

HEADSHRINKERS

PSYCHIATRISTS AS VILLAINS, ON-SCREEN AND OFF

Sharon Knolle

“Nothing appears more desperately urban than psychoanalysis, that theory and therapy invented by and for citified bourgeois,” wrote Sigmund Freud’s biographer Peter Gay. Freud’s theory of what lurks in the darkest parts of the psyche forever changed what humans thought of themselves and their fellow man. The idea that we are secretly ruled by our subconscious would become an integral part of film noir. Neurotic murderesses and sociopaths with Oedipal complexes, like *White Heat*’s Cody Jarrett, ran wild in the noir landscape, the id writ large.



The Mankiewicz men (from left to right, Herman, father Franz, and brother Joseph) were among the first Hollywood elites to embrace psychoanalysis. However, Joe strongly opposed psychoanalysis being the subject of Hitchcock's *Spellbound*

Freud would not only start a revolution in psychiatry, psychoanalysis would become so popular in the mid-twentieth century that it became unthinkable for an actor to *not* be in therapy. Rod Steiger, who played an analyst trying to rehabilitate a pedophile in 1961's *The Mark*, declared, "In 1950s New York, if you didn't go to an analyst, you were sick. Everybody had to go so they could sit at Sardi's and say, 'My analyst is better than your analyst.'"

Postwar Hollywood seized upon the psychoanalytic trend: Directors used psychoanalysis to get young actresses into bed and actors such as Kirk Douglas eagerly shared the details of their latest sessions during romantic trysts. Studios used analysts to keep wayward actors in line. During the Red Scare of the '50s, therapists who knew their patients' darkest secrets reportedly encouraged them to rat on their friends.

Within the wave of European émigrés who fled the Nazis, such as Fritz Lang and Conrad Veidt, came a wave of displaced psychoanalysts, many of them to be embraced by the Hollywood elite.

One of the early adopters of the cult of psychoanalysis was Adeline Jaffe Schulberg, the well-connected sister of agent Sam Jaffe and mother of Budd Schulberg, Oscar®-winning screenwriter of 1954's *On the Waterfront*. At her Hancock Park mansion, "moviemakers and analysts would regularly rub elbows at lavish dinner parties and intimate soirees," according to *Hollywood on the Couch* (by Stephen Farber and Marc Green).

Quick to join the Freudian flock were *Citizen Kane* screenwriter Herman Mankiewicz and his producer-director brother Joseph. Herman saw Ernst Simmel, a protégé of Freud's and an expert on addictive behaviors. Herman, at first, found analysis helped his alcoholism and jealousy of his brother Louis, but eventually he walked away "the same neurotic, self-destructive alcoholic" he had been when he started therapy. According to his nephew Tom, he quit Simmel with a flourish, declaring, "You're a quack. And, oh, by the way—I never mentioned that I have a sister and I hate her, too."

The most well-known psychoanalysts were nearly as famous as their clients, and often far more colorful. In the late '40s, after a series of failed romances, Celeste Holm saw Frances Deri, who was referred to as "Madame Deri." Holm recalled, "She looked just like a Buddha. She had that German hairdo that's really a Marine cut—straight across the top. She smoked cigarettes with a long wire holder in that German way. I came in to see her and her first words were, 'You don't need to be entertaining in here.'"

Then there was Ukrainian Gregory Zilboorg, who wore a black cape and sported an enormous mustache. The leader of the New York Psychoanalytic Association, he was called "a first-class phony" by his colleagues. He eventually was investigated for unethical practices, but the charges were dropped, partly because no one wanted to give the burgeoning movement a bad name. He was adored by patients, however, including George Gershwin and Lillian Hellman, who named her poodle after him.

The 1941 Broadway musical *Lady in the Dark*, in which a career woman undergoes analysis and learns her trouble is that she has no man in her life—was allegedly based on Moss Hart's sessions with Zilboorg. Other sources put Hart in therapy with Zilboorg's biggest rival, New York-born Lawrence S. Kubie, whose specialty was



Clients of analyst Gregory Zilboorg (far left) included (beginning top center) George Gershwin, Lillian Hellman (who named her poodle after Zilboorg), and Moss Hart

“curing” homosexuality. Hart, who eventually married and had children, was Kubie’s greatest “success story,” although associates claimed Hart was miserable. Said Celeste Holm, “Moss was a homosexual and didn’t want to be—and when he was through with Dr. Kubie, he wasn’t.”

Among the biggest power players in the headshrinking set was Russian-born May Romm, who included producer David O. Selznick among her clients. He credited her for curing his depression after seeing her daily for several weeks. In 1944, he produced Alfred Hitchcock’s ode to psychoanalysis, *Spellbound*. Romm received credit as “Psychiatric Advisor.”

“Her influence sometimes rivaled that of the actors, directors and producers she was treating... she was the first analyst to be embraced as a crony by the Tinseltown rajahs,” note Farber and Green. Her clients included Robert Taylor, Ava Gardner, Edward G. Robinson, and Jennifer Jones, Selznick’s second wife.

Although Ingrid Bergman heroically diagnoses the root of Gregory Peck’s neurosis in *Spellbound* and reveals the true murderer, the psychiatric community and its adherents were appalled when the real killer was revealed to be a respected analyst.

Famed bandleader and ladies’ man Artie Shaw adored Romm, but disapproved so strongly of her lending her name to *Spellbound* that, according to Farber and Green, he stopped seeing her. Although that may have simply been an excuse to quit therapy since she intended to talk him out of marrying Ava Gardner, which Shaw admitted after the marriage to Gardner fell apart.

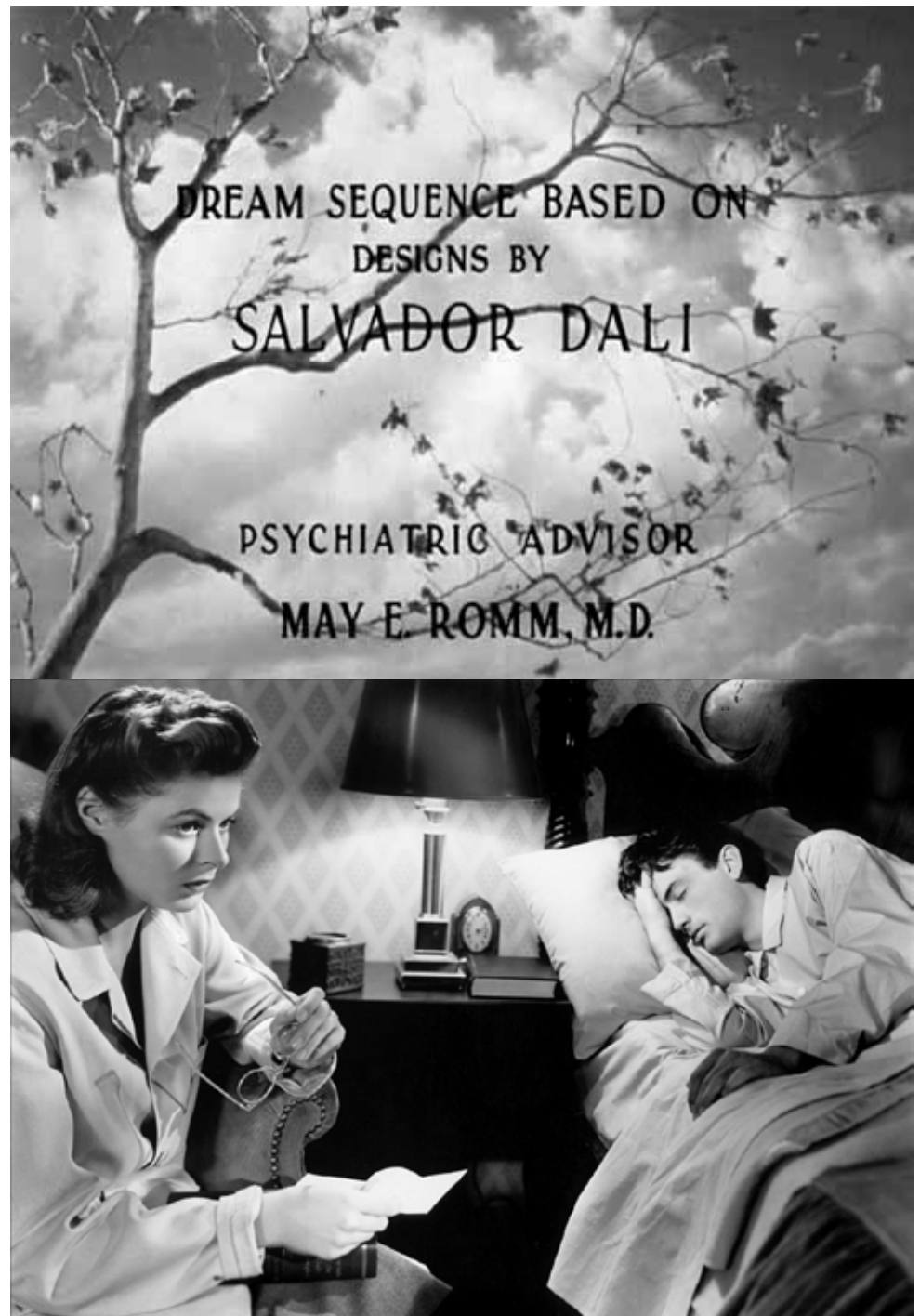
Joseph L. Mankiewicz was so incensed about Romm’s involvement with *Spellbound* that he alerted one of the Grand Poobahs of Hollywood shrinks, Karl Menninger, who fired off blistering memos to Romm and Selznick. Romm defended her participation, arguing, “Had I not done so, it would have been produced in a much more undesirable form than it is now.”

Dr. Frederick Hacker, a Viennese émigré, received the warm backing of Joseph Mankiewicz after he befriended the director’s wife while in training at the Menninger Clinic in Kansas, where recalcitrant actors and offspring were often shipped for straightening out. Once in Beverly Hills, he founded the Hacker Clinic and was knee-deep in well-heeled clients. “Hacker was the first analyst to become a millionaire,” said rival Dr. Martin Grotjahn, whose clients included Vivien Leigh, and who advocated group therapy for actors—as long as there was only one *star* per group.

Robert Mitchum was sent to Hacker after declining to prosecute the manager who had drained his bank account. “My mother and sister, doubting my sanity, implored the cooperation of my wife in suggesting a visit to a psychiatrist,” recalled the actor. And so he found himself on the couch of Dr. Hacker, who reminded him of character actor Walter Slezak.

According to Mitchum’s biographer Lee Server, Hacker’s advice may have been partially responsible for the actor’s famous “Baby, I don’t care” attitude: “You suffer from a state of over-amiability, in which failure to please everyone creates a condition of self-reproach,” Hacker told the actor. “You are addicted to the good will of people

Dr. May Romm, David O. Selznick’s psychiatrist, risked professional censure by consulting on *Spellbound*, in which shrink Ingrid Bergman probes Gregory Peck’s subconscious





Dr. Fredrick Hacker (center) gave Robert Mitchum some useful advice, but his care of alcoholic Robert Walker (with Jennifer Jones and David O. Selznick) proved fatal

and I suggest that you risk their displeasure by learning to say, 'No.'" Once home, Mitchum told his family: "He said I should tell you all to go shit in your hats."

Hacker's ministrations proved fatal for another client, Robert Walker. Despondent after wife Jennifer Jones left him for David O. Selznick, Walker took to drinking heavily and his behavior became wildly erratic. In 1948, he was arrested for drunk and disorderly conduct. Dore Scharf, head of production at MGM where Walker was under contract, gave him an ultimatum: If he did not submit to psychiatric treatment at the Menninger Clinic in Kansas, he would be fired. He agreed to the treatment, then returned to California and began sessions with Dr. Hacker.

On August 28, 1951, Hacker arrived at Walker's Brentwood home and found the actor ranting incoherently. He administered a shot of sodium amytal to calm him down. Walker immediately went into shock and died. Hacker had previously given Walker the same injection, but according to Farber and Green's account, the doctor had failed to determine the level of barbiturates already in Walker's system.

Shockingly, there was no investigation. Dr. Alex Rogawski, a prominent analyst who had grown up with Hacker in Vienna, was less circumspect: "Hacker killed Robert Walker. He actually killed him. But a doctor could get away with it back then. Today you would have a nice lawsuit."

Adds Dr. Leo Rangell, "That case didn't do Hacker any harm. It

almost worked to his advantage, on the premise that any publicity is good publicity." (Rangell went on to write *The Mind of Watergate: An Exploration of the Compromise of Integrity* about the American public's tendency to be "gullible or easily seduced, and susceptible to leaders of questionable character.")

Walker's devastated son, then 11, was—unimaginably—sent to therapy with none other than Frederick Hacker, the man who'd given his father the fatal shot. "I didn't know Hacker had anything to do with my father's death," Walker Jr. said. "He gave me a few psychological tests. I remember thinking even then that he seemed like a pompous know-it-all. But I don't blame him for what happened to my father. I just feel he didn't know any better."

The line between professional and private lives was crossed regularly: Artie Shaw briefly dated Dorothy Colodny, the daughter of his analyst, May Romm. Romm also analyzed Selznick's wife, Irene, who revealed in her autobiography that Romm saw nothing wrong in breaking client confidentiality and discussing her other clients, including Irene's sister. The two were very cozy: Romm was always at the Selznick's—so much so that son Daniel said, "I assumed all psychiatrists were like a part of the family."

According to son Christopher, Joseph Mankiewicz' years of analysis not only failed to cure his philandering, but became a technique to seduce women. Among the actresses he persuaded to try psychiatry were Judy Garland, with whom he had an affair in the '40s. First,

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Joseph Mankiewicz used psychoanalytic techniques to guide leading lady Nancy Guild in the 1946 amnesia noir *Somewhere in the Night* with John Hodiak

he bought her books on Freud, then he introduced her to Karl Menninger. Eventually, she ended up in therapy with Ernst Simmel, but preferred Dr. Herbert Kupper who made house calls.

Christopher Mankiewicz told Farber and Green, “My father believed passionately in Freud and in psychiatry. He once confessed to me that he actually wanted to be a psychiatrist but couldn’t pass the pre-med courses at Columbia. So he became a director instead, which was the next best thing. Psychiatry was his only religion.”

The director of *All About Eve* (1950) and *Five Fingers* (1952) also applied psychoanalytic techniques while directing: Nancy Guild, whom he directed in the 1946 amnesia noir *Somewhere in the Night*, recalled that he spent a few months with her before production learning the intimate details of her childhood and teenage years. When a problem arose on set, the director “would sit with me for half an hour reminding me of things I’d told him about myself... He was psychoanalyzing me all through the picture, breaking down my inhibitions.”

Evelyn Keyes, star of *The Prowler* (1951) and *99 River Street* (1953), began therapy on the suggestion of lover Kirk Douglas. As

she wrote in her autobiography, “Kirk was responsible for two very important decisions in my life: I went to a psychoanalyst and I broke my contract with Columbia. Kirk, just parted from his wife, with two small sons to worry about, already knowing that success wasn’t synonymous with happiness, was looking for it on an analyst’s couch. I somehow became an extension of his treatment.” She relates how he’d go to her place and discuss his session with her, then bring her comments back to his analyst. “I envied him the doctor to talk to,” she noted wryly.

She was less happy with her own therapy. “Going to the analyst didn’t offer the relief I had anticipated, nor the joy I thought to have talking about myself to a paid listener. On the contrary. The way he asked the simplest questions, was like an attack, as if he were after me. How do you feel about your mother? Brother? Sisters? Well, how should I feel, I love them, no? Doesn’t everybody?”

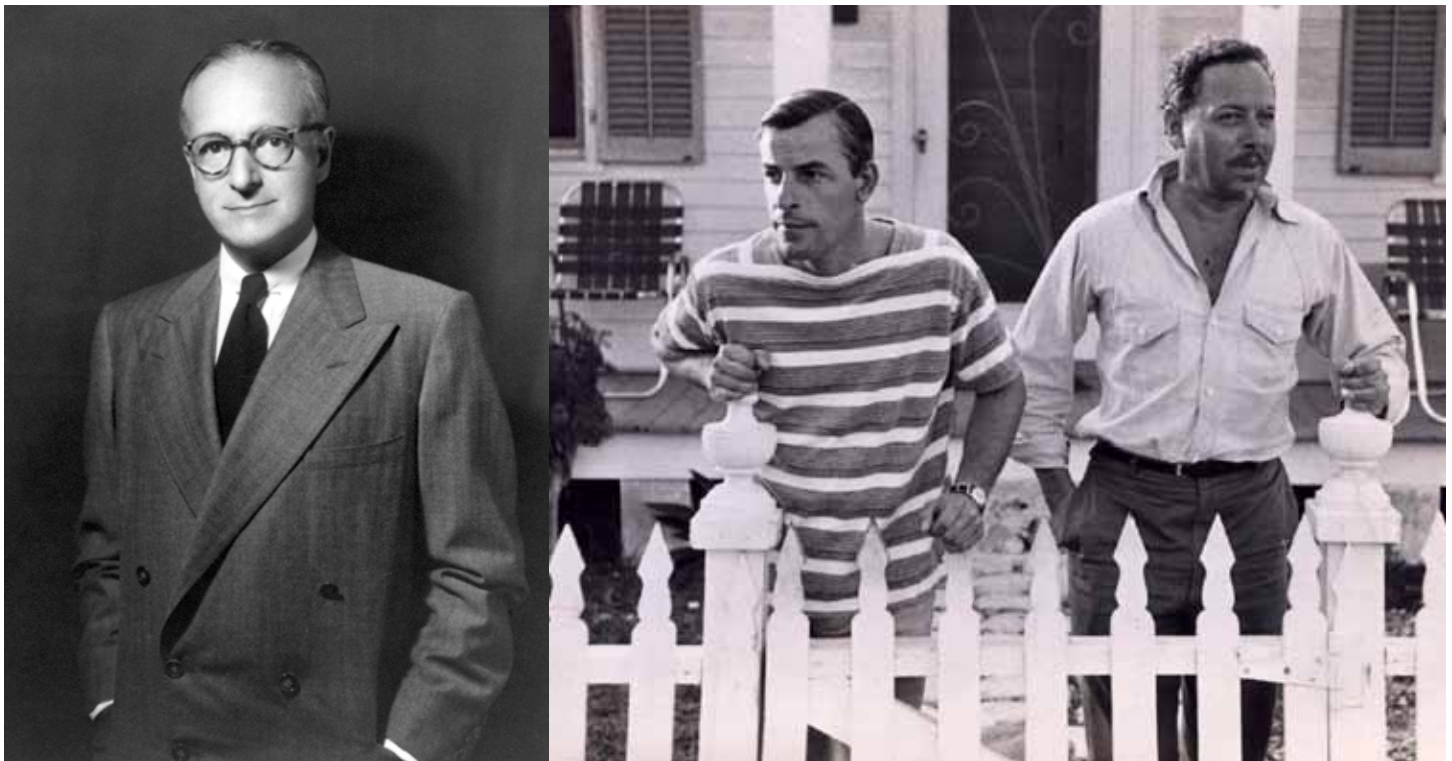
She finally quit analysis when offered a role in another country: “Having got rid of my original roots, three husbands and one studio, one lousy doctor was a cinch.”



Evelyn Keyes, star of *The Prowler*, *The Killer That Stalked New York*, and *99 River Street*, began therapy on the suggestion of lover Kirk Douglas



Lee Strasberg (third from left/first row) teaching at Actors Studio, where soul-searching became part of an actor's technique



Psychoanalyst Lawrence S. Kubie (left) did not not “cure” Tennessee Williams (far right) of homosexuality, but he did break up Williams’ long-term relationship with Frank Merlo (pictured)

Soul-searching was an integral part of The Method created by Lee Strasberg at The Actors Studio in New York. Bruce Dern, who studied with Strasberg in the '50s, recalls, “When Lee would do his comments on a scene, and he would sense a resistance in dealing with certain emotions, he would literally write vocal prescriptions for analysis... He would say, ‘You should see a doctor.... Or he might ask, ‘Are you in therapy? Are you going to a psychiatrist? Who is it?’ Then Dane Clark or Eli Wallach might raise his hand and ask, ‘Is he on Fifty-Seventh Street?’ At the time I hadn’t been in analysis and I wasn’t sure if it was an intrusion or an invasion of an actor’s privacy.”

“Analysts came to our sessions,” Frank Corsaro, who followed Strasberg as the director of the Actors Studio told Farber and Green, “and I remember one of them said, ‘You get results much more quickly than we do.’ Some actors come to the Actors Studio almost for therapy.”

Anne Bancroft, who filmed noirs *Don’t Bother To Knock* (1952), *The Naked Street* (1955) and *Nightfall* (1957) before netting an Oscar for 1962’s *The Miracle Worker*, credited her success to the Actors Studio and her six years of psychoanalysis, saying, perhaps only half jokingly, “The only men in my life from now on will be my father, my agent, my press agent and my psychiatrist.”

Kubie, the doctor who had “cured”

Moss Hart of his homosexuality, also counseled Tennessee Williams in 1957. He didn’t succeed in rewriting the playwright’s sexual orientation, but he did get Williams to break up with the love of his life, Frank Merlo. Screenwriter Arthur Laurents says, “I don’t think Tennessee ever got over the guilt of abandoning him.”

Williams talked about his analysis in a 1958 *New York Herald Tribune* interview, crediting therapy with dramatically diminishing his claustrophobia and panic attacks. After the failure of his play *Orpheus Descending*, his depression was so great that friends Marlon Brando, Elia Kazan, and Irene Selznick urged him to consult a psychoanalyst.

He underwent therapy 50 minutes a day, five days a week at the office of his analyst. Williams put his experiences into the 1958 play *Suddenly, Last Summer*, which became the 1959 Joseph Mankiewicz film starring Elizabeth Taylor, Montgomery Clift, and Katharine Hepburn. The shocking play contained references not just to homosexuality, but death by cannibalism and one of the most Oedipal mother-son relationships ever written, yet somehow it made it past the censors to the big screen.

At the film’s crux is rich matriarch Hepburn’s wish to have “babbling” niece Taylor lobotomized so the truth about her son’s gruesome death will





Clinical diagnosis of “dementia praecox” led to the purported lobotomy of actress Frances Farmer (left) and the confirmed lobotomy of Tennessee Williams’ sister Rose (right); both patients shown before and after their procedures

be kept hidden forever. The scenario recalls the sad true story of Frances Farmer, who shared the same bogus diagnosis—“dementia praecox”—with Taylor’s character. (Popular legend has it that Farmer *was* lobotomized, a fate Taylor’s character avoids thanks to the good doctor Clift and a dose of truth serum, but no one has been able to verify that the procedure was ever actually performed on the doomed actress.)

Tragically, Williams had more than Farmer’s tabloid story to draw from: His own sister, Rose, underwent a lobotomy at his mother’s orders. In a 1975 *New York Times* interview, Williams shared:

“[My sister] could have become quite well by now if they hadn’t performed that goddam operation on her; she would have come back up to the surface.... My mother panicked, you know, because she said my sister had begun using four-letter words. ‘Do anything! Don’t let her talk like that,’ mother cried.”

The playwright explained, “But Rose wasn’t doing that. Oh, she said things that four-letter words say, but she put them in elegant language, like this: ‘Mother, we girls at All Saints used to abuse ourselves with candles we stole from the chapel.’ Mother couldn’t bear it!” He added, dryly, “Mother’s ninety now, and an inspiration to us all.”

Williams ended the therapy after six months and later told his

mother why he stopped seeing Kubie: “He hit me where it hurt most. He said I wrote cheap melodrama and nothing else.”

Like Williams, Patricia Highsmith, the author of *Strangers on a Train* and the many Tom Ripley novels, sought therapy to “cure” being gay. The details of her short-lived analysis came to light with the release of *Carol*, the 2015 Todd Haynes film based on *The Price of Salt*, a lesbian love story she wrote under a pseudonym. The

inspiration for the story came in 1948 when she took a job at the toy counter of Bloomingdale’s in Manhattan to pay for her psychoanalysis. At the time, she was engaged to an author named Marc Brandel and was, as she later wrote, trying to “get myself into a condition to be married.”

At the time, being gay was not only illegal, but was believed to be just as subversive—or possibly more so—than being a Communist. Senator Joe McCarthy not only targeted suspected Communists, but forced 91 suspected homosexuals to resign from the State Department. The year *The Price of Salt* was published, the first edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* listed homosexuality as a “sociopathic personality disturbance.”

One of the oddest—and shadiest—chapters in psychoanalysis concerns Ernest Philip Cohen, whose clients included Lloyd Bridges, John Garfield, and screenwriter Sylvia Richards. According



In the late '40s, Patricia Highsmith, author of *Strangers on a Train*, underwent analysis to “cure” her of being a lesbian, then considered a psychiatric disease



Analyst (or FBI plant?) Ernest Philip Cohen convinced patients to cooperate with the HUAC, as screenwriter Alvah Bessie (top right) learned. HUAC chief investigator William Wheeler (bottom right) was assured by Cohen of his patients' cooperation, including that of John Garfield (top left) and Sterling Hayden (bottom left)

to *Naming Names* author Victor Navasky, Cohen was also an FBI informant who talked his clients into cooperating with the HUAC hearings in the '50s. Navasky described Cohen, a former Communist, as "a master of manipulation operating at the murky crossroads where the mystique of Freud met the mystique of Marx."

Force of Evil director Abraham Polonsky firmly believed that Cohen had betrayed his clients: "I know he was reporting confidences to the FBI. There's no question about that. And he was turning patients into stool pigeons," he told Navasky.

Richards, whose credits include the 1947 noirs *Possessed* and *Secret Beyond the Door*, recalls that she got the same message from her boss, her therapist, and her lawyer: Cooperate with HUAC. "I was the sort of person who wanted to please my friends, please my analyst... I thought I was choosing my friends," she said of her decision to become an informant.

Sterling Hayden was likely talking about Cohen in his 1964 memoir *Wanderer* when he included a conversation with a doctor whom he blames for persuading him to name names: "If it hadn't been for you I wouldn't have turned into a stoolie for J. Edgar Hoover. I don't think you have the foggiest notion of the contempt I have had for myself since the day I did that thing."

In his book *Inquisition in Eden*, Hollywood Ten screenwriter Alvah Bessie wrote that two years after consulting an analyst, he learned the man "had worked with a great many Hollywood writers and actors ... at least six of his patients turned up at subsequent investigations of the industry and every one of them was a stool pigeon. It also appeared that the man was not a psychiatrist at all; he was not even a psychologist, but apparently he was an FBI man."

William Wheeler, the HUAC chief investigator, told Navasky that Cohen never shared his patients' names, but promised their full cooperation. According to Wheeler, Cohen said: "If you subpoena one of my patients, I'll try to condition him to testify." Navasky ask for clarification: "Condition or convince?"

NOIR'S NOTABLE HEADCASES

In noir, many crimes are boiled down to some kind of psychosis. Here are some of the genre's most notable "case studies:"

Phantom Lady (1944) The cop on a strangulation case guesses that the murderer is a "diabolically clever paranoiac."

Spellbound (1945) Gregory Peck suffers amnesia after witnessing the death of the doctor whose identity he's assumed, compounded by guilt over the childhood death of his brother.

The Locket (1946) Being falsely accused of theft as a girl turns Laraine Day into a kleptomaniac murderess.

Possessed (1947) Joan Crawford wanders in a daze after murdering her lover. Flashbacks reveal schizophrenic tendencies making her "not responsible" for the crime.

The Dark Past (1948) Lee J. Cobb traces hood William Holden's nightmares and "paralyzed" hand back to childhood guilt over betraying his criminal father to the police.

White Heat (1949) Career-criminal Cody Jarrett has one hell of an Oedipal complex.

Whirlpool (1950) Gene Tierney's kleptomania makes her a convenient patsy for the murderous intentions of her hypnotist-therapist.

Strangers on a Train (1951) The "flamboyant" Bruno Anthony is obsessed with his mother, psychotically so. Is this the root of the Bates family tree?

The Sniper (1952) A GI with a pathological hatred of women goes on a deadly shooting spree after his attempt to be committed is ignored.

Angel Face (1953) Spoiled heiress has everything, including a slavishly devoted Robert Mitchum ... unfortunately her baggage includes a homicidal Elektra complex.



Phantom Lady



The Locket



The Sniper



Possessed



The Dark Past



White Heat



Strangers on a Train



Whirlpool



Angel Face



In *Whirlpool*, hypno-therapist José Ferrer dreams of the perfect murder: Kill his wife and condition client Gene Tierney to take the rap. Even crazier: a finale where he leaves the hospital under self-hypnosis to retrieve incriminating evidence

“What’s the difference? It was part of the therapy. The whole thing,” Wheeler replied.

If the psychiatric community had been up in arms over *Spellbound*, its swoony romance and famous Salvador Dali dream sequence certainly helped make psychoanalysis more accessible to the masses. Freudian therapy had already provided the framework for light-hearted comedies, including 1938’s *Carefree*, in which Ginger Rogers invents elaborate dreams to keep seeing analyst Fred Astaire, and Ernst Lubitsch’s *That Uncertain Feeling* (1941), where Merle Oberon’s socialite undergoes analysis to cure a case of the hiccups—but with noir it became serious stuff.

Now every psychoanalyst was a cop and every cop had to be a psychoanalyst. As Police Inspector Burgess (Thomas Gomez) says in Robert Siodmak’s *Phantom Lady* (1944), “We

Franchot Tone in *Phantom Lady* is the new breed of killer, one who doesn't know why he's driven to kill, he's simply compelled to do so. Like murderers in *M* and *The Sniper*, these killers almost warrant sympathy – they cannot stop, try as they might.

used to talk about ‘the criminal type.’ Criminal type my eye. It’s not what a man looks like, it’s how his mind works.” The man he’s hunting, Jack Marlow (Franchot Tone), is the new breed of killer, one who doesn’t know why he’s driven to kill, he’s simply compelled to do it. Like the child murderer in *M* (1931) or the loner in *The Sniper* (1952), many of these killers are so pathetic they almost warrant sympathy—they *cannot* stop, try as they might.

Some film shrinks were “dream detectives,” like Lee J. Cobb in *The Dark Past* (1948), who successfully psychoanalyzes gangster William Holden in a single evening while held hostage; Audrey Totter, who employs narco-synthesis to prove Robert Taylor’s innocence in 1947’s *The High Wall*, and Lew Ayres, who determines good twin Olivia de Havilland from her murderous twin in *The Dark Mirror* (1946). That many



In one of the socially conscious psychiatric dramas of the '60s, *Girl of the Night*, Anne Francis leaves the life after therapy. She was a composite of several real-life prostitutes profiled in the best-seller *The Call Girl*

of these analysts were in love with their patients might be bad for the ethics committee, but hardly bad for the box office. In the movies, science was ever aided by romance.

But for every kind, decent psychoanalyst, there was a charlatan using his power for evil: In *Shock* (1946), doctor Vincent Price attempts to drive insane the lone witness to a murder, and, in *Nightmare Alley* (1947), Helen Walker's analyst admits her business is really no different—just more respectable—than Tyrone Power's carny sideshow. "Takes one to catch one," she admits.

And then there are the hypnotists—such as the mysterious, Freud-reading killer of *Nightmare* (1956) who sets up suggestible musician Kevin McCarthy for a murder in a mirrored room. And as Richard Conte's lawyer says of dubious doctor José Ferrer in Otto Preminger's *Whirlpool* (1950), "The fellow's a hypnotist, among his other shady practices." Among those other practices? Blackmail, swindling, and murder! While he frames his kleptomaniac client Gene Tierney for murder, he's created his own perfect alibi: He's just had his gall bladder out and is lying helpless in a hospital bed. Cue the crazy finale in which Ferrer hypnotizes himself to ignore his blinding pain and retrieve incriminating evidence. Now *that's* psychiatry!

After the success of 1957's *The Three Faces of Eve*, the 1960s saw a new, socially conscious incarnation of the hero-psychiatrist, with prison shrink Sidney Poitier analyzing violent neo-Nazi Bobby Darin in *Pressure Point* (1962), Rod Steiger working with pedophile

Stuart Whitman in the wildly optimistic *The Mark* (1961), and call girl Anne Francis undergoing therapy in *Girl of the Night* (1960).

The latter was based on the bestseller by Harold Greenwald, *The Call Girl*, in which he interviewed 16 prostitutes, six of whom were in analysis with him. The film ends on an optimistic note, with Francis leaving "the life" and starting over. *Pressure Point* was drawn from a case in *The Fifty-Minute Hour* by Robert Lindner. The film ends with Poitier being overruled by prison authorities who decide to release Darin despite Poitier's warnings. A postscript tells us that Darin's character ultimately beat an old man to death, proving Poitier's instincts correct. Not everyone can be saved.

The '60s also gave us the prescient *The Manchurian Candidate* (1962), in which a soldier is brainwashed into becoming an assassin and his entire platoon conditioned to consider him "the kindest, bravest, warmest, most wonderful human being" they've ever met. As the sinister Chinese hypnotist says of poor Raymond Shaw (Laurence Harvey), "His brain has not only been washed, as they say... It has been dry cleaned." Angela Lansbury, as the controlling mother who sacrifices her own son and kisses him on the lips, is quite possibly the most "Freudian" mother in all of cinema.

1962 was also the year John Huston brought his docudrama *Freud: The Secret Passion* to the screen, starring Montgomery Clift as the father of psychoanalysis. The pinnacle of Huston's wartime documentaries between 1942 - 1946 was *Let There Be Light*, about the



treatment of WWII soldiers who'd had mental breakdowns. "Making that film was like having a religious experience," Huston said of the project, which inspired his lifelong fascination with analysis.

John Huston envisioned Freud's career as "as a kind of thriller, a mystery of a special sort" as he developed his radical Oedipus complex theory. The director's only choice for the role of Freud was Clift, who'd just completed co-starring in Huston's *The Misfits* (1961). Co-star Marilyn Monroe said of Monty Clift, "He's the only person I know who's in worse shape than I am." The only person who didn't seem to see it was Huston.

According to Clift biographer Patricia Bosworth, sometime in mid-shoot—when Clift and Huston had begun to clash and Clift was having difficulty memorizing his ever-changing lines—a hypnotist named Dr. Black arrived as one of Huston's advisors, "presumably to coach Susanah York, who played the hysterically repressed Cecily. Dr. Black made an unsuccessful attempt to hypnotize [Clift]. Monty told people he thought Black was treating him like a patient and he didn't like it. Later, a story got around Hollywood that Monty had been hypnotized into memorizing his lines by Black. When he angrily confronted Huston with the story, the director shrugged, 'You're paranoid, boy.'"

While the film was well-enough received

by critics, it's more famous for the conflicts between Huston and Montgomery Clift, as well as the lawsuit Universal filed against Clift for cost overruns—all serious issues derailing what was left of Clift's career. Clift acquits himself quite well, considering he was suffering from hypothyroidism, alcoholism, and cataracts during filming. The surreal dream sequences, one of which includes Freud attending his father's funeral, anticipate Fellini's *8½*, which was released six months later.

Monty Clift did the film as a tribute to his own analyst, William Silverberg, with whom he had a relationship so intimate, Farber and Green describe it as "verging on *folie à deux*." As they note, "Silverberg was [also] gay and in addition to socializing frequently,

Above: In *The Manchurian Candidate*, Laurence Harvey is brainwashed into becoming an assassin, a sacrifice made by his scheming mother, Angela Lansbury, one of the most Freudian screen villains of all time

Below and top right: Sigmund Freud, portrayed by Montgomery Clift, would be the subject of John Huston's 1962 biopic, *Freud*





Karl Menninger, whose famed clinic rehabilitated many troubled actors, including Gene Tierney. Sadly, Monty Clift was not a patient and his alcoholism went unchecked

the two men sometimes vacationed together ... Silverberg was completely ineffectual at treating Clift's crippling alcoholism. When Clift's medical doctor urged the actor to seek treatment at the Menninger Clinic, Dr. Silverberg vetoed the idea: he could not bear to lose his hold on the magnetic star. In their sessions together toward the end of Clift's life (according to the actor's secretary, Lorenzo James), Dr. Silverberg spent as much of the hour confiding his own problems as he did listening to [Monty's]."

May Romm's daughter Dorothy Colodny told Farber and Green, "I know some very good psychiatrists who were marvelous with patients, and you never hear their names... the big wheels who treated famous people were usually not the good therapists.... I think that is why so many of the important Hollywood people didn't get good care, which is very sad because a lot of them needed it." ■