Based on a true story?

ECT in international movies and TV programs

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Methods

- allmovie.com
- subzin.com, *phrases in movies & series*
- PubMed
- (inter)national ECT practitioners
Results

60 MOVIES
85

25 SERIES

52 MOVIES
75

23 SERIES

57 SCENES
57 SCENES

25 SCENES
25 SCENES

82 SCENES

+3

+4

89
About to have ECT?
Fine, but don't watch it in the movies...
The problem is that ECT lends itself beautifully to cinematic dramatization.

Shorter & Healy, 2007
a promising (?) start...
‘Why are you electrocuting me?’

Virginia Cunningham
writer
psychotic episode
written consent by proxy

The Snake Pit
Anatole Litvak
1948
Template

• frantic music
• unmodified

• violent motor seizure

Olivia de Havilland
in The Snake Pit
Anatole Litvak, 1948
ECT as a metaphor for the repressive disciplinary approach in psychiatry
anti-psychiatry

La Meglio Gioventu, Marco Tullio Giordana, 2003
’the biggest beast in the celluloid ECT jungle’

McDonald & Walter, 2009

One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest - Milos Forman - USA, 1975
Family Life - Ken Loach - **UK** 1971

Sandy Ratcliffe
as Janice Baildon
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Movies $N=57$</th>
<th>Series $N=25$</th>
<th>Total $N=82$</th>
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<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Modified</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>22.8</td>
<td>8</td>
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<td>73.7</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3.5</td>
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• Repeated stimuli

• Without losing consciousness
  
  • Smallville - Alfred Gough, Miles Millar 2004 - 3 stimuli!
  • The Simpsons - Matt Groening 2005 - 2 stimuli!

Caged Heat  
Demme 1974  
8 stimuli!

Requiem for a dream  
Aronofsky 2000  
3 stimuli!

A love to keep  
Claver 2006  
3 stimuli aversive therapy
# Electrodeplacement

<table>
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<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>92.9</td>
<td>3.5</td>
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<td>1.7</td>
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<td>21</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1*</td>
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<tr>
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<td>%</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>73</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1*</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>1.2</td>
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*Left UL*
Mouth Guard

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<th>Series</th>
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<td>47</td>
<td>23</td>
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<td>80.7%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>85.4%</td>
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Royal Pains - S03E10 - A little art, a little science, 2011

During the stimulus there are no facial contractions. We only witness mild myoclonic movements of the fingers. Surprisingly, no bite block is used in an otherwise truthful depiction, probably to actually make ECT look more attractive and less frightening (Sienaert, 2016).
| Indications                                      | Movies  
|                                               | N=57 | Series  
|                                               | N    | N=25 |
|                                               | %    | %    |
| Depression *suicidality*, catatonia           | 9    | 15.8 | 5    | 20   |
| Psychosis *et al*                             | 16   | 28.1 | 5    | 20   |
| Behavioral Correction                         | 9    | 15.8 | 1    | 4    |
| Torture                                       | 8    | 14.0 | 3    | 12   |
| Erasing memories                              | 1    | 1.8  | 7    | 28   |
| Homosexuality                                 | 2    | 3.6  | 1    | 4    |
| Other *status epilepticus*, delirium,         | 14   | 24.6 | 5    | 20   |
| substance abuse, amnesia, exorcism            |      |      |      |      |
Indications

Movies N=57
Series N=25
Total N=82

Other
status epilepticus, delirium, substance abuse, amnesia

Psychosis 24%
Depression 16%
Behav Corr 12%
Torture 13%
Erasing memories 9%
Homosexuality 3%
Other 22%

Other status epilepticus, delirium, substance abuse, amnesia
In 1928, ECT was not invented yet....
Um, so if I can just, uh, get your John Hancock… we'll get underway*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Movies N=57</th>
<th>Series N=25</th>
<th>Total N=82</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yes (or Implied)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>By proxy</td>
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<tr>
<td>No / Coercive</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>59.6</td>
<td>13</td>
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<tr>
<td>Written</td>
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* Requiem for a dream
Um, so if I can just, uh, get your John Hancock… we'll get underway
ECT in the young

Wizard of Oz - Butcher Boy - Solace
Je me souviens - Tarnation - 15 Park Avenue
The Jacket - Brainstorm - Dark Shadows
Dr Worley’s Electric Healing!

Return To Oz - Walter Murch - 1985
sequel to The Wizard of Oz - Victor Fleming - 1939
Je me souviens, André Forcier, Canada, 2009
The Butcher Boy, Neil Jordan, Ireland, 1997
if I start laughing while it’s happening, it's because I’m enjoying breaking you down

Nurse Pam (June Diane Raphael)
Other 22%
Depression 16%
Psychosis 24%
Homosexuality 3%
Erasing memories 9%
Torture 13%
Behav Corr 12%
No memory, no Amy, no problem!

Broken heart syndrome

House MD, Words and deeds, 2007
Hollywood has frightened the shit out of everybody about ECT.

Louis Linn

in: Shorter & Healy, 2007

Shock Therapy: A history of Electroconvulsive Treatment in Mental Illness.
USA
Howard Gordon & Alex Gansa
based on Israeli series *Prisoners of War*
S01 (2011) - S07 (2018)
Push the button and run…