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Scapegoats and Redemption on Shutter Island

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Abstract

The themes of redemptive violence, scapegoating, and ritual in the films of Martin Scorsese have provided much grist for critical scholarship. While it is going too far to claim that Scorsese is intentionally interpreting Girardian themes (which are themselves borrowed from a rich mythological tradition), the comparisons between the theorist and the director are compelling. My goal here is to establish the primary themes of scapegoating, mimesis, the cycle of violence, and feuding identities that occur in both Girard's works and Scorsese's films and pull them forward into a more recent work of Scorsese, *Shutter Island.*

Keywords

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Author Notes

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Summary of Girard's Theory

The mimetic model begins with human need – an inherent "lack" within an individual and the search to meet that need.[1] When faced with an initial need or lack, the individual selects a model to imitate in order to gain what the individual requires. At this point, a person has two choices: to imitate God or to imitate another. Put plainly, why would a human choose to follow another human and not God in order to fill this void? Is this not a clear choice? Charles Bellinger gives a persuasive answer:

> The deeper, truer, more mature form of selfhood is a possibility toward which God is always drawing the individual. But insofar as the individual is actively resisting the call of creation, he is existing in a state of inner conflict. He loves himself and seeks to maintain control over his own selfhood, and he hates the pressure that is being placed upon him to become a more mature person…. the sinful human being becomes immensely frustrated at his inability to prevent his creation. In his anger over his inability to kill his deeper self, he develops a need to kill other human beings. He subconsciously construes the other person as a representation of that which he is trying to kill within himself….To attack the Other, the Enemy, becomes a psychological need for the sinful person, as he seeks to avoid becoming *another to himself*, that is, a new self. *The most basic root of ill will toward others is ill will toward the self that one is in the process of becoming*.[2]

Humans are never completely formed, finished, and perfected. The path of humanity is one of growth and progress. Only Yahweh can say, "I AM."[3] The rest of us may only say, "I become." How humans respond to their unformed nature determines their path. We may turn to God and allow God to form and shape us or we may turn to others and look for what they have that we have not in an effort to seek our own completion. If we choose to turn to another human as the model for the next step in our own personal evolution, we seek someone who seems to encompass what we lack. What remains is the question about our perception of our own lack – how do we know we are missing something? Are these needs natural innate needs all humans

share, or are these socially constructed "needs," things that a human does not physiologically or emotionally need, but only perceives to need? Is the difference really significant? Perhaps there is a preliminary step required in which we examine how we perceive our needs, and how we distinguish between needs and wants. For now, let us simply begin with the observation that all humans have needs, and we may either choose to follow God and allow God to form us or we may turn to other humans and seek to obtain what they have that we have not. Beginning the mechanism at this point answers the question, "Why do we copy the desires of others?" The inner emptiness of each human inspires the mimetic process.

Mimesis is the awareness that someone else has something that I believe I need and begins with a game of comparison. I examine my situation and my state of being to assess what I believe is missing. I then see another person and compare her situation and my perception of her state of being, and assess what she has that I need. I will then take steps to obtain what she has or wants, and imitate her in some way in order to obtain it.[4] This portion of the theory describes the driving force behind the effectiveness of advertising and much of the social construction of trends, fashion, technology, education, romance, and friendships. If a famous and stylish celebrity is photographed carrying a designer lunchbox, one may be sure there will be a waiting list for that very lunchbox the next day. One needs only step in the halls of a local school or turn on the TV to see the mimetic desire at work.

Mimesis may be either positive or negative, depending on the being one imitates. If one chooses to imitate Jesus, mimetic desire may be very positive: "What Jesus advocates is mimetic desire. Imitate me, and imitate the father through me….the only way to avoid violence is to imitate me, and imitate the Father."[5] Girard declares that mimetic desire is a "pharmakon – a

medicine and a poison"[6] and can either create illness or cure it. When a person chooses another to imitate, he or she must choose wisely or come to ruin.

When more than one person desires an object, a rivalry is born. This rivalry for the same object leads to envy, competition, and conflict. A mediator is the person with whom I am in mimetic relationship. This person, my rival, mediates reality to me. This makes us "interdividuals;" our identity is construed by the other or model, and we are a conglomerate of mimetic relationships.[7] There are two types of rivalry at work here: internal and external. External mediation exists "when the distance is sufficient to eliminate any contact between the two spheres of possibilities of which the mediator and the subject occupy the respective centers."[8] External mediation exists when an eighth grade girl idolizes a pop star and copies the star's wardrobe, haircut, and mannerisms. The possibilities for contact, or even actual awareness, between the girl and the star are minimal. Internal mediation exists when "this same distance is sufficiently reduced to allow these two spheres to penetrate each other more or less profoundly."[9] The closer the relationship between the people competing for the same object, the more potential exists for a violent outcome.

In both secular and biblical literature, the theme of warring brothers or twins is rampant.[10] Perhaps because the relationship is more intimate and has greater value for each participant, the dissolution of a close relationship would necessarily require greater violence. At some point in a relationship of this nature involved in a mimetic rivalry, the members must decide whether the object of their desire is more important than the relationship with the other. Perhaps this is the greatest act of violence – that break with the other and the replacement of an object where a person once stood. Girard goes on to clarify that "the distance between mediator and subject is primarily spiritual,"[11] and while geography may be one factor, it is not the sole factor in rivalry.

Expanding the relational dimension to the spiritual plane creates an even greater arena for rivalry – and introduces the concept of rivalry with one's self.

Eventually, mimetic rivalry leads to acts of violence, and peace may only be restored through the use of a scapegoat. In a real rivalry, both sides are both aggressor and victim, and the violence escalates to become all-encompassing. In order to stem the cycle of violence, the rivals, be they individuals or communities, must find a victim to carry the responsibility of the conflict: a scapegoat. Girard describes the function of the scapegoat within the mimetic process as follows: "The desire to commit an act of violence on those near us cannot be suppressed without a conflict; we must divert that impulse, therefore, toward the sacrificial victim, the creature we can strike down without fear of reprisal, since he lacks a champion."[12] The scapegoat must exhibit some weakness or vulnerability, or bear some marker that sets him or her apart from the rest of the culture. The sacrificial scapegoat has several functions within the rival communities, but primarily the scapegoat serves to "restore harmony to the community, to reinforce the social fabric."[13] The sacrifice must "quell violence within the community to prevent conflicts from erupting."[14] Through the use of a scapegoat, societal violence may be avoided because "the sacrifice serves to protect the entire community from its own violence; it prompts the community to choose victims from outside itself."[15] The community is united through the establishment of a common enemy. The actual guilt or innocence of the scapegoat is inconsequential. The community must perceive the victim as potentially guilty, and the community must remain ignorant of its establishment of a sacrificial victim. The community must believe that the scapegoat carries the responsibility for all the community conflicts so that the destruction of the scapegoat will bring peace. If members of the community recognized that they themselves were responsible for the conflict and violence as a result of mimetic desire, violence would overlap all

societal boundaries and never find resolution, thus resulting in limitless and all-inclusive violence.

Girard recognizes that the Bible reveals mimetic desire and scapegoating, and that God sides with the innocent victim. Satan is the scapegoat mechanism[16] and serves as a *skandalon*,[17] or stumbling block, an idea that will become critical later. Jesus became God's instrument against violence to save us from our own faulty system. Girard declares that "the Gospels tell us that to escape violence it is necessary to love one's brother *[sic]* completely – to abandon the violent mimesis involved in the relationship of doubles."[18] Jesus is the only human who ever achieved this goal and was "the only man who has nothing to do with violence and its works."[19] Therefore, Jesus was not a sacrifice killed on the cross because a blood-thirsty God demanded death to appease God's wrath. Instead, "Jesus has to die because continuing to live would mean a compromise with violence."[20] Mark Heim takes up this hopeful idea and further states,

> Blood is not acceptable to God as a means of uniting human community or a price for God's favor. Christ sheds his own blood to end that way of trying to mend our divisions. Jesus's death isn't necessary because God has to have innocent blood to solve the guilt equation. Redemptive violence is our [humanity's] equation. Jesus didn't volunteer to get into God's justice machine. God volunteered to get into ours. God used our own sin to save us.[21]

The long-held misunderstanding of the wrathful violence of God and the victimization of humanity is corrected as the wrathful violence of humanity and the salvific victimization of God. It is not God's blood-lust that must be appeased by sacrifice, it is ours. And only the Son of God can save us from ourselves.

Echoes of Girard in the films of Martin Scorsese

Martin Scorsese was born and raised in New York City to two Sicilian immigrants. Both parents worked in the garment district and raised their children surrounded by Italian American

family and friends. The cohesion of family and community was of utmost importance, as was a shared faith through the Catholic Church.[22] Many elements of Scorsese's childhood inspired his interest in film. In addition to his faith and community, primary among these early influences was his poor health and his lack of contact with books.[23]

Young Scorsese's daily life involved gangs and gangsters, priests and nuns. This social situation created a specific foundation from which all of Scorsese's movies would stem: "Growing up in this neighborhood exposed the young Scorsese to two different, indeed opposite, kinds of role models – that is, men who had power – whom he could strive to emulate: the petty criminals on one hand, and the priests, on the other."[24] Scorsese saw two career options before him, "organized crime and the church."[25] Scorsese chose the priesthood but flunked out of seminary after one year, disillusioned and frustrated by the hypocrisy, intolerance, dogma, and moral ambiguity he claims he experienced in the Catholic Church.[26] Scorsese still declares himself a Christian, but one on a "quest for non-institutionalized religious experience." He believes that "living the good life is practicing the tenets of Christianity through love, rather than making Mass on Sunday. You don't make up for your sins in church, you make up for them in the street." [27] Due to this formative environment, the themes of power, corruption, the outsider, the sacred, violence and redemption would permeate his films.

Martin Scorsese is a revisionist like the best directors, and he reworks preexisting themes with fresh insight.[28] Intentional or not, the constructs of Rene Girard seem to occur frequently in the films of Scorsese. Indeed, "the value of Girard's schema to Scorsese's Italian American films is that their religious, social, and cultural values… provide an especially rich and dramatic breeding ground for the phenomena Girard describes."[29] While Girard and Scorsese share many themes, primary to this study are the portrayal of the social value of rituals and scapegoats, close

brothers or twins, and mimetic violence. Girard describes the function of the ritual of sacrifice as "a collective action of the entire community, which purifies itself of its own disorder through the unanimous immolation of a victim, but this can only happen at the paroxysm of the ritual crisis."[30] For Girard, the ritual serves to temporarily reconcile and reorder the community, to "'trick' violence into spending itself on victims whose death will provoke no reprisals,"[31] but eventually the community will collapse back into mimetic rivalry and require another scapegoat.

Scorsese makes sure to draw distinctions between ritual mimetic violence and the church, often contrasting the sacred and the violent: "Mediated by priests, ritual is the controlled mimesis, in disguised form, of the crisis that issued in peace and harmony,"[32] which in the end fails to control the spread of violence in the community.[33] For both Girard and Scorsese, ritual is important for negotiating social order but in the end only serves to perpetuate the cycle of violence.

Girard and Scorsese both give emotional weight to the cost of mimetic violence through an examination of the motif of feuding brothers or twins:

> The proliferation of enemy brothers in Greek myth and in dramatic adaptations of myth implies the continual presence of a sacrificial crisis, repeatedly alluded to in the same symbolic terms. The fraternal theme is no less 'contagious' qua theme for being buried deep within the text than is the malevolent violence that accompanies it. In fact, the theme itself is a form of violence.[34]

Again, a closer relationship between the rivals provides the opportunity for greater potential violence. "Enemy brothers" may be here a symbolic term for people in a close mimetic relationship such that "in their repetitive, unacknowledged imitation of each other, the rivals have unwittingly become each other's doubles. As their envious rivalry intensifies, they forget the original objects of their desire and become absorbed in the mimetic conflict to the point of actual violence."[35] Scorsese examines this fraternal internal mediation in several films. To name

a few, in *Raging Bull* there are Jake and Joey, in *Mean Streets* there are Tony, Michael and

Charlie, and in *Casino* there are Ace and Nicky. Within the Scorsese collection, "these feuding

fraternal 'doubles' symbolize the collapse of familial, social, and ritual order through

undifferentiated violence."[36] Often, these fraternal groups are childhood friends if not actual

relatives, and in more recent movies, such as *The Departed* and *Shutter Island*, Scorsese has

begun to explore even more intimate conflicting doubles: dual identities.

In almost all of his films, Scorsese asks very difficult questions about the nature of

violence, and mimetic phenomena and undifferentiated violence are very common in Scorsese's

films:

> As Lucifer challenged God, his model, for his possessions, so in Scorsese's films those
> who pretend to god-like autonomy are bound to attract not only imitators but violent
> rivals. Just as the rivalry between God and Satan caused the angelic host to divide
> themselves into factions, so in Scorsese's cinematic world such rivalries draw other
> people within their violent orbit…. With the spread of random undifferentiated violence,
> more and more people are endangered, formerly accepted limits and boundaries collapse,
> and a small scale example of sacrificial crisis, complete with doubles of violence, comes
> into being. This situation typifies the climactic moments of several of Scorsese's films.[37]

A Scorsese film is ripe with violent rivalries and doubles, and the violence increases into ever-

widening circles throughout the film until the climax where, finally, the violence is "resolved" in

one final great act of violence. With the ease of cinema, this final act brings resolution to the

cycle of violence, rolling the credits over the real-life consequence of an even greater violence

coming to life in response: "Their (Scorsese films) essential rhythm is that of a world which,

beginning in comparative order however precarious and threatened, gradually spins out of

control through violence and desire."[38] Because of this rhythm, one of Scorsese's primary

totems, among many, is the wheel or circle, representing this cycle of violence.[39] Other Scorsese

symbols of violence include the mirror or reflective surfaces and twins or close brothers to point to the mimetic rivalry or double mediation.[40]

The gulf between Girard and Scorsese opens in this violent climactic moment of Scorsese films. In the Scorsese library, violence solves violence. There is good violence and bad violence, and the good drives out the bad.[41] In some films, "when violence has been allowed to proliferate, its increasing scope and randomness paradoxically hold out the possibility that the next victim will be the last, and that the seemingly uncontrollable crisis will then miraculously come to a halt."[42] The scapegoat in the film has served its purpose, for the time being, but once the cycle has begun, Scorsese illustrates that "expulsive violence of whatever type cannot pacify society in the long run, so that the violent cycles must begin again."[43] As Girard so clearly explains, "the culture born of violence must return to violence."[44] It seems that Scorsese still believes in a blood-thirsty God who destroyed bad violence with good violence on the Cross and professes redemptive violence is the answer:

> Violence can be redeemed from senselessness to purpose, and can have a redemptive effect on others, both the perpetrators and recipient. It does, and must, always function like a parable, to shock and subvert our preconceptions, not for mere effect, but to change our perceptions and reactions, in particular those which many religious traditions often offer us and leave is simply comfortable.[45]

Therefore, most of the Scorsese library includes a Christ-figure of some kind, who disrupts the cycle of violence, at least temporarily. Scorsese, a man fundamentally formed and surrounded by violence, does not understand the Girardian Christ: "To recognize Christ as God is to recognize him as the only being capable of rising above the violence that had, up to that point, absolutely transcended mankind. Violence is the controlling agent in every form of mythic or cultural structure, and Christ is the only agent who is capable of escaping from these

structures and freeing us from their dominance."[46] For Scorsese, all are trapped in the cycle of violence, especially Jesus. The best we can hope for is for more good than bad violence.

Shutter Island

While it is unlikely that Scorsese intentionally includes Girardian themes, it is reasonable to suggest that Girard and Scorsese drew their themes, tropes, and constructs from the same canon. In the opening scenes of *Shutter Island*,[47] one of the guards (John Carroll Lynch) describes the psychological and medical rituals on Shutter Island. Normally, the criminally insane are "treated" with shock therapy, sensory deprivation, lobotomy, pharmacology, and ice water baths. On Shutter Island however, Dr. Cawley (Ben Kingsley) is trying something different. As the guard explains, Ashecliffe is unique, the "only facility like it in the world. We take the most damaged, dangerous patients. The ones no one else can manage. It's a hospital for people our society normally thinks are beyond saving."[48] Dr. Cawley believes that where mental illness is concerned, what should be a last resort has become a first response. "I have this radical idea," he explains to Marshalls Daniels (Leonardo DiCaprio) and Aule (Mark Ruffalo), "that if you treat a patient with respect, listen to him, and try to understand him, you might just reach him."[49] Therefore, the new rituals at Shutter Island surrounding the mentally disturbed include the prohibition of chains indoors, mandatory small group sessions and private therapy with a primary care giver, strict schedules, productive work assignments, and medication only when absolutely necessary. Also, staff and visitors are to address the residents as patients, not prisoners.

Dr. Cawley is trying to revolutionize psychological treatment for the criminally insane and is attempting to interrupt the scapegoating mechanism of larger society. Shutter Island is a three-fold community of scapegoats. Ashecliffe hospital is on an island about 11 miles from the mainland and is accessible only by one ferry controlled by the authorities on the island. The entire island is populated only by those who are too unsafe to mingle with the general population, those who are trying to cure them, and those who keep law and order on the island. The island is an autonomous police state, where the warden is the supreme authority. Within Ashecliffe, there are three residences for the patients. Complex A is for the men, Complex B is for the women, and Complex C, an old military fort, is the home of the most violent offenders, who serve as scapegoats of this community. The patients in Complex C are the most violent among the violent, those who cannot be trusted within the limited larger populace of the facility, and therefore never leave their cells unless accompanied personally by a guard. The Complex C patients are those largely responsible for the dim reputation of Ashecliffe, and as the "worst" patients they experience the "worst" conditions. While Complexes A and B are a hospital, Complex C is a prison. Of these patients in Complex C, Teddy is the scapegoat of even these and is the most violent of all the patients who have ever visited Ashecliffe.

Because of this reason, the elaborate role play developed by Drs. Cowley and Sheehan (Mark Ruffalo) is Teddy's last hope of survival. Drs. Cowley and Sheehan believe that Teddy is not a hopeless case because as Dr. Naehring (Max von Sydow) clarifies, Teddy is a man of violence, not a violent man. They are two very different things.[50] Teddy is a man of violence because of trauma he has experienced and witnessed, not because he enjoys violence. The trauma is Teddy's fundamental wound, his "lack." The initial events that wounded him occurred because he fell under the wheels of a violent cycle – war and mental disease. After watching the camp

commandant at Dachau botch his own suicide and die slowly, Teddy killed the camp guards

because he was ordered to. Teddy confesses that this act "wasn't warfare, it was murder."[51] His

wife killed their children by drowning them in a lake, so he killed her because she asked him to.

He lacks peace and absolution, and he is so burdened by guilt and pain that he creates an

elaborate fantasy to escape. Teddy's reality clashes with his fantasy in his dreams, when he

speaks with his dead wife and children, wet from lake water, and relives the liberation of

Dachau. As Dr. Naehring, a German doctor at Ashecliffe, describes it, "Did you know that the

word 'trauma' comes from the Greek for 'wound'? Hm? And what is the German word for

'dream'? Traum. Ein Traum. Wounds can create monsters, and you, you are wounded,

Marshal."[52] Dr. Naehring believes Teddy is irredeemable, a monster who must be stopped, a

monster whose death or immobilization will once again bring a measure of peace to Shutter

Island, at least for the time being.

"Do you believe in God?" - Dr. Naehring
"You ever seen a death camp?" - Teddy[53]

The prison warden is the only person on the island who might be a match for Teddy. The

warden (Ted Levine) is a menacing presence throughout the film but only has two minutes of

dialogue, all in one scene. The "violence speech" of the warden is iconic and could be lifted out

of *Shutter Island* and inserted into any number of Scorsese films with only minimal changes. The

conversation between Teddy and the warden takes place after a hurricane hits Shutter Island and

has apparently sent a tree into the warden's living room. The warden finds Teddy walking down

a road, having been missing from the facility over night and lost his partner, Marshall Chuck

Aule, who is in reality Dr. Sheehan. I include the conversation in total here as it describes the

intersection between the sacred and mimetic violence as a major theme not only for *Shutter Island* but for Scorsese's entire film collection as well:

> Warden: Did you enjoy God's latest gift?
>
> Teddy: What?
>
> Warden: God's gift. Your violence. When I came downstairs in my home, and I saw that tree in my living room, it reached out for me... a divine hand. God loves violence.
>
> Teddy: I... I hadn't noticed.
>
> Warden: Sure you have. Why else would there be so much of it? It's in us. It's what we are. We wage war, we burn sacrifices, and pillage and plunder and tear at the flesh of our brothers. And why? Because God gave us violence to wage in his honor.
>
> Teddy: I thought God gave us moral order.
>
> Warden: There's no moral order as pure as this storm. There's no moral order at all. There's just this: can my violence conquer yours? You're as violent as they come. I know this, because I'm as violent as they come. If the constraints of society were lifted, and I was all that stood between you and a meal, you would crack my skull with a rock and eat my meaty parts. Wouldn't you? Cawley thinks you're harmless and that you can be controlled, but I know different.
>
> Teddy: You don't know me.
>
> Warden: Oh but I do. We've known each other for centuries. If I was to sink my teeth into your eye right now, would you be able to stop me before I blinded you?
>
> Teddy: Give it a try.
>
> Warden: That's the spirit.[54]

Because both the warden and Teddy have witnessed great violence and committed great acts of violence, they are men of great violence. Perhaps no one on Shutter Island can understand Teddy the way the warden can, but the warden has chosen the path of embracing his violence as a gift from God. Because the warden can be the most violent man in his community, he believes he is the most blessed man. This characterization calls to mind the gangsters and organized violence Scorsese was surrounded by as a child.[55] Those who were the most violent had the most privileges and prestige. But the warden does not recognize that he has become defined by his

violent nature; he believes he has harnessed his violence to serve him. The warden is a violent man. Teddy is still struggling within this distinction set by Dr. Neuring and sees himself as only a man of violence. As Dr. Cowley describes it, "In your story you're not a murderer but a hero. Your crime is terrible. One you'll never forgive yourself for, so you've invented another self."[56] Teddy is lacking absolution and forgiveness – this is what he seeks. The warden is no longer concerned with forgiveness as he has embraced his violence to the point of fundamental identity.

The mimesis then occurs because Teddy knows of no other way to function than through violence. Violence is his mimesis, which only leads to more violence. Because of his experienced trauma, Teddy labors in a cycle of centripetal violence that has finally turned in against himself in the dual identities he has created. In *Shutter Island*, the feuding brothers theory from Greek mythology has reached a point of extremes so that the dualities have collapsed in on themselves and have become feuding identities within one person. In his hatred of himself and the violence both he and his wife committed, he has created a twin, an alternate personality for both himself and his wife; Andrew Laeddis is an anagram of Edward Daniels, and Rachel Solando is an anagram of Dolores Chanal. In fact, Shutter Island is itself an anagram for Truth and Lies as well as Truths/Denials. Scorsese consistently points to these dualities by means of reflective surfaces – bodies of water, glass, and even a flask. Scorsese also keeps the air around Teddy full of objects for the first two thirds of the movie, with rain or dripping water, snow, ash, papers, and sparks, perhaps to reference the illusion within the cluttered, confused mind of Teddy.

The cycle of violence is one of the guiding questions of the film – how does one break a cycle of violence? Can one break a cycle of violence? Who is the greatest victim of violence - the victim, the aggressor, or the witness? Was it only after the war, the liberation of Dachau, and

the death of his family that Teddy began responding violently, or was he always like that? Is there transference of violence taking place within the close contact of evil? Mark Heim associates Satan with the "parasitic activity" of the evil of sacrifice and the "disease of human conflict." [57] These images of Satan define how the cycle of violence is perpetuated among humans – it is contagious via mimetic desire. Evil can be transferred via contact with a violent act, however we define it. Teddy himself jokingly references this possibility when he first arrives on Shutter Island: "You act like insanity is catching."[58] When Teddy witnessed the piles of frozen bodies at Dachau, the pure evil existing within the holocaust "rubbed off" on him, so that when he witnessed the deaths of his children at the hands of his wife, his response was to kill her. Would it have been possible for Teddy to witness such evil and to participate in such acts of violence but not become a violent person? It is no surprise that a human who has experienced violence in any respect will, thereafter, instinctively respond to threat or conflict violently. It becomes inherent – we catch the disease. Is this idea of vampiric violence universal and unavoidable? Heim believes there is another way:

> Is evil automatically transferred (i.e., we become violent) whenever we are victims, perpetrators or observers of violence? All of these have powerful contagious effects, but they are not automatic or inevitable. There are powerful, contagious positive models and contagions also. Christ and the Holy Spirit are such. But without such countervailing forces, it is very easy to catch the disease.[59]

Teddy's problem is that he has had so few counteracting positive forces. For many soldiers returning from a war, perhaps an intact, healthy family, or a strong faith community of some sort, would have been sufficient to fight this transference of evil. Teddy's family failed to be a "positive contagious model" for him and therefore served only to push him further into the evil disease of violence.

Throughout the film, Dolores keeps appearing to Teddy in hallucinations and dreams, encouraging him to leave the island, to search for Laeddis, to search for Rachel, and to embrace the illusion he has created for himself. These actions are significant as Delores serves, in the Girardian sense, as Teddy's *skandalon* in the film. Girard defines *skandalon* as a Greek word used in the Gospels often synonymous with Satan, or "the living obstacle that trips men up, the mimetic model insofar as it becomes a rival that lies across our path."[60] Girard goes on to say that "the skandalon designates a very common inability to walk away from mimetic rivalry which turns it into an addiction. The skandalon is anything that attracts us in proportion to the suffering or irritation that it causes us."[61] In almost every scene with Dolores and Teddy, Dolores is wet with lake water and begins to bleed from the stomach or burn into ashes, even as Teddy holds her and weeps over her loss. As the person Teddy has loved the most, she is now the being who helps him the least, and keeps sending him back into the cycle of violence with instructions to kill Laeddis,[62] to keep searching for Rachel,[63] and to avoid the lighthouse[64] (where the truth lies). Dolores's power over Teddy is directly proportional to his love for her and his guilt over her death, and over his failure to help her with her own mental illness, which led to the deaths of their children. Teddy's visions and dreams of Dolores are both wish fulfillment and penance, as it tortures him and appeases him to see her, even as she asks him to let her go.[65]

"Remember us, for we too have lived, loved and laughed." - Shutter Island cemetery[66]

The penultimate scene of Shutter Island leaves us with hope that Teddy has recovered. He recognizes his real identity and can describe the world and personalities he has created. He asks for help, and confesses his crimes. But in the last scene, he is back to addressing Dr. Sheehan as Chuck, and declaring that something is amiss on Shutter Island and they must find out what it is. Sheehan turns to Drs. Cawley and Naehring and the warden, barely shaking his

head, thus giving the signal for Teddy to receive a lobotomy. As the orderlies approach Dr. Sheehan and Teddy, Teddy turns to Dr. Sheehan and asks, "Which would be worse - to live as a monster? Or to die as a good man?"[67] Scorsese leaves the possibility open that Teddy has chosen to sacrifice himself, thus casting Teddy as a sort of Scorsesian "Christ-figure" who sacrifices himself to save others, even if he is saving them from himself. Perhaps Scorsese would argue that this sacrifice is a form of "good violence," which answers the warden's question, "Can my violence conquer yours?" with a resounding "yes" as Teddy inflicts the violence upon himself. If this conclusion is in fact Scorsese's position, then Scorsese is still missing Girard's point that violence, particularly institutional violence, only satisfies society for a time and then begins the cycle again. Violence only begets violence. There are always more violent offenders.

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[1] Rene Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977,) 145.

[2] Charles Bellinger, *The Genealogy of Violence*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 67.

[3] Exodus 3:14, NRSV.

[4] Rene Girard, *The Girard Reader,* (New York: Crossroad Herder, 1996) p. 39-42.

[5] Girard, *Reader*, p. 63.

[6] Girard, *Reader*, p. 63.

[7] Girard, *Reader*, 291.

[8] Girard, *Reader*, 39.

[9] Girard, *Reader*, 39.

[10] Girard, *Reader*, 74, 146.

[11] Girard, *Reader*, 74, 146.

[12] Girard, *Reader*, 83.

[13] Girard, *Reader*, 78.

[14] Girard, *Reader*, 83.

[15] Girard, *Reader*, 77.

[16] Girard, *Reader*, 161,

[17] Girard, *Reader*, 198.

[18] Girard, *Reader*, 189.

[19] Girard, *Reader*, 186.

[20] Girard, *Reader*, 187.

[21] Mark Heim, *Saved from Sacrifice: A Theology of the Cross,* (Grand Rapids: Wm. Eerdmans Publishing, 2006) xi.

[22] Maria Miliora, *The Scorsese Psyche on Screen,* (Jefferson, N. Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2004) 12.

[23] Robert Casillo, *Gangster Priest: The Italian Cinema of Martin Scorsese*, (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 2006) 77-78.

[24] Casillo, *Gangster Priest,* 15.

[25] Casillo, *Gangster Priest,* 93.

[26] Casillo, *Gangster Priest,* 96-97.

[27] Casillo, *Gangster Priest,* 97.

[28] John David Graham, "Redeeming Violence in the Films of Martin Scorsese," In *Explorations in Theology and Film: Movies and Meaning,* ed. Clive Marsh, Gaye Williams Ortiz (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1997), 89.

[29] Casillo, *Gangster Priest,* 108.

[30] Rene Girard, *The Girard Reader,* 11.

[31] Rene Girard, *Violence and the Sacred,* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), 37-38.

[32] Girard, *Violence and the Sacred,* 105.

[33] Girard, *Violence and the Sacred* 212.

[34] Rene Girard, *Violence and the Sacred,* 64.

[35] Casillo, *Gangster Priest,* 103-4.

[36] Casillo, *Gangster Priest,* 254.

[37] Casillo, *Gangster Priest,* 114.

[38] Casillo, *Gangster Priest,* 120.

[39] Casillo, *Gangster Priest,* 120.

[40] Casillo, *Gangster Priest,* 118, 157, 254.

[41] Casillo, *Gangster Priest,* 121.

[42] Casillo, *Gangster Priest,* 121.

[43] Casillo, *Gangster Priest,* 122.

[44] Rene Girard, *The Girard Reader,* 150.

[45] John David Graham, "Redeeming Violence in the Films of Martin Scorsese," 93.

[46] Rene Girard, *The Girard Reader,* 193.

[47] *Shutter Island*, "Scene 2".

[48] *Shutter Island*, "Scene 2".

[49] *Shutter Island*, "Scene 5".

[50] *Shutter Island*, "Scene 4".

[51] *Shutter Island*, "Scene 7".

[52] *Shutter Island*, "Scene 15".

[53] *Shutter Island*, "Scene 4".

[54] *Shutter Island*, "Scene 14".

[55] Miliora, *The Scorsese Psyche on Screen,* 15.

[56] *Shutter Island*, "Scene 16".

[57] Heim, *Saved from Sacrifice,* 149.

[58] *Shutter Island*, "Scene 2".

[59] Mark Heim, email response to author, July 27, 2011.

[60] Girard, *Reader,* 161.

[61] Girard, *Reader,* 161

[62] *Shutter Island*, "Scene 9".

[63] *Shutter Island*, "Scene 5".

[64] *Shutter Island*, "Scenes 15 and 16".

[65] *Shutter Island*, "Scene 5".

[66] *Shutter Island*, "Scene 2".

[67] *Shutter Island*, "Scene 19".

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