Donnie Darko: Annotated Bibliography

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Donnie Darko: The Directors Cut is a 2004 extended version of the movie Donnie Darko written and directed by Richard Kelly. This movie is not only dark but confusing and delusional as it revolves around a teenage boy who is a paranoid schizophrenic. The continuous distortion of reality through audiovisual styles and the unified shift from the real world to dreams leaves the viewers in disarray. The movie starts with Donnie Darko, the protagonist of the story sleepwalking, led by a mysterious voice who we soon find out is Frank a malevolent bunny. He wakes up in the middle of a field only to return to his house to find out that a mysterious jet engine has fallen onto his house. Donnie feels that he owes Frank his life and follows his instructions.

Bosley, Rachael K., et al. “Flooding to Sundance.” American Cinematographer; vol. 82, no. 4, Apr. 2001, pp. 86–110. EBSCOhost, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=asu&AN=504932191.

“They kind of bend reality around the edges and give a more impressionistic point of view.”

Frank the bunny seems to be a projection of Donnie’s subconscious and Donnie uses him to validate all his wrong actions. As we see an increase in Frank’s presence in the movie we also see an increase in Donnie’s violent behavior. The movie does fulfill its intent at being dark and confusing as according to the extended version the entire movie’s plot is explained using a book on time travel written by a nun who in the movie is represented as a peculiarly disturbed old lady know in the movie as “Grandma death”. Hence, the idea of a tangent universe and the philosophy of time travel seemed very far-fetched and made the plot increasingly unbelievable.

Bosley, Rachael K., et al. “Flooding to Sundance.” American Cinematographer; vol. 82, no. 4, Apr. 2001, pp. 86–110. EBSCOhost, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=asu&AN=504932191.

“For this kind of movie, I like the look of widescreen anamorphic -I’m dealing inure with an impression of reality, rather than a pure representation of it.'

Donnie Darko was already a troubled teen who had to do sometime in jail as he torched an abandoned house. Ironically, this information was revealed when he was talking to Gretchen as the school was closed because Donnie flooded the entire school. Throughout the movie, there are several instances of violence and disturbing behavior. Another instance when he torched Jim Cunningham’s house, out of spite as Donnie did not believe in Jim’s ideologies being forced onto him. This seems like an overreaction on Donnie’s part and yet what is more difficult to believe is that when the firefighters arrived at Jim Cunningham’s house they discovered child pornography. There is a high possibility that the child pornography was planted by Donnie Darko. At the end of all these events, viewers learn that Donnie performed most of these actions because Frank told him to do so. In the movie Frank is supposed to be a mysterious

figure who should be helping Donnie in order to “save the world”, yet the fact that he is making him take a rather destructive course of action makes one believe that Frank is a mere fragment of imagination (a hallucination) or rather a projection of his subconscious and his true inner self. Donnie is after all diagnosed with schizophrenia and he is not only mentally unstable but he has also stopped taking his medication.

The presence of Frank can be seen as highly questionable and confusing. The director made it more obvious when he used distorted view and weirds electric sounds every time Frank made an on-screen presence. Hence, this hinted to the viewers that he is not a part of the actual or the original world.

Jordan, Randolph. “The Visible Acousmêtre: Voice, Body and Space across the Two Versions of Donnie Darko.” Music, Sound & the Moving Image, vol. 3, no. 1, Spring 2009, pp. 47–70. EBSCOhost, doi:10.3828/msmi.3.1.3.

“This new sound motif is based on the theme of electrical disturbances, sometimes an electrical humming, other times electronically garbled voices associated with distorted media emissions. Each instance of this new sound motif occurs in conjunction with either the appearance of the masked Frank.”

Speaking of which, the fact that there is a tangent universe and the current world is in the tangent universe and a loop theoretically make for a great science fiction movie if one were to keep aside all the actual facts and laws of physics. The movie very clearly portrays thanatophobia .i.e. the fear of death and the fear of not existing as not everyone is able to comprehend death or the fact that how we are just a speck in the universe on a cosmic scale. That sort of dark reality is portrayed through Jim Cunningham and his followers who try to impose their ideologies of “God” and how everything has a set path onto students and their kids. It is possible that Donnie did not want to fall into the same trap and he thought of Frank as a cosmic figure and that his presence signified that there are more things out there in the universe who can change the course of time, alter worlds and he escapes his fear through Frank by taking his own life for the greater good, in this case, saving the world. This can also be backed up the fact that in a tangent universe no one has free will, every action, every conversation is predetermined and every person in a tangent universe is not real, they are copies meant to correct an anomaly which can threatens the existence of a system as a whole.

The plot takes an even more ridiculous twist when the audience acquires the knowledge that Frank is his sister’s boyfriend. This incident happens when Donnie and Elizabeth decide to throw a Halloween party as the rest of the family is away. That’s when a mysterious sound is played and we see Donnie being guided to whiteboard which says, “Frank was here” this detail really confused the viewers as Frank was portrayed as a demonic other world bunny who is leading Donnie through his journey in life but he is just a hallucination of his sister’s boyfriend. It is after this scene things take turn for the worse. Donnie with his friends and Gretchen are led the Roberta Sparrow’s house, the “Grandma death,” trying to break in and go to her wine cellar. As they are trying to break in they see an oncoming car and Donnie’s two friends fled the scene while the car runs over Gretchen. Inside the car is Frank, in the same bunny rabbit costume as his vision. Donnie shoots him with his father’s gun and a second Frank is seen behind the bushes. This is one of the most confusing scenes in the movie as it is the only scene that portrays Frank as real/alive person. Every other scene in the movie he is portrayed as an

otherworldly person with “powers.” Some instance include when Donnie is in his washroom, questioning whether he should take his medication looks up into the mirror and sees Frank, he freaks out and takes a knife and stabs through the mirror into his eye, and mirror forms ripples showing that Frank is really on the other side of the mirror. After this instance we see Frank reappear when Donnie is at the movies with Gretchen and he takes off his bunny mask and his one eye is seen bleeding, although when Donnie asks Frank what happened to his eye he makes up an excuse yet ironically, it is the same eye Donnie stabbed him in. This scene is really puts the audience at an edge as according to it Frank has the ability to turn a mirror into a “portal” through which he can be seen, although in the scene we see that knife never really entered the said “portal” the only way to determine that the knife was affecting something is through the ripples formed in the mirror and yet he was hurt by it. This raises a lot of questions about Frank and who or what is he supposed to be. This scene according to me has a second meaning that the reflection in the mirror was Donnie. As I mentioned before that Frank could be a hallucination or a projection of his subconscious, the reflection on the mirror was nothing else but that, it was Donnie coming face to face with his true inner self that is destructive, violent and unstable. There are endless scenes that show that Frank in fact is not human and has “abilities” far superior then a normal human and is not just a mere person from another universe who know how to time travel.

Blazer, Alex E. “A Phenomenological Approach to Donnie Darko.” Film-Philosophy, Georgia College, 2015, https://www.euppublishing.com/doi/abs/10.3366/film.2015.0012.

“Is the world of Donnie Darko (the film) a dream, a hallucination, reality, or merely one reality among multiple universes? Does Donnie Darko (the character) sleep, delude, wake, or imagine? Examining the film from a comparative phenomenological perspective allows us first and foremost to clarify the underlying relationship between Donnie and the world and in so doing illuminate the meaning of Donnie’s death: if one reads the film as science fiction, then Donnie dies a singular hero saving the world; if as psychosis, then he is a confused suicide who could not bear the world anymore.”

This movie raises more questions then it answers, I believe the original Donnie Darko 2001 release is a better movie then the extended version as it leaves things to viewer’s interpretation. I believe that the extended version although answers certain questions yet leaves the viewers baffled at the logic of certain things. This movie has multiple interpretations and a lot of hidden meaning relating to the dark reality of life, starting from fear of death, to ignorant adults and metal health issues. It is a very well-directed film but I believe that the story is difficult to follow and interpret. All in all I strongly believe that we are watching this movie through Donnie’s eyes: a mentally unstable paranoid schizophrenic and not everything we see is real and most things happening are hallucinations due to the fact that he skips his medicine and has a long standing history with violence and acceptance in general.

Lee, Nathan. “All Fall Down.” Film Comment; vol. 45, no. 6, Nov. 2009, pp. 38–42. EBSCOhost, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=asu&AN=504344940.

“Yet white the movie rehearses classic adolescent alienation, an inescapable rite of passage even though Donnie is surrounded by uncommonly sympathetic adults, it also wields the

irresolvable paradox that Donnie is also quite dangerously mad.”