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FLM151: Section B — Fall 2016

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Film Analysis #7  
Parallel Action

Discuss the use of **parallel action**and how it is used to immerse viewers and move the story forward. Keep an eye out for the *action link*, and don't confuse flashback with parallel action.

*Cell 211* makes extensive use of parallel action throughout the movie in wonderful way that keep the story moving forward without being too confusing. Considering that *Cell 211* is a story about the prisoners of the prison riot and those affected on the outside, it makes sense to use parallel action so that the audience gets the story from both sides of the prison riot. Parallel action is essential to *Cell 211* in order to tell the complete story to the audience.

Just a few minutes into *Cell 211* the audience is presented with a moment of parallel action that sets up the plot of the film. At the same time that a piece of debris falls from the ceiling during the orientation for Juan Oliver, a new prison guard; Malamadre, the head of the prison mutineers, breaks free of his handcuffs and strangles a different prison guard just outside of the building (00:00:00). This sequence of events is presented to us separately from Juan Oliver’s point of view and then later from Malamadre’s point of view, setting up the prison riot that breaks out during the confusion resulting in Juan Oliver’s abandonment in cell 211 (Kay). The audience is first presented the confusion of the scene from Juan view to set up the unknown situation that Juan is in. Next we the audience is presented with Malamadre’s point of view which gives the audience the action link of the other guard leaving Malamadre for a moment to check on the loud noise of the debris falling inside the room. By presenting Malamadre’s view last, we learn the gravity of the situation and that Malamadre is a clever and dangerous man before Juan knows this fact.

Further into *Cell 211* the reality of how the prison riot is affecting the outside world becomes a factor that will bring about massive emotional moments of character change in the film. While the prison right is dangerous and resulted in the death of an inmate, the outside world has become equally as dangerous. This is exemplified when SWAT turns their aggression on the crowd waiting for news of their family members outside of the prison gates (Kelly). When Juan’s wife Elena is accidentally beaten to death by an overzealous prison guard, José Utrilla (00:00:00). During this time the prisoners in the prison are equally as lost and confused to what is happening in the outside world, just as the people outside the gate were previously to being attacked. In a cruel twist of fate, the prisoners, and in particular Juan, are left waiting to hear what has happened while the crowd outside experience the cruelty of the prison guards. The action link for this parallel action comes from one of the prisoners who has a secret cell phone and finds the news link that contains a video of Juan’s wife being beaten. This moment propels Juan into revenge state that he cannot overcome.

Works Cited

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Kelly, Chris. "Cell 211." *Socialist Review*. N.p., n.d. Web. 25 Oct. 2016.