Oneiric Cinema Creating a Collective Dream

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Abstract

Dreams have been a source of inspiration for humans throughout the history. They vary from the ordinary to surreal. They are a universal phenomenon that links the entire humanity. They are visual and spatial experience, but very personalized. Throughout history, many artists and researchers have tried to portray dreams through various mediums such as arts and literature. But the question who success full they were in portray of nocturnal fantasies? This paper aims to present challenges that are inevitable in various mediums for the portray of dreams. It explains how cinema is one such medium that can generate a common dream that is relatable and re-interpretable. This study is to guide researchers in the field of arts and spatial design to help them pick their medium for portraying of dreams to get the most suitable come. It suggests how the cinema screen works as the psychological prosthesis of our dream screen and that the development of film technology has allowed us to view films that very faithfully mimic night fantasies. Thus, the experience of watching films in the cinema is an approximation of our own dreaming experience.

Keywords: oneiric cinema, psychoanalysis, philosophy, history of dreaming, arts, literature

Introduction

Our cognitive abilities help us perceive information collected from our environment in various forms through the five senses we have. We receive various types of information and then we have several mediums to generate our own expression to communicate our thoughts, ideas, and information. These mediums of communication and expression become our language for communication. Often, the medium of communication and the form in which information is received is not the same. For example, we express our ideas and feelings using words, paintings, or poetry or any other language. Each of these mediums has their scope as well as limitations. When we transition from one medium of expression to another, we are limited by the capabilities of the expression proposed by each medium. As said by Wittgenstein;

 "The limits of my language mean the limits of my world" (Ratcliffe, n.d.)

The language here is not merely the spoken word, but any medium of expression that can communicate to us and from which we can communicate or express. Often when we transition from one medium of expression to another some information is either lost, rearranged, or stylized. Therefore, often one medium of expression is preferred over another for portraying a particular thing or an experience.

In terms of dreams throughout history, they have been communicated verbally / orally or through work of art and literature. But dreams are so versatile, and the experience is so significantly different from our waking life that even if we verbally describe our dream there is very less that we have communicated. Thus, it is really a challenge to accurately describe or communicate a dream. One reason for this is that dreams have both manifested and latent content. To portray dreams it is essential to first describe and comprehend the experience of dreaming to generate tools for looking into the potential of its portray in various mediums. Also, there is need to evaluate potential of mediums such as arts, literature and films as a medium of communication.

Method

Research Methodology

The research methodology is based on scientific research, study of history of portraying of dreams and their critical analysis. It makes use of qualitative data to do a thematic analysis to interpret patterns and meanings in the available data and body of knowledge to validate the hypothesis. There is the use of secondary data which involves analysis of previously done works regarding dreams so as to draw conclusions and to make propositions. (Scribbr, n.d.). There is also use of Lacan's proposed structure of the unconscious as the key reefrence for evaluating various mediums of art and literature.

Scope of paper

This paper, particularly talks about dreams only. It does not focus on lucid dreams, DeJa'Vu or any type of hallucinations. Also, it does not deal with type of dreaming that might be the result of a disability, medical condition, or influence of drugs. It addresses popular opinions and concepts linked with dreams. The paper explores the potential of various mediums of expression for portraying of dreams through research and analysis.

Materials

For this study spatial and experiential characteristics of dreams have been evaluated first, after which those characteristics are searched in various other mediums that have been used by people to portray dreams. Thus resulting in critical analysis of potential of any medium for dream portray.

Research question

The primary research question is what are the challenges linked with the portray of dreams in various mediums? How Oneiric cinema is the most ideal medium to portray dream? Answering these questions brings several questions for each medium that is put to test. These questions are; what are essential dreaming experiences? Is the medium capable of providing visual, spatial, and temporal experience? What are the most frequent sensory experiences provided by that medium that can be linked with dreams (among images, sounds, smells, tastes, touch sensations)? How frequent are shifting of events in the visual experiences? What are the dominant emotions? Can the viewer or a reader immerse themselves in a portrayed dream? What are the types of auditory and imaginative experiences in dreams? How people can experience a portrayed dream, and can they relate to it? Does the medium propose any gaps in communicating representation of dreams? Can the medium portray qualities of latent and manifested content? Can the medium create a collective dreaming experience that most people can relate to? How can the experience be less personal and more generalized? How can the medium suggest plot of a dream? What role linguistic structure of the unconscious proposed by psychoanalysis can help with? Why Cinema is a better medium to portray dreams? Does the medium suggest figurative language and imagery? What is the anchoring point of the dream? Can the medium of expression help to develop another copy of dream or propose rules for it? Is what the author says or does not say helpful in creating imagery? Is it understandable? (Interpretively, and emotionally) Alone or with help? Is it comprehensible? To whom would it appeal? Does it touch people emotionally? "Do the components of expression combine in a mixture that communicates both a literal and suggested meaning? Does expression gets to the heart of an idea? Is it creative with language (Metaphors, similes or personifications)? What is the power of expression created by the medium? Does it include ideas that people can use? (Sweetland, n.d.)

Results and Discussion

Research Findings

In order to evaluate any depiction of dream in any medium, we first need to understand the experience of dreaming. Our sleep has 5 stages. (Felson, 2020) In first three stages our body goes through a drop in body temperature, heartbeat, and low breathing. After which REM experience starts. This stage lasts for about 90 to 150 minutes. During which a person's experience body paralysis. This is when a person is dreaming.

Dreams are mostly identical, yet they create an impelling impression of sameness. (Richard M. Griffith, 1958).A great part of the dream content is linked with the sense of sight. Our eyes play the role of a camera to capture what is around us which later may become part of our night fantasy. Our dreams have a succession of silent images and storyline provided by our "implicit memories" and "semantic" knowledge involving general, abstract concepts as suggested by research of Robert Stick gold of Harvard Medical School. The dream content is not linked with episodic memory that includes association of memory with specific time, place, or an event due to which dreams seem illogical and full of discontinuity. This allows one to consolidate and integrate dreaming experiences without realizing its conflicting nature with real life. They are one such formation by nature that takes one into a visual spatial experience that has no censorship contrary to the reality of the individual in subjective or objective way or sometimes both. (Revonsuo, 1995).

The images, views, scenes, and other sensational experiences change rapidly and are often bizarre, yet they contain visuals of familiar places, people, and events. They become our reality, despite the missing logic of self-reflection and containing disruptive narrative, lack of orientation and stability. In dreams time, people, and places are plastic and fused. The discontinuous narrative provides single fabrication for each dream. An example of this is evident from a documented dream by Jack Kavosk in his dream journal named Book of dreams. It goes like…-

"OH! THE HORRIBLE VOYAGED I've had to take across the country and back with gloomy railroads and stations you never dreamed of----one of em a horrible pest of bats and crap holed and incomprehensible parks and rains, I can't see the end of it on all horizons, this is the book of dreams."

The dreaming experience is so convincingly real for a dreamer that throughout history people have been trying to interpret them to drive meaning and influence for their waking life. For example, in the Phaedo, Plato tells how Socrates studied music and the arts because he was instructed to do so in a dream. He believed dreams have the power to change lives,

About a half of dreaming experience is auditory and about 30% or below is movement and sensation-based experience. Here the auditory also refers to the narrative of the

dream. According to a study done by Hobson although dream experience in mainly formed of visuals and motion perceptions, but it is sometimes accompanied by other types of sensory experiences. One major part of dreams are intensified emotions. About 60% of our dream content have anxiety, emotion linked with fight and flight reaction to it. Usually, the will of the dreamer is reduced, and only emotional reactions are experienced by the dreamer. (Robert J. Hoss, 2005)

There are no limits to shift from one event or scenario to another. Also like as in movies a person can also see himself as part of a dream or as being portrayed in the dream. Dreams are accompanied by various emotional experiences, but mostly have negative emotions such as anxiety and fear. The speed of dreaming experience corresponds with the speed of our imagination.

Since Freud psychoanalysis have played extensive role in explaining the dream content. It provided identification of various phenomena occurring while dreaming and their interpretation. Freud's discovery of the unconscious mind has led to several art works that tends to elaborate on various phenomena linked with the unconscious mind. It gave foundation to surrealism and their marvellous art and literature works. After Freud, Jung focused on finding common content of dreams that could bring forward universal dream elements. His discovery of archetypes in various religions is a proof that dreaming experience is not just universal, but contains content that can be linked with human cultural evolution, religious mythologies, and genetic evolution. It also suggests that dreams have enough power to influence life and beliefs of the people.

The later works by Jack Lacan were built upon Freud's proposition that the structure of the unconscious mind is that of a discourse. He linked it with the linguistic and cultural date. In his book Four Fundamental concepts of psychoanalysis, he describes that there are gaps and holes in language which leads to perception-based understanding of spoken words for a listener. He proposed that language is thrust upon us by society and is linked representation of culture rather than individual. Thus, we are often not fully communicated to anyone. This leads to unprocessed and unclear understanding of our surroundings. This ambiguity and complexity in language make its links in the unconscious mind and thus occurs in dreams, where the symbolic order is broken through its link in signifying chain. Modern science also refers dreams as a source of processing thoughts and memory and that it performs the function of clearing clutter in mind. Lacan's proposition has influenced several films and one of them is Mulholland drive. Lacan's proposition of the unconscious is structured like a language has led to very refined and anchored dream portrays. His proposition of signifying chain and the interlocking of signifiers has made it possible to develop more dream like plots and narratives in films. According to him the primary mechanism that results in the formation of dreams include Condensation, displacement, and dramatization with a narrative running along with plot referred as "Diegesis" that is also referred as auditory experience in dreams. Overall

Psychoanalysis have influenced several portrays of dreams in various mediums from arts to film, media and literature.

Dreams in Literature

Dreams have been portrayed in various ways in literature such as by describing the plot to be a dream of a sleeping character. This is because dreams can transcend an individual to a new visual spatial experience thus an event is proclaimed as a dream by simply associating it with a sleeping person whose spatial experience shifts from one experience to another abruptly. The challenge to portray of any dream starts with how to make a dream expression relatable to all and to find its anchoring point. Several theories link dreams with personal memory and cultural upbringing of an individual to put them in context.

To understand this, one must read dreams journal of Jack" Kérouac. He was an American novelist and poet in 1960 .His personal 200 Dream journal is published as a book named "Book of dreams". From his writings it is obvious that dreams are spontaneous, and events are changing rapidly. For-example in his one dream titled' digging woman's cellar' he goes to an old woman's cellar from a big new room to dig marijuana. At the same time, he is thinking that the older you get deeper the caller becomes. And then suddenly Jack describes himself working for a fraud person and then he sees his mother visiting him in jail who turns around in the red coat.

His dreams are anchored in his life. One can reassemble bits and pieces from his dreams to relate to his real life after reading his biography. His dream events are spontaneous and show lack of orientation with no defined boundaries for displacement or movement. They suggest a lot of spatial displacement such as finding a fairyland at back of a printing shop. Also, many of his dreams contain the emotions of anxiety sometimes related to fear of people stealing his work and getting it published. His dreams possess of un-real creatures such as "pest of Bats". Which seems like condensation of two signs turning into one thing and this creature is certainly not relatable with waking life. But since his dream are expressed in the form of text. They leave a lot of room for imagination. So much so that people from diverse cultural backgrounds may develop its visual and spatial interpretation according to their cultural context.

The dream based literature produced by Surrealists has its foundation in psychoanalysis. They particularly used method of automatic writing. The results were disruptive narrative, but one that is not anchored at any point. It was related to the free association of words to form sentences and to generate meaning. The other techniques linked with dreams involve changing forms or body of characters in the plot Such as in case of Kafka's Metamorphosis. (White, n.d.)

However, whether it be poetry or other forms of literature when a dream narrative is read by a reader the visual image in the mind of the reader is totally perception based. Thus, even though such narratives may speak of definite forms, but can never result

in a single type of visualization or even accurate one. The classic example of this is dreams related with of Prophet Joseph about skinny cows eating fat ones and another one about the moon and starts bowing in front of him. Several artists have tried to paint this narrative after reading its description from religious scriptures, but most of them fail to demonstrate it as a dream without showing dream cloud or portraying sleeping Joseph on one side of the painting. Similarly, in case of Metamorphosis by Franz Kafka. The novel has inspired many illustrations by artists, but each artist presents a different visual to illustrate to the plot of the novel. Thus, text cannot help to accurately visualize a dream picture for a reader. However, it can evoke emotions and multiple dimensions to the same text.

In the case of poetry a poet portrays a mental picture through language. It involves the choice and arrangement of words in form of versus or stanzas. It has a certain sense of flow to it that leaves gaps for our perception and imagination to fill. It has a definite pattern, a way of writing and reading. There is usually with no intent to dis-orient reader. Poetry has descriptive, vivid, and a condensed use of words. Understanding poetry, is linked with the understanding of culture and context that words are linked with. Thus, it has linked with the ability to recall memories. It Provokes thought and results in the emotional response of various kinds. It can make people feel happy, sad, or anxious like dreams. However, to invoke anxiety is not dominant intent of writing it. It consists of linguistic characteristics such as personifications, similes, and metaphors. It can create vivid mental images for a reader. Often poetry follows strict physical and grammatical arrangement of words that can be explained or taught at institutions. It is linked with creating a flow and rhythm which are unlikely part of a dream. There are too many gaps in perception to fill. So much so that the actual conceived idea may not be perceived by reader at times. The reader may have to put their body into it to assess the meaning of words. Thus, intended meaning of the text for poet and reader can be different. (Sweetland, n.d.) Many time dreams are portrayed by referring the event to a sleeping individual. However poetry like many art forms has potential to convey many deep desires that are ambiguous on the surface and to suggest more than one meaning a particular piece of poetry. The mental image created by poetry depends on the perception of the audience or reader.

Dream portray in paintings

A painting is an expression of ideas and emotions, with the creation of certain aesthetic qualities, in a two-dimensional visual language. Its elements of expression are lines, shapes, tones, colours, and textures that are used in many ways to produce impressions of volume, space, movement, and light on a flat surface. Out of many artists and painters who have tried to portray dreams in their work Dali is one of the most famous. According to him, he used Paranoiac critical method to create his dreamlike paintings. Paranoiac critical methods is itself not a mechanism of dream. But it follows one of the mechanisms of unconscious mind that take hold of a paranoid

person. Thus a person is suspicious of things happening around him. Similarly, in Dali's paintings there is no end to link and engagement of objects. This is generally referred as an optical illusion in paintings, but it's really mysterious interlinking of objects and forms that keep on unfolding while they are being observed. So in his paintings one may keep on finding more and more things intertwined together. (Salvador Dali - The Paranoid Critical Transformation Method, n.d.). There were other techniques used by surrealists that relayed on chance encounters of finding forms in various mediums of expression. So as to go completely irrational and thus defying the logic which was associated with characteristics of dreams.

Other artist names Brenda Ferrimani is also known for portraying dreams in her paintings. Her paintings are illustrations of her true dreams. Her famous dreams include "I AM SALMON" and "Whale Speaks". To understand the context of painting one needs learns more about the life of the author. Her dream paintings can be directly linked with her life and religious beliefs. They are surreal work do suggest the visual quality of dreams. This quality is evident due to juxtapose of objects and forms. In her dreamss condensation of objects, forms and creatures are also very evident. But it's hard to use it as a reference to create another dream painting. Her painting does suggest out of ordinary spatial experiences. In film terms they do suggest the existence of the first person's perspective and a second person's perspective for the dreamer but not for the person who is visualizing painting. But the emotional impact of the painting for the dreamer and for any other viewer would be very different.

However the painting does suggest out of body transformational experiences for a dreamer. The paintings can be interlinked visually due to common element such as water, fish and religion can bring focus on some definite elements of her dreams. All these elements are linked with the personal life of the painter while for others they may have to perceive them their own way in the light of their own life. So, when the narrative is told orally or in written form again the dream image will depend on the perception of the audience or reader.

In terms of emotions a painting does and can evoke emotions in spectators. A painting can suggest various interpretations like in case of the dream's manifested content. While Dali's work is technique based and can help more dreamlike paintings. But these paintings lack auditory qualities and other type of sensations. Also the combination of visual temporal, spatial experience only depends on how keen an observer is and how much he is willing to spend time exploring the visual aspects of the painting. This can vary greatly from person to person.

Oneiric Cinema

Cinemas disconnect us from the stress and worries of the outside world like in the case of dreams. (Kaitlyn Tiffany, 2017) . The proof of which is the 1933 economic recession in the USA when the film production reached from 500 films per year to

800 films per year. The reason for this was that cinemas provided a means for people to escape their immediate reality that was filled with crisis and suffering. Cinemas and films are sourced for everyone to be in a different visual spatial experience. They provided a break from everyday routine. The theatrical experience is a merger of the consciousness and the projected consciousness of the subject of the screen, which reduces the distance between the viewers and that which is being viewed this helps build a sense of unity with the film. The Films seem both real and dreamlike because they appear to us in a way that activates the regressive experience of watching dreams on our psychic dream screens. (Eberwein, 2014) Thus, metaphorically dreams and cinema experience is linked and studied together in film theory called Oneiric. (Sparshott, 1971)

Like movies every dream is identical, yet they create an impelling impression of sameness. (Richard M. Griffith, 1958). No matter what is being shown on the screen, whether the literal representation of a character dreaming, or the fictional characters of a story going on about their fictional lives the very process of viewing film itself replicates activities associated with the oneiric experience. The development of cinematic technology has made it possible for us to watch films that imitate reality very accurately. Included in this reality approximates our own experience as dreamers. Our ability to sit still for extended time for a film or tv is an ability bestowed upon us by nature through dreams. This experience is more observable in cinemas where we are static, and our motor functions are at rest, and we give in to screen in front of us. (Eberwein, 2014) (Sparshott, 1971) (Bacher, 2008) (Richard M. Griffith, 1958).

Films take us into visual spatial and temporal experience of events and images. Films have been extensively used to portray dreams. The initial attempts did involve associating the visual experience with a sleeping protagonists, but with time the unique media of films enabled portray of nocturnal fantasies more accurately. In films the transitional experience of being in dream space and the shift of events is created using various editing techniques. Some editing techniques are more promising than others to portray dreams such as Jump cut, Montage, Motion freeze, Cross dissolve, and passer by effect. Such editing techniques help develop experiences such as of REM movement, shifting from one scene to another, shifting of perspective, allowing the suspension of an object and the individual to be portrayed, along with movement of events and passing of times. (Mormina, 2016) The REM is part and result of rapid shift of visuals that we visualize during the dream. In films such dis-connectivity is attained through jump cuts. (Jumpcut, 2021). It is manipulation of spatial and temporal duration of a single shot and fracturing the duration to move the audience ahead. "This kind of cut abruptly communicates the fast passing of time." ("Camera Pan: - welcometomabiesworld.com") As, the speed of dream resembles with our speed of thinking. There is the movement of time and spaces, but faster than walking reality. Jump cuts speed up the transition of visual and give the illusion of time passing fast. In it a new perspective of the same object is shown without moving around it.

Irrespective all the complexities the amazing part about dream is that they make perfect sense when you are having them.

Along with this film can provide audible descriptive material alongside plot. Such as in case of movie Mulholland Drive. In it in scene of Club Silencio one can say that at many points the audio is detached from the lisping of the stage actors and singers. This is essentially the characteristics of dreams that the audio or the plot narrative is there, but detached from the movement happening in dreams, yet it is suggestive of the plot. The film has made use of above mentioned editing techniques that have resulted in the fragmentation of the plot in the form of a dream along with some surreal lighting effects to represent emotions portrayed in colours which are also characteristics of dreams (Robert J. Hoss, 2005). Another thing is that the plot is based on Lacan's structure of the unconscious due to which it is anchored in a signifier and that is a woman and her dream around becoming a star at Hollywood. This all gives the film quality of latent and manifested content anchored in a signifier which other mediums may always struggle with. Other examples of films that have plot revolving around temporality of signifier are This Vanilla sky, Open your eyes, Shutter island, and Sucker punch. Thus, making possible for all to see a collective dream with broken symbolic order but still holding a plot. This lets portray dreamy look more like a technique that can be replicated repeatedly to develop promising results. Thus, dream-based films can be an object of study to analyse characteristics of dream sequence which can eventually help to formulate dream related works. The filmic experience is the merging of a viewer's consciousness with the projected consciousness of the screen's subject, a process whereby the viewer's prior experiences with dreaming "help to create a sense of oneness" with cinema, causing the gap between the viewer and what is being viewed to narrow. The very process of viewing the film itself "replicates activities associated with the oneiric experience." (Engineering:Oneiric (film theory), 2021)

In Cinema when the film ends the visual unity with screen is lost and one must leave the must leave the theatre, separated from its extraordinary screen, and emerge into the light of common day. (Robert, 2014). Thus the whole experience of watching films, particularly in cinema resonates with dreaming experience.

Conclusion

For the portray of dreams an author, an artist or a designer must be clear about the aspects of dreams they want to portray for their audience. This can be the first step in selecting a medium for the portray of dreams. For the most accurate dreaming experience cinemas and films are ideal. Films can mimic the latent content of drams and can also suggest manifested content that in unlikely in many mediums. Today, due to advance technological innovations in cinema and with the presence of 4D and dome cinemas the dreaming experience can further be manipulated by adding various other sensations. Also incorporation of VR, AI and holograms can make viewer to be part of projected dreams and to find himself in it.

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