

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE
Jason Zimmerman, MA

SPELLBOUND (1945)

Alfred Hitchcock

OVERVIEW

Director Sir Alfred Hitchcock (1899-1980) is a household name and perhaps the best-known British filmmaker. With over 50 films to his credit, Hitchcock helped to shape the modern understanding of the thriller genre. His best-known films include *The Birds*, *Psycho*, *Vertigo*, and *Rear Window*, all of which have earned accolades, including preservation by the US Film Registry. In 1960, Hitchcock was inducted into the Hollywood Walk of Fame with two stars for his work in both film and television. He was also the first recipient of the BAFTA Academy Fellowship Award.

Film Based on Hilary St. George Saunders' novel "The House of Dr. Edwardes," this film marked a departure from Alfred Hitchcock's usual screenwriting process. Typically, Hitchcock would conceive an idea for an adaptation and then present it to his producer. In this case, his producer, David O. Selznick, approached Hitchcock with an idea inspired by his own successful experience with psychoanalytic therapy. Hitchcock, along with his wife, Alma Reville, collaborated on a film treatment (a detailed synopsis provided to a film writer) for the novel before passing their work to Angus MacPhail for completion. MacPhail received full credit for the adaptation, while Ben Hecht finalized the screenplay. The rules set by the Motion Picture Association of America mandated several alterations to the original script. Words such as "sex menace," "frustrations," "libido," and "tomcat" had to be removed. Additionally, a minor character at Green Manors described as a 'violent nymphomaniac' had to be omitted. The suicide implied at the end of the film remained, however, as the film code allowed for exceptions when characters were shown to be "of unsound mind."

Background *Spellbound* proved to be a box office sensation. Despite its late-year release in the broader US market, the film raked in an impressive \$4,975,000 in North America alone. Upon its release in Britain the following year, it shattered all existing box office records. Critics showered the film with unreserved praise, applauding everything from the acting and dialogue to the cinematography. Critics still love the film: in 2018, Australian film critic Jake Wilson ranked *Spellbound* in his top five films, observing how its strong feminist themes still shine. The dream sequence draws heavy inspiration from Salvador Dali's art and remains a breathtaking example of this cinematic trope. Despite the ongoing critical acclaim, "Spellbound" tends to occupy a relatively lower position in online user-based ratings compared to some of Hitchcock's other films, making it something of a hidden gem.

CINEMATIC NARRATION

Spellbound stands out as one of the earliest Hollywood films to delve into the realm of psychoanalysis, making it a valuable touchstone for gauging the evolving public perception of mental health and disorders over time. In stark contrast to popular films like *Shutter Island* and *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, the mental hospital depicted in *Spellbound* is a well-lit, clean environment, with a caring and friendly staff. Alfred Hitchcock brings his wealth of experience to the production, showcasing his trademark camera style that seamlessly follows the characters, effortlessly gliding from room to room. The film encounters a minor stumble during the skiing sequence, where two actors standing remarkably close to each other struggle to make their actions appear authentic in front of the projector. The film's shining moment comes at the very end when the villain's pistol turns around to face the camera, forcing us to stare down the barrel of the gun before he takes his own life. This striking effect is accomplished through clever forced perspective, employing an oversized hand and gun model to achieve the desired impact.

MAIN CHARACTERS

Dr. Constance Petersen – A young female psychiatrist working at the Green Manors mental hospital

Dr. Anthony Edwardes / J.B. / John Brown / John Ballantyne – A man who loses his memory and poses as Dr. Edwardes

Dr. Alexander "Alex" Brulov – Dr. Petersen's mentor and teacher

Dr. Murchison – the head psychiatrist at Green Manors

(note: Several other named characters have only one or two brief appearances.)

SYNOPSIS

Dr. Constance Petersen works in the Green Manors mental hospital in Vermont. She is the sole woman doctor on staff, often drawing unwanted attention from her male colleagues, which she manages with clinical detachment. Her world changes when she falls for Dr. Anthony Edwardes, the new head replacing her former boss, Dr. Murchison. During an intimate moment, she discovers Anthony's peculiar fear of parallel lines, sparking suspicions about his true identity. After comparing his signature to one in a recently published book by Dr. Edwardes, she concludes this man is an imposter. Confronted, Anthony confesses to suffering from amnesia and the belief that he murdered the real Dr. Edwardes. Dr. Petersen enlists the help of Dr. Alexander Brulov, who helps to analyze the man's dreams, revealing a skiing accident as the likely source of his amnesia and learning that his name is John. A journey to the Gabriel Valley ski lodge ultimately leads to the discovery of Dr. Edwardes' corpse, and the source of John's guilt complex, which was his accidental childhood killing of his brother. This revelation triggers John's memory, and he recalls his true identity as John Ballantyne. When Dr. Petersen goes to the police with this new evidence, they arrest John, since Dr. Edwardes was shot. Dr. Murchison resumes his position at Green Manors, and life returns to normal. A conversation with Murchison about his dislike for Edwardes prompts Petersen to reevaluate Ballantyne's dream notes. She concludes that the wheel in his dream signifies a revolver, while the 'proprietor' bears a resemblance to the chief at Green Manors. She confronts Dr. Murchison with this interpretation. He confesses, drawing the revolver. Unfazed, Dr. Petersen walks out, recognizing the logic of the situation: Murchison won't get away with murdering her, and either way, the truth will be revealed. As the door closes, Murchison turns the gun on himself and pulls the trigger. John and Constance bid farewell to Dr. Brulov at Grand Central Station before beginning their honeymoon.

PLOT

Green Manors- The film begins with a title card quoting Shakespeare: "The Fault... is not in our stars, but in ourselves." Behind the title card is a mental hospital with large grounds. The name 'Green Manors' adorns the front gate. The camera moves to the front door of the hospital, and a new title card appears, explaining that the film is about psychoanalysis and illnesses of the mind. Somewhere inside the hospital, a group of women play cards. A nurse speaks offscreen: "Miss Carmichael please, Dr. Petersen is ready for you." The woman shoots the other players a look as she stands, saying, "Sorry I have to go, had a perfect hand, would've beaten all of you."



Keep your eyes on her- Miss Carmichael walks toward the smiling nurse, who says an orderly will accompany her. Miss Carmichael leaves the common room, and the orderly turns to follow. But before he can leave, the nurse pulls him aside and whispers, "Watch her carefully, don't take your eyes off her." The orderly nods and follows the patient into the hallway. As they walk to Dr. Petersen's office, Miss Carmichael takes the orderly's arm clinging to him like a high schooler in puppy love. She worries about his complexion and he tries to talk her down. She asks if they could go somewhere private before she sees the doctor. "I'd love it," replies the orderly, "if I had time." "Would you?" asks the mental patient as she scratches the orderly's hand, grinning. The orderly daubs the wound with a handkerchief before pushing Miss Carmichael into the doctor's office.



Dr. Petersen- Dr. Petersen sits at her desk, taking notes and smoking a cigarette. "Come in," she says when the orderly presses the buzzer outside her door. The orderly enters wordlessly, and Miss Carmichael saunters in and sits on a chair's arm, complaining about her card game being interrupted. Dr. Petersen dismisses the orderly, who says he'll wait outside. Dr. Petersen closes her notebook and approaches Miss Carmichael. The patient complains about the whole situation, revealing her lack of faith in the process of psychoanalysis. Dr. Petersen explains that such feelings are part of the process, that Miss Carmichael's subconscious is rejecting the change. After lying down on the couch, Miss Carmichael admits that she's been lying during their sessions and talks about her deep hatred of men.



Therapy canceled- Suddenly, Miss Carmichael bursts into a violent breakdown. She throws a book and shouts that Dr. Petersen is tricking her into revealing her secrets so she can feel superior. The orderly and another psychiatrist, Dr. Fleurot, enter the room. Miss Carmichael tries to seduce Dr. Fleurot but he responds coldly and professionally as she leaves. "Murchison must be out of his mind to assign Carmichael to you," Fleurot says as he crosses the room and sits in an armchair.



Unwelcome advances- The two discuss the woman's case for a moment before Fleurot moves to Petersen's side and makes a pass at her. "Are you trying to make love to me?" she asks jokingly. "I'm trying to convince you that your lack of emotional experience is bad for you as a doctor," Fleurot says, "and fatal for you as a woman." "I've heard that argument from a number of amorous psychiatrists," Petersen replies, "wanting to make me a better doctor." Fleurot makes several attempts to get a rise out of Petersen but to no avail. She responds clinically when he embraces and kisses her.



Stepping down- Dr. Murchison enters the room and apologizes for interrupting the other doctors' discussion. "My successor will be due any moment," the head psychiatrist says. Both Fleurot and Petersen say they're sad to see him go. Dr. Petersen can't imagine the hospital under anyone else's guidance. "The old must make way for the new," Dr. Murchison says, "particularly when he's suspected of a touch of senility." Dr. Petersen says he's far from senile, but Dr. Murchison insists that the strain of work has been wearing on him and is relieved to be retiring. A knock comes on the door, and one of Dr. Petersen's patients enters the room accompanied by an orderly.



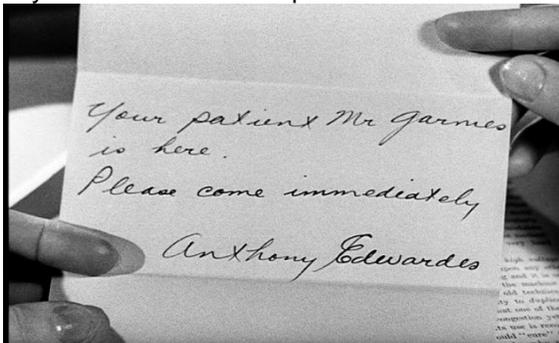
Dr. Edwardes- Dr. Murchison bids Dr. Petersen farewell and leaves her to her patient. The patient eyes the letter-opener Petersen uses to open her mail, asking if he can help. She asks him to sit on the couch. The camera moves to a window in another room with a view of the hospital's main drive. A man steps out of a taxi and shakes someone's hand. "That's the mighty Anthony Edwardes," says Dr. Fleurot. "He's younger than I expected," says another doctor. "He's only brought one suitcase," a third doctor comments. "Perhaps he doesn't mean to stay long." Another doctor enters with Dr. Edwardes and makes introductions, telling the newcomer that the room they're in is his quarters. Dr. Murchison enters and greets his replacement, informing Dr. Edwardes that he is leaving his library for the younger doctor's use.



Dinner- Nurses acting as waitresses carry plates and pitchers from table to table in a large dining room. The doctors sit at a table, eating soup and discussing Dr. Edwardes. Dr. Petersen seems well-acquainted with his book on guilt complexes and expresses a desire to learn from him. Dr. Edwardes soon joins them at the table. Romantic music swells as Dr. Petersen lays eyes on Dr. Edwardes: her attraction is instant. The conversation turns back to the hospital and the amenities on site such as the gymnasium. Dr. Petersen is excited about plans to install a swimming pool shortly. She tries to describe its shape but opts to draw it on the tablecloth with her fork instead. Dr. Edwardes has a strange reaction to the lines drawn on the tablecloth. All the doctors take notice.



“High school talk”- “Last night, a dimple appeared in your cheek that was never there before,” Dr. Fleurot says, lying on the couch in Dr. Petersen’s office. “And I detected the outcroppings of a mother instinct toward Dr. Edwardes.” Petersen scoffs, “I detest that sort of high school talk.” An orderly interrupts their conversation with a letter from Dr. Edwardes. “Ooo...” Fleurot grins, “love notes already.” The note says that Dr. Petersen’s patient is with Dr. Edwardes and he needs some assistance.



A favor- The patient in Dr. Edwardes’ office talks about his guilt complex: he believes that he killed his father. Dr. Petersen enters after rapping on the door. Dr. Edwardes thanks her for coming so quickly and asks for her assistance. Dr. Petersen is able to talk the patient down, and he leaves with the orderly. “Would you mind doing me a favor?” Dr. Edwardes asks. Dr. Petersen agrees. “I’ve a headache,” Edwardes says. “I’d like to take the afternoon off... with you.” Petersen seems somewhat shocked but agrees.



Love- They take a walk in the hills surrounding the hospital. On their walk, Petersen talks about her distaste for poetry. "Poets are dull, most of them, but not especially fiendish," she says. "They keep filling people's heads with delusions about love..." Edwardes defends the idea of falling in love, but Petersen blames a substantial part of their workload on the disappointment many feel when falling in love doesn't happen like in books or poetry. They find a good spot to have a picnic, and Edwardes asks Petersen what kind of sandwich she wants, fumbling with a paper bag. "Liverwurst," she responds dreamily. Despite not believing in love, she is falling for Edwardes.



Sleepless- At the doctors' dinner table, two chairs sit empty. The other doctors gossip about Edwardes' and Petersen's absence. "Poor girl's withering away with science," Dr. Fleurot says, defending Petersen's infatuation with Edwardes. "I was telling her recently something vital was missing from her life." Dr. Petersen enters the dining room, and the doctors stand in a polite greeting. She tells them not to stand. She only came because she'd heard one of her patients had become agitated while she was out. After receiving a little mocking about her apparent crush on Dr. Edwardes, Dr. Petersen leaves. That night, Petersen tosses and turns in bed. She decides to leave her room, heading upstairs to the library. She pauses on her way, looking at the light on in Dr. Edwardes' quarters. She finds what she's looking for in the library: Dr. Edwardes' recently published book.



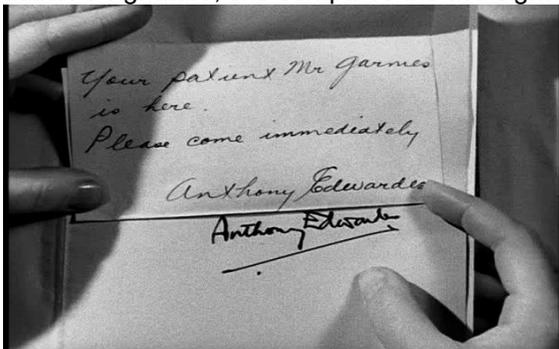
Late night intrusion- On her way back to her room, Petersen sees the light peeking from under Edwardes' door again. This time, she enters the room quietly, standing in the doorway until she is noticed. Edwardes is reading a book and is pleasantly surprised to see her. Petersen apologizes for the intrusion, saying she wanted to discuss his book with him, acting uncharacteristically shy. Petersen admits some fear about her feelings for Edwardes. She doesn't believe one could fall in love so quickly. Edwardes disagrees: "It happens in a moment sometimes. I felt it this afternoon. Like lightning striking. It strikes rarely." Romantic music swells as the camera zooms in on Edwardes' eyes, then Petersen's. She closes her eyes and a scene of doors opening one by one crossfades into view: her newfound love for Edwardes has opened a barrier in her mind she didn't even know existed. The music fades as they kiss and embrace.



Surgery- In his private office, Edwardes and Petersen look into each other's eyes. The music takes on a sinister tone as Dr. Edwardes looks down at Petersen's robe and recoils in horror looking at the parallel lines that cover the fabric. He does his best to calm down, but the phone begins ringing, interrupting the doctors. He answers the phone quickly and is frightened to hear the news: a patient has attacked a doctor and attempted suicide. Edwardes and Petersen quickly join the others in the operating room. "He's lost a lot of blood, but I think he'll pull through," one doctor says as the camera moves closer to the operating table. Seeing the condition of the patient, Dr. Edwardes has a panic attack. He pulls off his mask and begins babbling about darkness and putting people in cells. Then he collapses and has to be taken from the operating room.



Suspicion- Dr. Edwardes sleeps in his bed. Dr. Petersen sits beside him, reading his book about guilt complexes and watching over him. She looks conflicted before putting on her reading glasses and pulling out the note Edwardes had sent her that afternoon. Opening the book to the title page, containing the author's signature, she compares the two signatures, finding they do not match.



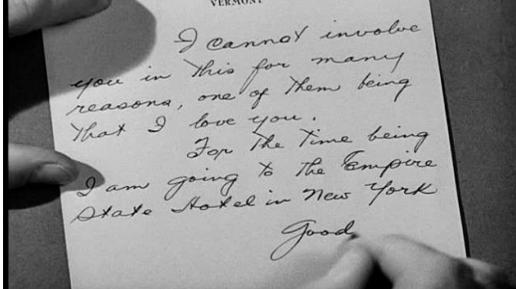
Revelation- She looks back to Edwardes who stirs in his sleep, blinking his eyes as he wakes. "I'm sorry," he says eventually. "I suppose I made quite an exhibition of myself." He continues talking for a moment before Petersen confronts him: "Who are you?" The man's face becomes haunted as the camera slides toward him. "I remember now," he says. "Edwardes is dead. I killed him, took his place."



Questions and answers - The false Edwardes paces before Dr. Petersen, puffing nervously on a cigarette. "I have no memory," he says. "It's like looking into a mirror and seeing nothing but the mirror." He has a laundry list of questions for Dr. Petersen. "Are you afraid of me?" he finally asks her. "No," she answers calmly. "You're ill. Loss of memory is not a difficult problem." She tells him that his mind is reacting this way to keep him sane, saying they must "open that door" if they want to restore his memory. When the imposter Edwardes objects, Petersen presses him about a recent phone call. Someone had phoned and insisted they didn't recognize his voice as Edwardes. He reports that the caller was Edwardes' office assistant. They talk about his fear and confusion, trying to determine if he can remember anything about his real identity. His cigarette case bears the initials 'J.B.' J.B. agrees to phone in ill and see Dr. Petersen for an appointment first thing in the morning.



J.B.'s Flight- J.B. stands at a desk writing a letter. In it, he apologizes to Dr. Petersen for having to leave and tells her he'll be staying at the Empire State Hotel. As he leaves Green Medows, he pushes the sealed letter beneath her door. After the sun rises, a group of doctors and policemen stand in Dr. Murchison's office, listening to Dr. Edwardes' assistant explain her concern about Dr. Edwardes, saying he's been missing for several days and that the man who answered the phone as Edwardes was not a man she recognized. Dr. Murchison looks at a photo of Edwards and passes it to the other doctors: It's a different man than they know.



Aiding and abetting- The group of men moves down the hall to Dr. Petersen's room. She is surprised to see the police. As they tell her about the disappearance of the false Dr. Edwardes, she notices J.B.'s note resting on the floor at their feet. She says she'll inform them of anything she learns, and the policemen and doctors file out. Dr. Murchison remains, apologizing to Dr. Petersen about the situation: he knows that she's fond of the man claiming to be Dr. Edwardes. On his way out, he picks up the letter and hands it to Dr. Petersen with a polite smile.



To New York- Dr. Petersen packs her bags while listening to a police report of Dr. Edwardes' murder on the radio. The scene fades to her walking with her bags among the bustling crowd inside the Empire State Hotel. She sits on a couch, looking around for J.B. A man approaches and sits next to her on the couch. He tries to start a conversation, but Dr. Petersen is distracted and disinterested. Instead of taking the hint, the man tries to kiss her. This earns the attention of the house detective. The detective sits down to check on Dr. Petersen.



House detective- Petersen claims she's looking for her husband, that they had a spat and she wants to apologize. The house detective is happy to help, showing her the check-in book in the hopes she might recognize some of the handwriting. One Mr. John Brown's signature catches her eye and the detective tells her which room he's staying in: 3033. After thanking the detective, Dr. Petersen makes for the elevator.



Room 3033- Dr. Petersen wears a worried look as she reads the placards on each door, stopping before the door to 3033. She presses the buzzer and J.B. answers. "Constance," he mutters, shocked, as Dr. Petersen forces her way in. J.B. is confused about why she came. "I'm going to do what I want to do," she says with conviction. "Take care of you and cure you and remain with you till that happens." J.B. tries to refuse Dr. Petersen, but she tells him she couldn't think of anything else but him since he was gone. Romantic music swells as J.B. embraces her. "It has nothing to do with love," Dr. Petersen says, doe-eyed. The music reaches the peak of a crescendo as they kiss.



Treatment- “Try remembering,” Dr. Petersen urges while J.B. lies on the bed. She tries to coax details about his childhood out of him while he struggles to remember. He shies away from the pain of trying to remember, but Dr. Petersen is firm: he has to think through the pain if he wants to recover. They are able to guess that he was a doctor based on his mannerisms and knowledge of pneumonia and other illnesses. “The eminent Dr. X,” J.B. jokes. Using similar logic, he becomes sure he was with Edwardes when he died. Dr. Petersen questions this, but J.B. explains, “I wouldn’t have come back as Edwardes if I hadn’t known he was dead. How would I know that, if I hadn’t been with him when he died?” Dr. Petersen begins treatment on J.B.’s apparent guilt complex, helping him remember that he was in an accident.



Late edition- The doorbell buzzes. “Who could that be?” J.B. wonders, worried. Dr. Petersen smiles and assures him it’s the bellhop with the late edition of the newspaper. When she answers the door, a bellhop stands there with a paper. When Dr. Petersen turns to find a tip for the man, he looks down to see her picture on the front page. He accepts his tip, stifling his surprise, before dashing back down the hall when Dr. Petersen closes the door. “My picture’s in the paper,” she realizes, telling J.B. they have to leave. The two exit the hotel quickly and quietly just as the bellhop reaches the house detective. Seeing Dr. Petersen’s face in the paper, his jaw drops in shock.



Return tickets -Dr. Petersen uses the ticket booth at a train station as a way to continue treatment. She tells J.B. to request return tickets to the station he passed through in upstate New York. J.B. is nervous. Trying to remember causes him physical pain. He wobbles toward the ticket seller, smacking his dry tongue against the roof of his mouth. “What do you want, sir?” the man asks, concerned but impatient. When J.B. doesn’t respond, he asks him to step aside. “I want two tickets,” J.B. finally says in a monotone. “Where?” J.B. closes his eyes, thinking hard. “Rome,” he says. When Dr. Petersen tries to cover for him, J.B. faints on the counter. This gets the attention of the stationmaster, who is walking nearby. Dr. Petersen says that “her husband” is just sick, and that they’re on their way home to Rome, Georgia. Petersen and J.B. join the queue heading downstairs before hiding in the space between the stairwells for a moment. J.B. is frightened that they’re going to be caught, but Petersen is pleased: her red herring may pay off if the stationmaster goes to the police. She takes J.B. by the arm, saying they’ll book tickets to Rochester at Grand Central Station.



Grand Central Station- J.B. asks why they're going to Rochester as they cross the main floor of Grand Central Station. Dr. Petersen replies that her teacher, Dr. Brulov, lives there. She's hopeful that he'll help her treat his amnesia. Petersen then muses about how easy it is to forget J.B. is her patient. "When I hold you like this I feel well," J.B. says with a smile, "Will you love me as much when I'm normal?" "I'll be insane about you," she chuckles in reply. Seeing all the parting couples kissing near the ticket taker's turnstile, J.B. holds Dr. Petersen close: "Everybody's doing it," he says as they lean in to kiss. When Dr. Petersen passes the ticket-taker two tickets mid-kiss, he gives the couple a confused look. "You're both going?" he asks, looking dumbfounded as they pass through the turnstile together.



War trauma - Aboard the train, Dr. Petersen presses J.B. to remember more as he settles in with the paper. "As a doctor, you annoy me," he tells her with a smile. "I can't help it, that's what happens in analysis," Dr. Petersen replies, matter-of-factly. "As the doctor begins to uncover the truth, the patient develops a hatred of the doctor. You're going to hate me a great deal before we're through." J.B. jokes that if he were to "biff her one," she'd consider it "a scientific diploma." She asks that he not "biff too hard" before continuing her questioning. They've come across some important information: "You're a doctor, you were in an accident, your hand was burned, and you were in Rome," she says to list them. She urges him to remember while he begins to relive the horrors of war. He had been working as an army doctor in Italy when their medical caravan was bombed. J.B. comes out of the memory in a panic, angrily accusing Dr. Petersen of judging him. She comforts him, saying they're only beginning the process of healing. "Don't biff too hard yet," she says.



Dr. Brulov's house- A taxi rolls to a stop in front of a modest house somewhere in Rochester after dark. Dr. Petersen and J.B. approach the house, talking about her past with Dr. Brulov. "You'll like Alex," she smiles, but J.B. complains: "One psychoanalysis in my hair is enough." They coordinate their cover story before ringing the doorbell, preparing to assume the roles of newlyweds. A maid greets them at the door and informs them that Dr. Brulov will return shortly. She then guides them to the sitting room, where they find two other men waiting to meet with the doctor. Petersen and J.B. surmise the two are police officers by their mannerisms and conversation and try to play it cool.



Warm welcome- Dr. Brulov enters and Dr. Petersen jumps up. “Alex!” she exclaims. “Ah!” the old man replies as he hugs her. “My old friend! To think I’d find you here. I would have come home quicker!” The policemen interrupt the reunion to ask for ‘data’ on Dr. Edwardes. Dr. Brulov is incensed: it appears the police have been inquiring about the case over the past few days. After facing additional questioning from the authorities, Dr. Brulov escorts them out of his home. He then shifts his focus to Constance and J.B. She introduces J.B. as her spouse, John Brown. Dr. Brulov warmly insists that they stay as guests in his house.



A glass of beer- Dr. Brulov offers the couple a glass of beer, “like in the old days.” The three move to the kitchen, discussing Brulov’s lonesome life as an elderly man and Constance’s skill during her time as his assistant. Constance retrieves the beer from the icebox while Dr. Brulov gushes to John about her. After their drink, the couple move up the stairs towards the guest bedroom. Dr. Brulov wishes them goodnight, telling them to have sweet dreams, “Which we will analyze at breakfast.” Constance and John thank Dr. Brulov for his kindness. “Any husband of Constance,” he says with a grin, “is a husband of mine.”



Guest bedroom- “He was an expert with the police,” J.B. says about Dr. Brulov after the door closes. “Carried it off like a grade-A gun moll.” Constance shares in his admiration before J.B. worries about the doctor knowing more than he’s letting on. “Alex didn’t think anything,” Constance replies. “He’s sweet.” She asks John if the police bothered him, and he jokes that one shouldn’t think of such things on a honeymoon. “I take it this is your first honeymoon?” he asks. “Yes,” Constance replies, “I mean, it would be if it were.” They kiss as romantic music swells. Uncomfortable with romance as always, Constance soon turns the conversation towards sleeping arrangements. She jokes about maintaining her professionalism when J.B. has another panic attack: The light casts lines on the duvet. He collapses after his fit, with Constance comforting him.



Shave- Later that night, J.B. rises from his makeshift bed on the couch. Constance is fast asleep in the bed. Finding himself unable to rest, he wanders into the adjoining bathroom and pours himself a glass of water. Looking at his face in the mirror, he decides he needs a shave. He grabs a straight razor and prepares the lather in a cup. Something about its whiteness triggers his memory. In a fugue state, he wanders out of the room and down the stairs, razor open in his hand. "Is that you, Mr. Brown?" Dr. Brulov asks off-screen. The razor glints in the light from the office.



"Glad to have company"- Dr. Brulov sits at his desk, apparently busy with some work at this late hour. "I was unable to sleep," he explains to the semi-conscious J.B.. "When you're old, you don't need to sleep so much." The doctor invites him to join him for some milk. As the old man crosses into the kitchen to fetch another glass, he muses about having company while the razor glints in the light menacingly. J.B. remains stationary. "Do you know who makes the most trouble in the world?" Dr. Brulov asks calmly as he pours the milk. "Old people. They are always worrying what will be in the world tomorrow after they are gone. That's why we have wars. Because old people have nothing else they can get excited about." The screen fades to white as J.B. tips up his glass and drinks.



2 + 2 = 4- The following day, Constance quickly dresses and leaves the guest bedroom. Fretful music reaches a crescendo when she sees Dr. Brulov splayed out in a chair in his office. Holding back panic, she approaches her former mentor, shaking him. "Alex?" she asks. "Alex? Are you alright?" Dr. Brulov wakes up with a smile. "My husband must have gone out," Constance says, trying to explain her anxiety, but Dr. Brulov doesn't buy it. "He's over there on the couch," he says, pointing. "Do you think old Alex Brulov -one of the biggest brains in psychiatry- is unable to make 2 and 2 come out 4?" He admits to drugging John while he was in a fugue state. After showing Constance the razor, Dr. Brulov says he's going to call the police. Constance is desperate to stop him, and Brulov agrees not to call after she admits her love for J.B. is real.



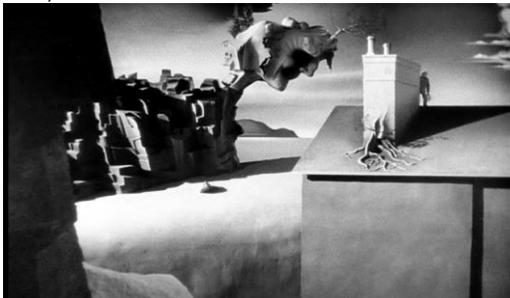
Half a year- After insulting Constance for her “womanly” lack of intellect, Dr. Brulov tries to light his pipe, spilling his matches across his desk. They set out a rough treatment plan for J.B., with Dr. Brulov issuing the warning that he will have to involve the police if they find that J.B. did indeed kill Dr. Edwardes. Assured of J.B.’s character, Constance agrees. “I couldn’t feel this pain for someone who was evil,” she says. “You are 20 times crazier than him,” Dr. Brulov jokes, further saying that treatment could take years. Constance shakes her head, stroking J.B.’s hair. “Half a year?” Brulov guesses. “We should sit and hide for half a year?” He then asks Constance to make coffee for him and agrees to allow the couple to stay for at least a few days. Even the calculating Alex Brulov wants to give the young lovers a chance to be together.



Rude awakening- Puffing on his pipe, Dr. Brulov watches as Constance heads into the kitchen. Then he wanders over to J.B. sleeping on the couch, shaking him gently. When the man continues sleeping, Brulov gives his shoulder a smack, then another and another. The old man gears up to slap his face when the younger man rolls over, waking up. “Who are you?” J.B. asks confused. Dr. Brulov answers, and John remembers, blinking his eyes in confusion. “Bromide... Who’s been feeding me bromide?” Brulov admits to drugging him and quizzes him, building up a quick idea of the man’s case. The doctor then asks about J.B.’s dreams. “I don’t believe in dreams,” J.B. says. “That Freud stuff’s a lot of hooley.” This causes Dr. Brulov some obvious annoyance, and he mocks the amnesiac for a moment. After calming down, Dr. Brulov explains the methodology of dream analysis in the hopes of convincing J.B. to allow treatment.



J.B.’s dream- Constance returns with the coffee, and J.B. sits down in a chair, agreeing to tell his dream. After returning once more with a pencil and paper, Constance begins jotting down the dream as he retells it. A montage of Dali-inspired images flashes across the screen. A gambling house with blank cards, a woman who kisses all men, and eyes in the curtains give way to a house where a man on skis tumbles off a steep roof. From behind the chimney, the proprietor of the gambling house appears with a wheel in his hand. He drops the wheel on the roof. Suddenly, J.B. is running, with a winged creature chasing after him, and the dream ends.



Snow- J.B. happily accepts a cup of coffee from Constance, but the joy disappears from his face when he notices the crisp, fresh-fallen snow outside. “The light frightens him,” Dr. Brulov states. “Photophobia.” “No,” replies Dr. Petersen, “it was the snow. That’s the white he’s afraid of, snow and those tracks.” Several children ride sleds down the hill outside, leaving black tracks in the snow. After Dr. Petersen connects the tracks in the snow with J.B.’s fear of lines, the two doctors pull down the blinds and attempt to continue their treatment.



Skiing- Dr. Petersen recalls that Dr. Edwardes was a pioneer in using sports, specifically tennis and skiing, to aid in the treatment of mental illness. Then it hits her: J.B. must have been skiing with Dr. Edwardes when the doctor died. “His horror of them means they’re immediately connected with the cause of his amnesia,” Dr. Petersen says with conviction. J.B. passes out and his coffee cup tumbles to the floor, shattering. More snow falls outside, covering the ruts made by the children’s sleds. Dr. Petersen begs J.B. to remember where he went skiing with Dr. Edwardes. John remains unresponsive, and the doctors turn to the notes about his dream. Using the clues there, they piece together that they may have been skiing at the Gabriel Valley resort. J.B. reacts to the name, and the doctors begin probing further.



Flawed perception - When Dr. Petersen calls Dr. Edwardes’ death an accident, J.B. flies into a rage, insisting they call the police. He still believes he was responsible for Dr. Edwardes’ death. Dr. Petersen is able to calm him and he agrees to return to Gabriel Valley with her. The scene cuts to an interior office of a police station where a uniformed officer sits at a desk. Another officer enters the room with a stack of photographs, saying, “This is for Cooley when he gets back in.” The camera looks over the first officer’s shoulder, revealing a picture of Constance. John and Constance leave Dr. Brulov’s house for the ski resort. On the train ride there, Constance seems to enjoy herself while a look of fear remains plastered on John’s face.



Gabriel Valley- In the distance, two figures climb the steep slope of a snow-covered mountain face, skis propped against their shoulders. They come into focus at the top of the hill: J.B. and Constance. After slipping on their skis, they slide off down the hill, quickly gaining speed. Tense music builds as they dash down. Constance gives him furtive glances but his eyes remain locked on the descent, a worried look across his face. As the hill ends in a large cliff, he remembers something from his childhood. I killed my brother! he thinks. A yelling boy appears on screen before his feet slide down a stone banister, knocking a younger boy forward and impaling him on the decorative spike of a fence.



Repressed memory- J.B. tackles Constance and brings them to a stop before they tumble over the cliff. "I didn't kill my brother!" he shouts. "It was an accident!" Memories come flooding back. The scene fades into the two of them standing in the warm lodge of the resort. "My name's John Ballantyne," he remembers eventually. "I'm very pleased to meet you," Constance grins. John then remembers that he was discharged from the army and was seeking treatment for shell shock from Dr. Edwardes. Constance confirms that watching Dr. Edwardes go over the cliff triggered John's guilt complex about his brother. In a sense, the skiing trip has completely cured his amnesia. "Now that you've got your head back," says Dr. Petersen, "you mustn't lose it again."



A bullet- The couple's romantic celebration is interrupted when a trio of detectives enter the lodge. They confront Constance and John, reporting that they've found the body of Dr. Edwardes below the cliff. "Thank goodness it's all cleared up," Dr. Petersen says, but a detective interrupts her. "I'm afraid a bullet was found in the body." A dramatic chord plays. "It was in his back. The case is one of murder." The police detain John. A montage of prison conversations and court proceedings plays out quickly. Constance does her best to defend John, but the courts find him guilty and sentence him to life imprisonment.



Return to Green Manors- In her office in Green Manors, Dr. Petersen paces. Dr. Brulov chastizes her for her emotional state. “He trusted me,” Petersen says, slumping over her desk. “I led him into a trap. I convicted him.” Dr. Brulov tries to comfort her. “It is very sad, to love and lose somebody, but in a while you will forget and take up the threads of your life where you left off, not long ago. And you will work hard. There's lots of happiness in working hard... Maybe the most.” With that, Brulov says goodbye to his young friend and is shown to a waiting car by Dr. Murchison.



Things better forgotten- Dr. Murchison returns, and Dr. Petersen says she should have gone to the station to see Brulov off. “You're too tired. I know that feeling of exhaustion well,” says Murchison. “One must humor it, or it explodes.” He tries to assure Dr. Petersen that she's on to bigger and better things now. “At least one good thing came out of this,” Petersen says. “You're back at Green Manors.” Murchison mentions that he knew Edwardes and “didn't care for him” before parting with Dr. Petersen. His words echo in Dr. Petersen's head as she scrambles around her office, finding the pad where she wrote the notes about John's dream.



The solution to Ballantyne's dream- Dramatic music plays as Constance slides into a chair, donning her reading glasses. She pours over the notes, Murchison's “didn't care for him” still echoing. She gasps and puts away her glasses, leaving her quarters and marching up the stairs to Murchison's office. The light pouring from beneath the door holds a different meaning now. Murchison is surprised to see the young doctor. Constance says she needs to talk to him, but Murchison repeats that she needs to rest. She convinces him to hear her out, retelling John Ballantyne's dream. Dr. Murchison listens studiously and sees similarities in the dream to a club in New York City and Green Manors, surmising that the proprietor of the club was actually the proprietor of Green Manors, Murchison himself. Constance agrees with his deduction. Murchison then discusses the strange wheel the man dropped. “It was a revolver,” Constance states matter-of-factly, continuing to say that the man left the revolver at the scene.



“Can’t agree”- “I can’t agree with this part of your interpretation,” Murchison says calmly as he rifles through the papers on his desk, “for the good reason that the weapon is now in my hand.” Constance fights back fear as she looks down the barrel of the gun. “I imagined something like this might happen,” says Murchison, “when I made the slip about knowing Edwardes. That started your agile young mind going.” Constance sums up the order of events while Murchison threatens her and tells her the police will never believe her. Constance can’t help but smile when she realizes that witnesses would place Murchison both at the club in New York and the Gabriel Valley lodge.



She calls his bluff- “You’ll not commit a second murder,” Constance says. Murchison blusters that he will but Constance sees the logic of the situation, a logic Murchison cannot deny. If he kills Constance now, it will be in cold blood and he’ll be put in the electric chair, but if he is tried for the murder of Dr. Edwardes, they’ll find he wasn’t of sound mind and receive life in prison. Coolly, Constance walks to the door and exits the office, Murchison’s pistol trained on her the entire time. With her gone, the pistol wavers. It then turns toward the camera and fires.



“Any husband of Constance’s”- John and Constance stand before the ticket-taker in Grand Central Station. Dr. Brulov shakes John’s hand heartily as he grins: “Remember what I said, ‘Any husband of Constance’s is a husband of mine!’” The same ticket-taker from before looks on with a look of confusion. The doctor leaves the couple after bidding them farewell, and the two take their ticket stubs from the ticket-taker. Upon seeing his confused face, John embraces Constance and pulls her into a long kiss. They pass through the turnstile and the camera steps closer to the ticket-taker, who looks first at Dr. Brulov and then the camera, dumbfounded.



THEMES

Gender- This theme is substantial in *Spellbound*. Gender arises as soon as we are introduced to Dr. Petersen. When the nurse and orderly mentioned the doctor's name, the audience in 1945 must have been quite surprised to find a woman sitting behind the desk. Even in today's context, women remain underrepresented in the field of psychiatry, but back in the 1940s, the presence of female psychiatric doctors was exceedingly rare. While in the modern context, the way her male peers treat her would be considered sexual harassment, these unprofessional moments are used to show the unusual lack of feeling Dr. Petersen shows until she meets John. Especially in the psychiatry of the 1940s and before, women were seen as uncontrollably emotional (often described as hysterical even when exhibiting symptoms of known illnesses or neurotypes). Dr. Petersen de-genders herself in her profession, and through her love for John, she becomes more in touch with her femininity and desire for feminine gender expression, mentioning wanting to dress in more revealing clothes, and desires to be a wife and mother.

Love- Love is one of the first themes we are introduced to. Dr. Petersen thinks love is a silly thing best saved for poetry and novels, that is until she meets Dr. Edwardes. The two enter into a whirlwind romance that is uninterrupted by Edwardes actually being John Ballantyne and having assumed another man's identity. The power of their love and Dr. Petersen's treatment results in John's full recovery not only from his amnesia but also his childhood guilt complex. Such an expedient recovery is due in part to the passion he and Dr. Petersen share. In earlier scenes, Dr. Fleurot embraces and kisses her despite her obvious disinterest, believing her to be more "like a textbook" than a woman. Love gives Petersen the gumption to face down Dr. Murchison's pistol at the film's end, assured that no matter what comes to pass in the office, the true killer will face judgment.

Fear/Bravery- Fear and facing fear co-exist in *Spellbound*. John's amnesia is caused by fear, PTSD, and his preexisting guilt complex. Believing that he's to blame for Dr. Edwardes' death, John assumes the doctor's identity out of fear of being imprisoned. His symptoms manifest in a paralyzing fear of lines since they remind him of the ski tracks in the snow. Similarly, Dr. Petersen faces the fear of the unknown when she is smitten with John. She's never felt these feelings before, and accepting her love allows her to open mental doors she never knew were closed. Her bravery continues when she decides to pursue John to New York to complete his treatment. Despite what everyone else says, she believes John is not dangerous, further showcasing her bravery. John must face his fears to regain his memory, and he does so with the aid of Dr. Petersen and Dr. Brulov. It is Dr. Petersen's bravery that brings the true killer to justice. Seeing the pure logic of the situation when Murchison draws his pistol on her, she leaves the

room, leaving the doctor only two options: suicide or the electric chair. In a moment of fear, Murchison chooses the former.

Investigation- Being a film about psychoanalysis, *Spellbound* is all about the investigation of the mind. While the main focus is on John's condition as he goes through healing and transformation, Dr. Petersen is also shown to learn things about herself and grow in the film's beginning. Accepting her love for John shows her new parts of her mind she wasn't even aware were truly closed off. Dr. Petersen does most of the investigation, beginning with her doubts about Dr. Edwardes' identity. After discovering the difference in signatures, Dr. Petersen quickly realizes that John is an imposter. Instead of reporting him, she does her best to help him, driven by love and the thrill of an unusual case. With the help of Dr. Brulov, they are able to pull information about Edwardes' death from John's dream, and at Gabriel Valley, further investigation results in the cure for John's amnesia. When John is taken into custody, it seems the investigation has ended, but Dr. Petersen refuses to give up. She confronts Dr. Murchison about his strange comments regarding Dr. Edwardes when he admits to killing his rival. Through brilliant logical deduction, Dr. Petersen realizes she has Murchison in check: no matter what he does, the truth will come out. And it does, after which Constance and John board a train on a honeymoon trip in the film's final scene.

Disease- Mental disease and its treatment are one of the main themes in *Spellbound*. John's amnesia and his guilt complex are the main focus of this theme, but we see more mild forms in all of the named doctors in the film: Dr. Fleurot seems to be overly sexual (even with early code era censorship); Dr. Petersen shuts off her emotions until she meets John; Dr. Brulov has a tick about table settings; and Dr. Murchison was driven to murderous rage by his mental break and jealousy of Dr. Edwardes. While they have very little screen time, a couple of the patients at Green Manors discuss their illnesses with Dr. Petersen. One possesses a murderous hatred of men while the other has a guilt complex not unlike John's. Dr. Petersen goes to great lengths to treat John's amnesia and guilt complex. Through her persistence and knowledge, they are able to resolve his symptoms in record time.

Healing - Healing from mental anguish is a potent theme in *Spellbound*. While we see this theme most clearly in John's transformation from Edwardes to Ballantyne, Constance and Murchison are also shown to have their own struggles with mental health. Dr. Petersen struggles with femininity and intimacy, realizing she's been stifling her feelings to present a professional facade when she falls in love with John. John's journey is most obvious: he goes from a barely-functioning amnesiac to his normal self under the care of Petersen and Brulov. These were themes the film's producer wanted to be clear after his own experiences with psychoanalysis. We see a lack of healing in Dr. Murchison. Having committed the murder of Dr. Edwardes in cold blood, his unsound mind leads him to kill himself in the film's final moments.

Appearance vs. Reality- Because of false beliefs, criminality, and delusions, things aren't always as they appear in this film. Notably, John and Constance use disguise and trickery to confuse the police. Constance is quick-witted enough to create a red herring that throws the police off their tails at the train station, doubling back and getting different tickets at Grand Central station. John's guilt complex causes him to doubt his innocence. For the first two-thirds of the film, he appears as if he could be the killer, and it's not until the end that the real culprit reveals himself. Murchison was playing the long game with his crime. He believed he could frame John for the murder of Dr. Edwardes until he let the fact that he knew and didn't like Edwardes slip to Dr. Petersen. Using her intelligence and driven by her love for John, Dr. Petersen quickly pieces together the truth using notes about John's dream, translating a witness statement from the surreal story. The facade cracked, Murchison decides to take his own life rather than face dishonor and embarrassment.

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Dr. Constance Petersen-

Constance is a female psychiatric doctor working at the Green Manors Mental Hospital in Vermont. She is seen as a very serious woman until she falls in love with Dr. Edwardes, the hospital's new chief physician. After discovering that Edwardes is an imposter, she risks her life and her professional status to treat the amnesiac she has come to love.

Intelligent Dr. Petersen is incredibly intelligent. She is obviously well read as seen in several scenes where she peruses both her personal and the hospital's libraries. Because of her education and logical mind, she is the first to suspect that Dr. Edwardes is an imposter. Despite the other doctor's willingness to turn a mental health issue into a criminal case, Constance risks her professional standing to follow and treat John's illness. Using both skill and personal feeling, she is able to trace the root of John's amnesia to a guilt complex triggered by Dr. Edwardes' death. Through her quick wit, she is also able to defeat Murchison's attempt to silence her by stating the pure logic of his attempt to threaten and kill her.

Aware Dr. Petersen is consistently aware. While the other doctors are self-assured and quick to jump to conclusions, she is well aware of her precarious position as the only female psychiatrist at the hospital and often looks at the context before passing judgment. Where the police and other doctors see John as criminally insane, Dr. Petersen sees an honest, scared man who needs help. Even Dr. Brulov fails to see the innocence of John's actions until he is confronted with her feelings and desires to cure John. Through her acute awareness, Dr. Petersen is able to survive Murchison's final gambit at the end of the film, calmly leaving the office where she is held at gunpoint by the crazed doctor while she states the logic of the situation.

Lovestruck The transformation of Dr. Petersen from an unfeeling professional to a loving woman is a major event in the film. We are shown several instances of her being sexually harassed by her male coworkers in an attempt to make her act less 'like a textbook,' as they believe some emotion would make her a better doctor. They are right, as her love for John causes her to very quickly break down and reconstruct John's mental hangups, allowing him to recover his memory in record time. She's even able to help him combat his childhood guilt complex. Her transformation from a closed-off professional to a lovestruck young woman happens almost in an instant when she first meets John. Their first kiss is shown as an 'open a door' in her mind that she didn't realize was closed. As a young woman in love, she finds herself unable to ignore her femininity, taking extra time to touch up her hair and choosing different clothes as she continues to travel with John. This rapid change in character shows us the power that love can have in our lives. Sometimes, the right person can change everything about us.

John Ballantyne-

John plays several roles in this film, as he has lost his memory. We are introduced to him as Dr. Edwardes. He fails to cope with the pressure of pretending to be the dead man, believing he has murdered him. John chooses the name 'John Brown' until he remembers his real name with the help of Dr. Petersen.

Imitator/Confused John is first introduced to us as Dr. Edwardes, but this is a poor disguise. As a shell-shocked soldier seeking treatment, he was on a ski trip with the real Edwardes when the doctor was killed. This event triggered John's amnesia. Scared and confused, the young man adopted the persona of Edwardes and attempted to pick up his life where the late doctor left off. John shows himself to be a poor imitator when he begins to have public breakdowns at the mental hospital. Because of these, he flees to New York, believing himself to be the murderer. This identity comes to an end quickly, but John's role as an imitator is extremely important to the plot.

Anxious John isn't short of anxiety. The pressure he puts on himself to appear to be Edwardes seems to be a major part of his breakdown in the operating room alongside the stress of his PTSD. His anxiety shows in his late-night departure from Green Manors: he is unwilling to face the police or further

embarrassment. He displays fear and anxiety about being followed by the police after he passes out at the train station, and his unwillingness to face his guilt complex is based on anxiety that he will remember being the killer if he regains his memory. He faces his anxiety at the top of the ski slope, following the same path that led him to his amnesia just a week before. Overcoming anxiety results in mental healing for John.

Determined John shows great determination, sometimes in contradictory ways. He is determined to appear as the genuine Dr. Edwardes, but he finds that he lacks the specialized knowledge to pass himself off as a psychiatrist. With the anxiety of police pursuit pushing him, he is determined to disappear in New York City only to be surprised when Constance follows him. His determination shows most when he agrees to ski down the same hill where Dr. Edwardes died in an attempt to jog his memory. He agrees to continue their treatment, determined to find the cause of his malaise. This determination does a 180 turn when he confronts his fears and guilt complex. A part of his mind refuses to face the fear, perpetuating his mental illness. Without Dr. Petersen's goading, he might have remained in a state of amnesia through this fear-based determination. Ultimately, his bravery and gentle but firm assistance from Dr. Petersen resulted in the cure for two pressing mental issues.

Dr. Alex Brulov-

Dr. Brulov is a renowned psychiatrist. He was Dr. Petersen's mentor and boss before she gained a position at Green Manors. He welcomes her and John into his house and agrees to assist with John's amnesia treatment

Friendly/Unfriendly There's an odd duality to Dr. Brulov: He'll praise Constance with one breath and insult her with another. This runs contrary to his utter generosity and kindness to the couple. After learning they're on their 'honeymoon,' he invites them to stay in his guest room. He gives them beer and food and shelters them from the police, all while occasionally mocking and chastising them. His friendliness often takes the form of jokes: "Any husband of Constance's is a husband of mine." His duality potentially serves as comic relief, but whatever joke the writers were making will go over modern viewers' heads. To us, he just seems like a rude, contrarian old man because of this duality.

Aware Dr. Brulov is incredibly observant. It doesn't take long for him to 'make four from two and two' when he sees the inconsistencies in John and Constance's story and behavior. He notices a lack of rings and physical intimacy one would expect from newlyweds as soon as they introduce themselves. Likewise, he notices their nervousness around the police waiting in his home to ask about Dr. Edwardes. He sees the threat posed by John when he comes downstairs with a straight razor in his hand during a fugue state and drugs him covertly by acting unexpectedly calm. Dr. Brulov's situational and logical awareness are signs of his effectiveness as a psychiatrist.

Dr. Murchison-

Dr. Murchison is the head psychiatrist at Green Manors. He is to be replaced by Dr. Edwardes after a work-related mental breakdown. This jealousy causes him to commit murder and frame John, the true cause of his amnesia.

Planner Dr. Murchison seems to be a competent planner. Despite his breakdown and anger, he is able to effectively frame John for the murder of Dr. Edwardes. By collecting his gun from the scene of Edwardes' murder and leading the police after John, he can take all suspicion off of himself. It's only in mentioning his personal dislike of Edwardes towards the film's end that Constance is able to piece together the true series of events with the help of her notes about John's dream. Even in this slipup, Murchison has a plan: he knows that Dr. Petersen might be able to figure things out based on his slip of the tongue, but even so, he attempts to hold her hostage when she confronts him.

Stable/Unstable This duality exists in Dr. Murchison to show us that even those most educated in psychology are still human, still fallible. He begins the film bemoaning his early retirement due to a public breakdown caused by work stress. When the police reveal that Dr. Edwardes has been killed, Dr.

Murchison steps back in as director of Green Manors, appearing quite stable and happy to be back in charge. This changes when we see him again at the film's end. He seems to be barely holding back his rage when Dr. Petersen wants to discuss Dr. Edwardes' death and lets his distaste for the man slip. His stability finally slips when he pulls a revolver on Dr. Petersen when she confronts him about the solution to John's dream. His final act of instability, driven by fear and vanity, is to kill himself so that he doesn't have to face the justice system.