

Josh Grant-Young 3MT Transcript | University of Guelph Campus Final 2020

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Title: Mental Health, Horror, and a Politics of Fear

Transcript: 1200 killed by mental patients. Trump says mental illness and hatred pull the trigger in mass shootings. Doug Ford says mentally ill criminals should be in jail not hospitals. Mentally ill monsters. Let those all sink in for a moment.

As an individual with mental health conditions, I and others like me experience various stigmatizing beliefs surrounding the nature of mental health conditions, and like them, I no longer want to live in a world of fear.

The chief research question of my research project is why do such fears continue to persist despite there is statistical evidence to the contrary? We live in a mediatized world where various screens – whether its our Twitter feeds on our phone, the videos that we watch on news media, or even the films that we watch – perpetuate certain types of narratives about what’s true and what’s not true and help us to build our beliefs.

On one hand we have the mediatized narrative of mass media, which often produces or sensationalizes violence in relation to mental health, creating some source of a false connection. We also have cultural narratives in the form of horror films, where the horror genre often manufactures similar narratives, different archetypes and tropes and characters, often feeding off of (or directly in relation to) different public anxieties and fears.

So how do these two things fit together in my project? They fit together in the sense that both of these forms of narratives produce different types of ‘bad beliefs’ (per epistemology) and these different bad beliefs often limit our ability to be proper empathetic and effective actors in the world.

In my project I use different fields of inquiry: philosophy, psychology, the Canadian field of Mad Studies and media studies, in order to shape various sub-questions which are important for my project. On an epistemic level we have to ask ourselves how these different false beliefs are formed and how we can actually challenge them. In terms of the affective content, how is it the case that we might be able to take horror from being a genre that’s rife with misrepresentation of mental health conditions and use it as a means to explore it more affirmatively?

Finally, in terms of bad beliefs, there is an ethical question – that being: if bad beliefs limit our empathy and ability to actually work in the public mind to support mental health conditions and the people who experience them, how can we do that better? Or, in the case of tragedy when

lives are taken, how can we grieve the loss of people with mental health issues? Particularly, if we understand them within the construct of monstrosity – which is a regularly used trope in both in mass media narratives and the horror genre. How can we move beyond this idea of monstrosity?

Thank you!

[End of Transcript]