

Intro

The opening to "The Discovery" (McDowell, 2017) addresses the existence of an afterlife or as they say a 'new plain of existence'. Everyone has wondered about the afterlife and what happens when we die. Some films explore the idea of an afterlife whether it's for comedic effect [clip of "This is the end"] (Goldberg, 2013) or a more serious version [clip of "A Matter of Life and Death"] (Powell & Pressburger, 1946)

A common way to present the afterlife on screen is having the character who has died appear as a ghost. The ghost is looking for a way to move on to the next stage of existence [clip of A Ghost Story] (Lowery, 2017). As humans we want to look for a meaning. Something beyond this life. A point to our existence. A reward for our work throughout our lives. Religion states that the Holy Spirit will enter the kingdom of heaven. This is shown in films as the 'force ghost' [clip of "Star Wars Return of the Jedi"] (Marquand, 1983) from star wars. As the Jedi is a religion and they achieve peace and become one with the force thus becoming a force ghost and able to explore both plains of existence.

"The Discovery" is set in a world where there is proof of an afterlife. It is not explained how they discovered the afterlife nor does it need to as the films premise is centred around trying to see what is on the other side. They are using the brainwaves of a recently deceased person to find out what the last images were before the brain functions cease, a far more scientific way of looking at it then let's say Flatliners [clip of "Flatliners" 1990] (Shumacher, 1990). The idea gets lost and as we find out what we see the movie loses traction and can lose the audience to a more generic idea. To simplify it. Time travel but bad [clip of "Doctor Who: the runaway bride"- what?] (Lyn, 2007). This was because they would have to have a definitive answer for the afterlife which would be seen as controversial so it was the safest option in terms of defining the afterlife. However the ending could've been worked better than a 'Shutter Island' (Scorsese, 2010) or 'Edge of Tomorrow' (Liman, 2014) type of explanation.

I am aiming to show how Hollywood uses the afterlife within films and what effect this has on the characters grieving because of their own death [clip of "The Simpsons" stages of grief] (Archer, 1991). Hollywood fantasises death and makes it the stereotypical version that is instantly recognisable [clip of "Rocky IV" if he dies he dies] (Stallone, 1985). I'm still not over this

Acceptance

Death is a natural part of life. We are born. We live. We die. It's a circle. You could say [clip of "The Lion King" circle of life by Elton John] (Allers & Minkoff, 1994) death occurs every day under many different circumstances. [montage of sad death clips "a ghost story" "monster house" (Kenan, 2006)] but it's what happens next that I want to look at.

The afterlife is subjective and everyone has their own concept of it. Hollywood takes the afterlife and creates a version that will be recognisable to the viewers. Usually it is under happier circumstances like they meet an old friend or family member [clip of "What Dreams May Come"] (Ward, 1998). The afterlife is presented as a happy peaceful place where characters can rest.

The hardest thing to do is get over the loss of someone so close to you that you used to see every day. They became a big part of your life and when they are gone you have to think they are in a better place. The pain never goes away but there is relief in thinking that they are no longer in pain.

Depression

Is death the end? Is death final? The idea that death is the end is bleak but realistic based on the scientific facts as no one really knows what happens after death. People say 'their life flashes before their eyes' [clip of "chicken run"] (Lord & Park, 2000). Most religions believe that the 'spirit' is a separate entity to the body. As it inhabits a physical vessel in this world.

A more practical and scientific mind would need proof of something to believe in it. They can't disprove it but as there is no evidence to prove it either way the discussion will always be there. A practical mind would believe that our body is like that of a machine. "What we call 'soul' or 'spirit', is nothing more than the sum of the functioning of the body. When the functioning ceases, the 'soul' or 'spirit' ceases likewise" –Tesla, Nicola. (1935). [clip of "The Prestige"] (Nolan C. , 2006) this reinforces that there is no afterlife based on the 'proof' that we have had. Everyone will die and our body is getting closer to ceasing its functions just like a machine would.

Bargaining/ Fear

People have died and managed to return to the land of the living (Zombies). These people have had a near death experience. This is where you could have an out of body experience or see a bright light. Which some people have called Jesus. An angel. Or in some parts of the world they believe that it is a being of pure love and compassion. These people come back and tell us of their experience. [clip of "Bruce Almighty"] (Shadyac, Bruce Almighty, 2003)

Films can creatively present death and the afterlife. The recently deceased can still exist on this plain of existence. They are trapped souls who haven't come to terms with their death yet [clip of "Ghost Town"]. And when they are told that they are dead they cannot believe they are dead [clip of "The Sixth Sense"] (Shyamalan, 1999). The emotional connections are what makes a death meaningful and that's how they stay with us. It's the hope that the lost loved one is in a better place. The optimism comforts us and allows us to grieve and move on with our lives.

People deal with loss by attempting to become holy [clip of "Harry Potter and the deathly hallows pt1" I'm holy] (Yates, Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 1, 2010). Again it's a way to understand the afterlife to prove to yourself that there is an afterlife as so many people around the world believe. You attempt to bargain with God and try to ensure you go to heaven [clip of "South Park: The Death of Eric Cartman"] (Parker, 2005).

Anger

People rage when they lose something or someone important to them. It's a way for people to vent their emotions usually aimed at people close to them as they won't be able to see their loved ones again [clip of "Inception" cobs screaming] (Nolan C. , 2010). Anger is a defence mechanism that we use when we are feeling vulnerable it acts as a sort of shield which protects us and makes us stronger [clip of "Avengers" I'm always angry] (Whedon, 2012). We don't want to get involved emotionally with other people. During the period of loss the anger can be directed at those closest. The anger is a way Hollywood can show the pain of loss on screen.

Denial

The unbelief that people have about the dead and the afterlife is always a shock. When a character dies they cannot believe they are dead and continue to live as normal [clip of "The Sixth Sense"] however the denial people have is towards the afterlife as they turn their back on society and begin to think "what if?". What if there is no afterlife? [clip of "Monty Python" is there life after death?] (MacNaughton, 1972) People are under the impression that what has happened can't be happening. Life becomes meaningless. The means of separation and isolating yourself to begin the stages of grief and come to terms with what has happened. So you are able to move on to a new life.

The disbelief that a loved one has died can be seen in many films as the protagonist who died simply disbelieves that they are dead as they are still on this earth and their appearance hasn't changed. In some cases they have forgotten that they died [clip of "The Sixth Sense"]. People tend to turn their back on their friends and family when they lose someone. Doctors and psychologists say it's natural and part of the healing process [clip of "Patch Adams" – father died] (Shadyac, Patch Adams, 1998).

I guess we will never know if there is an afterlife. All we can do is speculate. Hope, if you're in to that. Me personally I like to think I'm [clip of "The Late Show with Stephen Colbert" – Ricky Gervais agnostic atheist] (Pielocik, 2017). I am a man of science and I would require proof of a God or an afterlife in order to believe. [clip of "South Park" – ending of "The Death of Eric Cartman"].

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