

### 3. HOW TO SEE THE INVISIBLE STORY

*The therapist sees signals pointing to those elements of a new identity that are being driven by unwanted events taking place in the client's life beyond the client's control, and tries to help the client experience the essence of these events [...] allowing them to transform the existing area into a new inner space of greater capacity than before, and with a greater understanding of what happens to the person in life.*<sup>19</sup>

We may therefore say that the therapist's first task is to identify what, among the things that happen to the client, he or she perceives as unwanted, coming "from outside," surprising, and/or beyond his or her control. These may be all kinds of events: conflicts at work, dreams, strange coincidences, painful or wonderful moments, illnesses, obsessive thoughts, new emotions, and so on. Then—using various therapeutic techniques—the therapist helps the client experience the essence of these events. The effect of these confrontations is meant to be a recognition of the direction and meaning of the change that seeks to manifest itself, and their goal is the integration of a new area of experiences and qualities, expanding the client's "identity space"—that is, transforming the way the client perceives themselves and others, along with their system of values and beliefs.

The screenwriter and the director have a similar task, but they carry out the process of change through particular scenes, their sequences, and across the whole plot of the film. When this succeeds, the viewer has a chance to experience both the transformation of the individual protagonist and the universal mechanism of change that concerns each and every one of us.

In this chapter, we will look at the protagonist transformation from several different perspectives, but without yet going more deeply into the mechanism itself and its individual elements. To start with, we will distinguish external transformation, taking place on the level of visible events—that is, everything that happens in the world of the protagonist's actions and decisions—from inner

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<sup>19</sup> T. Teodorczyk, *Mindell...*, op. cit., p. 28.

transformation, that is, a change in his or her way of perceiving the world, a change in the value system, and in the relation to self and others. We will then return to the idea of the dreambody described in the previous chapter. We will see why a protagonist following his or her dreambody may be said to embark on a dangerous and radical journey. The dreambody will help us look at the process of transformation as a quasi-psychotic episode in the protagonist's life, in which, carried away by new events, he or she is forced into behaviors, decisions, and emotions contrary to that protagonist's identity.

In the third part of this chapter, we will learn how the difference between the protagonist's primary Self at the outset and the New Self at the end of the film is understood from a process-oriented perspective, what this key polarization consists in, and what its two extreme poles are. Only when both poles are accurately defined, and the protagonist's story is stretched between them, does the transformation become clear, important, and dramatic.

## EXTERNAL OR INTERNAL TRANSFORMATION?

*The nature of the soul is to grow.*<sup>20</sup>

Tomasz Teodorczyk, a pioneer and co-creator of Process-Oriented Psychology in Poland, defines process work as a psychological approach that “deals with change in all its manifestations”.<sup>21</sup> This change, however, does not concern only what happens “outside,” but refers to a person's inner transformation. Change is not simply the fact that the protagonist, for example, becomes rich or poor, finds the love of his or her life, quits a job and goes on a journey around the world, heroically saves someone's life, or escapes mortal danger. Change must concern just as much transformation of the old identity into a new one—the transformation of the primary Self at the beginning of the film into the New Self at the end. Thus, saving someone's life, reconciling with a brother, opening oneself to a new romantic adventure, gaining a fortune, achieving mastery in some field, or radically changing

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<sup>20</sup> Heraklit z Efezu, *147 fragmentów*, trans. Robert Zaborowski, Ewa Lif-Perkowska, STAKROOS, Warszawa 1996, p. 11.

<sup>21</sup> T. Teodorczyk, *Mindell...*, op. cit., p. 17.

one's lifestyle are events that are merely the external image of something that has happened "underneath"—in the protagonist's psychic reality.

The external events that make up the film's final action are the culmination of the process of inner transformation. In other words, for all these plot events to make sense and be credible, the protagonist must first undergo a radical inner transformation—face their fears and anxieties and cross the edge that until then marked the limits of their identity. Of course, the plot of the film itself does not have to focus on the inner process of transformation, since not every film is a psychological film. As we shall see in the following examples, however, good films—regardless of genre and of whether they are commercial or not—handle the combination of external and inner transformation very well. As usual, the secret lies in the details: in who the protagonist is, how they are presented, who the antagonist is, which events correspond to particular dramatic points, and what the change concerns.

### **The Truman Show**

The protagonist of *The Truman Show* is its title character, Truman Burbank.<sup>22</sup> Truman has been the star of a television reality show since the day he was born, although he himself has no idea of it. Since he is unaware of it, this is not his problem. His problem is getting to Fiji. He wants to find the girl who many years earlier disappeared from his life in mysterious circumstances. He is therefore searching for a love from the past, even though he is already married.

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<sup>22</sup> The summary of the plot—that is, the visible story—of this film and of each of the others I discuss can be found at the end of the book, in the chapter "Film Summaries". I strongly encourage the reader to watch these films before or during reading this book. If that is impossible, however, or if the reader already knows the film well, it is worth becoming familiar with the summary of its plot. I will repeat this reminder each time I turn to a new title.

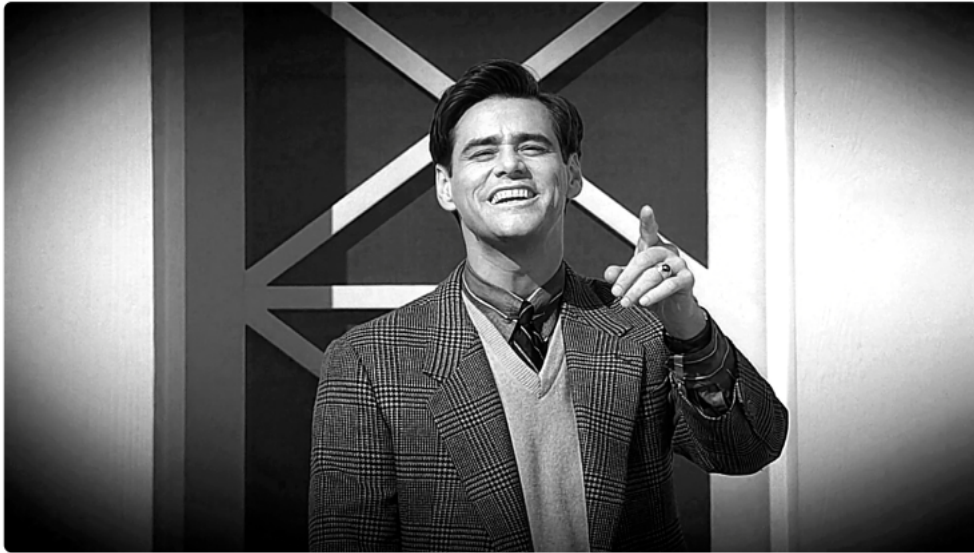


Fig. 3. Truman Burbank as an insurance agent (at the beginning of the film).  
Source: Still from *The Truman Show*.

Both—this storyline and Truman’s accompanying discovery of the truth about the reality of the television show, whose property he is—constitute a sequence of external plot events full of conflicts and plot twists. This is the space of the visible story: the chains of cause-and-effect events that make up the film’s plot. Truman first looks for a way to make contact with the Girl from Fiji. When this proves impossible, he tries to set out on a journey to that distant island. Sensing that the whole world is involved in a conspiracy against him, he decides—in secret, and without anyone knowing—to escape from his hometown of Seahaven. In the middle of the night he sets out alone in a sailboat, during which voyage he overcomes his deepest fears and traumas. Only then does he discover the truth. He reaches the boundary of his world, which turns out to be the wall of a gigantic television studio. He realizes that his life up to that point has been one great farce. For the escape from the “old” world to be possible, moving, and true, however, the plot events must reflect not only chains of external cause-and-effect events, but also—as will become clear—chains of inner cause-and-effect events taking place in the protagonist’s psychic reality.

The perfection, effectiveness and beauty of the visible story, the plot, in *The Truman Show* lie in the fact that behind the visible events there is hidden, “encoded,” a very precise invisible story of the developmental process. I will offer a full analysis of this film later, in the following chapters; here we will look only at the

relation between the plot, the visible story, and the “events” in the protagonist’s psychic world, the invisible story.

Truman’s inner transformation, from the process-oriented point of view, consists in the reworking of his primary identity, the primary Self, through the integration of the qualities and experiences with which the protagonist is confronted throughout the story. A synthesis of opposites takes place here (*coniunctio oppositorum*)—the integration of the experience of “life in Seahaven,” that is, Truman’s primary identity, with the qualities and experiences represented by the three most important supporting characters: the Girl from Fiji, the Father, and the Director-Demiurge.

When, in the first minutes of the film, we meet the protagonist as an adult man of about thirty, we see a grotesque insurance agent—bored with his life, dreaming of travels that he cannot afford either financially or mentally. The bourgeois way of life in Seahaven—“the most beautiful town in the world”—is both the image of the sugar-coated little town created for the purposes of the reality show and the inner mental landscape of the protagonist’s identity. In the finale, the director of the television show says to Truman directly: the fabricated reality of Seahaven is a place that is safe, predictable, and full of acceptance, unlike the nightmare of everyday life outside the television studio. Seahaven is a reflection of the infantile dream of perfect harmony and safety. It is also a reflection of the protagonist’s immaturity and of his emotional development having been arrested at the level of a child under parental care—deprived of agency and of the power to decide.

On the level of the plot, Truman Burbank’s greatest antagonist is the Director-Demiurge, whose task is to prevent Truman’s escape at any cost. The qualities represented by this antagonist are control, the ruthless pursuit of a goal, but also independence, courage in creating a world, and uncompromisingly following one’s vision—in other words, “holding the helm” as the director of a great enterprise. Truman will be able to escape from his sickeningly sweet prison only when he integrates precisely these qualities—when he grasps the boat’s tiller and becomes the creator of his own fate, even at the price of possible death during the final storm.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> The image of this transformation—that is, the finale of the invisible story—is the protagonist literally holding the sailboat’s tiller in the final sequence of the film. Alone on the open sea, he is like the explorer-pioneer he always wanted to become.

Success, escape from the reality show, can be achieved only when the inner transformation has been accomplished—that is, when the protagonist’s former personality transforms and integrates the qualities represented by the antagonist, qualities which, moreover, the protagonist once possessed in childhood, or at least had within himself the potential naturally to embrace in adult life.<sup>24</sup>

**The qualities the protagonist integrates are not literally the same qualities as those represented by the antagonist. Their content is similar, but once transformed they lose their negative, destructive character.** Whereas the Director-Demiurge used courage, tight rein, and “holding the helm” to subordinate his collaborators, the viewers, and Truman, Truman “uses” them honestly—not to enslave anyone, but to free himself.



Fig. 4. Truman Burbank as a sailor (at the end of the film).

Source: Still from *The Truman Show*.

Over the course of the whole story—at all its stages—Truman Burbank’s transformation consists in integrating the experiences and qualities represented by:

- the Girl from Fiji—rebellion against the existing order,
- Truman’s Father from childhood—the joy of taking risks and the traveller’s courage in following one’s dreams,
- the Director-Demiurge—steering one’s own life independently.

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<sup>24</sup> We will look more closely at the phenomenon of integrating psychic material previously repressed by the protagonist in the following chapters.

The field of experience that the protagonist embraces by the end of the film is much broader than the one with which he began. Interestingly, however, Truman already possessed these qualities as a child and had once embraced those experiences. He wanted to be a traveller; he was a brave and independent boy, testing the limits of his world. When sailing with his Father, he was the one holding the helm. His Father had taught him and had allowed him to do so.

So what happened? How did this brave, adventurous, and independent boy grow into a fearful insurance agent, terrified of life and incapable of acting on his own? The answer is a traumatic experience—in this case, from childhood—that effectively limited the protagonist's personal potential. In the past, the director of the reality show staged an event in which, during one of those carefree outings on a sailboat, a terrible storm broke out. Truman's father was thrown from the boat and drowned, and the young Truman was plunged into trauma and guilt—something his surroundings keep reminding him of, more or less directly. By reinforcing his post-traumatic identity, the protagonist's surroundings deepen Truman's identification with guilt, thereby ensuring the continuity of the broadcast. Such a Truman will not be able to rebel or discover the truth about his existence.

Thus, in order to restrain the natural impulses of little Truman—a prisoner of the television show—the Director-Demiurge had to create an event which, as trauma, would limit the personality of the twelve-year-old boy. It had to produce in him an opposite identification—with fear, the need for safety, and guilt over his longing for adventure. Little Truman began to fear water, and the ability to sail, together with the joy it gave him, was pushed into the space of trauma and guilt over his Father's death.

Arnold Mindell stresses that the rigidity of our personalities, and thus the limitation of our potential, relates to remaining closed within the comfort zone, to avoiding confrontation with what is unknown, alien, and unwanted, or with that for which we are not ready, or that we are convinced we do not deserve. He also noticed that in every person's life there comes a time for change. Then it is no longer possible to avoid confrontation with the experiences we would prefer to avoid, with the emotions we fear, and with the people who represent everything with which we disagree. **The time of change most often comes when life, or we ourselves, places new challenges before us, when we must take on a new social role, or when we are moving into a new stage.** Sometimes, however, there is no

particular reason—the tendency toward change simply reveals itself and declares “war” on the tendency to preserve the status quo.

Truman Burbank must change because he has set himself an important task—to find the person he feels genuine affection for, or at least fantasizes about, and to discover the truth about his life. He therefore has goals he wants to achieve. He is aware of both of them, although the second becomes clearly defined somewhat later. He is not aware, however, of what qualities and experiences he will have to integrate in order for the achievement of those two goals to become possible—this is the invisible part of his personal story.

Truman undergoes an “external” transformation and leaves the reality show because he has matured into being the “helmsman” of his own fate. He certainly does not cease to be himself, however, as shown by his final words: “In case I don’t see ya: good afternoon, good evening, and good night.” This is a refrain running through the whole film—his original way of greeting his “super-friendly” neighbors, but also “his” audience, whose presence he is unaware of. In uttering these words just before leaving the television studio—both to the Director-Demiurge and to the anonymous viewers of the reality show—Truman shows that although he knows much more about himself and the world around him, and is ready for a new stage in his life, he is still the same man. **The protagonist’s old identity—the primary Self—has not been rejected, but transformed by new experiences and qualities, thus creating the New Self.**

Inner transformation does not always have to be accompanied by a clear external change. This is sometimes the case in psychological films that are studies of the drama of a single protagonist, examples of which are *Manchester by the Sea* and *Escape from the “Liberty” Cinema*, discussed later. When external change is not accompanied by inner change, however, we are dealing with a flat story, devoid of mystery and depth. The protagonists do things, they are very busy with their tasks, and they struggle with adversity, but this reflects nothing beyond a general commotion that may hold the viewer’s attention for the duration of the screening. Such a story will leave the viewer indifferent after leaving the cinema or switching off the monitor. We need stories that touch the mystery of existence, its paradoxes, that which is invisible and yet often decisive for our lives.

## ON THE EDGE OF PSYCHOSIS—FOLLOWING THE DREAMBODY

As I mentioned earlier, the dreambody is an invisible sphere of life that has a hidden meaning and carries information about the change that seeks to be realized. The dreambody, as a communicative phenomenon, is itself invisible, but it manifests itself in the protagonist's life through all those narrative elements that stand in any kind of contradiction to their will, intention, expectations, or are unattainable to them at a given moment.

The direct and deep experience of unintentional and most often unwanted events, people, relationships, and behaviors appearing in the life of a given person or protagonist is the experience of the dreambody. Following this experience means moving in the direction of change, and thus of what is difficult, alien, and conflict-generating. The tendency toward change pushes film protagonists into trouble, and they are usually unaware of it. At first they try to resist it, but then they immerse themselves in it completely, sometimes risking their lives—physically and/or psychologically.

### Escape from the “Liberty” Cinema

An example of radically following the dreambody is the Censor—the protagonist of *Escape from the “Liberty” Cinema* by Wojciech Marczewski.<sup>25</sup> The film tells the story of a local Censor who receives notice of a rebellion by film characters during a screening in one of the cinemas. The fictional Characters/Actors have refused to play the roles imposed on them. This fantastic phenomenon, entirely irrational in itself, at the same time borders on political provocation and sabotage, because the film is set in communist Poland, where any rebellion or sign of insubordination is forbidden. As part of the apparatus of power, the Censor must deal with such an event—crush the “rebellion” in the bud. This is the tragicomic storyline of the film.

Once, when he was still young and full of hope for a literary career, the protagonist of *Escape from the “Liberty” Cinema* probably identified with what was irrational, fleeting, poetic, and transcended the limits of reality. But disappointments and a lack of creative success caused his artistic need to influence people through art to be replaced by a need to influence artists in his role as censor.

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<sup>25</sup> The summary of the film's plot can be found in the chapter "Film Summaries".

His censorial identification excluded, or repressed, the qualities and experiences of his earlier identity—the identity of the artist-poet.

The protagonist's first reaction to the irrational events in the "Liberty" cinema is to repress the fact that this phenomenon does not fit the materialist order of the world. The Censor, as a rationalist and a cynic, a person whose identity has fused with the idea of control and effectiveness, explains the rebellion of the fictional characters as a "rebellion of matter." In his view, it is a natural consequence of the fact that Polish society itself has ceased to rebel. Yet when the rebellious Characters/Actors start to confront him directly as they voice private opinions from the screen and enter freely into dialogue with the Censor—something that is beyond the pale—a marginalized and repressed quality begins to stir within him: the experience of being a poet. From this perspective, the events not only make sense, but possess an extraordinary beauty, which he senses and understands. Because the censor's persona is strong, however—and thus the wall protecting his present identity is high and impermeable—the protagonist enters into a radical experience.



Fig. 5. The Censor—the main character of *Escape from the "Liberty" Cinema*.  
Source: Still from the film *Escape from the "Liberty" Cinema*.

The transformation the Censor undergoes is an extreme experience of the dreambody, bordering on mental disturbance or even psychosis. It consists in fully immersing himself in that strange, irrational phenomenon of film characters freeing themselves from the roles imposed on them. As a result, the protagonist himself

becomes irrational. He is flooded by a wave of fantasy that blows apart his previous identity. He literally crosses the “edge” of the cinema screen and enters the space of illusion. He displays great faith, overcoming material limitations. He denies everything he stood for as the film began, and moreover does so publicly—before the eyes of his political superiors. In the end, he loses as the Censor, but wins as a human being, because in the film’s finale he is given a chance for a new identity. Although we do not see how, or whether, he makes use of that chance, the inner transformation has taken place. The most difficult, final stage would still lie before him—the return to everyday life with the New Self. What would await him there would be the people who knew him as a censor, as well as the decisions he would have to make and the external changes he would have to undergo.

The protagonist of *Escape from the “Liberty” Cinema* does not undergo a classic transformation. His passage through the edge of the screen—his entry into the fictional reality of the film within the film—is not a harmonious integration of qualities alien to his present identification, but a full surrender to the dreambody, a sacrifice of his whole previous identity—behavior bordering on psychosis. When the protagonist returns from the world of the film and its rebellious Characters/Actors, he is no longer a censor, but he is not a poet either. He is one of the ordinary people in the street, and no one pays any attention to him, but no one is afraid of him either. In the evening, at home, he draws the curtains. Tired, he goes to sleep—or symbolically dies. No longer either a censor or a poet, but a strange synthesis of the two.

Arnold Mindell, drawing inspiration among other things from shamanism and from the Castanedian figure of Don Juan Matus,<sup>26</sup> an Indian from the Yaqui tribe, describes the intrusion of the dreambody into the life of the client—and thus into the life of the film protagonist—as follows:

*While some choose to vacation rather than to meet these forces, the proverbial teacher explains that these inexplicable forces come to you whether you are ready for them or not. You must encounter them, succumb to them by becoming dissociated, or make them your allies.*<sup>27</sup>

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26 The protagonist of Carlos Castaneda’s highly popular book series from the 1970s and 1980s, including *The Teachings of Don Juan*, *Journey to Ixtlan*, *A Separate Reality*, and *The Art of Dreaming*.

27 A. Mindell, *The Shaman’s Body*, HarperSanFrancisco, 1993, p. 35.

Some experiences and qualities are very often regarded as alien and hostile as long as they remain outside the area of identification—the area of Self. Once, however, we manage to “cross the edge” of identity and “embrace” **them, they suddenly turn out to be close to us and may even become our allies. Identity has a tendency to create negative images or personifications of what comes from non-Self area, in order to “explain” to itself why such qualities or experiences should be avoided.**

The man with the stomach tumor, from the example cited in Chapter 2, perceived “opposition” as a destructive bomb, but when he entered into the deep experience of its energy, the bomb disappeared and in its place appeared such qualities as expression and the ability to say “no.” Although the tumor itself became more “familiar” and “understandable” to him, at that moment the man was not capable of accepting the change. The process of transformation is most often long and winding, full of plot twists and requiring many confrontations—something the invisible stories of many wonderful films try to tell.

If you are a person who does not identify with sadness, the experience of sadness may be unpleasant. You do not want it and try to run away from it, or you go with this “problem” to a therapist. If you come to a process-oriented therapist, he or she will try to encourage you to experience more deeply that which makes you sad. In the course of “working with sadness,” it may turn out that what is really at stake is not sadness at all, but, for example, the experience of reflectiveness—an introspection which, for some reason, wants to be integrated at this stage of life and which you need. This does not mean that a cheerful person must suddenly become pensive, but rather that one should not be afraid of introspection and reflection, which may be needed, for example, to make a decision that is important at this point in life. We will learn more about this mechanism, and about how it relates to the dramatic structure of film narrative, in the following chapters.

*In Buddhist systems, more especially those of Tibet, the meditation Buddhas appear in two aspects, one peaceful and the other wrathful. If you are clinging fiercely to your ego and its little temporal world of sorrows and joys, hanging on for dear life, it will be the wrathful aspect of the deity that appears. It will*

*seem terrifying. But the moment your ego yields and gives up, that same meditation Buddha is experienced as a bestower of bliss.*<sup>28</sup>

### **Black Swan**

Female protagonists in cinema have rarely undergone the kind of transformation this book is concerned with. This was a very surprising discovery for me, and it is precisely the reason for the proportion of female and male examples in this book. Until now, women have often had above all to struggle with their surroundings, with the patriarchal system, with oppression, or to fight simply in order to be themselves and achieve what they desire, without having to adapt to the world. That is why their inner change is quite often—if it exists at all—very subtle, and not as crucial to the action of the film as in the examples of male protagonists. The heroines of *The Piano*<sup>29</sup> (written and directed by Jane Campion, 1993) and *Erin Brockovich*<sup>30</sup> (directed by Steven Soderbergh, written by Susannah Grant, 2000) remain themselves from start to end, and that is their strength in relation to the world. If something changes in their lives, it does so as a result of their remaining true to themselves and to their strength. The system, adversity, and men did not manage to break them, even if they were deeply affected by them. They did not surrender, they did not adapt to the dominant model. They succeeded in carrying their inner independence into the outer world.

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<sup>28</sup> J. Campbell with B. Moyers., *The Power of Myth*, Doubleday 1988, p. 222.

<sup>29</sup> Ada McGrath (Holly Hunter) is a strong and rebellious protagonist from the very beginning. She does not undergo a classic inner transformation, because she does not begin as someone unaware or submissive who must discover her independence. She is already independent—psychologically and emotionally. Her silence does not signify submission, but a conscious act of rebellion and a refusal to submit. If one can speak of any change at all, it lies in her finding a way to survive in a world that wants to break her. Ada gradually adjusts her actions to circumstances in order to reclaim control over her outward life. In this sense, her decision at the end of the film—to live and begin to speak—is the result of her remaining true to herself, not of the old Self being transformed into the New Self. The rebellion ends not because Ada changes inwardly, but because the circumstances around her change. She does not become someone who no longer needs to rebel; rather, she no longer has to.

<sup>30</sup> Erin Brockovich does not discover her strength, nor does she have to mature into independence—she has it from the start. If any change takes place in her, it concerns rather the scope of her involvement, her becoming aware of the costs of the struggle, and her claiming the place in the world that is rightfully hers, a world that initially dismissed her. On the level of identity, however, she remains the same person: stubborn, uncompromising, self-confident, and capable.

Another kind of female protagonist is the rebel who, like Thelma and Louise (*Thelma & Louise*, dir. Ridley Scott, screenplay by Callie Khouri, 1991), makes a U-turn in a single gesture. One may say that they change both inwardly and outwardly, but this is a mad gesture of despair and rebellion which, in their case, ends in suicide<sup>31</sup>. The ability to be defiant and to devote one's life to that defiance is a beautiful idea and an extremely attractive dramatic motif. Here, however, we want to look at "invisible" changes which, although they do not always have to be the subject of the plot itself, fully determine the course of plot events.

The protagonist of *Black Swan*<sup>32</sup> (Natalie Portman) does not want to change, but she knows that if she is to achieve the success she dreams of, her dancing will have to change. She slowly comes to realize that one is impossible without the other. Her resistance to inner change is so great, however, that, like the Censor, she will pay for it with a psychotic, even demonic, episode, which in this case leads to actual death. This is an example of a change that was not completed, or that ended in failure, although one might say she came very close. The inner resistance to integrating—in life, not only in dance—the qualities and experiences with which Nina cannot identify—wildness, the courage to lose herself, being unruly and disobedient—is so radical that the dutiful, well-behaved, sensible, and delicate Nina will fight it to the death.



Fig. 6. Nina—the main character of *Black Swan*.

Source: Still from the film *Black Swan*.

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<sup>31</sup> Thelma and Louise's fate is not the result of an inner transformation, but of a collision with a reality that leaves them no other option. Their decision to drive off the cliff is not the culmination of transformation, but a symbolic act of mutiny against a world in which, as the film seems to suggest, there is still no place for women like them.

<sup>32</sup> The summary of the film's plot can be found in the chapter "Film Summaries".

Throughout the film, we see successive signals of the dreambody appearing in the protagonist's life, forcing her into confrontation. They manifest themselves, among other things, as disturbing bodily symptoms, an unexpected opportunity to take part in an audition for the leading role, a new, dynamic dancer in the company, or erotic fantasies escalating into increasingly dangerous hallucinations. We also see how Nina, despite everything, tries with all her strength to go beyond herself, to free herself from her oppressive mother—both the external mother and the internal one—to fight for herself and her goal, to become an independent, mature person, and to leave her “child's room.” Nina's beautiful potential transformation can be seen in her final dance. In the “Swan Queen” played by Nina, the energies and qualities of the White Swan and the Black Swan have been integrated, creating a marvelous spectacle of the unity of opposites—*coniunctio oppositorum*. Unfortunately, as I have already mentioned, the transformation takes place only in Nina-the-ballerina, only in the sphere of dance, because Nina-the-woman dies.

*Black Swan* is a psychological thriller in which, instead of a full integration of opposites, there is a murder/suicide. The inner resistance to the transformation of identity proved too strong. The protagonist fell into psychosis, but it was not the spirit of the Black Swan that possessed her—it was her own dreambody. Dreaming took control of Nina because for too long she had not allowed herself to lose control. The Black Swan, silenced for too long—Nina's inner potential, waiting for many years to be integrated—behaved like the spirit in the bottle from one of the Brothers Grimm fairy tales.<sup>33</sup> When, after hundreds of years spent in a tightly sealed bottle, the spirit is suddenly released, he declares that he is the powerful Mercurius, possessing the power to endow people with magical abilities. Yet because he had waited too long, he decided that he would immediately wring the neck of the first person who found him and let him out of the bottle. The Black Swan behaves in a similar way in Nina's psychotic vision in the final sequence of the film. It strangles her and shouts, literally, “My turn! It's my turn!”

The Black Swan—as the personification of such qualities as courage, ruthlessness, impulsiveness, and of experiences such as opposition, fighting for oneself and one's needs, and total self-abandonment—is not going to negotiate. It takes control and kills the White Swan, with whom Nina originally identified and with whom she was identified by those around her. **On the psychological level, the complete**

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<sup>33</sup> W. K. Grimm i J. L. K. Grimm, *Duch w butelce* [in:] *Baśnie braci Grimm*, trans. E. Bielicka i M. Tarnowski, Ludowa Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza, Warszawa 1989, t. II, p. 48.

replacement of the primary identity by the energy of the dreambody, the Black Swan, is a fall into psychosis. Deep and prolonged mental disintegration can be mortally dangerous, whereas a single psychotic episode—a short-lived experience—is often in itself growth-inducing. Then it is a deep immersion in the experience of the dreambody, followed by an insight into one's own potential and the direction of change, as in the case of the Censor.

The protagonist of the Brothers Grimm fairy tale succeeds in outwitting Mercurius and taking over his power, but Darren Aronofsky did not give Nina Sayers that chance. Perhaps in this way he wants to warn us not to wait too long to change, because if it comes too late, it can kill—in one way or another.

## PROCESS POLARIZATION—THE TWO POLES OF THE ENGINE OF CHANGE

*Heraclitus discovered the most remarkable of all psychological laws, namely, the regulatory function of the opposites. He called this enantiodromia, by which he meant that everything is turned into its opposite at one time or another.*<sup>34</sup>

In the following three examples, I would like us to look at the features of protagonist transformation discussed above. In them, we will see clear and interesting connections between external changes, in the world of plot events, and internal ones, in the protagonist's psyche, as well as the experience of the dreambody, that is, of what is unintentional and unwanted by the protagonist. Each of these examples does this in its own way and showcases a different genre: psychological drama, thriller, and, let us say, an auteur philosophical crime film.

Above all, however, I would like to use these examples to talk about the most important category from the point of view of the protagonist transformation—**the polarization between the qualities and experiences the protagonist initially identifies with and the qualities and experiences they must integrate**. I will present the meaning and mechanism of this polarization in the following chapters.

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<sup>34</sup> J. Jacobi, *The Psychology of Jung: An Introduction*, trans. K. W. Bash, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1943, p. 50.