America's favourite Serial Killer: "Dexter"

Jasmin Teuteberg

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Master's Thesis from the year 2009 in the subject Communications - Movies and Television, grade: A ("excellent"), Stockholm University (JMK - Department of Journalism, Media and Communication), language: English, comment: Master Thesis , abstract: In this study the television crime series Dexter is analysed in its significance to create a feeling of sympathy for a serial killer that is here exemplified by the analyses of the title character and protagonist Dexter Morgan. Deriving from this apparently contradictory presumption the main objective of the study is thereby to examine to what extent the conception of the series and its form of representation contribute to this alleged effect and which media devices can be considered for this purpose. As a starting point the theories of social constructionism and frame theory are to be analysed to show what we know and how we gain our knowledge about crime and criminals from the real life and those in fictional narratives. The achieved findings of current media frames of serial killers in fiction and non-fiction reveal that there are differences in the representation of serial killers in the mass media, but the tools which are used to establish those frames are comparable. Further, by reconciling these existing frames with the frame the series Dexter generates of a serial killer a range of variations are identifiable. The main finding is that the form of representation often violates genre expectations of the audience and also hitherto familiar frames of serial killers are questioned by the series' concept and challenges the viewer in some way in order to promote an effect of sympathy. Due to the quite innovative character of the series its investigation might provide new input in the field of media and film studies of television crime narratives. Key words: crime series, Dexter, serial killer, sympathy, social constructionism, frame theory, media frames

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