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6

MENTAL DISTRESS, ROMANCE AND GENDER IN CONTEMPORARY FILMS

Greenberg and *Silver Linings Playbook*

Alison Wilde

This chapter will analyze two recent films that have mental health concerns at the heart of their narratives. The first is *Greenberg*,[1] directed by Noah Baumbach in 2010, and the second is *Silver Linings Playbook*,[2] directed by David O. Russell in 2012. Both have very similar storylines, but I will argue that they generate very different discourses on normality, mental health and mental distress. Using an approach informed by disability studies, mad studies and film studies, I will show how mental distress in two ostensibly similar films is embedded within very different models of disablement, one that focuses on individual deficit and responsibility, and the other from a view that reminds us of the social context and catalysts for mental illness.[3]

This comparison will show avenues for further exploration, going beyond conventional criticisms of mental health portrayals that tend to be reduced to matters of violence, common clichés and whether a character is seen to be morally good rather than bad.[4] These criticisms are common to campaigns that focus on the cultural prevalence of one-dimensional, pathological images of mental illness, serving to perpetuate discrimination towards, and fear of, people with mental health difficulties.[5] However, according to Harper, there is a propensity to "focus on a rather undifferentiated notion of 'violence to others' as the sole criterion against which media images are judged."[6] It is unsurprising that a corollary of such approaches is the perceived need for characters who are likeable; "likeability" can be seen as the key criterion in "acceptance of" portrayals of disabled people by all audiences, and these are often associated with positive virtues in campaigns for better representations of all types.[7] These qualities are actually quite loosely defined, finding their antithesis in "bad" traits such as cruelty, most obviously in depictions of people as murderers, violent characters or victims. Conversely, likeable characters tend to be seen as good at "creating emotional connections through the use of universally shared qualities."[8]

As Harper suggests, this is likely to lead to overly simplistic analyses of cinematic and other media representations, potentially restricting the range of roles for characters experiencing mental distress and illness. Indeed, Sancho demonstrated how the virtues of likeable characters seem to be wrought from a combination of human weaknesses, comprised of recognizable traits that many of us are likely to identify with, and everyday dilemmas that resonate with viewers' own experiences. Further, there is evidence to show that audiences tend to be put off by overtly political or moralizing messages in popular media, perhaps most evident when a character returns to

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"niceness" after a period of moral or mental decline, perhaps most likely to be seen as "smashing you over the head with a message."[9]

These two films were chosen for their contextual similarity and because they both have unpleasant male characters with mental health difficulties as central protagonists. Stereotypes of mental health tend to be very gendered,[10] with women often portrayed as over-sexualized and men as incompetent/violent in relationships.[11] Both films also provide the opportunity to explore the intersections of mental illness with romance; this could be seen as a crucial area of representation, as romantic love can be seen as a key signifier of normality within films,[12] driving many narratives, across numerous genres. Indeed, madness can be used as a narrative device to support wider macro-narratives of "normality" in romance-based genres, most obviously perhaps in the moral trajectories of characters within *Fatal Attraction*, directed by Adrian Lyne in 1987.[13]

Given its ubiquity[14] one might argue that (usually monogamous) romance is perhaps seen as a central point of almost universal interest, perhaps reflecting a presumed appeal to everyone in the eyes of the producers[15] (more so when—as in these two films—these stories are set within family settings). In Paddy Scannell's terms these features would perhaps render romantic genres as a *for-anyone-as-someone* structure.[16] This is a mode of communicative address purported to be "for me and for everyone." Scannell identified several modes of address within communicative structures. Following Heidegger,[17] he defines a *for-anyone-as-someone* product as something that is deemed to be "useful and usable to anyone," *anytime and anywhere*, being *standard, uniform and repeatable*,[18] ostensibly providing a universal service. Conversely a *for-someone* structure is a product that is defined as "really only useful to and useable by the person for whom it is made."[19] This is a communicative structure that Scannell identified, at the time of his writing, as being found in items such as home videos or photographs,[20] perhaps now only attributable to those photographs and videos or writing we choose not to share. However, the pervasiveness of the *for-anyone-as-someone* structure can even be discerned within recent mainstream films that go beyond more traditional formats of heterosexual, and cisgender, monogamy. There is the doomed relationship in the romance-based drama *The Danish Girl*,[21] where Einer and Gerda, the two main characters who are newly married and deeply in love, subsequently separate after Einar's gender transition to become Lily. Similarly, there is the impossibility of a permanent coupling, which cannot be compromised with the career aspirations of Sebastian (a musician) and Mia (a writer and actress), the romantic protagonists in the romantic musical *La La Land*.[22] Despite the thwarted love stories central to each of these films, both succeeded in drawing quite diverse large audiences,[23] centered, as they were, around romance. Indeed many romance genres have been based on an acknowledgment of "confluent love"[24] since the 1980s, with affection seen as more provisional, being based on mutual satisfaction, intimacy and emotion in the short term, rather than duty and long-term interdependence. This can be seen for example in the depictions of desire and narratives showing the impossibilities of love dominating "nervous romances" (e.g. Woody Allen films[25]).

It is clearly in commercial filmmakers' interests to make films that have the *anyone-as-someone* structures as they are deemed to have a "double character," which is "always, at one and the same time, for me and for anyone." Scannell says that this position expresses a *we-ness* articulating the *human sociable life* mediating between the impersonal (the *they-world*) and the personal (the *my-world*).[26] Despite the (arguable) genre transgressions of *The Danish Girl* and *La La Land*, for example, this appeal to a mediation between the "they-world" and the "my-world," understood by most (if not all) is crucial to our understandings as part of a collective audience. Thus, as popular cultural products, media that have this structure can be an "inexhaustible topical resource,"[27] contributing to shared understandings (of what it is to be human). Indeed, one might argue that recent challenges to conventional norms are premised on the idea that the film industry as a whole is about appealing to *anyone-as-someone* as a white, heterosexual, non-disabled,

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cisgendered person. This can be seen in challenges made to the "whiteness" of the Oscars[28] and can also be seen in criticisms of *The Danish Girl* as a film that sanitizes it subject matter in favor of stereotyped images of female sexuality and the denial of lesbian identities.[29] However, many disability studies contributors' work on cultural representation suggest that disability is seen as an exception to the norm by media producers, who position disabled characters and themes outside the *my*- and *they-worlds*. This tends to promote fixed and less negotiable understandings of what it is to be disabled, creating an otherness that serves to shape counter- or dis-identifications with disabled people (including those designated as "mad") throughout the media (see endnotes 4 and 7, for example).

The dividing line between independent film and mainstream films is sometimes difficult to discern and this is true for both of these films. Neither film chosen for my exploration of mental distress could be considered as an "art film," which might be defined as niche, as being positioned for a more specific *someone*. As studio films, both can be seen as media that are accessible to all, being distributed in mainstream venues, despite their comparatively low budgets.[30] However, although it can be considered a mainstream film,[31] *Greenberg* has been categorized as a "smart film" by writers such as Perkins and Sconce.[32] This arguably positions it as a niche medium, as a style characterized by irony and "affective force," through a "strategy of ironic disengagement,"[33] "critiquing bourgeois taste and culture."[34] As a film that has also been seen as an independent film,[35] taking the smart film approach with "edgy content" and a "minimalist aesthetic,"[36] *Greenberg* also avoided the presentation of simple answers to questions of what it is "to be human" and refused the unambiguous narrative closure favored by those using classic narrative structures,[37] aimed at gaining large audiences.[38] As a smart film that did not buy into the certainties of classic narratives, *Greenberg* risked its capacity (or ability) to attract larger audiences and box office receipts, despite using well-known stars such as Ben Stiller and Rhys Ifans (and especially as it featured Greta Gerwig, an actress associated with mumblecore films[39]). I will return to this topic at the end of the chapter.

If it is true that romantic dramas, romantic comedy and so on are "useful and usable to anyone,"[40] then both of these films provide an ideal vehicle to examine the contemporary portrayal of mental health and mental distress, based on personal stories that most of us would recognize. They focus on the immediate challenges the protagonists face after leaving psychiatric care. This ostensibly places their experience at the center of concern and provides good opportunities to challenge the normality genre,[41] i.e. where madness is used primarily as a narrative prosthetic to revalidate ideas of (neurotypical) normality found in broader storylines. Further, the choice to place both these men in emerging relationships, and a wider nexus of social and family expectations, allows for the exploration of more complex issues, enabling audiences to establish engagement with a number of characters in ways that help us to negotiate relational understandings of actions and decisions. This should also allow a corrective to the individualistic way in which we discuss stories of mental health,[42] which tend to perpetuate ideas of people with mental health problems as set apart.[43]

I will compare their relative merits as mainstream and smart films both of which are classified as "comedy, drama, romance" on IMDB.[44] My aim is to show how the tone and style of such similar stories, and the ways in which they approach "normality" and disablement, through narrative structure and other cinematic techniques can lead to very different interpretations of the "problem of mental illness."

Greenberg

The title is the surname of the leading character, Roger Greenberg, played by Ben Stiller, a 40-year-old man who has just left institutional care. He is not likeable, and there are few signs that he has the capacity for romance throughout the film. Ian Parker[45] described Greenberg's

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character as a "sour, haunted man—an asshole" and suggested that his character might be so off-putting, or the film so dull, that one cinema had posted a sign saying "we must limit refunds to an hour past the start time."

Contrary to our expectations that mental illness will be used to create dramatic storylines while marginalizing the experiences of the character experiencing mental distress,[46] and despite a distinct lack of drama, the film allows us stark and revealing reflections on Greenberg's life. It gives us a reminder of the aching emptiness of life when the structures we construct to give us a sense of meaning are removed. Greenberg uses the lack of structure and meaning in his life to dis-identify with people and social conventions, often appearing to wear this as a badge of pride.

Greenberg's major personality traits are misanthropy, a lack of "normal aspirations" and little motivation to work or to climb social hierarchies. He also insists that he is making choices to opt out of conventional roles, as opposed to being a "loser," "doing nothing deliberately." He also seems to see himself as a critic of contemporary culture and cultural norms, a position he might believe to be enhanced by his outsider status. His unconventional attitude to relationships would commonly be regarded as unacceptable to many, especially as he is seen to act primarily out of immediate self-interest, blowing "hot and cold" in his attraction for Florence, his brother's assistant (played by Greta Gerwig).

To briefly outline the story, following a discharge from rehabilitation (the details of which are never disclosed), Greenberg is invited to stay temporarily in his brother's Los Angeles family home, caring for their dog, Mahler, while they are on holiday. He had moved away to New York many years before so is now something of an outsider in the community. Despite his stated commitment to doing nothing, he is faced with a range of life issues, including unresolved matters from his past, which he attempts to resolve in a defensive but ambivalent manner. A long-running backstory—perhaps a key element of Greenberg's life trajectory—is his attempt to reconnect with old friends, former band members. While one of these is still bitter that Greenberg had declined a potentially lucrative recording contract for the band many years earlier, Ivan, the other former member, is shown to make great efforts to repair their friendship.

The film tells us little about Greenberg's mental health. Most of what we learn about him is through his own articulation of himself and his interactions with others. Throughout the film Greenberg is faced with concerns about romantic relationships, his impending status as a middle-aged man and his unwanted responsibility for an ailing dog. His negotiations with his own fluctuating desires and the expectations for him to conform to social pressures (driving a car, finding a job, a partner and a home) add to his edgy defensiveness, conspiring to exaggerate his self-destructive and insensitive behavior. So, he risks his budding relationship with Florence by attempting to connect with a former girlfriend and refuses to engage directly with Ivan's efforts to resolve the dispute that came between them.

This film takes a risk to the extent that is likely that we will dislike Greenberg, and he probably reminds us of people we have met and criticized for their failure to "sort themselves out"; he may even remind us of ourselves and the haunting experience of loneliness or regret we may feel in low periods of our lives. It is also a slow and meandering film with no clear sense of direction.

The awkwardness of his life and personality is matched by that of Florence, especially in the clumsy attempts they make to forge some kind of a relationship. His attempts to make new connections with his old friend, Ivan, are equally fraught, as they struggle to resolve old grievances and misunderstandings while creating new ones. We are not lulled into any sense that Greenberg is on a "journey of recovery." Further, the audience is often encouraged to see the effects that he can have on those who love him; many of the close-ups in the film are of Florence. As close-up shots can be seen to express affect,[47] and to show emotional change, these shots are often focused on her emotional reactions to Greenberg's abrasive moments, but notably (before she

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even meets him) there is a close-up shot of her driving her car in the second scene, where she asks, "Are you going to let me in? Are you?" setting the tone for the rest of the film. Overall, close-ups in the film tend to be used sparingly, as they are in most smart films, serving to isolate characters, creating a "sense of disengagement,"[48] emphasizing character and dialogue; it is unsurprising then that where they occur they are usually limited to Florence and Greenberg, allowing us to observe their emotions and their changing affective positions towards each other.

Sancho suggests we often like characters because we can relate to many aspects of their characters of situations, one of which may be our frustrations with or enmity towards others. Against a one-dimensional stereotype we can also see that he has concerns for other people; this is exemplified in his prioritizing of Florence's care when she has to get to the hospital for an abortion (from her previous sexual partner—perhaps the most unromantic of scenarios). While suggesting a deep ambivalence in his attitudes towards social approval, and his need for acceptance and belonging, such moments of tension often act as a critique of normative codes of conduct especially in following prescribed cinematic trajectories of romantic love, e.g. those featuring epiphanies and declarations of undying love. However, contrary to possible expectations, there is little direct comedy and even less romance, defying most conventions of these genres.

The film avoids high drama, instead lightly drawing the divisions between characters and refusing to make harsh distinctions between right and wrong, between normal and weird. Rather, universal problems of social belonging and dis/connection were outlined, showing how simple it can be to appeal to human similarities, rather than sensationalized stories and/or portrayals of exceptionality.

Towards an Uncertain Ending

After he and Florence first have sex he criticizes her for always returning to him. Given her acceptance of such behavior it would be simple to portray Florence as having mental health issues, or as the "victim" of an "abusive" man. Whether we resort to blame of him or her it would also be easy to portray her in terms of her flaws, as she is clearly depicted as the object of his dis/affections, and is presented as a person who lacks a strong sense of self. Her tendency to be quite passive, awkward and generous could play very easily to conventional stereotypes of femininities that are aligned with victimhood or self-abnegation, rather than the more empowered neoliberal versions of femininity typical of post-feminist forms of agency.[49] However, despite his heartless dismissal of her, she cannot be fitted easily into female stereotypes, especially of victimhood or mental illness. Her portrayal is more multidimensional and perhaps associated more with virtues such as strength, resilience and understanding. We see the vulnerabilities and strengths of both characters over the course of this film and other vacillations that add to their fluctuating, and ambivalent, decision on whether they should get together.

Perhaps the only conventional trope of romance genres used here is that boy loses girl after a disagreement although, unlike most romances, this is all of their own making, having the impact of demystifying romantic love in favor of a focus on self-agency and responsibility. Other common romance themes are not really there. The hero, if there is one, is more likely to be read as Florence for her stoicism.

The core smart film trait of miscommunication and "emotional dysfunction"[50] is heightened through the "throwback naturalism" of cinematographer Harry Savides, including a 1970s style lack of resolution, to "evoke a feeling."[51] An often banal and stark *mise en scène* utilizing long takes and long shots creates distance and highlights the isolation of the characters.

The film resists a happy ending and we are left to make our own minds up about where they are heading; Greenberg finally tells Florence that "he was in the hospital" (for rehabilitation) but that it's not what defines him and she says, "I understand." So, the film begins and ends with

references to Greenberg's mental health, with no further development or detail and no resolution of problems and barriers he may have encountered.

Silver Linings Playbook

Silver Linings Playbook (henceforth *SLP*) seems, at first glance, to have a very strong resemblance to *Greenberg*. Again, we see the central male protagonist Pat (Bradley Cooper), released from a psychiatric hospital. And again, he meets the woman, Tiffany Maxwell (Jennifer Lawrence) who challenges him and effects changes in his life soon after his return to his parents' home (a condition of his release). In both cases, the story is a slow preamble to their eventual romantic relationship, with much resistance from the male lead along the way. This time his condition is named as bipolar. Pat is situated within the demands and worries of his family, consisting of a gentle and quite submissive mother, domineering father and comparatively successful brother. In this and a few other senses, there are resemblances to smart film—particularly in the tendency to use the family as the foundation and in emphasizing emotional and familial "dysfunctions." Pat's world consists of a lot of anger, including violent scenes with his father (Robert de Niro) at home, volatility and an obsessive desire to win his former wife, Nikki's (Brea Bee), love back. We are advised that the violence shown to her extra-marital lover (when Pat finds them in the shower), and his continuing harassment of her, were the real reasons behind his confinement to psychiatric treatment, agreed as part of a plea bargain.

After attending a dinner at his friend's house where he meets Tiffany for the first time, he begins a relationship characterized by ambivalence and rejections of Tiffany's advances. These serve to underline that Pat has delusional and obsessive beliefs about his former relationship, but a dark form of comedy is used to demonstrate his misogynistic views towards women. In a scene where he and Tiffany meet in a café, he outlines Tiffany's previous "promiscuous excesses" as a "worse" form of madness than his own. This is done when they have dinner together (where he orders cereal to signify that this is not a date). Simultaneously, he also has some dependence on a tenuous allegiance being built with Tiffany, based on their mutually shared feelings of difference from their friends and families. Pat sees that Tiffany may help him to get a letter to his estranged wife, but when asking for her help and loyalty he also makes it clear that he disavows his embryonic relationship with her. He compounds his misogynistic views of her by making the terms of this very clear—saying that he wouldn't like his wife to think that he would even envisage a relationship with someone who was capable of such sexual transgressions. This is a pivotal moment in Tiffany's character development where she loses her temper and challenges the assumptions he makes about women and madness as unacceptable and misogynistic. In the breakfast scene where he is enlisting her help, she finally loses her temper.

Unlike Greenberg, Pat's character does little to go beyond the violent obsessive avenger stereotype[52] common to depictions of men experiencing mental illness and, although the audience may well identify with his experiences of lost love, it would be understandable that violence and stalking behaviors will mitigate against his likeability, especially after his lack of compassion and cynical efforts to exploit Tiffany's affection. As an audience for romantic comedy drama, the preferred, and perhaps most generous, reading at this point is perhaps to invest our emotions in hoping that he gets therapeutic relationships with his family and friends.

Towards a Happy Ending

Contrary to this quite explicit gendering of madness, reversed and exposed to some degree, Tiffany and Pat bond around their experiences of outsider status and need for medication. Other than her apparent sexual deviance (and subsequent reformation) Tiffany is shown to have no

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other (obvious) symptoms of madness, and seems to be used in a therapeutic manner to aid Pat's recovery. Significantly, we can see signs of his rehabilitation that continue to play on this gendering of madness and relationships of care and intimacy. Pat later defends Tiffany's virtue and, invoking her previous "sex addiction," suggests she needs protection when other males make advances, implying that he is the person who needs to "fix the wing" of a "girl like this."

Pat's initial anger was attributed, in part, to his refusal to take his medication—despite considerable pressure exerted by his parents and therapist alike. He gives in and his life begins to improve, about halfway through the film, when he begins dance lessons, as part of a deal made with Tiffany. Pat becomes calmer and more considerate as the film proceeds, achieved with the aid of medication, a desire to redeem himself in the eyes of his former wife and perhaps also due to his regular dance practice. Other resolutions towards the end of the film include making peace with his father—who is clearly portrayed as a major cause of Pat's problems—as an obsessive, and delusional, if comic and mellowed gambler (an "exploding man" in Pat's words). This closure of father/son narrative is quite typical of commonly used Oedipal trajectories, an oft- (or over-) used dramatic device in films and other forms of storytelling.[53]

In both his and his father's case the women who come to rescue them appear to be the "silver lining," as essential female forces upon which their future mental stability depends. Overall, this film borrows heavily from cultural stereotypes of madness that are over-reliant on over-sexualized, or passive, enabling women and aggressive men for the creation of drama and the eventual resolution of conflicts. In Pat's case, the improved outcomes are achieved by a transformation of vulnerability, neediness and bigoted views on women, into more a conservative form of protective masculinity,[54] with the aid of compliance with medical authority. Any underlying causes for his behavior remain untouched, and examination of the internal experiences of bipolar disorder are ignored—it is clearly a case of moving him from the wrong to the right form of behavior, a process that involves rapprochement with his romantic fate and mutual respect between him and his father.

Just when we think it's all over there is a declaration of love, which most of the audience have probably been hoping for, amid a suddenly deserted street, replete with the semiotic schmaltz of Christmas lights. This culminates in a kiss, with sustained, fast-arc shots (perhaps suggesting wholeness), followed by a panning out. The final scene begins with an establishing shot of his parents' house and shots of domestic artefacts within their home. The final scene of the film confirms how much this story of mental illness is based on heteronormative ideals, as in the end the whole family effect a conventional, happy normality after resolution (of the film's narrative). Starting with a long shot of the family home and a voice-over by Pat, where he tells us that "the world can break your heart" but that he is very grateful for the help of his loved ones (perhaps suggesting the importance of social contexts, but firmly placed within the individualistic ties of family duties and obligations), the camera moves on to explore their home. First there are close-up shots of the family members' personal artefacts; in this case, the close-up camera shots perhaps denote affective shifts in Pat's perspective, to a much deeper appreciation of his family's values. After that the viewer is provided with a cameo epilogue of a family experiencing peace, happiness and continuity at home; father and son and their friends engaged in low-level gambling, mother cooking and giving advice and Tiffany moving over to sit on Pat's knee while his mother and friend look on lovingly. Here, the family's movements are shown in mid-length shots, allowing us to observe their interactions within the home as if we were there, illuminating the growing intimacy and tenderness between them.

This is, in the end, a story of redemption, of rehabilitation effected by medication, of heteronormativity and the love of a "good woman." A tale of the need for normality and the recuperative powers of love—whatever they are.

Conclusion

The leading women in both films are perhaps more likely to be seen as "just like us"[55] (if we regard ourselves as complex beings with multiple and conflicting needs and desires), especially as we see more of their struggles and strengths with which we may be able to identify.

In Greenberg's case, he isn't very likeable but it is likely that audiences will feel his pain and anxieties, producing a strong emotional verisimilitude, whereas the main focus on Pat's likeability seems centered around his conformity and journey, as a man, from wrong to right. If judged on box office figures it is the rehabilitation journey of *SLP*, with a clear delineation of cause and effect, which is welcomed by most film viewers.[56] Perhaps this is *the* defining feature of romantic comedy dramas and commercially successful films, and an important point of difference in the episodic (rather than act-based) structures of art films and smart cinema.[57] This seems to have significance for representations of mental health, for characters of all genders.[58]

Earlier in the chapter I suggested that narratives that follow the *for-anyone-as-someone* structure are likely to be useful and usable to everyone. Analysis of the two films has suggested that this may not be the case. *SLP* is, in the end, a story of redemption, of rehabilitation effected by medication and the love of a good woman, which seems to offer fewer viewing positions for men and even less to those who feel stigmatized through the imposition of mental health labels and therapeutic answers. This is likely to strengthen identifications with non-disabled stereotypes of ableist normality and neurotypicality. Conversely, *Greenberg* seems to be a story that highlights non-categorical forms of human frailty and vulnerability, ostensibly appealing to us all. Yet, it is *Greenberg* that attracts the niche audience, common to smart films.[59]

In terms of "the drama of communication"[60] *Greenberg* is an outstandingly polyphonic text that (as Florence might say) lets us all in and makes Greenberg the subject of his own story alongside the dissenting voices of others, whereas analysis of *SLP* shows how the "speech genre" used is a comparatively monologic one. Where Pat is at the center of the drama, he is made an object rather than subject of his own story. Tiffany, having completed her own journey of madness is the primary narrative agent, alongside the supports of therapeutic "silver linings" discourse, medication and the centering of the heteronormative family as a core of mental health. Conversely, like most smart films,[61] *Greenberg* places the individuals and the family at the center of concerns, but does so in ways that implicitly offer a wider cultural critique.

Greenberg shows us how compelling stories featuring mental distress can be, and how they can help us to think in terms of similarity rather than pathological forms of difference, placed as it is in symbolic opposition to conventional Hollywood films. Perhaps a key dimension of these films, for offering new understandings of mental illness, is in their challenge to the "action image,"[62] particularly in the ways they "cast doubt" over the permanence and possibility of change."[63] However, the comparative success of *SLP* may tell us something about the power of marketing, and the limited audience for smart films, but, perhaps most of all, of the resistance (beyond smart directors) of the film industry and society to view mental health in terms of shared human vulnerabilities.

Notes

1 *Greenberg*, directed by Noah Baumbach (New York: Focus Features, 2010).
2 *Silver Linings Playbook*, directed by David O. Russell (New York: The Weinstein Company, 2012).
3 I draw from all three areas of study. I am using a disability studies approach that borrows from a variety of strands within critical/disability studies as a whole, seen essentially as an interdisciplinary field that conceptualizes disability as disablement, a form of oppression that emanates from society. I am using mad studies in a similar way, as a newly emerging area of study related to disability studies that emphasizes the voices of those labeled mad; see Gillis' explanation, for example: Alex Gillis, "The Rise of Mad Studies," University

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Affairs, accessed May 31, 2017, www.universityaffairs.ca/features/feature-article/mad-studies. I use elements from the vast area of film studies; following an approach commonly taken when fusing film with disability, I focus primarily on narrative and visual analysis, but also on relevant aspects of genre.

4 Peter Byrne, *Screening Madness: A Century of Negative Movie Stereotypes of Mental Illness* (London: Time to Change, 2009), www.time-to-change.org.uk/sites/default/files/film-report-screening-madness-time-to-change.pdf.

5 Stephen Harper, "Understanding Mental Distress in Film and Media: A New Agenda?" *Perspectives in Public Health* 128, no. 4 (2008): 170–174.

6 Harper, "Understanding Mental Distress in Film and Media," 170.

7 Jane Sancho, *Disabling Prejudice: Attitudes Towards Disability and Its Portrayal on Television* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, Broadcasting Standards Commission and the Independent Television Commission, 2003), www.bbc.co.uk/guidelines/editorialguidelines/assets/research/disabling_prejudice.pdf.

8 Sancho, *Disabling Prejudice*, 10.

9 Jeffrey Gavin, "Television Teen Drama and HIV/AIDS: The Role of Genre in Audience Understandings of Safe Sex," *Continuum* 15, no. 1 (2001): 85.

10 See Norden's Analysis of the Obsessive Avenger Stereotype, in Martin F. Norden, *The Cinema of Isolation: A History of Physical Disabilities in the Movies* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1994).

11 Richard J. Bischoff and Annette Debolt Reiter, "The Role of Gender in the Presentation of Mental Health Clinicians in the Movies: Implications for Clinical practice," *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, Practice, Training* 36, no. 2 (1999): 180–189.

12 Jessica Robyn Cadwallader, "Like a Horse and Carriage: (Non-) Normativity in Hollywood Romance," *M/C Journal: A Journal of Media and Culture* 15, no. 6 (2012), http://journal.media-culture.org.au/index.php/mcjournal/article/viewArticle/583.

13 *Fatal Attraction*, directed by Adrian Lyne (Hollywood, CA: Paramount Pictures, 1987).

14 Kathrina Glitre, "Genre, Cycles and Critical Traditions," in *Hollywood Romantic Comedy* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2006), 9–40.

15 See writers such as Tamar Jeffers McDonald, *Romantic Comedy: Boy Meets Girl Meets Genre* (London: Wallflower, 2006).

16 Paddy Scannell, "For Anyone-as-Someone-Structures," *Media, Culture and Society* 22 (2000): 5.

17 Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962).

18 Scannell, "For Anyone-as-Someone-Structures," 6.

19 Scannell, "For Anyone-as-Someone-Structures," 7.

20 Scannell's distinction no longer holds true in the same way it did, with processes of disintermediation reshaping hierarchies of production and consumption, and new understandings of what is to be shared, but this concept still offers a valuable way of analyzing popular culture.

21 *The Danish Girl*, directed by Tom Hooper (New York: Focus Features, 2015).

22 *La La Land*, directed by Damien Chazelle (Santa Monica, CA; Summit Entertainment, 2016).

23 As at September 2017, *The Danish Girl* had grossed USD 64.2 million worldwide (more than four times the USD 15 million cost of making the film) and *La La Land* had grossed USD 445.6 million (nearly 15 times more than the film's production budget of USD 30 million). Production budgets sourced from IMDB; Box-office sourced from Box Office Mojo (as at September 6, 2017).

24 Anthony Giddens, *The Transformation of Intimacy: Sexuality Love and Eroticism in Modern Society* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992).

25 These themes are explored by Deborah Chambers in *Representing the Family* (London: Sage, 2001), 135. Chambers draws on the work of Stephen Neale. "The Big Romance or Something Wild? Romantic Comedy Today," *Screen* 33, no. 3 (1992): 284–299.

26 Scannell, "For Anyone-as-Someone-Structures," 9.

27 Scannell, "For Anyone-as-Someone-Structures,"19.

28 This can be seen in articles such as David Cox "#OscarsSoWhite: Who Is Really to Blame for the Oscars' Lack of Diversity?" *Guardian*, February 16, 2016, www.theguardian.com/film/2016/feb/25/oscarssowhite-right-and-wrong-academy-awards-audience.

29 For example, Kate Taylor conceptualizes *The Danish Girl* thus: "An Inoffensive Drama on a Transgender Woman's Experience in the 1920s," in *Globe and Mail*, December 11, 2015, www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/film/film-reviews/the-danish-girl-an-inoffensive-drama-on-a-transgender-womans-experiences-in-the-1920s/article27688773.

30 *Greenberg*'s production budget was USD 25 million, accessed May 21, 2017, http://powergrid.thewrap.com/project/greenberg. *SLP* had a smaller budget of USD 21 million, accessed May 31, 2017, www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?page=main&id=silverliningsplaybook.htm.

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31 Maria San Fillipo, "A Cinema of Recession; Micro-Budgeting, Micro-Drama, and the Mumblecore Movement," *Cineaction* 85 (2011), www.cineaction.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/issue85sample1.pdf.

32 Claire Perkins, *American Smart Cinema* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012); Jeffrey Sconce. "Irony, Nihilism and the New American 'Smart' Film,'" *Screen* 43, no. 4 (2002): 349–369.

33 Perkins, *American Smart Cinema*, 5.

34 Perkins, *American Smart Cinema*, 6.

35 *Greenberg* has been nominated for awards such as the Film Independent Spirit Awards in 2011, accessed September 9, 2017, www.imdb.com/title/tt1234654/awards.

36 Alisa Perren, "Sex, Lies and Marketing: Miramax and the Development of the 'Quality Indie' Blockbuster," Communication Faculty Publications 1 (Atlanta, GA: Georgia State University, 2001), http://scholarworks.gsu.edu/communication_facpub/1.

37 Annette Kuhn, *Women's Pictures: Feminism and Cinema* (London: Verso, 1994).

38 Kristin Thompson, *Storytelling in the New Hollywood* (London: Harvard University Press, 1999).

39 Maria San Fillipo, "A Cinema of Recession; Micro-Budgeting, Micro-Drama, and the 'Mumblecore' Movement," *Cineaction* 85 (2011), www.cineaction.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/issue85sample1.pdf.

40 Scannell, "For Anyone-as-Someone-Structures," 9.

41 Proposed in the work of disability studies scholars such as Paul Darke, "Understanding Cinematic Representations of Disability," in *The Disability Reader: Social Science Perspectives*, ed. Tom Shakespeare (London: Cassell, 1998); and David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis: Disability and the Dependencies of Discourse* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2000).

42 For example, Juliet Foster, "Unification and Representation: A Study of the Social Representations of Mental Illness," *Papers on Social Representations*, 10 (2001): 3.1–3.18.

43 See, for example, J. L. Roelandt, A. Caria, L. Defromont, A. Vandeborre and N. Daumerie, "Representations of Insanity, Mental Illness and Depression in General Population in France," *L'Encéphale* 36, no. 3 (2010), 7–13.

44 *Greenberg*, accessed May 24, 2016, www.imdb.com/title/tt1234654; *Silver Linings Playbook*, accessed May 24, 2016, www.imdb.com/title/tt1045658.

45 Ian Parker, "Happiness: Noah Baumbach's New Wave," *New Yorker*, April 29, 2013, www.newyorker.com/magazine/2013/04/29/happiness-4.

46 See Darke, Mitchell and Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis*.

47 Gilles Deleuze, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam, *Cinema 1: The Movement Image* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986).

48 Perkins, *American Smart Cinema*, 95.

49 Joanne Baker, "Claiming Volition and Evading Victimhood: Post-Feminist Obligations for Young Women," *Feminism & Psychology* 20, no. 2 (2010): 186–204.

50 Sconce, "Irony, Nihilism."

51 David Schwartz, "That 70's Look—The Throwback Naturalism of Cinematographer Harris Savides," *Moving Image Source Co-Presented with Reverse-Shot* (Museum of the Moving Image, March 26, 2010), www.movingimagesource.us/articles/that-70s-look-20100326.

52 Norden, *The Cinema of Isolation*.

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54 Wilde, "Disabling Masculinity."

55 This is a concept used by Jane Sancho, *Disabling Prejudice* to show affinities with media characters seen to be similar to ourselves and to have universal qualities.

56 The box office figures for *SLP* and *Greenberg* contrast sharply. As at May 2016, *SLP* had grossed USD 132 million in the United States and USD 104 million in other territories, accessed May 20, 2016, www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=silverliningsplaybook.htm; *Greenberg* only made USD 4.2 million in the United States and USD 2 million in other territories, accessed May 20, 2016, www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=greenberg.htm.

57 Sconce, "Irony, Nihilism," following David Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995).

58 The consideration of cis and trans women and men and those identifying as other genders is beyond the scope of this chapter. However, recent films featuring trans characters often have storylines where their trans identities are portrayed as a barrier to romantic relationships—this includes more mainstream fare, e.g. *The Danish Girl* (Tom Hooper, New York: Focus Features, 2015) and independent films such as *Tangerine* (Sean S. Baker, Los Angeles, CA, Magnolia Pictures, 2015).

59 Perkins, *American Smart Cinema*; Sconce, "Irony, Nihilism."

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60 Martin Flanagan, *Bakhtin and the Movies: New Ways of Understanding Hollywood Film* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).
61 Perkins, *American Smart Cinema*; Sconce, "Irony, Nihilism."
62 Deleuze, *Cinema 1*.
63 Laura Henderson, "*American Smart Cinema* by Claire Perkins," Book Review, *Senses of Cinema* 69, December (2013), http://sensesofcinema.com/2013/book-reviews/american-smart-cinema-by-claire-perkins.

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