



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Boundary Between Reality and Unreality: Narratives of Schizophrenic Experience and Delusion in the Film <BEAU IS AFRAID> (Ari Aster, 2023)

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ABSTRACT

Schizophrenia is a complex mental disorder marked by hallucinations, delusions, and cognitive impairments. This study examines how *Beau Is Afraid* (2023, Ari Aster) cinematically represent the blurred boundary between reality and delusion, immersing audiences in the protagonist Beau's psychological turmoil. Through narrative and mise-en-scène, the film visualizes the stigma and sensory confusion associated with schizophrenia. First, the film employs first-person perspective, distorted lenses, and handheld camera work to depict Beau's fragmented perception. The non-linear narrative, exaggerated dystopia settings, and repetitive horror elements reinforce his psychological breakdown and sensory overload, illustrating the schizophrenic experience. Second, surreal imagery and symbolic spaces—such as the chaotic city, his mother's mansion, the theatrical world in the forest, the phallic statue, and the courtroom—reflect Beau's paranoia and internal struggles. These elements merge reality and delusion, offering insight into the schizophrenic mind. Third, the film explores schizophrenia's social and familial context. Beau's oppressive relationship with his mother, Mona, incorporates Freudian Oedipal themes and gaslighting, suggesting that his mental distress stems from his upbringing. His anxiety and dependency mirror Mona's controlling nature, demonstrating how schizophrenia is shaped by family and societal structures. This study highlights how *Beau Is Afraid* presents a unique cinematic approach to schizophrenia, fostering empathy and reshaping perceptions of mental illness. By translating psychopathology into film, it contributes to a deeper understanding of schizophrenia's social and psychological dimensions.

Keyword: Schizophrenia, the boundary between reality and unreality, psychopathology, cinematic narrative, mise-en-scène, Ari Aster, Beau Is Afraid, social stigma, family dynamics

Introduction

Schizophrenia is a chronic and severe mental disorder characterized by delusions, hallucinations, disorganized speech and behavior, and cognitive impairment.¹ The term itself comes from the Greek words schizo (split) and phrenia (mind), which has led to social misunderstanding. In South Korea, schizophrenia has long been stigmatized as being associated with social deviance and crime.² This stigma has caused considerable hardship for individuals diagnosed with schizophrenia and their families, and has discouraged public discussion and treatment of the disease.² In response to these concerns, the Schizophrenia Naming Committee was established in 2008, and in 2012 the term “tuning disorder” was proposed to mitigate the negative connotations associated with the original name.² Mass media has played an important role in shaping public perceptions of schizophrenia. The 2023 psychological drama “Be Afraid” directed by Ari Aster, presents a narrative that closely resembles the phenomenological experience of schizophrenia.³ This story reflects many clinical features observed in schizophrenia, as it complicates the exploration of how trauma and dysfunctional family relationships contribute to his psychological distress.⁴ The film offers an exploration of family relationships, particularly the impact of an overprotective and controlling mother on Bo’s mental state, and the decisions, deep-rooted fears, and dissociative episodes suggest the long-term psychological effects of parental over-control. These elements are consistent with research on the impact of early childhood trauma and dysfunctional family functioning on the development of psychotic disorders.⁵ The structure of the film immerses the audience in the perspective of Bo, allowing them to experience his reality, which is characterized by a oscillation between psychotic experiences, hallucinations, and fragmentary perceptions. This narrative approach is very similar to the phenomenology of schizophrenia, in which patients have difficulty distinguishing reality from delusions.

Research Objectives and Problems Despite the widespread use of schizophrenic themes in these films, few studies have examined how films such as Beau Is Afraid portray schizophrenia and its psychopathological elements. This study aims to analyze how the narrative structure of the film, the depiction of hallucinations, and family relationships correspond to the clinical symptoms of schizophrenia. Specifically, this study aims to answer the following questions. First, how does this film represent the changes in perception of reality associated with schizophrenia? Second, what are the psychological and familial factors that contribute to the psychotic experience of Beau in the film? Third, how does cinematic depiction of schizophrenia shape social perceptions of schizophrenia?

To answer this question, this study uses a qualitative film analysis method based on a psychopathological framework and narrative analysis. Through a detailed examination of the film's themes, character development, and cinematic techniques, the study explores the intersection of cinematic storytelling and symptoms of schizophrenia. In addition, this study evaluates the psychological accuracy of the film by integrating clinical

research on schizophrenia, especially research on the role of trauma, hallucinations, and delusions. This study conducts a visual and cinematic analysis by examining mise-en-scène, cinematography, and surreal imagery to illustrate the protagonist's mental state. Additionally, a psychopathological framework is applied, incorporating theories from Freudian psychoanalysis and phenomenological psychiatry to explore key themes such as maternal control, paranoia, and identity disintegration. Furthermore, a comparative analysis is undertaken to contrast Beau Is Afraid with other cinematic representations of schizophrenia, assessing its contribution to the broader discourse on mental health. This study contributes to film studies and mental health discourse by providing insight into the portrayal of schizophrenia in contemporary cinema. By connecting film analysis with a psychiatric perspective, this study aims to increase understanding of how schizophrenia is represented in visual narratives. It also aims to highlight the potential impact of such portrayals on stigma, public perceptions, and clinical education in mental health.

Background

In <Beau is Afraid>, characters are allowed to express emotions for the purpose of causing anxiety. Beau is portrayed throughout the film as extremely anxious, depressed, and emotionally attached to his mother, Mona. The theme of emotional attachment is clearly revealed from the first scene of the film, as is the anxiety that recurs throughout the film and Beau's life. The film begins with Beau's birth, as seen from his perspective, when his mother angrily shouts at the doctor. This scene shows that Beau's mother is someone who has difficulty thinking realistically. Why did you drop the child? Why is the child not crying? Where are you taking it? The mother expresses hostility and fear towards the medical staff. As if Beau, who has finally emerged from the mother's womb, is standing on a boat on the water in the final scene, is judged, the boat explodes, and sinks into the water, the scenes are connected like a decalcomania. If she came out of the womb crying, she finally accepts her fate with a resolute look on her face and faces death freely. If the first scene is the birth of life, the last scene is the rebirth from death. If the first scene is reality, the last scene is an unreal, unconscious phenomenon. As the audience sees in the latter half of the film, she has been walking through the world created by her mother. Beau was trapped in a discourse with the huge world of her mother and lived a life like a doll. It seems like a symbiosis, but Beau has lived as if the anxiety of her mother was projected onto her, as if reality was not real. The first call that Beau made to the unreal girl she learned and experienced was to inform her of the following facts. In <Beau is Afraid>, Astor chose to explore the violence of cults and their spiritual world, and the symbiotic relationship between Beau and Mona. This film is particularly interesting when considering Freud's theory. As we have seen, Mona controls Beau's life to the point that even Beau himself cannot control it until the end of the film. She uses her own insecure personality and deliberately forces Beau to depend on her. Guilt is also a major theme throughout the film, which Freud recognized as a tactic for religion to control believers in Civilization and Its Discontents, writing broadly that

"religion has never overlooked guilt as playing a part in civilization."^{3,4} As mentioned earlier, Beau is described as a character who suffers from great anxiety stemming from his relationship with his mother.⁵ For example, when Beau misses his flight because he is unable to leave the house to go see his mother, Mona acts in a way that makes Beau feel anxious, implying that it is his choice and decision not to see his mother. This state of anxiety experienced by Beau can be explained in the same essay as "there are types of patients who feel only painful anxiety, a kind of anxiety, when they are unable to recognize their guilt or perform certain actions."⁵ Astor's storytelling also often relies on illustrative moments and elements, as in the first scene with Dr. Preel. In this scene, the therapist's actions stem from Beau's answer to Beau's question about what he thinks about going home. When Beau reluctantly says that it has been months since he went home, Dr. Preel asks if he feels guilty, and when Beau does not respond, Dr. Preel makes it clear that he feels guilty about Beau not visiting his mother for months. We see that Beau's guilt grows as the movie progresses, and the mass of guilt seems to lead to the trial in the final scene. Beau learns that his mother has died in a mysterious accident and receives a call from his mother's lawyer, Dr. Cohen, who tells him that according to Jewish tradition, the body must be buried as soon as possible, but they are delaying the funeral to fulfill Mona's wish that Beau attend the funeral. When Beau is unable to attend the funeral due to unavoidable circumstances, Dr. Cohen and Mona take this absence as a choice and make Beau feel guilty again. It is a message that you have failed as a son. As mentioned earlier, Mona controls Beau's life and influences his thoughts and actions. In his essay "Civilization and Its Discontents," Freud answers the question of why BEAU allows MONA to control him even though she does not fully recognize him by saying, "External influences are at work, and it is these that determine good and evil. (...) He must have had a motive for submitting to these external influences." Such motives are easily found in his sense of powerlessness and dependence on others, which can best be described as fear of the loss of love.³ Mona is this 'external influence,' and the reason why Beau acts the way he does around Mona and in his life is because he is afraid of losing her because she was his only constant. Mona also inherited Beau's sexual instinct and begins to suppress it by saying that Beau's father died at the moment of conception. Beau is nothing more than a character in a scenario that Mona has thoroughly planned. When Beau first acts on his instincts with Elena, he does not die, but Elena's fear becomes a reality because she looks like a stone. But before his guilt reaches its peak, he overpowers him, and he repeatedly begs Elena to stop, pleading with her to stop. He feels guilty for what he did even though he thinks Mona is dead, something she warned him not to do, which is what the same essay says: "People feel guilty (devout people say 'sinful') when they do something they know is 'bad.'" As Freud explained, "Even when a person does not actually do something bad, but merely has the intention to do it, he still feels guilty."³ Mona still feels guilty even though she thinks she is dead. One could argue that Beau is simply afraid of dying like the title of the movie, like his father, but the fact that the place is Mona's bedroom and the song that plays in the

background evokes the feeling of breaking free from someone's love means that Beau is thinking of his mother and her warning. Brainwashing is what this is all about.

Ultimately, Mona confronts Beau about his sessions with Dr. Preel, and her worst fears become reality. During the session, Beau's words are distorted by Mona, who accuses Beau of not being grateful for the love he has forced on her, and she breaks down and says she hates him. As has already been revealed, Mona is the reason why Beau feels guilty and why he is so dependent on her. Therefore, this confession of hatred is a punishment for the words that caused Beau to misunderstand. Although they are dependent on each other, Beau admits the following. He needs Mona much more than Mona needs him. In "Civilization and Its Discontents," Freud wrote that "When he loses the love of another person on whom he depends, he is left unprotected against a variety of dangers. Above all, he is exposed to the danger of the stronger showing his superiority in the form of punishment".^{4,5} Mona's punishment of Beau also extends to Beau's view of himself. Throughout the movie, Beau acts as if he is above Mona, acting as if he is dependent on her, not accepting her when she walks up to him, and complaining about the way she loves him. In the final scene of the movie, when he is convicted, Beau's eyes show a determined expression, and his face is relaxed as he stares into the water, seemingly disappointed by the way Mona looks at him.

It explores the human mind and uses anxiety-inducing scenarios to convey fear while adding supernatural elements and extreme plots to the film's narrative. Astor's films are not horror films, but they show how the dynamics of the family at the center of the symptoms are arranged. However, instead of portraying the family as a safe and reliable haven for the characters in the film, he chooses to blame the characters' downfall on the family structure. <Beau is Afraid>, Beau and Monna demand too much from each other and lead lives of mostly heartbreak and anxiety, and by the end of the film, both lose what is most precious to them.

The boundary between reality and unreality: cinematic technique and narrative analysis

This film faithfully follows how characters move in strange situations. It goes beyond common sense and borders on the absurd. Even in this situation, the characters alternate between desire and frustration, and the audience follows this process with an uneasy feeling. The intersection of reality and unreality makes reality stand out even more, and the audience sometimes confuses the images the film presents with reality and sometimes escapes from it. Movies also respond to people's needs, and people see the movie to confirm and strengthen themselves. When a movie tries to reflect reality, it goes beyond simple imitation or duplication to appropriately and accurately describe the contradictions of society and the essence of reality. In the process, it helps the audience to perceive the real reality and gives them a powerful projection by allowing them to experience the object that comes to life in the video in advance.^{6,7,8}

This film needs to be examined to see how it portrays the image of a person with schizophrenia. Usually, people with schizophrenia are portrayed in movies as wandering the streets, eating messy food, ingesting foreign objects, refusing to eat, and sleeping abnormally, which is different from the actual behavior of people with schizophrenia. This is different from previous studies, which usually describe people with schizophrenia as smelly and having a promiscuous sex life, crying, laughing, and shouting for no reason, and having no response or speaking incoherently when talking.^{9,10} In both films, the protagonists do not claim to be super heroes like Superman, but they unintentionally act aggressively towards the people around them, break things, and show self-harming behavior. They also show suspicious behavior and repetitive behavior such as constantly scratching their wounds and having seizures. In addition, the description of the person as having a thin physique, a blank expression, a creepy look of being on guard, self-inflicted wounds, and strange body and clothing is similar to that of other films.^{7,8} In Korean movies, the most common terms used to refer to schizophrenics are criminals or social evils,⁹ and it is reported that the most common terms used to refer to them in the 1990s were losers or lunatics. They were mostly described as people who wander around alone, eat messy food, have a promiscuous sex life, and have a foul odor because they don't wash. They are described as crying, laughing, and shouting for no reason, having no response when talking, or talking incoherently. They also exhibit delusional thinking that they are great figures like Jesus, or aggressive behavior that they easily act out due to problems with their perception and failure to control their impulses. They are sometimes expressed as having a stiff expression or a blank face that shows they are not concentrating, or as having an eerie impression that makes people wary of them, or as someone who has an unusual, out-of-season, bizarre outfit and appearance. Then, since 1996, it has been most common to refer to people with schizophrenia as "psychos" in movies, and they have been depicted as criminals, losers, and enemies. However, they have also been depicted as people who are not dangerous at all with conflicting images,⁷ and as people who commit indiscriminate murders based on delusions.¹⁰ On the other hand, BEAU is different from the common depiction of schizophrenia. Rather, it is like an adult whose body is full of fear and weakness, and whose mind is like that of a child who has not yet grown up. This part is a description of the character's appearance, which thoroughly shows that this is a symptom caused by family trauma, or in other words, relational aspects, which is what director Ari Aster focuses on. Second, let's take a look at the emotional expression of a person with schizophrenia. The typical emotional expressions of schizophrenic patients in movies include fearful expressions due to anxiety about the world and interpersonal relationships, absurd expressions, and expressions of disgust such as "I don't want to see you" or expressions of emotionlessness with a stiffened face and emotionless appearance. Rather than affectionate and intimate expressions, it seems that the facial muscles are stiffened, making it difficult to distinguish between emotions and that eye contact is not made appropriately. In fact, non-verbal communication

such as facial expressions and attitudes in interpersonal relationships determines the degree of relationship satisfaction. The emotions that can be detected through the facial expressions of schizophrenics depicted in the movie are depression, anxiety, tension, impatience, anger, and aggression. On the other hand, the emotions of the people around the schizophrenics are disregard, contempt, ridicule and mockery of the incomprehensible attitude, and hatred. In fact, when a person with schizophrenia interprets the emotions of others, they may misinterpret the information due to delusions and hallucinations, and errors in perception may occur, making it difficult to determine that it is the information processing process for accurate emotions. The important point here is that people's emotional states and expressions are often revealed as subjective and biased variables rather than appropriate due to their rapid thinking and delusions or hallucinations, which are symptoms of schizophrenia. However, Beau's emotional lines make the audience follow the emotions even in the midst of anxiety and permeate them to empathize with Beau's state at some point. In addition, in movies that deal with schizophrenia, it is common for the people around the schizophrenic to accept the schizophrenia itself as something incomprehensible. The relationship between Beau and his mother is reminiscent of the relationship between Nana and her mother in the movie <Black Swan>. Nana's mother has an awareness of her daughter's symptoms, so she constantly controls and interferes with everything, as if she were dealing with a child instead of an adult.¹¹ While it is true that caregivers want to protect their vulnerable children, excessive protection can make them dependent and prevent them from maintaining their lives as adults, which can lead to a process that exacerbates symptoms and the perception of illness. The two films have a strange similarity. Usually, having a mentally ill patient as a family member can feel like a burden, while there are also cases of controlling parents who deliberately make a family member mentally ill so that they can only rely on them.

Analysis of the relational aspects of schizophrenia

In Beau Is Afraid, schizophrenia can be viewed from the perspective of mutual subjectivity and attunement. In Korea, the term schizophrenia has been changed to "attunement disorder" because it causes prejudice. "Attunement" originally meant adjusting the strings of a stringed instrument, but it is a figurative expression of the state in which each subfunction of the mind is in harmony and works organically. There is previous research that views the fundamental pathology of schizophrenia as an abnormality of self-experience.¹² Phenomenological psychiatrists argue that the core pathology of schizophrenia lies in the structural abnormality of the self, and that while conventional psychiatry has focused on positive symptoms such as delusions and hallucinations, phenomenologists see these symptoms as secondary phenomena derived from the collapse of the self. Two characteristics emerge. The first is hyper-reflexivity, which means that content that would normally be processed unconsciously becomes overly conscious, and that one becomes overly self-observant. Diminished self-

affection, which refers to the process of the subject's sense of self becoming blurred and their relationship with the world weakening. This breakdown of self-experience is ultimately linked to the breakdown of intersubjectivity.¹³ In particular, to understand schizophrenia, we must analyze intersubjectivity, the way humans relate to the world and to others, because humans are not mere biological beings, but beings who exist in a social context and relate to others (being-in-the-world). Self is essentially formed through mutual subjectivity, and we construct ourselves through the gaze of others. Based on reading others' minds and mutual subjectivity, humans have the ability to observe others' behavior and infer their inner state. In other words, the emotions and actions of others are not just physical expressions, but are combined with the experience of the world of others. In schizophrenia, however, the mutual subjectivity collapses, and the patient loses the ability to interpret the actions of others. This results in the collapse of intentionality in the world, and the patient is alienated from relationships with others. Ultimately, the key keyword to understanding schizophrenia is "attunement," which refers to the pre-reflective emotional state that humans feel in the world. Therefore, in order to understand and treat schizophrenia, we must consider not only simple drug treatment, but also a phenomenological approach based on the patient's experience.¹⁴

Interpretation of Unrealistic Images and Symbols in Film

Through the cinematic combination of visual images that stimulate emotions and an interesting and often intense dramatic narrative, the film allows the audience to identify with the main character, Beau, who suffers from schizophrenia, and to feel an emotional connection.¹⁵ Ari Aster's *Beau Is Afraid* is a work that dramatically embodies the anxiety and psychological confusion of the main character Beau through cinematic style, intentionally blurring the line between reality and unreality to immerse the audience in the main character's mental state. The film uses surreal narratives, *mise-en-scène*, cinematography, and editing styles to blur the line between reality and fantasy, and to make the audience constantly experience the protagonist's chaos together. First, let's look at how the film blurs the line between reality and unreality through cinematic techniques. The film uses a first-person perspective and a subjective camera. To reflect Beau's mental state, the story, which is told from Beau's point of view, visually exaggerates anxiety and fear, and delusions, paranoia, and confused memories unfold as if they were real. The camera reflects his psychological anxiety as it is, and uses narrow angles, handheld shooting, and distorted lenses to destroy the sense of reality. It also depicts an exaggerated reality. The city where Beau lives is chaos itself, and it seems that the general social order has completely collapsed. He feels extreme anxiety even when he steps outside the door, and the film emphasizes this through a dystopian space design and exaggerated background settings. Murder, violence, and chaos are rampant in the streets, all of which suggest that this is an exaggerated reality in which Beau's anxiety is reflected. Even in this unrealistic environment, the way Beau accepts it as reality creates

the tension of the film. The third is Dream Logic and nonlinear narrative. The film does not follow a traditional plot structure, but develops an irregular narrative following Beau's psychological state. Reality and fantasy are mixed together, making it difficult for the audience to distinguish what is real and what is fantasy. In particular, the scene where Beau falls into the world of theater from the forest is a representative example of the transition between reality and fantasy, and it is the moment when the theatrical space completely overlaps with the reality in the movie. This narrative technique expresses Beau's mental instability and the collapse of his sense of reality, and it makes the audience fall into confusion.

The intersection of reality and unreality can be seen through *Mise-en-scène*. First, there is the heterogeneity of space. The narrative structure of moving from Beau's apartment to a suburban house, then to a theater stage in the forest, and then to the mother's mansion and a huge court follows a process of moving towards increasingly unreal spaces. Each space reflects Beau's psychological changes, and the boundaries between "safety" and "threat" are blurred. For example, Grace and Roger's home, where Beau seemed to be temporarily protected, soon turns into an obsessive and abnormal atmosphere and loses its reality. Second, color and lighting. In realistic spaces, dull tones and cool lighting are used, while intense primary colors and extreme lighting effects are emphasized when the Beau falls into the fantasy. In particular, the forest scene, which combines animation and theatrical elements, is expressed as a fantasy in a dream, using highly saturated colors and soft light sources. Thirdly, the symbolism of props and spaces can also be seen. The spaces where Beau lives embody his anxiety visually. The interior of the apartment is a narrow and cluttered space, giving it a closed and prison-like feel. His mother's house is a magnificent yet bizarre space that evokes supernatural horror, linking to his childhood trauma. It seems like a huge and gorgeous womb, but it is unrealistic and the reality is that the prison is real. The use of props is also notable. Medicine bottles, old toys, and a giant phallic statue are all visual hints of Beau's psychological oppression.

Looking at the way the mixture of reality and fantasy is expressed through visual style, the first is the collapse of the boundary between reality and fantasy through editing. The film uses jump cuts, sudden scene transitions, and discontinuous time and space to blur the sense of reality that Beau experiences. When Beau recalls a particular situation, the present and the past do not appear in a continuous, connected manner, but in a disconnected manner, and memory and fantasy are expressed in a way that is equivalent to reality. This editing technique encourages the audience to experience Beau's uneasy psychology firsthand. In addition, the use of animation and theatrical scenes. The scene where Beau encounters a play in the forest combines elements of animation and stage theater, and seems to visually depict Beau's psychological state. He describes the process of living a different life in the play, but eventually having to return to reality and feeling helpless about a fate he did not choose. This device breaks down the boundary

between Beau's delusions and reality, and emphasizes that he cannot find a haven even in his fantasies. The most unique description is a combination of grotesque humor and grotesque horror. Scenes that mix Ari Aster's unique uncomfortable comedy and extreme anxiety further blur the line between reality and unreality. The exaggerated characters and their bizarre behavior seem to project Beau's inner fears into the outside world, which keeps the audience questioning what is true.

The way to evoke empathy from the audience is through the camera work that makes the audience experience Beau's psychology. The camera often captures Beau's face in extreme close-ups to emphasize his fear and confusion. The distorted wide-angle shooting technique manipulates the space to make it appear overwhelmingly large or small, inducing a sense of anxiety. This shooting method forces the audience to experience Beau's emotions. In particular, it is an emotional immersion that uses universal anxiety because it deals with universal themes such as the pressure of family relationships, social anxiety, and the crisis of self-identity. Beau's relationship with her mother is based on psychological trauma with an Oedipus element, which is connected to the anxiety that many audiences instinctively feel. In the final scene, Beau's fate is played out in the form of a trial in a huge courtroom, where he is doomed without being understood. This scene is designed to make the audience feel the hopeless human condition and existential anxiety, leaving them with a tragic yet ironic feeling.

The Social Context of Psychotic Experiences and the Social Criticism of the Film

Media often serve as an important source of information on mental health. However, the media are also filled with negative stereotypes and portrayals of mental illness, which can lead to the public having preconceived notions about mental illness.¹⁶ Movies typically emphasize the violent behavior of people with schizophrenia.¹⁷ What is interesting is that when the visual depiction of the film seemed to depict Beau's delusions and hallucinations, but ultimately it was the script that instilled the delusions and hallucinations, the audience can empathize with Beau's experience of fear caused by the pressure of a huge maternal instinct, rather than schizophrenia. In movies, visual hallucinations are commonly used to portray schizophrenia. However, in the case of <BEAU IS AFRAID>, supernatural phenomena frequently appear beyond simple visual hallucinations, and the audience shares a sense of unease in the midst of psychological

confusion and ambiguity.^{18,19} And this is like the stereotype that can be seen in modern movies, where the audience indirectly experiences 'possessed schizophrenia'. So, I think the unique element of this film is that the audience, not the protagonist, ultimately encounters the point of mental breakdown. In other words, it gives the feeling of sharing an experience by moving between reality and unreality, rather than from an omniscient author's point of view or an observer's stance. In essence, the general public has false beliefs and negative attitudes towards schizophrenia,^{20,21} and there is also a social stigma attached to it. However, this film prevents the audience from finding a way out by putting them on the border between reality and unreality at the point where they experience a mental breakdown. This creates a point of empathy and makes us realize that humans can break down at any time and that we and others are only a paper-thin line away from mental health.

Conclusion

I would like to examine what the boundary between reality and unreality in Beau Is Afraid means in a cinematic context. What is depicted in the movie as reality is the function of the ego, and what is expressed as unreality is the realm of the id, or unconscious. In fact, the boundary is ambiguous because schizophrenia typically involves a pathological phenomenon in which the ego is vulnerable to the id. The collapse of the boundary is caused by the family. The causes of mental illness begin with biological inheritance and psychological inheritance from the "family." Beau's difficult journey is thought to have begun with the desire to return to the womb to be healed and restored. The ironic ending that one must die to live may signify a new beginning, but Beau's death feels like a deflating but foretold ending. The pathology of Beau and the endless anxiety of dependence that is fostered by it come to an end with death. In this way, the film helps to resonate with the patient's inner world and the state of experience by portraying scenes that make the audience feel like they are the patient and experience the symptoms together, as the boundaries between reality and fantasy are explored through mise-en-scène. It seems that the medium of film is the one that allows us to safely and aesthetically explore the borderline between fantasy and delusion, which straddle the line between reality and unreality, centering on the borderline of the ego.

Author Contribution

#These authors contributed equally to this work

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