



THE PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN'S AMBITIONS THROUGH THE CHARACTER OF NINA SAYERS IN BLACK SWAN

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Received: (October)

Accepted: (November)

Published : (December)

Abstract

Ambition is the energy expressed in active behaviour towards a goal or aspiration, carried out with persistence and a common struggle in the pursuit of success, achievement, and completion. The existence of different societal perspectives related to men's and women's ambitions raises negative stigmas that harm women. Therefore, film is present as an entertainment medium, and as a channel to convey messages to portray social reality, and to change the perspective. One of the films that depict women's ambitions is "Black Swan" (2010) with the background of the main character who wants to achieve success in the ballet industry in a performance called "Swan Lake".

This film highlights the struggles and sacrifices of Nina Sayers in her effort to get the main dancer position, with the pressures and obstacles she faced to reach the pinnacle of success. This study aims to determine the portrayal of women's ambitions through the character of Nina Sayers in "Black Swan". This research uses a qualitative approach, with semiotic analysis methods according to Christian Metz, through scenes that are categorized as depicting striving ambitions, perfectionist ambitions, and aggressive ambitions of Nina Sayers in "Black Swan".

"Black Swan" gives a complex picture of women trying to achieve success in the competitive ballet industry. The portrayal of strong women's ambition and perseverance to achieve success in this film provides a point of view rarely explored in the film's narrative. Nina Sayers' perfectionist personality shown most strongly in the film, "Black Swan" exemplifies that ambition and hard work know no gender boundaries. The film shows that women can also strive for success in their careers and are ready to make sacrifices to achieve those goals, just as men are.

Keywords: Christian Metz, film, film semiology, the large syntagmatic category, women's ambition

INTRODUCTION

Communication conveys messages from person to person. Pratikto (2007) categorizes it into seven contexts, considering factors like location, participants, feedback, and distance (West & Turner, 2010). Mass media, in one context, uses channels like radio, TV, newspapers, and film to reach broad audiences. Film, a product of mass communication, engages audiences with visuals and sound, conveying stories and messages. Semiotic analysis decodes film's sign meaning, unveiling depth influenced by societal norms (Danesi, 2010). Film undergoes semiotic analysis, utilizing imagery, sound, and narrative to communicate messages. These components serve stories bearing audience-intended messages (Susanto, 1982). Films offer not just entertainment but also stress relief, learning opportunities, therapy, and social awareness (Wiguna, 2021). Their narratives span friendship, romance, politics, society, gender, and ambition. Tatenhove (1984) defines ambition as persistent goal-driven behavior for success (Judge & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2012). Films, reflecting real-life, depict characters' ambitions that resonate with viewers' aspirations, linking diverse themes to universal experiences. Ambition is also not compartmentalized in certain areas for achieving success, yet it is neutral and free for all, and films often draw from real-life experiences to connect with audiences, portraying characters with ambitions that resonate with viewers' aspirations.

The societal notion that women manage households while men work makes envisioning women with ambitions beyond motherly and wifely duties challenging. Negative stereotypes emerge, branding women's

ambition as selfish or manipulative (Kirmandita, 2020), despite ambition's neutral meaning applicable to all, regardless of the gender.

The pursuit of life goals is gauged by one's success in achieving them. Yet, gender disparities persist in certain domains. For instance, global political landscape data by the Inter-Parliamentary Union reveals that over 75% of politicians are male-dominated (Piscopopo & Kenny, 2020). Conversely, women tend to exhibit lower political ambitions than men (Fox & Lawless, 2010). Noteworthy instances like Megawati Soekarnoputri becoming Indonesia's 5th President in 2001 and Hillary Clinton's 2016 nomination as the first female US presidential candidate have heightened societal awareness. Today, women can aspire to equality in ambition and status alongside men. Still, public figures like them likely encountered unreported challenges and sacrifices. A Forbes survey by Marcus (2016) involving 615 women aged 22-50+ highlighted the substantial sacrifices made by ambitious women for success, surpassing men's efforts.

"Black Swan," a 2010 psychological thriller directed by Darren Aronofsky, delves into women's ambitions and sacrifices for success. Inspired by classics like "Swan Lake," "The Red Shoes," "Repulsion," and "Suspiria," the film centres on Nina Sayers (Natalie Portman), a driven ballerina in the New York City Ballet. Cast as The Swan Queen in "Swan Lake," Nina confronts challenges and makes sacrifices while embodying both the innocent White Swan and the seductive Black Swan. The movie explores themes of mental instability, obsession, and the rigorous demands of ballet. As Nina strives for perfection, her mental state deteriorates, unravelling the suspenseful plot. The film also addresses issues within the ballet world such as eating disorders, competition, abuse, and dancer stress, adding to its psychological intensity.

METHOD

2.1 Communication

Communication, rooted in the Latin "communicare" (Suhandang, 2010), denotes informing and participating. In English, it signifies relationship, news, or notification. John R. Wenburg, William W. Wilot, Kenneth K. Sereno, and Edward Bodaken (Mulyana, 2015) features three frameworks of understanding. propose three frameworks. First, popularly, it's a unidirectional message from one to another via in-person or media like letters, newspapers, radio, or TV. Second, interactive communication involves alternating verbal and nonverbal exchanges. Third, transactional communication is personal, acknowledging others' presence, but not fully controlling their interpretation of verbal and nonverbal cues.

Communication is dynamic, continuous, and complex (Subiakto & Ida, 2012). It spans seven contexts: intrapersonal (self-communication), interpersonal (face-to-face), small group (among a few individuals), organizational (within large entities), mass (to wide audiences via media), public (from one to many), and cultural (among varied cultural backgrounds) (West & Turner, 2010). Essentially, communication is the exchange of information and ideas through various means.

2.2 Mass Communication & Mass Media

First introduced in the 1920s due to the emergence of the mass press, radio, and film, mass communication in the 20th century was characterized by: (1) centralized content production, (2) distribution either driven by market logic or state institutions, (3) standardized messages open to all but often controlled or supervised, (4) a vast, anonymous audience, and (5) a powerful ability to persuade and inform based on various factors like prestige, control, and the medium's impact (Deuze, 2021).

Mass communication, derived from "mass media communication," is the process of conveying messages to vast audiences and creating shared meanings between the media and its recipients (Vivian, 2008). It's distinct due to its unique characteristics: targeting large, diverse, and anonymous audiences; scheduled, temporary message dissemination; and operation within the complex, often costly structures (Severin & Tankard, 2009). The five core components of mass communication are source, audience, message, process (one-way or two-way), and context (Winarni, 2003). Unlike interpersonal or group communication, mass communication is institutionalized, general, prioritizes content, and often has delayed feedback (Simbiosia, Komala, & Karlinah, 2012).

Mass media tools like newspapers, radio, television, and film convey messages to a broad audience (Cangara, 2015). It's distinct from mass communication, which refers to the act of communicating to the masses via these media channels (West & Turner, 2010). In this context, both senders (e.g., newspaper editors) and receivers have control over the content they disseminate or consume (West & Turner, 2010).

Mass media, essential in influencing the masses (Iswandi, 2016), has the unique ability to reach vast audiences and gain popularity for its subjects (Mcquail, 2020). Beyond conveying messages, it serves roles in information, agenda-setting, connecting people, education, persuasion, and entertainment (Saragih, 2020).

2.3 Film

Film is a visual medium that uses moving images, often with sound, to convey stories, ideas, and emotions. As an art and communication form, it combines visual and auditory elements for a sensory experience, spanning genres like narratives, documentaries, and animations. Essentially, film captures still images in succession to simulate motion, enabled by advances in technology. It has significantly impacted global culture, providing a platform for artistic expression and social commentary.

Film, constructed entirely of signs, is a prime subject for semiotic analysis. These signs, from architectural to iconic, work together to form the film's narrative (Sobur, 2013). A sign consists of a signifier (its form) and a signified (its concept). In film, these signs encompass aspects like literary and visual design, cinematography, editing, and sound (Benshoff & Griffin, 2021). Filmmakers deliberately arrange these elements to convey messages, emotions, and themes. Techniques like camera angles, scene arrangement, and music influence viewer interpretations and emotions. Essentially, films use sign manipulation to craft narratives, echoing the principles of semiotics in visual communication.

2.3.1 Black Swan

"Black Swan" (2010), directed by Darren Aronofsky, is a 108-minute psychological thriller that dives into the demanding ballet industry. It follows Nina Sayers (Natalie Portman), a devoted and perfectionist ballerina from the New York City Ballet Company. As she prepares for her role as the Swan Queen, her obsession with mastering both the delicate White Swan and the uninhibited Black Swan pushes her to the brink. Challenged by her director, Thomas (Vincent Cassel), to embrace the wildness exemplified by fellow dancer Lily (Mila Kunis), Nina's perfectionism intensifies, leading her into a harrowing journey of self-discovery and rivalry (Ariasparrow, 2021).

Nina's intense ambition dominates her life in the film. Consumed by her desire for dance perfection, she neglects social interactions and any form of leisure outside ballet. This laser-focused dedication not only isolates her but also strains her mental health, as she frequently experiences disturbing visions. While her unwavering commitment showcases her passion for ballet, it simultaneously highlights the sacrifices she makes, including her mental stability and social connections. Her ambition and perfectionism add depth to her character, revealing the toll such obsession can have on one's life.

2.4 Semiotic

Semiotics systematically studies factors in sign production and interpretation across various systems. The term originates from the Greek root "*sernewn*," meaning 'sign' (Makaryk, 1993). Linguists and philosophers have long explored it. Christian Metz, known for film sign interpretation, examines how cinema portrays events and characters, often using psychoanalysis and film structure (Devano, Kustanto, & Maemunah, 2022). Psychoanalysis delves into personality and internal aspects (LBS, Muchtar, & Ridha, 2023). Metz, a semiotics expert in cinema, analyzes shot patterns and their meanings throughout entire films, fostering discussions and related insights.

Semiotics, as defined by Metz, explores how films create narrative structures, likening cinema to a structured language (Metz, 1991). He emphasizes the connection between language and film through shots (Ali, 2018). Metz posits that viewers naturally decode visual imagery in films. A "shot," resulting from filming, is a rich source of information, captured from the start to the end of a camera recording, also known as "one take" (Csinema, 2020). Beyond shots, a "scene" encompasses one or multiple shots set in a specific location. Meanwhile, a "sequence" is a larger unit with scenes or shots linked by transitions like fades or cuts (Csinema, 2020).

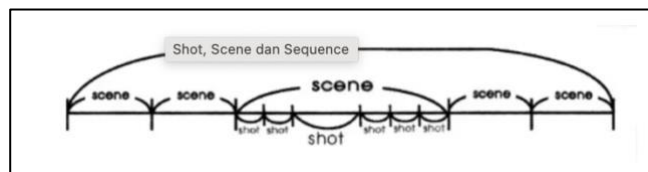


Figure 1. Understanding Shot, Scene, and Sequence

Metz's book unveils a concept for discerning key syntagmatics in film, termed "The Large Syntagmatic Category." This method breaks down films into segmented magnitudes, pinpointing and defining sections. Films comprise sequences and shots, crucial components that undergo analysis (Metz, 1991). Metz's system categorizes shots and scenes, depicted in **Figure 2** as the large syntagmatic category, establishing film syntax principles (Ahmadgoli & Yazdanjoo, 2020), which explained as follows (Metz, 1991):

1. Autonomous Shot is a comprehensive shot depicting a full story episode or a long view. It has two subtypes: sequence shots, capturing an entire scene in one frame, and four inserts with vital editing roles:
 - a. Nondiegetic insert is briefly displaying external objects for metaphorical or symbolic impact.
 - b. Subjective insert is revealing character experiences like memories and dreams using stacked visuals.
 - c. Displaced diegetic insert is a footage shifting focus within scenes, e.g., shifting between pursuer and pursued.
 - d. Explanatory insert is an insert that zooms in on scene details, akin to magnifying glass effects on items like cards or letters.
2. Parallel Syntagma is a montage joining shots from different times and places to create a unified story through editing.
3. Bracket Syntagma is a series of short scenes showing key story elements, presented non-sequentially yet linked by editing effects.
4. Descriptive Syntagma is a Visually descriptive montage displaying interconnected motifs at once, suitable for motionless subjects.
5. Alternate (Narrative) Syntagma is a non-linear montage merging events from various locations occurring simultaneously.
6. Scene is a Chronologically ordered events in a fixed setting, like a conversation between two people in the same place and time.
7. Episodic Sequence is a non-sequential shots from different scenes forming a coherent story through rational arrangement.
8. Ordinary Sequence is an unimportant sequence lacking plot impact, often unnoticed by the audience.

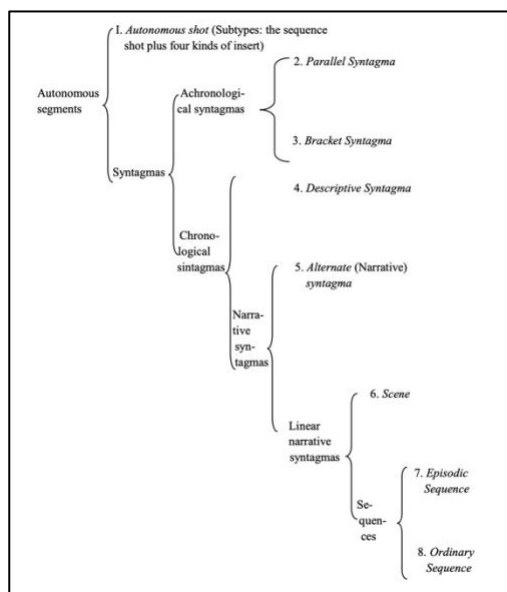


Figure 2. General Table of The Large Syntagmatic Category of The Image-Track

2.5 The Portrayal of Women in Black Swan

A film can hold ideologies, empathy, misunderstandings, beliefs, and stereotypes that can be revealed with the critical eye (Uzuegbunam & Ononiwu, 2018). In films, stories of women's ambitions are still rarely made, because of the stigma embedded in society, that women take care of the household, and men work. This becomes difficult to imagine when women have ambitions, in addition to their obligations as a mother and a wife. Meanwhile, according to Marcus (2016) in Forbes, the results of a survey were taken from 615 women workers ranged 22-50+ years old, sacrificing 5 things to be successful. First, the most common thing to sacrifice is to focus on work and make time for romantic relationships and family. Second, sacrificing time with one's child, or the decision to delay having children to prioritize one's career. Third, neglecting self-care, physical health, and spiritual well-being. Fourth, financial sacrifice to start a business or new career path. Fifth, the sacrifice of social activities and maintaining friendships. According to the data, 74% of the women stated that they are very ambitious and willing to make sacrifices to achieve success in their careers (Marcus, 2016). Due to the topic of women's ambitions and sacrifices in achieving career success, the topic was also raised in the film "Black Swan" (2010), with a background in the ballet industry. This film is packed with depicting the social reality, where Nina is struggling very hard to achieve success in getting the main dancer position in a dance performance entitled "Swan Queen". The film also raised some of the social reality conflicts professional ballerinas had to go through, that is eating disorder, sexual abuse, financial difficulties, and is under high stress levels.

2.6 Ambition

Everyone has ambitions, a strong desire for achievement. Ambition, as defined by Tatenhove (1984) defines ambition as energy expressed in active behavior toward a goal or aspiration, with the characteristics that Adler put forward (Dado, 2020). First, strive is the willingness of a person to strive for success or excellence. Second, aggressive is the behavior of a person who tends to want to attack something that is seen as disappointing, obstructing, or hindering. Third, perfectionist is the behavior of a person who does not want something to be achieved mediocrity, so that the person tries to prove it as best as possible so that he/she looks perfect. This desire is universal regardless of age. For instance, a student's wish to excel is akin to a CEO's project success goal. Gender differences in ambition appear over time. Initial ambition is similar among young employees, but women's ambition erodes faster than men's in less diverse workplaces. The gap varies based on diversity. However, ambition is fluid; daily interactions and opportunities shape it. Both genders share ambition and rationality (Joya, 2017).

2.7 Method

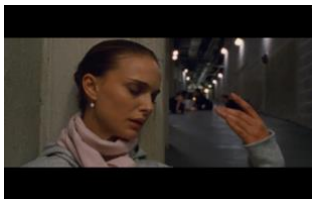
This study is qualitative research since the data is collected in the form of words and pictures, not statistics (Thao & Herman, 2020), specifically the scenes that describes the ambitious behavior of Nina Sayers in Black Swan. Scenes in the film depicting striving ambitions, perfectionist ambitions, and aggressive ambitions were observed, selected, and analyzed using Christian Metz's semiotic theory "The Large Syntagmatic Category".

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

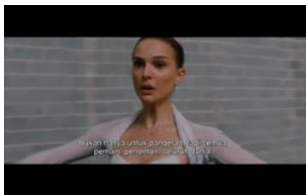
3. Findings

This study identified a total of 11 sequences which categorized in the depiction of striving-ambition, aggressive-ambition, and perfectionist-ambition from Black Swan (2010). Which is identified through the portrayal of women's ambition through the character of Nina Sayers, using Christian Metz's semiotic analysis method, the large syntagmatic category.

3.1 Striving-ambition


Sequence	Minute	Description/Dialogue	Video	The Large Syntagmatic Category
1	11:15 – 11:25	Nina, currently sitting in the hallway is preparing herself for the audition and practicing her hand movements in detail and beautifully.		This shot describes a striving-ambition behavior, where it is identified as autonomous shot, a single long and continuous shot highlighting Nina's struggle to audition by giving her best performance, by practicing in the studio hallway.

This scene is identified as the autonomous shot that depicts Nina's fighting ambition. Autonomous shot is a long and continuous single scene highlighting Nina's struggle to audition for the main dancer of Swan Lake, by rehearsing in the studio hallway while sitting and moving her two stairs to give her best performance at the audition.


Sequence	Minute	Description/Dialogue	Video	The Large Syntagmatic Category
2	13:59 – 14:23	Nina, who is auditioning by dancing the coda movement, had to lose her balance because her focus was disturbed.		This scene shows combined shots of Nina auditioning with Thomas appraising, and Lily who came late to the audition, where it is identified as displaced diegetic insert due to the fast image movement footage.

This scene is identified as displaced diegetic insert, or a footage that is moved from its normal position from one character to another with the camera directed to Nina who is auditioning, then moving to a shot of Thomas who is judging and encouraging Nina to continue to give her best moves, then moving to a shot of Lily who is

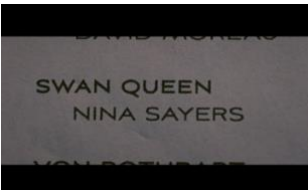
late on attending audition. This scene depicts Nina's striving ambitions, based on the scene when Thomas ask her to continue spinning in the coda movement, Nina is striving to satisfy Thomas.

Sequence	Minute	Description/Dialogue	Video	The Large Syntagmatic Category
3	17:00 – 17:40	One night at her house, Nina is still practicing the coda movement in front of the mirror until her big toe was injured, even after a full day of practicing at the dance studio.		This insert shows a scene of Nina practicing her coda movement in front of a mirror at night until her big toe is injured. This scene shows her thriving to get the main dancer position, where it is identified as explanatory insert.

This scene is identified as explanatory insert which shows the details of an image with a magnifying glass effect, namely the closeup shot on Nina's big toe nail split in half, due to too much practice. This scene depicts her striving ambition due to her effort to get the main dancer position by rehearsing coda which she had previously failed to do during the audition.


Sequence	Minute	Description/Dialogue	Video	The Large Syntagmatic Category
4	20:57 – 21:15	This scene shows Nina is persuading Thomas to make her get the main dancer position.		This scene shows a conversation between Nina and Thomas, where Nina is smoothly persuading him to consider her as the main dancer, because she had perfected her coda, which is identified as "scene".

This scene is identified as scene which is a series of events that are sorted chronologically without effects or changes in specific time and place settings. This scene depicts Nina's striving ambition due to her effort of smoothly persuading Thomas into getting her the main dancer position, since she perfected the coda by practicing nonstop.


Sequence	Minute	Description/Dialogue	Video	The Large Syntagmatic Category
5	23:07 – 23:22	A closeup of Nina Sayers' name who was chosen to be the main character of "Swan Queen".		This insert shows a closeup detail of the Nina's name chosen to be the main dancer in a play titled "Swan Lake" (explanatory insert)

This scene is identified as explanatory insert which shows the details of the image with a magnifying glass effect in a scene, where the camera focusing only Nina's name on the Swan Lake's play bulletin This scene depicts Nina's striving ambition, because her hard work has brought her to get the main dancer position.


3.2 Perfectionist-ambition

Sequence	Minute	Description/Dialogue	Video	The Large Syntagmatic Category
6	14:44 – 14:51	Nina auditioning for the main dancer role in a play called “Swan Lake”.		This scene shows Nina asking a second chance of the audition to Thomas due to the unbalance movement of Nina while doing coda, which described her perfectionist character, and identified as autonomous shot.


This scene is identified as autonomous shot which is a long and continuous single scene, that depicts Nina’s perfectionist ambition character, or the behavior of a person who does not want something to be achieved mediocrity, so that the person tries to prove it as best as possible so that she looks perfect, where Nina asked Thomas to attempt second chance audition of dancing coda, due to her failure on the first attempt.

Sequence	Minute	Description/Dialogue	Video	The Large Syntagmatic Category
7	17:00 – 17:40	One night at her house, Nina is still practicing the coda movement in front of the mirror until her big toe was injured, even after a full day of practicing at the dance studio.		This insert shows a scene of Nina practicing her coda movement in front of a mirror at night until her big toe is injured. This scene shows her perfectionist character to get the main dancer position, where it is identified as explanatory insert.


This scene is identified as explanatory insert which shows the details of an image with a magnifying glass effect, namely the closeup shot on Nina’s big toe nail split in half, due to too much practice. This scene depicts her perfectionist character, since Nina is not easily satisfied with her effort, especially her audition result, which she had previously failed to do during the audition

Sequence	Minute	Description/Dialogue	Video	The Large Syntagmatic Category
8	1:19:17 – 1:19:33	Nina practicing alone at dawn due to perfect her dancing movements.		This insert shows Nina at the studio at dawn practicing her dancing movements, when suddenly a snippet of her reflection in the mirror not moving in the right direction, which identified as subjective insert.

This scene is identified as subjective insert, or an insert that exist to display events that are not in the present, but absent moments experienced by the character such as imagination, memory snippets, dreams, fears, hunches. This scene vividly portrays Nina's internal struggle with her perfectionist tendencies and the toll they take on her mental state. The imagination represents her fears, doubts, and the overwhelming pressure she feels to meet impossibly high standards.

Sequence	Minute	Description/Dialogue	Video	The Large Syntagmatic Category
9	1:24:17 – 1:24:51	A scene of Nina's imagination turning into a swan.		This scene shows a snippet of her imagination by growing feathers on her back, eye turning red, and body transforming into a swan, which identified as episodic sequence.

This scene is identified as episodic sequence, or a presentation of non-sequential shots found in different scenes and minutes, yet when sorted explains a story of its own, which shows Nina's imagination of slowly transforming into a swan. This mesmerizing scene encapsulates the complex interplay between Nina's desires, fears, and her fragile mental state, as a result of her perfectionist character. The imagery of the transformation, from feathers to red eyes, captures the tension between her pursuit of perfection and the toll it takes on her identity and well-being.


Sequence	Minute	Description/Dialogue	Video	The Large Syntagmatic Category
10	1:28:07 – 1:28:32	Nina imagines that her toes begin to stick together identical to a swan's toe.		This scene shows a snippet of Nina's imaginary. Her toes, one by one, begin to draw closer together, the skin between them gradually dissolving like morning mist. In its place, a delicate membrane forms, connecting her toes in a way that echoes the webbed feet of a swan, which identified as episodic sequence.

This scene is identified as episodic sequence, or a presentation of non-sequential shots found in different scenes and minutes, yet when sorted explains a story of its own, which shows Nina's imagination of slowly transforming into a swan. Nina's determination for perfection radiates from her every pore. Her gaze fixated on her feet, she watches with a mixture of anticipation and unwavering resolve as her toes begin to change. Slowly, deliberately, they draw together, their contours shifting until the boundaries between them blur, much like the merging of a swan's graceful toes. Nina's transformation into the Black Swan is realized not just through her physical changes, but through her mindset and the relentless pursuit of perfection that drives her. The merging of her toes into the image of a swan's feet symbolizes her unwavering commitment to achieving her artistic ideals, even if it means letting go of certain aspects of herself in the process, that depicts her perfectionist character.

Sequence	Minute	Description/Dialogue	Video	The Large Syntagmatic Category
11	1:42:32 – 1:42:50	This scene shows Nina who finished performing "Swan Lake".		This scene shows the ending of Nina's journey by perfectly performed "Swan Lake" with visual effect, which identified as bracket syntagma.

This scene is identified as bracket syntagma, a series of short scenes that show the core of the story in the film, and chronologically place them in relation to each other with visual effects. This scene encapsulates the essence of Nina's perfectionist ambition, showcasing her moment of triumph and the realization of her lifelong dedication to becoming the perfect dancer. The dialogue "I feel perfect" captures the culmination of her success, by perfectly performed "Swan Lake".

3.3 Aggressive-ambition

Sequence	Minute	Description/Dialogue	Video	The Large Syntagmatic Category
12	1:26:15 – 1:26:29	This scene shows Nina aggressively attacking her mother who prevents Nina from leaving to perform.		This scene is identified as 'scene', which is a series of events that are in chronological order.

This scene is identified as 'scene', which is a series of events that are sorted chronologically without effects or changes in settings. This scene effectively portrays Nina's aggressive ambition side, highlighting her tendency to lash out when she feels obstructed or limited. Through this confrontation with her mother, the scene captures Nina's internal struggles, her desire for autonomy, and her fierce determination to pursue her ambitions at any cost.

The prevalence of striving ambitions (5 sequences), perfectionist ambitions (6 sequences), and the presence of aggressive ambitions (1 sequence) in the scenes mentioned suggests that Nina Sayers' character is portrayed as someone who grapples with internal struggles and is driven by a relentless pursuit of perfection. Her character's complexity is portrayed through these ambitions, showcasing her internal conflicts, desires, and the challenges she faces. The combination of fighting ambitions and perfectionist ambitions points to her determination to excel, even if it means pushing herself to the limit. The presence of aggressive ambitions adds an element of intensity to her character, highlighting the inner turmoil she experiences as she strives for excellence.

4. Discussion

4.1 Mass Communication in Black Swan

Mass communication is the process of sending messages to a massive audience. Mass communication is a process of creating common sense between the mass media and the community at large. In the film "Black Swan" Darren Aronofsky uses film as a medium to transmit messages to the masses or audience. The message is the social reality of an ambitious woman in the ballet industry, and how she managed to achieve her dream despite the obstacles and sacrifices she overcame.

This film serves as a medium for director Darren Aronofsky's extensive messaging. It epitomizes mass communication due to: (1) institutionalization involving numerous people, diverse equipment, and a substantial \$13 million budget; (2) its open and audience-oriented message, produced and screened by the major film

company Searchlight Pictures, ensuring widespread accessibility; (3) the communicant is anonymous and heterogeneous, since the communicator does not know the communicant directly, in this instance Black Swan's audience. (4) its skill in reaching a large population within a specific timeframe, exhibited during its cinematic run from September 1 to September 15, 2010; (5) prioritization of message content over relationship, focusing on grammar and structure for effectiveness; (6) its one-way nature, where the film communicates to the audience; (7) the drawback of limited sensory engagement due to its cinema-only format; and (8) a feature of delayed feedback, typical of one-way mass communication.

"Black Swan" (2010) depicts ballerina Nina Sayers, portrayed by Natalie Portman, as she grapples with ambition and the psychological effects of seeking perfection. Her drive blurs her reality, leading her into hallucinations and inner turmoil, intensified by the ballet world's pressures and her complex relationship with her mother. The film, a psychological thriller, symbolizes Nina's internal battles through the black and white swan duality. Beyond entertainment, it underscores the challenges women in rigorous artistic fields endure while chasing their dreams.

"Black Swan" delves into the intense challenges faced by Nina in the competitive ballet world, highlighting her relentless pursuit of the Swan Queen role. Amidst pressures from rivals and the industry's high standards, the film showcases the depths of women's ambitions in ballet. It underscores the significance of courage, dedication, and tireless determination in realizing dreams, offering a profound depiction of a woman's ambition.

The message Aronofsky wanted to convey through the film was able to influence the view and thoughts of the diverse and wide audience. The film's exploration of women's ambition, perseverance to achieve success, and the toll of societal pressures resonates with a wide range of viewers. The themes presented in "Black Swan" open doors for discussions on women's ambition, gender equality, the dark side of ballet industry, and the sacrifices to achieve success. By using compelling characters, visual metaphors, and a captivating narrative, the film captivates audiences and encourages them to engage on a deeper level. The film's impact goes beyond mere entertainment, as it prompts viewers to consider their own experiences and thoughts about the themes depicted. Indeed, "Black Swan" serves as a prime example of how films can be a source for conveying meaningful messages and prompting societal conversations. Through its thought-provoking narrative, it showcases the potential of cinema to not only entertain but also to challenge perspectives, provoke discussions, and shed light on aspects of social reality that might otherwise go unnoticed.

4.2 Film as semiotics

Films hold a potent but often implicit message conveyed through depicted signs, understood by select audiences. Researchers employ semiotic theory to decode these messages. Semiotics studies sign creation, interpretation, and meaning across diverse systems. This analysis is applied to "Black Swan," utilizing Christian Metz's semiotic theory, ideal for examining the film's entirety, emphasizing psychoanalysis and structure to portray character events.

In semiotic theory, films utilize visuals, narratives, and symbols with hidden meanings. Metz's semiotic theory aids in identifying and analyzing these elements to convey messages and emotions to viewers. Applying Metz's theory to "Black Swan" uncovers concealed messages, symbols, and narrative constructs, especially through "The Large Syntagmatic Category."

"The Large Syntagmatic Category" involves sequence-by-sequence film analysis, where sequences of scenes form a larger story. This approach delves into shot relationships, sequential arrangement, and conveyed messages. Metz asserts that the film's primary syntagmatic structure is sequences of shots in continuous scenes, shaping audience perceptions (Metz, 1991). Through meticulous shot-by-shot and narrative analysis, semiotic research reveals how shot and scene arrangements shape audience experiences, ultimately influencing the film's meaning.

Using this semiotic approach, visual elements, composition, camera settings, the use of color, lighting, and other elements work together to form the message conveyed by the film regarding the portrayal of women's ambitions through the character of Nina Sayers, which can be found in 7 sequences identified in "The Large Syntagmatic Category", these include:

1. **Sequence 1 (11:15 – 11:25)** which is identified as the autonomous shot that depicts Nina's striving ambition.

2. **Sequence 2 (13:59 – 14:23)** which identified as displaced diegetic insert that depicts Nina's striving ambition.
3. **Sequence 3 (17:00 – 17:40)** which identified as explanatory insert that depicts Nina's striving ambition.
4. **Sequence 4 (20:57 – 21:15)** which identified as scene that depicts Nina's striving ambition.
5. **Sequence 8 (1:19:17 – 1:19:33)** which identified as subjective insert that depicts Nina's perfectionist ambition.
6. **Sequence 9 (1:24:17 – 1:24:51)** which identified as episodic sequence that depicts Nina's perfectionist ambition.
7. **Sequence 11 (1:42:32 – 1:42:50)** which identified as bracket syntagma that depicts Nina's perfectionist character.

In this research, the researcher identified a total of 12 sequences classified in 8 categories of the large syntagmatic category, these include 2 sequences of autonomous shot; one sequence of subjective insert; one sequence of displaced diegetic insert; 3 sequences of explanatory insert; one sequence of bracket syntagma; 2 sequences of scene; 2 sequences of episodic sequence, and did not identify the remaining categories (nondiegetic insert, parallel syntagma, descriptive syntagma, alternate syntagma, ordinary sequence), since the research was limited only to selecting sequences that were classified as Nina's striving, perfectionist, and aggressive ambition character. Thus, the 5 categories were not found according to the predetermined ambitions.

4.3 Portrayal of women in Black Swan

Films like "Black Swan" powerfully communicate societal issues through their stories and characters. Nina's journey in the ballet world reflects the challenges and sacrifices many face when pursuing their dreams, especially women in competitive fields. Her quest for perfection sheds light on the extremes people might endure for success, impacting their mental health. While set in the ballet industry, the movie's themes of ambition and sacrifice are universally relatable, prompting conversations about the price of success in any high-pressure field. By focusing on Nina's character and her journey, "Black Swan" provides a window into the complexities of women's ambition, perseverance to achieve success, and the toll of societal pressure can take on one's mental health. Through its narrative and visual elements, the film becomes a vehicle for addressing these issues and encouraging audiences to reflect on the societal realities depicted on screen.

The film highlights the importance of sacrifice, dedication, and struggle made by a woman in pursuing her dreams, as well as how social pressures and demands in the ballet industry can affect Nina's journey and sacrifices to reach the point of success, which is highlighted in several points by director Darren Aronofsky. This film is a riveting cinematic portrayal that delves deep into the often hidden and complex realities within the ballet world. Through its narrative, the film sheds light on several harsh realities that can plague the lives of aspiring dancers, giving voice to challenges that many performers may silently face. The point that illustrates the social reality raised in the film are: the average ballerina suffers from an eating disorder, experiences sexual abuse, has financial difficulties, and suffers from stress, which is described as follows.

First, ballerinas must maintain an ideal body weight by following an intense exercise routine to achieve a high level of expertise in ballet. Many of them have to sacrifice themselves by undergoing a strict diet, in order to have an ideal body as a requirement of getting a role in a performance. This is due to lots of movement in the air such as the grand *jete*, *fouette*, and a toss, which requires them to be "light as feathers". As a result, many dancers suffer from eating disorders by vomiting after every meal, maintaining meal portions, and not eating junk food as shown in some scenes. Second, several scenes in the film show Thomas sexually assaulting Nina by kissing her lips and stealing the opportunity to fondle Nina's private area in a quiet studio to help Nina explore more deeply in the role of Black Swan. This illustrates the social reality of the ballet industry, which still has a high percentage of sexual harassment and abuse of power cases for decades, due to the hierarchical and power structures that exist within. Third, some scene show Nina living in a small apartment with poor lighting in the suburbs area illustrates the social reality that many ballet dancers have financial difficulties, due to the small income for performing and large expenses on shoes and costume. Lastly, women in ballet or other industries can experience mental and physical stress by facing high demands in their work. Ballet is an art that requires a very high level of technical expertise, as well as dedication and strenuous practice. The ambition and pressure to achieve high standards in an industry like ballet can cause high stress on dancers. In "Black Swan", Nina Sayers is portrayed as a perfectionist dancer who is highly dedicated in pursuing the lead role in a performance titled "Swan Lake". Her ambition to reach a level of perfection, and the pressure from her director caused stress that eventually affected her mental and physical health. This is reflected in the hallucination scenes that she experienced, as a representation of the immense pressure and stress experienced by Nina.

4.4 Women's ambition through the character of Nina Sayers in Black Swan

Humans inherently have ambitions, a drive to achieve. According to Adler, ambition involves striving for success, perfectionism, and aggression, traits evident in Nina's character from "Black Swan." The first characteristic of ambition is striving, or the willingness to strive for success. In the movie "Black Swan", Nina shows a very strong ambition of achieving her dream of getting the lead role in a performance titled "Swan Lake". She strives by dedicating to continuously honing her abilities and pushing her boundaries to achieve their fullest potential as an artist. This dedication involves consistent practice, rigorous training, and a commitment to refining every aspect of their craft. Nina practices and strives diligently to acquire the perfect dance techniques, and perform each character accurately, despite the pressure and intense competition behind closed doors.

The second characteristic of ambition is perfectionist, or a behavior conducted to achieve perfection by always trying their best. In the movie "Black Swan", the main character Nina Sayers is portrayed as a perfectionist in pursuing her dreams and ambitions to get the lead role in a performance titled "Swan Lake". Nina's ambition is evident through her unwavering dedication to her craft. She practices rigorously and meticulously refines her dance techniques to portray both the delicate and innocent White Swan and the seductive and dark Black Swan, two contrasting roles within the ballet. Her commitment to achieving perfection in these roles showcases her ambition to excel in her art form, through scenes that depict her perfectionist character in the film. These include multiple scenes of her struggling to practice certain ballet moves repeatedly until she feels that her performance is up to the standard she set for herself.

The last characteristic of ambition is aggressive, or the tendency of wanting to attack something that is seen as disappointing, obstructive, or inhibiting. The depiction of Nina's aggressive behavior towards her mother in the film's ending scene offers a compelling example of how ambition can lead to a fierce determination to overcome perceived obstacles. Nina's aggressive response to her mother's concerns illustrates the conflict that can arise when ambition takes precedence over other considerations, such as health and well-being. Her drive to achieve her dream of performing flawlessly in the show can be so strong that it prompts her to react aggressively when faced with what she perceives as a hindrance. This aggressive behavior showcases how ambition, while a powerful motivator, can also have negative consequences if it leads to a tunnel-vision approach where obstacles are viewed as mere distractions. Nina's unwillingness to accept any hindrance to her pursuit of success highlights the darker side of ambition, where the desire for achievement can override other aspects of a person's life.

In the character of Nina Sayers in "Black Swan," we witness a profound exploration of the multifaceted nature of ambition. Through her striving, perfectionism, and aggressive tendencies, the film vividly portrays both the inspiring and cautionary aspects of pursuing one's dreams with unwavering determination. Nina's relentless striving for success is evident in her tireless efforts to master her dance techniques and achieve the lead role in "Swan Lake." Her dedication to continuous improvement reflects the positive side of ambition, as she pushes her limits and commits herself fully to realizing her aspirations. Furthermore, Nina's perfectionism adds another layer to her ambition. Her meticulous attention to detail and rigorous practice underscores her unwavering commitment to achieving perfection in her performance. The aggressive side of Nina's ambition emerges when obstacles stand in her way. Her fierce determination to overcome hindrances, as demonstrated in her confrontations with her mother, highlights the potential downsides of ambition when it morphs into an obsession. Her single-minded focus on success blinds her to the broader context, leading to strained relationships and a disregard for her own well-being. In essence, Nina's journey serves as a profound cautionary tale. While her ambition drives her to reach great heights, it also exposes the darker aspects of pursuing success without moderation. The combination of striving, perfectionism, and aggression illustrates the fine line between ambition's positive motivation and its potential to cause harm.

CONCLUSION

Women often grapple with prioritizing family obligations, sometimes sacrificing personal ambitions. While progress has challenged traditional roles, films seldom depict women's ambitions and sacrifices. Gender norms clash with career aspirations, creating dilemmas and sacrifices. Movies can reshape perceptions, and "Black Swan" stands as an exception. The film portrays Nina Sayers' intricate pursuit of excellence in ballet, showcasing the toll of ambition. It explores the challenges, doubts, and sacrifices women endure, highlighting the underrepresented narrative of women's ambitions. Nina's journey mirrors the multifaceted decisions women face. "Black Swan" delves into the dark side of success, emphasizing the sacrifices required. Through this, the film dismantles gender boundaries, showcasing that women, like men, can ambitiously strive and sacrifice for their goals.

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