



Mister Memory

Marcus Sedgwick

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In Paris in the year 1899, Marcel Despres is arrested for the murder of his wife and transferred to the famous Salpetriere asylum. And there the story might have stopped. But the doctor assigned to his care soon realises this is no ordinary patient: Marcel Despres, Mister Memory, is a man who cannot forget. And the policeman assigned to his case soon realises that something else is at stake: for why else would the criminal have been hurried off to hospital, and why are his superiors so keen for the whole affair to be closed? This crime involves something bigger and stranger than a lovers' fight - something with links to the highest and lowest establishments in France. The policeman and the doctor between them must unravel the mystery...but the answers lie inside Marcel's head. And how can he tell what is significant when he remembers every detail of every moment of his entire life

Mister Memory Details

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From Reader Review Mister Memory for online ebook

Margot McGovern says

What initially appears a straightforward murder, committed in a jealous rage, soon proves far more complex: a mystery that ventures deep into the Paris underbelly and the highest echelons of power.

Mister Memory (Hachette Australia, 2016) is a twisting, enchanting tale of intrigue.

While Mister Memory is an adult novel, Marcus Sedgwick is perhaps best known for his YA titles. He has won the Michael L. Printz Award, and has twice received Printz Honors, so I feel kind of sheepish that this is my first encounter with his work, and I'm eager to read more.

Mister Memory has everything you want in a Belle Époque novel: seedy cabarets, paramours, corrupt police, starving artists, wild parties and just a touch of the surreal and improbable. While the story ventures into shadowy places, the narrative style is gilded with a playful, storybook quality, creating a juxtaposition between the sordid and the fanciful and reflecting the era's preoccupation with spectacle and illusion.

This contrast is woven throughout the story. At the heart of the high-stakes chaos, Marcel is a quiet and melancholy figure: 'A strange man, a captive of many months, held in cells of one kind or another, a funny kind of hero, doing nothing, saying little.' His strange ability to remember even the smallest details initially appears a wonderful trick. Indeed, he uses it to earn a living as a cabaret performer. However, out of the limelight, he loses himself inside his memory for hours, even days at a time. Overburdened by the past, he struggles to connect one moment with another and locate himself in the present.

"At any moment, any thought can trigger a thousand memories and each one of those memories a thousand more. [Dr] Morel envisages a labyrinth, a maze of infinity, and finally understands what he is up against. If he is to help Marcel, he has to help him stop going into the maze. It is that which disables him, so often, so intensely, so deeply: these wanderings in the lost pathways of his mind."

While Marcel may be a hero of sorts, being confined to an insane asylum, he has little agency. So while Dr Morel tries to teach Marcel to forget, Sedgwick has one of Paris' few uncorrupt police officers, a chap named Petit, set out to untangle the mystery behind the murder and clear Marcel's name. Unlike Marcel—who is sympathetic, if a little obtuse—Petit is an easy hero to love: earnest if a touch naive, overwhelmed by the corruption devouring the heart of his city and determined to do something about it, if only he can figure out what.

Mister Memory is a darkly delightful read: smart, strange and sinister with just a touch of whimsy.

Thank you to Hachette Australia for providing a copy of Mister Memory in exchange for an honest review.

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Tonstant Weader says

Is it shallow to confess that the first thing that drew me to Marcus Sedgwick's Mister Memory was the cover

art? A brilliant blend of modern and art nouveau, the illustration is framed very much as Alphonse Mucha would frame his illustrations. There is even a very Mucha-looking woman at the top, her hair becoming branches of a tree. Rather than ornaments, the corners of the frame are two revolvers, and down one side is the skyline of fin de siècle Paris and down the other a train. The central image is a man's silhouette and his torso is a street map of Paris. The very top has a skull, positioned so the woman's head almost seems the lower half of it. Directly opposite, at the very bottom, a brain lies with one portion identified, perhaps where turn of the century psychologists thought memory resided. It is fascinating and in its iconography, the entire story is previewed.

At first the story is simple. A cabaret performer named Marcel Després caught his wife in bed with another man, shot and killed her, and was arrested. Sureté detective Petit becomes suspicious, though, when Després is declared insane and sent to the Salpêtrière, an asylum for the mentally ill where he is put in the care of Dr. Morel, the Assistance Chief Alienist. Petit is curious why the Prefect of Paris Police, the head of all police, personally involved himself to shut Després away from investigation in the silence of an asylum. Soon both men become obsessed with Després for different reasons. Petit wants him to pay for killing his wife and Dr. Morel wants to find the limits of his memory, because the secret of Marcel Després is that he remembers every single thing. He forgets nothing, not even the unimportant details such as mouse droppings on a stair step.

Sometimes readers will think of the Watergate phrase, "it's not the crime, it's the coverup." Of course, there was a murder, so it is the crime, but it's quite likely if Delorme had not sent Marcel off to an asylum, the original simple crime passionnel would have been the only story. By piquing Petit's curiosity, then his obsession, all sorts of things unraveled, revealing a far more complex and sinister plot. One that puts Petit, Morel, Després, and everyone involved in danger.

Mister Memory is as much literary fiction as it mystery. It explores the themes of obsession and memory. While it may seem a gift to be able to remember everything, we quickly learn that it is a trap, that forgetting can be merciful. Obsession is explored not only through Petit's obstinate compulsion to ferret out the truth defying direct orders, risking his job, and even his life. Morel is equally obsessed, first out of ambition to publish a great paper that will surpass his teachers and competitors, then out of a genuine desire to help. In the process, Petit leaves behind his paralyzing grief over the loss of his fiancée and Morel finds a renewed dedication to the art of healing.

I enjoyed Mister Memory very much. There is a strong sense of place and time. Of course, if you're telling the story of someone who remembers everything, there had better be a strong sense of place, down to the disturbances in the dust. The details vary dramatically depending on whose point of view we are perceiving the story. The free-association of a never-ending memory is fascinating. The plot unwinds slowly, carefully, so that its complexity and intrigue are shocking to contrast with the beginning. We go from crime passionnel to international intrigue so slowly but inexorably that when we understand all, it's stunning. The real marvel, though, is how it is all unwound by the little details, Després' inexplicable insistence that he shot once but fired five times, an old file that was forgotten by a conspirator erasing his tracks, a photographer neglecting to polish out a flaw in his lens. To have such grand schemes be undone by the little things, that is the most gratifying kind of mystery.

The cover was complex and fascinating—which made it a perfect cover for this complex and fascinating novel.

Mister Memory will be released March 7th. I received an advance e-galley from the publisher through NetGalley.

Cheryl says

Set during the Belle Epoque, Marcel is a young man from a rural area in France. He travels to Paris in search of better circumstances. Marcel has a special gift—he can remember every detail of everything that has occurred in his life! While in Paris Marcel marries a beautiful young woman. For a time they seem to be happy, but one incident changes everything. Marcel is accused of his wife's murder. One police officer is determined to see Marcel pay for his crime. As the investigation proceeds, the facts begin to reveal that the crime involves more than murder.

Written in the style of the time, author Marcus Sedgwick skillfully shapes his characters and weaves an absorbing and complex story of murder, corruption, justice, and, above all, memory and identity that will pull you in and keep you guessing until the very end! The story begins slowly and builds to a fast paced conclusion.

Elaine says

I made a grievous mistake. I judged a book by its *cover*.

Now in my defense, the cover of ***Mister Memory*** has a creepy cool *Dia de los Muertos* vibe going on.

But if you're expecting magic and surrealism and whimsical, dark characters plotting havoc and destruction of the world, don't look here.

Move along, nothing to see here.

Mister Memory is not so much the story of a bland, dull young man named Marcel with an unusual gift but a treatise on memory and philosophical babble on how memory makes a person real. Or something like that.

Oh, and there's a vague mystery, mistaken identity, a terrorist plot, orgies, a pornographer and a political scandal in the mix as well, while our erstwhile main character, stands dumbly in the middle as the action happens around him.

I didn't hate ***Mister Memory*** but I certainly didn't like it.

I definitely didn't like anyone:

Marcel was unmemorable (*get it?*), a simpleton with little intelligence and only the ability to remember everything and anything to enable him to survive in Paris. He marries a duplicitous bitch named -

Ondine, a former prostitute turned cabaret girl who is definitely more street smart than her husband but having never been told that she is smart, only pretty, uses her beauty and wiles to blackmail a former lover and frame Marcel for a crime he did not commit.

The writing is good, though wordy, and the premise an interesting one but the execution was flawed and made worse with a hapless protagonist and a cast of characters you never really sympathized or cared about.

Talia Smart says

DNF @ p. 70

I don't think there's necessarily anything wrong with this book, but it's not for me. I haven't been able to get hooked or connect with the characters.

Diane S ? says

A friend on this site recently asked me how I chose the books I read. Like many I'm sure I take in consideration the reviews of some like minded friends, favorite authors and sometimes something in the synopsis of the book appeals. In this case, it was Marcel's memory, I have a pretty good memory, but can you imagine remembering everything, absolutely everything throughout your life, not able to forget and unable to lie?

Marcel is said to have killed his wife, he admits this is so, leaving his house, kneeling down and waiting for the police. Instead of standing trial he is sent to Saltpetriere, an asylum in Paris, where he presents marked catatonic tendencies, refusing to speak, simply staring at the wall. This sentencing does not sit well with Inspector Petit, who lost his own fiancée to violence and wants Marcel to answer for his crime. A doctor and the detective will work together to uncover the specifics of the crime.

This is a very literary mystery, wonderfully written, and quite fascinating. There are layers and layers to uncover and many surprises along the way. Marcel and his memory, how it works, how he thinks, so very detailed, so interesting. I was quite captivated. Not an edge of your seat thriller but there are some exciting moments and there is more to this case than appears on the surface. A very solid and well thought out story.

♥ Sandi ♥ says

3. 75 stars

How good is your memory? What happened yesterday, last week, 18 years ago? Impossible to remember even the faintest circumstance from yesterday, let alone every single detail of every minute of the day? There are people who do remember every single detail of every single day of their lives.

That was Marcel Despres. His memory was infallible, his ability to lie was nonexistent, and both put him on the road to a death sentence.

This book is narrated by Paris Police Inspector Laurent Petit, mad because Despres was admitted to a mental asylum for killing his wife, instead of prison, insisting that he will find out why; by Dr Lucien Morel, Assistant Chief Alienist, the Dr. who treated Despres while in the asylum; and finally by Chef de la Surete Rene Cavard, one of Petit's higher officials, who tries to restrict Petit's involvement in the Despres case; and by Marcel Despres himself.

Not only is the story good, but the last section of the book reads almost like another mystery. It sums up all

the loose ends and brings a whole new light to the darkly twisted story.

This story lost a bit in rating from me due to the various French words. I struggle with foreign pronunciations, street names, locations, etc and it slows down my reading. This book at least did not expect me to read and understand French, except in the form of street names, pronouns, and Paris attractions, which are somewhat familiar. I therefore deducted .25 from my rating.

Hannah Greendale says

The facts of the matter are these: In the year 1899, Marcel Després is arrested from his home in Paris for murdering his wife. He is transferred to the Salpêtrière Asylum where Dr. Lucien Morel determines that Després is an extraordinary patient, for Després has a perfect, photographic memory and is physically incapable of forgetting. The detective assigned to Després' case, Laurent Petit, is suspicious of how quickly Després - dubbed Mister Memory - was transferred to the asylum and soon realizes the case is far more complicated and dangerous than he could have imagined.

For every experience, sight, sound, smell, moment, event, thought, emotion, feeling, the assimilation of every mundane circumstance and outrageous deed that passed into the mind of Marcel Després, once there, could not be forgotten. To Marcel Després, everything was not to be forgotten, but to those who met him, it was Marcel himself who was unforgettable.

Mister Memory brings to light a profusion of intriguing philosophical questions about the role of memory, the origin of the self, and how consciousness shapes our identity. Observations and proclamations made by characters on these subjects are the source of the book's greatest merit.

I would ask you to consider the view of our philosophers, namely this: all that we are is an assembly of a sequence of memories. And if they are merely a sequence of individual, discrete events, then how can we create a single continuous self from them? And if there is no continuity of the self, then how can we be held responsible for our actions of five years ago, or six months ago, or even, for that matter, this morning?

'Curious, isn't it? That lying seems to be such an essential part of being human.'
Like forgetting, Morel thinks, but he keeps that part to himself.

The author makes use of neurological disorders not often found in books, providing a distinctive protagonist. And an omniscient narrator who addresses the audience with comedic and lyrical asides gives the narrative some much-needed pizzazz.

Marcel Després is presented as the main character, but a significant portion of the book is dedicated to following Laurent Petit - a young inspector with a penchant for following clues whose intuition propels him on a perilous search for truth.

Petit realizes that Marcel is now lost in a memory within a memory. As he did all those weeks ago when he first met Morel, he has the most awful feeling of standing at the edge of some abyss. The feeling is so strong that in his mind he turns away from the horrible void, leaving him with a nagging sensation in the backs of his legs, as if he were about to step uncontrollably into that yawning chasm behind him.

Though the story premise incites reader curiosity, the book disappoints in terms of plot pacing and structure.

Many revelations are delivered too soon, revoking the narrative of a sense of surprise or suspense. Several moments of clarity are based purely on character speculation, divesting readers of investment in the story. A plot twist delivered midway through the book feels unprecedented, seemingly dispatched for the author's convenience. The premature revelations, speculative nature of "what really happened," and the author's decision to invest minimal time exploring the book's most interesting character collectively castrate the book's potential to be a thrilling mystery.

Mister Memory is a unique but forgettable read.

Jessica says

Dear Marcus Sedgwick, you don't know me, but I love you. Your books are super weird, but I can't put them down, and I think they're glorious. Also, they make me feel inferior as a writer, but I'm somehow okay with that.

This book is a murder mystery that centers around a sweet, naive man named Marcel, who remembers every second of his life. Every. Second. He remembers being in the womb. He remembers every meal his mother ever made for him. And he remembers exactly how many times he fired at gun directly at his wife, Ondine. But, as he sits in an asylum awaiting trial, lost in his infinite memories, a doctor who wants to study him and the detective in charge of his case are starting to uncover some details that make Marcel's case seem a lot less cut-and-dried.

By the way: Sedgwick's other books that I have read have been YA. I didn't bother to check what this one was. It is not YA. It is definitely very grown up. With grown up words. And, you know- *wink wink nudge nudge*

Suzanne (winterscribbler) Cole says

Spoilers ... of course.

I have long been familiar with Marcus Sedgwick's young adult fiction and so was most eager to read one of his works aimed at an adult audience. My curiosity was peaked further by the multiple reviewers' recommendations to fans of Carlos Ruiz Zafon.

I absolutely loved the central concept of this book- a man who cannot forget a single instance of his life. I am an avid fan of magical realism, especially when an author is able to weave the fantastic elements into established reality, and works to maintain the sharpness of that reality as it punctuates the veil make believe. I enjoy it when exceptional gifts do not prevent a character from being buffeted by the world in the same manner as you or I, where the fairy tale co exists with the harshness of real life. It was an interesting coincidence that 'Mister Memory' referenced some events in French history that I'd recently read about and had piqued my interest; the persecution and arrest of Alfred Dreyfus, the failure of the Paris Commune, as well as the general state of the asylum system across Europe in the late 19th century. All of this helped to ground the fairy tale aspects in real, remembered history, adding to the overall effect of a story which examines how we share and experience history through memory. I also liked how this idea of mythology and

rumour was laid out in the opening lines: 'The facts of the matter were these'. How do we distinguish fact; how do we determine from the million tiny truthful actions, that only someone with a gift such as Marcel's can truly appreciate, those that make the real truth as we understand it. Memory, for Marcel, as well as for anyone, can be as much of a burden as the loss of memory. This how stories are created, and in reality memory is how we construct these stories and discover truth.

Throughout the narrative I loved how Marcel is constantly viewed through the eyes of various institutions, doctors, asylums, the police, and even, to some degree communities, such as the village where he grew up and the performing artists of the city. I also liked the juxtaposition of the city and countryside settings, and how a man such as Marcel is treated by his surroundings. Both these settings are vividly realised by Marcus Sedgewick's descriptions, the countryside infused with the strange quality of something lost, childhood reminiscences perhaps. The city atmosphere almost seems a challenge to perceived idea of light and darkness, danger and fulfilment that a 'magical' place such as Paris is supposed to offer to a gifted country boy like Marcel. In the city he sparkles in a way he would never been able to in the village, but it was in the simpler setting that his odd qualities were actually accepted and not exploited. It was an interesting inversion to see these two settings portrayed in this way, as the convention so often examines how those who are 'special' must escape a small community in order to find acceptance.

Marcel is an interesting protagonist, as he spends a large part of the early narrative as a detached, almost invisible character, for others, including the reader to project ideas upon. Even as he becomes more realised he remains a largely reactionary character, caught in the snares of other peoples' ambitions. It was satisfying to see a male character in this role, as it more often females who are placed in this kind of physical and intellectual trap, who must rely on winning round potential enemies, through their nature, to assist them in achieving justice, rather than rely solely on their own resources. As before, with his portrayal of the settings, Sedgewick achieves this with subtlety, nothing feels forced. Marcel being constantly placed in a victimised position may have become tiresome as the story progressed, had it not been for the richness of his inner journey. It wouldn't be too much of a stretch to suggest Marcel could be used as a comparison to autism, but at the same time as a straight forward depiction of an introvert, coming to terms with his apparent differences with the world.

I enjoyed the friendship that developed between Marcel and Dr Morel, especially since the latter seemed to be destined for the role of a stereotypical abusive asylum doctor. I liked how his motivation for helping Marcel changed as they two men got to know each other, how Marcel helps him to rediscover his actual passion for his work rather than simply the recognition for it. A similar change takes place with Petit, Cavard and Boissenot, in respect of their professional relationships with each other, and to how they are portrayed in relation to Marcel. Each of them, most specifically Petit, begin in opposition to him, wanting to see him punished or at least are indifferent to him or and the real reason for his hasty incarceration. I enjoyed how one by one, these single minded men who are all intent on their own business, come under the quiet, enigmatic pull of an odd young man- the fairy-tale interweaving with reality. Could it be that his gift, is an actual magic, with the power to bend others to its cause, or is it simply that the lives and minds of these men were altered by a chance crossing ways with a person who is slightly but fundamentally askance?

I found that, as the story progressed, the presence of a single antagonist disappears to be replaced by an idea of state sanctioned conspiracy, a force that is harder to pin down and fight against. So then our heroes' struggle becomes less clear, especially as it passed down from one to the other, each having to come to terms with the shift in their reality and the predicament they have been placed in. I liked how it seems that for each of them, they had only been forced to accept something they were likely always aware of but that a slight shift in the order of the things has brought into the light. It was interesting that as Marcel must sift through all of his knowledge to find truth, for ordinary characters the truth is only submerged in a constructed reality. I was genuinely shocked by Petit's early departure from the story, but liked how the narrative was passed on, which reinforced the idea of fairy tale or myth.

I was pleased that the treatment and portrayal of Ondine was not malicious, as it could easily have been, especially since the story is largely populated by men particularly in the sympathetic roles. She is written

with understanding both in her personal situation and in her relationship with Marcel, despite the unforgivable nature of her actions. In his depiction of their short life as a married couple the author demonstrates a relationship that is based on unlikely attraction but with each lacking a substantial understanding of the other's character. I felt a real sadness as their hopefulness and satisfaction floundered, and found it touching that they both felt deeply the sting of the other's betrayal: Marcel during the costume ball sequence, and Ondine upon discovering him with Lucie. Marcel's accidental act of infidelity was also an effective and surprising reveal of Marcel's true weakness, his inability to recognise faces, which again could be demonstrative of aspects of autism, but also plays into Ondine's development as a character. Her own husband being unable to know her face reinforces her own insignificance in a world that has primarily used her for her appearance. The portrayal of their life together also depicts how difficult it can be to live with someone who is different, even 'special'. It seemed that the author placed equal blame on each of them for the failure of the marriage.

Even her most villainous act of murdering Lucie and framing Marcel has a hint of her own tragedy about it, as we know the road that led to this. It also allows us to see Marcel in a negative light as it is understood that although he did not actually kill anyone, it was most definitely his intention to, goaded by life and circumstance into an act of passionate revenge. I admire an author who doesn't allow the protagonist to be entirely forgiven for his mistakes. I also liked how it revealed another of Marcel's character flaws, that he loved Ondine as a beautiful possession as much as any other man who had loved her. As well as being jealous of her as her husband he is also jealous of her spirit and her approach to life which is so vastly different from his. Ondine's gifts, though not as extraordinary as his own, allowed her to penetrate an elite layer of society that is never opened to him. This is perfectly shown in the costume ball sequence, and how it is Marcel, not Ondine, who must disguise himself in order to gain admittance. It was also a satisfying conclusion to that part of the mystery, and I found Ondine's words of 'But I was dead', truly heart-breaking. I did find that after this point my interest in the story's resolution waned somewhat. The quality of the writing still kept me wanting to read as it was so enjoyable, however with the exception of Marcel a lot of the earlier personal investment and loyalty I had felt was absent from the last third of the narrative. The overall twist and turns were exciting, but to some degree I did lose sight of the point of the mystery. I feel the real strength of 'Mister Memory' lies in the personal story, of a young-ish man who has lost his way and must come to terms with himself, with his own actions as well as his strange gift, in order to gain self acceptance.

The writing is beautifully entrancing and there are a couple of wonderfully realised set pieces, the costume ball being one, as well as the 'bee sting' sequence, which is genuinely funny and communicates just the right amount of the embarrassment felt by the characters and the reader. I liked how this scene was revisited again during Marcel's encounter with the prostitute, his coming to understand Ginette's motive and his subsequent misunderstanding of the prostitute's remarks provide another example of his touching and believable naivety. The recurring motif of Marcel's memory of his walk with Ginette in the field had the haunting effect of a truth briefly gained and then lost, and this image provided a satisfying point to leave Marcel at the end of the book. I also loved the library sequences- for personal reason- and the line about, 'no admittance to hell without a librarian'.

Overall the writing style was engaging and the dialogue snappy, the ideas communicated were thought provoking. All characters were, in their own way, philosophers or at least handlers of a particular piece of wisdom, which works to build a true urban fairy-tale. So why is this not a five star book for me? I feel that in the end 'Mister Memory' falls somewhere in between 'young adult' and 'adult fiction'. I never found the writing overly challenging, and everything in the narrative flowed just a little too easily. There were a few incidences where the dialogue came across as slightly juvenile, Marcel being described as a 'great guy', for example, and therefore jarred with the writing as a whole. Some of the more graphic descriptions of the violence and sex, stood out a little too much, as though it did not quite fit its surroundings as it should. Despite the care taken over the elements of reality, the writing style definitely leaned a little more to fantasy. Not that this detracts from its quality, this more a question on personal preference. I would definitely be

interested in reading more of Marcus Sedgwick's fiction for adults.

'Mister Memory' definitely captures the essence of an adult fairy-tale, both in its themes and execution. Once finished the reader is left with a curious feeling, as though we ourselves may have remembered something, we might never have actually forgotten.

Michelle says

Marcus Sedgwick typically writes young adult novels, and I have loved every one of them I have read. They are haunting and beautiful and almost always profound in some fashion. Mister Memory is his first adult novel, and it was with trepidation and anticipation I opened its pages.

From the opening line, it is apparent that Mr. Sedgwick continues to bring the same lyricism and beauty to this unusual mystery as he does to all of his novels. There is a fluidity to his writing style that makes it impossible not to find yourself completely absorbed in the story and lost to the rest of the world. He tells so much in a few words. In the case of turn-of-the-century Paris, it allows readers to not just visual the unfamiliar time and place but understand and experience it.

He takes the same care with his characters. Marcel, Dr. Morel, Cavard, Inspector Petit, and the rest of his characters come to life under his pen. While their physical descriptions remain fairly simplistic, Mr. Sedgwick focuses instead on their character. Unlike other mysteries, we get to understand the key players in the novel, their motivations, fears, regrets, joys, and so forth. We see their struggles and their growth as they absorb new ideas, ruminate over different philosophies, and experience life. They become real people, and their pain becomes our pain.

This is particularly true with Marcel, Dr. Morel and Inspector Petit. All three are damaged men in their individual fashion, and all three spend large swaths of time in the spotlight of the narrative. Marcel's pain is obvious, as is Inspector Petit's. However, it is with Dr. Morel where the novel finds its heart and soul, as he is the tie that binds all three characters together. It is Dr. Morel who fully comprehends Marcel's astounding memory and what it means for him, and it is through his eyes that we feel compassion for Marcel.

While Mister Memory may be a murder mystery on the surface, it is much more than that in the end. All of Mr. Sedgwick's novels tackle some form of philosophical thought, and Mister Memory is no different. He never grandstands his point though but allows readers to formulate their own ideas about the topic. In this case, what he presents about memory and the individual, its function, how it defines us and what that means is not only fascinating but it also inclines readers to contemplate similar ideas on their own.

Mister Memory is what I have come to expect from Mr. Sedgwick and so much more. With his foray into adult novels, he tackles loftier ideas and delves into the seedier side of man. His Paris is the dirty underbelly of the city, and he captures it in all of its depraved glory. There are few innocents in his world, and it makes for a grittier but more interesting story.

Debbie says

Hmmm....this is a challenging one to rate. I'm leaning mostly towards 2.5, but not a full-on 3 stars. The

writing is very good; Sedgwick has a fluid, slightly whimsical writing style that keeps you engaged. The premise was certainly intriguing and not the average, run-of-the-mill plot line. There was just a little bit of flatness to the story, overall. I liked the characters and their exchanges but it felt, at times, like I was skimming the surface, when I wanted to dive deeper into various plot points. Anyway, it's not a *great* read, but it's certainly not a *bad* one, either; just kind of in the middle.

Chantal Lyons says

This is a tough one to review. I really enjoyed Sedgwick's books when I was younger, so I jumped at the chance to review an adult book of his, as an adult this time. And there are some great elements to "Mister Memory" - just not enough for me to give this book more than three stars.

The premise is an intriguing one, and does have a whiff of "The Shadow of the Wind" by Carlos Ruiz Zafon, as promised by the blurb. But Zafon's story was made warm with its characters, while "Mister Memory" - for reasons I'll go into - lacks this.

The narrative style was off-putting for me. It's omniscient, and I never felt like I was truly descending into any of the characters. The switching between past and present tense, while mechanically correct, nonetheless jarred. And the staggered feeding of revelations to the reader felt contrived, mirroring a little the way that books using in-depth POV sometimes suffer when the character is obviously being forced by the writer to not work something out that would otherwise give away important information to the reader.

The "main" character, our Monsieur Memoire, is as you'd expect the main focus of the book - until about halfway through, when he's withdrawn far into the background. After that, even when the story briefly returns to him, he no longer feels as alive as he did before; merely a plot mechanism. I suppose I struggled too with having his journey replaced by that of another character's, and then that character's journey being replaced in turn.

Sedgwick is still an excellent writer, conjuring an 1899 Paris teetering between the past and modernity, chaos and order, civilisation and barbarity (although I would've appreciated a few more delicious turns of phrases like the city "sitting in a furnace of its own expired breath"). Sometimes I felt gripped. But more often than not I felt that I was reading simply to get to the next part, and then to finish the book. "Mister Memory" will not linger in my own memory, I suspect.

Dorian says

Eh.

This book took forever to get going, and I didn't really care for any of the characters. It suffered from being too long-winded, and by the end, I was less interested in the outcome than I was in being able to close the book and set it aside.

Trav says

Note: I did not finish this book because I lost interest. I stopped on page 189

Sigh. I must be getting harder to please as time goes on.

There were definitely some wonderful elements to Mister Memory -- just not enough to give this book a rating any higher than 2 stars.

The premise is intriguing, though it wasn't enough to keep me fully engaged. There were moments when Mister Memory became a gripping read, lulling me into a false sense of hope, yet those moments were fleeting.

The writing, although brilliant, (credit goes to Segwick, he is an excellent writer) felt as though it were missing something important -- a certain warmth. I found an emotional connection towards the characters lacking, a tenuous pull at best.

The style felt slightly disjointed; due in part to the narration oscillating between past and present -- obviously necessary to the story-line -- but nonetheless feeling slightly jarred.

Marcel, our protagonist, was a fascinating one. His social awkwardness (failing to recognise sexual advances made towards him was quite humorous) coupled with an infallible memory, made for an interesting character. Marcel was the only character I (somewhat) cared for. I started losing interest when he became relegated to the sidelines halfway through the book. That's when I started to skim-read. Never a good sign.

Books are entirely subjective when it comes to reviewing; what works for some, may not work for others and unfortunately Mister Memory just didn't work for me. Though I would still encourage those out there to give it a go.

Thank you to NetGalley and Hachette Australia for providing me with this ARC. I wish Marcus Sedgwick all the best with his upcoming release.
