

Analyse the thematic aspects of the opening sequence to cidade de deus essay samp...



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The opening sequence to *Cidade de Deus* is of thematic significance. It introduces to the viewer many of the themes that will be explored in the film. An analysis of the initial scene tells us that some of the main themes of *Cidade de Deus* are escape, poverty, violence and death. It also becomes clear from this sequence that the film will deal with the issue of corruption and the significance of a breakdown in society. The directors, Fernando Meirelles and Kátia Lund, convey these themes through the use of a variety of cinematic techniques.

One of the most obvious themes that emerges from the opening sequence is poverty. The film plunges us straight into the heart of a favela. The close camera work that is used immediately gives a sense of cramped and claustrophobic living condition. Close-ups of people's bare feet and ragged clothes as well as the make-shift roofs and terraces of the favela emphasize people's struggle to find such basic things as proper clothing and shelter, and help to convey the theme of poverty in the film. The fact that they are killing and plucking their own chicken also somehow conveys a sense of an impoverished society. It could be seen as symbolic of the fact that people in the favelas are never far from death. It is certainly a stark contrast to a European society where almost everyone, regardless of class, would go out and buy meat ready-prepared from a supermarket or butchers. The theme of poverty is also evoked by the desperate chase to catch the escaped chicken and by the chicken itself; which seems skinny and malnourished.

As well as poverty, the themes of violence and death are also depicted in the opening sequence of the film. There are many symbolic representations of violence. For example, the very first shot we see is of a knife being

sharpened; a clear indicator of the violence that will follow. There are also several dramatic, close-up images of guns that function in the same way. The theme of death is also emphasized when the diegetic sound of the Brazilian style drumming suddenly stops and the film cuts to an extreme close-up of a chicken's blood on a plate. The fast, chaotic and violent nature of the opening sequence in general could be seen to reflect the nature of life in the favelas.

Furthermore, the theme of escape or rather inescapability is evoked by the opening sequence of *Cidade de Deus*. The chicken that runs away can clearly be seen an allegory for escape while the scene in which Buscape is caught in the middle of Ze Pequeno's gang and the police is symbolic of the inescapability from violence and crime in the favela. These opening scenes relates to this key theme of the entire film by visually and concisely depicting the almost inescapable nature of life in the favelas.

Just as the chicken foresees its fate and tries to escape, Buscape witnesses young people around him falling into a life of crime and violence and seeks to escape this fate. However, despite Buscape's disinterest in either criminality or police work, he continually finds himself caught between these two factions. The theme of escape is perhaps best summarized by the line 'se correr o bicho pega, se ficar o bicho come'[1] (fight and you'll never survive, run and you'll never escape).

The breakdown of law and order is also highlighted by the opening sequence. The scenes of children running in the streets of the favela with guns, and the moment in which the gang squares-up to the police suggest a

total disregard for the law. The film depicts a gun culture of anarchy and highlights the issues of a breakdown in society. There is a sense of corruption as we see children entangled in this gun culture and life of crime. The images of children with guns are juxtaposed by the flashback in which we see an innocent game of football being played in the country. This football scene is symbolic of the purity of childhood; the children are simply playing as they should be at that age.

The opening sequence to *Cidade de Deus* introduces the themes of poverty, violence, death, escape, corruption and the breakdown of law and order. These thematic aspects set a precedent for the rest of the film, indicating to the viewer what the film will be about and what issues it will attempt to explore.

The themes of the film are introduced and emphasized via a variety of different cinematic techniques. Fernando Meirelles and Kátia Lund use extreme close-ups, symbolism, allegory, an effective use of lighting and both diegetic and non-diegetic sound. The thematic aspects of the opening sequence give the film greater depth and meaning. By exploring these general themes, the directors manage to extract universal significance from the events and action within the film, adding to its international success.

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