

A movie critique of midnight in paris by woody allen essay example

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Midnight in Paris is written and directed by Woody Allen and in a romantic fantasy based film that was released in 2011. It primarily stars Owen Wilson and Rachel McAdams as a couple who want strikingly different things from life, and this leads to resentment and distance in their relationship. Gil, played by Owen Wilson is a partially failed Hollywood screenwriter, who goes for a vacation to Paris with his fiancée Inez to rekindle their relationship. She forces him to stick to mundane screenwriting, while he personally prefers to write a novel. Moreover, while he wants to move in Paris, she believes it is best that they live in Malibu. Due to these deep seated conflicts, Gil escapes to his daydreams that go back to Paris in the 1920s. He falls in love during these dreams, meets Picasso and Ernest Hemingway as well. He constantly travels back to the Paris of 1920s during midnight and this further distances him from his family and his fiancée.

The film has received critical acclaim and appreciation primarily because it handles a dark topic such as growing tired of the one you love even before marriage, in a very light-hearted and comedic manner. However, approaching the film in terms of the editing techniques, shooting processes and the mise-en-scene, a whole new dimension comes alive. In terms of mise-en-scene, the costumes, locations and placement of props are just perfect and depicts the entire mood the film is supposed to convey. In the beginning the film incorporates a montage of various shots from the colorful streets and shops of Paris to inform the audience about the location of significance of the entire film. Moreover, the establishing shot that the film begins with, uses the concept of deep focus and shows three various landmarks to highlight the importance of the location where the scene will be

filmed. He uses Sienne River in the foreground, Alexander Bridge in the mid ground and Eiffel Tower in the background. This shot remains the focus for one or two minutes to signify that the entire plot revolves not only around the characters, but also on the location of Paris. Furthermore, when Dil was in the real world, things around him were more organized and they were created in a manner that fit in with reality. The costumes worn by his wife and him, were modern and fit in with the persona of an average couple, living in Malibu during the late 2000s. However, the entire scenario changed perfectly, along with the music, when Dil shifted to his dream world. In his dream world, things were in accordance with the 1920s. The props, costumes and color were more vibrant, sketchy and crowded than in reality. This imparted the idea that the dream world is less focused than reality. Moreover, the colors and costumes were not only vibrant to show how Paris was in the 1920s, but also showed the color that lacked in Dil's daily life. It showed the reason why he wanted a break from the real world and escaped to the dream world, to live the life that he wanted.

The lighting techniques used in the film were warm and radiant, instead of being stark white and yellow. A particular scene where Dil sits in a restaurant with his fiancée, shows that the background is red-flecked wallpaper and warm red toned lights are emanating from the scene. This adds warmth and reality to the scene, rather than seeming like a studio setting with a thousand spotlights. This makes the relationship of the characters more relatable for the audience, rather than making it seem staged. The use of warm colors is accompanied with steady camera movements and reality based camera placement. Rather using quick and quirky pans, Allen makes

use of steady and slow movements because that is how we humans perceive movement in reality. Reality is his prime focus, even though, Dil constantly escapes to the dream world, it is reality for him as a character, and that is the feeling the movie aims to evoke in the audience. The placement of the camera is more focused on capturing eye level shots. Since humans perceive everything at eye-level, it looks real and more believable. Dutch shots or extreme close-up shots are not made use of because they are associated with abnormality, something out of the ordinary and the fantasy world. Therefore, the movie did not aim to sell the idea of living in a dream and escaping reality. Lastly, the shots weren't abrupt and didn't shift the focus suddenly to appear haphazard. They were systematic and more structured, just like they are in our minds and through our eye-sight.

Not many formal and technical editing techniques are made use of in *Midnight in Paris* and the concept of classical cutting is present throughout. The classic cut is the most natural form of moving to another shot and is similar to the blinking of an eye. This strategy has been used for both Dil's reality in Paris and his dreams, whereas dreams are usually more phased out and tend to fade in and out rather than shift with a cut. The continuity edit is something that has been made use of and holds significance for the dream world because there isn't much continuation in our fantasies. This happens without any explanation or linkages from one shot to another, but what is commendable about this film is that it made sure the audience realized that there was continuity present in Dil's dream state as well.

On an ending note, whatever the strategies have been utilized by Woody Allen, whether they are of the *mise-en-scene*, camera movement or

placement, they are to evoke an emotional response based on reality within the audience. The dream world was real for Dil, and we are placed in his mind to show us that the dreams were almost as real as life itself for him. The imagery is lush and vivid, which not only makes it appealing for the audience due to the subject matter, but due to the iconic and trendsetting locations of Paris used as the primary sets throughout.

Works Cited

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