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Look Into My Eyes

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Abstract

This is a film review of *Look Into My Eyes* (2023), directed by Lana Wilson.

Keywords

Psychics, Afterlife

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Author Notes

Chris Deacy is Reader in Theology and Religious Studies and former Head of Department of Religious Studies at the University of Kent in Canterbury, UK. His PhD (University of Wales, 1999) was in the area of redemption and film, and Chris has published monographs which include *Christmas as Religion: Rethinking Santa, the Secular, and the Sacred* (Oxford University Press, 2016); *Screening the Afterlife: Theology, Eschatology and Film* (Routledge, 2012); and *Screen Christologies: Redemption and the Medium of Film* (University of Wales Press, 2001). Chris also writes regular film reviews, is writing a book about nostalgia and religion and has been hosting a podcast since 2018 called *Nostalgia Interviews with Chris Deacy* - <https://audioboom.com/channels/4956567>



Look Into My Eyes (2023), dir. Lana Wilson

Look Into My Eyes is a poignant documentary which charts the day to day lives of seven New York psychics and is all the better for the way in which it doesn't simply propagate the notion that the psychics are in any sense claiming to be "objective professionals" who speak with unadulterated authority on the lives of their clients. Rather, they came across as real, authentic people with often traumatic life stories of their own which match those of their clients. Indeed, it feels as though the people who are doing the psychic readings themselves come from a background where they are unsure of their own journeys.

They do not in all cases believe the messages from "the other side" that they are imparting, and indeed we are afforded a glimpse into a couple of scenarios where they demonstrably get it wrong. But, equally, showing the even-handedness of the filmmakers' intentions, there were also quite a few scenes where it felt that they were definitely onto something. There are minimal moments where the psychics are setting out to establish the possibility that the souls they are

channeling are from the afterlife, with several occasions where the visitations are of humans, or even pets, who are still living.

We are not given much scope to come to a view one way or another, with the psychics not interested in deconstructing or corroborating any particular theological position on what they are pointing to: their focus is more one of establishing the human angle whereby the psychic readings impact and even transform the lives of their clients, and in turn themselves. We also see the psychic readers forming a community of psychics whose objective is one of seeking how to look out for and counsel each other. These are wounded healers, indeed, who take on each other's pain and help them to transition.

For anyone who goes into this documentary film anticipating some great reveal, they are going to be disappointed, and it is unlikely that anyone going into the film a sceptic will come to a different position. But they are likely to extend empathy towards the healing narratives on display. We don't know whether the clients have come to the psychics as a last or as a first resort, but either way these are people in need who are seeking closure, even prepared to turn to unscientific methods to achieve this. For example, we hear a story from a doctor who decades earlier tended to a young girl in an emergency ward who later died of gunshot wounds, and he has been traumatized in the intervening years and wants to know if she is at peace.

As with movies about the afterlife, it is this-worldly vicissitudes and traumas that predominate, and there is a reductionistic and impressive dimension to *Look Into My Eyes* which promotes the notion that psychics are fundamentally in the business of healing the living. The afterlife is important insofar as it helps us face ultimate questions in the here and now, both for the client and, no less importantly, for the person doing the healing.