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A Lacanian-Foucauldian Analysis of Murder Report (2025): Spatial Confinement and the Subversion of Narrative Authority

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Abstract

This paper is a Lacanian-Foucauldian critical analysis of the 2025 South Korean chamber Murder Report that explores how spatial confinement as a structural agent triggers the disintegration of professional identity and the destabilization of narrative authority. The movie introduces a forensic psychiatrist who goes about doing away with people who abuse his patients in a methodical way: a character the viewers hate at first but eventually find themselves sympathizing with. This paper uses the principles of Jacques Lacan of the Mirror Stage and the Other as well as the ideas of Power/Knowledge and Discourse of Michel Foucault as arguing that the closed interrogation-interview space is a psychic space where both the journalistic ego of the reporter and the moral certainty of the audience are systematically dismantled. The article goes on to address how the hierarchical reason of journalistic reportage is destroyed throughout the narrative structure of the film, shifting epistemic power, in the process, off the interviewer onto the perpetrator. In conclusion, the article finds that when there are physical and psychological trapping, the narration becomes a kind of collective transgression, and turns the seemingly neutral reporter into an accomplice of structure and the audience into an unintended accomplice in a revisionary ethics of violence.

I. INTRODUCTION: THE CONFINED SPACE AS ETHICAL THRESHOLD

Modern South Korean films have become one of the most ethically strict film traditions of the twenty-first century. In his seminal work Biopolitical Ethics in Global Cinema, Jeong (2023) has said that the most difficult Korean films are not resolutory, but maintained in ethical suspension: they place their audiences in a state of irreducible moral incongruity and deny them the solace of firm judgment. In its

most concentrated form, Murder Report (2025) is an example of such a tendency, as its key conflict between a forensic psychiatrist and a journalist is limited by a highly constricted space and time frame. The movie is not necessarily a thriller but a philosophical provocation and, in a way, a weaponization of sympathy as a way to attack. The film gains traction in a cultural moment where audiences increasingly value psychological depth over spectacle. Its stripped-down, dialogue-heavy

structure aligns with a growing demand for intellectually engaging thrillers that prioritize character over action. Korean cinema continues to dominate the global thriller space, known for its layered storytelling and moral complexity, which strengthens the film's positioning.

The psychiatrist in the center of *Murder Report* is presented as a killer without any doubts. He has by his own confession killed a number of people, people who abused, exploited or psychologically tormented his patients. It becomes increasingly and systematically difficult to understand in the film not the fact of his violence but its meaning: who determines the meaning of violence, and by what right is that determination made? The interviewer who meets with him comes with all the institutional apparatus of narrative power - the tape recorders, professional detachment, the unspoken authority of the mass gaze which she has. However, at the end of the film this power has been turned in its entirety upside down and the audience, just like the journalist, is in an incommodiously complicit position.

The article contends that this inversion is not merely a narrative process but a formal operation that is rigorous and can be conceptualized in terms of the interlapping theories of Jacques Lacan and Michel Foucault. The Mirror Stage and the constitutive role of the Other in subject-formation as discussed by Lacan gives the conceptual resources to analyze the reorganization of the subject of viewing through the gaze of the psychiatrist and, through him, the viewers of the news and their position of viewing. The notions of Power/Knowledge and Discourse by Foucault help in understanding the institutional processes that make the limited space of the film a venue of epistemic struggle and, therefore, inversion. Most importantly, as Maniglier and Zabunyan (2018) have seen in their seminal collection *Foucault at the Movies*, the issue of cinema was to Foucault a discourse that was too new not to receive an easy genealogical treatment; but it is precisely on the basis of this fact that Foucauldian categories continue to have a kind of spooky vitality whenever deployed on films which, like *Murder Report*. "*Murder Report*" talks about how the personal and political spaces can merge

together in an uneasy combination that it often difficult to segregate one intent from the other. Even for the psychiatrist, his sense of justice emerges from his own personal tragedy where his destructive emotions didn't get a foreclosure, and he could empathize with his patients going through the same catharsis.

The analysis stakes are far much more than the film itself. The most characteristic formal mark of the genre is the denial of an opportunity to its viewers to be shown the moral vindication of the hero, as the analysis of the false redemption patterns in the Korean art cinema by Bai (2022) has suggested, is the most striking formal signature of the genre. *Murder Report* is involved in this tradition but radicalizes it: the sympathetic inversion it makes is not a narrative resolution but a theoretical demonstration - of the precariousness of moral certainty, of the artificiality of institutional power, of the insurmountable obstinacy of doing what is right in a world where right is always done by institutions with an interest other than their own.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: LACAN, FOUCAULT, AND THE ARCHITECTURE OF JUDGMENT

2.1 LACAN'S MIRROR STAGE AND THE PSYCHIATRIST AS DISRUPTIVE REFLECTION

The theory of the Mirror Stage by Jacques Lacan, developed throughout his professional life since the 1949 speech at the International Psychoanalytic Congress, to his *Ecrits*, explains that the sense of homogeneous self of the human subject is organized in the face of an alienated experience of an external image. Psychoanalytic film analysis has tended to prioritize the Imaginary register of identification and ignore the disruptive encounter with the Real that the most challenging cinema prompts us to have, as Vighi (2019) writes in his study of Lacanian cinema theory. *Murder Report* is exactly the movie of that kind: the enclosed space conditions the circumstances in which the Imaginary structures of journalistic and psychiatric identity are deprived of their stabilizing role in a systematic manner.

The psychiatrist is the observed; journalist is the observer. She is the one holding the recording device, he is the one being recorded. It is this imbalance, however, that is the very object of the deconstruction of the film. The psychiatrist analyses the journalist in the same cold way she tries to apply to him, she calls her evasions, reveals her framing apparatus and looks back at her a reflection of herself which she has never had to study. This is what Ballas (2022), who continues the Copjec-McGowan tradition of Lacanian film theory, refers to as the properly Lacanian gaze: no longer the gaze of the subject at the object, but rather the gaze of the field of the Other, re-forming the whole visibility of the scene.

The Lacanian term reconnaissance is especially fruitful in this regard, as it makes the fact of the journalist being certain, not to be disproven, but to be a structural aspect of ego-formation as such. She has no reason to read the psychiatrist misappropriately as she knows nothing about him; she has a reason to read him misappropriately because her professional identity involves a specific form of Other, monstrous, legible, pathological, to sustain its own sense of order. When the psychiatrist refuses to hold this post, her ego-ideal is revealed as reliant on his subordination, and the failure of that subordination brings about what Lacanian theory would refer to as a crisis of the Imaginary register. Just as Chevarie-Cossette (2022) has maintained in his recent writing on moral defenses in fiction, the viewers that watch thoroughly morally ambiguous perpetrator-protagonists experience exactly this sort of structural interference: the defensive structures they are used to relying on to ensure stable moral identification are systematically disrupted by the narrative structure of the text.

2.2 THE BIG OTHER, INSTITUTIONAL FAILURE, AND THE REAL OF CARE

The idea of the Big Other discussed by Lacan which is the symbolic order of law, language and social convention that organizes the desire of the subject and the legibility of actions is a key point of the argument in *Murder Report*. To the journalist, the Big Other is the unseen court of public opinion on which she implicitly prosecutes the psychiatrist via her report. She

is acting on behalf of the people, of responsibility, of truth - all of which are names of the authority of the Big Other. What gradually becomes clear as the film moves forward, though, is that the psychiatrist is more directly and in a Lacanian sense more forthright in his relationship with the Big Other than the journalist.

His violence is not of his scheme a breach of the social contract, but a reaction to the most essential breach of the social contract, its inability to secure the weak against those who possess structural domination over them. This argument situates *Murder Report* in fruitful discourse with the insight that Robson and Spina (2022) explore in their cross-cultural work of *Vigilante Justice in Society and Popular Culture*, which is the dissonance between formal legality and substantive justice that triggers extralegal action and makes audiences reconsider their blind trust in institutional authority.

The way in which the film is dealing with such a tension is, nevertheless, more philosophically advanced than most vigilante films since it puts the violence of the psychiatrist into a certain clinical and relationship context: the ethics of care. Emotional engagement with a character is not only affective, as Huang and Fung (2024) have proposed in their character identification in fiction model, but structural: it is what they refer to as to integrating, perspective-taking, understanding, and emotion as separate, yet interconnected, ways of engaging with a character. *Murder Report* is meticulously sequencing these modes in its storyline, first withholding the perspective-taking and understanding dimension and letting the emotional revulsion at the psychiatrist violence take over, and then progressively adding clinical and relation context that activates the more profound modes of engagement and finally reformatting the entire moral orientation of the audience (Chattopadhyay., 2023).

2.3 FOUCAULT'S POWER/KNOWLEDGE AND THE PRODUCTIVE NATURE OF PSYCHIATRIC DISCOURSE

The analysis of the psychiatric institution in *Madness and Civilization* by Michel Foucault

and the general development of the Power/Knowledge relations by the author is necessary additions to the Lacanian framework. To Foucault, power is not only repressive, it is not only prohibitive and punitive, but it also produces knowledge, categories, subjects, and truths. One such place as the psychiatric institution is a place where the authority to establish normalcy and pathology creates the very objects that it purports to observe. Foucault implies that such repressed or degraded knowledge has already begun to sprout through the cracks in the once-shining façade of the Age of Reason; however, he also argues the need for critical, erudite researchers such as himself, molelike students of hidden knowledge who will burrow deep beneath the foundations of progressivist historiography to uncover the irrational, the discontinuous, and the uncanny. In a recent longitudinal analysis of the discourse theory by Foucault, published in the Eurasian Journal of Applied Linguistics, Zhiyi (2023) explains this dynamic with specific specificity: discourse, as Foucault understood it, is not merely language but the structured system that governs who can speak, what constitutes evidence and who is permitted to speak, such a system is always a power-based construction in disguise.

Murder Report has a keen sense of this fruitful aspect of psychiatric power. The main character is not just a psychiatrist who is a murderer; he is a psychiatrist whose training as a professional provides him with close and detailed information as to how the very systems which are supposed to defend his patients are in fact harming them. He is a clinical insider who realizes the processes by which abuse is normalized, minimized, and institutionalized. His criminality cannot be separated out of his expertise: it is only the fact that he is aware of the system of truth-production apparatus that makes him know where it is faulty and can see where the institutional inaction turns into institutional complicity. This is in line with what Poorghorban (2023) acknowledges as the key point that Foucault initiates concerning knowledge institutions: they are not only a reflection of social reality but they construct the subjects and issues they are supposed to serve.

The privilege once bestowed upon universal, hierarchical, and essentialist knowledge claims is now disrupted by what Foucault calls an irruption of “subjugated knowledges.” Subjugated knowledge is knowledge under the signs of the repressed, the marginal, the fragmented, and above all, the local. Subjugated knowledges are those voices or traditions that were silenced by the discourses of modernity. The psychiatrist reveals what has been repressed as a collective whole by the institutions of law, psychiatry, and journalism; the testimony of patients whose sufferings were recorded but ignored, whose grievances were acted on and discredited, whose further mistreatment was made administratively invisible. The film medium, as Maniglier and Zabunyan (2018) suggest in their description of Foucault and cinema relations, can showcase these repressed knowledges in a way that the official discourse does not allow them to be seen - by dictating the circumstances of spectatorship, the cinema can dictate the circumstances in which the audience might experience not only what they are viewing but the form of epistemological exclusion. Most provocatively, Foucault argues that the traditional approach is most deeply flawed when it assumes that power is the prerogative of the individual will, that power is a manifestation of a unified subject or stable identity. The reality, he suggests, is that subjects (individuals, selves) are constituted by power; that is, stable identities, unified selves, are in fact the necessary fictions of power as it shapes people through a matrix of social and bodily relations.

III. SPATIAL CONFINEMENT AS PSYCHIC APPARATUS: THE CHAMBER AS DISPOSITIF

The movie is strictly a part of the tradition of the chamber drama - a genre whose limitations are intrinsically bound to its consequences. The closed area serves as what Foucault (after his critique of the panopticon in *Discipline and Punish*) would call a *dispositif*: a machine or a structure that directs individual agency to institutional goals of a predetermined nature and makes the directing look natural and unavoidable. The interview room is a *dispositif*

in this sense in that it is a space that is meant to generate a certain type of truth using a certain type of subject. The psychiatrist and the journalist are opposing each other; the equipment of recording is between them, the authority to speak and the authority to record are unevenly balanced. These are not impartial designs but the furnishings of institutional influence.

In *Biopolitical Ethics in Global Cinema*, Jeong (2023) has contended that spatial restriction is utilized in the most ethically problematic Korean films to focus social contradiction - to initiate the environment where the normal processes of social negotiation are put on hold and more fundamental conflicts are revealed. This is the case to which *Murder Report* lends a certain weight, as the cramped space does not simply concentrate conflict but changes it: what is initially the asymmetric relationship of power of the journalistic interview turns out to be much more reciprocal and much more disturbing. The space that is created to generate the report of the journalist stops generating the journalist as an object - she is brought out in her own complicity, in her embeddedness within an institution, in her stake in a certain story of the monstrosity of the psychiatrist.

The Lacanian aspect of this space analysis is the Real - the aspect of experience which cannot be symbolized, which cannot be captured entirely by language or institutionality. This enclosed space, where the journalist is deprived of her institutional environment and made to spend extensive time in the company of the psychiatrist, denudes the protective role of this Symbolic structure, leaving her (and the audience) vulnerable to the Real that it otherwise masks. The experience of the Real in cinema, according to Ballas (2022) in his history of the McGowan-Copjec tradition of Lacanian film theory, is not a content - a shocking image or revelation - but an event of structure: a moment in which the Symbolic structure that has been shaping the experience of the audience has failed, and the audience is induced to realize its investment in that structure.

This is exactly what is created by *Murder Report* with its spatial restriction. The interview room walls are the walls of the professional world of the journalist as well, and, as the film unfolds, the walls grow more and more permeable, not literally but epistemically. At the end of the sequences of the film the confined space has now become not a Symbolic space of the Real of the violence of the psychiatrist but a place of confrontation with the Real of the institutional violence, the systemic violence the individual crimes of the psychiatrist were reacting against and which the report of the journalist will finally serve to cover up.

IV. THE SYMPATHETIC INVERSION: NARRATIVE ARC AS ETHICAL RE- EDUCATION

4.1 THE CONSTRUCTION OF INITIAL CONDEMNATION

The introductory scenes of the film are well developed to set the audience into a certain and apparently safe position towards the psychiatrist. Before the interview starts, the audience is aware that he has killed. This knowledge is not challenged at the outset of the film; the audience is able to step into the interview space with a well-developed opinion.

The journalist professional confidence, her institutional support, her moral certainty, all this is the confidence, the support and the certainty of the audience on the screen. According to the reasoning presented by Chevarie-Cossette (2022) in his article about the moral defense and identification of character, the viewers tend to choose one of four defense models in the case of morally offending heroes: justification, excuse, exploration, or control. The opening of *Murder Report* is crafted to preclude the first two possibilities the actions of the psychiatrist are not described as either justifiable or excusable in the beginning, but it seems that the control option is the professional paradigm that the journalist will be working with: she will be investigating, evaluating, and reporting. The breakdown of this structure in the film is therefore, a breakdown of the most comfortable defensive stance of the audience.

The professional equipment of the journalist: her tape recorder, her set of questions, her

professional detachment, serves as the so-called affective armor of the institutional subject, in his analysis of the mechanics of institutional failure in Korean cinema, Boman (2020) defines it as the emotional and professional system that enables people in the systems of power to deal with suffering without being transformed by it. This deconstruction of this armor in the span of the restricted interview is the dramatic business of the film, which, by showing under the armor, not so much a single journalist as an institutional role, a point in the system of power/knowledge in which the violence of the psychiatrist will be created as pathological and the violence of the system will be made invisible.

4.2 THE ACCUMULATION OF EPISTEMIC DISPLACEMENT

The shift of the judgment to sympathy in *Murder Report* is not a one-dramatic reversal but a restructuring of the frame in which the actions of the psychiatrist can be made readable. The model of character identification created by Huang and Fung (2024) gives a specific explanation of this process: the four dimensions of identification: merging, perspective-taking, understanding, and emotion are not activated simultaneously but activated in a certain order, and this order is important. *Murder Report* intentionally postpones the engagement of perspective-taking and comprehension and permits emotion to dominate, then progressively injects information that causes these higher response modes to be engaged and eventually renders it impossible to continue with the entirely emotional system of condemnation.

The story of a case that the psychiatrist tells serves as a point within this displacing chain. These are not merely victimization tales, but accurate illustrations of institutional failure - stories where the processes of the system have been adhered to, where the appropriate authorities were informed, where the appropriate documents were submitted, where the appropriate procedures were implemented, and where the damage still ensued. Such is the difference, which Robson (2021) in his analysis of revenge and justice in the cinema presents in his article in the *International Journal of Semiotics of Law*, as defining central to the

vigilante story in its most advanced form: the difference between the hero who is forced to act by accident and the protagonist who acts by design.

Every case story that the psychiatrist tells is a challenge to this supposition, and the narrow surroundings assure that she has no way to flee into the institutional distance that her professional identity usually secures her. Similarly, as Farahbakhsh and Ebrahimi (2021), in their review of social metaphor in Bong Joon-ho's *Parasite* in *Cinej Cinema Journal*, observe in a related context, the most politically important Korean movies do not merely represent social inequality but through their formal structuring, their spatial arrangements, their narrative sequence, their control of audience identification, make the audience see the structure of inequality not *Murder Report* attains a similar effect in regard to the institutional power: the audience is not only a spectator of the epistemic displacement of the journalist but experiences a variant of it.

4.3 THE JOURNALIST AS STRUCTURAL ACCOMPLICE

The most difficult implication of the movie and the most valuable theoretical contribution to it is the fact the journalist is neutral in itself, and this is also a structural violence. Towards the end of the film, the viewer is invited to come to the realization that whatever the content of the report the journalist constructs will operate within a discursive system that has already predetermined the meaning of what the psychiatrist is doing.

The strength of the discourse on the institution, as Zhiyi (2023) claims in his longitudinal analysis of Foucault discourse theory, is exactly the ability to direct the agency of the individual to the predefined goals and make this directing look like the performance of professional freedom. According to Foucauldian terminology, the journalist feels she is making editorial decisions; she is performing the *dispositif*. Her being neutral is not a stand-point that is not within the system but rather the most efficient stand-point of the system in itself.

This collective enclosure of the interview space is therefore the formal metaphor of this structural position of the film: the confinements

of both journalist and psychiatrist are similar in type, yet different in qualitatively different ways.

V. KOREAN CINEMA'S ETHICAL IMAGINARY: SYSTEMIC VIOLENCE, CARE, AND LEGISLATIVE PROVOCATION

In order to place *Murder Report* into its more general cultural context, one must consider how Korean cinema has addressed the issues of the institutional care, systemic failure, and the boundaries of the legal justice in particular. This interaction has a legislative aspect that is well-documented: according to the International Relations Review (2023), South Korean films such as *Silenced* (2011) have directly led to the amendment of national legislation, with the so-called Dogani bill, translating to the title of the film in Korean, fortifying the punishments against mistreatment of disabled people and tightening the conditions of victimhood.

Murder Report is involved in this tradition but lends the system gaze on the psychiatric institution in particular - a setting that introduces an element of professional and ethical focus that most of its antecedents lacked. The violence of the psychiatrist is not only personal or political but also clinical: it lies in his professional understanding of what abuse looks like during the most intimate interactions, how it functions in what seems to be therapeutic relationships and how institutions turn over and fail to turn over the records of the continued abuse.

The ethical concern with the ethics of care, the philosophical tradition of relational obligation and the dominance of specific caring relationships over general principles are implicitly involved in the film but are structurally evident throughout. As the focal point of contemporary Korean cultural production, the conference on Precariousness and Ethics of Care in Contemporary Korean Literature and Cinema, organized by the UCI School of Humanities in 2024, argued that care ethics had become a part of the Korean cultural imaginary and were used to address the inadequacy of formal legal and medical institutions to respond to the suffering of the most vulnerable. *Murder Report* is a donation to

this project: its psychiatrist expresses, in his deeds and in his stories of cases, a care-ethics stance radicalized by institutional failure - an obligatory attitude to those to whom one is owed, in which the imperatives of the caring relation outweigh those of abstract professional duty and legal obligation.

The typical gesture of the genre, as described by Bai (2022) in his history of the false redemption patterns in Korean art cinema, is to establish the circumstances in which the viewer will sympathize with a character whose actions are not morally approvable - to generate what he refers to as the suspended judgment as opposed to resolution.

VI. NARRATIVE AUTHORITY AND THE POLITICS OF THE REPORT

For one thing, *Murder Report* maintains a remarkable focus on the formal structure of the journalist's authority, how the journalist's professional practice gives rise to its objects, which it says it observes. The film itself can be seen as a structural commentary on this: the 'murder report' is both a project for the journalist (the murders in the journalist's report) and a practice for the psychiatrist (the systematic calculation of the institutional murder of the patients' psychological health). This double meaning, where the report is a technology for the reproduction of a power/knowledge organization, and violence is another, is a formulation of the film's central argument which is made possible by a particular institutional setting that the film constructs. This argument has a precise theoretical foundation in the analysis of the confession and the examination as power-laden rituals performed by Foucault. In the analysis of Foucauldian discourse theory, Zhiyi explains that Foucault's key discovery was that the institutionalization of a truth produces that truth itself; the examination produced the patient's pathology, and the confession produced the subject's guilt, where the former did not reveal the patient's disease but rather established the normalcy of illness in a discourse structure that had already defined what a disease was. The ritual of this form is a kind of confessional: the institutional examiner

(the journalist) produces the object of inquiry (the perpetrator) as a particular kind of true subject, whose truth will be given a framework within which it will be processed. The psychiatrist, however, does not agree to the subject-position that the confessional ritual is supposed to create. That he doesn't seem to be a patient who is trying to get treatment, a criminal who's seeking absolution, or a monster seeking understanding. He does, consistently and disturbingly, seem to be a doctor of a sort that is not addressed by the journalist's framework: one that is not recognized within the categories structured by the journalist's framework. As described in the *Journal of Japanese and Korean Cinema* by Choe (2018), Korean cinema of the past ten years has established a unique tradition of 'ethical cinema' which is not just about posing ethical questions but more about inviting the audience to the film to reflect on ethics through the formal structure of the film itself; one that brings forth moral engagement and not merely comfortable moral reassurance. *Murder Report* is a contribution to this tradition in its strictest sense: it is a film that does not offer its audience anything to think and, through the formal constraints of the chamber drama, the Lacanian dynamics of the mirror and the gaze, and the Foucauldian analysis of institutional power, restructures the conditions in which thinking is possible.

VII. AUDIENCE IDENTIFICATION, THE ANTI-HERO, AND THE ETHICS OF SYMPATHY

The identification of the audience and the implications of the sympathy it produces is always the most difficult to deal with. In recent media psychology research, some new empirical studies have started to shed light on how audiences make moral judgments about transgressive fictional subjects. Huang and Fung's 2024 model of character identification, which identifies merging, perspective-taking, understanding and emotion as different types of audience engagement, offers an analytical framework for the sequence of modes in the *Murder Report* that leads to its inversion of sympathy. Studies on the fight of the anti-hero

in today's movies and the concept of moral ambiguity in film, conducted by researchers at the University of Florida (2023), have shown that the process of identification to one of these morally transgressive protagonists is not straightforward and uniform, but rather a structurally complex process where elements of identification are activated at different narrative moments. *Murder Report* takes advantage of this complexity in a particularly sophisticated way: the emotional level of identification is initiated early while the level of perspective taking and understanding is gradually advanced towards the psychiatrist's point of view, and an affective dis-alignment, where it is impossible to merge identifications, takes place. The film's handling of loyalty, its moral judgments of characters, is as sophisticated. Morpheously complex perpetrators are likely to follow a progression of defensive strategies before audiences become more involved in the modes of engagement, as Chevarie-Cossette (2022) points out in his discussion of the Defense-First Approach to Responsibility. As the psychiatrist's case narratives take out each of the journalistic's (and the audience's) moral defenses, the audience must move to the next defense until at the film's end all defenses have been used up and the audience finds itself in the same position the film has led them to throughout: suspended judgement. More specifically, what it implies is the institutional context in which these evaluations are conducted is itself created by the very same power that is being called into question by the psychiatrist (Kim., 2024). This shows the audience the moral structure that leads to their first condemnation, and which is an institutional construct, working to the benefit of the institutions it defends. It is those films that make this revelation, which are not only intellectually graspable, but also experientially inevitable, as Jeong (2023) argues in his analysis of biopolitical ethics in global cinema, that are the most politically significant Korean films.

VIII. CONCLUSION: THE IMPOSSIBLE REPORT AND THE FRAGILITY OF NEUTRAL AUTHORITY

Murder Report (2025) is a movie about the non-existence of the neutral observer and the violence that the “neutral” does. Its psychiatrist-protagonist is one whose violence is exposed as the violence that institutional neutrality hides; the journalist-protagonist is one whose professional competences are slowly revealed as a kind of structural complicity. Its limited space is not a point of capture but a shared condition that alters both the character and the space, revealing the Symbolic frameworks which are usually invisible and which, in the process, make the audience confront their own investment in institutionalized violence.

A Lacanian examination of Murder Report reveals that it is a prolonged enactment of the Mirror Stage's political aspect: that is, the institutionalization of identities through specular relations where the Other is always put into a subordinate and fixed role. The Lacanian encounter in cinema is not the identification with a unified image, according to the account of Ballas (2022), but the disruption of identification — when the mirror reflects back more than the subject can expect, and the subject is compelled to perceive the constructedness of his or her image.

Murder Report is built on the very same principle of power that was central to Foucault's work, as his entire discourse theory was developed over several decades and focuses on the concept of power as constitutive rather than repressive, as Zhiyi (2023) has shown in his longstanding account of Foucault's discourse theory.

The passage from judgment to sympathy is not a sleight of hand, but a demonstration is not just that justice is always enforced by institutions which claim to serve theirs, but that they are still the ones most vulnerable to injustice, and that justice is most easily denied. The journalist is supposed to write a 'murder report', but neutrality, as the film has been showing throughout its run, is never neutral, it is always an attitude, a stance, a position, an attitude towards institutional interests, a stance towards institutional violences.

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