

Cinematographic Dreams and Illusions within the Reality of the Femicides in Juarez, Mexico.

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Abstract— The ability of filmmakers to use aural and visual elements frequently allows them to excel in mimicking the likeness of a reality. The directors employ advanced and complex strategies to compel the audience to believe that what is being presented is “real” and that it is being re-presented objectively. Conversely, representations of real-life events have a tendency to blur the limits between what is “real” and dreams or illusions. Such is the case of the films representing the femicides in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico. In this paper, I conduct a comparative analysis of three films dealing with these crimes. Specifically, I assess when and how the directors blur distinctions between reality and dreams and between reality and illusion. I also explore possible psychological and conceptual interpretations of these instances. A priori I argue that the blending of reality and dreams is used in these films as a nonlinguistic metaphor for: first, the nightmarish reality lived by femicides victims and their families; and second, the attempt made by some institutions such as the Mexican government and the maquiladora industry to obfuscate the reality of the crimes to protect political interests. Furthermore, I analyze the instances where the limits between reality and illusion or dreams are diffused in light of the theory of the “stylistic effect,” as developed by Michael Riffaterre. I propose that these instances are the incongruous elements which are crucial for the representation of the femicides, for, paradoxically, it is through incongruences in the films that a unified, coherent system of signification is established.

Keywords—film; femicide; Ciudad Juarez, Mexico; mimesis; dreams; illusions; Riffaterre