

Anthony Safai  
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Dr. Kris Kellejian  
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### “I dream of death” Queer Cinema Final Essay

For the sake of clarity in this essay, I will be using option two and will be going according to the prompt. To begin, the film is directed by a Polish writer named Jan Komasa. This film is a foreign, queer film with twenty-one winning awards and eleven nominations and was published in 2011. Here is the summary:

Set in a time when the internet has become more popularized through the use of social media and broadcasting platforms. A boy named Dominik once had a well put together life with good grades, and healthy relationships, and was socially accepted amongst his peers at his high school. Until one specific peer-pressuring decision took place at an after-prom party, where he kissed another boy named Aleksander on camera when his life changed for the worst. Dominik escapes his trauma of sexual assault, bullying, loneliness, and all social contact from his parents, friends, and school to involve himself in a virtual reality world on the internet. In this world, he meets a group named “The Suicide Room” where a group of outcasted individuals see the Real world as cruel and misunderstand their character. Through this virtual world, Dominik accepts that he is bi-sexual, and finds himself in love with another girl named Sylwia who glorifies the act of suicide as if it is the golden temple, Sylwia gives him the task of being prescribed pills by his psychiatrist who was paid for by Dominik’s parents, who misunderstand him. Dominik and Sylwia schedule to meet at a bar, but Dominik makes the decision of swallowing the pills himself as an act of suicide because Sylwia did not show up to meet with him. This decision is immediately filled with regret, and the final scene leaves Dominik crying for his parents in the bathroom, shouting for help and attempting to throw up the pills he had just swallowed.

The most significant scene takes place at 17:00 minutes when Dominik is dared to kiss Aleksander (two boys) if Karolina and Magda (two girls) kiss on camera. Both groups go through with the dare, and Dominik's most tragic moments happen in the next following scenes. The reason this specific scene is the most significant in the film is that it reveals three specific topics. When girls kiss, it is seen as socially accepted or sexy, but when boys kiss, this society sees it as more of a laughable moment or more along the lines of taboo. The second reason why this scene is the most significant is that it changed Dominik's life and led him to unforgiving circumstances such as being sexually assaulted, being bullied, losing trust in a majority of people, and leading him to involve himself in the virtual reality world to escape reality itself. The third reason is that it identifies the film as being part of new queer cinema, as well as setting up the film to be part of the queer genre.

Throughout the film, there are two specific elements that make the film considered queer a queer film, and that are in relation to this course. First, the film brings up two specific stereotypes discussed throughout the course, in addition to queer discussions regarding queer cinema itself. The first is that Aleksander is a bi-sexual villain in the story (gays are always the villain stereotype) because he is seen sexually assaulting Dominik, and is the cause of so much trauma. The second is that Dominik is severely depressed, dreads the idea of being gay until halfway through the film when he is more accepting of it, and also kills himself in the end (those that are gay always die in the end and or kill themselves stereotype). In terms of new queer cinema, this film definitely fits in such category because it's edgy, meant to be sexy, and rebellious, with a sense of going against the heteronormative agenda, but has a twist of discussing the whole glamorizing suicide issue society has. It is also a good example of an identity-based film in which the character explores himself through other characters for the sake

of identifying himself as either gay or bisexual. Overall, this film is so rich with self-identity, and this is most likely the reason why it does so well for teen-based audiences but is a very dark film in that regard. Regardless of its rating, this film is seen as valuable when it comes to applying it to the late teen viewer, and it doesn't hide anything away (which is something society needs sometimes).

In terms of whether or not I would recommend the film: Regardless of the fact that this film is a good example of showing queer stereotypes, as well as it is a golden example of what it means for a film to be an identity-based film. I would 100% recommend this film because it does such a good job of teaching people about the process of depression and how it is related to homosexuality. And though it is extremely sad, it is important because it does a good job of showing a realistic story that considers being addicted to the internet, and traumatizing shows a character that regrets the decision of killing himself. The ending was almost as scaring as a cigarette or the "your brain on drugs" commercial with the fried egg, but instead of it being about drugs, it's about regretting the most valuable thing we were all given in life: Life itself.

## NOTES:

Notes: Opening scene establishes a dark, blue, emo, gritty feeling with a dark colored opera performance. The film also does a parallel edit of each character as the performance goes on, showing the daily lives of the family, the mother is a fashion designer, the father works in politics, and the son goes to school with a passion for poetry and writing. After this parallel edit is over, it cuts to the main character witness her friends watching a video about a man cutting a heart into himself, which is meant to represent a consistent theme within this film, that theme regarding depression.

Looking at this film, here are a few significant scenes that stand out and regard the queer identity. The first scene has Dominik gazing at Aleksander in his martial arts class, but the scene is also contradicted by Magda asking him out to prom with Dominik delightfully saying yes with a sense of excitement.

Second Scene: The after-party prom scene when Magda and Karolina kiss (two girls), and then Dominik and Aleksander kiss. Both do it as a dare, it turns into the beginning of the characters conflicts. And although throughout the film, Dominik states that he feels happy, is an honorable student, is passing his classes, has friends, and seems to have an easy well put together life, it was after this moment things begin to change for the worst. And it was all thanks to this one dare, this one action for his social life. That said, it is also a good moment for Dominik as well because he finds a sense of acceptance within himself (accepting that he is bi-sexual).

Third scene: He is basically sexually assaulted in his martial arts session by Aleksander (the boy he kissed) when he's violently pushed against the floor and touched in a private area violently. This was a major turning point for his character because it's humiliated him. Promptly after this, he is seen shouting at his father in frustration, wishing someone was there to be with him. His father refuses to pick him up, which is significant to his status of loneliness. He also takes it out of some people in the bus, and physically puts his hands on them starting a fight over a simple pet peeve that he has.

Fourth Scene: The following events that had taken place from scenes two to three have all lead up to this moment, where Dominik is on social media, watching his entire community laugh at him for all the following events that had taken place. He takes his frustration out physically by yelling in room into a pillow and proceeds to read an upcoming message from a person that has been talking to him. This is when the virtual reality world comes into play. Where Dominik is able to escape from all the drama, bullying, and trauma he has endured. This is when themes of depression and suicide come into the picture, and is introduced into the film. Though in this film, death is seen as the golden temple for these victims of trauma. In terms of how this applies to being a queer film, it represents a stereotype that says being homosexual is an act that leads to trauma and that this trauma will eventually lead to hating oneself or suicide. Evidence of glorizing suicide:

In the room, they watch videos that regard suicide as a practice

They call the room suicide room

They talk about suicide like it's the golden temple

Scene Five: Dominik states that he is gay after watching an opera performance. His parents ask him to go on a date with a friend's daughter, but he rejects and states that he "I can't because I'm gay" then proceeds to kissing an expensive statue of a male in front of them all. On the way back, the mother is in denial and states that he is not gay, contradicting his claim. The father says even if you are, keep it to yourself because nobody likes a gay person essentially. This is a major moment in the film because it identifies that his parents not only make him feel alone due to their absence, but also do not support the way that he is. Therefore, the virtual reality world that he has become obsessed with is the only place where he feels accepted thus far.

Scene Six: Dominik brings a gun to school and is convinced that he is different from everyone else. His appearance changed, and he becomes a different person.

Dominik attempts to kill himself, leading to another stereotype in the film, that homosexuals end up somehow leading to hurt themselves or hate themselves. His suicide attempt was a big deal.

And his parents haven't left his room in ten days, as well as hasn't talked to his parents.

Scene Seven: Dominik's mother says that she has done the best she could for him, but the truth is, she's done what was best for her. It is also in this scene, Dominik says he wishes to see his mother suffer and "howl in pain." Signifying that he given up all hope of keeping any relevance within his family.

Scene eight: He is peer pressured into getting pills for Sylwia so that she can use them to kill herself with a bottle of alcohol.

Scene nine: death preparations being made in this virtual reality shows just how serious these characters take it. It has become a life that is more serious than reality to them.

Scene 10: What makes this film an interesting example of a queer film. Is it makes the character look self contradicting, which may be connected to the stereotype that those who are gay or bi are confused. That said, this could just be me not fully understanding the character, it could very well be a characteristic of severe depression.

In the final chapter of the story, Dominik is seen swallowing all of the pills that were meant to be given to Sylwia. The reason he swallowed them was due to a series of events such as dealing with his depression, tragic moments in school, and not meeting with Sylwia earlier at the bar.

Though regardless of all these reasons, it is never 100 percent clear when it comes to his reason, it is left to the viewers to decide what the ultimate reason was. This can be confirmed when he is being video recorded outside the bathroom telling the audience all the events that had happened in the film, but not excluding one specific reason. Later on in the chapter, Sylwia and Dominik finally meet (but this was a hallucination). In one of the final scenes, Dominik's mother comes online to tell Sylwia and all the other members in the suicide room that Dominik has killed himself. Sylwia then goes outside of her room and cries. In the absolute final scene, Dominik is

shown in the same footage, but this time in the bathroom regretting his decision, and for the first time ever, suicide is then seen as not being glorified, but rather a regretful decision.

This film is a great example of new queer cinema because it practices elements of the film being daring, sexy, rebellious, Edgy. It is a film that goes against the heteronormative agenda with a twist of glorizing suicide (through character's perspective), which is additionally an act is shunned upon in society.