

CRITICAL MADNESS
Representations of mental illness in the music video
“Drown” by Bring Me the Horizon

Bachelor’s thesis
Tuuli Häkkinen

University of Jyväskylä
Department of Language and Communication Studies
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<p>Tiivistelmä – Abstract</p> <p>Mediarepresentaatiot vaikuttavat käsityksiin mielenterveysongelmista ja niitä kokevista henkilöistä. Vaikka mielenterveysongelmien kuvaukset mediassa ovat etenkin kolmen viime vuosikymmenen aikana muuttuneet realistisemmiksi ja positiivisemmiksi, on visuaalisen mediakulttuurin saralla edelleen taipumusta toisintaa stigmatisoivia representaatioita. Median genreistä musiikkivideoiden on aiemmissa tutkimuksissa todettu sisältävän yhtäältä sosiaalisesti ongelmallisia ja stereotyyppisiä kuvauksia esimerkiksi sukupuolesta tai päihteiden käytöstä mutta toisaalta myös progressiivisia representaatioita ja avointakin yhteiskuntakritiikkiä.</p> <p>Tämän tutkimuksen tavoitteena oli tarkastella mielenterveysongelmien esittämistä sekä aiheeseen liittyviä diskursseja brittiläisen Bring Me the Horizon -yhtyeen musiikkivideossa <i>Drown</i>. Tutkimuksessa pyrittiin selvittämään, kuinka mielenterveysongelmien representaatiot ja diskurssit rakentuvat musiikkivideossa semioottisten resurssien käytön kautta. YouTubessa saatavilla oleva video analysoitiin multimodaalisen kriittisen diskurssianalyysin lähtökohdista hyödyntäen van Leeuwenin (2005) sekä Kressin ja van Leeuwenin (2001) sosiosemiotiikan ja diskurssianalyysin teorioita. Tutkimus keskittyi musiikkivideon visuaaliseen sisältöön, joten lisäksi käytettiin Kressin ja van Leeuwenin (2006) kuva-analyysimetodia.</p> <p>Tutkimuksessa selvisi, että aiempaan mielenterveyden mediakuvauksia koskevaan kirjallisuuteen verraten <i>Drownin</i> roolihenkilöillä sekä yhtyeen jäsenillä ilmeneviä mielenterveysongelmia kuvataan stereotyyppisen hulluuden kuvaston mukaisesti. Mielenterveyden ja sen ongelmien teemoja käsitellään videossa yhtyeen ja tätä katsovan yleisön välille semioottisten resurssien rakentuvien vastakohtaisuuksien ja yhtäläisyyksien kautta. 2010-luvun rock-yhtyeelle tyylillisesti epätavallisten semioottisten resurssien käytön myötä videoon kuitenkin syntyy itsereflektiivisyys, jonka avulla kritisoidaan paitsi mainittuja stereotyyppioita myös diskurssia ulospäin näkyvistä mielenterveysongelmista näkymättömiä vartenotettavampina. Tutkimus osoittaa, että stereotyyppisiä ja stigmatisoivia mielenterveysongelmien esitystapoja voidaan käyttää tiedostaen aihetta koskevan moniulotteisen yhteiskunnallisen kritiikin välineinä.</p>	
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1 INTRODUCTION

The ways in which mental illness is portrayed in the media shape our understanding of the issue as well as of people living with it (Birch 2012). As Birch (2012) discusses, representations of mental illness in the media also have a significant potential to affect the identities of individuals with mental illness. Such social implications indicate that media representations of mental illness are a worthwhile research topic. Indeed, a number of previous studies have been made about representations in television news and drama series, newspapers, film and theatre, among other media forms. Several studies have identified a problem with the notable prevalence of stigmatising representations which portray mental illness and people with mental illness in a negative or unrealistic light. Nonetheless, this issue has received increasing publicity since the 1990s (Harper 2005), and many studies have also evidenced positive and non-stigmatising media portrayals of mental illness.

Music videos constitute a popular form of contemporary audio-visual media, readily available and consumed daily by millions of people via television channels and online streaming platforms such as YouTube. In effect, they have been the subject of plenty of critical research on the representations of various topics ranging from gender and sexuality via alcohol use to ethnic identities. Some studies, discussed in section 2.2, have found that the representations which music videos contain are problematic, for example, in terms of reinforcing stereotypes of gender and sexuality. In the meantime, other studies have investigated progressive representations which contain overt social criticism. The present study aims to contribute to the body of critical music video research by examining the representations of mental illness in the rock music video *Drown* by the British band Bring Me the Horizon.

As the present study is concerned with a sensitive topic addressed with varying names, a note on terminology is necessary. The main term used in this study is *mental illness*. Harper (2005) argues that it is a commonly used one and less stigmatising than most options, proposing that *mental health problems* is less suited because of its explicit problematisation of mental ill-health. According to him, the commonly used term *mental health* also has rather euphemistic qualities and is opposed to illness; similar considerations were made on behalf of the term for the present study. On the occasions where the term *mental health* is used in this study, it refers to the overall concept of mental health encompassing all different degrees of both good mental health and mental ill-health.

2 MADNESS, MUSIC VIDEOS AND METALCORE

2.1 Representations of mental illness in the audio-visual media

Characters with mental illness are fairly popularly represented in the visual and audio-visual media. Nonetheless, mental illness is usually an invisible phenomenon to outside observers, and depicting it – let alone in a sensitive way – may take considerable effort (see Cross 2004). Indeed, the visual and audio-visual media have a long history of drawing on stigmatised, often culturally iconic representations of mental illness (Birch 2012). Although there appears to be very little previous research on representations of mental illness or mental health in music videos, the topic has been studied in the related field of film as well as in other forms of media.

According to Birch (2012: 89-91), a common representation of mental illness in mainstream cinema is madness: strange behaviour which may be only slightly connected to any actual mental illness but is clearly opposed to what is considered normal human functioning. Birch (2012: 95) explains that historically, mad characters have been, among others, humans who are or may transform into monsters or animalistic creatures such as vampires or werewolves. He continues that the film industry has drawn upon many such portrayals for the sake of entertainment, but that they offer little information about actual mental illness. Instead, he argues that they limit the possibility of understanding mad characters' behaviour, rendering them frightening or at least enigmatic. Cross (2004: 199) identifies a less fantastic but nevertheless stereotypical visual representation of mental illness as madness: “wild, unkempt hair; tattered clothing; red-veined, staring eyes” and “fists shaken at ‘things’ that are not there”.

More generally, mental illness has been equated with violence and dangerousness in film as well as in other visual media forms (Birch 2012: 89-91). Birch (2012) illustrates that many popular films, especially in the genre of horror, offer depictions of violent criminals who appear “normal” and mostly mentally healthy in daily life but display madness in some of their actions and behaviours. This “split personality” stereotype – evident in films such as the 1991 psychological horror film *The Silence of the Lambs* and Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* from 1960 – may employ more explicit references to actual mental health conditions but still utilises representations of madness to create anxiety-evoking characters (Birch 2012). Similarly, the use of violent representations for impact or entertainment is commonly found in Nairn's (2007) review of several studies of mental illness in the mass media, particularly in newspapers and on television news and drama. He synthesises that mental illness is frequently portrayed as violent madness, possession or, alternatively, in the more innocent form of social or behavioural

incompetence, because previously used resources for such representations are readily available and easily recognised by the media audience.

However, many authors have noted a current shift towards more positive and non-stigmatising representations of mental illness and mental health. Harper (2005) times this as beginning in the 1990s when issues of mental health awareness began to gain more publicity. Birch (2012: 120) characterises these positive developments as including more realistic and psychiatrically accurate depictions of mental illness and portrayals of people with conditions not solely in terms of their mental illness – that is, as real people with naturalistic narratives. Non-stigmatising representations may also criticise the social position of people with mental illness (Birch 2012: 120). Birch (2012: 248) concludes that non-stigmatising representations can be aesthetic and dramatic – effects which are commonly sought with madness representations as well – but are essentially not threatening or violent. Harper (2008) goes along the same lines, saying that mental distress has increasingly been depicted “with realism and pathos”. He notes that one way of representing mental distress in a non-stigmatising manner is through the subjective positions of non-violent characters with mental illness, which is at times used as a vehicle of social criticism.

Aside from realism, there is evidence of a change towards more positive images of mental health in representations instead of mental illness. Thompson’s (2012) social semiotic analysis of images used on the mental health website HealthyPlace.com from 1999 to 2010 shows a trend towards increasing numbers of images of smiling people and images with several people together, suggesting meanings of wellness and sociality. She finds that many of such images are close-ups where the participants are gazing at the viewer, signalling the attainability of the togetherness and health which they display. In turn, she remarks a decrease in the use of images depicting distress. Although Thompson (2012) suggests that positive and social images associated with mental health contribute to normalising and destigmatising mental health conditions, she also makes the critical notion that such representations carry the risk of generalising the marketing for mental healthcare to people with non-pathological experiences.

In fact, there is criticism towards ostensibly less stigmatising portrayals of mental illness as well as the common perception of madness portrayals as stigmatising. Harper (2008) comments on portrayals of people with mental illness which evoke images of mental distress as a source of genius, creativity or enlightenment, as well as accounts on celebrities’ experiences with mental illness. He explains that these representations may be problematic, because they may

create an unintended association of mental illness with accomplishment and may overshadow the experiences of ordinary people with mental illness. Furthermore, Harper (2005) argues that evaluations of realism and verisimilitude are not always the key to understanding representations of mental illness as madness. Instead, he proposes that the function of madness portrayals should be considered, explaining that they can be used metaphorically as vehicles for social or political commentary, particularly in fictional media and art genres.

2.2 Previous research on music videos

Popular music has often been used as a vehicle for social commentary. In fact, McKerrell and Way (2017) imply that many popular music products convey at least ambiguous meanings of being anti-authority and anti-mainstream. Visual material has been integral in the popular music industry since its beginning, and images and videos are frequently used to produce social meanings in music (McKerrell and Way 2017). Indeed, music videos are multimodal, which means that they employ several socially standardised means of communication which can be in different sensory domains, in this case visual and auditory. Researchers such as Filardo-Llamas (2017) have argued that because of their multimodality, music videos are effective in making and mediating meanings. Thus, music videos naturally make interesting social research objects.

There is, in fact, a large body previous critical research on the representation of different social issues in music videos. Many researchers have found that music videos offer controversial or even harmful representations of social reality, while others have pointed out progressive ideologies and instances of clever social comment in music videos. Gender and sexuality are the overwhelmingly most popular topics, and different portrayals of gender and sexuality have indeed been found progressive in some studies and reinforcing stereotypes in others. Another point of interest has been the use of alcohol and other intoxicants, the presentations of which have been investigated and criticised by, for example, DuRant et al. (1997) and Lindsay and Lyons (2018). Dlaske (2016) and Rancier (2009) study the representation of language minorities and Kazakh identity, respectively, while Prody (2015) and Way (2017) investigate countercultural political protest in music videos. However, there appears to be little significant research on mental illness in music videos, which is the research gap that the present study aims to contribute to filling.

2.3 The social semiotics and multimodality of the music video

Social semiotics is a field of study concerned with the practical means of meaning-making in communication. Music videos, like all communication, makes use of what in social semiotics

are called semiotic resources. Van Leeuwen (2005: 3) defines semiotic resources as “the actions and artefacts we use to communicate”. In other words, they are units or features of communication that have the potential to be used for making specific meanings, which in turn are called the meaning potentials of the semiotic resources. The semiotic resources of the music video include a wide range of auditory and visual resources. The most obvious auditory semiotic resource in music videos is music, which can be further divided into its properties such as composition, instrumentation and manner of performance. Furthermore, sound effects, lyrics and dialogue are commonly used. Visual semiotic resources, in turn, include the lighting and physical setting of the music video, actors and their acting, dress, visual special effects, and technical shot properties such as shot length and camera angle. The meaning potentials of semiotic resources are not static but defined socially in the previous uses of the semiotic resource; thus, a given semiotic resource may have several different meanings, selected ones of which are evoked in the actual context of communication (van Leeuwen 2005: 4).

In addition to employing plenty of different semiotic resources, music videos use resources in different modes, which Kress (2010) characterises as socially defined channels of meaning-making. In other words, music videos are multimodal; they even use semiotic resources in different sensory domains. In multimodal texts, the modes communicating different information simultaneously may at best complement each other (Kress 2010: 1). Accordingly, Filardo-Llamas (2017) argues that multimodality in music videos results in the effective delivery of the message and meaning which they contain.

Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) theorise that images can interact their viewer by offering positions of relative power, degree of involvement and social distance. The authors propose that the first two of these can be conveyed through the semiotic resources of vertical and horizontal camera angle, respectively, whereas the last can be realised metaphorically through shot distance. Additionally, Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) suggest that in naturalistic images with human participants, gaze can be used to establish relationships both with the viewer and other participants in the image. The theories of social meanings in images can also be applied to shots of moving image as in music videos; regarding this, Kress and van Leeuwen (2006: 143) add that shot sequencing may reveal additional interactional information about point of view by successively showing a shot of a participant and a shot of what they see from their viewpoint.

Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) also argue that images can contain structures which imply a narrative. They explain that these narrative structures become evident from vectors, that is,

visible or imaginable lines which point from one depicted person or object, or participant, to another in an image. The authors continue that when such vectors are formed by gaze, the resulting narrative structures are called Reactions. Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) Reactions consist of Reacters and Phenomena; the first of these is the participant gazing at another, who or which in turn is the Phenomenon. The Phenomenon may or may not be depicted in the image; in the former case, the image is called transactional, and in the latter case, non-transactional (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006). Another type of narrative structure of Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) is a Symbolic Suggestive Process, an image which represents a participant in a symbolic manner. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) say that Symbolic Suggestive Processes usually do not depict an action nor assume a narrative, but merely show the participant, often suggesting that they represent a certain quality as coming from within.

2.4 Bring Me the Horizon, *Drown* and mental illness in metalcore

This study focuses on the music video of the alternative rock song *Drown* by the British music group Bring Me the Horizon (commonly abbreviated as BMTH). Formed in Sheffield in 2004, the band's line-up has since 2012 consisted of singer Oli Sykes, guitarist Lee Malia, keyboardist Jordan Fish, bassist Matt Kean and drummer Matt Nicholls. *Drown* was uploaded to the band's official YouTube channel on 21st October 2014 and is the second-most viewed video on the channel, with more than 90 million views to the date of this study (30th April 2020). *Drown* preceded the band's critically acclaimed 2015 album *That's the Spirit*, being the first single off it. The album marked a departure in the band's sound from the genre of metalcore – a death metal and hardcore punk-influenced style of alternative music – towards more pop influence, and it was a remarkable commercial success.

It is noteworthy that BMTH originally established themselves in the subcultural music genre of metalcore. Subcultures may intently use socially deviant means of expression to produce social commentary against mainstream culture (see e.g. Hebdige 1979). Mental health and difficult life situations are particularly frequent topics in metalcore lyrics. Furthermore, many musicians in the genre have been vocal about their struggles with mental health in the music media; Sykes, too, has come forward with his mental health struggles and ketamine addiction (McLaughlin 2015: 60-61). Since mental illness is still a taboo subject and carries plenty of stigma in society at large, the way in which metalcore has owned mental illness and health as some of its prominent discussion topics may be understood as signalling the genre's subcultural position.

Thus, the representations of mental illness in *Drown* may differ from mainstream media and may even be innovative, which makes the alternative music video an interesting research object.

3 PRESENT STUDY

3.1 Research aim and questions

The aim of the present study is to explore the potential of music videos in representing mental illness and to critically investigate the discourses and representations of mental illness in the music video of the song *Drown* by Bring Me the Horizon. Specifically, the research questions in this study are the following:

1. How are representations of mental illness constructed with the use of semiotic resources in the music video of the song *Drown* by Bring Me the Horizon?
2. What discourses emerge on the representations of mental illness in the music video?

Music videos are complex multimodal texts which employ a large number of different semiotic resources to make meaning. Thus, an investigation of the use of these semiotic resources should help in understanding the mechanics of meaning-making in the music video. Semiotic resources also allow a socially grounded analysis of meaning, as their meaning potentials are seen as constructed in their previous uses (van Leeuwen 2005). This is particularly helpful when investigating representations of mental illness in terms of stigma, which is essentially a social and attitudinal phenomenon. Furthermore, the use of semiotic resources can be used as grounds when investigating the discourses of mental illness which arise from the data. Van Leeuwen (2005: 275) defines discourses as “resources for representation, knowledges about some aspect of reality which can be drawn upon when that aspect of reality has to be represented”. He continues that discourses evaluate, legitimise and present the purposes of the aspects of reality which they represent. Due to the restricted timeframe available for this undergraduate dissertation, this study focuses predominantly on visual semiotic resources, which appeared to represent mental illness most saliently in *Drown*.

3.2 Data

The data of this study is the music video for an alternative rock song written and performed by the British band Bring Me the Horizon, *Drown* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TkV5709EG5M>). Considering the high information density typical of multimodal texts and the depth of the consequent analysis, one music video was determined to be a suitable amount of data for the timeframe and scope of this study. Since mental illness is a relatively rare topic in music videos, the data selection was performed out of music videos which were previously known to the author. The main criterion for the selection

was that mental illness had to be an objectively distinguishable topic both in the lyrics of the song and the visual material of the video. Additionally, the criteria of relative popularity and contemporaneousness were taken into consideration. A minimum of 10 million views was set to ensure that the topic of mental illness in the videos has social relevance. Contemporaneousness was defined as having been uploaded into YouTube no more than six years ago (from 22nd January 2020, when the data were gathered). Additionally, old videos uploaded years after their initial release through other media were to be excluded, although eventually no such instances were found during the data gathering.

3.3 Analysis method

The music video for *Drown* was first transcribed shot by shot using multimodal transcription (see Flewitt et al. 2014). Analysis was then conducted with the help of multimodal critical discourse analysis (MCDA). As the basis for the analysis, van Leeuwen's (2005) theory of semiotic resources and their meaning potentials as well as Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) image analysis framework were used. The findings were then subjected to discourse analysis following van Leeuwen (2005) and Kress and van Leeuwen (2001), taking a critical viewpoint to the representations of mental illness and the functions of these representations. Previous studies applying MCDA methodology have been able to identify discourses and attitudinal aspects to social topics in music videos. For example, Way (2017) has studied the representations of the 2013 protests in Gezi Park, Istanbul, and discourses of authenticity and subversion in a music video using MCDA. Filardo-Llamas (2017), in turn, has investigated representations and discourses of domestic violence in Spanish music videos with a similar method.

Since semiotic resources are seen as deriving their meaning from previous usage, the use of semiotic resources and their associated meanings in *Drown* were compared and contrasted with portrayals of mental illness found in literature (see Section 2.1). In addition, Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) image analysis was applied according to perspectives arising from the data; these were the narrative structures of Reaction and Symbolic Suggestive Process and the interactive meanings produced by shot distance and camera angle, described in Section 2.3 in this study.

3.4 Pilot study and methodological considerations

To test transcription practices and potential analysis methods, a pilot study was conducted. An unrelated music video was transcribed using multimodal transcription, parameters were edited

and added inductively as ideas of suitable parameters arose during the transcription. An attempt at conducting qualitative content analysis (Schreier 2014) on the data followed but yielded no useful results. Consequently, the data was analysed for the most conspicuous semiotic resources with the aid of the transcription, and the meanings evoked by the semiotic resources were used to ground a brief discourse analysis following van Leeuwen (2005). For the present study, this method was complemented with image analysis from Kress and van Leeuwen (2006). It is worth noting that traditional semiotics based on structuralist linguistics (Chandler 2017) was also considered, since such an approach has been previously used by authors such as Birch (2012). However, social semiotics was considered as more suitable for the study of a social issue like representations of mental illness, since it is concerned with the way that semiotic resources acquire their meaning, an aspect which traditional semiotics more or less bypass.

3.5 Research ethics

Ethical considerations were made regarding copyright issues and fair use of the music video. It was concluded that verbally describing the content of the video as necessary for the purpose of this study could be equated with paraphrasing, which was assumed good practice with the source provided appropriately. Stills from the video are not included in this study, as the *Drown* music video is publicly accessible in its entirety on YouTube. However, as there appears to be no ethical way of downloading copyrighted videos from YouTube, this piece of research was conducted according to the technical possibilities allowed by the online viewing platform.

4 ANALYSIS

4.1 Suits and hospital ward clothes: The positioning of BMTH as apparently healthy and the audience as people with mental illness

In the music video, BMTH perform the song *Drown* on a stage to an audience whose members have the stereotypical appearance of people with mental illness (Cross 2004: 199). Indeed, discourses of the band's mental health and the audience's mental illness are articulated multimodally (Kress and van Leeuwen 2001: 25) through the use of contrasting semiotic resources. At the beginning of the video, BMTH are performing on a stage, wearing matching light grey suits and looking well-groomed. These semiotic resources suggest the ability to take care of one's appearance, associated with good mental health. In contrast, the audience members are depicted in what appear to be old-fashioned hospital ward clothes, reminiscent of clothing in psychiatric institutions in films such as *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. Additionally, they have unkempt hair, and some of them are shown with peculiar facial expressions, staring blankly or with their mouth open. The representation of the audience members is clearly one which Cross (2004) terms as an image of madness.

During the first pre-chorus and at the beginning of the first chorus of song, multiple shots of Sykes looking slightly off the camera are sequenced alternately with shots of the audience with a similar gaze. These shots are what in Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006: 68) image analysis framework are defined as non-transactional Reactions, as each of them only depict a Reacter, that is, either Sykes or members of the audience. Through sequencing, however, gaze in the individual shots is narrativised (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 143); it becomes evident that Sykes is gazing at the audience with a thoughtful facial expression. The audience, in turn, is gazing at the stage in an immobile and expressionless manner. In a subsequent shot, Sykes makes a pointing gesture with his fingers at the supposed direction of the audience. Based on countless instances of past use (van Leeuwen 2005: 4) in concerts by vocalists in popular music bands, the gesture evokes a meaning potential of a benevolent attempt to excite and engage the audience. This is followed by shots of the audience's responses: wide grins, enthusiastic handclapping, turning down their faces and shaking their heads. The reactions to the gesture seem exaggerated and peculiar, and these semiotic resources of deviant behaviour (Cross 2004: 199) mark the audience as mentally ill.

The differentiation of the band as normal and the audience as people with mental illness is reinforced by the difference in the settings in which these groups are depicted. The stage on

which BMTH are playing is brightly lit and looks polished, furnished with light grey curtains. In comparison, the audience section is dimly lit and looks makeshift with folding chairs, resembling a backstage space with ropes like those used for pulling up theatre curtains on the back wall. There is thus a clear difference in the use of the semiotic resources in the modes of light and colour between the two settings, connoting different values and discourses (Kress and van Leeuwen 2001: 25). The light colours and bright lights of the stage connote publicity and visibility, whereas the dark colours and low lighting of the audience section connote secrecy and being hidden. Moreover, these two parts of the setting are never shown both in one shot, further enhancing their difference.

However, similarities are also constructed between the band and the audience. The semiotic resources of the band's vintage appearance match those of the audience members. Furthermore, the video includes shots of each of the band members and most of the audience members depicted individually in front of a mock American flag whose stars have been replaced with one of BMTH's logos. Although the looks of mental illness (Cross 2004) of the audience remain in these shots, the similar background and clothing signal meanings of connectedness (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 204) and construct a degree of similitude between the participants. Interestingly, each of the flag shots is relatively dimly lit, the background has soft focus and the video is in slow motion. The band members do not have their instruments in these shots; neither do the audience members have props, apart from an older man who is depicted attached to an intravenous device throughout the video. This stripping out of other conspicuous visual material and the relative lack of action in the shots draws attention to the essence of the represented human participants, due to which the flag shots could be characterised as Symbolic Suggestive Processes (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006). Combined with the similar clothing and background, this suggests that both the band members and the audience members share special qualities. One such quality could be mental illness, whose representations in the band members are explained in more detail in the following subchapter.

4.2 Breaking the line: Representations of mental illness in band members

Over the course of the music video, the band members are depicted experiencing supernatural transformations. As Sykes begins the first pre-chorus of the song, the pupils of his eyes momentarily turn narrow and snake-like, pale yellowish-green in colour. This makes him turn his head down and raise his hand on his forehead, which are semiotic resources of gesture that in this case connote distress. Similarly, during the second verse, Kean's hand is shown

disappearing, which he spectates with a bewildered expression. The hand becomes visible again when he shakes it, and he continues playing his bass. However, the most conspicuous of these transformations happens beginning from the second verse when Nicholls is depicted turning into a werewolf-like creature through semiotic resources of appearance: fangs and extra hair on his hands and face. Nicholls, too, appears distressed; he is depicted scratching himself, feeling nauseated and vomiting blue liquid, and looking at the hair which has appeared on his hands with a shocked facial expression. Consequently, Nicholls stands up from his drums and attacks Fish, after which he is exorcised by a priest and four nuns.

The transformations resemble previous cinematic representations of madness described by Birch (2012), where a human turns into a monster or other animalistic creature. Violence and dangerousness are central qualities attributed to such representations according to Birch (2012), and such stereotypical meanings are indeed evoked when Nicholls turns violent against Fish. Although these scenes hardly contain references to mental illness, as is typical of monster madness representations (Birch 2012), they are interpretable as representing it by analogy based on the depictions of the audience as people with mental illness. Considering the previous use of similar semiotic resources (van Leeuwen 2005: 95), it is found that *Drown* reproduces a discourse of mentally ill people as mad monsters. However, what Birch (2012) does not mention as usually included in such representations are the expressions of distress which the band members exhibit with regard to their transformations. In fact, mental illness can cause abnormal experiences, where one may feel like they are disappearing, turning into something else than they usually are, or even physically ill. With this experiential basis (van Leeuwen 2005: 33) in mind, the band's transformations can be understood as depicting mental illness in a metaphorical way.

4.3 Gaze and facial expressions: Communicating reactions to mental illness

Human participants are depicted throughout the video – with the only exception of a short animated sequence resembling a broadcasting error image – and the faces of the participants receive plenty of attention from the camera. Not surprisingly, the most salient vectors in the shots of the music video are formed by gaze, narrative structures produced by which are Reactions (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 67). Kress and van Leeuwen (2006: 67) refer to facial expressions as one of the Reactor's necessary qualities. Indeed, the semiotic resources of facial expression indeed appear to signal the content of Reactions in the video, revealing the feelings and attitudes of the Reacters. The participants represented in the video often appear alone in

shots as Reacters gazing at supposed Phenomena not included in the shot frame. Although such shots in themselves are non-transactional, the Phenomenon of the Reacter's gaze in *Drown* often becomes evident through shot sequencing (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 68, 143).

As Nicholls begins to show the first symptoms of his transformation into a werewolf, the rest of the band members are shown individually in Reaction shots looking to his supposed direction. In these shots, Sykes and Kean show relatively neutral to surprised facial expressions, nevertheless implying that they have noticed Nicholls' unusual behaviour. Malia consequently makes eye contact with Fish, gesturing with his head to Nicholls' direction with a slight, ambiguous grin, to which Fish responds with a grin. However, none of the band members make direct contact with Nicholls. This avoidance of involvement could signal that what Nicholls exhibits is stigmatised. Later, as Nicholls is being exorcised on the stage on which the band had previously been performing, the rest of BMTH are depicted in a Reaction shot watching the exorcism from behind the curtains on the side of the stage. In this shot, the band's facial expressions can be interpreted as possibly signalling disbelief, shock and fear towards Nicholls' madness and perhaps also the exorcism process. This seems fitting, as Birch (2012) says that monster madness representations are used to evoke such emotions.

It is also noteworthy that with the exception of Sykes, the members of BMTH do not gaze at the direction of the audience in the scenes where they perform the song. Instead, they are shown disproportionately concentrated on playing their instruments considering the level of skill associated with their professional musicianship. The downward gaze, as any semiotic resource, has several different meaning potentials (van Leeuwen 2005: 4), and this case is ambiguous; the band might avoid eye contact with the audience to distance themselves from their stigmatised representation of madness, or they might want to avoid communicating their own madness to the audience.

4.4 Shot distance and camera angle: Positioning the viewer

The semiotic resources of shot distance and camera angle in *Drown* play a role in offering a viewpoint to the events in the video. Frontal and only slightly oblique horizontal angles dominate *Drown*, and majority of the video has been shot on the eye level of the participants with mostly middle, middle-close and close shot distances. As per Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) image analysis framework, the frontal angle creates strong viewer involvement. However, that the authors associate shot distance with social distance does not appear as applicable to this video; instead, dramatic emphasis would seem more fitting a function of the

close shot distances. This is supported by their use in shots which depict symptomatic mental illness; for example, the video includes close-ups of Kean's vanishing hand and audience members' faces, as well as extreme close-ups of Sykes' and Nicholls' faces when they are experiencing their transformations. In short, the dominance of relatively close shot distances and the low degrees of obliquity make the music video engaging and dramatic. This also draws attention to the representations of mental illness and madness as central topics of the video. Additionally, each of the band members has his own characteristic horizontal and vertical camera angle and to some extent also shot distance, which are used when a band member appears in a shot alone. Together with the fact that they have their own standard locations on the stage, this makes it possible to interpret to whom an individually depicted band member is gazing at in sequences of shots.

4.5 Bring Me the Horizon "faking it": Stylistic incongruence

A very conspicuous feature of *Drown* is the band's use of the semiotic resources of vintage clothing and stage set. In fact, a semiotic analysis comparing semiotic resources with their past use (van Leeuwen 2006: 4) shows a strong incongruence with the semiotic resources used in the video and the ones which BMTH conventionally use in their actual concert performances. The light-coloured suits and the matching stage set evoke meaning potentials of relatively orderly entertainment associated with 1940s popular swing bands or 1950s early rock 'n' roll ensembles based on their past uses by such musical groups. Furthermore, the restricted movement and emotion with which BMTH play the song are highly uncharacteristic of their usual live performance. The meanings of orderliness and expressionlessness are in obvious conflict not only with the contemporary, metalcore-influenced alternative rock music of the video, but also with the depressive lyrics of the song, containing grim lines such as "what doesn't kill you makes you wish you were dead". This stylistic incongruence evokes a discourse of fakeness with regard to the band's performance; a visual façade is created.

Yet this façade is temporarily broken after the scene where the priest and four nuns perform a successful exorcism on Nicholls. A scene follows where the stage is lit with colourful moving lights and the band members are shown without their suit jackets, playing their instruments with much more movement. The semiotic resources of lighting and manner of performance in this scene are more authentic of a BMTH concert. This switch reinforces the meanings of fakeness and the façade previously constructed with the vintage stage setting and the suits. As it follows the exorcism scene, it additionally suggests that the fakeness extends to the band's previous

image as mentally healthy people. At the end of the video, the band is shot again in the grey suits. However, an interesting detail is that Malia is shown coughing and with messy hair. These semiotic resources could imply that Malia is the one suffering from mental illness, based on their previous uses in *Drown* and the fact that the other band members look well-groomed in this scene. This would even enable such interpretations as that all of the video's bizarre events are, in fact, products of Malia's mind.

5 DISCUSSION

Based on the analysis in the previous chapter, *Drown* utilises highly stereotypical representations of mental illness and madness, but their function appears to be symbolic rather than depicting reality. This is supported by the use of shots classifiable as Symbolic Suggestive Processes. The depiction of the audience appears to constitute a symbolic representation of mental illness due to the use of what could be described, after Nairn (2007), as commonly recognised semiotic resources connoting mental illness. As noted earlier, their presence enables the understanding of the band's supernatural transformations as madness representations of specifically mental illness. Furthermore, even though the audience members are not well-known people like the members of BMTH, they appear in Symbolic Suggestive Process shots in front of the mock American flag in the same way as the band members. In this way, their existence is acknowledged, and they are positioned as equal to the other participants in the video. Additionally, this positioning mitigates the possible associations of the band's mental illness representations with their musical achievement, which Harper (2008) would find problematic. A likely self-awareness of the stigma of mental illness is also signalled with the band's avoidance of eye contact with the audience as well as other band member's avoidance of involvement with Nicholls when he is exhibiting madness.

Drown strongly suggests a critical commentary on a discourse of "visibility as legitimacy" regarding mental illness. While the audience's mental illness is constantly visible through the looks of mental illness defined by Cross (2004), the mental illness represented by the band members only becomes visible on occasion. In effect, the band members appear normal and mentally healthy apart from specific scenes where their madness is visible. This division between mental health and ill-health based on outward appearance is criticised through the use of the façade constructed with the visual semiotic resources of the vintage stage and BMTH's suits. These are untypical for a band with a metalcore origin and do not connote BMTH's usual subcultural image, but instead they match the semiotic resources of the audience members' old-fashioned ward clothing. In other words, the audience is positioned as authentic and their mental illness as legitimate through the band's use of similar semiotic resources, whereas the band is rendered inauthentic and their mental illness rather illegitimate through semiotic resources which do not connote their authenticity as a metalcore-influenced rock band and conflict with the music which they are playing.

According to Birch (2012), madness representations in film are regarded as particularly unhelpful in terms of understanding mental illness, one such stereotype being that of an apparently normal person who occasionally turns into violent madness. However, Harper (2005) calls for the examination of their functions in media texts, and in fact, the mad monster portrayals in *Drown* appear to have a critical tone. With the exorcism scene, mental illness is associated with a demon which can even reside in an apparently normal person's mind; some people hide their demons better than others, but as in the case of Nicholls, they may sometimes interfere with normal life and have to be addressed, which the exorcism could be interpreted as a metaphor of. While Sykes' and Kean's representations of mental illness in *Drown* are indeed passing interruptions to normal functioning but non-violent, violence is central to the representation of Nicholls' madness. However, the semiotic incongruence between the band's vintage looks and contemporary metalcore-influenced alternative rock music lends the entire video a self-reflexive quality. Thus, while the meanings evoked by Nicholls' violent madness are admittedly ambiguous, the representation can be seen to pose a question of whether the mental illness of seemingly normal people is generally misunderstood as occasional, unpredictable bursts of violence and dangerousness based on such portrayals in the media. Similarly, the depiction of the band's reactions to Nicholls could be interpreted to draw attention to reactions to another person's mental illness based on such misconceptions.

6 CONCLUSION

With the innovative use of visual semiotic resources incongruent with BMTH's usual rock band image, the music video of *Drown* achieves a self-reflexive quality which enables a complex social commentary of stigma and common perceptions of mental illness. Moreover, stereotypical, stigmatised representations of mental illness as madness are used in *Drown* in a way which is interpretable as critical, although the video appears very cryptic at first, and such meanings require deciphering to be understood. This is possibly due to limitations brought about by the generic conventions of the music video such as the frequent absence of dialogue. Nevertheless, *Drown* succeeds in being dramatic and engaging, which is certainly to an extent due to the entertainment value of the madness portrayals but also due to the frequent use of relatively frontal shot angles and close shot distances. This perhaps maintains the viewer's interest in revisiting the video and making attempts at understanding its message.

Although *Drown* communicates mental illness largely from the point of view of distress and negative experiences, in contrast to Thompson's (2012) website analysis, the criticism of the stigmatising portrayals of mental illness can be regarded as challenging the stigma and implying positive attitudes towards people with mental illness. The results of this study support Harper's (2005) view that instead of the complete eradication of madness portrayals, their function and potential for social criticism should be taken into account. As Birch (2012) argues that the use of madness portrayals is still usually stigmatising in mainstream filmic products, their critical use in *Drown* would support McKerrell and Way's (2017) perception of popular music and its products as evoking anti-mainstream meanings.

Due to the limited scope of this study, there has been a strong focus on the visual. As auditory semiotic resources are integral to music videos and might contribute to the discourses of mental illness, future MCDA studies could incorporate theories of the semiotics of music and sound, such as those of van Leeuwen (1999) and Kress and van Leeuwen (2006). Since the analysis required frequent replaying of the video, often with the playback slowed down, the findings of this study are unlikely to correspond to first-sight interpretations. Additionally, only having one person coding and analysing qualitative data carries the risk of subjectivity in the results. A possibility to fill the aforementioned gaps would be to investigate the audience reception of mental illness in music videos. Birch (2012) has previously conducted a structured questionnaire-based study on the audience reception of mental illness in television news, a tabloid newspaper, a radio broadcast and a soap opera. While his method allows a relatively

large sample of participants, semi-structured interviews (Ayres 2008) following video playback could offer more depth to the findings. Either way, future research could shed more light on what viewers actually make of the informatively dense delivery of the sensitive topic in a more naturalistic situation.

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