

Popular culture analysis



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The Black Swan is a film produced by Mike Medavoy in 2010 in America. It is a psychological thriller directed by Darren Aronofsky. The thriller film is based on one of the currently popular world ideology that is female antagonism. Female antagonism, according to the Advanced learner' dictionary, is defined as the feeling of opposition or hostility developed by women against their fellow women or against men. Sexuality has been used as the shield for women to achieve their personal interest by participating in sex activities with fellow colleagues or work mates such as managers for them to be promoted or employed. This film portrays a balanced ratio of the female to male characters although the male characters tend to be given the upper hand in holding leadership. The female characters, Nina and Lily are portrayed in a conflict as to who is the best dancer and actress. Beth is also caught in a conflict with the director of their film who happens to have fired her earlier due to her pregnancy.

The film is based on characters namely Thomas Leroy who happens to be the director at the New York City ballet company. Nina is a young woman who lives with her mother Erica Hershey. Erica is said to have been a dancer in her previous ages but gave up dancing when she discovered she was pregnant. Later Thomas Leroy forces Beth into early retirement as he is in demand of more talented dancer than Beth. He wants an actress who can dance out both the characters of the white and the black swan. Currently he has Nina, who amidst her mother's curses insists on dancing. She can, however, only better dance the white swan and not the black swan. This annoys Thomas who keeps urging her to avoid being frigid but to dance out

with vigor. This comes after Beth's death immediately. It is at this point where Thomas meets Lily, a lady who happens to be a dancer too.

Stiff competition as to who is the best and should perform in the dance created a rigid tension between the two ladies. As none of them is willing to accept defeat, Lily devises a plot to knock off Nina. In one of their night outs, Lily drugs Nina's drink so that after they go sleep they have sex. Nina oversleeps only to wake up and find Lily already gone to the theatre. This annoys Nina so much that she argues with Lily as why she could not wake her up. The drug, however, still happens to have intense effect on her as she undergoes queer hallucinations which are accompanied with sex and murder. Her mother pleads her to give up the dance but she seems adamant to listen and even insists on performing on stage despite Thomas doubts. She performs well, as the white swan and as she throws herself off the cliff, she takes notice of her mother among the audience, weeping but the hallucinations take control over her amidst the performance so that she is carried to the backstage. In his imaginations she murders Lily and goes back to the stage where she exemplarily dances the black swan to everyone's surprise and wonder. It is later discovered that she had actually stabbed herself during one of her hallucinations. Nina cannot rise up from the mattress so that at first people think that she is asleep until they take notice the blood oozing from her stomach.

One cannot fail to take notice therefore of the circulating conflict by women characters towards their fellow women and some men. It is a film which goes against most common beliefs among film companies that women should never be given voice and actions. This film has greatly presented many

female characters who engage in a lot of conversations; not conversations about the men but about their careers as actresses and dancers.

In the play, social institutions are given priorities, especially the institution of media entertainment. This is pre-empted by the production of the swan film where dancing is a major undertaking. Films are of course meant for education and entertainment among other functions. However, the audience watching the film is kept alive and happy throughout the performance so that entertainment is the sole role of this film. The media is also an important institution for providing employment opportunities to dancers and actresses like Nina and Lily.

There are, however, unfair grounds for the termination of employees' contracts, for example, Beth is fired from the theatre without a proper reason or justification. The presence of this theatre is, therefore, contributing to the unfair treatment of the female with the consolation that some of them are weak and indeed Beth attempts suicide by letting herself be run over.

This film has presented gender, which is the portrayal of women and men as well as their expected behaviors. In the Black Swan film gender is presented in a manner that men exercise complete authority over women and even make drastic decisions about women without any consultations. They see and do things as they want. This is exemplified by Thomas Leyor who gets rid of Beth from the theatre without consulting her or prior informing her. She gets not a single warning and she is banned from dancing against her will. This is based on the fact that she resorts to suicide by letting herself be

run over. This is weaker portrayal of the women in relation to their male counterparts.

The rest of the female characters like Nina are reluctant to bend low to Thomas' demands. When told to withdraw having failed in the auditions, Nina is determined to make it to the performance even if it means having to kiss the director.

Nina's determination is seen to take her to the accomplishment of her dreams amidst the weeping of her mother to make her stop dancing. She is presented as a very strong female character and is sharply contrasted with Beth. The males cannot accept women as right completely but strive to find faults by all means. Thomas cannot agree that Nina is completely good in dancing. Lily too is compared to Nina, that she lacks some of the qualities Nina possesses. This is a gender issue in this film where women are portrayed as half capable and must be reinforced in order for them to arrive at their full potential. This is symbolized by the black and the white swan performance which none of the two women can perform independently.

Women are also involved in conflict against each other. Since none of them is ready to step down, they have to fight the war in clever ways, that is, Lily drugging Nina's drink.

Women's both weak and strong forces are presented so that reveal sharp contrasting ideas about the women sexuality. There are depicted women who allow themselves to be dictated and ruled by men and those whom take strong control of themselves.

The issue of gender presentation in film industry has been critical because in many film production men have been used to act even in areas where women can do better. Black swan women have been given opportunity to perform but it shows negatively their differences, especially in the case of Lily and Nina. Schultz, Julia gives a clear picture of how women in society can not work as a team because of selfish interest they have. Comparing to Black Swan film it is clear that poor relationship exist between Lily and Nina since both of them fight to act as white swan.

Other two scholarly materials that provide a clear picture on how women engage in sex activities in society outside marriage or before marriage is clearly investigated by Ciady Meston and David Buss who are the clinical psychologist who wrote a book known as why women have sex. It provide a research where by it emerged that women engage in sex for emotional, physical and material reasons. In the book they gave example how women engage in sex activities to get jobs, promotions and money to satisfy their needs.

The river between is another Africa famous novel which was written by Ngung'I wa Thiong'o where he explained how the society threat female gender. In his book I pointed out that women should remain under the umbrella of men and should respect the decision made by men whether is good or wrong. Women should not participate in political arena and have no rights to subject men in any manner. He concluded by bringing the real picture on who men violate sex rights of a woman simply because she has to respect the male gender.

In conclusion the Black Swan demonstrates how sexuality and class have great effect in film production. In this case Thomas engages in corruption by enabling Nina to play the darker side after having sex with her . This simply gives a negative image of society where women have to participate in sexual activities for them to be given good jobs. People in power also play a very vital role in this film where Thomas as the director of the film forces others for early retirement because of his personal interest and the position he occupies as a director. The film is an indication of how ladies are treated in the society and why the issue of gender imbalances is critical issue to be addressed.