

Repeat Viewings Revisited: Emotions, Memory, and *Memento*

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Introduction

In 'The Paradox of Suspense', Noël Carroll ponders a question that has long troubled film critics, namely why viewers feel anxiety while watching a film that they have already seen.¹ Uncertainty, Carroll argues, is a necessary ingredient of suspense. He claims that we feel suspense when a preferable outcome for a film seems jeopardized. So, once a film's conclusion has been revealed, any uncertainty about its outcome is eliminated, and, following Carroll's line of reasoning, feelings of suspense should likewise dissipate. And yet this conjecture is disputed by the common experience of viewers who still find themselves biting their nails during their seventh viewing of, say, Peter Jackson's version of *The Fellowship of the Ring* (2001).

Carroll's explanation for the paradox of suspense is a compelling one. He argues that belief is not necessary for the experience of emotion. To paraphrase his own example, I do not need to believe that I am actually going to fall in order to feel vertigo when standing on the edge of a high roof; merely entertaining the thought of falling is enough to make my stomach lurch. Carroll applies similar reasoning to the experience of suspense when watching a thriller for the second, fifth, or tenth time. The viewer already knows how the movie will conclude, but he or she considers the possibility that it could end in another (less desirable) fashion. That act alone, Carroll concludes, can create a feeling of suspense. As he points out, the ability to experience emotion by simply imagining an event makes sense from an evolutionary standpoint. Such a skill allows

humans to be prepared for a variety of threats they have never encountered, thereby arming them with a greater arsenal of defense strategies and a more likely chance of survival.

Like Carroll, I am also interested in examining the experience of repeat viewings, but rather than focus on suspense, I am concerned with sadness. Just as we would expect a reduced sense of suspense when watching thrillers that we have seen before, we could also conclude that repeatedly viewing a sad movie would result in diminished grief, for we would expect that over time we would become habituated to whatever distresses us on screen. My experience with Christopher Nolan's *Memento* (2000), however, has been the complete reverse. Although the plight of the film's protagonist, Leonard Shelby (played by Guy Pearce), is certainly sad enough to provoke sympathetic sadness, when I first saw *Memento*, I responded to it primarily on an aesthetic rather than an emotional level. On subsequent viewings, however, the film has had an increasingly emotional impact on me.

Though I will focus here on my own personal experience with *Memento*, I do not wish to imply that my reactions to this particular film represent those of the general viewer. Rather, I wish to use my particular responses to *Memento* to offer a model for the ways that films may over time condition viewers into having emotional reactions that become increasingly powerful over time. Nor do I wish to imply that *Memento* represents the classical Hollywood film, for although the story it tells is rather simple, the film itself is anything but. In short, the movie focuses on Leonard, a man afflicted with

anterograde amnesia – an inability to make new memories – as the result of a head injury sustained while trying to rescue his wife from two men who had broken into their house. Although Leonard can remember everything that occurred previous to his accident, he is no longer able to form new memories. Leonard shot one of the men, but was hit from behind by the other assailant. The police did not believe Leonard's story about the second man – undoubtedly because his condition renders him, in their eyes, a less than reliable source – and attributed the crime entirely to the dead assailant. Leonard has since devoted his life to finding and killing the other man: the film's notorious John G. He relies on carefully labeled Polaroids and an elaborate system of notes – some of which he tattoos directly onto his body – to help him in his investigation.

It is the narrative structure of the film, not its plot, which causes difficulty for its viewers. Containing no less than forty-four segments, the film moves back and forth between color scenes that feature Leonard's attempts to track down his wife's killer and black-and-white scenes that show Leonard in a hotel room discussing the details of his condition either in a voiceover or on the phone to a undisclosed person. While the black-and-white portions progress chronologically, the color scenes move backward in time, so that the first event we witness – Leonard shooting Teddy (Joey Pantoliano) – is actually the last event to occur chronologically. The second color scene shows us the fifteen minutes or so that lead up to Teddy's murder. At the end of the movie, the black-and-white and color timelines converge, and we are finally provided with a full understanding of how the events of the movie fit together. To a certain degree, then, our experience of the film's events is perceptually equivalent to Leonard's. Burt, a hotel manager, says of Leonard's condition, 'That must suck. I mean, it's all backwards. Like maybe you have an idea about what you want to do next but you don't remember what you just did.' Burt's description succinctly sums up Leonard's life – and the experience of watching *Memento* for the first time. We are thrust with Leonard

into settings and given no understanding of what brought us there. But unlike Leonard, our memory of previous scenes helps us predict and comprehend the trajectory of his actions.

Because of its unusual narrative structure, Nolan's film requires more concentration from viewers than the typical Hollywood movie.² At this point, then, it might be tempting to conclude that if, as in my case, *Memento* has an increasingly emotional impact during repeated viewings, it could be because the first time we watch the film, the majority of our attention must focus on simply unraveling its complex narrative; as a result, we may neglect the film's emotional nuances. During subsequent screenings, we no longer need to devote so much energy to understanding the film's plot, and thus have more opportunity to absorb the film's subtle emotion cues, leading to a more powerful emotional experience.

However, I propose that another cognitive process might also account for the increasingly emotional impact of the film. Whereas Carroll cites thoughts about a film's outcome as the cause of our emotions during repeat viewings, I argue that films can achieve emotional potency by prompting cognitive processes that are largely unconscious and that occur somewhat independently of the film's plot or outcome. I claim that the power of emotion cues is not limited to their function as instigators and sustainers of mood, but that they may also over time train viewers into experiencing emotion. Because the most moving scenes of *Memento* employ multiple emotion cues, a viewer may be conditioned into having an emotional response to those markers that begins to become independent of an understanding of the narrative situation. My discussion will have two parts: first, I will call upon a recent approach to film analysis that is based on an associative network model of the viewer's emotion system, in order to illustrate how emotion cues in *Memento* collaborate with the plot to create a mood of sadness in the viewer. Second, I will explain how current research into the formation of memories, specifically the distinction between representational and emotional memories, can

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clarify how the emotion cues in *Memento* may gain the ability to evoke feelings of sadness that, over time, become unconscious, learned behaviors rather than conscious responses to the film's plot. I conclude that, as a result, repeat viewings of a film may actually intensify rather than diminish one's emotional reactions.

Emotion Markers in *Memento*

In his 2003 book *Film Structure and the Emotion System*, Greg M. Smith describes an associative network model of the viewer's emotion system and proposes what he calls a *mood-cue approach* to film analysis. In an associative network model, Smith explains, emotions (the 'nodes' in the network) are linked to a variety of cognitions, physiological states, and a selection of potential responses.³ The emotion of fear, for example, 'might be associated with a childhood memory of falling from a height, a trembling voice, running, increased heart rate, increased right front hemispheric activity in the brain, and widened eyes.' (p. 29) The experience and expression of emotion during any given episode depends upon the number of nodes triggered and the strength with which they are activated.

What is clear, then, is that while they share certain common denominators, emotion systems are largely idiosyncratic; what amounts to an emotional scene will differ somewhat from one film viewer to another. As a result, films must present a number of redundant emotion cues (*emotion markers*) – for example, dialogue, lighting, music, *mise en scène*, facial expressions, and gestures – in order to ensure that viewers with distinctive emotional networks will experience the emotional orientation desired by the filmmaker (pp. 42–43). While successfully tapping into each viewer's particular emotion system seems a formidable task, one advantage that filmmakers have, Smith points out, is that establishing a low level of emotional arousal, what he terms a mood, increases the likelihood of invoking a more intense emotional reaction. Not only do moods direct our attention to cues that sustain our current emotional interpretation, but they also tend to be long-lasting, requiring

only occasional bolstering from subsequent cues (p. 38). Thus, if supplemented by subsequent emotion markers, moods become somewhat self-perpetuating by making us more alert to other reinforcing stimuli. In using emotion markers to create a mood, then, a filmmaker not only solicits our cooperation in sustaining emotion by focusing our attentional orientation, but also pushes us that much closer to the experience of more powerful emotions.

Smith's mood-cue approach is of great help in explaining how emotion, specifically sadness, is constructed in *Memento*. There are, I would argue, four moments in the movie which have as their primary function the creation of sympathetic sadness in the viewer: scene 5, at about nine minutes into the film; scene 9, at about 20 minutes; scene 15, at about 32 minutes; and scene 25, at about 54 minutes. The intended emotional effect of these scenes is unambiguous, for they focus on Leonard's grief over the loss of both his wife and, as he puts it, his 'ability to live'. Leonard's words in these scenes emphasize the sadness that he clearly feels. In scene 9, for example, Leonard, at the request of Natalie (Carrie-Ann Moss), closes his eyes to remember his wife. His words are especially poetic: 'You can just feel the details, the bits and pieces you never bothered to put into words. . . . You put these together and you get the feel of a person, enough to know how much you miss them, and how much you hate the person who took them away.' Leonard's description of his own sadness during scene 15 also communicates his grief vividly: 'I know I can't have her back, but I don't want to wake up in the morning thinking she's still here. I lie here not knowing how long I've been alone. So, how, how can I heal, how am I supposed to heal, if I can't feel time?' Perhaps most poignant are Leonard's words in scene 25 as we witness him burn some of his wife's possessions: 'Probably tried this before. Probably burned truckloads of your stuff. Can't remember to forget you.' These four scenes are evenly spaced out throughout the film, thus providing viewers 'with a periodic diet of brief emotional moments' sufficient to sustain a mood of sadness (p. 42). This mood, in

turn, makes it more likely that we will experience a stronger burst of emotion during the film's conclusion.

While our understanding of Leonard's predicament and his poetic expressions of grief alone make certain scenes in *Memento* quite sorrowful, other markers, such as Leonard's facial expressions, strengthen the emotions these more overt cues inspire. When Leonard describes his sadness, the camera often zooms in until his face takes up most of the screen. The decision to shoot in anamorphic further contributes to an increased emphasis on Leonard's face. As director of photography Wally Pfister explained, anamorphic is typically used to capture wide shots of landscapes; when used to shoot close-ups of, for example, a character's face, it results in less depth of field.⁴ In other words, almost anything beyond the character's face will tend to be blurry. The result is that more attention will be directed toward the only aspect of the shot in focus, namely the character's face and expression. In Leonard's case, that expression is often one of sorrow. Close-up shots of Leonard's sad expressions prompt not only an awareness of his sadness, but also a tendency for viewers to unconsciously mimic his expressions with their own faces (the process known as affective mimicry); furthermore, according to the facial feedback hypothesis, mimicking such facial expressions may, in turn, cause at least a low level of emotion within the viewer.⁵ At the very least, then, close-ups of Pearce's sad face may strengthen the sadness that is receiving support from other markers within a particular scene.

David Julyan's musical score is another emotion marker that may amplify the sadness of



• Leonard burning his wife's possessions in scene 25 of *Memento* (2000).

these scenes. The relationship between music and emotion has been – and continues to be – an area of considerable debate,⁶ but it is clear that the tonal and temporal properties of a melody do influence its perceived emotional quality.⁷ Research, in fact, suggests a neurological link between the intrinsic qualities of music and the emotions they express and inspire. In *Music, the Brain, and Ecstasy*, for example, Robert Jourdain notes that a composition that overemphasizes the five non-scale tones outside of its key often annoys its listeners, proving to be, he says, 'a burden for our minds to carry.'⁸ He also says that the tendency for minor chords to seem sad, especially in comparison with the happier-sounding major chords, may be linked to their greater inherent dissonance: 'minor triads do not overlap as well as those of major chords, and so minor triads are inherently filled with conflict.'⁹ Annabel Cohen has further suggested that the perceived emotional quality of music may be linked to our experience with the typical vocal patterns associated with different emotions. Vocal expressions of sadness, for example, are often marked by certain characteristics, such as low volume, low pitch, static pitch contour, and impoverished harmonic structure. This does not mean that all low, slow sounds are regarded as sad. Music that shares these qualities may not categorically indicate sadness for all listeners, but sadness will be the predominant emotional quality associated with these characteristics.¹⁰ Some research suggests, then, that the intrinsic qualities of different pieces of music are emotionally expressive and may in turn be capable of causing at least a low level of arousal.

But a film score does not bear the entire burden of emotional arousal, as it is assisted in this task by the visual narrative it accompanies. To function as a successful emotion marker in *Memento*, the score need only emphasize and intensify the intended emotion of the scene it complements. Research has demonstrated that music does indeed influence the affective quality of visual sequences in a variety of ways. Through a process called affective congruence, for example, a musical score may increase the

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potency of an emotionally unambiguous visual sequence.¹¹ In other words, a visual segment of, say, unequivocal grief will seem sadder if accompanied by a congruent score than without any musical accompaniment whatsoever. Although Julyan created sixty-one different musical cues for the soundtrack of *Memento*, the movie's 'Main Theme' and its subtle variations are the strains featured during the most moving moments of the film, often accompanying Leonard's poignant descriptions of his grief.¹² This theme plays for almost a full five minutes during scene 15 and for almost the entire three minutes of scene 25. The intrinsic qualities of this musical theme, its slow tempo, low tones, and even pitch contour, are sorrowful. Furthermore, since the intended emotional quality of the scenes that the 'Main Theme' accompanies is unambiguous, Julyan's score functions to amplify their sadness through affective congruence.

Although the most moving emotional moments of the film occur during its color portions, the black-and-white scenes offer a parallel story, the sadness of which may help to amplify the sorrowful mood created in the color sequences. Many of the black-and-white scenes feature Leonard describing the job he held before his injury, that of an insurance claims investigator. Leonard once investigated a man named Sammy Jankis who, coincidentally, also suffered from anterograde amnesia. Unable to accept her 'new' husband, Sammy's wife invented ways to 'test' his memory, such as hiding food all over the house to see if hunger would motivate him into remembering where it was. Scene 42, the longest black-and-white segment – totaling three minutes and thirty-five seconds and beginning almost an hour and a half into the film – is devoted to the final test that Sammy's wife devises. A diabetic, Sammy's wife required the regular administration of insulin shots; because Sammy learned this skill before his accident, he retained it throughout his anterograde amnesia. In order to determine if Sammy had really lost his short-term memory, Sammy's wife tricked him into injecting her with insulin three times in a row. The overdose sent her into a coma from which she never recovered,

leaving Sammy with no memory that he had inadvertently caused his wife's death. Though Leonard relates this story to an unspecified person on the phone, the movie allows us to witness these events, aided by a narrative voiceover from Leonard. The emotional resonance of such a sad story may spill over into the narrative occurring within the color segment, further deepening the sadness of the main plot and sustaining the mood of sadness. The full impact of the Sammy Jankis story, however, will not be realized until the final scene of the movie, which I will discuss in the next section.

From this close analysis of *Memento*, several things become clear. First, emotion markers, such as Leonard's facial expressions and Julyan's musical score, intensify the sadness communicated by the narrative situation and dialogue within these scenes. In addition, because of unconscious processes such as facial mimicry, facial feedback, and affective congruence, these markers have an additional impact on the viewer's emotion that occurs without his or her awareness. These markers sustain a mood of sadness, which may be subsequently elevated to a more intense emotion, especially during the final scene of the film.

Remembering Emotion; Learning to Feel

In the previous section, I called upon an associative network model of the emotion system to explain how markers throughout various scenes in *Memento* create a mood, or a low level of arousal, that may lead to a more powerful experience of emotion. In this section, I will return to this model in order to show that the power of emotion markers is not limited to their function as instigators and sustainers of mood, but that they may also over time begin to function as nodes in the viewer's network of emotion. Because *Memento* repeatedly employs the same emotion markers, a viewer may be conditioned into having an emotional response to those markers that is largely independent of the narrative situation. It is this process, I will

argue, that accounts for the movie's potential for inspiring a powerful emotional response at its conclusion that may become stronger during subsequent viewings.

As we noted in the previous section, emotional networks are largely idiosyncratic. While our emotional networks may share certain cultural and biological factors – such as an association of the color black with death in Western cultures or a fear of falling – they become individualized over time based on our personal experiences. Emotionally neutral stimuli, if present during an emotional experience, can become imbued with an emotional overtone and function as new nodes in our emotional network. In order to explain how this happens, I would first like to relate an experiment conducted by the neuroscientist Antonio Damasio that offers profound insight into the workings of memory.¹³ One of Damasio's subjects, David, suffered from a learning defect so severe that, like the protagonist of *Memento*, he could not learn new facts. His condition rendered him unable to recognize anyone he had met or recall anything about their past interactions. Damasio and his colleagues collaborated in a 'good-guy/bad-guy' experiment, which involved David's interactions with three people over the course of five days. One person consistently rewarded David regardless of his behavior, the second behaved neutrally, and the third treated David unsympathetically and engaged him in tedious psychological tests. Some time later, David was asked to examine sets of four photographs; each set featured the face of one of the three people who had been involved in the experiment. Though David could never recall having met any of the three people, when asked whom he would approach for help or consider a friend, David chose the 'good guy' over eighty percent of the time and *never* chose the bad guy. Damasio further points out that the 'bad guy' was 'played' by a 'young, pleasant, and beautiful neuropsychologist', thus eliminating natural attractiveness as a potential influence on David's behavior.

The sort of experiment described by Damasio suggests that there are two types of memory – a

point recognized in the (neuro)sciences by Joseph LeDoux,¹⁴ and in the humanities by Patrick Colm Hogan.¹⁵ According to Hogan, our sensory perception of an object or event is stored as a *representational memory* (what LeDoux refers to as an 'explicit' or 'declarative memory'), whilst our emotional response to that object or event is stored in the form of an *emotional memory* (otherwise known as an 'implicit' or 'nondeclarative memory'). When a representational memory is recalled, the emotional memory is simultaneously triggered, resulting in a current state of emotional arousal. It is important to note that a cue need not be the most salient piece of sensory input for it to be capable of activating emotional memories. LeDoux, for example, notes that rats conditioned to a tone-shock combination will over time exhibit fear when simply placed back into that same chamber, suggesting that peripheral cues were conditioned along with the most salient one, the tone.¹⁶ Just as we do not need to be consciously aware of the cues when the emotional memories were formed, nor do we need to be conscious of the cues that trigger them. Although David could not reconstruct a representational memory of his interactions with others, their faces were still able to trigger emotional memories that lay beyond his consciousness. Hogan points out that people without brain damage often find themselves experiencing emotion without realizing the cause; this occurs when an emotional memory is reconstructed but the accompanying representational memory is not, perhaps because attention is focused on something more salient.¹⁷ These findings are significant to a cognitive approach to film because it suggests that emotion markers can form and trigger emotional memories even when they are not the focus of our attention.

One aspect of film that often exists beyond the level of conscious awareness is its score. However, research suggests that even though background music is not the most salient cue, it has a particularly strong connection to memory. A study conducted by Marilyn Boltz, Matthew Schulkind, and Suzanne Kantra demonstrated

that a musical score aids recall when the mood of the music matches the mood of the visual segment it accompanies. In other words, when the visual and musical components of a film are affectively congruent, the score can help viewers remember scenes they had been previously unable to recall.¹⁸ Julyan's score itself, then, may aid the viewer in recalling previous sad scenes in which it featured; while the viewer may not construct complete representational memories of these previous scenes, emotional memories of the sadness experienced during those scenes could still be activated.

The ability of *Memento* to establish a mood of sadness may also aid in stimulating congruent emotional memories. In the previous section, we noted that moods have an orienting effect on our perception: moods cause us to seek out and attend to other cues that support our current emotional state. Moods also have an orienting effect on our memory. Just as emotion causes us to attend selectively to our environment, so, too, does it cause us to recall memories of similar emotional tone.¹⁹ Thus, a mood of sadness may help to selectively activate emotional memories of a sad quality. Furthermore, research has shown that memory is often improved when our mood during recall is congruent to our mood at the time the memory was formed, a tendency known as the mood congruity hypothesis.²⁰ In short, a mood of sadness increases the likelihood and ability with which we will recall other memories of sadness. Just as the experience of emotion depends on the number of nodes activated within our emotional network and the strength with which they are stimulated, the reconstruction of a memory depends upon the cues available that were also present during memory formation. The more cues present during recall – and the more significant these cues are – the more likely it is that a memory will be activated.²¹

Understanding the interaction between representational and emotional memories can help us understand how a movie like *Memento* is able to achieve affective potency during a single viewing. Part of the intensity of the film's conclusion is undoubtedly linked to the

information we receive, revelations that have a powerful effect on both Leonard and the viewer. Teddy tells Leonard that his real name is John Edward Gammell and that he was the police officer assigned to his wife's case. Believing Leonard deserved vengeance, Teddy helped him track down and kill the real culprit over a year ago. However, Leonard's condition did not allow him to remember that he had ever achieved his revenge, so Leonard began to search for another man to kill. In fact, Teddy says that Leonard has deliberately made the 'evidence' he relies on vague enough that he will continually find men to fit his criteria. What is more distressing is that Teddy tells Leonard that his wife did not die in the attack. The story that Leonard attributes to Sammy Jankis is actually his own: unable to handle Leonard's condition, his wife used Leonard's anterograde amnesia to trick him into killing her with an overdose of insulin. Leonard is unable to handle the truth, so he decides he will eliminate Teddy, the only reminder of the lie his life has become. Knowing that he will soon forget his own willing self-deception, he manufactures for himself one final clue, namely that John G.'s licence plate is SG13 71U, the same as Teddy's. Because we have already witnessed Teddy's murder in the first scene of the movie, we know that Leonard's new 'evidence' will lead him to kill Teddy.

What we learn in this scene is powerful enough to trigger a reaction of sympathetic sadness. However, our final moments with Leonard are additionally saturated with emotion markers that have been repeatedly employed throughout the movie. As Leonard drives off to find a tattoo parlor, the camera zooms in on his face. Though his expression is one of cold determination, his face itself may be sufficient to evoke sadness in the viewer since it has featured so prominently during other scenes of sorrow. As in other scenes, Leonard's thoughts are poignant and poetic: 'I have to believe in a world outside my own mind. I have to believe that when my eyes are closed the world is still there. . . . We all need mirrors to remind ourselves who we are. I'm no different.' The theme music weaves in and out of hearing during the entire sixteen



• The conclusion to *Memento*.

minutes of this scene, becoming unusually loud in these final moments; indeed, it is the only sound we can hear aside from Leonard's voiceover. The conclusion, then, includes the same emotion markers that featured previously in the scenes that focused on Leonard's grief, such as close-ups of Leonard's sorrowful face, his poetic descriptions of his feelings, given either in a voiceover or to another character, and Julyan's 'Main Theme'. The result is that emotional memories of sadness are continually activated during the movie's conclusion, causing sadness to well up within the viewer. The final scene also features quick flashes of Leonard's wife, an image often featured in Leonard's scenes of grief. Images of her face may also be capable of eliciting additional emotional memories.

If an understanding of the relationship between representational and emotional memories may help us to explain why the conclusion to *Memento* can have an emotional impact on a viewer during a single viewing, then it might also account for why that effect may become more powerful over time. When a film relies on recurring emotion markers to create a certain mood, as this film does, the markers themselves, even those unattended to by the viewer, may trigger emotional memories. As the film progresses, viewers recognize these repeated emotion markers by calling upon representational memories. The activation of these representational memories simultaneously invokes emotional memories of the sadness experienced during the previous scenes in which these markers were featured. While it might seem safe to conclude that the emotional associations formed during a viewing of a film might weaken once it is over, research suggests

that memories of an emotional experience tend to be stronger and longer lasting than those formed during affectively neutral situations. Citing studies done by Jim McGaugh, LeDoux explains that rats injected with adrenaline after conditioning exhibit improved memory of the experience.²² Since the arousal of emotion is usually accompanied by a release of adrenaline, we could surmise that explicit memories of emotional events would be stronger than those of non-emotional situations. In other words, our memory for films that move us emotionally is stronger than for those that do not. Repeat viewings, then, could strengthen the conditioning accomplished in previous viewings.

Conclusion

In essence, I have argued that emotion markers within the film, especially its score and Leonard's sad facial expressions – aided, of course, by the movie's story and dialogue – are able to invoke a mood of sadness that may lead to a more powerful expression of grief. I have also argued that repeated encounters with these emotion markers lead to a sort of conditioning, so that throughout a single screening of the movie – and over the course of multiple viewings – our sadness becomes a partially unconscious response to the various cues the film offers. These emotion markers are stored as both representational and emotional memories. When we encounter a marker that was present during a previous scene of sadness, both types of memories are activated, leading us to re-experience the emotion we felt before. Over time, the association between these markers and the feeling of sadness is strengthened, leading to increased grief upon repeat viewings.

In addition to salivating, did Pavlov's dog feel hunger, desire, longing, when that infamous bell rang? More importantly, would we? While we are willing to accept that more primitive emotions, like fear, often function beyond our control, there is something almost distasteful about the idea that our more 'civilized' emotions, such as love or sympathy, could also operate outside our consciousness. Indeed, I

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myself almost want to resist the idea that my increasingly emotional reactions to *Memento* are the result of conditioning rather than empathy for the plight of the film's protagonist. Rather than diminish our perception of emotion, however, an understanding of the unconscious processes leads to a deeper understanding of how our feelings are a complex reaction to our experiences, an informed response to life.

Toward the end of *Memento*, Leonard, on the phone to an undisclosed person (but whom we assume is Teddy) explains, 'You know the truth about my condition, officer? You don't know anything. You feel angry, you don't know why. You feel guilty, you have no idea why.' While Leonard is describing a consequence of his anterograde amnesia, his words surely ring true for many of us.

Notes

- 1 Noël Carroll, 'The Paradox of Suspense', in Peter Vorderer, Hans J. Wulff, and Mike Friedrichson (eds.), *Suspense: Conceptualizations, Theoretical Analyses, and Empirical Explorations* (Mahwah, NJ, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1996), pp. 71–91.
- 2 One review of *Memento*, for example, begins: 'They should have provided a flowchart. And flash cards. Heck, posting studio officials outside the theater for impromptu lectures and explanatory puppet shows couldn't have hurt either.' Daniel Fierman, 'Memory Games', *Entertainment Weekly*, 22 June 2001, 23–4. See also Jeff Giles, 'Cool So Is Thriller This', *Newsweek*, 19 March 2001, 60–2. Though typically a reason for praise from critics, the film's complex narrative structure prompted a negative review from Alexander Walker, who wrote that '[t]he feat of keeping so many bits of disparate and seemingly disordered information in one's mind was too much for me. Mensa champs might have accomplished it; I grew fatally confused, then resentful that such a brilliant idea should be so unnecessarily entangled in style.' 'Private Eye Who Doesn't Have a Clue', *London Evening Standard*, 19 October 2000, 32. Quoted in James Mottram, *The Making of Memento* (New York, Faber and Faber, 2002), pp. 22–3.
- 3 Greg M. Smith, *Film Structure and the Emotion System* (New York, Cambridge University Press, 2003). All subsequent references are taken from this edition. Page numbers will follow in brackets.
- 4 Mottram, *Making Memento*, pp. 119–20.
- 5 For a more detailed discussion of affective mimicry and the facial feedback hypothesis, see Carl Plantinga, 'The Scene of Empathy and the Human Face on Film', in Carl Plantinga and Greg M. Smith (eds.), *Passionate Views: Film Cognition, and Emotion* (Baltimore, MD, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), pp. 239–55.
- 6 For an extensive discussion of this debate, see Jeff Smith, 'Movie Music as Moving Music: Emotion, Cognition, and the Film Score', in Plantinga and Smith (eds.), *Passionate Views*, pp. 146–67. Another helpful discussion can be found in Jenefer Robinson's 'The Expression and Arousal of Emotion in Music', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 52.1 (1994), 13–22.
- 7 For example, Marilyn Boltz, Matthew Schulkind, and Suzanne Kantra note that melodies that express negative affect typically 'displayed a relatively slow tempo, minor mode, and a low level of pitch with few changes in pitch contour.' 'Effects of Background Music on the Remembering of Filmed Events', *Memory & Cognition*, 19:6 (1991), 596.
- 8 Robert Jourdain, *Music, the Brain, and Ecstasy* (New York, Morrow and Company, 1997), p. 106.
- 9 *Ibid.*, p. 313.
- 10 Annabel Cohen, 'Associationism and Musical Soundtrack Phenomena', *Contemporary Music Review*, 9:1–2 (1993), 163–78.
- 11 Jeff Smith also describes a process called polarization, 'an interaction in which the specific affective character of the music moves the content of the picture toward the emotional pole communicated by the music.' ('Movie Music', p. 148.) Cohen demonstrated that congruent versus incongruent score-film combinations resulted in differing emotional interpretations ('Associationism and Musical Soundtrack Phenomena'). Cohen and Sandra K. Marshall have also demonstrated that a viewer's attention may focus more intently upon actions within a visual segment that are temporally congruent with the musical score accompanying it, leading to an altered interpretation of the emotional qualities of the scene. See 'Effects of Musical Soundtracks on Attitudes Toward Animated Geometric Figures', *Music Perception*, 6:1 (1988), 95–112.
- 12 Mottram, *Making Memento*, p. 92.
- 13 Antonio Damasio, *The Feeling of What Happens: Body and Emotion in the Making of Consciousness* (San Diego, Harcourt, 1999), pp. 43–7.
- 14 For a detailed discussion of representational versus emotional memory, see Joseph LeDoux *The Emotional Brain: The Mysterious Underpinnings of Emotional Life* (New York, Simon and Schuster, 1996), pp. 179–224. LeDoux describes an experiment similar to that described by Damasio (pp.180–2). The French physician Edouard Claparede treated a female patient who had also lost the ability to make new memories. When he shook her hand on one visit, he stabbed her with a tack he had hidden in his palm. The next time he

- saw her, she claimed to have no memory of him, but refused to shake his hand.
- 15 Patrick Colm Hogan, *Cognitive Science, Literature, and the Arts: A Guide for Humanists* (New York: Routledge, 2003), pp. 181–4.
 - 16 LeDoux, *Synaptic Self: How Our Brains Become Who We Are* (New York, Penguin, 2003), p. 215.
 - 17 Hogan, *Cognitive Science, Literature, and the Arts*, p. 183.
 - 18 Boltz, Schulkind, and Kantra, 'Remembering Filmed Events', 600.
 - 19 Hogan, *Cognitive Science, Literature, and the Arts*, p. 170.
 - 20 LeDoux, *Synaptic Self*, p. 222.
 - 21 LeDoux, *Emotional Brain*, p. 212.
 - 22 *Ibid.*, p. 206.