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Insufficient Love

In *The Seven Storey Mountain*, Thomas Merton suggests that the pattern of all sin is 'the deliberate and formal will to reject disinterested love for us for the purely arbitrary reason that we simply do not want it' (1998: 26). Thomas Aquinas – who makes an appearance in *The Divine Comedy* – explains sloth as 'an oppressive sorrow, which, to wit, so weighs upon man's mind, that he wants to do nothing; thus acid things are also cold' (see Beaup 2012: 98). There are several characters in Scorsese's filmography who suffer from the kind of insufficient love that Dante depicts as sloth on the central terrace of his Mountain of Purgatory.

Imperfect love

'The fear of not loving enough is the purest and worst of fears. ... Only *perfect* love casts out fear' (Ricoeur 1967: 45) is a commentary that has some relevance for *Who's That Knocking at My Door*, whose extended genesis enhances (rather than undermines) the narrative of the film. The different ratios, the mysteriously ageing/rejuvenating Keitel and the interspersed sex scene after a discussion about 'broad's' serve to underline the confusion of J.R., the central protagonist. He is on a physical and emotional voyage that takes several stages but does not advance very far and may, in fact, be going backwards.

In comparison to other boat trips in Scorsese's films (in *Cape Fear*, *Shutter Island*, *The Wolf of Wall Street* and *Silence*), the Staten Island ferry offers no sense of threat, even if J.R. does not understand how the (otherwise unnamed) Girl (Zina Bethune) whom he meets there 'just came for the ride.' ('I just don't look at this as being a cruise, you know,' he explains.) J.R. appears to be constantly on the move: there is a car drive through the streets of New York; a car lift with its grinding mechanism; a taxi journey with the Girl; an excursion to the countryside and the climbing of a hill that has an echo with Dante's mountain in *Purgatorio*.

Yet, J.R. ends up back with his friend Joey (Lennard Kuras), indicating that he has made insignificant progress. The repeated theme of padlocks, bolts, closing windows and slamming doors increases the sense of entrapment. Indeed, J.R. is often located in a half-way location, caught (and frequently framed) between his friends Joey and Sally Gaga (Michael Scala). When questioned about his job, J.R. tells the Girl that he is 'in between positions'; and leaving Joey's car after a heated argument one night, he literally finds himself in the middle of the road.

In the Pleasure Club, J.R.'s thoughts are taken up by the Girl – the ideal blonde, despite the snuffles that give her a note of humanity. A close-up of her face, breaking into a welcoming smile, contrasts with the aggressive environment that he shares with his own friends. At first the audience is treated to a silent movie of a slightly awkward first encounter. When the scene cuts to the meeting itself, the wooden benches on which the couple are seated might belong in a church. However, their first conversation is not about religion but about movies, as Charlie draws attention to pictures of *The Searchers* (John Ford 1956) in her *Paris Match* magazine. The article about the film is not in the original French publication (21 January 1967), but the added images allow a conversation to develop in which J.R. appears more of a Western expert than the intellectual Girl, who apparently does not share his view about the importance of the genre and that it 'would solve everybody's problems if they liked Westerns'.

It appears that the Girl eventually remembers the film – directed by the Catholic filmmaker John Ford – and recalls the embarrassing 'comic' scene when Martin Pawley (Jeffrey Hunter) inadvertently purchases a Native American bride. The question of insufficient love is demonstrated in *The Searchers* when Ethan Edwards (John Wayne) initially wants to kill his niece Debbie (Natalie Wood), who has been abducted by the Comanches, because he believes that she has been tainted by association. At the end of the film, he changes his mind and rescues her – a narrative that has been linked to the saving of Iris by Travis in *Taxi Driver* (see, for example, Raymond 2015). The theme of rejection reflects the actions of J.R. himself in his attitude towards the Girl, whom he repudiates because she does not meet his ideal of the virgin bride. He lives according to a code in which 'virginity and spotlessness are as closely bound together as sexuality and contamination' (Ricoeur 1967: 29).

J.R.'s turmoil is connected to his religious beliefs, which underpin his actions. The Girl lets J.R. borrow the publication: 'I swear to God I'll give it back,' he vows, bringing God into the conversation as he raises his right hand to make his oath. Later in the conversation there is a sudden eye of God shot, and the Girl

looks up at J.R. as he says, 'I wouldn't lie to you.' The fact that they are sitting next to a bin bearing the sign 'FOR TRASH ONLY' is an ominous portent of their future together.

Who's That Knocking at My Door was a project developed during the second half of the 1960s – a period of upheaval in Western society (with anti-war protests and marches for equality) and in the Catholic Church (with the reforms of the Second Vatican Council). As J.R. and the Girl wander among the chimneys on the roof of a New York tenement, it is clear that there are fires burning beneath their feet – a suitable Purgatorial image. There is a cross and a Catholic church in the background, and a high-angle shot offers another suggestion that they are under a divine gaze as the young couple kiss in the cold sunlight. As they make their way across the roof, there are repeated images of dividing lines that underline the fact that J.R. is a conflicted figure. The theme of barricades (closing car doors and windows) is a repeated feature of this film. Indeed, given the focus on virginity within the narrative, there is an association with the Song of Songs in the Old Testament: 'You are an enclosed garden, my sister my bride / an enclosed garden, a fountain sealed' (4.12).

When J.R. and the Girl enter a bedroom, there are sounds outside of children's voices through the window – a reminder that sex may lead to procreation – and plentiful religious iconography, including a statue of a Madonna and Child that J.R. tells the Girl not to touch (because, if it were damaged, his mother would 'pass out'). It is interesting to watch this scene in the light of *Silence*, given the importance of the *fumi-e* on which the Christians are asked to trample to symbolize their apostasy.

The couple lie on top of the bedspread rather than drawing back the sheets, signalling the transitory nature of their assignation rather than a firm commitment, although J.R. places a pillow behind his girlfriend's head to make her comfortable. There are extreme close-ups as he embraces her, and a focus on the texture of their skin. Then J.R. pulls away to leave her puzzled at the traditional role reversal: 'What's the matter? Why'd you stop?' she asks. His response is unhelpful, 'Just felt like it. No reason.' Casillo analyses the bedroom scene and sees J.R. as 'hemmed in by Catholic sanctities and taboos' (2006: 168).

Andrew Greeley points out that, in 1963, the first National Opinion Research Center Catholic school study recorded that 88 per cent of the Catholics who responded to the survey 'thought that premarital sex was always wrong' (1990: 97). Drawing on Greeley's study published in 1971, Richard Gambino explores attitudes towards sex among unmarried Italians and claims that 'the supposed

Italian double standard for the two sexes did not emerge. On the contrary, Italian-American responses to questions about acceptable behavior for engaged males were almost identical to those about females. Only 5 per cent thought it acceptable for an engaged man to have intercourse; only 42 per cent approved petting; while 94 per cent sanctioned kissing' (2011: 184). Gambino argues that 'American culture served more to distort Italian-American sexuality rather than liberate it' (2011: 186).

J.R. is one of those statistics, caught between 'anxieties and uncertainties, doubts and guilt born from culture conflict' (Gambino 2011: 186) as he kisses the Girl. There is a reflection of the couple in the dressing table mirrors (**Figure 5.1**), with the Girl appearing in stereo, and J.R. situated in the middle. The statue of the Virgin Mary on the right of the frame also watches over him. 'If you love me, you'll understand what I mean,' he says, kissing her hand as if she were a princess: 'Call it anything you want. Old-fashioned or what.' Indeed, his apparent chastity is out of kilter with the standards of the 'swinging 60s'.

It is only later that J.R.'s view of women is clarified by the 'broad' discussion after the couple leave a cinema having watched *Rio Bravo* (Hawks 1959). There is an abrupt switch of focus to the Girl and J.R., as he makes the sign of the cross (a traditional symbol of respect) as they walk past a church. 'A broad isn't exactly a virgin, you know what I mean. You play around with them. You don't marry

Figure 5.1 'If you love me, you'll understand.' Uncertain morality in *Who's That Knocking at My Door*.

a broad, you know what I mean.' J.R. does not appear to object to sex before marriage per se. However, he would expect his own bride to be a virgin – and it is here that his failure 'to love enough' comes to the fore.

Before the relationship falls apart, the taxi ride taken by the couple in New York shifts to a car journey in which J.R. and his two friends drive to a small town named Copake – 'the garden spot of the world'. When they go for a walk in the countryside, their aim is to see 'something beautiful' and the auditorium is filled with the sound of birdsong – an unusual moment in Scorsese's filmography. There are several examples of the beauty of the natural world in his films that focus on religion (*The Last Temptation of Christ*, *Kundun* and *Silence*) but his protagonists are more accustomed to the paved streets of the city. The hillside scene also has a Dantean resonance as the Pilgrim makes his way with Virgil through *Purgatorio*:

After his feet had laid aside the haste
Which mars the dignity of every act,
My mind, that hitherto had been restrained,
Let loose its faculties as if delighted,
And I my sight directed to the hill
That highest tow'ards the heaven uplifts itself.
The sun, that in our rear was flaming red,
Was broken in front of me into the figure
Which had in me the stoppage of its rays. (*Purg.* III)

In *Who's That Knocking at My Door* there is a zoom out in which the young men are viewed against the expanse of landscape, indicating that J.R. and Joey are outside their comfort zone in the kind of environment that Dante envisages on the Mountain of Purgatory:

Upon the side on which the little valley
No barrier hath, a serpent was; perchance
The same which gave to Eve the bitter food.
'Twixt grass and flowers came on the evil streak,
Turning at times its head about, and licking
Its back like to a beast that smoothes itself. (*Purg.* VIII)

There is even a warning to J.R. and his friends to 'Watch out for the snakes down there!' for this Garden Wilderness may contain dangers (and Scorsese himself does not like reptiles as he admitted during the filming of *The Last Temptation*).

When they reach the top of the hill, J.R. is the only one to kneel down, as if in prayerful contemplation of the sunlight, perhaps from the viewpoint that 'the sky *manifests* the sacred' and '*signifies* the most high' (Ricoeur 1967: 11). Michael Bliss argues that the men may be facing the realization of 'what an orientation towards death and enclosure represents' (Bliss 1995: 9) but it is Joey who complains, while J.R. gazes in silence as if experiencing a moment of illumination.

After climbing the mountain, J.R. plummets symbolically in the subsequent scene when he rejects the girl of his dreams because she is not the pure virgin of his fantasy. On the evening when the Girl discusses her past, she lights a votive candle and puts it on the table as a decoration, not realizing the incongruity of the gesture. The statue of the Madonna and Child is also present again as a constant reminder of J.R.'s religion. In the shot there is a loaf of 'Wonder' bread in a wrapper bearing the testimony that it is 'Premium Quality' – a label that J.R. once attributed to the Girl and will soon withdraw when he learns that she is a rape victim. Her long hair is piled on her head and features a spiral curl that is notably reminiscent of the coiffure of Madeleine (Kim Novak) in Alfred Hitchcock's *Vertigo* (1958). J.R. is to undergo his own moment of revelation when his ideal woman begins to tarnish before his eyes, as happened to Scottie (James Stewart) in Hitchcock's film.

Dante reminds the reader 'that disordered love makes the crooked ways seem straight' (Royal 1999: 125). This is a world in which 'defilement is spoken of under the symbol of a stain or blemish, sin under the symbol of missing the mark, of a tortuous road, of trespass, etc. In short, the preferred language of fault appears to be indirect and based on imagery' (Ricoeur 1967: 9). As the Girl relates her story of date rape, her narrative is intercut with images from the crime itself, although it is not certain whether they reflect her own memory or J.R.'s imagination. The audience does not hear her describe her assailant, and there are specific details (such as the fact that the man took off his glasses) that she would remember. The rape itself is not recounted in dialogue, but the camera focuses on J.R.'s face as if the event is being played out in his mind, and the moment that the Girl fights off her brutal attacker is intercut with a vision of her and J.R. in their earlier bedroom tryst. J.R.'s potential virgin bride is now soiled in his mind. The account ends with her scream.

The scene has a confessional edge as J.R. and the Girl sit on opposite sides of the table, but he proves to be an unforgiving confessor whose concern is for himself. Her words are full of self-reproach tinged with hope: 'I felt dirty. I felt

I wasn't as good as anyone else. I felt ashamed. I couldn't even talk. I didn't talk. I love you. And I don't wanna lose you.' Notably, her plea ('With you it will be the first time') would also meet the approval of Catholic theologians such as St Augustine. In *City of God* Augustine acknowledges that a rape victim may feel shame, but notes that 'whatever anyone else does with the body or to the body, provided that it cannot be avoided without committing sin, involves no blame on the sufferer' (*City of God*, I:16). Thomas Aquinas writes that virgins who have suffered rape are not merely 'secondary virgins' in the eyes of the Church; they are true virgins: 'Even supposing that one thus violated should conceive, she would not for that reason forfeit her virginity' (*Summa Theologiae*, Suppl., q. 96, a. 5, ad 4).

However, J.R. does not share these theological viewpoints. He shakes his head and his spoken words offer no consolation ('I can't understand') as he states that he does not believe her 'story'. J.R.'s reaction echoes a scene in Franco Zeffirelli's New Testament production *Jesus of Nazareth* (1977) when Mary reveals that she has virginally conceived a child. Joseph, her betrothed, responds: 'That's too much for any man to believe,' and Mary counters, 'But you're not "any man."' The Girl also meets with rejection from J.R. at this juncture ('I mean if anyone else hears a story like that, well, how could they believe it?') and her plea ('But you're not "anyone else"') falls on deaf ears. 'It just doesn't make any sense,' is J.R.'s reaction, and the apartment door is heard to slam three times as she leaves, although it shuts only once, to emphasize the finality of their parting.

J.R. is then seen with his laddish friends – in the middle – and 'Mary had a little lamb' on the soundtrack seems an appropriate message for his juvenile reaction to life. Yet the images of the violation scene continue in his imagination: there is wild laughter intercut with a shot of the car in which the attack took place, followed by the rape itself. J.R. sinks down by a radiator in the hallway on the chequered linoleum, as if he is a left-over piece in a board game. He reaches out a hand as if to touch the Girl's golden hair in the sunlight with a memory of their kiss.

When J.R. eventually relents, he goes to the Girl's apartment, apparently for the first time as he searches for the number as he walks down the long corridor. She is alone in bed, with a chain on the front door – the kind of chaste behaviour that he would expect of his girlfriend – and she is even glad to see him at 6:30 in the morning. However, his attempt at repentance for his actions is quickly undermined when he continues: 'I forgive you, and I'm gonna marry you anyway.' J.R. does not receive the grateful response he expects: 'I won't marry you on that basis,' she replies, as she (presumably rightly) concludes: 'You'll always

find a way to bring it up' and that a marriage built on such a foundation is 'not good enough'.

'Who do you think you are, the Virgin Mary or something?' asks J.R., and then he compounds his error by adding, 'You whore.' Gambino explains that the status of a woman 'as symbolic of all that is human and supportive of life also finds its expression in the great status accorded to the primary female figure in Italian Catholicism, the Virgin Mary' (2011: 165); but, as has been well documented, Scorsese has suffered from 'the well-known tendency of some men, especially those raised in the church, to see women as either Madonnas or as whores' (Ebert 2008: xiv).

The Girl does not react but stands with her back to him and her arms folded. Now realizing his mistake, J.R. makes an attempt at reconciliation: 'I'm sorry. I didn't mean it. Honest to God, I didn't mean it. I'm just so confused by this whole thing.' Anthony Cavalluzzi sees J.R.'s reaction to the rape of the Girl as part of an assumption 'that the Madonna-whore characterization is the only possible path for a woman to take' but that 'the realization the Girl is not "pure" also corresponds to J.R.'s inability to separate himself from the restrictive margins of his stunted male world' (2015: 282).

As the Girl lives on the ninth floor of the building, J.R. stumbles down a symbolic nine levels – figuratively into the ninth circle of traitors – but his descent is the result of confusion rather than wicked intent. The Girl's final instruction to J.R. is 'Go home' (as opposed to the conciliatory 'Let's go home' – the words Ethan says to Debbie in *The Searchers*). Although J.R. is next seen in a church, he is wearing different clothes, so there is a time lapse that suggests that the church is not actually the 'home' to which the Girl was referring. However, when J.R. seeks refuge in St Patrick's Old Cathedral (with its autobiographical links to Scorsese as a parishioner and altar boy), he is surrounded by the iconography of Catholic saints who have given their lives for a Cause – whereas J.R. has failed to love enough.

The church is a most impressive building with beautiful stained glass windows and an array of holy statues. Paul Sorvino, who starred in *GoodFellas*, spoke of the influence of Catholicism: 'We were all brought up in churches that have marvellous windows and statues, and big ideas were presented weekly. The question of good and evil is a serious question for Catholics, and it is related to the question of beauty, because the history of the Church is a history of art' (in Kelly 1996: 272).

J.R. goes into a confessional and there is the sound of the screen being pulled back by the priest. As J.R. imagines kissing the Girl, a church bell rings (perhaps

adding to the fantasy of the marriage that will now not take place). He makes an act of contrition, resolving 'to sin no more and to avoid the near occasion of sin' – although the narrative has frequently shown him on the edges of an altercation and then enthusiastically taking part in it with his friends.

In the confessional, there are flashbacks to his relationship with the Girl, her rape and an episode (presumably in his fantasy) in which he cavorts with naked women. The scenes represent his examination of conscience, as they are the times when he has indulged in lust, hypocrisy and a lack of compassion. The song 'Who's That Knocking at My Door' by The Genies tells of 'a man beset by women who constantly bang on his door,' while the following song is 'The Plea' by The Chantels with the lyrics: 'Dear Lord, please hear my plea, / And do something, something for me' (in Cavaluzzi 2015: 283). Casillo maintains that when J.R. 'is shown several times alternately in the confessional receiving his penance and at the altar in the act of performing it, it is implied that the pattern will be repeated again and again, but with no alleviation of J.R.'s anguish' (2006: 175). It is a scene that evokes the actions of Kichijiro in *Silence*, who confesses five times on screen and repeats the same sin in between the sacrament.

The statues in St Patrick's Old Cathedral include St Lucia who has been a popular female martyr for Italians as she combined 'serietà attributes with her Christian virtues' (Gambino 2011: 181). Indeed, she is one of the sacred figures who come to the Pilgrim's aid in *The Divine Comedy*:

A gentle Lady is in Heaven, who grieves
At this impediment, to which I send thee,
So that stern judgment there above is broken.

In her entreaty she besought Lucia,
And said, 'Thy faithful one now stands in need
Of thee, and unto thee I recommend him.' (*Inf.* II)

There are repeated shots of a *Pietà* and statues of Christ, St Theresa of Lisieux, the Sacred Heart, St Rocco (a popular Sicilian saint, with the scar on his leg that was a sign of the plague) and the Virgin Mary handing the rosary to St Dominic and St Catherine. Scorsese discusses the original effect of those statues on him as a boy: 'And the use of color and the suffering of the saints It was quite a theatrical experience but, I mean, religious, but also at the same time something that has never left my consciousness' (in Ebert 2008: 191). The religious icons are interspersed with images from the rape scene, with a focus on wounds, including the image of Christ laid out in the tomb. When J.R. kisses the crucifix

in the confessional, there is blood on his lips, uniting him with his Saviour – in comparison to the scene in *The Last Temptation of Christ* when the devil kisses the wounds of Christ on the cross and there is no transfer of blood.

Then J.R is back on the street with Joey with a ‘See you tomorrow’ farewell, remaining trapped in the darkness. He is not an evil protagonist with murderous aims, but his disjointed, immature morality leads to unkind judgements and confused actions. Casillo points out that ‘a Mediterranean man’s honour requires him to preserve the chastity of his wives and daughters’ (2006: 76), but Scorsese describes such attitudes as ‘medieval’ and out of step with society in the 1960s. He was told: ‘Here we are in the age of the sexual revolution, and you’re making a movie about repression! Total sexual repression. Who’s going to see it? Nobody’ (in DeCurtis 2017). Fortunately, for admirers of Scorsese, those critics were wrong in that respect.

Wasted talent

Deficient love also leads to more conventional ideas of sloth with regard to the use of one’s talents. Bliss claims that *Alice Doesn’t Live Here Anymore* ‘communicates a semblance of moral progress while what it actually catalogues is a story of spiritual inertia’ (Bliss 1995: 45). At one point the heroine is literally at a crossroads and says, ‘Quo vadis?’ echoing the famous story of St Peter. Scorsese admits that he ‘was fascinated by Ancient Rome because of the church’ (Schickel 2013) and that he liked the film *Quo Vadis* (1951) by Mervyn LeRoy. Alice appears to give up on her singing career, not making the most of her (admittedly unspectacular) gifts, but Scorsese was unhappy with the compromise scene in the diner in which Alice reconciles with her lover David. Ellen Burstyn explains: ‘The end they wanted was a *movie* ending, not a *real* ending – which was why Marty had everybody in the restaurant applaud, because that was *his* way of acknowledging that this was the *movie* ending’ (in Kelly 1996: 84–5).

In Scorsese’s adaptation of Edith Wharton’s novel *The Age of Innocence*, Newland Archer (Daniel Day-Lewis) has a comfortable nineteenth-century lifestyle but an insufficient sense of purpose. ‘The theme of conformity’ is seen ‘during a street scene in which an all-male band of pedestrians marches against the wind wearing identical derbies’ (Blake 2005). Newland Archer does eventually commit to his marriage with May Welland (Winona Ryder) but, as Roger Ebert points out, there is poignancy in the final scene that ‘reveals that the man was not the only one with feeling – that others sacrificed for him, that

his deepest tragedy was not what he lost, but what he never realized he had' (2008: 133). At the other end of the social scale, Johnny Boy's poor work ethic in twentieth-century New York leads to the dramatic finale in *Mean Streets* in which he is shot because he cannot pay his debts, although he does remain alive.

There are also signs of recovery when 'Fast Eddie' picks up his pool cue again in *The Color of Money*; Lionel Dobie returns to his canvas in *Life Lessons*; and Howard Hughes leaves the darkness of his screening room and takes the controls of The Hercules in *The Aviator*. But sloth is a difficult aspect to address on film, given that visualizing indolence is not necessarily an entertaining prospect. As the Pilgrim has already been informed in *Inferno*:

'Now it behoves thee thus to put off sloth,'
My Master said; 'for sitting upon down,
Or under quilt, one cometh not to fame,
Withouten which whoso his life consumes
Such vestige leaveth of himself on earth,
As smoke in air or in the water foam.' (*Inf.* XXIV)

The piteous sight of Jake La Motta's expanding girth in *Raging Bull* is a visible symbol of his inner weakness, while the stage routines in the night club might earn sympathy, as they 'involve a kind of self-humiliation that is painful to watch' (Bliss 1995: 70). 'The man without a soul has nowhere to go but outward,' claims Peter Ackroyd (in Hayes 2005: 6). Scorsese explains that the film aims 'to achieve an understanding of a self-destructive lifestyle – of a person who was destructive to the people around him and to himself – who finally eased up on himself and on those other people, and somehow made peace with life' (in Kelly 1996: 122). At one point, Scorsese was going to play the role of a priest, integrating himself into the moral argument (see Cieutat 1986: 163).

The pain is magnified as the audience is inside the ropes with the boxers during the bouts, so that the sense is conveyed that 'inside the ring becomes equivalent to inside Jake's psyche' (Grindon 2005: 37), and in one fight (against Sugar Ray Robinson) there is 'an impression of heat throughout: A heavy haze fills most of the frames, figures come in and out of focus' (Berliner 2005: 42). Scorsese, who admits to having no familiarity with the sport of boxing, treats Jake with some sympathy: 'The pail of water the sponge is dipped into is bloody. The sponge goes up to Jake's back. It's squeezed. Then the blood drips out. ... The trainer was putting vaseline onto Jake's face, but it looked like some sort of blessing almost. It looked as if this guy was going to be sacrificed, so I thought that was very interesting' (in Kelly 1996: 134).

Scorsese shot the fight scenes at high speed so that the audience would be able to see the punches. 'The rushes were hours of a guy standing there like this, bleeding' (in Kelly 1996: 136). When the announcer (the voice of the actual announcer from the last real fight is used) says, 'No man can endure this pummelling,' the comments about Mel Gibson's representation of Jesus in *The Passion of the Christ* (2004) might come to mind. However, Jake becomes an animal sacrifice – not a Christ-like figure himself but the kind of man for whom Jesus laid down his life. It is in prison that Jake appears to come to terms with this fact.

Rather than 'attempting to justify La Motta's behavior, the film lets the ugly facts of his life, both in and out of the ring, speak for themselves' (Ehrenstein 1992: 67). David Ehrenstein suggests that this is problematic for some audiences: 'Without some form of catharsis – preferably one of the "life-affirming" variety – viewers were forced to take away unanswered questions and unresolved feelings' (1992: 68). Changes are made to La Motta's biography in order to 'bring out the Christian themes of fraternal love and hatred, since Scorsese regards La Motta as less a historical character than a moral exemplum' (Casillo 2006: 227).

Scorsese revealed, 'Later on, people told me that the suffering in that film had more to do with a Catholic sense of suffering, the daily struggle of just living' (in Occhiogrosso 1987: 101). Bertellini and Reich claim that La Motta has made 'a pact with the devil (the mob boss Tommy Cosmo)' and 'is incapable of distinguishing licensed, socially acceptable, and sacralised violence inside the ring from domestically situated profane violence outside the ring' (2015: 47). However, Jake does appear to be aware of his mistakes when he says, 'I've done a lot of bad things, Joey, maybe it's coming back to me.' His words may remind an audience of Donnie's reaction in *The Wolf of Wall Street* when he thinks he is about to drown. However, while Donnie survives and carries on in the same vein, Jake will eventually try to mend his ways.

In conversation with Richard Schickel, Scorsese compares the narrative of *Raging Bull* to the story of King David in the Bible – a man who sinned against God in his act of adultery with Bathsheba and his treatment of her husband Uriah, and yet he is still 'one of the anointed of God' (Schickel 2013). Scorsese wrote a quotation from the Gospel of John at the end of the script, with a discussion between Nicodemus and Jesus about being 'born from on high' to enter the kingdom of God (in Wilson 2011: 101). He reveals: 'It was only a joke, but we did consider having a white light enter the cell or using its beams to trace the shape of the Cross' (in Wilson 2011: 102).

The theme of redemption, which relates to Scorsese's personal emergence from his physical trough in the late 1970s as well as to La Motta's survival, is

Figure 5.2 'I'm not that guy.' Repentance in *Raging Bull*.

underpinned by the New Testament verse that appears on screen at the end of the film: 'All I know is this: once I was blind and now I can see' (Jn 9.24-6). The biblical quotation and the dedication of the film to his former tutor, Haig Manoogian, indicate 'that Scorsese himself had achieved redemption through this character' (Raymond 2015: 30).

With reference to *The Divine Comedy*, Royal explains:

We are so prone to spiritual drift that it is often only through the sharp sense of loss of meaning and direction that God can get our attention. At first we may only think we need simple measures to pull ourselves together such as therapy or vigorous action. These may help, but Dante suggests that, for this predicament, the real remedy goes much further. (Royal 1999: 39)

Commenting on the role of Jake La Motta, Scorsese asks, 'What is it that confers a sort of grace on him at that moment? That's the mystery. Something happened to him, and it happened to me, too, and that's why I'm here now. Something that allowed him to say "I'm not that guy"' (in Henry 1999: 91). (**Figure 5.2**) When Jake utters the monologue from *On the Waterfront* (Kazan 1954) he is trying to forgive himself: 'I wanted to show there was hope for the resolution of the soul, to show it simply with an unsympathetic character' (in Keyser 1992: 120). In making *Raging Bull*, Scorsese shared with Jake the 'Catholic background, the guilt feelings, the hope for redemption. Maybe it's a little pretentious to talk about redemption. More than anything, it's about learning to accept yourself' (in Henry 1999: 89).