

AfterSun and the Plasticity of Time: Malabou's Neurophilosophy of Memory and Societal Precarity

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Abstract:

As the transition toward the twenty-first century exhibits a world marked with societal and economic uncertainties, Charlotte Wells' *AfterSun* (2022) takes the mission to capture and monitor such a change. This paper resorts to Malabou's theory of neuroplasticity to examine how the film imbeds what she calls destructive plasticity. Aesthetically, a fragmented narrative, joined with temporal dislocations, reflects much of the memory, trauma, and identity concerns of the time. As a result, the film serves as an alarming call for awareness on how individuals have become doomed to bend and dissolve under societal pressures. Yet, constructive plasticity makes it possible for them to find empathy to reconcile with others, based on the accumulation of experiences. This ultimately enables them to seek healing and understanding through recollection, selection, and acceptance of positive change.

Keywords: AfterSun; destructive plasticity; memory; trauma; neoliberal precarity.

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Introduction

Charlotte Wells's *Aftersun* (2022) is among the films that go beyond the surface of culture representation to deep levels of exploration. For instance, it exhibits a high level of awareness of complex issues like memory, loss, and family workings. Aesthetically, it resorts to fragmented narratives to reflect on its core objectives. Thus, critics highlight the unarticulated and subtle emotions and themes that lie beneath the film's narrative, which is mostly fragmented.

At the core of *Aftersun*, we find that temporal dislocation marks most of the narrative, as the adult protagonist Sophie attempts relentlessly to piece together her childhood memories, namely her holidays with her father, Calum. This disjuncture in time does not happen by coincidence, but it is a way of representing societal conditions, marked by uncertainty and instability. Connected with latter is the notion of identity and its suffering from the risks of erosion, caused by trauma and the nature of memory, which is elusive. Thus, the film evokes this network of concepts to portray one's challenges in a changing world.

Suffering is often related to economic dimensions. For this, echoing Ghezzal and Daoudi's (2022) examination of poverty in *Slumdog Millionaire*, *Aftersun* resorts to a fragmented narrative to critique neoliberal economic vision that suffers from instability and lack of efficiency. However, like any problematic situation, glimpses of hope remain available as Sophie attempts to reconstruct her memory.

One way of extricating the meanings interwoven in Wells's narrative is Catherine Malabou's theory on neuroplasticity. The core of her idea revolves around the brain's capacity to receive and give forms, namely in relation to the faculty of memory. However, her idea extends beyond the physical formation of neurons to existential and societal form building and alteration. To go into some details, we find that Malabou makes distinction between creative and destructive plasticity. While the first represents the brain's capacity for adaptation and production of new forms, the second points to the capacity of annihilation and replacement by entirely new forms. This is an entirely new vision on the workings of human biological faculties of thinking and remembering. Therefore, this paper selects such novelty to deal with the film's portrayals of trauma, memory flexibility, and identity creation, namely against situations of disruption and fragmentation.

The view held here is that *Aftersun* selects temporal dislocation to represent fragmentation as a cinematic device that aptly reflects the status of societal unrest, spreading around the turn of the twenty-first century. A thorough investigation into the film's aesthetic and thematic choices under the light of Malabou's theory attempts to demonstrate how the self has become fragmented in an era of societal and economic upheaval.

1. Literature Review

1.1. Film Studies and Memory

Memory as a human device and shared faculty has received much attention in academic studies. Film studies have had their share of involvement in this fertile field of inquiry. Especially, as memory, or remembrance transcend the individual dimensions to reach collective or societal levels. Thus, a significant body of works examined the way films attempted to portray or explain

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memory. Mostly the focus was on how fragmented or non-linear narratives were implemented in conjunction with subjective viewpoints. The aim was to evoke a sense of unreliability and elusiveness of memory.

Cinema has long dealt with psychological phenomena, including trauma, recall, and identity creation or shaping. As a relatively new form of expression, it has experimented with temporal manipulation to evoke the complex and hidden features of human psychology. The films that adopted such approach have challenged the old linear narrative and resorted to mosaic structures. In many ways, this succeeded in portraying the disjointed nature of memory for instance. Critics endeavoured to prove how such cinematic strategies affect the viewer at cognitive levels. To name a few, Mary Ann Doane (2002) explored cinematic temporality, while Laura Marks (2000) devoted her work to extricate how memory could be embodied in film.

In this tradition, *Aftersun* (2022) position itself as a work of art that blurs the lines between past and present, while fading reality with recollection of bits of memory. However, it marks itself as distinct in the way it explores the protagonist's fragmented memories in a subtle manner that does not take the viewer's attention. Yet, it imbeds a remarkably deep level of psychological exploration. This was achieved by bringing forth the bright side of emotional response to the girl's recalling of her happy childhood, while progressively delving into hidden struggles of her parents. In contrast to tradition exploration of memory as a forcible act of search for bits of information, as if it is a detective work, *Aftersun* represents memory as a fluid and flexible faculty, which could be interpreted differently repeatedly throughout the development of the film's narrative. Interestingly, this parallels the development of Sophie that ends up with the discovery of empathy to her parents.

Not only critics have been interested in the film's exploration of memory in general, but they focused on how particular aspects were portrayed and used. For Babusubramanian's (2023), Sophie's childhood footage goes beyond the symbolic references to serve as a device of construction that builds totally new information and feelings out of the scattered bits of early memories of holidays and childhood.

Similarly, Leger (2024) carries on the examination of memory reconstruction, but he also highlights how intimacy and silence contribute to the same phenomenon. He points out that Wells resorts to fragmentation at the visual and narrative levels to evoke a sense of detachment and connection, while the character manifests traumatic signs.

Alison Landsberg (2004) comes up with the concept of prosthetic memory, an idea that ascribes cinema to what she calls mass-mediated representations. She argues that such representations make individuals acquire experiential memories of events they never lived, as if they were transported to the worlds of those characters in films. In *Aftersun*, Sophie's footage of her childhood serve not only as merely records of the past, but also as experiential sites where the viewers can join her to feel and be part of a familial trauma. While viewers recognise their distinguished past, they join Sophie into a shared history of common suffering. In general terms, Landsberg extends such view on cinema's power of immersing viewers into the narrative's experiences. The process blurs the lines between lived and mediated experiences.

1.2. Catherine Malabou and Neuroplasticity

Catherine Malabou framework takes a philosophical dimension and provides the lens through which form and transformation could be examined and interpreted. Namely, this is very helpful in examination of the brain, its functions, identity and societal forms. At the core of Malabou's work is the concept of neuroplasticity, which she defines and describes beyond the purely biological aspect. While, the latter is known as the brain potential for change and adaptation, the new concept refers to metaphysical and ethical dimensions and features. In her milestone work *What Should We Do with Our Brain?* She makes clear distinction between the functions of the brain in terms of plasticity. On the one hand, the brain is somehow flexible and could be shaped by experience. On the other hand, the brain acts in active manner to provide form whether innately, i.e., structure, or function. Therefore, this dynamic nature of the brain makes it in a continuous state of formation and adaptation.

However, Malabou brings about a totally different dimension to the brain faculties, so in addition to formation and adaptation, she argues for a "destructive plasticity." Her view is that the brain under certain conditions resorts to annihilate forms yet not going back to an undefined state. Instead, it generates totally new unpredictable forms. Inspired by the French word "plastic," she thinks of such brain faculty as radical rupture that happens in an unpredictable manner with no signs of evolution. To clarify her idea, Malabou (2012) elaborates further her idea in *The Ontology of the Accident*. Through injuries that an accident could engender the brain does not only receive psychological shocks and physical damage that might go to memory erasure in some instances, but rather identity could be reshaped and wholly new being could come to live.

In contrast to the concept terminology, destructive plasticity is essential to understanding psychological phenomena like trauma, amnesia, and personality change. Accordingly, these are not just aspects of brain malfunction or anomalies, but they are signs and symptoms of occurring psychological active processes, often ending up with new sense of identity and vision of the world.

Thanks to interdisciplinary studies, Malabou's ideas have been intertwined with cinema studies to unveil much of the hidden personality change narratives. Dalton and Tyrer (2024) make the parallel between the use of destructive plasticity in film analysis and the examination of brain injury and psychic shocks. Moreover, Hainge (2023) adopts this approach to analyse Jonathan Glazer's *Under the Skin*. He contextualises destructive plasticity in post-cinema studies.

This research paper resorts to Malabou's theory to examine how characters interact with both internal and external powers to reach a transformation of their identities, within an undeclared anxious social atmosphere. The cultural counterpart of such view, as posited by Landsberg's prosthetic memory, serves also as a helping approach to interpret how mass media, including cinema, contribute to the process of reformation within ruptures at different levels.

1.3. Neoliberalism, Precarity, and the Self

The turn of the twenty-first century has been marked by the influence of Neoliberalism, briefly defined as an ideology with political and economic folds. Both arguing for freedoms whether at individual levels or markets. Deregulation, for instance, while hailed for making markets easily accessible, made it also possible for some individuals to unethically take massive advantages

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and powers. This led to others suffering from immense pressures that limited their freedoms and sense of well-being. Thus, despite the apparent veil of freedom, psychological and societal restraints spread what Judith Butler (2009) calls "precarity," a status of instability and insecurity. Isabell Lorey (2015) joins the same position as she associates such social insecurity with unstable employment, erosion of social safety networks, and pressures on individuals to become adaptable and self-employing. As a result, this landscape creates a sense of uncertainty, affecting mental health and sense of self. The lack of a stable self-awareness, joined by continuous structural forces engenders a contradictory situation where individuals suffer from psychological impairment like trauma and depression.

In *Aftersun*, Calum takes much of the burden of individuals who challenge the neoliberal world's directives. Despite his unspoken complaints, the viewer understands his sufferings, especially mental health and economic difficulties. As many, he is the embodiment of personal resilience in the face of societal pressures. The narrative makes it clear that such resilience is to be tested throughout the development of such character, who is judged constantly and expected to succeed on his own terms.

Therefore, the film reflects how the dynamics that occur at the societal level are converted into processes of resilience or change at the individual level. In particular, in the case of Calum, these are experiences of uncertainty and abruptions which could be seen not only through his behaviour but also through his familial relationships. Yet, what is noted is that Calum does not make his suffering visible to others and his weakness lies in his inability to speak out his mental troubles as Olah (2023) notes. It is in this space, where Landserg's (2004) prosthetic memory finds justification as mediated experiences of psychological impairments could turn into positive features, such as ethical considerations and alliances.

2. Methodology

2.1. Methodological Approach

This study resorts to a dual methodological approach to unveil *Aftersun*'s deep thematic concerns. While a formal analysis deals with themes and their aesthetic representations, a theoretical consideration evokes the workings of Catherine Malabou's concept of neuroplasticity. Thus, such approach will provide the necessary philosophical framework to interpret the selected themes in relation to memory and societal precarity.

2.2. Formal Analysis

The formal analysis will mainly interpret the cinematic language used by Charlotte Wells. When necessary one or all the following elements will be visited: Cinematography, editing, sound design, narrative structure. With cinematography, we mean the analysis of camera movement, shot types, and lighting. Then editing is solicited as memory is one of the main concerns of this study, the flow of scenery and cut strategies become very useful for interpretation. Next, without doubt, sound design will help understanding the development of emotions and atmosphere. Finally, the narrative structure, through flashbacks and cuts, will provide a clue to how plasticity could occur in psychological dimensions.

2.3. Theoretical Application

The theoretical application involves using Catherine Malabou's concept of neuroplasticity, particularly her distinction between creative and destructive plasticity, as an interpretive lens for

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Aftersun. This will involve three strategies. The first is mapping Malabou's concept to film elements. Basically, this means applying Malabou's ideas on plasticity, whether giving, receiving, or annihilating, to characters, narrative, and other visual patterns in the film. The second is exploring affective dimensions. That is, using Malabou's work to examine dislocation and retrospective experiences and their resonance with macro-dynamics at societal levels. While the third is discussing the philosophical implications of the narrative and Malabou's theory in terms of memory, identity, and agency in a continuously changing world. Conducting this process without losing sight of the examination of how established forms, through memory, could react to the forces of change.

3. Analysis

3.1. The Fragmented Narrative and the Malleable Brain

The narrative as a core feature in cinematic language serves a clear role in the overall message of *Aftersun*. Featuring fragmentation and non-linearity, it reflects the elusive and delicate nature of the processes within human memory. The way it is flexible and unconventional goes in line with the idea on the brain's inherent plasticity. Like the brain's ability to seamlessly imbed many complex processes, the film merges two periods of Sophie's (Celia Rowson-Hall) life in a subtle manner. The narrative goes back and forth from the current moment in her life as an adult person to her childhood. Through a series of flashbacks to their shared holiday in Turkey many years ago, the narrative takes a certain temporal fluidity. The latter is not a haphazardly chosen stylistic technique but a cinematic representation of the brain's ability to reprocess past experiences. For instance, the sudden cuts between current Sophie's life scenes and the mini-DV sequences, starting at 00:00:00, without clear or prepared transitions push the viewer into unorganised experiences, often associated with leaps of memory.

As shown in Fig. 1, another feature of brain faculties is manifested through the overuse of fading colours and blurred edges with low-resolution mini-DV footage. As mentioned earlier, the grainy uncoloured frames are contrasted with the sharper, more polished regular lens filming for the contemporary Sophie's life. This contrast visually emphasizes the subjective and constructed nature of the memory's process called "recollection." Moreover, as Faisal (2024) argues in his semio-pragmatic framework, sound and visual techniques evoke narrative elements that imitate the brain's form-related processes of forming, reforming, or recollecting. The very fact that Sophie's father is shown filming her repeatedly and more importantly re-viewing the recordings at different points in the film's narrative point out the fact that memories are not fixed in meaning but changing in terms of interpretation. Each time Calum views the film new emotions arise because of the accumulation of experiences. This idea of continuity aligns with Malabou's description of plasticity as a process of continuous transformation. For this, the film resorts to a dreamy atmosphere in which Sophie gets back to a moment when her father was dancing in a rave. Going back to that moment, in multiple instances is referring to the past not as a fixed entity but as a flexible one that could be given a new form each time the person, in this case Sophie, is empowered with new experiences and new understandings. In other words, the brain's capacity to change extends to the possible alteration of our personal histories.

Figure N° 1. Blurred edges and fading colours mini-DV footage



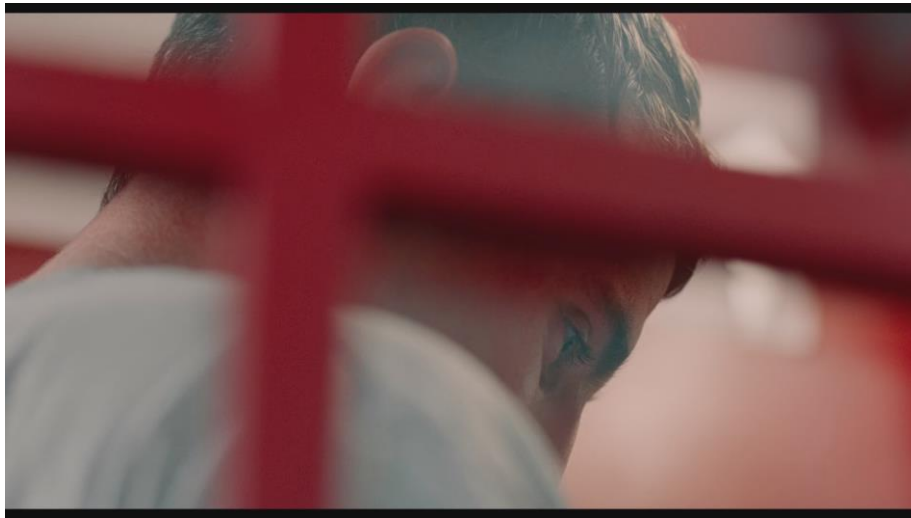
Source: (Wells, 2022, 00:01:39)

3.2. Calum and Destructive Plasticity

The psychological portrayal of characters is abundant in *Aftersun* yet it remains subtle. Sophie's enigmatic father is never talking about his internal impairments, yet his concealment and moments of withdrawal refer much to his suffering and despair. He is often finding difficulty to connect with his only daughter, and the viewer feels his inability to articulate his fears and struggles. In a way this aligns with Malabou's destructive plasticity, as he tries to find a place in his uncomfortable conditions. Thus, he makes efforts to meet secure his life financially and physically. For this he thinks of creating a private business, without much success. To find some quietness he shows some interest in Chinese meditation (01:19:34). yet he does not persist. If the narrative points out at some point to possible growth and development, the unfolding events prove that he is only going to decline, what Malabou refers to as a process of annihilation. Not only the meditation scene provides clue to Calum's trouble with defining his own identity but all the process of seeking a sense of well-being whether in health or in social relationships, namely with his daughter. The viewer finds difficulty in following such progress or decline, and thus Calum's life transmits his inner frustration and fragmentation.

This is illustrated in several scenes where he struggles to find himself. For instance, he attempts to sing and his voice cracks (00:56:55). Later he attempts to conceal himself in a hotel room, only to breaks down crying (01:26:18). Even when he is seen, that occurs through an alarming red fence as portrayed in the following figure:

Figure N° 2. Calum looked at through confinement



Source: (Wells, 2022, 00:17:25)

Calum's breakdowns, illustrated at different levels, are not merely personal failures but they are reflections of macro-level social instability, imposed by neoliberal ideologies. Without knowing it, he is conceding core transformations that eradicate his existing and established identity. Dismantling his psychic structures seems not leading to new stable ones, at least at the moment. His reluctance to remain in public spaces and often willingness to retreat to empty spots demonstrates that he is facing constant pressures. A certain level of resilience turns the wish for progress into destructive reformation of the self. Destructive plasticity shows how the brain's ability to form and reform may lead to eventual annihilation of long-established self.

3.3. Sophie's Search for Coherence

In contrast to her father, Sophie's journey is a pursuit for meaning and understanding. Thus, her endeavour to discover the hidden troubles of her father and the bit of her childhood memory align with a certain reconstructive plasticity. The film opens with her watching the mini-DV camera recordings announcing her intent early in the narrative. While her father manifests uncertainty and indecisiveness in his endeavours, she is much engaged and willing to get back to her memories each time new understandings occur. Despite the difficulties, she persistently attempts to understand and improve her relationship with her parent. Reviewing her past experiences in a continuous manner is not merely about retrieving memories, because one instance of watching could just do it. The narrative makes it clear that she is using her evolved understanding to actively reform her memories as she implements her resolve of empathy for her father. Reviewing some past instances of her father's then mysterious actions are yet other examples of her positive stance toward memories, despite her initial ignorance of their underlying meaning. Many scenes illustrate this, namely her reconsideration of his contemplation moments (01:19:38) or his solitary moments in the balcony (00:54:03).

Building on Bouzidi's (2024) Freudian readings of psychological films, *Aftersun's* fragmented approach to the portrayal of memories evokes the traumatic nature of Sophie's childhood. While she herself had no direct impairments, those of her parent actively affected her

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early sense of self. Yet, in contrast to him she takes a positive plasticity perspective and endeavours to make sense of her memories with him. She neglects any possibilities of interpretation that might taint her vision to her father. This could be understood when we see her look at him doing something either not understood or weird and ultimately turn away and keep going. Thus, we understand that she has a constructive plasticity that enables her to build coherence and meaningful memories out of the confusing irrelevant bits of experiences. Such approach definitely provides her with healing forces, as her brain demonstrates its ability to perpetually reshape the inside narrative, giving new forms of memory and connecting her progressively to her own sense of self.

3.4. The Rave as a Site of Transformation

Cinematic motifs are meticulously used in *Aftersun*. One illustration of this is the recurrent scenes at the rave. In this space unexpectedly both father and daughter appear either together, or one spotting the other. Such space is a strong reference to the need for a transition in terms of self-definition and understanding. It is also a space where constructive and destructive plasticity merge or conflict to negotiate an outcome. One specific scene shows Sophie, the contemporary one, taking glimpses of her father, who is moving amidst the wavy crowds. The light and colours intersect with the darkness of the shades on his face and body, displaying the contrasts between his hidden parts and exposed ones. The overwhelming sounds, lights, colours, and movements point out the way he is losing a fixed form to the benefit of much powerful blending of identities. The next scene shows him suffering and moving as if under immense pressure serves as a metaphor for the ongoing transformation, going extremely to dissolution of forms (01:26:16). This dissolution could be interpreted in two different ways. The first is that it is a symbolic reference to the way individuals lose their established forms and sense of identity under the pressure of society. Thus, through cinematic language, Calum dances to the music and its rhythms. This is not about entertainment solely, but it is about following the crowd and submitting to the macro-levels of society. Plasticity occurs as both sound and light cut, showing the difficulties of losing old forms to the benefit of newer ones. The second is that not necessarily, the dance floor represents competition. It is rather a melting pot where energies flow together to form a kind of connection. Although, no verbal communication happens, a sort of cohesion takes place as everyone interprets the bits of music according to both personal and public expectations. Calum finds space to forget about his suffering, discover the gaps in his experiences, and fill out what is missing from others' energies. Therefore, the rave transcends the entertaining level to take become a ground for dissolution and reformation. For Calum it helps him to vividly revive his self-anew, proving its innate fluidity.

4. Discussion

4.1. The Interplay of Form and Theme

Aftersun is among the rare films of the opening decades of the twenty-first century which exhibit a profound impact on its audiences. This is not only about its peculiar narrative building but also about the intricate way form and theme interact. Elements of cinematography work in the background of the narrative with the essential purpose of attributing fragmentation and subjectivity to the brain's faculty of memory. Moreover, on many occasions, close-ups bring the protagonists forth to capture their facial expressions as they move forward in their journey of forming and

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reforming their memories. While emotions of closeness arose out of gestures of intimacy, possible emotional distance between individuals also happen to occur.

Colour palette makes a fine work of drawing the line between warm scenes of holidays and the abrupt cuts into current melancholic atmospheres. Furthermore, editing enhances the building of narrative as non-linear and evokes the plasticity of the brain and its processes in relation to memory. Intercutting between two modes of filming, mini-DV and 35mm, is another aesthetic choice that brings the past within the present to evoke the sense of dialogue between the two periods. While generally time movement begins with past through the present. Here the complexity of plasticity makes it even possible for the present to change the understanding of the past. Thus, a new understanding of memory could arise each time a new round of interplay occurs. Music, also as a motif, accentuates such interplay and works as a reminder of Sophy's father. Thus, in a good number of scenes the Calum is called upon to the imagination of Sophy and the viewer just through the replay of a melody. Thus, cinema articulates its power of expression that merges visual and audio elements to bring forth mental images of newly constituted forms.

4.2. Destructive Plasticity and Societal Critique

The relevance of the destructive plasticity in the case of Calum's character is not limited to the study of his psychology at individual level. What is more important is the way *Aftersun*'s narrative intertwines individuality with societal layers. In many ways, *Aftersun* delves into a sincere critique of society, namely the one guided by neoliberal ideology. While at surface level such ideology presents itself as advocating resilience and flexibility, it strives to create an unbearable context for many individuals to naturally grow free within. Growth is by definition linked to the ability of making forms, and more importantly transforming according to new understandings and new situations. For this, Calum's endeavours to secure stable economical solutions that answer his ambitions of creativity and resilience are doomed to fail, as his community acts little to assist him. The rise of neoliberal ideology is well pointed at, as the film highlights the last decade of the twentieth century, a period marked by massive changes in societal, economical, and political levels. Despite his portrayal as self-reliant individual, Calum fails to reach his intended social position. As he attempts hard to reach it, challenges arise in his path, pushing him to assume destructive transformation. Yet, the film's narrative exempts him from his own failure and point the finger toward the social system in transition. Therefore, the film marks itself as a critique of "cruel optimism," to use Berlant (2011) words. For the latter such social system advocates individual happiness, while eroding all necessary grounds to achieve it. Making such consequences central to the film's narrative accentuates the film's message on how often societal and political structures seal the fate of individuals in terms of forming or re-forming their individualities.

4.3. The Ambiguity of the Image

The irony of *Aftersun* is that it draws its resonance not only from what is shown, but from the unseen. As illustrated earlier, in many scenes, characters such as Calum, are portrayed being concealed or at least unaware of being watched. Different layers of interpretation arise and evoke a higher sense of ambiguity. As the narrative goes back and forth to the past, it delivers an exploration of the elusive nature of memory. Moreover, the viewer is called upon to actively participate in the process of interpreting the intended meaning of memory or other psychological concepts such as

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trauma or depression. The cinematic language used to achieve this goes through withholding the pivotal moments. That is, they are either obscured partially or totally. Through cinematography, Calum appears as reflection or left off-screen completely. Sometimes, his absence is filled out with the music referring to the place he used to occupy, for instance the rave party, as explained earlier. On one occasion, he appears through a half-open door, only to raise ambiguity and concern at the viewer's side. This offers more chance to the latter to use his imagination to interpret the scene. While such ambiguity is useful for the viewer to engage in the cinematic experience, it also points out that memory has no fixed form or content. It is limited by definition and always depends on recollection, completion, and interpretation. Ambiguity serves another purpose related to the difficulties of knowing about another person. The nature of social connections and arenas makes it almost impossible to accurately know or understand the inner worlds of others. Therefore, the film addresses in an explicit manner how individuals think they know about each other, while when scrutinizing facts, little proves to be known. Just as in the case of Calum, hidden pains and unresolved questions always remain deep in the corners of human psyche. Much effort needs to be overtaken so that sincere relationships unveil the pain and attempt to find cure for it. In *Aftersun*, cinematic language, namely the camera work exhibits how such device can move from objective to subjective observer. The very fact of being able to create ambiguity out of a rich scenery makes the camera selective and hence subjective in its endeavour of reality framer. The film, therefore, demonstrates how cinema can engender empathy as it invites as, viewers, to explore the unknown hidden corners of human psyche and heart.

4.4. Alternative Readings and Limitations

Catherine Malabou's theory of neuroplasticity finds repercussions withing *Aftersun*'s narrative and underlying philosophy. Ideas on the brain's faculties of change and resilience enlighten the viewer and academics on the workings of memory at individual and societal levels. The dangers of much structural influence on individuals could also be pointed to raise awareness on the need for societal solidarity and empathy. Yet, it is very important to mention that such theory is not the only lens through which a rich film like this could be approached. To mention a few, Calum's troubles, which are shared by many individuals today, could be considered through core psychoanalytic analysis to broaden the scope of mental and behavioural examination. This might involve phenomena such as trauma and melancholia, and repetition compulsion. Moreover, a feminist perspective could offer more nuanced interpretation of Sophie's personal development as she considers a peculiar vision to her own identity through perpetual dialogue with her father. The way *Aftersun* handles her adolescence experiences is one that calls for particular interest, as new perspectives seem to be adopted. Besides, it is worth noting that, the resort to neuroplasticity as a solely approach to interpreting the workings of memory and brain faculties of formation and transformation might eclipse other important aspects of the film. For instance, the historical and cultural context of the film's story is also important and calls for attention, as the transitional period of the turn of the twenty-first century marks itself yet another pivotal moment in world history. While this paper referred to the economical circumstances, they were not delved into with many details. A more devoted analysis to such underlying factors and aspects would probably evoke more valuable insights into our understanding of memory at different levels. Nonetheless, Malabou's plasticity theory joined with stylistic analysis used here made it possible to relate the film's peculiar

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use of cinematic language to with philosophical inquiry. That would open venues for more nuanced research in this area encompassing memory, identity, and transformation.

Conclusion

This paper has been a dialogue with *Aftersun's* (2022) cinematic language and philosophy to invoke more understanding on temporal dislocation, memory, and identity. Through the use of Catherine Malabou's plasticity theory, we attempted to connect the film's engagement with notions on the brain's capabilities of change and resilience. By considering temporal dislocation we highlighted how the narrative style, as part of cinematography, could be more than a stylistic choice. It goes further to reflect on complex human faculties such as the brain and its different constituents. Part of this is memory, a human device that, according to Malabou, is not only an archive of information but a more complex faculty able to receive and take form. Moreover, memories through cinematic techniques such as flashbacks demonstrate that they can be interpreted and re-interpreted as one develops in time and gains more experiences. More techniques such as subjective framing, using camerawork justifies further the power of cinematography in terms of psychological and philosophical inquiry. Among these we demonstrated that the film is powerful in its portrayal of mental health issues, as it is in the case of Calum. Through, Malabou's "destructive plasticity," we underscored the pressures imposed on individuals by economical and political structures in contemporary society. Destructive plasticity, therefore, explains very well how identities, just like memory, are not fixed or stable in a world of inevitable change. Transformation, which is often understood as a process leading to growth, proves to be leading to annihilation and demise. Despite Calum's striving to adapt to change, he is doomed to fail, as the social structures promise individual liberty and self-assertion, while they make it impossible for free-minded individuals to grow or prosper. The call for conformity seems to be more important than individual success and assertion. As individuals need stability and comfort to express themselves, contemporary precarity seems to be the main background of all human activities. Thus, impossible levels of resilience are required to assure adaptation and survival. To make a balance with Calum's struggles, the film proposes his daughter Sophie, whose journey, interestingly goes in line with Malabou's "constructive plasticity." If Calum is associated with psychological impairments, Sophie actively re-forms her childhood memories and overcome ambiguity and fear. Integrating her life experiences to such process of memory recollection, she could create meaning out of her fragmented memories. Therefore, in contrast to her father, she finds a way toward healing and understanding. To merge the two perspectives, or plasticity types, the film uses cinematic language to offer the rave, as a common ground for conversation and dialogue. On this ground, change manifests its duality of nature. While Calum's identity faces dissolution, Sophie's gains renewal. At broader levels, cinema and Malabou's theory make it possible to interpret how humans can take a positive stance toward change. Despite the difficulties and precarity of social and economical context, individuals can reach healing and refresh their memories through their experiences, only to find reconciliation with others and themselves.

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