



An Exploration of Psychology in the Movie *Black Swan*

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Due date

Synopsis

Black Swan is a 2010 psychological drama that centers on the competitive world of ballet. The film takes viewers inside a ballerina's journey into insanity in a terrifying depiction of psychosis that medical professionals assert resonates with realism. The main character, Nina Sayers, performs ballet dances for a New York City ballet group that is getting ready to stage "Swan Lake." The competition and her controlling mother stress Nina so much that she begins scratching and tearing off pieces of her flesh. She suffers from increasing paranoia and delusions, such as vicious and erotic hallucinations of her rival Lily.

Nina performs stirringly as both the gentle white swan and the seductive black swan. To completely commit to the character and win over her demanding and sexually aggressive director, she is required to let go of her "sweet girl" reputation and embody her darker side. As the pressure increases, her hallucinations worsen as she believes that her sprouting barbs are morphing into real wings. Her images drive a fictitious dramatic showdown that takes place at the film's tragic ending.

Psychoanalytic model

Within the Psychoanalytic Model's framework, Nina Sayers' upbringing and traumas provide evidence of the progression of her mental condition, characterized by the features of Schizophrenia and its associated afflictions (APA, 2023). Throughout the film, it is evident that Nina was brought up in an environment marked by intense maternal control. The audience is led to believe that Nina Sayers' mother, Erica Sayers, was also a ballet dancer, but she had to give up her dream to bring up Nina. She helps Nina with everything, ranging from dressing her to cutting her nails. Erica is also possessive and does not tolerate any help from outsiders.

Furthermore, Nina Sayers has a conflict between the three central forces: id, ego, and superego. Nina's decisions are always influenced by her id. She constantly battles between the superego, which powers her at first, but her id begins to fight back. For instance, she uses her id to get the role of a white and black swan dancer. She practices at her home till one of her nails is bleeding. She believes that she must put in more practice because there is no time to unwind. She uses her superego to portray that she is a sweet, innocent girl with no dark side. In her reality shows, she perceives herself as the good girl that every parent would like. Her ego finds no place in her decisions as she uses her mother's values and morals as the

foundation of the superego.

Cognitive-behavioral model

Nina's cognitive processes, and in particular her distorted thinking patterns, contribute to her mental health disorder (Fleuridas & Krafcik, 2019). For instance, she is portrayed as the best dancer in her company—that is, until Lily shows up, and Nina starts perceiving her as a huge threat. As a result, Nina experiences extreme stress, and she starts believing that Lily is trying to take her title as the best dancer. She therefore feels an even stronger drive to have the ideal figure and to perform flawlessly. The stress also leads to eating disorders.

As the film progresses, Nina's behavior changes. Nina progressively changes into a more impulsive and uncontrollable individual. She partakes in sexual encounters and receives alcohol and drugs from the nightclub. Nina sees herself changing into a Black Swan the night before Black Swan premieres. Nina sees herself changing into a Black Swan the night before Black Swan premieres. This change illustrates Nina's mental transition into a real Black Swan. She engages in scratching and self-harming behavior. She scraped her back until her mother covered her hand with something to stop her from injuring her skin. This scratching tendency is a reflection of Nina's emotional stress and worry and a reflection of how she perceives the world around her.

Humanistic-existential model analysis

Nina constantly struggles with self-actualization. She does not get the opportunity to realize her potential and become the person she is capable of becoming. The process of self-actualization involves understanding one's values, beliefs, and goals, and ensuring that one's actions are in line with these inner realities (Fleuridas & Krafcik, 2019). When it comes to her daughter, Erica is quite controlling and obsessive. Erica treated Nina like a young child and even adorned her ceiling with plush animals and her wallpaper with pink butterflies.

Nina also struggles with her authentic feelings. The father figure is absent in the family dynamic, and the mother, who is the present caregiver, places conditions of self-worth onto Nina. Her state of incongruence was a result of the conditional positive regard she received at home. People who are experiencing

incongruity constantly want acceptance from others, and when they do not, they become angry.

Sociocultural model analysis

Societal and cultural factors have played a crucial role in the onset of Nina's condition. At the sociocultural level, history is passed down in the form of traditions, beliefs, stereotypes, and values. The concept of thinness as beauty is deeply embedded in American culture. Through commercials, news reports, and entertainment media, the message of being slim permeates all facets of society (O'Shea, 2017). As a professional ballerina, Nina is under great pressure to be slender, which supports society's emphasis on the thin ideal. Furthermore, a small figure is idealized in ballet companies since ballet demands intense practice and exceptional athleticism to accomplish the challenging jumps, spins, and lifts. She obsesses about making each move perfect, so she moves swiftly and precisely. Nina pushes herself to perform despite her body being overworked because she firmly believes that anything less than excellence is unbearable.

The family is a small sociocultural system that plays a powerful role, which is more intense and emotionally felt. Nina's mother still harbors some bitterness toward this sacrifice and blames being pregnant with Nina for the termination of her ballet career. The unresolved issues from Erica's background serve as a historical context for the emotional characteristics her daughter has acquired. Erica feels jealous of Nina's success, even though she desires it, since it feeds her obsession with ballet. Therefore, Erica puts tremendous pressure on Nina to satisfy her impractical needs because she is torn between unsatisfied desires and passive-aggressive ambivalence regarding Nina's accomplishments.

References

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