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The Film Camera Filter in *Paprika*

In the world of *Paprika*, Detective Konakawa has been fighting an internal battle, trying to resolve his deep-seated trauma left behind by his old friend's death. In the midst of the chairman's takeover of the DC Mini and the capture of Dr. Chiba's dream alter ego, Paprika, Konakawa is forced to take action and save her from the grips of the chairman's minion, Osanai. As he rips her away from Osanai's fantasy world, he is thrust into his own dream, a sequence that he has lived through time and time again. As he moves from one movie scene to the next, he once again finds himself at the scene of a murder, with the murderer running away from him, only this time, the murderer is Osanai. As Osanai is about to escape, the shot suddenly morphs, shifting away from the animation style that is present in the majority of the film, to one that is reminiscent of a movie shot on an old-timey film camera. The audience is then greeted with a close up of Konakawa, paralyzed by his fear, which proceeds to fade out and transition into Konakawa's friend asking, "Where's the rest of it?". As the old film camera filter shifts back into the movie's normal animation style, Konakawa snaps back into action, "finishing" the dream. While the use of this filter is a clear reference to Konakawa's turbulent past regarding filmmaking and a way to tie in the advancement of his character arc, it is also a delivery mechanism for a prominent issue brought up in *Paprika*: the illusion of identity.

Obviously, the differentiating characteristic of this shot is the filter through which it is presented to the viewer, created through a combination of other aspects. To start with, the shot becomes less focused, and black spots appear on the screen, providing a clear contrast between the quality of modern film and older film. Adding on to this effect, the camera also seems to begin shaking, creating an image that the viewer can imagine is the result of film passing through an old projector. To complete the visual effects, the entire shot takes on a yellowish tint, playing into our association of old pictures or movies with similar lighting. As this happens on screen, the sound of a film reel running is added to the background of the scene, drawing the viewer's attention not only through visuals but also through auditory stimulation. These aspects all join together to present this shot through a filter that temporarily emphasizes the physical action of the scene, and allows the film to communicate a new message through its mode of presentation.

For just a moment, the audience is no longer watching the world of *Paprika*, they are watching a new film created within that world. This effect provides a unique transition into the plot development of the scene, where Konakawa's dead friend appears and yells at him to finish the movie. While there are plenty of instances of the impossible scattered throughout the movie, they all blend seamlessly into the world around them, as they were intended to. However, in this instance, Konakawa's friend's appearance is differentiated from the rest, breaking the natural flow of the rest of the film. As a result, while it is impossible to focus on every other illusion, this one stands out. The filter combines with the gravity of the moment to create an experience personalized to Konakawa and gives the audience a glimpse into the character's psyche.

Now of course, this filter serves an obvious purpose in the plot of *Paprika*. After struggling with his inner demons for the entirety of the film, Konakawa finally breaks through

his own repressive instincts, and “completes” the film. In doing so, he honors the memory of his late friend, and the film-like filter is a callback to what kept them together. However, this filter can also be seen as a nod to this idea in the film that our identities are nothing more than an illusion we create. Konakawa had denied the true meaning of this traumatic vision for too long. By highlighting this sequence with this filter, it is almost as if Konakawa becomes a character in a film of his own. The Konakawa that was present when the filter was there was not the real Konakawa, he was just an actor playing a part. He only takes action after the filter disappears, and the actor behind the character is finally visible. After finding his closure, Konakawa is finally free from his own denial, and it becomes evident that he was putting up a facade before, trying to hide the painful memories of his friend.

While it is hard to say whether or not the use of this filter had any meaning beyond tying Konakawa to his friend, it does still serve as a way to highlight the culmination of Konakawa’s development throughout the story. The use of a filter can easily go unnoticed in a normal viewing of a movie, yet it can still have a subconscious effect. Clearly, the animator was not trying to use the filter to give the scene any additional shock value the way a fourth-wall break or dramatic sound effects would. Its purpose was more to emphasize what was already present in the scene, and perhaps provide additional meaning to it. In my eyes, the filter works with the film’s action to deliver a message about identity and its falsities. Although the plot of the film is all about attention-grabbing illusions in the physical world, it brings to light plenty of messages about illusions that may not be as apparent, and the filter is one of the mediums used to bring these to the surface.