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5 My Victims, My Melancholia

Raging Bull and Vincente Minnelli's *The Bad and the Beautiful*

Despite the many transtextual moments in *Raging Bull*, its engagement with Vincente Minnelli's *The Bad and the Beautiful* (1952) has largely escaped critical attention. When Scorsese put together his meditation on American cinema, *A Personal Journey with Martin Scorsese Through American Movies* (1995), he chose to begin the four-hour documentary with a clip from Minnelli's film about a megalomaniac Hollywood producer and three victims of his boundless ego. Many years before this, in *New York, New York* (1977), Scorsese shot a violent car scene in homage to one of the emotional high-points of *The Bad and the Beautiful*.¹ In *Raging Bull* itself, allusions to Lana Turner in *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (1946), Kirk Douglas in *The Champion* (1949), and Minnelli as director of *The Father of the Bride* (1950) inevitably lead us to consider *The Bad and the Beautiful* – the tale of angst-ridden Hollywood masculinity in which the three stars combine forces. Furthermore, in those key moments of desire in *Raging Bull*, when Vickie dangles her legs in the pool and later over the foot of the bed, Scorsese makes reference to the first thing we see of Lana Turner in *The Bad and the Beautiful* when her legs (also her entrée in *The Postman Always Rings Twice*) hang down from a hole in the roof of an abandoned Hollywood mansion. Given the obvious importance of the film both to Scorsese and to the iconography of *Raging Bull*, critical neglect of *The Bad and the Beautiful* in this context offers a surprising and challenging oversight.

The real importance of the comparison of *The Bad and the Beautiful* with *Raging Bull* lies in what it tells us about the melancholic hero of

popular film and the characters that become his sacrificial victims. Such a comparison also emphasizes the extent to which films about the male melancholic, such as *Raging Bull* and *The Bad and the Beautiful*, draw on mythical narratives of melancholia as analyzed by Freud in *Mourning and Melancholia* and *Totem and Taboo*. This chapter will address these issues. Very little has been written on the melancholic hero, yet he is central to the films of Martin Scorsese and particularly *Raging Bull*. As Fred Amile (Barry Sullivan), Georgia Lorrison (Lana Turner), and James Lee Bartlow (Dick Powell) are used by Jonathan Shields (Kirk Douglas) to feed his creative fantasies in *The Bad and the Beautiful*, Vickie and Joey are compelled by Jake to indulge strange fantasies of his own. Both films give a qualified validation of their reprehensible male protagonist, despite the damage he inflicts upon those who love him. Where *The Bad and the Beautiful* differs and is instructive, however, is in the fact that it focuses greater attention on Fred, Georgia, and James Lee and the effect of, what Thomas Elsaesser calls, their "manic manipulation" by Jonathan.² Narrated by each of them in turn, unlike Vickie and Joey, they have a clear voice in the film to tell their own stories and to demonstrate how those stories are central to Jonathan's. *Raging Bull* and its critical reception are largely concerned with Jake and his point of view. A reading of the film that takes *The Bad and the Beautiful* into consideration, therefore, reminds us that there is another story unfolding in Scorsese's film. This is the story of Joey and Vickie as Jake's victims. Comparison of the two films encourages us to read their story, and it also helps us to understand the extent to which Jake and Vickie's story of oppression is vital to Jake's narrative. This is to acknowledge that any attempt by the spectator to validate Jake's experience and regard him as a redeemed figure, as Scorsese does, can only be made at great cost.³ This is because at the center of Jake's story lies the pain and suffering endured by Vickie and Joey as the puppets in Jake's performance of loss. However much we may validate the suffering of Jake and his own status as victim, it is Joey and Vickie who are the real victims of Jake's mean and melancholy history.

Elsewhere I have argued at length that, subdued by an overwhelming sense of loss, the Scorsesean male protagonist is invariably melancholic.⁴ The central defining features of Scorsesean melancholia are, first, that the melancholic experiences a sense

of separateness from a corrupt and conservative group, such as the Italian-American Mob (*Casino* [1995]), nineteenth-century New York society (*The Age of Innocence* [1993]), or the twentieth-century New York crowd (*Taxi Driver* [1976]); second, he undergoes the trauma of loss, frequently represented by the loss of a desired woman (*Bringing Out the Dead* [1999]), but also loss of a desired male (*Mean Streets* [1973]) or even the loss of a country (*Kundun* [1998]); third, he refuses to relinquish mourning of that loss and erects a mental crypt, a private space where he can preserve his love for the lost object of desire (*Life Lessons* [1989]) or where he can play out a narcissistic fantasy scenario of his own popular importance, power, and authority (*King of Comedy* [1982]) – both allowing the Scorsesean melancholic a place where he can indulge in fetishization of that loss⁵; fourth, he displays an ultimate desire for conformity with the group effected through an overt show of self-sacrifice or renunciation (*The Last Temptation of Christ* [1988]); and finally, he benefits from the consolidation of personal authority and power through the workings of melancholia and the public recognition of his private fantasy and self-inflicted stoicism (*New York, New York*).

Raging Bull is the Scorsesean melancholic text *par excellence*. The key opposition between the melancholic and a conservative, almost tribal, group is clear in Jake's struggle for independence from the Italian-American Mob, represented in the film by Tommy's decaying family. In his stubborn refusal to accept either the Mob's help or its conditions in gaining a title fight, Jake nominates a realm of personal, moral, and perhaps even spiritual values that, he believes, set him apart from the lazy corruption of the Mob. Obviously a man of incredible physical prowess, Jake's sense of separateness from the Mob is further emphasized when we consider the aging and diminutive characters of Tommy's family who are attempting to bring Jake into line. Their eventual success in gaining his conformity – making him take the "dive" (such as it is)⁶ – provides Jake with a minor note of loss, an inevitability from the beginning of the film for the contender who would be champ. But this sense of loss is enfolded, in Jake's melancholic fantasy, with the more substantial loss of Vickie and Joey and the Darwinian horde-family they complete under his rule as animal patriarch. This is a fantasy family much like

that of Charlie (Harvey Keitel) in *Mean Streets*, which includes the anarchic Johnny Boy (Robert De Niro) and Charlie's cousin Teresa (Amy Robinson). Here, in relation to *Raging Bull*, Freud's account of the origins of civilization in *Totem and Taboo* is useful for an understanding of Jake's fantasy, his horde posturing, and his struggle with the Mob, which bears a strong resemblance to Freud's post-horde band of brothers.⁷

Jake's horde posturing – clearly indicated in the Copacabana face-off between his horde and Tommy's group – forms the basis of his fantasy scenario (Figure 18). Having lost his horde family, a loss confirmed by his personally meaningful, but objectively pointless, act of self-sacrifice in his final fight with Sugar Ray Robinson, his melancholic crypt-work of loss-fetishization alters. His private (because publicly incomprehensible) refusal to let go of the horde family, which represented his power, gives way to a public performance of loss in his night club act. We see part of this act – the recitation of the *On the Waterfront* (1954) speech – in private, but the stage hand (played by Scorsese) tells Jake that the Barbizon Plaza, where he is performing, is crowded. By the end of the film, Jake's melancholia has clearly gained public recognition and his blameworthy life has achieved a validation that, as Pam Cook points out, easily sees our desires fused into Jake's own.⁸

In many ways, Jonathan Shields in *The Bad and the Beautiful* fits the melancholic description. Setting up a personal war with the Hollywood establishment that hated his father, Jonathan demonstrates his personal vision and opposition to the Hollywood mob in his stated ambition to "ram the name of Shields down their throats." This sense of a personal vision is a fundamental feature of male desire in Minnelli's films and a number of his heroes counteract their obvious sense of loss with an attempt to build their own world. For Elsaesser, this is Minnelli's "great theme": "the artist's struggle to appropriate external reality as the elements of his own world, in a bid for absolute creative freedom."⁹ Loss pervades Jonathan's narrative both in the death of his father and in the more obscure form of the "after picture blues," which he explains to Fred early in the film.¹⁰ Just as he hires Hollywood extras as mourners at his father's funeral, in "Shields Productions" Jonathan creates an elaborate fantasy entity,

17. "You've got to give the Devil his due."

which includes Fred, Georgia, and James Lee, as a public and ongoing memorial to the loss he experiences in the very act of film production. In pursuit of this expensive and exploitative melancholic fantasy, Jonathan loses everything: Fred, Georgia, and James Lee, in particular. This is where the film begins and ends. At this point of loss, however, Harry Pebbel (Walter Pidgeon) articulates Jonathan's gesture of conformity with the Hollywood establishment. To revive his career and his fantasy scenario of loss, he must crawl to Fred, Georgia, and James Lee, who are now very much a part of that establishment. If they agree to work with him once more, despite the past, Harry can raise the money to get Jonathan's show back on the road. All three refuse, seemingly hammering a highly effective nail into Jonathan's coffin of loss. As they leave Harry's office, however, Jonathan is still on the phone from Paris, excitedly narrating his latest story idea to an impatient Harry. Overhearing this, his greatest enemies are strangely moved to pick up the extension to hear his ideas. Once again, they are captivated by Jonathan's pitch and, at this point, we know that they will work together again (Figure 17).

18. "I got a problem...."

Despite everything, the melancholic victimizer achieves a seemingly impossible redemption. This validation will lead to another Shields production and yet more opportunity for public recognition of Jonathan's private story of loss.

The initial Hollywood outsider status of Fred, Georgia, and James Lee in *The Bad and the Beautiful* provides something of the desired difference and separateness central to Jonathan's fantasy. When Fred and Jonathan first meet, Fred is a tongue-tied, aspiring filmmaker, barely scratching out a career on Poverty Row and yearning for the opportunity to become a great director. In Georgia's case, as she says, when she met Jonathan, she was neither a woman nor an actress – she was a drunk, financing her habit by picking up bit parts from people who knew her father, a Barrymore-styled former movie great. By contrast, James Lee was a successful college professor and best-selling author, deeply suspicious of Jonathan and Hollywood and highly resistant to being suborned by either. Lending Jonathan their frustrated ambition, personal suffering, and non-conformity, these characters augment Jonathan's quest for a mythic persona of radical individualism. As Hollywood outsiders, Fred, Georgia, and James Lee help in the production of Jonathan as the creative "genius boy" of new ideas and new, young people – a sensitive and understanding man apart from the rigid conservatism of the Hollywood in-crowd, a man who does things in his own way.

The key significance of Joey and Vickie in marking Jake's difference, and his separation from Tommy and Salvy's all-male group, lies in Joey and Vickie's taboo status. In the terms of *Totem and Taboo*, this is the extent to which the Mob has decreed that they cannot be touched (SE 13: 25). When Jake first sees Vickie at the pool, Joey describes the effect of her taboo. Vickie may well "hang out" with Salvy and his crew at the pool, but as a fifteen-year-old girl of precocious physical beauty, she does not "go with them." At the Chester Palace dance, we see her and a single female friend, lone women among Salvy's larger crew of men. We see such a configuration again in Tommy's group at the Copacabana, although this time without Vickie. There, a lonely female figure sits silently with her back to the camera. In both cases, the minority female presence works to regulate desire in the all-male group. When she is part of Salvy's gang, Vickie stands for desire in the group, and she provides the group with a powerful point of sublimation of that desire.¹¹ But, although desired by all, she cannot be possessed by any single individual of the group without risking jealousies and the outbreak of socially disruptive violence (SE 13: 144). She must therefore be shared by all, and in a non-sexual way. The bearer of such a powerful taboo, she may not be touched. The bearer of such a taboo – a menstruating woman, for example – is feared in totem societies as unclean or dangerous, a compromised second-class citizen. The fact that Jake incorporates her within his possessions is sign enough of his desire for difference (SE 13: 23). But his violation of the group's unspoken taboo over her is a potent sign of his separateness from the group. As no single member of the group would dare claim her as his own, by doing just this, Jake powerfully asserts that he is not a member of such a group. Vickie's continual presence among Jake's possessions simply emphasizes the fact.

A great deal has been written about homoeroticism in *Raging Bull* and particularly about the conflation between fighting and sexual exchange in the film.¹² Jake brings the various strands of this discussion together when, fed up with the continual assertion of Janiro's good looks, Jake quips, "I've got a problem. I don't know whether to fuck him or fight him." Of particular interest in the homoerotic discourse surrounding *Raging Bull* is Jake's love and sexual desire for Joey. The essence of this relationship is potently expressed early in

the film when, having banished his first wife from the room, Jake forces Joey to punch him repeatedly in the face. When Joey finally stops, having re-opened the cuts to Jake's face sustained in a previous bout, Jake pinches Joey on the cheek. The significance of homoerotic exchange in the film, for our purposes, is to further indicate the use he makes of Joey to mark his status as taboo violator. A general homosexual/homosocial identification may well exist in a band of brothers like Tommy's Mob family (SE 13: 144), but beyond the kind of sublimation we have commented upon in relation to Vickie, homosexual exchange in such situations can only ever be threatening to the stability of the all-male group. When Salvy sees Jake and Joey fighting in the training ring, he remarks, "They look like a couple of fags." It is, therefore, this double taboo of incest and homosexuality that Joey's presence in Jake's horde suggests. As the general violator of such taboos, Jake's status outside the conservative Mob-group and its laws, as well as his pretense towards the power of the pre-taboo horde patriarch, is again confirmed by his possession of Joey.

In Jonathan and Jake, we see that melancholic loss is no singular event in their narratives. For the melancholic, loss does not begin or end a narrative: it pervades. Despite the three points of loss in *The Bad and the Beautiful*, the temporal pervasiveness of melancholic loss is indicated in the film by way of the initial flash-back to Jonathan's public mourning over his father. In *Raging Bull*, there is a strong contrast between the fit and muscular Jake of the opening credit sequence and the fat and flabby Jake of the mournful night club years. This similarity begins the film with the idea of loss being as evident in Jake's youth as it is in his maturity. Despite everything that happens in the plots of the two films, both films give clear indication that there was never a time when their protagonists were not subject to the pains of loss.

In its cyclical nature, *The Bad and the Beautiful* emphasizes the melancholic's need to continually restage his habitual sense of loss by proxy. That continual need, which Scorsese demonstrates with each new melancholic text, Minnelli demonstrates in one film. It is in this proxy role that Fred, Georgia, and James Lee show themselves to be very useful indeed. Each character is jettisoned from or repelled by Jonathan, and all display their moments of suffering as a result. Fred stands in the background, stunned by betrayal, as Jonathan walks

away with his directorial replacement, Von Ellstein (Ivan Triesault). Georgia speeds off recklessly and almost mortally in her car after she finds Jonathan with Lola. James Lee brutally slugs Jonathan after he hears of his former friend's role in the death of his wife. Thus, each character is given an experience of loss by Jonathan as part of the process of offsetting and augmenting his own. In attempting to master the loss of his father and the loss he feels in the after-picture blues (when directors, stars, and writers obviously become redundant to him), Jonathan nurtures loss and suffering in his loved ones, which he then reclaims as part of his own expanded sense of loss. His reaction at their moments of departure – especially in his painful speech of self-justification to Georgia – suggests this, and the fact that the film begins with his yearning for their return makes it clear. Thus, taken up by Jonathan's own sense of loss, they become recipients of some of that loss only to have it reclaimed by Jonathan as his own. In this complex example of what Nicholas Abraham and Maria Torok have called melancholic introjection, the melancholic Jonathan takes on and stages, as his own, their grief at having lost him.¹³

In *Raging Bull*, Jake's overriding sense of loss is obscure, but in addition to the deprecation of taking the dive for Tommy, loss is similarly centered on Vickie and especially Joey. As in *The Bad and the Beautiful*, however, this is a loss for Jake that he himself has brought about. His desperate and psychotic need to assume the status of a cuckold (another state of masculine impairment) brings him to deal out a violent and savage physical punishment to Joey and Vickie, which ends his relationship with his brother and brings on the beginning of the end with his wife. Nevertheless, despite his obvious culpability in the matter, in his fantasy scenario, Jake casts himself as an almost passive victim of deprivation. The self-sacrifice he stages in the following Sugar Ray Robinson fight is a complex emotional event for Jake and lends itself to a variety of interpretations. In this context, however, it is highly instructive of the process whereby Jake marks the loss he has inflicted on others as his own loss. That is to say, long playing the role of the victimizer, his fantasy can easily turn the situation around to cast himself as the victim – exactly the opposite of his usual boxing strategy of initially playing “possum,” weathering a continual stream of blows but at the same time wearing down his

opponent, before finally inflicting a stinging attack and gaining a knock-out victory. Allowing himself to be beaten by Sugar Ray, as he beat Joey and Vickie previously, he is both admitting his guilt and, more importantly, incorporating the suffering of his victims to bolster the public recognition of his own suffering. In this way, acting as both man and animal, Jake casts himself as the self-sacrificing god of regeneration.¹⁴ His extreme and masochistic gesture is thus cast, at least in his own mind, as the redemption of all humankind. The effect is augmented by his less violent, but emotionally extreme, night club routine, where he glibly wears his heart on his sleeve, parading his loss for both money and applause. In both performances, Jake invokes Joey, Vickie, and the extreme victimization he has visited upon them as talisman-like objects of loss to give a clearer form and meaning to his more abstract feelings of loss.

Perhaps the best metaphor for the callously self-serving nature of Jake's relationship with Joey and Vickie is to be found in the familiar Hollywood film figure of the greedy and covetous producer – of which Jonathan in *The Bad and the Beautiful* is a perfect example. James Naremore has detailed the associations made between Jonathan and Hollywood figures, such as Orson Welles, David O. Selznick, and indeed the infamous Broadway producer, Jed Harris.¹⁵ In the myth-scapes of personal obsession surrounding all three figures, we can observe a useful model for Jonathan's obsessive drive to lure Fred, Georgia, and James Lee into his productions, to bleed them dry, and then let them go. The incredible measures he takes to procure them (especially Georgia and James Lee) are only superseded by the methods he employs to obtain what he wants from them. He deceives Fred to get *The Far Away Mountain* into production; he panders to Georgia's love for him to secure her best possible performance; and he puts his in-house Latin love in the way of Rosemary Bartlow (Gloria Graham) to free-up James Lee and get their script written. For Jonathan, no moral or ethical impediment is too great to impede getting what he needs for the fantastical ego projections that are his films.

The extreme and unscrupulous methods Jonathan employs to secure Fred, Georgia, and James Lee for his production family tell us a great deal about their worth to him. As we see with the mink-lined Milo (Nina Foch) in Minnelli's *An American in Paris* (1951), Jonathan seems to need his victim-protégés in an obsessive and highly

possessive way.¹⁶ The insanity of this need is demonstrated by the fact that, initially, only James Lee has anything like a track record of achievement to warrant such a need. Beyond this, their real worth to Jonathan is hardly demonstrated in their work, which, in each case, is entirely reliant upon Jonathan's significant input. What he gets from them, of course, are cheap and vulnerable projections of his own ego – the puppets he needs to stage his fantasy scenario. Their apparent lack of natural talent merely indicates the callousness of Jonathan's victimization.

Just as Jonathan needs Fred, Georgia, and James Lee to play out roles in his films, Jake requires Joey and Vickie to make up the numbers in his horde fantasy. Like Jesus' in *The Last Temptation of Christ*, Jake's horde-family is defined by the presence of woman and children, as opposed to the all-male Mob trying to claim his allegiance.¹⁷ As head "gorilla" of the horde, the very thing Salvy calls Jake at the Copacabana, Jake's fantasy places him as the supreme authority and not subject to the Mob's Oedipal regime based on the consensus of equals (SE 13: 141–144). Vickie's role in this horde is undemanding but vital. The extent to which Jake relies on her presence, not so much as a taboo possession won from the Mob but as the mother of his horde, is clear in two scenes following outbreaks of violence. In the first of these scenes, Jake fights with Vickie over the good-looking Janiro and banishes her from the kitchen where he is discussing the upcoming fight with Joey. On Joey's advice, however, Jake goes to make up with Vickie, now on the floor in the sitting room with the children. There he moves around on his hands and knees, kissing Vickie and the babies, as Joey's wife Lenore sits at the side with her own brood. The short scene strongly resembles the horde group of a dominant gorilla (SE 13: 141). The second of these scenes follows the violent beating (mentioned earlier) that Jake gives Joey and Vickie. Some time after, Vickie returns to the house and makes ready to leave him. Penitent, Jake implores her to stay, saying, "I'm a bum without you and the kids." Despite all his actions to the contrary, the fact of Vickie's lowly status as possession is thus demonstrated to be vital to Jake's self-image and the terms of his struggle. The presence and sole possession of women and children in his horde is vital to his fantasy of separation from the Mob group, which thoroughly

regulates and virtually forbids the enjoyment of such pleasures (SE 13: 143).

Joey's role in Jake's horde fantasy is more complex. He remains central to the horde ideal so long as he remains a feminized and infantilized figure,¹⁸ that is, so long as he follows Jake's orders and allows himself to be Jake's possession. He is driven out, however, when he is suspected of infringing upon Jake's rights as ape-like head of the horde, that is, when Jake suspects him of infidelity with Vickie (SE 13: 141). In both the breach and the observance, however, Joey serves the horde idea of Jake's bizarre delusions. Even in his business negotiations with Salvy and Tommy – which Jake's paranoia sees only as an act of betrayal – Joey serves Jake's fantasy of a horde versus Mob struggle. Like the gangster genre itself, Jake's own fantasy narrative of horde loyalty and order is best served not when the group is working smoothly, but when it is on the point of decay, a situation consistent with Freud's observations about totemic order (SE 13: 9). In so far as Jake's paranoia sees Joey as betraying him to Salvy and Tommy, Joey plays a vital part in affirming the truth of such a struggle in Jake's mind.

The idea that Joey and Vickie are objects of loss for Jake relies on his ability to re-cast their deprivation as his own deprivation, rather than his fault. The same situation applies to Jonathan in relation to Fred, Georgia, and James Lee in *The Bad and the Beautiful*. But the idea that the male melancholic has caused the departure of his victims, that he has forsaken them, is also useful to his performance of loss. That is, in so far as Joey and Vickie represent, in Jake's bizarre fantasy scenario, the facts of his non-conformity (his maintenance of a horde operating against Tommy's Mob), eradicating them indicates his self-sacrifice designed to mark his ultimate reconciliation with the establishment. The same goes, in relative terms, for Jonathan and his gang. In *The Bad and the Beautiful*, Harry makes constant reference to the good that has come from Jonathan's bad. Elsaesser reinforces this view, to a certain degree, reading Jonathan as "destroying their private lives" to liberate their previously imprisoned creative potential.¹⁹ Listening to Harry, it is as if the megalomania behind Jonathan's betrayal of Fred, Georgia, and James Lee has had little effect beyond the beneficence it has bestowed on the Hollywood

community. It is as if these acts of betrayal are only Jonathan's various moments of self-sacrifice which, in the successful careers of Fred, Georgia, and James Lee and in the two or three films of Jonathan's that take their place in the Hollywood top ten, have indicated his commitment not to self but to the great Hollywood motion picture industry.

For Jake, in the terms of his bizarre and obscure fantasy, the eradication of Joey and Vickie leaves them not just figures of his loss but also markers of his self-sacrifice. They are sacrificed to his need to *make* a sacrifice. Given that Jake once saw them as so vital to his horde and hence key to his resistance to Tommy's Mob rule, their removal marks the end to his resistance and his god-like gift of self-sacrifice on behalf of the wider community (SE 13: 153). The actual effect of this sacrifice in the world around Jake is, of course, negligible. Beyond initially requiring him to take a dive, the Mob has no real interest in Jake. As we see in the absence of Tommy and Salvy at the all-important final Sugar Ray fight, Tommy and his family have no real sense of the sacrificial terms in which Jake has cast his fantasy. Nor are they present to witness it.²⁰ As Freud observes, such a fantasy scenario for the melancholic is carried out under no other direction than the melancholic's own narcissism (SE 14: 250).

I have already discussed the response registered by Fred, Georgia, and James Lee to Jonathan's outrages against them. These are brief but, particularly in the case of Georgia's automania, powerful indications of their suffering. After their time with Jonathan, much of the rest of the film for Fred, Georgia, and James Lee is really marked by a sarcastic and smug attitude towards him. Beyond a brief shot of Georgia wearing a mourning costume at the beginning, there is no indication that any of them have spent much of the intervening years lamenting the past. As Minnelli brings their stories to the fore, however, Scorsese augments the portrayal of the suffering of Jake's victims to greater levels.

Given Georgia's automaniacal departure from Jonathan's life in *The Bad and the Beautiful*, it is indicative of the inter-penetration of these two films that Jake's last moments with Joey and Vickie are also staged around cars. Just as gossip columnists rumored that Lana Turner's fourth marriage ended in a fight in a parking lot,²¹

Vickie announces her departure from Jake in his Miami night club car park. Certainly it is a bitter departure but, as an indicator of her discontent, it is nothing like the bitterness of the final encounter with Joey to come. This is not to dismiss Vickie, finally, as a legitimate victim of Jake's fantasy. The bruises and the blows she has sustained throughout the film speak for themselves. What it does reflect is the way Jake uses his victims and spits them out when they no longer serve the cause of his melancholia. It also reflects the misogyny that underpins Jake's narcissism, which in turn reveals the ideology of the homosocial Mob group to which he will give his ultimate allegiance. In this way, Jake conflates his objects of loss into the single loss of his brother, Joey. Joey is, after all, a more suitable object of memorialization for the melancholic who, like Jonathan Shields and his father complex, ultimately seeks to renegotiate his contract with patriarchy rather than terminate it in favor of an alternative identification.

Jake's last encounter with Joey is in a New York parking lot. This encounter shows Joey's discontent and indicates his criticism of the melancholic fantasy for which he has been used. When Jake first sees Joey, after so many years, Joey gives him the cold shoulder. Jake follows him, however, and compels him to turn around, forcing himself and his embrace on an obviously unwilling brother. Following this awkward exchange, Joey reluctantly agrees to call Jake in a few days, but it is obvious that he does not mean it. His enduring bitterness at his former victimization is made clear when Jake tries to kiss and be kissed by Joey and Joey says to him, "Let me call my wife and kids. Don't you want them to see the kiss?" Whether it is Jake kissing Joey or the reverse, Joey understands how his brother's fantasy operates. The kiss Jake expects demonstrates his desire to perform publicly and be celebrated as the sensitive and complex man of sorrows. Joey's wife and kids saw Jake's violent and humiliating attack on Joey. Now Joey mockingly suggests they should bear witness to Jake's performance of remorse. Joey's resistance to his brother's bombastic affection is understandable. Having been so badly abused, why should Joey allow Jake the opportunity of demonstrating openly his capacity for sorrow, pain, and atonement, which, from Joey's perspective, are probably insincere emotions? For Joey to reciprocate Jake's

affections, in front of his own family, would only serve to validate further the melancholic's desire to wear his grief publicly. This is, of course, the very thing Jake does in his night club performances. Here we see not only a potent display of Jake's melancholia, but also the central importance of Joey (who, by this stage, is also a surrogate for Vickie) to this performance.

Jake's night club performances represent a pathetic display of personal loss. In no other context could Jake more dramatically parade his melancholia than in these bars and clubs – low-life dives – where he performs his rise and fall as a boxer. What little we see of his routine is dry, repetitive, clichéd, and cribbed; it continually rehearses and restages his career as a boxer, intermingling this sad tale with melancholic allusions to a liberal selection of authors, including Shakespeare, Tennessee Williams, and Rod Serling, the author of *Requiem for a Heavyweight* (1962). Jake's place in the world outside his private fantasy is unstable and, as we see in the Florida stockade scene, easily slips into madness. Lacking in expression and sophistication, his night club routine is not far removed from the animal cries and wall-beating of the stockade scene. Twice we see Jake perform before an audience, both times rehashing old chestnuts about wives cheating on their husbands – another potent allusion to his own cuckolding by Joey and Vickie. In the final scene, which is also the opening scene, we gain a more substantial insight into Jake's complete story and the central importance of Joey and Vickie's stories within it.

In the solitude of the dressing room, Jake's fantasy is emphasized, in part, as a solitary one. Unlike Jonathan, whose performance of loss is almost always a public expression, Jake's performance may even exist for no one but himself. The stockade scene emphasizes the extent to which Jake is fighting with himself. The drab isolation of the dressing room conveys a sense of hopelessness but shows that Jake is somehow satisfied in his fantasy world – "I'm the boss" he repeats as easily as he asserted the fact before he became champ. Jake's loneliness, matched with his optimism, imbues the scene with a sense of pathos. His struggle against the Mob, to assert what he considers to be his right to a horde and supreme authority, has been thoroughly defeated, and yet Jake still believes in the truth of his own vision. To the spectator, Jake is a figure of pity, perhaps even

a sympathetic figure believing in him when all those around him have forsaken him. To this extent, the lone melancholic, seemingly repentant figure attracts our indulgence.

In neither the stockade scene nor the dressing room scene is the spectator privy to Jake's private state of mind. His actions in both scenes merely replicate and rehearse the performances he has made all his life, before huge audiences. The Barbizon Plaza may not be Radio City Hall but, despite some of the seedy bars Jake has performed in, the Barbizon suggests that, in the 1960s, people were still coming to hear his melancholy history. When Scorsese, as the stagehand, tells Jake that the house is crowded, we know that we are not the only ones who have come to hear and see Jake's performance. Jake's isolation, his struggle to maintain his inner vision, is opened out by a wider public willingness to hear his story. Like Jonathan's films in *The Bad and the Beautiful*, Jake's fantasy scenario, the creation of his own world, thus gains a wider cultural legitimacy and validation, despite the cost to its victims, Joey and Vickie.

By placing his own story in amongst those of other boxers and "great men" of film and literature, Jake sees his tale as part of a wider cultural tradition – perhaps even of mythic significance. In this way, Jake's night club performances play a significant part in his melancholic display. Like the stories he draws upon, Jake's performance represents a continuation of his struggle against what he perceives as injustice. It also continues his fight for pre-eminence with the Mob and to possess a horde of his own. But as we know, this struggle has been long since lost. What the night club performances achieve is the mastering and validation of that loss. There is also a clear element of theater to Jake's shows. Just as Jake continually played possum in his boxing career, as he allowed himself to be sacrificed in the ring, Jake's night club routine restages his loss for the pleasure and applause of others.

Jake's final recitation of Brando's speech from *On The Waterfront*, with its heavy emphasis on the blaming of the brother, indicates his failure to deal with the reality of his own violence towards Joey (and Vickie). Furthermore, it demonstrates the way Jake uses Joey, above all, as an alibi for the memorialization of his own personal loss.²² The performance ignores any aspect of the suffering Joey has endured and conjures a fantasy picture of him as a sign of the loss

of Jake's horde and a focus for his nostalgia and hostility. For Jake, the loss of Joey represents the loss of the horde and the defeat of his desire to be something better than Salvy, Tommy, and the rest of the decrepit Mob.

Joey's hostility at seeing his brother marks the victim's outrage at his former role as object of the melancholic's history. Jake's narrative, his achievement and demonstration of melancholia, is maintained at the expense of Joey and Vickie. Jake's wider narrative thus incorporates the melodrama of punishment and victimization endured by his wife and brother. Joey's hostile response to his brother is largely explained by the punishment he received at Jake's hands; it is also this drama that has created the context in which Jake's melancholia has been achieved and displayed. Thus, it is Joey's response as Jake's victim, the loss that he and Vickie represented well before they abandoned Jake, which largely drives the melancholic narrative. Just as Jonathan's loss-by-eradication of Fred, Georgia, and James Lee enabled the development of Shields Pictures, the loss of Joey, which begins and ends the film, provides the essential matter of the melancholic narrative; here, Joey's implied castigation of Jake evokes that sadistic victimization Jake once dealt out to Joey and Vickie, which continually renews and gives strength to Jake's melancholic fantasy.

In *The Bad and the Beautiful*, we never see Jonathan's intended production. His request for Fred, Georgia, and James Lee and their interest in the project suggest that it might look something like Jake's routine – another installment of the male melancholic's story of loss, financed on the exploitation, brutalization, and sacrificial eradication of his favorite victims. Where it will differ from Jake's performance piece is that Jonathan needs his victims in person. His detached presence, by telephone, at the end of the film, like Freud's murdered and sublimated god father of the fraternal band (*SE* 13: 143), suggests an awareness that his own memorialization of loss (the next film) will be staged largely by the living faithful Fred, Georgia, and James Lee. The fact that Scorsese does not use Minnelli's secondary source approach to tell Jake's story is indicative of the fact that the Scorsesean melancholic really only needs his victims as an idea. This fact indicates their ultimate exploitation. Whereas Jonathan

requires warm bodies on his set to achieve his fantasy, Jake's narcissism populates its own world. Requiring not even the presence of Joey and Vickie, Jake's melancholic fantasy exists most powerfully as nothing more than an eternal thought in the mind of the melancholic Scorsesean hero.

NOTES

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1. James Naremore, *The Films of Vincente Minnelli* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 134.
2. Thomas Elsaesser, "Vincente Minnelli," *Genre: The Musical*, ed. Rick Altman (London: Routledge, 1981), 19.
3. Some conflict has emerged between Paul Schrader, one of the writers of *Raging Bull*, and Scorsese as to the question of Jake's redemption or salvation. Scorsese indicated his position with the concluding quotation from John 9:24: "All I know is this: once I was blind and now I can see." Schrader commented, "I don't think it's true of La Motta either in real life or the movie." See Les Keyser, *Martin Scorsese* (New York: Twayne, 1992), 121.
4. Mark Nicholls, "Martin Scorsese's *Kundun*: A Melancholic Momentum," *Metro*, no. 116 (1998), 11–14; Mark Nicholls, "Something For the Man Who Has Everything: Melancholia and the Films of Martin Scorsese," *Playing the Man: New Approaches to Masculinity*, ed. Dave Trudinger, Katherine Biber, and Tom Sear (Annandale, Australia: Pluto Press, 1999), 39–51, 215–216; and Mark Nicholls, *Scorsese's Men: Melancholia and the Mob* (Annandale, Australia: Pluto Press, 2004).
5. Lesley Stern, *The Scorsese Connection* (London: BFI, 1995), 224.
6. Carol Siri Johnson, "Constructing Machismo in *Mean Streets* and *Raging Bull*," *Perspectives on Raging Bull*, ed. Steven Kellman (New York: G. K. Hall, 1994), 101.
7. Sigmund Freud, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. and trans. James Strachey, 24 vols. (London: Hogarth Press, 1955–1974), 13: 140–146). Hereinafter cited parenthetically as *SE*.
8. Pam Cook, "Masculinity in Crisis," *Screen*, 23 (1982): 3–4.
9. Elsaesser, "Vincente Minnelli," 15.
10. Naremore, *Films of Vincente Minnelli*, 127, sees this as manic depression.
11. David Friedkin, "Blind Rage and 'Brotherly Love': The Male Psyche at War with Itself in *Raging Bull*," *Perspectives on Raging Bull*, ed. Steven Kellman (New York: G. K. Hall, 1994), 122–130.
12. Compare Robin Wood, "The Homosexual Subtext: *Raging Bull*," *Australian Journal of Screen Theory*, 15/16, pp. 57–66, and Friedkin, "Blind Rage," 122–130.

13. Nicholas Abraham and Maria Torok, "Mourning or Melancholia: Introjection versus Incorporation," *The Shell and the Kernel: Renewals of Psychoanalysis*, ed. Nicholas T. Rand (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 136.
14. In Freud's reading of the Mithras slaying, in *Totem and Taboo*, the god commits the deed in the sacrifice of the father, acting alone to redeem the company of brothers from complicity in the original deed (*SE* 13: 153). This, of course, is precisely the nature of Christ's sacrifice of the cross.
15. Naremore, *Films of Vincente Minnelli*, 112.
16. Elsaesser, "Vincente Minnelli," 19.
17. Lorraine Mortimer, "Blood Brothers: Scorsese, Schrader and the Cult of Masculinity," *Cinema Papers*, no. 75 (September 1989), 35.
18. Johnson, "Constructing Machismo," 102.
19. Elsaesser, "Vincente Minnelli," 25.
20. Compare Richard Librach, "Mean Streets and Raging Bull," *Film / Literature Quarterly* 20 (1992): 14–24.
21. Sam Kashner and Jennifer Macnair, *The Bad and the Beautiful: Hollywood in the Fifties* (London: Little, Brown, 2002), 255.
22. Pam Cook, "The Age of Innocence," *Sight and Sound*, February 1994, 45–46, uses the word "alibi" to describe Ellen Olenska in *The Age of Innocence*.

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