

SHUTTER ISLAND

Reviewed by George Simons at diversophy.com 12 march 2010

Shutter Island is far more interesting film from a cultural perspective. I won't go into full description of the content for fear of ruining the denouement for those of you who may not have seen it. It is a study of a returned veteran of World War II who has become a US marshal. As the opening scenes would have it, he is a lawman now sent to investigate a missing person incident in a mental institution for the criminally insane.

Throughout the film he is plagued with flashbacks of the trauma of military engagement, the liberation of concentration camps and his own family life as he navigates in the confines of Shutter Island during a hurricane.

The context is the culture of fear in the USA in the 1950's. No doubt this is a setting in which to explore the fear of post 9/11 USA, using as a surrogate the *Communist Threat* that penetrated everything and that time, and which led to the McCarthy Era in the US. I can remember those times and even the little anti-communist tracts that were handed out in church every few weeks. Everything and everyone is suspect in the madness and paranoia surrounding these eras and the government, which manages the population by fear, most of all.

The ultimate question in this film is can we face and live with reality and our roles in it, i.e., come to grips with the values and behaviors of our own culture, be realists without either paranoia or playing Pollyanna, or must we lobotomize our memories and fears to be happy and insouciant in a world that seems too threatening to manage if we try.