Visual Text Study – *Gattaca*

Close Analysis of Swimming Scene

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| Image from Film | Visual / Audio Language | Explanation |
|  | * Low angled double-shot of Anton and Antonio (Vincent’s brother and father) to make Anton look big and powerful – *The Chosen One…* They then embrace and hug * Bright, natural lighting streaming in on Anton’s face * Voiceover: ‘A son my father thought worthy of his name’ |  |
|  | * Close-up of ‘Height Chart’ showing that Anton (aged 8) is much taller than Vincent (aged 10) * Vincent rubs out his own height line – angry, frustrated, disappointed by his own lack of height * Instrumental music – slow paced |  |
|  | * Cuts to mid-shot of Anton and Vincent by the ocean * Sound of waves crashing on the shore * Voiceover: ‘By the time we were playing at Blood Brothers, I understood that there was something entirely different flowing through my veins…’ |  |
|  | * Zooms into close-up of the brothers cutting their thumbs to be ‘Blood Brothers’ – Anton refuses to * Voiceover continued: ‘… and I’d need an awful lot more than a drop if I was going to get anywhere.’ * Music withdrawn momentarily |  |
|  | * Long-shot of brothers swimming out to sea * Voiceover: ‘Our favourite game was *Chicken.* When our parents weren’t watching we used to swim out as far as we dared…’ * Instrumental music reintroduced |  |
|  | * Over-head shot of two brother swimming out to sea further – Vincent’s strokes are looking weak and tired; Anton still going strong * Voiceover continued: ‘It was about who would get scared and turn back first…’ * Sound of heavy splashing strokes |  |
|  | * Mid-shot of Anton far ahead of Vincent * Lighting using sepia coloured filter to emphasise that it is a memory / flashback * Dialogue: ‘Come on you coward’ |  |
|  | * Cuts to mid-shot of Vincent who is in trouble – too tired to continue swimming with a pained expression on his face * Voiceover continued: ‘Of course, it was always me.’ |  |
|  | * Over-head shot of Vincent floating on his back – expresses his disappointment and feelings of failure * Voiceover continued: ‘Anton was by far the stronger swimmer; he had no excuse to fail.’ |  |
|  | * Cuts and flashforward to family sitting round the dinner table * Vincent at the foreground and off-centre of shot to show how he is physically and emotionally distanced from his family – doesn’t fit in and studying * Fill light creating shadow on his face |  |
|  | * Cuts to close-up of his father’s face * Fill light from the side creating shadow on the face as he delivers ‘bad news’ to Vincent * Dialogue: ‘The only way you’ll see the inside of a spaceship is if you’re cleaning it…’ |  |
|  | * Cuts to show flashforward – now the boys are ready to swim again as adolescents * Bright lighting to suggest hope * Dialogue: ‘You sure you want to do this? You know you’re gonna lose…’ – Anton to Vincent * Sound of wind blowing the flags |  |
|  | * Mid-shot of boys entering the water echoes earlier shot, but camera is reversed (now in front of them instead of behind) to foretell a different outcome * Voiceover: ‘It was the last time we swam together…’ * Instrumental music reintroduced |  |
|  | * Overhead double-shot to show the boys side-by-side in their swim – again, echoing the earlier race * Lighting suggests that Vincent is coming out of the shadows in to the light (metaphorically out of his brother’s shadow) * Voiceover: ‘ Something was very different about that day…’ |  |
|  | * Point-of-view shot from Anoton’s perspective showing Vincent pull away – mirrors earlier race * Sunlight shining down on Vincent emphasising his ‘heroic’ feat * Voiceover continued: ‘Everytime Anoton tried to pull away, he found me right beside him until finally the impossible happened.’ |  |
|  | * Close-up of Vincent saving Anton from drowning – his triumphant moment as he ‘beats’ his brother for the first time in their lives * Voiceover continued: ‘It was the one moment in our lives that my brother was not as strong as he believed, and I was not as weak. It was the moment that made everything else possible!’ |  |
|  | * Long-shot of both brothers washed up on the shore * Sound of waves lapping the shore – more peaceful than earlier to suggest the calmness now in Vincent’s life * Darker lighting suggesting a new beginning for Vincent and Anton |  |
|  | * Cuts to an extreme close-up of family photograph indicating another shift in time * Vincent tears his own face from family photograph – suggests he has now disowned them as they had to him * Lighting is now very dark as it is at night – hiding away in shadows |  |