

MIT Student

The Naked City (1948) Jules Dassin

Opening Scene:

- "A city, a particular city of some people"
 - o The sense of anonymity in the city, we're focusing in or picking a story out of the crowd. This works at the end with "eight million stories, and this has been one of them" we zoom out to see the entire city again as opposed to focused scenes.
 - o We also see seemingly random people, they didn't necessarily even have to be integral to the plot of the film
 - The first people we see named is "Mr. Halloran" and he and his wife use their last names jokingly but as if they were strangers (perhaps in part because they are strangers to us). All the other vignettes of the city pass in anonymity until we focus in on Ms. Swenson

Aspects of the city

- Children center around the fire hydrant we have at least three shots of kids playing outside the precinct around the hydrant in various activities
- No privacy, nothing happens in isolation and the people of the city are involved always in some way
 - o People talking about the case, reading the newspaper
 - o The crazy people who think they know who did it or in fact did do it
 - And the savvy police man who can see past them
 - o The crowd facilitates, hinders and generally responds to the action of the chase
 - Waking up in the people as they shoot down the fire escapes
 - Running towards the gunshot
- Yet in the crowd, anonymity becomes privacy
 - o "Y'ever see a man looks like this"
 - Garza can walk by right past the person he's asking because he's just part of the crowd.
 - "This is a great big beautiful city, try to find me"
- Mark Hallinger represents the voice of the city
 - o "leading" the detectives, watching them as they hunt for the killer
 - o Reading the "thoughts" of the characters
- Certain types of people that match and dispel their stereotypes
 - o Miss Dexter
 - "all crazy for the bright lights...her kind of dead doesn't rest"
 - The person who comes to the city for the dream of being famous, leaving their non-urban home, abandoning any outsider traits they have (like ethnic names)
 - "She couldn't be happy unless she was rich"

- The vice that perhaps lead to her downfall, all the theft; you'd expect her to be simply using her beauty but not the wit you'd need to be jewel thief.
 - Her fame comes from her death
 - "the athletic thug"
 - Though he does point out that he is more than his stereotype when he outsmarts the detective
 - The "hard-boiled detective" of film noir => Lt. Maldoon
 - But he isn't really as "hard-boiled" as a Humphrey Bogart character like Sam Spade in *Maltese Falcon*
- Similarities to other films we've watched
 - Seeing people in their jobs, feeling a little mechanical ("does anyone even listen to this program
 - "do you want Billy run over by a truck?"
 - "I wouldn't steal a piece of bread if I was starving"
 - The locals protecting the member of their neighborhood, not telling the police where Garza lived
 - "I was afraid to go to the police"
 - A daunting search with simple methods
- The Noir Depiction of the city
 - Having its own character, personified
 - "fundamental ambivalence...corrupt...but also exciting and sophisticated
 - The sense of immortality that US cities had after WWII when all the other great cities of Europe were destroyed in bombing
 - But also the "Suburbanizing" of the American population post-war while film noir was so big, allowing the city to be displayed to be more dangerous, perhaps fantastical because it plays into the imagination of the city they left.

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