



Movies And Mental Illness: Using Films To Understand Psychopathology

By Danny Wedding, Mary Ann Boyd, Ryan M. Niemiec

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The 15 core clinical chapters of *Movies and Mental Illness* thus each use a case history along with synopses and scenes from one or two specific, often well known films to explain and teach students about the most important disorders encountered in clinical practice. Helpful teaching tools such as suggestions for class discussions and key issues to consider while viewing films are provided throughout.

Now in an updated edition, with expanded coverage of sleep, eating, impulse control, and adjustment disorders, as well as sexual dysfunction and violence, this book has established a great reputation as an enjoyable and highly memorable supplementary teaching tool for abnormal psychology classes.

Written by experienced clinicians and teachers, who are themselves movie aficionados, *Movies and Mental Illness* is superb not just for psychology or media studies classes, but also for anyone interested in the portrayal of mental health issues in movies.

Reviews nearly 1,000 films illustrative of psychopathology!

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Editorial Review

Review

"John Milton, in *Paradise Lost*, tells us that we must 'strike the visual nerve, for we have much to see.' So, too, in this present work, do Wedding, Boyd, and Niemiec admonish us that there is much to learn by seeing with the mind's eye what these well-chosen films, by turns sad and silly, offer us in illuminating the psychopathologies set forth in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of the American Psychiatric Association. "Wedding, Boyd, and Niemiec provide a brief synopsis of the particular film in relation to the major category of psychopathology being covered in a chapter, and they relate the manifest and latent content of the film to the various diagnostic symptoms within a category, such as childhood disorders, and further provide an illustrative case study to assist in the process of generalizing from the film to actual diagnostic work. "The authors provide a lively expository style, and the use of epigraphs for each chapter is a particularly happy device for setting a tone for each chapter. "[This work] is likely to become a classic of its type and a particularly useful teaching tool for the diagnosis and understanding of the various psychopathologies for students of the helping professions. I commend it to the reader, be the reader student or professor." Allan Barclay, PhD, St. Louis, Missouri "If it can be written, or thought, it can be filmed" stated the famous director Stanley Kubrick, who proposed some of the best representations of madness in cinema with his famous street hoodlum, Alex (Malcom McDowell), in *A Clockwork Orange* (1971) or Jack Torrance (Jack Nicholson) losing his mind in *The Shining* (1980). Since the silent days in the beginning of the 20th century, cinema has proven to be an art particularly suitable to portray human psychological experiences and is replete with characters who illustrate psychopathology. In *Movies and Mental Illness: Using Films to Understand Psychopathology*, Danny Wedding, Mary Ann Boyd and Ryan M. Niemiec review nearly a thousand movies that depict psychopathology. Following the nosology of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, Fourth Edition (DSM-IV) of the American Psychiatric Association, the authors relate a variety of films to major categories of psychopathology. The book is organized into fourteen 'clinical' chapters, each focusing on a different disorder with one or two movies as primary illustrations of each disorder. For the authors, films are a powerful teaching tool to enhance students' understanding of psychopathology. In order to stimulate ideas and discussions, each clinical chapter starts with a "Questions to consider" section related to a recommended film (e.g. Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960) for dissociative disorders or Adrian Lyne's *Fatal Attraction* (1987) for personality disorders, followed by a constructed case history and mental state exam of the chosen movie's central character. As a movie fan and a psychologist, I was eager to review this book. Reading it made me want to watch unseen and previously seen movies considering the reflections proposed by Wedding, Boyd, and Niemec. Another significant strength of this work is the filmography organized by diagnostic category provided in Appendix G (each film is rated from 1 to 5, based on its usefulness for educational purposes). It is regrettable that the authors fail to systematically name the directors in this impressive list of recommended films. Moreover, despite a series of appendices, the absence of indexes for films or subjects makes it difficult to find information at times. As a final point, non-American films are still underrepresented (however, the authors' e-mail addresses are given in the Preface and suggestions are welcomed for the next edition of *Movies and Mental Illness!*). In conclusion, I am convinced that this work is a helpful and creative resource to init --From the Preface: Alan Barclay, PhD. St. Louis; MO

If it can be written or thought, it can be filmed.

Stanley Kubrick

This amazing reference of psychopathologically classified movies is primarily written as a learning supplement for students of psychology, social work, medicine, nursing, and counseling. The authors suggest

that *Movies and Mental Illness* can be a supplement for the core textbooks of abnormal psychology. In chapters, the authors have categorized movies based on DSM classification of mental disorders. They claim that observation of the characters of movies as examples of people with specific mental illnesses circumvents the ethical issues related to real case reports. (p. x) Furthermore, based on the difference between the imagined and the real, there are usually incompatibilities between the cases presented in the movies and real patients; and their analysis in classes might intrigue challenging and thoughtful discussions about these differences. On the other hand, by the help of cinematic effects, phenomena like hallucinations can be more touchable by the students through watching skillfully prepared movies. Furthermore, students can also see the world from the eyes of a mentally ill.

In an interesting introductory chapter on *Films and Psychopathology*, the reader learns about some cinematic terms, techniques, and classifications. In this chapter there is also a brief description of psychological effect of cinematic methods and metaphors used in the movies.

In the next chapters movies are classified under the DSM categories including Anxiety Disorders, Dissociative and Somatoform Disorders, Psychological Stress and Physical Disorders, Mood Disorders, Personality Disorders, Substance Use Disorders, Sexual and Identity Disorders, Schizophrenia and Delusional Disorders, Neuropsychological Disorders, Disorders of Childhood and Adolescence, Mental Retardation and Autism, Sleep, Eating, Impulse Control, and Adjustment Disorders, Violence and Physical and Sexual Abuse.

Each chapter begins with questions to be considered during watching the representative movie of the mentioned disorder. Then the protagonist is introduced by a standard patient evaluation report based on a fabricated psychiatric interview. This report, besides the history and mental status examination includes functional assessment, evaluation of the patient's strength, diagnosis, treatment plan and prognosis. After a brief description of the movie and rationales for the diagnosis, the main disorder is described. This introduction to the disorders is the part that might be boring and unnecessary to the psychiatrists or graduate psychologists, but is useful for the other audiences of the book or the general readers. I personally did not read the sections describing and defining the disorders and so, several pages of the book were bypassed by me. The subcategory disorders of the main topic of each chapter are briefly described and movies related to those disorders are introduced and discussed. For each movie, there is a brief discussion of the character that has the supposed disorder; this character might be the protagonist or even a character with a few minutes appearance in the whole movie. On strength of the book is its coverage of many movies from the black and white movies to the recent ones. This helps the reader to review movies s/he has already seen through his/her life from a psychopathologic point of view and have access to a list of several movies related to a mentioned disorders. It also has a brief overview of some international movies in each chapter. In the end of the section related to each disorder, some Critical Thinking Questions about the disorder and related movies are brought that intrigue the viewer's thinking about issues covering the compatibility of the movie with reality and ethical, treatment, and diagnostic issues among others. --*Journal of the American Academy of Psychoanalysis & Dynamic Psychiatry* Vol 36 (3) 2008, reviewed by Dr. Arash Javanbakht

From the Author

John Milton, in *Paradise Lost*, tells us that we must 'strike the visual nerve, for we have much to see.' So, too, in this present work, do Wedding, Boyd, and Niemiec admonish us that there is much to learn by seeing with the mind's eye what these well-chosen films, by turns sad and silly, offer us in illuminating the psychopathologies set forth in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of the American Psychiatric Association*. "Wedding, Boyd, and Niemiec provide a brief synopsis of the particular film in relation to the major category of psychopathology being covered in a chapter, and they relate the manifest and latent content of the film to the various diagnostic symptoms within a category, such as childhood disorders, and further provide an illustrative case study to assist in the process of generalizing from the film to actual diagnostic work. "The authors provide a lively expository style, and the use of epigraphs for each chapter is a particularly happy device for setting a tone for each chapter. "[This work] is likely to become a classic of its

type and a particularly useful teaching tool for the diagnosis and understanding of the various psychopathologies for students of the helping professions. I commend it to the reader, be the reader student or professor.

Allan Barclay, PhD, St. Louis, Missouri

Users Review

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Velda Thornley:

Typically the book *Movies And Mental Illness: Using Films To Understand Psychopathology* has a lot info on it. So when you read this book you can get a lot of profit. The book was written by the very famous author. The writer makes some research before write this book. That book very easy to read you will get the point easily after perusing this book.

Bobby Miller:

Your reading sixth sense will not betray anyone, why because this *Movies And Mental Illness: Using Films To Understand Psychopathology* book written by well-known writer who really knows well how to make book that can be understand by anyone who also read the book. Written inside good manner for you, leaking every ideas and composing skill only for eliminate your own hunger then you still skepticism *Movies And Mental Illness: Using Films To Understand Psychopathology* as good book not simply by the cover but also by content. This is one publication that can break don't assess book by its include, so do you still needing an additional sixth sense to pick this!?! Oh come on your studying sixth sense already told you so why you have to listening to yet another sixth sense.

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