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Dreamer

Treatment

'Dreamer' is a surrealist film that experiments with the idea of identity by confronting the uncertain nature of human existence and challenging the idea of a world without 'purpose'.

Identity will be explored in 'Dreamer' through the protagonist. Throughout the film, they will undergo various changes and shift from person to person in an attempt to discover their identity. The costumes, makeup, props, environment and circumstances that they find themselves in will transform to convey their uncertain existence. From beginning to end they will be trying to understand who they are without success. The intention of this idea is to confront issues surrounding identity such as existentialism. This term refers to the philosophy that investigates the meaning of being. It challenges the common nature of human existence as being problematic and uncertain. According to Existentialist philosopher Nicola Abbagnano, humans are "defined by the fact that they exist or are in the world and inhabit it" (Abbagnano, 2020). This quote highlights the motive that drives individuals to find their identity. When simply tasked to exist without purpose, people will often feel lost.

To explore meaning and experiment with the reality of dreams where anything is possible, 'Dreamer' will be constructed as an anti-narrative film. This convention of surrealism will highlight the mind numbing feeling of purposelessness as the character is thrown into each scene and situation without any sensible catalyst. Instead of playing out a story, the protagonist will simply exist, fated to never discover the meaning of their life. Having no restrictions on reality will accentuate the presence of surrealism and create a world that does not appear to be real; one moment the protagonist could be sitting on a couch and the next they could be standing in a carpark. A mixture of non-diegetic and diegetic sounds will be included throughout the film to assist in this dream atmosphere. For example, strange buzzing noises or the sound of ocean waves may play during a scene in a forest to disorientate the audience and contribute to the nonsensical reality (Glynne-Jones, 2012).

Inspiration for the visual and narrative aspects of 'Dreamer' spawned from films such as the 2010 Tim Burton 'Alice in Wonderland', because of its illogical atmosphere and the way it confronts identity. Colour will be partnered with ridiculous scenes full of dreamlike components to translate this wonderland style into my film. To quote "Perfect nonsense goes on in the world. Sometimes there is no plausibility at all" by Nikolai Vasilievich Gogol will

also be an influence for the irrational aspects of 'Dreamer'. The implausible reality will be portrayed for viewers through components such as lighting and costume which may change mid-scene or contradict the setting's context.

The weird and inconsistent nature of 'Dreamer' will create mystery in each scene. If the audience is unsure of what will happen next due to the unpredictable transitions and nonsensical action, then the film is achieving its purpose in replicating a world full of strange possibilities. This unreliable world is a tribute to our own reality where life is full of surprises. Symbolic codes such as the actor's appearance and set design will be manipulated to confuse the audience and build the dreamscape. Makeup will be odd, featuring various colours and shapes on the actor's face, symbolic props will create meaning - such as a broken mirror that reflects a distorted image of the protagonist to portray her 'broken' identity - and costumes will be diverse and inconsistent, shifting during and after each scene. Although this inconsistency would normally break the viewer's suspension of disbelief, it will stay intact in this film because it will already be established that the reality is false. The ridiculous nature of the sound effects and mise en scene will make sure of this.

The use of technical codes will further assist in the creation of meaning and establishment of the dream world. Hand held camera footage will be favored over the use of a tripod to convey that the film is set in an unstable and shaky reality. Smooth, cut-on-action transitions will be used to progress each scene, as well as contribute to my film's personal aesthetic. The intention of these specific transitions will be to convey the meaning that each scene is connected, despite not being at all related. The whole film features one dream where there are no boundaries between each reality. This flow will also subtly suggest that the audience is only given a small glance at the protagonist, who is trapped in a never-ending cycle where they are experiencing an existential crisis while searching for their purpose. The focus will remain on the protagonist throughout 'Dreamer' to better establish that the reality is a dream. Often in dreams, the large details of the environment and other characters are unclear, making it difficult to discern the context. Because of this, secondary characters and props - such as a letter with something written on it - will be out of focus so that the audience is further immersed in the dreamlike experience. The line between the real world and the dream world will be blurred through the use of eyes opening and closing. This symbolic imagery is often seen at the beginning and end of a dream sequence to signal waking back into the real world, however in 'Dreamer', this motif will be used throughout the whole film. Multiple realities will be established when the audience sees the protagonist open their eyes and find themselves in another fantastical place. This layering will also aid in the film's unpredictable nature since the audience will see the eye's open and assume they have

returned to the real world, when instead they have simply dived deeper into the dreamscape (Tate, 2020).

As a film situated in the style of surrealism, 'Dreamer' " will reject the rational view of reality and instead immerse the viewers into a dream world where anything is possible. The very title of 'Dreamer' hints to the audience that they are a participant in the featured reality, which encourages them to place themselves in the protagonist's shoes.

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Reflection

There were various stylistic conventions that shaped the personal aesthetic of 'Dreamer'. These conventions not only conveyed the desired meaning surrounding identity, but also contributed to the visually appealing aspect of my film.

The most experimental technologies used in 'Dreamer' were the lighting, sound effects and shot types. The improvised development of each of these occurred during or after shooting so that the theme of surrealism could emerge creatively without being hindered by planning. For example, the lighting in the card game scene, which relied heavily on trial and error, was experimented with during filming to create intentionally inconsistent, colourful chaos in the film. The distorted shots created from glassware and crystal candle holders required experimentation with long repetitive shots until something looked successfully interesting. Unlike the diegetic sounds that were planned early on, the non-diegetic sounds came together in the editing process. These odd and mismatched noises accentuated the nonsensical reality in 'Dreamer' by adding an element of the unexpected.

In order to create flow with smooth transitions that would convey meaning and add to my personal style, I had to film each scene with the next in mind. This required me to plan out large aspects of the film thoroughly before picking up my camera. The action of each scene was mostly concrete, while other aspects such as the costumes and makeup were left to be improvised. This allowed these visual aspects to be experimental and spontaneous which added an interesting element of wonder to the film's development. Often my actors would contribute their own personal touches to their appearance. This creative freedom invited new ideas and improved the overall look and feel of my film.

During the editing process, the key stylistic feature of surrealism that guided the film's structure was the 'deliberate use of cutting to link unrelated events or locations'. This feature channeled the strange and unexpected sequencing of the film, assuring that every transition jumped somewhere the audience could not predict. These irrational cuts between scenes assisted in the creation of a film where the viewers were taken from place to place without need for a narrative catalyst to guide them. The use of this feature also allowed me to explore the surrealistic concept of 'dreams' by composing a world in the film that was implausible. An outdoor scene with a bicycle could instantly be connected to a scene with a couch, despite the lack of logical affiliation.

References

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