

The Significance of Urban Space in Death Trilogy of Alejandro González Iñárritu

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Abstract : The cinema of Alejandro González Iñárritu hasn't been subjected to a lot of detailed analysis yet, what makes it an exceptionally interesting research material. The purpose of this presentation is to discuss the significance of urban space in three films of this Mexican director, that forms Death Trilogy: 'Amores Perros' (2000), '21 Grams' (2003) and 'Babel' (2006). The fact that in the aforementioned movies the urban space itself becomes an additional protagonist with its own identity, psychology and the ability to transform and affect other characters, in itself warrants for independent research and analysis. Independently, such mode of presenting urban space has another function; it enables the director to complement the rest of characters. The basis for methodology of this description of cinematographic space is to treat its visual layer as a point of departure for a detailed analysis. At the same time, the analysis itself will be supported by recognised academic theories concerning special issues, which are transformed here into essential tools necessary to describe the world (mise-en-scène) created by González Iñárritu. In 'Amores perros' the Mexico City serves as a scenery – a place full of contradictions- in the movie depicted as a modern conglomerate and an urban jungle, as well as a labyrinth of poverty and violence. In this work stylistic tropes can be found in an intertextual dialogue of the director with photographs of Nan Goldin and Mary Ellen Mark. The story recounted in '21 Grams', the most tragic piece in the trilogy, is characterised by almost hyperrealistic sadism. It takes place in Memphis, which on the screen turns into an impersonal formation full of heterotopias described by Michel Foucault and non-places, as defined by Marc Augé in his essay. By contrast, the main urban space in 'Babel' is Tokio, which seems to perfectly correspond with the image of places discussed by Juhani Pallasmaa in his works concerning the reception of the architecture by 'pathological senses' in the modern (or, even more adequately, postmodern) world. It's portrayed as a city full of buildings that look so surreal, that they seem to be completely unsuitable for the humans to move between them. Ultimately, the aim of this paper is to demonstrate the coherence of the manner in which González Iñárritu designs urban spaces in his Death Trilogy. In particular, the author attempts to examine the imperative role of the cities that form three specific microcosms in which the protagonists of the Mexican director live their overwhelming tragedies.

Keywords : cinematographic space, Death Trilogy, film Studies, González Iñárritu Alejandro, urban space

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