

A Dangerous Method (2012)

Rated R. Our ratings: V -1; L -1; S/N-4. Running time: 1 hour 39 min.

*The heart is devious above all else;
it is perverse—who can understand it?
Jeremiah 17.9*

David Cronenberg's film centers Jung visits Freud in Vienna. on the two giants of psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud[©] 2012 Sony Pictures Classics (Viggo Mortensen)

and Carl Jung (Michael Fassbender). The controversial Freud, attacked by the medical establishment of the time for his "talking cure" treatment of the mentally ill, is looked up to as mentor by the younger Jung. In 1904, after exchanging letters during his treatment of Sabina Spielrein (Keira Knightly) who is plagued by masochistic hysteria, the two finally meet in Freud's Vienna study.

Rigidly holding to his view that sex is at the root of most disorders, and also despising religion, the cigar smoking Freud soon clashes with Jung when the latter insists that the mystical is not just illusionary. However, Freud sends a doctor for treatment to Jung, and the free-thinking patient apparently convinces his therapist that polygamy is acceptable. Sabina Spielrein not only improves under Jung's care, but for a considerable length of time becomes his mistress, despite the fact that Jung loves his wife Emma (Sarah Gadon), who desperately wants to give him a son after the birth of their two daughters. Jung's affair is ironic in that his adultery with a patient would lead to his censure or expulsion from today's associations of therapists.

This cerebral film, with several erotic scenes, will not be for everybody, but is a fascinating glimpse of not just two,

but three giants of modern psychoanalysis. The end notes inform us that Sabina Spielrein rose from helpless patient to become one of the first female psychoanalysts, and—well, I will let you discover for yourself her eventual fate over 30 years later. Based on a play and a book, David Cronenberg's film is well worth seeing.

Note: Discussion questions are available with this review for those subscribing to the Visual Parables journal. The journal also includes many extras—book reviews, the use of films for church seasons, a lectionary related column, and more. Hundreds of old reviews are also available in the subscribers; section. Check out the [sample issue](#).