

Critical thinking on goodfellas critical response

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“ I’m an average nobody. I get to live the rest of my life like a schnook.”

These are the last words of Henry Hill (Ray Liotta) in the 1995 film GoodFellas, directed by Martin Scorsese; in the film, Henry is a gangster who has risen through the ranks to develop himself as a crime boss, only to run afoul of his associates (Robert De Niro, Joe Pesci). In order to protect his family and save his own life, he turns state’s witness, enrolling in the Witness Protection Program and forever turning away from his life of crime.

Henry Hill, in a way, manages to come to terms with what he has to do; in fact, the last line of the film implies that he misses it greatly. While he will never live down some of the horrible things he did (murder, extortion), he accepts what he has done, and given a second chance, he would do it again. If anything, he laments his now normal, mundane life, as he looks down upon those who do it.

Henry must weigh whatever morals he has left against the appeal and allure of life in the mafia; this informs his decision making process to the point where he eventually chooses his family and his life over the glamour and riches of the mob. He eventually reaches a point where the danger of the job simply cannot suffice anymore; it is a hard decision, but he realizes that all the glamour in the world does not matter if you are dead.

Works Cited

GoodFellas. Dir. Martin Scorsese. Perf. Robert De Niro, Ray Liotta, Joe Pesci. Warner Home Video, 1995. DVD.