



A PSYCHOANALYTIC EXPLORATION OF ANOREXIA NERVOSA IN THE FILM “TO THE BONE”

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Abstract: This study gives a psychoanalytic exploration of anorexia nervosa as portrayed in the film *To the Bone*. Anorexia nervosa is a complicated mental condition marked by distorted body image and severe nutritional restriction. The film provides a narrative that digs into the protagonist's struggle with the condition, allowing for an examination of the underlying psychological processes and therapeutic dynamics. This research tries to uncover the film's unconscious impulses, defence mechanisms, and symbolic representations of food and the body by using psychoanalytic ideas and concepts. Recurring psychological themes and narrative structures are recognised and analysed using qualitative analytical approaches such as thematic analysis and narrative analysis. The study issues concern the presentation of underlying psychological processes, defence mechanisms, therapeutic dynamics, and psychoanalytic discoveries. The findings contribute to a better understanding of anorexia nervosa by shedding light on its psychological intricacies and perhaps directing treatment strategies. This study's goal is to raise empathy and understanding about anorexia nervosa in our culture.

Index Terms -.Anorexia Nervosa, Eating Disorder, Distorted Body Image, Societal Influence, Cognitive Impairment.

I. INTRODUCTION

Anorexia nervosa is a complicated mental condition distinguished by distorted body image, excessive food restriction, and a strong fear of gaining weight. It affects people of all ages and genders, with serious physical and psychological repercussions. As the frequency and effects of anorexia nervosa increase, there is an urgent need to improve our knowledge of its underlying psychological processes in order to develop effective therapies and support systems. In recent years, films have developed into strong vehicles for depicting the lived realities of those suffering from mental illnesses. The film *To the Bone*, directed by Marti Noxon, has received a lot of attention for its representation of anorexia nervosa and its possible influence on viewers. Through a psychoanalytic lens, the video explores the complicated psychological landscape that underpins anorexia nervosa. This study aims to conduct a psychoanalytic examination of anorexia nervosa as represented in the film *To the Bone*. Using psychoanalytic ideas and concepts, this research aims to uncover the underlying psychological elements that contribute to the development and maintenance of anorexia nervosa, as well as the dynamics of the healing process depicted in the film. Through this investigation, it also aims to obtain insights into the intricate interaction of unconscious desires, defence systems, and symbolic representations of food and the body. This study intends to conduct a psychoanalytic examination of anorexia nervosa as shown in the film *To the Bone*. This study intends to give useful insights into the complex nature of anorexia nervosa and its representation in the film by applying qualitative analytical methodologies and evaluating the underlying psychological variables, defence mechanisms, and therapeutic dynamics.

A qualitative analysis will be used to meet the goals of this research. This method allows for a thorough examination of the psychological concepts and experiences shown in the film. Thematic analysis will be used to discover repeating patterns and themes connected to anorexia nervosa, while narrative analysis will be used to study the film's narrative structure and character development. By using a psychoanalytic lens and qualitative approaches, we can give a nuanced and thorough analysis of anorexia nervosa in the setting of the film *To the Bone*. This study intends to add to the current body of information on anorexia nervosa and its psychoanalytic interpretation, eventually providing insights that may be used to influence treatment techniques and develop more empathy and awareness in our society.

The objective of this study is to perform a psychoanalytic examination of anorexia nervosa as portrayed in the film. *To the bone* The study tries to analyse the underlying psychological elements, defence mechanisms, therapeutic processes, and symbolic representations depicted in the film using psychoanalytic ideas and concepts. The goal is to contribute to the current body of information on anorexia nervosa and its depiction in films by deepening understanding of the condition. Furthermore, by giving useful insights into the complex psychological processes involved in anorexia nervosa, the study aims to inform treatment techniques, interventions, and public awareness.

Here are some of the studies that have been conducted on the film *To the Bone* and eating disorders, each focusing on a different facet of the genre-

“How Eating Disorder is Portrayed in The Movie: *To the Bone*” by Dr. Pranita Gaur and Dr. Sarabjit Kaur Sran says that Social media encourage young individuals to follow a temporary diet that allows them to lose weight quickly while harming their physical and emotional health. Certain communities encourage slim bodies. Hence ,this study focuses on the necessity of investigating the symptoms and causes of this condition.

“Overview on Anorexia Nervosa: An eating disorder” by Anirban Pattanayak, Eshita Manna, Paromita Mukherjee, Payel Kumar Roy and Swati Nakhale explains that the rate of anorexia nervosa in Western countries is higher than in non-Western countries, which is explained by cultural differences since Western society places a high value on thinness in young women. According to this study, it is spreading to non-Western countries in both genders and is explained by a number of factors, including media attention, social and parental pressure, genetic and biochemical variables, and other psychological problems such as sexual abuse and low self-esteem.

“Ellen's Anorexia in *To the Bone* Movie (2017)” by Elsa Lubianti, Mia Fitria Agustina, Shofi Mahmudah Budi Utami attempts to discover what causes Ellen, the main character in Noxon's film *To the Bone*, to suffer from anorexia. In addition, to address the study topic, this study found that Ellen's anorexia is driven by both internal factors (stress, loneliness, and despair) and external factors (her parents' divorce).

“Females with Eating Disorders and Urinary Incontinence: A Psychoanalytic Perspective” by Qin Xiang Ng ,Yu Liang Lim ,Wayren Loke ,Kuan Tsee Cheeand Donovan Yutong Lim provides a psychoanalytic approach to the presence of urinary symptoms in females with EDs is addressed in this paper, and it states that these symptoms are linked to specific traits or characteristics of ED patients, namely the overarching need for control, a pathological strive for perfection, and self-denial of basic bodily urges. This is examined in connection to common psychopathological processes, development, and personality variables in ED patients.

"Inner conflict in the movie script entitled *To the Bone* by Martin Noxon "by Cyntia reveals that the primary reason for Ellen's distress was the pain produced by her parents' divorce. However, nothing Ellen did had any influence on her parents' divorce. According to this analysis, the complex issue in this film is the problems that Ellen encountered.

These are some of the studies conducted in relation to the film *To the Bone*, and this study conducts a psychoanalytic investigation of anorexia nervosa as represented in the film *To the Bone*.

A psychoanalytic study of anorexia nervosa in the film *To the Bone* gives fascinating insights into the film's underlying psychological elements, defence mechanisms, therapeutic dynamics, and symbolic representations. This analysis, which employs psychoanalytic ideas and concepts, gives a better understanding of the intricate interaction of unconscious impulses, identity battles, and the symbolic value of food and the body in connection to anorexia nervosa. The film *To the Bone* effectively portrays the underlying psychological factors contributing to the development of anorexia nervosa. The protagonist, Ellen, exhibits deep-seated emotional conflicts and unresolved issues stemming from her family dynamics and personal experiences. Through a psychoanalytic lens, it becomes evident that Ellen's intense fear of gaining weight and her preoccupation with thinness serve as symbolic representations of her internal conflicts and desires for

control. The film adeptly portrays the psychodynamic processes at play in the development and maintenance of anorexia nervosa.

To the Bone is about Ellen, a twenty-year-old college dropout who has anorexia nervosa (AN). Her stepmother has exhausted all treatment options until Ellen meets a bizarre doctor who accepts her into his plan, which consists of living in a group home for six weeks and recovering from eating disorders. The plot concentrates on the physical and psychological ramifications of this eating habit. Marti Noxon wrote and directed *To the Bone*, which was released in 2017 and runs around 1 hour and 47 minutes. The film *To the Bone* is used to discuss anorexia nervosa. People may have unconscious sexual urges towards their parents or same-sex parents, according to psychoanalytic thought. Ellen's connection with her father, as well as her mother's dread of losing her, is analysed in the film in terms of the Oedipal complex and its probable influence on her psychological development. According to psychoanalytic theory, people might project their unresolved feelings or conflicts onto others, and therapists can experience countertransference—an emotional reaction to the client. The therapist's connection with Ellen, as well as Ellen's personal history of an eating disorder, might be analysed in the film in terms of transference and countertransference and how it might affect the therapeutic relationship. In terms of defence mechanisms, *To the Bone* paints a realistic picture of the many techniques used by those suffering from anorexia nervosa. Ellen and other characters repeatedly downplay the severity of their ailment or hide underlying emotional suffering, displaying denial and repression. Ellen's inadequacies are also projected onto her stepmother, transferring her personal issues to external circumstances. The movie focuses on the numerous and complicated ways in which defence systems develop and interact in the setting of anorexia nervosa.

Psychoanalysis is Sigmund Freud's psychological technique that tries to investigate the unconscious mind and its impact on an individual's ideas, feelings, and behaviours. It is founded on the idea that many psychological disorders and conflicts arise from unresolved childhood experiences and the intricate interaction of conscious and unconscious processes. In this study, psychoanalysis is shown through the use of psychoanalytic ideas and concepts to analyse and comprehend the psychological dynamics depicted in the film. The investigation will use a psychoanalytic lens to explore the underlying psychological reasons, defence mechanisms, therapeutic dynamics, and symbolic representations of anorexia nervosa shown in the film. Psychoanalysis can be utilised to dive into the protagonist's underlying impulses and conflicts that drive her fight with anorexia nervosa. The investigation may reveal repressed emotions, unresolved childhood traumas, or complicated interpersonal interactions that contribute to the disorder's genesis and maintenance. A psychoanalytic viewpoint can shed light on the underlying psychological underpinnings of anorexia nervosa in the film by analysing the character's goals and unconscious urges.

In *To the Bone*, symbolism is significant, and a psychoanalytic examination shows the complex and subtle depictions of food and the body. Food is a potent symbol that represents both sustenance and control. The film explores the intense uncertainty and anxiety that people with anorexia nervosa experience around food, illustrating how it becomes a battleground for underlying conflicts and desires. Weight loss and physical appearance are visible expressions of interior conflict, and the body itself becomes a canvas on which psychological struggles are portrayed. The film effectively portrays the underlying psychological factors, defence mechanisms, therapeutic dynamics, and symbolic representations that contribute to the development and maintenance of anorexia nervosa. By delving into the unconscious processes and exploring the symbolism associated with food and the body, this analysis deepens our understanding of anorexia nervosa and its psychological underpinnings. It highlights the potential for psychoanalytic approaches to inform treatment strategies and foster greater empathy and awareness in addressing this challenging disorder.

The film's depiction of the therapy process provides rich material for psychoanalytic investigation. The protagonist's interaction with her therapist allows for the investigation of transference, countertransference, and the dynamics of the therapeutic alliance. Analysing the character's emotional reactions to the therapist as well as the therapeutic methods utilised might provide insights into the character's underlying conflicts as well as the possibility of resolution. In addition, the investigation might investigate the transformative potential of therapy in addressing the underlying psychological problems that contribute to anorexia nervosa. In the psychological characteristics of anorexia nervosa, defence mechanisms are critical. A psychoanalytic study of the film can detect and analyse the character's defence strategies for coping with unconscious conflicts and concerns. For example, the character's denial of her condition's seriousness, the projection of her fears onto others, or the use of intellectualization to detach herself from emotional suffering. This investigation can give insight into how these defence systems safeguard and maintain the disease. Object interactions and early attachment experiences are important in forming one's psychological development, according to

psychoanalytic ideas. *To the Bone* provides an opportunity to investigate the character's interactions with family members, notably her parents, and how these connections may have impacted her anorexia nervosa development. The investigation can look for attachment difficulties, unsolved conflicts, and internalised object connections, revealing insight into the character's challenges with identity, self-worth, and the desire for acceptance.

The film *To the Bone* has received attention for its subtle depiction of eating disorders and the difficulties of rehabilitation, as well as for its investigation of the emotional and psychological problems that underlie these diseases. However, the movie has also come under fire for its graphic depiction of disturbed eating habits and its apparent romanticization of anorexia. Each character in this research paper has been given a genuine psychoanalytic description. Through that, the readers will learn briefly about each character's perspective, increasing the study's importance in society. Ellen, the main character in the movie, acts out of an overwhelming feeling of insecurity and a need for control. When everything else feels out of control, her anorexia gives her power over her life and body. Her anorexia has made her already difficult connections with her family much more difficult. Her battle with anorexia is a symptom of deeper psychological problems, which treatment aids in addressing and resolving. Ellen's therapist, Dr. Beckham, helps Ellen overcome her anorexia. Ellen cooperates with Dr. Beckham, a sympathetic and empathetic therapist, to address her psychiatric problems. She helps Ellen identify the causes of her anorexia and encourages her to share her feelings. She also exhorts Ellen to accept accountability for her behaviour and make life-enhancing adjustments. Ellen's mother is a complicated person with her own psychological problems. She is judgmental of Ellen and overbearing, which has worsened Ellen's anorexia. The fact that Ellen's mother is prepared to go to whatever lengths to assist her daughter also stands out as being obvious. Ellen and her mother may face their problems and start to mend their relationship through treatment.

Luke is a different patient at the facility where Ellen is being treated. He is a free spirit who has previously battled addiction. Luke is initially attracted to Ellen, but their connection is strained as he tries to influence her medical care. Although Luke is attempting to assist Ellen, his efforts only make the situation worse. Luke can identify his own problems and work on them thanks to counselling. Ellen's sister, Kelly, appears to be the one who is more responsible. She urges Ellen to get her anorexia under control and supports her. Kelly exhibits artistic skills and expresses interest in pursuing a career in the arts. Even though we do not get to see as much of Kelly's character growth as we do with Ellen's, it is still obvious that Kelly loves her sister and just wants what is best for her. Psychoanalysing the characters in *To the Bone* provides insight into their motivations and behaviours. It demonstrates how the troubles of the characters are connected to deeper psychological problems that call for therapy and introspection.

A psychoanalytic examination of the depiction of anorexia nervosa in the film *To the Bone* might dive into the film's unconscious impulses, conflicts, defence mechanisms, therapeutic dynamics, and symbolic representations. This study provides more in-depth knowledge of the character's psychological environment, the underlying psychopathology of anorexia nervosa, and the transformational possibilities of therapy.

This study adds to our understanding of anorexia nervosa and its depiction in movies. This investigation, via the psychoanalytic lens, provides vital insights into the psychological intricacies of the condition, emphasising the importance of unconscious processes, defence mechanisms, therapeutic dynamics, and symbolic representations. This study's findings have ramifications for treatment methods, treatments, and social awareness, developing empathy and a better understanding of anorexia nervosa. It emphasises the need for treating the underlying psychological causes and supporting people dealing with this difficult condition with comprehensive therapy. The study provides a thorough examination of the film's underlying psychological aspects, defence mechanisms, therapeutic processes, and symbolic representations. This investigation, which employs psychoanalytic ideas and concepts, provides vital insights into the intricacies of anorexia nervosa and enriches our understanding of the condition.

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