

FILM SCORE ANALYSIS OF *ETERNAL SUNSHINE OF THE SPOTLESS MIND*

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to analyze the score composed for the film *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* and understand how it connects to the work's broader themes. This movie, released in 2004, was directed by Michel Gondry with the soundtrack written by Jon Brion.

In this analysis, I seek to explain the strategic use of music to embody the inner-thoughts of the protagonist. Because a majority of the film takes place within the mind of the central character, and the storyline unfolds in a rather disjointed manner, the viewer experiences a blurring between the lines of present and past, waking life and dreams. In effect, the viewer becomes entangled in the protagonist's mind - jumping quickly through space, time and a catalogue of memories. It is therefore quite fitting that the music used in the film complements the bizarre storyline with an equally eclectic instrumentation and production value. The use of sonic texture and tone painting aids in the development of the drama and is used strategically to reflect the shifting mental state of the protagonist.

While the opening scene and its score begin unassumingly, the viewer soon realizes that this film is not a traditional one and that the score will not be either. A conventional film follows a linear storyline with a correspondingly logical film score pattern. Within the typical score, thematic material is continually revisited and developed. Yet in *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, the critical musical elements lie not in the revisiting of themes but rather in the use of odd instrumentation and mixing of sound design elements with musical

elements. In essence, the score serves to personify the main character and embody the confusion experienced in his shifting mental state.

Composer Biography

Jon Brion is an American musician/songwriter turned record producer and film composer. In his early twenties, he left behind a formal education to pursue music entirely. Throughout the 1980s, he joined forces with several pop bands, first writing and performing in a duo and later serving as a multi-instrumentalist in more acclaimed pop bands such as The Wallflowers, Aimee Mann's band 'Til Tuesday, and Jellyfish.

From the connections he garnered in the music industry, he went on to produce albums for artists such as Fiona Apple and Rufus Wainwright. In the late 1990s, he began collaborating with film director Paul Anderson, writing and recording the score to *Boogie Nights*. This experience paved the way for further work in film scoring into the 2000s, with his music being featured in such films as *I Heart Huckabees*, *Punch-Drunk Love* and *Step Brothers*. His soundtracks for *Magnolia* and *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* even earned him Grammy nominations for Best Score Soundtrack Album.

Now residing in Los Angeles, CA, Brion still finds time for live solo performances in between film scoring gigs. He is known for making regular performances at the music bar Café Largo, where he plays a variety of songs from Frank Sinatra, to Johnny Cash, and big-band to pop hits.

Critics describe Brion's style as quirky and idiosyncratic with pop-leaning sensibilities. Brion describes his own style within the genre as "Unpopular Pop" - far removed from the super-produced mainstream. As a multi-instrumentalist, we see Brion adeptly incorporate instruments such as guitars, piano, drums, ukulele, harpsichord, and vibraphone into his songs and film scores. Additionally, one trademark of his work is the use of sampled

sound and tape looping. Musicians that influence Brion include The Beatles, Brian Eno, Elvis Costello, and Queen¹.

¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jon_Brion

http://www.bluefat.com/0907/Jon_Brion.htm

Synopsis

The storyline for *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* follows the life of a reserved, 30-something man named Joel Barish and his love story with the beautiful, restless Clementine Kruczynski. The opening scene of the film shows Joel lying in bed on a cold winter's morning, somehow compelled to skip work and opt instead for an adventurous outing to Montauk Beach in Long Island. Here we see what appears to be Joel's first encounter with Clementine on a lonely train car heading out of New York City. Later, the pair bump into each other again at an old diner where the two sense an undeniable attraction. They cozy up together on the subway back into the city exuding a very palpable chemistry. As the evening carries on, the couple heads back to Clementine's apartment for a drink and end up spending several hours together getting to know each other. Later that night, the two venture out onto a frozen lake where they lie next to each other on the ice, looking at the stars, holding hands and laughing as they make up names of constellations.

However, as the film progresses, the viewer learns that what we perceive as their first encounter in the opening scene is actually not their first meeting at all. In fact, the two at that point were actually ex-lovers who had their memories of the other erased in order to forget their painful breakup. Therefore, what we see as the first scene of the film in reality is documenting the moments after their erased relationship. At a subconscious level, Joel was unable to eradicate Clementine from his mind, and in fact, felt compelled to save their

relationship. Thus, in the opening scene, while the two have no recollection of the other, fate has reunited them for a second chance at love.

After witnessing an innate connection that arises the day of their second encounter, the storyline begins to warp. From here, we jump back in time to the end of their first real relationship. We see Joel sobbing alone in his car. He later heads into his apartment alone, visibly disturbed. He opens a bottle of prescription pills, takes one, and goes to bed. This disturbing flash back in time is really the first sense of foreboding that the viewer experiences; not everything is as perfect between the two as it ostensibly seemed.

From here the storyline is in great part limited to what is happening inside Joel's sleeping mind. In fact, it is at this point that the memory deletion process begins and the visual elements of the scenery begin to unravel in front of our eyes. Backgrounds fade into black, words melt off of signs and lights flicker. All of these bizarre incidences are indicative that the deletion process is in effect, degrading the very details of Joel's memories. During this erasing procedure, the viewer continues to travel backwards through Joel's memory, beginning with the most recent -and most painful- memory of Clementine: their breakup and her decision to delete their relationship from her mind. We watch Joel relive the moment he realized Clementine had deleted him from her life. His friends reveal that she underwent a medical procedure that effectively wiped her brain of all memories she held of Joel. Upon discovering that Clementine had deleted him from her existence, Joel also decided to receive the same treatment to put their troubled romance behind. Through the lens of Joel's memory, we witness their final argument and sense that they are far less enamored than their encounter in Montauk.

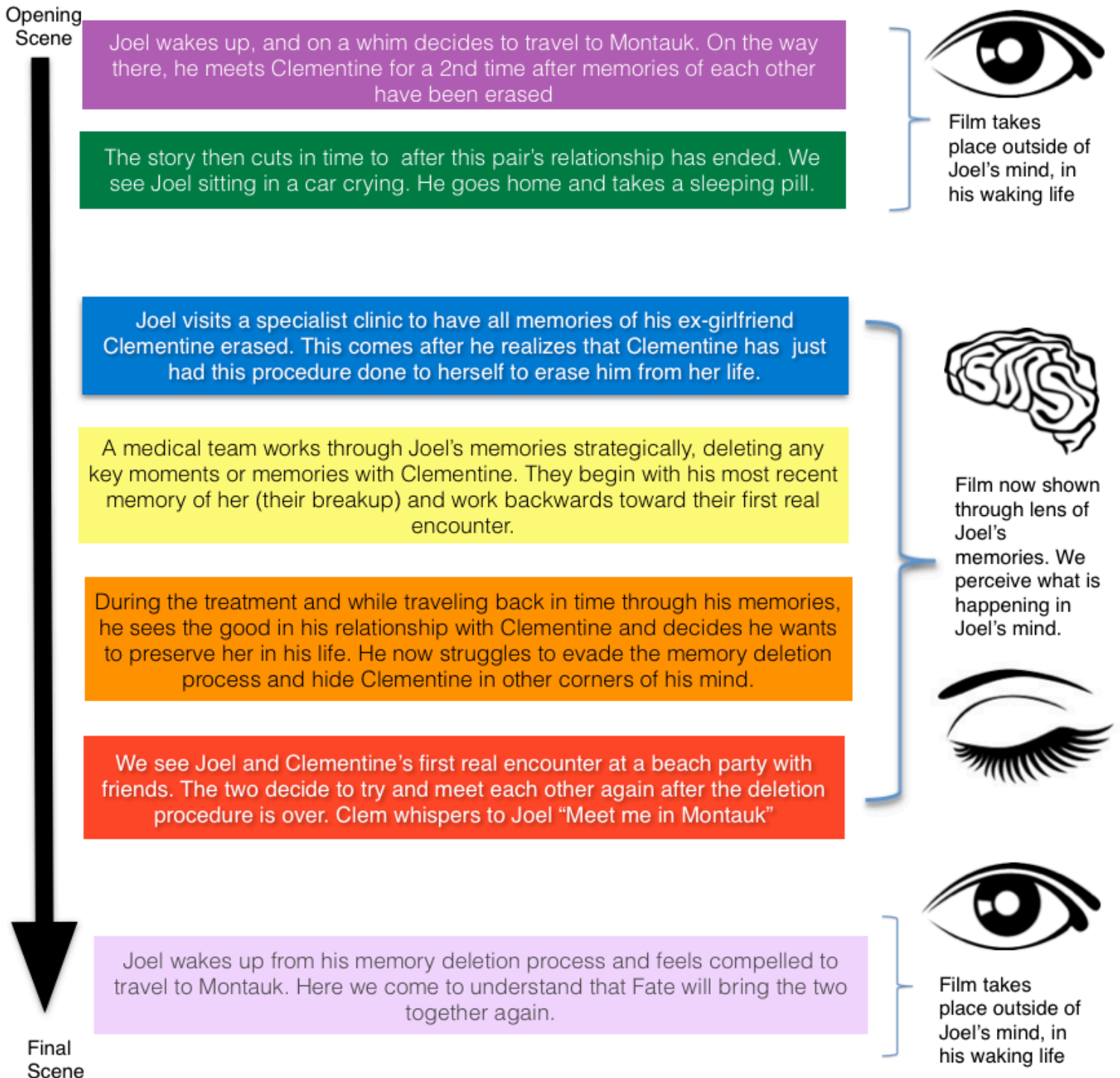
Within this dream-like state, Joel lives out the significant memories he shared with Clementine until they disintegrate in front of his eyes. Scenery crumbles, Clementine disappears, and the memory slowly fades into nonexistence. But, as the procedure moves further back in time to their days of budding romance, Joel realizes that he truly loves her and that he doesn't want to erase Clementine from his life. So the challenge becomes escaping the clutches of this memory-wiping device and preserving Clementine in the obscure corners of his mind so as to never lose her. The two race together through a catalogue of shared moments, seeking desperately to avoid the disintegration of their collective experience.

The last memory wiped from Joel's mind is that of their very first true encounter. We see the two running along a summer shore, joining up with mutual friends at a beach party. As their surroundings fade away and the ground they stand on crumbles into nothingness, Clementine whispers to Joel, "Meet me at Montauk." With those final words ringing in his ears, Joel wakes up from his dream-like state. The memory-deletion has been successfully completed, yet subconsciously he is compelled to seek out Clementine again.

We return to the very opening scene of the film, where Joel is lying in bed with a warm morning sun filtering into the room. The film's ending scene actually loops back into the beginning of the film, when he awakes and decides to go to Montauk on a whim. With this apparently cyclical storyline, the viewer is left to determine if the two are locked an endless cycle of doomed love or if they are somehow able to break from their failed past, learn from their previous mistakes, and forge ahead with an even stronger love.

Diagram of Film: Scene Order Compared to Chronology

The order of film goes from top to bottom, with the opening scene of the film at the top, and the final scene at the bottom. The colors represent the actual timeline/chronology of the storyline. Purple represents the most recent event and red symbolizes the moment furthest back in time.



Analysis

As mentioned previously, the film itself and consequently the scored music accompanying it is unlike that of many traditional film scores. Knowing this gives us the proper lens through which to listen to and analyze the score of the film. Unlike much film score music of the past or present, we as listeners are presented with a score that centers less on thematic and motivic development but more upon style, instrumentation, and sonic complexity. The thematic material is somewhat important in aiding the drama of this film as there are several thematic centers used during the film, but what will quickly become apparent is that this is not ultimately the most important dramatic tool Brion uses in the score. The storyline unfolds in a non-linear fashion and the music serves as a mirror to the protagonist's inner emotions and confused mental state. This musical story-telling technique provides a powerful sonic backdrop to the drama. So, thematic material, in essence, becomes a way of navigating the chronology of this film and anchoring the viewer more than developing musical motifs for any characters or plotline. Because of the odd nature and disjointed storytelling style implemented in the film, any analysis must be approached in a similarly abstract way. A traditional analysis would miss out on the eclectic depth present in the score.

My analysis attempts to break down the film into several discrete sections where we observe marked changes in the score whether it be in instrumentation or style. Though I have established these parameters subjectively, they are nevertheless a way to analyze the score more effectively through its various points of evolution.

The title music of this film at 00:00:36 (Score excerpt below) is one of the most unassuming yet fully developed pieces of music written for this film. As we see our protagonist in the opening shot of the film, the listener hears a piano playing a gentle, melancholic melody. There is only one brief moment of modulation to a B section but it quickly returns to the A section before leaving us with main characters Joel and Clementine on the beach. The structure and style of the cue is very songlike in nature, with a simple melodic line accompanied by a relatively repetitive left-hand accompaniment. Already we see Brion's unique sound palette in action during this opening sequence as the piano has been prepared so that the bass strings are muted. This creates a sort of plucky, whimsical sound quality. ([Audio example - Title Sequence - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qISbT5XODiE&list=PL9A26C61C0D36C198](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qISbT5XODiE&list=PL9A26C61C0D36C198))

It is in this section of the film that we hear the score in its most simple and unconfused state; as if we are starting with a blank slate on which to build. Only after watching the movie in its entirety does this musical tactic make sense - the movie begins with the protagonist being given a new lease on life. Yet later as the story begins to warp, the music adjusts in style to reflect the mental state of the main character. Instruments become muddled and incoherent, forming part of a confusing landscape. This opening scene of catharsis and melodic clarity also loops back and is repeated at the film's close.

Title Sequence - *Excerpt*

♩=104

Piano

8

Pno.

12

Pno.

We begin to see a metamorphosis begin almost immediately in the film as we see what looks to be like the first time Joel and Clementine meet. In reality, however, this is their second encounter after having their memories erased. At 00:05:00, we hear a playful and intermittent cue that almost seems to come in and out of existence as if it is mirroring the spark of chemistry unfolding between our main characters, reminiscent of their shared romantic history. The orchestration is small, with only a bassoon, two clarinets, and a flute; however it is already a marked departure from the title music in terms of style and orchestration/instrumentation. We hear this playful and quirky cue meander around as Joel and Clem get to know each other, but it does not feel or sound like overly complicated or

overwrought music. Brion simply wants to convey a sort of awkward connection growing between these two people.

It isn't until 00:12:56 that we hear a new thematic development and what is perhaps the most important cue of the film, Phone Call ([Audio example - Phone Call - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0EE6Qyvo_kc&list=PL9A26C61C0D36C198&index=19](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0EE6Qyvo_kc&list=PL9A26C61C0D36C198&index=19)). We have just seen Joel and Clementine return home after a day spent together getting to know each other for a second time. What immediately strikes the listener is how different the instrumentation is again from earlier cues. Brion uses this as an opportunity to create thematic material that is memorable not in its melodic content or its development, but rather in its sonic value. It is memorable, but not as we might think of thematic material in many films. It may not even be something that one might hum, but it does have a way of lingering in the listener's head. What makes it so memorable, as mentioned previously, is its production value. As Joel leaves Clementine's apartment, we are struck with a repetitive and heavily effected guitar pattern played by two acoustic guitars in a tight harmony. This guitar idea is memorable primarily because of its lo-fi quality and odd harmonic progression. The guitars sound hazy and distant and almost trip over themselves at times as they seem to bounce in and out of phase with each other momentarily. (Score excerpt below)

'Phone Call' - Motif

♩=63

The musical score is arranged in four systems, each containing two staves. The first system is labeled 'Guitar 1' and 'Guitar 2'. The second system is labeled 'Gtr.' and 'Gtr.'. The third system is labeled 'Gtr.' and 'Gtr.'. The fourth system is labeled 'Gtr.' and 'Gtr.'. The score consists of a continuous melodic line in the upper staff of each system and a rhythmic accompaniment in the lower staff. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 4/4. The tempo is marked as ♩=63. The score is divided into measures by bar lines, with measure numbers 3, 5, 7, 9, and 11 indicated at the beginning of their respective systems. The notation includes various note values, rests, and accidentals (sharps and flats).

The image shows a musical score for guitar (Gtr.) consisting of four staves. The first staff is labeled with a '2' and a '13', and the second staff is labeled with a '14'. The music is written in a rhythmic, ascending and descending style with various accidentals (sharps and flats). The notation includes eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. The overall style is reminiscent of a four-track tape recording, as mentioned in the text.

Here, it is apparent that what Brion has done is created a strong musical concept in a much different way than might be done in a more traditional film score. In essence, he has created a theme for Joel and Clementine not melodically but instrumentally and with unique production quality. This sonic expression seems to somehow mirror the production style of the film as well; specifically, this guitar line sounds as though it could've been recorded on a four-track tape recorder. There is a grainy, nostalgic warmth that Brion has created with this thematic material simply by using an untraditional and unexpected sound. At only thirteen minutes into the film it is clear that the score will not be developed in a traditional manner and that the sonic elements themselves play a more important role in the development of the score than melodic or harmonic information.

At 00:17:37 we jump again to a different moment in the story's chronology. Shifting now to the couple's breakup, we see Joel crying and hear the source music song 'Everybody's Gotta Learn Sometime' performed by the artist Beck. This is, in fact, the

moment after Joel has realized that Clem has had him erased from her memory. At the point, the film's opening credits are played, implying that this could be the movie's opening sequence. At this point in the score, the instrumentation remains very traditional both in compositional style and production value. Musically, nothing is markedly strange apart from the cue called Phone Call. However, this shift in plot does represent a shift musically as well. What the listener comes to realize, though, is that Brion makes these transitions seamlessly. This way of conceptualizing the score at times seems to enhance the nebulous confusion of the film and is also employed as a way to personify characters or events.

At this point in the story, it is important to make a distinction before things start to change dramatically. Every bit of music up to this point is what we might call Waking Music. The instrumentation, style and effect of the music have all been similar: understated, simple, and never confused as we have only seen Joel in his waking state.

The musical material the listener begins to hear at 00:20:02 can be thought of as transitional. In fact, this is the first moment in the film when the listener can start to call into question whether or not what he is hearing is part of the score or simply sound design elements. However, that question is answered quickly as we realize that what we are hearing is meant to function as score. Though it may not sound to us like a traditional score, it's primary function is the same: to bolster what is happening on screen and increase its dramatic effect. This particular scene is important for this very reason. Its purpose is to bridge the gap between two very different sections of the film. We begin to notice a shift in style almost immediately when Joel takes the sleeping pill. Though the

viewer at this point in the film does not know exactly what is happening, strange musical elements begin to filter in, and change feels imminent.

From here, every event that follows is a memory being played out in Joel's mind. Scraped cymbals, gongs, bells, high-pitched reversed samples, and low droning noises start to appear as we watch Joel fumble around through his apartment. This odd percussive cue continues and at 00:21:50 as this strange soundscape progresses, we hear more elements begin to creep in slowly. First a distant, hazy piano enters that is clearly meant to have no relation to the other musical elements in this cue - personifying the disconnect we witness in Joel's mind. The music mirrors the odd nature of what is happening on screen as we watch Joel drift through various memories. Fuzzy, distorted sounds pulse in and out, and low chirping woodwinds enter as well adding to the cacophony. Finally, this short sequence ends as Joel snaps to a firm memory at the house of his friends Rod and Carrie. This is only a momentary break from the strange and confused music from before, though.

As Joel enters into this memory with his friends, the music cuts out. The viewer at this point might be deceived into thinking they have somehow entered back into Joel's reality, however, it quickly becomes apparent he is recalling a memory during this sequence as he enters into yet another memory while explaining to Rod and Carrie that Clementine had ignored him in the bookstore. As Joel seemingly walks out of the bookstore, we see that he is actually walking out of that particular memory and back into the memory we found him in with his friends. As this long sequence finishes, Joel and the viewer realize at the same moment that Clementine has had Joel erased from her memory.

As the scene ends and Joel's friend Rod explains what Clementine has done, this musical sequence closes rather abruptly with a sharp crescendoing cluster chord played by strings and woodwinds. Additionally, we hear spooky synthesized sounds and bowed cymbals join.

This sequence illustrates nicely what Brion does so well: matching the complexity in sonorities and depth of the music with what the main character is feeling and experiencing. More important than the actual notes or musical development is the palette of sounds used to compliment what is happening on the screen.

The transition into what I consider to be the third section of the film begins after Joel has met with his friends and decides to have the memory erasing procedure done on himself. This also represents a very large shift in the music and perhaps the most significant portion of the film both in plot development and musical development. Much of the oddness we find in the score begins to become more and more apparent during this large swath of the film. While the listener will hear previous thematic material during this section of the film, it is important to recognize how this music is being used. When previous thematic music is revisited, it is being used as a way to anchor the viewer in the chronology of the story and to provide something to recognize during the strange events of Joel's memory being erased. This is somewhat different to how thematic material might be used in a more traditional film score. However, because the viewer is constantly being transplanted to new moments in the chronology of this story, the music helps serve as a way to guide the viewer through the confusing plotline. That, however, is the only purpose

on Joel. This simple, repetitive musical motif is meant to create some sort of continuity between reality and what Joel is remembering while he is asleep. It acts as a sort of glue so the viewer doesn't get too lost during the sequence. It is also important to note that this sequence, like many others in the film, is not continuous. Rather, it ekes in and out of existence, sometimes fading away unperceived.

This is the case as the cue ends at 00:31:38 and reenters at 00:31:48 by restating the original accordion pattern, but this time an organ is added to the ensemble playing back the same musical idea carried by the accordion. There is another brief pause in the music and it reenters at 00:32:13 in the same fashion as before. As Joel's mental state becomes increasingly strained, the music works to echo this tension. All the while, the same musical pattern pulses in and out. Odd musical elements begin to join as the stress of the situation increases. Strange vocal sounds in the far background of the mix enter, odd metallic droning sounds enter as Joel realizes something doesn't feel right. Strings and woodwinds enter as well and begin to add to the tension.

At around 00:34:00 the full ensemble is added to the mix as the tension mounts until finally at around 00:34:14 we leave Joel's mind and see Patrick, the clinic's technician, alter the flow of electricity into Joel's brain. Here, the music bends with the different adjustments made to the instruments connected to his mind. A low-frequency oscillator affects the volume of the entire mix as it pulses in and out and all the while we continue to hear the 'Dream Upon Waking' motif drive the music forward. The tempo and pitch seem to continuously modulate upward during this most tense moment of the cue

creating a final sensation of tension. The cue ends abruptly as problems in the procedure arise, and we flip back into reality.

This sequence is perhaps one of the most important musical moments that supports my argument that it is actually the instrumentation, production style, and sound design that guide the score and help create a sense of Joel's shifting mental state. In this particular sequence, the odd electrical sounds, intermittent quality of musical elements, and pulsing mix convert the music into a physical presence. The viewer feels enveloped in the sounds of the protagonist's brain, hearing it pulse in and out of existence while speeding up and modulating in moments of heightened duress. The score is palpably connected to the very brain waves and synapse-firings in Joel's mind.

As we continue on, we see that this style of music and production are used during this part of the film as Joel's memories are being erased. In fact, the very next sequence incorporates even stranger musical elements. As Clementine leaves Joel for the last time, the cue at 00:36:44 starts with low rumbling distorted sound while a piano plays atonal and seemingly unrelated music. Low, droning woodwinds and brass enter, with shimmering metallic sounds accompanying above. All the while, a cluster of low tones can be heard supporting this odd mix of sounds. This musical thought ends abruptly as that particular memory is erased. However, as Joel moves into another memory, the same music reenters. This time the score begins simply with a drone played by bass clarinet at 00:38:00. This drone continues to pulse in and out while strings slowly enter droning with the bass clarinet. As the memory is being erased, Joel finds himself wandering back and forth on a street as it continuously changes directions. It is evident that he cannot catch up

with Clem because the memory is fading. At this point, we hear an oboe enter playing very rapid, unsettling runs that underline the confusion each time the street changes directions.

We pop back into a more traditional sounding cue at 00:42:33 called 'Sidewalk Fight' ([Audio example – Sidewalk Fight -](#) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dsgAQ821TQQ&list=PL9A26C61C0D36C198&index=10>) as we see Joel and Clementine fighting. This is a tactic Brion employs frequently when moving from memory to memory. In this case, the memory is very clear and the musical style reflects this in its straightforward instrumentation. Pizzicato strings enter, creating a playful and simple musical expression. Sound design elements haze in around 00:42:50 with electronic noises until finally the memory is totally erased and the cue ends. (Score excerpt below)

'Sidewalk Fight'

♩ = 125

5

9

13

15

Brion uses this new musical concept several times during this section of the film. It enters again at 00:47:20 as Joel enters a memory we have seen before and then again as a medical assistant goes to see Clementine at her apartment at 00:49:26. The cue itself doesn't develop musically, but is used as a sonic marker in the storyline. It is a way to delineate this particular memory sequence from the rest, giving it its own sonic identity. As we move toward the end of this sequence with the medical assistant, we hear at 00:51:58 a restatement of Joel and Clementine's music: the cue called Phone Call. This is significant because it becomes clear to the viewer that Patrick has tried to steal Joel's identity by giving Clementine a necklace that had originally been gifted to her by Joel. This moment marks the middle point of the film and Joel realizes consciously, even though he is asleep, that he has made a terrible decision. From this point on, he intends to fight the deletion procedure occurring in his mind.

Joel now actively tries to work against the procedure, and in keeping with the strange and chronologically confusing plotline, we see Joel struggle to remember moments with Clementine that have already been erased. It is also during this long sequence of events that Clementine, awake and existing outside of Joel's mind, realizes that something is not right while dating Patrick.

At 00:54:45 we hear tense strings build into an ostinato rhythm then carried by low strings as Joel begins to diverge from his memories of Clementine in an attempt to prevent them from being erased. Musically, this marks a shift as we leave behind some of the odd instrumentation and production quality we have heard through most of the third section of the film. We now hear more determined and generally less confused music. Though Joel is

still undergoing the procedure, it is clear that this shift in the quality of the music embodies his newfound determination to stop the procedure from advancing. Brion matches the intent of the music to the altering mental state of Joel. One might argue that new motivic information being presented here is an important musical event; but what is more important is the shift in the sonic palette being employed during this sequence. This continues to be the case for much of the final part of the memory erasure procedure.

During this long sequence of events as Joel loses his final memories of Clem, Brion reflects the sort of stream of conscious movement of the plotline as Joel moves from one non-Clementine memory to another. Often, cues start and end abruptly during this sequence and don't necessarily relate to one another in terms of thematic information. It is really during this section as Joel brings Clementine into various childhood memories that the music changes most frequently in style and instrumentation. Although musically this section of the film doesn't necessarily develop any new ideas, it certainly is effective in bolstering the rapidly changing emotional and mental state of Joel. For example, at 1:00:57 Brion suddenly shifts the musical feeling after a somewhat tense moment in the film to something more playful as Joel and Clementine escape into a memory of Joel as a child. We hear a sort of restatement of the cue 'Sidewalk Fight' begin and serve as a very gentle backdrop to Joel's childhood scenes with Clementine. This gentle flowing feeling doesn't last long however as Brion shifts the mood of the music abruptly at 1:08:30 as we see Joel lose Clem in his childhood memory. A very dark and ominous drone carries us to a new memory that Joel must now flee from. The score between 1:10:02 and 1:15:47 is simply meant to create a sort of montage of musical events that are thematically unrelated

and don't necessarily remind us earlier motivic information. As we watch Joel and Clem scramble to remain together, it becomes evident that Joel's memories are not going to last and his attempt at escaping the procedure will not ultimately be effective.

A shift that transitions us to the final section of the film occurs as we see Joel and Clem in the bookstore in apparently what is one of Joel's first memories with Clem. It is clear to the viewer that Joel is resigned to the fact that his memories will ultimately be taken from him and we hear this reflected in what might be the most gentle and understated music in the entire score. At 1:22:21, as Joel relives one of his first discussions with Clem, a slow moving Cello idea enters that is gradually joined by a small string ensemble. What is interesting to note is that this is one of the only times in the score that we hear strings as the only instrumentation.

We transition to the last musical section of the film as we see Joel and Clem together on the beach in Montauk. Musically, this section of the film is really a time for restatement of the most important musical ideas we've heard in the film. Notably, we hear Joel and Clementine's thematic material reemerge at 1:26:29 as Joel enters his final memory of meeting Clementine on the beach. The cue is almost identical to its first statement when we see Joel leaving Clementine's apartment for the first time. Notably different, however, is that the guitar parts have been reversed – a clever device to support the concept that the story is moving in reverse. One final quote of previous material enters at 1:29:04 ([Audio example – Peer Pressure -](#)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zDnTb0RTBI&index=16&list=PL9A26C61C0D36C198>)

as Joel explains to Clementine that he “felt like a scared little kid” when he met her the first time. This is the same music used during the long montage of memories being erased as we see Joel as a child being humiliated by his friends. While this sort of quoting hasn’t been common in much of the film, Brion uses this tool well in the final moments of the film. Finally, we exit Joel’s sleeping mind as we see him wake up in his bed. This takes us to where we first saw him as the film began. It makes sense then that Brion gives us the title cue again. The only new material Brion introduces is at 1:39:27 as we see Joel and Clementine decide to give another try at their relationship. Much as before, this music is very simple and traditional in instrumentation. It is a very solemn and slow moving string instrumentation that carries the viewer to the final scene of the film.

In the above discussion we have seen many examples of the eccentric mechanisms Jon Brion employed throughout the film. Thematic material, while present in the score, has not been the driving force of its development. The shifting sonic palette, quirky instrumentation, and production quality that Brion implements serve not only to blur the lines between memory and reality within the film, but also have the effect of meshing the viewer’s experience with that of the main character’s. This fusion could not be accomplished solely through thematic development used in more traditional film scores. It is in this way that Brion brings us into the mind of the main character and we experience the turbulent journey he undergoes. As Brion says of his own music, “While the sound of [a piece] is less important than the chords and melody, I’m completely obsessed with giving a song a sonic quality where it feels like the odd piece of living sculpture that is an

outgrowth from that song's DNA.² It is through this unique musical interpretation that the viewer connects with the protagonist and comes to experience his inner workings on a most intimate level.

It is clear to me that Brion doesn't seek to create a beautiful soundtrack through this score that can stand alone. In fact, I believe this film's music cannot stand alone. It is instead so inextricably linked to the main character's psyche that to extract it would render the music meaningless.

² <http://www.bluntreview.com/reviews/jonbrion.html>