

Reflections in Crystal

AKA: “Arazil’s Observations on Nostalgia and Nostalgia Adjacent Phenomena”

Recalling A Past That Never Really Was

A sequel to: “Memoria Misera: A Brief Tour Of Your Human Memory And Its Failings”

WARNING: Presentation contains unverified personal gnosis (UPG). I am NOT a certified psychologist.

Who is Arazil?



- We are a “Fae adjacent” Listari (Space Elf) researcher of far-sight (divination) and related topics.
- We are also a fusion belly dancer.
- We have been around the community since around 1999.
- We are a psychology-philosophy college drop out and not an actual “psychologist.”
 - We did get a college degree in “computer psychology” though.
- We have an aversion to using the first person singular pronoun.

A Quote

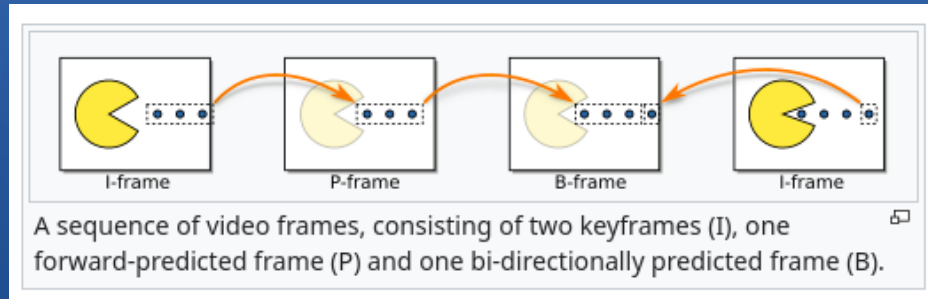
“So many lines from some old rhymes are running through my head. They blot out the present by recalling a past that never really was. For the past can change as days go by and the memories fade away. And those moments dear, no longer here, just part of yesterday.”

-“Othertimes” by Elvendrums

Session Overview

- An Exercise: Recalling Last Year's Session
- How Today's Sequels Ruin The Past
- A Stimulating Simulacra
- How Real Is Your Nostalgia?
- Can We Go Back?
- Vanishing Point
- Additional Resources

A Photographic Memory

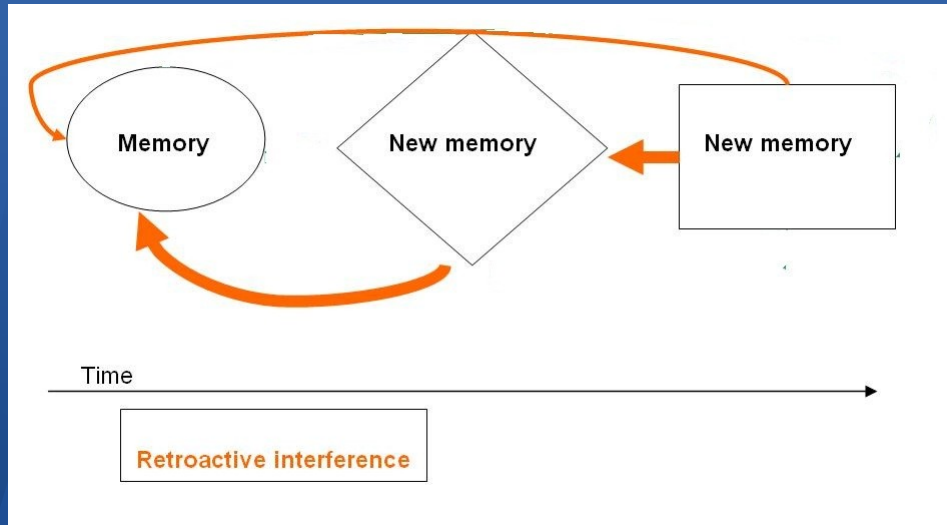


- Memory can be thought of as a modern day video file.
 - Video is split between keyframe and inter-frame type pictures (frames).
 - Memory is split between verbatim and gist type memories.
- Video uses keyframes to store complex pictures and provide a static reference point for video playback.
 - Our memory system contains “verbatim” memory that stores complete facts and figures much like a keyframe.
- Video uses inter-frames that tie into other inter-frames and keyframes. This saves storage cost while allowing the picture to be reconstructed when required.
 - Our memory system contains “gist” memory that stores memories by referencing other memories.
- Psychologist call the divided “verbatim” and “gist” memory system the “Fuzzy Trace Theory of Memory.”

The Seven Sins Of Memory

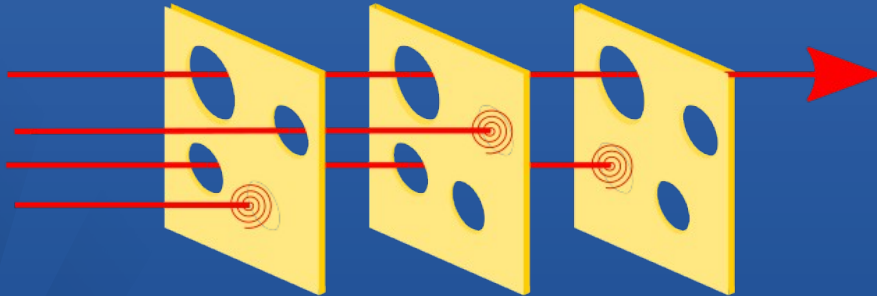
- Transience – This is where one memory incorrectly influences another. Caused by a breakdown of gist memory.
- Absent-mindedness – This is where something is not encoded properly due to insufficient attention.
- Blocking – This is where one memory actively interferes with the retrieval of another memory.
- Misattribution – This is where the memory itself recalls properly but with source metadata corruption.
- Suggestibility – This is where external suggestions contaminate the memory.
- Bias – This is where current feelings and beliefs distort the recall of the past.
- Persistence – This is where the memory recall system gets stuck involuntarily recalling disturbing information. In extreme situations, this can lead to post-traumatic stress disorder or phobias. (Daniel Schacter's "The Seven Sins of Memory: How The Mind Forgets And Remembers" via Wikipedia)

• How Today's Sequels Ruin The Past



- “Misinformation Effect”
 - Occurs when information from the present interferes with recalling memories of the past.
 - Occurs due to a combination of suggestibility (3rd party influence on memory) and misattribution (corruption of the memory’s source metadata).
 - Susceptibility varies due to a variety of factors.

Your Brain On Bandwidth

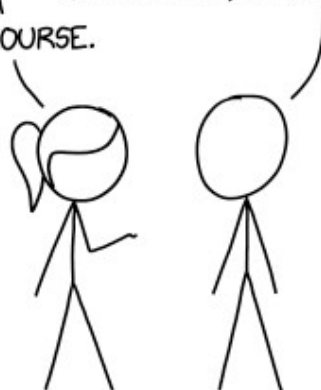


- We are being blasted by a firehose of data at all times.
- Our senses pick up a small portion of this data and send it to our brain.
- Our brain then runs the raw sensory data through further filters and compression to keep the bandwidth under control.
- Our brain further splits the data between the “conscious” and “unconscious” levels.
- The resulting process resembles the “swiss cheese model of security”: Data is discarded at every stage of the filtering process and only select “lucky” pieces of data make it all the way through to the “conscious” layer.

XKCD #2501: “Average Familiarity”

SILICATE CHEMISTRY IS SECOND NATURE TO US GEOCHEMISTS, SO IT'S EASY TO FORGET THAT THE AVERAGE PERSON PROBABLY ONLY KNOWS THE FORMULAS FOR OLIVINE AND ONE OR TWO FELDSPARS.

AND QUARTZ, OF COURSE.
OF COURSE.



EVEN WHEN THEY'RE TRYING TO COMPENSATE FOR IT, EXPERTS IN ANYTHING WILDLY OVERESTIMATE THE AVERAGE PERSON'S FAMILIARITY WITH THEIR FIELD.

A Stimulating Simulacra

- A “simulacra” is an incomplete duplication of an existing item.
 - Example: If I scan a page into a PDF file, it becomes a simulacra of the page.
- Simulacra will always be incomplete because of quantum mechanics.
 - Heisenberg’s Indeterminacy Principal: It is impossible know everything with 100% certainty.
- Humans use mental simulacra to process information and scenarios.

How Real Is Your Nostalgia?

- We often grow attached to the simulacra of things (how we want them to be) rather than what they actually are (the ground truth).
- Simulacra 1950s vs. a more realistic 1950s
 - Simulacra: The 1950s were an idyllic time for the modern day nuclear family where everyone was happy and knew their role in society.
 - Ground Truth: The privileged class, the veterans of World War 2, were forced to ignore their post-War PTSD symptoms by a society that did not want to deal with it. The treatment of less privileged classes was even worse.
- Organizations have a vested interest in selling the simulacra of the quaint past through advertising and merchandise.
 - Advertising reflects this shared nostalgia.

Can We Go Back?

- As time passes, our simulacra of the item and the real version of the item diverge.
- This divergence creates a dissonance effect where the real world item seems to be both familiar and unfamiliar.
 - This also leads to the entire encounter feeling “surreal.”

Vanishing Point

- “Confabulation”: False memories created via data corruption.
 - Can be the result of “Gaslighting”, a form of psychological abuse.
- “The Mandela Effect”: False memories can be transmitted among a large group of people like a virus.
- “The Pollyanna Principle”: People tend to remember the good more than the bad.
- Plain Old Censorship: Controlling the historical narrative in a more traditional manner.
- These impacts, when taken together, can erase people and events from the historical record.
 - Example: The historical contributions of transgendered people.

Additional Resources

- “Your Nostalgia Is Not Your Own”: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OWsGUx3gWFw>
- “I Left. It Wasn’t The Same.”: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7yATfRxh3JE>
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uncertainty_principle
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Misinformation_effect
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Seven_Sins_of_Memory
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/False_memory

The End

- TLDW Version: Nostalgia is a side effect of our fragile memory. As such, it is very susceptible to subtle corruptions from outside forces.
- Q&A Session To Follow.