

The films *Gangs of New York* and *Goodfellas* both directed by Martin Scorsese and are based in New York, the former in the 1860's and the latter in 1960's. Scorsese is known for directing gangster films with an historical accuracy. *Gangs of New York* was based on an era rather than a specific person's story. He took some artistic liberties with dates and personalities but based the story around characters known in the gang rings in the 1860's. *Goodfellas* however is based on a true life story of Henry Hill who was a member of a New York based branch of the Mafia. Winning an Oscar for his directing role in *The Departed* Scorsese is a critically acclaimed director who lends his talents well to psychological dramas and gangster films.

The use of Dialogue is important in both *Gangs of New York* and *Goodfellas* especially in the "Dead Rabbit" and "Funny ...How" scenes as it helps to build tension. The change in the way dialogue is delivered allows the audience to understand the characters of Bill Cutting and Tommy. The silence in the scenes also builds tension between the characters.

The "Dead Rabbit" scene in *Gangs of New York* contains no music and the dialogue fills the whole soundtrack. **The idea was for Scorsese to build tension as silence allows for no distraction for the audience, who have to focus on the power and meaning of the words being said by the two characters** (1). Lines from Sheriff Happy Jack Mulraney are delivered in an official, well-rehearsed manner which makes the audience feel as though he is saying what he has been told to say rather than what he wants to say. **The lines "My allegiance is to the law" and "I'm paid to uphold the law" allow the viewer to see that he is corruptible. The double meaning behind being "paid to uphold the law" is seen by the audience when the answer "What in heaven's name are you talking about?" is delivered as they realise that at the time he is paid to uphold the governments law but would gladly be paid by this gang leader to uphold Cutting's law if necessary** (2). Past conflict is hinted at as Jack was a member of the original Dead Rabbits who were defeated in battle in the beginning of the film with the coolness of the delivery of the lines "You may have misgivings but don't go believing that Jack, that way lies damnation." And the cold confident reply of "I am no danger of damnation Bill" as each man's deep seeded hatred over their religious differences and past conflicts become evident. The delivery of the lines reminds the audience of the determined stand off earlier in the film where both gangs are lined up prepared for battle. Scorsese uses silence in scenes where one character is trying to intimidate another to build a tension, scenes like the "Funny... how?" scene in *Goodfellas* and the scene where Billy Costigan arrests Colin Sullivan in *The Departed* and when Jimmy is confronted with his true identity at the end of *Shutter Island* all contain silence which fills the gaps between the words which is just as important as the words themselves as they allow the viewer to process the words and understand that these are important scenes where vital plot information is given out. It also builds tension in the scene as the viewer is left hanging on every word being said. This relates to the scene in *Gangs of New York* as it shows the power Cutting has over people who used to be his rivals and also alludes to the consequences of losing the battle for the "Dead Rabbits" and how they are forced to live in the shadow of a man who slaughtered their friends and family.

In the "Funny... how" scene of *Goodfellas* the dialogue allows for tension to build. Tommy's dialogue in the beginning of the film is fast and high pitched as if he is proud of his story. **This is important as his voice in the beginning of the scene contrasts to the slower paced, more controlled voice he uses with a lower tone as he becomes more serious. In the line "What do you mean the way I talk." The tone of Ray Liotta's voice changes and the contrast is made clear that he is taking offence to Henry's comment and indicates a change on mood of the scene to the audience. Also silence plays a huge part in creating and relieving tension in this scene** (3). In the beginning of the scene there isn't a moment of silence. Tommy is telling his story and in his pauses there are always people laughing, and even when they are laughing Tommy is talking over them adding in some comment or

another for comedic value. It gives off a very casual tone to the scene as you hear the clinking of people's cutlery and socially feels as though this situation could be happening in any restaurant. This allows the audience to relate to the situation as it feels as though it is just a group of friends going out for dinner. **The content of the story allows the audience to see that they aren't quite ordinary people though as it talked about Tommy getting beaten up by a policeman in a comedic way. As soon as Tommy begins to take offence to what Henry is saying there is silence between the lines. This puts the viewers on edge as they feel the awkwardness of the situation** (3). The silence also brings impact to the words that are being said, each question being asked pulls the audience in as they feel as though they are being asked the questions and are being forced to come up with a reply. The same effect is used in the film *Shutter Island* in the scene when Jimmy is confronted with his true identity. The silence in between the sentences allow for the audience to understand the importance of the scene in *Shutter Island*. The same applies for *Goodfellas* in that this scene is an introduction into Henry's mafia life. Including the silence and the change in Ray Liotta's voice Scorsese highlights the importance of this scene.

In the "Dead Rabbit" scene of *Gangs of New York* and in the "Funny... how" scene of *Goodfellas* are both edited to create tension, both beginning slowly and speeding up as tension increases. Their placement in terms of the film are important too as they give a reality check to the audience of the inside workings of a gang.

The editing of the "Dead Rabbit" scene of *Gangs of New York* is of a slow pace. It is done in this slow pace to bring emphasis to the scene and slow the pace of the film and is almost a lull for viewers to regain their place between two points of major conflict in the film. **[A detailed discussion of the editing in this scene follows but is not included in the exemplar]**

The editing in the "Funny...how?" scene of *Goodfellas* goes from a few shots which are cutting slowly, allowing the audience to understand the story being told by Tommy, to quick paced cuts between Tommy and Henry as the tension builds. **[A detailed discussion of the editing in this scene follows but is not included in the exemplar]** This gives a reality check to the audience as they see that everything has consequences and puts the job into perspective. Scenes like these are an important way for directors to foreshadow the collapse of what looks from the outside to be a perfect job. **In *Goodfellas* it foreshadows the inevitable fall of the mafia** (4).