

The Body and Film: Estranged Body States – A Case of das Unheimlich

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Introduction

Cinema moves us deeply. As Christian Metz (1974) points out, the particular physical conditions of the cinema of the blackened room and the large screen opens the audience on to an imaginary space. In this shared womb like space the film lights up the screen and focuses our attention. A film can tap into sensory stimuli, of course most obviously via vision and sound, but a film is not only perceptual, it affects in bodily ways. Our eyes well up with tears as sadness overwhelms, or an erotic scene sexually arouses or palpitations and heart beat race as excitation, terror and fear get a grip. In this paper I describe how film depicts bodily states, speaks to the body and affects us in unconscious and bodily ways. I suggest that film can affect and alter visual and sensory experience (Massumi 2002, Gormley 2005). I do this by exploring a particular film, *The Others* released in 2001 (director Alejandro Amenába).

Mainstream cinema is popularly associated with enjoyment and pleasure. However film can also evoke unpleasurable states, painful feelings and can create traumatic experience (Bainbridge 2004). In terms of the body, cinema can help us escape into a place where there is an imaginary idealisation of bodies, evoking a form of wish fulfilment, as in day dreaming. Or it can capture the inverse underside, the precarious, unstable and frightening aspects of bodily being and identity; more a nightmare than a dream. The experience can go beyond the pleasure principle (Freud 1920) and tip into trauma: something akin to Lacan's idealised imaginary body (1977) that then turns into the fragmented and disorganised body.

Unlike a novel or a still image, a film deploys particular cinematic techniques as a way to construct meaning and affective experience. I will look at film in its unique specificity: the special means it has to create and mobilise us as psychosocial subjects. I suggest that film

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affects us unconsciously and can evoke body states. A film, by catching us unawares, by taking us by surprise can, I would argue, effectively break through defences and take the viewer to an experiential place that they may not have consciously chosen.

In exploring how the film *The Others* (Amenábar, 2001) affects the viewer unconsciously, in both producing disorientating body states and tapping into fragile body states already in play, I work with no split between the individual and the social. I am arguing that any idealised unity of the body is necessarily short lived and that the fragility of the bodily ego and the susceptibility to destabilising and fragmentary body states are an inevitable outcome of being a decentred (Lacan 1977) psychosocial subject with no fixed and certain identity.

Through examining *The Others* I will explore how film evokes disconcerting body states, namely a state of embodied 'das Unheimlich', that is of feeling not at home in the hearth of the home. This is the crux of the uncanny: feeling uncomfortable and estranged even in one's own body. This discussion raises implications regarding the psychosocial nature of subjectivity.

I draw not only on my background as a University lecturer in Psychosocial Studies but also on my role as a psychoanalytic clinician. As a psychotherapist I work with the body and trauma, where clients often experience estrangement from their own bodies (Diamond 2013). Although I do not refer to clinical material, I bring insight gained from this complimentary field to understanding disturbances in bodily experience that can be evoked by a film.

Affect, the Filmic Image and the Body

Massumi's work (Massumi 2002) arguably has considerable implications for developments in thinking, contributing to what might be referred to as an 'affective turn' in psychosocial research. Massumi (2002) describes how responses to a short clip of film played without and with verbal commentary elicited different reactions, noting that the non-verbal version evoked a more affective and pleasurable response and was more memorable than the verbal 'factual' clip despite the fact that the verbal voice-over made the clip more organized and linguistically structured. Massumi identifies how affective - bodily states can be

mobilised by film and I bring this insight into the exploration of *The Others* and the impact it has on bodily states.

How is the body addressed in cinema? Mainstream cinema can generate pleasure and idealised bodies for its audiences. This aspect of cinema functions in the field of the imaginary as Lacan (1977) and Metz (1974) describe. In the imaginary the body is perfect and beautiful. Likewise unity, wholeness and 'having it all' is made possible in the filmic fantasy world, where no lack, incompleteness and body disunity need be encountered; it is a dream world of wish fulfilment (see also Mulvey 1975; Neale 1983).

Freud in *The Ego and the Id* (1923) stated the ego is first and foremost a bodily ego and is a projected surface, originally deriving from sensations springing from the surface of the body. This projected surface Lacan identified as 'The mirror phase as the misrecognition of the 'I'' (1977) as it is the surface of the body projected by the mirror image from the space of the mirroring image. The jubilant six month old baby identifies with the body image in the mirror which is idealised into a gestalt unity but this is a 'misrecognition' as the baby's body as unified and whole is reliant on the gestalt effect derived from the mirror image, when in fact the actual body in its immature state suffers motor *dis*-coordination and sensory disarray. The mirror image gives an idealised unity which contrasts with fragile and precarious body ego states

This mirror image is a way of describing how the gestalt effect derives from the image and this mirror image can be the other's look, ranging from the caretaker that mirrors and idealises the baby to the wider field of others that mirror the body and constructs the body surface as image that the subject comes to 'misrecognise' as itself.

Althusser (1971) related Lacan's mirror image explicitly to the social field, pointing out that this mirroring surface that presents an idealised body image can be any media surface, from a bill board or other visual advert to body images displayed across flickering cinema screens. Althusser referred to the way these screen images 'interpellate' us as subjects so that we identify with the ideal images and 'misrecognise' ourselves in them. Identification in the cinema can be directly with the bodies on the screen, but might also be with the camera, its positioning, or it might be through the structure provided by editing and the 'point of view' shots.

Whereas Lacan was focused on the specula image in the formation of the body ego, the psychoanalyst Bick (1968) and later Anzieu (1989) emphasised how touching and ways of holding the infant structure the sense of the body ego. Indeed, Freud (1923) from early on made it clear that the body ego was also tactile in nature. The importance here is that there is visual and sensory engagement with the images on the screen. Watching film does not only involve visual experience, other senses are also affected. Massumi (2002) is critical of the cognitive and linguistic focus of the earlier Lacanian and Althusserian models, however this in my view does not make their understanding redundant, it is just that their analysis needs to be developed with further insights from Massumi and other interdisciplinary approaches that explore the multi sensory transmission of the visual media and its power to affect us in bodily ways.

There is not only the mirrored body surface but also tactile sensorial affects from watching a film. Understanding of the mirroring process has been furthered by research into neural mirroring. The work of Gallese and colleagues (2004) supports the mirror hypothesis, describing the interpersonal basis of the neural process, whereby a sense of one's own body is derived from the other. They refer to a simultaneous tactile –visual simulation, giving the example of a person watching a James Bond film viewing a tarantula crawl on Bond's chest and who simultaneously experiences the tingling sensation of a crawling spider on their own chest (Gallese et al, 2004). This example implies that the image evokes visual and tactile experiences in the viewer.

The way film visually and bodily affects us will be looked at through an exploration of *The Others*. However instead of focusing on the idealisation of the body in the image, I shall look at the way the film disorientates and disrupts a sense of bodily unity and identity. Cinema, I will suggest, can mobilise body states that are perturbing and tap into anxieties concerning identity and the psychosocial body, and suggest more precarious and unstable body states. The body-ego gestalt is in fact hard to maintain and incoherent body states can perturb and disrupt. Perhaps deep down we all fear Humpty Dumpty's fate:

Humpty Dumpty sat on the wall

Humpty Dumpty had a great fall

And all the Kings soldiers and all the Kings Men could not put Humpty Dumpty together again.

At the level of physicality, trauma and mortality, the body is vulnerable, susceptible to damage, illness and death. From a psychoanalytic perspective the collapse of the imaginary body ego exposes fragmented body states and these can haunt our lives.

The Story Line

The Others is set in Jersey in the immediate aftermath of World War 11, in 1945. The plot is loosely based on the Henry James novel *The Turn of the Screw*. The film comes under the general genre of horror-thriller.

A mother (Grace) played by Nicole Kidman is with her two children Anne and Nicholas in a large and isolated house. We do not know how or why they got there. According to Grace, the children suffer from a rare disease which makes them photosensitive, they apparently cannot be exposed to light and so the curtains must be closed at all times. Only gas lamps are used as there is no electricity.

One day three servants just turn up at the house, Mrs. Mills, Mr Turtle the Gardener and a much younger Lydia –a mute girl. As soon as the servants start to live in the house there is suspicion that the house is inhabited by others and is possibly haunted. Anne reports seeing a boy called Victor. She draws pictures of four people: a man, a woman, Victor, and a scary old woman, all of whom she says she has seen in the house. Grace scolds Anne for her behaviour, which seems somewhat harsh and reveals Grace to be a rigid autocratic mother. Grace also begins to notice strange noises, doors closing without force, a piano playing in a locked room when no one is inside, and curtains which are mysteriously drawn open.

Grace, while trying to hunt down the invisible "intruders" runs out of the house and gets lost in the forest and miraculously meets up with her husband who had been away at war. He is strange and aloof, in 'shell shock', and does not relate to his wife. He comes back to the house but oddly leaves the next day. The only emotion he shows is alarm when Anne tells him how her mother has treated her. In the same sequence Grace sees the old woman

from Anne's drawing but dressed up like her daughter in a wedding dress. Grace says "You are not my daughter!" and attacks her. However, she finds that the old woman was in fact her daughter and that she effectively attacked her daughter. Anne accuses her mother of trying to kill her, while Grace swears she saw the old woman.

One morning, Grace wakes to the children's screams: all of the curtains in the house have disappeared. When the servants refuse to help look for them, Grace realizes that they are somehow involved. At night Anne and Nicholas sneak out of the house wanting to find their father, and stumble across hidden graves. They find that these graves belong to the current servants. The servants appear and give chase to the children, who make it back into the house. Mrs. Mills states that tuberculosis killed all of them (the three servants) more than half a century ago.

For the main body of the film the viewer is 'left in the dark' and is as lost as the key protagonists are (Grace and the children). The viewer, like them, does not know what in fact is truly going on. At the end, all is revealed. Upstairs Anne and Nicholas discover the old woman is acting as a medium in a séance with Victor's parents. Gradually a different reality is revealed. Grace loses her temper and 'attacks' the visitors in the séance, but in their séance Grace is absent: only objects move on their own accord and séance members are affronted by an invisible force not Grace herself. It is then she and her children learn the awful truth: The old woman is not in fact the ghost; nor is it Victor or his parents. The reverse is the case, 'the others' that were presumed ghosts are in fact in the land of the living, and it is Grace and the children who are the ghosts; they who are the uninvited 'others'! This is the twist in the tale, and when the truth shows, Grace breaks down in front of the children and remembers what has happened. Out of her despair she had lost her sanity and smothered the children with a pillow before shooting herself. The yearning for her husband, away at war, and the constant darkness because of the children's condition, had all become too intolerable to bear. Grace had not realised that she and her children had joined the living dead. She had assumed, when she 'awoke', that God had granted a miracle: that the terrible deed that she had committed, had been miraculously undone.

However in the reality, Grace and the children realize that Charles, Grace's husband must also be dead and that he in his malaise seemed also to exist in a twilight zone. Mrs. Mills

then appears to inform Grace that the dead and the living will learn to get along, and sometimes she won't even notice the living people who inhabit the house. She also tells Grace that since the children no longer exist in mortal bodies they no longer suffer light sensitivity and so light can for the first time flood the house. From the window, Grace and her children look outside as Victor's family move out and so 'the others', the uninvited ghosts, remain resident inside the house.

The film is a thriller, gothic, horror, and supernatural: undecidedly all four. Given the viewer and key protagonists are in the 'dark' for much of the film, it is unclear what is being viewed. What is real and what is not, what is true and what is false, are the ghosts real or imagined, who ho is alive or dead is it realism or a supernatural world? No one knows. Of course ultimately, the story is fantastical because the key protagonists are dead, meaning that the whole film is located in the afterlife.

The Others: Reception

The film was a box office success in 2001 and won eight Goya Awards, including awards for Best Film and Best Director and Best Horror Film with Amenábar being nominated for a BAFTA Award for Best Original Screenplay, a rare occurrence for a horror film. Although twelve years on from the film's initial release date, I find that most people know of the film, have seen it and say that it had a powerful impact on them. The film has remained memorable and still lives on in the popular imagination.

The Others received rave reviews. It was perceived as exceptional for a horror film of the time, in that it did not rely on special effects. Instead the film was praised for its classic horror movie features: the creation of an atmosphere, of playing on what is not seen and the viewer's imagination and excellent overall execution.

The Others has also attracted attention in visual media analysis. Bruce (2005) writes on *The Others*, referring to the film as gothic horror but also points out that it is not alone in its focus on ghosts, or in particular on ghosts' who do not know they are dead and likewise the

viewer is misled, for example in *The Sixth Sense* although Bruce's paper develops into a discussion of the photograph, it raises some key themes. The article foregrounds the film's social and political setting- the Second World War- and how personal trauma is necessarily located in wider social upheaval. Very pertinently she also raises the way the film problematizes the division between the others and the self and implies that the reflexive transformative recognition is that 'the other' is not outside 'the self' but implicates the I, that the ghostly other resides within.

The film haunts by its persuasive insistence that its audience reconsider the relation between selves and "others". It impels us towards a revision [of] self and other, personal and political, upsetting the comfortable, familiar distinctions between them; and it haunts because it manages to unsettle our apprehension of others wherein properly apprehending the other entails a revision of one's apprehension of the self (Bruce 2005 p23-24).

This last point Bruce mentions but does not develop, whereas this paper specifically takes up the relation of others to the embodied self. I will now look at the cinematic ways *The Others* tells a story well, by *mise en scene*, the use of the camera, relations between sound and image. I will examine the filmic ways deployed that produce a downright eerie atmosphere and manage to orchestrate affective states in the viewer, which as the film unravels activates fragile and precarious body ego states that disorientate and disorganise a sense of embodied self.

The Status of 'Reality'

The Others predominantly takes place in a large and austere house and although set in Jersey, the exterior shots were filmed in Cantabria Spain and are of the mansion Los Hornillos Palace. This disjointed location is on a par with the filmic presentation of the house as situated in the middle of nowhere, offering no point of orientation. It seems to be in moorland, with some surrounding bare trees in the midst of a gloomy bleak fog that never lifts, in which greyness overshadows and there is no change in the dull light outside the

house. All this contributes to the sense of a temporal standstill. This a-temporal experience is reinforced by the fact that from shots taken inside the house the viewer cannot tell if it is day or night, as the curtains remain closed and oil lamps are the source of light. No seasons and no differentiation between day and night, creates a type of timeless zone. So both space and time are suspended in a no-where and timeless space.

Although set in 1945, the interior space and clothes are outdated and austere and are more late nineteenth century than mid twentieth, which adds to the feeling of time standing still. As Freud notes, there is no time in the unconscious and as I will suggest the film explores unconscious states of being, including bodily experiences and psychotic delusional states. The film could be viewed as a *mise en scene* of a dream, where the viewer and the protagonists in the film do not know the distinction between what is fantasy or what is reality, Most importantly I suggest it is the quality of 'reality' that the film creates, the ambiance and atmosphere that is projected, the disorientation in space and time contributing to this estranged world. This theme is reinforced in terms of storyline: who are these unknown others in the house? Are they real or not? Who are the ghosts and who are not, or is it the case that the viewer is witnessing a delusional reality, the product of Grace's psychosis?

Could it be that the house and the goings on therein is a manifestation of the unconscious? The film has clear psychoanalytic themes. One reading of the film is that we enter as spectators into Grace's world of psychotic delusion where the truth— her murder of the children and of herself- (her destructiveness) is foreclosed. It would seem that after a violent and destructive act, a delusional world is created based on an exclusion of the truth. In truth Grace's children are dead and she is the murderer but in this world of illusion which we as spectators perceive, the children are alive and Grace is the protective mother, the opposite of the truth. The film in this sense produces an induced shared psychosis. The film could be viewed as a manifestation of a psychotic dream state, an illusion, an unconscious reality that as Freud points out in his paper on *Neurosis and Psychosis* (1924) acts like a patch that covers over the rent in ego and its actual severing from 'reality'. The filmic content here is considered comparable to a delusional world produced by a psychotic

defence. When the curtains are closed the house is in the dark and the film is in the delusional state, when the curtains are pulled open and the light floods in then the unconscious truth comes to light and is known.

In Kleinian understanding and in Bion's terms what could be understood here is the creation of a world where Grace's disowned violence is so intensely projected that it returns as a threatening and attacking external world where paranoia prevails and a return of attack in the form of 'bizarre objects' takes over. The term bizarre object was coined by Wilfred Bion (1967) to denote a distinctive kind of object existing in the world of the psychotic. By violent projection of unwanted psychic elements, the psychotic personality constructs its universe of bizarre objects. The psychotic personality uses a form of splitting and projective identification that is not merely excessive but different, in that aspects of the psyche, especially those ego and superego functions which lead to awareness of reality, are split off, fragmented, and violently expelled into the external world

Bion (1967), gives examples: "If the piece of personality is concerned with sight, the gramophone when played is felt to be watching the patient; if with hearing, then the gramophone when played is felt to be listening to the patient. The object, angered by being engulfed, swells up (p 48)..... "The consequences for the patient are now that he moves, not in a world of dreams, but in a world of objects which are ordinarily the furniture of dreams."(p.51)

What Bion describes is how the objects in the external world that become receptacles for projection take on the emotional qualities whereby they appear as if they have a life of their own which is exactly what the house and its contents appears to have in *The Others*. The Piano that plays on its own, the doors that close as if they have a will of their own, the creaks, and shakes that haunt the house and of course the intrusive ghosts that are felt to be so threatening and which Grace cannot escape.

However, even in the illusion dream-fantasy world, the foreclosure of the truth is rendered incomplete. Grace's aggression is there and seeps through the cracks of the perfect facade. The idealised image of the protective and caring mother is undercut by Grace's outbursts of aggression directed at the children, the harshness of the mothering, the cruel attitude that

all of a sudden shows itself and the punishments (especially towards daughter Anne – the harbinger of truth).

In fact *The Others* as a film cannot be simply reduced to a projection of an individual psyche; the film exists as a cultural creation in its specificity and exists as a psychosocial reality. The film goes beyond Grace's projections: it is a projection itself where the audience shares what is seen and heard as the *mise en scene* of the cinematic space. The film plays with the audience's senses, it produces noises and visions that are experienced -ghosts do go bump in the night and the dead are alive!

This is not only a production of a psychotic illusion to share, but like a dream has unconscious ideas producing scenes loaded with symbolism. In creating a form of social representation the film offers a form of social dreaming that I suggest presents states of fear that are applicable to us all.

A state of das Unheimlich

Now I ask the following: - what is so scary about the others? The film is focused on the others but who are the others? Are they the outsiders that intrude into the house, or are they in fact much closer to home, residing in the very 'hearth' of it? It turns out that the others are not the uninvited ghosts but the residents themselves. There is a reversal: the ghosts are not from without but derive from within and are indeed, the key protagonists, Grace and the children. This raises thought provoking questions about 'the others'. If they are not the intruders at all then are 'the others' in fact part of who we really are? Are we in some important sense 'the others'? 'The others' have now become part of the familiar whilst simultaneously evoking an experience of estrangement. This raises a more general question about body identity in the psychosocial field. Where the body is exposed primordially to others and the cultural field, perhaps the field of others can no longer simply derive from without but comes to inhabit the very sense of a bodily self? (Lafrance 2009, Manning 2009, Pile 2011, Diamond 2013)

The film subtly works to evoke a fundamental state of what Freud (1919) calls *das Unheimlich* and has been translated from German into English as 'the uncanny': feeling not at home in the heart of the home (the crux of the uncanny). This is the way a person can feel very uncomfortable even in their own bodies. I propose *The Others* enables the spectator to explore the embodied state of *das Unheimlich* indirectly, making the viewer confront the experience of their own otherness, which is an integral part of bodily being and a sense of self. Lesley Stern identifies encounters with the uncanny in cinema as moments of 'a strange and unexpected meeting with yourself' (1997: 348).

Freud (1919) in the paper translated as 'The Uncanny' explores the way the unfamiliar is in the familiar, the strange is in the everyday. The German *das Unheimlich* refers to something foreboding, unfamiliar, alien and other, including the black arts. *Das Heimlich*, the opposite, refers to the homely, familiar and tame. Freud discusses Hoffman's novel *The Sandman* (1916), which features a life like doll (is she human or not?) and the doppelganger effect – meeting up with another who is in fact oneself- and argues that both are related to the uncanny. Freud describes an example from his own life, where he was on a train, in a train compartment, when all of a sudden an old man barged into his train cabin. At first Freud thought the old man was an intruder, but he then realises that the mirrored cabinet door had flung open and this stranger was nothing other than his own reflection staring back at him.

A *das Unheimlich* experience implies an affective state associated with estrangement and even with states such as derealisation and depersonalisation related to a perturbation in one's sense of bodily being and disorientation in relation to one's own body image and identity. The doppelganger effect, confusion over whether the body is alive or dead, a doll or puppet, human or android are all experiences that involve a state of *das Unheimlich*.

Das Unheimlich is a state of feeling not at home, in the hearth of the home; feeling estranged in somatic and sensory ways, unfamiliar in the familiar. It can be a feeling of being uncomfortable and strange in one's own body or/and home/familiar environment. Most importantly it is the way that the alien and the other comes to disrupt a state of body ownership and self familiarity. Rather than 'the others' existing as an alien force from without, it is rather the way others exist from within, whether within me, my own body, or

my own home or all three. It is a disrupted body ego state, 'the others' as part of the self have to be acknowledged and are indeed confronted in a state of embodied *das Unheimlich*, and this puts into question any idealised intact sense of bodily identity (see Diamond 2013).

To sum up *The Others*, it makes us ask who are 'the others'? The intruders first perceived as aliens from without, are intruders in the hearth of the home, making the familiar, radically unfamiliar and unknown. When watching the film the sense of the uncanny is evoked, something disturbing and strange inhabits the house and the people in it making 'the normal' and the everyday seem scary, bizarre and disorientating. As the story unfolds it is about how 'the others' cannot be kept at bay, but come to truly inhabit the interior, the very heart of the house from which there is no escape. The film then moves on to show that the so-called others are not located outside at all but exist in the form of the key protagonists themselves. The narrative twist is that the others become the protagonists themselves and implicates the viewer- that we likewise are no longer sure who we are.

The film not only explores the question who 'the others' are, in terms of the storyline, but much more significantly by the way the film tells the story cinematically through how this makes us feel as spectators as we engage with the film's movement. The film takes the viewer unawares and mobilises our visual and sensory experience in to a state of *das Unheimlich*. How does the film do this? The film via cinematic means interjects the familiar and the at home with the suddenly strange and unfamiliar. This is done in a number of ways, in the creation of the location/setting, the interior of the house and the goings on therein, the eerie feel of the characters and an appropriation by an alien and supernatural force which, like the fog, shrouds the house. Also the house and the objects in it seem to have a life and will of their own, so what is animate and inanimate? The personas within the house at times come across as flat and cardboard like, questioning who is human and what is not, who is alive or dead. This confusion over life and death, human and machine is a feature of the uncanny.

The ambience of the environment contributes to the uncanny effect both inside and outside the house, as discussed above. In addition to the uncanny effect of the environment, the characterisation adds to this. Although set in 1945, the clothing is austere, more Victorian

and turn of the century, adding to the time warp atmosphere. The character Grace is aloof and cold. However the cardboard cut out like quality of the acting is evident in the adult characters. Bertha (Finnula Flanagan) is kindly but strangely reserved, her speech shot through with innuendo and premonition; the mute girl Lydia (Elaine Casidy) who is so passive and vacant in expression that she is not quite there; the gardener Mr. Tuttle (Eric Sykes) also lacks animation, and the brief entry of Charles (Christopher Eccleston) Grace's shell-shocked husband appears vacant and zombie like. There is something flat in them all; they all lack an element of aliveness, almost a bit doll like, which certainly adds to the uncanny ambiance.

The darkness, the casting of shadows in the house, creates a colour version of film noir. The viewer cannot see well and this makes normal everyday living in the house seem more unusual; a little strange for example, everyday activities like a family eating breakfast in the kitchen but in this context with curtains closed, in the dark. Music and sound are also used in particular ways: for example dislocated sounds and voices are deployed and at times there is no orientation as to which part of the house the sound comes from. A baby cries which is not one of the children; music is playing but it is not possible to hear where it is coming from. Non-directional sound comes across as disembodied. There is also the specific relation that gets established between sound and image to disorientate so that visual image of the person and the voice don't go together.

As the film opens with the credits we hear the voice over, of a soothing maternal voice saying 'Are you sitting comfortably', a comment presumably the viewers could take as related to them also sitting in the reclining cinema seats in the dark. The voice evokes a maternal idealised scene of mummy telling a story to her children, yet what is to follow is an exploration of the unfamiliar, disconcerting and uncomfortable. The film shockingly opens to Grace's screams, as she awakes from a nightmare.

In mainstream cinema there are rules followed which establish filmic continuity in time and space and they orientate the viewer whilst watching a film. These rules govern point of view structures created by the film and this helps the viewer locate where one body is in relation to another body, where someone is placed in relation to another. By conforming to these rules the cinematic space creates a sense of 'reality' and familiarity. However cinematic

conventions are deliberately broken in *The Others*. I will now look at the way the shot reverse shot structure is transgressed and how this not only creates discontinuity in cinematic space but also fundamentally disorientates the viewer and fragments the body on the screen creating a bodily state of *das Unheimlich* that the audience experiences whilst watching the film.

The second scene is in the grand interior of the house. Grace greets the three servants. In this scene cinematic conventions are used, the mainstream shot reverse shot structure conveys the conversation between Grace and the servants. However the third scene is a little odder. Grace takes the two woman servants up to see the children, they hover outside the children's bedroom, the light is very obscure and the gas lamp appears to light the servants' faces from below, giving a slightly sinister feel. Suddenly the camera is roaming. The cinematic point of view structures are for this moment broken as the camera does not show the faces from the front, instead it pans around the back of the servants in the dark. It all happens in a flash, so whilst watching the view will not even notice, but the effect still mobilises feeling. This is a cinematic means of creating an uncanny effect. It does this by introducing the strange and unfamiliar. It juxtaposes, the estranged with the homely and safe, so from the foreboding swerve from behind in the dark there is the sudden switch to light and the children coming out to meet the new carers, the music changes from sinister to soothing and the children's smiling faces takes us from the estranged to the reassuring and innocent.

The camera roaming behind the servants and in surveying them from the back in effect creates an unknown-point of view. The camera is autonomous in so far as there is no character who is viewing from behind. So who is looking, whose look does this point of view belong to? No one in the film; so this is an anonymous look and this raises a sense of invisible presence. The camera in swerving round the back creates a kind of natural movement, an animated gait (of a hand held camera) adds to the feel that someone is there although not seen. The film thereby creates an unknown position of the look – the gaze from nowhere; another who is unfamiliar and may not be human.

As noted in mainstream shot reverse shot structure, the camera shows one person speaking and cuts to one person listening, full frontal views are shown, if the camera is positioned

behind the shoulder of one character, it at the same time shows the front of the body and face of the other character. This locates and identifies the body in space, the protagonists in relation to one another. The technique where the characters are seen only from the back view does the reverse. The camera view from behind does not reassure the identity of the characters', it opens up questions- who are they and who is looking- and the experience distantiates the viewer.

Seeing from the back is unsettling as no one can in fact see their own back. Rene Magritte's 1937 painting *Reproduction interdite* ('reproduction forbidden'²) cleverly plays with the familiar and the strange, the painting shows a man from the back and his reflection in the mirror shows him from the back also. It is ominous and perturbing, this seeing from behind. It encourages the thought that 'something' or indeed a 'no-thing' can sneak up from behind and catch the body/person unawares.

The film in a later scene breaks and disregards the 180 degree rule. The 180 degree rule is an imaginary line that divides the room into half. The cameras are then lined up for use on one side of the dividing line. An imaginary line called the axis connects the characters and by keeping the camera on one side of this axis for every shot in the scene spatial continuity is kept and bodies on screen are clearly located as is the spectator's viewpoint.

Abiding by the 180-degree rule prevents the filmmaker making use of the 360-degree space that is potentially available. If the camera passes over the axis, it is called jumping the line or crossing the line. However when the 180 degree rule is transgressed and the potential of the 360 degree space is utilised, it not only disrupts the positioning and hence identity of the characters', the entire film space can become fractured and disorganised, orientation for the viewer is completely lost. What this does is disrupt body and identity continuity and positioning as well as environmental spatial orientation.

Anne, Grace's daughter is playing with her white communion dress and is pretending it is a wedding dress. Anne's reflection is in the mirror image, the camera then cuts back to her but by cutting across the 180-degree rule line, using the potential of the 360-degree space, the move bodily disorientates. Effectively the camera moves from viewing Anne's body in

² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Not_to_be_Reproduced

the mirror to passing Anne behind her and then cutting to her full frontal in a different place. So Anne appears not in the place she should be and a jump in cinematic space occurs and creates a doppelganger effect, there are three Anne's one in the mirror image, one from behind, and then Anne herself, or is it Anne? Anne is in an entirely different position in the room for where we expect. This all happens so fast and by surprise, that it affects the viewer pre-reflectively, the disruption of body identity affecting our spatial orientation and rendering a state of embodied das Unheimlich that we for a split second share. The doppelganger effect created by this cinematic move is similar to Freud's confusion when he does not recognise himself in the train compartment.

Anne then swirls around playfully and laughs, it is really dark in the room so although there is this joy there is also the sense of Anne being utterly alone in the dark, her vulnerability therein, the juxtaposition of the child-like play and the foreboding atmosphere is uncanny. Later on in the scene Anne is sitting down on the floor in the 'wedding dress' playing with a wooden puppet. Grace enters the room and the camera cuts to what Grace sees. The hand playing with the puppet is not her daughter's hand, but a hand old and wizened. The camera cuts to Grace's face which is horrified, she goes round to face Anne and there is a blind old woman that stares back at her, yet the daughter is singing in her sweet child like voice. This disjuncture between sound and image, a girl's voice but an old woman's face, and this turnaround in body image, Anne's girlish body but with the face and hands of an old woman, eschews body identity. It is supernatural, yet it is a real visual experience for that moment Anne the child has become the wizened old woman. The wooden puppet extends the theme of das Unheimlich, what is it to be human and have a body? The voice is in the wrong body, the body of another, yet in Anne; the familiar and radically unfamiliar is what it is like to be a body. So the others do not only enter the hearth of the house they can get inside the body, and become part of it.

Concluding Remarks

The Others as noted could be said to exist in a twilight zone. This is the ambiance the film creates, where the boundaries are confounded between the living and the dead, the ghostly

bodies of the others and the living, pleasure and unpleasure, the familiar – unfamiliar and the strange. It is suggested that cinema produces a form of transitional potential space (Winnicott 1953), a virtual space, where there is the creation of a cultural zone in which affective states are shared. There is the spectator's indirect involvement - it is simultaneously happening and not happening to me - and there is a type of social dreaming that is constructed and communal, a kind of affective transitional space where dreaming and day dreaming can coincide: dreaming whilst awake-between wake and sleep.

In this in-between social space powerful experiences can be constructed, addressed, explored and reworked as are also anxieties and fears which can be tapped into and that are already in play within a psychosocial subject or should I say body. Watching a film is visual and sensory and as Massumi (2002) argues affects us in bodily ways mobilising visual and sensorial bodily states. This paper has looked at the specific use of cinematic expression, the way non-verbal techniques can affect us pre-reflectively, non cognitively, in visual and visceral ways, impacting not only visually but also by hitting us 'in the gut' so to speak. By taking us unawares, the film affects us in unconscious ways.

I have focused on a genre of film that makes explicit that the pleasure we get from watching a film is complex and ambivalent, where pleasure and unpleasure coincide and become confounded and where pleasure can tip into pain and suggest the traumatic. Modern horror films can be obsessed with body states that are too horrible to be thought about, intent to show the most grotesque visual and visceral states, they try and force an encounter with an unimaginable 'real' (body states that are so feared that they cannot be represented or imagined, and belong to what Lacan refers to as the 'real'). In contrast *The Others* is not a gory horror but is scary and eerie, overtly subtle in its message. For *The Others* explores body states more estranged than grotesque and as has been argued confronts and evokes the bodily experience of das Unheimlich. In doing this the film helps us face uncomfortable feelings and truths about ourselves.

The film *The Others* shows how the state of das Unheimlich is not only about ghosts that go bump in the night and evil forces from without, but is about the way the experience of others exist in bodily ways and at the 'heart' of the very sense of 'self'. It is preoccupied with 'the others' not as an alien and outside force that can be fled, but an inescapable otherness

that inhabits. This I suggest raises a more general question about body identity in the psychosocial field, where the body is exposed primordially to others, and the cultural field, rendering the other(s) as no longer simply residing without but rather as inhabiting the very sense of a bodily self. A state of embodied das Unheimlich is the otherness within but also beyond the film, and more generally I suggest a bodily state of das Unheimlich is a condition of living as a psychosocial body.

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