

S06-02 - CINEMA, SUBJECTIVITY AND PSYCHOSIS: TOWARDS A PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACH

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According to the Jasperian model, phenomenology 'gives a concrete description of the psychic states which patients actually experience and presents them for observation' (Jaspers, *General Psychopathology*, 1963, 44). Narrative cinema is arguably no less phenomenological in that it employs a phalanx of aesthetic strategies (visual design, framing, editing, camera angle, point of view) to materialise subjective consciousness and thereby facilitate the process of emotional identification with onscreen characters. But in representing psychosis, most popular cinema resorts to a shorthand of Expressionist cliché and crudely objectifying stereotypes. We suggest that the concern for clinicians and responsible filmmakers is much the same: how to treat psychotic conditions empathetically, testing empirical understanding and knowledge against 'first-person' accounts of mental illness. Our paper focuses on a case study of a short film in production. Sal Anderson's observational fiction *Froth: Whose Drama is it Anyway?* juxtaposes the media-fed public perception of epilepsy with its subjective experience. During shooting, the neurological condition was explored through a series of improvisatory workshops where people with epilepsy re-enacted and then reflected on the stages of a seizure. This methodology is proposed as a template for the development of alternative strategies in the portrayal of psychosis on film. Finally, we offer a speculative link between Jaspers' notion of the 'ununderstandable' in relation to psychosis and the intractably resistant nature of the cinematic image.