

Mise en scène in *City of God* and *La Haine*

Mise en scène is important in creating meaning and generating response in both these films. In *City of God* (hereafter referred to as CG), it is greatly important in drawing out audience response while in *La Haine* (hereafter referred to as LH) the importance of mise en scène stems from its ability to give meaning to the film.

Comment [teacher1]: Good distinction made

The disco scene in CG highlights how vital mise en scène is in drawing out audience response to the film. The scene hinges on Benny; the fact that Benny has been able to bring together all the different groups within the city of God: the soul crowd, the religious groups, the gangsters, the samba crew, the groovy crowd and Lil Ze – visually depicted by the different costumes of the different groups – shows how Benny is the only person that can unite the city and keep a reasonable peace. This point highlights the importance of mise en scène in the scene in enticing audience response to the film; this is because the only real way of creating the message that Benny creates unity between the people of the city of God is visually; therefore without mise en scène in this scene the message the director is trying to put across could not be created and the audience would not be able to respond. The message that Benny creates unity in the City of God serves to enhance the audience's feeling of loss when Benny is killed by Blacky; this is because the audience is positioned to feel that Benny is the only person who can limit Lil Ze from going on a continuous murderous rampage, and therefore when he is killed the audience feels as though there is no hope of peace in the City of God being maintained. Mise en scène is vitally important again to the scene in helping to develop the character of Lil Ze and generating audience response towards him. Lil Ze's performance when he is rejected a dance by the girl is incredibly important in conveying his insecurities to the viewer and in generating an emotional response from them. Lil Ze's sad facial expression connotes inner turmoil and generates empathy and compassion from the audience. The disco scene is one of many scenes in CG which uses mise en scène as the main story-telling technique. For this reason, mise en scène is of incredible importance to the film in creating meaning and generating response.

Comment [teacher2]: Well chosen scene; strong and detailed analysis

The scene in LH in which the boys are running around Paris at night trying to get home demonstrates the tremendous importance of mise en scène in giving the film meaning. The emptiness and lack of people in the scene, shown through empty streets and train stations, brings to focus the dangers of night-time Paris – there is nobody around to help the boys if they get into trouble. This idea of emptiness is furthered in the part of the scene in which the gang are sitting on a roof top, overlooking Paris. Here mise en scène is used to create the idea that the boys from the banlieue are isolated and ant-like in the huge city of Paris. This again shows the high importance of mise en scène to the film in creating meaning. Like in CG, the film's most powerful message to the audience is put across mainly through mise en scène. The film's inspiring message for the French people to rebel against police brutality is put across in the scene through the drunken man jumping up and down on the police car, showing his contempt for authority. The fact that the film's most powerful message to the viewer is put across using mise en scène shows how important it is to the film in creating meaning.

Comment [teacher3]: Good, though lacking the detail and sustained focus of your comments on CG above.

The ending of CG can be used to further the point that mise en scène is of paramount importance in extracting audience response to the film. However; unlike the disco scene, the mise en scène in the ending scene of CG is used strongly both to create meaning and generate response, as opposed

to being used just to provoke a response from the viewer. The images of the dead bodies lying on the ground demonstrate how important mise en scène is in creating meaning and generating response to the film; the messages that the film gives out in the portrayal of the dead bodies and the impact that they have on the viewer could not be achieved by any other way other than visually. The way in which Lil Ze's dead body is portrayed through mise en scène –his entire body covered in bullet wounds – symbolizes how Lil Ze has got his come upppance. This compels the viewer into feeling indifferent to Lil Ze's death, despite the fact that Lil Ze has lived a short and difficult life, probably owing to psychological trouble. Arguably the film's most powerful message, that the violence in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro is shocking and unacceptable, is portrayed through mise en scène. An example of how this message is portrayed to the viewer can be seen in the way the Runts are presented: children running around with guns, murderous, ruthless and unfeeling –not the way children should be. The audience is obliged to feel that the violence the Runts have witnessed in the City of God has had a deeply disturbing effect on them. This point again shows how important mise en scène is to the film in creating messages and generating responses from the audience.

Comment [teacher4]: Good; focused well on response

The ending of LH adds weight to the argument that mise en scène is vastly important in giving meaning to the film. At the start of the sence while the boys are talking, the image of Charles Baudelaire is on the wall in the background, a purely mise en scène element of the scene - this is used to make a general statement about the journey the boys have been on in the film – the boys have lost their innocence – just as Baudelaire lost his throughout his life. The image of Baudelaire can also be seen as a sign that tells the viewer that the film is heading for a sad ending. At the end of the scene Hubert is placed in binary opposition to a policeman. This again symbolizes the film's most important message –rebel against authority, through mise en scène, again demonstrating the importance of mise en scène in creating meaning in the film. The binary opposition between Hubert and the policeman can be drawn out further by highlighting the fact that Hubert is black and the policeman is white; the opposition may symbolize the racial tension in France.

Comment [teacher5]: Good explanation

In conclusion, mise en scène is highly important in creating meaning and generating response in both CG and LH, but while in CG, mise en scène has a great importance in drawing out audience response to the film, in LH, mise en scène finds its importance in its ability to give meaning to the film.

Comment [teacher6]: Confident structure – please see Moodle for your grade and my overall comments