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Enter The Void: Blurring The Lines Between Fantasy And Reality

INTRODUCTION

Director Gaspar Noé's overstimulating film *Enter The Void* (2009) takes a psychedelic journey through the physical and spiritual experience of existence, dragging the spectator along through the ride of life, death, and rebirth. Drugs, sex, and lights, amongst many other elements pertaining to the message and the mise-en-scène, flood the entirety of the film. But, as a whole, what does this all mean? Transparently, the film serves to present an ideology towards the experience of death and the afterlife, as well as allegorically demonstrate a relationship between psychedelics and death/the afterlife. It is, however, due to the success of multidimensional aspects of the film that further strengthen the post-life theoretical experience that the film portrays. By exploring the allegories, theories, and motifs of *Enter The Void*, this paper will serve to explore the line between fiction and non-fiction in order to support Noé's film as being a successful science-fiction film.

DMT IN THE VOID

Oscar, a young adult living in the city of Tokyo, Japan, is living his life as a drug user and in-denial drug dealer, stress free and simply interested in experiencing life. Drugs, one of the primary motifs throughout the film, are introduced in the film within the first 10 minutes, along with a mentioning of the book "Tibetan Book of the Dead" lent by Alex, one of Oscar's friends. The relationship between the two is, at this point,

notably carried on throughout the context of the film. After taking several hits of DMT (Oscar's drug of choice), he asks Alex if their drug dealer Bruno has anything stronger than DMT. In return, Alex says "come on man, you're gonna fry your brain... you should read the book of the dead," and describes it as such:

"[The book is about] when you die... your spirit leaves your body, actually at first you can see all your life, like reflected in a magic mirror. Then you start floating like a ghost, you can see anything happening around you. You can hear everything but you can't communicate. Then you see lights, lights of all different colors. These lights are the doors that pull you into other planes of existence, but most people actually like this world so much, that they don't want to be taken away. So the whole thing turns into a bad trip, and the only way out is to get reincarnated" (Enter The Void 2009)

The entirety of this explanation personifies the film itself. Oscar, a few moments later after being explained the book, gets shot by police for an attempted drug deal at The Void, a local bar. With his physical responsiveness to the deadly situation, vision and thoughts slowly diminishing to elude the nature of death through cinema, he asks himself "did they kill me? It's the DMT... no I'm still alive, I think this is real... am I alive? am I tripping? I'm dying." The camera fades to black, and thus ends the physical life of Oscar, and begins the spiritual journey. Gaspar Noé conceptualizes Oscar's transition from the physical to spiritual world, as well as moments in which Oscar transitions from one memory (or present-time moment) to another, similarly to

the way in which Oscar experienced his DMT trip in the beginning of the film. DMT, short for dimethyltryptamine, is a psychedelic tryptamine compound found in humans, plants, and animals (Baker, 2013). Though illegal, many individuals obtain concentrated amounts of DMT to take for recreational psychedelic purposes. There's no surprise with understanding that DMT is one of the strongest psychedelic substances known due to the naturalistic nature of the compound. After conducting a biological study on rats and finding DMT in their pineal glands (Baker 2013), along with conducting his own study on 400 participants administering and recording their experience with DMT, Rick Strassman is compelled to claim that a small amount of DMT is released when individuals dream, are born, and die (2001). This claim, backed by the noted experiences that DMT users have had (Strassman 2001), match up similarly to Gaspar Noé's depiction of Oscar tripping on DMT, entering the spiritual realm, and reincarnating into another human form; several minute scenes of unexplainable multi-colored shapes and visuals mimicking molecular structures appear at each transitional moment, typically induced by the spectator being consumed by some form of light. Though artistically/visually unique, these surreal moments shine light on what may be considered fact or fiction. Despite the previous research conducted on DMT, Strassman's theory on DMT being naturally released within the human body during the states of birth, dream, and death are merely just that; *theories*. Actual tested hypotheses and scientific studies have yet to be conducted in regards to this matter due to how fairly new and difficult studies on DMT are. The blurring of the line between reality and fantasy is not only what makes this film a successful science-fiction film, but also what makes the success of any film that

tries to captivate spectators triumphant; making the viewer(s) forget that what they are watching is in fact not real.

ENTER THE VOID: A TRUE SCIENCE FICTION FILM

The claim in which *Enter The Void* is a science-fiction film is backed by the inherent uncertainties that the environment creates for the spectator, generating a sense of cognitive estrangement, which some academics and film analysts might identify as a factor to science-fiction cinema (Cornea, 2007). Though dissimilar to traditional science-fiction films, Gaspar Noé's film runs primarily on the ideology of reincarnation and there being an experience after death. Director Noé's filming techniques (which will be discussed later), the disorganized-yet-chronological nature of the story, and the dialogue/experiences depicted within the film maintain the affect that makes the viewer sense the situation is real, yet unfamiliar in comparison to their experiences in life. This correlates to Corena's theory of science fiction existing between the outside of the laws of a known world and the logical extensions of the world that is known (2007). The dream-like streets of Tokyo that Oscar lives in, similarly to the memories that he experiences as a spirit, are known. Though the spectator may not have a direct connection to the locations being shown, it's recognizable that certain scenes are familiar environments, such as the city streets or an apartment building. It's the moment in which the spectator begins to think about the "reality" that's being shown where they begin to question the truth of it all. Travis discusses that science-fiction film maintains one of many definitions, one of which is relevant to *Enter The Void* titled "judicial speculation" that relates to the issues and

instances involving moments of time during the life-to-death and afterlife (2011). Since there is no factual evidence (yet) to fully make factual claims on all of which *Enter The Void* represents, it is for that reason that the film maintains truth to its untraditional science-fiction nature.

ENTER THE VOID'S SOCIAL COMMENTARY

The science-fiction genre's lack of having a clear definition isn't a bad thing. It leaves room for directors and artists to take advantage of the loose umbrella term and to go with it as they please. The genre has evolved and continues to do so by the political and social climate of the present day. Science-fiction, as a whole, creates a space in which a film can maintain alternative ideologies and methods of functioning by expanding on the imagination of contemporary society (Travis 2011). With allegorical critiques to the present day society, the genre builds on the interests of the social and philosophical ideologies (Cornea 2007). In the case of *Enter The Void*, Noé seems to actively commentate on three things. Unsubtly, the use of drugs is brought into discussion. Though drug abuse from drug use is both dangerous and frowned upon, Noé seems to have drugs as a central theme of the film to allegorically resemble the second point in which he actively critiques on throughout the film; the experiences after life. Noé was brought up with a sheltered and censored background (Barney 2014), which explains the explicit use of drugs and coincides with the heavy use of eroticism. Similarly to how science-fiction cinema allegorically critiques on the present day society, Noé seems to take advantage of the situation in which Oscar's intense use of drugs mirrors the ideologies that surround the afterlife and

reincarnation. The lack of dedicated focus on certain drugs such as DMT, a compound that exists in living beings, is what gives purpose to the film. Furthermore, theories involving reincarnation and what has confirmed to happen after one dies is another taboo topic of discussion that Noé shines light on to. *Enter The Void's* backlash from cinema-goers and film critics lack to properly interpret the alternative social and legal conditions, as well as variables, that can ever be considered (Travis 2011) in regards to research towards drugs and the afterlife experience.

Noé's sheltered childhood and exposure to various types of media leads to the third area of focus he/the film commentates on; intimacy. One of the biggest critiques expressed about *Enter The Void* was its questionable, awkward, and cringe-worthy moments of intimacy. Sure, a more-than-large portion of the film involves some form of intimacy. However, many moments throughout the film depict Oscar and sister Linda's relationship as incestuous. Though it's never blatantly discussed (or physically displayed through acts of sexual intercourse), certain shots involve suggestive nature that indicate incestuous behavior such as Linda intimately and repeatedly kissing Oscar's neck, baring her chest out casually in front of Oscar, and at one point leaning in for a kiss with Oscar. It's hard to even judge what's more disturbing; Linda's sexually suggestive manner towards her brother, or Oscar reincarnating into another physical being within his sister's body and Alex's sperm (he observes Alex having sex with Linda for quite some time, one of many moments in the film, in which he as a spirit begins to manifest into Linda's body once she moans "cum in me," a double entendre that not only was for Alex, but also served to signal Oscar's spirit to be reborn again). It's not that Noé wants to shine light onto the situation of incestuous

behavior, but more so it's his attempt at shining light onto classic psychological behaviors that lack to make its way into social discussions, let alone modern-day cinema.

Many scenes throughout the film, whether it's particular memories or visuals, make it seem as though the spectator is experiencing déjà vu. This should not be surprising considering that the majority of the film is made up of memories that the main character Oscar is remembering/reliving. As described by Alex in the beginning on the film (as a commentary to the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*), once a spirit leaves its physical life form, it begins to experience various memories in its life. One of the reoccurring memories that made its way into Oscar's consciousness was the fatal car crash that Oscar and Linda experienced as children. Various shots depicted the gory car crash at each scene, with the same horrific screams of terror and sadness from Linda occupying the audible space of the incident. On the surface, this traumatizing life event is merely an event that scarred the memory of the siblings. However, when diving deeper, the purpose of such a scarring event explains the incestuous behaviors carried out by Laura. Freudian theory discusses incest, primarily between a brother and sister, as a cause of psychological childhood trauma (Lester 1972). In the film's case, the psychological childhood trauma relates to the memory of the parents car crash. Additionally, incestuous behavior, as discussed by Lindzey, is a factor of homogeneity (Lester 1972). Oscar and Linda, siblings that are, therefore, genetically similar, seem to support this theory.

Lester goes further in depth to discuss various factors that make up and play out with incestuous behavior by bringing up various theories that apply to the

incestuous relationship between Linda and Oscar. Initially, Freud postulated a universal sexual attraction between kin (1949), while other psychologists outright denied the theory (Lester 1972). Fox (1962) suggested the Indifference theory, which signifies siblings that are separated as kids and reunited after puberty experience desires and temptations for incestuous behaviors (Lester 1972). This directly links with Oscar and Linda's situation; briefly after they witnessed and experienced the deadly car accident that killed their parents, they were separated from one another and reunited only after they had become adults. Seligman (1932) also suggests a family cohesive incestuous theory that suggests that although kind of family conflict is considered "disruptive," sexual jealousy between kin is the most disruptive (Lester 1972). This theory provides reasoning as to why Oscar would constantly look at Linda having sex or doing sexual things with other people (as a spirit). Most significantly with explicit suggestions of incestuous behavior in the film, Seligman's theory directly connects to a particular shot where Linda is about to leave to meet with her boss/partner Mario and says to Oscar "what, are you jealous?" Though, as siblings, they have experienced conflict within the film (as kids and as adults), the sexually suggestive scenes provide evidence that backs Seligman's theory; from scenes of Oscar (as a spirit) seeing Linda have sex with Mario in a red-filled aura of rage, to reincarnating into one of Alex's sperm inside of Linda's body. The idea of incest frightens scholars and non-scholars to discuss such a topic. As expressed by Lester (1972), there is a lack of scholarly research pertaining to the topic of incest which fails to provide adequate knowledge on the subconscious purposes of its existence. Noé's semi-aggressive incorporation of this aspect within the film is to further battle against

the idea of censorship that he was brought up experiencing, along with battling the “taboo” ideology that surrounds this issue, similarly to psychedelic drugs and ideologies about the afterlife. The nature of such a discussion on incest bodes well for the umbrella categorization of science-fiction film, for theories such as Freud’s, Fox’s, and Seligman’s merely manifest within *Enter The Void* as hypothetical and exemplary approaches to theories, not factual universally-accepted ideologies.

The content, both explicit and allegorical, within the film are part of Gaspar Noé’s film aesthetic. His previous films similarly include raw and aggressive scenes and content that leave spectators confused and concerned. Defined as the New French Extremity, a new wave of French cinema was captivating a handful of influential directors that were redefining the space of cinematic experience through the use of violent, gory, and psychologically challenging content (Quandt 2011). In comparison to his other films, Gaspar Noé’s *Enter The Void* was more visual and conceptual of a fictional theory such as the properties of DMT and the afterlife than any other theory in any other previous film. He still maintained the ability to allegorically critique the political and social structure of society (Quandt 2011) by discussing issues pertaining to incest, drugs, and the afterlife, which relates to New French Extremity. However, it’s due to his keen attentiveness to detail that made the film an interpretive science-fiction success of the experience of the afterlife.

MISE-EN-SCÈNE

Two key factors part of the mise-en-scène play a vital role in the film to depict the personal experience that one would have when taking DMT or living in the

afterlife. Camera angels play a vital role in depicting the state of “being” in the film. Gaspar Noé’s primary point of view was first person, which was praised for by film fans. A one of a kind film whose point of view journey throughout the film maintained to be the spirit of Oscar, regardless of it being in Oscar’s physical body or in the spiritual realm. The spectator is unable to see Oscar up on to the moment in which he gets high off DMT, where the camera pans out of Oscar’s body and levitates over his persons. This bode nicely with Alex’s commentary on out of body experiences shortly after smoking DMT, fearing that he would never make it back into his body. The camera angle pans out of Oscar’s body twice more, both instances in which he was fatally shot and killed by Tokyo policemen in The Void’s bathroom. Putting those scenes aside, the cameras point of view primarily pans over the city and various spaces in the present space, while maintaining either first person views or over the shoulder shots of Oscar’s memories that he was reliving. These key details play a significant role in not only maintaining the feeling of having the spectator being one with Oscar’s spirit, but also the success of depicting the life, death, spiritual life, and rebirth of an individual. If it weren’t for such camera angels and techniques, Gaspar Noé’s *Enter The Void*, embracing theories on drugs and the afterlife, would be a failed piece of art. It was no wonder why each shot came out so wonderfully, for Noé had spent months on end working with a filming and technology company to maintain and capture shots as accurately as he could depict a real experience of life and death to be (Barney 2014). The out of body experiences and depicting the silent and uncommunicative life of a spirit in the real world shown through the camera angels maintains the sanctity of this film’s science-fiction qualities, where Noé’s arguably

makes the life-death experience as realistic as possible to make spectators feel as though they have to question the reality/falsity of the shots.

Lighting might have been the most important aspect of the film. It's evident that Gaspar Noé wanted to make the spectator feel as overstimulated as possible (this is evident by the roughly 120 second introductory credit reel of every font you can possibly imagine with flashing colors illuminating every text). The majority of the film is made up of illuminated neon colors that are either radiating in the physical environment/space of Tokyo, or radiating off objects and people as spiritual aura's/energy that Oscar sees. Moments in the film go by where lights in the film represent the emotional energy associated with the individual or context of a scene, such as in the end scene at the Love Hotel where various individuals are having sex in a room flooded by neon lights, while warm-toned colors occupying the regional space in which sexual stimulation is taking place. As previously mentioned, at one point Oscar's spirit sits in and watches Linda have sex with Mario, which results in Oscar's speculative perspective being to go from neutral natural colors to a fiery red, insinuating his anger over the situation. This scene coincides with the successful use of the camera angles, where as the fiery red colors begin to illuminate Oscar's vision, the camera begins to aggressively shake back and forth, further suggesting a rage within Oscar. Such moments throughout the film served the convincing purpose of portraying the experience of drugs and the afterlife (Norris 2010), which further serves to strengthen the allegorical relationship between the two (which is ultimately Gaspar Noé's purpose; to create a discussion on drug use and the journey of the afterlife).

Costumes, though somewhat minor, played a major role in foreshadowing and flashing back to memories and events that took place within the time period of Oscar's life. In certain scenes, it can be noted that Linda wears similar clothing as an adult from the time she was a child. The first instance is when she receives the call from Alex about the news of her brother's death. Dressed in a two-piece showing skin, the shot of an adult Linda transitions into a shot of herself as a child, crying in a similar two-piece. More significantly, when Linda and Oscar reunite (a memory that was revisited during Oscar's spiritual life), Linda is not only wearing the same clothing as when she had departed from Oscar, but also holding the same teddy bear that she had befriended as a child. Linda also seems to show early signs of her exotic dancing career in Oscar's memory through the use of costume by her presence of constantly wearing revealing lingerie that was never properly sitting on her. It's important to note that Linda is one of few (if not, *the only*) character in *Enter The Void* that was consistently involved in the costume aspect of the mise-en-scène of the film. This, theorized according to Noé's beliefs and underlying connections to other theoretical ideas, serves to emphasize on the trauma that was experienced by Linda and Oscar as children, which, as demonstrated throughout the film, carried out into their adult lives by manifesting into a psychosexual incestuous relationship. It can also be theorized that the use of costumes contributing to the mise-en-scène of the film served to further emphasize on the science-fiction aspects of the film, where even in instances that normal day-to-day experiences that Oscar was remembering maintained a fictional aspect to the story of the film. Could it be that it's Oscar's

memory that is recalling a grown-up Linda in the same clothes as when she was a child? Or was it a reality?

A final key element that made up the *mise-en-scène* of the film was the environment of the film itself. Practically the entirety of the film, the various settings that *Enter The Void's* scenes and shots consisted of were detrimental to the dream-like feeling that surrounded the world in this film. Whether it's the trippy psychedelic atmosphere of The Void (whose setting, made up of lighting and props, bode well for the title and plot of the film), the color-vomit Love Hotel filled with neon lights, or the dark and dull space of Oscar's apartment, whose main source of light was from the light pollution outside (primarily from the colors illuminating off of The Void sign), the space that *Enter The Void* created and hosted was consistently mystical and paired nicely within the science-fiction genre. One key choice on behalf of Noé that played well for the success of the film was its ability to recreate the setting of various memories and have it seamlessly transition from one shot to another. Flashing memory reels would play out in the film where shot after shot would transition; Oscar would be sucking on the breast of a woman (as sexual play), transitions into when he was a baby being breastfed, transitions into being naked in the bath tub with his mom with Linda being breastfed, transitions into watching his mom breastfeed Linda, transitions into seeing a painting of a mother breastfeeding. The success of these shot-by-shot memory reels flashing in Oscar's consciousness was completely in part of camera positioning (point of view) as well as thematically maintaining a relationship from the previous to the next (e.g. both were naked in shot 1, shot 2 is identical to shot 1 except that Oscar is now a baby, shot 3 still has everyone naked, etc.). Shots

like these mimicked dream sequences, which was most likely intentional on behalf of Noé to allude the sense of the revisiting of memories as a spirit as both real and science-fiction.

MOTIFS

Many motifs in the film similarly serve the purpose as do the elements of the mise-en-scène of *Enter The Void*. Light emerges as a motif, serving the purpose of what is depicted as “heaven” or “hell.” At one point, Linda and Oscar enter a dive bar radiating with bright lights and crystals. She looks around and says to herself “it’s like heaven in here.” “Hell,” on the other hand, may have been found in various scenes where Oscar was unhappy of the memory or circumstance (e.g. the setting of the strip club, Linda and Mario having sex). Airplanes also repeatedly reappear in conversation and in sight within the film. Recalling back to the first line of the film, Oscar says “I wonder what Tokyo looks like from up there,” with a first person shot of the sky covered in stars and a single plane slowly flying through it. Later throughout the film, various shots show airplanes in the sky, as well as Alex holding a model airplane in front of Oscar saying “this is the plane that brings your sister back home.” Airplanes serve to symbolize the freedom that a spirit such as Oscar might have had when choosing what memories to relive and what spaces to spectate on. It may have also served to be the symbol that indicated Oscar’s arrival towards coming back to life (as a reincarnated being), for the last time we see an airplane is when Oscar’s spirit ascends into the sky, enters an airplane briefly, and the descends into the room of the

Love Hotel where Linda and Alex were having sex, in which he was then conceived and reincarnated.

QUESTIONS

One interesting message that seems to touch on the various discussed factors that make up *Enter The Void* is the “reality” of it all. It’s easy to catch on to the film’s tropes and the connections between the underlying consistency of feeling as though you’re tripping and realizing that you’re nothing more than a spirit. The film’s perspective journey starts in Oscar’s body, transitions into the spiritual plane of existence, and reincarnates back into the physical realm, all while maintaining the naturalistic “honesty” that Noé portrays which is that the spectator is nothing more than Oscar’s spirit *throughout* the film. With that said, Noé incorporates underlying allegories that suggests moments in which Oscar is both in the physical and spiritual realm is just a figment of his imagination. The first scene of the film shows Oscar looking up at the sky, asking Linda to step out to the balcony and ponder what Tokyo might look like from “up there.” Within that memory, which as a spectator we view as the present moment, Linda is most definitely there. On the contrary, when Oscar’s spirit begins to dwell on past memories, the experience of being on that balcony and asking Linda what Tokyo is like from up there fails to embody an identical experience. The presence of Linda, when looking back at that moment in Oscar’s life, begins to flicker in and out of the physical realm. It’s unclear exactly what Noé’s intentions were to incorporate a memory that both the spectator experienced and Oscar seems to be losing touch with, however it can be theorized that such an instance is meant to be

allegorical to the overall tone of the film. *Enter The Void*, in essence, is a psychedelic trip. Whether influenced by drug use (accompanied by successful uses of the mise-en-scène) or merely existing in a spiritual plane, Gaspar Noé creates a space in which the idea of an expanded consciousness beyond verbal depiction exists. At one point, Alex tells Oscar of a drug that is far beyond stronger than DMT, one that will make him feel as though he had experienced something in the immediate moment, only to find out a week later that it was a figment of his imagination. Dialectic moments like these, discussing the experience of psychedelic drugs, allegorically pairs with visual moments in the film that further emphasize on what is real and what is not. Has Oscar been tripping all along? Is “entering the void” a psychedelic journey for Oscar that lacks to provide clarity between cognitive expansion and spiritual existence? After all, he asks himself “am I alive? am I tripping? I’m dying” moments before his death.

It’s ironic, to say the least, that Noé had a character like Alex involved in the film. An individual that the spectator (and Oscar) identify as a friend, though his presence throughout the film is played in a godly manner; with brown hair and facial hair similar to Jesus Christ, he exists in the film as a “big brother” to Oscar, providing insight on what is safe and not safe, as well as providing the Tibetan Book of the Dead which acts as religious script that Oscar’s existence plays out in the film. Alex’s character goes as far as to warn Oscar that, as a spirit, when you begin to relive past memories, some experiences are like a bad trip with no escape. This allegorical response works both as an innuendo to the prevalence of psychedelic drugs in the film and a suggestion provided by the wise and God-like Alex. His warning of bad trips

within the spiritual plane also imitates the way in which a God would warn one of the existence of hell, a place or condition of endless suffering (Di Muzio 2013) that a spirit would eventually seek to get out of by reincarnating back into the physical realm. Alex, which for theoretical purposes we'd assume is allegorical to the human manifestation of a God, fits the Christian mind frame of what a God is (Di Muzio 2013); Alex plays himself out both as a teacher to Oscar and a Father, literally, to Oscar once Oscar chooses to reincarnate within his sister as Alex's sperm. Is Alex a spiritual influencer, a guide, to Oscar's existence across all planes? Or is his knowledge on drug use and the afterlife common theoretical knowledge that director Noé expands upon visually in the film.

Oscar Wilde's infamous quote "life imitates art" bodes well for *Enter The Void*. Though Noé's film suggests theories discussing incestuous behavior, reincarnation, and drug use, it lacks to enforce any structured ideologies as "fact" or "the only perspective." Reincarnation, an evident occurrence in the film, lacks to have a direct association to religious context. The only inference made is Alex's Tibetan Book that he had lent, which associates with Buddhist values, one of which being the idea of reincarnation. With an interactive perspective of theology on the aspects of the film, *Enter The Void* provides room for critique on its suggestive drug and spiritual context, much like a theological science-fiction film should allow (John 2017). The approach of bringing theology and film into a dialogue (rather than vice versa) makes room for a film to act as a resource from which people can learn and discuss new theology (John 2017). Noé creates this space by his lack of subjective contextual suggestions. Further discussions on the presence of theology/religious context in science-fiction

films, at least successful ones, involve moments where the main character experiences events that either can not be explained by human reason, or successfully conveyed through spiritual experiences “better than any contrived religious symbol” (John 2017). The 60+ minute long spiritual experience of Oscar embodies John’s notions of successful theological scenes that are carried out in films. Noé intently glued his attention to the visual aspects of the film, the ability to visually depict an experience or event without the use of verbal dictation, to emphasize the theological experiences that lack to explicitly enforce an ideology (Barney 2014).

As a classic point of reference, Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* provides great allegorical references to *Enter The Void*’s cinematic success in depicting a moment in science-fiction as real as possible. Similarly to Noé’s film, *Frankenstein* provides a shift in narration transitioning from the scientist to the monster. And, with surprise, the monster’s experience creates sympathy on its part. Critical backlash against *Frankenstein* was in part of normalizing a “beast” such as the monster himself (MacWilliams 2011), yet it is the lack of science-fiction literature itself (at the time) that created a non-human being depicted as equal to humans that makes the novel a success. Identically, *Enter The Void* presents an alternative perspective of existence and the afterlife that Noé brings into discussion. Moments like these in the science-fiction genre that provide alternative and unfamiliar experiences in comparison to the known human experience. A commentary on what’s typically undiscussed, both intentional and discussed in Noé’s film, correlates to John’s notions on theology and science-fiction cinema. Certain films, such as Noé’s, are used as a tool or medium to allow room for critical thinking about theological and ideological topics. Shelley’s

Frankenstein did not impose certain beliefs, but merely provided a context in which certain beliefs can be both structured and discussed. Same goes for *Enter The Void*, where the film brings up controversial issues but lacks to impose a particular ideology.

Though Gaspar Noé's approach towards depicting the journey of psychedelics and life after death was executed in a one of its kind fashion, one question bears to mind; how does time play out throughout the film? Though a film like this was well planned out years in advance (Barney 2014), there were moments in the film that still lacked clarity, which is ironic to subtly mention due to the overall busy-in-context nature of the film. We see the film start off in "real" time, in a first person point of view (minus the brief moment in which "we," as spectators, leave Oscar's body because of his DMT trip). Fast forward a dozen minutes and the point of view becomes one with Oscar's spirit, free to roam around Tokyo and experience various memories. Time, at that point varies based on Oscar's spirit; he either chooses to roam around the present time, spectating his grieving sister amongst other things, or absorb the energy of various lights around him in the present world to tap into other planes of existence, visiting memories from the recently departed life. With this understanding, how is it that a spirit can tap in to present time, and manage to experience various memories one after the other, the way that Oscar did, while managing to tap back into the the present time once more at a normal occurrence? Is it that the experience of visiting previous memories as a spirit similar to the theory that dreams, though seeming to last for so long, last for merely a few seconds? If that is the case, is this theory intentionally allegorical to the use of DMT in the film, a direct connection to Alex's mention in the film that taking "DMT only lasts for six minutes, but it really seems like

an eternity”? It seems intentional on the part of Noé to leave these would-be plot holes in the film, though this may also be in part of the science-fiction aspect(s) of the film that raises questions when trying to make sense of what spectators are personally unaware of.

CONCLUSION

Gaspar Noé managed to produce a cinematic experience so untraditional and alien that managed to maintain a sense of realness. The space he allocated for scholarly discussion on issues pertaining to drug use, reincarnation, and incest was provided by the subjective context of the film. His ability to capture the essence of a spirit, that which is Oscar’s, through visual and audible techniques not only strengthened Noé’s depicted experience of reincarnation, but also successfully creates a discussion of theology and the relationship of out-of-body experiences with drug use. The directors use of the *mise-en-scène*, along with various motifs that embodied allegorical representations involving theology, theory, and psychedelics, created a space for the spectator that is both foreign and familiar. The lack of fully relating to the depicted experience of Oscar’s life throughout the film (life, death, rebirth) makes the film’s science-fiction aspect raw enough to doubt its fictionality. Though untraditional from various science-fiction films, *Enter The Void* manages to encompass discussions that can be held globally, pertaining to what is real and what is not real, what happens after life and whether there really is an after life.

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