Eternal Sunshine of The Spotless Mind

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Form, Content

Form - We start in the future, shift to a recent past, and then continue reverse-chronologically further back in time, only to end up in the present that continues to the future we already saw and beyond. The film includes a majority of flashbacks from Joel’s recollection of Clementine and their relationship. The camera emphasizes on Joel’s unconscious mind; for example, the shots filmed in his unconscious state are seemingly disconnected, as Joel transports from location to location.

Content - Lacuna workers go into Joel’s mind to erase his memory of Clementine after their recent breakup and Joel’s realization that Clementine erased him from her memory. Soon into going through his memories he realizes he wants to keep it and regrets his decision.
Joel Wakes Up

Joel wakes up in a funk, not able to recognize his pajamas. Sees that his car is wrecked and blames it on his neighbor. He decides to randomly skip work to go to Montauk. He walks along the beach looks at a house then eats at a diner to see Clementine across the room. He goes to a train station and waves at her, they have a conversation on the train.
Two blue Ruins

Driving home, he gives her a ride and stays for drinks at her place. They begin to have a deeper connection and she gives him her number. Joel arrives home, waits a bit and then calls Clementine to wish her a Happy Valentines day. They go on a date to the frozen Lake Charles as they lie down and watch the stars. Joel drives her back home in the morning. She wants to stay at his place so she goes inside to get her things. Patrick knocks on Joel’s car window and asks him why is he here.
Broken up

Joel drives home crying while listening to “Everybody’s Gotta Learn Sometime” by Beck. He removes the tape and throws it on the street. As he walks to his apartment he is followed by Stan and Patrick in the Lacuna van. As he picks up his mail, his neighbor Frank talks about Clementine and Valentines day. Joel goes to his apartment, takes a pill and passes out. Patrick and Stan soon walk in with their equipment and begin erasing Joel’s memory.
Dream - Blue Ruin

Starting with his encounter with his neighbor, Joel begins to dream his memories as the erasers remove it. He’s at Rob and Carrie’s house telling them how he bought Clementine a makeup present and was going to give it to her at work but she acts as if she doesn’t know him and is with a guy named Patrick. Rob then gives Joel a letter from Lacuna Inc. saying that Clementine erased Joel.
Dream

Joel goes to Lacuna offices to figure out what is going on and Dr. Mierzwiak apologizes and offers Joel the opportunity. Joel is in Rob and Carrie’s kitchen explaining the situation Carrie saying she erased him like a “lark”. Joel thinks, the scene cuts to Joel frantically asking for the procedure immediately. Mierzwiak instructs him to gather all items related to Clementine so they can map out his memories of her. He meets Stan as the begin the mapping process. His dream then starts to trip out.
Lacuna Erasers

Stan asks Patrick to check the voltage regulator and connections so he could memory wipe cleaner. Patrick starts messing with knobs and buttons and Joel’s Dream intensifies.
Dream

Joel starts seeing himself at Lacuna and knows they’ve begun the procedure. He can hear Stan and Patrick talking in his dream. He hears the name Patrick and all versions of himself repeat the name.
Patrick looks around the apartment and calls it a dump. Stan calls Patrick's name and Joel whispers it as he’s asleep.
Agent Orange

Joel experiences the last time he saw clementine. He sits on his chair as drunk Clementine comes home at 3am, telling him he wrecked his car. Joel is angry as Clem insults Joel and says how he thinks she cheated on him that night. He agrees and says how having sex with other people is how she gets people to like her. She furiously gets her things and storms out, as Joel chases her she disappears.
Eraser Night

Stan says Mary is coming over. Patrick says how Mary doesn’t like him. Patrick tells Stan how he has a new girlfriend and their situation is complicated.
Agent Orange

Joel gets his car out of the fire hydrant and chases down Clem. The world is falling apart as she walks with one leg and a car falls from the sky. He angrily tells her how she erased him first and she’ll be gone by morning. All the cars and signs begin to disappear and get out of place. He can hear Patrick and Stan talk as Patrick says Clem is his new girlfriend.
Eraser Night

Patrick says he stole one of Clementine’s panties and Stan freaks out.
Agent Orange

Joel is now eating chinese food with Clem on the couch. He hears Stan and Patrick, trying to find them in his dreams. He tells Clem there’s someone here and he stole her underwear. Her voice is distorted as she and the food disappear.

He is in another memory lying down with smeared ketchup on his face. Clem is angrily getting ready and leaves saying “I should’ve left you at the flea market”.

They are at the flea market and Clementine says she wants a baby, Joel doesn’t think they’re ready and capable enough to raise a child. Clementine is angry and they yell at each other. The dream fades and becomes blurry.
Eraser Night

Mary arrives and dismisses Patrick then kisses Stan. She gets drinks and Patrick says how she hates him. She comes with drinks for her and Stan, toasts, and says “Blessed are the forgetful, for they get the better even of their blunders." She talks about her Bartlets (book of quotes) and says she thinks Howard will be in Bartlets one day.
In bed Clem says how she tells him everything and wants mutual communication, Joel says how constantly talking isn’t communicating, she yells at him for saying that and how all he does is write in his journal.

Joel narrates his journal entry

Says, ”Dinner at Kang’s again, are we those bored couples you feel sorry for in restaurants”. They have dinner at Kang’s and they have a bland conversation. She tells him to remove the hair off the soap because its gross and repulsive.
Eraser Night

Patrick dials up Clem she says how shes confused and acting weird and wants him to come over.
Agent Orange

Joel can hear Patrick as he visits his memory of Patrick in Barnes & Noble, trying to see what he looks like but can only remember the back of his head.
Eraser Night

Patrick tells Mary and Stan he might have to leave and Mary agrees with him. Patrick tells Clem he’ll be right over and calls her Tangerine.
Agent Orange

Clementine reveals her orange hair to Joel for the first time, he tells her it looks like a Tangerine. He realizes he’s in the dream and wonders why patrick calls her Tangerine.
Eraser Night

Mary and Stan lay down and talk about how beautiful the procedure is and admire Howard while they smoke weed.

Patrick is at Clementine’s apartment as she is freaking out and saying how nothing is making any sense. Patrick hugs her and she asks him to go to the frozen Lake Charles with him now. Patrick calls Stan that he won’t be back, Stan is dancing with Mary and says it’s all right as its on autopilot. Patrick reads Joel’s journal about the Lake Charles and memorizes it, he then gives Clementine a necklace (Joel’s) and she loves it.
Red Menace

Joel and Clem are under the sheets, she tells him a story about she wanted her favorite ugly doll named Clementine to be pretty so she could be pretty too. Joel kisses her but she fades away. Joel crawls looking for her and says how he wants to keep this one memory.

They are at Lake Charles laying down, he tells her “I could die right now Clem, I’m just happy. I’ve never felt that before. I'm just exactly where I want to be.” Clem disappears and Joel yells he wants to call it off in a very frustrating manner. He finds Clem and runs with her trying to find Mierzwiak to call it off. He goes to his subconscious and tells Mierzwiak to call it off, he asks who Patrick is and Mierzwiak replies, “He works for us, thats Paaaaatrack baby boy”. Joel says Patrick stole his stuff, his identity, and trying to win Clem with his words.
Eraser Night

Clem and Patrick are at the frozen Lake Charles, he repeats Joel’s journal entry he memorized saying, “I could die right now Clem, I’m just happy. I’ve never felt that before. I'm just exactly where I want to be.” Clem jumps up and says she wants to go home. They rush to the car.
Red Menace

Joel and Clem are in the woods and he apologizes to her for erasing her. He wants to figure out how to cancel it. He opens his eyes to wake himself up and it worked but he couldn’t move. They are stumped on what to do. They are in Joel’s couch and Clem has the idea of going to a memory without her so they can’t reach them.
Childhood

He sings row row row your boat, it begins raining and he goes under the coffee table flashing back and forth to his childhood. Clem and Joel are in Joel’s childhood kitchen and Joel acts like a toddler and gets distracted, Clem becomes Joel’s babysitter.
Eraser Night

Stan hears a buzz and panics since Joel is off the map. Mary has the idea of calling Howard, he then calls Howard for help waking him up. Howard leaves his wife in the night and comes over. His wife is suspicious. Mary panics because she’s stoned and doesn’t want Howard to see her like that so they clean up. Howard comes over and tries to figure out how to fix the problem. Mary is very nice to Howard.
Childhood

Joel and Clem bath in the sink as his mother sings “Oh my darling’ Clementine”.

![Image](image-url)
Eraser Night

Stan finds Joel and erases clem from the memory he is in. Joel Drowns in the bathtub and his eyes open up and Howard injects him with a sedative. They find Joel and Clementine again and Mary praises Howard’s work.
Red Menace

Joel goes to his regular memories and remembers to run from the erasers. He goes to his memory of Lacuna office but the details are much hazier.
Stan says he has developed a resistance to the procedure, going into memories that have already been erased.
Red Menace

They are in the book store and Clem comes up with the idea of hiding him into a deeper memory that is hidden.
Howard begins to exit the door but they lose Joel again.
Childhood

Joel is in his deep childhood memory where the little boys bully him into smashing a pigeon with a hammer. He cries after doing it and child Clementine comes to get Joel as they walk away and have fun by themselves, suffocating Clem with a pillow. Clementine is erased.
Eraser Night

Howard and Stan erase Clementine from that memory. Howard says he doesn’t understand it but he’s able to find Joel quicker.
Red Menace

Clem suffocates Joel with a pillow (as adults). They have fun with each other. Clem is erased.

They run on the frozen beach in Montauk. Clem tries to run to “their house” but Joel drags her the other direction so he can save her. Clem disappears.
Eraser Night

Mary admires Howards work. Stan takes a break and goes outside. She tells him about her Quote book and repeats the “blessed are the forgetful…” quote. She then tells a quote by Alexander Pope, “How happy is the blameless vestal’s lot! The world forgetting, by the world forgot. Eternal sunshine of the spotless mind! Each pray’r accepted, and each wish resign’d?”
Eraser Night

Joel and Clem are at a city parade having fun, Joel loses Clementine
Eraser Night

Mary continues to tell him she admires him, then she kisses her. She admits her love for him then apologizes. Howard tells her they can’t do that and calms her down. They kiss more. Howard’s wife pulls up and sees them kissing. She gets back in her car and drives away. Howard chases her down and tells her its a one time thing. Mary apologises as well. Howard’s wife tells them that this has happened before and reveals Mary had the procedure done done before. Mary angrily leaves. Howard and Stan go back inside to finish up.
Joel visits Clem at Barnes & Noble and apologizes for running away and leaving her. He asks her out on a date. Book titles disappear in the back and fade to white slowly. Clem says she’s high maintenance and a “F up girl who’s looking for her own peace of mind”. Joel cherishes that moment. He tells her it will be different if they give it another go around. Clem tells him to remember her, maybe they can.
Eraser Night

Mary storms into the Lacuna office throwing around files looking for hers. She finds her file and listens to her tape, horrified and crying.
Green Revolution

Joel is at the montauk beach for a party. Narrates his journal entry of how they met. Clem sits next to him and keeps him company. She introduces herself then steals his chicken. He introduces himself. She tells him not to make jokes about her name. He begins to sing “Oh my darling’ Clementine”. Joel cherishes this moment.
Green Revolution

That night they leave the bonfire and walk together. They find a beach house and Clementine breaks in. Joel is scared and timid. He says he thinks they should go. She asks why, and says they can be David and Ruth Laskin for the day. She finds the drinks and offers Joel a drink. The house begins to fall apart and the water comes in. He says he wants to go she replies, “then go”. Joel wishes he stayed and creates a new memory of the night by staying and having a proper goodbye to Clementine. She whispers to him “Bye Joel. Meet me in Montauk.” Joel flashes through all the fun memories together as it fades away.
Joel Wakes Up

Stan and Howard erase the last memory. They pack up and leave, Stan goes to drop the van off. Joel wakes up to the sound of Stan and Howard driving off. He wakes up in a funk, not able to recognize his pajamas. Sees that his car is wrecked and blames it on his neighbor. He decides to randomly skip work to go to Montauk.
Eraser Morning

Stan confronts Mary in front of the Lacuna office as she packs the Lacuna files and her things. Mary asks about if he knew or suspected Howard’s relationship with her.
Blue Ruin

Joel takes Clem home, Clementine picks up her stuff and listens to Patrick’s Voicemail. She checks her bruise on her butt from falling at the lake. She grabs her mail then enters Joel’s house. She opens the mail to find one from Mary sending Clem her file and her tape. They play the tape and Joel is angry and stops the car, leaving Clem to walk home. Clem goes home yelling Patrick away and cries in bed. She goes to Joel’s apartment to find him listening to his tape. They apologize to each other for saying what’s on the tape. Joel gets her a drink and Clem leaves, overwhelmed about what Joel says on the tape and what’s happening.
Blue Ruin

Joel stops her at the hall telling her to wait. She tells him she’s “just an F up girl whos trying to look for her own piece of mind”. He says he doesn’t feel those things but she says that he will. Clem says how they are doomed to feel the way they said in the tapes. Joel says it’s ok. They both agree and accept it. “Everybody’s Gotta Learn Sometime” by Beck starts to play. A clip of them running on the frozen beach repeats itself as it fades to white.
In the opening credits, the credits play after the shot fades to black and it then goes to Joel just driving in the rain, the night that he gets his memory erased. The music is diegetic until he removes the tape from his car and the music plays. Title and credits fade to nothing, just like the memories in his brain dissolving into nothing.

Having a spotless mind does not bring eternal sunshine. “Eternal Sunshine” is a metaphor for ongoing peace, happiness, and being carefree. The title describes the happiness and joy one can experience once the negative experiences are removed from your mind.
Subplots

Mary and Merzwiak’s relationship and its history.

Patrick stealing Joel’s things to get Clem to fall in love with him.

Joel’s Childhood

Rob and Carrie’s Relationship
Causal, Spatial, and Temporal

Causal - Joel finds out that Clementine erased him from her memory so he does the same to her.

Spatial: The camera hides Patrick’s face in the beginning to hide that he is the same guy who confronted Joel.

Temporal: The dreams occur backwards chronologically with the first dream being him arriving to his apartment, and his last dream being the night he meets Clementine for the first time.
Change of Knowledge

When he meets Clem for the first time (green hair) viewers realize that's the first time they meet.

Viewers know that Clementine and Joel will meet again; scene is shown in the introduction of the movie. Joel and Clementine are NOT aware that they have had their memories erased when they meet again for the second time in Montauk.

Patrick and the guy that questioned Joel in the beginning are the same guy.

The erasing happened before the intro sequence.
Metaphors/Motifs

Water - Represents peace

Music - theme plays everytime there's an instance of love

“Nice” - Clem hates the word nice. Repeated a lot since Joel uses it, and Patrick copies Joel

Beep - After nearly every memory dream sequence, a beep from the computer would play showing how that memory has been erased.

Blue Ruin - Beach house, drinks, hair.

Stalker Book - Joel’s journal and Patrick using the journal
Parallelism

Joel waking up

Clementine’s Pink Cowgirl costume

Patrick repeats Joel’s experiences

Getting a drink and leaving

Huckleberry Hound

Going to Lake Charles, Beach in Montauk
Sound

The song “Everybody’s Gotta Learn Sometime” by Beck plays over 5 times throughout the film. Non Diegetic and Diegetic.

You can hear Clementine say “David and Ruth Laskin” in the Beginning.

Joel wakes up to the sound of the Lacuna Van leaving.

You can hear Joel’s childhood memories when Clem tells him to go somewhere deep.

Beep after every memory is erased.

Reuse of Dialogue - “Patrick Baby Boy”
Point of view

Third Person Multiple. This point of view follows mainly Joel in his dream, the Lacuna Erasers in his apartment as well as Patrick and Clem.
Memory and Identity are inseparable. Our accumulated experiences are how we form a conception of what it means to be us.

The message is Finding and accepting peace will set us free.

Theme: Recovery, love, pain, regret
Meanings

**Change of her hair color** - When his memories are being erased, it erases them from the most recent memories of Clementine, to the memories from the beginning of their relationship. As Joel’s memories are being stripped, he regrets his decisions once he reaches the “good” point in their relationship, when Clementine has red hair.
As the viewers, we are able to differentiate time by Clementine’s hair. They meet in Spring, when her hair is green. Green symbolizes the freshness or liveliness of people meeting for the FIRST time. The name is Green revolution, which also hints at a repetitive nature in their relationship, which is shown at the end of the film when they reconcile and decide to try to be together again. As they enter a relationship, Clementine has red hair, aka Red Menace, representing a passionate love that is strong like the Summer. During this phase, they are the happiest.
As a result, Joel attempts to preserve this Clementine in his memories, and tries to run and hide with her in his consciousness. As the relationship goes south, her hair turns an Auburn, Orange shade. The Agent orange color is a faded version of the red, representing fall. They break up when her hair is orange like a flower falling from a tree. In the present, her hair is blue, also called Blue ruins, signifying negativity in her life, which is during her memory erasure process. The Blue is in the PRESENT, the second time they are meeting after they’ve had their memories erased.
Meanings cont.

**Lacuna** - Latin word for “hole” or “gap”. The word is translated in English to mean “unfilled space”. This represents the of Lacuna’s patients, as they now have a hole in their memories.

![Image of a note from Lacuna Inc. with redacted text]
4 V’s

Voyeuristic- The film is taken in different parts of Joel’s mind and going through his relationship between him and Clementine. Throughout the story the movie switches between two different settings (In his mind and when the procedure of erasing his mind is occurring)

Visceral - Overall plot has a visceral connection to love. Explored the good and bad memories and also the human relationship that will protect the memories that you value the most. Interpreting love is about communication and you have to accept the good and bad memories. Bad memories help us avoid making the same bad mistake twice.
4 V’s

Vicarious - Audience becomes emotionally involved with Joel because we begin to feel bad for him as Clementine is being erased from his memory. We can see that he is regretting his decision about the procedure and does not want to continue with it. As Joel begins to try to hide Clementine in other memories, just so they could spend more time together, we begin to feel sorry for Joel. The film has a strong emotional core that makes the audience want to know more about what is going on through Joel & Clementine mind.

Verisimilitude - There is a real life and emotional draw, the director was able to make people imagine this real life, love scenario.
Settings

Joel’s Apartment

Clementine’s Apartment

The Beach House (Montauk) | Lake Charles

Barnes and Noble

Lacuna Office

Rob and Carrie’s House

Train station

Flea Market
Clementine Kruczynski

A young sprites and exciting young women who was Joel Barish’s companion. Had a risk taking behavior that was exciting and spontaneous.

Throughout her relationship with Joel, she consistently change the color of her hair depending on where the relationship stands and how she feels.

Clementine does end up having Joel erased from her memories after a toxic relationship that did not make her feel like herself anymore.
Joel Barish

The protagonist of the film - a very simple man who is not very spontaneous and exciting. But ends up falling in love with Clementine, someone who is the complete opposite of him.

From dating for 2 years, Clementine and Joel breakup, so when Clementine decided to erase Joel from her memory, he was extremely hurt and angry as well. Which leads him to doing the same to her.

But throughout the film we witness the process of the erasing and how he regrets doing the procedure, and recognize his other regrets from their relationship.
Mary Svevo

Receptionist at Lacuna - “Stupid girl with a stupid Crush”

Has a past relationship with Dr. Mierzwiak and finds out that she also had her memory erased.

Mary returns all files on past patients who erased their memories, and that's how Clementine and Joel end up finding out that they had their memories erased.
Patrick

Works for Lacuna, worked on the procedure to erase Clementine’s memories and fell in love with her shortly after. He uses the mementos from Joel to get her to fall for him but it confuses her too much.
Narrative, Narration, Narrator

Narrative - events prior to, during, and following a procedure on the human brain to erase memories.

Narration - Revealed through a series of personal thoughts, flashbacks, drawings, and conversation.

Narrator - Joel; Camera
Is it a good movie?

Unified Plot: Everything shown in the plot is necessary. Some parts seem random but everything ties together in the end.

Credible/Plausible: People do experience breakups and have the desire to erase that relationship from their mind.

External Observable Truths: Acceptance of faults, learning from past relationships

Internal Truths of Human Nature: The memory might be erased but the feeling is still there, knowing your significant other more than you know yourself.

Artistic Semblance or Truth: Yes

Suspense: Suspense is created is through non-diegetic music. As well as the emotions from the characters.
Explicit Meaning

There are bad parts of a relationship that you want to forget and there are amazing parts of a relationship that shape you into the person you are.

Joel wants the procedure to get over with at first as he goes through the breakup again and the events leading up to it.

As he goes further into his memories, he remembers the love he had for Clementine as well as the fun he had and he doesn’t want to let go of it or forget it.
Important Scenes

Bookstore - When Joel asks out Clementine (Red Menace) out on a date after leaving her at the beach

Break up scene - Cause of the breakup and cause of the spiral of events that led to Clementine and Joel erasing his memory

Meet me in Montauk - The night they first met at the beach. Joel regrets leaving her so he makes a new memory and a new goodbye by staying there. Clem tells him to meet her in Montauk (Beach)

Ending when they accept their faults - Shows acceptance and want to do the relationship again. Maybe the spotless mind does bring eternal sunshine
“Blessed are the forgetful, for they get the better even of their blunders.” - Nietzsche (Mary to Stan & Mary to Howard)

“I could die right now, Clem. I'm just happy. I've never felt that before. I'm just exactly where I want to be.” - (Joel to Clem, Patrick to Clem)

“I'm just a fucked-up girl who is looking for my own peace of mind.” - Clem to Joel (Red & Blue)

“... You said ‘so go’ with such disdain you know?” “I wish i’d stayed” - Joel

“Meet me in a Montauk” - Clementine

“How happy is the blameless vestal’s lot! The world forgetting, by the world forgot. Eternal sunshine of the spotless mind! Each pray’r accepted, and each wish resign’d?” — Alexander Pope, Eloisa to Abelard
Depth & Range

Joel’s memories are much more subjective when the story told in the Eraser Night provide information in a much more objective way.

Majority of the film is restricted because we are following the story through the perspective of Joel’s memories.

Mental subjectivity of Joel - we see his memories and perception

The cards from Lacuna provide a change of knowledge for most of the characters in the film especially Joel as well as those who are watching the movie.

Change of Knowledge with the Affair, how Joel and Clem met, who is Patrick, etc.
Motivation

Artificial Lighting - Makes the scene feel like it's not like real life because it is just a memory that is being altered

Fast Forwarded and shaky camera shots during the flashback provided a feel of all of those memories he had quickly being taken away.

Overall candid moments written into this film were added because the director wanted their relationship to feel as real as anyone else's relation in the real world
Sources

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