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Building Resolution: Analyzing Payoff in Film

Films can evoke feeling. They can even create feelings you have never felt before, highs that you will always be chasing in every film afterwards. And, through numerous techniques, they can push us to respond emotionally and physically in ways that are unique to themselves, yet we've also felt at some other point in our lives. In this case, I will be writing about the latter, using sequences from three entirely different films: *Victims of Sin* (1951), *Enemy* (2013), and *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* (2015). Despite their varied contexts, each sequence does the same job of building up moments and satisfying that build up through its resolution, while still being different in the variety of emotions they each convey.

The sequence I will be taking a look at in *Victims of Sin* takes place in the third act, in which she kills Rodolfo in order to save her son. Here, Rodolfo is seen physically and verbally abusing his son, to which he cries in fear and in pain. Suddenly an amped up score plays and Violeta enters the room and shoots Rodolfo, resulting in her serving prison time.

To emphasize the sound of Rodolfo hitting Juanito, the sound in the sequence is diegetic, up until the moment Violeta enters the room. There is nothing but Rodolfo's yelling, Juanito's crying for help, and the sound of Rodolfo's physical hits. Rodolfo's abuse was seen earlier in the film towards Violeta; falling victim to him throughout the film, this scene is earned in her finally getting rid of him after his abuse towards her and her son. To play into that, the non-diegetic musical score starts, already at a climax, pushing into that feeling of reward and yet also a conclusion, as the suffering from fear of Rodolfo is over. The music serves as a push to further

the audience's relief for the two of them, and to highlight this important moment, the film cuts to three different worried faces of men in the room once Violeta enters. After acts such as leaning to prostitution and other sacrifices to support him, she still keeps her sense of self through her son, an important trait that, having been processed throughout the film, adds onto the satisfaction of this sequence once it concludes.

Enemy is an interesting one. I settled on looking at the opening scene, the scene that sparked the most feeling from me in the film. Confusion, fear, and discomfort flooded me throughout. The sequence begins with Jake Gyllenhaal's character walking into a room, with a haunting musical score playing. In the room is a group of men, gathered around watching a woman perform sex acts; none of the men really look pleased or happy to be there, especially Gyllenhaal's character. A spider is revealed and appears to be stepped on by a woman, ending the sequence.

The sequence takes its time. It's very slow, it lingers on the facial expressions of the men, and it doesn't exactly end. While it cuts and moves on to the next location, there is never really a clear understanding of the purpose of that scene, at least, not explained in your face during the film. I've chosen this sequence, as it's been in my mind the most out of anything in the film, including the ending. This is because I interpret this scene as taking place after the events at the end of the film. Looking at the facial expressions of all the men, including Adam/Anthony, a very specific look can be seen. And there is a reason for why we stay on them for as long as we do. It's not a look of fear, or anger, but a look of guilty pleasure. They all hate that they like being there. To make a direct connection, it is similar to pornography: this entire sequence is a representation of lust and regret. And why a spider? On paper, it is just a spider. I am absolutely terrified of spiders; outside of that automatic feeling of fear, I find this to be a metaphor for that

lust. At the end of the film, Adam seems to become Anthony, opening up the mail and holding onto that key, which we see at the beginning as well. As for his wife turning into the spider, this appears to be highlighting that he has let his lust and unfaithfulness take over, with the scene of the woman stepping on the spider conveying that, again, he hates that he loves it.

Moving on to *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*: this scene features Han Solo and Kylo Ren face-to-face in an intense confrontation. After their conversation, Kylo Ren kills him, as the lighting darkens in the scene. Chewbacca then rampages on Stormtroopers and explodes the entire ship.

This film being my first encounter with the *Star Wars* franchise offered what is most likely a different interpretation from most fans. To see Han Solo, being only a legendary name in my mind, get killed off in my first viewing of him, was an odd feeling. The ship's opening behind Han Solo that offers light is important because this is the only form of natural light in the scene. Representing the light side, shining on Han Solo with a hint of blue, this contrasts the red that shines on Han Solo's face which comes from Kylo Ren's side (the dark side). It felt inevitable as they got closer, and once the light left, so did all the blue within the scene. The intensity from the score also pushed me to feel deep down that this is an important moment in the series. In relation to my argument, this is another moment that was built up from the moment they made contact with each other, and Chewbacca's rampage afterwards feels deserved and earned.

Every sequence I decided to explore was the most impactful out of their respective films to me as an audience member. These brought up the strongest emotions, and all share the same strengths in earning a moment that was built up well. Even an opening scene can work as a payoff, as the *Enemy* scene lingers in my mind after watching the entire film. That, to me, works

as the ending, and is a very unique extension of evidence that film can differ in every way possible and still deliver on always making you feel.