

# Spectatorship and Punishment: The Tension Between Macabre Voyeurism and Moral Impulse in *Mark of the Devil*

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## Abstract

The article analyses *Mark of the Devil* (1970) and examines the role of empathetic imagination and voyeuristic pleasure in the process of film reception, as proposed by cognitive approaches to film studies. It focuses on key features of the narrative (unpunished crimes and unjust suffering) and emphasises accordingly the fundamental ambivalence of spectatorship (sympathising vs. sadistic looking), while discussing the modes of viewing connected to different concepts of voyeurism and related questions about moral dilemmas. The article underlines the notion that, by showing scenes of torture in such a naturalistic manner, this mode of storytelling encourages voyeurism, while the excessive injustices contained in the plot are just as strong a driving force, motivating moral reflexions on the action. The article also

scrutinises the film's self-reflexive nature via an analysis of a key scene, and presents related moralist and metafictional interpretations of the film.

**Keywords:** exploitation, cognitive film studies, moral, voyeurism, spectacle, spectatorship, *Mark of the Devil*.

In this article we examine the film *Mark of the Devil* (*Hexen bis aufs Blut gequält*, Michael Armstrong, 1970) as a creative and self-reflexive artwork that uses strikingly sensational visuals and sound, a characteristic feature of the exploitation genre, to disconcerting effect. We begin with an analysis of the relationship between the story and audiovisual representation on the general basis of cognitive theories, as exemplified by David Bordwell's approach, which argues for the explanation of the perceptual and cognitive aspects of film viewing: "In general, cognitive theory wants to understand such human mental activities as recognition, comprehension, inference-making, interpretation, judgment, memory, and imagination."<sup>1</sup> Since we base our hypotheses closely on a cognitive perspective, we place special emphasis on the aspect of spectatorship. According to Carl Plantinga "[o]ne of the fundamental activities of the viewer of a narrative film is 'mind reading', and then responding. In other words, spectators come to understand the intentions, motivations, desires, and behaviour of fictional characters in the

context of narrative situations."<sup>2</sup> As our starting point we will consider the characteristics of the narrative – i.e. the cognitive representation of the plot constructed by the viewer – followed by a discussion of the perception of audiovisual spectacle and horrific images and sound. From a perspective that is interested in spectatorship, it is necessary to investigate human reactions to a film – perception, imagination, sensation – and their specific dynamics.<sup>3</sup> The viewer is considered here as an abstract spectator, independent of gender, age or cultural background, who relies on basic mechanisms of the human psyche. Our concept of the spectator does not consider any actual cultural and subjective experience to which a real spectator could resort.

### **The Difficulties of Empathic Engagement**

Exploitation film is usually associated with patchy narration. Entries in the genre often have loose narratives that, on the first viewing, seem too muddled to be completely coherent. Exploitation movies are often distinguished from other films by privileging spectacle over an

elaborately and comprehensively narrated plot. Instead of conveying a narrative coherently and economically, such films tend to supply a wealth of excessive and seemingly gratuitous audiovisual elements, like car chases, sex scenes or violent murders, that sometimes seem unnecessary for the comprehension of the story. These movies often do not provide all the narrative clues needed to produce a coherent plot; therefore, spectators are forced to infer and speculate to make a chain of events plausible and meaningful.<sup>4</sup>

If every fictional film can be understood as a special batch of various stimuli to create imaginary narratives with a particular perspective on selected segments and events of the fictional world, these narrative styles, conventions and templates vary greatly between different film genres. Such schemes support diverse narratives, fictions and points of view, thus supplying a broad spectrum of pleasures that arise from immersing oneself in stories, experiencing fictional worlds, closely monitoring the actions of characters and

imagining diverse points of view of different characters.<sup>5</sup> With these functions in mind, we now turn to analysing the cognitive and emotional mechanisms at work in *Mark of the Devil*.

The film is set in a rural Austrian village in the eighteenth century that is terrorised by the local witchfinder Albino (Reggie Nalder) who randomly tortures innocents without trial. Lord Cumberland (Herbert Lom) and his young apprentice Christian (Udo Kier) arrive in town to replace Albino. Christian, who falls in love with waitress Vanessa (Olivera Vučo), believes in the impeccability of his superior, but loses his faith when he realises that even the esteemed Cumberland murders arbitrarily and for profit. The executioner Jeff Wilkens (Herbert Fux) and the advocate (Johannes Buzalski), Cumberland and Albino's henchmen, break into a private house where nobleman Walter (Adrian Hoven) and his wife (Ingeborg Schöner) stage a puppet play that satirises the witch craze. The witch hunters attack the players and in the course of the brawl, Walter's wife blinds the advocate.

The puppeteers are thrown into the dungeon, where the man is tortured and the woman is raped by Cumberland. The latter also strangles Albino, who has derided the lord because of his impotence. With Christian's help, Vanessa, who too is accused of witchcraft and imprisoned, manages to escape from the dungeon and calls on the peasants to storm the castle, which serves as Cumberland's official residence. Whereas the leading witchfinder evades the people's rage, the innocent Christian is lynched by an angry mob.

Recently, cognitive film theories have emphasised the role of empathetic imagining for the construction of narratives in the mind of the spectator.<sup>6</sup> According to these studies, empathy is understood as a process of imagination; in particular, it is a type of *personal* imagination, in which one mentally simulates experiences or certain events and imagines the thoughts and emotions of another person.<sup>7</sup> Empathetic responses may be activated in situations that actively elicit cognitive processes, as is the case with film consumption. The activity of watching a film provides suitable opportunities to broaden

the individual mind, above all by imagining the thoughts, feelings and emotions of fictional characters. According to Murray Smith, such occasions resemble an extension of our mind, enabling us to "incorporate" parts of the minds of others<sup>8</sup> – of course only imaginatively.

To be involved in processes of empathy by enjoying representational art in general and film in particular, certain conditions are helpful. For example, it is of avail if the spectator is presented with fully developed characters and if he or she has a firm grasp of a solid, causally motivated narrative.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, empathy can only be achieved successfully when the spectator, with the pool of information at hand as described above, feels the desire to go beyond the narrative provided, in order to imagine more than is given in the initial narrative frame. Furthermore, empathy can be supported by practical reasoning, when the spectator tries to predict the likely outcomes of the plot and the fates of the characters.<sup>10</sup>

*Mark of the Devil* adheres to this logic only partially. The film provides minimal narrative structures that, while recognisable to the viewer, nonetheless leave many gaps in the plot that the viewer must fill in order to generate coherent meaning. These gaps are especially striking in the portrayal of characters or in the chronological and causal unfolding of events. The timeline seems to be quite confusing: temporal orientation is difficult as the plot unfolds mostly in the interiors of the castle after the puppet players' arrest. In the last third of the film – after the capture of the nobleman and his wife – events progress rapidly and the story is told in a series of snapshots. Furthermore, there are some missing links in the plot: nobody is charged explicitly for blinding the advocate, Albino's death remains seemingly unnoticed etc. The spectator has no choice but to try and predict the next steps in the unfolding of events, to consider the thoughts and actions of characters or to imagine their feelings. (Moreover, the viewer's mental construction of the story might be impeded by historical inaccuracies such as a modern-day traffic sign

on a street of the early-modern village that is barely covered by baskets or the shadow of the camera operator visible during another street scene.) This particular kind of narrative structure results in an apparently clumsy and often pedestrian plot that operates with abrupt montage, ellipses and characters with insubstantial motivations. Of course, these characteristics do not support the process of imagining characters and experiencing stories empathically. However, there is an exception. One character certainly solicits an emphatic response from the spectator, the young witchfinder Christian, because of his disappointment in his superior and his protest against the witch-hunting mission (and finally his demise). Christian's character drawing might not be the most refined in film history, but it certainly stands out from *Mark of the Devil's* diegetic spectrum of rather undistinguished and stereotypical figures.

For the viewer, the attempt to understand character motivation and create a chronological-causal chain of events is a significant obstacle to

immersing in the story and may therefore prevent him or her from engaging imaginatively with *Mark of the Devil*'s complex narrative scenario. Actually, it can be difficult to empathise with the sketchily portrayed victims in the analysed film, even though the spectator is naturally emotionally affected by the extensive torture of the innocent. Due to its peculiar narrative structure, the movie only partially fulfils the conditions for conjuring feelings through empathic processes.

### **Implications of Voyeuristic Looking**

Though *Mark of the Devil* does not stimulate empathic imagining in the way that more classically constructed films do, the movie offers many spectacular sensations to the viewer. By prioritising sensory and emotional experience over imaginative and empathic engagement with fictional characters, the film gives way to experiencing the here-and-now dimension of situations, thus allowing the spectator to relate to it in various different ways. For example, the torture scenes of *Mark of the Devil* can elicit highly subjective emotional reactions: one might

be revolted by the plight of innocent victims, or experience sympathetic feelings towards the physical pain of the characters, or might even take pleasure in witnessing the torment of the victims. However, sympathetic responses and empathetic processes concerning fictional characters can be very different from one another: the latter are necessarily momentary and susceptible to interruption, even if the spectator feels strongly motivated to alleviate the difficulties of the character.<sup>11</sup> This is plainly a result of the film's prioritising sensations over narrative coherence to the detriment of empathetic imagination. Therefore, in *Mark of the Devil*, the viewer observes characters as well as their actions mainly from a perspective that is external to the fictional world.<sup>12</sup> Empathic involvement and a continuous sympathising with characters are thus usually blocked, and this promotes a peculiar mode of looking. The movie places the spectator in a position in which the simple act of looking at others (who cannot look back) becomes a spectacle and a source of pleasure. However, it is important to acknowledge that the film certainly supplies a

graded range of points of view and spectator positions, but overall, *Mark of the Devil* seems to elicit a distanced mode of spectatorship. The film enables to digress from this dominant mode only in scenes of spectacle which facilitate intense emotions.

This kind of spectatorship is often related to a somewhat sensitive issue, namely voyeurism, which is fraught with moralistic associations in journalistic film criticism. But before discussing the moral aspects of voyeurism, it is worthwhile to define the term. Torben Grodal suggests a distinction between passive-cognitive observation and voyeurism, which cannot be regarded as being entirely passive, because it always entails at least some degree of emotional engagement. In the strict sense, voyeurism would imply, for example, the mere watching of sexual intercourse without the chance of acting out the desires elicited: “By blocking enaction in such films, the director cues powerful subjective experiences, just as he or she would in creating a horror scene in which there was no enactive outlet.”<sup>13</sup> The word ‘enaction’ means that

psychic and bodily processes are activated in response to fictional stimuli. Instead of a real and fully executed action, it can be understood as a preparation for action, even though the viewer cannot actually act in the fictional world.

According to Grodal, the blockade of intervening in the diegesis evokes subjective images of bodily reactions in the spectator.

However, voyeurism should not be confused with our strong interest in looking at the human body or at intersubjective acts in the interest of understanding other people’s behaviour.

Voyeurism is connected with the natural human curiosity<sup>14</sup> for the uncommon, hidden, bizarre or forbidden, which is not pathological but which nonetheless may conflict, to varying degrees, with moral norms.

We are familiar with the widespread concerns over voyeurism, especially in regard to filmic representations of violence. Moral campaigns condemning voyeurism claim that watching, for example, torture scenes may cause macabre pleasure in certain viewers, which is linked to the development or unleashing of perverse

desires.<sup>15</sup> According to these claims, voyeurism is dangerous to the extent that it desensitises viewers<sup>16</sup> and immoral to the extent that it makes the spectator rejoice in the suffering of others.

Often, voyeurism is associated with immorality, a connotation we cannot confirm. By contrast, we suggest that witnessing intense or prolonged sequences of graphic on-screen suffering inevitably invokes moral qualms and is felt by most viewers to be morally offensive. In this respect, Michele Aaron points out that film spectatorship is inherently related to the human alignment with the suffering of others, because “we are always implicated in, not only as consumers but as consensual parties in the generation of characters’ suffering for our entertainment.”<sup>17</sup> Aaron argues that film spectatorship is always ethically charged, as it represents a negotiation of subjective pleasures and the imagined interests of others. Furthermore, the spectator’s prolonged contemplation of the suffering of a character can be an occasion to reflect on moral issues and to consider actual personal experiences related to

the events witnessed. Watching graphic torture can thus be seen as an opportunity to think about the notion of suffering as well as the issues of responsibility and justice. Voyeurism, in this sense, is far more than simply fascination with spectacular images of the tortured body. It provides the opportunity to ponder the filmmakers’ motives for performing torture as well as the audience’s interest in watching violent movies. It is important to acknowledge that films that present disturbing images and sounds of suffering invite considerations of the relationship between the responsibility of spectatorship and the desire of viewing. To this effect, we too would like to insist that there is nothing intrinsically pernicious or problematic about voyeurism or any mediated witnessing of suffering.<sup>18</sup>

Instead, voyeurism reinforces self-reflexivity with regard to spectatorship by encouraging the contemplation of one’s viewing practice. By providing disconcerting audiovisual cues, *Mark of the Devil* allows a wide range of meta-representational reflections, evoking the

spectator's responsibility for and individual pleasure in watching violent content. Here, it is important to recall images of audience members at the horrific executions and the facial expressions of witnesses of the tortures in *Mark of the Devil*. The film puts great emphasis on displaying the horror and, possibly, pleasure of the bystanders, as exemplified by a series of reaction shots, close-ups of facial expressions and other angles on the audiences at the witch trials and executions. The behaviour and reactions of the public can be considered as an expression of and a reference to the emotional and cognitive states of the film spectator, as well as to the tension between voyeuristic desires aroused by the suffering of others, moral indignation and, above all, rebellion against terrible injustice. The revolt and revenge sequences, which represent the response of the villagers at the end of the film, may not only be grasped as violent acts of justice, but also as a visual metaphor for the impulse to act when confronted with violence. The spectator is willing to break with his or her passive perceptions and feels the urge to spring into

action in order to regain moral autonomy. This desire is satisfied by the peasants' punishment of the authorities for their wrongdoing.

### **The Moral Dilemma**

In depicting gruesome scenes of torture and mayhem, *Mark of the Devil* strings together instances of outrageous injustice that are committed under the pretext of enforcing God's will. The narrative demands a moral resolution; the perceptual or sensational dimension of such spectacles, on the other hand, is linked to seemingly immoral voyeurism or even sadistic desires. However, the spectator usually does not acknowledge this dynamic. Instead, the viewer ostensibly desires a narrative closure that chimes with conventional moral rules: wicked people are punished and evil forces are defeated. In this sense, the story suggests at first glance the moral triumph of the victims, whose dignity not even torture can break, over the evil and monstrous witch hunters. The typical witch hunter characters (from whom, of course, Christian needs to be regarded separately) are paranoid, confused and broken despite their nominal

authority. The story focuses on the excessive investigations of the witch hunters, who, in the course of the plot, increasingly lose control and compromise their profession by giving in to their greedy, selfish desires and sexual drives. As a result, they fall victim to their own obsessions: they are threatened, hunted and banished by the villagers they have terrorised. In short, the hunter becomes the prey.

However, the film provides more than just moral pleasures. The spectator can also relish the supposedly immoral depictions of sexual violence and torture. This tension is enacted in a sequence that functions as *mise en abyme*: the puppet play about the proud man, which satirises the hypocrisy of the persecution of alleged witches, highlights the divergent spectatorial delights (moral resolution vs. voyeuristic enjoyment) on offer in *Mark of the Devil*. On one hand, the play reflects the motivations of the main diegetic characters as well as the ideas of the filmmakers, and, on the other hand, it is a metaleptic performance, where boundaries between distinct levels of narration (the puppet

play about the proud man/the story of the witch hunters/the film about witch hunting) are transgressed.

In what seems to be a luxurious living room, nobleman Walter and his wife, hidden behind a stage, perform a play with puppets on strings in front of an audience of elegantly dressed children and adults. When the advocate, the executioner Jeff Wilkens and two of their henchmen burst in the room, they pause in surprise and watch the show. In this very moment, the puppeteers, who also perform their characters' voices, start mocking the witch persecution craze without being aware of the intruders' presence:

*Puppet 1*: I am a great wizard, and if I had feathers, I could fly.

*Puppet 2*: Only angels and witches can fly.

*Puppet 1*: Then I'll be an angel.

*Puppet 2*: You are not good enough to be one. At the most you could ride on a broomstick like an old witch.

*Puppet 1*: Like an old witch? But I want to be an angel.

*Puppet 2*: No, no, you're not good enough.

*Puppet 1*: All right, then I'll be a witch.

*Puppet 2*: That's impossible; you are not bad enough for that. [...]

*Jeff Wilkens*: Those puppets not only talk, but can answer correctly questions they're asked.

*Advocate:* And they appear one minute and then they disappear the next, and then they walk on air and have facial expressions just like human beings. I tell you, it's magic.

After the players emerge from behind the stage and explain their show, the advocate orders his henchmen to arrest the puppeteers on the suspicion of witchcraft. A commotion ensues in which he stabs Walter with a needle to find the devil's mark. However, the latter's wife defends her husband and pulls the advocate to the floor. While struggling with the him, she blinds her opponent with the needle.

The puppet play represents a metafiction, which supplies a clear moral explanation of the story: a proud man (the witch hunter) fools himself into believing that he is an angel (or doing God's work), but he has to come to the realisation that he is not good enough and thus cannot fly (because he is not really a servant of God). This metaphor presents the witch hunter as a hypocritical character who pretends to chase evil away, creates the illusion of saving souls and destroys bodies possessed by evil. The dialogue

between the two puppets about his not being good enough to be an angel or bad enough to be a witch can be read as the internal struggle of the witch hunter in defining his own purpose and agenda. His ambitions to fly (to be the one in power, dominating others around him, especially women) are so out of reach that even though he wants to be an angel, he settles for being a witch (being evil) in order to achieve this goal. Thus, the witch hunter is completely aware of the rift between the agenda he is advocating (cleansing the land of evil forces) and the one he is pursuing (achieving a powerful position by any means necessary), and accepts this evil role.

Whereas the puppet show clearly functions as a condensed representation of the ethical dynamics at play in the whole film, we would argue that its meaning goes beyond this moral allegory.

In our reading, the puppet show staged by actor Adrian Hoven, who, as the co-director and executive producer, played an important role in the making of this film, conveys another important message. The appearance of the co-

director in his own film indicates the self-reflexive dimension of the scene under discussion. The puppet play is presented as a creative and entertaining performance, i.e. a work of art. Only the advocate and his slow and simple-minded colleagues are unaware of its aesthetic capacities, as they cannot appreciate aesthetic pleasures because of their fear of evil powers and the urge to punish it. (It remains unresolved whether the henchmen actually believe in their own accusation or if they use the show, aware of its harmlessness, as a convenient excuse to do damage.) The ensuing blindness of the advocate, who indeed loses his sight in this sequence, can be seen as a metaphor for the strong aversion to artworks and voyeuristic practices, which are rejected on account of groundless moral prejudices.

Therefore, the puppet show can be read in at least two ways: on the one hand, it can be seen as a moral allegory of the narrative, as a moral treatise on Lord Cumberland's failure. Observed from this angle, it is a metafiction that illustrates the moral conflict at the heart of the entire film.

On the other hand, the performance constitutes a meta-representation of the film-as-artefact and a reflection on horrific but desired images. The parodic puppet play falls victim to the dominant ideology, the witch hunt. In general, this intermezzo reflects conservative societies' distaste for every kind of representation, which is denounced as black magic, and their deep-seated fear of taboo content – in this case, witchcraft. The puppet-show sequence criticises the conservative stance towards works of art that are opposed because of ill-founded and clichéd anxieties.

To sum up, the disruption of the puppet show and the punishment of the puppeteers deliver an allegorical message: the horrific spectacle, which is ostensibly condemned by the spectator as immoral and disgusting, is celebrated at the meta-level of representation. A moral revolt against it is undermined by the aesthetic fascination for the creative artwork.

Spectatorship is marked by this ambiguity, which can be observed across the levels of film-as-fiction and film-as-artefact.

This ambiguity on the part of the beholder corresponds with the tragic fate of Christian. He is the only character who allows insight in his inner life, emotions and moral doubts, and therefore the only figure who involves the spectator in empathic imagination in a film that otherwise elicits a distanced mode of spectatorship. Lord Cumberland's assistant is a tragic hero because he misjudges his master and places absolute trust in justice legitimated by the sovereign. Because he is blinded by this trust, injustice goes unnoticed by Christian, so he commits what Aristotle describes as *hamartia*, a tragic error. As a representative of the authorities, he is sacrificed by the enraged crowd and lynched just outside the castle. Christian is too late in realising his mistake, and even though he does not deserve a punishment of such cruelty, he puts up with his fate without any resistance. The story of the young witch hunter is indeed a classic tragic plot and the character's brutal fate, which is foreshadowed throughout the film, provides suspense, but does not supply any pleasure.

Initially, Christian has a limited but authentic motivation: he wants to prosecute witches and acts according to a sovereign moral law. But later, he overcomes his own blindness (based on decency, morality and the fear of evil) in favour of the broader perspective of a sceptical spectator. Therefore, we argue that *Mark of the Devil* puts forward a significant critique of punishing people and works of art while using moralistic rhetoric as legitimation. Obviously, the film does not offer any common moral resolution of the story, where evil receives its just deserts and good is rescued and rewarded. The failure to deliver poetic justice is a strong negative stimulus, because appropriate comeuppance plays an important role in the enjoyment of fiction. William Flesch argues that the most important motive for creating and enjoying narratives goes back to our strong desire to penalise people for their selfishness, cheating, deceit and sins.<sup>19</sup> Flesch makes the case that our sensibility towards moral wrongdoings has evolutionary roots and is based in the psychology of co-operation, meaning that we try to unmask treacherous, overly

competitive and selfish behaviour for the sake of the group.<sup>20</sup> For contemporary audiences, the cooperative goals have already faded, but the underlying mechanisms are very much alive: we have the urge to chastise not only real people, but also fictional characters for their selfish behaviour. This film, however, really lets the spectator down in this sense, because while it supplies a story with outrageously unjust crimes,

it thwarts the strong desire of the spectator to see evil punished. This tension is not resolved and lingers on well after the end credits roll. In summary, *Mark of the Devil* presents the dissonance between practicing moral punishment and overcoming the will to do so by contemplating the aesthetic and reflexive potential of consuming horrific images and sound.

<sup>1</sup> Bordwell, D. (1989) "A Case for Cognitivism", *Iris*, 9 (2), 11–40: 11.

<sup>2</sup> Plantinga, C. (2015) "Facing Others: Close-Ups of Faces in Narrative Film and in *The Silence of the Lambs*", In: Zunshine, L. (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of Cognitive Literary Studies*. New York: Oxford University Press, 291–312: 293.

<sup>3</sup> This approach refers to Murray Smith's cognitive concept of spectatorship described as an imagination-perception-sensation framework. See Smith, M. (1995) "Film Spectatorship and the Institution of Fiction", *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 53 (2), 113–127: 119.

<sup>4</sup> For a detailed account of these problems, see Wilson, G. M. (2007) "Elusive Narrators in Literature and Film", *Philosophical Studies: An International Journal for Philosophy in the Analytic Tradition*, 135 (1), 73–88.

<sup>5</sup> Smith, M. (1995) "Film Spectatorship and the Institution of Fiction", 122.

<sup>6</sup> For more detailed accounts, see Keen, S. (2007) *Empathy and the Novel*. New York: Oxford University Press; Tan, E. S. (2011) *Emotion and the Structure of Narrative Film: Film as an Emotion Machine*. London: Routledge.

<sup>7</sup> Goldie, P. (2000) *The Emotions: A Philosophical Exploration*. New York: Oxford University Press, 195.

<sup>8</sup> Smith, M. (2011) "Empathy, Expansionism, and the Extended Mind", In: Coplan, A. and Goldie, P. (eds) *Empathy: Philosophical and Psychological Perspectives*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 99–117: 108.

<sup>9</sup> Goldie, P. (2000) *The Emotions*, 213.

<sup>10</sup> Goldie, P. (2000) *The Emotions*, 204.

<sup>11</sup> Goldie, P. (2000) *The Emotions*, 214.

<sup>12</sup> Grodal, T. (2009) *Embodied Visions: Evolution, Culture, and Film*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 202.

<sup>13</sup> Grodal, T. (2009) *Embodied Visions*, 248.

<sup>14</sup> Grodal refers to Smith, M. (1999) "Gangsters, Cannibals, Aesthetes, or Apparently Perverse Allegiances", In: Plantinga, C. and Smith, M. (eds) *Passionate Views: Film, Cognition, and Emotion*. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 217–238: 234.

<sup>15</sup> For the political and social dynamics of the moral panic about the new medium video, see Petley, J. (2012) "'Are We Insane?' The 'Video Nasty' Moral Panic", *Recherches sociologiques et anthropologiques*, 43 (1), 35–57, <http://rsa.revues.org/839>

<sup>16</sup> There exists, of course, a wide range of reactions to representations of violence and horror, most of them follow the moral common sense and reject violent images. See Cherry, B. (2009) *Horror*. Abingdon: Routledge, 209.

<sup>17</sup> Aaron, M. (2007) *Spectatorship: The Power of Looking On*. London: Wallflower Press, 112.

<sup>18</sup> See Saxton, L. (2010) "Ethics, Spectatorship and the Spectacle of Suffering", In: Saxton, L. and Downing, L. (eds) *Film and Ethics: Foreclosed Encounters*. London: Routledge, 62–75: 65.

<sup>19</sup> See Flesch, W. (2007) *Comeuppance: Costly Signaling, Altruistic Punishment, and Other Biological Components of Fiction*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

<sup>20</sup> Flesch, W. (2007) *Comeuppance*, 288.