

THE USE OF FEMALE MENTAL ILLNESS AS A NARRATIVE DEVICE IN  
CONTEMPORARY EUROPEAN FILM AND CULTURE

GEORGINA BERRITTA

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## Introduction

Over the course of time, there have been people within Western society who were dubbed as "crazy" or "insane". Naturally, due to their undesirable personalities and human nature's methods of natural selection, these people came to be ostracised by the rest of society and were isolated and ridiculed. Some argue that the banishment of people with mental disorders became more culturally acceptable after the eradication of leprosy in Europe by the end of the 15th century, when cultures became used to exiling those within society who were deemed as undesirable (Albers, 2012:2). Despite this fact, research into the treatment of madness throughout the ages suggests that it could have been considered a form of religious kindness to exclude the "affected" from society (Albers, 2012:3). This would be done in order to gain spiritual fulfilment on behalf of the both the sufferer and their excluder, for they would both ultimately be saved by God (the sufferer would be cured, and their excluder would be rewarded for initiating the curing process). Whether banishment of the mad was merely a force of habit after the leprosy pandemic or whether the pious inhabitants of medieval Europe solely wanted to guarantee their place in Heaven, one thing is extremely clear: the mad have never been welcome to live amongst the "normal". The progress of the treatment of those who were deemed as mentally ill was generally considered to be a taboo subject, and it was only when Foucault published *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* in 1967, that issues about the treatment of the mentally ill were illuminated. Through his work, he highlighted the main events in the history of mental illness and explained how these occasions impacted upon modern-day treatment of the mentally ill, ultimately explaining that modern treatments (at the time of publication) were no less cruel than those in action during the

middle ages, and that the diagnosis of insanity was just as randomly-assigned to those deemed as undesirable as it had ever been.

However, despite the generic diagnosis of insanity, madness itself has always been considered extremely gender-specific. As I will detail in later chapters of this dissertation, during the British Georgian era (and for a century-or-so afterwards), men and women could separately attend a doctor's surgery and complain of the same symptoms, which could consist of anything from melancholy to depression to emotional outbursts, and expect to be diagnosed differently. The man would be told he was merely suffering from a form of sophisticated "nervousness" (Tucker, 2009), whereas the woman would be diagnosed as "hysterical". However, as will be explained in Chapter 1, this diagnosis was not medically sound, and was inevitably result of unprofessional stereotypes on the practitioner's behalf.

The fact that, even in our modern world of advanced science and medicine, men and women can still be diagnosed as suffering from different illnesses when suffering from the same symptoms (World Health Organisation (WHO), 2012), demonstrates that there is a deep, culturally-inscribed mindset amongst society that sees mental health issues affecting people differently according to the gender of the sufferer. It is never the less a fact that men and women have tendencies to suffer from different illnesses (women are twice more likely than men to suffer from unipolar depression, while men are approximately three-times more likely to be diagnosed with antisocial personality disorder, according to WHO), which would support the impression that certain mental illness are gender-specific - or rather, that the gender of the sufferer dictates how they (the sufferer), or indeed the health professional treating them, may react to their mental illness. According to a study carried out by the American Psychological Association (2011), women are more likely to internalize their emotions and become lonely and withdrawn; men, on the other hand, will

externalize their feelings, leading to "aggressive, impulsive, coercive and noncompliant behaviour".

As such, it stands to reason that society could support the stereotype, and that this stereotype be validated in cinema - as "film is a reflection of society, both past and present" - that men and women develop different types of mental illnesses (Sherak, in Shah, 2011).

The notion of cinema as "transpositional" is one which I will explore in more detail in Chapter 1, but a brief definition now would be beneficial; Dusi (in De Pau and Torello, 2008) explains that it is "the idea of something that survives the passage from one text to the other respecting differences and elements of continuity." It is worth mentioning that the concept of transposition fully explains why mentally ill women in particular, are portrayed the way that they are; even in contemporary cinema, mentally ill females are depicted as manic, unkempt and uncontrollable, even though this is largely false and is no more than an unflattering stereotype. As such, the purpose of this dissertation is to analyse several films which incorporate such a stereotype, and determine why the female characters were shown this way. My hypothesis is that the use of mental illness within cinema serves to convey a variety of narrative messages.

It is worth noting that there are certain mental illnesses that are portrayed in cinema which are seen as more acceptable, and these illnesses can affect both male and female characters; for instance, Tom Hanks' lead character in *Forrest Gump* (Zemeckis, 1994), Dustin Hoffman in *Rain Man* (Levinson, 1988) and Judy Dench in *Iris* (Eyre, 2001). Furthermore, the illnesses that afflict these characters are not scrutinised with as much caution, which is likely due to the genre of film that these characters are featured in. As I will explain in Chapter 3, genre and the representation of mental illness are strongly connected, but for now, it is important to note that the genre of a film can impact massively

on the portrayal of mental illness. For instance, films which are described as a “biopic” (such as *Rain Man*, *Iris*, and *A Dangerous Method* (Cronenberg, 2011)) tone down the severity of the illnesses, in as much as the sufferers are not perceived by the audience as being particularly dangerous, and this represents their mental illnesses in a different way to those present in *The Others* (Amenábar, 2001) or *He Loves Me...He Loves Me Not* (Colombani, 2002), which can both be described as horrors.

I will use three key texts, *The Others*, *He Loves Me...He Loves Me Not*, and *A Dangerous Method* to demonstrate my thesis, with each analysis referring to the genre of the specific film, and how the genre affects the portrayal of mental illness with regards to the female characters. The genre of the film naturally has an impact on the narrative style, and the aim of my thesis is to explore how madness can drive a film’s narrative. In the case of *The Others*, a supernatural horror, madness is used to evoke tension amongst the audience, as well as to provide a substantial narrative twist. In *He Loves Me...* – a film which combines two opposing genres (rom-com and horror) to establish a genre hybrid - madness is partly used as an emotive intensifier for the audience, who firstly sympathises for the character but is then expected to reverse this and be repelled by her. Finally, in *A Dangerous Method*, which is both a biopic and a drama, insanity is, at first, little more than a signifier of authority, but it then progresses to become the foundation of a sexual relationship and, subsequently, the demise of the lead character’s own mental state.

In order to analyse the use of mentally ill female characters within contemporary European film and culture effectively, it was necessary to conduct research in several areas. Firstly, I researched the representations of mental illness over the ages, ranging from Ancient Greek depictions to those described in recent literary works (spanning from 17th century plays to Victorian novels), and finally the modern age of cinema. In the course of this first

chapter, I look at several examples of female mental illness, including specific characters from Greek mythology, Elizabethan tragedies, contemporary literature and cinema.

Sequentially, it is crucial to establish the sociological and psychological mindset of European societies over time in order to ascertain a link between public opinion of mental illness and how it is consequently represented in various art forms. This is a vital part of my analyses, as I am then able to observe the evolution of the representation of mental illness over the course of several millennia, and chart the differences of representation from several types of art.

I will begin by defining the term "hysteria" and proceed to explain how the differences between male and female madness have been culturally inscribed within our society for thousands of years, beginning with the first cases of the diagnosis of "hysteria" in approximately 450 BC. I will then proceed to distinguish the differences between male and female madness and how our societal expectations of how each gender ought to act when suffering from mental illness has come to define the way in which cinematic characters are portrayed. From this chapter, I will progress to analyse each of my key texts individually, using the research from previous chapters (such as social perceptions of mental illness) as well as other forms of analysis stemming from the cinema-specific critical theory in order to examine the female characters.

Through analysing these films, it became clear that mentally ill female characters can drive a film's narrative almost single-handedly. By studying the characters' behaviours and the progression of the plot in accordance to their actions, I was able to identify the reasons behind the characters' illnesses and how these impacted upon the development of the plot.

There are several differences between the illnesses of the characters; for the duration of *The Others*, the audience is somewhat unaware of the severity of Grace's illness – instead, the narrative is driven by the idea that she *may* have committed an inhumane act towards her children previous to the commencement of the narrative, and the audience suspects that she may be ill but has no solid basis for thinking so. Instead, the characters of Anne and Lydia are presented as having the more severe illnesses, and the audience focuses on them instead. This is similar to the character of Angélique, as it is only at the end of the film that the audience discovers, beyond any doubt, that she is severely ill - she is diagnosed by a doctor as suffering from erotomania. With Sabina in *A Dangerous Method*, the narrative is completely different as the audience knows from the start that she is ill; the plot in this film is concentrated upon how her illness changes and is exploited, as opposed to the other two films which leaves the audience to guess throughout whether the characters are actually ill or not.

The analyses of these films will be done so in accordance to several theoretical frameworks, the two main ones of which are gender theory and genre theory. As I will establish in later parts of the dissertation, these two theories are strongly linked and continually influence one another, leading to the idea of female mental illness representation within culture and cinema as being “transpositional”, as is explained in Chapter 1. The differences in genre between some of the literature, and indeed between the three main texts, *should* allow for different representations of female madness – but they do not. Some of the texts are classed a Gothic, a genre which took its earliest inspirations from Greek tragedies in order to develop a new sense of “horror”, encompassing a “liminal monster...that evokes the very particular response of fear 'compounded with revulsion, nausea, disgust'” (Carroll, as is cited in Hogle, 2002:193). Similarly, some are defined as “horrors” or “thrillers”, but crucially, some of the texts are

also on the opposite end of the genre-spectrum; several texts are referred to as “rom-coms” or “melodramas”, both of which (particularly the latter) have been described as “films for women” (Mercer & Shingler, 2013: 26) or “chick-flicks”. The generic conventions of these two genres have distinct differences but are not too dissimilar; they are both genres which are driven by emotion, and focus heavily upon the relationships between the characters. Despite this, the differences between the genres mean that the representation of mental illness is slightly different dependent upon other generic factors, such as genre-specific narrative styles and *mise-en-scene*, which will be examined further in Chapter 2. With this in mind, it is crucial to identify the specific sub-theories of genre theory which will be applied to my work; the concept of transposition in cinema, and therefore in genre, stems from the concept of Neoclassical genre theory, which was “fully furnished by centuries of tradition” (Altman, 1999:6), which created “pure genres”. This specific sub-theory of generic Neoclassicism revolves around the idea that genre is static and unchanging; each genre has specific conventions which are individual to only that genre; this idea is key, especially during the analysis of earlier texts, such as Expressionist cinema and Gothic literacy, as it is these texts which compile the basis for the three case study texts.

However, it is also important to acknowledge the numerous shifts in genre development, namely that from the Neoclassical to the Twentieth-Century genre theory, which is currently the prominent theory of analysis within cinema. This theory states that genre is fluid, “opposing generic categories and individual texts” (Altman, p. 7). This is due to the fact that many films possess qualities which stem several genres, but also because genre changes over time, and “grows in accordance to human development” (Altman, p. 21). It is important to consider both of these sub-theories whilst analysing the portrayal of mental illness, as they are extremely time-specific and therefore it would not be plausible, for

example, to analyse a pre-20<sup>th</sup> century text in accordance to twentieth-century genre theory, as it was not this theory under which the text would have been written. In the same respect, it is important to consider the roles of women within society during the times that the texts were created, as the perception of women is also time-specific (as is outlined in Chapter 1).

It is also key to consider aspects of gender studies throughout my analysis, specifically women's studies and representations of gender equality. As my research will state, the representations of female mental illness can be extremely different to that of male mental illness, and it is important to consider the reasons for this. These range from the idea of cinema being primarily a male-dominated field, to the concept of Western society being run as a patriarchy – both of these notions will be discussed further in Chapter 2.

Furthermore, the portrayal of female characters within film and television has become a research topic which has gained a lot of academic and financial investment over recent years. There have been key studies undertaken by the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media, who secured a grant in 2012 from Google in order to develop software which would aid research in the field of gender representation. Several of these key studies by the Institute will be referred to throughout this dissertation, especially with regards to the “hypersexuality” of female characters in PG-13 and R-rated films, which would incorporate all of my three case study films.

## I. Representations of Mental Illness

Mental illness has always been a prominent social issue, and one that society has continually felt the need to remedy. As sufferers have routinely been outcast by their society, their life experiences leading to and following their expulsion from their social contexts, have provided a rich inspiration for storytelling. Madness has become an established cultural topos, reflecting societal anxieties about diversity and loss of control – in fact, there is an established phobia, *agateophobia*, which is a fear of going insane (Anon, 2010), undoubtedly due to the tendency to emphasise the unattractive aspects of mental illness, as is seen in the arts and media. For this reason, stories of mental illness either from Ancient Greece and the classical era or from the contemporary depict sufferers as fantastical, magical, disturbing and often quite horrific. Taking this premise into account, this chapter will outline the representation of female mental illness over time. I will provide an outline, starting with the overview of the role of the female sufferer firstly in Greek mythology and how this impacted on the representation of mental illness in the Greek tragedy and theatre. I will then move forward to analyse selected samples from several

forms of visual art, ranging from Shakespearean theatre to contemporary European cinema, as well selected samples of literature. The purpose of this diachronic and transmedial overview is to map how social perceptions of the issue have changed whether the narrative role of those portrayed to be mentally ill have changed from era to era, and any transformations that have been effected when the same topoi were transferred from one creative medium to another.

According to the *Ancient Greek Encyclopaedia*, female madness was portrayed as early as the 7th century BC, transmitted through myth. Every civilization created its own versions of traditions and folklore, and the origins of these legends are located in an era when the concept of the supernatural was both feared and respected, which explains why Gods and unearthly monsters feature so prominently in ancient myths, administering rewards or punishments to humans. It is important to note that the ancient Greeks and Romans did believe the mythological stories to be true events, and gods to be real individuals, and it was only during the medieval period that gods began to be considered divine and untouchable, therefore completely changing the people's perceptions of them.

This, naturally, has a direct impact on the development of society, for if an individual author creates a story which depicts its male hero overcoming an insane villain, then it seems obvious that the representation of them as evil or insane would resonate over the coming generations. Considering the tendencies of the ancient Greeks to portray anybody who was supposed to be evil as mentally unstable or, significantly, a woman, it makes sense that the two would be combined in order to create the ultimate fearful beings: supernatural, or insane females.

There are numerous examples of Greek myths that focus on mentally ill female characters; these range from goddesses to unworldly creatures, and their mental illness was often signified by their physical characteristics. For instance, there were mythological monsters

such as Medusa, who despite her mortality, was transformed into a hideous creature because of her increasing promiscuity (which, in itself can often be considered a form of mental illness in women<sup>i</sup>). This transformation from a beautiful human into a hideous monster who turned anybody who dared behold her to stone, has come to symbolise the epitome of female rage and as such still brandishes the connotation of female emotional instability and the dangers it presents. This concept of emotional fragility was a common feature of Greek mythology, as several of its female characters possessed qualities which portrayed them as angry and volatile – this stereotype still exists today, within society, literature and cinema.

It is important to note that misogyny was rife in the era of Greek mythology, with figures like Hesiod and Plato using their misogynistic views frequently throughout their work. As a result of this, there are numerous myths from the Ancient Greek era which incorporates misogyny; one of the most famous is that of Pandora, a woman who was made as “foolish, mischievous, and idle as she was beautiful”, and who, through her own lack of self-will, unleashed horrors upon a Utopian world, despite the fact that she could have easily prevented it (Graves, 1990). When one analyses this particular myth, the misogyny within Greek mythology is undeniable, as this one particular fable had such an impact on the preceding representations of women; they are beautiful but flawed and will bring nothing but hardship and disaster into a world of otherwise hardworking and innocent men. The moral of Pandora’s box still continues to be used in Western society, not only in reference to an unfortunate series of events, but also in popular culture, such as in *Pandora’s Box* (Pabst, 1929), within contemporary literature, and even potentially as a basis for the *femme fatale* archetype in *film noir*<sup>ii</sup>.

Following the mythological era of Ancient Greece, there came a time when these myths were acted out on stage, which eventually bore the concept of the Greek tragedy.

Euripides and Sophocles, both of whom wrote several tragedies which featured mentally ill females, attempted to show female mental instability the way their contemporaries saw it. Euripides wrote several plays which included mentally ill female characters, but it was *Hyppolytus* which was most telling of the social attitudes towards mental illness and women. The play depicts its primary female character as lovesick, emotionally unstable and, ultimately, suicidal, but also its secondary female character as malicious and untrustworthy. As is demonstrated, these women were not meant to possess alluring qualities; in fact, the title character of the play is so disgusted when he learns of his step-mother's love for him that he explodes into a misogynistic rant, proclaiming "how great a curse a woman is!" (Coleridge, 2012).

The concept of the tragedy eventually spread throughout Europe, and in the Italian Renaissance, plays and arts were based upon the works of classical Greek playwrights. With this widespread popularity of the tragedy, the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries have become known to have produced some of the best playwrights in history: Shakespeare, Marlowe, Kyd and Middleton all wrote tragedies, some of which included mentally ill female characters as a pivotal main character that was significant to the narrative. The analysis of these characters shows that the misogyny which was once present in Greek mythology and classical plays was still highly evident in the Shakespearean and Jacobean era. Examples of misogyny within these plays include the psychotic Lady Macbeth (*Macbeth*), the love-sick and suicidal Ophelia (*Hamlet*), the promiscuous Isabella and murderous Beatrice (*The Changeling*) and the vengeful Bel-imperia (*The Spanish Tragedy*). Though it is true that the males in these plays are often depicted as being extremely mentally volatile, their volatility is expressed in a way which deems it justified and understandable, for the men in the plays are usually the heroes. It is for this reason alone that I believe that the women in theatre (whether it be classical Greek or 16<sup>th</sup> century Jacobean) are depicted

as being mentally ill; they make the male heroes in the texts appear more likeable and empathetic.

This notion of female madness being a narrative ploy to make the heroes of the texts more engaging and winning is one which has been carried on throughout the ages of the arts and has ultimately become one of the main forms of narrative within contemporary literature. A prime example of this narrative strategy being used within literature is in Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* (1847) in which it is discovered that the hero of the story, Rochester, has imprisoned his "maniac" of a wife for many years. Rochester blames his wife's "vices" for the breakdown of their marriage, claiming that "her temper ripened, her vices sprang up, violent and unchaste...", implying that she merely became unmanageable, possibly due to her sexual excesses. Psychoanalytically, the character of Bertha Mason in the novel of *Jane Eyre* could be diagnosed as a paranoid schizophrenic, as her characteristics match those of the symptoms of the disorder, though it is much more likely that, at the time of publication, *Jane Eyre* merely misrepresented mental illness and societal expectations. In the novel it is obvious that Bertha represents the "dark side" of Jane that she tries so hard to lose, especially when she is content to marry Rochester in order to establish a sense of normality in her otherwise torturous life. Bertha is everything that Jane wants to be (strong, rebellious etc), however she is unable to submit herself to these characteristics as they were considered to be socially undesirable. In this sense, *Jane Eyre* is not deemed solely as an example of Gothic literature, but specifically Female Gothic literature, a genre which "articulates women's dissatisfactions with patriarchal society" (Smith and Wallace). With this in mind, it is worth remembering that the character of Bertha was not meant to have grown up in a European society which was dominated by patriarchy, and that her seemingly-unenviable characteristics are merely a matter of Western perception.

In *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966), the author depicts Bertha Mason's life before her move to England, when she lived in Jamaica and was seen as desirable and lively. Only when she moves to England and is perceived as being irrational and overly sensual does her descent into madness begin, as her new husband fails to appreciate their cultural differences and sees her spirited qualities as abnormal. As a result he neglects her and her mental instability grows, leading to her mental demise and eventual suicide (which she believes is her destiny). What this novel succeeds in doing is illuminating an extreme case of 19th century sexism and racism, in the form of *Jane Eyre*, for the latter explains Bertha's madness purely by stating that she is foreign. According to Fuery (2003: 34), during the 18th and 19th centuries there was a strong sense of "Eurocentrism", meaning that any country that was situated outside of this particular zone was deemed inferior and its inhabitants uncultured and savage-like. The term "Eurocentric" literally referred to any culture that was not considered to be part of central Europe, even including Spain, Italy and numerous Eastern European countries, therefore it stands to reason that a character, such as Bertha who hailed from the Caribbean, was perceived as untamed and uncivilized. Fuery states that:

"...(European) rational thought embodied humanity and anything outside of that was less, a supplement, a copy or weak imitation. Madness came to be seen as part of bestiality, and so excluded from human reason".

When considering the description of Bertha in *Jane Eyre*, her madness shown as very animal-like; she runs around on her hands and knees, makes indecipherable noises and laughs manically, like a "clothed hyena" (1992: 339). When one takes this into consideration, it is impossible not to draw comparisons to the Cronenberg film *A Dangerous Method*, in which the main female character is suffering from "hysteria" during the latter part of the 19th century. As if this were not enough of a parallel, this character is also Russian and depicted as some sort of untameable animal, once again demonstrating that Eurocentrism was rife

during that time. If one were to draw similarities from Sabina Spielrein in *A Dangerous Method* and Bertha Mason (as was portrayed by Valentina Cervi in the Fukunaga film *Jane Eyre* (2011)), it is clear to see that Fuery's observations on the portrayal of madness as animal-like is extremely accurate. He states that those suffering from madness in film are often depicted as having "dishevelled hair...[emitting] screams and grunts instead of speech and [performing] unpredictable actions" (2003: 34). Within the 2011 film adaptation, Bertha is seen as manic and unruly and she seems to care deeply for her husband, so much so that the mere sight of Jane in her wedding gown is enough to provoke her into violently attacking Rochester. This not only further validates Fuery's above theory of madness as an animal-like behaviour, but also signifies something much greater. In the novel, it is written that Bertha attacks Rochester without provocation:

"Ware!" cried Grace. The three gentlemen retreated simultaneously. Mr. Rochester flung me behind him: the lunatic sprang and grappled his throat viciously, and laid her teeth to his cheek: they struggled. She was a big woman, in stature almost equalling her husband, and corpulent besides: she showed virile force in the contest--more than once she almost throttled him, athletic as he was." (p.179)

The fact that her character in the film shows some sort of affection for her estranged husband makes her more human and less of an animal, portraying a far more advanced and modern view of mental illness. The fact that Fukunaga decided to change the character of Bertha from the original version symbolises not only a change in public perception of mental illness, but perhaps also the perception of male authority, for in the book the reader is supposed to sympathise with Rochester for his trouble with Bertha and admire him for allowing her to stay in the attic of Thornfield instead of sending her to an institution, whereas the film portrays him as insensitive of his wife's condition and dismissive of her love for him. Therefore, the film adaptation of *Jane Eyre* is showing more of Bertha's perspective than in

the novel, which is a concept that is fairly new in cinema, due to the previously tried-and-tested method of depicting the mentally ill as undesirable, and someone with whom the audience should not empathise.

When cinema first began portraying mental illness in cinema, the understanding of mental conditions was fairly basic; both the moving image and psychiatry were new concepts, and as one of them grew, so did the other. As such, cinema began representing mental illness more frequently as psychiatry gained popularity. When one considers how the mental patients were presented in *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (Wiene, 1920) or the representation of psychosis in *Secrets of a Soul* (Pabst, 1926), it is easy to perceive how mental conditions were extremely misrepresented due to the fact that psychiatry and psychology were in the relatively early days of development, and as such the only point of reference in Western Europe was the work of Sigmund Freud. This point is validated further by the fact that Pabst hired two of Freud's assistants to aid him in making the main character's psychosis seem "realistic" whilst directing *Secrets of a Soul*<sup>iii</sup>.

And yet, despite the fact that psychiatry steadily advanced with contributions from other psychoanalysts such as Carl Jung, Alfred Adler and Wilhelm Reich (and as such, many of Freud's theories were challenged and disproven), the representation of mental illness within cinema long remained unchanged, and this could be due to several reasons. Much of the first European films were produced under the influence of German Expressionism, and as such they would have followed many of the same codes and conventions as one another, creating almost identical representations of mental illness; examples include *M* (Lang, 1931) and *The Testament of Dr. Mabuse* (Lang, 1933). The fact that films from this era seemed to draw the same conclusions of the mentally ill and depict them as dangerous and unpredictable can be explained by Feury's theory of cinematic transposition. Feury states that the "representations [of madness] draw freely on the full historical and cultural range of

discourses on the mad" (2003:31) and as such the conventions of madness are basically just reassigned from one film to the next. What this shows is that understanding of mental illness is sometimes not taken into consideration when portraying the mad, for the audience has come to recognise certain conventions and as such, they will always be present. This was certainly the case in the 1920s and 1930s when, despite medical advancements and increased understanding in the subject of madness, the same negative stereotypes were shown in cinema.

A fact that further explains the misrepresentation of mental illness during this era could be the presence of the *film noir* genre, which itself was influenced heavily by German Expressionism. This genre was extremely prominent in the 1930s and continued to gain popularity during and in the aftermath of World War II, especially due to the influx of European directors into Hollywood. The importance of *film noir* to the representation of madness is quite simple; the genre dictated extremely specific gender roles for its characters, as well as some significant presence of dysfunctional characters, and due to the aforementioned theory of cinematic transposition, these gender roles continued to be assigned throughout cinema. Within *film noir*, gender roles were extremely apparent; the lead male characters were cynical outsiders, while the women were alluring and dangerous. What these gender roles represent is the defiance of women to submit to their post-WWII assigned roles of mother, wife and homemaker and instead choose promiscuity (similar to the previously mentioned myth of Medusa) in order to entice unwitting men, usually for their own amusement, sexual pleasure or financial gain. As Fuery states, "since at least the Middle Ages in Western thought, women have been aligned with madness and passion" (2003:39), and as such, *femme fatales* can be described as:

“a woman conscious of the power of seduction, cold-blooded, which means she doesn’t falter easily...for her, sex is not a source of pleasure but rather for inflicting pain on others.” (Almodóvar (cited in D’Lugo, 2006, p.124))

When taking this quote into consideration, it is not difficult to recognise how women within film have been represented as insane, for the main characteristic of a *femme fatale* is sadism (which can be a symptom of several mental conditions<sup>iv</sup>), a mental state of which is highly disapproved in modern culture. This contemporary penchant for using non-mainstream sexual preferences or other sexual/relationship disorders as a way to depict mental illness has proven to be popular, as is demonstrated by two of my selected case study films (BDSM - Bondage and Discipline, and Dominance and Submission- in *A Dangerous Method* and erotomania in *He Loves Me...He Loves Me Not*), where the main women within these films are portrayed as dangerous and mentally unstable.<sup>v</sup> The idea of using overt sexuality in order to depict mental illness within female characters is well-established in cinema, especially in horror; Benshoff (2000:31) states that horror regularly incorporates the “demonization of gender and sexuality,...and are arguably more embedded as monstrous [within the genre].

vi

This chapter has demonstrated that women have been depicted as “crazy” from the earliest stages of society – both artistically and anthropologically, and that this depiction has had a long-lasting effect on the way that literature, film and theatre have presented mentally ill characters. It is necessary to note that in some of the examples within this chapter, particularly the myth of Pandora, there is nothing to demonstrate that the women in question were suffering from an illness – only that they possessed character traits that were undesirable. This is also the case with Bertha in *Jane Eyre*, and thus poses the possible question of whether the earliest diagnoses (and perceptions) of mental illnesses amongst women were genuine medical advancements and observations, or merely a way

for men (doctors, writers or otherwise) to express their disdain for personality traits that were considered "feminine".

Before analysing the use of madness in cinema, it is important to note the differences between male and female madness in society. Mulvey states that "the unconscious of patriarchal society has structured film form" (1975:6), and it is therefore necessary to study firstly the concept of hysteria, possibly one of the most important by-products of a patriarchal society.

Many believe that the concept of hysteria was primarily established by Hippocrates, who was a practising physician in the Classical Greek era and is often cited as the "father of medicine". As is noted in the previous chapter, this era of Greek history relied heavily on superstition and assumption, and as such Hippocrates was the first published doctor who gave an official name and diagnosis to the behavioural abnormalities that occurred in females. As Satow states,

"'hysteria' has been a label used for a pot-pourri of female ailments and non-ailments alike since antiquity...The Greeks and Romans called almost all female complaints hysteria and believed the cause for all these female maladies to be a wandering uterus..." (1979, pp. 463-464).

However, more recent research into Hippocrates' work has propelled the label of hysteria into disarray; according to King (1993:5), the problems in Hippocrates' coining of the term "hysteria" originate from a linguistic mistranslation. In Hippocrates' original text, he refers to a condition as *hysterika*, which he claims can be remedied by a sneeze; King rightly infers that our modern-day definition of hysteria is not a condition which could purely be treated by a sneeze. Her extensive research into this point concluded that the Greek term *hysterika* referred to a wide variety of uterine diseases, as was recorded by the Roman

physician Galen during his own study of Hippocrates' works. It is thus concluded that our contemporary understanding of hysteria originated with the philosopher Émile Littré, who himself interpreted Hippocrates' use of *hysterika* into *hystérie*, a word which accurately translates into "hysteria". Research into the works of Littré suggests that it was his use of the word *hystérie* which led the modern-day perception of hysteria, as he distinguished actual, physical movements of the womb (in keeping with Hippocrates' definition) from imaginary movement of the womb, which obviously referred to the then-new fad of diagnosing female sexual dysfunctionality as "hysteria" (King, 1993).<sup>vii</sup>

One of Littré's main influences was Jean-Martin Charcot, a neurologist who believed that bouts of hysteria in patients were often caused by a post-traumatic experience. According to Webster, his patients "suffered, in his view, not from the physical effects of the accident, but from the idea they had formed of it" (2004). Charcot believed that both men and women could suffer from hysteria; one of his most well-known patients, known only as "*Le Log----*", was a delivery man who had been in a terrible road accident and was subsequently in a short-term coma for several days, and had gaps in his memory. However, as there was no physical damages to *Le Log----* externally, Charcot believed that his patient's memory loss, violent seizures and nose-bleeds were all signs of traumatic hysteria. As Webster correctly states,

" if *Le Log----* were to be brought today to a hospital in practically any part of the Western world there can be no doubt that doctors would recognise a case of closed head injury complicated by late epilepsy and raised intracranial pressure...[he] did not forget because he was frightened. He forgot because he was concussed. His various symptoms were not produced by an unconscious idea. They were the result of brain damage." (2011: 37)

I believe that this account is extremely demonstrative of the medical and psychological *zeitgeist*. Therefore, it is not surprising that Charcot's research partner and colleague, Sigmund Freud, used his analysis of *Le Log---* as a basis for his own psychological research, establishing what we now understand as psychoanalysis. The case of *Le Log---* was not a unique incident at the time, for there were numerous patients whom were wrongly diagnosed as being hysterical in the absence of an accurate medical diagnosis (due to a lack of neurological development at the time); sufferers of epilepsy, multiple sclerosis, Tourette's Syndrome and chorea or any other condition which was suggestive of a mood imbalance, were all diagnosed as having hysteria.

As a result, it is easy to see how Freud came to the forefront of the psychoanalysis era, taking his diagnostic techniques from Charcot and another of his colleagues, Dr. Josef Breuer. Freud was particularly interested in one of Breuer's patients, "Anna O", who suffered from numerous physical and psychological problems including paralysis of the right-hand side of her body, hallucinations and spells of unconsciousness (Breuer and Freud, 2000). She was eventually cured of her "hysteria" via "The Talking Cure" (Breuer's term for verbal therapy), and it is by Breuer's example that Freud went on to use the same techniques in his own therapy. In addition to this technique, he also adopted some of the methods of Charcot, based on the belief that physical conditions were always caused by emotional trauma and repression.

Due to attitudes at the time, and his own personal attitudes towards women, Freud was always ready to diagnose any woman with unexplained physical complaints as hysterical, and despite Charcot's previous admission that men could also suffer from hysteria, the term began to be used solely to describe women. Though men did suffer from hysteria in the 19th century, it was merely diagnosed as a "particularly sophisticated nervous system" (Tucker, 2009). In fact, to have this condition was deemed highly desirable in the 18th

century, particularly by middle-class gentlemen who wished to further separate themselves from the working-class men who would not cry when they saw a play at the theatre or feel morose about the weather (undoubtedly because they never had the means to visit the theatre or the privilege to be able to worry about the weather). However, this condition became a lot less desirable during the Napoleonic Wars when men were expected to be fierce and fight for their country – for this reason, the stereotypical male gender role was re-established, and it was once again only women who were diagnosed as "hysterical". Even though there were still middle-class men visiting doctors and complaining of unexplainable emotional upset during and after the Napoleonic Wars, they were diagnosed as having a more tangible physical illness other than hysteria. As Tucker goes on to explain, every single doctor during this time period would have been a middle-class man who would write publications of their medical findings and treatments, and as such, they would not want to publish the fact that middle-class men like themselves could still be plagued with something so unmanly. In essence, they wanted to protect their own ego and reassure themselves that they, men of science and rationality, could never develop an illness such as hysteria, so heavily connoted as a condition dependent on emotional weakness and unpredictability. Therefore, the only time hysteria was ever written about by a doctor was in the case of female patients. With this taken into consideration, the question arises whether during the 100 years-or-so that hysteria was being diagnosed, it was the result of a purely patriarchal understanding of societal practices.

Taking into account the fact that the cultural circumstances described above rendered it practically impossible for men to be diagnosed with hysteria from the end of the Napoleonic Wars (1815 onwards), it is easy to understand how doctors and psychiatrists came to view hysteria solely as a "women's disease". However, the fact that hysteria came to be seen as a feminine disease in the early 19th century is only one part of its creation

from a patriarchal society; one of the key time periods leading to the diagnosis of female hysteria was the 18th century, when the leading school of thought was "rationality". According to Fuery (p.30), during the 18th century it was European rational thought which "embodied humanity"; therefore, not only were outer-European countries (such as the nations of Eastern and Southern Europe) perceived as savage-like and uncultured (due to the overwhelming sense of Eurocentricism at the time), but any person who existed out of this preconceived notion of "normal" was considered to be animal-like and "excluded from human reason" (Fuery, 2003). What contributes to this school of thought further is the concept of culturally inscribed stereotypes; rational and logical thought is considered to be masculine, whereas passion and emotion are perceived as feminine, and this had been the case for centuries before the emergence of "hysteria" in the 18th century. A fine example of this is Shakespeare's *Hamlet*; despite Hamlet's obvious paranoia and grief surrounding his father's death, he is merely represented as being melancholic and his actions are therefore understandable. Whereas in the case of Ophelia, she is passionate about her love for Hamlet and feels rejected when he scorns her, yet her actions are perceived as insane and she ultimately ends her life. Interestingly, when one analyses the character of Ophelia with reference to today's medical advancements, it is possible to declare that she was actually suffering from erotomania; the same can be said for the character of Angélique *He Loves Me....*

During several scenes in the film, when Angélique is deeply disturbed by her love for Loïc, she begins to act rather bestial; her actions are scattered and her appearance is untidy. When analysing this animal-like quality of Angélique it becomes apparent that the idea of portraying insane women in cinema as animals is a frequently-used technique, especially when one considers the characters of Sabina in *A Dangerous Method* and Grace in *The Others*. Fuery (2003:34) states that women suffering from hysteria in film often have

“dishevelled hair... [they use] screams and grunts instead of speech... [and they often commit] unpredictable actions”, which seems like an extremely accurate description of Grace when she realises she has murdered herself and her children, or Sabina when she is in the earliest stages of her hysteria. This reaffirms my earlier point of cinema being transpositional, in that the idea of portraying a hysterical woman as animal-like is a frequently-used convention in film, despite the fact that it could be perceived as not only inaccurate, but also insulting to women who suffer from mental illnesses who do not conduct themselves in this manner. It is also worth noting that in the case of Angélique who suffers from erotomania, and to a certain extent Sabina (a sexual deviant), they are naturally perceived as insane by the audience for being passionate and overly sexualised; as Mazzoni (1996:39) states, "overly sexualised women are not normal". When taking this quote into consideration, it makes logical sense that society would be wary of women who were diagnosed as hysterical, especially considering the fact that hysteria itself was often treated by sexually arousing the afflicted woman to the point of orgasm. <sup>viii</sup>

Naturally, it appears that the male doctors who were diagnosing women with hysteria were blaming the disease on the women's biology, which in itself could be perceived as a result of the aforementioned patriarchal society. This sense of a patriarchal society is still applicable to our current society, as recent research (NHS, 2009) shows that men have a lesser understanding of mental illness and are likely to be less sympathetic towards sufferers. Furthermore, 17% of men who were interviewed said that they believed that mental illness was a sign of weakness, and that psychotherapy is an ineffective treatment. Moreover, there is still a great sense of gender bias in the diagnoses of mental illnesses, as it appears that doctors are far more likely to diagnose depression in female patients, even if their male patients are displaying the same symptoms (World Health Organisation, 2012). This considered, I think it is impossible to say that the diagnosis of mental health

problems cannot be attributed to a patriarchal society, though it is possible that there are also biological factors to take into account. According to Nauert (2007), men and women physically respond to stressful situations in different ways. Men are more likely to adopt a "fight-or-flight" mentality, whereas in women the emergence of a stressful situation activates the limbic part of the brain, which results in a more emotional response. This accounts for the stereotype of female psychotherapy patients, as women deal with stress by sharing their feelings and talking to others<sup>ix</sup>. With these biological factors taken into account, it is the case that these biological differences have themselves created an aspect of the patriarchal society in which we live. If women are more likely to respond to stressful situations by talking to others about their problems, we could not we expect this patriarchal society to subside, as the doctors who they are talking to are more likely to be male (who, as we have established, deal with stress in a completely different way). According to the table below, there were only 3 European countries which had more female physicians (as is highlighted by an asterisk).

<u>COUNTRY</u>	<u>MALE</u>	<u>FEMALE</u>
Austria	17734	9679
Czech *	17339	18621
Denmark	9170	6483
Estonia *	2397	3721
France	126772	76715
Germany	174727	103158
Greece	31344	16600
Hungary *	16276	16601
Ireland	7064	4077

Italy	156000	85000
Netherlands	32155	18699
Portugal	18488	15952
Spain	75200	60100
Sweden	17280	11842
Switzerland	17975	7946
United Kingdom	87262	46379 <sup>x</sup>

A significant point to remember is the fact that there are many more male directors in both European and American cinema (Hollywood has recently been referred to as a “big boys’ club” (Gritten, 2013)), and as such, the film which is being directed by a male director will (albeit possibly unintentionally) convey a sense of patriarchalism. Though female directors are becoming more frequent, sources such as the *Huffington Post* (Seldon, 2013) and *Marie Claire* (Ramsdale, 2013) regularly quote the same five female directors as being the only ones worth mentioning. Therefore, if there are only five-to-ten female directors that the public are aware of (the likes of Sofia Coppola and Norah Ephron, who passed away in 2012 and is therefore not actually directing films anymore, but is still regarded as the top female director of the current cinematic era), it is little wonder that male directors are dominating contemporary film-making. They have no competition, and little reason to compare their patriarchal approaches (especially towards representing the mentally ill) to a more respectful conveyance, as there is nothing much to compare it to. With this in mind, however, there are a number of European female directors (such as Agnes Varda, Lone Scherfig, Margathe von Trotta, to name a few), whose works are critically acclaimed by fans of European cinema, but their popularity is relatively minimal as a whole in

comparison to Hollywood directors, as their works are not as widely distributed. The films directed by these female directors tend to possess a distinctly-feminist nature, and portray women as being powerful for rejecting societal gender roles (for instance, *Vagabond* (Varda, 1985), *Sisters, or the Balance of Happiness* (von Trotta, 1979), whereas the portrayal would be somewhat different if they were being directed by a male. Films which incorporate female characters which are portrayed as being “different” to society, especially with regards to sexual habits, usually involve the female characters being punished for their behaviour, particularly if the director is male; examples include Suzanne (Sandrine Bonnaire) in *To Our Loves* (Pialat, 1983), and Joe (Charlotte Gainsbourg) in *Nymphomaniac I and II* (von Trier, 2013).

However the idea that all male directors are unsympathetic towards women who are different, particularly the mentally ill is inaccurate, as the most contemporary release of *Jane Eyre* was directed by a man (Cary Joli Fukunaga), and his portrayal of Bertha Mason is far more kind and compassionate than the previous versions. In earlier releases of the film, even as recent as 2006 (White), the portrayal of Bertha has been derogatory and insulting, making her out to be completely delusional and dangerously unpredictable (no more so than the TV serial from 1983 (Amyes) and the first cinematic adaptation in 1934 (Cabannes), in which Bertha was unnecessarily unsettling and manic in her depictions). However, with my key texts in mind, I am inclined to think that Fukunaga is the exception to this patriarchal rule, especially considering the internationally recognised stereotype that “crazy” female characters have to act as unhinged as possible<sup>xi</sup>.

It is important, when considering the representation of mentally ill female characters, how contemporary gender debates are reflected within the representation, namely the controversial theory of intersectionality. This theory can be described as “a concept from feminist theory which looks at the intersections between groups of oppressed peoples”

(Jeraj, 2013), which in the case of this particular context, are female mental health sufferers. As I previously described in Chapter 1, mental health sufferers have often been ostracised and oppressed throughout history – as have women.

Since the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, women's roles in European society have been undermined by lack of importance and low rates of pay, which only worsened with the introduction of industry and labour-extensive jobs (Rowbotham, 1973). Though, female oppression was not just a problem within a professional context; Rowbotham states that men came to assume that women were their subordinates, and that this was merely the natural order of society (ix). This school of thought was reflected in literary publications up until the mid-nineteenth century, which, as has been previously established, had a significant impact upon the themes and ideologies in early cinema<sup>xii</sup>.

Intersectionality is an extremely fragile concept, as it has gained both significant support, as well as opposition – this opposition, surprisingly, generally comes from self-identifying feminists, who claim that it is “meaningless, radical and a threat to the sisterhood” (Robertson, 2013). But the point of intersectionality, as Robertson states, is that “it is about the lives of real women [who are] fighting to be heard” - a backlash against the modern patriarchy that dictates how an oppressed woman should be perceived and treated. Within mental health, as is previously explained, women are still treated differently to men, not least because of the gender stereotypes held by the professionals within the mental health sector who will diagnose and treat their patients in accordance to “widened gender inequality” (Jeraj).

This gender inequality is worldwide and has a mass effect on every aspect of culture and society; in a recent press conference, the Chief Operating Officer of Facebook, Sheryl

Sandberg, claimed that only eighteen countries throughout the world have female heads of state, which demonstrates the persistent power of patriarchy in its most political form.

Though this may be quite an extreme example, it is proof that men are still considered to be the most capable gender when it comes to leading, whether that is in a political sense, medical sense, or creative sense. Ironically, the emergence of social media into popular culture may in itself be partly responsible for the on-going problem of gender equality; if one searches for “women” on Facebook, some of the leading results are undeniably sexist, with four out the top ten results alluding to “hot women”, who feature in quizzes relating to preference of pornography, in which countries these women are “most beautiful”, and which women are better in the “Naked Women’s Wrestling League” (See Appendix 5).

Intersectionality is also rife within social networking sites, with Facebook causing controversy recently for its seemingly lenient attitude towards pages which trivialise female rape (Frevele, 2011) – the term “intersectionality” was originally coined as a way to describe how black and immigrant women’s experiences of sexual assault were dismissed by rape crisis facilities because their cases were “too complicated” (Robertson). What is most noteworthy about the numerous cases of blatant misogyny on Facebook is the fact that these sort of pages are against the website’s policy, which prohibits “content that is hateful, threatening, or pornographic; incites violence; or contains nudity or graphic or gratuitous violence” (Frevele), once again demonstrating that the power of patriarchy is still as potent as it ever was.

The notion that misogyny and female objectification is still in-place in most aspects of today’s society is also evident in contemporary cinema, as well as within my focus films. As was mentioned in the introductory chapter, there is a tendency within non-G rated films (or U-rated in the UK), to “hypersexualise” female characters (Smith and Cook, 2008). The term “hypersexualisation” has been described by Smith and Cook as an “overemphasis on

attractiveness and sexuality by way of clothing and body proportions”, and is a concept which is frequently applied to female characters. It is also worth noting that this study states that female characters can inversely be described as “traditional”; these are literally the only two types of female characters that feature in cinema according to the study. What is significant about this finding is that one, or both, or these depictions can be applied to each of the lead characters within my key films – a point which is worth evaluating further.

In *The Others*, the character of Grace is generally portrayed as traditional (albeit a little subversively, considering her role in the death of her children), which is described as being defined as the character’s “relational and parental status”. Grace is both in a committed relationship, and is a parental figure, however her traditional depiction becomes less frequent as the narrative progresses, and it becomes more apparent that the traditional aspects of her character are subverted. She is in a committed relationship, however her partner is distant and displays signs of discontentment, whereas her children are generally devoted to her, despite the notion that they are also scared of her (which is eventually explained to be the result of her previous bout of insanity, when she smothered them to death). Grace’s costume and appearance reflect the change in her character from traditional to hypsersexual:



*Fig. 1.*

During an early scene, Grace is sat with both of her children, as they read passages from the Bible and discuss the concept of morality. This is one of the key establishing scenes in the film, as it solidifies the idea that Grace is extremely fundamental when it comes to her parenting style and religious beliefs; her ideas regarding religion and morality are traditional – in stark contrast to her children, who find her beliefs laughable – and her appearance symbolises this fact. As is shown in the above photo, her appearance is proper and restrained; her hair is pinned back, which not only reflects her character's seemingly-dull personality, but also highlights her facial expression, which is that of displeasure that her children are refusing to adhere to her antiquated values regarding religion and lifestyle. Furthermore, the collar of her dress is high-cut and shows no flesh below the neck, making it obvious to the audience that she is not a sexual character at this point of the narrative.

As the narrative continues, her sexuality – as well as her deteriorating mental state – is represented through costume changes and modifications to her hair and make-up. It is no

coincidence that her heightened sexuality and her fragile mental state are represented more and more as the narrative continues; though the two do not strictly go hand-in-hand, the increased frequency of scenes which depict either of these aspects of her personality as the narrative progresses, shows that the ideology of the film suggests that madness can be “sexy”. This is supported further by the fact that in a review of the film, Bradshaw claims that, within this context, Kidman is “the sexiest she has ever been, by far” (2001).

An example of this is a scene in which Grace becomes hysterical when her husband tells her that he is leaving her and the children. Despite the seriousness of the situation, and the way in which Grace’s volatile state of mind means that her character goes from a state of frenzy to self-wallowing, her character undergoes a hypersexual transformation, as is evident from these stills:



*Fig. 2.*



*Fig. 3*

Both of these photos show Grace as being highly sexualised, as she is framed in extremely provocative stances. In both instances, the camera is focused upon her via a mid-shot, which accentuates her positioning and her costume. The latter photo also emphasises her sexuality through her position on the bed, but also the way in which her nightgown has ridden-up slightly to reveal the top of her stockings, alluding to the existence of lingerie, and thus, sexuality.

The combination of mental instability and sex appeal also occurs in *A Dangerous Method*, which incorporates numerous scenes of hypersexuality amidst scenes of severe mental illness. One of the earliest scenes of this nature is one in which Sabina has immersed herself in a pond in a state of mental instability, and as such, is soaked in water, which has made her white nightgown cling to her body:



Fig. 4

The popularity in contemporary Western culture (especially America) to exhibit women in wet t-shirts as a form of entertainment proves that there is a form of sexual attraction in the act of watching it; according to Banet-Weiser (1999: pp.82-83), these sort of contests “regulate gender identity”, as they represent “the sexualized female body [as] is displayed

for consumption". Though the scene outlined above is clearly not an example of such a competition, the parallels between this scene and such a competition are undeniable; there would be no other reason to show Sabina in a wet gown other than to emphasise her sexuality. However, this scene is relatively subtle in comparison to others later in the film; there are numerous scenes which depict sexual activity between Sabina and Jung:



*Fig. 5*

Though it is true that by this stage in the narrative, Sabina is in a comparatively better state of mental health than in the earlier scene outlined above, her sexual relationship with Jung is a direct result of her illness. Their sexual relationship also signifies the lack of any personal investment the viewer may have in Sabina – she is generally portrayed as being extremely passive, especially sexually, as she is the one being dominated by her male lover. This directly undermines her presence on screen (Smith and Cook), which affects the way in which the audience perceives her. This concept of the female character having little control on her surroundings and her relationship is a theme which runs throughout the

three focus films, but within *He Loves Me...*, it occurs only within the first half of the narrative before Angélique's true nature is revealed.

Along with the fact that Angélique is seemingly quite passive, she is also hypersexualised, but in a more subtle way than her female counterparts in the other two films. If we were to analyse her hypersexuality in the most basic form (i.e. by her body proportions, such as waist size, and skinniness), she would technically be just as hypersexual as the other two characters:



Fig. 6

As the above photo shows, her small waist and thinness is emphasised by the tight black dress she is wearing, and by the fact that her form is perfectly framed between objects in the foreground, drawing attention to her body. However, unlike the other films, *He Loves Me...* is the only one which doesn't depict the hypersexuality of a male character (which is usually five-times less likely than that of a female character anyway), which indicates the actual lack of closeness and romantic interaction between the two lead characters. Within *The Others* and *A Dangerous Method*, the male leads are sexualised in several scenes,

whether that be in the form of a passionate embrace between them and their partner, or a scene in which they are nude as a result of sexual activity.

One of the key points to consider when analysing the lead female characters in terms of their sexualisation is the role that casting plays. It is true that the actresses who played these roles were suited to them due to previous similar roles (such as Audrey Tautou in *Amélie* (Juenet, 2001)), but it can be no coincidence that each of the actresses is known for their sex appeal and beauty<sup>xiii</sup>. For instance, Audrey Tautou has been described as having the “captivating features of a model” (Secher, 2011), Nicole Kidman was recently said to be “smoking hot” and “stunning” (Judge, 2014), and Keira Knightley’s credits include frequently modelling for big-name brands, which means that she is described by the media as “breathtaking” and “radiant” (Winter, 2014) on a regular basis. With this in mind, it is important to establish the reasons behind these casting choices; not only are these actresses suited to the roles professionally, but aesthetically, they are easy to sexualise and objectify.

It is possible, though, that the genre of the film can dictate how a female character can be objectified and sexualised, as the male gaze is not genre specific. Kuhn and Radstone (1990: 363) states that:

“Sexuality has...been a central theme of popular films, especially in genres like the thriller, horror, *film noir*, and melodrama. Popular narratives, typically constructed around the disruption of a fictional equilibrium by a threat or a problem, and the restoration of a new equilibrium in the story’s resolution, often construct female sexuality as the threat or the problem that sets the story in motion.”

As is stated in the above quote, horrors, thrillers and melodramas are all prone to using female sexuality as a narrative device; the fact that the female characters in my three focus films (which encompass these specific genres) are mentally ill makes no difference to the fact that they are objectified, confirming my earlier statement that craziness can be shown as sexy.

## II. Mental Illness and Genre

If one takes into account the genres of my three key texts, it is plain to see that they are all serious, dramatic films, and that perhaps this is the reason why the use of mental illness is, in itself, seen as a serious issue. In *The Others*, Grace's paranoia and apparent personality disorder is what drives the narrative; similarly in *He Loves Me...* and *A Dangerous Method*, the narrative is driven by the female character's persistent lack of psychological stability.

If one were to analyse these films on a basic level, the first thing one would do would be to describe the films according to their genre. According to IMDB, two of the films share at least one generic description with another: both *The Others* and *A Dangerous Method* are defined as “dramas”, and *He Loves Me...* is defined as a “thriller/romance”. What this suggests is that the convention of using mental illness as a narrative device can be present in several genres, but how different are these genres from one another? An important fact regarding genre is the fact that it is not confined to any specific codes and conventions; according to Susan Hayward (2013:183), “[they] are not static...they rework, extend and transform the norms that codified them”. Basically, films are never just one genre; they use codes and conventions from several genres in order to make a hybrid. Therefore, when IMDB classes *The Others*...as a “horror”, it could just as easily be described as a “thriller”, because it uses similar codes and conventions to a film which is defined within that genre; both *The Others* and *He Loves Me...* contain several moments of suspense and tension due to the character's irrational and unpredictable behaviours, however they are described as two completely different genres. Therefore, as a matter of elimination, it can be implied that it is the character's diminishing mental states which create the “thriller” aspect of the films; the horror within *The Others* is due to other codes: the presence of ghosts, the big, old house, the foggy weather and the forest behind the

characters' home. As Prohászková states, the environment in which the film is set can often be one of the most significant “dominants” within the horror genre, often consisting of “places out of the modern world, such as...a gloomy forest...[an] old house...” (2012:134). The environment in *He Loves Me...* is entirely the opposite to this, and perhaps it is this fact which makes it solely a “thriller” - if the film consisted of the same plot, but was set in an isolated, fog-ridden mansion, then maybe the genre would have been assigned differently.<sup>xiv</sup>

Analysing the mentally ill female characters within these two films, as well as other “thrillers” and “horrors”, makes it apparent that it is entirely genre-specific as to the narrative reason behind a character's mental illness. The depictions of mentally ill characters varies greatly in other genres, which is due to the gender-specific conventions which mould the narrative and character development. Therefore, the representation of mental illness is defined by the genre of the film; for example, in horror films, there are three key character types who display mental illness: “The Hysterical Body”, “The Slasher”, and “The Maternal Body” (Creed, featured in Devereaux and Hillman (1995, pp.144, 147-148). “The Hysterical Body” is “almost always...the female victim... [she] is used to express (on behalf of men?) terror at its most abject level. She loses bodily control, she also loses her powers of coherent speech and her sense of her ‘self’...” (p.144), a character which seems to fit perfectly with Fuery’s aforementioned description of madness (2003: 34). “The Slasher” is usually male, but there have been examples of the Slasher as “a psychotic female” (1995: 147), and their killing-styles vary greatly depending on their gender: the male Slashers tend to “despatch victims with alarming regularity”, while the female “sometimes castrates her male victims”...[or] is represented as a temptress who kills during coition” (pp.147-148). Crucially, however, if a female Slasher castrates a male as a form of revenge, it is “justified, and audiences are encouraged to sympathise with her”

(p.148). A male psychopath “kills as a form of symbolic rape” as is evident from the fact that his victims are usually teenage girls. Finally, “The Maternal Body” is a “female psychopath...who clings possessively to others...It is her possessiveness which is represented as the source of horror.” This particular character is the most unsettling, as it can be linked to “The Uncanny” (outlined further in Chapter 3), especially as the female psychopath’s reasons for murder are “almost always linked to perverted familial relations and her desire to suffocate her loved ones” (p.148).

It seems that the female's mental instability plays a significant part in the plot; Grace's bouts of psychosis led to her murdering her children, and then killing herself, causing them to haunt the house where they died. It is important to note that this revelation solidifies Grace’s role of “The Maternal Body”, as she has been shown as extremely possessive of her children and her husband during the narrative, and then proceeds to kill her children by suffocation, as is the trope for this particular horror character. With this in mind, out of the three female protagonists from the key texts, Grace is the only character to fully embody all three of Creed’s previously mentioned horror roles; she possesses traits from the “Hysterical Body” in several scenes (an example of which is when she is running away from the ghosts of Bertha, Mr. Tuttle and Lydia), as well as from “The Slasher” (she demonstrates psychotic traits throughout the film, such as denying the murder of her children and showing no remorse), and “The Maternal Body”, as is outlined above.

However, it is their unawareness of their own deaths is what drives the story, and as the film's plot begins after Grace has killed her children and herself, the whole film is leading up to the climax, when it is revealed what happened when “Mummy went mad” (though she shows signs of many mental problems throughout the film as well, which will be discussed further in Chapter 3). In *He Loves Me...*, Angélique's severe form of

Clérambault's syndrome is what drives the dual-narrative, with one half of the plot being shown from her perspective, and the second half displaying reality and the effects of her mental struggles on Loïc and his family. The effects of mental illness on secondary characters are also used in more unexpected genres, such as comedies, in which the mental illness is usually perceived as a comedic device.

In the American comedy *Me, Myself and Irene* (Farrelly & Farrelly, 2000), mental illness is used as a comedic device, as the character's illness (Dissociative Identity Disorder) means that he has two personalities: one who is repressed, kind and caring – the other is rude, confrontational and exploitative. The use of mental illness within this particular plot is to make people laugh, but this seems to be an uncommon technique within comedy, and as such, mental illness features more frequently in films of a darker, more serious nature.<sup>xv</sup>

When one considers the role that mental illness has to play in films such as *A Dangerous Method* and *Iris* (Eyre, 2001), it becomes apparent that mental illness is actually very flexible and can be used to achieve different emotions and narratives. In the two aforementioned films, the characters' mental illnesses are used as a way of solidifying relationships, whether they be sexual or emotional, but as is previously stated, it can also be used to connote fear and humour, depending on the genre of the film.

Considering the variety of narrative roles a mentally ill character can fulfil (particularly a female character), it is possible that their existence within film is to satisfy an expectation that the already audience possesses before they even see the film. In a comedy, a mentally unstable woman can be used as a form of comic relief, or a way in which to bond more heavily with the protagonist (as has previously been stated, in comedy films the role of the neurotic wife can exist in order for the audience to sympathise with her “struggling” husband). Similarly, the audience may have a preconception that any mentally ill character

within a thriller or horror will be the villain – both stereotypes (the mentally ill female as the neurotic wife or the villain) are caused by the previously mentioned theory of cinematic transposition, where it has come to be that audience members simply expect characters to fulfil these specific roles because it is what they are used to seeing.

As mental illness was once seen as far more taboo than it is in this current age, there once would have been many films produced with their villains being fulfilled by an insane person, such as in *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (Wiene, 1920) and *Secrets of a Soul* (Pabst, 1926).<sup>xvi</sup> As both films were produced under the influence of separate philosophical movements (as is highlighted in footnote 3) which both focused on taboo social issues, the way in which the characters were portrayed in those films became the template for subsequent film-makers, and so there were frequent releases of films which used the same insane-villain-stereotype, with examples including *M* (Lang, 1931), *The Awful Dr. Orlof* (Franco, 1962), *Front à la Scotland Yard* (Vohrer, 1962) and *Bell from Hell* (Guerín and Bardem, 1973). The lack of films between *M* and *The Awful Dr. Orlof* is by no means representative of the actual amount of films made, however in the 30 years between the releases of the two films, cinema was influenced heavily by World War II. As such, many of the films released from 1939 onwards reflected political issues and were often censored. As a result, many of the examples of the insane-villain-stereotype occurred much more regularly in the 1960 and onwards, when cinema regained its creative liberation. After World War II, there was a new genre of cinema to occupy the masses; *film noir*. Though the popularity of the genre is generally thought to be associated with American films, the background of *noir* is stapled solely on European cinema from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Naremore (1998:220) states that *film noir* is:

“...the interface between an avante-garde European modernism and an older, more conservative tradition of 'blood drama', stories of violence and erotic love that included crime films but also Gothic romance.”

With this quote in mind, it is important to remember that films from this genre are, in essence, crime films, which can often depict the mentally ill as being dangerous and intimidating. Referring to the film *Sling Blade* (1996), Rafter (2000:155), points out that the lead character's “scary appearance forces us to think through our stereotype of 'criminal' and 'dangerous’”. With this in mind, Rafter continues to relate modern crime films to the earlier examples of *film noir*, stating that films from the genre “revived the expressionist tradition and incorporated Freudianism, developments that encouraged their representations of mental pathology” (p.70). She continues to analyse the use of mental illness in the genre, identifying the trend of using very specific gender stereotypes, with reference to the film *Kiss Me Deadly* (Aldrich, 1955):

“...for instance, the male criminals are ordinary mobsters and scientists, but one of the three female characters is a fugitive from a mental institution, the second a childish psychotic, and the third a nymphomaniac.”

However, within the genre of *film noir*, it is not always the case that it is the women who appear to be mentally ill; it is often implied that it is the female characters' behaviour towards their male counterparts that lead to the male characters suffering a mental downfall, usually leading to their deaths<sup>xvii</sup>. This is supported by Rafter's analysis of *noir* and contemporary cinema, where she states that films often instil the notion that the role of female characters is to live-up to the “age-old myth of the Evil Woman who leads man astray...” (p.77). However, on the face of it, the fact that these women use manipulation and often mislead the male characters into trusting them by the promise of sex, is

interpreted as a mental instability on the females' parts. Though, analysing this fact from within the paradigm of gender, it is evident that these *femme fatales* are just an example of a societal *zeitgeist*; as Blaser (2002) states, "[the female characters'] destructive struggle for independence is a response to the restrictions that men place on them...[*film noir's*] images of conventional women are often bland to the point of parody." Feminist criticism of *film noir* has suggested that the fact that the *femme fatales* are untamed and "dangerous" was originally structured by patriarchy, but resulted in a shift in gender perception that threatened patriarchy within cinema:

"'*Film noir* is a male fantasy'...these are images which centred on a male point of view, narratives structured by a patriarchal logic in which women are always framed as less than men. The point for feminist critics of *noir* is not to suggest otherwise but rather to point to *noir's* characteristic playing out of that logic in a manner potentially troubling for the patriarchal culture" (Spicer and Hanson, 2013: 355).

Despite this feminist approach, it is still fair to say that the *femme fatales* are represented as being of an unstable mind, and yet the role of an "established" mental illness (in as much as it is obvious to the audience that the character is suffering from a mental condition, though it is not diagnosed within the narrative of the film) within *film noir* is extremely common. Spicer states that *film noir* often depicts "a wide range of mental states..." (2002:23), with Rafter agreeing that films (both from the *noir* period and more recently) have a tendency to "reinforce the myth of a close association between mental illness and crime." (p.77). Furthermore, the use of mentally ill characters and/or "evil women" are not displayed as a way to "deliberately mislead the public but to attract audiences with lures of proven efficacy: action, emotional thrills, blood and gore" (p.78).

Though, could this not just be considered a self-fulfilling prophecy? Indeed, the makers of these films may not be intending to mislead the audience into believing that all crimes are carried out by mentally-ill murderers, the ways in which the audience will interpret the media that is before them cannot be individually monitored, and is therefore subject to “generalizability” (Ruddock, 2000:18). This term refers to the idea that there are audience members who whole-heartedly believe that the representation of a social group or any specific fact within film and media is entirely accurate, and that we can therefore infer that there are a greater number of people in the world who also believe this. For instance, Ruddock explains that after the radio broadcast of the War of the Worlds in 1938, the American Institute of Public Opinion conducted research into the effect of the broadcast on its audience; out of the 6 million people interviewed, 1.6 million admitted to being scared – despite the fact that it was made obvious before the broadcast that it was no more than a fictional drama. He goes on to state that the American researcher, Hadley Contril, whose speciality was research into public opinion, found that during the broadcast, there was a significant increase in the average number of phone calls made to the police and the radio station(p.45). This demonstrates just how easily the mindset of an audience can be manipulated according to what they are subjected to in the media, despite the directors'/producers' best intentions not to mislead the public.

Within the film industry, especially in horrors/thrillers and crime dramas, the directors make a conscious decision to depict mental illness in a certain way, not to mislead the audience into believing that their depiction is truth, but merely because that is what the audience expects. This, in turn, will appeal to viewers and will therefore accumulate more sales. In

short, the use of mental illness as a narrative ploy in specific genres is merely to bring in the audience and generate more money.

### III. *The Others* (Amenábar, 2001) – Mental Illness and the Supernatural Horror

Within *The Others*, there is far more mental illness involved within the progression of the narrative than is first apparent. These displays of mental illness fit in well within the film's genre, a supernatural horror, which encourages the film's characters and viewers to become paranoid and scared throughout the film's narrative. Prince (2004:3) says, "audiences never tire of being frightened because they never stop feeling frightened about their fellow human beings", and as is stated in Chapter 2, film can often optimise on the audience's sense of "generalizability", which dictates that the viewer will fully believe the portrayal of a character, including the existence of ghosts, and the psychotic nature of the mentally ill.

It is crucial to analyse *The Others* in terms of its genre, which, as is previously established, is a horror – specifically, a supernatural horror. One of the key themes within supernatural horrors is the inclusion of stock characters, namely the paranormal entity, the believer, and the sceptic. All of these characters tend to combine in one giant confrontation at the climax of the film's narrative; the only difference with *The Others* is that the lead three characters encompass all three of the stock characters<sup>xviii</sup>. Within *The Others*, Grace (Nicole Kidman) is the sceptic, and is destined to "become [a] victim of the monster", as is the stereotypical trope within supernatural horror films (Pinedo, in Prince (2004:95) – little does she know that she is, in fact, the monster that she has been running from (this point will be expanded upon later in the chapter). Also, within the horror genre, there are well-defined gender roles for the characters; Zillman and Weaver (in Weaver and Tamborini (81)) claim that within the horror film, the male character are agonistic and the females are sedentary, a cinematic feature which stems from society's persistent gender segregation<sup>xix</sup>.

Considering the nature of the film, and the way in which it ends (with the revelation that Grace killed her children and herself), it is obvious that Grace is suffering severely from

one or several mental conditions, but she is not the only character within the film who possesses the symptoms of somebody suffering from a mental illness. Her husband, Charles (Christopher Eccleston), a soldier who has seemingly just returned from fighting in France during WWII, suffers greatly from post-traumatic stress disorder, as is apparent from his behaviour and his depression. However, his character is fleeting and features only briefly within the film, and so this chapter will focus mainly upon Grace, Lydia (Elaine Cassidy), the mute servant, and Anne (Alakina Mann), Grace's daughter.

That Grace has a troubled mind is apparent from the very first scene in the film, when we see her waking up from being asleep, screaming and crying<sup>xx</sup>. What the viewer does not know, because part of the events occurred prior to the start of the filmic narrative, is that Grace has tried to advertise in the local newspaper for servants the week before, but that the advertisement had not been collected by the postman (as he presumably heard that the family had died and therefore omitted the house from his rounds). Knowing the events leading to the opening scene of the film, it can be argued that Grace is haunted by her actions and it is likely that she was dreaming about murdering her children when the film starts. According to Mind (2013), the reliving of a past traumatic event through dreams and nightmares is a symptom of post-traumatic stress disorder; moreover, there are numerous symptoms listed under the condition which are present in the portrayal of Grace's behaviour: "keeping busy, repressing memories, feeling detached, irritability and extreme alertness" (Mind). These are all traits which Grace demonstrates throughout the film; she keeps herself busy by embroidering or teaching the children, she claims she does not remember killing her children, and throughout the film she is often by herself and states numerous times how lonely her life is. When considering the features of mental illness which are demonstrated specifically by Grace (but also Anne and Lydia) it is important to

look at the context of their illnesses, both from a cinematic point of view, and a historical perspective.

The concept of *The Others* is seemingly very traditional – an old-fashioned ghost story. The notion that *The Others* is a kin to traditional urban legends is established as soon as the film starts and then reiterated throughout. The opening scenes portray key scenes from the film in the style of an old-fashioned children's story book, with Grace's voice narrating with an accompanying story, which begins, “are you sitting comfortably, children? Then I'll begin” (a phrase which was featured heavily within the British radio show Listen With Mother, which ran for over three decades from 1950 onwards). Many of the traditional aspects come from the underlying religious tones which are prominent within the narrative, and many of the twist and turns of the plot are dependent upon the characters' belief in religion.

Grace's character is a devout Catholic, as is evident by numerous scenes in the film; the fact that she uses Rosary beads, the way in which she teaches her children about Limbo, and the fact that Anne states that she has been baptised. Though there is no doubt that her character's belief in Catholicism is crucial to the plot, it is also likely that this particular aspect of the plot was influenced directly by the personal ideologies of Alejandro Amenábar. Being raised in Spain throughout the 1970's and 1980's, Amenábar would have been surrounded by Catholic ideology, as Spanish society was heavily influenced by religion. The Spanish cinema which was released around the time of Amenábar's childhood portrayed religion to be evil and often cast religious figures as the villains. Such as the case of *The Priest* (de la Iglesia, 1978) and *Tasio* (Armendáriz, 1984); this negative representation of religion is one which has continued on to modern day, with films like *The Others* and *Bad Education* (Almodóvar, 2004) being prime examples. However, in contrast to this, the way in which religion is cast as Grace's saviour throughout the film (although it

was ultimately her downfall), links to the idea that cinema censorship was rife during the 1970's, and was only lifted after the death of General Franco in 1976 – the fact that religion is actually responsible for Grace's downfall is a prospective acknowledgement of the films created after the censorship. The role of religion within the film demonstrates the shift of religious authority which was happening during Amenábar's childhood, from something to be obeyed and believed, to something to doubt and mock. Furthermore, Grace's faith underscores the entire depiction of her condition; during the film's final scenes, Grace recalls the day in which she killed herself and her children, and states that when she heard her children laughing she thought that “God had given [her] a second chance.” As such, she thinks nothing more of the event and feels no need to address it, or the causes of it. As has been established within previous chapters of this dissertation, the progression of treating mental illness has been slow and, during WWII when *The Others* is set, treatment towards those who suffered would have been lacking, and would have had a great social stigma attached to it. As such, a person such as Grace who is devoutly Catholic, would have been left no choice but to pray to God for the strength to overcome her emotional instability – if she did believe that God had given her a second chance after killing her children, this would explain why she puts all of her faith into religion during the film.

Like any war, WWII had a profound effect not only on the person serving in the military, but the family they left at home. As is previously mentioned, Charles seems to be suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder when he features in the film, but it is also very likely that his family, specifically his wife, suffered greatly when he left for the war – this is what is commonly referred to as “military spouse depression” (Spell, 2013). In a recent study (Nauert, 2010), it was reported that the wives of soldiers serving in the military are more likely to get depressed and anxious, and this is due to several reasons; coping with

children as a single parent, worrying about their partner, feeling lonely, etc., all of which are present in Grace's character. There are several scenes which support this claim; when she is telling the housekeeper, Bertha (Fionnula Flanagan) about how they cope with the children's condition (xeroderma pigmentosum) Grace says "It is rather difficult to say the least...some might say unbearable". It is also very apparent how much she misses her husband, which is demonstrated in the scene where she is slumped next to the wardrobe, caressing and smelling his clothes in a fit of despair. Her loneliness is obvious, though it is demonstrated in different ways; the fact that the house (that she cannot leave) is in isolation surrounded by fog, and the way in which everybody she depended upon chose to leave the area - her family left Jersey before the Nazi invasion some years earlier, then her husband chose to go and fight in the war ("Why did you go and fight in that war, which had nothing to do with us?"), and all of her servants left during the night, leading her to be alone with the children. Grace goes on to state that it was the abandonment of the servants which was ultimately the reason why she felt like she could not cope, and led to the murdering of her children. Considering the historical implications of the film, it makes sense that the servants would leave the area as Jersey was occupied by Nazi Germany, and had been for over four years at the time the film was set<sup>xxi</sup>. This fact may contribute more to Grace's feelings of abandonment than is first apparent, especially as the viewer knows she felt isolated already, due to the leaving of her husband and family.

However despite the significant strain Charles' absence has created on Grace's life, it is also evident how much Anne is suffering from her father's lack of presence. Studies show that approximately 20% of American children suffer from mental illness (WebMD, 2013), with the second-most-common illness taking the form of Disruptive Behavioural Disorders. Taking into account Anne's personality throughout the film – her reluctance to listen to authority, her argumentative nature etc – it is likely that she should be suffering from

Oppositional Defiant Disorder. The traits of this illness include “a persistent pattern of angry outbursts, arguments and disobedience” (DeMaso, 2011), and these symptoms are usually most evident when the child is confronted by “authority figures, like parents...[but also] siblings, classmates and other children”. Considering the fact that the only other child that Anne comes into frequent contact with (apart from her troublesome playmate Victor (Alexander Vince)) is her brother, Nicholas (James Bentley) – who is also her permanent classmate, as they are both home-schooled - her behavioural tendencies begin to fit well with the aforementioned description of the condition. This, combined with her dismissal of authority in the form of her mother, Bertha or Lydia, shows that she is undoubtedly meant to be suffering from a behavioural disorder, most likely ODD. A 2011 study by American academics states that children whose parents have served in the military – especially those who have served on the front-line and participated in combat – are more likely to develop depression and stress disorders. With this in mind, it is also probable that Anne is suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, brought on both by her father's deployment and her mother's bout of insanity. This is evident in several scenes, especially the ones which feature the characters talking about the moment that Grace “went mad” - Anne is always the one to bring the subject up, showing that it had a significant affect on her, leaving her emotionally scarred.

Another intriguing point about Anne is that, for at least the first twenty minutes or so of the film, the audience is led to believe that she has an imaginary friend named Victor, and gradually establishes more and more “imaginary friends” as the film progresses (taking the form of Victor's family and the clairvoyant which they hire). Though it becomes apparent at the end of the film that these characters were not a result of Anne's active imagination (much like her claim that “Mummy went mad”), the audience has no reason to argue with Grace that Victor does not exist, as imaginary friends are a concept that most people

recognise as occurring throughout childhood. According to Kennedy-Moore (2013), children who create invisible friends are not always necessarily troubled, but an imaginary friend is a “source of comfort when a child is experiencing difficulties...[such as] traumatic experiences.” Furthermore, the trope of the over-imaginative child (who is doubted by their peers and superiors but turns out to be right) within horror is well established, especially within the supernatural horror; examples include the character of Cole Sear (Hayley Joel Osman) in *The Sixth Sense* (Night Shyamalan, 1999) and *The Curse of the Cat People* (von Fritsch, 1944), which was a direct influence for Amenábar when writing the script (French, 2001). From the very start of the film, the audience perceive that that there is tension within the house, demonstrated by Grace's coldness and Anne's references to her mother's sanity; besides all the other factors that can arguably engender a situation of tension: the time of the action, in the aftermath of WWII; the absence of the father of the family, who left to fight in the war and never returned. Given this situation, the creation of an imaginary friend on the part of Anne can be read by the audience as a typical survival mechanism, which the child enacts to create for herself form of companionship.

Furthermore, the notion of Victor and his family being imaginary characters lends a great deal to the narrative. It is only at the end of the film that it is revealed that Victor is real; before this revelation, the audience is led to believe that he is either an imaginary friend of Anne's or a ghost. Therefore, a lot of the narrative is dependent upon Grace's reaction to these “non-existent” characters, and how Anne is the only one in the family who can see and communicate with them. Though it is not the case by the end of the film, the audience is also left to wonder whether Victor and his family are representative of something more sinister; the fact that they could be ghosts drives the plot heavily, but there is also the socially-taboo possibility that Anne could have been imagining them as a form of mental illness, an idea which Grace gives no credence, as she just believes that her children like

to create a world of fantasy. Anne's disruptive and spiteful behaviour towards others, as well as her "friends" that only she could see, could easily have been identified as child schizophrenia if, of course, we didn't know how the film ends – however, if we as an audience were to dismiss the film's ending and analyse only the first half hour of the film, we would see that Anne's behaviour is unconventional and quite aggressive, and that nobody gives it a second-thought, with her mother simply leaving her to her own devices as she "doesn't like fantasies; strange ideas". This is extremely demonstrative of how mental illness would have approached during that specific time period, as the war had taken its toll on people's self-esteem so it became necessary to make the best of one's life – even if that meant ignoring a potentially life-changing condition. A prime example of this belief is the character of Lydia.

Lydia is introduced to the audience as a meek young woman who, we quickly find out, is suffering from mutism. Throughout the film, she is put in awkward situations which conveniently highlight the fact that she cannot talk; she is left supervising the children and is mocked by Anne due to her inability to tell Grace of her daughter's misbehaving, and she is hounded by Grace to give details of the paranormal experiences within the house, but cannot communicate with her no matter how hard she tries. The circumstances surrounding Lydia's condition are kept to an absolute minimum throughout the film, though the audience is told by Bertha that Lydia was not born with the condition, to which Grace responds that the on-set of mutism is often a result of "some sort of trauma". This can be taken as a narrative cue which assures the audience that the reason for Lydia's mutism was indeed a traumatic experience which will be revealed later in the film. It gradually becomes apparent that the strange, ghostly experiences in the house are linked to the three new workers that Grace hired, and as such, the audience invests a significant interest into Lydia's mutism – not only is it a narrative device in the way that she is

prevented from telling her secret to the other characters, but also because the audience wants to find out what caused her to develop the condition in the first place. Mutism (specifically elective mutism, which is the condition which affects Lydia) is not a stand-alone disease, but is the symptom of a mental health problem, usually a form of Social Anxiety Disorder (Yelton, 2011). Yelton suggests that becoming mute as a result of trauma can occur, but does so rarely, and is not a permanent issue.

A point to remember about Lydia's mutism is that this is actually a frequently-used convention in the horror genre; there are often mute characters within horror films who are used as narrative drives, usually by withholding information or just simply to be perceived as suspicious or mysterious by the audience. One of the first horror films to use this convention was *The Old Dark House* (Whale, 1932), in which two strange, unearthly siblings and their mute butler are obliged to host a group of travellers who have become stranded during a storm – the family dynamic is extremely reminiscent of that in *The Others*<sup>xxii</sup>. Another film which bares several resemblances to *The Others* and *The Old Dark House* is *The Virgin Spring* (Bergman, 1960)<sup>xxiii</sup>, due to the religious nature of the family dynamic. The devoutly religious tones of the film are similar to those in *The Others*, with both respective parents doubting their otherwise-unfathomable faith in God as the result of the death of loved ones. There is also the aforementioned notion that the mute character in each film is responsible for driving the narrative forward, and ultimately bringing the plot to its tragic conclusion. The fact that these mute characters are all confined to one location, though, is clearly indicative of the horror genre. The idea that these three films all encompass very similar settings, characters and plots is no coincidence; as Wells (2001: 18) states, “the domestic space has become the locality for the worst of horror...”, and this fact combined with the films' shared similarities regarding characters and plots only further

demonstrate the earlier point that, according to Feury's theory, cinema is "transpositional". Though what is most remarkable about *The Others* is that, despite its similarities to previous horror films, it is distinctly different – the narrative twist at the climax of the film, as well as the complex and misleading character roles, suggests that the film can be considered as belonging to the "uncanny".

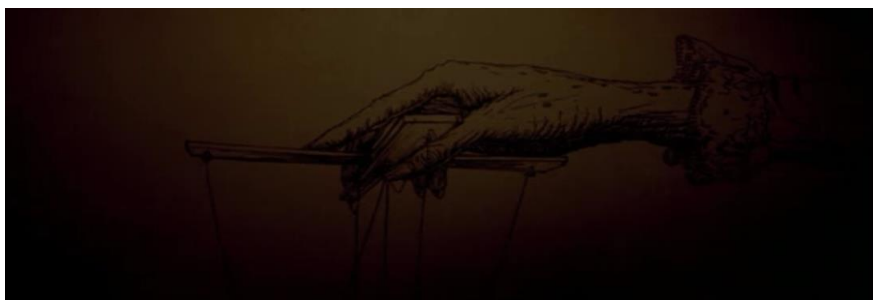
Freud first published a paper on this concept in 1919, stating that it was possible for human beings to feel a sense of unease or discomfort when subjected to an object or situation which is perceived as being too familiar – so much so, that the familiar begins to feel strange. As Royle (2003:1) states, "...the uncanny is not simply an experience of strangeness or alienation. More specifically, it is a peculiar commingling of the familiar and unfamiliar" - and *The Others* is a film which encompasses this notion perfectly. If we once again analyse the opening of the film, we will see that there is something very familiar about the scene – it is a mother, reading her children a story with an accompanying story book in candlelight, which is actually visualising several scenes from the film. Prima facie, this opening sequence is quite normal, however if the audience re-watches the sequence after viewing the film in its entirety, it becomes apparent that it symbolises something completely different.

Reading books by candlelight is reminiscent of yesteryear, but on reflection, this particular shot has more meaning: it is representative of the children's light-sensitive condition, but also has links to death and religion, as candles are often used during religious ceremonies and funerals, as well as candlelight vigils. This point is exaggerated further as the story that Grace is telling her children is Biblical, as seen in Figure 8.



*Fig. 8*

Crucially, the lack of colour and light in this first frame is a prime example of foreshadowing; it is letting the viewer know from the outset that the film will be extremely dark, both aesthetically and narratively, especially as the visualization in these opening scenes is dependent on candlelight – much like the film's characters.



*Fig. 9*

This frame shows the fragile hand of an elderly person playing with a puppet. As an after-thought, the audience knows which scene this is in reference to, however, on face value, it strikes the audience as strange to articulate the notion of an old person playing with a toy. Also, the physical qualities of the hand, such as its age spots, wrinkles and overgrown nails, make it somewhat unsightly to look at.



*Fig. 10*

Figure 10 is a reference to a later scene; the toy that is being played with by the elderly hand is an angel marionette. The fact that it is in the form of an angel is very significant, due to the religious nature of the angel as a messenger from God – again, it is foreshadowing the narrative of the film, identifying religion to be a key driving force within the narrative, before the film has even properly begun. The fact that the marionette is disjointed and only being held up by strings, represents the idea that Grace's faith in religion is slowly breaking, and is only mildly intact. However, the same can also be said for Grace's mental state at the point of the film that is being depicted in this drawing. It is also worth noting that Grace's faith is further destroyed symbolically, after the scene which is depicted in the above screenshots; when Grace sees that Anne has been possessed by

the Old Lady (Renée Asherson), she throws Anne to the ground, ripping the dress that she's wearing – this dress was for her first holy communion, which Grace had made for her. This is the first time that the audience sees the aggression and mental instability to which Anne had previously eluded, though Grace only admits to these bouts of insanity and hostility at the end of the film, when she fully remembers that she did kill her children. It is at this point that the audience realises that Grace was the “monster” in the narrative all along.

According to Wells (2001:9), the monster “comes to represent the disintegration or destabilisation of any one dominant perception or understanding of what it is to be human”, and throughout the film, we are led to believe that the monster is actually the combination of Bertha, Mr Tuttle (Eric Sykes), and Lydia, for their existence and reasons for being in the house are not fully explained until the climax of this film. From the moment that they arrive in the film, there is an air of mystery surrounding them which only escalates throughout the narrative, until Grace and Anne both simultaneously discover that the three servants died 50 years previously. It is at this point that the viewers begin to doubt their opinions of Grace as someone who is suffering from a mental illness, as her suspicions and paranoia about her three servants are confirmed, and they are revealed as the “monster” of the text – albeit temporarily. As Wells goes on to say, “The monstrous element in the horror text is usually an interrogation of the amorphous nature of evil, or an address of the limits of the human condition; physically, emotionally and psychologically.” (2001:8) It becomes very apparent that there is no greater test of the limits of the human condition than seeing the graves and accompanying photo from the “book of the dead” of the three servants to convince the audience that Grace was correct in her suspicions all throughout the narrative, and that Bertha and her accomplices had intruded upon her family's life in order

to test her faith, and persuade her that it is possible for the dead and the living to live amongst one another. Though as the plot continues forward, past the revelation that Bertha and the other two servants are dead, it is revealed that Grace and her children are also dead, and that the three servants have been acting as a *doppelgänger* for the duration of the film. Linking in with the idea of the “monster”, the *doppelgänger* is “effectively a 'double', in which humankind confronts its nemesis...” (Wells, 2001:8); in this case Bertha, Mr Tuttle and Lydia have been Grace's nemesis throughout, representing her innermost fears of losing her faith, and losing her mind, and the subsequent consequences.

It is clear that there are many examples of mental illness within this film, whether it be the daughter who is suffering from missing her father, or the mother who cannot cope with being isolated with her children. Anne's mental development throughout the plot enables the audience to both like her and hold her in discontent, as her actions lead to doubts about the climax of the narrative. Furthermore, due to the dynamic of the characters, the audience is subconsciously made to decide which character they want to see succeed (Anne or Grace), and Anne's defiance and apparent-knack for creating scary stories (though we later find out that all of her stories are true, but at the time the audience believes them to be merely the fantasies of a young girl) makes her extremely unlikeable at times.

#### IV. *He Loves Me, He Loves Me Not* (Colombani, 2002) - Mental Illness and the Rom-Com/Horror Hybrid

In *He Loves Me, He Loves Me Not*, the mental illness of the lead female character, Angélique (Audrey Tautou), is key to the film's narrative development. Throughout this chapter, I will closely analyse the ways in which her mental condition is demonstrated, and how this impacts upon the narrative. In order to do this, it is important to consider the genre of the film, which I have described in the title as a "Rom-Com/Horror Hybrid". Despite the marketing of the film, which would encourage audiences to believe that it is a rom-com (explained further in a later part of the chapter), the film encompasses conventions from both the rom-com and the horror genres – two genres which are rarely combined, not least because their conventions are so different. However, *He Loves Me*...takes the rom-com conventions and subverts them, making them sinister and obsessive, resulting in murder and danger – turning the narrative into a horror.

By the conclusion of the film, Angélique has been diagnosed with a form of erotomania. This condition is rare, and has been labelled mostly as a female illness; this is probably due to the fact that the psychiatrist who first wrote about the condition, Gaëtan Gatian de Clérambault, stated in his work that it was an illness that could only affect women (Noll, 2007:154). As has been previously discussed, namely in the case of hysteria, the diagnosis of these conditions can often heavily depend upon the social expectations of who they should affect, and not who they actually do affect. In reality, erotomania can affect men, it is just far more unlikely (Enoch and Trethowan, 1991), but examples of men with the condition do exist. In order to fully

address the differences between the diagnosis in men and women, and the use of the illness within *He Loves Me...*, it is first necessary to explain what the condition entails.

Erotomania, or de Clérambault's Syndrome, was first established in 1927 and described by Clérambault as “psychose passionnelle” (Patient information Publications, 2014), which literally translates as “insanity of passion”, according to Colman (2008). Jordan and Howe (1980) state:

“...the syndrome is characterized by the delusional idea, usually in a young woman, that a man whom she considers to be of higher social and/or professional standing is in love with her. She develops an elaborate delusional process about this man, his love for her, his pursuit of her, and her inability to escape his 'affectionate clutches'.”

The distinguishing aspect of erotomania from conditions which are similar, such as Obsessive Love Disorder, is that the sufferer firmly believes that the object of their affection returns their feelings, but cannot tell them this directly due to external circumstances, such as marriage or professional obligation. This is certainly the case with Angélique; her love for Loïc (Samuel le Bihan) begins when he gives her a rose, which she interprets as a sign of him demonstrating his love for her. In reality, he merely gave Angélique a stem as an act of happiness as he was passing her on the street. This behaviour is apparent throughout the film, with Angélique misconstruing the simplest actions as demonstrations of Loïc's love her: through her narrative, Angélique states that Loïc had posted a holiday brochure through her letter box as a

way of telling her to book a trip for the two of them – through his narrative, the viewer is shown Loïc's confusion when he receives a note from Angélique about the trip. Similarly, when the narrative focus is on Angélique, we see her wearing a scarf that Loïc gave to her, and cherishing the rose he left for her as a gift; when the narrative shifts to Loïc, the audience sees that the scarf is in fact Loïc's wife's and was dropped by accident, and the rose he gave her was a non-consequential act of kindness upon hearing of his wife's pregnancy.

By half-way through the film, it becomes increasingly apparent that Angélique's love for Loïc, is unrequited. However, this is what is most compelling about the narrative of the film – for the first half, the audience is led to believe that the two characters have a genuine love affair, and this is due to the fact that the narrative is focused entirely from Angélique's point of view. From the very start of the film, there are codes from the romance genre throughout the mise-en-scene; the abundance of heart imagery (from the love-heart collage during the title sequence, down to the fact that Loïc is a cardiologist); the constant use of the colour red (the roses, Angélique's shirt, Angélique's motorcycle etc), and the incessant use of Nat King Cole's "L-O-V-E" as both diegetic and non-diegetic sound. For the first half of the film, the audience is deceived into thinking they are watching a rom-com due to generic conventions, not least because they have no reason to suspect otherwise. It is key to assess the use of audience-deception, and therefore audience expectation, and its impact on the role of Angélique's illness on the narrative.

Pramaggiore and Wallis state that "most viewers form expectations about the kind of film they plan to see" (2005:8) and, apart from anything else, the title "*He Loves Me*,

*He Loves Me Not* establishes strong connotations with the romance genre. On the surface, perhaps if one were to simply choose to watch this film based on the title, they might believe that they were going to be emerged in a world of romantic comedy, which is emphasised further by several critics and reviewers believing that the film would somewhat shadow Audrey Tautou's previous quirky rom-com *Amélie* (Jeunet, 2001). As Willsher (2013) states, "Tautou has had difficulty shaking off the innocent, naïve and meddlesome girl from Montmartre (a reference to the character of Amélie)", and this is supported by several reviews which compare *He Loves Me...* to *Amélie*. Stuber (2013) stated that "Angélique...played by Audrey Tautou, is much the same as Amélie: quirky, reserved, and charming..." and Pierce (2002), upon commenting on Tautou's inclusion in the film, says, "Her presence here, then, is smart filmmaking shorthand - it sets an ideal tone for the opening sequences, as her artist Angélique ambles around in a haze of love." This fact aside, the notion that the title includes the word "love" would be enough to convince potential audiences that the film would be described as a romance. According to IMDB's top 100 results when searching for "love", 70% of these titles contain the word "romance" as a description of the genre<sup>xxiv</sup>. This can be explained by using theories of Cultural Studies; During (2007:33) states that, "All the other films and products of the entertainment industry which they [the spectator/consumer] have seen have taught them what to expect; they react automatically." In this case, the word "love" in the title, the conscious connection between this film and *Amélie*, and even the various promotional posters for the film, all encourage potential viewers to perceive the film as a romance.

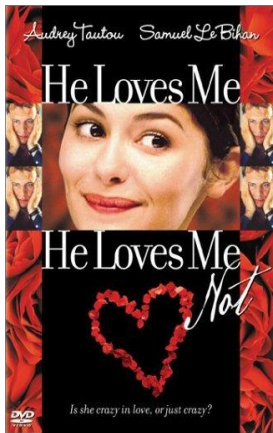


Fig. 11

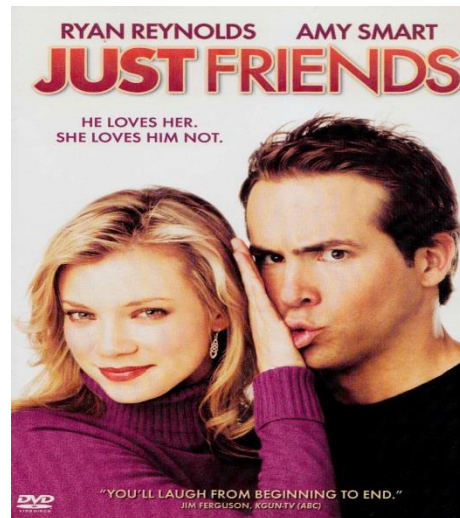


Fig. 12

*Just Friends* (Kumble, 2005) is recognised as a rom-com, yet the promotional poster for it and *He Loves Me...* have many similarities - these similarities are not accidental. Both have the lead female character as the focal point, with her love interest(s) in the foreground. The female character looks happy and mischievous, while the accompanying males look ignored and fed-up – not to mention that the tagline for *Just Friends* is “He loves her. She loves him not.” The overly-happy tone of Audrey Tautou's face against the overly-dramatic pose by Samuel le Behan is reminiscent of several rom-com movie posters (see Appendix 1), and taking into account Kerrigan's work regarding film marketing, “the unique selling proposition for this film is the genre, signalled by the cast and the design of the poster” (2010:135). It is possible to say that the tagline for the *He Loves Me...* poster (“Is she crazy in love, or just crazy?”) should be an indication of the darker side to the film, possibly suggesting that it falls into another genre. However, the use of a mentally ill female character in rom-coms is well established, especially when that character is stalking their love interest as Angélique is<sup>xxv</sup>. In essence, a film poster (or possibly a movie trailer) will

be what first attracts the viewer to the film, and so, it has to be produced to specifically attract its target audience. The use of Audrey Tautou as the main star, and thus the main focus of the posters, would have guaranteed the attention of fans of Amélie; combined with the poster's aforementioned photographic placements, and the use of the colour red which can be seen in the love-heart and the roses, this film poster was supposed to attract fans of the rom-com genre. In keeping with this marketing tactic, the first half of the narrative follows suit and is depicted as a rom-com.

The first half of the film perfectly follows the rules of a romantic comedy; a young woman who is demonstrating her love for a man through big, romantic gestures intertwined with a series of misunderstandings and unrequited feelings, only for love to conquer all...however, this seemingly happy ending is the ultimate heartbreak for Angélique, for love does conquer all, only it is Loïc's love for his wife which is all-powerful, and this leads to Angélique trying to commit suicide. It is at this stage in the narrative when the audience begins to realise that the film is dark, and not the light-hearted "chick-flick" that they might have been expecting. After this point, the narrative completely changes; the focus changes from Angélique to Loïc, and the story goes back to the start. Gradually, the audience sees that Loïc is completely dedicated to his wife and his unborn child, and that Angélique has developed feelings for him from one, short-lived moment of kindness on his part. Her feelings are completely unrequited, and his and Angélique's lives are entirely separate, as is demonstrated by the shift in narrative and the retelling of the plot.

Throughout the two halves of the narrative, Angélique's fragile mental state is demonstrated numerous times, but it becomes most apparent once she believes that Loïc is purposely ignoring her, and favouring his wife instead. In the first half of the narrative, we see her slowly start to disregard any sense of order and cleanliness – she neglects the house she is looking after, vandalising the furnishings and killing the owner's prized rose bush. It is at this point that we first see a glimpse of how unstable Angélique is becoming, as she had previously been told to cherish the rose bush and pay it particular attention, yet she lets it wilt and begin to die gradually. Eventually her anger and feelings of betrayal culminate in an act of rage and upset, with Angélique literally pulling the rose bush by its roots from the pot. This is symbolic of her mental state, with her mental wellbeing represented by the lifespan of the rose; in the earlier parts of the narrative, she is happy and in-love, and the rosebush thrives, yet as Loïc seemingly ignores her advances, she begins to sink into a depression, and the rosebush similarly wilts. Finally, her mental state hits rock bottom, symbolised by the rosebush which is close to death, and in a state of upset, Angélique pulls the rosebush from its root and throws it to the ground in disregard, representing the end to her seemingly rational behaviour. At this stage, Angélique becomes increasingly violent; she hits Loïc's wife with her moped, making her miscarry the baby, she sends him a heart with an arrow through it, and she kills a patient who had previously accused Loïc of physical assault<sup>xxvi</sup>. These violent outbursts are possible in sufferers of erotomania, with particularly violent acts against those “they believe stand in the way of their delusional love” (Patient information Publications, 2014). In Angélique's case, she deemed it necessary to hurt Rachel, Loïc's wife (played by Isabelle Carré), and was undoubtedly trying to kill

her and the baby, as well as Sonia Jasmin (Nathalie Krebs), the patient whose claims could have sent Loïc to prison and therefore taken him away from her.

An essential point about the second half of the narrative is that it focuses solely on Loïc and his surrounding circle of friends and family. By distancing Angélique from the plot (via the separation of narratives and the focal shift between characters), the audience sees how Angélique's actions take their toll on Loïc and those around him. We see that, at first, Loïc thinks nothing of receiving gifts as he assumes they're from his wife, but then as the gifts become more frequent and gradually more intense and grandiose, he suspects that there is something wrong. He initially suspects his receptionist of sending the presents, but after comparing the handwriting from one of the love letters he has received to that of his secretary's, he begins to suspect his patient, Sonia Jasmin. The fact that he goes to the effort of comparing handwriting samples after work demonstrates that, by this point, Angélique's obsession with him is starting to creep into every aspect of his life. His concern for the situation starts to make him increasingly paranoid and irrational, which in turn, impacts on Rachel. Despite the fact that Loïc has stated several times throughout earlier scenes that he cares for his wife and their unborn baby, Rachel becomes emotional and irrational, asking him if he even wants the baby at all. Loïc begins to spend most of his time thinking about the gifts he has been receiving, and becomes more and more paranoid as the film progresses; in one scene he gets distressed upon hearing the aforementioned song "L-O-V-E", because Angélique had previously left him twenty-three messages on his answer phone, all of them playing the song. In short, it is important to remember that Angélique's illness does not affect her alone; her actions cost Loïc a career, prime physical and mental health, and a child. His confusion and

discontent with the situation is demonstrated in several ways, ranging from close-ups which display his face formed into an expression of upset or pensivity, or occasionally the fact that he is positioned with the reflection from his swimming pool giving his appearance a warped and disjointed appearance (this aesthetic is also achieved to connote feelings of contemplation during a scene where the audience's view of him is obstructed by flashing lights from a police car). This is similar to a method predominantly used in film noir (see Appendix 4), where the protagonist's mental state was depicted by facial close-ups, obscured by heavy shadow<sup>xxvii</sup>.

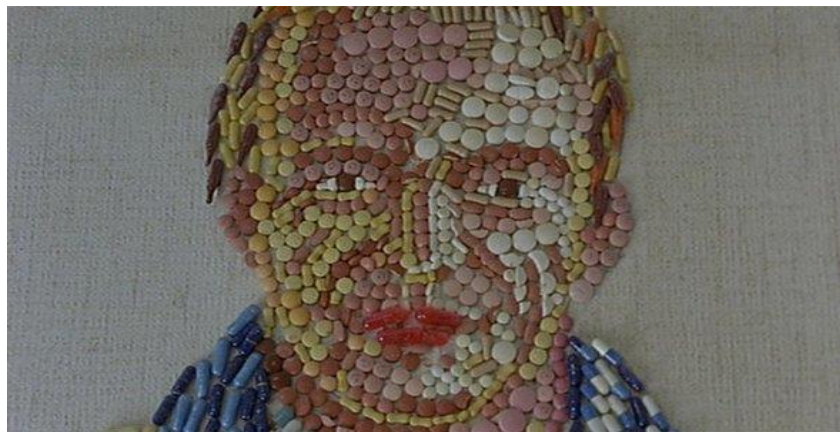


*Fig. 14*



*Fig. 15*

Loïc's uncertainty and confusion last until the end of narrative, when there is a temporary resolution. The audience discovers that Angélique is sectioned in a mental hospital against her will (there is a scene which involves her running away from her carers), and undergoing treatment for her case of erotomania, which includes medication and electroconvulsive therapy. These scenes are intertwined with scenes of Loïc and his wife, raising a family and enjoying their life which is now free of Angélique. Though, their safety and happiness is short-lived, as after Angélique is released from hospital, a mural is found in her old room:



*Fig. 16*

This scene is one of, if not the most important scene in the film to truly symbolise Angélique's illness. The sheer amount of effort she put into the mural is astounding; the different sizes of tablets, the different colours to create the illusion of shade, even the fact that she has bitten the edges of some of them so they look like strands of hair. Her love for Loïc is as strong as it ever was, and her time in treatment was of no use. She used her time in hospital to gain the confidence of the doctors, in order to be able to lie to them and manipulate them into letting her out. As a promising art student at the beginning of the film, Angélique frequently pursued creative interests,

and concentrated her love for Loïc into paintings and drawings, but as she became more mentally unstable, her interest in art declined and she destroyed her work. The fact that this mural even exists shows that it is her love for Loïc which inspires her; he is her muse. The medication-mosaic represents various things; on a basic level, it shows that Angélique had not been taking her tablets and is no better than she was before she entered the hospital; it represents the impending upset that will shortly enter into Loïc's life; above all, it signifies society's fear that the mentally ill cannot be cured, and that their perceived danger cannot be restrained.

As is previously mentioned, the narrative of the film depends so much on Angélique's illness – not least because of the focal shift half way through. When the focal shift moves from Angélique to Loïc, the audience sees that, once again, Angélique – the character who has been thus far portrayed as the protagonist, similarly to Grace in *The Others* - is actually the “monster” of the film. This creates a completely different tone with regards to spectatorship, as it reinstates the stereotypes of madness to the audience, which in turn supports the idea of generalizability (Ruddock, as is mentioned in Chapter 2). This change in focus, therefore, signifies a separation in genre; the first half of the film would likely be considered a romance, considering the aforementioned conventions from the genre it follows (and the fact that the film is described as a “romance” on IMDB <sup>xxviii</sup>, however the second half would be considered a thriller or horror, due to the conventions which were mentioned in Chapter 2. In order to emphasize the thriller-aspect of the film, there is an abundance of red herrings for Loïc. He believes that his stalker is many different people before he discovers it is Angélique – and even though the audience knows that it is Angélique who is tormenting him, the fact that he as a character does not know,

makes it much more tense for the audience as we are unaware of how he will react and address his suspicions (e.g. verbally assaulting his patient because he believes it is her). Furthermore, the two halves of the narrative each symbolise the mental stability of Angélique, via the way in which she is seen as prospering in the first half, but once her actions are contextualised in the second half, the audience experiences her downfall. As such, for the first half of the narrative, the audience is subjected to an extremely unreliable narrator in Angélique, and it is her method of storytelling which is key the shift in genre. This method of retelling the plot from different perspectives has been used in many films in order to mislead the audience, with the first notable example being in Kurosawa's *Rashomon* (1950), and has subsequently been used in European cinema frequently, in titles such as *The Apartment* (Mimouni, 1996), and *The Skin I Live In* (Almodóvar, 2011). It is worth noting that these three films are all described as dramas on IMDB, demonstrating that this method of storytelling is likely to be used in the drama genre. It is also relevant that there are characters in each of these films who have become obsessed with another character who they saw only briefly; all of these obsessed characters are men<sup>xxix</sup>. However, in *He Loves Me...*, Angélique's obsession and its consequences are represented in a unique way: through the concept of colour.

Colour is a significant way of signifying emotion in visual arts, and has been established as such from centuries ago; for instance, it is suggested that the artists Titian and Rembrandt increased their usage of monochromatic tones within their work in their later years as a psycho-physiological result of their self-identification as being old (Gage, 2000: 19). Whether this was a conscious or sub-conscious choice is unknown, but the fact remains that they incorporated different colours into their

work to symbolise their emotions, and the same can be said for modern-day cinematography.

Throughout the film, there are evident colour schemes which dictate the mood and importance of a scene or character. It is worth noting that this use of colour is common in films, with even the most basic *mise-en-scene* using this concept (villains wearing black, heroes wearing white, etc), with Everett stating that colour “is amongst the most powerful of cinematic codes and narrative devices” (2007:16). However in this film, the distinction between colours is dramatic, and each colour signifies something different and personal to the narrative, not least because of the cultural connotations that each individual colour evokes from the audience. The most obvious case of this is the use of the colour red throughout the film, which undeniably represents love and femininity. As Elliot and Niesta state, “red has an amorous meaning, as studies of colo[u]r association have indicated that people tend to connect red to carnal passion, lust and romantic love...”, and this is a link which is well established in modern Western culture<sup>xxx</sup>. Furthermore, as is previously mentioned, the connotations with the colour red is quite feminine, and this is a result of the fact that the emotions which are linked to it, such as love, romance, passion etc, are mainly linked to femininity (Fuery, p. 39). This is extremely relevant, as it signifies the idea that the love that is so apparent in the film is mostly one-sided, and radiates mainly from Angélique as a result of her mental illness. As a result of her illness being so potent throughout the film, there is therefore naturally many examples of the colour red being used to represent love. One such example is in the very first scene of the film, which is completely immersed in the colour red, from the

roses in the foreground, to Angélique's red sweater and lipstick:



Fig. 17

The colour gains more prominence as the film continues, with costume choices and *mise-en-scene* all suggesting that red is the colour of love (again buying into the aforementioned theory that the first half of the film is being portrayed as a love story). It is worth noting that red clothing is worn in abundance throughout the film, with Angélique's red sweater and other red garments making regular appearances in scenes which portray her as being loved-up. The excessive use of the colour red indicates that there is much of the narrative driven by Angélique's obsessive love for Loïc, from the red rose that she sends him as a gift, to the red box containing the aforementioned impaled heart.

It is not just the love-related cinematography which drives the narrative though, as throughout the film there are constant reminders of reality – the reality that Angélique is so eager to suppress – being represented by the colour green. Often the colour green is used in scenes when Angélique's mental state is threatened by her own sense of jealousy (consider the well-known idiom “green with envy”), such as in scenes which include her observance of Loïc and Rachel together (notice how the

red (Angélique) and the green contrast, as Angélique faces the harsh reality outside of her mind):



Fig. 18

As Loïc is arrested for murder (a murder that Angélique actually committed), she stands and watches in her red jumper, on a green backdrop, as she simultaneously ruins Loïc's career and reunites him with his wife, neither of which are scenarios that she had planned, but both of which are a result of her actions. Both of these situations are the harsh reality which Angélique desperately tries to hide from, which she does by trying to commit suicide. The framing of this scene is also particularly important, as Angélique's figure is emphasised by the brightness of her red jumper, as she stands between Loïc and Rachel in the foreground – her obsessive love and jealousy has come between them. It is also worth noting that there are numerous examples where greenery in the form of plants, trees and similar are prominently placed within a scene; as is in the example above, this represents nature, but not just in an environmental sense – it represents the nature of Angélique's illness, and

the realistic consequences of it. There are more obvious examples of the colour green being linked to reality and the Angélique's consequential jealousy, such as the green costume worn by the airport worker when Loïc has left Angélique at the airport, the telephone she sleeps by as she waits for him to call, the bed that she uses to destroy her wedding dress, and the trousers she wears as she finally leaves the psychiatric hospital in the last scene.



*Fig. 19*



*Fig. 20*



Fig. 21

Another way in which Angélique is kept from realising reality is through both metaphoric and physical barriers; she is often seen looking through windows, and peering through fences, looking upon the life she desires from the other side of a physical obstruction. For example, in one scene she sees Loïc through the window and watches him, before cautiously running after him, trying not to catch his attention:



Fig. 22

It is also worth noting that *He Loves Me...* is the only film out the three which is directed by a woman. The horror/thriller genre is dominated by male directors, and as such, Colombani's film is extremely unique in the way that the horror aspects of the film are manifested. Though it is true that she is not the only director to have

made a popular thriller (*Love Crimes* (1992), directed by Lizzie Borden, for example), her film is undeniably feminine in its representation of horror. This has been done by subverting the conventions of the rom-com genre in order to make them darker and suspenseful; all of the usual conventions are there (namely characters in love, jealousy etc), but they do not lead to the happy ending that has become a staple in the rom-com – instead, they lead to the complete opposite.

Biopic

*A Dangerous Method* is a biopic of Carl Jung (Michael Fassbender), however, intertwined into the plot of the film is an intense sexual relationship between Jung and one of his patients, Sabina Spielrein. Though she is not the protagonist, her character is crucial to driving the narrative forward, especially in terms of her mental illness. It is vital to remember that, despite her character's key involvement in the film, she is not the lead character – her character is often overshadowed and her presence undermined by her passivity in comparison to Jung, which is a common factor in film, as has been previously established in Chapter 1 (Smith and Cook (2009)). It is, however, far more common for this misogyny to occur in the biopic - a genre which “builds[s] a pattern of narrative that is selective in its attention to profession, differential in the role it assigns to gender, and limited in its historical settings”(Custen, 1992: 3). In short, a biopic is a genre which selectively chooses the parts of the real story, which it then manipulates and transforms it into the “Hollywood view of history” (Custen) – and this process can often omit the presence of a female character, no matter how influential she was in reality – this point will be further discussed in a later part of the chapter.

As has been previously mentioned with this thesis, and secondary literature (Fuery and Dusi) there is a concept within film analysis which states that cinema is transpositional, and therefore, the representations of certain types of person are quasi-static – they have not changed over the course of film (or indeed, cultural) history. This is true not only in terms of the representation of mental illness, but also

in terms of characters who are not “Eurocentric”, such as Sabina. Authors such as Shohat and Essed have written about the portrayal of non-Western female characters in European cinema, and have stated that such characters have been depicted as a “‘virgin’ territory that must be conquered by a masculine imperial power” (Essed, 2009:55). As much as the film is a biopic, and has certain factual guides to follow in its depiction of events, the sense of a male Western saviour in the form of Jung is undeniable, and the director’s emphasis upon this fact is obvious throughout the film.

An important point to make regarding the film is that the plot-line surrounding the romance between Jung and Spielrein is not based on absolute truth. There are correspondences between the two from their time in therapy and afterwards which hint at romantic feelings from one or both parties, but an affair between the two has never been confirmed, with David Van Nuys, a noted psychotherapist who has previously released work on Jungian theory (2012), stating that, “there is no concrete evidence of their having had an affair, let alone the sadomasochistic elements so vividly portrayed in the movie” (2012). The quote above refers to the particular emphasis on Jung and Spielrein’s BDSM-themed sexual relationship, which in the film, often depicts Jung spanking Spielrein in order for her to gain sexual gratification. This is an aspect of the film’s narrative which I will expand upon in a later paragraph, but in order to analyse the impact of Sabina’s illness on the narrative development of the film, it is compulsory to start at the beginning, when she is first introduced.

The film begins with Sabina being transported to the Burghölzli Psychiatric Clinic in Zurich, which is where Jung was based as the hospital psychiatrist. The shots of Sabina are unsettling for the audience to view, as she writhes around the carriage in

fits of panic, continually screaming and throwing her body from side to side. Her appearance is pale and gaunt, with her hair unruly and dishevelled; her physical appearance combined with her behaviour, personifies Fuery's theory that "the mad are signified through animal-like qualities" (p.37), with Scott (2011) claiming that she is "like a wild animal". As the carriage approaches the hospital, Sabina's screams of terror are the most audible part of the diegetic-sound – they purposefully drown out the sounds of the horse hooves on gravel, and the grunts of effort from Sabina's accompanying guards who are trying to restrain her, leaving the viewer no choice but to observe her discomfort. What is most fascinating about this opening section is the fact that when Sabina is being escorted into the hospital, she erupts into a manic fit of laughter; this is a code which is often used to represent mental illness in cinema, with Wahl (2003:37) claiming that, "the media in their overall presentations emphasize the bizarre symptoms of the mentally ill...the afflicted person often enters the scene staring glassy-eyed...mumbling incoherent phrases or laughing uncontrollably".

Laughing at inappropriate moments (like the one Sabina is experiencing) is a common symptom of several mental disorders, as it usually indicates a case of psychosis. As the film continues, it is clear to the viewer that Sabina is suffering from psychosis; she suffers from delusions, inappropriate affect and negative symptoms (as are outlined in Larkin and Morrison (2006:164)). As her therapy commences, Sabina begins to show physical and facial twitches (a symptom of "hysteria" according to Laycock's paper on the condition, in 1840), which conforms to Cronenberg's penchant for using close-up shots to emphasise "body horror"; these twitches are extremely severe and intrusive for the audience, making for uncomfortable viewing.



*Fig. 26*

The reason that these facial contortions are uncomfortable for the audience is because they abjectify her – they exaggerate her unattractiveness and make her physically unappealing, allowing her to be dehumanised by the viewer. Her facial twitches are focussed upon by mid-shots and close-ups, making them the focal points of the scenes, which emphasises its monstrous quality to the audience. This abjection is prompting the audience to view Sabina with discomfort and disgust, and also conforms to the stereotype of the mentally ill as subhuman.

Her facial contortions, however, are not the only sign of her mental deterioration; in a later scene, after being scolded for playing with her food, Sabina flees to a nearby pond and refuses to leave. This imagery is particularly evocative, as it is an intertextual reference to another case of literary madness in *Hamlet*– it is a subtle reference to Ophelia's death by drowning in Act 4 Scene 7, which has been recreated in several artworks, including work by John Everett Millais (1851/52) and John William Waterhouse (1894) (- see Appendices 2 and 3). Furthermore, Sabina

looks particularly dishevelled, as she is soaking wet, with dirt all over her face and her otherwise-pristine white dress. This is crucial as Bourn (2010) states that the colour white often has many connotations, ranging from purity to safety and to innocence; this is a key point to remember whilst analysing this film, as Sabina's character is in solely white costumes throughout the entire text. Therefore, the way in which the colour is represented (whether it is spoiled, stained, untarnished etc.) is extremely telling in the representation of her character's mental development. For instance, the soiling of her dress during the pond scene is symbolic of the deterioration of her mental state, for this scene precedes an earlier scene in which Jung had told Sabina that he could not continue with her therapy due to being enlisted into the army, and she is unsettled by the idea of him leaving her. Her therapy sessions prove useful in establishing the real nature of her illness, as Jung is quick to "diagnose sexual suppression in Sabina's case, stemming from childhood beatings that have caused masochistic desires in adulthood" (Bradshaw, 2012).

Sabina's gradual mental stability and interest in Jung's experiments and discipline encourage him to spend more time with her, and less with his wife, Emma (Sarah Gadon). In fact, the audience generally only sees his wife when she has given birth to a child (which happens numerous times in the film), perhaps to indicate that their relationship is extremely formal and he sees her only as a way to produce offspring. This cold, unloving portrayal of their marriage is an extremely effective way of making the audience root for Sabina, as the viewer will automatically compare the distance between Jung and his wife to the increasing closeness he has with Sabina. This particular sequence of events can be read against the background of cultural theory frameworks. We see how the audience is intended to be a "homogeneous mass, passive and easily manipulated" (Nicholas and Price, 1998:62), and use of the

good-VS-evil dichotomy, as applied to the characters of Sabina and Emma, will inadvertently tell the audience which characters to root for.

Emma, as a character, is not “evil”, just as Sabina is not “good”; both characters are flawed and show bad judgement at times, yet the audience is still hoping that Jung will choose Sabina over his wife, to whom he initially “remains guiltily devoted”, despite the medical and ethical implications of their relationship (Scott, 2011). The audience is supposed to show preference towards Sabina, even though her relationship with Jung began whilst she was his patient and he committed gross misconduct by commencing a sexual relationship with her – especially as he uses her illness and the subsequent secrets she tells him during their therapy to his advantage in order to sleep with her. In this respect, the good-VS-bad dichotomy can be applied also to Sabina and Jung; this can be supported by the idea of black-and-white dualism, which is boldly symbolised throughout the film by the costumes; Sabina is always shown to be wearing white, while Jung wears black – though this is true of all women and men in the film, not just these two in particular. This represents something far greater than a simple good-VS-bad dichotomy, for it also symbolises gender inequality, as well as the notion that men are often portrayed as being more immoral than their purer female counterparts – as is evident in the character of Otto Gross.

Though not a female, Gross is introduced into the film with several mental problems – namely drug and sex addiction – and the latter of these addictions is key to the film's development. It is Gross who first suggests that Jung sleep with Sabina, and continues to chip away at Jung's sense of morality until he gives in. What's more, his overtly sexual nature and unusual approach to monogamy demonstrates that he can be interpreted as Jung's darker side – his “id”, even. This refers to Freud's theory

regarding the different levels of the human psyche; the “id” being the “psychical agency...which [contains] both the innate or instinctual and repressed” (Teitelbaum, as is featured in Leeming, 2010:421). Freud also wrote about the “ego” ,which “controls and governs both id and superego, mediating between their demands and the external world...[and] maintains a balanced, harmonious relationship...” (Engler, 2008:45), as well as the “superego”, which consists of “the conscience and the ego-ideal...it scolds the ego and creates feelings of guilt when moral codes are violated.” (2008:44). In this respect, Jung (before his affair with Sabina, at any rate) mostly consists of the “ego” - he has a conventional marriage, and uses reason and rationality to make sure that he lives a good, morally-approved life. Therefore, it is his wife Emma and their growing family, who represent the “super-ego”; the ideal side of Jung's life, which is perfect on the surface and corresponds to societal norms. Sabina takes Jung on a journey through all these levels of the psyche; when she is first hospitalized, he is the super-ego, then as she begins to recover and their feelings for each other intensify, he becomes the id, and finally, when they part ways, he becomes the ego – he lives both with his wife and another mistress, of whom he tries to emulate Sabina in every way. Toni, the mistress, is an ex-patient of his, who is half-Jewish and training to become a psychoanalyst, but she is still the compromise for him – she is not Sabina, nor is she his wife; she is the compromise between the id and the super-ego. It is due to Sabina’s mental progression, and consequently, their sexual relationship, and the way in which this effects Jung and his relationship with his psyche,that ultimately drives the narrative.

It is mainly when Jung and Sabina begin a serious, sexual relationship that the narrative of the film changes – it becomes more than a historical drama; it becomes a romance, but it also possesses “the quiet, uncanny mood of a horror movie, albeit

one whose monsters are invisible, living inside the souls they menace”, adding to the intense atmosphere that is often associated with a romantic drama (Scott). The audience can comprehend that the narrative has shifted from one genre to another due to the realisation that Sabina is no longer being abjectified by Jung (or indeed, by the viewers themselves); she begins to be objectified. The first sign of this is during a scene in which Jung confides in Sabina about his relationship with Freud; apart from the fact that Sabina is humanised by the fact that Jung now sees her as a person and not a patient, this is the first scene in which the two converse outside of the grounds of the psychiatric hospital. In this respect, the audience is aware for the first time that Sabina is no longer confined to the restrictive grounds of the hospital, which implies her mental progression – the hospital was a prison in which she was dehumanised and depicted as an abject “monster” (in the aforementioned sense of the word as is defined by Carroll in the introduction to this dissertation). Sabina is also more aesthetically objectified, albeit in a more traditional way; her hair is pinned back into a sensible bun, whilst her body is hidden in a delicate lace dress:



*Fig. 27*

In essence, she is the epitome of mental and physical health, which is appealing not only to Jung, but also to the audience, as it makes her character more relatable. This is a stark contrast to later scenes in which Sabina is objectified in a more hypersexual way (as was outlined in Chapter 1), creating a very obvious Madonna/Whore dichotomy; in scenes such as the one above (fig.27), she is Jung's nurturer – somebody who he trusts and from whom he seeks advice; in later, more sexually-explicit scenes, she is his sexual partner and nothing more, as is often displayed by the cold, clinical manner in which they have sex. The first sex scene between the two is extremely uncomfortable for the viewer to watch, as it does not conform to the romance genre conventions; there is little intimacy between the characters – they're both still fully-dressed - nor does either character look like they are enjoying it. It is an extremely clinical portrayal of sex – a theme which is prominent throughout the film, with Bradshaw stating that "its sexual adventures are shown with a clinical detachment." In fact, the immediate shot after their lovemaking

has finished is a frank shot of Sabina inspecting her spoiled dress; the camera focuses upon the blood stains. This naturally represents Sabina's loss of purity, but it also inadvertently represents the fact that Jung now feels that she is mentally well enough for him to feel no guilt or shame in taking her virginity – this idea is supported by Robé, who writes that the biopic “often makes women function as ‘living sacrifices’ for male deficiencies and desires” (2009:83). Furthermore, the tarnishing of her dress symbolises the break-down of her recent mental progression; she has now become dependent upon Jung as both a lover and a confident, and has therefore lost her recently-acquired independence.

As the narrative continues, their sexual relationship grows and they become more emotionally involved with one another, until it gets to a stage where Jung wants to terminate their intimate relationship. At this point, Sabina becomes more unstable, and cannot stand his rejection. She reacts by slashing him across the face with a letter-opener, leaving a very visible wound. In this act of mental instability, she is trying to humiliate him and draw attention to their relationship by making the wound so visible (as there is no more obvious a place for a symbolic scar than on the face). She has scarred him, both physically and mentally, and their relationship will now forever be a part of him, as is evident by the climax of the narrative.

By the end of the narrative, it is Jung who has become mentally unstable; Bradshaw states that “Cronenberg has created a drama of male hysterics with no interest in diagnosing their own condition”, emphasising the aforementioned notion that male doctors are often unwilling to confront their own illnesses (Chapter 1). However, it is also evident that Cronenberg and the writers never intended for Sabina's character

to be the film's focus; it is true that her part in the film is key, though the narrative mainly revolves around Freud and Jung, and their relationship. There have been several feature films made about Speilrein's life before, but it is worth noting that *The Soul Keeper* (Faenza, 2002) is "built on...speculation...[and is] over didactic and over obvious" (Marshall, 2003)<sup>xxxi</sup>. Therefore, we can assume that some of the narrative has been greatly exaggerated, especially with regards to the relationship between Sabina and Jung, with Wagner-Martin (featured in Bingham (1999:4)) claiming that this is because "women's biography is most often based on private events because few women...live public lives". The same article goes on to state that there are infamously less biopics made about women than men in contemporary cinema, but when these biopics are made, the writers "invariably downplay [the female's] ambition and initiative...such drives are usually transferred to male associates...making [her] success appear to be...a happen-stance that was fallen onto by near accident" (Heilbrun, 1988: 23-26, within Bingham, 1999:4). This fact is supported by Robé (2009:70), who agrees that the biopic is a "male-centred genre", which leads me to debate whether *The Soul Keeper* and *A Dangerous Method*, which are both described as "biographies" on IMDb, and include Sabina as a main character, are actually two different genres, due to the fact that the narrative's emphases are on two different genders. Robé (2009:75) writes that there are "traditional gender hierarchies that...favo[u]r the male-centred, 'masculine' biopic over the female-centred, 'feminine' costume drama", and though the character of Sabina drives the narrative in *A Dangerous Method*, the plot is mainly concerned with Jung, making it a biopic – the fact that *The Soul Keeper* focuses on Sabina and her personal life makes it a costume drama, a genre of film which is considered feminine.

## VI. Conclusion

The analysis of the role of mental illness to a film's narrative is extremely complex, and there are several aspects to bear in mind; genre, the reliability of the narrator, the validity of the character's illness and the ways in which all of these things are contextualised by the cultural depictions of mental illness.

It would be impossible to analyse any representations of the mentally ill within cinema without first studying the ways in which mental illness has been depicted throughout the ages, via literature, theatre and early cinema. As has been previously stated, these forms of media are generally representative of society's perceptions and understandings, and can therefore accurately demonstrate how not only the creator of the work felt, whether they be the ancient Greek author Euripides or contemporary film-maker Alejandro Amenábar, but also the audiences that these artists were trying to reach. This dissertation has established that public perception of mental illness can be influenced by many different forces, including social stigma, historical beliefs and a basic fear of the “unknown”. As such, a great majority of artistic works that have included mentally ill characters have made them unpredictable, dangerous and unruly, and this does not depend on the nature of the text. As has been demonstrated within several chapters, mentally ill characters can be just as frightening to an audience whether they are in a horror film, a thriller, a romance or a comedy. And this negative portrayal is for two reasons; because it creates a stimulating narrative and fulfils the public's expectations of how the mentally ill should be depicted.

On the surface of it, the actual condition that the character is suffering from might not seem important – they are demonstrating generic “crazy” symptoms, like screaming, manic laughter, manipulation, intimidation etc., and that gets the job done from a narrative perspective. But the intricacies of their illnesses are extremely relevant, as they can dictate whether the illness is being shown accurately, and whether the symptoms are being exaggerated in order to obtain a sense of artistic licence. This has been the case in two of my three focus films, where the characters who are suffering from mental illnesses have had their symptoms misrepresented as a way of developing the plot. Furthermore, it is important to analyse the possible signs of mental illness in both male and female characters, to determine how both genders are represented when faced with mental instability. This links in to the idea that mental illness is very much dependent upon the sex of the patient; a male and female can demonstrate the same symptoms, but can receive different diagnoses. This is a result of many things, such as the assumption that women are stereotypically less able to deal with their emotions, and that for many centuries, the medical profession consisted only on male doctors, going as far back as Hippocrates. This is one of the most important facts to remember about this dissertation; it is factual analysis of the history of the development of the treatment of mental illness which makes the study of this thesis possible. In basic terms, if the medical profession consisted only of male doctors, then they in turn would be likely to separate the diagnoses of mental illness in accordance to the gender of the patient; after all, as is previously mentioned, a male doctor would reluctantly diagnose a male patient with depression, erotomania, or any other mental condition which has its basis in emotional sensitivity, as to do so would concede that he too, and any other man, could suffer from the same illness. And history has proven that it

is not desirable for men to be in-tune with their emotions. Therefore, as the male doctors proceeded to only diagnose their female patients with mental illnesses, it became the stereotype that only women could suffer from them, hence the emergence of “hysteria” as a genuine, medical diagnosis.

As it soon became common-place for doctors to diagnose women with this condition, it became socially acceptable to assume that mental illness was purely a feminine ailment, and literature and cinema began to use this stereotype in order to achieve a sense of danger and unpredictability in female fictional characters. In contrast to this, the leading male characters would often be the “heroes” of the texts, but this is due to another level of patriarchal discrimination, in that it was more respectable if it was a man's name on the cover of a book, or under the title of “director” for a film. And, as these crazy female characters began to be featured in films, their archetype was established, and has been used frequently ever since in an act of cinematic transposition. It has reached a stage in cinematic development that the authenticity of mental illness is insignificant, as the character will achieve their intended narrative role if they are portrayed as a gaunt, unruly madwoman (as was the case in early cinema), more so than if their condition was scrupulously dissected according to symptoms, and this is likely because the audience does not have to care about the specifics of the mental illness. The film-makers know the audience will respond well enough to a generic mentally ill character to one whose condition is fully explained, as it just makes the characters scarier. Without the specific diagnosis of each illness, there is a sense of general madness, and this makes the audience question it less. Somehow, it makes it more real, and the audience can watch a film featuring a character suffering from “general madness”, and contemplate the real-life

implications of this; the implications that mental illness is so general, it could affect anyone, and that these characters are always so dangerous in films because that is just the way that mental illness works. The specifics are not important, and they do not achieve the desired effect. However, with this way of thinking, the stereotype is reinforced.

If mental illness within films is not meticulously examined, and a formal name is not assigned to the illness, then the audience will continue to believe in the aforementioned notion of “general madness”, and apply the beliefs that they have gained through literature and cinema to their own lives. This has a huge implication on the impact on society, as the notion of “general madness” is recreated again and again in cinema, making viewers believe that crazy female characters are just that way because they are women, and not because they suffer from any one specific condition. The crucial point about “general madness” is that it can often be genre specific, as is demonstrated throughout this dissertation.

Within a supernatural horror like *The Others*, there are characters who believe in the otherworldly beings that are key to the narrative, and these characters are often portrayed as mentally unstable or out-of-touch with reality by their fellow characters, though these characters are somewhat milder than their generic alternatives: the murderous psychopaths. Within *The Others* and *He Loves Me...* the lead female character is revealed to be a mentally unhinged murderer, a stereotype that is often used and emphasised, relating to the idea of generalizability, and the inaccurate portrayal of the mentally ill due to cinematic transposition. Within *The Others* and *He Loves Me...*, both horror films, the climax of the narrative reveals to the viewer that

the female characters that they were rooting for throughout most of the film are actually the “monsters”, which is not only a well-established generic trope of the horror film, but also a reflection of society’s caution regarding mental illness. It reinstates the stereotype that mental illness can be unpredictable (dangerously so), and is somewhat encouraging the audience to always be wary of the mentally ill, directly or otherwise, via generalizability.

Though *He Loves Me...* has horror genre conventions, it is actually a rarely seen rom-com/horror hybrid, which allows its mentally ill female character to be portrayed in several ways. Due to the narrative shift, Angélique is seen both as the film’s protagonist and antagonist, with the earlier parts of the film deceiving the audience and hiding Angélique’s condition of erotomania from the audience. Unlike *The Others*, which contains small hints for the audience throughout the narrative, it is only when the focus shifts from Angélique to Loïc that her mental illness becomes immediately apparent – before then, the audience is none the wiser, once again emphasising the fact that the mentally ill can be perceived as deceptive and unpredictable, until the stage that their condition becomes so potent that they become dangerous. This said, the examples outlined in Chapter 4, show that even the rom-com genre incorporates mentally ill female characters into its narrative, but usually for a more comedic and light-hearted value; the potential seriousness of the character’s condition is never addressed within rom-coms, usually because the characters who are afflicted are not lead characters, and their illnesses are irrelevant, in as much as they do not drive the narratives.

The depiction of mental illness within biopics, such as in *A Dangerous Method*, is usually more serious, not least because the narratives of such films are based on real events, but also because biopics tend to fall into subgenres with their own stance on the portrayal of mental illness. A film like *A Dangerous Method* is identified as a historical drama, as well as a biopic, which will touch only briefly upon a female character's mental illness, because these genres are considered to be more masculine. In contrast, films which fall under the subcategories of costume dramas or melodramas will be more likely to focus upon a female character and her illness, due to the fact that these genres are catered towards women and are therefore considered more feminine.

Overall, it is clear that mental illness within female characters can be used in any genre – sometimes these characters are the driving force behind the narrative, and sometimes they are not, but the most crucial thing about their existence is the way in which their characters are perceived by the audience. If the character is a key figure within a horror film, there is more chance of the audience reacting to her badly and attaching caution to the idea of mental illness in their own society, due to generalizability. She will generally be the main driving force in a horror, taking one of the numerous roles outlined by Creed in Chapter 2. Alternatively, if the mentally ill character is in a rom-com or a more generic comedy, she is not seen as dangerous and is instead a spectacle to laugh at, as she displays signs of obsession and instability, much to the inconvenience of the male protagonist. This is somewhat similar to if the mentally ill female character is featured in biopic – as is mentioned above, biopics are strictly a “masculine” genre, and as such, any woman who features in one (mentally ill or otherwise) is there to drive the narrative in a minor

way. She might have a lead role, such as in *Iris*, but much of the main narrative revolves around how her male counterpart reacts and deals with her illness.

In short, female mental illness can feature heavily within a narrative, and sometimes it will be over-shadowed by the male protagonist, and sometimes it will be responsible for a film's narrative climax, but no matter its role – the point is that it exists, for the audience to receive and perceive in any way it seems fit. Or rather, it exists as a result of the films' writers and directors, and how they want the audience to receive it. Film is a reflection of society, but it is also, without a doubt, a social influence as well, meaning that the two influence one another, creating an everlasting sense of transposition – regardless of how medically, socially or culturally inaccurate the case of transposition is.

WORD COUNT: 28,939

## Appendices

1.



Fig. 52

*Bridget Jones's and the Edge of Reason* (Kidron, 2004).

2.



Fig. 23

Painting entitled *Ophelia*, by John Everett Millais (1851/1852).

3.



Fig. 24

*Ophelia (by the Pond)* by John William Waterhouse (1894).

4.



Figure 63

*This Gun for Hire* (Tuttle, 1942).

5.

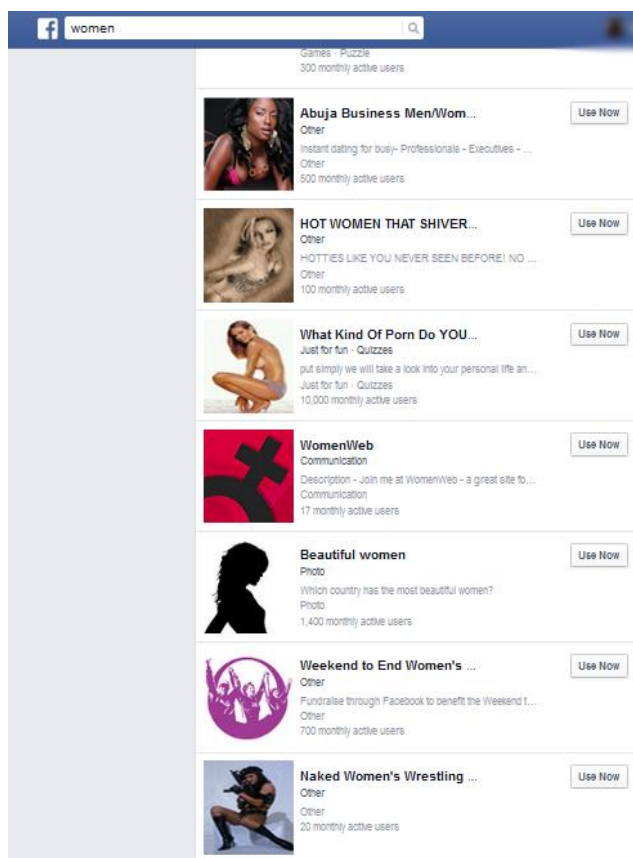


Fig. 23

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*The Wedding Crashers*, 2005. [Film] Directed by David Dobkin. USA: New Line Cinema.

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i

According to Sansone and Sansone (2011), recent studies have proven that promiscuity in females can often be a symptom of Borderline Personality Disorder.

ii

According to Creed (2012:30), a *femme fatale* is "an exotic beauty who first seduces her victim before destroying him", which can also be applied accurately to the character of Pandora.

iii

This fact is stated on the official website of the Sigmund Freud Museum (<http://www.freud-museum.at/freud/themen/film-e.htm>).

iv

The main form of mental illness which has sadism as a symptom is Sadistic Personality Disorder, a condition in which the patient "is amused by, or takes pleasure in, the psychological or physical suffering of others" (PsychNet-UK, 2012). However, sadism is also a main feature of Histrionic Personality Disorder, which means that the sufferer can often "act or look overly seductive" and is usually diagnosed more frequently in females (PubMed Health, 2010).

v

Erotomania is described as "a delusion in which a person (typically a woman) believes that another person (typically of higher social status) is in love with them" (Kiran and Chaudhury, 2009).

<sup>vi</sup> This ranges from the earlier mentioned condition of erotomania (as is displayed in *The Story of Adele H.* (Truffaut, 1975)) and unconventional sexual preferences (such as in *Red Desert* (Antonioni, 1964)), to more socially taboo issues like incest in *Bunny Lake is Missing* (Preminger, 1965) and nymphomania in *Diary of a Nymphomaniac* (Molina, 2008), and *Nymphomaniac* (von Trier, 2013).

vii

Littre's work came at a time when the concept of hysteria was beginning to become popular; his translation of Hippocrates' work (1839), and thus his interpretation of hysteria, would have been heavily influenced by the French physician Pinel, who published several

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works on madness over one decade (1794, 1798 and 1802). The work of both Littré and Pinel went on to inspire the works of Charcot, who published his first work on hysteria, *Iconographie Photographique de la Salpêtrière*, in 1877.

viii

According to Maines (1999), "in the Western medical tradition genital massage to orgasm by a physician or midwife was a standard treatment for hysteria". The fact that the greatest medical minds of history claimed that a woman's sexuality was to blame for their "hysteria" is extremely representative of society's attitudes towards women at the time. However, as Maines states, "medical authorities as recently as the 1970s assured men that a woman who did not reach orgasm during heterosexual coitus was flawed or suffering from some physical or psychological impairment. The fault must surely be hers, since it was literally unimaginable that any flaw could be discovered in the penetration hypothesis." A view such as this one almost seems justified when it existed in a time of severe female repression and the existence of "hysteria", but the fact that some medical authorities still held this view only 40 years ago is concerning.

ix

This also explains the previously mentioned fact of men disbelieving psychotherapy's role in overcoming mental illness.

x

Original study conducted by the World Health Organisation, 2013.

<sup>xi</sup> Examples include: *Obsessed* (Shill, 2009), *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* (Oplev, 2009) and *Black Swan* (Aronofsky, 2011).

<sup>xii</sup> Books of this nature include *The Scarlet Letter* (Hawthorne, 1850), *Pride and Prejudice* (Austin, 1813), and *Jane Eyre*, amongst others.

<sup>xiii</sup> One reviewer commented that "Audrey Tautou reveals the darker side of Amelie" within *He Loves Me...*

<sup>xiv</sup>

I would like to state that I am referring only to *The Others* and *He Loves Me...* purely for the reason that *A Dangerous Method* is a biographical film, and it therefore has its own settings and themes which do not conform to the thriller/horror genres.

<sup>xv</sup> This said, the cinematic trope of the obsessive, paranoid and neurotic girlfriend/wife/lover is frequently used as a comedic device within Comedies, such as in *Death Becomes Her* (Zemeckis, 1992) and *Annie Hall* (Allen, 1977).

<sup>xvi</sup> Both films were produced in close chronological proximity to one another, but followed two different schools of thought. *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* was produced as a piece of German Expressionism, whereas *Secrets of a Soul* was produced as a piece of work under the New Objectivity Movement. Both schools focused on serious issues, including madness, addiction and prostitution.

<sup>xvii</sup> *Phantom Lady* (Siodmak, 1944) and *The Killers* (Siodmak, 1946).

<sup>xviii</sup> These stock characters are well established in supernatural horrors, and exist in many

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examples: *The Exorcist* (Freidkin, 1973), *The Blair Witch Project* (Myrick and Sánchez, 1999), *The Sixth Sense* (Night Shamayalan, 1999), to name a few.

<sup>xix</sup> These gender roles are well used in horror films; *Scream* (Craven, 1996), *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (Hooper, 1974), *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (Craven, 1984), *The Conjuring* (Wan, 2013). In all of these films, the female characters are the helpless victims who are being targeted by a killer or supernatural entity, but are saved by their male counterpart.

<sup>xx</sup> It is worth mentioning that *The Others* is not the only film from the three key texts which portrays the lead female character's madness from the beginning, as *A Dangerous Method* also does this. In this respect, *He Loves Me...* is the only film of the three in which the character's madness is revealed gradually.

<sup>xxi</sup> The Nazi occupation of the Channel Islands lasted from 2 July 1940 to 9 May 1945 (according to Sanders, 2006) – the film is set in 1945, though a specific month is not stated.

<sup>xxii</sup> As with *The Others*, *The Old Dark House* is set in an isolated, gloomy mansion which houses a strange family with a secret to hide; interestingly, it is the mute servant in both films which reveals their respective secrets to the audience – in Morgan's case in *The Old Dark House*, he unleashes the family's recluse brother, who systematically tries to murder the house-guests by beating them and setting the house on fire. In Lydia's case, it is revealed that she became mute when she died, thus putting an end to the secrecy and mystery surrounding the house and the family.

<sup>xxiii</sup> The narrative of this film focuses on Karin, a young girl from a prosperous, religious family, who whilst on a trip to her local church is confronted by three strangers, one of whom is a mute, who proceed to rape her. After the ordeal, the mute man (referred to only as "Mute Herdsman") murders Karin, and two of the herdsman go on to seek shelter in a nearby home, which unknowingly to them, is owned by Karin's family. Some days later, Karin's deeply religious father finds the body of his daughter and cannot believe that God would have betrayed him and his family in this way.

<sup>xxiv</sup> <http://www.imdb.com/search/keyword?keywords=love>

<sup>xxv</sup> Examples include Gloria in *The Wedding Crashers* (Dobkin, 2005), Mary in *All About Steve* (Traill, 2009), *Dinner for Schmucks* (Roach, 2010) and Samantha in the previously mentioned *Just Friends*.

<sup>xxvi</sup> The symbol of a heart with an arrow through it stems from classical mythology, with Eros the god of love (his Roman-equivalent Cupid perhaps being more prominent in modern culture), being born in an environment of immense love and hatred, which "sum up existence and life...for hatred is only love in *some form*" (Wood, 1867:67). When Angélique sends Loïc this gift, a symbol which relates to the way in which Eros/Cupid would strike a person with a tinted arrow in order to make them fall in love, she both loves him and hates him.

<sup>xxvii</sup> Without showing a moving version of these scenes, it is difficult to fully explain the effect, however the two screenshots provided partially demonstrate the point; the reflection from the water can be seen on the left side of Loïc's chest, while he can also be seen being roused from a daydream by the police lights.

<sup>xxviii</sup> [http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0291579/?ref\\_=nv\\_sr\\_1](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0291579/?ref_=nv_sr_1)

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<sup>xxix</sup> In the case of *Rashomon*, Tajōmaru, a notorious bandit, falls in love with the wife of one of the men he has robbed; in *The Apartment*, Daniel, a wealthy businessman, kills his wife in order to become closer to another character named Lisa; and in *The Skin I Live In*, Zeca, the son of a maid, becomes obsessed with Vera, a woman who is being held captive in the home his mother works in. In each of these films, the obsessions of the male characters lead to tragic circumstances. In *Rashomon*, Tajōmaru rapes the wife of the man he has robbed, and then proceeds to kill him. In *The Apartment*, Daniel, as is previously mentioned, kills his wife in order to gain closeness with Lisa, but when she eventually spurns him, he blows up her apartment with them inside. Finally, in *The Skin I Live In*, Zeca rapes Vera and it subsequently killed by Robert, the owner of the house where Zeca's mother works. Though these are all extremely dramatic events, there is a far higher risk of danger for those involved -when it is a man who is suffering from erotomania; Goldstein (1986) claims that "it...is not surprising that men with De Clérambault's syndrome would be more likely than a woman to act out their delusions, to threaten or even commit violent acts when their professions of love are rebuffed..." This being said, in a study by Purcell, Pathé, and Mullen (2001:2058), "female stalkers also showed the same propensity for threats and violence as their male counterparts, although the rates of physical assault were somewhat higher in male stalkers." This explains that the violence and aggression shown by Angélique in *He Loves Me...* can be considered to be accurate, though physical assault as is shown by Angélique is more common in men who are suffering from the condition. This means that the physical aggression shown by Angélique was both a way of developing the plot, and also indicative of another underlying mental health condition, possibly schizophrenia.

<sup>xxx</sup> This can be traced back to the early seventeenth century, when German philosopher Johann Wolfgang Goethe released a book entitled *Theory of Colours* (2006), in which he specified that colours relate to an individual, or a society's, association with certain characteristics; femininity, hope, morality etc.

<sup>xxxi</sup> There is a documentary on Speilrein entitled *My Name was Sabina Speilrein* (Márton, 2002), as well as a semi-biopic, *The Soul Keeper* (2002).