

CHINATOWN

by Robert Towne

Water and real estate scandal, historical, banking scandal. But, uses history anachronistically, as the story addresses the NOW. The situation is a present day type situation.

GITTES'S WORLD

What kind of guy he is. Small time. Caring, up to a point. This guy is upset, but Jake tries to get him out of his office.

p. 4 - line art from the film, on the nose.

IMAGE SYSTEMS

Sex in photos, outdoors. Sexual cruelty - we see what it does to the husband. Sex is a weapon. Little in the film about sexuality is positive.

Imagery. External imagery. Has symbolic value in outside world. You bring it into your film with the same meaning it has in the outside world... that's amateurish. But, if you give an image a meaning in your film, whether or not it has meaning in the outside world, that's stronger.

THE SNOOP SEQUENCE p. 20

Investigative sequence and Jake's technique.

We're given little information on the guy.

We're given a problem.

He tries to solve the case.

Resolution ends up in the papers.

INCITING INCIDENT - main plot begins only when the body hits the ground. When Mulwray's body is found. It is NOT when Mrs. Mulwray hires him, because: it doesn't upset the balances of forces in his life, and the big hook isn't there...

WATER/DROUGHT (subtheme for the film) dripping photographs, water dripping on soundtrack, dry riverbed, dam disaster, flies on soundtrack, seagulls, Water & Power company, ocean, starfish, water in pipe, Echo Park, water on the brain, have to swim in same water as all of us.

THE HUNT FOR MULWRAY p. 40

Sequence begins with a negative. He gets a lawsuit. He tries to find Mulwray to get himself cleared, and out of the lawsuit.

It builds UP and she drops the lawsuit. (reversal)

He doesn't want to drop it. (reversal, again) This is trouble of his own choosing.

Goes to reservoir. Meets Escobar.

Find body. End sequence with very negative. Worse than the lawsuit.

He's a good guy. His choosing to help Mr. Mulwray because he's in trouble will get Jake in trouble.

WATER / DROUGHT fish on wall, Mulvihill liquor and water/drought, bad for glass (double image), spit, steam iron, her riding and sweating.

MRS. MULWRAY CONNECTION p. 44

He is hooked even more deeply.

She lies to hide the can of worms that will lead to her father.

She has found that her father is looking for the girl.

She is hiding her big secret.

Phoney Check - phoney arrangements between people.

SEARCH FOR CLUES p. 56

Ends with a negative in that he's still lost.

Positive is that he's got a valuable clue.

Nose slash, combined with embarrassment of photos in paper makes it personal. He could quit, but he's become obsessed. Much better than if he's just working for a salary.

LEVELS OF CONFLICT - is he involved on three levels?

1. social / environmental

he's against people who have done him wrong, and have killed a man

conflict with police & goons

trying to find a man

clues

2. personal conflict

Escobar

Loach
 Mrs. Mulwray
 Mulvihill
 Noah Cross

3. inner conflict
 he knows not to get involved... but he does anyway
 his operatives tell him to get out
 common sense says to get out, but pride/justice want to be involved.

SEARCH FOR SUSPECTS p.85

Suspects -- Mrs. Mulwray, Yellburton, Cross, also, the mysterious "they"

Images -- nose (castration), gun in ear, goldfish in water, swim in same water we all do, fish head dead eyes

SUBPLOT - LOVE STORY

inciting incident, when she shows up with lawsuit, they meet.
 she drops suit
 he protects her at police
 she hires him, phony contract
 she really hires him...

This sequence ends on an up note. He feels on track, things are happening. He knows who they are and has to narrow it down.

She stutters on anything having to do with her father.

Gittes is in conflict with EVERYONE Clerk, Secretary, Farmers.

SEARCH FOR PUBLIC MOTIVATION p. 106

Tries to light cigarette while driving in car and comes up with Jasper Lamar Crabb... adds tension in a flat scene.

SEARCH FOR PRIVATE MOTIVATION p. 118

WHY. He is searching for the why.

Negative spin on love story. He's calling it off when he calls her Mrs. Mulwray.

Love scene. She uses Oriental makeup, links her with the girl from the backstory. Gittes tries to protect a woman and she was hurt... in the past. His pride is trying to undo the past.

Subplot meets main plot when they make love and it complicates the main plot.

Flaw in her eye. She is the only one who sees clearly.

Hits horn on car. Set up for end of film (with head) -- she will be shot through the eye with the flaw.

ATTEMPT TO PROVE PUBLIC MOTIVATION

Finale. Everything ties together. Nothing that we've seen is not used. Nothing is wasted.

The one place he hasn't wanted to go, he goes. Chinatown.