

Dying and Sexuality – Controversial Motive in Contemporary Cinema

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Abstract : Since the beginning of the cinematographic industry, there has been a visible interest in two leading themes: death and sexuality. One of the reasons of the unfading popularity of these motives was the fact that death or sex employed as leitmotifs attracted great attention of the viewers, and this guaranteed a financial success. What seems interesting is the fact that the themes of death and sexuality/eroticism seem to be mutually exclusive in the mainstream movies to such extent that they almost never appear together on the screen. As leitmotifs they describe opposite experiences of human life, one refers to affirmation of life, the other points to atrophy and decay. This film paradigm is rarely challenged. Thus, a relatively less attention has been devoted so far to entwining dying and sexuality/eroticism in one movie. In our paper, we wish to have a closer look at the visualizations of dying with focus on the aspect of sexuality/eroticism. Our analysis will concentrate on the contemporary European and American cinema, and especially the recent productions that contribute to the cultural phenomenon of entwining the two realms of human life. We will investigate the main clichés, plot and visual schemes, motives and narrative techniques on the examples of Sweet November (2001), A Little Bit of Heaven (2011) and Now is good (2012). We will also shed some light on the recent film productions that seem to provide a shift in portraying the realms of dying and sexuality concentrating on The Garden of Earthly Delights (2003) as the most paradigmatic example.

Keywords : contemporary cinema, dying and sexuality, narrative techniques, plot and visual schemes

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