

Searching for the Lost Tree of Life: An analysis of the Self-identity Process of the Heroine Joe in The Nymphomaniac Vol with Conceptual Metaphor Theory

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Abstract: People have been suffering from extreme loneliness, especially women, are more likely to feel lonely. For various reasons, modern women can't honestly express their sexual desires and needs, which makes it more difficult for them to realize self-identity. Lars von Trier shows a woman who challenges tradition and seeks her own identity from the perspective of feminism. How the heroine "Joe" in this film realizes her identity, her experience is very special, and it is worth exploring in depth, but relevant research is very scarce. Therefore, this paper uses the methods of narratology and conceptual metaphor to deeply analyze the women in the film. This paper uses the methods of video data and literature data, combined with narratology and conceptual metaphor, to analyze the film and its related literature. From a practical point of view, it provides a reference for women's identity positioning in real life, and deeply understands women's personal aspirations.

Keywords: The Nymphomaniacvol, The tree of life, Female self-identity, Conceptual metaphor, Oak and ash

1. Introduction

The film "Nymphomaniac" is divided into two, shot in 2013 and 2014 respectively. The film tells the story of Seligman, a bachelor, who unintentionally saves the heroine Joe. At the beginning of the film, Joe described herself as a bad woman [1]. Seligman listened to Joe's story and understood her life experience of falling into sex addiction. Finally, Seligman tried to rape Joe and he was shot by Joe. Joe can finish the final counterattack against this hypocritical patriarchal society. The film focuses on the original sin of human beings and explores the deeper desires in human hearts [2]. These desires fall into fear because of nothingness and are doomed to loneliness because of the original sin. The film was nominated for major awards, but due to a lot of controversies, many countries banned the public screening of the film, such as Turkey and Romania. Sexual addiction is

a controversial concept in the medical community and at the social level. Medical research shows that it is difficult for sex addicts to have fun from sex, and even deliberately use violence to avoid happiness, and choose to numb themselves in pain [3]. However, society's understanding and acceptance of sex addicts are low, which often makes sex addicts more painful and helpless. The director Lars von Trier was born in Denmark and was nicknamed "Lars mad Trier" by fans because his style and content always offended audiences and critics [4]. Although his films are full of a lot of blood and violence, nudity and sexual scenes, the challenge to the scale of the film is not to attract attention, but to express his concern for real problems and thinking about the human spirit through the film.

2. Conceptual Metaphor Theory

The essence of conceptual metaphor is to understand and experience one thing and another, which is the mapping from source domain to target domain. Metaphor is not only embodied in the lexical and grammatical levels, but also as a macro conceptual structure, which transcends lexical grammar from top to bottom and forms textual metaphor [5]. Conceptual metaphor ability is that cognitive subjects map or encode concepts through cognitive mechanisms such as metaphor structure, give full play to their loose analogy and divergent thinking ability, and compare various kinds of information. To find the similarity between the source domain and the target domain, so as to quickly and correctly understand the metaphorical meaning of discourse. Conceptual metaphor, as a high-level language cognitive ability, plays a central role in discourse reasoning. The film metaphorically depicts the heroine Joe as an ash tree and an oak tree. Ash tree is an intention of the heroine in the process of exploration, and it is also the most precious memory left by her father. Oak tree is the essence of life that the heroine awakens and realizes after being loved and abandoned.

3. Metaphors in this Movie

3.1. Ash Tree

The fable of the ash tree is eternal love and endless life. Because of its strong cold resistance and wide adaptability to the environment, it reflects its tenacity and diligence. At the same time, ash trees are deciduous plants, but their leaves remain in a green growth state all year round and will not wither and fall easily. They symbolize the love between each other and are not interrupted by external interference. In female addicts, the father tells the story of an ash tree for the heroine from childhood. The metaphor contained in it is instilled and guided by the heroine Joe's father in his childhood. His role is more inclined to pave the way for Joe to finally find his own life direction, truly understand himself and treat sexual addiction. According to Eriksen, it refers to the establishment of self-identity, including the diffusion state, the cancellation state, the exploration state, and the realized self-identity state. Four states can be seen. In this part, the heroine Joe is in a state of diffusion and cancellation.

The first part is the exploration period, which consists of two main lines. Mainline 1: sexual curiosity. It tells us that Joe has realized the difference between her two years old and plays with her pussy for fun like opening Pandora's treasure box. Slide and rub your pussy with friend B on the wet board. Mainline 2: the first time. At the age of 15, young Joe decided to let Jerome have sex with her because he had a motorcycle and powerful hands. Then Jerome only had sex with her about three times, five times, and relentlessly rushed to the end. Joe's sexual experience began with humiliation. After that, she and her friend B took a train and had sex in a bag of chocolate candy competition. Joe awakened the power of the female body in the mixed taste of semen and chocolate and began to abuse it. During this period, the image of the ash tree appeared, and Joe's father told the story of the ash tree. The Ash tree is a world tree in Norwegian mythology. When the leaves fall off in winter and reveal black flower buds, other trees laugh at the ash tree for putting their fingers into the ash. Therefore,

the ash tree is an important image in Joe's life story. Black bud symbolizes her dark and evil sexual addiction. Before finding the real tree of life, the ash tree has always pinned its hope on Joe's emotions, longing for love, exploration, and attachment to their father's love. The branches of the tree, the story of the tree, and the story of the tree alleviate endless loneliness and pain. This is a sample of the tree. In her father's eyes, she is the most beautiful ash tree, even if she has black flower buds. According to Erikson's self-identity theory, Joe is in the first stage of diffusion. She can't explore her identity and understand herself, so she can't make her own decisions. At the same time, she doesn't care about the future. The appearance of her father, friend B, and Jerome can easily make her reverse her previous decision and go in the opposite direction. Joe then told the story of the ash tree, began to explore the diffusion state of self-identity, and began to entangle with spirit and body.

Joe's experience during the exploration corresponds to the second state of Erikson's self-identity - canceled state. In other words, in this state, people only make commitments based on their parents' values, without self-exploration. Although people at this stage have obtained certain self-identity, it does not come from their exploration and attempt. It comes from other people, especially their parents. During this period, Joe was deeply influenced by the concept of ash tree handed down by his father. Before her father died, Joe picked up leaves again and put them beside his bed. Her father stroked Joe's hair and said, "my daughter is so beautiful." It can be seen from this that in the eyes of the father, the daughter is always an angel like perfect existence, just as the ash tree is a tree in the Norwegian mythology, it has no shortcomings (in the words of the father). Therefore, this praise is based on her father's tolerance of Joe - the initial criticism of black bud came from jealousy of other trees, which also symbolized that he thought his daughter's sexual addiction was due to public jealousy of Joe's good qualities. It is her father's values that make Joe accept herself and acknowledge the rationality of the existence of sex addiction, which paves the way for her to cater to sex addiction and explore herself. The most common characteristic of people in the cancelled state is what my parents are, or what my parents ask me to be, I am who I am. Their perception of stem self and their planning for the future of stem are all related to the stem of others. Therefore, when these people encounter setbacks, they are prone to feel frustrated and strong self-doubt.

But with the death of her father, ash, and black buds, the relationship between the pair that has been bound to Joe and her sex addiction, seems to have been unlocked, which gives Joe more space to explore ways to get along with sex addiction. In other words, although the father, who is a doctor, has an open and inclusive attitude towards his daughter's sexual addiction, this can never be regarded as an exploration and attempt by Joe himself. Obviously, Joe's life is ultimately Joe's decision, her father can't stay with her all his life, so this is also part of the heroine's self-identity process. This also means that the cancellation state in self-identity is gradually disappearing and moving on to the next stage.

3.2. Oak

The ash tree mentioned above is the process by which the heroine Joe experiences the second state (the canceled state) of Erickson's theory of self-identity, in which the symbolic meaning of the ash tree is inherited by her father but does not belong entirely to Joe's exploration in the sense of self. According to the third stage of Erickson's self-identity theory, that is, the exploratory state, that is, the state in which people have not made a decision in the process of self-exploration, people are still exploring their true self and future direction through continuous efforts and thinking, which also conforms to the significance of Joe's sexual addiction to life and self after experiencing the loss and recovery of sexual desire.

Joe went through this stage of exploration and finally found an oak tree, and the two developed an intimate relationship after their second reunion with Jerome, but the effects of sex addiction on her were further highlighted in the relationship between the couple. She experienced a loss of sexual

pleasure while enjoying pure love, but this loss made her feel overwhelmed, and thus she explored herself deeply and began to try to activate and satisfy her sex addiction in different ways, including trying to have sex with people of different races, SM hitting the lower body to obtain pleasure, etc. People in the inquiry stage are not unwilling to achieve self-identify, but in the process of effort, they have not yet reached the step of self-identify, in the face of Joe's strong sexual desire, even the first step of isolation after participating in the addiction group cannot succeed, and even open the ash tree specimen again and begin to masturbate [6].

People at this stage are the ablest to feel anxiety and crisis because they have a clear sense of their confused state. They want to find a good road, but there is nothing they can do for the time being, so they are very tormented and miserable. But if they keep doing so, they can eventually reach the stage of self-identify.

As Joe did, she finally chose to face up to her addiction after all kinds of explorations such as the gains and losses of sexual desire, the failure to fulfill her mother's responsibilities competently, and her participation in the sex addiction group—rather than treating it as a disease, it was better to accept the satisfaction of an inseparable feature of herself, which was one of the necessary ways for her self-exploration to try to reconcile with it. She made it clear in her panel discussion on her sex addiction that she respected her addiction, which paved the way for her to truly explore her tree of life (oak) later.

The meaning carried by the oak tree is extraordinary. In the secular sense, the flower language of the oak tree is eternal love, but the author believes that the heroine Joe in this film uses the oak tree as her tree of life, which is subversion and even irony of the traditional oak tree meaning. As a female addict, the heroine does not have a long-term intimate relationship at all, and the loneliness of constantly looking for self-identity is the theme of her life.

The second part is the liberation period, one of which is the correct gender name. Joe joined an addiction group. After cutting off all the things that can cause sexual desire, when she was bored, she leafed through the herbarium again. However, the sexual addiction was awakened again. Facing Joe's strong sexual desire, even if the first step needs to be isolated, it can't succeed. In the end, Joe chose to confront her sexuality directly rather than treat it as a disease, which she accepted as an inseparable feature of herself. The other main line is the collapse of love. At this stage, Joe works under the gangsters and meets the girl P. after the two become closer and closer, P discovers Joe's abnormality and not only does not leave but also accepts Joe. Joe also reincarnated the lost love in this process, told P the story of the ash tree, and gave her the Encyclopedia of the tree. But in the end, P and Jerome betray the heroine. According to Erickson's self-identity theory, Joe is already in a state of exploration. In this state, people have not been able to make decisions in the process of self-exploration. They are still exploring their true self and future direction through continuous thinking and efforts. Joe gradually accepts himself and tries to move closer to the direction of self-identify. During this period, the appearance of the ash tree meant that Joe passed the love given by his father to P. although P eventually betrayed her, love slowly occupied her heart.

The seventeenth-century Dutch philosopher Baruch de Spinoza believed that true freedom was the quest for self-control and that the valuable things learned from acquired culture helped us make the right choices to bind the lower natures, which was the power of the true subject [7]. After experiencing the betrayal and insult to Jerome and her adopted daughter P, the heroine made up her mind to go to the south and walked into the depths of the mountains to find her own tree of life, the oak tree, before setting out. Compared with the ash tree, the oak tree has no black buds, which also means that Joe will completely quit sex addiction in the future and live a lonely and ordinary life from then on. As she comes to an end to her conversation with Seligman, Joe is relieved and finds the goal of the rest of her life, "abstinence." It is also a necessary route for sex addiction treatment for all sex addicts [8]. Some doctors believe that sex addicts are just an excuse for men with power and money to excuse

their sexual indulgence; other part of doctor believes that sex addiction is an underlying brain disease, controlled by genetic genes; patients cannot control their sexual desires, through compulsive habitual sex to escape the real dilemma, is a kind of sex drive control disorder [9]. Society's prejudice against sex addicts is mainly reflected in two aspects; one is the gender difference, usually, the default sex addict is male, and some men think that they are "sex addicts", proud of their sexual ability or as an excuse to excuse. This exacerbates the oppression of vulnerable groups, such as the rape of women and children, trafficking of sex slaves, incest, etc. The second is the cognitive misunderstanding; due to the lack of sex education and the impact on the overall social environment, the pain of sex addicts is often ignorant or indifferent. Such a social atmosphere also increases the psychological burden of sex addicts, making it more difficult for them to face up to their diseases and delaying medical treatment and treatment.

At this time, the heroine Joe has entered a state of self-identify, forming a conscious and enterprising state, which is bound to combine clear cognition and strong feelings plus continuous purposeful behavior, converging on strong willpower [10].

4. Conclusions

The heroine Joe went through a period of exploration and development. During this period, the story of the ash tree and black bud was taken as the introduction of self-exploration, and the stage of self-identity developed from the diffusion state to the cancellation state; During the development period, the search for the oak of life was taken as the clue, from the state of exploration to the state of realization of identity. Finally, she grew from a little girl who knew nothing about sex to a big woman who was determined to resist the sexual desire. The whole film is full of pornographic pictures. The tone is dark and obscure, but there is no desire at all. Joe, because of her sexual addiction like black bud, has been pursuing empty sexual pleasure. As a sex addict, she is doomed to be as lonely as the oak tree on the top of the mountain, forever pinning her hopes on the next pleasure, becoming painful and numb in sexual indulgence. But at the same time, she has a clear and independent moral consciousness, so as to explore the chaotic state and finally complete her self-identity. He always uses his knowledge to cover up his sexual reaction to the dialogue and forgives Joe from above. He is an extremely hypocritical moral defender. He eventually revealed his true thoughts and tried to rape Joe. Through this long conversation, Joe has cleared her mind, decided to return to normal life through abstinence, and filmed Seligman. Subversion of patriarchal society. Director Lars von Trier created many tragic female characters in his works, which not only showed the tragic situation of women in society but also gave them the strength to resist the patriarchal society. He always chooses to tell extremely cruel stories, challenges the bottom line of human morality, and deeply analyze human characteristics such as desire, rationality, goodness and evil. He infiltrates his depression and pessimism into his works and boldly opposes men, religion, and society. Lars von Trier's film is not only a personal interpretation of art and life, but also carries the film's artistic mission. There is still a lot to explore about women's situation in society and the process of self-identify. The film female addict provides a possibility - to experience and explore bravely, to resist the patriarchal society bravely, and to be yourself bravely.

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