Themes Of Growing Up In Perfume And In Good Will Hunting

The major themes of growing up, however both the 1985 literary historical fantasy novel Perfume by Patrick Su skind and the 1997 film drama Good Will Hunting directed by Gus Van Sant change up this traditional narrative by focusing their stories on highly gifted protagonists. This challenges their audiences to reconsider the true internal turmoil that one experiences as a gifted individual as they attempt to find their place in society. Suskind utilises literary techniques to explore the impact of eighteenth-century France societal norms and religious beliefs on the development of gifted individuals. Van Sant conversely uses film techniques to explore the impact of class and wealth on development of innate gifts in 1997 Boston .

Suskind and Van Sant explore how members of society can use power to gain influence over gifted individuals for their own selfish benefit. In Perfume, the primary individual who takes advantage of Grenouille's abilities is Giuseppe Baldini, the once 'successful perfumer' now 'failing' in his endeavour, through the implementation of the third-person narrative perspective, the narrator conveys to the reader that Baldini 'never had any gift' for 'perfumery', having bought his recipes from 'traveling merchants' . Baldini thus encourages Grenouille to utilise his ability, in order to benefit himself. However he was blind to the true depth of skill that Grenouille had for perfumery. Similarly Professor Lambeau in Good Will Hunting, although with good intentions, pushes Will to pursue mathematics, as he believes that anything else would make him a 'failure'. However he disregarded whether or not it was the right thing for Will. Both Suskind and Van Sant further explore how the gifted individual is able to have power over others through the abuse of their own abilities. In Perfume , Suskind utilises the third-person narrative perspective to illustrate how Grenouille utilises his 'olfactory powers' to enable him to be 'totally uninteresting' or completely 'infatuating' as he proceeds to murdering 'twenty five young girls'. The narrator enables the reader to attain an 'outside' view of Grenouille's 'horrendous crimes'. Meanwhile, Van Sant utilises camera angles to emphasise the impact that Will's superior intellect and ability with words has on secondary characters . In Will's first meeting with Sean Maguire. The use of close-up shots particularly highlights how Will's intellectual abilities enable him to influence and manipulate other people in order to benefit himself. These camera angles give the audience an intimate view into the effect that Will's intelligence has on others and how he attempts to hide his own emotions by hurting others . Suskind and Van Sant explore how highly gifted individuals can be manipulated by others in positions of power , which can lead to those with gifts utilising their abilities to hurt others.

Both creators explore how individuals born in low socio economic areas are drastically disadvantaged from reaching their true potential, however through determination are able to rise up through society. In Perfume, Suskind utilises olfactory imagery to convey how Grenouille climbs the social hierarchy, this is presented through Grenouilles exceptional olfactory abilities. Suskind illustrates Grenouilles lower class status at birth by describing the scents around him as 'putrid' and 'acrid' in scent. Conveying to the reader the abysmal living conditions of the poor in 'Eighteenth Century France'. Contrast Van Sant utilises colour to convey the impoverished conditions of 1997 'South Boston'. Utilising a monochromatic colour palette, featuring primarily earthy colours to emphasise the desolation of the construction zones and decrepit houses of the physical environment of Will, Van Sant makes evident to the audience the decrepit and working-

class nature of ‘Southie’. Utilising relevant stylistic techniques both authors convey the low social class of their protagonists. However by the conclusion of both texts the authors utilise these techniques to convey their protagonists rise in society, far from their low beginnings. In ‘Part three’ of Perfume, Grenouille has ascended the social hierarchy to become a ‘Journeyman’ and moves to ‘Grasse’. Suskind conveys to the reader Grenouille’s heightened social class through his use of sumptuous olfactory imagery describing ‘jasmine’, ‘ripe apple trees’ and other more pleasant smells to those describe at Grenouilles birth. Comparatively once Will’s mathematical abilities are identified by Professor Lambeau he gets high level job interviews with the NSA and other large corporations. The colour palette of these encounters with high society utilise primarily cool toned colours, which are in stark contrast to the warm colours of ‘South Boston’. This conveys to the audience the sharp and serious nature of sophisticated society. This use of colour, is similar to the use of imagery within Perfume, expressing Will’s rise in society, and the stark contrast between the lower and upper class. Both Suskind and Van Sant convey their protagonists rise in society through their description and visualisation of the environments that the protagonists are in , and reinforce how individuals are ultimately a product of their oppressive social context.

Perfume and Good Will Hunting also examine how an individual must choose between social responsibility and their own personal desires in order to gain personal fulfilment. In Perfume, Grenouille initially yearns to ‘create’ the ‘perfect perfume’ using his olfactory powers in order to make the world smell more beautiful. This desire soon warps into something grotesque , as he goes against society and the moral code, ‘killing’ ‘young virgin girls’ in order to fulfil his innermost desire to be loved. The killing of these girls is symbolic of how Grenouille craves ‘love’ and ‘beauty’, as he is considered an abomination. Contrastingly, Van Sant utilises non-diegetic sound conservatively , specifically when Will finds himself around Skylar, his love interest. These songs are quiet however hold powerful meaning, conveying to the audience Will’s inner emotions in these encounters, and his desire to be with Skylar. This use of music in the tender parts of the film is contrasted to the more serious tone found when Professor Lambeau is attempting to convince Will to utilise his skill in ‘mathematics’, and telling him of all the things ‘he could achieve’. In contrast, Grenouille is depicted as a ‘tick’ from the very beginning of the novel, suggesting that he always intended to pursue his own personal desires. Ironically however in his pursuit to be ‘loved’ Grenouille finds himself loathing the animalistic reaction of his subjects as they fall around him in an ‘orgy’. Thus his own desires lead him to his demise. Contrastingly, Van Sant frames Will through the use of [film technique here] as he attempts to follow what he believes to be his social responsibility to his friends, specifically by staying in South Boston, however after a heartfelt conversation with Chuckie he learns that his social responsibility is to pursue his own desires. The ending shot of the film, shows Will driving off to California to be with Skylar, Eliot Smith’s folk song ‘Miss Misery’ plays softly in the background, conveying to the audience that this is the right decision for Will . Both creators examine the contest between individual desires and societal responsibilities through the protagonists’ dramatic journeys, particularly how neither choice can be disregarded and that an individual must balance their own desires with their responsibilities.

Both Perfume and Goodwill Hunting explore the massive impact that abandonment in the developmental years can have on ones adult life. In Perfume, Suskind utilises figurative language to convey how Grenouille is abandoned by society, this is evident in Chapter 3 when Father Terrier, a priest, rejects Grenouille as an infant. Father Terrier serves as the metaphorical representation of the societal perception and attitude towards Grenouille. In contrast Will in Good Will Hunting is reluctance to let people in emotionally, because of the

abuse and abandonment he suffered as a child. Through the utilising of film editing techniques Van Sant conveys his reluctance by strategic cuts, jumping from the speaker to the listener, this is most prevalent in conversation between Will and his many psychologists, from this the audience is able to view how Will dodges questions and in revolt pries into the personal lives of his psychologist. Because of their societal abandonment in their developmental years, both Grenouille and Will have deep seeded resentment and longing for acceptance and love. This is evident in Perfume where Grenouille longs to ‘possess’ the scent of Laure Richis, and ‘make’ it ‘his own’. Laure is the complete juxtaposition of Grenouille, young, beautiful, and loved by all, she is a metaphor for societies preference for the beautiful. By taking her scent, Grenouille is attempting to gain the love from society that he never gained as a child. In contrast, Will want to pursue Skylar as partner but is held back by his reluctance to be emotionally open. This is made evidently clear to the audience in a scene of Skylar where she is just about to board a plane, the audience expects Will to catch her at the airport. However this scene cuts to Will sitting on a bench watching planes fly off, depicting how both characters wish to be together, however due to his background Will is unable to make the right move. Both authors examine the detrimental effects that abandonment can have on the psychology of an individual, and the long term impact that it can have on them.

Conclusion

In these journeys of transformation, Patrick Suskind and Gus Van Sant utilise a variety of stylistic techniques in order to explore how individuals face and deal with adversity as they attempt to find their purpose in their world. Whilst Suskind primarily focuses on how an individual abandoned by society can lead them to seek self-satisfaction no matter the cost to others. Gus Van Sant explores how others can have significant influence on the choices of others. Both texts however explore the classists prejudices in society and how these prejudices create barriers to success. Both texts utilise their medium in order to convey these themes in ways that engage their respective audiences.