

## “After the Sex Wave the Hex Wave?” The German Marketing of *Mark of the Devil*

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### Abstract

This article examines the German marketing campaign of *Mark of the Devil* (1970) using the example of two advertisements. The film suffered from a sustained conflict between Michael Armstrong and Adrian Hoven, who both asserted their claims to creative control. The dispute over the movie’s authorship left traces in an article published by the regional daily *Stuttgarter Zeitung* based on a longer advertisement commissioned by distribution company Gloria. The Filmmuseum Düsseldorf preserves a significantly modified version of this advertisement; both texts and their promotional rhetoric are analysed at length. These written marketing materials accentuate features such as historical authenticity, excessive sexualised violence, star appeal, (trans-)nationality and topicality. Actually, the film was promoted as a fictional response to purported contemporary

witch cults in Germany and the UK.

Furthermore, the partial and ridiculed reprint of the original text in the newspaper illustrates distribution companies’ great difficulty in obtaining press coverage of exploitation pictures. The article argues that the advertisements’ striking incoherence results from the attempt to target audiences with different interests by trying to appeal in divergent ways that could motivate cinema-goers to purchase a ticket. The article concludes by recognising the predominant role of extreme violence in the marketing strategy as a means of product differentiation.

**Keywords:** *Mark of the Devil*, production, distribution, marketing, advertisement, promotion, rhetoric, authorship, violence, Germany.

## Introduction

One of the aspects the horror film *Mark of the Devil* (*Hexen bis aufs Blut gequält*, Michael Armstrong, 1970) is famed for is its inventive US marketing. Using a phoney rating and providing a sickness bag, distributor Hallmark not only flustered the Motion Picture Association of America,<sup>1</sup> but contributed to making the German movie an eminent box-office success in 1972. While *Mark of the Devil*'s North American campaign is acknowledged as a clever example of genre film marketing by critics and fans, the promotional efforts to publicise the film's 1970 theatrical release in Germany under the title *Hexen bis aufs Blut gequält*<sup>2</sup> have not gained scholarly interest yet. This article attempts to fill this gap, considering previously ignored materials preserved in German film archives. After outlining the funding and production conditions of the film, two advertisements and their promotional rhetoric will be scrutinised in detail. The analysis will reveal how aspects such as authenticity, the depiction of violence and sex, (trans-)national reputation and topicality were

used to sell the movie. Moreover, it will engage with textual allusions to the film's troubled production and the way in which the distribution company Gloria tried to distinguish their product from competing exploitation movies. I would like to point out there exists another promotional document mainly relying on textual information. However, I have not considered what I would regard as a pressbook,<sup>3</sup> because it mainly consists of an extended synopsis that does not add to the peculiar commodification of *Mark of the Devil* that the advertisements discussed below accomplish.

## The Production of *Mark of the Devil*

Munich-based distributor Gloria, led by Ilse Kubaschewski, represented one of the most influential companies in the German post-war film business. During the 1950s, Gloria's success rested upon the *Heimatfilm* (homeland film) boom with its light-hearted negotiation of romantic relationships and family conflicts in picturesque rural settings. A decade later, this trend had waned and Kubaschewski was forced to diversify her programme. In an attempt to

target audiences interested in more titillating product, Gloria invested in a range of films that did not really fit to the distributor's previous business strategy.<sup>4</sup> This is the context in which the company deemed a film project later known as *Mark of the Devil* a viable venture. While Tim Bergfelder suggests Kubaschewski released the horror film only for lack of more appropriate fare,<sup>5</sup> it is crucial to acknowledge Gloria's involvement from the stage of pre-production.

The movie was produced by Hi-Fi Stereo 70 Filmvertriebs KG, a company founded in 1967 and owned by Rudolf Englberth jr. and sn.<sup>6</sup> Since 1957, the Englberth family have run the Royal film palace on Munich's Goetheplatz<sup>7</sup> and ventured into (co-)producing exploitation fare from 1968 to 1973. The company's name seems to derive from the theatre operators' commitment to developing new 70 mm camera techniques,<sup>8</sup> which they tried out on their Paul Naschy vehicle *Hell's Creatures (La marca del Hombre Lobo*, Enrique López Eguiluz, 1968).<sup>9</sup> While I could not trace any historical document revealing *Mark of the Devil's* production

budget, it appears that producer Hi-Fi Stereo 70 and distributor Gloria complemented one another in financing the picture. In his account of the film's troubled production history, director Michael Armstrong asserts that the distribution company provided at least a part of the funding for realising a screenplay penned by Adrian Hoven and re-written by Armstrong.<sup>10</sup>

The former became famous as the good-looking heartthrob of many 1950s *Heimatfilme*, but it is often forgotten that Hoven pursued an alternative career in an even less respectable strand of popular cinema. From 1966, he ventured into directing and producing exploitation films, which frequently featured himself as an actor and belonged to a wide range of genres. In the 1970s, the actor's career took yet another turn when Rainer Werner Fassbinder discovered him for his highbrow social dramas, casting him in supporting roles repeatedly. Despite the low esteem of the project he pursued in 1969, Adrian Hoven regarded *The Witch-Hunter Dr Dracula*, the initial screenplay that would become *Mark of the Devil*, as his pet

project. Therefore he accepted only grudgingly Gloria's decision to hire the Briton Michael Armstrong as the director. Armstrong, in turn, did not like Hoven's screenplay and agreed to direct the film provided that he could write his own version. Still, the author of the first draft kept working on the production in the capacity of executive producer. According to Armstrong's statements on a DVD audio commentary<sup>11</sup> and what seems to be its written summary on his personal website,<sup>12</sup> these conflicting interests between the Austrian industry veteran and the budding British talent poisoned the film's production that took place from 25 September to 31 October 1969.<sup>13</sup> Large parts were shot in the Lungau, a mountainous district of Austrian federal state Salzburg. Moosham Castle in Unternberg, a historic site of witch trials,<sup>14</sup> served as the film's central location, representing the official residence of Lord Cumberland (Herbert Lom).<sup>15</sup>

Michael Armstrong remembers that Adrian Hoven already took care of marketing the film during production. When the latter arrived at

Moosham Castle, he "was accompanied by a couple of journalists which, together with Lom's presence, prevented any on-set fights. They watched the tongue-tearing scene, did a couple of interviews and returned to Munich with Hoven the following day."<sup>16</sup> It is not known whether this initiative, temporarily restoring the peace between the antagonistic filmmakers, resulted in any news coverage, although a former *Heimatfilm* beau supervising the shooting of gruesome torture scenes might have been an ideal tabloid subject. Hoven's attempt to attract public attention for *Mark of the Devil* was supported by the distribution company.

### **Newspaper Advertising**

Gloria's marketing efforts proved more successful in promoting the film about two months before its theatrical release. On 12 December 1969, the regional daily *Stuttgarter Zeitung* published a short, shrewdly written article under the headline "No comment": "Sergio Casstner wrote the screenplay of the Gloria colour film *TORTURE – Witches Tormented Till the Blood Flows* on a historical

basis. Director of photography Ernst Kalinke composed the often gut-wrenching scenes – and had to work as a paramedic along the way. Again and again, several extras kept collapsing during the exterior shoot at Moosham Castle in the Lungau, because they couldn't stand seeing all the blood."<sup>17</sup> While these lines advertise the product as a brutal horror film, whose emphasis on gory violence even hindered the shooting itself, they are also remarkable due to the authorial input they imply. Sergio Casstner represents Michael Armstrong's pseudonym,<sup>18</sup> while Adrian Hoven, also receiving a writing credit for his original screenplay, was listed as Percy Parker,<sup>19</sup> an alias he used several times throughout his career. Tellingly, only Casstner is mentioned in the advertisement, which points at Armstrong's primary responsibility for the script's final version. The latter explains he was forced to adopt the pseudonym as the regulations governing the German tax incentive from which the producers wanted to benefit did not allow more foreign collaborators.<sup>20</sup> As Sergio Casstner does not sound like a proper German name at all – neither does it seem very Italian – Armstrong's

assertion appears inconsistent. More broadly, the intricate development of the screenplay, especially Hoven's original version, containing supernatural elements that Armstrong condemns so strongly, warrants further research.

Beyond doubt, the announcement praised a frivolous product, which did not seem to conform to the newspaper's broad editorial line. The journalist who published the advertisement made sure that the *Stuttgarter Zeitung* dissociated itself from the lurid attractions Gloria offered. The dry note "Written by the propaganda company as material for the [newspaper's, A. E.] film department"<sup>21</sup> comments on the announcement, which only adds to the irony of the headline ("No comment"). After all, Gloria was not too cautious in making a ballyhoo about the film's most striking features that must have appeared as a fierce attack on 1970's standards of morality. The advertisement holds out the prospect of relentless screen brutality, gaudily signalled in the partially capitalised variation of

the final film title *TORTURE – Witches Tormented Till the Blood Flows*.

At the same time, this kind of sensationalist phrasing is contained through a rhetoric of realism. Recurring evocations of historical accuracy are used to legitimate the excessive violence that the promotional text promises: “The film [...], which portrays authentic episodes from the gruesome persecution of witches, is unable to avoid depicting the witch hunters’ reign of terror realistically.”<sup>22</sup> These affirmations of realism, endlessly repeated throughout the marketing campaign, have their background in the film’s pre-production. Even though many critics subsequently questioned the film’s reliance on historical facts, it seems that although Hoven had not conducted proper research into original sources such as documents from early modern trials, he had definitely studied the available literature.

### ***Mark of the Devil as a Literary Adaptation***

These claims of authenticity, also raised by Armstrong,<sup>23</sup> can be related to the book of a

nineteenth-century historian. The fact that Hoven and Armstrong availed themselves of it was omitted later. A fact sheet preserved by Deutsches Filminstitut Frankfurt mentions a book entitled *Geschichte der Hexenprozesse* (*History of the Witch Trials*) by Soldan Heppe as the screenplay’s literary source,<sup>24</sup> one that is not explicitly referenced in other ancillary materials. Presumably, Hoven used Wilhelm Gottlieb Soldan’s 1843 study *Geschichte der Hexenprocesse: Aus den Quellen dargestellt* (*History of the Witch Trials: Drawn from the Sources*).<sup>25</sup> Soldan, a teacher, historian and politician based in the German city of Gießen, did not accept the existence of witchcraft, but denounced its abuse by the Church and secular authorities. His monograph, which includes many detailed examples of accusations and punishments, became a standard work published in numerous versions since its initial appearance. Heinrich Ludwig Julius Heppe, the author’s son-in-law, was one of the first editors of Soldan’s book;<sup>26</sup> their names are intermingled in the fact sheet. A possible reason for not citing the study in *Mark of the Devil*’s opening credits and

marketing campaign might have been the risk of infringing copyright or having to pay a fee to the rights holders, as Soldan's work was mainly available in edited and annotated versions still protected by copyright laws. Already the *Stuttgarter Zeitung* advertisement, the first document that emerged from the film's pre-release marketing efforts, clearly omitted the fact that the authors referred to a historic scholarly monograph. Still, evocations of realism, which might be understood as allusions to the nineteenth-century study, pervade the short article.

### **Cult Film Stardom and Transnationality**

Furthermore, the promotional text interweaves the announcement of the stars with the ballyhoo of the film's spectacular properties in a cunning way. Basically, the promised exploitation elements are violence and, rather less prominently, sex. The advertisement references the violent deaths of Reggie Nalder, Udo Kier as well as Michael Maien and the brutal torture of Olivera Vučo, Ingeborg Schöner and Gaby Fuchs. The actresses' ordeals are introduced in a

highly self-reflexive manner when the advertisement mocks the exploitative nature of the product's title which it is promoting: "In a film already promising in the title that witches are tormented till the blood flows not even the ladies are shown mercy."<sup>27</sup> This indicates an awareness of the ostensible crudity that represents a central element of *Mark of the Devil's* advertising strategy. Another aspect adds to the ironic stance the text adopts on the bloody spectacle which is its subject. The article flirts with the fact that the roles the actors play are mentioned only parenthetically, while it seems to revel in ambiguous phrasing suggesting that it is the actors *themselves* who are subjected to the tortures. The text proposes the ambivalent pleasure of watching one's favourite screen idol massacred on the screen.<sup>28</sup>

In the case of leading couple Kier and Vučo, the advertisement highlights another facet when pointing to their relations with foreign countries: "All the magazines consider Udo Kier [...] ravishingly beautiful. Yet, the German Roman is not spared dire pain."<sup>29</sup> His screen partner awaits

a similarly rough treatment: “Olivera Vuco, [sic] the racy beauty from Yugoslavia, must already endure a whipping in her first German film.”<sup>30</sup> First of all, this statement plays with stereotypes of German sternness and a more erotic nativeness linked to Southeast Europe.<sup>31</sup> Epitomising the latter notion, Vučo is positively disciplined, both as an actress and in her role, by means of film production. Moreover, one would assume these statements function to position *Mark of the Devil*, although an exclusively German production in terms of funding and execution, as a transnational film. This strategy could have appealed to those audiences from German-speaking countries tired of domestic product, who cherished foreign stars and were interested in more ‘exotic’ fare than the average German sex comedy.

Actually, certain members of the cast were of international standing. While the witch film represented only Kier’s third chief part, the Serbian Vučo, already famous mostly as a singer and actress in former Yugoslavia, could look back at a considerable film career. Regardless,

Czechoslovakian citizen Herbert Lom was the most bankable star of *Mark of the Devil*, having contributed to more than 70 films before being hired by the German production. Among his many engagements were high-profile movies like *The Ladykillers* (Alexander Mackendrick, 1955), *Spartacus* (Stanley Kubrick, 1960) or *A Shot in the Dark* (Blake Edwards, 1964). Still, the *Stuttgarter Zeitung* advertisement does not refer to Lom as a renowned actor already well-established in many national film cultures. It casually states: “Herbert Lom plays the dreaded Lord Cumberland, a ruthless ruler without mercy.”<sup>32</sup> The same applies to Reggie Nalder, by 1969 also an actor of international reputation, who the article refers to as “pox face”<sup>33</sup> before using the decidedly German version of his name “Reginald”.<sup>34</sup> Although stemming from Austria, Nalder mainly worked for US TV series throughout the 1960s, before returning to Europe for celebrated projects such as *The Bird with the Crystal Plumage* (*L’uccello dalle piume di cristallo*, Dario Argento, 1970) or *Fellini’s Casanova* (*Il Casanova di Federico Fellini*, Federico Fellini, 1976). It seems that the



promotional text pursues a two-fold strategy when positioning its product as both domestic and transnational. Neither aspect is emphasised too much in order not to alienate two differently orientated segments of Austrian, German and Swiss audiences: spectators attracted by domestic star power and those preferring foreign actors. Of course, such a strict division in terms of audience preferences represents an essentialist critical construction. In addition, it is impossible to classify the cast of *Mark of the Devil* according to the criterion of perceived Germanness. The fundamentally transnational character of much of the film industry, not only in the 1960s and 1970s, undermines such an undertaking. Still, it might be reasonable to assume that the advertisement attempts to maintain the balance in catering to divergent audience types. While it calls low-key attention to certain cast members who enjoy transnational esteem, the text does not risk selling its wares as a genuinely international picture.

### **The Intricacies of Cult Film Marketing**

The assessment of the *Stuttgarter Zeitung* advertisement is somewhat complicated by the fact that the article reproduces only one page of a two-page text from the film's marketing campaign disseminated by Ringpress Hans Krüger-Franke, a "studio for public relations"<sup>35</sup> in Munich. This partial publication of the announcement seems symptomatic of the distributor's basic difficulty in placing their product in the press. Contemporary discussions in trade magazines confirm this problem. In a survey of the trading year 1972 in the film business, Peter Tomas, a representative of the distribution company Adria, complains that supra-regional coverage of the firm's theatrical releases was rather the exception than the rule. Tomas reveals that "for *Trinity Is STILL My Name!* [*Continuavano a chiamarlo Trinità*, Enzo Barboni, 1971], we sent press material to all national newspapers, magazines etc. and only four or five publications responded to the release."<sup>36</sup> The distributor assumes that this neglect is related to its films mainly consisting of cheap Italian genre fare. Instead of making a

futile attempt to convince the press to announce their product, Adria shifted their endeavours to creating appealing advertising material for the movie theatres exhibiting their wares.<sup>37</sup>

Evidently, Gloria's *Mark of the Devil* suffered a similar fate. Although a part of the original advertisement was published in the *Stuttgarter Zeitung*, it was compromised due to its incomplete reproduction and the ridicule contained in the accompanying disclaimer. For the daily's film department, the text represented a curiosity and the responsible journalist made sure to tag it accordingly. Given the great challenge of promoting genre product in newspapers other than via paid advertisements, Gloria must have been pleased to receive this kind of attention anyway.

### ***Mark of the Devil* and 1970s Occultism**

What the newspaper published is the second part of the original advertisement subheaded "Extras passed out".<sup>38</sup> Due to the confusing layout on the first page, it is quite unclear whether the advertisement's main title is "After the sex wave the HEX wave?" or "Witches – did they exist,

do they exist?"<sup>39</sup> Thus, the peg on which to hang the publicity was the contemporary existence of witches. This idea was fully in line with the esoteric sensibilities of hippie counterculture subsumed under the label New Age.<sup>40</sup>

Accordingly, the text poses its rhetorical question in an attempt to wow the implied reader: "did you know that in the year of the moon landing, ten thousand (!) women (!) adhere to arcane witch rites alone in Great Britain?"<sup>41</sup> The trope contrasts technological advance, represented by manned spaceflight, with a regressive desire for ancient cults, highlighting the timeless nature of coeval esotericism. While the first use of the exclamation mark is comprehensible as a means of stressing the surprisingly large number of cultists, the second one, emphasising their sex, seems quite misplaced due to witchcraft's long-lasting association with femininity. Women are not only described as deviant with regard to the content of this sentence – that is, they follow esoteric beliefs – but the text also marks the female graphically as 'Other' by means of punctuation. Moreover, the modern 'witches' are

not German, but British, which distinguishes them from the German audiences that the advertisement targets. The text continues by citing a supposedly anonymous insider confiding their expert knowledge to the reader:

An initiate reports: “It’s a secret of our 20th century, with its unique scientific progress and grand technological success, that age-old demonic cults are being resurrected at the same time ..... [sic] On the other hand, materialism, ruling everyday life in varied forms and crass manifestations, creates the desire for psychic, mystical-occult replenishment.”<sup>42</sup>

This kind of bombastic rhetoric reminds one of voice-over narration common in another contemporaneous popular genre, the Italian mondo cycle.<sup>43</sup> More broadly, the educational and lofty tone adopted in this manifestation of *Mark of the Devil*’s advertising is similar to the marketing of classic US exploitation films,<sup>44</sup> which demonstrates astounding continuity in selling lowbrow pictures, in other respects a rather erratic line of business.

### Notions of Nationality

In addition, the excerpt puts forward a specific notion of Great Britain. From the UK’s portrayal as an ideal site for occult practices – later, England is described as “the mist-swirled island kingdom” in which “witchery comes into vogue big-time”<sup>45</sup> – the text makes the link to the director’s origin: “Director Michael Armstrong, being from Great Britain – see above! – staged the German colour film *TORTURE – Witches Tormented Till the Blood Flows*. And it isn’t ruled out that the sex wave will now be replaced by a hex wave.”<sup>46</sup> Thereby, the advertisement blatantly suggests that because of his British origins, Armstrong might be somehow familiar with such rites and thus perfectly suited to direct a movie on this topic. Even though the article refers to the foreign artist supervising the production, it underscores the project’s quintessential Germanness. Again, this might be related to the marketing campaign’s attempt to maintain the delicate balance between the picture’s domestic and transnational properties. Furthermore, the text anticipates a fully-fledged film cycle in the tradition of *Mark of the Devil*.

Assuming a strong box-office success, Armstrong's not yet released film is posited well in advance as a ground-breaking model enabling a number of successors. Despite the anonymous author's confidence in the project, German film history does not chronicle a serious witch cycle commensurate with the highly popular sex wave. Besides, the film is proposed as a genre classic in the announcement completely obliterates the fact that it was derived from the success of *Witchfinder General* (Michael Reeves, 1968). If any film deserves such a status, it is Michael Reeves's influential work.<sup>47</sup>

Subsequently, the advertisement relates the topicality of alleged British occultism to *Mark of the Devil*, which is supposed to introduce the "witch craze"<sup>48</sup> to German audiences. The text, however, makes clear that the film is not about supernatural phenomena: "Here, the broomstick, intrinsically tied to the notion and activity of the witch, remains in the prop closet. Armstrong cracks his whip. Remorselessly so."<sup>49</sup> Instead, the centrality of violence is emphasised, referring to the greatly exaggerated number of a

million executed victims alone in Germany,<sup>50</sup> before the text continues with the section printed in the *Stuttgarter Zeitung*. What is striking about the advertisement's first page is its incoherent reasoning, confusing a topical pagan belief in the occult with the film's enlightened stance. Like *Witchfinder General*,<sup>51</sup> the point *Mark of the Devil* makes is the non-existence of witchcraft and the lack of any empirical foundation for a belief in witchcraft. Yet, the article evokes the countercultural relevance and existence of witchcraft in terms of a British cult involving female followers.

Overall, the promotional article is written in a decidedly tongue-in-cheek style, using numerous puns that are difficult to translate. It also displays self-awareness about the strategies that it employs in order to sell its product. After referencing the film's topical subject matter, the advertisement presents its director and actors. It is noticeable that one factor potentially useful in generating public attention is omitted. Gloria's announcement does not mention Adrian Hoven, the driving force behind the project. Maybe his

association with the old-fashioned *Heimatfilm* genre was not deemed useful in promoting a film targeted at a completely different audience. Having said that, Hoven had been committed to exploitation movies since the mid-1960s. Therefore, his involvement in Gloria's horror film might not have been contrary to his star image by 1970. A possible reason to conceal his involvement could be the unclear distribution of creative control, which affected *Mark of the Devil* both as a business enterprise and symbolic artefact. Hoven's rather vague role in the film's production, as well as the conflict concerning this role, might have prevented the advertiser from promoting his participation more widely. Of course, it was not completely denied that he had contributed to the picture. Whenever contemporary contextual materials list cast and crew, Hoven is mentioned without exception.<sup>52</sup> Still, no promotional text using a narrative to sell the product refers to him. This suggests that the artist's disruptive status could undermine the distributor's endeavour to market its product in a specific way, one which focused rather on textual features, stars and the film's perceived

nationality. Notwithstanding that exploiting troubled production histories has always represented a common strategy to spark interest in a film,<sup>53</sup> it was decided not to utilise Armstrong and Hoven's dispute as a publicity ploy for *Mark of the Devil*'s advertising in Germany.

### **Title Variations**

Another version of the advertisement that constitutes the basis of the *Stuttgarter Zeitung* article is contained in a set of press materials also preserved by the Filmmuseum Düsseldorf. This variation consists of only the first page of the actual two-page advertisement, which describes the film's topicality in regard to contemporary English witch cults and director Armstrong's take on the topic. The version is identical to the one discussed above with the exception of an important detail. Instead of *TORTURE – Witches Tormented Till the Blood Flows*, the film title used throughout the compilation of documents dispenses with the bold-written part. As *Witches Tormented Till the Blood Flows*<sup>54</sup> represents the final title under

which the movie was released, the set thus stems from a later stage in the marketing process than the advertisement including the *TORTURE* variant of the title. The compilation comprises several sheets of paper associated through their identical layout: a list of cast and crew, a short as well as a more detailed synopsis (the latter reveals the film's bleak end) and another two-page promotional text prepared by Ringpress Hans Krüger-Franke.

Under the headline "In the past the witches burned – and today?"<sup>55</sup> this advertisement evokes a Europe plagued by witch hunters and laced with stakes. Again, it stresses the film's reliance on historical facts "recorded in ancient chronicles without any hint of doubt."<sup>56</sup> After pitching several subplots, the text mentions the exaggerated number of around 9.5 million predominantly female victims of witch trials in Europe. (The opening of *Mark of the Devil* references 8 million victims.) Allusions to a selection of historic cases leads to an account of the belief in witchcraft in present-day Germany. The announcement alters its tone considerably,

presenting the film rather as a social problem picture than as lurid exploitation.

### ***Mark of the Devil* as a Social Problem Film**

This change is most noticeable in a line above the advertisement title, which borrows wording one would not exactly expect in regard to cinematic horror: "A film, whose shocking scenes will make you think"<sup>57</sup> On its second page, the advertisement discusses the presumably rampant activity of *Hexenbanner* on German territory. *Hexenbanner* are "people who make a living from tracking down and 'banishing' witches."<sup>58</sup> According to "[t]he 'German Medical Information Service'"<sup>59</sup> which the text cites, ten thousand of these experts work especially in rural areas. There are about 70 annual trials against self-styled witch hunters, but the number of unreported cases remains high. The advertisement even suggests that undocumented suicides and lynchings triggered by witch hunters are widespread in 1970 Germany and concludes with the following statement:

It would be wrong to claim that intolerance and bigoted fanaticism are only limited to the villages. Sure, witches are not hunted in the cities – but as long as people are attacked just because of their looks, their skin colour or their convictions here too, one cannot dismiss films like *WITCHES* *TORMENTED TILL THE BLOOD FLOWS* as a look back on conditions long since passed.<sup>60</sup>

These closing remarks virtually elevate the movie to a humanist project with universal appeal. From the second page of the advertisement, it seems that *Mark of the Devil* deals with pressing social issues in a fictional form. Cunningly, the horror film is rendered educational when the promotional text presents it as an answer to the raging superstition afflicting the German countryside. The announcement attempts to legitimate the information provided by referring to an institution such as the German Medical Information Service. What might appear at first sight to be an invention in the vein of classic exploitation movies<sup>61</sup> is an actual association that published healthcare journals from the 1950s until the mid-1980s. Besides dental prophylaxis and noise pollution, the society also

dealt with coeval occultism in the 1950s. This discussion was not only exploited in film marketing, but also referenced in scholarly literature. For example, the Italian ethnologist Ernesto De Martino cites an issue of the association's homonymous journal devoted to witchcraft in Germany in his study *Sud e magia (South and Magic)*.<sup>62</sup> The 1955 issue of the journal *Deutscher medizinischer Informationsdienst* that De Martino references seems to be the same one to which the promotional text alludes as the latter quotes only statistics from the 1950s. While the advertisement implies the immediate relevance of the film to the topical German problem with neo-pagan beliefs, the mention of the German Medical Information Service might be more likely an attempt simply to rake up old stories.

## **Conclusion**

It is crucial to acknowledge that this alternative advertisement complements the version referencing occultism in the UK in order to create another potential connecting factor for audiences. Maybe spectators that did not really

bother about witch cults in England could rather be seduced into watching a film related to domestic superstition.<sup>63</sup> Both advertisements discussed above constitute Gloria's efforts to promote the film to a preferably large segment of audiences from the German-speaking countries. Though not the most consistent pieces of writing, the texts communicate the film's central properties clearly: the depiction of violence and sex, the stars, the double-edged status as a simultaneously national and transnational production as well as its topicality in regard to social developments in Germany and the UK.

Fundamentally, the lack of coherence that these promotional texts exhibit can be linked to their function of attracting cinema-goers. According to Barbara Klinger, such a fracturing into different aspects to which diverging audiences can relate represents film marketing's primary objective: "One of the chief activities of commodification [...] is to pry open the insularity of the text as object and to disperse it into an assortment of capitalizable elements."<sup>64</sup>

While the promotion certainly succeeds in conveying the diverse appeals of *Mark of the Devil*, there exists a hierarchy organising the extent to which a certain feature is emphasised. Excessive violence in combination with sexual titillation certainly possesses an overriding importance in the entire marketing campaign.

The analysed advertisements, the pressbook, posters, lobby cards and the trailer rely predominantly on written and (audio-)visual evocations of a sexualised brutality challenging 1970's standards of on-screen violence. Such a promotion of extreme subject matter must be understood as a means of product differentiation in a contemporary German mediascape soaked with similar content.<sup>65</sup> In order to compete with similarly orientated wares in the film market, the advertising of *Mark of the Devil* puts great emphasis on content that could be perceived as eroticised ultra-violence. The publicity materials promise an excessive depiction of what pervaded many other contemporary films, but to a lesser extent. It is this kind of sensationalist marketing that contributed to making *Mark of*



*the Devil* a box-office success in Germany in 1970.

*I would like to thank Gabriele Jofer, Klaus Heitzmann, Uwe Huber, Ulrich Mannes, Martin Nechvatal, Julian Petley, Margret Schild from Filmmuseum Düsseldorf and the staff of Deutsches Filminstitut Frankfurt for their valuable advice on drafts of this article and support in locating archival material.*

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<sup>1</sup> See anon. (1972) “Free ‘Vomit Bags’ To Test Indie’s Self-Styled V-For-Violence Rating”, *Variety*, 5 April, 3, 16.

<sup>2</sup> The apostrophe sometimes inserted in “aufs” is used irregularly. While the German opening credits refer to “Hexen bis *auf*’s Blut gequält” (my emphasis), neither of the promotional documents inserts the apostrophe when mentioning the title.

<sup>3</sup> Anon. (no date) “*TORTUR – Hexen bis aufs Blut gequält*”. Collection of Filmmuseum Düsseldorf.

<sup>4</sup> Bergfelder, T. (2005) *International Adventures: German Popular Cinema and European Co-Productions in the 1960s*. New York: Berghahn, 74–81; Baer, H. (2012) “16 August 1949: Ilse Kubaschewski Founds Gloria-Filmverleih, Sets the Course of Popular West German Film”, In: Kapczynski, J. and Richardson, M. (eds) *A New History of German Cinema*. Rochester, NY: Camden House, 328–333.

<sup>5</sup> Bergfelder, T. (2005) *International Adventures*, 81.

<sup>6</sup> Commercial register, HRA 47018. Amtsgericht München.

<sup>7</sup> Jofer, G. (2008) “Von Gabriel bis Monopol: Kleine Geschichte und Geschichten zu den Münchner Kinos von heute” In: Lerch-Stumpf, M. (ed.) *Neue Paradiese für Kinosüchtige: Münchner Kinogeschichte 1945 bis 2007*. München: Dölling und Galitz, 274–313; 295–297; Sigl, K. (2008) “Lexikon der Münchner Kinos” In: Lerch-Stumpf, M. (ed.) *Neue Paradiese für Kinosüchtige*, 320–354: 346.

<sup>8</sup> Appelt, C. (2009) “Dream Journeys: The M.C.S.-70 Process and European Cinema of the 1960s”, *in70mm.com*, 4 January,

[http://in70mm.com/news/2009/mcs\\_70/english/index.htm](http://in70mm.com/news/2009/mcs_70/english/index.htm) There is a German version of this website, which dwells on Englberth in more detail.

<sup>9</sup> Hauerslev, T. (2009) “MCS 70 – Superpanorama”, *in70mm.com*, 1 January,

[http://in70mm.com/library/process/mcs\\_70\\_superpanorama/index.htm](http://in70mm.com/library/process/mcs_70_superpanorama/index.htm)

<sup>10</sup> Anon. (2014) “*Mark of the Devil*”, <http://www.michaelarmstrong.co.uk/archive/film/markofthedevil/>

<sup>11</sup> DVD release of *Mark of the Devil*, West Hollywood, CA: Blue Underground, 2005.

<sup>12</sup> Anon. (2014) “*Mark of the Devil*”. See also Reggie Nalder’s somewhat different recollection in David Del Valle (2003) “The Face That Launched a Thousand Trips: An Interview with Reggie Nalder”, *Kinoeye*, 3 (2),

<http://www.kinoeye.org/03/02/delvalle02.php>

<sup>13</sup> “*Hexen bis auf’s Blut gequält*”, spioarchiv. Collection of the text archive, Deutsches Filminstitut Frankfurt. This document seems to belong to an archive of the German Spitzenorganisation der Filmwirtschaft (Umbrella Organisation of the Film Industry).

<sup>14</sup> For a case history of a seventeenth-century trial taking place at Moosham, see Klammer, P. (2014) “*Daß sy der Rit schütt*”: *Das Lungauer Zauberer- und Hexenbuch*. Mariapfarr: Peter Klammer, 107–118.

<sup>15</sup> Strasser, C. (2013) *Location Salzburg: The World’s Most Versatile Movie Locations*. Salzburg: Anton Pustet, 106–111.

<sup>16</sup> Anon. (2014) “*Mark of the Devil*”.

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<sup>17</sup> “Das Drehbuch des Gloria-Farbfilms *TORTUR – Hexen bis aufs Blut gequält* schrieb Sergio Casstner nach historischen Begebenheiten. Kameramann Ernst W. Kalinke setzte die oftmals an die Nieren gehenden Szenen ins Bild – und mußte nebenbei noch Samariterdienste leisten. Immer wieder kippten bei den Außenaufnahmen im Schloß Moosham im Lungau einige Statisten um, weil es ihnen zu bunt – sprich zu blutig – geworden war.” Anon. (1969) “Ohne Kommentar”, *Stuttgarter Zeitung*, 12 December. Collection of the text archive, Deutsches Filminstitut Frankfurt. The main body of the text is italicised, which I do not reproduce for the sake of readability.

<sup>18</sup> Anon. (2014) “*Mark of the Devil*”.

<sup>19</sup> “*Hexen bis aufs Blut gequält*”, spioarchiv.

<sup>20</sup> Anon. (2014) “*Mark of the Devil*”.

<sup>21</sup> “Von der Propaganda-Firma als Material für die Filmredaktion geschrieben”. Anon. (1969) “Ohne Kommentar”.

<sup>22</sup> “Der Film [...], der authentische Episoden aus der grausamen Hexenverfolgung schildert, kommt nicht umhin, das Schreckensregiment der Hexenjäger realistisch darzustellen.” Anon. (1969) “Ohne Kommentar”.

<sup>23</sup> Anon. (2014) “*Mark of the Devil*”.

<sup>24</sup> “*Hexen bis aufs Blut gequält*”, spioarchiv.

<sup>25</sup> Soldan, W. (1843) *Geschichte der Hexenprocesse: Aus den Quellen dargestellt*. Stuttgart: Cotta.

<sup>26</sup> See Leszczyńska, K. (2009) *Hexen und Germanen: Das Interesse des Nationalsozialismus an der Geschichte der Hexenverfolgung*. Bielefeld: transcript, 155–165.

<sup>27</sup> “Ein Film, der schon im Titel verspricht, daß Hexen bis aufs Blut gequält werden, gewährt auch den Damen keine Schonung.” Anon. (1969) “Ohne Kommentar”.

<sup>28</sup> For detailed studies on (cult film) stardom, see Dyer, R. ([1979] 2009) *Stars*. New ed. London: BFI; Dyer, R. ([1986] 2010) *Heavenly Bodies: Film Stars and Society*. 2nd ed. London: Routledge; Egan, K. and Thomas, S. (eds, 2013) *Cult Film Stardom: Offbeat Attractions and Processes of Cultification*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

<sup>29</sup> “Udo Kier [...] gilt bei allen Illustrierten als ‘Bildschönheit’. Dennoch bleibt dem deutschen Wahlrömer Kier hier arge Pein nicht erspart.” Anon. (1969) “Ohne Kommentar”. At that time, Kier was living in Rome.

<sup>30</sup> “Olivera Vuco, [sic] die rassige Schönheit aus Jugoslawien, muß sich gleich in ihrem ersten deutschen Film auspeitschen lassen.” Anon. (1969) “Ohne Kommentar”.

<sup>31</sup> For a similar contemporary use of stereotypes in an entry to an Italian exploitation cycle, see Ehrenreich,

A. (2015) “Delicate Reports: Prostitution in Sergio Martino’s Mondo Film *Wages of Sin (Mille peccati ... nessuna virtù)*”, In: Ritzenhoff, K. and McAvoy, C. (eds) *Selling Sex on Screen: From Weimar Cinema to Zombie Porn*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 111–130: 119–120.

<sup>32</sup> “Der gefürchtete Lord Cumberland, ein skrupelloser Herrscher ohne Gnade, wird von Herbert Lom gespielt.” Anon. (1969) “Ohne Kommentar”.

<sup>33</sup> “Pockengesicht”. Anon. (1969) “Ohne Kommentar”.

<sup>34</sup> Anon. (1969) “Ohne Kommentar”.

<sup>35</sup> “Studio für Öffentlichkeitsarbeit”. Anon. (no date) “Nach der Sex-Welle die HEX-Welle?” Collection of Filmmuseum Düsseldorf.

<sup>36</sup> “haben wir für *Vier Fäuste [für ein Halleluja, A. E.]* an alle überregionalen Zeitungen, Illustrierten usw. Pressematerial verschickt und hatten zum Start nur vier oder fünf Veröffentlichungen.” Anon. (1972) “Wie war das Jahr? Bilanz der Firmen: 17 Verleiher und 12 Produzenten geben Auskunft”, *film-echo/Filmwoche*, 22 December, 12–15: 15.

<sup>37</sup> Anon. (1972) “Wie war das Jahr?”, 15.

<sup>38</sup> “Statisten kippten um”. Anon. (no date) “Nach der Sex-Welle die HEX-Welle?”

<sup>39</sup> “Nach der Sex-Welle die HEX-Welle?”; “Hexen – gab es sie, gibt es sie?” Anon. (no date) “Nach der Sex-Welle die HEX-Welle?”

<sup>40</sup> See Sutcliffe, S. (2003) *Children of the New Age: A History of Spiritual Practices*. London: Routledge; Kemp, D. (2004) *New Age: A Guide*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press; Doyle White, E. (2015) *Wicca: History, Belief, and Community in Modern Pagan Witchcraft*. Brighton: Sussex Academic Press.

<sup>41</sup> “wußten Sie, daß im Jahre der Mondlandung allein Großbritannien zehntausend (!) Frauen (!) geheimen Hexenriten anhängen?” Anon. (no date) “Nach der Sex-Welle die HEX-Welle?”

<sup>42</sup> “Ein Kenner der Materie berichtet: ‘Es ist ein Geheimnis unseres 20. Jahrhunderts mit seinem einmaligen wissenschaftlichen Fortschritt und grandiosem technischen Erfolg, daß gleichzeitig uralte dämonische Kulte wieder zu neuem Leben erwachen.... [sic] Der Materialismus, der in vielgestaltiger Form und krasser Erscheinung den Alltag beherrscht, weckt andererseits den Wunsch nach seelischer, mystisch-okkulturer Ergänzung.’” Anon. (no date) “Nach der Sex-Welle die HEX-Welle?”

<sup>43</sup> See Goodall, M. (2006) *Sweet and Savage: The World Through the Shockumentary Film Lens*. London: Headpress; Gallio, N. (2013) “‘Til (Faces of) Death Do Us Part’”, *Cine-Excess, 1*, <http://www.cine-excess.co.uk/til-faces-of-death-do->

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[us-part.html](#); Ehrenreich, A. (2015) “Delicate Reports”.

<sup>44</sup> Schaefer, Eric (1999) “*Bold! Daring! Shocking! True!*”: *A History of Exploitation Films, 1919–1959*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 103–119. See also Schaefer’s account of the square-up (69–73).

<sup>45</sup> “Während auf dem nebelwabernden Inselreich der Hexenzauber wieder groß in Mode gerät”. Anon. (no date) “Nach der Sex-Welle die HEX-Welle?”

<sup>46</sup> “Der aus Großbritannien – siehe oben! – stammende Regisseur Michael Armstrong inszenierte den deutschen Farbfilm *TORTUR – Hexen bis aufs Blut gequält*. Und es ist nicht ausgeschlossen, daß damit nun die Sex-Welle durch eine Hex-Welle abgelöst wird.” Anon. (no date) “Nach der Sex-Welle die HEX-Welle?”

<sup>47</sup> For an analysis of the connections between these films, see Hunt, L. (1996) “*Witchfinder General*: Michael Reeves’ Visceral Classic”, In: Black, A. (ed.), *Necronomicon: Book I*. London: Creation, 123–130.

<sup>48</sup> “Hexenwahn”. Anon. (no date) “Nach der Sex-Welle die HEX-Welle?”

<sup>49</sup> “Der mit Begriff und Tätigkeit einer Hexe untrennbar verbundene Besenstiel bleibt hier jedoch im Requisitenschrank. Bei Armstrong knallt die Peitsche. Erbarmungslos.” Anon. (no date) “Nach der Sex-Welle die HEX-Welle?”

<sup>50</sup> In regard to implications of historically inaccurate victim numbers of witch persecutions, see Behringer, W. (1998) “Neun Millionen Hexen: Entstehung, Tradition und Kritik eines populären Mythos”, *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht*, 49 (11), 664–685.

<sup>51</sup> Smith, J. (2013) “Vincent Price and Cult Performance: The Case of *Witchfinder General*”, In: Egan, K. and Thomas, S. (eds, 2013) *Cult Film Stardom*, 109–125: 116.

<sup>52</sup> Anon. (no date) “Gloria Film zeigt *Hexen bis aufs Blut gequält*”. Collection of Filmmuseum Düsseldorf; anon. (no date) “*Mark of the Devil*”. Collection of Filmmuseum Düsseldorf; “*Hexen bis auf’s Blut gequält*”, spioarchiv.

<sup>53</sup> See Langford, B. (2005) *Film Genre: Hollywood and Beyond*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press,

241; Mathijs, E. and Sexton, J. (2011) *Cult Cinema: An Introduction*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell 2011, 16.

<sup>54</sup> “*Hexen bis aufs Blut gequält*”. Anon. (no date) “Gloria Film zeigt *Hexen bis aufs Blut gequält*”.

<sup>55</sup> “Früher brannten die Hexen – und heute?” Anon. (no date) “Gloria Film zeigt *Hexen bis aufs Blut gequält*”.

<sup>56</sup> “die in alten Chroniken zweifelsfrei festgehalten sind.” Anon. (no date) “Gloria Film zeigt *Hexen bis aufs Blut gequält*”.

<sup>57</sup> “Ein Film, dessen schockierende Szenen zum Nachdenken anregen werden”. Anon. (no date) “Gloria Film zeigt *Hexen bis aufs Blut gequält*”.

<sup>58</sup> “Leute, die davon leben, daß sie Hexen aufspüren und ‘bannen’”. Anon. (no date) “Gloria Film zeigt *Hexen bis aufs Blut gequält*”.

<sup>59</sup> “[d]er ‘Deutsche Medizinische Informationsdienst’”. Anon. (no date) “Gloria Film zeigt *Hexen bis aufs Blut gequält*”.

<sup>60</sup> “Falsch wäre es jedoch, zu behaupten, Intoleranz und bornierter Fanatismus wären nur auf die Dörfer beschränkt. Sicher, in den Städten werden keine Hexen gejagt – aber solange Menschen auch hier lediglich wegen ihres Aussehens, ihrer Hautfarbe oder ihrer Überzeugung bekämpft werden, solange kann man Filme wie *HEXEN BIS AUF’S BLUT GEQUÄLT* nicht als Rückblick auf längst überholte Zustände abtun.” Anon. (no date) “Gloria Film zeigt *Hexen bis aufs Blut gequält*”.

<sup>61</sup> See Schaefer, Eric (1999) “*Bold! Daring! Shocking! True!*”, 115–116.

<sup>62</sup> De Martino, E. (2000) *Sud e magia*. Milano: Feltrinelli, 195, fn. 15.

<sup>63</sup> For a theory of cinematic seduction, see Stiglegger, M. (2006) *Ritual & Verführung: Schaulust, Spektakel & Sinnlichkeit im Film*. Berlin: Bertz + Fischer.

<sup>64</sup> Klinger, B. (1989) “Digressions at the Cinema: Reception and Mass Culture”, *Cinema Journal*, 28 (4), 3–19: 13–14.

<sup>65</sup> See Eitler, P. (2013) “Das Reich der Sinne? Pornographie, Philosophie und die Brutalisierung der Sexualität (Westdeutschland 1968–1988)”, *Body Politics*, 1 (2), 259–296.