

The others and turn of the screw essay



The two films "The Others" written and directed by Alejandro Amenabar and the "Turn of the screw" directed by Tom Mc Loughlin based on the novel by Henry James, are both psychological horror films that consist of a haunting plot and make you think as they are full of suspense and have a moody and intense atmosphere. "The Others" has a very unusual starting with a black screen which disorientates the audience right from the very beginning and even the comforting tones of "Are you sitting comfortably, then I'll begin" from 'listen with mother' that are heard as a voice over don't soothe the audiences minds.

Next it looks like a flickering candle is being held over a page, this gives a mysterious feel, as if something is shadowing over, as ghosts do. The paper is brown, this gives the feeling that it is from an old book and has some history to it. On the page are pictures of the sun and animals and the voice over tells the biblical story, very briefly, of how the world was created by God. This makes you think that the story has some link to religion and/or the characters are religious.

Later we find out that Grace is deeply religious and also enforces it upon her two children Anne and Nicolas. Then the screen goes black again and the music starts, this then puts the audience in a confused prospective not knowing what to make of the story so far, very unusual but there are also things that they can relate such as the biblical story and the "are you sitting comfortably...." McLaughlin has a very different opening to his film; it starts by showing illuminated colourful surroundings to a large country house in the bright morning sunshine.

There is nice calm music over and close up shots of the flowers are shown. The lake is shown briefly and then the shots of flowers continue, then the lake is shown again and the music becomes disconcerting and a dark haired woman is shown floating on the water and finally a close up of her bare cold lifeless hand is shown on the screen. Then the scene changes and it's out on an open road with horses and carriages everywhere and murder-mystery like music is played over the noisy road scene.

This makes the audience feel as though the woman in the lake had been murdered and this was a murder mystery genre film, but as we find out the woman was in fact the lover of Peter Quint who drowned herself after she died for the love of him. The resemblance between her and the new governess bare a lot of similarity as they looked alike. This gives a weird twist and to the film as Peter Quint later kisses her through the young boy Miles.

Amenabar gives us a build up of the characters slowly not giving away too much at once he starts off by introducing to us Grace , who is first pictured in a close up shot of her face is shown and then you hear the high pitched echoing scream from her she has her hand held over her mouth and she screams again the camera takes the focus off her face and show a long shot as she is seen getting off the bed frantically as if in horror of something. She is portrayed as an over protective mother to her two young children Anne and Nicholas who are shown when the servants have arrived.

This is something that McLaughlin also does, he doesn't give too much away at the start about the governess's character, and her face isn't even shown

until she meets the children's guardian, before then her gloved hands are shown and her shoe as she steps on to the carriage but not much else is revealed about her or her character. When Mrs. Walkers face is first shown she is smiling at the children's guardian, they begin talking and it is discovered that the children who she is to become a governess to have lost both their parents and that he is their only living relative.

He makes it quite clear he doesn't want any thing to do with them himself as he says that the job has a condition, he doesn't want to be pestered with any questions or complaints and Mrs. Walker is strictly told she should deal with everything herself, later this is confirmed when he sends her the unopened letter from Miles' headmaster as he doesn't want to have to deal with it. She replies to this offer by saying that she will be grateful as it will be closest thing she will get to a family she longs for children as she was not able have any as she has been recently widowed.

She also says she will give them all of her love and attention. The children's guardian gets up and shakes her hand, he holds on to her hand and looks into her eyes holding her gaze and say that the children are very lucky to have her as their governess. In these few moments it seems as though he has grown very close to her and the audience begin to think that the story may become a romantic costume drama between the two, later on she is thinking about him when she sees Quint on the tower and the thorn from the rose pricks her palm and begins to bleed.

Before she leaves she asks about the last governess Miss Jessel and what happened to her, he tells her that she died and doesn't mention anything

else about her, but this give the hint to the audience that the dark haired woman in the lake was her. It also makes the audience fear for Mrs. Walker because as the new governess what will happen to her? Both McLaughlin and Amenabar use the children to put across the ghosts, in turn of the screw Quint possesses Miles and his power and evilness is put on throughout Miles but Flora also seems to know everything that he gets up to and they plan tricks on Mrs. Walker together when they are whispering to each other.

In "The others" the girl talks about ghosts and tries convincing her little brother who is terrified of it and her deeply religious mother that ghosts do exist and they are in their home. When she tells her mother she says that she disbelieves that this could ever happen as God wouldn't allow the world of the living and the dead to be mixed up together. She punishes her daughter, making her stand at the top of the staircase reciting the bible for days on end so that God will protect her from evil and that it will stop her from having what she calls strange ideas about ghosts.

The two films are set in large houses, 'In turn of....' The house is very gothic looking with a large picture of a haunting dog above the fireplace in the room with the large grand piano this gives an uneasy feel to the room and questions why someone would put that sort of picture in a family home. In 'The others' there is also a very dark look to the house as the lighting used is very dim to create an intense and secretive atmosphere.

'In Turn of....' there is contrast between the brightness outside the house in the open green gardens and the darkness in the corridors at night when Mrs. Walker paces up and down them holding a flickering candle light, this

darkness portrays all the bad that goes on within the house. Mc Loughlin has done this to show how pretty and happy everything is in the day when it is bright, but how all the strangeness and evil are revealed as secrets in the night. This contrast of darkness and light and good and evil are presented throughout the whole film, with the evil being Peter Quint and the innocence being in the children who he possesses and commits his evil acts through.

In 'The others' Amenabar uses fog to show the unhappiness that Grace and her children feel. The fog and darkness is outside the house but follows on into the house as the film is mainly set in dark lantern-lit rooms, this is partly due to the fact that the children are photosensitive, but this also holds a deeper meaning as though there is something secretive that is being hidden, this is the fact that she smothered both the children and shot herself as well and they are all living as ghosts in this large deserted mansion where she says she feels 'totally cut off from the world.'

She mentions the priest and says he has not been to see them even though he knows of the children's condition. Amenabar creates lots of tension through the character Grace who, gets frantic at any sound is very fidgety and sighs with anticipation a lot of the time. He also builds up tension with the contrast of lots of noise and then silence, he does this when is running around with the big rifle trying to find who she thinks is the 'Nazis' in her home when she runs the music is loud and dramatic and then it suddenly grows silent when she is turning and looking around.

When she is at the music room door opening and closing it is really quiet and all that can be heard is the creaking of the door and then there is a loud

bang and the door slams shut in her face pushing her backwards. When she gets up and struggles with the door trying to open it the powerful music takes over again. The music builds up suspense that adds to the rest of the frightening atmosphere. In ' Turn of.... ' McLaughlin uses a very different technique to put across tension and suspense.

A good example for this is when Flora is showing Mrs. Walker around the house on the day she gets there. It starts off very bright outside in the garden where they are having afternoon tea outside. Flora wants to show Mrs. Walker around the house she accepts willing to know the girl better. Mrs. Walker asks about Miles but Mrs. Gross says he is away at school, Flora says he will be home very soon; this makes it seem that she knows what is going to happen. Then Mrs. Walker and Flora are shown going up the stairs on to the second floor, they walk down the hallway and then Flora suddenly disappears, Mrs. Walker calls out but Flora isn't there she hears a creaking noise to the side and she see's a long thin corridor leading to a door that has just open, as if inviting her in she walks down the corridor and opens the door.

As she walked in she looked around her there are dirty cups and glasses still half full of drink. She seems rather shocked and taken aback that such a place existed in the house. Flora shows her all around the house but doesn't show her that room and because she disappears it makes the audience think that she left that room for Mrs.

Walker to discover herself. When you see the room you can sense that the room belongs to someone who no longer exists, it also seems that no one

else wants to go in there as it hasn't been tidied up and remains an untidy mess. It is sensed that the room belongs to someone who is now a ghost because of the grey colored misty air and also when she first enters there is the sound of rushing air, which give the feeling that it is cold and unwanted. McLaughlin uses the props very well together with the mysterious music to create an interesting yet spine tingling ambience.

The end of the films are both quite different as they in ' the others there is lots of suspense and we finally find out the truth that Grace and the children are ghosts but in ' Turn of... ' found out right from the beginning about the ghosts, but at the end Mrs. Walker gets miles to reject Peter and in doing so he uses up so much energy and power that he dies. In this last scene of ' turn of... ' there is lots of atmosphere created with the use of flickering candles that are blown out by the wind, the windows open and close as the wind blows into the room and the curtains are also blown around.

Then Peter Quint and miles are shown together for the first time and When Mrs. Walker tells Miles to say no to Quint he looks vulnerable. Throughout the whole film he is presented as a very mature child that is confident and evil but at the end he looks small and vulnerable compared with the strong figure of Peter Quint that slowly fades away. And when the audience finally think that Quint is out of their lives and that they will live happily together she pulls miles away from her chest and he is dead.

In ' The Others' it finishes with Grace holding on to her two children telling the story of when they died and the maid comes in to view at the doorway she tries to comfort Grace she says " That's exactly what Liddy said when

she found out we were ghosts” she is trying to compare the experience they had to that of her own and in doing she is trying to show her that they are in the same situation and that they are alike as they share the same experiences.