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# THE REMAKE OF MEMORY: MARTIN SCORSESE'S *SHUTTER ISLAND* AND PEDRO ALMODOVAR'S *THE SKIN I LIVE IN**

The history of cinema has given us notable representations of states of memory, delusion, hallucination, and dream. Cinematic states of consciousness arise in early German Expressionist and Surrealist films, such as in *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari, Robert Wiene, 1920) and *Un Chien Andalou* (Luis Buñuel, 1929). In Hollywood films there are famous dream sequences, such as in *Spellbound* (Alfred Hitchock, 1945), or re-creations of dream-like worlds, such as in the classic film noir, *Laura* (Otto Preminger, 1944), or renditions of mad obsession, as in *Frankenstein* (James Whale, 1931) or *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (Rouben Mamoulian, 1931). And in the US avant-garde film, works such as Maya Deren's *Meshes of the Afternoon* (1943), and Stan Brakhage's *Anticipation of the Night* (1958), create metaphors on dream and perceptive states. Film theory too addresses these concerns with early writings of Hugo Munsterberg, for example, who saw the medium of film itself as an objectification of consciousness (2012), or with more contemporary theorist Laura Mulvey (1975) who interpreted the whole of narrative cinema as the objectification of male sexual desire, especially in relationship to the representation of women. But in our current cinematic era, one that arguably begins in the mid-1960s, or early 1970s, and termed "postmodern" by the critic Fredric Jameson (1983), a new form of "memory" begins to interject itself into the picture, or shall we say, into the *movie*. That is, the viewer's own movie memories, not personal ones, mind you, but cultural memories, ones cued by cinematic elements strategically re-created and recombined by the filmmakers. According to Jameson, this practice conflates past, present, and future, and puts our very understanding of history into jeopardy.

Jameson wrote his seminal essay on the cultural condition of postmodernism in 1983, and foregrounded one of its constituent features as "pastiche", or blank parody, a technique that affects

***Shutter Island*** **(Martin Scorsese, 2010) / Courtesy of Vértice 360º**

not only the story and the style of the newer film, but also the "look and feel" of the image. Since then, the features that Jameson chose to address have only become more pronounced in cultural practice. The amount of copying, of "quoting", "recycling", "adapting", and "remaking" (Dika, 2003; Constantine Verevis, 2006), for example, as well as modes of physical recombination, such as "sampling" and "remixing," have intensified to almost all aspects of cultural production, from films, to art, to music, to social media (Fowler, 2012; Laederman and Westrup, 2014). These often varied works, however, must be looked at within their historical and aesthetic contexts. As I have argued elsewhere (Dika, 2003), an approach to such a broad-based topic is to look at individual practices that provide significant creative possibilities within the current tendency. In this essay, I will look at the work of Martin Scorsese and Pedro Almodovar, two veteran filmmakers whose works have previously submitted to the thematic, stylistic, generic, or iconographic reference to past cinema history. I will be discussing Scorsese's *Shutter Island* (2010) and Almodovars's *the Skin I Live In* (2011), not only in relationship to earlier films about states of consciousness to which they may allude, but most importantly, to the cinematic *strategies* and *concepts* about the representation of consciousness that the directors now re-engage, augment, or challenge.

First to note is that *Shutter Island* and *The Skin I Live In* give rise to cinematic memories that may vary among individual viewers. *Shutter Island* could recall, for example, aspects of *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* or *The Shining* (Stanley Kubrick, 1980) for some viewers, while *The Skin I Live In* may reference *Frankenstein* or *Eyes Without a Face* (Georges Franju, 1960)[1]. This quality of variance has been a feature of postmodern pastiche from the beginning. For Jameson, the quoted elements were both "allusive" and "elusive," often aiding the films' sense of "nostalgia" in their ability to span past works and eras. It is this referencing of past historical time that is now especially interesting since *Shutter Island* and *The Skin I Live In* are also narratively structured as temporal and visual labyrinths, using the film medium's enhanced ability to traverse time and space through digital editing, and to construct a potent visual surface through the reality-altering abilities of computer-generated technology. In this essay I have selected to compare *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* and *Un Chein Andalou* to *Shutter Island*, and, for the most part, the film *Frankenstein* to *The Skin I Live In.* I have done so not to claim that Scorsese and Almodovar necessarily intend to engage their audiences in a "play" of reference for its own sake. Rather, I am interested in how the cinematic concerns of the older works, ones that had importantly addressed questions of consciousness and identity at the earlier part of the 20th century, are now reformulated and re-imagined in the newer films[2].

*Shutter Island* is adapted from a 2003 novel by Dennis Lehane. The resulting film bears an interesting relationship to (at least) two films from cinema history, primarily because of the way *Shutter Island* puts the subjectivity of the viewer into question. In the German Expressionist film *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* by Robert Wiene, for example, and in *Shutter Island*, the viewer is immersed in a world where the veracity of depicted events is held in suspension[3]. And because of *Shutter Island's* visual and aural associative structure, one that so privileges the dream mechanisms of "condensation" and "displacement" (Freud, 2011) —of sensory metaphor and metonymy— it begs at least some comparison to the Surrealist film *Un Chien Andalou* by Luis Buñuel and

Salvador Dali. In both the newer and older films we are entering cinematic worlds where the tension between real and imagination, memory or hallucination, past and present are of central importance.

The dissimilarities between the historical films and *Shutter Island* also abound. One of the most obvious that must quickly be addressed is the different political and formal status of the works. For example, we must not confuse the historical placement of *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* and *Un Chien Andalou,* especially their inter-war European setting, their radical aspirations, and their highly disruptive form, with that of *Shutter Island.* Scorsese's film is definitively a work of US popular culture, and not part of the avant-garde. But this is precisely the point. Our interest will be to note which significant cinematic strategies have been selected from the past works, which concepts have been sustained, and which still function in important and challenging ways. We can begin by discussing *Shutter Island* in the variance of its references and connotations.

*Shutter Island* can in some ways be seen as a detective film. This is certainly the way it begins, and because of the costumes and early 1950s era, it might even give rise to a *film noir*[4] mood. We learn, for example, that Teddy Daniels, played by Leonardo Di Caprio, is by his own claim a Federal Marshall, and we watch as Teddy and his partner Chuck disembark on a foreboding Shutter Island. The two men enter a mental institution where their assignment is to locate a missing patient, Rachel Solando, a woman who drowned her three children in the lake and cannot accept her culpability. Since Rachel Solando proves elusive, Teddy is drawn deeper into the space of the institution, meeting people who tell him of possible lobotomy experiments conducted there as part of a government conspiracy. Teddy traverses the space of the asylum, in search of Rachel, and in search of "truth", until he reaches the lighthouse, only to confront his *own* truth. Here elements congeal in *Shutter Island* to refer to a *Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* type plot. The psychiatrist, Dr. Cawley (recalling Dr. Caligari), tells Teddy that it is he, Teddy, who is the mental patient. The doctor says that it is Teddy who killed his wife because she drowned their three children, and Teddy who imagined the "scenario" we have been watching. All has been a delusion, or more properly, because film is a visual medium, a hallucination. It is Teddy who must now be lobotomized. It is Teddy who is insane. Or is he?

**The tactic of combing computer-enhanced images with natural elements, however, is not always clearly distinguishable in *Shutter Island*. Instead it further serves to expressionistically create a feeling of unease through the tortured environments it creates**

While there is a narrative similarity between *Shutter Island* and *The Cabinet of Dr, Caligari*, it is perhaps the cinematic strategy of putting the film viewer directly into the consciousness of a proposed madman in both films that is most striking. In more conventional films, a determining structure alerts the viewer to a shift from an objective reality, to a subjective vision. Dreams, hallucinations, memories, and subjective point-of-view shots are set up in this way. And while the flashback structure of *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* is so presented, with Francis beginning to tell his story of the past as the film opens, we are not initially alerted to the possibility that his narration may be unreliable. Similarly, in the opening sequence of *Shutter Island,* the more standard cues to a subjective vision are removed. From the beginning, we assume we are watching a series of events from an objective perspective. And even over the course of the film, when dreams or flashbacks are openly cued from Teddy's perspective, we do not initially realize that they are imbedded in an elaborate overall structure of Teddy's delusions and hallucinations. We, along with Teddy, are locked inside his consciousness, seeing from his "point of view", one that slides across states of actual perceptions, across to dreams, memory, delusions and hallucinations.

If we look more closely at the opening sequence of *Shutter Island*, for example, we come to realize that all was not as "normal" or "objective" as we had originally expected. We can find hints, visual, aural, and dialogue cues that on a second viewing become more evident. Teddy is clearly agitated in this opening sequence, making reference to his physical and mental upheaval, and alluding to the disturbance that "water" causes him, and later, the disconcerting presence of "fire". Both of these are symbolic allusions to the trauma of Teddy's children's death by "water", by downing, and the gun Teddy "fired" in killing his wife. Moreover, as in *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari,* a distinctive visual world is constructed in *Shutter Island. Caligari* is legendary for its German Expressionist visual design, where the inner turmoil of a troubled mind is objectified onto two-dimensional painted sets. In similar fashion, the visual surface of *Shutter Island* is "painted" — only now it is done so digitally—. The clear distinction between objective and subjective reality is manipulated here, while the digital imagery is utilized for its particular properties.

For what these properties of the digital image might be, Gilles Deleuze has

provided some observations. Deleuze describes the digital image as distinctive because it presents "the brain-city, the third eye, replacing the eyes of nature". Scorsese takes this property of the digital image to metaphorically imply states of interiority. Moreover, Deleuze notes that the digital image exists as "the object of a perpetual reorganization, in which a new image can arise from any point whatever of the preceding image" (Deleuze, 1989: 265). Scorsese employs the digital image for the purpose of rendering states of consciousness, utilizing its permeable, "exfoliating", surface. Although the digital image's exfoliating effect is frequently utilized in popular cinematic practices (as were similar effects in the optical printing, double exposure, and dissolve techniques of the celluloid past)[5], Scorsese mixes the two, blending the filmic and the digital, along with the narrative and symbolic elements, now to weave a web that teeters between an objective and subjective reading of the events, and that expressionistically creates a feeling of unease.

*Shutter Island* opens on a grey foggy screen. No object is yet visible through the fog. This first image begins an overall metaphor of "moving into consciousness", from a formless state, towards form, in search of memories, in search of truth. Accompanying the foggy image, only the sound of water is heard, indistinct but insistent: is it water as it flows from a tap, as it laps against the side of a boat, or cascades from a waterfall? The dim outline of a boat slowly appears, almost lacey in its blackness, approaching from the center of the frame, moving forward. We next see the inside of the boat. Through an open bathroom door, a man is hunched over, heaving. Teddy Daniels vomits into a toilet. What is this metaphor? "Slipping his guts?" Has Teddy been made sick by drugs —or by his own surfacing memories?—. Teddy wipes his face with water from the sink. He looks into the mirror, a mirror reflection, alluding to the splitting of the self that will characterize the film as a whole. He says, "Pull yourself together Teddy". He then looks out the porthole to the digitally rendered "ocean" that moves by. Barely containing his revulsion he mutters, "It's just the water, it's a lot of water". Teddy then climbs to the deck to meet his partner. Chuck lights Teddy's cigarette. A quick flashback to a pretty blonde woman —this is Teddy's wife— who died. Teddy explains to Chuck, "There was a fire at the apartment while I was at work".

Is the opening sequence of *Shutter Island* an objective event, or is it part of a subjective state that can be read metaphorically? The film presents a visual surface that keeps a balance between the two, and that will later complicate the reading of events. When Teddy and Chuck talk on the deck, for example, a digitally rendered ocean rushes by behind them. The created image is painterly in its flat blue lines, yet cold, austere, and nearly windless. What's more, the "ocean" seems to separate from the ground, almost declaring itself as a fake. The tactic of combing computer-enhanced images with natural elements, however, is not always clearly distinguishable in *Shutter Island*. Instead it further serves to expressionistically create a feeling of unease through the tortured environments it creates. We note, for example, scenes where characters struggle against a rain-twisted black forest, where a multitude of rats swarm from a single hole in the rocks, or where webs of chain-link fences, or hospital gratings, or prison-like bars encase the characters. Colors and set design also aid in creating this sense of an almost tactile, strangely flattened surface. The color green, for example, pervades the film, hospital green, institutional green, and the florescent green of nightmares and disturbing interior design. Browns and tattered whites also rise, ragged and wet along labyrinthine dungeon-like corridors, and underground passages. In the end, these surfaces give the film the feeling of a fabrication in one sense, as in *Caligari,* but also of an enclosure, of repressed surfaces, and the visually equivalent of a "no way out".

The presence of "water" and "fire", however, form the most insistent visual and aural element in *Shutter Island*. It is the water that eerily comes from Teddy's hands, drips in his dreams, and drips from pipes of the building; it is water that surrounds the island, and that falls from the sky in torrential rain. Throughout the film, the presence of water is also evident in the narrative action as the characters ask for water, dive into water, look at the water, and the sound of water spills onto surfaces.

***Shutter Island*** **(Martin Scorsese, 2010) / Courtesy of Vértice 360º**

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There is too much water. It is, after all, the "water" that killed Teddy's children, and that now wakes his dreams, and pervades his consciousness. He can't get rid of it. The fire is just as insistent. The verbal metaphor to "fire" a gun is literalized in *Shutter Island* with the repeated lighting of a match, with the burning of the apartment, or with a thunderous and flame-drenched car explosion. In Teddy's dream, "I fired the gun" is the thought that pervades, and is linked with another "liquid" metaphor: "I cannot stop the *blood* that flowed from her". Fire and water, blood and ash intermingle: "It is the fire that caused her to die, to crumble to ash in my arms, the 'fire' that I cannot admit to". This is Teddy's trauma, Teddy's wound that repeats throughout the film.

And it is here that *Shutter Island* approaches *concepts* regarding the representation of the unconscious mind on film famously broached by the Surrealists. As I have noted, Scorsese's film is a work of popular culture, and so does not attempt the disruptive, anti-establishment attitude of *Un Chien Andalou*. However, the mechanisms of condensation and displacement, the associative structures of visual metaphor and metonymy, operative in dreams and in psychological symptoms, are nonetheless employed in *Shutter Island*. I will describe the significant mechanisms in *Un Chien Andalou*, noting some of these cinematic strategies, and how they have been once again addressed in *Shutter Island*.

*Un Chien Andalou* is presented to the viewer directly as a "dream state". It does so by eliminating a mediating bracket, and by distorting established formal strategies for cinematic narrative. The central operating principle of Dali and Buñuel's film is the irrational and sometimes violent juxtaposition of physical objects and events by means of film editing, as well as the disruption of narrative expectation through illogical sequencing. In the famed opening of *Un Chien Andalou*, for example, we see a close-up of a straight razor as a man makes the gesture of cutting across his thumbnail, and then associatively, a shot of the moon as a slender cloud "slices" across it, and then the cutting of a woman's eye with the straight razor. This type of associative blending, based on form and function rather than narrative sense, continues throughout the film, not always *across* shots such as described here, but also *within* shots. The shape of ants crawling out of the center of a hand, for example, is echoed in the shape of a sea urchin *dissolving* into armpit hair; or, a man's mouth first disappears from his face, only to have a woman's armpit hair erotically *superimposed* in its place. Characters shift, splitting off into a man who rejects violence and a man who lives for it; and separate locations are made continuous by moving from a city apartment to a beachfront in one cut. In *Un Chien Andalou,* the scenes proceed irrationally, to impede meaning. The film is meant to imply a dream in its "raw" state, before the process of secondary revision, of interpretation, in waking life. *Shutter Island* does not maintain this level of assault on logic. Instead it strives for interpretation, now through cinematic associative structures that present a shifting and permeable surface to the film.

*Shutter Island* develops more like a state of troubled consciousness, or set of symbolic symptoms, in the process of being interpreted through talk therapy. It is almost as if we are walking through Teddy's unconscious mind with him, picking up visual and aural clues, ones that can be converted back into speech, to find the meaning of his delusions. Characters like Chuck, who is later revealed to be Teddy's therapist Dr. Sheehan, facilitate in this process, as does Dr. Cawley, and the other patients, nurses and orderlies, making possible the verbalization of Teddy's search. Here the dream work processes of condensation and displacement are mimicked. In addition to the condensed status of "water" and "fire" noted above — transforming these words, these ideas, into the cinematic metaphors that embody, repeat, and proliferate their associative meaning ("fire" = match = explosion = gun) ("water" = rain = "ocean" = lake)— the mechanism of displacement is also utilized on many levels of character, story, and dialogue. One of the most obvious is the continued displacement, the slipping and sliding of identities, for example, from Teddy, to Andrew Laeddis, to George Noyce, and from the missing patient Rachel Solando, to Dr. Rachel Solando, to Teddy's wife Delores Chanal, and back again to Teddy's dead daughter Rachel. As in *Un Chien Andalou*, identities, and personages, do not stay stable

in *Shutter Island,* nor do the nature of events. Chuck, for example, dies on the rocks, and then walks again in a subsequent scene; Rachel disappears from a locked cell, and then re-enters; Laeddis is elusive, and then part of Teddy himself. Dreams, memories, hallucinations also combine, losing their distinct boundaries and blending, until finally, the truth is found —or so it seems—.

Scorsese uses this ambiguity in *Shutter Island* to ultimately address one of his own repeated cinematic themes: redemption. After Teddy has admitted his culpability, he seems to revert to madness. Knowing that the orderlies will lobotomize him, Teddy then makes a *choice.* He states, "Which would be worse, to live a monster or to die a good man?" and then voluntarily walks away with the orderlies. In an earlier scene Dr. Cawley's had admonished, "Sanity is not a choice, Marshall. You can't just will to get over it". Should we now assume that Teddy, in making a moral choice, in knowing the difference between right and wrong, is *sane*? The redemption of the character through the making of a moral choice can be seen in many of Scorsese's films, from Charlie in *Mean Streets* (1973), to Travis Bickle in *Taxi Driver* (1976), to Jesus in the *Last Temptation of Christ* (1988)[6]. In Teddy's case, the possibility of his being sane reconstructs the story of the film. Perhaps Teddy has been drugged as part of a government-funded conspiracy to fabricate amoral "monsters" for government use. Teddy is certainly traumatized by his past, damaged by it, but he is not insane. In this way, the final reading of *Shutter Island,* like *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, teeters between a psychological interpretation (madness), and a realistic interpretation (government conspiracy) of events.

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*The Skin I Live In* by Pedro Almodovar also draws on a composite of films from film history, and deals with states of obsession and madness. However, this film does not enter the consciousness of the main character to the extent of *Shutter Island*. Instead, the film originally seems to be shot from an objective perspective, and with a fairly conventional story structure and use of cinematic space. As the film progresses, however, a pattern of flashbacks and dream states ensue, bringing us into a tortured set of past events. Moreover, *The Skin I Live In* is often digitally manipulated to enhance the naturalism of the image, confronting us with a glossy, sensual surface, while the costumes, set design, and props in the image help us understand aspects of the story, and our implication in it. This is a crucial dynamic in The *Skin I Live In* since the film conflates potent psychological, sexual, and social concerns, drawn from a mélange of Freudian theory and contemporary issues, and does so in a way that allows the film to enter *our* consciousness, and our past traumas, and memories, with insistence.

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To begin our discussion of *The Skin I Live In* I will offer an anecdote. This account involves the early stages of understanding of sexual difference on the part of a four year old boy. The reason for presenting this account is for its straightforward simplicity, for its usefulness in demonstrating Freud's theory of the Oedipus Complex (2011) and for the references to other films from film history that it inspires.

I had a friend named Liz who was the mother of a four-year old boy named Eddie. Liz had never read Freud, nor had she in-depth knowledge of his theories, but Liz loved telling stories of Eddie's development and of the funny things he said and did. Liz told me that one day she was taking a shower when Eddie came into the bathroom riding on his toy bike. He pulled open the shower curtain, looked up at his mother for a while, and then left. He soon returned, pulled open the curtain, and said, "Hey Mom, can I see that again?" Liz said that she stood there soaking wet as her son contemplated her body. Then Eddie said, "Hey Mom, what happened to your penis?" Liz tried to explain about boys... and girls... but Liz said that for weeks afterwards the conversations with Eddie continued about penises and penis size. Eddie wanted to know how big the elephant's penis was, how big the turtle's penis was, etc. From a Freudian perspective, Eddie had suffered a trauma, a fear of perhaps losing his own penis, of having it cut off, and was now engaging in these conversations to re-assure himself.

Castration is the central trauma in *The Skin I Live In*, and it is arguably a fear that lies at the basis of male infantile discoveries of sexual difference. For our discussion, it is interesting that Eddie's story takes place in a shower, bringing us memories of Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1959), and of the knife (what "happened" to your penis?) used to "punish" the woman for her crime

(her lack?). *Psycho*'s shower scene portrays a symbolic castration, and a story that the cinema has often told us. *The Skin I Live In* actively alludes to a number of such films, ones that similarly use metaphors of castration to tell their story. Beginning in seeming compliance with those earlier films and their symbolic stance, *The Skin I Live In* then becomes more explicit in its approach to the material.

*The Skin I Live In* tells the story of a mad doctor, Robert Ledgard, who conducts experiments on his patients by replacing their skin by a process of "transgensisis". He mutates pig skin with human skin, creating a tougher organic material, one not subject to burns, or to puncturing, cutting. Since Robert's experiments go beyond accepted medical practices of the time, they call to mind such cinematic mad doctors as those depicted, for example, in *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, Frankenstein, Eyes Without a Face* and *Dead Ringers* (1988). These classic films resonate in *The Skin I Live In* on the level of visual reference, in shot set-ups, set design, or color palette, but most importantly, on the level of story. They depict doctors who alter their victims/patients' bodies, and therefore, their identities. As Robert delivers a lecture on his controversial experiments, for example, the shots and set design of the lecture hall are reminiscent of those in *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. And as Robert begins the vaginoplasty on his victim Vicente, castrating him and constructing a vagina, the cold, sleek interior of the operating room, and the litany of surgical preparations recall the visual surface of *Dead Ringers*. But it is perhaps the content of these earlier cinematic doctors' operations that bear the most comparison. Dr. Frankenstein, for example, reanimates a man by recombining dead body parts, even the brain, challenging the meaning of identity. Dr. Mantle in *Dead Ringers* operates on women's sexual organs, alluding to birth and eventual individuation. In *Eyes Without a Face,* Dr. Genessier removes the face of his female victim to super-impose it onto the corroding visage of his own disfigured daughter. And of course, in *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, Dr. Jekyll splits off into two men, losing his singularity, and his individual appearance, to become separate entities.

In all these films, there is the question of altering the body and somehow changing the soul, changing the answer to the question "Who are we"*?* Are we defined by the limits of our bodies, our brains, our faces, and our genitals? And it is here that Almodovar returns to one of his repeated themes: the tension between sexual and gender difference. As often noted, Dr. Frankenstein attempted to "play God" in transforming dead flesh into a living being, deforming the biblical story of Adam and Eve. Robert, in *The Skin I Live In,* again "plays God" by transforming Adam *into* Eve by means of a sex change operation.

In *The Skin I Live In,* Robert changes Vicente into Vera. He makes him a woman, one now presented on film for our visual pleasure. Here the image and the *mise en scene* take us to another level, away from the purely horror film reference that the earlier stories may have suggested, to one of cinematic self-reflexivity. At the beginning of the film, Vera is presented as a prisoner in Robert's home. We assume that she is the recipient of his special skin experiments and that she is being carefully monitored. At first this certainly seems to be the case, as Vera is presented with beautiful skin. Resplendent, smooth, and pore-less, it reflects the light and shines through to us. But her skin is not the only part of the film that glows. Not only do the sleek locations have this look, but the very skin of the film has been presented in high gloss sheen, one that ironically draws us into uncompromisingly uncanny material.

It is now the "skin" of the film that touches us, the skin of light that has formed the image that now reaches us (Barthes, 2010: 82).

This, along with the potent psychological material presented, *The Skin I Live In* envelops us. To complete the encounter, the methods of voyeurism presented in *Psycho*, for example, and elaborated on by film theorists such as Laura Mulvey, alert us to the psychosexual dynamic involved in taking the woman as the object of the look in cinema and in art. The set design of *The Skin I Live In,* for example, presents us with several large Renaissance paintings by Titian, pictures of reclining nudes with their bodies prominent to the viewer (Berger, 1972). This pose is then repeated as we, and her captors, view Vera on large and small flat screen TVs. Bringing the past of the representation of women to the present, we, and the characters, want her, want to be her. The film screen itself is articulated in its flatness in these scenes, with

***The Skin I Live In*** **(La piel que habito, Pedro Almodóvar, 2011) / ®El Deseo. Photograph of José Haro**

characters caressing Vera's image, and even "licking" her image, alerting us to our own desire.

However, it is later revealed that our visual pleasure has been a ploy. Any fantasy of rape "we" may have had, any fantasy of "being" Vera, is tempered by the revelation that Vera is Vicente. Have we desired having sex with a man? Or, have we desired to be this man? And when Vera says, "I am Vicente" to his mother (perhaps the only person on earth who will still accept him as such), what do we make of that statement? Is Vera still Vicente? What is the meaning of identity? Does it change with changes to our body? What is the meaning of our sexual orientation? Will Vera now be a "lesbian" if she desires a woman, or will she desire men and so be a "heterosexual"? These are just some of the questions that rise from this newly configured working and reworking of old films and theories, now to new and assaultive effect. The uncanny, as Freud once described it (2003), that is, the return of infantile fears and the dread that accompanies them, is now made real in a movie about physical changes on the body of an individual, and the questions of identity that arise.

Previous cinematic works depicting psychological states have inspired *Shutter Island* and *The Skin I Live In*. In these later works, Martin Scorsese and Pedro Almodovar have addressed new cinematic approaches to the topic of consciousness, while also engaging us in added layers of meaning and experience. *Shutter Island* and *The Skin I Live In* are in some ways memories of past screen memories, and re-viewings of past cinematic desire. We inhabit a kind of double exposure, making us aware of our own process of remembering as we watch characters in their continued inner search, and ideation of the past. They struggle and we struggle with identity, with vision, and with dream. ■

***The Skin I Live In*** **(La piel que habito, Pedro Almodóvar, 2011) / ®El Deseo. Photograph of José Haro**

## Notes

* The pictures of *The Skin I live In* (Pedro Almodóvar, 2011) and *Shutter Island* (Martin Scorsese, 2010) that illustrate this essay have been provided by El Deseo and Vértice 360. *L'Atalante* thanks the distribution companies their authorization for reproducing them in this journal. (Edition Note.)

1 The critic Noel Carroll takes a slightly different position regarding this type of referencing. Carroll claims that allusion establishes a "two-tiered system," one in which the work provides a "wink" to the knowing members of the audience, while other less film-knowledgeable members of the audience take the film at face value (Carroll, 1982).

2 It is interesting to note that the 1970s and 1980s (and beyond) practice of allusion is one that has often privileged film works from the mid-20the century. Scorsese (and to a lesser extent Almodovar) in the films under discussion, seem to reference works from the earlier part of the century. In Scorsese's subsequent work *Hugo* (2011), the director also returns to the beginning of film history, revisiting Georges Melies and his pioneering films, now through the extensive use of CGI and 3-D technology.

3 See Todorov (1975) where he describes a literary genre in which the meaning of perceived events is held in suspension between a psychological and a supernatural interpretation by the main character and the reader. In the cinematic work *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, the tension is more between the objective and subjective interpretation of events.

4 *Film noir* too is highly influenced by German Expressionism in cinema, stylistic and thematic predispositions of which *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* is an important example.

5 For an interesting discussion of the possibilities in visual effects in the digital era see Cram (2012).

6 See for example, my discussion of Martin Scosese's *The Last Temptation of Christ* (Dika, 2003:188-196).

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