Shutter Island

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In the film “Shutter Island”, the events take place in 1950s, on the island where the hospital for criminals with mental disorders is situated. The main character, Teddy Daniels, arrives to this island with his partner in order to investigate the case of disappearance of Rachel Solando, a patient admitted to the hospital after she murdered her children. Although the head of the hospital states that the liberal methods in their patients’ treatment are used, Teddy suspects that patients are exposed to the terrible experiments and tortures. Dealing with the issues connected with his direct task and trying to reveal the secrets of the strange island, Teddy, however, conceals his own secret. He is looking for the pyromaniac who has killed his wife. Teddy has to stay on the island and become more and more familiar with this horrible place’s mysteries. As the result, Teddy goes mad himself.

The mental disorder of the main character of this film is most likely to be the Dissociative Fugue. Dissociative Fugue is the type of mental disorders which is characterized by short-term loss of memory about personal identity, memories and personality. Dissociative Fugue, as usual, is the result of extreme psychological stress. This disorder also may include confused or unplanned wanderings and the establishment of a new personal identity.

In accordance with DSM-IV, Dissociative Fugue is related to the group of dissociative disorders, and has the following symptoms.

- Sudden, unplanned and unreasoned leaving of usual habitat place.
- Amnesia about personal identity, people, time periods and recent events.
- Perception about people and things as they are distorted and unreal (derealization).
- Detaching from oneself personality (depersonalization).

A person with Dissociative Fugue may suddenly leave his or her location forgetting about their personality and creating a new one at the new place. A fugue episode may last from several hours to several months and end as suddenly as it has begun.
If to speak about the treatment which Teddy receives, we can see that Teddy is allowed to play out his fantasy, and that might return him back into reality, as the doctors suppose. Doctors instruct the hospital workers and patients to play along. Teddy is given an absolute freedom to move around the entire island for a few days.

In the real life, such kind of disorders is not treated by means of the above mentioned therapy. Actually, the treatment of Dissociative Fugue should consist of thorough patient’s observation and permanent talking about the events and things he has forgotten. Patients with this disorder should permanently receive doctor’s support and special medication treatment in case when their Dissociative Fugue disorders lead to the appearance of anxiety or depression. Although at the end of the film doctors try to recall Teddy’s memories about his past and explain him how he has obtained his second personality, it is done in quite aggressive and unethical manner. In today’s medicine, utmost mild and tolerant methods are used for this purpose.

In the majority of cases, fugues do not last for a long time and are self-limited. The complications after the illness ends are mild and short as usually. However, if the fugue lasts for a continuous period of time and its complications are significant, there can be considerable difficulties in returning them to their identity. Yet, in common, there are good perspectives in fugue treatment, especially in the USA, where mental disorders are treated with high attentiveness and by liberal means. Therefore, if Teddy lived in the contemporary conditions and was treated by modern doctors and methods, his disorder would be regulated more effectively.
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