

“Midsommar”: Unraveling the impact of early-life trauma through art _____

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Introduction

The concept of “Trauma” is very popular, even among those who are unfamiliar with most psychological concepts. Although definitions may vary, the term usually refers to an experience or event, that causes distress on the person, to the point that it impacts their ability to cope and function, and can also cause intense psychological and emotional reactions, affecting their wellbeing (APA,2013). Trauma, including one-time events, but not limited to, not only leaves long lasting and repetitive effects on the survivor, but also affects everyone differently. According to the nature and type of trauma, and how it correlates with the personality of the individual who has experienced it, the way those effects manifest can be obvious, and can clearly impact cognitive functioning, in a way that we can clearly measure and diagnose it as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). However, trauma, might also be subtle and quiet, in cases where the symptoms do not specifically fall under the diagnostic criteria checklist, since these effects might be insidious, can be easily overlooked and, in turn, become destructive for the individual experiencing them (SAMHSA, 2014).

The immediate reactions following the traumatic event are usually quite complicated and are shaped by the survivors’ personal experiences, their ability to

get support, as well as their coping and life skills. Post-traumatic reactions, even the most acute ones, would be considered normal, considering that these reactions are results of what should be considered abnormal situations, and their sole purpose is to manage what remains of the trauma in the survivors' psyche. These coping styles can vary in intensity and approach. Some individuals may be more action oriented and tend to face the issue head on and reflect on it, while others might have overactive emotions, which in turn can become difficult to manage, since they impact the way the trauma survivor thinks, acts, how they perceive themselves and how they relate to the outer world (SAMHSA, 2014).

It is important to emphasize that there is no wrong coping style. Depending on whether the individual who experienced a traumatic event decides to speak about the trauma or not, the coping style might be identified. However, regarding their mental health, it does not make a major difference on the way that they internally process these symptoms (SAMHSA, 2014).

As far as traumatic events go, death, especially when it is sudden, might be one of the most impactful in a person's psychological well being. When confronted with the loss of a loved one or becoming a witness to a tragic event, trauma takes root within the human psyche, leaving a mark that can alter the course of one's life. Especially the death of someone close, whether sudden or expected, often shatters the sense of security, and exposes the fragility of existence. This rupture in the natural order of life can leave survivors grappling with overwhelming grief, guilt, or a profound sense of emptiness. Trauma emerges as a relentless companion, by replaying the scenes of loss, triggering emotional turmoil, and challenging one's ability to find meaning and purpose. The journey of healing from such trauma can be arduous, requiring resilience, support, and a willingness to confront the pain, without getting stuck in it (Lawrence, 2019).

Most people do have a neurotic view on death, especially since it goes against what human beings generally strive for, which would be values such as beauty, youth, achievement, or progress. These values would be considered the essence of what we try to accomplish during our lives, especially considering the individualistic culture most western societies (and not only) have ingrained in the mass population. Confronting the inevitability of death, whether it's regarding someone close to us, or even our own imminent death seems to bring out certain neurotic traits in us such as anxiety, depression, or hypochondria. Despite the fact that most people are in denial when it comes to death, (probably due to the fact that this might be a survival mechanism which tries to ensure our existence and making us weary of threats that might risk the continuation of our lives), its inevitability manifests itself in all of us, in different ways according to the specific circumstances that we might encounter and that make us aware of the absolute nature of death (Lawrence, 2019).



Fear of death, in its essence, would be fear of the unknown, since it is impossible for the human mind to comprehend it, because that same mind attempting to understand what it would be like to not exist, would not be able to think in that scenario due to its lack of existence, and in our attempts to do so we still remain spectators and assist in creating the scenario, in which we are required to be non-present. Therefore, we can be aware of the fact that no one is conscious about their own death because there is no way for us to experience a moment where we do not exist (Freud, 1915). When we claim that we fear death, we may, in fact, be afraid of concepts related to death that impact our *life*, things such as abandonment, unresolved conflicts, or the outcome of a sense of guilt.

When it comes to the death of someone else, we are usually cautious when mentioning it, almost adding a sense of admiration, at best, regarding the deceased. There has always been a tendency to celebrate our heroes' deaths, by putting a special meaning to it, or a general inclination towards treating the dead and the memory of them with a sense of heightened respect, that usually we do not direct towards the living. As a reaction to this, man has created forms of existence such as spirits or ghosts, and also concepts such as afterlife or reincarnation, in honor of the memory of those who have passed away, since death has usually been considered the worst event to happen in someone's life and the living have always assumed that lack of existence cannot exist, or it might immediately turn to a different kind of existence, be it spiritual or physical (Freud, 1915).

Considering that, to our current knowledge, the dead are incapable to become any of these concepts, and they certainly have never spoken to us about the events that happen once their vitals stop functioning, it is safe to assume that death folklore, which is present in all societies and cultures, is a collective way of coping with grief. Grief can be defined as the psychological response following the experience of a significant loss, event which would usually be the death of a close and intimate personal relationship (APA, 2020). It includes several psychological responses such as distress, separation anxiety, confusion, or an inability to stop reminiscing on the memories of the person who is no longer in our life. It may include remorse or sorrow, regret, in some cases, and, in the most severe cases of grief, it can become life threatening due to the immense amounts of stress which may cause a disruption of the immune system, personal neglect or even suicidal thoughts.

Grief is a deeply personal experience, shaped by various theoretical frameworks and concepts. Freud's 'grief work' theory highlights the process of breaking ties with the deceased and building new relationships. Kübler-Ross's 'stage theory' suggests that grief follows a series of predictable stages, including shock, denial, anger, guilt, depression, and acceptance. Stroebe and Schut's 'dual-process model' emphasizes the oscillation between emotion-focused and problem-focused coping

in the grieving process. Bonanno et al. (2004) explores the associations between chronic grief, pre-loss dependency, and resilience with pre-loss acceptance of death. Neimeyer and Sands (2011) emphasize the importance of constructing meaning in grief. Hall's proposition of 'post-traumatic' growth suggests that loss can lead to life-enhancing transformations. Additionally, the concept of anticipatory grief, experienced before a loss occurs, is questioned in terms of its impact on bereavement. Considering the numerous theories that we have on grief, and despite the complications that arise when attempting to understand it, they all share a common ground by stating that it is characterized by profound emotions and thoughts related to the deceased, with various predictors contributing to its development (Hamilton, 2016).

A quantitative study in 2018, by a group of researchers from several psychology research centers, decided to examine the impact of individuals' memories of being aware of death during their early years of development on their coping abilities with losses during both childhood and adulthood. Participants emphasized the importance of communication about death, particularly during childhood, and expressed a desire to have had more conversations about their losses with others and wished for greater communication from their parents. Participants also wanted more guidance on adaptive grieving processes and more information about rituals and ceremonies surrounding death (Martinčeková, Jiang, Adams, Menendez, Hernandez, Barber & Rosengren, 2018) Regarding emotional support, participants felt dissatisfied with the level of support they received while coping with a loss, while the theme of age-related issues highlighted the perception that children might be too young to understand and effectively cope with death. Some respondents described feeling too young at the time of a loss, while others acknowledged that with age, they gained a better understanding of death's implications. The responses suggested that the participants believed children might not fully comprehend the gravity of death. Overall, the findings of this study suggested that open conversations about death and better emotional support systems can positively impact individuals' coping abilities with death-related events throughout their lives. Especially, those who recalled their parents being more open about death-related matters demonstrated improved coping skills in both their childhood and adult years. These findings underscore the potential advantages of introducing children to discussions about death and how it can positively influence their ability to cope with death-related experiences.

Grief, death, and trauma are intricately interwoven phenomena within the realm of the human condition, forming a complexity of interconnected experiences. The event of losing a significant individual through death confronts us with a profound emotional void, and in the wake of this bereavement, the intricate process of grief is set in motion. Bereavement-induced grief, however, can be further compounded



by the emergence of trauma resulting from the deeply distressing emotional impact of loss, which can leave indelible imprints on the psychological landscape, complicating the navigation of grief and its associated emotions.

Within the confines of art's mirrored surface, we encounter reflections of early-life trauma that resonate with our collective human experience. As viewers, we gaze into these artworks and find ourselves drawn into a mesmerizing dance between the artist's personal pain and our shared human empathy, where emotional turmoil and vulnerability merge together, to give us a full picture of the universal nature of human suffering. Within these reflections, we are able to discover a profound interconnectedness—a reminder that, beneath the surface of individual stories, humans are bound together by their shared emotions. Considering this, all forms of art would enable us to unravel the impact of early trauma in human life, relating it to each one of us, by tapping into universal feelings and experiences.

The present paper explores the critically acclaimed film, "Midsommar," directed by Ari Aster, to unravel the intricate interplay between trauma and human psyche in a captivating narrative, set against the backdrop of a Swedish midsummer festival.

"Midsommar": Mapping theoretical concepts into movie analysis

Drawing from psychoanalytic and trauma theoretical frameworks, the present analysis provides a discourse of the film's portrayal of trauma as a potent force that shapes the characters' emotional landscapes, unveils their vulnerabilities, and exposes the disturbing rituals of a seemingly idyllic community. Navigating through the film's surreal imagery, the audience delves into the transformative power of trauma, examining how unresolved grief and pain can manifest in haunting ways, challenging the façade of joyous festivities with darker undercurrents, scrutinizing the effects of trauma on the human psyche, illuminating the ways in which unresolved grief and pain intertwine with the film's idyllic and eerie settings, and ultimately creating an unsettling tapestry of human experience.

"Midsommar" (2019), a cinematic tour de force helmed by Ari Aster, invites audiences on a gripping journey into the enigmatic world of Swedish midsummer celebrations. Set amidst the picturesque landscapes of rural Sweden, the film introduces the audience to Dani, a young woman grappling with the recent loss of her family in a tragic incident, caused by her sister, who was suffering from bipolar disorder. Haunted by grief and struggling to cope with her emotional turmoil, Dani seeks solace in her emotionally distant boyfriend, Christian, and their group of friends. All five of them take off to celebrate mid-summer in Sweden, in a pagan community, which was home to one of Christian's friends, and participate in their traditional celebrations (Aster, 2019).

The way events are conveyed primarily takes place through Dani's perspective, and the viewer gets the impression that they, in fact, are foreigners visiting the community. This significantly reinforces the immersive nature of the film, blurring the boundary between reality and the movie screen, thus eliciting authentic and intense emotions inside the viewer that linger for hours after the film's conclusion, evoking a sense of shock and awe. It becomes challenging to distinguish that the events are being witnessed through a screen, as the audience is drawn deeply into the narrative. As one of the outsiders in this enigmatic Swedish community, the viewer experiences the unsettling customs and rituals alongside the characters, resulting in a profound sense of unease and curiosity.

The storytelling and visual artistry heighten the impact of Dani's perspective, making the audience an integral part of the immersive experience. The blending of reality and fiction in this manner leads to a strong emotional resonance and makes it easy to identify with the main character and her experiences (Chang, 2019). The film's ability to create such an authentic connection allows the viewers to internalize the characters' emotions, mirroring their fear, confusion, and vulnerability (Bradshaw, 2019).

Psychoanalytic principles permeate the film, as each character represents a unique facet of the human psyche grappling with internal conflicts. Dani's vulnerability and profound sense of loss resonate with viewers, serving as a catalyst for introspection into the complexities of trauma. Her emotional fragility is poignantly depicted in a scene at the beginning of the movie, where she tearfully pleads for Christian's support, only to receive cold detachment and emotional manipulation in return, further exacerbating her feelings of isolation. Such moments exemplify the impact of repressed emotions and the desperate need for connection in the face of trauma, and by not receiving it, Dani is pushed further towards her chaotic, irrepressible pain, having to face it alone.

As the film progresses, it becomes apparent that "Midsommar" is more than just a story made of mysterious rituals. Rather, it is an intricate exploration of trauma and its profound impact on the human psyche. Trauma, as depicted in "Midsommar," emerges as a pervasive theme that drives the plot and character development. The film portrays the characters as haunted by repressed memories and unresolved traumas from their past. The protagonist, Dani, played by Florence Pugh, experiences profound emotional upheaval after the personal tragedy she was currently dealing with, thereby setting the tone for her psychological healing journey. Additionally, her boyfriend, Christian, along with their friends, reveal their own psychological vulnerabilities, all of which become increasingly exposed as the story unfolds amidst the enigmatic midsummer festivities.

Upon their arrival in Sweden, the characters in "Midsommar" are welcomed with an enchanting yet sinister ambiance. The idyllic rural landscapes of the



Scandinavian countryside, adorned with vibrant floral arrangements, serve as an enticing facade for the impending unsettling events. For Dani, the journey to Sweden marks a pivotal moment as she seeks solace amidst her profound grief. As the group joins the midsummer festivities, their initial enthusiasm gradually gives way to a sense of unease, as they encounter peculiar rituals and traditions deeply entrenched in the community's history. Ari Aster masterfully employs symbolism and visual cues to foreshadow the transformative power of the after-effects of trauma, setting the stage for an exploration of the human psyche and the haunting manifestations that lie beneath the sunlit surface.

Aster's mastery lies in his ability to employ visual cues and symbolism to expose the characters' psychological vulnerabilities. The use of floral imagery, a recurrent motif throughout the film, serves as a metaphor for personal growth, life cycles, and death. In one scene, Dani's emotional catharsis coincides with the vibrant display of flowers, representing the emergence of resilience amidst personal tragedy. Except the flowers, the film is rich in symbolism, which delves into the characters' subconscious experiences, but also speaks to the audience about events and emotions beyond it, leaving it open to interpretation, one of the essential qualities of "Midsommar," transcending the concepts of time and place.

One of the primary symbols seen throughout the film is mirrors. According to Jung, mirrors are symbols of self-reflection but also of alienation from society, as they are closely associated with the Shadow and shedding social masks (Caputo, 2013). In a spiritual aspect, mirrors are also linked to parallel worlds and are treated as portals, especially in art, as exemplified in Lewis Carroll's book "Through the Looking-Glass," where the main character crosses through a mirror into another dimension. Though mirrors appear consistently throughout the movie, three key moments stand out in their symbolic use. Firstly, in a scene where Dani confronts Christian about why he had not informed her about the trip to Sweden, the camera focuses on Dani, while Christian is only seen through his reflection in the mirror. In this scene, the mirror symbolizes the detachment between the two, despite the closeness their relationship is supposed to have, existing in separate emotional worlds. The use of mirrors here is akin to the moment when Christian reveals to his friends that Dani will be joining the trip, and his reflection is similarly emphasized. In both scenes, Christian evades direct confrontation with the issues at hand, and his character is portrayed through his fear of making decisions, further emphasizing the sense of avoidance and discomfort he experiences in these moments. Thus, the film compels us to witness his unlikable side. The fact that he never focuses on the mirrors in either scene indicates his avoidant attachment and his fear of confrontation.

The second scene would be when the five characters head towards Harga, where the view is turned upside down, with the sky seen below and the road above, as

though the road were a mirror itself. This is a classic art trope where the mirror serves as a passage to parallel worlds, symbolizing the inversion of reality that Dani (and the audience) experiences, entering another society where the cycle of life and collective consciousness is vastly different from what they are accustomed to. To further emphasize this feeling, when they walk toward the woods, they pass through a pathway where trees form a circle, signifying their passage through a portal.

The third moment is when Dani, under the influence of hallucinogens, finds herself in a dark room and catches a glimpse of her reflection, but quickly rushes away into the woods. In this scene, Dani is shown she has to confront her trauma, a perspective reinforced by the surrounding darkness, but she is not yet ready to face it head on, and therefore retreating to avoid confrontation with herself, since she has not yet found a safe way to let herself become aware and express these emotions.

Another symbol, present throughout the film, would be “The Bear”, which can also be related to trauma, as it serves as a powerful metaphor for the characters’ psychological and emotional experiences. The bear represents the trauma that the characters carry within themselves, and its presence throughout the film embodies the haunting effects of past wounds and unresolved pain. Trauma, much like the bear, can be a dormant force, seemingly harmless and subdued until triggered or confronted. Starting with a painting in Dani’s room depicting a little girl seemingly unafraid of it. This foreshadows Dani’s encounter with trauma, as she is initially portrayed as someone trying to be strong and resilient in the face of personal tragedy, attempting to suppress her grief and pain. As the story unfolds, the bear becomes more prominent in the rituals and symbolism of the Harga community. It is burned inside a wooden structure, representing the culmination of its symbolic significance. This burning of the bear parallels the characters’ journey of facing and processing their traumas, as the act of burning the bear happens right after Dani is ready to start her new life free of her emotional baggage.

In Norse mythology, the bear represents the masculine aspect of human consciousness, due to several myths where Norse Gods descend to Earth in the form of bears. In this context, masculinity would represent qualities such as courage, manliness, loyalty, and sacrifice, traits lacking in Christian, who is supposed to be the masculine counterpart of Dani’s feminine. According to Norse mythology, males who did not adhere to these principles were considered traitors and were sentenced to death.

The bear’s association with the character Christian also adds a layer of meaning to the trauma symbolism. Christian’s death inside the bear’s skin symbolizes the consequences of his toxic behavior and Dani getting rid of the weight of her emotional baggage. His death through the bear ritual can be seen as a metaphorical



cleansing of his negative impact towards her, and considering it was Dani the one who ordered the sacrifice, it leads to an understanding that, in the end, she was finally ready to clear the consequences of trauma in her life. Overall, the bear symbolism in “Midsommar” serves as a potent representation of trauma, lurking in the background and occasionally rearing its head to affect the characters’ emotional and psychological states. It highlights the need for individuals to confront and process their traumas, or else risk being consumed by them, much like the bear’s destructive presence.

Dani’s dream is also another major plot point full of symbolism, regarding the effects of trauma in her psyche, and hints at the psychoanalytical concepts Ari Aster has implemented throughout the movie. The dream that Dani has on her first night in Harga is filled with symbolism related to her emotional state. Initially, the fact that her four companions leave in a car, deliberately leaving her behind, and Mark’s mocking expression reveal her fear of abandonment, Christian’s neglect towards her, and the indifference they all show towards her overwhelming pain. These feelings of fear and abandonment stem from her subconscious fear of being left alone, as she grapples with the recent loss of her family in a tragic accident. The dream also captures her feelings of neglect and insignificance, as she is seemingly forgotten and left behind by those she thought were close to her, and can be a representation of her waking life, in which her boyfriend deliberately tends to neglect, manipulate and undermine her.

As Dani opens her mouth to speak, darkness pours out of it, filling the entire screen before she wakes up. The darkness symbolizes the emotional turmoil and pain that Dani carries within herself. It represents the overwhelming grief and sadness that she has been trying to suppress and avoid since her family’s death. The act of opening her mouth could indicate her desire to express her emotions, but the darkness flowing out may suggest her difficulty in vocalizing her pain or feeling heard and understood by others, especially since her trauma is still unprocessed at this point of the narrative. Since she has not yet dealt internally with everything that has happened, she still experiences feelings of pain and shock every time she is reminded of her personal tragedy.

Overall, Dani’s dream in “Midsommar” serves as a psychological snapshot of her innermost fears, insecurities, and desires. It exposes the internal conflicts she grapples with, stemming from her traumatic past and the need to confront and process her grief. The dream acts as a bridge between her conscious and subconscious mind, allowing the audience to delve deeper into her emotional journey throughout the film. Dani’s journey can be an almost perfectly realistic representation of the stages of overcoming trauma, as it serves as a profound exploration of how she navigates her past traumatic experiences and seeks healing and transformation within the enigmatic world of the Harga community.

Throughout the film, we witness her emotional state and the ways in which her trauma impacts her behavior, relationships, and ultimately, her path towards catharsis and recovery.

Throughout the film, Dani grapples with her toxic relationship with her boyfriend, Christian, who is emotionally distant, selfish, and reluctant to support her during her vulnerable moments. Their relationship becomes a microcosm of the unresolved trauma, by also adding its own flare to her mental and emotional issues, since she is aware of how he is treating her and yet, she still hopes things will get better, since she tends to think of herself as “too much” and blame herself, not him or his lack of interest towards her, for the disconnect in their relationship. As she confronts Christian’s infidelity and lack of empathy, she begins to realize the toxicity of their connection, contributing to her emotional turmoil and slowing down her healing process.

Dani’s decision to join her friends on the trip to Sweden is an attempt to escape her traumatic past and seek solace in their company. However, upon arriving in Harga, she finds herself in an entirely different world, one that challenges her perceptions and emotions. But considering that her perception on life was already altered due to her trauma, it is exactly why it was so easy for her to fit in within the community and to leave her old life behind; because, at this point, it seemed there was no life to leave behind at all.

The empathetic and supportive treatment she gets from the Harga community allows her to confront her trauma directly, especially since all their rituals were collectivist, and she finally felt like she was heard and accepted. We can notice this in the scene, after she was crowned as “May Queen” and found Christian cheating, where she and the other girls cried and screamed in unison. She was offered a different way to process her emotions and gradually shed the weight of her past trauma, by sharing it with the group. The Harga members shared her grief, providing a sense of collective support that contrasts sharply with the isolation she felt back home and in her group of friends. The May Queen ceremony becomes a turning point for Dani. As she is crowned “May Queen”, she is utterly transformed, embracing her newfound sense of, not only belonging, but being appreciated, valued and the center of attention, which is something she had needed for a long time and yet hadn’t received. The catharsis she experiences during the dance symbolizes the release of her repressed emotions and a sense of liberation from her trauma. And, towards the end, the burning of Christian inside the bear skin further represents her final step towards severing ties with her past life and pain, and therefore reclaiming her strength and autonomy.

The film concludes with Dani choosing to stay within the Harga community, leaving the audience with an ambiguous ending. Her decision can be interpreted as both an escape from her past trauma and a chance to create a new life, where



death, the root of her trauma, is celebrated, instead of demonized (Laffly, 2019). The ending makes us contemplate the complexity of trauma recovery and the ways in which individuals may find healing and transformation in unexpected places, even those that seem disturbing at first.

Conclusion

Even though death and loss, and the aftermath of it, are normal and unavoidable parts of life, when death is unexpected, such as with suicide, there can be an overlap of the traumatic experience and the grief experienced, that can become overwhelming. In some cases, people get stuck in their grief, and they either cannot or do not want to get better, since traumatic grief can be the only string left connecting them to their loved one.

Due to the comorbidity of trauma and grief, it can become hard to make a distinction between grief, PTSD, and traumatic grief; however, the main difference is that grief is about loss and PTSD is about fear, while traumatic grief incorporates elements of both. Traumatic grief can have symptoms such as distressing thoughts or dreams, hyperarousal, or anhedonia, and can be easily confused with depression. What makes a loss traumatic is not only the way the person died, which, in “Midsommar” would be the murder-suicide, but also the meaning we attach to death, and the way we perceive it.

Overcoming trauma, especially related to grief, takes a lot of time and inner work, but it can also be the catalyst for a renewed sense of meaning (APA, 2020), which is portrayed in “Midsommar” through Dani joining the Harga community at the end, that offers a new purpose and direction to life. There are ways to work on overcoming trauma, though; ways that do not include joining a cult that sacrifices their elders to pagan Gods at the age of 72. Talking about the traumatic event would be one of them. It is important to have a support system that not only understands what happens and gives emotional support, but also helps in gaining a new perspective on the event and the way trauma is being handled (APA, 2020). Accepting your feelings, without any judgement, also helps, because by acknowledging that negative and complicated emotions are normal in these types of situations, it can serve as a reminder that these feelings are a normal reaction in an abnormal situation. The sooner the negative feelings are accepted, the sooner the weight of trauma will be lifted (APA, 2020). Other ways to help in overcoming trauma and grief would be, by being part of a social group, which did seem to work for Dani, and taking care of both self and the group; asking for help, or giving help to people in similar situations, in order to give trauma a purpose; and attempting to remember the people who we’ve lost in a positive light, which can shift our perspective and change the narrative we tell ourselves (APA, 2020).

In conclusion, art possesses a unique and powerful ability to depict trauma in its rawest form, transcending the boundaries of language and allowing audiences to confront the darkest recesses of the human psyche. Throughout history, artists have utilized their creative talents to explore the complexities of suffering, offering glimpses into the depths of trauma and its profound impact on individuals and societies alike.

“Midsommar” unfolds as a chilling tale of a disintegrating relationship and a group of friends’ encounter with a sinister Swedish commune during its midsummer festival. From the very beginning, the film introduces us to Dani, the protagonist, who experiences an unimaginable tragedy in her life, and as the story unfolds, the film delves deep into the emotional upheavals caused by grief and loss. In doing so, “Midsommar” expertly captures the nuances of trauma, portraying its impact on Dani’s psyche and the intricate dynamics of her relationships.

Throughout the film, viewers are forced to confront the uncomfortable reality that trauma can manifest in various ways, from the subtlest shifts in behavior to full-blown psychological disintegration. “Midsommar” deftly explores the communal aspect of trauma, emphasizing the collective nature of human suffering. In witnessing the characters’ struggles, the audience is reminded of the universal nature of trauma, as it affects not only individuals but also those connected to them.

Art, including “Midsommar,” acts as a cathartic medium for both its creators and audiences. For artists, the process of crafting such emotionally charged narratives can be a means of grappling with their own experiences and emotions. Through their work, they offer a window into their psyches, inviting viewers to explore the intricacies of trauma alongside them, while, for audiences, experiencing art that confronts trauma can be both unsettling and therapeutic. It allows them to confront their own suppressed emotions and encourages empathy towards those who have endured similar hardships.

In essence, “Midsommar” stands as a powerful testament to the transformative power of art in its depiction of trauma. By utilizing mesmerizing visuals, intricate storytelling, and powerful symbolism, the film opens a gateway to the human condition, where the darkest aspects of life converge with moments of transcendence and self-discovery. As we bear witness to this haunting exploration, we are reminded of the redemptive potential that art holds, offering a profound sense of understanding and empathy, even amidst the most distressing circumstances. Through “Midsommar,” we are reminded that art can be a guiding light in the darkness, illuminating the depths of trauma with a glimmer of hope for healing and growth.



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