# Representations of Madness in the Cinema: Three Contemporary Cases

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# Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to develop a better understanding of how madness is depicted in contemporary Hollywood films. Specifically, it discusses what shapes the depiction of madness, how and why it differs from reality, how then it is communicated to the audience and to what purpose it serves as a plot element.

In the first part is dedicated to outline the theoretical background, method and goals of this thesis. Next three chapters each are dedicated to in depth discussion of the three movies that were chosen for this paper: *Me, Myself and Irene* (2000), *Bug* (2006) and *Shutter Island* (2010). Finally in *Findings* chapter common traits of depiction that are found in all three movies are compared and examined.

In conclusion, the thesis demonstrates that there exist a lot of culturally and historically defined expectations and influences that shape a depiction of madness, for which a modern medical knowledge plays just a small and superficial role. Those influences differ from film to film but common mechanisms that transcend a specific film and even genre exist to communicate madness as a form of Otherness. Finally the study argues that the element of madness in movies is often used not to communicate a deeper understanding of a real life mental illness but to communicate ideas about social order, right and wrong and to make a point about what is **not** madness.

Although this paper examines only three particular cases, nonetheless those findings can be used as a stepping stone for a further research and for facilitating a fruitful discussion between cinema professionals, people connected to the mental health issues and the film audience.

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# Representations of Madness in the Cinema: Three Contemporary Cases

## Introduction

It is often stated that movies have a big influence on the development and promotion of stereotypes. Especially in cases when we deal with groups of people that not so many members of the audience have got real world experience with, or that are not so easily defined. Madness being one of such phenomenon that is often circulated topic in mass media, especially in fiction, where character can be painted with madness to produce a certain reaction from the audience. But despite how often it is used in those mediums constantly changing philosophical, scientific and popular explanations create a fuzzy understanding of what madness is and where it does end and sanity begins.

Cinema, especially genre cinema, relies heavily on the stereotypes and conventions as a part of its vocabulary that shapes the verisimilitude of each specific genre. Real world stereotypes are caught in fictional narratives and sometimes create new ones. With a certain degree we can assume that those fictional truths then can become a surrogate for the real experience. Although how much of the fictional beliefs bleed in to our real life and how much real life shapes genre is a matter of debate that this paper will not go in to. But the fact remains, the connection between fiction and reality, when discussing madness, certainly exists. What is more, it is rather widely used and strongly emotionally charged phenomenon, often understood as being the same as mental illness. So understanding how and why we watch movies depicting madness can be really helpful in constructing arguments for and against certain ways of depicting the phenomena.

The goal of this paper is to take an in-depth analysis of three movies with a strong element of madness and demonstrate how and why the phenomenon is employed there, how it is defined where the line is drawn between sanity and insanity, and how we, as viewers, are engaged in this process. It can seem paradoxical, but each movie must that deals with madness must define what the madness is in the first place, so the variation between different movies exist. Defining madness in each separate case and demonstrating the difference between them is also my goal for this paper.

## State of the Field

Despite the fact that maddens is constantly present through the history of the storytelling, not excluding cinema, there is not so many academic work done around it, especially works that would deal with madness as a cinematic phenomenon and not as a reflection of the real life mental illness. Although one big work by Professor W. J T. Mitchel, about representation of madness, is currently in the process of writing, it is currently only available as a short summary of authors lectures on the topic[1]. After finished, it can hopefully provide a very wide overview on the field. Most research that is currently available deals only with specific films or genres, just touching upon the madness as a part of the film structure, not discussing its nature, or is too much rooted in the critical standpoint of reality or both. For example, a big work is done by Dr. Peter Byrne who published his findings in 2009. Here he discusses the problem of stereotyping of mentally ill people in the movies, and suggest that solution to this would be more accurate depiction of the patients.[2] But his consideration of the depictions is based only on the four very broad stereotypes by which he groups the movies: *Comedy, Faking & indulgent, Pity* and *Violence*, and is strictly limited to the discrepancy between fictional and real life mental illness. I think that this approach, though it discusses an important social aspect, is much too broad and only touches very surface of the body as complex and diverse as movies. This can be illustrated by films such as *Bug* (2006) and *Clean, Shaven* (1996) put in the same category under the violent stereotype. Even if they both have scenes of violence connected to the mental state of the character, the reasons, explanations and depiction itself is without a doubt very different, especially in the way of how they interact with a viewer. Also, this approach focuses on the very set relationship between mental patients and their depiction in the fiction that is expressed in creating and strengthening of stereotypes. I think it ignores the fact that most often the origin of the madman's image in the cinema steams not from the real symptoms of mentally ill but it is a disguise given to some kind of social ideas, that is understood as or being considered if, being outside the borders of normal and sane – socio-cultural ideas concerning our own behavior and inter-human relationships. In that regard a madman becomes a carrier of those ideas and through his interaction with the world those ideas then are tested. The realistic depiction of madness as a mental illness, I think, most often is not so important, or even blatantly disregarded.

The same can be told about the general public discourse. For example, Prism Awards, organization that awards movies with special prize for accurate depiction of mental patients, as judged by film's

entertainment value, accessibility of message and scientific accuracy.[3] In other words, it awards movies promoting contemporary scientific outlook of the mental illness. But those films are just a small slice of the whole body of cinema that deals with the subject of madness, as the concept of madness is more broad that the psychiatric one. As I have already noted, it also encompasses a philosophical ideas, like, for example, ones expressed by Michel Foucault, that are clearly at odds with the medical outlook, or at least with the outlook of medical institutions about the relationship between madness and the "normal" society. It can be concluded that this discourse is also discussion about the nature of madness in general. Discussion where scientific theories, artistic outlooks, popular concepts and nonprofessional experience with madness are compared, shared and reshaped.

Moreover, very little to nothing is written about mental illnesses from the perspective of the film analysis. The most you can find is about the horror genre, particularly *slasher* genre, which explicitly deals with the cases of violent behavior by people who sometimes display symptoms or are named as suffering from particular mental illnesses. Books such as *Movie psychos and madmen: film psychopaths from Jekyll and Hyde to Hannibal Lecter* by John McCarty by Paul Chevannes[4], *Psychos, Sickos, Sequels: Horror Films In The 1980s* by John Stell[5] makes detailed overview of those movies. Though their main focus is the genre itself not the mental conditions of the characters. Another example would be *The Dark Mirror* by Marlisa Santos, who analyses the madness in a genre of Noir and it concentrates on the psychoanalytical approach, that although undeniably is influential in shaping the depictions of madness, by itself operates in concepts that belongs more to a philosophy than science, concepts that became outdated in psychiatric treatment, such as neurosis, Oedipus complex, drives etc. And though I don't deny that those paradigms do influence the filmmaker greatly, on contrary, I think that psychoanalytical ideas are an important source of inspiration to many filmmakers even today, I find it unfit to discuss mental conditions using a theory that has at least dubious ideas about the origin of named conditions. Nevertheless, I will discuss manifestations of psychoanalytic ideas in the movies.

## The Subject of Madness

As I already pointed out, one of the main difficulties in writing about madness is the definition of the madness itself. Although on the intuitive level it seems that it is easy to define madness, the definition actually is very much blurred. Even the word madness has some subtle meanings that

make it fit some situations better than others, leaving others to synonymous but subtly different terms such as lunacy, insanity, dementia etc. Even if we just consider the simplest and most intuitive definition of madness as a maladaptive behavior that is dangerous to yourself and others – a deviant behavior, we instantly need to make some exceptions for behaviors that fit the definition but are considered as different states (drunkenness, for example, or being deeply in love), then again we can find a lot of narratives that depicts love and intoxication as madness. The legal point of view threats insanity as a mental state that inhibits the ability to judge the consequences of own actions and that is not self-induced. Psychiatric approach actually tries to distance itself from the terms such as madness and insanity instead using other medical terms that emphasizes a disease process of a mental illness. But in popular understanding it is still madness. For enlightenment philosophers like Rene Descartes the madness is question of reason versus unreason[6], for the postmodernist philosopher Michel Foucault madness is something that is devoid of work as he states the chapter *Madness, the absence of an œuvre* in *History of Madness*[7]. There is no universal consensus, and in the end each author and each person in an audience is free to choose his own version. On the one hand, this makes it look as the object of madness that does not exist in any one solid form, so it can be hardly become a subject of discussion. On the other hand, the fact that the discussion already exist proves that the subject exists and can be intuitively recognized. I do not mean that this process is in any sense objective, without a doubt it is shaped by the culture, experience and so on, even the psychiatric point of view accepts the importance of the culture in shaping the ways that otherwise universal conditions, such as schizophrenia, are expressed[8]. But in any case madness is a blanket term that most of us use to label and recognize a certain group of phenomena of behavior and thinking.

In this paper I will use mental illness, madness, insanity, craziness and lunacy as synonymous words. The reason for this is the fact that each of three cases I will analyze has a medically sounding labels attached to each of the main hero, but at the same time what we observe there has only a slight relationship to the purely medical phenomenon, instead dealing with madness in its popular, traditional and symbolic form which encompasses a lot of different symptoms, far more than can fit a specific mental illness or even whole definition of mental illness. And although dictionaries distinguish between separate terms, I think in everyday use the distinction between, for example, mad and insane, is quite fuzzy at the least, and probably the meaning behind those terms can change from situation to situation, rather they are used as umbrella terms. But in

general, I think, all the mad, insane, lunatic, schizo and similar words, even including medical terms, are connected by the fact that they mark some kind of mental deficiency of the character in comparison to "normal" and sane. The term that is used to signify this difference can say something about minute variations, but will not change the main meaning: marking the mental deficiency.

I think, this approach, first of all, deals with the right-wrong definition of act and intention. Madness is often separated from sanity by the wrongness, abnormality or deviancy from how normal people think and behave. That, of course, strongly implies a moral aspect of madness, which then affects our relationship with the insane characters, as our sympathy is strongly shaped by how we perceive a certain character in the moral sense. Then again, this right-wrong opposition can become a bit diffused and even turned upside down, as I will demonstrate in this paper.

This then invokes the need to understand how we, as an audience, relate to a mad hero, what other factors, besides morality, influence how we perceive them, and what is needed to label them as insane, or maybe to inhibit us from labeling someone as such. I will argue that the factors that shape this are ones that make the character more likable or unlikable, and also understandable or alien. That involves such simple elements as the charisma of an actor, stretching to moral values of the character, his capabilities and the perceived danger that he poses. I will also discuss the relationship between rationality, morality and sanity, and how they influence our evaluation of the character.

Finally, I want to look at the relationship of depiction of madness in films with the reality and established real world beliefs about madness. The closest to those, I think, are contemporary psychiatric theories, although they are not as stable as it would seem, what can be illustrated by numerous debates surrounding the publishing of new DSM-5 (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders) and the fact that one universal diagnosis manual still does not exist. Although in general the medical establishment considers madness (though it avoids this word, because of its negative connotation, instead using terms such as Psychopathology or Mental Disorder) as a form of abnormality that is defined as:

. . . disorder [which is] a harmful dysfunction, wherein harmful is a value term based on social norms, and dysfunction is a scientific term referring to the failure of a mental mechanism to perform a natural function for which it was designed by evolution.[9]

But madness, insanity and craziness are also historical concepts that change with the time and even in contemporary frame enough divide exists. As, for example, the difference between legal definition of insanity and medical definition of psychological illness. Historically, even different schools of psychiatry defined madness differently. Different philosophical schools and philosophers had and still have different opinions, and I will constantly refer to at least two of them – Cartesian school and works of Foucault. Then, of course, we have a popular understanding of madness that takes bits from every source and uses it to explain, what I think is generally understood as a form of Otherness. All those ideas are not considered to be fiction, but rather used to explain the real life, but they also are transferred to the fictional narratives, to explain, justify or accent certain events.

And, as I will demonstrate, in all three films we have some kind of clash between the medical diagnosis and our own evaluation of the mental state of character that are based on a mix of paradigms and subjective impressions. Thus the search for what is the "true madness" actually is the search for the source (or rather sources) that shape the depiction and interpretation, philosophical or popular, judgmental or patronizing, for or against stereotypes.

## The Nature and Function of Cinematic Madness

I also would state that "fictional madness" is usually some kind of social phenomenon or idea that then is labeled as madness. It is often some kind of existing social idea for which a fictional world is created, to accent the righteousness or wrongness of this idea. And so this idea not the madness itself becomes a reason for the narrative.

I should start from the fact that madness, that I am describing, here is something that is displayed by fictional characters not the real people. And it can be questioned if we really can apply a real condition on someone that is not? For this we should understand the difference or similarity between those two experiences. First of all the basic understanding of the fictional character in film and real human being does not different if we are watching the film under the suspense of disbelief (there are, of course, other ways of seeing a movie). Although, as Torben Grodal points

out in his book *Moving Pictures*, chapter *Fiction, Symbolic Simulation, and Reality:* the factor of formalism comes in, when the way in which a person is portrayed is shaped by conventions that have more to do with learned ways of expression[10] (not unlike language). This means that the way we consume those images on one hand is shaped by ideology of the convention but also means that skilled audience, one that is fluent in the language of the particular film, can go straight to the text of the film without being distracted by its form. In other words, regardless of how much visually stylized a movie is, as long as it has a consistent narrative, we can identify with characters as if they were real. As Grodal stresses:

> . . .film does not possess a semblance of reality; it is not an illusion, as has been claimed by numerous film scholars and critics; on contrary, film is part of reality, its experienced power connected to the way in which it cues experience of central processes in the mind-body-world interaction. . . Imagination, consisting of hypothetical simulations of possible relations and processes, is a central aspect of everyday life; the difference between art and everyday imagination is not one of kind but of degree, of direct 'interestedness' of 'art' understood as superior know-how. [11]

I will add that in case of film, we are often aware of its artificial nature. But my guess is that even if we do not believe that things that we see can physically manifest in real life (magic or aliens, for example), they are a part of a genre and do not cross the real – unreal border, the human part is very real, and by "human part" I mean the workings of character's minds. In other words, the dragon that we see on the screen is only fiction, but the fear that we perceive in character seeing the dragon is exactly the same as we know from the real life experience. Regardless of the nature of the character that experiences it, we evaluate this fear by the same mechanism - Theory of Mind - an ability to understand mental states of Others. Grodal suggests that we can operate on global or local reality level. "Any percept or schemata has the same "local reality", as existing in the mind, whether it is a part of fiction or a real event, and as such it has an activating impact on the mind" [12]. So the attributed cognitive and especially emotional states of fictional characters do not differ in any significant way from how we attribute them to the real world people, as long as we consider them to be depictions of real people. Actually Grodal argues that fictional representation even can be more activating than reality, as less important features are toned down to promote ones that audience should react to.[13]

For this paper that means that although what is considered to be insanity can be influenced by a genre (for example, someone claiming that he sees dragons can be considered mad or rational

depending on the fact if the dragons do or do not exist in this kind of fiction), genre itself does not influence how we apply our Theory of Mind to insane characters in movies. And so the experience of cinematic madness can be perceived as invoking a very real reaction, not limited to a clearly defined area of a screen. And as such it becomes a very involving tool of discussing real world issues. I would even go as far as to say that madness in one form or another is one of the most often used elements in cinema, next to love and death - two other emotionally engaging real world phenomena. Although forms that it takes can be wildly different, as can be the role that it assumes in a body of a film's text.

The multitude of shapes that madness assumes means that there is an inevitable clash between different interpretations of what is and what is not madness. And the ongoing discourse means that there is a constant process of intermixing between ideas when elements from one camp migrates to another and mixes with local elements, loosing part of old and acquiring some new meaning of what madness is. This illustrates the importance of thorough analysis of the content of the movie text. I think, considering all this, we can look at movies not as finished statements, but an ongoing discussion with the audience. Looking at the cinematic madness in this manner can help us to understand how the details in the depiction can shape the impression of the public, and what they themselves are shaped by. Cinema is one of the fields that the discourse about madness and sanity is taking place in, and it is not a passive medium, but medium that has its own methods and conventions that can influence the outcome.

Arguably in its essence the art, and by extension cinema, is a way of disputing reality. In arts the reality becomes plastic, shapable by our wishes and beliefs. And as such it speaks and evokes the inner workings of ourselves much more than it discusses the actual nature of reality. Even in cases when we see movie as a "what if" scenario, it offers us something that is better than real in one way or another, something that we are inclined to believe not because it is based on facts, but because it invokes a positive emotional response. Be it more just or more fun or sometimes more "realistic" and in general more controlled, in the end it is a constructed fantasy, fantasy that can be more believable than reality, because we want it to be real. And this often creates an idea, that art is capable to create more "true" image of the world. I already expressed this idea by quoting Grodal but this idea goes deep in to western culture, at least so far as Aristotle's *Poetics*, where he states that mimesis is a tool of education*:* "... this is why people enjoy looking at images, because

through contemplating them it comes about that they understand and infer what each element means . . ." [14] Of course, in the age of information it is hard to accept that things that we see on the screen can be taken uncritically. But I think that the tendency of creating and consuming the narrative in this way, as capable to show us something about reality, is still here, even if we are conscious of the possibility to deny it. But the subjective relationship between reality and fiction is more complex, as can be further illustrated by Aristotle's words:

> In general, the impossible must be justified by reference to artistic requirements, or to the higher reality, or to received opinion. With respect to the requirements of art, a probable impossibility is to be preferred to a thing improbable and yet possible. . . 'Yes,' we say, 'but the impossible is the higher thing; for the ideal type must surpass the reality.' To justify the irrational, we appeal to what is commonly said to be. In addition to which, we urge that the irrational sometimes does not violate reason; just as 'it is probable that a thing may happen contrary to probability.[15]

In this respect the depiction of improbable, very unusual or outright exaggerated narratives, such as we see in many films where mental illnesses is depicted, still has a mimetic impact on its audiences. The understanding of the fantastic nature of a narrative does not cut its perceived mimetic value. David Bordwell in *Narration in the Fiction Film* describes the process of understanding a film's story as "apply[ing] sets of schemata derived from context and prior experience" but then "Some films. . . Undermine our conviction in our acquired schemata, open us up to improbable hypotheses"[16]. And if we accept that at least some real world schemata is involved in the understanding of film narrative, then film experience stops being "just a film", because by changing our understanding of a particular schemata it can change our real world outlook.

Of course, not all movies are deliberately taking part in this discussion, probably just a minority, but the intention of the creators and the impact of the movie are two different things. As I have already mentioned, the real lasting impact on the audience is beyond the scope of this paper but it would be hard to argue against the fact that it exists in some degree. In *MIND report* (UK), *Not just sticks and stones: A Survey of the Stigma, Taboos and Discrimination Experienced by People with Mental Health Problems*[17] 60 percent of the mental health service users who took part in the survey, blamed media for the discrimination they faced. However, this is an opinion by the people affected by the discourse and is more symptomatic of the importance of the discourse than the actual mechanism of it. But without a doubt some movies, such as *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's*

*Nest* (1975), have played a significant role in shaping the public opinion on the topic and in a way where a manifest for a particular ideas about madness and especially "normality". Meanwhile other films were not interested in making statements, but they still shaped the ways in which some forms of madness are expressed and perceived, creating and/or supporting particular stereotypes, as, for example, *Psycho* (1960) did with the case of the split personality. Also, I must note a sense of hostility from the people that are connected to the mental health issues towards such films, and this is an indication that there is something in the way that the mental illness is represented, that offends those who have real life exposition to it.

Finally, as already stated, when I speak about discussing reality, I do not mean that all the movies are discussing what madness is, this is only one of the possibilities. Often madness is employed as a tool to discuss other aspects of our reality, especially those that are connected to the concepts of normality and rightness. I think that movies with madness **in** them are not movies **about** madness and even less about madness in a medical sense. The madness rarely does become self-important element. Instead, my guess would be, madness works as a kind of smoke screen under which borderline or even extreme scenarios of human behavior are tested against what we perceive as normal.

Here, of course, we encounter a complicated concept of "normality" but, I would argue, in the situation where we deal with madness, "normality" can be simply defined as a condition that lacks it or even opposes it. And as I have discussed above, because madness is described in a lot of different paradigms, some concerning rationality, some – morality or competence, the depiction of sanity becomes dependent on the same factors. I want to stress here that it would be a mistake to assume that madness is always depicted as lacking something. The opposition of those two extremes is more complex than this, and sometimes can be made confusing on a purpose by the filmmakers. The easiest way to do that is to go against the stereotype, making madness superior in one aspect or other. But in any case, there is always a tension between those who represent madness and those who represent sanity.

This tension is also embedded in the concepts of Us (the sane and "normal", and I will used a capitalized Us when trying to accent this) versus Others (insane and "abnormal") and can either evolve in to a conflict of domination, as seen by the post-colonialist philosophers such as Abdul R. JanMohamed[18] or some kind of self-discovery as argued by Emmanuel Levinas[19]. Definition given

by Jean-Francois Staszak, describes Other as a "member of dominated out-group, whose identity is considered lacking and who may be subjected to discrimination by the in-group". He further explains that the Otherness is due less to the difference of the Other than to the point of view and the discourse of the person who perceives the Other as such. [20] Although concept of Otherness has more interpretations, in this work I will use it as described here.

Finally, because I discuss the movies that are primarily visual experience it must be assumed that visual element plays some kind of role in depicting and recognizing madness in this medium. To understand this mechanism, I will borrow ideas from the cognitive theory, particularly as described by Torben Grodal. In general the sign in films, according to Grodal, consists of a „communicative act", by which something is represented in special way, linked to a specific context and possibly provided with a specific meaning; and a „mechanical" – analogue representation. He further argues that just in rare cases (for example icons) we can reduce audiovisual sign to a purely semantic meaning, unlike words in the language.[21] Here I will add that madness, being an intrinsic quality of a character, either needs to be iconized, i.e. be expressed in a visual stereotype, or it invokes a „communicative act", when the audience needs to do some degree of interpreting. The iconography of madness in fiction is quite well known and is easy to recognize, it is the way the character acts: repetitions and meaninglessness, looks: naked, dirty, and having body, and especially head, deformities. But at the same time, we rarely have heroes that are just an icon, simply because they need to change in the course of a movie, which does not allow them to assume one iconic position, but at least requires them to move in or out of it.

## Approach

The scope of this particular work, and the ever changing nature of the cinema, does not allow going in to an all-encompassing research that will allow making general assumptions about the whole field of the cinema in regards towards the madness. So instead more qualitative, approach, looking at each separate film as more or less independent text, was used here. I did also look at the communication outside the body of each particular movie, such as its marketing, interviews by directors etc. And I did look at the critical reception of each movie to see what reaction it evoked in the audience.

The idea is to be open to the text, and approach it without looking for specific messages. Instead, the goal is to find as much different ideas in each of the film as possible, and then try to

understand the interaction, purpose and the impact they have on the audience. I started this thesis with an open question of "What is Cinematic madness" and gradually refined it to the set of questions that I introduced above. At the same time I started with a big list of films concerning my topic and ended with three films: *Me, Myself and Irene* (2000)*, Bug* (2006) and *Shutter Island* (2010), each being a contemporary Hollywood film, involving recognizable names and distributed through the major companies, and having madness as a major theme. The goal was to have a set of movies that share a similar historical context, and to be from the time period that is better understood by a contemporary audience, to not risk missing some historical perspective. Also, the fact that all those movies are made for a wide audience, means that they are not meant for a specific group that again can invoke a specific context that can be hard to interpret. Furthermore, they all belong to different genres, providing broader specter of the depiction of madness.

As I already stated, the subject I have chosen for this paper - madness is not very clearly cut, a defined pool of data/an overarching theory does not exist, and this dictated a particular approach – Grounded Theory. In the essence this method means that:

> . . . grounded theory approach is to read (and re-read) a textual database (such as a corpus of field notes) and "discover" or label variables (called categories, concepts and properties) and their interrelationships. The ability to perceive variables and relationships is termed "theoretical sensitivity" and is affected by a number of things including one's reading of the literature and one's use of techniques designed to enhance sensitivity.[22]

The textual database in this case was film texts and all the information surrounding them. The first step was to start with a broad question, then gradually develop a set of a specific research questions. The process was to make a close reading of each of three movies in search of elements that are somehow connected with the concept of madness. Which then, I tried to categorize and to understand their meaning in a greater context. Each scene was given a name that summarized it, place where it was happening was described with the goal do find some symbolic elements; camera placement was noted as it strongly shapes audience's relationship toward the scene; characters were described in each scene noting their appearance, posture, perceived emotion; dialog was written down and noted for element's concerning madness and also the factual truths were noted (such as facts concerning conspiracy theories etc.); sound effects were noted as they produce a strong emotional cues; separately music was noted. Memos were made for each scene, noting its meaning and significance. Not only film's script was analyzed in this way, but also

available communication surrounding the film: posters, advertisement events and interviews with filmmakers.

On parallel I was looking in to reviews. I was using IMDB.com and RotenTomatos.com as a source for this. For each film I looked ad three to four hundred reviews (from both, critics and audiences), summarizing each and looking for elements that are repeated through many posts. Distinctions between professional and casual reviews were noted. The resulting notes were used to get a general impression on the reaction of the audience to specific elements of a film. And although I do realize that this is not a strict statistical cut, I think it is a valuable method of getting an insight about how a text of a film interacts with a viewer.

The resulting memos then were analyzed and reread until some of reoccurring elements were crystallized, whose then were used as a reference in a in depth analysis of each of the three cases, dictating what should be looked upon in greater detail, with a goal to understand those elements not as isolated but as interacting with each other. This work resulted in three chapters discussing each individual movie, then one discussing the similarities and differences between those three. Finally, the conclusion about the depiction and function of madness in the three movies was made. My main goal here was to identify how the madness is encoded by filmmakers and how it is recognized and decoded by the audience.

My hope is that the results can facilitate the further discussion between cinema professionals, people affected by the mental illness and professionals in the field of mental illnesses. Ultimately that it can provide the basis for more broad research that goes beyond the scope just three cases and tighten the understanding of the role that cinema plays in shaping of the understanding of what madness is.

## *Me, Myself and Irene* (2000): Too Much Normality will Make You Mad

I will start with this film, because I find it to be a most traditional and generic image of a madman and because it had a very active interaction with the reality, sparking a heated discussion about the depiction of insanity. *Me Myself and Irene* is a comedy about a nice policeman Charlie (Jim Carrey) who, after the love of his life cheats on him and finally dumps him, leaving Charlie with three children that are obviously not his (they have black skin, like the lover of his wife), suppresses his feelings so much that they eventually spill in to an alternative identity – Hank, rude, violent, sexually uninhibited and wise-cracking. The story evolves while Charlie/Hank escorts Irene (Renee Zellweger) - who is on a run from criminals and corrupted police. The story culminates in a happy ending where love overcomes everything, even a mental illness. The film's use of madness is akin to a court jester, who makes the audience laugh with his stupidity, but under the disguise of comedy he confronts sensitive social topics.

Although many reviewers compared this movie to *All of Me* (1984), I find *Me, Myself and Irene* more closely reminding *The Mask* (1994). Here Carrey's character - Stanley is split in to a two personalities occupying the same body and fighting over the love of one girl. It is almost exactly the same story. Except in *Mask* the reason for the two different personalities using one body is a magical mask. But the rest of the story is quite similar: the hero, who is a looser in the beginning of the movie, because he is simply too nice and too passive, gets ability to transform in to another form, which is much more proactive and brave but at the same time is not bound by morality. Eventually, this causes problems to the hero, who is then forced to fight for his rights himself and in the end takes the control of his life back and is rewarded with a beautiful woman. So it seems that madness here is just a plot device that is interchangeable with spirit possession, weird science etc. But if we look more carefully, madness in *Me, Myself and Irene* was picked for a reason.

### "Peskiness" as a Relationship with Reality

Before I dive in to a more detailed analysis of how this movie deals with madness in its storytelling, I will need to showcase the marketing campaign that surrounded the film, specifically the context of other movies by directors of *Me, Myself and Irene*. Three previous movies directed by Farrelly brothers were *Dumb and Dumber* (1994), *Kingpin* (1996) and *There's Something About Mary* (1998) – which is their best regarded movie. This line of movies, and especially the last one, which was a great financial and critical success, has built an expectation of a particular type of humor,

and that is a gross-out and politically incorrect one. The topics of jokes often revolved around disabilities, animal cruelty and stupidity. That became some kind of an auteur style of Farrelly brothers, and it could be assumed that significant part of the audience was going to see their movies exactly because of this. It also created a situation in which, with each next film, the audience was expecting them to go further, crossing one more line of decency. In some aspect this process reminds of what can be observed in the horror-movie audience, when they try to find more edgy/gory movie that will be able to shock them.

In the trailer of the film the directors are called „pesky", pointing exactly to this effect. "Peskiness" is what expected to go further than it has been in the last movie, to keep the shock effect. And if *There's Something About Mary* was dealing with sex jokes and some animal cruelty*, Me, Myself and Irene* went all out, picking on animal cruelty, various physical disabilities, racial stereotypes, sexual and scatological jokes and finally and mainly the mental health.

The director's official standpoint on this can be seen in one of the interviews, where Peter Farrell explains:

> The problem is not that we look down on these people [people with disabilities], but rather that we look up at them and feel that they are better than us.... we revere them. [23]

Meaning that instead of idealizing them, directors just treat people with disabilities as any other subjects, and they don't see why it should be exempt from becoming a target of a joke. Although in practice this is hardly a case, as making fun of disabled people is how this movie achieves its edginess. A mental disability is made fun off, because it is different, and because it is at a disadvantage. A quick glance at the advertisement campaign is enough to see this.

The strongest example would be bottles distributed during the film's previews with fake "pills" (jelly beans), with instructions to "Take one pill every six hours for advanced delusional schizophrenia with involuntary narcissistic rage" and a warning that side effects include "genital elephantiasis" (a symptom of a particular STD). Also, other advertisement elements such as T-Shirts with the slogan „I am schizo and so am I"[24] (which is a paraphrase of a classical American comedian Oscar Levant), seems as a deliberate attempt to offend by pure ignorance of the misery of mental patients – a minority.

This obviously provoked a reaction from the affected groups. In some countries there were protests against the movie, organized by NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) in US, NSF (National Schizophrenia Fellowship) in UK, SANE in Australia and New Zealand, CPA (Canadian Psychiatric Association) in Canada. In UK the protest meet with a limited success when Twentieth Century Fox agreed to remove "gentle-to-mental" slogan from the posters when the Irish Censor gave film an over 18 certificate, effectively cutting a big part of potential viewers from seeing it.[25] The main critique from mental health organizations was an unrealistic depiction of the mental illness and the ignorance and cruelty whit which the condition was depicted.[26] This illustrates that people were reacting to the nomenclature in the movie. Also that the problem steamed from the fact that what was labeled as a mental illness, was a range of behaviors that we consider to be indecent, which the mental health professionals felt, has nothing to do with how the illness manifests in real life. The communication was not only untrue but outright insulting.

The reaction of the filmmakers and many of the film fans was a direct opposite: „it is only a comedy". Taking a position that fictional depictions have nothing to do with the reality. And the profit of the film demonstrated that the protests made a little if not an opposite impact, instead granting some extra publicity for the film, what was probably the goal in the first place, a publicity playing to the "peskiness" of the Farrell Brothers.

Behind the phenomenon of "peskiness" we can find the relationship of film subjects and the real world. The case of *Me, Myself and Irene* belongs to the gross-out comedy sub-genre which thrives on controversies. Its main relationship with realism is based on showing us things that are not supposed to be observed for entertainment in real life situations, such as sex and toilet behavior, also minorities, and mental illness. All this is not a fictional phenomenon. We react to them, because we have strong attitudes towards them from our real live experience.

When we are exposed to them in a form of a spectacle, that we understand to be not real and at the same time real enough to be recognized, we often relieve the tension by laughing. Here I am referring to the *Relief Theory*, which assumes "that laughter and mirth results from a release of nervous energy. In this view humor is mainly used to reveal suppressed desires and to overcome sociocultural inhibitions."[27] *Benign Violation Theory* expands this idea stating that we laugh when we experience a non-threatening violation:

A violation can seem benign if (a) a salient norm suggests that something is wrong but another salient norm suggests that it is acceptable, (b) one is only weakly committed to the violated norm, or (c) the violation is psychologically distant.[28]

The Benign Violation Theory explains that this does work as with physical so with moral violations. But most important is the fact that we must not deeply emotionally invested in to a target of a joke.

*Me, Myself and Irene* is full of slapsticky humor, but there is much more jokes dealing with moral subjects. Both of those are here make us laugh. In slapstick comedy we lough at a bodily humor as we experience a danger of physical harm but know that it is not real. Then we have a lot of moral violations, when moral integrity of the characters is at risk. For this type of humor the bridge between real and fictional is essential, unlike physical humor, the politically incorrect jokes are strongly connected to the contemporary sensitivities and culture. Of course, we see a completely unrealistic depiction of the mental illness, but I would suggest that the connection happens somewhere on more global, conceptual level. At that stage we do not consider the reality of depiction, but rather react at the label.

By acknowledging this we can look at *Me, Myself and Irene* as a narrative that tests our moral fabric through farcical depiction of madness. It is interesting to note that very similar story could (and numerous times it was) be produced by an alien invasion, spirit possession or failed chemical experiment (before mentioned *Mask* being one of the examples). But mental illness itself is a sensitive subject and without it a degree of "peskiness" (that "elevates" the movie above similar ones) would be lost. Unlike other mentioned options, mental illness is very real phenomenon.

## Distancing from Madness and Denying Reality

As we need an anchor in reality, so we also need to achieve the distancing effect that *Benign Violation Theory* speaks about. So filmmakers employ a term of Advanced Delusionary Schizophrenia with Involuntary Narcissistic Rage (nonsensical term, that is made out of bunch of psychiatric terms randomly stuck together). This label, despite being an obvious caricature – a comedic device, can be effortlessly decoded, and film actually does this for you, calling Charlie "a shizo" – a derogatory label to mark someone whose behavior deviates from norm, because of the state of his mind.

The distancing is also facilitated by the actor: Charlie is played by Jim Carrey, famous not only for his plastic face but for acting characters that are "over the top" eccentric. He is well known for playing character who pretended to be insane - *Ace Ventura* (1994) or actually insane as in *Batman Forever* (1995) or stupid as in *Dumb and Dumber* (1994). Of course, we all know that this is not a real state of the actor's mind, madness is his act, and a lot of people are drawn to the movie theater expecting to see this act again, as a form of repetition. For example, many reviewers were comparing the scenes from *Liar, Liar (*1997) where Carrey's character beats himself to be excused from testifying and *Me, Myself and Irene*, where Carey beats himself to express two personalities fighting for one body. The reasons behind the scenes were different, but the audience mostly accented the quality of physical performance, demonstrating that spectacle and not the understanding of character's motivations is why the scene was enjoyed.

Another thing I need to stress, that provides some clarity on the connection between reality and fiction, is that the split personality or medically speaking - Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID for short), a condition that is closest to what we see here, is by itself quite controversial diagnosis. It is not only very rare but it is heavily debated if this condition exists at all or is just a reaction of some patients to some of the therapeutic techniques[29]. This makes it harder to argue how much movie reflects the real life cases. What makes this even more complicated is that the movie just once named Charlie's state as a split personality, but later uses Advanced Delusionary Schizophrenia with Involuntary Narcissistic Rage that involves terms narcissism and schizophrenia, both real terms, but they do not make much sense in this context. It is also interesting to note that in the official letters from Mental Health organizations to the 20th Century Fox (for example, the letter from NAMI[30]) only Schizophrenia is mentioned as condition that is misrepresented but not the Narcissistic Personality Disorder. The diagnosis is always pronounced in a funny manner in its full form. Unlike in *Bug* (that I will discuss in the next chapter), where the diagnosis sounds real, here it is an obviously a joke, some kind of Star Treck-ian technobabble. Although by itself this does not mean much, as the symptoms are based on the fantasy of the scriptwriter, directors and actors, not the real world cases. This discrepancy, as can be guessed by numerous reviews, was spotted by many and that added another layer of distancing from the real world. This demonstrated that people were checking the fictional condition against what they believe to be real world knowledge, what proves that cinematic experience cannot be completely detached from real world knowledge.

Because of this controversy is easily sparked, as people who are connected to the mental health do not feel at all distanced from the topic, and instead of responding with laughter, they experience film as a real moral violation, despite the fact that this violation is only a matter of nomenclature – without a label, Charlie's actions could be seen simply as buffoonery. As I have already explained, the same kind of two personalities – one body situation was depicted many times before under different premises, like spirit possession in *All of Me* (1984), and did not spark any controversy. This illustrates the real problem: naming deviant behavior as a result of a mental illness. The result of this is an insult to people affected by the mental illness, but for others it is an extra edge to the comedy.

It is important to note that insulting language is often filled with words associated with excrements and explicit sexual behavior. That can be illustrated with numerous curse-words. Of course, this is not the only way to insult, but the very basic insults are mostly about those topics. What the film *Me, Myself and Irene* did, it embraced all those elements as defecating in neighbor's garden, using a dildo for anal stimulation and so on. Let's not forget the label on the jelly-pills, warning about elephantiasis of the genitals. Those are uncomfortable topics, they generate tension that either is released with laughter or, if this reaction is inhibited, the spectator is left with a feeling of frustration. The film also associates madness with incompetence, what is also often used as a form of insult.

## Behind the Façade of Madness

Mental illnesses such as Schizophrenia, Paranoid Personality Disorder, Antisocial Personality Disorder, Amnesia and DID are quite popular plot elements. The reason of it probably that in films and literature it is a very convenient device for unexpected twists and exploration of human nature itself. In *Psycho* (1960) the killer is a second personality – an internalized mother, hiding inside Norman Bates. In *Three faces of Eve* (1957) woman is torn in to two personalities (Eve White and Eve Black, one – timid, another - wild) because of a childhood trauma and the third one – sane one, emerges after first two merges together. *Fight Club* (1999) deals with a second personality who is created as a result of hopeless situation in a young man's life and basically is embodiment of Nitzschean Ubermensch who overcomes difficulties by disregarding any social norms. This allows fragmenting one character in to separate characteristics, who then become separate personalities who can ten enact a visible conflict.

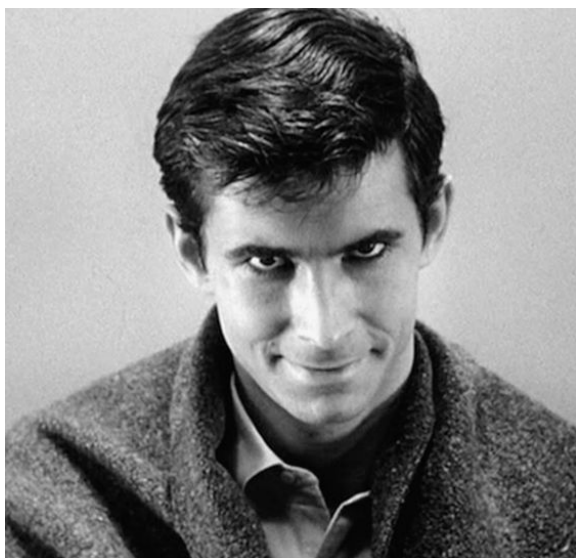**Figure 1.1: US poster of Me, Myself and Irene (2000)**



**Figure 1.2: Expression of cinematic "mental". Norman Bates from *Psycho* (1960)**

In almost all those cases we can see Freudian psychoanalytical ideas, where the multiple personalities are expression of the fight between the Id and Superego, one - an embodiment of social norms, another of a pure desire. Also it is an often material for horror movies, as it is a good way to hide a menace where he is most hard to find - inside a head of someone who seems to be most harmless. Simultaneously this split provides an easy to understand explanation to the extreme behavior. But there are just few comedies that are dealing with the split personality as a mental condition, even ones that exist seem to be quite obscure and not well known, I only managed to find three examples: *Serial Mom* (1994) which is more of a spoof on split personality horror movies, *Me, Myself and I* (1992) and *More of Me* (2007), both much more moderate in the representation of the illness and also without any major distribution. In any case, they all have a common theme: life can push you so hard that your psyche will shatter (from here probably comes the confusion between Schizophrenia and DID), but the true solution is to accept who you are and become whole again. It is a kind of reassuring narrative, stating that the usual way of life is the right one.

I think that the main challenge of showing the split personality in cinema is the externalization of the internal conflict, and that is probably one of the main reasons why the role was given to Carrey. His "plastic" face was constantly praised by reviewers and the audience, as it gave the actor the ability to transform from one personality to another not only changing the mannerism but also physically transforming his face. This is best illustrated by the poster where two halves of the

Carrey's face are looking at us (**Figure 1.1**), one belongs to Charlie, another to Hank, and there is a slogan: "From gentle to mental". One side being a gentle face, another - a sinister one, probably a homage to the *Psycho (1960)* (**Figure 1.2**). Two sides of the face are split in the middle that communicates a split personality. The internal struggle in this case can be expressed in behavior of two opposite characters that despite having one body, are easy to distinguish. They even are marked by physiognomy that betrays their characteristics. It also creates a depiction with a clear contrast, two clearly expressed opposites, an essence of conflict. Mostly thanks to the "plastic" face of Jim Carrey.

The connection between mind and body is very prevalent imagery. We can remember Jekyll and Hide, where the evilness of Hyde is reflected on his physical attributes, as if he has been deformed, although in no apparent way that could be described. The "unnormal" mind was reflected on the appearance. And the connection runs both ways, as deformity of the body sometimes reflect back on the sanity. This notion can be traced back to the Greek drama with the usage of masks that reflected the internal workings of characters mind. It can be seen in the cases of comic heroes such as Two-Face or Hulk, where not only internal state but even the duality of character becomes physical, and in the case of Two-Face from *Dark Knight (2008)* the physical change causes the insanity. In *Me, Myself and Irene* most of the time we can tell if we are looking at Charlie or Hank. Not only Hank looks menacing, but Charlie is depicted carrying a sheepish smile. Although later, as Charlie is nearing the recovery, this distinction begins to dissolve until the two personalities merge in to one.

This is, of course, a convenience of a film, where it is always desirable to find visual ways to express ideas. The physical transformation in the *Me, Myself and Irene* exists for the sake of a viewer, as the characters in the movie do not seem to be able to recognize Hank by just looking at him, only the behavior betrays him. But for viewers the transformation is almost always spelled by the close shot of facial expressions of Carrey, and additionally announced by a drum score. This score is also a straightforward clue, first of all it sounds like something between a comedy punch-line cue and a loud "crazy" cacophony (it is a complex drum beat). I think it can be described as crazy-funny. The song that plays here is *Fire Like This* by *Hardknox*, whose lyrics expresses feelings of destructive aggression:

I am the darkest one
You will never heal me
A mind beyond repair
I will make you fear me
I slay your hopes and dreams
You're lost forever
In this world of mine. . .

What just spells the essence of Hank: Hank is anger, Hank is danger, Hank is insane one, Hank is what we are in our mind when we are angry.

This is how a personality trait is externalized but also turned into an independent character, externalizing the internal struggle, making it visible to the audience of the film. The struggle is between "extremely nice" and "extremely pesky". The film clashes those two extremes, under the premise of a mental illness, in a fantasy "what if" scenario. This simplistic depiction has very little to do with the real life mental illness, but it is a good source of drama and comedy.

Hank/Charlie's story in the nutshell is about second personality as a response to a bad situation where there is no socially acceptable solution, it is also about the importance of having all your personal traits to coexist, and it is about the dangerous person hiding behind the mask of a seemingly tame human. In all of the examples of films dealing with split personality, that I have mentioned, the difference between personalities are based on things that we consider to be morally defined, one is always timid and conformist, another is always deviant. The personalities almost always contrast, which is probably why it is so interesting to explore this phenomenon in arts, making this an easy tool to make a social commentary.

*Me, Myself and Irene* takes a full advantage of this as the film explores the limits of the political correctness (regarding race, sex, disabilities, not only mental illness). Hank, unlike Charlie, does not shy from a conflict or sexual topics, but more importantly his extreme "peskiness" lets him say and do things that most of us would never do, despite that we sometimes have urges to do so. He insults an albino waiter, he physically assaults a child that insults him and tortures her by drowning, he drinks milk out of a breast of a beautiful breastfeeding mother, he destroys a wrongly parked car and so on. His actions are driven by impulses and not inhibited by any social norms. Like Hyde, he is free from the social norms and his mental condition is his excuse, but he also gets a backslash for his actions. Meanwhile Charlie follows those norms to the fault and misses a lot of

opportunities in his life because of this. The two characters are illustrations of what would happen if the conformity went to any of two extremes.

Of course, *Me, Myself and Irene* is not a serious social exploration. First of all, it is a comedy. In Hank's scenes the comedy arises from what *Benign-Violation Theory* calls a *Benign Moral Violations*, i.e. the political correctness is violated but in such way that we, as the audience, do not feel threatened despite understanding that this is wrong. Also, the satisfaction comes from the identifying with Hank, who is a kind of antihero in this movie. Although any of us would probably newer assault a child, being angry at a child is a familiar feeling. Situations like this allow us to understand the mindset of Hank - to apply the Theory of Mind. And then through him we can act-out those emotions. Charlie is one who feels but does not act out. He is what Grodal calls a melodramatic character[31]. Hank, on the other hand, acts without inhibition, identifying with him is like a thrill ride, except that the danger is not of falling but of being indecent.

I think that most of the audience understands the nature of the thrill: that we laugh at inappropriate jokes, and "this is only a film" is one of the ways to defend your reaction. But it is not something that we would want to be caught doing in a public situations. Sometimes we laugh at the behavior of Hank, which is caused by his insanity, but other times we laugh with him when he makes insensitive and often insulting remarks. The border between those two is fuzzy: do we find an insulting joke funny or are we just laughing because of the absurdity of the situation? This is one more layer granting us a safe distancing from the indecency, but this time it is not about making situation funnier, but about stating a position that is easier to defend. The character of Hank has a cover: "He is a schizo" tells Irene several times through the movie when situation provoked by Hank's needs to be defused. So the mental condition is used as an excuse, he is indecent because he is insane. But if we laugh with him, does that mean that we are insane too? Or does it actually mean that Hank is not insane as we are perfectly capable to follow his train of thoughts? In a way by laughing with him, we agree with him. And at the same time we still feel at advantage, because we can understand the situation but Hank - is just insane.

A similar effect can be illustrated by the case of court jesters, who were allowed to say things that no one else dared to say (some forms of standup comedy is today's equivalent of this phenomenon). And though I will not go in to debate of whether there are some deeper truths behind the jokes in *Me, Myself and Irene*, it is clear enough that madness and the unreality of

cinema are used as safeguards from a judgment that would be unavoidable in other cases. Because Charlie-Hank cannot help it, because he is "mental", he cannot be held responsible for his buffoonery, he is not supposed to be taken seriously. At the same time a court jester is not stupid or insane in a clinical sense, we just agree to treat him as such. A jester is given a license to act insane, unlike a mentally ill person who is who he is. In *Me, Myself and Irene* we look not at a madman but at a jester – Jim Carrey who is playing a mentally ill person. We, as the audience, are aware of this fact and that probably helps us to shift to (or claim) position that is morally more convenient at any particular moment, laughing with or at the madman. It helps to protect not only our moral integrity, but also our claim of sanity as an ability to differentiate between real and acted madness.

This jester phenomenon also demonstrates an uncertainty of assessing madness. Sometimes wisdom hides behind the madness and sometimes madness is hiding behind the façade of sanity. And as sane can pretend to be insane, so the sane can be depicted as pretending to be sane. In one scene Hank does exactly this to have sex with Irene. This illustrates the ability of the madness to infiltrate in to our midst, because it wears a human body. This is what makes madmen very convenient horror monsters, but also it fits a comedy genre as humor comes from the fact that Other gets in Our midst and gets confused, because he does not understand our rules – a separate subgenre by itself.

In that sense Hank's madness makes him a foreigner in our social fabric, not unlike the main hero in *Borat: Cultural Learnings of America for Make Benefit Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan* (2006). And it is easy to see how close the humor of those two movies really is. Besides the element of absurdity, this kind of humor plays on deconstructing our social axioms, it does question our social norms that we take for granted. The joker does that under the disguise of not understanding what he is doing, and so a "comic bubble" is created, where it is allowed to consider the unquestionable.

Another premise of madness in *Me, Myself and Irene* can be expressed in a popular saying: "it drives me crazy". In one scene Hank voices reasons of Charlie's madness:

HANK

You don't know what it was like. Spending all those years
trapped behind a wall of politeness. Bound and gagged. . .
in a dark and silent world where nothing grows but the

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          anger. All because some demon he married laced up her boots
          and did a Nancy Sinatra on him... l was a big piece of the
          personality pie back then. But when she left him, Charlie
                          went numb... And l went AWOL.
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Here madness explains itself as anger at the perceived injustice that finally has broken through the facade of a socially acceptable behavior that Hank calls "numb". Also he points out that before he was a part of Charlie's personality that later was suppressed. We see a parallel of Freudian model where ego inability to balance needs of Id and the pressures of Superego results in a mental illness. The inspiration coming from psychoanalysis manifests in a scene where Charlie, controlled by Hank, pulls down his pants in front of two elderly ladies. They are stereotypically ones that would be most shocked by such indecent act; and so the movie taps in to hidden urges to shock - a destructive, self-destructive and sexually motivated manifestation. This is a Freudian idea inflated to grotesque proportions, where our superego is always struggling to contain our basic instincts, of animal like behavior, but also of self-destruction, and that struggle sometimes spills in to seemingly random accidents – Freudian slips. In *Me, Myself and Irene* this struggle gets a physical manifestation culminating in the hero beating himself and finally throwing himself out of a car. At the same time it illustrates a real struggle between social pressures and more basic impulses of gratification and paints "what if" scenario where those two factors go to extremes. Both extremes are made fun off, depicting a moderate balance - a harmonious coexisting between Id and Superego - as a "normal" and desirable choice.

A demonic possession is another traditional concept of madness that can be seen as an influence behind the depiction of insanity in *Me, Myself and Irene*. The possession happens because Charlie fails to uphold certain standards existing in the film universe. Entity possessing Charlie – Hank, is not only repressed anger; Hank is a male action hero in all of us. In other words, he is a character who acts as a hero: breaks the rules, speaks in one-liners and gets the girls. But if movie hero, like Dirty Harry can do this, then most of us can just pretend. What we get instead is a parody - that is an acting that does not produce desired results. This is exactly the case of Hank, for example when Irene tries to imitate him by speaking in one-liners, Hank cannot understand her and asks to speak like normal human being. He acts tough and gets in to fights, but gets beaten all the time, except when he picks a fight against a little girl. He constantly makes sexual advances on Irene, but only manages to have sex with her because he pretends to be Charlie. He tries, like an action hero, to enforce justice by breaking rules himself, but picks up on "crimes" like faulty parking and littering

and even then he fails. This is madness because it is inadequate, it is like Heracles riding imaginary chariot while stricken with madness. Madness here is depicted as some kind of an incompetent poser. The incompetence itself helps to promote comedic situations, but it also helps to degrade the madness itself. Unlike Pazuzu in *Exorcist*, who is a menace because he is smart and powerful, Hank is no Pazuzu but more like a parody of him, and this is a part of the fabric of a comedy. This expression of madness can also be seen as a take on the Foucaultian concept of madness as something lacking work, it just cannot be productive in any meaningful sense.

The constant pattern and the reasoning behind Hank's behavior, where he constantly fails, goes beyond foolishness, which Foucault defines as being prone to mistakes and which is art of human nature. It becomes a stupidity that is defined as acting out of the bounds of defined categories, where one can make mistakes within a category, out of categories one cannot succeed.

> To be wrong is to mistake cause for another; it is not to foresee accidents; it may derive from a faulty knowledge . . . but it is altogether different to ruin a project completely: it is to ignore the framework of categories . . . they confuse all aspects of reality with every form of possibility."[32]

Writes Foucault. Hank's actions are defined by the fictional categories, but the problem is that those categories do not work in the fiction that he is in, they belong to another genre, and it does not seem that he is capable of comprehending this, and to correct his ways, he is a character that is lost in genres, a variation of "stranger in our land" comedy.

This can be seen as some kind of intertextual insanity. Most of the film's heroes would seem to be insane if we put them in another genre, as would we if we somehow mixed reality with film's fiction. Without the ability to make difference between different verisimilitudes, madness and stupidity descends. Like madness stricken Hercules riding an imaginary chariot, when all but the mad one understands that there is no chariot, so Hank does not see that he is not Dirty Harry. Although in the scene with the albino waiter, he seems to understand what he is doing wrong, after Irene (the film's voice of reason) explains it to him, but this realization turns in to comedy as Hank tries to fix his mistakes and again fails, because he is not capable to act rationally. So, there is a clear fact that Charlie can change, unlike Hank, who constantly slips back to his way of acting. It separates one as misguided and another as stupid. Hank's case is a true madness, but for Charlie it is just a phase. Foucault writes:

The philosopher must be sufficiently perverse to play the game of truth and error badly: this perversity, which operates in paradoxes, allows him to escape the gasp of categories. But aside from this, he must be sufficiently "ill humored" to persist in his confrontation with stupidity. . . to let it slowly grow within himself. . . and to await, in the always unpredictable conclusion to this elaborate preparation, the shock of difference.[33]

This philosophical experiment is reenacted with Charlie being exposed to the stupidity – Hank, where instead of "ill humor" there is mental illness, and audience gets to experience it too, through the act of identification. The notion of shocking difference is important, pointing to the fact that by being exposed to the contrast between two extreme ways of behavior we can better understand what is right. It can be said that Charlie's madness is a possession by a stupid demon to teach him to be smarter with his life, a philosophical task indeed.

Stupidity is often perceived as having a particular connection with wisdom, as it helps to break categories, especially categories that are counterproductive, by deconstructing them. This claim of wisdom can be often found in different forms of comedy. The act of madness can give an opportunity to better define sanity. Charlie, for example, at the beginning is imprisoned by categories; he is depicted as a hyperbolized stereotype, even his sunglasses, mustache and a hairdo are exactly like every other officer on the Rhode Island has. Hank's behavior, through extreme and inadequate, takes over Charlie's body and breaks the categories. By destroying the barrier between right and wrong he lets Charlie to reconstruct himself in better (or what filmmakers suggests is better) way. Actually, the whole journey of the hero is filled with things that are outside frame of normality, which first of all is embodied in the Rhode Island – a bastion of tranquil conformity, which Charlie is forced to leave. And by facing things that are beyond his everyday life, Charlie was given a chance to reevaluate what is normal. The audience with the help of identification could then experience the same.

Besides its meaning as a social comment, madness in *Me, Myself and Irene* is mostly for pure entertainment value, especially in the slapstick scenes. Hank's behavior in the movie is usually refereed as: "got a major screw loose" or "schizo". This refers to a person who commits unusual, random, potentially dangerous and indecent acts that are hard to explain otherwise, in other words, those terms mark us giving up on applying the Theory of Mind on a person. Those terms define someone who acts in such a way that it is easier to attribute the reasons of actions to a disorder in person's head than to search for any rational explanation. Labeling behavior as

"schizo" frees us from the responsibility of trying to seek a deeper understanding of that person. On the other hand, we are given very clear understanding of what is happening in Charlie's/Hank's head. So it can be said that *Me, Myself and Irene* mixes both enjoying the story by identifying with the hero and by watching a spectacle of buffoonery. Madness in *Me, Myself and Irene* is both an object to observe in a slapstick scenes but also a state which we can feel an empathy to in more dramatic scenes.

The feeling of empathy, I think, comes from the fact that there is an immoral side in us all, and we are not exactly driven only by a pure rationality and logic. Each of us in the real life deals with social norms and experiences a certain amount of tension because of this. Hank becomes a character through which we can actualize some of our impulses and relieve some of those tensions. This is why we so easily can get behind the motivations of film's antihero. It is important to note, that in the end not nice Charlie, but Charlie that absorbs Hank, becomes a true winner. This raises another notion, of madness not being depicted as a binary opposition of rational – irrational or moral – immoral. Right-Wrong then is not directly connected to one extreme of those opposites but rather to a certain state of balance between them. And although Charlie – Hank seem like equal opposites at first – it is not a case.

## Opposing Madness, Punishing for Insanity and Insanity as a Punishment

Charlie denies Hank, so he does not have memory from the episodes, but Hank knows what Charlie is doing. If on the first look it seems that Charlie and Hank are binary opposites that can be compared to: "righteous – immoral", "good – bad", on the closer inspection this does not hold true. Actually, if we were to apply the model of binary opposites here, the sane – insane would be represented not by Charlie-Hank, but Irene – Hank, as Irene in this film represents a measure of "normality". She has a messed up life, but she does react to world around her in a "normal" way – same that average person would react, way that we would expect to see, she gets angry, happy, afraid and ashamed more or less adequately to how we perceive the situation she is in. She makes mistakes, but at least she reacts at them accordingly, Charlie does not. Irene is a character against which we can assert that what most of us feel to be normal is normal in this fiction too. At the same time both Hank and Charlie are affected by madness, although in different ways. And there is at least one additional position to the two that film presents as the best.

It also cannot be said that madness here represents an ultimate wrongness. The real immorality and menace in *Me, Myself and Irene* is represented in a form of corrupted police officers. In some way they represent a demonized version of rationality, one that we can find in works of Michel Foucault, who denies the Cartesian outlook that rationality is a guarantee of morality[34]. The antagonists in this film are Caucasian, suit-wearing males (played by – Chris Cooper and Richard Jenkins) are an image of establishment, perfectly sane and representatives of the system, but without a doubt - evil.

Related to this, there is also a theme of punishment of madness. Charlie in *Me, Myself and Irene* is being hunted as a criminal for a crime that he has not committed, the corrupt agents point at Charlie's mental illness as something that makes him dangerous, while in reality it is they who have committed this crime. Here rational immorality and insane immorality are put side by side, and without a doubt rational side comes as much bigger menace. Actually, the corrupt officials can be seen as a representation of a Foucaultian idea of repression that sane commits against insane. So we can conclude that in the narrative of *Me, Myself and Irene* morality is not dependent on rationality or conformity. Rather the relationship is almost reversed. And in the end the real evil, suit wearing white guys are punished.

The reversed stereotype effect can be seen on a three sons of Charlie, they are depicted as stereotypical Afro-Americans, who are incredibly smart – the movie here clearly makes a statement against the stereotype. Of course, this is still an exploitation of the stereotype, as you need to have a stereotype in the first place to reverse it.

Getting back to the theme of punishment and responsibility for your actions, we have a question if Hank/Charlie is depicted as responsible for his own actions, in other words, does he possess a "Mens Rea", which is defined as a "Guilty knowledge and willfulness"?[35] As defined in definition of legal insanity. The corrupt agents obviously are fully aware of what they are doing. This question can be seen in the light of other movies, especially other movies with Jim Carrey: *Mask*, *Liar, Liar* (1997) and *Yes Man* (2008), they all deal with the topic of a protagonist losing some agency over his own actions and learning some lesson from this, because, as I have mentioned before, this gives a possibility to experiment with a radically different way of behavior applied to character's everyday life. In case of Charlie he loses control over his body to his suppressed part of personality and learns new ways of behaving.

If we would agree that Hank is an embodiment of a madness possessing a body, then obviously Charlie cannot be held responsible for his actions, as in any cinematic case of possession. But also this "possession" is always a kind of poetic justice – a punishment, as it produces an extreme opposite of a characters flaw: extreme truthfulness for lying, complete disregard of morals for being extremely moral, etc. Obviously, at the end of the film, when hero learns his lesson, his agency will be returned to him. Near the movie's end Charlie becomes aware of Hanks actions, and he is even able to be awake at the same time as Hank is active, resulting in a two personalities fighting over one body, what is followed with Charlie declaring that they are in this together and then symbolically kicking Hank out of his body:

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                         CHARLIE

     I don't need you to fight my battles for me! If you can
     back down from something this important, you're nothing at
                           all!
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Although the madness here is a result of passivity, the recovery is an active act.

In *Me, Myself and Irene* what is punished is not a flaw against others but a flaw against self - passivity. And so the punisher is also himself. It is a mix between Jekyll and Hyde and some popular psychoanalytical ideas, where subconscious makes you punish yourself. And like in psychoanalysis, when the conflict is resolved, the condition goes away. It can also be seen as a patronizing look at the character: we like him, but he needs to be punished to become more like Us - better. Not unlike children or criminals are seen. And then the question of responsibility fully lies on Charlie, as Hank, though self-conscious, is the madness itself, he is an instrument of the punishment. Charlie is guilty in his passivity, although not able to control Hank's actions in the beginning, he is depicted as guilty for letting him loose in the first place.

It is important to note that this kind of attitude does not differentiate between punishment and cure. On the surface the film tells a positive message about importance of love, which in a way brings it close to the ideas of a moral treatment, where it was believed "that physically attractive environment and socially kind and moral personnel could rescue institutionalized patients from degradation and depravity"[36]. Note that the untreated condition of mental patient is noted as leading to *degradation and depravity.* On the other hand, *Me, Myself and Irene* depicts mental illness as something very bad that happens if you do something wrong, what instantly throws the

concept of madness back to the archaic beliefs about demonic possessions, and madness as some form of metaphysical justice.

## Meaningful Madness

In general the concept of the origin of madness in this movie is close to what we can find in a Greek drama, when great grief can bring an episode of madness, or when denying some social norms can bring anger of gods, who then will send madness as a punishment. For example, staying chaste brings the wrath of Aphrodite in Euripides' *Hyppolytus[37]*, or Oedipus who goes mad even if he breaks the social taboo unknowingly. Madness is often depicted as spirits or a curse that attacks a person when he is vulnerable because of something happening in his/her life. I think it often expresses the fear of losing a grip with the social fabric one belongs to, by breaking one taboo, person can be thrown in to a state of madness where all his behavior ceases to make sense to sane. But at the same time most often there is some kind of logic behind the mad behavior. So for example Oedipus[38] blinding himself after seeing his dead wife, displays a poetic logic: he gets rid of his own eyes, because they caused him such a pain, by letting him see the scene. The action has its macabre logic but it is something that no sane person would do. As Bennet Simon writes in his book *Mind and Madness in Ancient Greece: The Classical Roots of Modern Psychiatry:*

> If a man acts irrationally, it is because a god is carrying out a carefully calculated plan to help one hero and hurt another. There is a method to human madness and human folly, but the method belongs to the mind of the gods[39]

Of course there is no god in *Me Myself and Irene*, but the mainstream Hollywood movies (especially comedies) have the almost universal principle of the happy ending, that in this case takes place of the gods (actually not unlike the Greek theater, where the god was a literally device required by the genre). It can be concluded that some things are punishable, and it does not matter who is the agent of the punishment: man, god, the character himself or a scriptwriter, as long as we, as the audience, are happy that some things would be punished out, that the suffering caused by the madness was for a reason, and that in the end all would be better. Simon Continues:

> The heroes of tragedy who go mad (they are always driven mad) do so when their world is collapsing around them. Their madness is part of a frantic attempt to hold on to what they know and think right.[40]

This is similar to the case with Charlie, whose life has collapsed after the love of his life has cheated on him and then left him right after the weeding. In this respect Hollywood actually borrows more from the Greek tragedy than comedy, in which madmen were just madmen, because "their bile has gone amuck"[41], although there is a mix of both, as some scenes are just antics of a madman, devoid of any meaning except to make audience laugh. But at least in global reality of the film there is a method and a purpose behind the madness, and I already discussed some aspects of this meaningfulness in previous chapters - it is here to make the character better.

The other point about this depiction, which stems from the fact that cinematic madness is meaningful, is that you do not need any medical help to get cured from the mental illness, all you need is to get your life in order and you will be cured. In the film Charlie is using a medication, that lets him to keep Hank from manifesting, but it is not a cure, it just postpones the symptoms, and produces side effects, further making Charlie's life miserable. Charlie himself seems to be ignorant of his condition, he just repeats the name of his diagnosis flawlessly and takes his pills, but does not take any other actions. The trust in the mental health system here is also a portrayed as a part of conformity for which Charlie is punished with the madness in the first place. Mental health system is depicted at least impotent, because it does not deal with the meaning behind insanity.

 Charlie's way back to the sanity goes not through medication but through fight. As a true movie hero he must fight to win. Pills prescribed by doctor are not a fight, it is passivity. Only through experiencing the adventure with Hank and finally confronting him as a manifestation of madness (psychologically and physically) he overcomes the illness and also takes control of his own life and is rewarded with a beautiful girl. The film depicts the mental illness like a bad habit that you can quit only if you try hard enough. But most important is the fact that the appearance, way of manifestation and finally the recovery from madness are all connected to a one central meaning that becomes the message of the movie - you must fight for what you value.

The ideas of meaningful madness, possession and a discovery of truth through exposition to madness draw to a feeling of a justified happy end, when Charlie, who started as flawed but good man, fights and banishes the madness possessing him, and is rewarded with the love and acceptance. His madness is a part of a hero's journey, a standpoint that is typical for religious understanding that deals with concepts of greater meaning. This outlook can also exist in therapy – Logotherapy, for example, that is based on finding a meaning behind what is happening.

"Human person is motivated by a "will to meaning," an inner pull to find a meaning in life" – states the entry text of the Viktor Frankl Institute of Logotherapy[42].

## Conclusion

Here I will briefly return to the Greek theme: madness is something that is often depicted with people either terrified, because actions caused by madness are self-mutilation, killing of relatives or suicide, or laughing because person is acting in strange ways. Sometimes those two happened side by side, as for examples in *Heracles* by Euripides. This notion is refereed within *Me, Myself and Irene* text as Whitey is terrified to stay with an insane person in one room, thus pointing out that we expect insane people to do some terrible things, at least in movies. Here movie tells that maybe its depiction of insanity is actually more positive than we expected to see, as things that make us laugh are better than ones that make us terrified. Although really, both those ways of depiction emphasize Otherness of madmen and do not facilitate attempts to humanize them. But at least laughing is less probable to invoke hostility than fear.

In some way *Me, Myself and Irene* depicts madness in not so judgmental way as other two movies I will write about: *Bug* or in some aspects *Shutter Island.* Despite the film going extra mile to be pesky, in some aspects the depiction is almost a positive one - madness allows Charlie to rediscover himself, unlike *Bug* where Peter's madness is punished by death and cleansed with fire, or *Shutter Island* where madness brings demise of Teddy. And the general outlook, though covered with farcical jokes is a hopefully one. Despite that, this depiction of madness is a pure literally device, woven in to a fabric of the story, created to tell a certain message about "normality". The positive message is achieved by making a caricature out of real world illness.

Madness in *Me, Myself and Irene* is used as a lens through which the filmmakers comment on the real world, it lets us to be entertained by things that we are not supposed to laugh at, making madness like a mirror room in the carnival, where we can laugh at how deformed someone looks, because it is just a reflection, not real, and we know that. The film's version of madness acts as a protective layer between you and the object of the joke. It acts in a tandem with the comedy genre, when it is allowed to laugh at things that otherwise would be offensive, giving the storyteller a license to make fun. Although it can be seen as a way to deconstruct some social dogmas, that comes with a price of suggesting that mental illness in general can be object of jokes. Making such comedy is no different than making fun at disabled people, even if we are just fooling.

It does represent an obviously fictional form of madness but at the same time it generalizes it under the real world term of "shizo", what is an umbrella slang used for a wide range of behavior including one that is displayed by real world mentally ill, to accent their inferiority and otherness.

The film also puts all the different "abnormalities" from albinism to the mental illness to the racial stereotypes to small communities and sexual fetishes to high intelligence under one category – different therefore funny. The Otherness of someone is a reason to make fun of him. In the final happy scene there is only happy "normal" people (with maybe the exception of Charlie's sons, but technically they are outside the scene, high in the sky, only watching the happy moment). Despite pretending to treat everyone equally, film actually just threats the majority of the audience, the in-group. The film even goes so far as to tell that if you are too politically correct the people who you are polite to will walk over you.

There are no bad consequences in the fiction of *Me, Myself and Irene* for making fun against any kind of disability, all of this is either ignored, turn to something positive or are discarded as behavior of „schizo". And yes, we are dealing with a fictional people, but all those "abnormalities" originate from the real life. In some respect this reminds a colonialist literature, where the native people were described by the outsider for the outsiders, when the stereotype becomes a defining characteristic, it does not represent the people that it speaks about, but entertains us with a glimpse at some kind of novelty. Actually, in parallel with claims of being just fiction, movie constantly entertains us with various cameos of famous people, what again is example of the tight connection between film and reality, as this connection is what catches and keeps our attention. Without feeling that movie is somehow related to the reality, I think, we would quickly loose the interest.

The relation to the reality is also supported by the existence of a greater justice in the story of the film, which creates a paradox where the image is very false but at the same time it is so much more believable, because, as I have already mentioned, people are comforted by meaning, it facilitates our wishful thinking. Unlike the case of *Bug* where the inner workings of the madness gets more and more alien and alienating or *Shutter Island,* where we are exposed to the heroes insanity only in the third act, *Me, Myself and Irene* is a classical three act story where madness happens at the end of the first act and is conquered at the climax. It gives us a character that we

like and then gives us a satisfaction in rewarding him with happiness, and knowing that his suffering, that we shared through identification, was for a reason.

Although I do not suggest that the classical three act story is not capable of telling more realistic narrative about madness, it seems to be a complicated task. Not even the movies that claim to be based on real events manage to do it. A famous example - *A Beautiful Mind* (2001) is full of changes, where the factual truth is sacrificed for the sake of the story flow and the overarching meaning of the story. As Sylvia Nasar, the author of the book that the film was based on, commented: "invented a narrative that, while far from a literal telling, is true to the spirit of Nash's story".[43] What she probably means that despite the details the fiction is connected to the reality in a broader sense , but then the same can be told about *Me, Myself and Irene* that is not accurate in presenting details, but in broad sense deals with the real world phenomena.

In the end, to be entertaining the movie usually needs to speak about things that we are concerned in a real life, but needs to order them in more attractive, meaningful way, ordered by some kind of virtue that is shared by the audience. Madness here is a carrier of certain ideas, not a tool to promote the knowledge of real life mental illness. And when it does not make a statement, then it is just an object for laughs. It is a conscious choice, and it is not that audience is unaware of that. *Me, Myself and Irene* earned almost 150 million USD worldwide (almost three times its budget)[44], despite getting only 48% critic score on RotenTomatos.com[45].

Also the mentioned case of *A Beautiful Mind* leads to think that the reaction to the depiction is not a question of realism as much as a question of what kind of divergence from the realism is acceptable and what is not. The hostility, I think, is mostly a result of making connection between mental illness and things that we identify with and things that we consider to be violating decency, morality and dignity. So, obviously people connected to the mental health were insulted by all the immoral behavior attributed to the madness in *Me, Myself and Irene*, like in the case of *Bug*, people who believe in conspiracy theories were insulted because the film connected those beliefs with insanity.

In the end all those things add to the realization that most of us still struggle to understand where we should draw the line separating madness from other forms of deviancy. It is always tempting to put a label of "shizo" on someone that looks like Us but acts in a way that our culture disallows.

Though in theory we can look for the answer in the field of psychiatry, it is clear that psychiatry does not hold monopoly on explaining this phenomenon. And then in the multitude of voices we can see such as *Me, Myself and Irene* that are purposefully playing on the sentiments of the audience, speaking false but believable things that everything that diverges from our comfortable lifestyle is madness, and then claiming that it is just a movie. The last argument is actually one that makes all this more complicated. It is unlikely that many of us can confuse a farcical comedy with the reality, the facts can be obviously fictional, but you do not need to claim truth to hurt someone with an insult.
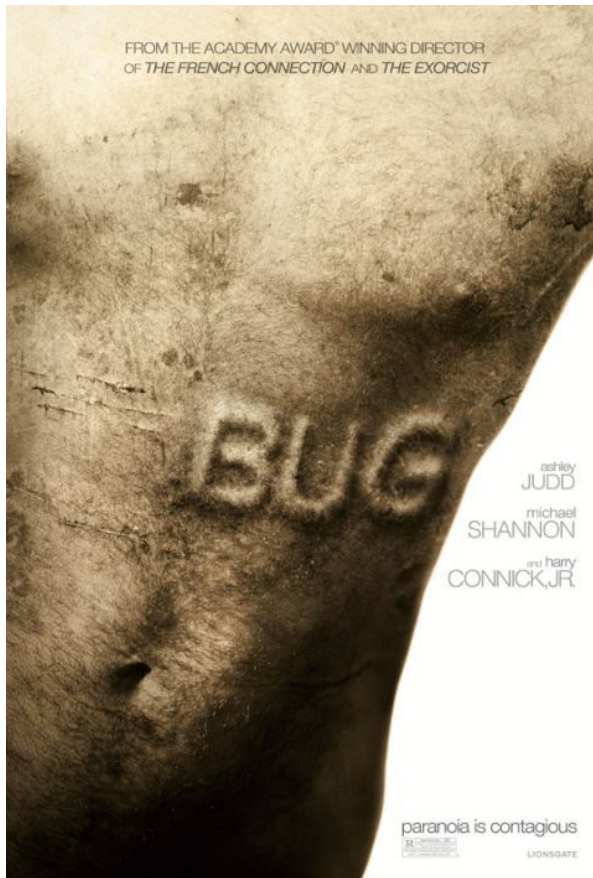
## *Bug* (2006): Is Madness Contagious?



**Figure 2.1: UK poster of *Bug*, a direct refference to The Exorcist**



**Figure 2.2: The original scene from The Exorcist**

This is an interesting film in many respects, it was chosen for this paper because of its heavy emphasis on the dynamics of madness – how it develops and spreads, and mostly because of the active involvement of the audience in drawing the line between the sane and insane. Unlike *Me, Myself and Irene*, where madness is marked very clearly at the very beginning, almost like "on-off" state, *Bug's* depiction of insanity starts on much subtler note and then progresses until it becomes an extreme stereotype. This dynamic adds an additional layer to the depiction and allows analyzing not only a state of cinematic madness, but the process of maddening as well.

In the *Film report: Screening madness, Bug* can be found under the stereotype of violence in the subcategory of *Psychosis as Violence*.[11] I find this to be very superficial assessment of the film, I think that the depiction of madness here is much more complex and multilayered than this and violence does not even play a major role in how mentally ill is depicted here.

Bug (2006) is a movie with comparatively small budget (4 million USD) distributed by Lions Gate Films (USA), directed by William Friedkin, based on a stage-play by the same name by Tracy Letts, and starring Ashley Judd and Michael Shannon as the main characters. Movie was explicitly marketed as a horror movie by Lionsgate, with the trailer following expected conveniences of a modern horror movie, and posters reminiscent of other horror movies of that time distributed by the Lionsgate, like *Hostel* (2005), *Saw* II (2005). The

message on the UK and French posters was: *Paranoia is contagious.* And: *From the director of the "Exorcist"* (**Figure 2.1**)*.*

Agnes White lives in a run-down motel in the "middle of nowhere" of the American South. She indulges in the alcohol use, and looks to be on the verge of depression. Also, she is constantly harassed by the anonymous phone calls, that she believes to be from her ex-husband Jerry Goss, who is just released from the prison, where he has got for an attempted murder. One day her best and only friend R.C. Introduces Agnes to a socially awkward drifter Peter, and brings him to her place. They find each other to be close souls and Peter and Agnes become romantically involved. Peter confesses that he is AWOL soldier and that army has performed some strange experiments on him before he has deserted. Soon Peter starts to find microscopic aphids everywhere and everything starts to spiral in to madness.

## A Question of Genre

At the moment of writing this paper the movie has 61% "fresh" rating at the Rotten tomatoes site, based on 131 critic reviews, and the 33% audience rating.[46] I am sure this difference is partially to blame on the marketing campaign of the movie, where audience was misled to expect a horror flick in a vein of previous blockbuster made by the director William Friedkin – *Exorcist* (1973) or modern low budget horror movies like *Hostel* (2005) or *Saw* (2004), but Bug is actually none of this, and unfulfilled expectations lead to frustration. Later Friedkin claimed: *In many ways, [Bug is] a black-comedy love story.[47]* Pointing that screening it under the banner of horror genre was the idea of Lionsgate marketing department, while it was not intended as such.

The posters and the trailer were very explicit about the genre and very "by the book". UK posters showed the name of the movie embossed on the torso of a man, clearly referring to the scene from the *Exorcist* (**figure 2.2**). Trailer depicted Peter jumping at the camera in fast motion with a screeching sound playing in background. A slogan was the only hint of the insanity as an element of the narrative: "Paranoia is contagious". However, *Bug's* case is not paranoia typical for a horror movie.

In the context of horror, especially body invasion subgenre, paranoia is a crucial element, although there it becomes not a sign of insanity as it is rather a tool of survival. For example, Invasion of the *Body Snatchers* (1956), *Rosemary's Baby* (1968), *Cube* (1997) all are dealing with a persistent

paranoia, but it is a motivated paranoia, not a psychopathological condition, the audience is constantly reminded that the danger is real. In the case of *Bug* the paranoia is not a real danger. It is not a result of the events that are happening, it is a result of the mental illness. The difference is in being rational or irrational to one's surroundings. Instead of making the audience, who is identifying with film's characters, scared and unsure of who is a friend and who is a foe, in other words – making us feel empathy with the protagonists, we gradually learn that the treats are just delusions in this film, and that the only real danger for the characters is they themselves. And so rift is created between our understanding and understanding that characters are supposed to be operating on. This perceived discrepancy in Theory of Mind, I think, leads to emotional and cognitive distancing between the protagonist and the audience.

Although countless reviews of *Bug* start with a statement that this is not a traditional horror movie or not a horror movie at all, technically, the ingredients are there: there was a menace that came in the form of a man with mental issues that turned out to be a killer. There were even elements of possession and body invasion, all so common in the horror genre. But in the end the execution of those elements was too unorthodox and at the same time felt too real to be enjoyed in a way that horror movies usually are enjoyed.

Critics were more inclined to overlook the discrepancy between the film and its marketing campaign, instead concentrating on the mastery of the film-making, especially acting.

## Visual Elements

The acting was often named as intense, heavy, and unrestrained so much that a viewer is scared for the actors. This also is an interesting detail, which points to the fact that even if the fictional world is not perceived as real, just the imitation of madness is seen as dangerous. The same can be read in reviews of *Keane* (2004), where prizing of Damian Levis was often followed by concerns of his well-being after he has taken a role of schizophrenic. In *Bug* this concern rises mainly because of physical acts but also because actors are seen as "dressing" the mindset of the insane characters. It is not unusual to find reviews expressing sympathy towards actors who must endure this state for a prolonged time. Even if we speak about the metanarrative here, it still concerns how the madness is depicted in the movie, how madness is expected to be acted and what we think it means to imitate madness. It seems that any close contact with insanity is considered to be at least unpleasant if not outright dangerous.

**Figure 2.3: Charles Le Brun, *the Expressions* (from Trait é des Passions, 1698)**

It is also interesting to note that Bug actually started Shannon's career as an actor who plays madmen (*Boardwalk Empire* (2010 – 2013), *My Son, My Son, What Have You Done*(2009), even to a some degree the *Man of Steel*(2013)), in 2012 he was nominated for a PRISM award for depicting a mentally ill person in *Take Shelter* (2012). Besides the actor's talent, this, I think, has to do with a spectrum of facial expressions that Shannon possesses. In many films he displays his menacing, angry-looking and in general worried expression that associates with a troubled mind – a reflection of ideas about state of a soul reflecting on a physiognomy, and, not only medical but also artistic or even metaphysical tradition, such as *Metoposcopy* of Girolamo Cardano[48] where he was using facial wrinkles as an indicator of mental illness; or *Passions of the Soul* by Rene Descartes[49], where he stated that movement of the soul was reflected through the nerves and then manifested in contractions of the body; or Charles Le Brun who systemized the facial geometry to help to witness the processes in the soul **(Figure 2.3)[50]**. This illustrates that the way in which movies are consumed, creates a certain expectations and demands on the visual part of the insanity. I think that the visual signs of madness in visual storytelling, although more subtle that

the signs expressed by behavior, are strongly codified and easily recognized on an intuitive level. They often are features (permanent or movable), but can also be a manner of body movements, that we ourselves do not possess, and they signify the Otherness of a madman.

Not only humans but also the space is used to express madness. Film starts in a blue-lit room, where everything is covered with a tinfoil. There is a body lying on the ground. The scene visually is so unusual that without a context it could be an interpreted as happening inside a spaceship. Actually this is a shot from the last act of the film. In the course of the movie the audience will be gradually immersed in to this madness. Finally, when it comes to this scene at the very end, it will be much more understandable. This scene is also contrasted with the last shot where the room is shown before it has transformed in to foil-covered nest of insanity. Those two scenes are here for the contrast effect that helps to make the Otherness of insanity more prominent, but also to visually illustrate how "normality" gradually can slip in to Otherness. Although the contrast between the beginning and the end of this process can be shocking, being a whiteness of this process can make you partially blind to what is happening.

## The Bug of Insanity

As I already mentioned, Bug is not a generic horror movie, although it shares a lot of conveniences of the genre. Every horror film is supposed to have a menace and the menace is often reflected in the name of the film itself, like *Alien* (1979) or *Predator* (1987) or *The Thing* (1982). The name is a direct indicator of what we should expect, who will haunt the hero. So in *Bug* the menace should be the Bug. The name can mean a real bug (creature that evokes an uneasy feelings in many people), but also it can mean a surveillance device, drugs, infectious disease (as stomach "bug" – gastroenteritis) or even STD in slang English. The film actually has a scene where the madness is shown transferring in a physical way.

This scene is somehow disjointed from the rest of the film. It can be interpreted as a symbolic metaphor for the contagiousness of madness. The symbolic nature being accented by the Eisensteinian editing, where the sex scene is intercut with stock footage of insects, provoking a reaction of revulsion and danger to what is happening, and in general to the union between Peter and Agnes. It is an event that marks a beginning of the intimate connection between two characters, but it would be hard to say that sex played a crucial role in this, as Agnes actually later states that they do not have sex anymore and she does not care. It is rather symbolic episode

"crowning" what has already happened - Agnes falling for Peter, love that is like a disease or like maggots that eat you from the inside and that ends in death as marked by the face of the praying mantis. As film medium is a visual one, the corruption of the mind acquires a physical and so visual manifestation, it's a twist on healthy body – healthy mind. This scene becomes a visualization of the slogan "Paranoia is contagious" and also the symbolic idea becomes embodied in the image of a Bug.

Multiple meanings of the name are exploited throughout the movie, keeping audience guessing which shape it will finally take, facilitating a sense of uncertainty. There are clues about surveillance, starting with a constantly ringing phone, and a suspicion displayed by Peter before it becomes obvious that he is a full-fledged paranoiac. Camera angles, placed like someone is watching from dark corners of the room, also add to this feeling. Drugs are involved too, and it is well known fact that some drug users experience sensation of bugs crawling under the skin. Actually, the delusion of aphid infestation as a result of drug use can be found in a book by Philip K. Dick *A Scanner Darkly,* which is a famous account of the US drug culture of 70s*.* The parallel is so strong that it can be seen as a tribute. Despite all those theories in the end of the film we learn that the bug here is just a metaphor for insanity infecting the mind.

Like the contamination scene that can be understood as workings of the Peter's and Agnes' minds, so the droning sounds of the machines, helicopter sound, the camera shoots from the helicopter flying above the motel or the shaking room are symbolic acts that should not be interpreted literally. Those are the clues that helps viewer not to understand the literal truth behind the happening, but to experience the inner state of the characters - the paranoia, the feeling of being infected by it. Those scenes can act as distractions if they are taken at the face value. In this sense the audience is hovering between two planes – the subjective and factual. Those two planes are separated in some cases but come quite close in others, and become hard to distinguish. For example, the helicopter and phone are two elements that are impossible to say if they are a part of delusion or the film's reality, but the shaking of the room and the maggots are obviously not real, they are made to look fake. Then we also have the bugs that are so small that we can't see them so we must choose if we trust Peter and later Agnes who see them. This reflects the very fabric of the madness here, as Peter's delusions are actually constructed from the facts that are true in the real world sense, but then they are weaved in to a theories that have very little touch

with the reality. So the audience is given an opportunity to get a taste of the inner workings of the madness, as the facts are known but the connections are not.

I think what the film is trying to do here is to test our immunity against this infestation of madness – something that the visuals of the movie depict as a disgusting sickness, not unlike being infected by real bugs. This element of disgust and possible infection is not only judgmental but also one of the elements that facilitates our wish to keep a distance from the characters. In a contrast, we have the filming style that is full of hand-held close-ups, and manual zoom-ins, especially in scenes where the insanity becomes more prominent – bringing the audience unpleasantly close to the bodies of madmen. Torben Grodal notes that horror movies are structured in such a way as to cut our empathy with characters and put the audience in the position of a voyeurist, as the stress that film victims experience is too big to endure[51]. Instead Bug goes against this, constantly putting us too close to the characters, in to their personal – intimate space, too close to be comfortable as just watchers. Paired with the dirty, sweaty, wounded bodies of Agnes and Peter, and the general claustrophobic atmosphere and the growing understanding that they both are capable of unpredictable acts, this closeness clashes with the instinctive need to go away, and aggravates the aversion that is produced by the madness.

## Social Aspects of Madness

It is interesting to compare this process with *Take Shelter* where the dynamic of madness works in opposite direction, where madness is introduced with close shots in cramped spaces, but later goes in to open and calm environment where it is shared (in a poetic/symbolic way) and redeemed by an act of love. It is a complete opposite to *Bug,* where we start with some distance and space and then go more and more claustrophobic. Another significant difference being the fact that we can see and hear all hallucinations endured by Curtis (the main character of *Take Shelter* played by Shannon).So unlike Peter's his mind is more transparent to us and so it is much easier to apply empathy. Peter's mind meanwhile is completely shut from the viewer, and his behavior is almost always unpredictable, what adds to the feeling of alienation. Another difference between two Shannon's characters is the ability to stay in touch with the in-group, despite the state of one's mind. In *Take Shelter* – despite Curtis' delusions, he is kept with his family by the bond of love. In *Bug* Peter isolates himself from the world (literally but also symbolically), dragging Agnes with him. It is also interesting to note that Curtis is actively seeking for help, and he says

"sorry" many times for his behavior provoked by his mental state. Despite his impaired rationality, his moral integrity is depicted as intact, he seems to be even more concerned about well-being of sane surrounding him than himself. He feels ashamed for his behavior and he tries to redeem himself in some way. Peter, though we can see him suffering, does not show any signs of regret instead he is actively spreading his madness, again we can see the parallel with STD. This goes with the ideas describing Otherness as having moral deficiency – all you can do is to be meek to compensate your inferiority in the eyes of health people. Not being ashamed of his madness Peter instead of sympathy as a victim evokes antipathy as one who threatens our order. And also with this kind of behavior he strengthens the tension between the Otherness he is part of and the "normality".
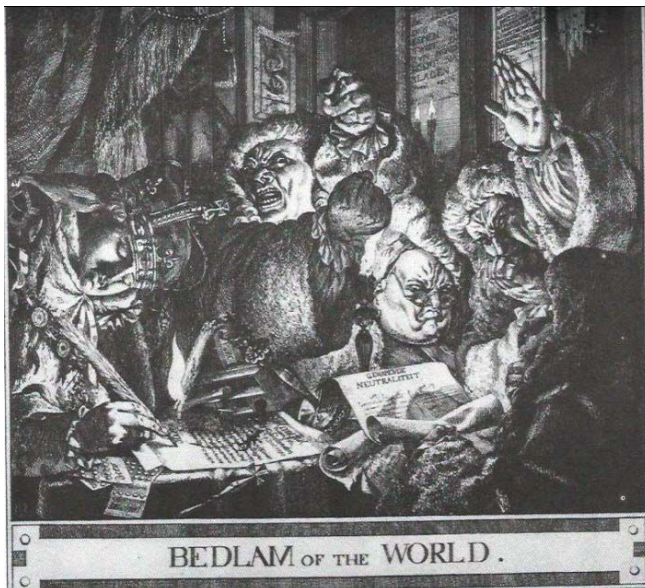


Figure 2.4: Peter Dutsman's 1781 political cartoon

I think that being exposed to someone behaving at odds to our norms can be a distressing experience. And Peter's paranoia actually consists of many facts that especially the US audience must have found to be too close to home. Most of the facts that Peter builds his conspiracy theories from are facts that are not only known for the majority of population but also have an emotional weight to them: Edgewood Arsenal LSD experiments, Tuskegee syphilis experiment, Peoples Temple mass Suicide, Tim McVeigh Oklahoma bombings and some more. All of them speak about an enemy inside, among the people that we consider to be in-group. Some reviewers noticed this subtext, and pointed out that *Bug* is commenting on the state of contemporary US, where war is waged not only with outside forces but here are Others among Us. This unavoidably brings a parallel between the state of madness that originates from inside, turning one of Us to Other, not unlike some hideous infection. It also illustrates a situation where the whole nation or world can be labeled as insane when it starts threatening its own people. This parallel can be seen in other movies such as *Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb (1964),* or numerous historical caricatures (**Figure 2.4**). Today, for example, Russia – Ukraine conflict's coverage is filled with psychiatric diagnoses put on entire groups and nations.

It is also interesting to note, that it is easier to cope when the enemy is from the outside. But when the enemy originates from the same group as we, we need some kind of method to separate ourselves from the one we perceive as deviant. Madness is a good way to do this. At the same time this can turn in to a paranoia and witchunting, because the difference is hidden behind the facade of a normal human.

This nature that lets madness to infiltrate is also what makes it infectious. *Bug's* version of madness is one that invokes more madness. Although I cannot claim the knowledge of the true intentions of the original scriptwriter Tracy Letts, I think this treatment of madness is intended as an insult towards those responsible for events like Oklahoma bombings. It actually depicts people who get in to a conspiracy theories and distrust government as a clinically insane and dangerous – monsters in a human skin – cinematic psychokillers. In other words, it is not only a way to humiliate those who are looking for enemies in their own country; it also depicts them as madmen, i.e. outside of rationality outside of understanding, incapable of being productive. They do not fit our social fabric because they are different from Us in some fundamental quality, and they are less than Us because they are sick. On the other hand, the paranoia is contagious, so it can contaminate minds of sane people coming in to a contact, like in various cases of cults.

In general, madness in the Bug is given a bug-like nature: it is infectious, ugly and alien. It can be said that madness here is devoid of all redeeming qualities that we can see in other films discussed in this paper, it is irredeemable. This condition is unpleasant for ones who watch it, but the madmen of the film seem to be oblivious to it, diving deeper in to it with each scene and becoming less and less humanlike.

## Recognizing Sanity and Alienating Madness

The unpleasantness of the depiction is constructed in several layers. First of all it is a *mise en scene*, that trough all the movie closely follows the mental state of the two protagonists. As almost all of the film happens in one flat it becomes almost a character by itself. In the very beginning it is a dirty room, it is not a complete mess, but just barely: there are empty bottles everywhere, Agnes smokes and drinks inside, so even if smell is not a part of movie experience, it is not hard to imagine that the place is soaked with the unpleasant smell, as is the body of Agnes, who from the very start is depicted as not caring much for her looks or cleanliness. She washes her dishes with her bare palm, her shirt is dirty and torn, she uses a toilet without closing the door etc. This feeling

of dirt is hard to avoid as we are always positioned too close to her body by the merit of close shoots, and it reflects the state that Agnes mind is in – she is struggling at the edge of depression and addictions – also expressed in the numb postures used by Ashley Judd, that remind depictions of melancholy **[figure 2.5]**.

Figure 2.5: Agnes played by Ashley Judd: a pose of melancholy

This feeling of dirt gets worse as the film progresses and as the madness gets more and more prevalent. At the end of the movie there are food leftovers lying on the ground all around the flat, the bodies of the characters become covered with scabs and finally the room transforms in to a surreal space covered with the tin-foil and lit by bug traps. The movie itself is color-graded in the shades of brown, giving it a rusty and dusty feeling, with the exception of the blue neon lights around the roof of the hotel, which foreshadows color of the last act.

Like the characters *mise en scene* gradually accumulates the madness, and works as an indicator of the mental states of the people living here. The first strong indication of developing madness is the flypapers and insecticides. Although the premise itself seems logical: Peter was bitten by a bug in Agnes' bed, and he suggests taking care of the infestation,  but the actions he takes are undeniably out of rational bounds because they are too extreme. The amount of the flypapers signals the start of the process that ends with the flat completely covered with the tinfoil. The flypaper itself is brown and sticky, probably not the most pleasant thing, especially when it fills the living space, it sticks to anyone walking inside, what can be understood as a symbol of madness that is transforming the place in to a trap. Actually, at the end the flat looks like the inside of a bug-trap lamp – a quite surrealistic sight, one that we get to glimpse at the very beginning of the film. In general, it is a gradual transformation; one that happens step by step. The first signs are just a bit outside usual, while the last seem like not belonging to the same reality. It is not a yes/no situation of sane/insane, but rather gradual move from one to another. *Bug* depicts madness not as a qualitative but quantitative difference that despite looking completely alien in its extreme forms starts from almost usual things that do not rouse our suspicion. A woman on the edge of

society can easily shift out of it, a man with a bit strange beliefs can turn in to a raving madman. This depicts madness as much more dangerous and much more subversive, because now we are dealing with a continuum where without a clear boarder it becomes possible to cross to the other side without realizing it.

The way how the two characters are exposed to us are enough to alienate Us from Them. And although the movie is constructed in such a way to leave some doubt about if and how much Peter is insane, evoking such interpretations as: a part of what we see happening were drug induced hallucinations, or the fact that "if you are paranoid that does not mean that they are not on to you", leaving some space to guess that maybe there was a grain of truth in Peter's delusions. But the overwhelming clues point to the interpretation that all events we see in this film are result of a genuine mental illness. This interpretation is also supported by the difficulty to feel an emotional connection with the two main protagonists. The state that they are in the end is not only very openly insane but also repulsive (in a physical and moral sense), and so we are not motivated to save them from the insanity by proving that there is some kind of meaning in what they do.

Despite theories that we hear from Peter are something that can be found in books by conspiracy theoreticians, for some people they do make sense. And actually in few reviews we can find displeasure expressed over the fact that conspiracy theoreticians are compared to madmen (again pointing to the fact that calling someone madman can be a form of insult). Because *Bug* is quite vague about what is true and what is not in the frames of its own fictional world, we – the audience – become ones who measure the rationality or irrationality (i.e. perceived madness) of the characters by our own standards, we compare it to what we understand as reality. Depending on our belief in the conspiracy theories, for some viewers the expression of this belief can be enough to label someone as crazy but for others this is perceived as a rational idea. Coupled with the uncertainty of the genre to which *Bug* belongs this divides the audience between ones that understand crazy behavior of Agnes and Peter and the theories as steaming from madness, and others for whom the ideas expressed by Peter sounds plausible and that clashes with his mental state. Not only the truth is tainted by being spoken by a madman, it becomes associated with unpleasant and degrading things that madness in *Bug* is associated with.

In the last act we see the flat completely cowered in tinfoil, blue-lit by the bug-trap lamps. At that point it must be hard to argue that Peter is not insane. It is definitely not something that can be

easily rationalized unless we know that the film's fiction operates on different premises than our world. Like, for example, *Evan Almighty* (2007) where the Evan looks to be insane, but actually he does bidding from God, who we know is real in that fiction. But *Bug* refuses to provide its viewers with any clear explanation of what is true, instead confining us inside one flat, where the only source of the information comes from the lips of a character that we suspect to be insane. Without any other reality check inside the film's fiction we turn to our own experience, and we compare what we see to what we consider to be "normal". Covering your flat in tinfoil obviously is not normal; also that kind of behavior is quite stereotypical sign of a silly paranoid madman in the pop culture. It is also a real life phenomenon, though it is not a sign of a clinical psychopathology, rather it is a sign of beliefs held by a particular social group that otherwise sane people can share. Here I must explain that if behavior is shared by a group, even if we personally find it deviant, clinically that does not qualify as mental illness. Although sometimes refereed as madness of crowds[52], it is a part of natural human behavior, a form of conformity. But as the term *madness of the crowds* suggests this kind of behavior popularly can be perceived as a form of insanity, especially by those who do not share it. As Charles Mackay states in the preface of his book *Memoirs of Extraordinary Popular Delusions and the Madness of Crowds*: "We find that whole communities suddenly fix their minds upon one object, and go mad in its pursuit. . ."[53] So in *Bug* the sense of madness also steams from the different beliefs, separating Us from madman in a sense that we know the truth and he has only false belief. This also confirms our capability to recognize false beliefs and in the process assures our superior capability for a rational thinking.

That brings to the topic of differentiating Us from the Otherness that is madness. It is interesting to note that archaic term for psychiatrist was an *alienist*, i.e. one working with those who are alienated. One way of experiencing Otherness is based in beliefs. So, if we believe in our own sanity, then what Peter believes is not true. He is mad because he believes his own madness. Although there is possibility of truth that is incomplete, but this version, I think, is less compelling than clear-cut right/wrong divide. The clear separation of sane and insane not only lets us to label Peter's beliefs as delusions, but also it points out to the concepts of rationality, madness and morals that are typical for Enlightenment era philosophy, akin to the ideas of Voltaire and Descartes, where the rationality was a guarantee and guard of goodness against the evil and that lack of rationality leads to evil acts. So in case of *Bug*, sanity possesses superior reasoning and as a

result – a capability to superior morality. Here it differs from *Me, Myself and Irene*, where it seems that madness can be equal on a rational level, but differs in morality.

The dirt, strange beliefs and inability to think rationally are then accented by small signs of madness, such as twitchy movement of Agnes and Peter. In the last scenes of the film Dr. Sweet shows up (a person from the outside), and explicitly names the medical condition of the Peter: the paranoid delusion with the schizoid episodes. This basically is a moment when we need to choose who is right: Peter and his paranoiac theories or a person that we see for a first time, which claims to be an expert and claims that Peter is mentally ill. I think I will not go too far by assuming that for the most of the audience it is an easy choice, not only at that point we have enough clues about the mental state of Peter, not only we are sure that his way of thinking is different, but because his character is presented in such way as to cut us from identifying with him, he is simply not a likable character. Movie had literally alienated him from us and actually this choice at that point is already made.

Nevertheless, the most direct clue – diagnosis by Dr. Sweet is actually most ambiguous one. The movie plays a trick here by declaring the diagnosis in a quite unreliable way. The "paranoid delusion with the schizoid episodes" sounds believable and scientific enough, and on surface many of us recognize words such as paranoid and schizophrenic but it does not seem to be a real name of a mental illness that can be found in DSM, ICD or other manuals of mental disorders that I know. It can be a technobabble like ones that we hear in Star Trek as well. It is impossible to tell if it was put there purposefully or by the accident (maybe actor has misspoken). Of course, very few know the psychiatric jargon on the fly, so words "schizophrenic" and "paranoid" from the lips of person claiming to be a doctor sounds convincing enough. Especially when spoken in the room covered with the tinfoil and describing naked people living there.

On the other hand, this scene is filled with elements that inject a doubt in to the audience. Here, I think, the movie plays on our expectations of binary opposition, where we expect one side to be right and then the other by default – wrong. Here we have situation where we consider that either Peter or Dr. Sweet is telling the truth and the other is lying. But Dr. Sweet is paradoxically not so easy to label as sane. Despite him showing his credentials to Agnes, she does not believe him, like bugs, the credentials are never shown to us, so it is up to us if we believe that his credentials are true. Agnes saw the papers, but at that point she is almost obviously insane and her judgment is

doubtful at least, and the actions of Dr. Sweet makes us doubt his professionalism (and so his claims about truth) and his sanity, as he ignores an obvious danger.

We see Sweet behaving in a way that doctor is not supposed to: he takes drugs that he finds lying around, he plays along Agnes delusions and so on. This evokes some slight hope, that maybe there is truth behind Peter's delusions, and there is some kind of horrible conspiracy happening? This would restore our faith in Peter's rationality and would justify his behavior, even if he was still clinically ill, in a medical sense, his condition and behavior would be a result of inhuman experiments done on him by the military. This would not reclassify Peter as one of Us, but, I think, would let us bring Peter from the zone of utter Otherness to the Otherness that is redeemable (example of this would be Terminator in *Terminator 2*(1991)).

It would also turn the madness in to what Foucault calls a Medieval understanding of madness, where man could be driven mad by the lost confrontation with the secret powers of the world[54], although in the case of *Bug* those secret powers are physical and mundane. Peter's madness can be interpreted as a lost battle with the modern mysticism that is more based on science fiction and conspiracy theories. The movie actually plays with this idea, dropping clues here and there that suggest that maybe Peter's delusions are not delusions at all, maybe what he is saying is true, and there is some kind of mad insight in his ramblings, maybe he is mad because he knows the truth. This is quite common troupe of films and literature, especially horror genre (for example Eddie Walenski in *Dark City* (1998) or Father Brennan in *The Omen* (1976)).

But then this doubt is shattered when Peter stabs Dr. Sweet with a knife. It not only erases any possibility that Peter's actions are somehow justified; it also cuts the audience from the last possibility to get any kind of information that can redeem Peter, once again making him a source of frustration, and so inclining us to label him with characteristic that scorns him for his behavior. The act of killing putts him beyond the line of morality. So the final "diagnosis", I would argue, is a result not of right-wrong discourse between Peter and Dr. Sweet but instead Peter and the audience.

Actually, Doctor's appearance can be seen as a distraction from the discourse between us and Peter, so much that this is reflected in reviewers interpreting Dr. Sweet as a delusion – a product of senses clouded by madness. Agnes actually openly expresses this idea by asking: "how do I

know you're not a delusion?" At this point the doubt inducing Dr. Sweet is easier to dismiss as a hallucination, than to accept that there is still a reason to search for anything that can redeem Peter's sanity or at least morality. It could have worked at the beginning when he still had some sympathy from the audience. Even if he told the same conspiracy theories, audience would be more inclined to believe him than Dr. Sweet, as the choice of whom to believe, as I have already mentioned, depends no less on the logic and rationality than on the sympathy.

The room where it happens also induces a negative emotional response. There is a dirty crackpot, and canisters with gasoline. In other words, there is an insane person on drugs with a lot of flammable liquid. It is a situation that threatens with immediate danger, it invokes an affective evaluation, one that is based on quite simple emotional response - fear. A bit later this mix explodes in to a murder, after which room hosts a corpse of the doctor with the blood spilled all over the place. Agnes and Peter are still oblivious to their surroundings, where the rational reaction would be running away or at least hiding the trace of the crime (what would make it criminal but not insane). Although it does not look like a Gothic asylum, like one we see in *Shutter Island*, the room is a clear symbol of madness. It marks a territory that does not belong to Us anymore. Walking inside it is the same as walking in to the lair of a predator.

In the scene where Peter murders Dr. Sweet, this alienation is verbalized, when Peter calls Sweet an android – an entity with human body but lacking human essence. For him, sane are aliens. Film here accents the alienation, stating that mad are not compatible with sane. Agnes starts as a character with whom we can identify and ends with the character that is not only too alien for Us to identify, she herself starts actively alienating herself from "normal" people, chasing off her sane friends. *Bug* depicts this alienation as a fault of madmen.

Still, despite alienation, film employs some scientific knowledge to paint the image of insanity. The filmmakers actually are very methodical here. They expose Peter's childhood: his mother died when he was young and his father was a "pastor with no flock", hinting about lonely childhood with a detached parent, he displays a series of symptoms that corresponds to his diagnosis, filmmakers even put the label of *Delusional Paranoid with Schizophrenic Tendencies* that probably is misspelled *Paranoid Schizophrenia with Delusions,* but in any case sounds like a legitimate diagnosis. In other words, film provides with a set of believable symptoms of a mental illness. This lets the audience to pretend being psychiatrist who observes symptoms and diagnoses the illness.

But, as I have already explained, this is just a secondary factor. If the character was likable, and his behavior was not dangerous, all those clues would be not so effective in convincing the audience, like in the case of Teddy from *Shutter Island*.

This process of allying or alienating with or from characters and do we like or hate them is often based on the perceived morality. As Murray Smith defines in his article *Soot and Whitewash: Allegiance*:

> To become allied with a character, the spectator must evaluate the character as a morally desirable (or at least preferable) set of traits, in relation to other characters within fiction. On the basis of this evaluation, the spectator adopts an attitude of sympathy (or, in the case of negative evaluation, antipathy) towards the character.[55]

Further, he explains that this morality in films is expressed by the actions of a character, often in an iconic way. Although in *Bug* we do not see most iconic acts of immorality (like rape or killing of a child), an image of a naked man, covered in blood, with a knife in his hand is quite strong imagery. Also there is a faint theme if incest that helps to straighten the antipathy. It is Peter's actions and his appearance that shape our allegiance towards his character.

If it is easy to expose the thinking and so the morality of a character in a book, and literature has plenty of conventions to signal the thoughts of a madman. In film we are left to observe the behavior of characters and from that – deduce what happens in their mind. Here the Theory of Mind comes in to a play. But also we need to have a motivation to question character's sanity: anyone behaving within convictions of the society (or genre) is safe from this scrutiny, only behavior that transgresses "normality" invokes this. Agnes and Peter, both give us a reason to question their sanity and to dislike them. I would say that film is constructed in such a way that we are almost forced in to position where there is nothing left, just to observe the spectacle of madness.

## Sinister Madness

There are some attempts to soften the depiction. We get to know a little bit of Peter's past, we get to see that he is really suffering from his condition. It is hard to say that film tells a story of Manichean struggle of good versus evil. But like any other film monster, Peter is a menace, if at

the very end Jerry would break in to a room and shoot Peter, it could be said that this was a happy end and that Agnes was saved. So despite the few humanizing facts, we still wish Peter away, as he is incompatible with our society. Unlike, for example, Hank from *Me, Myself and Irene*, who is rather "bad" than "evil" or Teddy from *Shutter Island,* who is truly virtuous in his madness, Peter is a worst case of how madness can be villainized.

In this context of madness as something that is in a confrontation with Us I would like to refer to the term of criminal insanity that is a real world phenomenon somehow different from the psychiatric notion of mental illness and popular understanding of madness and at the same time strongly connected to those two. Basically, it is an idea that mental condition of a person can qualify him as not responsible for the criminal act (the exact wording is different from one legal system to other) or makes him non punishable for it (as in the case of Norway). In most cases criminal insanity is defined similarly to the Mc'Naghten Rule:

> [Insanity defense] if it is not an assumed or imperfect, but a genuine and thorough insanity, and is proved by the testimony of intelligent witnesses, makes the act like that of an infant, and equally bestows the privilege of an entire exemption from any manner of pain . . . To serve the purpose of a defense in law, the disorder must therefore amount to an absolute alienation of reason, *ut continua mentis alienatione, omni intellectu careat* - such a disease as deprives the patient of the knowledge of the true aspect and position of things about him - hinders him from distinguishing friend from foe - and gives him up to the impulse of his own distempered fancy.[56]

In summary – inability to make rational decisions exempts one from guilt of acting in an immoral way (here I make assumption that criminal behavior is usually one that is considered to be immoral). In fiction this idea is often turned upside down in to: a mentally ill person can perform an immoral act at any moment because of his inability to assess his own guilt. Again we see the Descartian idea of rationality being a guarantee of good. In *Bug* we see this when Peter stabs Dr. Sweet to death, because he believes that Sweet is a robot, in other words, madness is the reason for murder. And even if legally he probably would not considered to be responsible for his actions, it does not change the fact that an act of killing is outside of what we see as normal or right behavior, especially because it is an irreversible act.

As a counterpoint to the insane Peter we have Agnes' ex-husband - Jerry, who is criminal and he is dangerous but he is obviously sane. He seems to be quite capable of reasonably assessing his own situation and potential consequences. He is deviant but not insane. Although he is as likely to

perform (and does perform) acts of violence, we can apply the Theory of Mind to his actions. Although immoral, his behavior has sane goals. Jerry is perfectly aware of the "true aspect and position about him". We can, more or less, predict actions of Jerry, but what happens in Peter's head is beyond us. Gus is an unsympathetic character, but when contrasted to Peter – a criminal seems to be less menacing than a madman. In last minutes of the film, Gus actually becomes the last hope that can still save Agnes from madness and death.

Peter's alien mindset and the unpredictability steaming from it is something that *Bug* exploits. In the scene where Jerry is looking in the microscope, Peter leans over his head, almost touching it with an awl. The actor communicates that there is something happening in the head of Peter with a disturbed facial expressions, and we already know that his toughs are "strange", so until Peter turns away, the audience is hanging in suspense if something violent can happen soon. If in the case of Jerry, the violence (and we know that he was jailed for an attempted murder) is something that can be, at least to a some degree, to be reasoned with; Peter, even if in a court case he would be probably declared "not guilty by reason of insanity", is seen as more dangerous and sinister because he does not possess the reason that can filter good from evil. The danger coming from him is unpredictable.

As I write *sinister* I mean that the madness does not make Peter a victim, instead he is a methodical predator - the real menace of the movie. Also it is not exactly right to say that he is incapable of reasoning, instead his reason operates on the premises shaped by madness. This madness is not a Cartesian Evil Genius, because then he would shape what a madman experiences, and this is only a part of how Peter's madness works. He manipulates Agnes in to believing him, what eventually culminated in her catching Peter's insanity, as he infects her with his misconceptions and his flawed logic. When Agnes doubts his story, each time he punishes her by threatening her fear of being alone.

Peter's manipulations on Agnes suggest that he is self-aware of the difference between the reality and his own delusions. Each time when confronted by demands to provide some kind of proof about his beliefs instead he just prevents Agnes from expressing her doubts. At first, he claims that Agnes hates him when he suspects that she does not believe him and then he just pressures her in to unconditionally accepting what he claims. He is deliberate and methodical and it is clear that he

is conscious that at least for Agnes his delusions are not true. The scene where he forces Agnes to admit the existence of the bugs is the most obvious moment of him manipulating her:


                                PETER

        They got to you, goddamn it. If you're a part of this…

                                AGNES

            No! I'm just trying to make sense...

                                PETER

        Okay, you tell me. Do we have the bugs or not?

                                AGNES

            I'm just looking for an explanation!

                                PETER

                Do we have bugs or not?

                                AGNES

                    I don't know.

                                PETER

        It's not a matter of opinion. An organism just is or isn't.

                                AGNES

                        Right.

                                PETER

            So, are there bugs or aren't there?

                                AGNES

                        - Some…

                                PETER

No, don't give me "some" bugs. Presence of bugs, absence of bugs.
The sign outside says "vacancies" or "no vacancies." It doesn't
say "possibility of vacancies." Now, do we have bugs or not?

AGNES

Yeah.

PETER

Then your doctor is lying to you.

It can be said that there is a method in Peter's madness. This method dissolves at the very end of the movie, when it turns in to running around naked and rambling, but until then Peter can be seen as switching between two different modes of his mental state. One is genuine immersion in his own paranoia: he seems to be scared, even in the scenes where he is not observed by other characters, he is depicted as sincerely concerned about the bugs and surveillance, he makes assumptions and acts in a way that is provoked by his delusions.

But then there is the other side of him, very methodical one, rational and even self-conscious. He switches to it whenever somebody threatens his grip on Agnes. The dialog I have provided above is a good illustration of this, as is his simulated seizure. In this aspect Peter looks more like a child that plays a make-believe game with his mother and who is jealous of anyone cutting in and disrupting the game. It is clear that he needs Agnes mostly to play along. Again, just in the very end he gives away the steering-wheel of the madness to Agnes, signaling that he had accomplished his goal, and he is completely confident that Agnes is as insane now as he is. Until then he either tries to cut Agnes from other people, or suppress her doubts in anything that he says. Madness here becomes akin some kind of sinister disease that not only makes you sick, but makes you want to infect other people, to ease your own misery. Here, I think, it is the biggest divergence between the film and reality in a way how mental illness works, it is shaped by the needs of the plot, and so it expresses the point of view that this film holds: madness is not only contagious it possesses a sinister mind of its own and it has a goal to spread.

Sometimes what we perceive as madness can be provoked by the forces unknown to us. Possession could be one example of this (I am speaking about fiction of course). The difference here is between person acting with impaired awareness of reality and person made to act in a deviant way because of some external reasons. Peter's case is somehow blurred in this regard. His

mental state makes him misunderstand his surroundings, but at the same time he operates in very methodical self-serving manner, as if madness itself is self-aware. Madness becomes a separate entity. Not as explicitly as in *Me, Myself and Irene*, but the separation between insane person and the insanity itself can be seen in *Bug.* Peter's actions are harmful for him but they serve to grow and spread the madness, as would be happening in the case of possession. The concept of patient and illness become mixed. Here the parallel with *Exorcist* becomes not only as a marketing trick. *Bug's* madness is evil infecting people. However, I think this is not what the fans of the Friedkin's blockbuster were expecting. Finally the inconsistency of the nature of madness points to the fact that it is just a device to progress a plot. *Bug* is not about exploration of madness, but only uses it as a tool to comment certain social issues.

## Catching Madness

Speaking about the nature of madness, the Agnes' case is quite different. First of all, if Peter starts by being a schizophrenic, Agnes catches his madness, so we can assume that her madness is a case of *Folie a deux*, rather than a medical condition. It would be hard for me to comment on how often this happens in reality, although this condition is included in ICD-10[57], so at least it is medically plausible, on the other hand is no longer included in DSM-5. But nevertheless I would argue that this element of being contagious is more a social comment than reflection of real a psychopathological condition. What we see in *Bug* is more like comment that stupidity and dangerous ideas (in general, immoral/irrational behavior) are contagious – idea that untrue and potentially harmful and unfounded ideas and behavior tend to spread, and people often tend to make stupid choices especially when left to the influence of other stupid/immoral people. Phrases like "Insanity is spreading" or "contagious madness" are commonly used and understood not as medical terms but as terms for describing undesired social processes. In the case of Agnes, madness can be summarized as folly. In other words, what appears as insanity is just a series of bad decisions that in Agnes case are motivated by a need of love. This actually can be confirmed in the very final scene, where it looks like she has a moment of clarity when it is already too late. It also touches upon the idea that even such a positive feeling as love can lead to madness and moral degradation. In *Bug* love is not rational, and so it does not protect from evil.

The dynamic of Agnes' madness is more like game/addiction or intoxication that had gone out of control. If Peter seems to be genuine ill, Agnes is more depicted as a member of a cult. The parallel

with a cult is hinted through the conspiracy theories that Peter constantly tells. He mentions several such cases like Peoples Temple and other suicide cults and he seems to be on their side. And the film's plot actually mirrors those cases on a miniature scale of two people, one representing a cult leader, another - a follower, one – insane, another – driven insane, one sinister, another – foolish, and finally they commit a suicide. Madness spreads from one person to another and then the two madmen starts to feed on each other's insanity. Peter needs confirmation of his delusions and Agnes needs someone who needs her. It is a form of codependency. Unlike a schizophrenia-like state of Peter, that is a mental illness, where his mental state differs from our own in an essential quality, codependency is a personality trait that has gone to an extreme.[58] This is actually a good summary of Agnes character. She is an image of a person that made bad decisions because of the fear of being left alone and thus pushed herself from what was a borderline "normal" to the irrational and dangerous and finally – fatal. Her need to be saved from her own life makes her into a potential victim for this cult-like situation, and Peter (or his madness) instantly feels that and uses her weakness to push her across the line of sanity, grabbing her from the outside and pulling her in to the Otherness.

The vulnerability of Agnes is shaped by several factors. The fact that she has lost her child, reflects on her fear to loose Peter, who, as I have mentioned before, displays childish behavior (the parallel between Otherness and childishness is also a common one). Her agreeing with everything Peter says, and even her self-mutilation, is just her way of keeping him with her. But only when they are left completely isolated, there is none to act as reality check for Agnes, and only then she starts acting as she really believes Peter, not just playing along. From that point she actively starts taking part in weaving the theories of a paranoid delusion. This is when *Folie Imposee* manifests. Taking in to consideration the isolation the characters are in, without outside influence, the beliefs and delusions can be challenged only by a rational mind. Rationality of Peter is impaired by schizophrenia; Agnes is prone to the foolishness. After short while without any contact with the outside world and she starts to speak things that contradict our own understanding about how the reality works, starts to behave in a strange manner, both of which mirrors the behavior of Peter, and drifts more and more from what we believe and what we understand as "right" behavior. She seems to be more and more insane, more alien.

This gradual process of going insane can be seen in many other fictions. One of the best known examples would be the *Shining* (1980). Here the characters are gradually driven insane by the circumstances. In *Bug* as in *Shining* this process is facilitated by the mind altering substances, alcohol in Jack's case, alcohol and cocaine in the case of Agnes. In both cases this is somehow guided process that develops gradually with the help of external forces. In *Shock Corridor* (1963) this happens from simply spending too much time in an asylum. Going back to the *Exorcist* (1973), the parallel is similar, as the demonic possession develops gradually. In both, *Exorcist* and *Shining,* the external forces are metaphysical. In *Bug* the agent of madness is very real man from the flesh and blood, but nevertheless the process itself is very similar. In all four cases something drives "normal" people to such extremes that they practically cease to be humans. This form and process of going mad does not fit in to contemporary medical model, but it is a norm in popular culture, as can be illustrated by "he is driving me crazy" or "spreading insanity" expressions. It suggests a concept of madness that can attack a sane (although somehow vulnerable) person and transform him or her in to an insane.



**Figure 2.6: Peter and Agnes „mirroring" each other**

Another difference between Peter and Agnes is that she is more likely to evoke our sympathy. The fact that she is played by Ashley Judd, who was many times nominated as one of the world's sexiest women, by itself can invoke patronizing sentiments in some viewers. Even in the very end she is sincerely terrified by the murder of Dr. Sweet. So in this small, isolated flat she is comparatively more moral, and by the merit of this to the very end we are teased by the faint hope that she will be saved and will regain her sanity. The later she actually does, but then it is too late. Agnes' line in *Bug* is of a struggle of a flawed person against the evil which is madness, one that she loses because of her flaws. Her madness is not only a source of suffering but it has a clear moral aspect, it is not unlike crime or childishness that can be fixed but also must be punished.

Even if at the end Peter and Agnes look like mirror images of each other (they actually are depicted in that way, sitting against one another naked, repeating each other **(Figure 2.6)**, inner workings of their madness is different on many levels. If Agnes starts sane, Peter's madness starts hidden; here Peter can be compared to a werewolf – a monster hiding behind the surface of an ordinary person.  Agnes starts as vulnerable but sane and gradually sinks in madness.

Unlike most of horror film victims, she does not fight for her survival, and that makes it easy to give up on her, as we are used to identify with proactive characters. Through the film it gets harder and harder for the audience to keep an empathy link with her as she constantly makes choices that the audience understands as wrong, choices bringing her deeper in danger. The common sense (i.e. our Theory of Mind) tells that this should be obvious to Agnes also, so this process constantly goes at odds with the possibility of identification until it reaches the point where we stop trying, what I think corresponds with the moment when we stop caring for her.

In the end, seeing her screaming: "I am the super mother bug", with the hands raised high, reacting to an invisible swarm of bugs, many reviewers noted, that they were laughing. What means that they lost an emphatic link with the character, and instead shifted to the position of spectators observing a farce, not unlike slapstick scenes in *Me, Myself and Irene*. The believable character turned in to a stereotype that can be described by one word – madman – a character only characterized by madness, what describes character's way of acting, thinking and even his/her appearance.

## Conclusion

This last scene is where film sharply breaks from the apparently "realistic" depiction of madness in to a theatrical (i.e. exaggerated and codified). This helps or almost forces us to shift from identification to speciation. The manner of acting becomes over the top (reminding us about the artificiality of what we see): actors run around screaming, take off clothes, as if shedding the last layer of "normality", like members of some primitive tribe from the old movies, finally they kill themselves. Judging from the numerous reviews the audience was split in its reactions, many did not take it seriously, but some were extremely disturbed by it.

I think that for one part of the audience the finale seemed as farce, where everything becomes incomprehensible and exaggerated and characters cannot function in everyday situations, we

laugh because we see dangerous things, but we are aware of the fake nature of the film, we experience a physical and moral violation and at the same time we feel safe because we do not accept characters as real people. The scene with the pizza delivery would actually perfectly fit in a comedy like *Hangover* (2009), the difference being that in *Hangover* the protagonists are intoxicated, in *Bug* they are insane. But as *Me, Myself and Irene* demonstrated the inadequate behavior can be funny regardless of the reasons behind it.

For other viewers, who still felt the emotional connection with the characters, the finale turned into grotesque, as there was nothing left in whole screen that would not be twisted in some ugly way by the raging madness. Those viewers did experience the violation without getting relief from acknowledging the unreality of the scene. The violation, I think was not so much based on the death of the characters, as on the shear Otherness that the ending scene produced. By identifying with the characters, one was carried along in to this alien landscape outside our rational and moral norms, and this can be quite disturbing experience.

Shared madness in the end is a victory for Peter and defeat for Agnes. In short, *Bug* provides us with an unhappy ending of a struggle where one side is represented by sanity and another not only by insanity but everything that is immoral, ugly and scary. At least in that sense it has something in common with horror films. On the other hand, the "good" in film's reality is not an elevated good, but just barely not as bad as the other side.

Agnes' folly is then subjected to a harsh treatment. Her foolishness is depicted if not as equal to madness then at least as something that can lead to it. Although *Bug* creates an illusion of a contemporary medical concept of madness, by referring to a believable nomenclature, and providing with a believable symptomatic, the way in which film threats the phenomenon is moralizing and judgmental. At best we can laugh at the madmen because they are not able to pass a reasonable judgment. At worst this is a fantasy of characters self-punishment for not conforming to the authority of rationality, that is to be understood as only source of good and right. The same outcome for both Peter and Agnes signifies that the reasons behind irrationality are not as important as the result that this way of thinking provides, putting love in the same category as schizophrenia, and making criminal seem like a lesser evil, because it can function in our society at least part of the time. In short, Agnes' bad judgment is her downfall despite being motivated by love. It can be illustrated by 1785's print *L'Amour conduit par la Folie* – blind love is led by madness

(**Figure 2.7**), it is interesting to note that people depicted bowing to this pair, probably mocking the idea of making non rational impulses in to a virtues. Unlike *Me, Myself and Irene*, where love has a magical power to restore sanity, in *Bug* love is foolish and leads to madness and death, as in this fiction rationality and objective results, not a metaphysical "righteousness" is main factor that separates good from evil and sanity from insanity.



**Figure 2.7: Cupid, blindfolded, led by a woman carrying a fool's bauble and personifying Madness, while in the background people are paying their homage to them. 1785 Mezzotint**

The theme of foolishness is also seen in the depiction of the doctor Sweet. If we accept that he is real and not a delusion, then he is also foolish. He enters the mad space and feels safe inside. He takes drugs; he sits on the gasoline with a lighter in his hand. He does not retreat when he sees Peter with a knife in his hand. He sends Jerry away, the only person who could protect him; he is at least as foolish as Agnes, probably more, despite his credentials, his self-confidence and scientific terminology that he spits out. It can be interpreted as a film's comment about mental system's inability to deal with the madness and being ignorant or even outright charlatans. In this film madness prays on foolish, and folly itself is to blame for this.

Again, it is interesting to note some parallels with *Exorcist*. While in *Exorcist* there is a possessed girl that in her folly invites a demon by playing with Ouija board. In trying to save the girl one of the priests dies because his faith is not strong enough. The parallel can be drawn here between exorcists and Dr. Sweet. Unlike the priests, Sweet seems to be cynical and does not take Peter seriously. He actually flirts with the delusions, as if trying to reverse the roles, and to seduce Agnes into giving away Peter as demon was trying to seduce the priests. And if a little doubt kills Karras in

the *Exorcist*, the doctor's fate is sealed even sooner for not having much of determination in the first place. There is skepticism towards the mental health institutions that in this film are depicted as incompetent and powerless to deal with real madness.

In conclusion *Bug* works as a cautionary tale, shaming the behavior that it depicts as leading or even not resisting the madness. It is very simplified depiction of madness, but it is hidden below layers of textbook symptoms and convincing acting. All this creates a story that is believable, that if found on the pages of tabloid would not raise much suspicion about its truthfulness as it plays to majority's beliefs about the "right way" of thinking and behaving as being right and superior. The movie itself is open about being a fiction, and emphasizes this with scenes that obviously belong to the medium of cinema, but as I have mentioned in the introduction of the paper, the exaggeration and improbability do not prevent the fiction from being perceived as speaking about real things. But in reality it is rather a conservative classical outlook about madness that is quite judgmental if not outright hostile. And although it seems that the real target of the film is domestic extremism, it does this at the expense of mental illness, it puts a label of mental illness on the behavior that is almost universally understood as wrong. It warns the audience against madness as foolishness and calls us to laugh at it or punishes us for not doing that; it dehumanizes and humiliates madness, making madness itself in to something shameful and immoral. If we agree with the director that this is a black comedy, then it is an invitation to mock the victim because his downfall is his own fault. The suffering itself becomes an object to spectate not something to identify or even to feel compassion too.

*Bug* also differentiates between the people that are really sick and the ones that can be saved by simply isolating them from the "bad" influence. But in the end they both would be better off if some outside force would take care of them. It is a direct opposite of Foucaultian ideas - *Bug* can be interpreted as a proponent of enforcement of rationality and isolation of madness.

Finally, it is interesting to see the connection between the genre and the madness. As I have already explained, the genre of *Bug* is not so easy to grasp, especially while you are still in the process of watching it. That uncertainty about the genre spills in to uncertainty about the mental state of the characters. If this is a horror as advertised then what Peter claims can be real. If this is a black comedy as Friedkin claimed, then maybe the characters are simply stupid and we should not take them seriously? The genre shapes our assessment of the film reality and it provides us

with the tools to measure the madness. The rules of each particular fiction and what is real in the frames of each fiction inevitably shapes what is wrong immoral or insane.

*Bug* also strikes a sad note that it is hard to empathize with mentally ill people, as it is hard to think and feel together with those that operate on very different premises, especially when we think that this will not change for the better, turning the sympathy in to frustration.

## *Shutter island* (2010): the Insanity of the Cinematic Experience

The last film I will discuss in this paper is *Shutter Island* (2010), it is a film directed by Martin Scorsese and based on a bestselling book by the same name written by Dennis Lehane. This is the only film out of three that has got somehow positive reaction from audience, critics and mental health organizations. Nevertheless, the depiction of madness is in *Shutter Island* is multilayered, what makes it an interesting subject of analysis. And before I start speaking about the movie, I must point, that the story itself, and therefore the in big part the depiction of madness in this movie, comes from the text of the book, as the movie follows the book's plot almost word by word. But this, actually, is why it is interesting to analyze this particular film, as it gives us the opportunity to notice the subtle differences that despite of identical plot, arises when the madness is transported from the medium of literature to the medium of film. Those differences, although do not change the plot itself, play quite significant part in how we, as the audience, consume the film. The advertisement campaign, neither in posters nor in trailer, has mentioned the fact that the film is a book adaptation. That suggests that the film has been made to function as an independent peace, and even if the comparison between film and the book can be useful, the movie can be analyzed on its own.

The plot follows Teddy Daniels (Leonardo DiCaprio) and Chuck Aule (Mark Ruffalo), two US marshals who arrive at the island-based mental institution for the criminally insane – Shutter Island, to look for an inmate/patient woman, who has supposedly disappeared in to a thin air. Things quickly start to become strange then straight paranoid. Eventually Teddy finds himself in the middle of insane conspiracy that makes him doubt his own sanity.

The plot of *Shutter Island*, as in many cases of the depiction of mental illness, deals not only with the madness but also psychiatry. Psychiatry is inevitably interwoven with the depiction of madness, as the depiction of interaction between the mental state and the establishment dealing with it speaks a lot about the interpretation of the madness itself. It is also often depicted not as an instrument for healing but an opposite of the madman – structure of repression. In this respect *Shutter Island* was modestly praised by NAMI: for discussing "*a struggle for recovery and conflict between competing methods of psychiatry at a critical point in history- surgery, medication, and intense psychotherapy.*"[59]

Here we can see different outlooks towards the mental illness clashing in one institution over a particular patient - Teddy. We see Dr. Cowley and Dr. Sheehan representing the humane psychotherapeutic approach, where the patients are treated like humans, even going so far as to allowing patients to be happy in their own madness. And then we have the "old guard" embodied in the German accent bearing Dr. Naehring, who believes that the institution's personnel must do everything to protect themselves from the dangerous inmates, medicating or lobotomizing them, as long as that makes them less dangerous to the sane, he does represent a mental institution in a Froucaultian sense – an institution of repression. This distinction also reflects two different outlooks towards the madness: one as the difference that has the right to coexist with us, another as evil that needs to be contained. Audience is invited to participate in this discourse, and film, of course, guides us in choosing the "right" side, as do other two movies that I speak about in this paper.

The events, without a doubt, are a reflection of the true processes that was happening in 50's. But it is also oversimplified and somehow more convenient depiction of what was happening with the medical understanding about madness at that time. First of all, though not accented, the lobotomy and medication are put as antithesis to the therapeutic approach. This is not correct, as medication and therapy often go together in the real life treatment of the mentally ill. What we are dealing with there is rather free will against stripping of the free will (as a form of repression). I think that allowing to be medicated is often seen as a kind of passivity, and passivity is often frowned upon.

It is also a quite common belief that a mental institution is capable to make a sane person to become a madman – to strip him of his own humanity, again a Foucaultian idea of institution that has a goal to break, not to heal. We do not want that to happen to us, and so we don't want this to happen for someone with whom we identify. But for example, in the movie *From Hell* (2001) lobotomizing of Sir William Gull is cruel but justified ending, as William is a menace to the characters for which we feel empathy, it not only renders him not dangerous anymore, but satisfies our wish to punish him for what he did.

## Phantoms

The first shots of the *Shutter Island* brings us to a place similar to one that Sir William Gull meets his end: we meet policemen, i.e. people that can legally use force, coming to the mental

institution on an island, with the predisposition of potential danger. From the very first shots film establishes the tone that marks all things connected with madness – danger, uncertainty and isolation. Even the ship's captain expresses the inaccessibility of the island and wishes to be out of here as soon as possible. Then, as we follow the protagonists, we are exposed to the walls with barbed wire and iron gates. The entering scene is depicted in such a way, that it makes us want to turn back and run away, but instead we are carried deeper inside. There are a lot of POV shots as if we are taking a ride ourselves, gates closes behind us, and we are left on the island in the middle of the storm, that disrupts communication with the outside world, surrounded by insane and the doctors that remind Nazi scientists. In the book this is much calmer trip carried on foot, but here it is made in to something that reminds us a horror ride in a theme park. The arrival scene ends with the close shoot of the main gates closing behind, cutting us from the only exit. Now the audience, together with the protagonists is confined in a world of madness.

Denis Lehane himself in one of the interviews stated that this book is "*an homage to Gothic, but also an homage to B movies and pulp.*"[60] This points out to a presence of a meta-text – an extensive quoting of other generic fiction and its mannerisms. So the film is a good illustration of the depiction of madness that is shaped by established conventions of storytelling, it is rooted not in scientific concepts of psychopathology, but rather in literally and film classic. And this classic is by itself based and inspired by medical and popular ideas that existed at the time when particular genre had formed. Medically those conventions are outdated, but they are still expected in generic films, and to a certain degree they keep those stereotypes alive. For example, the understanding of madness in Gothic literature and the era of Romanticism that gave birth to it was a mix of biological, metaphysical and purely sentimental ideas that had freely intermixed, this understanding was strongly rooted in sensitivities of that time. In a way art was safe and socially acceptable medium to discuss topics that were concerned with the otherwise undiscussable gray areas between right and wrong, good and evil.

This particular mix of supernatural, madness and social issues often has manifested as hallucinations of the dead that are caused by the guilt of the hero of the story. It is very interesting to note the concept hallucination of the dead that joins metaphysical and insanity in to one entity. The resulting form of madness is something that has very defined meaning, mostly of the guilt and blame. It exist to be either solved by the hero or to punish him. This kind of experience almost

always is depicted as an instrument of a metaphysical principle of right and wrong. And this can be seen in *Shutter Island* also.

Moreover, the nature of a hallucination of the dead is more complicated than that of a simple ghost in its very base meaning. It is well explained by the professor Owen Davies in his book *The Haunted: a Social History of Ghosts*:

> So a ghost sensed visually was an apparition, but an apparition was not necessarily a ghost; it could be another form of spirit, a saint or a devil perhaps, or an image of the deceased created by natural forces. 'Phantom' and 'phantasm' have a long history of usage in English sources, though they were rarely used in popular literature until the influence of magic lantern shows from the late eighteenth century onwards. Although occasionally used in the sense of 'ghost', they were generally employed to denote visions or hallucinations of the dead rather than the appearance of their souls.[61]

This explanation defines experience of a ghost as something that can be real and imagined at the same time. It can be seen as a madman's hallucination, or even a mistake of the perception. But its actual form is not as important as its function. In some way this phantomous nature of ghosts is echoed in the experience of the movie, like Davies mentions in his passage or like W. J. T. Mitchell notes in his lecture *Seeing Madness* while speaking about the connection between smoke, demons and cinematic experience, pointing out that light phantoms from projectors reflected in the cigarette smoke dissolves the boundary between what is happening on the screen and in the cinema room, Mitchel stresses that it makes invisible to become visible.[62] Noir uses smoke extensively, turning human breath of life visible, substituting ghosts. This becomes a method of expressing invisible – human mind and soul.

The phantoms that Teddy deals with in the S*hutter Island*, are of not well defined origin (Ghosts? Memories? Dreams? Drug induced visions?), but they clearly are a visual manifestation of Teddy's mind – his madness. In the book they mostly appear as dreams or as an inner voice that can be as easily interpreted as character's toughs or as spirits of the dead, it depends on the outlook of the viewer. The film transforms this literally voice in to full-fledged visual hallucination, with phantasmagoric colors and special effects. This gives a ghostly form to something that could easily be just a voice of conscience. This stylistic choice has a double effect. First of all, it makes the character look more insane as now he is not only dreaming and hearing a voice but experiencing visual hallucinations.

Secondly, it is the reference to the cinema phantom - which we know to be false, but we should also ask to whom does it manifest: the hero or us, the audience? As we see from the book, a simple inner voice would be sufficient to tell the story. But as this is a movie, it dictates a particular ways of expression. The ghosts are an artifact of cinema as a medium of storytelling. They disappear in a blink of an eye, they are clad in clothing covered in blood, do not burn in fire and are colored by a different color grading. In short, their nature is visually different from anything else in this film. Before we get the information that Teddy is a patient of this mental institution it is easy to interpret them as a poetic device, not unlike the shaking of the walls in *Bug,* or a drum score when Charlie is turning in to Hank in *Me, Myself and Irene*. Here I will quote Mary Shelley, a prominent author of Gothic literature:

> But these were not real ghosts (pardon, unbelievers, my mode of speech) that they saw; they were shadows, phantoms unreal; that while they appalled the senses, yet carried no other feeling to the mind of others than delusion, and were viewed as we might view an optical deception which we see to be true with our eyes, and know to be false with our understandings. I speak of other shapes. The returning bride, who claims the fidelity of her betrothed; the murdered man who shakes to remorse the murderer's heart; ghosts that lift the curtains at the foot of your bed as the clock chimes one; who rise all pale and ghastly from the churchyard and haunt their ancient abodes; who, spoken to, reply; and whose cold unearthly touch makes the hair stand stark upon the head; the true old-fashioned, foretelling, flitting, gliding ghost,— who has seen such a one? [63]

Like Owen Davies, she makes a clear distinction between a ghost and a phantom. First being metaphysical entity with their own agency, and second – only illusion. And she also claims that the difference is obvious and instantly recognizable, because as we can see, the real ghost always carry some kind of emotional charge, they are not random, but meaningful manifestations in the waking world.

In *Shutter Island* we see ghosts and understand that there is some kind of meaning behind them, and there is always something that betrays their ghostly nature. In the dreams and memories Teddy is able to interact with the ghost of his wife and children but each time he sees them in the waking world, there is no interaction at all.  So what are we looking at? Are they ghosts or phantoms?

If those are hallucinations of a madman, why are we – sane people, experiencing them? Furthermore, if Teddy is a real madman, then his visions should be counterproductive. But instead

it is clear that the meaning behind ghosts does not disappear even if we accept that Teddy is insane, they are meaningful as sometimes they provide Teddy with advice, which Teddy then disregards, putting himself in to a deeper trouble. His ghosts are not only reminders of the past, but they offer what Patric Fuery defines as a different kind of meaning:

> If madness is not meaningless, and instead offers a different type of meaning, then we come closer to understanding how anything can be seen as meaningful by looking at its opposite.[64]

And so, despite the fact that we almost see the world through the eyes of a madman, we do not become mad ourselves. Instead of going mad, we learn something and become saner. By exposing ourselves to the ghosts that haunt Teddy, we are given some kind of wisdom. The idea that madness is devoid of meaning or work ultimately is true for Teddy, for him it is his personal downfall – a voluntary lobotomy. But for us it is rather a reveling experience. It is a paradox that can only happen in relationship to fiction, when the madness has meaning, but this meaning is meant for spectators.

In the medium of cinema, the moral meaning also can get a visual expression by the way the character is filmed. Several times through the film we are put in a POV of dying people looking at Teddy. First time it is a POV of dying Nazi officer in Dachau, who is bleeding on the floor, for whom Teddy denies the possibility to commit suicide, leaving him to suffer for an hour. In this scene camera looks up to the Teddy's face, as if from someone inferior. But at the same time it is a POV, so it puts us in the position of someone who is belittled. Next, we have a shot from above, but it is not POV, it is a shot from the ceiling, as a hint to some greater force that is overseeing and judging the event.

The second example is POV from the dead daughter floating in the water, when Teddy runs to rescue her. Again this is a shot from below, from the POW of a dying person. It is a vulnerable position; one who needs help that comes too late. Although both POVs are technically similar, the moral charge is different. Here, I feel, the movie plays with the fact that there are no easy way of recognizing good and evil, each case must be examined – idea that this film exploits a lot.

Finally, POV we see in the lighthouse, and there for the first time we are put in to a POV of Teddy, while he is aiming at and then shoots Dr. Sheehan and Dr. Cowley. The scene accents the surreality of the situation, but also while we are put in to a POV of man holding a gun, we are questioned if

we would pull the trigger. There is an option to pull the trigger together with Teddy and to cling to his version of the story - so choosing violence, which film actively condemns, and madness. Those three scenes also puts us in to perspectives of a monster, a victim and then in a position from which we can became either victim or a monster. This way of involving the audience in the scene is only possible in a illusory medium of cinema.

All the forementioned scenes ask questions about righteousness, guilt and blame, which side a spectator wants to take. Also they communicate a superiority of one's position. Here the superiority and guilt are strongly connected, as we can feel the silent blame that comes from a inferior position. Through those scenes film points out that the might does not make you right or sane.

In general, the meaning of madness is often rooted in right – wrong opposition, but in Noir, the important source of inspiration for *Shutter Island,* although madness can be associated with evil or, at least, socially destructive behavior, at the same time it is born not our of evil motives but instead of past traumas caused by the encounter with evil. In Teddy's case this encounter happened at the Dachau concentration camp. That is a premise of a typical Noir anti-hero. Traditionally, he will be punished at the end, but his punishment will not give us a moral satisfaction, because we will know that he himself has been a victim. His demise, though stops his evil acts, does not destroy the source of evil.

I will repeat that the characterizing someone as madman usually is not a compliment, and although there are movies where mentally ill person is depicted as a completely good and/or sympathetic (*Rain Man* (1988), *A Beautiful Mind* (2001)) in those cases the whole movie is dedicated to a fight against the stereotype, often so much as to twist facts to create a more positive image. *Shutter Island* is somehow special in this regard: Teddy is insane and his insanity leads to the behavior that is outside our social norms. Like a typical Noir anti-hero Teddy is a victim of his past – war and a tragedy in his family, what leads him in to madness and confinement. But the impression we get about him is hardly one of anti-hero. One of the reasons is that we learn the fact of his madness at the very end of the story, in a form of twist ending. Until then only the ghosts betray his dark side. In the lighthouse scene the film catches us unaware. At that point we not only sympathize but identify with Teddy. It is exactly that moment when we are put in to POV of Teddy who is pointing a gun at the doctors. Accepting his madness, is accepting our own

inability to differentiate between good and evil, rational and irrational. But although the facts that film provides does not leave a lot of space for a doubt, at least some of reviewers were questioning the ending, claiming and hoping that Teddy was really a victim of a conspiracy. And the motivation behind this, I would argue, was that the character we identify with cannot be insane at the end of the story.

It can be said that film leads its audience in to a trap. *Shutter Island* almost mocks the audience's ability to differentiate between sanity and insanity, real and phantasmic. We can tell that the visions are just a visions, therefore and because we are sane, unlike Teddy, who seems to be unable to do so, but also because we are given clues such as color grading. But at the end of the movie, when the plot is blatantly explained by Dr. Cowley, who even uses a flowchart to make it clear how absurd is everything that Teddy, and so we – the audience believe. The audience is put before the fact that not everything was so clearly marked, and more effort, specifically a Cartesian Metaphysical Doubt - a pure rational effort is needed to separate phantoms from reality.

On the other hand, film casts a doubt on the power of the critical thinking. Like characters, so the settings in *Shutter Island*, are illustrations of the inner world of its inhabitants or even some grander ideas. Linda Bayer Berenbaum, in her book The Gothic Imagination, explains:

> *Mental disorders appeal to the Gothic temperament in much the same way as do ruins. Insanity is a form of mental deterioration, an internal ruin. Rather than the beauty of order, balance and proportion, Gothicism seeks the partial, the drastic, or the extraordinary.* [65]

Madnes gets physical manifestation. The same can be told about the forces of nature. Storms and isolated islands are topics beloved by Romanticists, they became reflection of human life. In S*hutter Island* we often encounter passages telling about the storm invading in to the safety of human structures, be it a residential space or a crypt or a ward. Wind break doors, branches break windows, water leeks through a ceiling, disrupting communications with the outside world. It becomes a mirror of the Teddy's mind, as the reality seeps in to his fantasy that he has created. In this light, hero's insanity, as an internal turmoil, visualizes as a doomed but noble fight against the odds.

The element of storm, though beloved by Gothic writers, originates in the counter-enlightenment movement of *Sturm und Drang,* where paintings of irrational destruction caused by the nature

where a theme in parallel to the irrational nature of the human itself. Madness as one of the irrational states of human is a central part of the *Shutter Island* as is the storm that tears down everything that human has built: be it wireless communication or a burial grounds. This traditional outlook questions the rationality and morality of human nature itself, exposing his destructive (physically and socially) nature, claiming that madness is a part of being human. This idea also is reflected in the Noir genre, which is heavily influenced by the Freudian concepts of subconscious and suppressed urges. Marlisa Santos in her book *The Dark Mirror* writes:

> Noir paints a picture of a world where normalcy, as we might have known it, or hoped to imagine it, ceases to exist – where the things we most depend on as human beings fail to have any confronting power. Even in the most horrifying crisis, one's own mind should be firmament on which to depend; however, Noir shows this to be a crumbling illusion, fraught with unexpected inconsistency and danger, from loss of memory to loss of control. [66]

And what we see here is hero's struggle against the chaos or evil that is a part of his own nature, struggling to keep his own moral integrity, despite the chaos (real and metaphorical) surrounding him, sacrificing his own identity and, finally, his mind to protect himself from evil. The chaotic and powerful nature of the storm is a statement that such human constructions as logic and rationality are helpless here.

*Shutter Island* depicts the storm through the most of its running time, it uses it by conventions of Gothic genre, but it also adds something unique. Specifically it depicts the storm as fake. More than once Teddy gets in the rain, or jumps in to water and in the next shot he is completely dry. The obvious explanation is a mannerism - the *Shutter Island* is repeating a cinematic look of the classical low budget Noir and Gothic films. But we can also interpret this as a Teddy's stubborn refusal to accept reality, clinging to his delusion. Even water does not stick to him. Also here we can refer to the healing properties of water that Foucault mentions in his works:

> …water adds to this the dark mass of its own values: it carries off but it does more: it purifies. Navigation delivers man to the uncertainty of fate; on water each of us is in the hands of his own destiny. . .[67]

So the fact that Teddy almost always seems to be dry, in whatever conditions he wanders, can be interpreted as a reflection of his refusal to recover and accept reality. Furthermore, it is hard to

miss connection between Foucault's ship of fools and the first shot of the movie, where the ship, used to carry patients, brings Teddy to the Shutter Island.

## Moral Ambiguousness

The feeling of uncertainty is a big part of *Shutter Island,* especially when it concerns themes of morality. In a flashback scene we see Teddy executing guards of the Dachau concentration camp – a violent episode before he had gone insane. Had he the right to do that? The Chef Warden of the *Shutter Island*, seems to be fascinated by the violence to the point where he sounds like a lunatic, speaking about biting other's eyes out. But formally he is not a madman; on the contrary, he is one who wards the world against the insane. He is a "man of violence" who keeps anyone from crossing the line separating Us from Others. But when compared with the ones he keeps from reaching Us, he seems to be as much dangerous as they are. So again, the line between sanity and insanity is depicted as fuzzy.

In warden C we meet a madman who tells that he is afraid to go outside, because of the H-bombs. Mrs. Queens also claims that she is not so eager to go outside because it seems strange and violent. On one hand it seems that insane tries to isolate themselves, but then this relationship is well described by Marlisa Santos while discussing *Behind Locked Doors* (1948):

> [Mental institutions] are places of mystery and criminality, meant to be infiltrated . . . Normalcy is seen to be in peril, with law and order exposed to be corrupt and hiding in this environment of mental instability . . . [it becomes] violent and unjust microcosm of modern society in which the weak are victimized, the strong are malicious, and only chance compassion can provide salvation.[68]

As a microcosm of society, asylum not only dissolves the border between right and wrong in itself, but acts as a metaphor of our society as a whole. It does not only reflects the violence and injustice but also fears. By being of a smaller scale, in some sense it can be even seen as a safer place. It is important to note that not only patients but anyone inside the asylum becomes a part of this microcosm. And, I think in a sense of film experience, this applies to the film's audience.

But if morality itself is fuzzy, visual accent on the difference between sane and insane in *Shutter Island* is obvious. This is best expressed in the contrast between the ward C for the most dangerous patients and the doctor's quarters. If the first is dirty, rusty hellhole with the leaking roof and screams echoing through the corridors and labyrinth-shaped staircases then the last one

**Figure 3.1: Us poster of *Shutter Island***

is a heaven of classical luxury, calm and warmed by a fireplace, filled with music. But the main difference is light. Ward C is dark - the only way to find something here is to bring your own source of light, which illuminates dirty naked bodies of madmen, sight that many of us would prefer to not see. In all Gothic tradition the setting is a reflection of the idea. On the other hand, Doctor's quarters are filled with the warm light. So, on the visual level the distinction between sanity and insanity parallels the opposition of light and darkness and order versus chaos - a very traditional distinction, and distinction that is often used to separate good from evil. At the end, when Dr. Cowley is explaining the truth, he uses a white flip-chart which he deliberately illuminates with a lamp. The light causes migraines for Teddy, again, symbolizing his fear of truth. Smoke and darkness are something that prevents one from seeing things, and they are constantly used as a metaphor for Teddy's madness. So, the madness also becomes connected with the ability to see and understand truth as the light tends to go out, or to become obstructed with smoke.

The film's poster **(figure 3.1)** depicts Teddy holding a lighted match. Half of his face is hidden in shadow and another is lighted by the match, there is a trail of smoke rising up. The symbolism here, I think, is quite obvious: there are two sides of a hero, one is in light another is in darkness. This is a technique that can be seen in many modern, but mostly in classical Noir films, and it is a symbol of moral ambiguity. Despite the fact that it started as a visual style that historically was often used because of technical limitations, and then by itself comes from the painting technique of *chiaroscuro* going back to baroque and even earlier, where it was mostly manner of painting, not united by any one meaning. In Noir it eventually became associated with the established meaning, of the dual nature of heroes.

We can see the similar motif of duality in the posters of *Bug, with Agnes face partially hidden in shadows*. We also can see the duality of the character in a dream scene where Teddy meets Laeddis - his other half - with a scar dividing the face in two parts, held together by metal staples.

The symbolist interpretation is unavoidable, because it makes a lot of sense and it is easy to deduct. The character played by DiCaprio is obviously split: he struggles between truth and delusion, between being mad but virtuous or accepting that he is a monster. His character actually voices this perfectly in the very last line of the movie, and probably the biggest difference between the book and the film (the book does not have this line):

```
                              TEDDY

Which would be worse, to live as a monster or to die as a good man?
```

This line not only sums up the internal struggle of Teddy, but clearly states that his internal struggle is of a moral nature, where we have good on the one side and Otherness or monstrousness on the other. Here the sanity itself is not as valuable as a moral integrity and it is for sure not the same. At the same time, what is an easy choice for Teddy is a real puzzle that the audience must solve in a right way, or be punished by the ending of the movie with the sense of meaningless defeat, although not in such an extreme way as in *Bug.*
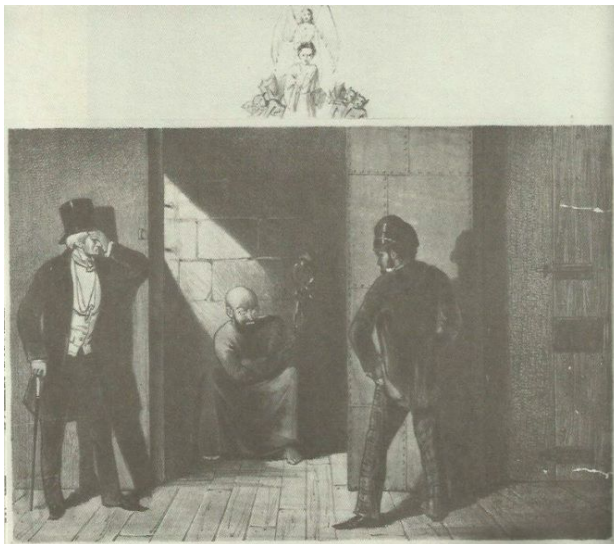


**Figure 3.2: *The Mad House*, a British litography, early nintenth century**

There are other illustrations of ambiguousness and double meanings that become clear only after close reading of the film. The best example is the doctor's lounge. First impression is of the bastion of order and luxury, it is filled with the warm light that, as I have mentioned, symbolizes sanity. But then we get to know the history of this place: the officer residing here in the time of the Civil War put so much money in to building it, that he was court marshaled and executed. The luxury of the building hides a sinister history.

Another example of moral ambiguousness is the scene when Teddy arrives at Dr. Cowley's office for the first time and he sees three pictures

hanging on the wall. First one, is *The Mad House*, a British lithography from early nineteenth century **(figure 3.2)**. The first impression we get by lucking at it is of a confined and tortured madman, but as Sander L. Gilman explains in the book *Seeing the Insane*:

> . . . the madman is directly illuminated by a beam of light whose source seems to be window, and it's symbolic significance is emphasized by the figures above the main scene. Here the angelic spirit protects the madman, restored to senses, while the demons of madness are being exorcised. Thus the light and openness of asylum represent potential salvation from madness.[69]

This lithography, despite the chain and iron door, is an illustration of hope. It also again refers to the light/darkness metaphor that is prominent in *Shutter Island*.



**Figure 3.3: *Nebuchadnezzar* by William Blake, late eighteen century**

Another is an iconic picture of Nebuchadnezzar II (**figure 3.3**) – a Babylonian king that according to the biblical story was punished with madness by God for his pride, and for seven years lived as an animal, believing that he is an ox:

> That very hour the word was fulfilled concerning Nebuchadnezzar; he was driven from men and ate grass like oxen; his body was wet with the dew of heaven till his hair had grown like eagles' *feathers* and his nails like birds' *claws*.[70]

I have already discussed the biblical legend of the mad king earlier in this paper, but here I would add that the depiction of Nebuchadnezzar in the Bible is described as an ox-like – a herbivore, and his gaze in the picture is scared but not aggressive. In no way he looks threatening and, I think, that lets us to feel some sympathy towards him, and look forward for his eventual recovering. He is punished for a wrongdoing, this is his dark side, but he also has a capability to become a good king again.



Figure 3.4: The Tranquilizer chair designed by Dr. Benjamin Rush

The last picture is a tranquilizer chair (**figure 3.4**) – invention of eighteenth century by Dr. Benjamin Rush, also called "Father of American Psychiatry". This chair was supposed to reduce the blood-flow to the patient's head, and so reduce the madness. This was based on misconceptions about origin of the psychopathology. It was not a torturing device despite its look. But with a time, it became one of the symbols of inhumanity of mental health institutions and became associated with the torture and brainwashing. As the *Shutter Island*'s events take place in 1952, it is the time period when is commonly believed that CIA was experimenting within those fields. That suspicion is actually repeated in the film text more than once, casting doubt on the benevolence of the mental health system itself.

The critique of inhuman treatment of mentally ill can be attributed to the books of Benjamin Rush, this is a quote from his book *Medical Inquiries and Observations, Upon the Diseases of the Mind* that is often used to illustrate the idea:

> If all these modes of punishment should fail of their intended effects, it will be proper to resort to the fear of death. Mr. Higgins proved the efficacy of this fear, in completely subduing a certain Sarah T, whose profane and indecent conversation and loud vociferations, offended and disturbed the whole hospital. He had attempted in

vain by light punishments and threats, to put a stop to them. At length he went to her cell, from whence he conducted her, cursing and swearing as usual, to a large bathing tub, in which he placed her. "Now, (said he) prepare for death. I will give you time enough to say your prayers, after which I intend to drown you, by plunging your head under this water." She immediately uttered a prayer, such as became a dying person. Upon discovering this sign of penitence, Mr. Higgins obtained from her a promise of amendment. From that time no profane or indecent language, nor noises of any kind, were heard in her cell.[71]

In reality the time of Benjamin Rush was one of very positive changes in the treatment of mentally ill, especially compared to the previous conditions, it was exactly the *moral treatment* practiced by him that removed the chains from the patients, and started to treat them as humans. At the same time this kind of mental treatment is a form of despotism of reason, when there is only one right way to behave. And those who have power to use it, enforces it on those who they consider to be insane. So it all falls in to a gray area of morality.

When Teddy asks about the pictures Dr. Cowley comments back about chaining of patients in the past. It is impossible to guess the intentions of filmmakers, if they simply are telling the commonly accepted facts, or is there some deeper comment intended. In any case, those pictures illustrate at least one thing: outlook towards the mental illness keeps changing, and that things are not just black and white, but they depend on the context. The same goes to the mental health institutions and professionals. *Shutter Island* openly raises the question: how should we treat those who are mentally ill? Should we punish them? Threaten them with violence? Heal them? Do we have the right to oppress and isolate them? The film questions the right to use power and violence as in the context of sane versus insane, so in general sense. And it points to the idea that maybe those who claims sanity is not always really sane at least in the moral sense. So how should we choose our allegiance?

One of the methods to grab audience's sympathy is by the charisma of actors. DiCaprio rarely plays characters that are intended to be unsympathetic, as is Ben Kingsley who represents the humanistic approach. Dr. Naehring and Max von Sydow who plays him, on the other hand, does invoke an instant antipathy, as he is depicted in an iconic way that is reserved for a noble born Nazi officers – refined but stereotypically evil. The factor of casting then is paired with the perceived moral values of characters and in this way film clearly positions the accents to hint

which side is right and which is wrong. But this does not automatically answer who is sane and who is insane.

## Recognizing Madness



Figure 3.5: Illustration from a children book *Trau keinem Fuchs auf gruener Heid und keinem Jud bei seinem Eid*, 1936

To answer the question of who is sane and who is not, we together with teddy must solve a riddle, that Dr. Cowley devised. It is here to help Teddy to make the right decision (that basically boils down to staying insane or recovering). In a case that he chooses to resist he will be subjected to a lobotomy, that will make him stop being dangerous, but also will strip him of his free will, identity and probably will make him in to a vegetable, there will be no way back. This is also a healing versus a punishment. And Teddy refuses to be healed because he feels the need to be punished for what he has done, he basically chooses death, as we learn from films such as *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest,* where is clearly stated that it is better to be dead than lobotomized (a procedure that, I think, taps in our natural fears). But at the same time Teddy refuses to be a

passive patient, even in his madness he manifests his will, and his downfall is his own choice. Here he displays one of the virtues that I think is universally connected to being a classical hero – being active despite the odds.

It is important to note, that Teddy himself does not deny the fact of his own madness, rather he denies his own actions that he has done in the past. For him lobotomy becomes a kind of escape. As the "good doctor" Cowley describes:

```
                            COWLEY

    We treat them. Try to heal, try to cure. And if that fails, at
    least we provide them with a measure of comfort in their lives.
                             Calm.
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Even if the lobotomy looks terrifying to us, for Teddy it is easier than suffering the ghosts of his past that haunts him. At the same time we, as spectators, see this as too big price to pay. By making this choice, Teddy is depicted as having an almost inhuman sense of justice.



Figure 3.6: Fool steps down the cliff, despite the dog who tries to stop him. Rider-Waite Tarot deck.

I also want to point out that although not directly a mental illness, lobotomy is often depicted as an injured mind that also leaves physical scars, though it usually is not a case in real world lobotomy. Good example would be *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* where in the last scene we see McMurphy marked with the stigma of lobotomy. Arguably the same we can see in the end of *Shutter Island* on Teddy's forehead, when the bandage comes off. In short, it seems that the permanent damage of mind is most often marked with some kind of physical characteristic, for example, scarification, often ugly or outright scary. What probably also can be attributed to a popular concept of *A sound mind in a sound body,* but also to the habit to depict Others as ugly, contrasting the in-group members that display virtuous physical characteristics **(figure 3.5).**

In Teddy's case the scar is barely visible and it is actually hidden under the bandage until the very end. I think that reflects his "Heroic Madness" – it is irredeemable but not ugly. In some way Teddy can be seen as a martyr.

On the other hand, this once more brings us to the concept of folly and stupidity and their relationship with the understanding of madness. Teddy's madness can be seen as a form of folly, as he makes a choice that will be harmful and irreversible for him, but he makes it anyway, as a fool who steps down the cliff (**figure 3.6**), not unlike Agnes in *Bug*. It is mentioned that he repeats this cycle again and again, regaining his sanity and then relapsing back to his delusions, not able to make a choice that seems rational to us. It seems like his actions are meaningless, but there is a clear motivation behind this act, that we can understand, and in a way even justify. It is far from the insanity of Peter in the *Bug*, where his motivation is madness that is beyond our understanding and even more beyond justification; we simply cannot follow the workings of Peter's mind. In the *Shutter Island* Teddy's madness seems to possess a very clear moral logic, what he lacks is the ability to save himself. It has a parallel with Charlie's madness in *Me, Myself and Irene*, where too much normality brings madness. I think this can be defined as morality that overwhelms rationality.

## Two Kinds of Madness

The surplus morality of Teddy makes him more like a tragic hero who had gone mad than a madman. And though I doubt that we can imagine ourselves in the same mental state, we, as the audience, can see a kind of nobility/virtuousness in his madness. In a way he is better than Us, because of his moral integrity, and because he has strength to suffer for it. But then there is a question: can something that we consider to be noble be mad? I think that it is hard to answer yes here, as virtuousness and deviancy are quite opposite concepts. It is easier to accept madness as a way to virtuousness, like in *Me, Myself and Irene,* but much harder to accept that virtuousness can be the reason of madness. On the other hand, love is led by madness, and it depends if we look at it as folly or virtue. And if we accept that virtues can lead to suffering, then we must accept the distinction between mentally ill, based on conditions leading to the state of insanity. Those conditions make a certain group of insane to be assessed differently than our stereotypical madman. That separation can be observed even in real world cases like the introduction of *Let There Be Light* (1948) (and US infomentary about curing post-traumatic stress of WWII soldiers)

where the mental illness resulting from war stress was explicitly separated as having acute neuroses as opposed to peacetime neuroses of "chronic" nature.

Here I will again refer to the madness in the Greek drama. One of the key elements here is the fact that hero goes mad, i.e. we as audience get to know him as sane and then as insane. And we get to pity him, because of his condition, unlike the *really mad*, whom we get to know only in the mad state, and it is not worth to pity them, their madness is what they are, they newer were one of Us and newer will become, they are permanently a part of Otherness.

In the case of a mad hero, madness becomes just a characteristic that is added on the top of otherwise complete character. Teddy seems like a complete personality even before we get to know that he is insane. This accents his difference from stereotypical madmen. For example, Mr. Breene who cut the face of his maid, disfiguring her, is mentally ill, but Teddy and we, as the audience, feel contempt for him for what he had done. His motivations are perverted, based on sexual frustrations, and he is acted like a person devoid of traditional virtues, such as manliness. This character is constructed in a way that should evoke antipathy in us, and this antipathy is voiced by Teddy, who becomes an antithesis of Breene. Breene is defined by madness; we don't see any other characteristics in him besides his perversion.

Breene is contrasted by other patient – Mrs. Kearns who axed her husband. But she explains what has happened in such a way, that it makes her actions look at least partially justified. He was beating her, and she killed – her motivation was not madness, although still murder, her action was not meaningless or completely unjustified. This invokes some sympathy for her. All this makes us doubt her insanity, as otherwise we should doubt ours. In short, we see Teddy and Mrs. Kearns more like Us, and Mr. Breene – unlike Us. Although they all are labeled as mentally ill, the difference in morality allows us to identify with the first two and prevents that with Mr. Breene.

Most of the inmates of the island also are stereotypical madmen, we are not even given an opportunity to apply the Theory of Mind on them, they are here to be observed, not to be identified with. Exceptions are Teddy and also Mrs. Kearns. Not only they act and look humanlike, very important is the fact that we share their moral values. We accept those characters as being like Us, unlike real madmen who are anything but like Us. And even if inside the fiction they all are defined as insane, for us there is an obvious difference between those two groups of *irredeemably*

*mad* and *heroically mad*. This distinction manifests not only in a meaningfulness and morality of the behavior but also can be physically seen. Scenes in Ward C are perfect example of this, as is the arrival scene where a madwoman smiles to Teddy (**Figure 3.7**), acting as a face of a mad-house.

This divide of madmen in to good and bad goes against the stereotypical image of madness as an attribute of antagonist. If Teddy and Breene are on the different sides of the good/evil



**Figure 3.7. One of the shutter island patients, the physical manifestation of madness.**

opposition, should not one be sane and another insane? As Breene's evil behavior is a result of his insanity, should not we see madness as a root of evil? Instead, Teddy is shown as so much disgusted with Breene that he starts torturing him, what probably mirrors the situation when he shoots German prisoners in Dachau. The hero actively confronts what he understands as evil, and his understanding of morality, I guess, is close to the understanding of many moviegoers. So we see that the concept of madness does not fit a simple model a binary opposition. From the structuralist point of view the model should be at least expanded to the *Semiotic Square* (as described by Algirdas J. Greimas[72]) that would then be made of Sane – Mad – Not-Sane – Not-Mad elements. Then we would have "mad hero" as a complex metaterm that is encompasses both "mad" and "sane" terms, unlike stereotypical madman who is a pure case of "mad", or the "evil" chef warden who can be described by compound term consisting of "not-mad" and "not-sane". Or perhaps we can go even further in deconstructing the depiction of madness, to the state which Foucault calls: "One day, perhaps, we will no longer know what madness was." [73] Except that in this case it would be more correct to say that we don't know what sanity is, as there is no character in this film that could not be at least suspected in being insane.

Here also I must note that the meanings of Mad and Sane are not absolute concepts, their meanings fluctuate depending on the context, and because of this the binary relationship between them is also subjected to reevaluation. The context obviously will change if we change genres, or even between different movies and even in the course of watching the movie for the first time,

while we are still not completely sure about the rules of the fiction. Although I must admit that this way of analyzing the film in a real time, while watching it for the first time, makes the interpretation even more confusing, less intuitive and, I would argue, less satisfying to witness, as it does not provide a quick working theory. And so the tendency is to drift back to the simple binary opposition.

## Destabilizing Sanity

Despite the fact that we wish to have simple answers in a form of god/bad, sane/insane, true/untrue, *Shutter Island* does not fit this model well. The fact that the movie takes a lot of elements from the films belonging to old Noir and Gothic genres creates additional layer between *Shutter Island* and reality, this then helps to blur and in some cases makes it almost impossible to understand if what we are seeing should be understood as real or delusional. This is very interesting fact as it brings similarities between the *Shutter Island* and *Me Myself and Irene* and even in some degree *Bug*. The similarity here is the fact that Teddy, Hank and maybe Peter (although Peter's case is not so clear), all are pretending to be someone that they are not. Hank was pretending to be policeman from the action movie, Peter claims that he is a soldier who has taken part in secret military experiments, Teddy pretends to be a cop from film Noir and pulp crime novels. His marshal badge and gun are actually plastic toys, though just in the very end we are exposed to this fact. Until then, we are experiencing the events as if we see it from the perspective of Teddy - an unreliable narrator. Teddy, as Andrew in his sane past, actually was a marshal, but I would argue that he is acted more like genre cop than an actual real officer. His appearance, manners, speech, all remind of the tough agent from the black and white movies from 50's. Now here we have two options of interpretation: first, that all the story belongs to the genre and this is how this fictional world works, and this is how the cops in this world act. The second possibility is much more interesting. What if this fictional world is much closer to the real, but instead the events of the story are acted in the way that reminds films and books? Teddy is pretending to be a marshal, although he has real life experience in this job, he still acts more like child playing make-believe. He uses plastic toys as real, he sees strange clues written in codes, he suspects complicated conspiracy that could only make sense in the fiction. Which version is the right one is impossible to tell, but it is an interesting question, that illustrates the state of uncertainty when we deal with fictional reality. Except in cases when the movie clearly marks what is true with a visual clues (like for example the ghosts), our ability to recognize what is real and

what is a delusion of madman is quite limited, and that is closest experience to the Teddy's madness that we can experience. Our perception is as vulnerable as his.

The things that happen around Teddy are one big game, orchestrated to let him finally see the absurdity of his delusions. So almost everyone around him does play the act, for example, Dr. Sheehan, pretending to be Teddy's partner Chuck, we can assume that he has no real life experience of being a marshal, so it should be no wonder that his act reminds a genre movie character, not unlike one performed by Teddy.



Figure 3.8. Mrs. Keans drinking from the imaginary glass.

All this puts the audience in to an interesting position. We do not know what is happening and what is true. Although there is not so much initiative to suspect Teddy's madness, film gives enough clues to understand that something is not right. We become involved as we are trying to solve the puzzle together with the protagonist, and we are provided with a lot of metatextual clues. Despite some questions that cannot be answered, some have hidden answers. Unfortunately, the filmmakers have probably outsmarted their audience, as can be suspected from numerous reviews. Details that betray this experiment are often so tiny that they can be

noticed only on repeated viewing or the ones that are more obvious were often named as filmmaking errors.

There is dry clothing in the rain effect that I have mentioned earlier. Another very obvious clue is the use of a green-screen. In many shots it is so obvious that it makes you wonder if there was a lack of funding for this film. The best example would be scene where chef warden and Teddy are riding the car. It is unmistakably fake, the movements are wrong, the shadows are wrong, and the chef warden almost does not look ahead, despite riding unpaved forest road. Is this a lazy filmmaking? The first impression is exactly that. But there are so many details like this one. They all pile up in to another explanation: the movie is testing our perception and the ability to suspend our disbelief.  In other words, this is a test to our sanity. Film watching experience, especially in psychoanalytical school of film analysis, is often compared to the state of madness. Patrick Fuery in the introduction of his book *Madness and Cinema* writes:

> The cinema spectator is seen here as a deeply unstable and tumultuous position, required to abandon the certainties of the everyday. As we shall note in a moment, the spectator is compared to the hysteric, neurotic, and psychotic in an attempt to witness the madness involved in watching a film. [74]

It can sound as an over-analyzing of the film, but the scene where Mrs. Keans drinks from an imaginary glass (**figure 3.8**) and almost no one in the audience reacts to it, suggests otherwise. This scene could only happen if the filmmakers did put in there on a purpose. And this purpose is to show us that we ignore things that are obvious, as long as we think that we understand the story, as long as we are able to construct a satisfying narrative from what we notice. Not unlike Teddy, in his madness and paranoia.

Another illustration of this is the depiction of Dachau concentration camp in flashback scenes. One thing is the obviously theatric scenography of the infamous death train, where frozen bodies form grotesque waterfalls. The archival pictures of the liberated camp are freely accessible, and although horrible, they do not possess this aesthetic quality with which they are depicted in *Shutter Island*. But that can be dismissed as artistic liberty (and the frozen faces of the dead looking at Teddy can be seen as symbol of his frozen memories). But there is another thing, that is more puzzling, and it is the gates of Dachau concentration camp. The ones that we see in the film are almost an icon - the iron gates with the words: "arbeit macht frei". The thing is that those

gates were in Auschwitz (**figure 3.9**). But if we start to question this fact, we will spoil our experience of the movie. It is the same as drinking from imaginary glass. There are things that defy reality, but nonetheless they do not distract us from a form of temporary insanity that is suspense of disbelief. They defy reality but not the fiction.

The same goes to the marshal's badge that Teddy caries: it looks a bit different than the real one from the same time period, but it looks real enough not to dispel our suspense of disbelief. This is how Teddy's insanity works: he dismisses, or simply does not notice anything that confronts his delusion. *Shutter Island* consciously brings a parallel between the madness of its hero and the audience experiencing the movie.

Moreover Dachau that we see in Teddy's memories, does remind of the Shutter Island. Similar barbed and electrified fences, red brick buildings, even inside of the officer's quarters there is the same gramophone, playing the same music that we get to see and hear in the doctor's lounge, where we meet Naehring – a doctor of a German descent. Coincidence or not, but this can be seen as a way of how Teddy's brain constructs his version of reality, and which we observe. Nothing that we see here can be taken for a granted.



**Figure 3.9: From top to bottom: Gates of Dachau concentration camp as depicted in Shutter Island; Gates of Auschwitz; gates of Dachau**

It goes even further, from tranquilizer chair to „fake" Dachau, to the music of Gustav Mahler whose recording of *Quartet for Piano and Strings in A minor* could not be playing in 1945 or 1952, as it was only rediscovered in 1960. Also Gustav Mahler was a Jewish composer that in Nazi times

was shifting from being labeled as degenerate artist to being accepted as official composer in Nazi Austria. The same goes to Adolf Ziegel, whose painting we can see in the officer's cabinet at Dachau. He was a favored painter of Hitler but his connection with Dachau was by the fact that he was imprisoned there. Uncertainty and confusion, not only in a factual sense, but also in the sense of unclear line between right and wrong, transcends the film's fiction and starts to comment the reality. It illustrates a fragile facade of sanity, that needs not to be questioned or it will show its insane side.

Digging deeper uncovers uncomfortable facts that go beyond the true – untrue, they start to become confusing and sometimes contradicts our understanding of what sane is. Film starts to destabilize the convenient system of binary opposition, suggesting that there are situations that need more complex evaluation than simply right/wrong.

This also concerns how we evaluate Teddy. The *Shutter Island* tests our concept of sanity along with our suspense of disbelief. Do we believe that such conspiracies can happen in this fiction, or do we believe Dr. Cowley when he tells that this belief is absurd? This is not defined by the verisimilitude of the genre, so we can guess and maybe apply our own convictions about the real world. Believing in a fantasy can be seen as a form of madness, and if we believe this fantasy together with our hero, we are risking sharing Teddy's madness.

Of course, this madness ends as soon as our suspense of disbelief ends. But when at the very end we, along with Teddy, are confronted by the truth (or lies, depending on which interpretation one chooses), we are free to ignore the facts presented by Dr. Cowley and even experienced by Teddy, as the plastic pistol crumbles in his hands, and chose the reality that clearly belongs to the genre. We can then explain all inconveniences as the result of drugs that they secretly feed to Teddy. For that moment our mind not only accepts the fiction, it chooses an interpretation that is even further from reality and closer to paranoia, not only in the facts that it believes, but in ways that it defends them. Not unlike Agnes defended Peter in *Bug*. In that we mirror madman's paranoid way of thinking, as he retreats in to his insanity and fights to preserve it whatever the circumstances. The movie is also happy to fuel this paranoia putting some ambiguous details, like the scar on Teddy's head, conversation with the woman in the cave, unexpected slip by Dr. Cowley about "blowing the lid", are they all hallucinations? It is possible, because we see ghosts, and some clues also have element's that betray their unreality, but for some things film simply does not give us

any explanation. Referring back to Merry Shelly, there are many situations when we really don't know if we are looking at phantasm or ghost, and so we must base our guess on something else, for example on how much we want the hero to be right.

Despite Dr. Cowley pointing to the absurdity of what Teddy believes, we, as the audience see the moral logic in his actions, one that defies purely practical logic, but what is often understood as separating human from android, for example. And that inhibits the attributing madness on Teddy, as madness brings a negative emotional connotation.

But then we are given the last scene, where Teddy verbalizes that madness is his own choice. And although it means a sad end, it is a character that we like, and as I already pointed out, we tend to believe ones that we like. Furthermore, this explanation makes a moral sense, it is just, and so it makes it easy for us to align with this version.

## Conclusion

The depiction of madness in *Shutter Island* is perhaps the most complex out of the three cases I analyzed in this paper. We are used to perceive madness as a deviancy, and accordingly – madmen as deviants - Others as they do not fit our social order. As Abdul R. JanMohamed, points out in one of his articles: "This economy [of Manichean allegory of Us/Others], in turn, is based on a transformation of racial difference into moral and even metaphysical difference."[75]

So the tendency is to accent the difference between sane and insane (as one of possible forms of Others) as much as possible. Although he speaks about the Otherness in the context of colonialism, I feel the same fits the subject of mental illness. When the morality of Other (madman, in our case) does display moral virtues, they cease to fit in this schema of Manichean duality and their status and stereotype as different and as worse than Us needs to be reevaluated. I would suggest that instead of a two clearly defined opposites we are dealing with a continuum of sane-insane, where the extremes are unexplored ideal philosophical states, what makes them interesting objects of exploration.

But although some characters in *Shutter Island* break this schema of binary opposition, others fit it perfectly. In those cases the difference implies moral and absolute superiority of Us against Them, as implied by the term of Manichean Allegory. Meaning, and what JanMohamet also states, that

this difference is understood as rooted in some kind of metaphysical truth, existing above us, not determined by human, but something more universal and stable. This can be easily illustrated with the case of Peter Breene, where he is depicted as morally disgusting person – a pervert. And pervert is a label that is not questionable, it is perceived as clearly amoral – a sign of broken taboo, and also as I have pointed out while discussing *Me, Myself and Irene* – insulting and degrading. He is Other in all aspects. The same goes to the ward C patients, they are naked and dirty, i.e. they are closer to animals, less human. We even see Teddy performing violent acts against them (actually a divergence from the book, something that filmmakers felt make a greater sense in the story). But we do not have this feeling of moral superiority against Mrs. Keans and of course Teddy himself, who despite their diagnosis are on the right side of morality. This moral aspect, I think, being more important in attributing Otherness than appearance, physical or mental capabilities that often are just indicators of how humanlike one is. I would even suggest that it is more important than the label of mental illness. In short: being diagnosed with mental illness does not automatically make a character in to a madman, but behaving in a way that contradicts our usual norms of behavior is. There is a huge gap between the heroic madness and the stereotypical one. If in other films characters manage to cross it in *Shutter Island* this never happens. Despite being mentally ill Teddy does not become a madman.

Paradoxically, despite heavily borrowing from the real world facts, despite giving so much attention to the real development of the mental health system, *Shutter Island* is far from realistic depiction of the mental illness. Insanity we see here is not a real world psychopathology. It is very poetic madness that praises the moral integrity that can be kept even when the sanity fails. In a way this depiction does not pretend to be realistic, it is generic as cowboys in westerns or spaceships in space opera. Madness we see in *Shutter Island* belongs to Noir and Gothic, with all the troubled past and phantoms as reminder of it.

In the end *Shutter Island* is a complex and conflicting depiction of madness. In a big part it treats its subject as a moral question, which, without a doubt is important factor, but in the real life this is only one facet of the phenomena. Although, i think, this aspect is what shapes our relationship with madness most strongly. It also does ask us what we think about it and where we draw the line between sane and insane, and it does discuss the tense relationship between those two. Of course, this is mostly connected to the mental state of Teddy. There are numerous characters in

this film that are depicted as stereotypical madmen, and I would say that film here is much more at fault than the book, as film seems to cut some angles to make a quick point about the mental state of background characters by employing stereotypical acting and make-ups.

But most interesting theme is how the movie destabilizes our understanding of our own sanity through making a parallel between madness and film experience. Although, I feel, this theme was not expressed in the most effective way, it is definitely here, questioning our perceptions, knowledge, morality and ultimately that what we call sanity. It dissolves boundaries between what we used to understand as exclusive opposites: sane spectators judging the madmen on the screen. By doing so the movie creates an opportunity to get a fresh perspective on madness and Otherness that is much more personal. In the end Teddy's condition, though described in detail by Dr. Cowley, is never given a medical name. I think film's biggest virtue (or flaw, depending on your interpretation) is the focus on the relationship between sanity and insanity and also sane and insane, and not concentrating on symptoms of a particular mental illness. *Shutter Island* really deals with the phenomenon of madness.

# Findings

After just three cases of madness in cinema it would be impossible to draw any global conclusions, nevertheless in this chapter I will discuss those elements, concerning representation of madness that I have found repeated in all three movies. Although the findings cannot be called universal, nevertheless I think they can be a stepping stone for more global research, and most importantly they can serve as a material for discussing and understanding the relationship between mental health issues, the concept of madness and the representation they are given in cinema.

## Madness is not about Madness

I will start with the general notion that in all three cases we had movies with madness **in** them but not movies **about** madness and even less about psychiatric conditions, despite all three claiming a psychiatric authenticity in one way or another. What I mean is that despite madness being an important element in a story, it does not become self-important element, i.e. none of the movies explores madness as a real life phenomenon, and they do not invite its audience to observe madness. *Bug* or *Shutter Island* were not even advertised as having an element of insanity. *Me, Myself and Irene* had, but as I have discussed in analysis of this film, the peskiness of laughing at mental illness - the political incorrectness - not the illness itself was a reason why people were interested in this film. In reality it seems that filmmakers are trying to avoid getting close to real world illness, not only making up fictional symptomatic but even making nonsensical terms, instead of psychiatric labels. Instead, I would suggest, those films invite to explore human nature and social reality through the lenses of madness. Even in the cases where mental illness is represented without blatant disregard to its medical, real world phenomenology, it is still just a possibility to put the audience in an unusual point of view through the phenomena of empathy, to help deconstruct or simply escape the world around us through the acts and logic of madness.

Those points of view often echoes medical or philosophical paradigms from the past be it psychoanalysis with its emphasis of understanding the reasons to madness to achieve a recovery, and to touch upon our subconscious; ancient Greek works about balance of the bodily fluids; moral therapy with its notion of importance of positive feelings or depiction of madness as a demonic possession. So, for example, in *Shutter Island* we see a lot of elements that reflect ideas from works of Michael Foucault, conventions of Noir and Gothic, and a historical context of 50s. *Me, Myself and Irene* uses a lot of psychoanalytical concepts concerning subconscious. *Bug* shows

a good understanding of modern psychiatric symptomatic but also accents a concept of rationality as a complete opposite of madness that can be seen in works of Enlightenment philosophers such as Descartes and Voltaire. In each case the point of view is important not because the film discusses it, actually none does, instead they speak about what it means for such kind of mental state to clash with the "normality". They all explore not only what it means to be insane, but also what it means and how to be sane.

For example, *Me, Myself and Irene* can be seen as an exploration in to both extremes of morality as an expression of dysfunctional interaction between *Id* and *Ego*, which manifests as independent characters. By seeing those two side-by-side, we get opportunity to compare them and conclude that the source of sanity is moderation. *Bug,* on the other hand, attributes madness to the lack of the rational thinking, who then leads to tragic consequences. In very Descartian way it depicts rationality as only thing that can ward evil. In *Shutter Island* we have an exploration of moral virtues that are independent of a clinical state of mind, and real evil that can be found on both sides of asylum walls - idea often seen in Noir films.

As we can see, what is hidden behind the term of madness differs from film to film, but at least in all three cases discussed here, it a state that is in tension with sanity in terms such as wrong, immoral, illogic, simply outside of "normality". The word Madness itself has a clearly negative connotation. Even the case of *Shutter Island* connects madness with more negative than positive.

Often labeling someone as insane gives us the leisure of not putting an effort in deciphering inner workings of his or her mind, madness can be seen as sufficient explanation for a wrong behavior. We can often see this in cases of stereotypical madmen, who appear in a background. But when madness is given any kind of depth we become engaged in the exploration of relationship between sane and insane. What does this relationship mean is different from film to film, but I think that the possibility to raise this question is always there and it is often implied. Even in such cases as *Psycho* the socially charged relationship between the insanity and sanity is there, it just has become cliché by itself, so it does not engage us anymore in the process of deciphering it. In any case the presence of the Other invites to reevaluate ourselves. *Bug* questions the virtuousness of blind love, *Me, Myself and Irene* – conformity, Shutter Island – justification of violence and repression. This consideration is what shapes where we draw the line between the madness and sanity, as it is no longer given as in case of stereotypical madmen.

In the three movies I have described in this paper, one of the main and reoccurring subjects is – a person's position in regards to the society in which he lives. This relationship between a human and the society can be defined in a two way connection: right or wrong, which is reflection of the one of the diagnostic criterion of the mental illness - deviancy. On the surface this connection is right if the character is sane and wrong if he/she is insane. But as we can see, in each three cases, what is right and what is wrong differs. *In Me, Myself and Irene* both extremes of morality are wrong. In *Bug* lack of rational thinking is wrong, but in *Shutter Island*, Teddy who is insane is more virtuous than most of us, he is more right than most of the characters who claim to be sane. The divide of right – wrong becomes a divide in Us and Others, although as we see from the case of *Shutter Island*, belonging to Us does not automatically make us right.

## Otherness

As the cinema, especially the Hollywood cinema, is predominantly sane filmmakers speaking to the sane audience about madmen it becomes an asymmetrical divide. Madness becomes a label that sane put on those that they find different. And we perceive madmen as ones who are in a need of some kind of supervision (be it therapy, medication or isolation). It is a dominant position, prone to discrimination and repression. Madman is perceived as not bound by our social norms, which are often taken for granted. Although this does not directly make madman evil, it makes him in to outsider. So the Otherness becomes a one of the defining characteristic of madness and its relationship towards sanity. Even in cases where madness is virtuous, as in case of *Shutter Island,* the difference of madness from the normal state of mind is quite pronounced. This difference then is often accented with the help of contrast. We are given scenes where we can put sanity and madness side-by-side and see how different they look. This is obvious in *Me, Myself and Irene* where we have consequent scenes of Charlie and then Hank interacting with people. In *Bug* we have first and last shot, both depicting the same room before and after madness happens. *Shutter Island* has a huge contrast in how doctor's and patient's quarters look.

Of course, Other does not automatically mean insane. The Alien from *Alien (1979)* is Other, but he is not insane. We do not expect him to behave in our way, as we do not expect an animal. Rather, to attribute madness, we need someone who we expect to be like Us, but who acts in the way that we attribute to Others. Nebuchadnezzar would be a good example of this kind of attribution of madness – human who acts like an ox. Although some details here are left for a debate, like

concepts in science fiction, where a robot can go insane, or the classical example of a Frankenstein monster, when we have insanity attributed to someone who is not a human in the first place. But in any of the three movies that were discussed in this paper, all three (four if we count Agnes) madmen start as sane or appearing to be sane, and then slip in to insanity. That not only shows that the madman looks exactly like sane person, it also demonstrates the possibility of reassessment of the characters position in Us-Others continuum as we observe his behavior. That also suggests that the reassessment can be made more than once, and go both ways. We not only see characters going insane, but also see Charlie (completely), Agnes (too late), Teddy (temporary) regaining sanity.

This also means that madmen can become a wolf in a sheep's skin, a shape changers that walk among Us. In this way madness can infiltrate our midst. Madman then can disrupt the social dynamic of the in-group with their madness (and all three madmen from the discussed movies do that). It can work as a premise of comedy or horror. This is a perfect premise for any cinematic "stranger in our land" (case of *Me, Myself and Irene*) or monster like a werewolf or vampire (*Bug* and in more subtle way *Shutter Island*). And there are more similarities between madman and monster. Grodal in his book *Moving Pictures* points out to the fact that a vampire is defined by its causality ruled behavior: blood which triggers a schematic behavior. [76] And this is what makes him inhuman despite possessing human body. Although if we consider that the vampyric bloodlust is a metaphor for a sexual drive, then the vampire itself becomes a metaphor for a dark side of human nature. And so does a madman.

In the analysis of all tree movies we can see that happening, although with different results: Hank is embodiment of suppressed desires hiding under the face of good citizen Charlie; Peter does not want to be lonely in his madness, so he comes in to the life of Agnes under the disguise of a shy guy; Teddy from *Shutter Island* is hiding a dark past, but also there are violent almost insane people hiding behind masks of asylum's personnel. Although the case of Teddy in a way goes "against the grain" - instead of animal like madman, we do see someone that is more human in his madness than others are in their sanity. Agnes case is also very human as it is a result of love, even Hank in one scene is shown as quite human. But in all cases the behavior of madmen is based in what Grodal calls the "causality ruled behavior". They are not monsters, but they are not humans either, they are not driven by a mind that is like ours. Grodal in the chapter *Humans, Robots, Monsters, Psychopaths, and Clowns* writes:

As viewer, like the person in everyday life, does not have direct access to the mental life of other beings, the ascription 'degree of humanness' must take the form of interpretive hypotheses based on the expressive signs that these beings emit on an interpretation of their behavior.[77]

## Recognizing a Madman

But if we would need to follow the characters who are completely devoid of at least imitation of sanity, through whole film, I think it would be very difficult to watch, although films like that exist, *Idiots* (1998) for example, though even this film has a some kind of reasoning behind what is happening. So even if defined by madness and trapped inside "causality ruled behavior", the main character must still hold some degree of humanity, to be interesting to a viewer.

This then can result in scenarios where the audience is lead to misjudge the insane character for sane. Peter, for example, pretends to be sane, Teddy only at the very end of the film is exposed to be a mental patient, and Hank in few scenes pretends to be Charlie. That means that the cinematic insanity can not only be misjudged, but also it can imitate the behavior of sane as, for example, Peter or at some points Hank does. This also means that our recognition of sanity will change depending on a observed behavior. Examples would be Agnes – who learns how to behave from Peter, or Charlie, who learns the "normality" through the experience of madness. We do not know what is happening in their mind (which actually does not exist at all as they are fictional characters), and so the changing in how they behave changes our understanding of their sanity. This also creates an impression that madness is a matter of misbehavior. Madmen become not unlike children, who are more likely to make mistakes and who do not know how to behave properly until they will be taught by example or by punishment and rewards, the madness is reduced to behaving problems. This reflects the concept of Otherness as defined in post-colonialist theory, which stresses the adult - childlike relationship between Us and Others. So by default the sane are put in a position of understanding and being able to act according to what is right, a quality that madmen lacks. Abdul R. JanMohamed writes:

> By allowing the European to denigrate the native in a variety of ways, by permitting an obsessive, fetishistic representation of the native's moral inferiority, the allegory also enables the European to increase, by contrast, the store of his own moral superiority; it allows him to accumulate "surplus morality," which is further invested in the denigration of the native, in a self-sustaining cycle. [78]

I think the similarity between classical depiction of a "savage" and a madman, dirty, naked, childish and marked with a physical features that we find to be different forum ours, unpleasant and dangerous to find ourselves in their midst, is quite obvious. It also points to a vicious circle where we need insane to confirm our sane status, by producing the surplus morality in comparison. I think it is important to note that this works for both benign and dangerous Otherness. First case can be illustrated by *Me, Mysel and Irene*, the other by *Bug*, this makes a difference between comedy and horror but in both cases we are dealing with an Otherness that has a deficit of morality. In *Shutter Island*, many of the madmen we meet also falls in to this category, although Teddy and Mrs. Keans are not only exceptions but also opposites - they do have surplus of morality themselves and illustrate the deficit of it in the people who are using violence against Others. But at the same time the same surplus is what brings them to the asylum. I think that here we encounter a deliberate breaking of a stereotype (what is a common practice in movies), but also, we have a notion that too much morality can also turn someone in to Other, like explicitly was expressed in the case of Charlie.

Besides morality, rationality (or a lack of it) is often involved in assessing madness. Rationality most often is depicted as strength (corrupted cops in *Me, Myself and Irene,* Chief Warden in *Shutter Island*), but it does not always triumph (actually only in *Shutter Island* it does not end on the losing side), and even if it does, that is not always what we root for (again ending of *Shutter Island*). We then are confronted with the question: is the rational answer the right one or just a necessary one or maybe unavoidable. In *Bug* there is very little space to doubt the benefits and sanity of rationality, in *Me, Myself and Irene* love in the end conquers cold rationality, and in *Shutter Island* the possibility of the human rationality itself is put at doubt. My guess is that this question is evoked because of the culturally defined separation between emotions and logic, and then the fact that our mind actually does not work this way, as our thinking process always involves emotions. There actually are enough narratives that explore the evilness of the pure logic devoid of any emotions. And movies involving madness are ones that participate in this discussion.

The ideas that morality and reason are connected and can be traced back to at least Rene Descartes and his works, particularly the idea expressed in *Meditation I* about the "Evil Genius" (or Evil Demon) who is:

. . . I shall then suppose, not that God who is supremely good and the fountain of truth, but some evil genius not less powerful than deceitful, has employed his whole energies in deceiving me; I shall consider that the heavens, the earth, colours, figures, sound, and all other external things are nought but the illusions and dreams of which this genius has availed himself in order to lay traps for my credulity"[79].

According to Descartes our mind is our only source of truth, making it a lone source of not only rationality, but also sanity and even goodness, as rational thinking in this worldview is needed to tell the difference between false and true, good and evil. Cinema itself can be understood as being of the illusory nature. So we are free to doubt everything we see on the screen. But the movies have power to make us doubt even things that are outside a screen, particularly the things that are shared between real and fictional worlds - that is our own rationality. But is it a work of the *Evil Genius* or maybe, on the contrary – possibility to grasp some kind of truth behind the illusion? This is a matter of interpretation.

Foucault saw the superiority of rationality, and the ideas of Descartes, as the reason beyond the *Great Confinement* of 1657. There was no place left for madness in the world of rational as it only can work as an *Evil Genius*, trying to cloud our perception of the truth, obstructing the goodness. Like Foucault, Edward Said confronts this pure reason by quoting Friedrich Nietzsche when describing knowledge as something that is not absolute:

> ...a mobile army of metaphors, metonyms, and anthropomorphisms—in short, a sum of human relations, which have been enhanced, transposed, and embellished poetically and rhetorically, and which after long use seem firm, canonical, and obligatory to a people: truths are illusions about which one has forgotten that this is what they are.[80]

And so not understanding, and as consequence falling out of the dominant set of knowledge can lead one to be qualified as Other. Here I need to stress that rationality can be seen as something absolute as in case of Descartes, or culturally defined as stated by Said. In any case it defines a competence to function harmoniously with an in-group. We see a reflection of this in *Bug*, where the madness spreads as a kind of counter-knowledge. In *Me, Myself and Irene* we have a scene where Irene explains to Hank why his behavior is wrong and although at the moment it seems that he understands, his madness prevents him from acting on this knowledge and he relapses. In

*Shutter Island* Teddy's virtues also are at odds with the dominant knowledge. And then each of the three movies asks its audience if it is capable to stay in the frame of this dominant knowledge, what then grants an ability to not fall out of the social order.

Jacques Derrida notes in his *Resistances to Psychoanalysis* that Foucault accuses rational of being inhuman and madness as something that evokes sympathy. And in his later discourse with Foucault he points out that the challenge of madness with rationality is in itself a paradox. According to Joel Whitebook the "psychiatric treatment is 'moral rather than medical'." And it's purpose "'is to adjust the patient to the norms and behaviour of respectable bourgeois life"[81]. Frank I. Swannack in his blog entry *The Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida debate on Cartesian Doub* notes that:

> "Whitebook's comments are similar to the discourse that Descartes inflicts on himself – the anxiety of no longer being respectable through the belief of having a body made of glass, which manifests itself through the constant questioning of one's sanity. Derrida argues that questions like these constitute the logic of reason; a paradox that humanity is trapped within".[82]

I find this to be an ongoing discussion about the nature of madness: the madness as lack of reason versus the inhumanity of reason and then the paradox of discussing the morality of insanity with the help of reason. This paradox, and the fear of becoming Other, not the fear to be irrational, I think, is what drives the audience to decipher the madness that we see on the screen. It is what makes those movies engaging. And the fact that this discussion does not have (and probably cannot have) a clear conclusion does not allow madness to become a stale topic. In short, we are driven by our fear to fall out of in-group, by demonstrating an inability to differentiate between things that are sane and insane, and in doing so, to fail to prove our own sanity. But each movie is able to provide a new context, that then asks for a new solution for which not only knowledge but also a capability to operate it - rationality is needed. The importance of knowledge then is often downplayed, as it is often assumed that dominant knowledge is the only knowledge. In this paper we had three different cases, specifically: *Me, Myself and Irene* we recognize madness in extreme conformity or lack of it, and we then laugh at it. In *Bug* we recognize absurdity of Peter's conspiracy theories and are horrified by what he does. *Shutter Island* goes even further as we must

question not only the morality of every character, but even our own perception to solve the riddle, and thus prove that we possess enough knowledge and capability for rational analysis of it. In all three cases we weight what we see according what we know, to get to the rational and sane conclusion. Basically rationality boils down to the character's (and through him - ours) ability to recognize the Truth of the fictional world, what often is crucial in avoiding to be dangerous to yourself and others.

It seems that this process is very well understood by filmmakers, who then transcend madness outside a hero and apply it directly to the cinematic experience. In *Bug* we are confronted with the fact that if we agree with the conspiracy theories (that are taken from outside film's fiction), we could be insane. *Shutter Island* is actually filled with a myriad of small details challenging our own rationality, by misrepresenting a lot of real world things, like Dachau gates, or playing with illusions like imaginary glass, where even our perception of reality itself is questioned. Even Me*, Myself and Irene* transcends individual madness by its constant jokes at things that are politically incorrect. Audience itself is in a state of temporal insanity, from which it can escape with the help of rational thinking.

On one hand, the depiction of madness is shaped by traditional concepts that position it as a condition of irrationality and/or amorality, on the other hand - the depiction often acknowledges and exploits the paradoxical nature of the discourse about madness, which prevents the complete separation of sane and insane. The paradox generates a tension, which manifests itself as a wish to be sure of what is and what is not part of our "normal" world. And solution to this, depending on a movie can be very simple (*Me, Myself and Irene*) or confusing (*Bug* and *Shutter Island*), gradual (*Bug*) or shocking (S*hutter Island*). Furthermore, this process sometimes can be hijacked to force us to reevaluate who is on which side of the Us – Others opposition, as does *Shutter Island*, that withholds the fact of hero's madness till the very end, when we already establish an emotional evaluation that results in a strong emphatic link with him, what then prevents easy attribution of madness.

According to Grodal identification assumes not assimilation of the character, but process by which we provide him with our intentionality, motor reactions, emotions, and so on, so that we can live our-non realized potential.[83] And if we identify with character that we are told is mad, does that suggests that we have unrealized potential to be mad? This is unnerving notion that we try to

alleviate by either distancing ourselves from madness, which often requires solving of a puzzle, to prove our sanity, or by shifting our stance so that we feel to be morally superior even despite the lack of rationality (as per definition of Otherness). The last option becomes possible in *Shutter Island*, but in *Bug* and *Me, Myself and Irene* we "solve" the madness and dismiss it as wrong as is prescribed by the film's doctors.

Whatever the solution, at least in those three examples – the acceptance of the madness is the end of the hero, either as a punishment or as accepting defeat, Teddy is lobotomized after we are exposed to the fact of his madness, Agnes and Peter kill themselves after all attempts to save them from madness fails, Charlie must conquer his madness or be doomed to life of misery. Even in cases where the madness is shown in a more positive light, as in *Shutter Island*, this positivity is experienced by the audience but not always by the hero. Although I must admit that there exist examples that avoid this cliché, for example *Keane (2004)* where film ends in a question to the audience: what will happen next. But films like this are rather exception, or they are films dedicated to opposing of negative stereotypes, like *Rain Man* (1988) or *A Beautiful Mind* (2001) that basically make their own category, although again they are more about a positive message to the audience than happy end to the hero. In a big part the image of madness is often constructed not for the sake of depicting madness but rather madness is sacrificed to translate some kind of idea to the audience. And if a viewer chooses to oppose this idea, he is then punished together with the hero (as in case of *Bug*) or at least is denied the feeling of victory (as in case of *Me, Myself and Irene*).

Of course, this does not concern background madmen, that often have just one characteristic – insanity, and to save time, they are depicted with physical marks that let the audience to instantly identify them as such. They are devoid of any other characteristics, such as morality or rationality, they are depicted as being closer to animals than humans. And they do not manifest any struggle for sanity. This form of madness is different than one that the main characters suffer from. I would suggest that they mostly are used as mood setters, as a detail of a mental institution, adding to the eerie and unpleasant feeling of the place as in *Shutter Island* or the last scenes of *Bug*, or as tools to produce slapstick form of comedy, like in *Me, Myself and Irene*. They can be funny or disturbing, but they all lack the capability to invoke an emphatic link with the audience, and mostly they are

not a good medium of engaging the audience in to discourse about relationship between sanity and insanity.

In those cases the recognition of madness becomes very easy as it is based on appearance. We can recognize madness in the poses and ticks that Peter displays, and, of course, there is recognizable grimace of madness in the scenes where Charlie transforms in to Hank. The fact that those characters often are depicted in surroundings (asylum, lair of madman) that communicates madness also helps. But in the end they are defined by their representation and do not require us to engage in empathy or Theory of the Mind, because there is no further information to be gained. I would even suggest that the icon of madman is universal enough to be consistent even in different genres.

Then we have main heroes that are subjected to madness, and they are usually none of the above. Rather they appear as normal as the movie character can be, usually only thing tagging them as insane is their behavior taken in the context of the film's fiction. Charlie, Teddy, or Peter (in the first half of the film), look just a bit unusual, as perhaps most of the main characters in cinema, but in no way they betray madness. So here we do not have a sign of madness, rather we attribute the meaning of their actions to the madness after witnessing the communicative act. In other words, madness in cases of main characters is not a sign but rather characteristic of a character that emerges as a result of active involvement of spectator. Unlike the passive recognition of a stereotypical madman, this process engages us in a cognitive analysis, and demands us to accumulate a sufficient amount of proof. It also needs an open mind approach, where we accept the possibility that the character can be sane or insane. Often there is a dissonance between a medical label and our own opinion, often rooted in the distrust towards the mental institutions, and we can see it an all three films. So a fictional doctor telling that someone is insane is far from sufficient. *Bug* has incompetent Dr.Sweet (if he is a doctor at all), *Shutter Island* – a possible conspiracy, in *Me, Myself and Irene* the medicine given by psychiatrists does not help. So we are lead not to trust film's doctors, but rather to make our own conclusions. Although, I must admit, that the diagnosis from a fictional mental health system appears in all three movies. But I would argue that it rather obfuscates than identifies madness.

So how we gather the proof of someone being insane? I think that the process is threefold. And I have already discussed all the criteria in this chapter, so now I will only give a quick summary. The

first symptom is the irrational behavior which is repeated until it does not make sense, as for example in the case of Agnes, who dismisses all the calls of rationality, the lack of rationality can be sufficient to diagnose madness. Although as we can see in *Me, Myself and Irene*, and even *Shutter Island*, irrationality does not have to be a permanent state, a character can get rid of it in certain circumstances. Also, not all versions of madness are irrational and even sanity is not always depicted as possessing this quality.

Second clue is appearance. Not as expressed as in case of stereotypical madmen, where the appearance is enough to make the diagnosis, it does manifest on the main characters, although not from the start or not constantly. It is most often coded in movable details of a madman: expressions, ticks. Peter displays ticks as does Charlie in the moment of transformation, those subtle signs then can transform in to a full mask of a madman, when the mind of the hero wanders deep in to insanity. Even Teddy has a scar on his forehead, as small stigma, that I think marks him as belonging to the world of insane. There is also another, not a direct way of communicating this, especially in the film posters, where the characters are depicted either with a split face (*Me, Myself and Irene* poster, and the face of Laedis – the true personality of Teddy in *Shutter Island*), or part of the face hidden in darkness, (posters of *Shutter Island* and *Bug*). I also must add that not only a face of character but also the act of actor playing him and even *mise en scene,* which can be an extension of a character, constitutes his or her appearance.

The third criterion, most important one, I will argue, is morality. I have already pointed out that by the merit of morality or the lack of it a character can be understood as "One of Us" or "One of Others". The morality means not only how right or wrong a character is in a practical sense, but how "good" or "evil" behavior (or in some cases even thoughts) the character displays. This in itself does not, or at least not absolutely, determines our sympathy or antipathy towards the character. We have enough sympathetic antiheroes in the cinema, but I think that this is because the antiheroes always display some virtue, which we see as having greater moral value than the social norms that he or she breaks. In any case being only immoral is not sufficient to qualify someone as insane. In *Bug* both Peter and Jerry are immoral, but only Peter is insane, in *Me, Myself and Irene* – policemen are immoral but not insane, as are some staff members on the *Shutter Island*. Nevertheless, the one that we label as a madman, someone belonging to Others, should not share our morality; they do not obey the social contracts that we are subjected to. That

also makes them dangerous and unpredictable, and impossible to relate to. This is very clear in *Bug's* case, where madness is compared to the domestic terrorism, basically an active threat to our way of life. Hank, on the other hand, sometimes displays a certain degree of understanding of the morality, but at those moments, I would argue, he does not appear as insane. Teddy, without a doubt, is a highly moral character but in *Shutter Island* we are constantly asked: who are the real madmen?

The process of evaluating morality is also very much connected to the process of identification. What is very interesting to note here, that the recent findings in neuroscience confirm the relationship between the sense of morality and empathy, as authors of the article *Parsing the neural correlates of moral cognition: ALE meta-analysis on morality, theory of mind, and empathy,* by referring to works of J. Piaget, M. Tomasello and Jackson J. Decety et al. states:

> "Previous research suggests that the cognitive and emotional sources of moral decisions might be closely related to theory of mind, an abstract-cognitive skill, and empathy, a rapid-emotional skill. That is, moral decisions are thought to crucially refer to other persons' representation of intentions and behavioral outcomes as well as (vicariously experienced) emotional states". . . we parsed the neural correlates of moral cognition by reference to a socio-cognitive framework, exemplified by ToM [Theory of Mind] cognition, and a socio-affective framework, exemplified by empathy. Ultimately, our results support the notion that moral reasoning is related to both seeing things from other persons' points of view and to grasping others' feelings.[84]

That actually not only assumes that both emotional and rational assessment are needed to judge morality of someone, but that without ability to experience the world from the position of someone, we cannot asses his morality. And if, as I have suggested, assessing morality is a big part of assessing madness that means that the process of assessing sanity must involve an act of identification. This of course speaks about the real world experience. So the question is: does this apply to the fictional characters? And as I already pointed out there is no difference in quality of how we experience real and fictional characters.

In the end the lack of human mind in a sense of rationality and morality and lack of human appearance in a madman leads to a conclusion that process of going insane is a process of ceasing

to be human. Although extreme surplus of any of those three qualities can provoke a similar effect. Without those elements we cannot apply Theory of Mind or experience empathy. That is not surprising as I already established that cinematic madness is a sort of Otherness. This method of painting madness, I think, plays in to our wish to be part of some kind of social fabric. By becoming insane, characters cease to belong to the society. And although some movies suggest some possibility of the social order of mad in general this is a lonely world. Loneliness is one of the recurring themes in films dealing with madness. All four characters in the three films are lonely and/or alienated. So recognizing someone as a madman, means accepting that he or she is not socially compatible. Although, as I already described, sanity-insanity is a continuum, rather than two opposed states. And so depending on how far in to madness someone is perceived (or how close to depicted madness we perceive ourselves), sometimes the possibility of dialog can exist.

# Conclusions

In conclusion I would clarify, that film experience is one of the social-cultural practices, so we are able to learn the rules of the films and the difference between it and the real life. But at the same time those rules only encompasses so much, as each movie is a new experience, it cannot be fully defined by the conventions of the genre. So we need to employ our real life experience to fully interpret the text. For example, in *Me, Myself and Irene* we deal with a behavior described as "shizo", It is a real world derogatory term that is applied to the film's fiction in the same manner as it would be applied in the real world, in *Shutter Island* we are afraid for Teddy, because we would be afraid of lobotomy in real world, and *Bug* provokes an emotional response by employing real life facts about domestic terrorism and suicide cults. I think that in a big part what attracts us to see the movies is a possibility to experiment with real life things, and without having any touch with the reality, regardless of how well defined conventions it has, film would not be interesting as a narrative. In conclusion, even if the fictional worlds differ wildly from one another and especially from the reality, the goal of the fantasy is not so much (or at least not only) to wonder at the strangeness, but to test the connections between things in an unusual configurations. In the case of madness it is put in to our midst and then we, through the act of identification, experience wrongness of it.

But why do we enjoy movies about madmen despite obviously trying to avoid the madness as something undesirable and even dangerous? Grodal suggests that often in such cases we should be dealing with schizoid viewer-situation, when we enjoy the spectacle without having emphatic connection towards the characters.[85] According to this we can enjoy a spectacle of madness because we do not want to emotionally attach ourselves to characters that will suffer. Maybe this is a case with some movies, but I think that even in the case of contemporary insane slasher, we see an effort to create a possibility of empathy with madmen, for example, *Fryday 13th* (2009) where we are exposed to the backstory of how Jason's childhood has made him in to a serial killer. *Me, Myself and Irene* and *Shutter Island* both dedicate enough screen time to explain the reasoning and morality beyond madness of the heroes. The madness of Teddy ends in a tragic catharsis that cannot be called meaningless. In *Me, Myself and Irene* madness ends with learning a "better way" and healing, so again we are rewarded in the end for suffering. In all cases the

suffering that we experience through the empathy is meaningful, and because of this – bearable. I would argue that the possibility to get closer to madness not only attractive because it is a thrill, but it is also has a purpose – a safe test of socially extreme behavior, which is a reason why we are attracted to those movies.

Another reason is probably a mental stimulation that we get by solving a puzzle that separates sanity from insanity. It involves different techniques that we consciously or subconsciously apply to characters. Nevertheless, this process is nothing like a medical diagnosis. Rather it is based on a lot of emotionally and culturally defined factors and it is rooted in an ongoing discussion about what is right (sane) and what is wrong (insane). It is also not an instant process, but often takes a significant part of the running time of the movie. And when the label is applied it has very little to do with what modern psychiatry considers to be a mental illness. Rather the condition is something that works as a metaphor for some social issue, especially those that deals with understanding of what is "normal", "moral" and compatible with our way of life.

All three movies discussed here are contemporary and all three deal with and are shaped by ideologies and ideas of the time, but also by old traditions. The forms of madness that we see there all come from the issues that we can understand not only as a part of genre but also of our everyday life. They are connected to our concepts of morality, rationality and even physical manifestations that can be summarized as general norms of human relationships, although which component dominates, differ from film to film. And although all three cases of madness are given an aspect of medical condition, the feeling of madness is invoked by the experience of Otherness (steaming from the differences in morality, rationality and appearance) towards the character rather than by the running each character through the process of symptom evaluation, what is basically impossible in the situation where we speak about fictional people.

Obviously those movies are created to entertain, but to entertain they must speak about things that the audience is interested in. In some cases it seems that the audience is entertained, because a movie confirms sanity of a viewer. The madman here is everything that we were not – an ideal Other. They also confirm our place in the stable social in-group. This thread can be seen in *Bug*, *Me, Myself and Irene* and even in *Shutter Island* when we speak about the background madmen. But it must be noted that the difference is that the sane side is also depicted in not so positive colors. I

think this reflects the postmodern sensitivities, where even if we still tend to divide everything in opposite categories, at least there is a gray zone between those.

This gray zone actually becomes a field of a narrative. Here good - bad, rational – irrational and sane – insane become not clear categories, but rather pieces of a puzzle that the audience is invited to solve. What instead we get from those movies is the ability to test the possibilities the divide between right and wrong in situation where it is not clearly stated from the starting point. By acting out our experiment through the insane characters we check different alternatives. This gray zone not only lets us to confirm our sanity, but maybe to confirm that our impulses and thoughts that traditionally are considered to be "wrong" are not so insane after all, and that us not always agreeing with what is considered to be normal is also normal. On other hand, it can act as a cautionary tale that punishes us for choosing a wrong possibility. Those movies also can provide us with the blissful excuse of temporal insanity, in which we escape the bounds of culturally defined categories. And again, this is a comforting experience, that not only lets us to enjoy a moment of freedom, but more importantly, have potential to allow us to reevaluate or confirm our own understanding of sanity, normality, rationality and morality, providing us either with a sense of acceptance or an intellectual stimulation.

Here we can ask:  is it not any story in the end about right vs. wrong, good vs. evil? Do not other topics, such as death or love, fill the same purpose? And they can, but I think that madness gives a new perspective on this cliché, not only because it is a good way of circumvent some social taboos, but also because it is in a way an exotic state that balances on the edge of what we are used to understand as being human (in no way I suggest that mentally ill are less humans than we, but the Otherness that often are part of how movies construct the signs of madness most often falls in this position). We can temporary look at the human condition from the position of Others. Unlike love, that clearly is a part of "normal" life, or death that is an irreversible condition.

I think the films about insane heroes are tests for our own sanity, but for us, as the audience, to endure this test, the insanity must be made a little bit more sane, usually by giving it a moral rationalization, what allows us to establish and keep an emphatic link with a mad hero, to follow him through the story and in the process discover something. In other worlds the madness, and

our experience of it, must be given a meaning, usually this meaning is an insight about rightness or wrongness of our real social life.

In this regard a cinema madman acts like a court joker who creates a refuge where its audience gets an opportunity to question the righteousness of rationality and moral norms, without a risk to be ridiculed for believing in "having a body of glass". The essential difference between joker and madman being the ability of joker to understand his own state and to stop being a fool at will, and that his audience understands this too. It gives us an opportunity to claim a temporary madness saying: "it's only a movie", when in reality it is not. And as a joker is not a real madman, so the scriptwriter, director or actor is someone who is given a social contract to behave in this way. This is not a Foucaultian madman who does not produce work, or does not have meaning. On the contrary, he has both: he communicates the ideas about our habits and beliefs, about the dominant knowledge and human nature. Cinematic madness always has a fool's wisdom. He engages us to a process of separating right from wrong. But also it often does this at the expense of the real life misery that is a mental illness. Because fictional madness deals with issues of immorality, stupidity and ugliness and at the same time disregards it as a real life phenomenon, it creates not only false but often insulting and degrading associations between madness and certain behaviors.

In most cases cinema does an opposite job of mental health system, where effort is put in to bringing the patient back to the society even if he cannot fully be healed, movies use madness as something that does prevent that, madness becomes a method by which we draw a line that divides Us from Others. Because without the component of Otherness, although sometimes sympathetic or even relatable, madness loses its role as a jester, joker or a fool, that allows to question our own social reality from a distant and, at the same time, safe point. Also, madness becomes an isolated phenomenon, if in reality mental illness does not exist without a social component, as deviancy must be in relationship to something, the film madman is never alone, as it is always observed and judged by the audience, who then is entertained by the experience of a controlled amount of horror, awe, disgust and/or curiosity and then leaves the cinema feeling saner than were before entering it.

My hope is that all those findings can help to make a discussion between cinema and mental health more grounded in specific aspects of depicting madness. But because this work is of quite limited scale it would be useful to do a similar analysis on more films concerning madness, to see if the same criteria of recognizing madness and it's connection with morality, rationality and physical attributes are applicable outside the three cases discussed here, or perhaps some additional criteria will be needed, or the existing ones should be more refined with a help of, for example, sticking to a particular source of influence, like Cartesian School or Psychoanalysis.

It also would be interesting and useful to explore other visual mediums of storytelling such as comics, videogames (that, I think, are much more extreme in Othering the madness) and even nonfiction such as documentaries and news. If anything else it can raise awareness of how do we speak about madness, to help us say more without causing damage.

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# Filmography

*Ace Ventura.* Directed by Tom Shadyac. 1994.

*Alien*. Directed by Ridley Scott. 1979.

*All of Me*. Directed by Carl Reiner. 1984.

*Behind Locked Doors*. Directed by Budd Boetticher. 1948.

*Boardwalk Empire.* HBO. (2010 - 2014),

*Invasion of the Body Snatchers*. Directed by Don Siegel. 1956.

*Beautiful Mind, A*. Directed by Ron Howard. 2002.

*Borat: Cultural Learnings of America for Make Benefit Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan*. Directed by Larry Charles. 2006.

*Bug*. Directed by William Friedkin. 2006.

*Clean, Shaven*. Directed by Lodge Kerrigan. 1996.

*Cube*. Directed by Vincenzo Natali.  1997.

*Dark City.* Directed by Alex Proyas. 1998.

*Dark Knight*. Directed by Christopher Nolan. 2008.

*Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb.* Directed by Stanley Kubrick. 1964.

*Dumb and Dumber*. Directed by Peter Farrelly, Bobby Farrelly. 1994.

*Exorcist, The*. Directed by William Friedkin. 1973

*Evan Almighty*. Directed by Tom Shadyac. 2007.

*From Hell*. Directed by Allen Hughes, Albert Hughes. 2001.

*Hangover*. Directed by Todd Phillips. 2009.

*Hostel*. Directed by Eli Roth. 2005.

*Three faces of Eve*. Directed by Nunnally Johnson. 1957.

*Keane*. Directed by Lodge Kerrigan. 2004.

*Kingpin*. Directed by Peter Farrelly, Bobby Farrelly. 1996.

*Let There Be Light*. Directed by John Huston. 1948.

*Liar, Liar*. Directed by Tom Shadyac. 1997.

*Man of Steel*. Directed by Zack Snyder. 2013.

*Mask, The*. Directed by Chuck Russell. 1994.

*Me, Myself and I*. Directed by Pablo Ferro. 1992.

*Me, Myself and Irene*. Directed by Peter Farrelly, Bobby Farrelly. 2000.

*My Son, My Son, What Have You Done*. Directed by Werner Herzog. 2009.

*More of Me*. Directed by Daisy von Scherler Mayer. 2007.

*Omen, The*. Directed by Richard Donner. 1976.

*One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. Directed by Milos Forman. 1975.

*Predator*. Directed by John McTiernan. 1987.

*Psycho.* Directed by Alfred Hitchcock. 1960.

*Rain Man*. Directed by Barry Levinson. 1988.

*Rosemary's Baby*. Directed by Roman Polanski. .1968.

*Saw II*. Directed by Darren Lynn Bousman. 2005.

*Serial Mom*. Directed by John Waters. 1994.

*Shining*. Directed by Stanley Kubrick. 1980.

*Shock Corridor*. Directed by Samuel Fuller. 1963.

*Terminator 2*. Directed by James Cameron. 1991.

*Thing, The*. Directed by John Carpenter. 1982.

*Take Shelter.* Directed by Jeff Nichols. 2011.

*There's Something About Mary*. Peter Farrelly, Bobby Farrelly. 1998.

*Yes Man*. Directed by Peyton Reed. 2008.