

Reading *Wolf Creek* :

Normative Social Strategies in the
Reception of Contemporary film

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“new method of power whose
operation is ensured not by
right but by technique, not by
law but by normalisation”

Michel Foucault, (1979), *The History of Sexuality: Vol I*, p. 89

“thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble
consisting of discourses, institutions,
architectural forms, regulatory
decisions, laws, administrative
measures, scientific statements,
philosophical, moral and philanthropic
propositions”

Michel Foucault, (1980), *Power/Knowledge*, p.194

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“it’s gut-wrenchingly awful to watch –
horrifyingly violent, stomach-churningly
gruesome and soaked in inevitable
tragedy...It’s so intense that we’re unable
to breathe, longing like the characters for it
to end soon.”

Rich Cline, Review for www.shadowsonthewall.co.uk

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“a policy of coercions that act upon the body, a calculated manipulation of its elements, its gestures, its behaviour...a machinery of power that explores it, breaks it down and rearranges it...not only so that they may do what one wishes, but so that they may operate as one wishes”

Michel Foucault, (1984), 'Docile Bodies', p.182

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“If you squirmed and felt ill, good, you should...It is there to disturb, not make you laugh”

Jen, contributor to a debate on TimeOut.co.uk

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“To laugh through the movie, as midnight audiences are sometimes invited to do, is to suggest you are dehumanised, unevolved, or a slackwit...If anyone you know says this is the one they want to see, my advice is: Don't know that person no more.”

Roger Ebert, Chicago Sun-Times

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“If the film evokes squeamishness, it has done its job. You're not supposed to sit through a film like this placidly munching popcorn. The reaction is intended to be visceral.”

James Berardinelli, Amateur Critic for ReelViews.net

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"This film is disturbing. It made me uncomfortable. It made me squirm. It made me sick to my stomach. It made me ask my friend to walk out..."

"[[It is] simply sophisticated sick violence...If you played a part in the making of this movie, you are a truly sick individual..."

"I'm embarrassed to tell people I saw this movie, and if you know someone who thought this was cool, I would stay away from them."

Jeffrsun, IMDb

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"The cinema of sadism smartens up in *Turistas*, a violent drama that has all the don't-go-there nastiness of B-movies like *Hostel* and *Wolf Creek* with a whole lot less of that guilty aftertaste."

Terry Lawson, The Detroit Free Press

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"It is...pointless, nauseating cinema..."

"Viewers eager to embrace 90 minutes of footage featuring women being brutalized, beaten, stalked and slaughtered may want to consider some serious introspection."

Tyler Hanley, Palo Alto Press

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"*Wolf Creek* is the kind of well-executed sleazefest that makes audiences feel not just creeped-out but downright dirty, as if it would take a three-hour-long shower just to wash all the grit and grease away."

Nathan Rabin, AVClub.com

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“the people who do appreciate the movie (you can't really use the word "enjoy" when talking about a film like this) will find themselves on the defensive, explaining how they can recommend something that's so cruel, it's almost painful to watch”

Ethan Alter, Film Journal International

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“Shame on the director [for]... perpetuating the disgusting myth...that women exist to be abused. I am sure the director would not deny that many sick minded men would in fact find scenes in this film a turn on. We know that such men exist and thrive on violent pornography and snuff movies. Why would you want to bring this kind of thing to the masses.”

Josie, contributor to a debate on TimeOut.co.uk

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“My idea of a good time at a horror film is to feel queasy and feel my heart skip a few beats. I like walking out of the theater asking myself ‘why did I just watch that?’ And ‘am I a sick monkey for enjoying it?’”

Subovon, contributor to IMDb

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Conclusions

- Talk centres on the physical/visceral experience of the film
- Concern about whether potential viewers will respond 'appropriately'
- Attempts to define 'appropriate' responses
- Struggle over the validity of 'displeasure' as an ideological response
- Problematisation/Pathologisation of viewing 'pleasure'
- Viewer's situate their 'pleasure' within the context of these debates

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