

Let the Right One In

(2008, Alfredson, Sweden)

Component 2: Global Film

Focus Area Representation

PART 1: Key Sequence(s) and timings and/or links

Sequence 1

Killing for blood and Eli & Oskar meet. 00:6:59 – 00:13:45

Sequence 2

Rubik's cube scene. 00:29:23 – 00:31:31

Sequence 3

Swimming pool scene. 1:39:12 – 1:44:00

PART 2: STARTING POINTS - Key Elements of Film Form (Micro Features)

Cinematography (including Lighting)

- There are many scenes shot at night or in the dark, but are still evenly lit with generally vivid colours. There is also a heavy use of pull-focus, often to create a 'bokeh' effect with the lighting, helping to produce a somewhat dreamlike quality to the night-time scenes.
- The shallow focus is also used throughout the film, notably when Oskar is involved in the frame, keeping him tightly in focus but ensuring a much softer and out of focus shot for the rest of the frame, creating an oddly-deep frame in many scenes but with much of it out of focus. This could potentially represent Oskar's lack of care for things that are not directly around him or that he's involved/interested in.
- It could however, just be the aesthetic: Oskar is out of focus compared to the bully when he is centre of frame at 00:06:25. Perhaps this is indicative of Oskar wanting to 'focus out' of the scenario/situation.
- Scenes in the daytime, especially those surrounded by snow, are brilliant white and

clean. They are almost blinding in their vivid nature, helping to further the somewhat fantastical nature of the colour palette.

- Cinematography purposefully creates a sense of mystery by not revealing characters fully in own first meeting with them; Oskar is shown only as a reflection in a window, Eli is shot in close-up from behind, only revealing part of her hair, her 'watcher' is also shot over the shoulder (OTS), obscuring his face from being fully revealed. The lighting in this scene with the car is also cleverly low-key, creating an uneven effect which is dramatic, mysterious and produces a somewhat 'scary' look to his face.
- We're introduced to Oskar in medium shots (MS), sometimes medium long shots (MLS), making clear that he's wearing only underwear and suggesting that he's home alone. We also mostly see him through glass, suggesting a distance between him and everyone else.
- Much is shown and not said in key sequence 1 with the placing of the jug below the man, followed by the old man wielding a knife. These actions are highly suggestive and imply a form of butchery will be taking place. In terms of representation, the reasons why this character is acting in this way is unclear; it provides an uneasy mystery and ambiguity about his motivations, but his pragmatic nature shows that this is a person who is experienced in this matter, even if it is gruesome and unpleasant work that he takes no pleasure from.
- Which again is taken further by a jump cut into a tighter shot, this time an extreme close-up of blood in the jug. There is no longer any confusion about *what* he is doing, now only why he is doing so.

Mise-en-scène

- The first time we see the props used on the victims, it's clear that we're not shown exactly what these are for, but also their discoloured nature suggests that this is something that has been going on for a while.

- The leather box in which everything is kept however, is immaculate, implying a sense of care to the operation and a care over outside appearances.
- Clothing is key in this film; it suggests Eli's gender (pink jumper), it shows that it's cold (hats worn outside by almost every character), it is the 1980s (style of coats in particular) and it tells the audience who is financially comfortable and who isn't through the quality and condition of the clothing.
- The first meeting of the two teenagers takes place outside and around a 'climbing frame'. The cold, dark and somewhat empty locale is directly in front of the apartment building in which they live, and directly indicates that they are both outsiders and isolated, drawn to one another by their youth.
- Key sequence 3 also reinforces that the characters are joined in friendship but both are also 'outsiders'. Oskar, in a swimming pool physically below his 'peers' (perhaps more accurately referred to as tormentors) and with few clothes, is vulnerable and isolated: Eli is an outsider to the extent that she is not even in the building.

Editing

- The editing during the beginning of key sequence 1 is dominated by sharp jump cuts, almost montage style, to suggest a sense of speed and efficiency; this man has done this before.
- The first time we see Eli, at 00:12:23, it's an 'unshowy' moment; the camera pans to the right and without sound, Eli is in the frame where previously there was nothing. This indicates a somewhat supernatural presence. To reinforce this, Eli effortlessly jumps from the jungle gym and later in the scene leaves the shot as we cutaway to Oskar. As it does, we hear the door of the building, seemingly just *too* quickly for her to have *walked* there. Oskar not reacting despite watching shows us that he is perhaps comfortable with what he has just seen, despite the possible strangeness of the event but that he is also potentially stoic.
- In the third key sequence, there is a purposefully restrained nature to the editing; initially cut away's and cross-cutting are employed to help establish the reaction of the different characters in the scene as well including shots of a clock to establish tension and suspense.
- During Eli's rescue of Oskar however,

the editing purposefully holds on Oskar underwater and doesn't allow the audience to see the 'carnage' occurring above the water; this helps to add both a sense of mystery but perhaps even more powerfully, only allowing a glimpse into the action when it appears on screen in the form of limbs and body parts.

- In this way, the editing also reinforces that we are to experience the scene from Oskar's point of view; the restrictive POV here reinforces that he is unaware of what is going on.
- By the end of the scene Eli is shown in extreme close up, including blood splatters, and an eye-line match to a close-up shot of Oskar makes clear that they are forever aligned. The cut to Oskar also allows us to see the joy on his face and establish a reaction that is one of happiness at Eli. The slightly odd or disconcerting reaction is then reinforced when a jump cut to a high angle shot reveals the horror of slaughtered children, our reaction presumably somewhat more muted than Oskar's.

Sound

- The soundtrack in the opening is very dark and sombre, but also features a slightly discordant high pitch sound, most notably when Oskar is wielding the knife, evoking the classic Bernard Hermann score from Psycho.
- During the second key sequence, the score begins when Oskar offers Eli the Rubik's Cube, a sign of friendship and generosity and as a result the score becomes much 'warmer', and friendly. Whilst still generally sombre, the strings provide a gentile atmosphere that swells in places where the two share moments of civility and a burgeoning friendship.
- Diegetic sound effects here are also interesting; everything sounds slightly exaggerated, from the sound of the snow and the climbing frame when Eli approaches, to the almost mechanical nature of the sound effects of the Rubik's cube and especially when, towards the end of the scene, we hear Eli's stomach growling, indicating her hunger.
- It is the sound of the hunger here that is key; Oskar offers a metaphorical olive branch and indicates a desire for friendship-the sound of Eli's rumbling stomach indicates that she needs to 'feed' and because of the cinematography (see notes above) we've been primed for Eli to perhaps 'feed' on Oskar: that she chooses not tells the audience that she is also willing

for a friendship to develop between the two.

PART 3: STARTING POINTS - Contexts

Social

- *Let The Right One In* is an adaptation from a Swedish novel of the same name (the original title is *Låt den rätte komma in*) by author Ajvide Lindqvist, which was published in 2004.
- With a budget of a reported 29million SEK, (around £2.6m) it made a healthy profit with worldwide box office receipts of around \$11m, perhaps bolstered by a very positive critical response: it received a 98% positive rating on RottenTomatoes.com
- The film features some interesting aspects that refer to issues of social commentary; in the original novel one character, Håkan, is described as being a paedophile, though this was omitted from the adaptation. Eli features a somewhat broad representation of being a young female character and is, in fact an androgynous boy. The film handles this in a very ambiguous manner with a scar suggesting castration and a post-production changing of her voice which was considered to be too high pitched.
- Themes of the film also consider contemporary issues of integration of 'foreigners' into traditional environments, as well as classic themes in literature such as bullying, childhood and romance.
- Released in 2008, the film was very much a part of the 'vampire' zeitgeist at the time; the successful *Twilight* novels had been published and were in the process of being adapted for the screen. *The Vampire Diaries*, an American TV show based on the hugely successful novels of the same name was about to be broadcast. Of course, *Let The Right One In* was a very different take on the genre, but the success of the film was almost certainly helped by the timing of the release.
- As well as being part of a the vampire 'phenomenon', the film was also released during the 'Nordic-noir' movement. Books (and later film/TV adaptations) such as *The Girl With The Dragon Tattoo*, *Wallander* as well as TV shows *The Killing* and later, *The Bridge* are cornerstones. This 'genre' was typified by a realistic setting and dialogue style which featured a generally dark and morally complex mood. Dialogue of such texts is often very restrained and generally

features commentary on Scandinavia's political systems. In this 'genre', there is a general suggestion that the apparent equality, social justice, and liberalism of Scandinavia hides dark secrets and hidden hatred, most keenly referred to as a suggestion that Sweden had failed to integrate its immigrant population- something clearly felt in *Let the Right One In*.

Historical

- After being commercially and critically successful, the film was remade in 2010 as *Let Me In*, with *Cloverfield* Director Matt Reeves at the helm. Whilst critically well-received, the film performed poorly at the Box Office.
- In 2013, the film was also turned into a theatre production by the National Theatre of Scotland. Following the original performances in 2013, the play occasionally tours, to great critical reception and has played in London, New York and in 2017 will be performed in Texas.
- The character of Eli is an interesting take on the vampire character, in so much as the young girl has the power and the older gentleman, Hakan is seemingly at her behest. There is an element of this in Anne Rice's *Interview with The Vampire* (Kirsten Dunst's character Claudia) but this is a much clearer and contemporary viewing of gender roles being reversed.

PART 4: STARTING POINTS - Specialist Focus - Representation

- The leads in the film are mostly children and teenagers. Whilst adults are seen and have some prominent roles, the narrative is driven by Oskar and Eli and the denouement of the film revolves around the actions and decisions of young people.
- As a result, the teenagers featured in the film offer an interesting viewpoint of young adults to an audience and many can be labelled as being representative of fairly traditional roles. Oskar for example is the isolated and troubled teenage boy looking for friendship and meaning and Eli is the lonely and misunderstood 'teenage' girl who is very much an outsider.
- Key to the creation of this representation is partly through mise-en-scène (how Eli's clothes represent her gender and her somewhat transient down trodden existence- this is not a glamorous and wealthy vampire in the vein of Count Dracula) and partly through cinematography. Oskar is often shot in a way that offers much space in the frame, highlighting his isolation

whereas many of the 'bullies' are shot with multiple people in the frame, suggesting a sense of friendship or at least togetherness.

- There is a key theme of being wary of outsiders and some discussion around the idea of integration (in a political sense) of 'outsiders' or 'newcomers' into a well-established social order. The new inhabitants

to the building are viewed very sceptically by others who are wary and somewhat afraid.

- Oskar too, is seen as an outsider and someone who does not integrate well with peers-it could be suggested therefore that he represents more than just a young boy, but perhaps offers a wider mediation on the perils of marginalising the vulnerable and those in need.