

Your Name: Cole McDonald
Title of Film: Serendipity
Year: 2001
Director: Peter Chelsom
Reason why you chose this film:

This film takes the romantic comedy genre and blends it with the melodrama genre in a much more intellectual style than other members of these genres tend to espouse. This appeals to me deeply as it touches both aspects of what I feel a movie should do: make you feel and make you think.

Film Segmentation and Analysis Project

I. PLOT SEGMENTATION

A. New York, Christmas time

1. Jonathon meets Sara by chance
2. They have a romantic date and decide that fate should decide the outcome of their encounter
3. Two tokens of fate are set into motion

B. "A few years later"

1. Jonathon is getting married to another woman
2. We find Sara is engaged to be married as well to someone else
3. Both are consumed by their chance meeting

C. Back in new york

1. They search for each other
2. Lots of near misses
3. They find each other at the site of their encounter years ago
4. Happily ever after!

II. SHOT ANALYSIS

1. See attached

III. COMPOSITION

1. Frame: The framing is open throughout the scene to position the subjects in the greater world of New York City, while keeping tighter frames to emphasize the burgeoning emotional connection between the two characters.
2. Space (cluttered/empty): In relation to the rest of the contents of the frame, the subjects are kept large, filling the frame during the vast majority of this scene. This serves to show their relationship to one another and hint at their inner views of one another in relation to their surroundings. The spaces are New York street locations filled with extras to make them seem natural and plausible as real locations in New York. The extras keep a wide enough berth, however, to place our heroes in their own little world.

3. Sets: The sets are designed to emphasize the aspect of christmas time on the streets of New York City. Trees are strung with copious amounts of small white christmas bulbs to give a fairy-tale background as the cinematography pushes the points of light out of focus. Streets are lined with snow along the edges and the few added pieces of actual set (the newsstand and the Tuba tree) are built to either serve the story or to add to the Christmas feel of the segment.
4. Design: Using existing locations to film this scene, the filmmaker has done most of the design to dress existing structures to fit naturally into the romantic mood of the scene while emphasizing its fairy-tale otherworldliness. Out of focus strings of lights in the background and Winter and Christmas images provide a sense of location, time and intimacy.
5. View of characters: The characters are framed in mostly over the shoulder conversations as they discuss fate's role in their meeting and continued relationship. This provides a feeling of connectedness between the characters by keeping them in frame when we switch angles to the other participant in the conversation.
6. Movement of character(s): The characters in this scene are changing between moving walk and talk shots and stationary conversation shots during heightened moments of the conversation between the two of them. The moving backgrounds are all similar in design to one another providing a scrolling montage of images of winter and Christmas imbuing the scene with the feelings of togetherness and family which Christmas represents for many. The filmmaker uses this to give a sense of these two belonging together as a family and is a shortcut to getting the audience to accept them as a couple and the need for them to stay together.

IV. CINEMATOGRAPHY

1. Shot: The majority of the shots in this scene consist of mid shots keeping the audience close to the characters and providing an emotional connection between the characters and the audience. The points where the camera pulls back or pushes forward are to detail the environment (showing the newsstand across the street) or inserts of pertinent information within the context of the scene (the \$5 bill being written upon).
2. Lens: At the beginning of the scene, the Cinematographer is using Longer, telephoto lenses to compress the space and place the two lovers in their own little world. The long lenses also help to emphasize the short depth of field and cause the backgrounds to appear more out of focus and dreamlike. The compressed space makes the scene more intimate. As the fates continue to intervene, the Cinematographer moves to a wider field of view bringing our star crossed lovers back into the real world, de-emphasizing the out of focus backgrounds and making the subjects fit more naturalistically in the real world in terms of size and distance.
3. Focus: The subjects are in critical focus, while the foregrounds and backgrounds are pushed out of the focal range. This effect is further heightened by the use of long lenses to grow the circles of confusion making the backgrounds appear even more out of focus. This effect makes the subjects seem as if the world

- around them has become the backdrop to a supernatural experience in which the two of them are in perfect connection with their surroundings, which is opposed by the blurriness which emphasizes what I like to call the “high school dance” vision wherein all of the surroundings take on a blurry aspect as the world freezes around the participants who become the only moving inhabitants in a world which exists only to them.
4. **Angles:** The steadicam operator placed the camera just below eye level on all of the shots making the two seem slightly larger than life throughout all of the walk and talk sections of the scene. In the frames which weren't part of the conversations, the shots all seemed to be cool shots described by the environment. The overhead shot of Jonathon crossing the street may have been indicative of a higher power peering down to match that moment in the plot where the power of fate was just put into play for the lovers.
 5. **Movement:** Almost the entire scene was shot using a steadicam. This allows more freedom for the camera to follow the action down the streets giving the graceful feel of a dolly shot with a slightly more floating and intimate feel to it. Within the locked moments, it causes the background to shift ever so slightly in parallax with the subjects. This adds to the fantasy, otherworldly, fairy-tale sense of this moment in the film.
 6. **Lighting :** due to the supernatural nature of the subject matter, this film uses unusual lighting for a romantic comedy. It uses the softlight, but uses it in a low key method which adds a moddiness and intimacy as if the subjects were constantly walking past store windows at night...which is primarily what they are doing making the lighting very naturalistic. This helps keep the characters firmly planted in the real world and the darkness adds to the intimacy of the scene.
 7. **Color:** This scene uses a very dark palette to emphasize that it is night time. At this point in the narrative, the characters are to have spent an entire perfect day together starting at a department store and ending at the Waldorf Astoria. At the end of this once in a lifetime encounter, the filmmaker is using a warmer palette to emphasize the intimacy of the connection between the two leads in the film.
 8. **Special effects:** There are no special effects in this scene.
 9. **Types of shot:** Most of this scene is a walk and talk with two characters shot in mids to keep the audience connected to and invested in the characters' relationship.

V. EDITING

1. **Position of segment:** Before this scene is a wonderful first and conceivably only date between two star-crossed lovers who are in relationships with other people. This scene is the tail end of their tryst as they debate the meaning of their meeting and the future of their relationship and the role fate has to play in that context. After this scene is a surreal test of their fatedness followed by their inevitable separation from one another.
2. **Transition techniques:** As a straight romantic comedy, This film uses straight cuts and fades.

3. Editing: This is cut in the familiar Hollywood continuity style. This links historically to all of the earliest romances even though the topic is very intellectually presented, creating an expectation in the audience based on those nostalgic films.
4. Length of Individual shots: Most of the shots are about 2 seconds in length. This makes a bit of a swaying, rocking, soothing expectation during the conversational sections of the scene. The moments of action when the fates begin to play their hands, the editor uses 1 second clips to intensify the audiences experience of time. Points in the conversation where salient points are being made or reactions to the conversation are very important, the editor spends more time on them, up to 10 seconds in places. All shots in editing are played in accordance with how the audience is allowed to fixate on a shot bringing up questions and solving quandries with in their mind. These are then replaced or solved with the next shot building a strata of questions and answers within the context of the story (Walter Murch, In the blink on an Eye).
5. Rhythm/Pace: See length of shots above.

VI. SOUND

1. Music: The only music in this scene is the diegetic tubas playing “Joy to the World” in the middle of the scene. This adds to the naturalistic approach the director is taking with the rest of this scene.
2. Sound Effects: The soundscape presented in this scene is one of New York city street at night: Cars and traffic, crowds, a bit of wind for the snow and naturalistic foley for on camera action. Again, the filmmaker seems to be making a push to create a naturalistic environment for the conclusion of our little fairy-tale date.
3. Dialogue or Silence: This scene is first and foremost a walk and talk within which the conflict is setup for the remainder of the film. The intellectual banter between the two main characters consists of Jonathon trying to get Sara's number after a truly magical date together. She is much more coy with her dialog and is more resolved to let fate decide their futures.
4. Voice over/ Narration: There is no VO work in this scene.

VII. AUDIENCE ADDRESS

1. Does the film acknowledge the spectator or do events transpire as if no one were present? The fourth wall is firmly defined in this film. This world is neatly contained within the imaginary world they are creating on the screen.
2. How does the film position the spectator vis-à-vis the onscreen events?: This film puts the viewer in a third person perspective as if watching the action from within the scene, but not as a first person point of view. This adds to the audiences involvement with the characters and the story and makes the outcome of the scene personal for them.
3. Does the film appeal to certain expectations, i.e. generic conventions? This movie is a very “straight” movie within the romantic comedy genre. The hero and heroine are clearly defined and introduced to us in the opening scene

together, then torn apart by circumstance and fight their way back together being helped by fate.

4. Does the film address contemporary social issues? This film makes a strong statement that fate plays a role in our lives, but that we have to take the initiative to have those fates realized.

VIII. ADDITIONAL OBSERVATIONS

1. Acting (stylized/naturalistic): The acting in this movie is very naturalistic except for a few key roles which are peppered in for comedic value, it is a romantic comedy after all.
2. Costumes (symbolic use of clothes): At the beginning of the film, the two star-crossed lovers symbolically start out by both grabbing the same glove off of a rack in a department store, as if they are holding hands upon meeting which plants the seed for the audience that they are meant for one another. The rest of the costuming is very naturalistic, making it possible for the characters to represent anyone at all, allowing the audience to put themselves in the characters' shoes.
3. Social and cultural codes: This scene takes place as a slow, languishing day long date in New York City, the city that never sleeps and never stops moving. This juxtaposition describes to the audience how engaged the two characters really are with one another on this particular day.
4. Recurrent stylistic (visual or oral) devices that are typical for protagonist? Fate is mentioned many times within this relatively short scene. This is the pivotal scene wherein the fates are called upon to decide the outcome of this relationship.
5. Use of genre expectations (comedy, melodrama, western, documentary, etc.): This is a romantic comedy. It puts two star-crossed lovers in a difficult situation and forces them to strive to resolve the situation. Humor is used to keep the mood light through witty banter and a couple of ridiculous characters.

IX. NARRATIVE

1. Describe briefly what you see in the selected sequence.: In this sequence, we see two people at the end of a chance encounter which turned into a date discussing the role of fate in their future. Jonathon tries to get Sara's number and she will only give it to him if fate intervenes to bring them back together. She has him put his name and number on a five dollar bill and buys something with it putting it into rotation to see if it comes back into her hands. Her number goes into a book which she will sell to a used book store somewhere in New York for him to try to find. We see that this is winter and nearing Christmas by the lights in the trees and the red and green displays of Christmas cheer.
2. What is the filmmaker trying to communicate in this sequence?: That fate can play a role in everyday life through little events. In this scene specifically, the event of a passing truck kicking up wind blowing paper around and whisking her number from his hands.
3. How do the five channels of information in film—visual image, print, speech, music, sound effects—work together to communicate this message? Speech is the

dominant purveyor of the effects of fate, but the interaction of fate with the world is shown through the visual image of random happenstance being interpreted by the people involved in the event. The iconic use of the song “Joy to the World” in the midst of this scene brings forth images of elation and overwhelming emotion. It occurs at the moment the main character achieves his objective within the scene...to get her phone number, kind of. The sound effects place this fairy-tale firmly in the real world by creating a naturalistic soundscape for the scene. Print does not play a role in this scene.

4. Try to determine what function and significance this segment has for the film as a whole and your understanding of it (foreshadowing, climax, transition, exposition, etc.): This scene sets the struggle for the whole rest of the film. It takes the two main characters from their chance encounter at the beginning of the film and tears them apart with only slight hope for re-unification in the future. This is the pivotal moment in their lives when fate has set in motion the future and nature of their relationship. The film implies that fate will always make the right thing happen in the end, but there is struggle on the part of the participants to get to the point where they can take advantage of that moment. This scene is the launching of that ship for this couple.

Shot	Time	Size	Type	Motion	Subject	Description
1	15:51	MCU	OTS	Locked	John	Writing phone # on scrap of paper
2	15:54	MCU	OTS	Locked	Kate	
3	16:00	WIDE	EST	Locked		Across street – Truck passes, blows paper
4	16:02	MCU	OTS	Locked	John	Reaction shot
5	16:04	FULL	2-Shot	Handheld		Loses paper in paper tornado kicked up by truck
6	16:09	MCU	OTS	Locked		
7	16:10	MCU	OTS	Locked		
8	16:11	MCU	OTS	Locked		
9	16:13	MID	Walk & Talk		Leading	
10	16:25	MID	OTS	Stop Track		
11	16:29	MID	SINGLE	Handheld		
12	16:38	MID	OTS	Handheld		
13	16:44	MID	OTS	Reframe Right		
14	16:45	MID	OTS	Handheld		
15	16:47	XCU	INSERT	Locked		
16	16:48	MID	OTS	Handheld		
17	16:50	MID	SINGLE	Reframe Right		
18	16:51	LONG	EST	Locked		
19	16:54	MID	SINGLE	Handheld		
20	16:55	XCU	INSERT	Handheld		
21	16:57	XCU	INSERT	Locked		
22	16:58	XCU	INSERT	Locked		
23	16:59	CU	SINGLE	Locked		
24	17:00	LONG	EST	Locked		
25	17:02	MID	SINGLE	Locked		
26	17:04	LONG	OVERHEAD		Locked	
27	17:06	FULL	2-Shot	Locked		
28	17:16	LONG	CUTAWAY		Tilt Down	
29	17:21	LONG	2-Shot	Reframe Down		
30	17:22	MID	OTS	Locked		
31	17:25	MID	OTS	Locked		

32	17:28	MID	OTS	Locked	
33	17:29	WIDE	CUTAWAY	Locked	
34	17:32	FULL	REVERSE	Locked	
35	17:35	CU	INSERT	Locked	
36	17:36	MID	OTS	Locked	
37	17:40	MID	OTS	Track Right	
38	17:42	MID	OTS	Track Back	
39	17:44	MID	OTS	Track Forward	
40	17:50	MID	SINGLE	Track Back	
41	17:52	LONG	2-Shot	Track Right	
42	17:55	MID	SINGLE	Track Back	
43	17:58	MCU	OTS	Whip Pan Right	EOS
44	18:00	LONG	EST	Locked	
45	18:06	LONG	EST	Locked	
	Total Time				
	2:09:00				