

Dreamwork and Dramatisation in *Black Swan* and *Mulholland Drive*

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Abstract

Psychoanalysis is a set of theories that deals with the study of unconscious mind. Freud pioneered this concept and suggested various perceptions on unconscious mind. The activities of unconscious minds emerge as dreams. Dreamwork is one such theory of dreams wherein the repressed desires find home in dreams. Dramatisation is a branch of dreamwork which shun away from the conscious mind and settles in the repressed dreams. Many psyche based films can be interpreted using dreamwork. This paper deals with the dreamwork analysis of two films namely *Black Swan* and *Mulholland Drive* which picturize the trauma of two women indirectly, who strive to reach their aspirations.

Keywords : Dreamwork, Psyche, Freud, and Dramatisation

Movies and literature share a set of similarities. They reflect and represent life in the most unique ways. Literature and movies are open for discussion and create space for new interpretation. If literature and movies are interconnected, so do the psychology. This paper focuses on the repressed desire of the characters in the movies *Black Swan* and *Mulholland Drive*. *Black Swan* is an award winning movie released in the year 2010 and directed by Darren Aronofky. The story revolves around a ballerina dancer who is given a chance to play the role of a good swan and an evil swan. The story continues to picture the ways through which she completes this complex task. The protagonist is Nina played by Natalie Portman. *Mulholland Drive* is another interesting movie directed by David Lynch. The story of an amateur actress who aspires to reach greater heights.

Freud's theories are not confined to a single domain. They extend to many areas and life in general. Freud is known for his research on dreams. His study of dreams has enhanced the knowledge to analyse the consequences and reasons of dreams. Dreamwork is a concept that interprets the whole human psyche. It is visible in the representations of suppressed and unfulfilled desires. Dreamwork involves three process namely, condensation, displacement and representation. Condensation in dreams can be seen through the various elements put together to exaggerate the dream effect. Displacement is jumbling the dream sequences and masking ideas. Representation is a process in which the contents of the dream appear indirectly in an unusual and unexpected ways with the help of puns, metaphors, ironic reversals and linguistic tropes.

The two movies mainly stresses on the bottled up emotions which settle in the subconscious part of the human brain. It has its outlet only through dreams. The revelation of dreams and the task of deciphering it, differ from the deep down wishes of an every individual being. As Margaret Atwood points out in her poem "The Journey to the Interior" that the most difficult and dangerous expedition in one's life is their introspective journey, these two actresses also derail from the sanity because of their inward dreams.

Black Swan and *Mulholland Drive* are two different movies that depict the life of two unsuccessful actresses whose ambition lead them to a tragic death. Here are the two parallel characters whose failed life pushes their aspiration to a violent dreams where they see the different version of themselves. Sigmund Freud, father of psychoanalysis talks about three distinct psyches: Id, Ego and Super Ego. Both Nina and Diane are the theatrical artists whose effort to be popular in theatrical art gets jeopardise in the competitive world. So their ego side absorb all the humiliation and powerlessness but still waiting for the complete outlet of their vulnerability. Through the dream work, their Id keeps progressing, leaving behind the physical and mental torture for them.

At the same time, the narcissistic attitude of both Nina and Diane make them socially unfriendly. For an instance, when Nina is auditioning for the role of the swan, Lily enters the dance floor. By the screeching sound of the door, Nina gets disturbed and misses the beat. That's when Nina starts to hate her, even when Lily puts all her effort to befriend her. When the passion becomes obsession, every other good thing they have in their life fades into nothing like Nina's love for her mother.

In the case of Diane, her jealousy and helplessness drive away the only relationship she has, that is to say, Camilla. In real life, she exists in the theatrical field by using her dead aunt's fame. Camilla's recommendation of her as supporting actress in all the film she involves, along with their lesbian relationship, makes her a dependant woman both physically and financially. Instead of being grateful, she gets possessive of Camilla's popularity and money. That's why, Diane creates Camilla as a memory loss patient in her dreams, which makes the latter one to go for the advice to Betty, the reel self of Diane. Diane's self-hatred goes to an extreme to imagine herself as a person called Betty, a waitress in real life. By conceiving Camilla as a patient, Diane led her Id to rule her mind whereas in the living world, she projects herself as timid and frightened person.

Black Swan is about how Nina, an actress has to go through emotional changes to blend with the character she plays in. In the process of getting to know the role of black swan, she is slowly loosened from her real self in the physical world. The repressed feeling of hers turns into a wild dream where she sees herself to be the way she wants to be. The anxiety and external pressure keep evolving when the day of performance comes nearer. But the madness goes out of hand when Thomas appreciates the style of fellow actress Lily and appoints her to be the substitute of Nina, if in the case of her absence. In order to achieve the perfection and to compete her new threat Lily, she does things out of her way like drugs and hallucinates herself as the evil one, which eventually leads to insanity. Till the very last, it blinds her from reality and the uncertainty becomes an end to her own life.

As Diane is hopeless in both her career and personal life, she just imagines herself as an efficient and adventurous woman and assumes her successful friend Camilla as a needy and dependent one in her dream. At one point, the imagination of Diane overshadows the reality she is in and takes fake identity as Betty, an amateur and blooming actress in cinematic field.

The hyper reality reaches its peak where Diane herself, couldn't differentiate anything. At the end of the movie, she wakes up and tries to gather what is happening around her and finds the key on her table. The key reminds her of the crime she committed against her best friend's murder. Now all the guilt gushes over her and leads to taking her own life.

In both the movies, there are some scenes which inform the audience that these are all the dreams of the respective characters. In *Black Swan*, whenever Nina gets scratches all

over her skin, the previous scene must be her dream. In *Mulholland drive*, there are many scenes that act as indications of dreams. The very first scene where the real Betty works, a guy comes and informs the owner that he sees a monster in the backyard of that hotel in his dream. Even in the end, Betty and Camilla attend the Italian play which has its theme on illusion. Both Nina and Diane cannot dwell in their hallucinated world for a long time. Once they come out of it and experience the pain of reality, they decide to put an end to it by self-destruction or committing suicide.

Under the concept of dreamwork, Dramatization/ representation are applied in both the characters. Their frustration have been hidden behind the visual dreams in order to be the antidote for the emotional scars. The characters create a confusing picture the viewers in realising the truth of the dreams. The role reversals and misleading images are evident in the two movies. The motives of this technique can be to experience the suppressed desires for one last time through dreams. Hence, dreamwork when captured on screen, expose to the viewers, the unravelling mystery behind the characters through the element of surprise and uncertainty at the end.

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