From Realism to Reinvention: Collaborations of

Martin Scorsese with De Niro and DiCaprio

By

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Martin Scorsese is considered by many to be the greatest film director of the past quarter-century. He has left an indelible mark on Hollywood with a filmography that spans more than four decades and is as influential as it is groundbreaking. The proverb goes, "It takes a village to raise a child." The same could be said of cinema, though one popular filmmaking theory refutes this. French filmmaker Jean-Luc Godard said of the filmmaking process, "The cinema is not a craft. It is an art. It does not mean teamwork. One is always alone on the set as before the blank page" (Naremore 9). Film theorist Robert Stam discusses this concept of auteur theory in *Film Theory: An Introduction*, an idea that originated in postwar France in the 1950s. It is the view that the director is solely responsible for the overall look and style of a film. As Colin Tait submits in his article "When Marty Met Bobby: Collaborative Authorship in *Mean Streets* and *Taxi Driver*," the theory is a useful tool at best, incorrect at worst. Tait criticizes the theory in that it denies the influence of other artists involved in the production as well as the notion of collaboration.

It is this spirit of collaboration in Scorsese films featuring two specific actors, Robert De Niro and Leonardo DiCaprio, which this this paper will examine. Scorsese has collaborated with De Niro on eight films, the first being *Mean Streets* in 1973 and the most recent being *Casino* in 1995. He has also collaborated with DiCaprio on a separate five films, the first being *Gangs of New York* in 2002 and the most recent *The Wolf of Wall Street* in 2013. My research is a journey through 37 years of Scorsese's work. A study of six Scorsese films through the lens of characters

played by De Niro and DiCaprio offers a unique look at Scorsese's style as an auteur from his early realist days to his most recent work which builds upon his own innovative style. De Niro's work in collaboration with Scorsese is often considered an extension of character archetypes romanticized by Scorsese, while DiCaprio brings an energy and entrepreneurial aspect that helped redefine Scorsese in his modern work. It is not simply Scorsese's single vision but his collaborative spirit and valued partnerships that contribute heavily to his success as one of most famed and respected film directors of our time.

Taxi Driver

In the 1976 film *Taxi Driver* De Niro plays protagonist Travis Bickle. Struggling to assimilate back into civilian life after the Vietnam War, Bickle grows increasingly paranoid of the inhabitants of a decaying New York City. His obsession roams from Betsy (Cybill Shepherd), an unattainable political campaign strategist, to a plot to assassinate the presidential candidate she supports, and finally to a 12-year old prostitute Iris (Jodie Foster), where he becomes fixated on saving her from her extraneous surroundings. The film is about more than loneliness but *self-imposed* loneliness, according to screenwriter Paul Schrader (Rausch 27).

Scorsese uses several filmmaking tools to emphasize the solitude that haunts his protagonist, creating a dark and busy yet lonely New York City for Bickle to navigate. "Whores, skunk pussies, buggars, queens, fairies, dopers, junkies. Sick, venal. Someday a real rain will come and wash all the scum off the streets" Bickle narrates while driving through the crowded streets of the city, steam pouring up from below through manholes, his taxi a metaphor for the relationships in his life that come and go. In two scenes inside the Belmore Cafeteria where taxi drivers congregate, Scorsese blocks the shot to purposely alienate Bickle. In one scene Bickle

joins three other drivers but keeps his distance at the end of the table. Later in the film Bickle comes into the cafeteria for a cup of coffee but sits at a different table altogether while briefly joining the other drivers in conversation. In the very next scene outside the Belmore in a conversation between Bickle and fellow driver Wizard (Peter Boyle), Bickle is bathed in ominous red light emanating from the building's sign as he admits to Wizard that he's having bad thoughts in his head. Other times Scorsese nearly blends Bickle in with his environment, matching his dingy attire with the walls that surround him, such as in his apartment or the cab company. There is even an instance where the viewer alienates Bickle altogether. Scorsese begins a long take on a medium shot of Bickle on the phone with Betsy in his apartment building. As he tries to convince Betsy to go on a second date the camera dollies right removing Bickle from the shot and exposing a long narrow hallway that opens up to the city streets, the only thing Bickle has left in his life as a distraction. As he recites in the film, "Loneliness has followed me my whole life, everywhere. In bars, in cars, sidewalks, stores, everywhere. There's no escape. I'm God's lonely man." Through cinematography and mise-en-scene Scorsese builds a diegesis in which it is utterly impossible for Bickle to escape.

But research shows it was not only Scorsese's vision, as the potentially flawed auteur theory might suggest, but rather collaboration between auteur and actor. In 2009 De Niro donated his career's worth of papers, documents and script notes to the Harry Ransom Center at the University of Texas, Austin (Tait 4). These documents provide evidence of De Niro as a key contributor to Scorsese's filmography. In *Taxi Driver*, the second collaboration between director and actor, De Niro had an increasing amount of range in his portrayal of the Travis Bickle character. This collaborative spirit borne out of *Mean Streets* and *Taxi Driver* evolved and flourished during production of the duo's next six films.

De Niro's artistry and preparation is well-documented and on full display onscreen in *Taxi Driver*. Preparation for the role in which he would be nominated for an Academy Award in the best actor category began while he was in production for another film in Italy, Bernardo Bertolucci's *1900*. During filming De Niro traveled to a nearby U.S. Army base to observe the mannerisms, dress and Midwestern accents he planned on incorporating for the Bickle character. Additionally, he took pistol lessons, lost thirty pounds, questioned screenwriter Paul Schrader about the dark period of his life in which he wrote the script, and got a weekend job driving cabs with a fake license (Rausch 31).

De Niro brings a subtle nuance to his performance that adds to the realism of *Taxi Driver*. After Bickle speeds away from the Palantine campaign headquarters he is stopped at a red light. Although the vehicle isn't moving, his hands are on the steering wheel slightly yet methodically shifting right and left like he is still driving, as if to indicate that the smallest amount of time sitting still is damaging and he needs constant distraction. De Niro's lazy delivery of the film's narration, a staple of Scorsese films, adds to the surreal dream-like atmosphere of the film. We don't know much about Bickle's backstory but he does allude to it briefly in a card to his parents, which he writes (and narrates), "I'm sorry again I cannot send you my address like I promised last year, but the sensitive nature of my work for the government demands utmost secrecy. I know you will understand I am healthy and well and making lots of money. I have been going with a girl for several months and I know you would be proud if you could see her. Her name is Betsy but I can tell you no more than that."

Taxi Driver was groundbreaking cinema during a decade of daring creativity by filmmakers. The late 1960s and 1970s is known as the "Hollywood Renaissance" due to the changing studio system that emphasized independent films and the easing of censorship

restrictions with the adoption of the voluntary MPAA film rating system in the 1970's. Tait calls *Taxi Driver* a "triangulated authorship" that includes screenwriter Paul Schrader (16). Schrader purportedly wrote the script during a suicidal period in his life. It was material that both Scorsese and De Niro could relate to (Rausch 29). Tait sums up that the arrival of *Taxi Driver* in 1976 during a time of social unrest surrounding the Vietnam War and political scandals like Watergate symbolized what was currently wrong with the country but right in U.S. cinema.

Goodfellas

Martin Scorsese was born in the middle-class Queens, New York suburb of Corona, populated largely by Italian-Americans. When he was six, financial problems forced his parents to move their family to Little Italy; a ten-block area of New York City populated by Sicilian immigrants and filled with organized crime. It was during this time, *Martin Scorsese: A Biography* author Vincent LoBrutto writes, that Scorsese "became an observer of human behavior and a historian of street life" (22).

Scorsese's childhood obsession with American gangsters and his love of cinema proved fertile ground for the inspiration behind several of his films. In 1990 he reunited with De Niro for a sixth time for the crime drama *Goodfellas*. The film is based on the Nicholas Pileggi non-fiction book *Wiseguy*, which chronicles the life and times of gangster Henry Hill as he rises through the ranks of the Lucchese crime family. Because of his own experiences as a boy growing up in Little Italy, Scorsese related to the narrative Henry Hill told Pileggi. He felt he could create a new breed of crime film, one that personalized the narrative and sympathized with the anti-hero protagonist (LoBrutto 298). A multi-authorship process perhaps more complex than that of the "triangular authorship" of *Taxi Driver* began when Scorsese collaborated with Pileggi

on the screenplay. *Goodfellas* would be Pileggi's detailed accounts of Henry Hill's life story adapted from *Wiseguy* and filtered through the lens of the auteur that lived a strikingly similar childhood. It would be another four years and eleven drafts before Scorsese was finally ready to make the film (Rausch 120).

Before producing the film, Warner Bros. wanted a big name actor attached to the project. When Scorsese asked De Niro about casting for the role of Jimmy Conway, De Niro suggested he himself take the role. Both the director and studio agreed, and Scorsese moved forward with *Goodfellas*. De Niro then suggested that Ray Liotta be cast as Henry Hill, a move that suggests a substantial artistic partnership between auteur and actor (Rausch 121).

Goodfellas features elements of realism so dominant in Taxi Driver but with a cinematically indulgent style, as told through the eyes of protagonist anti-hero Henry Hill. Scorsese replaces the gritty, urban hole that Travis Bickle inhabits with the open framing of Hill's Brooklyn neighborhood where, as Hill narrates, "Being a gangster was better than being President of the United States…They weren't like anybody else. They did whatever they wanted…Nobody ever called the cops."

The pacing of the film is fast, covering nearly thirty years in 146 minutes. When co-writing the screenplay, Scorsese and Pileggi "cherry-picked" the most interesting parts of the book for inclusion in the film (Rausch 120). Through the use of narration, still frames, and the authenticity of Hill's story and his own childhood memories, *Goodfellas* has a documentary feel to it. The film is told mostly from Hill's point of view and narration, but about an hour into the film viewers meet Hill's wife Karen (Lorraine Bracco) and the film switches briefly to her narration. This continues a few more times throughout the film. Near the end of the film during a

court proceeding where Hill testifies against his former mafia ties, Scorsese allows Hill to stylishly break the forth wall and talk to the audience with a direct address. It is a poignant moment that adds verisimilitude to all of Hill's previous narration, as if he were next to the viewer the whole time.

Much like *Taxi Driver*, De Niro's preparation for *Goodfellas* was meticulous. He studied Peleggi's files that did not appear in *Wiseguy*, and asked the real Henry Hill about Jimmy Burke, the gangster Jimmy Conway's character is based on. He quizzed Hill on everything from his reactions to how he held a shot glass. The end result was a De Niro performance so accurate Hill later said, "Robert De Niro plays Burke as well as Burke could play himself" (Raucsh 123).

Not everyone adopted the same preparation methods as De Niro. For his portrayal of Tommy DeVito, based on the real-life Tommy DiSimone, Scorsese told actor Joe Pesci, "I don't want to see you act. I want to see you behave." Pesci went on to create his own wise guy persona for DeVito based on his own experiences and relationships. Scorsese trusted Bracco to do the same for the Karen Hill character (Rausch 123). In describing Scorsese's leadership style of structure and creative flexibility with cast and crew, actress Ellen Burstyn, who won an Academy Award for best actress for her performance in Scorsese's 1974 film *Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore*, told the *Washington Post*, "It was loose and methodical at the same time. Of all the directors I've worked with, Marty is the best at providing an atmosphere where actors can do their best work. He trusts actors and involves them" (Kelly).

Goodfellas not only entrenched Scorsese as the foremost auteur of the gangster genre, but also one willing to delve deep into the ethnicity of his film's characters. In "Irish-American Identity in the Films of Martin Scorsese," Matt Lohr describes Scorsese as "the cinematic poet of

the Italian-American experience." The criminal underworld of *Goodfellas* is complex, made up of Italian-American Tommy DeVito, Irish-American Jimmy Conway and Irish and Italian mixed Henry Hill. Lohr cites both jovial and hard racist moments in the film, such as Conway returning an Italian toast to life of "Cent'anni" with a hearty "top o' the mornin' to you" and more direct racist comments of small-time jewish crook Morrie (Chuck Low) calling Conway a "cheap, cigarette-stealing mick" and Hill labeling some of the Italian-American old-country rituals as "real greaseball shit." Though ethnicity was on display in *Goodfellas* mostly for narrative purpose, with Jimmy and Henry unable to become "made men" due to their Irish heritage, it would be at the forefront of one of Scorsese's later films, *Gangs of New York*. Through his films, Hollywood's Italian American Filmmakers author Jonathan Cavallero writes, "…Scorsese looks critically at Italian American culture, confronting the rigid ways in which it defines men and women while simultaneously imprisoning individuals within a worldview that often robs them of happiness and limits their free choice" (49).

Casino

The eighth and to date final collaboration between De Niro and Scorsese, the 1995 film *Casino*, also marks the conclusion of what is known as Scorsese's "mafia trilogy" that also includes *Mean Streets* and *Goodfellas*. Scorsese also teamed up once again with *Goodfellas* screenwriting partner Nicholas Pileggi. Pileggi got the idea for *Casino* after reading a *Las Vegas Sun* article about a front lawn domestic dispute between a Las Vegas casino head and his wife. The casino head was Frank Rosenthal, a former Midwest gambler sent to Las Vegas by the mafia to run the Stardust casino. Pileggi shared the story with Scorsese, who was saw the project as an opportunity to revisit the gangster motif while making a contemporary western in an homage of sorts to his filmmaking heroes Howard Hawks and John Ford (Rausch 165).

One critique of *Casino* is that Scorsese copies the formula used in *Goodfellas*. There are indeed a number of similarities. Both fall under the gangster film umbrella and feature three main characters, two of which played by *Goodfellas'* De Niro and Pesci. Pesci's portrayal of loose cannon Nicky Santoro is eerily close to the Tommy DeVito character, though with a darker side. The film also utilizes narration by multiple characters and employs a potent use of music for both narrative and satirical commentary (which in itself is cause for its own essay). But where *Casino* differs is that it is an examination of an *enterprise* run by the mafia rather than a study of the men that make up the mafia. Whereas *Goodfellas* focuses on the mafia "foot soldiers," as Vincent LoBrutto defines them, *Casino* shows us the players that ran Las Vegas for years before it went corporate. Much like Scorsese's prior films, including *Goodfellas*, *Casino* is a tale of rags to riches to redemption. Protagonist Sam "Ace" Rothstein, played by De Niro, calls Las Vegas a "morality carwash." He is able to take money from casino guests legally via the house, allows the mafia to skim off the top, and keeps his hands clean while living the good life. The appearance of femme fatal Ginger (Sharon Stone) and arrival of hot head and former colleague Nicky are is Sam's eventual undoing. Scorsese widens the scope narratively, signaling not only the end for Sam Rothstein but also the mafia ties to Las Vegas, whose commercialization turns it into "Disneyland for seniors." It is fitting that Scorsese's final film of his "mafia trilogy" documents the end of days for the mafia's control of Las Vegas.

In showing the true collaborating power held by Scorsese, *The Films of Martin Scorsese and Robert De Niro* author Andrew Rausch shares an amusing anecdote from the production of *Casino*. Scorsese hired several technical advisors that had been involved in the real-life events he was attempting to bring to life on celluloid. One advisor was former gangster Joe Russo, who worked for Tony Spilotro, the man Pesci's Nicky Santoro character is based upon. He also hired

former FBI agent Mark Caspar, the very agent that arrested Spilotro. Scorsese later noted, “A little unnerving, but it turns out that they’re old acquaintances. Mark used to tail him!” (169). Perhaps only Martin Scorsese could manage to bring mafia and FBI together in the name of cinema.

Trust was a central theme of *Casino*, and it is the trust Scorsese has in his actors that helps the auteur create such vivid narratives. According to actor Kevin Pollak, who played Phillip Green in *Casino*, the actors had “one hundred percent freedom to improvise and do whatever they wanted within the boundaries of the composition.” Scorsese specifically cited a scene where Ginger lies to Sam about where she spent $25,000 as being greatly improved thanks to the improvisation of De Niro and, by proxy, Stone (Rausch 174).

On the issue of trust, it is important to note that at this point in his career Scorsese had established an inordinate amount of trust in film editor Thelma Schoonmaker. She has edited every Scorsese film since 1980’s *Raging Bull*, along with his first feature film, 1967’s *Who’s That Knocking at my Door*. “You would have to be here to see what an incredible collaboration it is,” Schoonmaker told *Financial Times Magazine*. *Casino* was potentially a landmark film for Scorsese and Schoonmaker as it was the first film she used digital editing software to edit rather than the traditional flatbed film editor. “I experiment more because I can make a copy of my edit in one second and make four or five others to show Scorsese if I feel the scene needs it” Schoonmaker said of the switch to digital editing. Editing style wasn’t the only thing about to change in Scorsese’s career. As he wrapped on the final collaboration with De Niro, a burgeoning relationship with a new partner was just on the horizon.

Gangs of New York

It seems like fate that the cinematic triangle of Scorsese, De Niro and DiCaprio would come to be. It was De Niro who brought Leonardo DiCaprio to the attention of Scorsese after the two actors worked together on the 1993 film *This Boy's Life*. Around the same time, Scorsese says he observed DiCaprio's performance in *What's Eating Gilbert Grape*. DiCaprio said it was around this time that he became a "student of great cinema" and began studying classic films. He noted a heightened admiration for Scorsese's work in the 1970s, specifically *Taxi Driver* (Feinberg). The recommendation from De Niro along with DiCaprio's own body of work was enough for Scorsese to ask DiCaprio to star in his upcoming film *Gangs of New York*.

The epic historical drama documents the 19th century gang wars in the Five Points slum of New York City, near Scorsese's boyhood neighborhood in Little Italy. It was again a collaborative spirit that helped make *Gangs of New York* a reality. The film is based on Herbert Asbury's 1928 book of the same name which documents the gangs and gangsters that made Five Points one of the world's worst slums, as Asbury describes, "Every house as a brothel…and every brothel a hell." Scorsese began work on the script in 1975 and would eventually tab cinematographer Michael Ballhaus to serve as the film's director of photography. Scorsese collaborated with Ballhaus on five prior films, *The Color of Money*, *The Last Temptation of Christ*, *After Hours*, *GoodFellas* and *The Age of Innocence*, and the two talked for years about the possibility of the daunting project (Bosley). The film would eventually be made at the price tag of an estimated $110 million. The epic period piece features a revenge-themed narrative wrapped around the historical lens of the characters and settings from Asbury's book during the tumultuous Civil War era.

The cinematic amalgamation of DiCaprio and Scorsese seems to have revived Scorsese's filmmaking career to some degree. Scorsese told *The Hollywood Reporter* he first met DiCaprio during the filming of *Bringing out the Dead*, a time which he calls a low point in his career. DiCaprio signing on to play one of the lead roles in *Gangs of New York* helped Scorsese secure financing for the film (Feinstein). DiCaprio also brings an entrepreneurial element to Scorsese's modern body of work. In the case of *Gangs of New York*, it was convincing Daniel Day-Lewis to end his five-year sabbatical to play Bill "The Butcher" Cutting. According to *CNN's IBNLive*, DiCaprio visited Day-Lewis at his brownstone house and invited him to stroll through Central Park, where he told him about the role. He later enlisted the help of friend Toby McGuire and the duo convinced Day-Lewis over dinner.

The two actors would be the centerpiece of the fictional narrative, with Cutting as head of the U.S.-born "Natives" gang and DiCaprio's Amsterdam Vallon as leader of the "Dead Rabbits" Irish American gang. Day-Lewis brought an intensity and exaggeration to the Cutting character that resulted in an Academy Award nomination for best actor. What Scorsese needed from DiCaprio was a combination of youth, angst and naivety that would be overshadowed but not completely overrun by Day-Lewis. Instead of opting to construe the inner-workings of the mid-19th century gang world similar to the formula that worked in *Casino*, as Vincent LoBrutto explains, Scorsese instead sought to capture the "pageantry of the times" and the story sometimes gets lost in the "beauty and mayhem…" of the mise-en-scène (370). It is because of this, perhaps, that critics have described the film as "messy" and "flawed" while simultaneously praising the film's set design and its auteur's dedication to bringing mid-19th century New York City to life. The narrative is often overpowered by the period, but Vallon's slow matriculation into a budding paternal relationship with Cutting gives the narrative a dramatic continual flow.

Despite often being eclipsed onscreen by Day-Lewis, DiCaprio maintains a private rage with a youthful, inquisitive nature to create the understated Amsterdam Vallon character. He remains reserved and observant and doesn't fit in with the colorful residents of Five Points. Like De Niro, DiCaprio was diligent in his preparation for the role. He spent a year lifting weights to add muscle and practiced throwing knives and learning popular fighting methods from the 1800s.

Because of the combination of history and drama, this may be one of Scorsese's least-pointed films as far as messaging. Immigration and assimilation by the Irish are front and center, especially in the Five Points neighborhood. Political corruption, race, and opposition to the Civil War draft are all on the periphery, though they gain importance as the narrative advances. As is the theme in Scorsese's prior films such as *Mean Streets* and *Who's That Knocking on My Door*, the Italian American characters in *Gangs of New York* attempt to preserve their ethnic culture and neighborhoods through the opposition of outsiders, something Cavallero says results in stereotyping "others" while creating a narrow understanding of what it means to be Italian American (61).

The Departed

Scorsese's 2006 film *The Departed* is perhaps his least personal film. He approached the remake of the Hong Kong film *Internal Affairs* as a crime film, different than the personal style of his "mafia trilogy" films. Scorsese would reunite for the third time with DiCaprio (the two worked together on the 2004 film *The Aviator*), casting him in the lead as undercover cop Billy Costigan opposite Matt Damon, who would play crooked police investigator Colin Sullivan. The film features an all-star supporting cast that included Jack Nicholson, Mark Wahlberg, Martin Sheen and Alec Baldwin. Despite the film's impersonal style (by Scorsese standards), DiCaprio

called his role as Billy Costigan "…one of most compelling characters I've ever had to play" (Nicholson Comes Unhinged). Rather than his understated performance in *Gangs of New York*, DiCaprio brought an unnerving intensity as an agent living a double life. He held his own amongst the veteran cast, winning a Golden Globe for best actor. Critic Rodger Ebert surmised Scorsese's slant on the film in saying, "In making so many films about them, about what he saw and knew growing up in Little Italy, about his insights into their natures, he became, in a way, an informant." In telling the narrative through DiCaprio's performance as the unraveling Costigan, Scorsese is able to accentuate the film's themes of identity, trust and guilt. Because of their prior work, Scorsese trusted DiCaprio with the depth of the role, telling *The Guardian*, "Having worked with Leo in *Gangs of New York* and *The Aviator*, I sense something about him. There's a great deal emotionally going on inside of him" (Pilkington).

Moving away from the style that had been so successful in the past, Scorsese placed a greater emphasis on the plot rather than the characters in *The Departed*. Vincent LoBrutto describes Scorsese's style in the film as, "an intricate interweaving of deception, lies, and survival, with tight reins on the plot and with little emphasis on set pieces" (384). Cinematically the film moves at a quicker pace than many of his prior films and is full of rapid, witty dialogue, much of which offers a brief reprieve from the dark tone of the film. Despite the fact that this was the eighteenth collaboration with editor Thelma Schoonmaker and seventh with cinematographer Michael Ballhaus, the film's overall look and pace is markedly different than the trio's past works. Scorsese does apply some familiar techniques but uses them in a new fashion. The cross-cutting used in *Casino* for the narratives of Sam Rothstein and Nicky Santoro is heightened in a cat and mouse-style chase throughout the film as Costigan and Sullivan race to discover each other's identities.

The bold move by Scorsese to shift from his signature personal style to more of a plot-driven crime film paid off. *The Departed* won the Academy Award for best picture and Scorsese won his first Academy Award for best director in 2006. It is also considered a coming-of-age film for DiCaprio. “I didn't realize that at the time,” Scorsese said of DiCaprio’s maturation between their first three films. “There's no doubt that he was a boy when we did *Gangs of New York*, which is what I wanted. But when he did Howard Hughes in *The Aviator*, that changed everything” (Pilkington).

The Wolf of Wall Street

The most recent collaboration between DiCaprio and Scorsese marks an evolution in the pair’s filmmaking relationship. The 2013 film *The Wolf of Wall Street*, an adaption of Wall Street tycoon Jordan Belfort’s 1990 bestselling book, was inspired not by the filmmaker but the actor. In 2007 DiCaprio outbid Brad Pitt for the rights to Belfort’s memoir. Warner Bros. was set to produce the film with Ridley Scott slated to direct, but the studio backed out of the project in 2010. DiCaprio eventually secured Red Granite Pictures to finance the project and asked Scorsese to direct. DiCaprio would play the lead role of Belfort. According to Belfort, who DiCaprio spent hundreds of hours with to understand the character, it was DiCaprio’s dedication to the project that made it a reality despite years of pre-production issues (Weisman).

In *The Wolf of Wall Street* Scorsese manages to pay homage to his own work while reinventing himself at the same time. The rise and fall and redemption story told in a stream of consciousness style, a Scorsese trademark, follows Belfort’s ascent from penny stock broker in a strip mall firm to multi-millionaire owner of the Wall Street brokerage firm Stratton Oakmont. Scorsese’s cinematic form follows content as his filmmaking style is as excessive and

unapologetic as the film's characters. Belfort narrates his rock-star rise and outlandish lifestyle while being admittedly high most of the time. The unlikely tales are told onscreen with familiar Scorsese tools on a grand scale, including slow motion, freeze-frames, flashbacks, tracking shots, quick dollies and pans, direct-address narration and a meticulously chosen soundtrack. The film was also cut heavily to avoid an NC-17 rating. The theatrical version includes full-frontal nudity, drug use, orgies, and the film sets the unofficial record (there is no official record of note) for the number of times the word "fuck" is said, with more than 500 instances (Wickman).

DiCaprio's energy onscreen rivals his off-screen efforts to get *The Wolf of Wall Street* made. He appears in nearly every scene in the film, no small feat considering this is Scorsese's lengthiest film with a runtime of 180 minutes. Like the Belfort character he portrays, DiCaprio seems to dial up as much intensity as possible for every scene. Much of the film is shot wide, allowing the audience to visually take in the size of Belfort's growing empire. Though it may appear that DiCaprio does it all onscreen, it is again a group effort that makes the film so successful. Regarding the cast of *The Wolf of Wall Street*, editor Thelma Schoonmaker said, "I have never seen a group of actors work together so beautifully. They all loved doing their parts, and they all worked together as a unit and they were all willing to take on these slightly dubious roles and make the most of them" (Suskind).

After completion of the film, the pair's fifth collaboration, Scorsese and DiCaprio were honored as much for their off-screen partnership as their onscreen work. The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences voted to add both Scorsese and DiCaprio as producers of *The Wolf of Wall Street*, which was nominated for best picture. The film garnered five nominations overall, including nominations for both Scorsese as best director and DiCaprio as best actor.

Martin Scorsese in one of Hollywood's most renowned directors, and in his narrative filmmaking career that began in 1967 thirteen of his films prominently feature Robert De Niro or Leonardo DiCaprio. Despite similar genres and themes, an analysis of these films reveals a diverse and adaptable trend-setting style that is borne not out of the "auteur theory" but more a collaborative style by the director that includes not only the actors in which he frequently partners with but a host of other production partners as well.

Scorsese carved his name into the bedrock of great auteurs with his collaborations with De Niro that spanned nearly two decades. Since then, his partnership with DiCaprio has allowed the director to reinvent himself and take more risks as a filmmaker. The young actor that was recommended by De Niro and honed his craft by studying early works by Scorsese and De Niro is now a muse of sorts for Scorsese as the pioneer of their collaboration on *The Wolf of Wall Street*. The proverbial torch has been passed from one leading Hollywood actor to another. "For me it was interesting," Scorsese reflected on his relationships with De Niro and DiCaprio in an interview with *The Guardian*. "I felt comfortable with the emotional process he was going through, and it reminded me very much of De Niro. It was a different frame of reference: I'm 30 years older, but he approached emotional subjects in a very similar way and he also thinks about things in life the way I do."

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