

The Secret Life of a **MALADAPTIVE DAYDREAMER**



By: Damalika Pryor
27 April 2019
Rhetorical Composition

Table of Comments ¹

Read in southern accent for kicks

"Well, well, well. What is this lovely thing we have here? Ohhh! This here is a is a Multi Genre Research Paper. And would you look at that. It's about...uh...maladaptive daydreamin? What in tarnation is maladaptive daydreamin? I guess we need to read it to find out."

Pg.3 "Dear Reader... I'm gessin that the author wants us to read this. Seem pretty legit."

Pg.4 "I guess this is a day in her life. Seems like a lot of daydreaming."

Pg.5 "Looks like she done done a interview with her girly friend. Oh how sweet! I bet theys nice an purdy."

Pg.6-7 "Oh hey now. I never heard a this one. What does this here say Polly? Uh, stream of c-o-n-s-c-i-o-u-s-n-e-s-s. This here just looks like a bunch a jumbled up words to me. What's that about walkin into a café. You know I love my coffee! HA!"

Pg.8 "Looky here. Why she wrote a cute lil poem. I outta take this home to ma and have her frame it. Your ma loves stuff like this ya know."

Pg.9-10 "What's this about alternate endins? Why can't she just have one? And why did it just stop like that? Just plain Lazy. Polly, have you noticed them here colors. No, look they're here and here. Maybe she wants us to read it."

Pg.11-12 "She getting all *scientific* now. Looks like she went to school. Woo boy, I cannot for the life of me get this in my head. Seems like she's tryna explain what that maladaptive daydreamin is."

Pg.14 "Thems is nice pictures. But.. seems kinda sad. Don't this seem sad to you Polly?"

Pg.15 "Works cited. Who is Eli Somer and what does he have to do with this here paper? Seems borin to me."

Pg.16 "End abstracts?! Why she is literally just explainin what I just read. Now why she have to go and do that? I just read it."

Pg.17 "POLLY! Get over here! Why would you take a look at this. Thishere is the purdy lilt hang that wrote. How you pronounce that? D-a-m-a-l-i-h-a. Sounds about right. Talks all about her life. Wonder what happened? Hmph, well I guess this here is mins now. I cannot wait to show ma. Oh, she gonna love this."

Dear Reader,

Before you embark on the journey of reading, I wanted to give you some insight on a few things.

1. Until this year, the courage I needed to openly talk about this was nowhere to be found.
2. This condition might not be something deemed "valid" to you, but know that this is a very real part of my life.
3. When starting this project, I was just as curious as you are now.

I am a **maladaptive daydreamer**² who body rocks. There...I said it. With this confession should have come some sort of reward...right? Wrong. It took 18 years 3 months and 3 days to gather up the nerve to say that aloud to my peers. I now know that doing so was one of the biggest mistakes I have ever made.

The body rocking started when I was younger. My mom could tell you my exact age, but we'll just say I was 4. My family says that when you couldn't find me, I was somewhere rocking. The daydreaming didn't start until a bit later. I can't give you specifics, but what I can tell you is that maladaptive daydreaming has both made my life better and ruined it. This project will showcase my experiences so far.

Before I end this letter, there are a few thanks to be given. I would like to thank the teacher who felt it her place to say that maladaptive daydreaming doesn't affect my everyday life. Thank you to my family for being so accepting. Thank you to Nicole for never giving up on me. Lastly, for your never-ending optimism, thank you reader.

Love,
Damaliha Pryor

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A **Maladaptive Daydreamer** AND BODY ROCKER

6:30am- Wake up sleepy head; you have a normal day ahead of you.

7:40am- Leave for school and try not to be late to first hour...again

8:00am- School has officially started, and it's time to watch some CNN Ten

8:05am- You slip into your first daydream unknowingly. Only when you come out of it do you realize that just happened. Time to feel self-conscious as to whether or not someone saw you talking to yourself.

9:05am- Second hour with Mrs. Connolly. You have work to do, but you keep zoning out. Seriously!? Shouldn't you have learned not to do that. Oh, you can't help it?

10:06am- Third hour Chem. You're not really good at chem, and she makes eye contact a lot. Make sure not to daydream in here.

11:06am Guidance office. You finally get a break from core classes. Get there fast so you can take the furthest passes. All that walking does some good. Not only is it exercise, but you can daydream in the empty halls with no one there to see it.

12:10- Lunch is finally here. Not only are you hungry, but the end of the day is in sight. Sitting through and P.E. are easy. A few more hours to go, then you can sit in your safe place and escape to your own world.

2:15- Gym is going and your team is yelling at you. F**K, you did it again. At this time, you give yourself a little friendly reminder not to daydream while playing volleyball. You should have learned your lesson from being hit with a serve. *Face palm*

3:10pm- School is out and you only have a little more to go. Just a 12-minute drive home until you're in wonderland. NOT! You can't find your ride home and when you do, she tells you that she has something to do after school. This causes you to stop talking, become agitated and drown out the world with music. You can daydream, but not comfortably because people are watching.

Sometime later- The time has come. You go to your room and sit on the white pillow (the purple one is too thin). Next, you find some music that fits your mood and escape.

Bedtime (11:00pm)- Just kidding. You're not going to bed. You have so much to daydream about. You can't quit now. Well...what about your homework. It can wait. Yeah...you can do it tomorrow morning. Crap! You have to be at school early tomorrow. Ehh...let's keep daydreaming and see where it takes us.

12:00pm- You lug yourself into the bed. Your daydreaming isn't over yet. You'll just do it while laying down. Sooner or later, you fall asleep while doing it and wake up in the middle of the night.

5:30am- Wake up sleepy head, you have a normal day ahead of you

Deal or No Deal? ³

1. Before we met, had you ever heard of the term maladaptive daydreaming?

A: "I have not heard of maladaptive daydreaming before you."

2. Does my maladaptive daydreaming and body rocking affect our relationship?

A: "I think body rocking and maladaptive daydreaming does affects our relationship."

3. If so, is it negative or positive?

A: "Negative."

4. In both, explain the negative and positive effects.

A: "You will sometimes not realize you're doing it, and people will look at us weird until I tell you to stop. Daydreaming also affects us because I will start a conversation, and you will not be able to get through it because of random daydreams you have."

5. What went through your head when you first caught me body rocking and daydreaming?

A: "You have told me before I saw you actually doing it that you rock regularly. I expected it, but when I look at you, you look like a shell. Your eyes look hollow and lifeless. I was confused even though you told me it would happen."

6. What is the most significant instance in which my daydreaming has affected my life/our life? A: "You have trouble holding a conversation."

7. In the future, would maladaptive daydreaming be a deal breaker?

A: "No. I believe you cope or live certain ways, and I respect and signed up for it."

8. Has my maladaptive daydreaming made you think differently of me?

A: "Yes, I think of you differently. It's odd that you can make up an entire world that you want and actually live it. I could never know what you're thinking if you didn't tell me."

9. If I started daydreaming and body-rocking in public while with you, would you be embarrassed and why?

A: "I wouldn't be embarrassed, because I know there's little you can do to help it."

So... what actually goes on in your head while you're daydreaming?"⁴

"NO, I CAN'T COME OVER TODAY. WHY? I HAVE LOTS OF THINGS TO DO, YES... LOTS OF THINGS TO DO, BUT THAT'S NOT WHAT IS OCCUPYING MY MIND. I WANT TO SIT IN A DARK ROOM WITH THE FAN ON AND HAVE MY CHOICE OF MUSIC PLAYING. AND..I JUST HATE PEOPLE IN GENERAL. YEAH, **I LOVE YOU** TOO. BYE." SHE WALKS INTO A CAFÉ, NO, NO, NO. SHE WALKS INTO A CLASS ROOM. NO! THEY WALK THROUGH THE CAFÉ DOORS. OKAY, LET'S GET THIS STRAIGHT...CRAP THE SONG IS ALMOST OVER **AND** I NEED TO CHANGE IT. THERE, NEW SONG DIFFERENT VIBE, BUT NOW MY BACK HURTS. I WONDER WHAT TIME IT IS? Wow! 10:34pm, BUT ACCEPTABLE AS LONG AS I'M IN BED BY 12. MY FACE NEEDS WASHED AND MY TEETH NEED BRUSHED. GREAT! TWO THINGS I REALLY DON'T WANT TO DO. AS LONG AS I GET THEM DONE BEFORE BED **THERE'S NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT**. MAYBE I CAN FALL ASLEEP AT 12:00AM AND SET AN ALARM FOR 1:00AM TO DO THAT. UHH YEAH...THAT SOUNDS GOOD. HE WALKS NEAR THEIR BREAKFAST TABLE AND ASKS WHERE THE OFFICE IS. ICY WHITE SHORT HAIR AND HAZEL EYES IS ALL OLIVER SEES STARING BACK AT HIM. HIS NAME IS ROBIN AND HIS SKIN HAS A SUN-KISSED GLOW TO IT. AND NOW THE SONG IS OVER...GET AGAIN. THEY NEED TO MAKE MUSIC LONGER THESE DAYS. MY FEET REALLY HURT FROM THIS POSITION AND I'M HUNGRY NOW. THAT CAN WAIT I GUESS WHAT WOULD I EVEN MAKE ANYWAY. 7 RINGS BY ARI, JUST WHAT I NEED FOR THE ULTIMATE BAD BITCH. IN HER TIGHT RED DRESS AND HEELS, SHE STRUTS INTO KOOL BEANZ TO MEET NICOLE. THE WHOLE GROUP CAN DO NOTHING BUT STARE AND SHE KNOWS IT. OLIVER HASN'T SEEN HER IN A WHILE AND LIKES WHAT HE SEES NOW. ONLY PROBLEM IS...HE'S WITH CHANCE. HER AND NICOLE ARE AN UNLIKELY PAIRING. SHE WITH CURVES IN ALL THE RIGHT PLACES AND LONG JET-BLACK HAIR. HER FACE IS FELINE WITH LIPS FIR FOR A QUEEN. NICOLE IS

CHUBBY WITH CROPPED RED HAIR, GAUGES, AND AN EARTHLY BEAUTY. THEY SEEM NOTHING ALIKE, BUT STILL NICOLE COPPED HER. SITTING ACROSS FROM HER MAKES IT ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO STOP STARING. SO, OLIVER STEELS GLANCES EVERY NOW IN THEN. TRYING TO SOAK UP WHAT HE CAN. I BET HE REGRETS NOT GIVING HER A CHANCE IN HIGH SCHOOL...OKAY. IT'S 1:56 AND I REALLY NEED TO GO TO SLEEP. SO, I GUESS I'LL LAY IN BED AND LISTEN TO MUSIC UNTIL 2:30AM AND MY FACE AND TEETH DON'T REALLY NEED CLEANED THAT BAD...



She rocks back and forth 5

Back and forth

No one can see the beauty beneath her eyelids

They *can't* *Imagine*

Right now, she is unstoppable

Her imagination creating *a universe* untouched the outside world

The dopamine swallows her whole,

Like a warm hug after a tragedy

For hours *this* is how her time *is* spent

She wouldn't want it any other way



In her head, so many things are possible

But when her eyes open,

It all comes back to *her*

The cluttered, dimly lit room manifesting again

It is everything she wants to *escape*

So, she shuts her eyes

And leaves it all behind...

Let's make an Alternate Ending...or Three! 6

"She's really freaking hot," exclaims Bek. Kool Beanz Café is usually busy on Thursdays, due to their weekly open mic night. Oliver and Chance sit snugly on an orange loveseat, legs entangled. Bek, Mouse, and Claire are adjacent them on the olive-green sofa. Outside, the sun is shining and Downtown Granite is alive. Its spring break and these five decided to meet at the café to "spill tea", catch up and relax. It is not an unfamiliar setting though. Both Oliver and Chance are former employees and the other three are here so often, they know the menu by heart.

On today's list of "tea spilling", Bek is oozing over a girl that he met a while ago. He isn't the type to crush and go, so they know this is serious. "I love Dom, she's so- Nicole!" Ahh... you see this is Nicole. She's nothing but an explosion of fiery red hair and two deeply set dimples. "Aye, what's up man," she says as they dap up. "Nothing, we're just hangin out. You?" "Chillin, about to meet my girlfriend here." This is where we have a problem...The girl that has Bek head over heels, may or may not be Nicole's girlfriend of two years.

After introducing her herself to rest of the gang, Nicole finds a seat across from Bek, Claire and Mouse on a faded yellow sofa against the window. The topic of conversation shifts to talk of everyday life. Her phone vibrates, and before they know it her dimples and red hair left as quickly as they came. "Umm, what was that?" says Oliver. The rest of the gang shrugs and meets him with confused expressions. "Ope, here she comes," Claire says with an outstretched neck. Nicole welcomes herself back in and settles back into the sofa.

After five or so minutes later, a girl comes in. She's the type that makes you question what you wore, how you smell, and if you should have gotten that hair cut last week. She is the physical embodiment of all things feminine. With

skin the color of caramel, hair that makes you think rivers were created after it, and deep chocolate eyes that remind you of warm hot coco on a winter morning.

No

About five minutes later, a boy comes in. His hazel eyes seem as if they have absorbed every light in the room. Atop his head is a mess of dark brown curls with designs etched into the side of his fade. He has femininity and is the type to make you question your sexuality. The room seems to shrink. His presence is that of an elephant even though he hasn't spoken a word.

No

*Five minutes go by and Dom walks in. She's dressed casually and has a wild kinky fro that blocks the sun. Her high-rise jeans and crop top accentuating her slight curves. She smiles crookedly and takes a seat next to Nicole----***KNOCK KNOCK****



The Phenomenon of Maladaptive Daydreaming: Where do we go from here? 7

It is not often that a mere daydream takes a hold of the dreamer and immerses them into a world real enough that they forget reality exists. There are usually triggers that can bring them back. Say...hunger or sleep deprivation. Well, what happens if those triggers do not work? Surely something has to stop them. Right? Wrong. A community of people exists who are willing to defy the rules of nature, let their guards down, and give up real world relationships to daydream. The thought of it seems—comical. Why would anyone be willing to do that? It is okay to question what is not understood. However, perhaps the real- life experiences and diligent research shown will answer any and all questions that might arise.

Now, who are these people and what are they “suffering” from? This can be anyone. From your next-door neighbor to the old man across the street. They have what is known as Maladaptive Daydreaming: A term coined by professor of clinical psychology Eliezer Somer, that describes a tendency to daydream excessively as a means of coping that interferes with one’s daily life (Cook 5). While this condition is not recognized as mental health disorder, some psychologist have conducted research and observations to better understand what goes on in the head of a maladaptive daydreamer (Sommer, Lehrfeld, Bigelsen, Jopp 2015).

The biggest component to take away is that daydreaming and Maladaptive daydreaming are NOT the same thing. Daydreaming, to an extent, is normal and has great benefits. Most people have them and it is important to know where to draw the line. When contrasting the two, quality along with quantity play an immense role in differentiating them. Ordinary daydreams “encompass all off-task thought”, and have very little fantasy content (Sommer et al., 2015). Whereas Maladaptive Daydreamers (herein MDers) engage excessively in fantasy daydreams (Sommer al et., 2015). When most people daydream, it has little to no effect on their day to day

life. Contrarily, MDers find interpersonal relationships, daily tasks and life goals hard to manage because of this condition.

How long do you have to daydream to be considered an MDer? The answer—a while. In a survey, conducted by Eliezer Somer and consisting of ninety MDers, they spent an average of fifty-six percent of their day daydreaming (al et., 2015). If you take fifty-six percent of twenty-four, it sums up to 13.44. That's how many hours they spend (on average) daydreaming. This doesn't account for "bad days", when daydreaming rates skyrocket. This is where the problem arises. MD accompanied by a job, family, chores or schoolwork can become overwhelming.

While the MDers know that they have responsibilities, they cannot seem to part from their fantasy worlds. As a person who struggles with MD, balancing life and this condition hasn't proven easy.

"I spend most of the day at home daydreaming. I live alone so technically I find it easy to dream all day long. My anxieties that this is how I will spend my life are increasing. I feel like a ghost that misses out on life. The stronger my fears get the more depressed I become and then I need to daydream to make myself feel better. It's a vicious cycle." (FG) (Somer, Somer, Jopp 2016)

There is a lot of mystery surrounding MD such as: are there any links to childhood trauma, what do MDers daydream about, and why do some of them exhibit odd behaviors while doing so?

Without proper knowledge of the subject, misconceptions could arise. Such as the thought that childhood trauma is linked to MD, but this is not the case (Somer al et., 2015). As far as the content, it could be about anything. I personally daydream about a better version of myself or the person I think I should be. Another reoccurring daydream is about an old high school crush.

What I'm getting at is that not normal everyday things can contribute greatly to a daydream. As

far as the odd movements, that is known as kinesthetic activity. These movements “can increase sensory stimulation, which potentially could facilitate the imagery process.”(Somer al et., 2015). From string twirling to body-rocking, these behaviors are observed in many sufferers of MD.

The topic of MD is a controversial, yet interesting one to explore. Even as someone who is a self-proclaimed MDer, I discovered countless things that surprised me. In my research, I found that the similarities between the subjects and I were uncanny. When doing my writing for this paper, I started out with the goal of educating my peers on MD. Along the journey, I discovered many things about myself as well.



A Journey into the Light 8

It's spring. Her senior year of high school is almost over. This means late nights out with the girls, and sitting in cars and talking about life for hours on end. *Time* is ticking. She is preparing *to fly away* to discover greater things.



But...



Something is holding her back, An invisible force known only by those closest. Whoever thought that creativity and imagination could do so much harm. *She is prisoner to her own mind.*

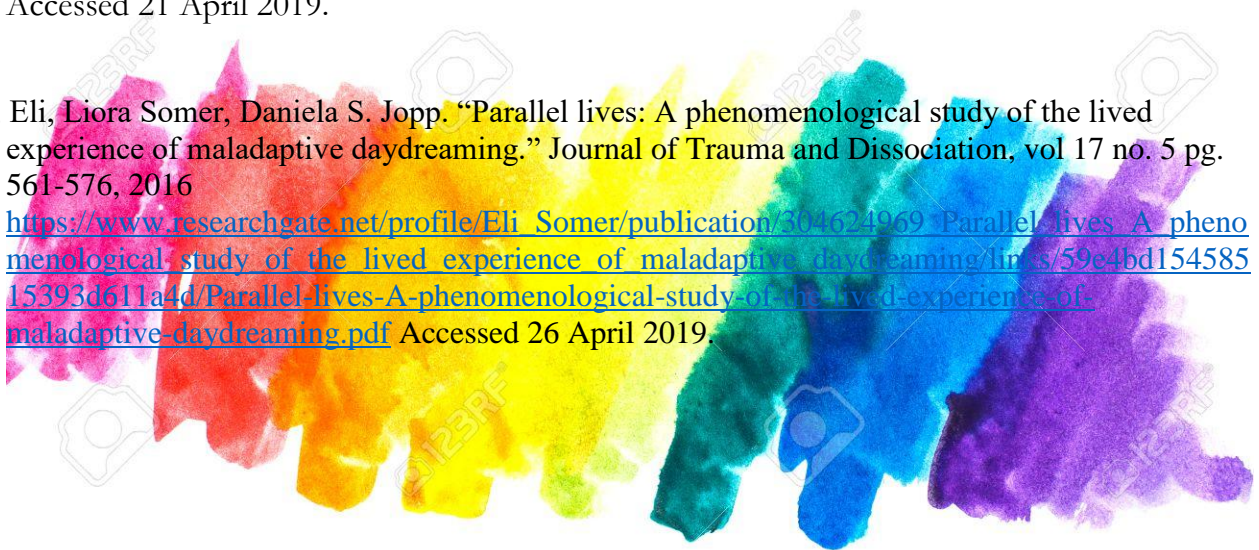
Nights spent alone on the floor. Everything is pitch-black, but *she is reaching for the light*. When her eyelids close, sunsets are created. The wind is cool on her skin and the feeling is real. The feeling of leaving everything behind makes her weightless.

Like a dying rose, she is left unnoticed. The outside *is* withered, worn. But...somewhere deep inside there is something growing. A sight so beautiful, it could blind one thousand men. *If only they could see her for what's on the inside.*



Works Cited

- Cook, Mary, "Thin Places" (2018). English Honors Theses. 10.
https://creativematter.skidmore.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1009&context=eng_stu_schol
Accessed 23 April 2019.
- Somer, Eli, Johnathan Lehrfeld, Jayne Bigelsen, Daniela S. Jopp. "Development and validation of the Maladaptive Daydreaming Scale (MDS)." *Consciousness and Cognition*, vol 39 pg. 77-91, 2015
https://s3.amazonaws.com/academia.edu.documents/44813273/2016_Bigelsen_et_al_MD_under-researched_Dx.pdf?AWSAccessKeyId=AKIAIWOWYYGZ2Y53UL3A&Expires=1556597233&Signature=A8Tql7YCzK8N5RyYqGVOhINOFrs%3D&response-content-disposition=inline%3B%20filename%3DMaladaptive+daydreaming+Evidence+for+an.pdf
Accessed 21 April 2019.
- Somer, Eli, Liora Somer, Daniela S. Jopp. "Parallel lives: A phenomenological study of the lived experience of maladaptive daydreaming." *Journal of Trauma and Dissociation*, vol 17 no. 5 pg. 561-576, 2016
https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Eli_Somer/publication/304624969_Parallel_lives_A_phenomenological_study_of_the_lived_experience_of_maladaptive_daydreaming/links/59e4bd15458515393d611a4d/Parallel-lives-A-phenomenological-study-of-the-lived-experience-of-maladaptive-daydreaming.pdf Accessed 26 April 2019.



End Abstracts

1. This was one of the first pieces of my paper that I wanted add. It ended up being the last coincidentally. At first I wrote the character with a normal accent and later decided to give it a little fun spin to it. I got this idea while reading a table of contents in a novel. It was BORING, as are most. So, I decided to put my own spin on it and add a little southern twang.

2. The rainbow color scheme was actually going to only be present in the poem. After reading the paper for my write club, they loved the idea. So, I got creative and put a little something special on most pages for appeal. Think of it as blackout poetry, but rainbow.

3. When finished with this project, I wanted my readers to walk away educated about the topic of maladaptive daydreaming. I figured the interview would give real insight as to how this is affecting my interpersonal relationship.

4. Being a maladaptive daydreamer means that there is always something happening in my head. What better way to convey that than a stream of consciousness? It wasn't hard to write this. I just wrote down what ever came to mind. The best part is, I didn't have to revise.

5. Fun fact: I wrote this poem in one class period. It was pretty easy for me to express how I feel in an artistic way. The picture was taken a couple summers when I was at my friend's lake house.

6. This piece, I believe, gives good insight on how my days dreams build themselves. If something is messed up or I don't feel like using a character, I'll start from the ground up just to change the main character. This is also my most reoccurring daydream. The three alternate characters are my most used ones to convey myself in a daydream.

7. I've never had so much fun writing a research paper. Perhaps it was because I was actually interested in the paper and had my own experiences to put in there. While doing research for this, I came across one of the best pieces of writing I have ever read. It's called "Thin Places" and it is an Honors thesis by Mary Cook (Highly recommend if you want to know more about maladaptive daydreaming).

8. This was perhaps the trickiest thing in my paper to do. Not because of writing or photography, but because of the formatting. Not kidding, real tears almost left my face trying to get those pictures into place.

Writer Bio



Damaliha Pryor **is a senior** attending Granite City Senior High School. Some of her many hobbies include acting in school plays, reading and shopping. There is much more to her though. Damaliha also **has a passion for** helping people and **learning** about different cultures **and** ethnicities. If you found her in a library, she'd have her nose in the multicultural section for sure. When looking for a major in high school, combined these two passions and **decided to major in social work.**

You might be wondering how she came to write this paper. Well, choosing a topic did not prove easy. It was only after she had a negative classroom experience with a teacher, who is not named, did she land here. She isn't known for much, but her ability to turn negative situations positive is one of her greatest assets.

