Daydream Sequences in Hollywood Cinema since 1947

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INTRODUCTION

DEFINING DAYDREAMS, CINEMATIC DAYDREAMS AND CORPUS

Daydream sequences provide viewers with important information regarding the desires, hopes, fears, and psychological state of film protagonists. Investigating a corpus of Hollywood films containing fantasy scenes, this text answers the following questions: how do cinematic daydreams stand with regard to classical Hollywood cinema? What do volitional fantasy sequences typically infer about the conscious mind? What do non-volitional cinematic daydreams imply about the workings of the unconscious psyche? Do filmed fantasies commonly reinforce cultural hegemony? And, is daydreaming typically depicted as a detrimental or beneficial pastime in mainstream US cinema? In addressing these questions, this study uncovers the key functions that daydreams serve in Hollywood films from cinematic, thematic, psychological, and ideological perspectives.

Defining the daydream

The Oxford English Dictionary defines the daydream as "[a] series of thoughts or yearnings that distract one's attention (esp. pleasantly) from the present; a reverie. Hence: an idle fantasy or vain hope, typically concerning ambitions of happiness or success" (*OED Online*, 2014). The daydream covers a broader spectrum of experiences than this description implies. A daydream can be volitional or unbidden; gratifying or distressing; attainable or fanciful; ambitious or erotic; harmful or beneficial; misleading or truthful; highly visual or purely aural; a flashed image or a structured narrative; a preparatory plan or a substitute for realisation. The daydream thus has a variety of functions, themes, and modes from which filmmakers can select when representing internal experiences and scenarios. Whatever form the daydream takes, it is an attempt by the mind–intentionally or otherwise–to depict future events, or reimagine past ones. It is worth noting the inclusion of the phrase "idle fantasy" in the *OED* definition above as I

use the terms "daydream" and "fantasy" interchangeably throughout this text.

It is important to distinguish between daydreams and other internal occurrences and conditions including sleep dreams, alcohol- and drug-induced visions, and hallucinations caused by mental illness and sleep-depravation. These other subjective states differ from daydreams as the person experiencing them is under the influence of an external agent or force. In such instances it is probable that an individual may have little or no volitional control over their own thought processes. It is also possible that they are unaware that the mental events they are experiencing are not occurring in objective reality. By contrast, the daydreamer is both conscious and in full possession of their mental faculties. Though they may occasionally lose volitional control of their internal thought processes, the daydreamer is always able to differentiate between their fantasies and events taking place in the real world. Two other subjective events commonly experienced by similarly compos mentis individuals are recollected memories and flashbacks. These internal occurrences differ in that a flashback is a minimally voluntary or involuntary recollection of a memory, even a traumatic experience, whereas a recollected memory is an intentional recalling of a past event. These subjective thought processes differ from the daydream in that they depict past events as they (ostensibly) actually occurred, whereas the daydream reimagines an altered version of events.

Cinematic daydreams

In cinematic daydream sequences the action transfers from the objective real world of the film to the internal subjective world of the daydreaming character. These fantasies are typically depicted as vivid mental visions akin to those an individual might see during a sleep dream. Though this may not be the way we commonly experience fantasies in reality, the screening of lucid daydream imagery is the most efficient way–in terms of narrative clarity–for filmmakers to depict mental subjectivity. Via the use of fantasy sequences, filmmakers are able to dramatise the desires, fears, and psychological states of their characters. This provides spectators with clear insight into the daydreamer's innermost thoughts, without the need for expository dialogue or action. Subjective scenes of all varieties often share the same production techniques. Sleep dream and daydream scenes, in particular, tend to be formally and stylistically constructed in similar ways. A common tool employed in both fantasy and sleep dream sequences involves the use of opening parenthetic devices that inform the viewer that

the film's action is entering the internal headspace of a character's psyche. These parenthetic shots typically feature fades, dissolves, extreme close-ups, spoken introductions, "ghostly" dry-ice vapour, changes in lighting, and "other-worldly" ethereal music to signpost the transition from objective to subjective worlds.

Though daydream sequences are more likely to be filmed from a first-person point of view, typically they are not. Though it may seem appropriate to view a character's mental imagery through their own eyes, cinema audiences have historically found lengthy scenes shot from a first-person point of view unattractive and disorientating. The most renowned Hollywood film shot from a first-person perspective is the noir thriller *Lady in the Lake* (1946), starring and directed by Robert Montgomery. The plot, centred on the search for the missing wife of a wealthy publisher, is filmed entirely from the point of view of central protagonist Phillip Marlowe (Robert Montgomery). Though Montgomery was praised for his vision, many found his first-person perspective technique confusing with regard to character development and narrative clarity. Without access to Marlowe's facial expressions, viewers were, at times, unable to gauge how he felt about events occurring in the plot. The vast majority of fantasies in Hollywood films are shot from a third-person limited perspective that involves an omniscient camera displaying the daydreamer (and other characters) and the location in which the internal experience occurs. Placing the camera at an objective distance from a daydreaming protagonist within their own subjective environment creates what Walters terms a "dreamed world" (2008, p.45). This dreamed world does not accurately reflect most people's real-life daydream experiences: few individuals view themselves from outside of their own bodies in internal scenarios. The widespread norm in mainstream US films, however, of providing narrative clarity and a clear indication of a protagonist's state of mind, has prompted most Hollywood filmmakers to present a third-person account of daydreams.

Film corpus

A corpus of 44 post-Second World War Hollywood films featuring daydream sequences (see Figure 1.0) has been compiled to complete this study. Whilst there are a handful of mainstream US films that include fantasy scenes missing from this compilation, this corpus comprises the vast majority of post-1945 Hollywood narratives containing daydreams. There were a few internal scenarios that were initially considered for inclusion in this study that were later omitted. These scenes were rejected either because

they embody a different type of subjectivity to that of a daydream (as exemplified by The Dude's (Jeff Bridges) internal visions during different states of unconsciousness in *The Big Lebowski* (1998)), or because the daydreamer involved is under the influence of a substance that alters their state of mind. *9 to 5* (1980), for example, features three consecutive fantasies as experienced by central protagonists Judy (Jane Fonda), Violet (Lily Tomlin) and Doralee (Dolly Parton). The content of these sequences, however, is heavily influenced by the smoking of marijuana; these daydreams, therefore, were not considered for inclusion in this study. All of the films within this corpus are "mainstream" in that they are either financed, produced, or distributed by a Hollywood studio, or a subsidiary of a Hollywood studio. Though movies like *(500) Days of Summer* (2009) and *Ruby Sparks* (2013) may appear to be independent films, they were, in fact, both financed and distributed by Fox Searchlight Pictures, a division of the Twentieth Century Fox Picture Company. All of the films in this corpus feature recognised Hollywood stars, if not always in the central roles.

	Film	Genre	Year	Directed by	Produced by
1	*The Secret Life of Walter Mitty*	Comedy	1947	Norman Z. McLeod	The Samuel Goldwyn Company
2	*Unfaithfully Yours*	Comedy-drama	1948	Preston Sturges	Twentieth Century Fox
3	*On the Town*	Musical	1949	Stanley Donen and Gene Kelly	Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer
4	*An American in Paris*	Musical	1951	Vincente Minnelli	Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer
5	*The Seven Year Itch*	Comedy	1955	Billy Wilder	Twentieth Century Fox
6	*Midnight Cowboy*	Drama	1969	John Schlesinger	Jerome Hellman Productions
7	*Grease*	Musical	1978	Randal Kleiser	Paramount Pictures
8	*10*	Comedy	1979	Blake Edwards	Orion Pictures
9	*King of Comedy*	Drama	1982	Martin Scorsese	Twentieth Century Fox
10	*A Christmas Story*	Family	1983	Bob Clark	Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer
11	*Unfaithfully Yours*	Comedy-drama	1984	Howard Zieff	Twentieth Century Fox

12	*The Muppets Take Manhattan*	Family	1984	Frank Oz	Henson Associates
13	*National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation*	Comedy	1989	Jeremiah S. Chechik	Warner Bros.
14	*Wayne's World*	Comedy	1992	Penelope Spheeris	Paramount Pictures
15	*True Romance*	Crime	1993	Tony Scott	Morgan Creek Entertainment
16	*Dumb & Dumber*	Comedy	1994	Peter Farrelly	New Line Entertainment
17	*Happy Gilmore*	Comedy	1996	Dennis Dugan	Universal Pictures
18	*American Beauty*	Drama	1999	Sam Mendes	DreamWorks
19	*High Fidelity*	Comedy-drama	2000	Stephen Frears	Touchstone Pictures
20	*Chicago*	Musical	2002	Rob Marshall	Miramax
21	*Mean Girls*	Comedy	2004	Mark Waters	Paramount Pictures
22	*The Girl Next Door*	Comedy-drama	2004	Luke Greenfield	Regency Pictures
23	*Shark Tale*	Family	2004	Bibo Bergeron, Vicky Jenson, Rob Letterman	DreamWorks Animation
24	*Madagascar*	Family	2005	Eric Darnell, Tom McGrath	DreamWorks Animation
25	*Superbad*	Comedy	2007	Greg Mottola	Columbia Pictures
26	*Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*	Musical	2007	Tim Burton	DreamWorks Pictures
27	*500 Days of Summer*	Comedy-drama	2009	Marc Webb	Fox Searchlight Pictures
28	*Toy Story 3*	Family	2010	Lee Unkrich	Pixar Animation Studios
29	*Despicable Me*	Family	2010	Pierre Coffin, Chris Renaud	Illumination Entertainment
30	*Madagascar 3: Europe's Most Wanted*	Family	2012	Eric Darnell, Tom McGrath, Conrad Vernon	DreamWorks Animation

31	*Frozen*	Family	2013	Chris Buck, Jennifer Lee	Walt Disney Animation
32	*Despicable Me 2*	Family	2013	Pierre Coffin, Chris Renaud	Illumination Entertainment
33	*Ruby Sparks*	Fantasy	2012	Jonathan Dayton and Valerie Farris	Fox Searchlight Pictures
34	*The Paperboy*	Drama	2012	Lee Daniels	Millennium Films
35	*The Family*	Comedy	2013	Luc Besson	Europacorp
36	*The Kings of Summer*	Comedy-drama	2013	Jordan Vogt-Roberts	Big Beach Films
37	*The Secret Life of Walter Mitty*	Comedy-drama	2013	Ben Stiller	Twentieth Century Fox
38	*Dumb & Dumber To (2014)*	Comedy	2014	Peter Farrelly and Bobby Farrelly	Universal Pictures
39	*Minions*	Family	2015	Kyle Balda, Pierre Coffin	Illumination Entertainment
40	*Inside Out*	Family	2015	Pete Docter, Ronnie Del Carmen	Pixar Animation Studios
41	*The Duff*	Comedy	2015	Ari Sandel	CBS Films
42	*La La Land*	Musical	2016	Damien Chazelle	Summit Entertainment
43	*Despicable Me 3*	Family	2017	Kyle Balda, Pierre Coffin, Eric Guillon	Illumination Entertainment
44	*The Shape of Water*	Fantasy	2017	Guillermo del Toro	Fox Searchlight Pictures

Figure 1.0: Films featuring daydream sequences in corpus

Most Hollywood films belong to one of the following 14 established genres: Western, science-fiction, horror, war, mystery/suspense, action/adventure, historical epic, thriller, fantasy, family, drama, comedy-drama, musical, and comedy. This corpus does not contain one film from the following genres: Western, science-fiction, horror, war, mystery/suspense, action/adventure, historical epic, or thriller. Only four films within this study–*Midnight Cowboy*, *The King of Comedy*, *American Beauty* and *The Paperboy*–are part of the drama category. The composition of this corpus strongly implies that fantasy scenes are not deemed suitable material for narratives within genres that are typically realist in nature and serious in tone. 12 (27%) of the films in this corpus are family films (all comedy

hybrids); 12 (27%) are comedy films; 7 (16%) are comedy-dramas; whilst 6 (14%) are musicals. These figures reveal a clear link between cinematic daydreams and instances of comedy and spectacle (like musical numbers). Are daydream sequences specifically targeted by filmmakers as sites in which to insert non-narrative instances of entertainment? This is the focus of Chapter 1.

CHAPTER 1

DAYDREAMS AND HOLLYWOOD CLASSICISM

This investigation begins by examining how cinematic daydreams function as acts of filmic narration. As fantasy sequences depict phenomena occurring exclusively in the psyche of a character, they are a form of internal diegetic scene. Often daydreams provide a type of narration that appears to diverge from the dominant "classical" mode of Hollywood filmmaking. This chapter will describe the conventions of Hollywood classicism and ask whether daydream sequences in mainstream US films constitute territory where filmmakers typically choose to subvert classical principles. This chapter will examine David Bordwell's concept of generic motivation (explained below) and assess whether it renders the classical paradigm too flexible to be considered a robust and consistent model. This chapter will also consider why fantasies in mainstream US films–even though they are structurally suited to undertaking such operations–rarely perform classical narrative functions.

Hollywood Classicism

All of the films within this corpus are mainstream films that–in their non-daydream elements–largely adhere to classical Hollywood principles. David Bordwell defined the classical Hollywood model of dominant narrative characteristics, its common aesthetic systems, and production techniques, in his chapter 'The Classical Hollywood Style, 1917-60' (Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson, 1985, pp.3–84). Though this seminal study only examines Hollywood cinema up to 1960, Bordwell later argued, in *The Way Hollywood Tells It,* that classicism continued in Hollywood films made after 1960 and endures to this day:

> Despite all the historical changes and local variants we find in contemporary film style, we are still dealing with a version of classical filmmaking… nearly all scenes in nearly all contemporary mass-market movies (and in most "independent" films) are staged, shot, and cut according to principles that crystallised in the 1910s and 1920s. (2006, p.180)

Although there have been numerous recent advances in film technology, most significantly with the emergence and growth of computer-generated imagery, the classical style remains the dominant mode of film production in contemporary Hollywood. For instance, whilst the majority of the shots in *Avatar* (2009) are created using CGI (as opposed to live action), the film nonetheless adheres to most classical principles. The conventions of a typical classical Hollywood film are: 1) the plot consists of a three-part narrative featuring a set-up, complementary action and development, a climax, and denouement, 2) all components of the film are subordinate to the telling of the story, 3) the narrative is driven by a cause-and-effect chain of events, 4) the central protagonist is goal-oriented and the primary narrative thread describes the character's journey in his or her attempt to achieve that objective, 5) a secondary narrative contains a heterosexual romance story, 6) the resolution features a "happy ending" in which the protagonist achieves their goal(s) and is romantically coupled, 7) each scene advances the plot and/or develops character and opens up a new causal chain, 8) characters have definable traits and act in a realistic manner, 9) mise-en-scène is arranged to create a credible environment, 10) narration is typically omniscient and communicative, but does not draw attention to itself, 11) non-intrusive continuity editing is employed to create a coherent filmed world, 12) time is linear, and 13) screen time represents real time. Whilst a film does not have to contain all of these elements to be considered classical, all classical films feature most of these components.

According to Bordwell, any fictional film possesses three stylistic systems:

> A system of narrative logic, which depends upon story events and causal relations and parallelisms among them; A system of cinematic time; and A system of cinematic space… the total [Hollywood] style can be defined as the relation of those systems to each other. (1985, p.6)

Bordwell claims that in Hollywood films these systems are not equals: "space and time are almost invariably made vehicles for narrative causality" (1985, p.6). The classical Hollywood paradigm is dominated by the forward momentum of the plot. For Bordwell, the elements of a classical film serve a primary function: the telling of a story in which characters have strong motives, major obstacles, and pressing deadlines. The classical narrative model is loosely based on the structure of a standard three-part, nineteenth century stage play featuring goal-oriented protagonists. Plots commonly cohere through prioritising character-centred, causally motivated action; narrative events rarely occur by chance or coincidence. In his description of classical character-centred causality Patterson writes that, "plot… is a

careful and logical working out of the laws of cause and effect. The mere sequences of events will not make a plot. Emphasis must be laid upon causality and the action and reaction of the human will" (1920, p.5). A character's psychological motivation to achieve certain goals, and his or her reaction to triumphs and setbacks, will determine the story's path. Bordwell likens the upward trajectory of the typical classical narrative to climbing a staircase. For advocates of classicism, "[e]ach scene should make a definite impression, accomplish one thing, and advance the narrative a step nearer the climax" (1985, p.17). This is not to suggest that classical films are entirely predictable and contain no surprises. Shocks and revelations that do occur, however, are likely to be subject to character-centred causality. If the protagonist in a classical narrative behaves in an unexpected manner, viewers will generally learn, retrospectively, that he or she had a personal motive for doing so.

Classical narration is usually very communicative; typically, a small number of probable outcomes are posited, of which one is eventually confirmed. Though classical films often provide viewers with unrestricted access to most of the events occurring within the plot, the classical narrative perspective is usually focussed on the experience of a central protagonist for the majority of the film. The classical Hollywood film rarely draws attention to its own narrative device and seldom seeks to confuse viewers for prolonged periods: clarity is key. For Bordwell, the typical classical scene performs two functions: "First, it continues, develops, or closes off lines of cause and effect previously left open… [its] other duty is to open and perhaps develop at least one new *causal* chain" (1985, p.64) (emphasis in original). Though not all classical scenes achieve these two objectives, in order to maintain the forward momentum of the story, it is necessary that most do.

Classicists often consider Hollywood scenes that do not perform the dual process Bordwell describes above to be narratively disruptive. This is Syd Field's position, as outlined in his highly acclaimed, classically influenced scriptwriting manual *Screenplay,* in which he presents his paradigm for structuring and writing successful Hollywood screenplays. Field emphasises what he perceives as the need for film plots to feature central characters with clear, tangible, and emotional objectives: "What is it that drives him or her forward through the action? What does your main character want? What is his or her dramatic need?" (2005, p.25). For Field, the protagonist's desire to fulfil her wishes propels the classical narrative towards its conclusion. Describing what he believes to be the purpose of the

typical Hollywood scene, Field writes: "Either it *moves the story forward* or it *reveals information about the character.* If the scene does not satisfy one, or both, of these two elements, then it doesn't belong in the screenplay" (2005, p.162) (emphases in original). This assertion highlights Field and Bordwell's differing perspectives with regards to Hollywood classicism. Whilst Bordwell focusses largely on the need for ongoing story progression, Field also stresses the importance of continuing character development.

A range of filmic techniques and practices are typically associated with classicism. Classical films almost never depict the same period of time more than once: non-linearity draws attention to the representational regime in a manner that is alien to the Hollywood model. In order to maintain the illusion of reality, classical narratives treat the filmed world as existing beyond the confines of the cinematic frame. Usually, the camera is situated in the most advantageous position from which to view current story action. In most classical productions the filmed environment appears verisimilar. This is generally achieved via credible set design and realistic mise-en-scène. Narrational intrusion is generally avoided, enabling the highest possible level of viewer immersion.

Hollywood classicism tends to employ continuity editing that creates temporal linearity and spatial continuity in re-positioning the viewpoint around the story-space. Shots are linked smoothly; each one clearly depicts what is occurring next in the narrative, creating the illusion of reality. There are numerous continuity editing techniques that can be used to create this imaginary reality, including: 1) the "180 degree rule" which refers to the creation of an "axis of action" over which edits between shots cannot cross– meaning that, in practice, one can never vary between positions of more than 180 degrees away from the axis of action, 2) establishing shots, 3) eye-line matches (a shot of a character looking at someone or something followed by a shot of said person or object, the implication being that the second shot displays what the character is observing), 4) the "match on action" where the film cuts to a different viewpoint during a piece of action in a manner that communicates that no time has passed in the edit, thus maintaining temporal continuity, 5) cross-cutting between actions occurring in different locations to create tension around looming deadlines and to invite comparison, and 6) shot/reverse-shot patterns that alternate over-the-shoulder views between interacting characters.

Modern Hollywood movies are, generally, narrative-centred films that feature plausible and consistent fictional worlds. This style of filmmaking

came to prominence in the 1910s and 1920s; prior to this period, films made in the United States were often structured and shot very differently. Before 1906 and pre-Hollywood, US films were, typically, far more exhibitionist in nature; Gunning labels films made in this era "the cinema of attractions" (1986, p.64). Early films produced in this period often contained a variety of entertaining elements, including trick cinematography, gags, vaudeville numbers, and shocking events. Indeed, the "cinema of attractions" was a form of cinema that was specifically intended to stimulate and excite viewers rather than absorb them in coherent storylines featuring causally-driven protagonists, as Gunning explains:

> The cinema of attractions expends little energy creating characters with psychological motivations or individual personality. Making use of both fictional and non-fictional attractions, its energy moves outward towards an acknowledged spectator rather than inward towards the character-based situations essential to classical narrative. (1986, p.59)

Early cinema was a broad, episodic form of entertainment more closely related to the appeals of the amusement park than the drama of theatre. Unlike its classical counterpart, early cinema was also prepared to break the illusion of an enclosed fictional world and to display its own visibility by directly addressing the audience. Though mainstream US films became increasingly plot-driven during the 1910s, for Gunning, the cinema of attractions did not disappear. Rather, it became a component of the narrative-led medium that emerged: "cinema has always pirouetted about the poles of providing a new standard of realist representation and (simultaneously) projecting a sense of unreality, a realm of impalpable phantoms" (1995, p.468). While they may feature in Hollywood films, "unreal attractions" and "impalpable phantoms" remain non-classical in nature in that they are liable to distract the viewer from the narrative, draw attention to the medium, and diverge from realism.

   Though they would appear to subvert the classical paradigm, unreal attractions remain an essential ingredient of many contemporary Hollywood films. David Bordwell's concept of "generic motivation" facilitates the integration of these non-narrative instances of spectacle to the classical model. Whilst the Hollywood paradigm may, at times, appear fairly rigid, specific genres of films are allowed to take certain freedoms with classical narrative principles. Bordwell writes that "each genre creates its own rules, and the spectator judges any given element in the light of its appropriateness to generic conventions" (1985, p.20). For instance, Bordwell claims that mystery films often suspend specific norms associated with classicism:

> The mystery film sometimes makes its narration quite overt: a shot of a shadowy figure or an anonymous hand makes the viewer quite aware of a self-conscious, omniscient, and suppressive narration. Similarly, the mystery film encourages the spectator to erect erroneous first impressions, confounds the viewer's most probable hypothesis, and stresses curiosity as much as suspense… The narration may even be revealed as retrospectively unreliable. (1985, p.40)

These generic quirks and concessions, commonly inserted for the purposes of building tension and surprising the audience, can disrupt the forward drive of a mystery plot. Westerns often feature gunfights that interrupt, or slow down, narrative progression. The intended viewer, however, expects these pauses; gunfights are "generically motivated" and familiar exceptions to the classical paradigm. The spectator knows that once the shootout has concluded, the action is likely to return to the film's central narrative thread. Each mainstream film genre has its own set of conventions: war films feature battles, horror films contain shocking sequences, and action films feature fight and chase scenes. Whilst these generic traits can slow down the narrative process, typically, they rarely impact significantly on a film's compositional unity or clarity; indeed, generic digressions are often prepared for by the plot. Most Hollywood films are able to contain intermittent, generically motivated deviations.

Non-narrative diversions, however, are not so easily absorbed in two particular genres: comedies and musicals. Describing how generic motivation applies to these genres (and melodramas), Bordwell writes,

> [a] conception of the classical film as a 'realist text' tends to see the stylisation of certain films as outrageous and jolting. Yet stylisation, of various sorts, is a convention of many Hollywood genres, most notably the comedy, the musical, and the melodrama. Historically, all three descend from episodic and composite forms in the American popular theatre (e.g., vaudeville, melodrama). The nineteenth-century popular play was commonly interrupted by orchestral interludes, songs, dances, animal acts, magicians, acrobats, and other novelties. To some degree, musicals, melodramas, and comedies have followed in the episodic bent of their forebears. This seldom disturbs us, however, because in such instances the typical multiple motivation of the classical text simply gives way to a more linear series: a scene motivated compositionally, then a song or gag motivated generically, then another scene, and so forth. (1985, p.71)

Whilst Bordwell acknowledges that the musical and the comedy are commonly structured differently from most other genres, he does not appear concerned that the episodic nature of these genres directly opposes the

narrative continuity classicism endorses. This highlights a fundamental flaw with Bordwell's principle of generic motivation in that it calls "classical" the practice of filmmakers–in particular, those making comedy and musical films–who ignore the conventions of the classical model as and when they please.

Under the relaxed conditions of generic motivation, most scenes in mainstream US films can be considered classical in nature, even if they completely disregard the narrative conventions they supposedly adhere to. Indeed, in many films considered by Bordwell as embodying classicism, classical narrative norms are digressed with such regularity that it raises the issue of whether the model is defined so loosely as to be meaningless, with even wholesale rejection of classicism categorizable as classicism as long as a genre motivation can be imagined. Numerous daydream sequences contained within this study do not possess classical narrative traits, and yet, under the terms of generic motivation many nonetheless qualify as classical scenes. Fantasies most commonly occur in comedies and musicals: categories that are bestowed with greater freedoms than most genres with regard to classical conventions. Indeed, within this study, films from the musical and comedy genres are the narratives that test the unity, strength, and limits of the classical model most frequently and to the greatest extent.

Having outlined the norms and conventions of classicism, I will now compare these elements with those contained in a non-classical film: *L'Année dernière à Marienbad* (1961), directed by Alain Resnais. The film, set in a baroque palace hotel, portrays character X (Giorgio Albertazzi) trying to convince character A (Delphine Seyrig) that they once had an affair in Marienbad. A, currently coupled with male character M (Sacha Pitoëff), does not recall the affair X describes. By the conclusion of the film, X and A appear to have formed a romantic connection and leave the hotel together. This, however, is just one possible explanation of the plot. As the film does not employ a linear timeframe, cause-and-effect motivation, or continuity editing, it lacks narrative coherence. X provides voiceover commentary throughout the film, acting as an unreliable narrator who occasionally alters historical events to suit his own desires. For instance, following a scene in which M jealously shoots and kills A, X tells A (in voiceover): "That's not the right ending. It's you alive I must have." X proceeds to erase the shooting from the narrative and A remains alive. True to classical principles, Narrator X is a goal-oriented leading protagonist (he wishes to be coupled with A) who acts in a realistic manner. The other characters in the hotel, however, including A and M, behave as if automata. The dehumanised

guests around X seem resigned to a perpetual, pleasant but meaningless cycle of existence within the confines of the palace.

L'Année does not attempt to represent reality in the manner of classical films; for example, the contrived, stilted performances of the hotel guests are a clear rejection of naturalism. Occasionally these catatonic characters come to a momentary standstill, pausing the forward progression of the story whilst laying bare the narrative device employed. The characters only remain motionless for 3 to 4 seconds, but for audiences accustomed to perpetual motion and forward momentum this feels like a long period of time. *L'Année* features numerous temporal jumps between the past and present; continued conversations between X and A regularly occur across different times and locations. Viewers are also intermittently presented with only brief fragments of character's conversations, some of which are partially drowned out by non-diegetic music. All of these techniques encourage disorientation and confusion in the audience. *L'Année* treats the vast majority of classical conventions as unimportant. Indeed, the film only conforms to two classical principles: the central protagonist is goal-oriented, and a secondary narrative contains a heterosexual romance story. *L'Année* serves as a useful example of how a non-classical film can differ greatly from a classical film.

Genre and daydreams

The following pages outline the principal conventions that govern the three most common genres present within this study: comedies, family films, and musicals. This section investigates how these genres sit with classical narrative principles and examines how the specific characteristics of each category corresponds with the common features of cinematic daydreams. Of the 44 films containing daydream sequences in this corpus, 31 are intended to make the audience laugh; this includes all of the comedies, comedy-dramas, and family film-comedy hybrids present within this study. Comedy, both as a mode and a genre, commonly subverts classical Hollywood principles. Eitzen claims that Bordwell's classical narrative model can be reduced to one question: "What is the character going to do now?" (1997, p.395). For Eitzen, it is difficult to align comedy with Bordwell's classical paradigm because humorous acts and occurrences rarely attempt to answer this query:

> What makes us laugh at movies – pratfalls, jokes, exaggerations, incongruities, the violation of conventions, silly and unexpected behaviour, and so on – generally has little to do with our interest in the goal-oriented actions of

characters. It has very little to do with the question, 'What is the character going to do now?' (1997, p.401)

Comic moments seldom advance the stories in which they feature. Eitzen has compiled a list of ways in which, gags specifically, disrupt plot progression and expose narrative as a device:

> Because of their unpredictability, they [gags] tend to complicate viewers' efforts to figure out what is going to happen next. Because they violate viewers' expectations about what is plausible and likely, they tend to call attention to themselves. Because they focus attention backwards, on characters' reactions to surprising misunderstandings and mishaps, rather than forward, on characters' goals, they tend to interrupt the impetus that drives the narrative. The very exaggerations and incongruities that make these moments funny also tend to interfere with the impression of a plausible and coherent fictional world. (1997, p.400)

Reading these observations, one could, quite reasonably, reach the conclusion that comic moments and gags are inherently anti-classical. However, according to Bordwell,

> farcical forms of comedy permit almost anything to happen next, but there the improbability and open-endedness of permissible hypotheses are motivated as generic conventions, and we adjust our expectations accordingly. (1985, p.38)

For Bordwell, Hollywood classicism permits comedy to bend its rules; comic infringements, therefore, are not considered violations. Indeed, the conventions of classicism are regularly bypassed in humorous daydream sequences due to this form of generic motivation.

  Classical films typically provide the audience with what they expect to occur next in the narrative. Comedy confounds those presumptions to create incongruous and implausible events. Daydream sequences similarly play with viewer expectations of what is likely to happen next in the plot. For instance, confusion is often created over the narrational status of a daydream, leaving the viewer uncertain whether they are watching objective reality or a subjective fantasy. This process requires a film's general adherence to classical principles for viewer expectations to be intermittently undermined. Because comic moments and daydreams commonly employ similar tactics of surprise it is, perhaps, no coincidence that so many cinematic fantasies are also comedy scenes. In comedies, the dynamic between comic and narrative components varies from film to film.

Sometimes humorous events are smoothly integrated into the storyline, whilst at other times gags are completely unrelated to the plot. For Bordwell, whilst instances of comedy can cause minor disturbances, the classical narrative structure is able to contain and absorb them. No matter how efficiently it is incorporated into the plot, however, comedy tends to stand out from the surrounding action and draw attention to itself and the medium: Bordwell's paradigm underplays the disruptive effect humour can have.

Jerry Palmer has developed the comic theory "the logic of the absurd" in which he posits that all instances of comedy combine plausible and implausible elements in unequal measure:

> The essential point about the logic of the absurd is that its insistence upon the relationship between plausibility and implausibility necessarily involves placing the comic moment in a specific relationship with a narrative which has criteria of plausibility, yet at the same time uses the element of implausibility, which also derives from the same narrative structure, to show how the enunciative mechanism emerges within the flow of the narrative. (1987, p.147)

For Palmer, whilst plausibility is always present in comic moments, implausibility is often dominant, and it is this dominance that allows us to perceive the events as comic, rather than poetic or tragic. Daydream sequences in mainstream US films often similarly contain both plausible and implausible components. Typically, the objective of a fantasy is plausible; protagonists within this corpus rarely daydream of acquiring things that are beyond the realms of possibility, like gaining a superpower, for instance. Instead, they tend to desire people, characteristics, and situations that are (just) within their grasp. The manner in which cinematic daydreamers imagine attaining these objectives is, however, often highly implausible. For example, numerous male characters within this study fantasise about becoming romantically involved with a female object of their desire. This, generally, is a plausible, achievable goal. However, the manner in which these men internally envisage becoming coupled with these women is often absurd. For instance, occasionally male daydreamers imagine the women they are attracted to–some of whom they have never actually met–becoming uncontrollably overcome with lust and desire in their presence. As with Palmer's logic of the absurd, implausible occurrences within these internal scenarios consume the more plausible elements of these scenes. Whilst the objective of the daydream may be achievable, the far-fetched, overly idealistic, and clichéd manner in which the character imagines realising their wish renders the scene ridiculous.

Because they typically constitute the same elements that form the "logic of the absurd," it is, again, little wonder that many cinematic daydreams are humorous.

   The family film, a category that first emerged in Hollywood in the 1930s, is a genre that is designed to appeal to both children and their parents. The corpus of films compiled to undertake this study contains 12 family films: *A Christmas Story* (1983), *The Muppets Take Manhattan* (1984), *Shark Tale* (2004), *Madagascar* (2005), *Toy Story 3* (2010), *Despicable Me* (2010), *Madagascar 3: Europe's Most Wanted* (2012), *Frozen* (2013), *Despicable Me 2* (2013), *Minions* (2015), *Inside Out* (2015), and *Despicable Me 3* (2017). The nature of family films can vary greatly. For instance, some family films, like *The Railway Children* (1970), *Watership Down* (1978), and *E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial* (1982), are essentially dramatic narratives. Other family films, however, like *Home Alone* (1990), *Shrek* (2001), and *Elf* (2003), are family film-comedy hybrids (i.e., family films that are intended to make the audience laugh). All of the family films contained within this study are comic hybrids. This is, perhaps, unsurprising as there would appear to be a clear connection between daydream sequences and comedy.

   Whilst family films can take many different forms, Brown asserts that movies within this genre typically feature the following recurring elements:

> The reaffirmation of nation, kinship and community; the exclusion and/or defeat of disruptive social elements; the minimisation of "adult" themes, such as representations of sexuality, violence, crime, profanity, drug abuse, poverty, gore, etc.; and a story which, while acknowledging the possibility of an unpleasant or undesirable outcome, is finally upbeat, morally and emotionally straightforward and supportive of the social status quo. (2013, p.29)

The family films contained within this corpus all feature the components Brown lists above. Although there is no specific plot, location, theme, or character associated with the genre (as is the case for the Western, for example), there is the strong expectation for the viewer of family films that they will deliver what Brown calls "a familiar package of emotional uplift and moral wholesomeness" (2013, p.30). Because they target a younger, more impressionable audience, family films are often moralistic in tone. Storylines often feature clearly-stated life lessons that are learned by initially misguided leading protagonists. Brown also posits that Hollywood family films commonly reflect certain ideologies that are enmeshed within

the US national character, including the importance of family and community, and the "American Dream" of meritocratic self-advancement (2012, p.220). As Chapter 4 of this study will show, many of the family-oriented narratives contained within this corpus feature self-centred daydreamers who eventually learn to focus less on their own wants and more on the needs of others.

The majority of the family films contained within this study are computer-animated films. Over the past two decades the computer-animated film has become the dominant form of the Hollywood family film, in terms of commercial and critical success. Peter Krämer highlights the regularity with which Pixar, and other computer-animation production companies, successfully develop entirely new narratives (i.e., stories that are neither adapted from other sources nor are sequels) for their family films (2017, p.10). Highlighting that between 1992 and 2001, half of the films based on original scripts in the US box office top ten were animated features, Krämer writes:

> While for many decades the vast majority of Hollywood's animated features had been adapted from fairy tales and classic children's books, since the mid-1990s animation has become the area most likely to generate original scripts which become the basis for films able to compete, at least at the US box office, with otherwise completely dominant adaptations and sequels. (2017, p.10).

All of the computer-animated family films contained within this study, bar *Frozen* (2013) (which is based loosely on Hans Christian Andersen's fairy story *The Snow Queen* (1845)), are founded on new stories that have been specifically written for these films. *Frozen* aside, the remaining nine computer-animated films in this corpus cover various modern-day issues in narratives that commonly occur in contemporary urban settings (even *Madagascar* opens in Manhattan). These new stories typically reflect the evolving modern-day world, specifically with regard to fashion, the effects of globalisation, and advances in technology. For Brown,

> [f]ar from being creatively bankrupt, such films [computer-animated family films] are often celebrated for their ingenuity, providing multiple layers of narrative appeal that reward recognition of current trends, memes and representational elements in contemporary Western popular culture. (2017, pp.21–38).

Supporting Brown's claim, the computer-animated family films contained within this text acknowledge recent cultural developments in Western society and engage with contemporary ideas.

One notion all of the computer-animated films in this study recognise is that humans (and other beings imbued with sentience) are daydreamers; indeed, these contemporary narratives, typically, embrace the activity. Between *Shark Tale* (2004)–the first computer-animated family film to feature in this investigation–and *The Shape of Water* (2017)–the most recent movie analysed in this study–this corpus features 22 films. Of these 22 movies, 10 are computer-animated family films. Computer-animated family films are, therefore, statistically more likely than any other Hollywood film category to contain a daydream sequence. Current family films' positive take on daydreaming could be linked to contemporary attitudes and educational initiatives that encourage children to use their imaginations more fully. Many experts now believe that daydreaming can be a vital component in the creative process, specifically in the development of new ideas. In keeping with this outlook, many computer-animated family films actively endorse imaginative play: a key component of most daydreams. This type of creative thinking is displayed by Riley (Kaitlyn Dias) in *Inside Out* (2015) when she plays with her imaginary friend Bing Bong (Richard Kind) in daydreamed visions. In these internal scenarios Riley imagines that she and Bing Bong are in a musical band, play upside-down tag, and ride together on a "song-powered" go-kart.

The musical genre also includes unique conventions that lend themselves to daydream sequences. Six films contained within this corpus are musical films: *On the Town* (1949), *An American in Paris* (1951), *Grease* (1978), *Chicago* (2002), *Sweeney Todd* (2007), and *La La Land* (2016). The following 11 films analysed for this study–though not categorised as musicals–contain one or more musical numbers: *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty* (1947), *The Muppets Take Manhattan* (1984), *Shark Tale* (2004), *Madagascar* (2004), *(500) Days of Summer* (2009)*, Madagascar 3: Europe's Most Wanted* (2012), *Frozen* (2013), *Despicable Me 2* (2013), *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty* (2013), *Despicable Me 3* (2017), and *The Shape of Water* (2017).

The musical film developed out of the stage musical following the emergence of sound film technology. Stage musicals exist in a variety of formats, including operettas, revues, integrated musicals, musical comedies, musical dramas, and rock musicals. The essential ingredient that unifies these different formats is the presence of some type of music, song and/or

dance performance. Musical films contain elements adapted from musical theatre, most notably the propensity for characters to break into song and dance numbers that express their thoughts and emotions. In his analysis of the dynamic between performance and story in musical films, Mueller lists the different narrative functions that musical numbers serve; from those *"which are completely irrelevant to the plot,"* to those *"which contribute to the spirit or theme"* (1984, p.28) or *"which enrich the plot, but do not advance it,"* to those *"which advance the plot"* (ibid, p.29) (emphases in original). As Mueller observes, musicals can and often do prioritise the insertion of memorable production numbers over narrative integration and coherence. For instance, at certain points in Busby Berkeley musicals such as *Golddiggers of 1933* (1933) and *Dames* (1934), the plot functions merely as a structuring device with which to move the film from one spectacular musical number to the next. Many musical films are arranged to showcase the specific talents of their star performers. For example, the extended dance performance that accompanies the number "Top Hat, White Tie and Tails" in *Top Hat* (1935) clearly exhibits Fred Astaire's ability as a dancer, whilst films such as *Bathing Beauty* (1944) and *Million Dollar Mermaid* (1952) are designed to display Esther Williams' swimming and diving prowess.

With regard to Hollywood musicals Cohan argues that

> [t]he musical needs to be approached as a genre which typically and inevitably sets its impossible numbers in some kind of dialectic relation with narrative, heightening, disrupting, revising, or multiplying the codes of cinematic realism ordinarily determining a film's diegesis. (2001, p.2)

Cohan's assertion that musical numbers are typically in dialectic relation with narrative is largely borne out by the musical films within this study. It should be noted, however, that not all of the song and dance set-pieces in this corpus work against the flow of the plot. *Chicago* (2002), in particular, features musical numbers that both progress the storyline and develop character (more on which shortly). Cohan is right to assert that musical numbers typically subvert principles of realism. Song and dance performances are commonly anti-realist in the following ways: 1) people rarely burst into song in real life, 2) whilst the singing is usually diegetic, the musical accompaniment is typically non-diegetic, and 3) non-central characters and extras often sing backing vocals or dance in choreographed synchronicity. This rejection of realism exposes the narrative device and reminds the spectator that they are watching a film with very specific generic conventions; for these reasons Altman calls the musical the most "reflexive of all the Hollywood genres" (1987, p.7). According to Bordwell,

the typical Hollywood musical film still adheres to classical principles; violations (i.e., pauses in narrative progression, breaks with realism etc.) are commonly considered generically motivated. As with his view of comic moments, however, Bordwell underplays how disruptive the insertion of a musical number can be. For instance, *The Band Wagon* (1953) features a 12-minute musical dance performance parodying the crime fiction of Mickey Spillane that has no bearing on the film's main plotline. This lengthy separation from the central narrative thread does feel like a short film within a film. Like instances of comedy, musical numbers typically stand out from the surrounding action, disrupt the flow of the narrative, and draw the attention of the spectator to the medium.

Moments of musical spectacle are often clearly separated from the linear flow of a film's story. This separation can, occasionally, be somewhat jarring, even for a genre in which narrative deviation is expected. When musical numbers appear detached from a film's central narrative thread, filmmakers often seek to use a device that justifies a break away from the main storyline: daydreams are often employed in musical films for this purpose. Theoretically, in a fantasy anything is possible, including musical numbers that have little connection with previous narrative events. This corpus contains numerous song and dance routines that take the form of daydreams that, in turn, justify the inclusion of musical numbers that might otherwise appear unrelated and disruptive.

In *Genre* (1980), Steve Neale marks out the musical as being, typically, less "real," in terms of narrative content and style, than many other film genres:

> It should firstly be noted that some genres are conventionally considered to be 'more fictional' than others. Gangster films and war films, for example, tend to be judged according to strict canons of realism, whereas the musical, the gothic horror film and the phantasy/adventure film (i.e., films like *The Thief of Bagdad* [1940] or *Jason and the Argonauts* [1963]) are recognised as either being more 'poetic' or else as involving more of the faculty of 'imagination,' as being closer to 'phantasy' than to 'reality.' (1980, p.37)

The musicals contained within this corpus support Neale's claim. None of the films attempts to depict objective reality all of the time; all feature characters who employ their "faculty of 'imagination'" in the development of daydream scenarios; and, what could be "closer to 'phantasy'" than the insertion of fantasies in each narrative? If musical films are, by design, more apt to represent fictional, subjective, and psychological realities, then it is

no coincidence that they are also more liable to contain daydream sequences than genres like gangster and war films that typically abide by realist principles.

Musical numbers are not the only form of spectacle to feature in the daydream sequences within this corpus. At other times instances of comedian comedy (defined later in this chapter), elaborate costume design, extravagant set design, fight scenes, celebrity appearances, displays of female bodies, blood and gore, and special effects are present. Definitions of cinematic spectacle include: "the production of images at which we might wish to stop and stare" (King, 2000, p.4), "what will thrill, amaze and astonish" (Lewis, 2012, p.101), and cinematography presenting a certain body type as having "to-be-looked-at-ness" (Mulvey, 2004, p.16). These descriptions imply that spectacle is a cinematic form of display that is in some way different from the majority of the film's action, creating a departure from the purposive action that usually comes with the passing of story-space time in a film. It is worth noting that King's definition ("stop and stare") describes a ceasing of movement, implying that spectators are encouraged to briefly disengage from the flow of the narrative. Classicists generally regard non-narrative components like instances of spectacle to be artistically-motivated, excessive, and distracting. For Bordwell, spectacular moments that display technical virtuosity are instances of "showmanship" intended to make the audience "appreciate the artificiality of what is seen" (1985, p.21). Calling attention to a work's own artfulness in this manner challenges the notion that Hollywood films employ a transparent representational regime. For Bordwell, though instances of non-narrational artistry have the potential to be disruptive, generally they are absorbed by the plot: "genuine breakdowns in classical narration are abrupt and fleeting, surrounded by conventional passages. In Hollywood cinema, there are no subversive films, only subversive moments" (1985, p.81). Whilst Bordwell is correct to highlight the important structuring and containing role plot often plays in Hollywood films, the "subversive moments" he writes of are a great deal more common and impactful than his narrative-dominated paradigm assumes.

Having described the classical Hollywood model and outlined the characteristics of the most common genres contained within this study, I will now investigate whether daydreams in mainstream US films generally abide by classical narrative principles. Typically, scenes that observe the paradigm: 1) advance the story, and/or 2) develop character, 3) contain narration that is communicative, and 4) feature narration that does not draw

attention to itself. Daydream sequences will either be considered as adhering to classical narrative principles (i.e., they observe conventions 1–4 listed above), or as subverting classical narrative principles (they contravene one or more of conventions 1–4 listed above). Analysing a number of cinematic fantasies as case studies, this chapter will examine what purpose daydreams that circumvent the classical narrative model generally serve. As mentioned, classical principles are often bypassed under the proviso of generic motivation; this chapter will also consider whether the classical model is too flexible with regard to musicals and comedies and assess whether these genres are structurally suited to being part of the classical Hollywood paradigm. The following section analyses daydream sequences that adhere to classicism and advance the stories of the films in which they feature by functioning as inciting incidents, key incidents, and turning points (all described below).

Daydreams that adhere to classical narrative principles

Daydream sequences typically embody a clear separation from the film's objective world, and from a narrative perspective may therefore appear to be inherently anti-classical. This, however, is not necessarily the case: a number of the daydreams in this corpus are significant to plot with some even functioning as "plot points." According to Field, a plot point is "any incident, episode or event that hooks into the action and spins it around into another direction" (2005, p.14). Plot points usually have a considerable impact on the protagonist's story and, consequently, the film's broader narrative. In plot point scenes characters either shift closer to, or further away from, their primary objectives; either way the story advances. Field states that two specific types of plot point–the "inciting incident" and the "key incident"–form the basis of every successful Hollywood narrative. The inciting incident "(1) … sets the story in motion; and (2) … grabs the attention of the reader and audience" (2005, p.131). The inciting incident–which commonly occurs at an early stage of a film–typically reveals something new and important about the protagonist, whilst providing some information regarding the theme of the plot.

The inciting incident leads indirectly to the key incident, a scene that Field argues is the film's most important dramatic event. For Field, the key incident is "the hub of the story line, the engine that powers the story forward. The *key incident* reveals to us what the story is about" (2005, p.133) (emphasis in original). Typically, the key incident provides the viewer with crucial information about the central character's journey. The