

# Let's Get Mental!

How to Write Crazy Characters

# Crazy Characters Are Fun To Write

- Make them do whatever you want them to do
- Freedom to explore dark reaches of human nature
- Guaranteed conflict
- Give yourself the shudders as a gauge

# Do Your Research

- NIMH Web site <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/index.shtml>
- Schizophrenia
  - A BEAUTIFUL MIND or SHUTTER ISLAND
- Dissociative Identity Disorder
  - SYBIL or THE THREE FACES OF EVE
- Bipolar Disorder
  - SILVER LININGS PLAYBOOK or THE HOURS
- Borderline Personality Disorder
  - GIRL, INTERRUPTED or WHITE OLEANDER
- Histrionic Personality Disorder
  - A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE or FATAL ATTRACTION

# Avoid Hollywood Clichés

- Mad scientists
- Evil children
- Sadistic caretakers
- Wild-eyed maniacs
- Shadowy figures in black

# Make Them Real People

- Sympathetic elements
- Weaknesses
- “Moral” codes
- Fears
- Example from *AFTER ME*

# Insane People Think They're Sane

- Hitler
- Ted Bundy
- Hannibal Lecter
- Annie Wilkes
- Ted Kaczynski (Unabomber)
- Tom Marvolo Riddle (Voldemort)

**Delusional logic can explain anything!**

# Subtlety is NOT Overrated

- Jack Torrence
- Norman Bates
- Unnamed narrator in FIGHT CLUB
- Example from “Midsummer Shower”