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Transitional Violence in *King of New York*

Abstract

Abel Ferrara's violent and controversial film, *King Of New York*, follows the escalating violence and resulting trail of corpses between mobster Frank White (a psychotic sort of Robin Hood) and a group of detectives attempting to arrest him. The goal of this paper is to utilize Elizabeth Swanson Goldberg's grammar of transition as a structural device to identify negative connections that highlight and foreshadow sources of violence in *King of New York*. However, simply noting the process of these transitions is insufficient to the paper's broader purpose; if one is to investigate the causal elements of violence through structural analysis of transitional grammar, Rene Girard's psychological framework is also necessary. Hence, this paper will argue that, in the film, the law acts as a metaphysical border separating the two groups (gangsters and police officers) until mimetic rivalry escalates into violence. This escalation can be witnessed through the progression of transitional grammar; as negative connections intensify, subtle juxtapositions turn into blatant repetitions. As the doubling escalates, the metaphysical border of the law diffuses into a blurred dichotomy where the two groups become identical and the most virulent connection takes place: the cycle of violence (or, Girard's mimetic contagion).

Keywords

Violence, Mimetic Rivalry, Contagion, Girard

Author Notes

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Introduction

Director Abel Ferrara baptized himself “the master of provocation,” a grandiose self-bestowal indicative of the polarizing nature of his oeuvre: his films are, if nothing else, provocative. The reception of his work ranges from extreme revulsion to critical acclaim, including honors at the Venice Film Festival and the International Critics Award. Albeit slowly, the depth and religious themes that characterize his oeuvre are starting to be taken seriously on an academic level. For instance, Nicole Brenez, a professor of cinema studies at University of Paris, author and editor of six books on film including studies on John Cassavetes and Jean-Luc Goddard, penned a book on Ferrara for the series, *Contemporary Film Directors*. In her book, *Abel Ferrara*, which was translated from the French, Brenez argues that “Abel Ferrara is to cinema what Joe Strummer is to music: a poet who justifies the existence of popular forms.”¹ Brenez notes that Ferrara’s films are often assailed in America while earning more praise in Europe, and uses the likes of Georges Bataille and Hegel to argue that Ferrara’s work “redeems genre cinema” through the exploration of themes such as identity, evil, capitalism and religion. Brenez’s study is not an anomaly. Film Critic Brad Stevens wrote *Abel Ferrara: The Moral Vision*, and academic articles on Ferrara have been written in German, French and Norwegian. In “Expanding the Horizons of Cinematic Narrative: A Textual Analysis of Nietzschean [sic] Themes in Five Abel Ferrara Films,” Russell Dennis claims that Ferrara’s characters are “wandering through a Nietzschean landscape,”² and investigates Nietzschean themes and images in five Ferrara films, including *Bad Lieutenant* and *King of New York*. Like Brenez, Dennis pays homage to the sophisticated work Ferrara does within the constraints of popular cinema, claiming:

“Working within his commercial genres and with established actors, Ferrara still manages to produce dark, intense thematically complex, and unapologetically controversial works that often push the envelope of taste and moral propriety.”³ Ferrara certainly has no qualms about pushing that envelope, and perhaps it is both the dark content and questionable taste that makes his work so polarizing. After all, who wants to see a barrage of images that reveal the dark side of humanity? Dennis concludes, much like Brenez, that the exploration of philosophical and religious themes “removes [Ferrara’s films] from the exploitation category and places them within the ranks of the poetic, disturbing, experimental works of Jean-Luc Godard, Michelangelo Antonioni, and Roman Polanski.”⁴ As a director who genuinely explores religious and philosophical themes, Ferrara deserves a closer look.

While *Bad Lieutenant* probably represents Ferrara’s most critically successful film, *The King of New York* is a microcosm of his polemic oeuvre, appearing as a stereotypical and, perhaps, overindulgent gangster flick, but asking more sophisticated questions beneath that gruesome exterior. Abel Ferrara and writer Nicholas St. John got booed for the film at the New York Film Festival. One reporter called it an “abomination.” Yet Peter Travers of *Rolling Stone* raved, “Ferrara’s blend of toughness and lyricism turns this visionary crime film into something stylish, seductive and haunting”⁵ and *The New York Times* called it “a grisly yet electrifying film.”⁶ Ferrara, in his expected brazen arrogance, claimed, “King of New York made Scarface look like Mary Poppins.”⁷ Perhaps that curious goal of feminizing one of American’s most famous gangster flicks speaks to the problematic and offensive nature of his work, which begs the question, what can be gained from such a wretched display of violence? Brad

Stevens, in his book, *Abel Ferrara: The Moral Vision*, provides a possible answer, arguing that there is a method behind the film's graphic madness: "[M]any conclude that Ferrara is either incompetent or immoral. It would be more accurate to describe **King of New York** [sic] as a modern American cinema's most complete rejection of violence."⁸ And there lies the rub: in order to reject violence, its causal elements and psychological mechanisms must be revealed, which are the dark contents of that envelope Ferrara loves to push. It is not pleasant to watch. Brenez and Dennis have both shown that Ferrara's work is best approached with a hermeneutical lens, and this paper will take the same angle, arguing that *King of New York* reveals the mechanisms of what Rene Girard calls mimetic violence. The fates of Frank White, Detective Gilley and both of their gangs portray the tragic consequences of a mimetic contagion in full force, and this portrayal is an implicit rejection of violence.

In *King of New York*, it is hardly a surprise when Detective Dennis Gilley announces his intent to kill Frank White, a New York mobster: "[T]here's only one way to get Frank. We can make it look like an accident, like a rival gang thing if that's what matters."⁹ The significance of Gilley's statement is twofold: Gilley has become a mimetic double of his rival, and he has crossed the literal and metaphysical border of the law, being consumed in the cycle of violence. Elizabeth Swanson Goldberg, in her book *Beyond Terror: Gender, Narrative, Human Rights*, defines this type of border as a "grammar of transition," which is a "richly layered border that quite literally denotes life and death and a blurring of the two [. . .]."¹⁰ This denotation certainly holds true for Detective Gilley, who will die soon after he announces his murderous intent, an announcement that signifies his own ethical blurring. This paper will utilize Goldberg's

grammar of transition as a structural device to identify negative connections that highlight and foreshadow sources of violence in *King of New York*.

Summary of Goldberg and Girard

Goldberg finds transitional grammar particularly prevalent in witness literature, as it identifies moments that “emerge narratively as subtle juxtapositions of characters or events, often inscribed transitional moments during scenes and chapters.”¹¹ While these moments “often emerge” in shifts of chapter and scene, they are not reduced to those transitions specifically, and can also be useful when applied on a broader scale. For example, in Goldberg’s analysis of Edwidge Danticat’s *Farming of Bones*, the river that separates Haiti from the Dominican Republic is not only a border between the countries, but the site of the River Massacre where bodies are dumped, making it a “structural connection between the acute violence of genocide and the sustained violence of poverty, oppression, and the colonial legacy.”¹² Like the law above, the river is a “richly-layered border” that works on literal, anthropological, and cultural levels; as blurring dichotomies that simultaneously separate and provoke violence, both the river and the law represent a grammar of transition on this larger, broader scale. Regardless of whether it is a larger, structural schema or a subtle juxtaposition, the significance of transitional grammar, for Goldberg, is its ability to reveal positive connections: “The value of studying this grammar of transition is in its revelation of the ways in which the collective wounding of atrocity can connect us rather than impel us further into the siege mentalities that produce cycles of violence.”¹³ Within the text of witness narratives, these positive connections

between survivors allow them to transcend cycles of violence. The significance of these positive connections raises an antithetical question: Is it not safe to assume that negative connections exist as well? While some survivors can transcend the cycles, others are not as fortunate, as evidenced by Ferrara's film. Goldberg's positive connections must be inverted within the Girardian framework.

The psychological basis behind Rene Girard's thought is that all desire is mimetic: "[T]here is nothing, or next to nothing, in human behaviour [sic] that is not learned, and all learning is based on imitation."¹⁴ It is through mimesis that humans learn to satisfy basic appetites (eating, sleeping, etc.) which naturally progress to a more sophisticated set of desires. Other people who are metaphysically larger in childhood and more prestigious in adulthood appear to not only have more, but to *be* more. Thus, desire is not necessarily for some external good but, often, for that fullness (prestige, fame, happiness) which a third party gracefully exhibits in their daily life. These third parties become Girardian models, and to obtain that metaphysical fullness models are imitated on a variety of levels; it is why, for instance, the fashion of celebrities and high school elites is mimicked in magazines and hallways. Since humans cannot snap their fingers and become the model, they dress like them, act like them, and attempt to infiltrate their social groups. After all, the model's behavior must provide the key to that ontological fullness. Desire, in essence, is contagious, and this contagion can lead to large-scale problems.

People do not easily give up the objects and status that seemingly define them. Hence, when mimetic desire becomes reciprocal between two people (races, nations, etc.), mimetic rivalry is engendered and conflict ensues. While the first party may come

to realize the model does not possess the abundance of ontological fullness as originally perceived, the rivalry itself is enough to keep the person engaged as the escalation continues, climbing towards violence. The object, often, is simply symbolic of the model's ontological status, allowing rivalry to quickly escalate past the object itself to more opaque metaphysical arguments: who is smarter, who is more famous, who is a better person. The metaphysical desire for the model's fullness has, in the mind of the first party, succumbed to the power of the mimetic rivalry itself.

Once two parties are engaged in rivalry, mimetic doubling follows. Hate between the rivals quickly intensifies, but because they are still locked into the mimetic process they begin, unconsciously, to mimic each other's actions and emotions. As Girard explains, "The more antagonists desire to become different from each other, the more they become identical. Identity is realized in the hatred of the individual."¹⁵ In the midst of the sameness each person desperately searches for differences, as it would be too psychologically painful to recognize themselves in their hated rival. Once doubling begins to escalate, the desire, the movement, and even the strategies of the party (be they singular or corporate) are swept up in a mimetic contagion toward undifferentiated sameness that renders them identical – save their delusions of difference. The psychological effects of such delusions are the final step in the process: "When mimetic rivalry has 'undifferentiated' all relationships, not the double, but the difference is a hallucination. The hallucinatory reading of doubles is the last trick desire plays in order not to recognize in the fact that the mimetic partners are identical, its own failure – or deplorable success."¹⁶ With escalation, each party will imitate the other's last move or strategy, resulting in reciprocal accusations that will ultimately destroy one and all. As violence intensifies, the crisis widens to include anyone involved.

Violence, like and in part with desire, is imitative and contagious but can never be seen as such. The individuals and/or community are unconscious of the entire process, and out of this misrecognition emerges a myth as to how and why the murder took place. Jim Williams, in the Foreword of *I See Satan Fall Like Lightning*, elucidates on the communal necessity of myths:

[Violence] is covered and disguised due to the belief that lies at the very origin of myths: the victim really is the source of the troubles afflicting the community. Such belief results in transferring the blame to the victim and exonerating the community.¹⁷

Mythology is the voice of the crowd that justifies the violence. It is the voice that demanded Socrates drink the hemlock, cried for Pilate to crucify Christ, and rationalized the Holocaust. In psychological terms, myths are a type of defense mechanism. Since neither individuals nor communities can bear to see themselves as violent killers, the creation of myth allows them to believe that the victim brought about her/his own death. They “had it coming.” Hence, in the Girardian framework, the role of mythology is to disguise and justify violence in the name of the community, both before and after a mimetic crisis, as can be seen clearly in Ferrara’s films. A hermeneutical lens combining Girard’s mimetic theory and Goldberg’s transitional grammar will clarify the means in which Ferrara reveals the causal elements of violence in order to reject them.

In *King of New York*, Goldberg’s transitional grammar works on two distinct levels that gradually merge. First of all, the “subtle juxtapositions” between scenes act as signposts, indicating various negative and causal connections, connections that become more blatant as the violence intensifies. Secondly, and on a broader scale, the law acts as a metaphysical border that separates the two groups (gangsters and police officers) until

mimetic rivalry escalates into violence. This escalation can be witnessed through the progression of transitional grammar; as negative connections intensify, subtle juxtapositions turn into blatant repetitions. As the doubling escalates, the metaphysical border of the law diffuses into a blurred dichotomy where the two groups become identical and the most virulent connection takes place: the cycle of violence (or, Girard's mimetic contagion). Transitional grammar not only foreshadows cycles of violence, but also reveals the mimetic mechanisms that create them. Because this paper is looking to expose these mechanisms as they escalate in the narrative, it will be necessary to examine the film chronologically.

King of New York

King of New York opens with Frank White (played by Christopher Walken) being released from Sing Sing Prison. The initial shots open through the bars of his cell, then the bars of a cellblock door. Frank gets into a limousine that drives away and Sing Sing's large iron gate slowly shuts behind it. What follows are four intermittent scenes of violence and serenity connected by subtle juxtapositions of images. A Columbian gangster carries a briefcase from a brothel and steps into a phone booth. The door is jammed shut. Four men shower him with bullets from machine guns and then show him an article announcing Frank White's release from prison. Frank is connected to the murder through the picture, but also through the subtext of a cell; Frank leaving one and the Columbian being killed in another. The scene transitions from Frank's picture to Frank riding back to New York City in the limousine, flanked by a beautiful black

woman and a beautiful white woman. On the surface, this is a man who gets everything. Subtextually, this scene introduces the protagonist's existential dilemma: Frank White is a man who vacillates between light and dark, who wants to *be* good but will do terrible things to accomplish his goals, creating a tension between his metaphysical desire for goodness and his ontology as a criminal.

The next scene opens with a plane flying over a Travel Lodge Hotel. Inside, a group of gangsters led by Jimmy Jump (played by Lawrence Fishburne) are purchasing cocaine from a Columbian named Tito. When Tito abruptly raises the price of the cocaine, Jump balks, then resigns, saying, "You in power, Tito, you in power. You da king."¹⁸ This line sets up one of the film's mimetic motors: the metaphysical desire *for* power, and the ontological desire *to be* king. These mimetic motors have produced centuries of rivalry and violence and three scenes into the film Ferrara promises the same anthropological phenomenon. Jump and his gang gun down Tito, ending his reign as king.

A juxtaposition of hotels connects Frank to the violence, as the scene shifts from the cheap Travel Lodge to the luxurious Plaza where he is showering under a gold faucet. Again the violence is followed by posh surroundings. The camera pans expensive champagne, glass flutes with gold rims, and white lilies. As Frank dons his black suit, the black woman and the white woman simultaneously dress, as if they are two distinct parts of his self.¹⁹ Frank then gazes out the large window of his balcony, and the lights of New York City reflect off the glass in front of his face. The lines of these lights echo the prison bars that opened the film and signify Frank's ascension from a prisoner in a cell to a king looking over his kingdom. A few minutes later Jimmy Jump and his gang bring

Frank the money and cocaine they have acquired – along with King Tito’s gloves, symbolically crowning Frank as the new king of New York. While these early transitional moments are not connecting people per se, they are laying out the dynamics of desire, power, and royalty, which will advance the negative connections of mimetic violence.

Frank’s rise will, however, require more money and power than he currently has at his disposal, and further gain cannot take place only on the street, so he joins the societal elite at an upscale restaurant. Nicole Brenez, in her book, *Abel Ferrara*, notes the significance of this change in venue:

The building’s façade, in neoclassical columns, promises a polysemic site: temple or law court, it is in fact a restaurant where no one eats. It is populated by three social types: glamorous women, specialists of high society . . . and specialists of economic power (businessmen, women of the world, Frank and his entourage, all dressed the same way).²⁰

Brenez not only points out the subtextual fusion of law and society in the building’s structure, but also the implicit ethical sameness (which will later saturate the film) of moral and civil corruption illustrated through dress codes. Frank’s party includes all three social types: a beautiful female attorney, a famous New York columnist (Pete Hamill, playing himself) and his date, and Frank’s chief liaison, Joey Dalesio. Frank tells Joey he wants to “talk business” with Artie Clay and Joey promptly excuses himself from the table. Pete Hamill’s date asks what she can expect from the “reformed” Frank White, and Frank responds that he wants to be mayor. Everyone laughs. Frank claims he is not

kidding. An exchange between Frank and the female attorney, Jennifer, follows, introducing the larger grammar of transition in the film, the law as a border:

FRANK: "What's a matter? You're not glad to see me?"

JENNIFER: "You belong where they put you. Maybe you'll stay out of trouble this time."

FRANK: "That depends on how good my lawyers are."²¹

JENNIFER: "I thought people like you didn't believe in the legal process."

FRANK: "I thought people like me were the legal process. [Pause] You know what I'd like to do to you? I'd like, to take you on the subway."²²

The scene transitions from Jennifer's laughing, porcelain-white face to the face of a Madonna statue outside a small Italian restaurant. Joey relays Frank's message to Artie Clay who says he does not talk to "nigger lovers" and urinates on Joey's shoe. The narrative quickly returns to Frank and Jennifer alone on a subway car, making out. Frank unbuttons her top and begins to fondle her; literally and figuratively, Frank is fucking the law, a border to which he pays no heed. After all, he is the legal process. Three thugs carrying knives interrupt this symbolic tryst. One of the thugs takes Jennifer's purse and another demands Frank's wallet. Frank pulls back his jacket, showing his power, a gun, then throws a wad of money to the leader and says, "Come by the Plaza Hotel, I got work for you. Ask for Frank White."²³ This invitation introduces a subverted theological theme that will quickly be repeated: Frank is recruiting disciples.

Frank breaks in on a card game run by Artie Clay, demanding a game of Black Jack which he wins, prompting somewhat of a business proposition: "You guys got fat while everyone starved on the street. From here on out nothing goes down unless I'm involved. No blackjack, no dope deals, no nothing. If a nickel bag is sold in the park, I want in. It's my turn."²⁴ Frank and Artie both desire to be feared and revered, and that identical desire for metaphysical fullness and power has led to mimetic rivalry. Frank's

mention of people starving on the street seems a passing line, but its purpose is twofold: a foreshadowing of his inclination towards helping others, and an explanation that while Frank was in jail, those in power reaped the benefits and refused to share.

As long as Artie resigns himself to the proposed business deal, violence can be averted; but as Frank is leaving, Artie says, “Think you’re going to live long enough to spend that, you fucking hump?” Frank fires two shots into Artie, then repeats his invitation from the previous scene: “If any of you are tired of getting ripped off by guys like this [shoots him two more times], you can come work for me. I’m at the Plaza Hotel. You’re welcome! You’re all welcome [another shot] to join.”²⁵ As disciples dropped their nets and followed Christ, two of Artie’s men follow Frank out the door. This subverted theological tension illustrates that violence and power can be just as tempting as faith and miracles. Complete with Girardian terminology, Brenez emphasizes the multiple levels of metaphysical goodness at play in Frank’s quest: “Frank pits system against system, criminal machine against criminal machine. The kingpins he eliminates one by one no longer represent random obstacles, they constitute true *rivals* on the economic, ethnic, and even ethical levels (he reproaches one of them for exploiting his compatriots).”²⁶

Frank continues his luxuriant lifestyle by taking in Eugene O’Neill’s play, *Emperor Jones* at the famous Broadway theatre, Lunt-Fontanne. Textually, the title of this play emphasizes the themes of royalty and power; visually, the play foreshadows (a bit blatantly, perhaps) the violence that is to follow: on stage, a convict shoots a police officer. The aesthetics of the theatre continue the established pattern of violent scenes followed by plush and serene scenes, a larger and thematic grammar of transition that

structures the film: the plush scenes are safe from violence and represent a civilized culture in contrast to a culture of death. After the play, Frank berates a city councilman about a hospital in the South Bronx not making the fiscal cut. The councilman claims there is not enough money in the budget and tells Frank, “If you think it’s so easy, why don’t you get the [sixteen million dollars] yourself.” “Maybe I will,” Frank responds. “I know what this city needs and privileged districts shouldn’t be the only ones with hospitals.”²⁷ While he may not be mayor, Frank is certainly taking his kingly duties seriously. This exchange offers a further glimpse of Frank’s metaphysical desire to do good, the existential tension eluded to in the subtext of his position between light and dark; he wants to help the poor. In a warped sense, Frank is like Christ heading towards Jerusalem, complete with his own band of disciples and vision to help the needy.

It is in this scene that the police appear²⁸; dressed in civilian clothes, they are Frank Bishop, Dennis Gilley (played by David Caruso), and Tommy Flanigan (played by Wesley Snipes). After some juvenile banter they escort Frank from the theatre, the final image of the scene the square sign of the luxurious Lunt-Fontanne. In the commentary of the DVD the editor of the film, Anthony Redman, points out “Okay, this is where things get going [. . .]”²⁹ noting the importance in the film of the relation between the gangsters and the police. Violence is relational, and its source is negative connections that are unwittingly imitative in nature. As Girard asserts, “Mimetism is indeed a contagion which spreads throughout human relationships, and spares no one”³⁰ including the police. By taking Frank from the theater, the police signal the second theme over which rivalry will escalate: Frank’s luxuriant lifestyle and subsequent desire to be seen as good; his ontology is a scandal to them. If their rivalry with him was simply over the

law, they would not have taken him from a place where he would be exposed as a criminal in front of those before whom he wished to appear otherwise, as the king of New York.

For now, these differences are real enough to keep the two groups separate, and as Girard notes, this separation is essential to mimetic rivalry; “Competitors are fundamentally those who walk or run together, rivals are those who dwell on opposite banks of the same river, etc.”³¹ Girard returns us to the theme of border, and this scene returns us to the law as a grammar of transition (border) that, for now, separates the two groups. It is not difficult to recognize the significance of this border, for as long as each group stays on its respective side, order can remain. Ferrara adroitly illustrates how tenuous the situation is by having Gilley drive the wrong way down a one-way street; the law is a border he does not mind briefly crossing – as long as he can return. Gilley’s predisposition to violence and rivalry is one that will haunt him throughout the film. He is closer to being Frank than he knows.

The police take Frank to an abandoned site, open the trunk, and display the bloody body of King Tito. Frank says, “What’s that?” Various insults are hurled. Frank punches Flanigan and Gilley puts a gun to Frank’s head, begging Bishop to “let me cap him.” Bishop holds the peace for now, telling Frank, “I know what you’re up to, White, and you can forget it [. . .].”³² It is a futile threat. The police are showing Frank that despite his acceptance into the halls of power, they know his dark ontology as a criminal trumps his light metaphysical desire for goodness. This scene furthers the detectives’ psychological dynamic of Gilley as the young hothead, quicker to ignore the metaphysical border of the law that separates him from the likes of Frank White, and

Bishop as the older and wiser commander, more loyal to the law. It is no coincidence that one definition of his name is that of a spiritual elder as he tries to convince those beneath him to transcend the cycle of violence by paying heed to the larger grammar of transition, the law.

Ferrara provides a glimpse into the lives of the policemen through the staggered and subtle juxtaposition of a square sign that reads “Peter Doeller’s Extra Beer” above the bar where they are holding a wedding reception. The transition echoes the sign of Lunt-Fontanne from two scenes past, and is the first transition of scene that connects the gangs with the police, the juxtaposition in signs subtly emphasizing their juxtapositions in class: Frank reaps the benefits of his powerful and rich lifestyle by spending his evenings at an Eugene O’Neill play while the police officers’ low income forces their wedding reception to an Irish bar. While Frank drank expensive Champagne out of gold-rimmed flutes, the police drink cheap Champagne out of plastic wine glasses. These negative connections can remain mere juxtapositions as long as the metaphysical border of the law is not blurred. Still, these signposts of transitional grammar point the viewer towards differences in class that provoke envy and lead to resentment, which ultimately lead to violence.

Detective Gilley further asserts his dominance at the wedding reception. He is the best man, and his toast playfully mocks Bishop, Flanigan and even the groom. A few minutes later he pretends to make out with the new bride, prompting Flanigan to warn the groom, “[You’ll] find vampire marks sunk into her neck.”³³ The scene closes with Bishop handing an envelope to the father of the bride, telling him, “Give this to the kids.”³⁴

Ferrara keeps the transitional grammar tight, beginning the next scene with a clip from the film *Nosferatu* (a vampire movie from 1922) which criminal Larry Wong is watching in his own movie theatre, plush with red seats. Frank has sent Joey to talk with Larry, hoping to purchase his two hundred and twenty pounds of cocaine. This scene is followed by another staggered transition in which Jump gives children money to play video games (and their grandmother a hundred dollars) while he is ordering food in a restaurant; this gesture connects Jump to Frank Bishop, who subsequently enters the restaurant with his crew to arrest Jump. One can see the steady escalation between the two groups in the overtly physical manner in which Gilley cuffs Jump, and in Jump's subsequent threat to Flanigan: "I'll slap that black off you."³⁵

Ferrara next transitions from action (Jump's gesture of giving money) to place, a children's hospital where Larry Wong and Frank are trailing a female doctor. She explains that the hospital will close without private funding, exits, and Frank makes his pitch to Larry: "You don't have the man power . . . but I do. You put up the stuff, I put up the guys to sell it, I take the heat and the risk – if there's anything left over we divide the difference, setting some aside for places like this."³⁶ Frank is trying to create a positive contagion amidst the mass of violence, hoping others will "catch" his metaphysical desire for goodness and help the less fortunate. Without the means of violence, however, Frank is far less convincing and unable to obtain followers; like Artie Clay, Larry Wong balks at Frank's offer; "If I was into socialized medicine I would've stayed in the Peking Province. [. . .] You know something, Frank, this conversation made me realize how fucking crazy you really are."³⁷ Three out of the last four scenes have dealt with the theme of giving money to children, from Bishop to Jump to Frank, creating

one of the film's few positive connections – which Larry breaks by not taking Frank's deal. Like Artie, Larry will regret standing in the way of Frank's metaphysical desire for goodness. Moreover, Frank's failure to envelop others in his positive contagion demonstrates how much more contagious and intoxicating violence is than kindness.

At this point in the film the violence begins to intensify, and this intensification is subtextually illustrated through less subtle transitional moments (blatant repetitions as opposed to subtle juxtapositions) and the gradual deterioration of the law. Frank posts a million dollar bail for Jump. When a limousine arrives for Jump, Gilley spits in Jump's face, an action expected of a criminal as opposed to an officer of the law. The law, as border, continues to blur for Gilley, and Girard explains the psychology behind this phenomenon: "The more antagonists desire to become different from each other, they more they become identical. Identity is realized in the hatred of the individual."³⁸ Gilley's hatred for Jump and his gang is altering his identity and actions. Jump wipes the spit off his face, licks his fingers, and then peels off three hundred dollar bills, saying to Flanigan, "Black man, get some flowers for your witness."³⁹ Jump is responding with psychological violence, flaunting his financial status and intensifying the resentment.

Mimetic desire leads to envy, envy leads to rivalry, rivalry leads to hatred, and hatred leads to violence. The criminals and the police are becoming similar, Ferrara adroitly joining the negative connection of doubling with the thematic contrast of the law. While Gilley is caught up in doubling, Bishop, as always, remains calm and devout in his dedication to the law, asking Frank's lawyer, Jennifer, "Are you proud of yourself, Councilor?" The councilor provocatively responds, "If you've got a problem, take it to the judge."⁴⁰ Frank is still fucking the law, his ability to post a million dollar bail further

evidence of the advantage his financial means offer, provoking further envy that will shortly reach its apex. The police are impotent in the face of Frank's money, and as a result resort to juvenile tactics of spitting in people's faces and applying guilt trips. Royalty has its privileges, and one of them is to mock the defeated (as Jump did above, licking the spit from his fingers). The law, it appears, benefits criminals with money more than the officers who are paid to uphold it, further signifying the blurred dichotomy that simultaneously prohibits and provokes violence.

Violence is literally driven from one scene to the next as the limousine that picked up Jump speeds into China Town, transitioning on a repetitious image; the juxtapositions that transitioned earlier scenes have lost their subtlety, indicating that the cycle is speeding up and connecting us, as Goldberg claims, to "the siege mentalities that produce cycles of violence."⁴¹ Frank's gang begins spraying machine gun fire at Larry Wong's gang. In the heat of gunfire Larry accidentally shoots one of his own men, an artful foreshadowing of the inevitable sameness and chaos that will dominate the ensuing violence. The scene ends with Frank's gang carrying out large vats of cocaine and the image of Larry hanging upside down next to a light fixture. The following scene begins with a spotlight on the singer Freddie Jackson (playing himself) at a fundraiser for the hospital; here Ferrara has taken the grammar of transition even further (the subtle juxtaposition of lighting) connecting not people, but acts: Larry's violent death and the acquisition of his cocaine is tied to the raising of funds for a hospital in South Bronx. Ferrara is also maintaining the structure of violent scenes followed by serene scenes. The song Jackson sings easily speaks to the themes of Frank's metaphysical desire: "All my life I've been waiting, for a time, when I'd be free. How I pray for liberation, and a little

bit of dignity. I hear the heartbeat of the city, how it pounded and sounded in the night. The children's voices were so pretty, I'm gonna reach up . . . I'm going to make it alright."⁴² All of Frank's tropes are covered: freedom, the city, children, and a desire to help. The transition of light not only connects the two acts, but through this connection mythologizes the violence (killing Larry) used to help the community (the fundraiser). Has Frank found his chance to be free? The signposts of transitional grammar would certainly indicate otherwise.

Ferrara continues with even tighter and more blatant transitions, again signaling the "sameness" that lies ahead. At the fundraiser a female reporter stands in front of a camera with a microphone, and in a bar the police officers are watching the woman on TV; this transition of the same face is, again, less subtle, which is the point: once violence escalates, everyone is the same. The police are now witnessing a celebration for Frank as a city hero, the reporter saying, "One prominent city politician called it a proud moment for the city and all New Yorkers." This irony is hard to miss. It is not "New York's Finest" that the city should be proud of, but one of New York's criminals. Gilley is outraged, and begins taunting Bishop in front of the other detectives: "Roy, he's a movie star. Frank is a fucking movie star. A toast, to Frank, he made it. [. . .] The King of New York."⁴³ It is bad enough that Frank gets to live his evil and luxuriant lifestyle outside the boundary of the law, but to have his purchased heroism portrayed over the airwaves of New York City is more than Detective Gilley can stand. Gilley's hatred is so intense that he must reach for differences that are really illusions, and blind him to the truth of what he is becoming:

We, on the other hand, waste our time lifting finger prints, interrogating witnesses and my favorite, court orders, so Frank's Park Avenue attorney can get [Jump]

out in ten minutes – ten minutes later he’s back on the street. *I thought we were what’s right, I thought the law counted for something.* But this whole system favors the scumbag. [. . .] We make thirty-six five and Frank gets rich on killing people. [Gilley snickers] Roy, Roy, there’s only one way to get Frank. We can make it look like an accident, like a rival gang thing if that’s what matters.⁴⁴

Gilley is riling up the crowd, pulling them over to his side, and for all intents and purposes they are a rival gang. However, like the law between them, the differences Gilley rattles off do not really exist. The earlier quotation from Girard explains this dynamic perfectly: “When mimetic rivalry has ‘undifferentiated’ all relationships, not the double, but the difference is a hallucination. The hallucinatory reading of doubles is the last trick desire plays in order not to recognize in the fact that the mimetic partners are identical, its own failure – or deplorable success.”⁴⁵ Clinging to these differences is a psychological defense for Gilley, as he knows the only way to get Frank is to act like Frank; Gilley must also become the legal process.

Bishop again tries to be the voice of reason, loyally standing by the law; “You going to shoot everyone you can’t catch, Dennis?” But Bishop is too late, his previous influence now eclipsed by the mesmerizing power of violence. Gilley is lost in the mimetic contagion. The only step left is to mythologize the violence that is to follow in the name of the community: “That’s not your fucking – you know what my problem is with you? I can’t do my job. My job is to protect the people of New York and you won’t let me do my job. With or without you I’m going to get rid of Frank. [. . .] You know, Roy, every time Frank kills someone, it’s our fault. Can you live with that? I can’t.”⁴⁶ The stutter here is revealing. Gilley does not answer Bishop’s question, per se, but instead returns to his own personal mythology that justifies the impending violence: lives are at stake, he is doing his job. Gilley truly believes that his *only* choice is to kill Frank,

and since he is caught in the contagion of doubling, it is his only choice: he wants the same freedom from the law that his rival exploits. Gilley has crossed the river without knowing it. The metaphysical space that once separated the two groups has become a blurred dichotomy and will soon be a battle zone where the most violent connections are made.

The father of the bride from the earlier wedding reception is sitting next to Bishop, and says of Gilley, “This guy belongs in a fucking rubber nut squad. He’s a nut.”⁴⁷ This is an eerie and deft echo from Larry Wong telling Frank he is “fucking crazy.” Mimetic doubling is in full effect.⁴⁸ This doubling is illustrated structurally as Frank gets his own monologue in the next scene, the transition creating an ironic juxtaposition between himself and Gilley. Frank and Jennifer are walking on his balcony, overlooking the city after the successful fundraiser. He laments, “I’ve lost a lot of time. It’s gone. From here on I can’t waste any. If I can have a year or two, I’ll make something good, I’ll do something good . . . something good. Just one year, that’s all.”⁴⁹ It is a stark and fascinating contrast: the police officer caught in the mimetic vortex is only concerned about killing; the criminal, while being the object of the doubling, has not yet been engaged, and is only concerned about doing something good. Frank understands that he is part of the cycle of violence, but wants to delay the inevitable in order to not only be a proper king, but a proper person. The distanced witness, if paying attention to the transitional signposts, knows Frank will not have enough time.

Bishop also understands this inevitability of violence, and has only one meager play left. In what seems like a strange and almost misplaced scene, he approaches

Frank's lead attorney, Abraham Croft, during an expensive brunch and drops pictures of all the people Frank has killed on the table.

BISHOP: "Take a good look, Councilor, you represent the man responsible for that."

CROFT: "Are you insane?"

BISHOP: "You're a lawyer, you're a member of the bar, how can you be a part of this?"

CROFT: "Part of what?"

BISHOP: "You can't pretend you don't know what he's doing out there."

CROFT: "I don't pretend anything, if you've got evidence, prosecute."

BISHOP: "By then it'll be too late. Bring him in."⁵⁰

As the spiritual elder and one who has not yet been lured into the cycle of violence, Bishop understands what is at stake: he is trying to save Gilley and those who will follow him into the fray while also giving the law a final chance. He is correct, however, that it will be too late. What follows is a thirteen-minute sequence of violence in which Gilley's gang storms a club where Frank's gang is dancing and doing coke (except Frank, who is on the phone⁵¹). Gilley's gang is dressed in dark clothing, their faces covered with bandanas and ski masks. They are dressed for the job: like criminals. It is not until halfway through the scene that the viewer sees one of the policeman's faces, the young man who was married earlier in the film. The scene is lighted with "Congo Blue," which makes everyone's skin color look identical, emphasizing the sameness that abounds in a mimetic contagion. Moreover, Detective Gilley is wearing a hat identical to the one Jump wore through the first half of the film, illustrating that both are willing to kill for their king. After a long car chase and a host of killings, Tommy Flanigan follows Jump around a corner, through a gate, and underneath a bridge. They walk through the gate ten seconds apart, but they are carrying their guns identically, in their right hand,

extended and pointed to the ground. Jump kills Tommy. Gilley kills Jump. The cycle is at full speed.

This extravaganza of violence is followed by the film's last serene scene in which Gilley is standing over a casket surrounded by police officers and flags. The sky is blue and the grass is green. In despair, Gilley storms away from the funeral and down to his car, which will not start. He punches his steering wheel. A black limousine pulls up next to the car, the window rolls down, and Frank splatters Gilley's head on the windshield with a shotgun. Frank has shot a police officer in front of a hundred other police officers, illustrating the further dissolution of the law into a space reserved for violence and chaos. Goldberg's earlier quote that identified the river as a border in Edwidge Danticat's *Farming of Bones*, is especially pertinent here: "[T]he river cartographically and symbolically figures the blurred, flowing border between nations that also signifies life and death in the novel's symbolic scheme."⁵² This description is equally apt for the law: it signifies life as long as the officers respected its power, and death when they allowed doubling to transform it into a blurred dichotomy; this is not only a broader grammar of transition, but one around which the entire narrative structure of the film is built.

In another theological thread, Frank has been betrayed by one of his own disciples. Just as Judas took thirteen pieces of silver to lead the priests and officers of the temple to Christ, Joey took fifty thousand dollars to deliver Gilley's gang to Frank's doorstep at the club. Joey pleads for his life with Frank: "It was the money, I had never seen so much. They were going to put me in witness protection. I was out, I was free – you can understand that."⁵³ Perhaps Frank should understand, as it is a return to his own trope of freedom, but the cycle of violence is in full swing and Frank is far less forgiving

of his betrayer than Christ was of Judas, and tells his men to bury Joey with the money. This is an example of the mimetic contagion widening to include anyone in the vicinity. In fact, there is only one person still outside the circle, and Frank sets out to lure him in.

When Bishop walks into his apartment Frank is sitting in a chair with a gun in his hand. Bishop sets down his groceries and Frank begins his own defense, mythologizing his own violence for the good of the community:

When the DA's office investigated the sudden death of Artie Clay, they found he had left a thirteen-million dollar estate – how do you explain that? Then there's Larry Wong, who owned half of China Town when he passed away. Larry used to rent his tenements out to Asian refugees – his own people – for eight-hundred-dollars a month to share a single toilet on the same floor. How about King Tito? He had thirteen year-old girls hooking for him on the street. These guys are dead because I don't want to make money that way. Emilio Zapo, the Mata brothers – they're dead, because they were running this city into the ground. [. . .] I didn't kill anyone who didn't [dramatic pause], deserve it.⁵⁴

As Frank claimed at the beginning of the film, he is the legal process. This is another example of the doubling between Frank and Gilley, in that just as Gilley mythologized his own violence in the name of what was good for the community (“My job is to protect the people of New York”) so must Frank (“[T]hey were running this city into the ground.”) It is a warped and touching litany in that Frank sincerely believes his own personal mythology of city guardian, and few could sell such a speech as Christopher Walken. Frank is stuck between the light and the dark. Also like Gilley, Frank is reaching for differences that are hallucinations: like all of those men, Frank is also a killer.

Always loyal to the law, Bishop asks, “Who made you judge and jury?” Frank has an answer for everything:

It's a tough job, but somebody's got to do it. Now, for the likes of Artie Clay and the rest of those bums, you slap a tag on me for fifty thousand dollars? You make me public enemy number one – is that some kind of joke? We'll, I've got a message for you and your friends. You tell them I've got a quarter of a million dollar contract out on anyone involved in this case. Now we all get to know what it's like living without knowing when some asshole's going to step out of the dark and blow your head off. I want you to know what it's like to live that way.⁵⁵

This bounty is Girardian to the core: “Physical violence is the perfect accomplishment of the conflictual mimetic relationship. Everyone imitates the other's violence and returns it ‘with interest.’”⁵⁶ Frank imitates the violence done to him by the police offers and ups the price, returning the same act “with interest.” If they live like he does, there will be no difference. His defense, however, is not finished:

You think ambushing me in some nightclub is gonna stop what makes people do drugs? This country spends a hundred billion dollars a year getting high, and that's not because of me. All that time I was wasting in jail it just got worse. I'm not you're problem; I'm just a businessman.⁵⁷

Again Frank's point is valid, and again he is professing his own goodness: he is not a killer, he is a working man trying to better the community; it is what sets him apart from the likes of King Tito and Emil Zapo. It is what makes him different. As Brenez observes, this economical critique reaches beyond the likes of Frank's rivals: “Frank unmasks the clandestine functioning of the American economy and its consequences: the political institutions, generalized corruption, and civil wars it allows to proliferate (the kingpins are less gang leaders than monarchs of their ethnic group).”⁵⁸ Hence, Ferrara is not simply interrogating violence in a vacuum, but also its subversive role in a decaying American culture.

Having finished his defense, Frank could easily kill Bishop at this point, but his goal was psychologically more devious: coaxing Bishop into the contagion. In a final act of doubling Frank has Bishop handcuff himself to his chair with his own cuffs. “Now you

know how it feels,” Franks says, “*welcome to the circle.*”⁵⁹ It is a chilling moment. The circle is the Goldberg’s cycle of violence and Girard’s mimetic contagion. Frank has put Bishop in the position of criminal, again making himself the legal process. If Bishop follows Frank, he is drawn into the circle. The scene’s final image is of Bishop pulling a gun from his desk and shooting the chain on the handcuffs, a slow-motion sequence of the bullet shattering the chain. It is an act reserved for a criminal, and Bishop has joined the circle. On another level the image is overtly symbolic: a bullet shattering the chain of handcuffs, shattering the law Bishop has stood by loyally for the duration of the film. Brenez extols Ferrara’s overall use of images as “an ethic of forms. [. . .] [T]he image often presents itself as the coinage of the unrespectable, as a ruin, a fallen image.”⁶⁰ The law, for Ferrara, is certainly in ruin, and by entering the circle Bishop has made himself a fallen theological image in the film. No one involved is immune to the negative power of a contagion.

Bishop follows Frank onto the subway. Frank takes a female hostage. With a gun to her head he continues to bait Bishop: “You want me to make it easy on you? I’ve done things in my life you wouldn’t even think about doing. Why should you be *any different?* You’ve got the gun – use it! Come on!” To the woman, Frank says, “Do you have a family? [She nods.] I don’t want to hurt you but I will blow you away if I have to.” Then to Bishop: “Could you do that?”⁶¹ In cycles of violence, no one comes out alive, and they both draw their guns and shoot each other. Bishop dies on the subway, the convulsions of his body strikingly similar to Jump’s death. Frank makes it out of the subway to a cab, which is stuck in a traffic jam. All around him cars are honking. A neon Coca-Cola sign flashes. Frank dies alone watching the police surround him. The

final image is of his gun falling. Of this last shot Abel Ferrara said, “Live by the sword, die by the sword.”⁶² In mimetic terms: live by violence, die by violence. Every major character in the film is dead. Brenez further elaborates on this emblematic ending:

[T]here is, crucially, an irreducible opposition between Frank and the rest of the world. Outside, in log-jammed Manhattan, uniformity reigns in the repetition of gestures and postures . . . lights, shots, and motifs. Outside is the human community; inside, in Frank’s taxi, the irreducible singularity who wanted to change the course of the world and could only manage to suspend it for an instant agonizes in close-up: the traffic jam is suddenly a sublime figure.⁶³

Ferrara’s rejection of violence permeates this final scene. From the overt image of the falling gun to the more subtle subtext of the traffic jam, symbolizing not only Frank’s inability to “make something good,” but rejecting the violent means which brought him to that isolated space, indicating that these causal elements of violence extend past his own death to the point of stagnant gluttony, as symbolized through the neon Coca-Cola sign. From capitalists to gangsters to politicians, violence is America’s *modus operandi*.

Conclusion

Elizabeth Goldberg argues that as distance witnesses it is our job to observe positive connections in order to transcend cycles of violence; Ferrara’s project, it would seem, has the same intent with entirely opposite means. If the critical focus of *King of New York* was moral ambiguity and capitalist corruption in America, then Frank would live. If Ferrara was trumpeting theological transcendence in modern Gomorrah, then

Bishop would live, or at least the film's final shot would be of a hospital being built, brandished with Frank's name. With both characters dying, however, along with every member of their respective groups, the film is a rejection of violence and a warning of its contagious power, chiefly illustrated through mimetic doubling and the decaying border of the law. Ferrara's protagonists rarely find themselves on the right end of a film, despite their arguably noble intentions. In *Bad Lieutenant*, LT finds theological redemption, a conversion that prompts a surprising act of forgiveness – after which he is gunned down by his bookie. In Ferrara's vampire film, *The Addiction*, a chilling indictment of western philosophy, Kathy begs a priest for forgiveness after an attempted suicide, then appears to peacefully die after receiving her last rites. The list goes on, and the cycle of violence is always the ultimate victor. And perhaps this is part of Ferrara's project: as distanced witnesses, how can we learn about the dynamics of violence without watching them progress? How can we avoid being pulled into the circle if we do not know the warning signs?

¹ Nicole Brenez, *Abel Ferrara*, trans. Adrian Martin (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2007).

² Russell Dennis, "Expanding the Horizons of Cinematic Narrative: A Textual Analysis of Nietzschean [Nietzschean] Themes in Five Abel Ferrara Films," *Popular Culture Review* 17, no. 4 (Winter 2006): 13.

³ Dennis, "Expanding the Horizons," 13.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁵ Peter Travers, "King of New York," *Rolling Stone*, September 28, 1990, <http://www.rollingstone.com/movies/reviews/king-of-new-york-19900928>.

⁶ Janet Maslin, "King of New York," *The New York Times*, September 22, 1990, <http://www.nytimes.com/movie/review?res=9C0CE4D81238F931A1575AC0A966958260>.

⁷ Andrew Purcell, "Abel Ferrara: 'I made Scarface look like Mary Poppins,'" *The Guardian*, August 5, 2010, <http://www.theguardian.com/film/2010/aug/05/abel-ferrara-interview>.

⁸ Brad Stevens, *Abel Ferrara: The Moral Vision* (England: FAB Press, 2004), 143.

⁹ *The King of New York*, directed by Abel Ferrara (1990; Santa Monica, California: Lions Gate, 2004,) DVD.

¹⁰ Elizabeth Swanson Goldberg, *Beyond Terror: Gender, Narrative, Human Rights* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2007), 60.

¹¹ Elizabeth Swanson Goldberg, *Beyond Terror: Gender, Narrative, Human Rights* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2007), 165

¹² *Ibid.*, 160.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Rene Girard, *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World*, trans. Stephen Bann and Michael Meeter (London: Athlone Press, 1987), 7.

¹⁵ Rene Girard, *I See Satan Fall Like Lightning* (New York: Orbis Books, 2001), 22.

¹⁶ Girard, *Things Hidden*, 302.

¹⁷ Girard, *I See Satan Fall*, xv.

¹⁸ Ferrara, *King of New York*.

¹⁹ On the DVD, this scene is titled “Split Personality.” This “split” can be further symbolically identified through the contrast of Frank’s last name (White) and his penchant for always wearing a black suit. The simplicity of this subtext is certainly an example of, as mentioned earlier by Russell Dennis, Ferrara pushing the envelope of poor taste too far, as the extension of light and dark is rife with racial insensitivity. While there are black members of the police squad (Wesley Snipes) and Frank White’s crew (Lawrence Fishburne), having a man named “White” lead a gang of mostly African Americans who represent darkness is offensive. This tasteless stereotype is exacerbated when Jump later orders fried chicken. Brad Stevens notes that the role of Jump was originally written for James Russo (136), who is white, which would only slightly alter these dynamics. Brenez, however, argues that part of Ferrara’s project is a critique of “the American Condition” that seeks “to illuminate actual centers of power and lines of forces which determine the development of both personal social realities in the United States” (59). Hence, one could argue a man named “White” leading a group of African American’s (all of whom die in the film) is a further critique of the racial inequality that America continues to exploit. Regardless, the simplistic light and dark imagery that results in tasteless stereotypes is one of the film’s major flaws.

²⁰ Brenez, *Abel Ferrara*, 64-65.

²¹ This is ironic, as Jennifer is part of his cadre of lawyers and someone with whom he has been romantically involved in the past.

²² Ferrara, *King of New York*.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Brenez, *Abel Ferrara*, 43-43 (emphasis added).

²⁷ Ferrara, *King of New York*.

²⁸ There has been a single shot of the squad commander, Frank Bishop, looking at Frank's file on a computer screen and taking a pill for what is presumed to be a terminal illness.

²⁹ "Audio Commentary with Editor Anthony Redman." *The King of New York*. Narr. Mary Kane, Anthony Redman, Joe Deilia, Randy Sabusawa. Dir. Abel Ferrara. 1990. Special Edition DVD. Lions Gate, 2004.

³⁰ Girard, *Things Hidden*, 299.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 11.

³² Ferrara, *King of New York*.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Girard, *I See Satan Fall*, 22.

³⁹ Ferrara, *King of New York*.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Goldberg, *Beyond Terror*, 160.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, (emphasis added).

⁴⁵ Girard, *Things Hidden*, 302.

⁴⁶ Ferrara, *King of New York*.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ In the DVD commentary, the editor remembered that in filming this scene that Nicholas St. John said to him, "This is where he turns into Frank White" ("Audio Commentary with Anthony Redman." *King of New York*). Hence, while St. John may not be aware of Girard, he is certainly aware of the dynamics and phenomenon about which Girard writes. Brenez, too, seems to understand these dynamics, writing that Gilley "has *imitated* the underworld's dirty procedures" (44, emphasis added).

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ It is interesting, as in this case, how often Frank is outside of the debauchery and focused on his vision. Not once in the film does he do drugs.

⁵² Goldberg, *Beyond Terror*, 160.

⁵³ Ferrara, *King of New York*.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Girard, *Things Hidden*, 300.

⁵⁷ Ferrara, *King of New York*.

⁵⁸ Brenez, *Abel Ferrara*, 45.

⁵⁹ Ferrara, *King of New York* (emphasis added).

⁶⁰ Brenez, *Abel Ferrara*, 38.

⁶¹ Ferrara, *King of New York* (emphasis added).

⁶² “Audio Commentary with Director Abel Ferrara.” *The King of New York*. Narr. Abel Ferrara. Dir. Abel Ferrara. 1990. Special Edition DVD. Lions Gate, 2004.

⁶³ Brenez, *Abel Ferrara*, 76.

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