

The Departed. Directed by (sign of the Cross) Martin Scorsese (variously pronounced). Starring Mark Wahlberg, Leo DiCaprio, Jack Nicholson, Matt Damon, Martin Sheen, Alec Baldwin. Whoa!

NINA. No Irish Need Apply. Movie about the Irish made by an Italian. So won't come as much of a surprise that Scorsese disencumbers himself of a long—way too long—throw-away scene in which Jack Nicholson's Frank Costello (a few Irish names *do* end in a vowel: Costello, Kinsella, O'Meara, O'Hara, Valera... Kennedy), the *faeloeth* or "boss" of the Boston Irish *malcaigh* or "brotherhood of overweight, ill-kempt, badly-dressed, funny-talking low-lives," plies his satiny menace (and none too satiny at that) upon a coupla priests (who *do* have the *look*, gotta admit) at (a none-too-frugal) dinner leveling what I'm pretty sure the reader can predict is the predictable epithet at Fawthah Flynn and Fawthah Moorphy. Hint: It rhymes with "fed her last." *Ite missa est*. And, as with Scorsese's (pronounced "Score-seize," by the bye; go rent "Singles") *Gangs of New York*—described in the books as "flawed but rich," which pretty much covers Scorsese (pronounced "Score-see-zee") do you ask me—we're awash in phony accents, this time Boston and mercifully not yet another visitation of bogus brogues fetched up by ac-toors who wouldn't know a *blatherscait* from a *spalpeen* if the latter bit them on the *maracudlseh* (and I wish it had): "...you fookin' lace cu'tain Micks come down heah, staht droppin' ya r'ah's, tryin' ta find ya roots in Southie..." and on and on. *Oh, muisha muisha*.

That said, this is a pretty good flick. Tough talking, though, and not sure you wanna take gramps and little Jason or Melissa. Oh, and gruesome, too. Needless to say, any film with a halfway clever premise has already been thunk of by the Japanese (in the event one called *Infernal Affairs*) and luckily for Scorsese (variously pronounced... but universally adulated: the next Cecil B. Capra...) already laid out scene by scene and frame by frame right down to the dialogue. Onliest thing us arty Gringos got to do is insert the prime vulgarity and gratuitous brutality... oh, yeah... and drop the ah's. The story is clever (that's "clevah"), though: a vice lord ("lawd") sends one of his homunculi undercover ("undahcovah") inside the local police department ("depahtm... aw, hell, this is gonna get old; bettah drop ya r'own ah's but remembah you keep 'em if the next wo'd stahts with a vowel); at the same time the cops send one of their guys undercover in the organization of the crime boss. Simultaneously, as if that weren't enough, the two guys—who keep crossing paths and *almost* uncovering each other's undercover cover in harrowing scenes of suspenseful suspense—fall in love with the same high cheekbones, pouty lips, tight jeans psychiatrist (dunno as she was a psychiatrist in the original since it clearly required some tapdancing in this one to orchestrate appointments/assinations for these two dumbos with the same woman—who ain't Hannah Arendt, by the way: degree from Hahvahd, moves in with Matt Damon, does DiCaprio next day—but, hey... willing suspension of her briefs) and on and on. So, we're off!

Curiously, for all the cuteness and cutitude of this scheme and for all the talent of the cast assembled here, *cell phones* turn out to be the real animators of action, plot, twist, and resolution: we actually have scenes where the only "ac-toor" is a cell phone vibrating its wireless little way across a coffee table. If you don't accept the premise of callbacks, call

waits, pages, and textmessages (unless those are all the same thing), you can't comprehend why/how the plot progresses from moment to moment; some action, in fact, would just plain ol' vanilla be implausible (well, *implausibly* implausible... it is a movie after all) without the techno-intervention of this techno-invention. Talk about a *Deus ex machina* (variously pronounced): *Deus ex pocheta*. Anyhow. When the ac-chool ac-toors are ac-chooly ac-ting, the interplay is great. Nicholson, noted for his "understated" read: "narcotized" performances, dispels that mist (he sings "Mother Machree" with his eyeball-rolling dementia from "Shining") to lurch way over the top on this one (be careful what you complain about: they may fix it...), but the kids shine: Damon (who if he's shanty Irish, I'm Maureen O'Hara) as Colin Sullivan, ambivalent as the squeaky clean plant among Boston's finest but learning fast; DiCaprio as Billy Costigan, the police ferret, acquiring some patina (and some tattoos) as he gets older along with some grit, doing his best with the accent and the action; Martin Sheen as Queenan, the only authentic Mick in the crew, stumblebumming as Hibernian *paterfamilias*, dedicated but not too bright; Alec Baldwin (no kid, of course) as O'Hoolihan (or something), bulky and oleaginous as a ruthless, aspiring political cop and bigtime pottymouth (remember *Glengarry Glen*) trying to do right but not for any particularly admirable reason.

Who steals the show, howsomever, is Mark Wahlberg, Queenan's adjutant on the fawce, who tosses off the accent in favor of a ferocious, brutal, remorseless honor (not *honesty*, which is about all the others can manage, though the film is about deceit, dissimulation, façade, mascarade... and rats—*rattus rattus*—and in case you missed it, you dummie, there's one in final scene crawling along ledge of State House!); who, of course, for his trouble gets cast out of this Fenian firmament; who ultimately affirms our hope for a repository sommeres of simple decency and the courage to enforce it. Wahlberg is the real hero of this thing, last man standing after the hecatomb and appropriately named (they quote Joyce all over the map; we should be grateful they spared us Dante in all the *Goodfellas*™ flicks...): Paddy Dignam!

Note: I made up all those Irish words, by the way. Well, I didn't make them up, exactly. Me *Da* used them. I just haven't got the first flockin' clue what they mean... except likely isn't good. Didn't make up the Latin, though.