosophical and are of cosmic importance. Films like *Following, Memento, Insomnia* and *Prestige* problematize the Cartesian subject and illustrate how fragmented is a 20th century subject. These films show how the rationalisation of the characters goes in vain and how they strive out

existentially. As subjects of knowledge they terribly fail and performs as beings of the moment. The subjectivity these characters encompass is existentialist and modernist. The second perspective has been an attempt to look at his *Batman Trilogy* as films that celebrate the possibilities of cyborg subjectivities. Unlike other superhero films of the period, Nolan's composition of Batman is very realistic. He is haunted by a trauma. His subjectivity is fragmented. He gets out of his fragmentation by appropriating technology. It is technology that makes him Batman. Nolan thus celebrates the possibility of man-machine mix in these films. The third category of films looks into the later films of Nolan that critically look into the future of humanity and how technology is helping humanity to go beyond its limitations. These films of Nolan are driven by the possibilities of science and technology. In these films Nolan shows how constructed is human subjectivity and how a person's subjectivity can be systematically manipulated to construct a person of creator's choice.

In the films of Nolan, subjectivity is a serious matter of deliberation. Being a filmmaker who is philosophically oriented and scientifically complex, he couldn't escape the subjectivity questions that are crucial to his times. Though he deals with questions of subjectivity in his films, we can critically decipher a pattern in his treatment of subjectivities. The focus of the project is this treatment of subjectivity in his three categories of films. While he dealt with the anxieties and crisis of a fragmented subjectivities, his batman films counters this fragmentation by adhering to technology and celebrate the possibilities of a man-machine mix. This 'Cyborg subjectivity' as Donna Haraway would call it, envisions a postmodern subjectivity which celebrates a post-humanistic era of subjectivities that is giving way to technologized human/masculine beings. His later treatment of subjectivities continued his fancy with the possibilities of scientic theories. These films schematically proposed the anti-essential nature of subjectivities and their constructedness.

Although he proposes the endurance of humanity in these films he never gives an authentic subjectivity to machines. It is humanity and subjectivities give meaning to this man machine mix. The project has been an attempt to explore thus this metamorphosis of subjectivity from existentially fragmented pieces to a digital space artistically curated. The project also explores the ideological facets involved in this metamorphosis. Theoretical tools used in this analysis are the theories of existentialism and theory of Cyborg by Donna Haraway. Heidegger's notion of authentic and inauthentic subject, Todd McGowan's notions of subject of knowledge and subject of desire; Lacan's definitions of subjectivity and other readings of subjectivity, also have been used to explore the tropes of subjectivity implicit in the films of Nolan.

The first chapter "Who We Are: Genealogical Survey of Subjectivity" has been an exploration of the evolution of the concept of subjectivity. As a genealogical survey the attempt has been to look at theories of subjectivity as object of analysis. The chapter has argued that the questions of subjectivity have been the archetypal concern of all ages. The chapter thus has looked into the evolution of the concept of subjectivity from the Greeks to the modern times. As a theoretical survey the chapter has dealt in detail with different questions of subjectivity from Plato's notion of subjectivity as the reflection of an idea or pre-ordained truth to contemporary postmodern notion of subjectivity as an effect or performance.

The second chapter "Subjectivity in Films" has been an attempt to trace the technical and the cinematic development of cinema and the parallel evolution of the treatment of subjectivity in films. The chapter also traces how film theorists have analyzed the concept of subjectivity in characterization and the medium itself. The chapter has argued that the search for subjectivity in cinema is the ontological explorations of the consciousness of the filmic texts, the characters who elucidate the theme and the context in which it is set.

The chapter has seen Point of View Shot as a director's method of expressing the mental disposition of the characters in the film.

The third chapter "Subject of Knowledge / Subject of Desire: Subjectivity in the Early Films of Nolan" has problematized the classical definitions of subjectivity and has shown the predicament of an existential subject. These films have dealt with subjectivity as a traumatic and fragmented existential space. All the characters in these films are either traumatic ones or persons without identity. *Following* has filmed the predicament of a subject who believes in the dominance of rationality. He is a subject of knowledge to use Todd McGowan's phrase, who still tries to thrive on his reason. Bill's subjectivity is explored in the film in his obsessions. Bill is a person who believes that subjectivity is nothing but the totality of a persons' inside out obsessions. He finds his sense of self in randomly following others. This act is undertaken with a rational purpose of understanding them. But his rationalisation fails and he is trapped by his own logic. His theory of knowing people by looking closely at their present behaviour conditioned by the unconscious past; and now preserved as memory, ultimately fragments him. Bill's failure has been looked at as the failure an enlightened self who believes in one's own rational impressions. He fails to think through his own engrossment of what he thinks. His fall is the fall of all theories that believe subjectivity is nothing but the totality of a persons' inside out obsession. His act of following others supposedly seems an authentic act in the beginning of the film. But the film discredits the authenticity of such an act when the act of following others is shown as the consequential design of a person named Cobb. Nolan has shown the frailty and the fragmented subjectivity of the protagonist in the absence of establishing shots in the film. The visual limit that Nolan employs in the film is exactly the cinematic rendering of the mental status of Bill. His fractured and limited subjectivity is visually explained in the minimum use of external

images using establishing shots or wid-angle shots. The film also problematizes questions like how far free is one's subjectivity and how free is a person in choosing his/her choices?

His next film *Insomnia* features trauma of the character who suffers from insomnia. The film has shown the predicament of a traumatic character who is psychologically fragmented. He is a typical existential being experiencing angst. His psychological instability is narrated through non-linear narratives. Insomnia is a motif in the film that explicates the fragmentariness of Dormer. The film never discloses Dormer's motif behind the murder. The nonlinear narrative structure of the film communicates the fragmentariness of Dormer. The film also problematizes memory and shows how faulty is memory and thus questions the notion of subjectivity as the collective of the past memories. It also questions the famous Platonian dictum 'knowledge is what we remember. The analysis of his early films shows that troubled identity is a recurrent theme in the films of Nolan. Nolan's characters are fragmented/wounded either psychologically or physically. Sometimes physical wounds are very suggestive of the psychological wound the characters have. Such physical and psychological fissures problematize the Enlightenment notions of self and subjectivity in Nolan's films. His characters are either psychologically disrupted or their sense of self is effaced by trauma.

His film *Prestige* takes further the concept of subjectivity and shows how performative is subjectivity. He has used the concept of the double to exploit this. He has employed the binaries of reality/illusion, apparent/actual and change/permanence to explore the performance of subjectivity, though he never positions himself with any sides. Through the image of Jess who believes in the vanishing trick of Cutter, Nolan initialises the conflict of reality versus illusion in the film. Jess's wonder is set against the rationalist and the empiricist impulses of Sarah' nephew. When the magician smashes

the cage where the canary is caged, he flares up. When the magician reveals the canary, he asks where his brother is. By counterpointing these two reactions, Nolan has critiqued the whole history of western philosophy that engaged in reality illusion debate.

Prestige has challenged the Enlightenment notion of an organised and unquestionable self with inconclusive illusion of the single/double subjectivity in the art of magic. The doubled self of Borden is made explicit when his wife says "I know what you really are, Alfred". Nolan, in fact, finds the motives behind Sarah's suicide is her knowledge of the double in Borden. The project argues that she hangs herself because she can no longer writhe in the torment of experiencing half a life, half a lover and half a marriage with two identical yet distinct men sharing her life, her trust. The project also states that by representing a double self and the characters attempt to maintain the illusion of a unified identity, Nolan has filmed the predicament of the contemporary subjectivity which is under continual crisis. Angiers in the film has no sense of his subjectivity. He couldn't distinguish whether a man is on the stage or someone buried in the box. He seems lost to himself. Though he loses himself and his subjectivity miserably fails, the images of his drowned wife come to his mind. He couldn't even escape this trauma even through the mechanical reproduction of his other self. The process of doubling was Angier's method of cleansing his memory and a way of escape. Borden represents modern man who is disillusioned with modernity and its accompaniment. Thus, *Prestige,* as a film, has questioned the categorical concept of self and subjectivity. It has established the performative stature of subjectivity by exploring the concept of the double. He has employed the traditional binaries, like reality/illusion, to question the essentiality that these binaries refer to. Nolan has foregrounded in the film how self and the concept of subjectivity are performative unlike the Enlightenment notion of subjectivity as unique and authentic essence.

The project looks into the fragmentation of the narrative structure of the film *Memento* in a cinematic way of telling the fractured subjectivity of the character Leonard. Memento has explored more the situatedness of a fragmented, modernist self. Leonard uses Polaroid photographs to establish his due course of action. These polaroids can be seen as the externalised representation of the Leonard's disconnectedness; a disconnected subject from his everyday action. Nolan has used many filmic techniques to visualise Leonard's fragmented subjectivity. Leonard has been filmed as a person who uses different names for the same person and keeps hanging his perspective on others unconsciously. The alternative colour and black and white sequences in the film also establishes the fragmented subjectivity of the protagonist. The project argues that the fragmented structure of the text has reduced the film into a series of presents that mirrors the model of schizoprenic experience described by Jameson as 'suggestive aesthetic model of postmodern subjectivity'. The project examines Leonard's struggle as the resultant of capitalism. Leonard's struggle has been looked at as the struggle of an individual to establish one's identity in a decentred world. He is also troubled by the trauma of his wife's death. Though capitalism is a source of struggle for Leonard in *Memento* and also a source of his fragmentation, Nolan deals with capitalism differently in his later films. Capitalism has been seen as a system that crushes individual desires and fragments a person's individuality in *Memento.* But Nolan's perspective on capitalism changes in his typical Hollywood films. As an industry that thrives on capital, his Hollywood films echo the potentialities of the capital-centred society.

The next Chapter "From Playboy to Batman: Cyborg Subjectivity in Batman's Trilogy" has focused on the characterization of Batman. As an analytical review the study has focused on how Nolan deals with the questions of subjectivity in these superhero films. His Batman trilogy is very unlike other superhero films in Hollywood. Nolan has done a realistic

portrayal of Batman in his films and for first time in a film Batman was given a back-story to detail his origin and growth and the final emergence as a superhero. The super-heroic powers of Batman are acquired by intensive training and it is not something which he is born with. Nolan realistically explores and justifies why Bruce Wayne chooses Batman as a symbol of protection for Gotham city. He brings a back story of Wayne's phobia of bats. He even redesigns Batman's costume to make it more realistically convincing. Nolan continues his preoccupation with reality/fantasy play in the trilogy too. He perfectly mixes the realistic elements to the fantastical Batman. Nolan's Batman is traumatic. Batman is a person who grapples with his confused self to reconcile the conflict of evil/good divide in Gotham City. He is an existential hero who is fallen to the core and fragmented in his subjectivity. The extraordinary attribute that Batman has is his mortality; he has no super powers or outlandish capabilities, only human limitations, which ironically are made limited.

Nolan's *Batman Trilogy* in wider scale has dealt with the pertinent existential questions of a 20th century traumatic self. In this film Nolan has tried to address critical questions of masculine subjectivity and tried to find technology as an answer to all the questions that haunted humanity in the postmodern period. Nolan's statement of subjectivity as performative and the prepositions, like 'it's the subjectivity on display' define who a person is; not what he/she actually is, make him a postmodern filmmaker. Nolan has thus propounded the idea that subjectivity has to be understood not as something that belongs to the persons individually but as something that is produced between people and within social relations. Nolan makes Batman say that, 'no one has respected me until I wear the mask'.

But, in spite of his realistic portrayal of Batman and his actions in his films, there is an amount of conservatism in the subjectivity of Batman.

Nolan's Batman legend is one that transforms and ultimately undermines the uniqueness of Nolan's cinema. All superheroic characters have no other existential choice but to be exceptionally heroic. All the superhero characters are ideologically framed as authentic, original and true in Hollywood films; to which Nolan also had to submit. So Wayne as Batman eschews all the decadent subjectivity in him. He uses black suits and different armours to establish his subjectivity as an authentic self and a futuristic Heideggerian self. He establishes his subjectivity by relying on tools and machines to effect the change. He establishes himself as the man of future or subject of desire by authenticating his existence as Batman. He escapes his in-authenticity as a playboy by establishing his space of masculine potentiality as Batman. Wayne escapes all his fragmentariness by recoursing to technology. Batman with his superhuman speed, animated by the providence of technology, overpowers his enemies. He metalizes his body, challenging the classical nostalgia of the western models of superheroes and masculinity. Batman, as a cyborg with his speed, gives a promise of future for the city of Gotham. Thus, Batman becomes a man of social reality and a creature of fiction. It is the technologized environment that strengthens the traumatic subjectivity of Wayne. Batman in Nolan is more of a cyborg than a superhero in Nolan's *Batman Trilogy*. He convincingly portrays how Wayne becomes Batman one day with the help of technology. It is technology that empowers him. Nolan schematically shows how Wayne is able to authenticate his masculine subjectivity with the help of technology. Nolan has used new technologies to reinterpret Wayne's identity and even Batman is interpreted on technological terms. Thus technologically modified subjectivity of Batman can be seen as a 'cyborg' as Haraway called it or as 'terminal identity' as Batman himself did. Nolan thus invests hope in technology's power of renovating life from the liminal existence. The project has looked at this use of technology as an attempt of Nolan to bypass human limitation by celebrating the possibilities

of technology. Nolan's *Batman Trilogy*, thus, gives a futuristic perspective of human subjectivity made possible as half machine and half human.

The third Chapter "Spinning Memories: Digital Subjectivity in *Inception* and *Interstellar*" is an analysis of Nolan's sci-fi films. These films foreground Nolan's belief in the endurance of a future digital human being. These films have shown the future possibilities of science and technology in construing subjectivity in spite of all the fragmentariness. The protagonist in *Inception*, called Dom Cobb, is traumatized by the memory of his wife's death. Just like other characters in Nolan's films, Cobb's subjectivity too is fragmented. He is haunted by the memory and guilt of his wife's death. Cobb thinks of replacing his memories with those memories he cherishes. Unlike in Cyborg films, it is not a technological addition. It is a digital replacement of one's consciousness. Nolan, thus, dreams of a subjectivity that is digitally constructed. In his cyborg films, Nolan has used technology as something that adds to one's subjectivity. In *Inception* Nolan removes all the biological and social dimensions of subjectivity for a digital replacement. Subjectivity thus became a digital data that can be installed or uninstalled at our wish. Nolan dreams of a near possibility of constructing people's consciousness and subjectivity as we wish. The film envisions a postmodern world where people's subjectivity can be easily monitored and constructed. Through the process of inception, Cobb could create a disposition that could be appropriated at his will. The project looks at how Nolan uses Plato's idea of knowledge as remembrance and also how these films problematize the reality/dream conundrum in the film. Cobb often fails to distinguish between reality and dream. In *Memento* protagonist has tried to escape from the traumatic memory he had and performs to conjure up a new identity. In *Inception,* the protagonist tries to retain his memories with wife and he uses the idea of hyper-remembering. He sustains the unreal dream world where he can live in his memories, though it is unreal. Nolan has presented Cobb as an

architect who is able to create a world of reveries where he can enable either to extract or implant ideas in the mind of the subjects. The film philosophizes the possibilities of digitally developing a subjectivity that he prefers. Subjectivity, thus, is the sum total of all the wanted and unwanted consciousness of the external and internal world. *Inception* philosophizes the possibilities of adding or removing the likes and dislikes in the consciousness.

Though *Inception* is conceptually innovative, the project has problematized the idea and the fantasy it propagates. The film belittles the breach of privacy and the frightening possibility of mental manipulation. The film deals so casually with the terrifying ideology of breaking privacy and it justifies violation of privacy for individual motives. Nolan never problematize the violation of Cobb's attempt of manipulating people's memory and subjectivity in his attempt of freeing himself from guilt and traumatising memory. It is Cobb's failure to respect the private space of his wife that led her to commit suicide. Nolan in these films justifies the act of invading a person's mindscape by deceptive means from the perspectives of character's personal motives. The film never explores the predicament of the character who undergoes this. Robert Fisher is betrayed; his identity is altered and subjectivity, fragmented. The inception team implants doubts concerning his relationship with his godfather. They even insert false idea in Fisher's mind that strategically becomes his subjective turn. Though the act of implanting an idea is technologically a brilliant innovation but the result it produces is fatal. A person's memories, desires and thoughts are manipulated by intruding into his/her private space. A person's subjectivity, constituted of his/her memory, thoughts, desires and his/her circumstances is just the play of those in power. Nolan never problematizes the idea of stealing and implanting people's consciousness. He rather naturalises it. The project looks into how Nolan propounds the argument that there is nothing called authentic subjectivity but just a technologically only driven stimuli. Subjectivity is thus nothing but an

extension of the digital world one lives in and the persons who control it. It is a digitally boosted space/data that performs according to some stranger's plans. Nolan also legitimizes the corporate intrusions into the privacy of individual's personal space which is a contestable position. The idea of privacy has its roots in the notions of subjectivity/individuality as unique and original entity which distinguishes a person from the crowd. In an age of digital tracking and unlimited surveillance authentic and unique subjectivity is just a myth. The adventures of Cobb's team in *Inception* speaks about individual's subjectivity as the outcome of some illegitimate targets. Subjectivity thus in *Inception* becomes nothing but an ideologically constructed expression of someone's desires and can be seen as digitally controlled sensation.

Nolan has continued, in *Interstellar*, his obsession with masculine quintessence. The project explores this film as a tale of stoic masculine heroism. The film has been looked at as a celebration of the classical idea of masculinities' pioneering spirit. There is a conspicuous absence of feminine perspective in this film. The film is a celebration of masculine rationality. The protagonist, Cooper, in the film is in an existentialist crisis. He is rather forced to give up his desire and invests himself in agriculture. Hunted by this loss he is frustrated. He overcomes such frustrations in his interstellar journeys. The conventional notions of subjectivity as something that is constituted in the present and the end result of one's past deeds are contested and Nolan envisions in this film subjectivity as something that can be altered and curiously manufactured through male rationale. Unlike his early films where characters are trapped in temporality and trauma, Cooper emerges out of his crisis and establishes his subjectivity. Cooper escapes the catastrophe that awaits him by exploring further possibilities of life in another space. Subjectivity that is usually addressed in his earlier films is absent or partially absent in *Interstellar*. Cooper is very much convinced about the endurance of

the male quintessential subjectivity irrespective of the crisis he goes through. Cooper reasserts the lost spirit of masculinity and subjectivity with the aid of technology. Subjectivity that is usually addressed in his earlier films is absent or partially absent in *Interstellar. Interstellar* proposes a world view which presuppoes a post-humanistic world which could overcome its crisis through digital and technological means. It is the hyper sensitized, technologically-aided masculine subjectivity that thrives in this film. The solution that Nolan gives for the crisis that human face is so anthropocentric, patriarchal and capitalist.

The essential idea that humans can afford to change their homes after ruining resources and destroying their habitats in *Interstellar* has been critiqued because it is a disenchanting ideology that Nolan propagates in this film. As a filmmaker who questioned Enlightenment subjectivity in the initial phase of his career, in *Interstellar* he reassures and reshapes the subjectivity, he once questioned. From a subjectivity in crisis, he switches to masculine subjectivity on the move, in his later films. Films like *Memento* and *Following* proposed a fragmented subjectivity that questioned the functionality of a rational, male and white Cartesian subject. But in *Interstellar,* he cinematically questions his own positions and scientifically establishes his rationale on masculine subjectivity as authentically capable of transcending all limitations and fragmentations. He establishes nothing but an idea of anthropocentric subjectivity which was questioned and found destructible. He asserts that human beings are unique and they are superior creatures in terms of rationality and love. But in his categorisation of humanity, he excludes the feminine dimension of it. His humanity is nothing but a fantastical exhilaration of alpha male rationality. Nolan doesn't believe in any other beings or superhuman powers in *Interstellar* who can save the 'humanity or masculinity' from total destruction. He even philosophises that earth and other planets are hostile to human/masculine sentiments and

existence. It is not the extra-terrestrial beings that lead human/masculine into other galaxies through worm holes, but its technologized/digitalised future humans. He sees technology as the extension of masculine subjectivity. Nolan theorises that only the essential man can get rid of the crisis that humanity undergoes. *Interstellar* has got a sugar- coated philosophical vision that celebrates male success story. The project has excluded a deep analysis of Nolan's latest film *Dunkirk* (2017) as it is a period and war film that eludes the categorisation that this project has been working at. Yet there are certain Nolanesque elements in this film. Nolan has continued to brood on masculine sentiments in this film. The film never looks into the feminine side of the classic Dunkirk retreat. He demystifies single man-centred narratives of the classical war films. It's a story of masculinities in three different spaces simultaneously.

Thus, the project "Mementos of (Un)Reality: Metamorphosing Subjectivity in Christopher Nolan's Films" is an attempt to explore the treatment of subjectivity in Nolan's films. Nolan as a postmodern filmmaker has tried to address many questions concerning subjectivities of the day. An analysis of his class of films points to the epistemological direction that Nolan addresses subjectivity in his films. He addresses higher questions concerning subjectivity from an existentialist perspective in his earlier films. Nolan's focus is on the identity crisis his characters go through. His later films replace the characters from the systems of crisis to a cyborg substantiality where a machine aided poetic subjectivity is permissible. The last category of films analysed in this study brings forth Nolan's further pro(re)gress in his sense of subjectivity. He even looks at subjectivity as an extension of the digital world we live in. His ontological questions concerning subjectivities include the jouissance of perceiving subjectivity as a digital data that can be carefully curated and systematically skewed.

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