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## CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

### THE NEW ORDER: THE METHOD OF MADNESS IN THE CINEMA OF MICHAEL HANEKE

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In a relatively short period of time, Michael Haneke's oeuvre developed from critically acclaimed films with a small distribution, co-produced by Austrian and German television, to works of French cinema, without doubt the most sophisticated cinema in Europe in terms of public image, distribution, and star-power. Now accosted by French stars (Juliette Binoche, Daniel Auteuil, Isabelle Huppert) to make movies showcasing them, Haneke's name is synonymous with European art house cinema. It should be added that Haneke himself is quite media-savvy, insisting in interviews and in the short documentary features that accompany the DVD-editions of his films that he, as the filmmaker, can only give one of many possible interpretations of the films he wrote and directed, adding to the image of himself as the heir to the European tradition of the socially critical *auteur*.<sup>1</sup> Like other European directors who previously took this spot in the imagination of the *feuilletons* (e.g., Peter Greenaway and Theo Angelopoulos), Haneke is addressing topics considered difficult measured by the standards of commercial cinema: the traumatic effects of violence, racism, sexism, and alienation. Considering his well-documented contempt for television and Hollywood cinema with its generic system (see Cieutat and Rouyer, Grabner, Sharett), which by critics and scholars alike are seen as postmodern excesses lacking in substance, it is not surprising that Michael Haneke has been labeled a modernist.

This reputation in turn clearly dictates the reception of Haneke's films, which are judged by their ability to take a readily identifiable stance against phenomena perceived as "typically postmodern," i.e., the reifying effects of consumer capitalism and the role of mass-media in it. One critic, representative of such a judgment, attests to "Haneke's perverse modernist

desire to punish us for our collusion with the commodified—and thus, for Haneke at least, mendacious—narrative certainties of dominant cinema.”<sup>2</sup> While there are certainly signature shots typical of Haneke (a close-up on the exchange of goods and money), typical scenarios (an oedipal triangle, often sharing the same names—Anna/Anne, Georg/Georges, and Ben), and recurring motifs (the droning of television and/or reference to current events such as the war in Bosnia) that warrant such a reading, I would argue that these surface phenomena are merely symptoms, and that it would be more fruitful to concentrate on madness, the one *topos* that appears in one form or another in all of Haneke’s films. Therefore, instead of expecting a critique of our culture that we can apply when needed, we should accept, with regard to Haneke, Nietzsche’s famous insight that philosophers and artists are “physicians of culture,” an insight with which Haneke, who studied psychology and philosophy at the University of Vienna, is certainly familiar. In other words, instead of the normative demand for a cure, we should first accept the *auteur*’s ability to diagnose a disease in our culture by reading the symptoms.

With this shift in perspective in mind, we can readily see that there are two forms of madness in Haneke’s films that need to be held apart: the everyday craziness of life in our fragmented, postmodern world and the madness of a criminal act, often linked to a violent, traumatic event that cuts all social bonds. Haneke seems to play here on the two German words for being mad: *wahnsinnig* (meaning “insane”), whose more commonly encountered noun form, *Wahnsinn*, could be translated literally as “delusional sense”—with the same double meaning of “sense” as in English—and the more colloquially used adjective *verrückt*, crazy, literally “out of joint.” It is in this latter sense that madness in film is generally depicted: as a character’s state of un-reason (*Ver-rücktheit*). It is important to point out that this craziness which befalls the evil stock character of virtually all action films is never motivated psychologically—the prototypical “bad guy” of Hollywood action films is evil incarnate in himself—but instead provides the hero’s motivation for violence in the form of a morally justified revenge. In Haneke’s cinema, however, madness becomes a new order that provides a new *sense*: we can locate this new sense, for example, in the form of a new code in the everyday craziness of racism in, for example, *Code inconnu: Récit incomplet de divers voyages* (*Code unknown*, 2000). When the civil order breaks down in *Le Temps du loup* (*Time of the Wolf*, 2003) only mad actions still make sense. And, cynically, the new order of madness provides perverse rules of the game in the *Familienroman*, the Freudian family romance of the tortured family in *Funny Games* (1997). This article will look at the

instances of this “new-order” madness in the cinema of cruelty that Michael Haneke unfolds and explore its subversive uses, especially as concerns not only Haneke’s cultural analyses, but—on another and less understood level—his very stance concerning cinema spectatorship and the pedagogical role cinema plays for the viewer.

What is remarkable here is the affinity that Haneke’s conceptual framework shows to philosophers like Michel Foucault, Jean Baudrillard, Jacques Derrida, Gilles Deleuze, Shoshana Felman, or Alain Badiou, who have been dismissed with the label “postmodern.” Badiou, for example, calls for an “ethics of truths,” while Felman reflects on the pedagogical use of trauma.<sup>3</sup> This does not mean that Haneke’s films can be explained by reading these philosophers and “applying” their thought to his films; instead, it should be stressed that these films make a similar attempt with aesthetic means as does the philosophy of the above-mentioned thinkers. This attempt can be described as the thinking of a possible alternative to the global culture of so-called postmodernity.<sup>4</sup>

The basis for Haneke’s unique take on madness can be found already in his first three films, the trilogy about alienation which he baptized “glaciation of feelings” (“*Vergletscherung der Gefühle*”): *Der Siebente Kontinent* (*The Seventh Continent*, 1989), *Benny’s Video* (1992) and *71 Fragmente einer Chronologie des Zufalls* (*71 Fragments of a Chronology of Chance*, 1994), as well as in *Funny Games* (1997), the last German language film Haneke wrote and directed.<sup>5</sup> Noticeably, the family’s murder/suicide in *The Seventh Continent*—apparently inspired by a real event—as well as the shooting spree and suicide in *71 Fragments of a Chronology of Chance* indeed *do not make sense*. *The Seventh Continent*’s nuclear family is socially on the rise, with a long-awaited and hard-earned promotion for the father adding to their economic security, a well-established daily routine and, apparently, a comfortable life in their house. When the couple destroys all their goods and flushes the money down the toilet before killing their young daughter and committing suicide, their motives cannot be explained. Likewise, Max’s humiliation at the bank at the hands of an aggressive customer in *71 Fragments* certainly does not justify his taking out his aggression on innocent bystanders. However, if we take Michael Haneke as a “physician of culture,” what Gilles Deleuze calls a “clinician of civilization” (*Logic*, 237), we can establish a point of view from which this clinical picture does make sense. In short, we need to identify this new disease by carefully analyzing its symptoms.

The clinician of civilization, as Daniel W. Smith explains in his excellent introduction to Deleuze’s *Essays Critical and Clinical*, “distinguishes cases that had hitherto been confused by dissociating

symptoms that were previously grouped together, and by juxtaposing them with others that were previously dissociated. In this way, the doctor constructs an original clinical concept for the disease [...]” (xvi). In the following, I bring out the most important of Michael Haneke’s clinical concepts, still prevalent in his French-language films, by concentrating on the different forms of madness in his first four cinematic feature films. I focus on two concepts: trauma, which always results from a failed integration into the symbolic framework, and symbolic exchange, an objectifying (market) force that expresses itself in the infinite substitutability of object for object and object for money. As I argue, these concepts do not provide a cure, or a single identifiable cause for the disease, but rather introduce a pedagogy of the image, where the viewer is led away from seeking a transcendent, true image, or Truth, and instead is initiated into the (painful) taking of perspectives that yields unexpected, plural truths. The clinical concepts of exchange and trauma are only the first steps in the process of finding a possible cure, providing not a punctual event constituting a radical shift, but rather the bringing on of a different mode of thinking and praxis.

In his films, Haneke attempts what Deleuze calls a pedagogy, educating the viewer to more complex ways of reading, thus enabling the diagnostic work performed by the image: “There is a pedagogy of the image, especially with Godard, when the function is made explicit, when the frame serves as an opaque surface of information, sometimes blurred by saturation, sometimes reduced to the empty set, to the white or black screen” (*Cinema 1*, 13).<sup>6</sup> This pedagogy of the image appears in Haneke’s films in the insertion of black film, but also in the painfully long sequences of the table-tennis player and the old man’s phone conversation in *71 Fragments*. In *Benny’s Video*, it appears as the repeated slaughter of the pig (which we must assume is real, not “all Ketchup,” as Benny calls cinematic bloodshed) and as the fictive slaughter of the girl, which we simultaneously see and do not see, being out of the field of vision of Benny’s video camera, in turn the object of the film camera. This space that is not shown but that nevertheless exists in the fiction is known as *hors champ* (“out of field”) in cinematic terms. In all these cases of video-in-film, the image is revealed *as* image with its manipulative power, thus drawing attention to the materiality of the *hors cadre*, the outside of the cinematic frame itself, the space of enunciation: What is it the director does not allow us to see? Do we really want to see it?

In the framework of clinical diagnoses, it is not surprising that in *The Seventh Continent* we do not partake in the couple’s planning of the suicide and no psychological motive is ever given, while only the wife’s

letters to her in-laws are heard as voice-over. Benny, in *Benny's Video*, pressured to give an explanation for the slaughter of a young girl he encountered by chance, can only say that he “wanted to know how it is.” Instead, Haneke’s camera—which has often been compared to a diagnostic instrument (Seeblen, 52)—dissociates and isolates the protagonist’s daily routines in order to facilitate the diagnoses. These routines—with some significant exceptions—are symbolic exchanges: buying and consuming food, leaving a note with some lunch money, renting videos, exchanging money for drugs, etc. In each instance, the camera focuses on the object of exchange, sometimes in extreme close-up. As an example, repeated scenes of shopping come to mind, or the long chain of hands in *Benny's Video*, passing on the goods and the money from one choirboy to the next.

The isolating focus on the object of exchange has the curious effect that the object as the actual agent seems to stand still, while the world revolves around it. Here, Haneke shows another kinship with Jean-Luc Godard insofar as a careful differentiation needs to be upheld between what Godard famously calls “*juste une image*” (“just/only an image”) and “*une image juste*” (“a just/true image”). While the “just image” attempts to find a perfect expression for a concept, the images Godard and Haneke construct are “only images” that do not point to a transcendent point of view, but rather question it.<sup>7</sup> This differentiation in turn allows two different but not mutually exclusive readings or, rather, perspectives. One perspective that establishes itself in the foreground—and here the images certainly provide a “just” illustration—concerns the lack of meaning in this routine, stressing, as Adam Bingham aptly puts it, the “emotional vacuity of modern life”:

“By showing only shots of hands turning off alarm clocks, hands preparing food, etc., the film very effectively states just how mechanically such tasks, the everyday tasks that make up these characters’ lives, are performed. And thus just how empty their lives really are.”

This perspective, however, provides the foil for a second perspective, which, since it is an abstract concept, cannot be shown, but is constructed by the constant repetition and insertion of a black screen that syncopates *The Seventh Continent* and *71 Fragments*: the exchange of commodities. More akin to Eisenstein’s famous plan to adapt Marx’s *Capital* for the screen, Haneke crosses over in these moments to the genre of essay-film, effectively filming the paradoxical impossibility of showing the concept of exchange.

Michael Haneke's educated viewer, enabled to "see" the concept of exchange at work, must now be equally capable of seeing the exceptional. That this network of symbolic exchange is firmly grounded in consumer capitalism and that words are used sparingly and entirely for the purpose of basic communication is not remarkable in itself. But the notable exception to this circulation of goods, seemingly a rupture of exchange, is the family's murder/suicide in *The Seventh Continent*, which takes the form of a suicidal potlatch with a carefully planned exchange of all moveable goods for money, withdrawal of cash and a final feast, followed by a methodical destruction of all furniture and the flushing of the cash down the toilet. This absolute annulment of the family's economic existence, however, is already foreshadowed by some breaks in the otherwise smooth symbolic exchange. When the brother-in-law's inability to get over their mother's death manifests itself at the dinner table, the couple responds to his emotional breakdown with an embarrassed silence. More telling, when the young daughter, Eva, feigns blindness at school, her mother promises Eva that she will go unpunished if she admits her guilt. Ignoring her promise as well as the daughter's obvious attempt to get attention—we see a newspaper with the headline "Blind Girl Earns Sympathy"—the mother slaps her in the face.

This violation of a symbolic debt finds its most disturbing manifestation in the rationalization that we witness in the suicide note that is left for the parents. Here, the couple explains that they pondered whether they should "take Eva with them" or not. After asking their daughter whether she is afraid of death, and obtaining her response in the negative, they decide that killing her would be in her best interest. A visual illustration of this decision is provided by the fish, whose agonizing death is shown in extreme close-up. At this point, Eva begins to understand her imminent death and resists when she is forced to drink the poisonous cocktail of sleeping pills. Eva as the child, however, is exactly that which escapes the symbolic exchange in the paradoxical form of the gift. As Jacques Derrida points out in *Given Time*, there can be no gift since every gift introduces its receiver into a vicious circle of gift and counter-gift, in short, an economic exchange which denies the very definition of gift as something that is given freely, without ulterior motive. Following Marcel Mauss's play on the etymology of gift, leading to the different meanings that the word gained in English, where it refers to something that is given, and German, where *Gift* means poison, Derrida states:

In order to be gift, not only must the donor or donee not perceive or receive the gift as such, have no consciousness of it, no memory, no recognition; he or she must also forget it right away [*à l'instant*] and

moreover this forgetting must be so radical that it exceeds even the psychoanalytic categorality of forgetting. (18)

The only gift—and Haneke clearly points to it in the final sequence of *The Seventh Continent*—is therefore the impossible gift of existence that Eva as the child cannot perceive or recognize, but which in turn puts her parents into debt. Contrary to this debt—what we might call an ethical debt—the parents, by giving poison to their child, act on Eva as if she were a commodity in their possession, like the furniture or the fish, not something that is indeed given in the other, radical sense. Thus, the viewer realizes that, in fact, the family murder/suicide is not a rupture in the chain of exchange, but rather a radical form of it, radical because it takes the logic of exchange to a new, undeniably “logical” end, and radical because, as image, it calls attention to that very logic of exchange that the couple fails to overcome.

With this perversion of the gift in mind, we can now better determine Michael Haneke’s clinical concept of the exchange. The repeated focus on the exchange of goods shows that the objects of exchange not only provide meaning, but that the protagonists in this circle also fully identify with this logic of exchange, thereby defining themselves as goods—a true perversion in the sense of Lacan’s pun of the *père-version*, the father’s version, where the subject denies its own excessive sexual enjoyment, its *jouissance*, and instead makes itself into an instrument of the Other’s *jouissance*. The perverse logic of the parents’ actions becomes apparent here: since the Other as the site of absolute alterity does not exist and cannot be appropriated by identification, serving as an instrument of the Other’s *jouissance* means serving a pure projection of an inhuman logic. Characteristically, the (self-)destruction is carried out without any apparent emotional involvement. Indeed, instead of seeing the potlatch as an alternative to the capitalist exchange of goods, one that replaces the utilitarian economy of lack with one of excess, as Georges Bataille famously suggests in *The Accursed Share*, the parents in *The Seventh Continent* fully identify with the exchange. Any forms of excess, be they emotional or other, have no place in this logic. The reaction to the brother’s breakdown and the slap in the face that the spouse receives after declaring her love to her husband in *71 Fragments* also bear witness to this. And the cool reaction of the father in *Benny’s Video* is telling. He sarcastically remarks: “*Nicht gerade die ideale Imagepflege!* (Not especially ideal for our public image!)” The problem is one of dealing with the excess, the non-exchangeable—or, as Bataille calls it, expenditure—which threatens the family’s symbolic capital. Hence, the body of the victim in *Benny’s Video* is entirely perceived as a problem of waste-

disposal: “The pieces have to be small enough so that they don’t clog the drain.”

The audience, by virtue of Haneke’s clinical camera, is pushed into the role of Polonius, who has to admit: “Though this be madness, yet there is method in it.” Or, as the father at the beginning of the suicidal potlatch perceives: “We can only do this if we approach it methodically!” Only from this limited perspective—from the point of view of the exchange—does it make sense, *Wahnsinn*, to define the family entirely as a closed and dispensable economic circle that can be taken off the circuit without hurting the overall exchange. The sense of delusion stems from the logic of exchange, not a rupture with it, thus making “delusional sense.”

This inability to deal with excess and the subsequent identification with the logic of exchange leading to a perversion points to a traumatic, i.e., failed, integration into the psyche’s conceptual framework, a failure that Freud famously linked to the death drive. Here, we encounter a second recurring clinical concept, that of trauma, which in Haneke’s oeuvre is already discernible in *71 Fragments* but is developed later in his French films, especially *Caché* (*Hidden*, 2005). According to Laplanche and Pontalis, trauma is “[a]n event in the subject’s life, defined by its intensity, by the subject’s incapacity to respond adequately to it and by the upheaval and long-lasting effects that it brings about in the psychical organization” (465). These traumas which appear in all of Haneke’s films and are always linked to a violent crime, however, should not be confused with the trauma of the typical traumatized character that we encounter in many Hollywood films and whose trauma is usually eliminated or “solved” by the violent annihilation of the trauma’s cause.<sup>8</sup> *Caché*, for example, goes to great lengths to establish George’s, the main character’s, innocence, who, as a 6 year old, out of jealousy contributed to the removal of an Algerian boy, Majid, to an orphanage, but who was of course too young at that point to understand the effects of his actions. In their concise introduction to the notion of trauma, Baranger et al. point out that in Freud’s definition the traumatic should not be confused with the pathogenic. The trauma is instead an event that needs to be “historicized,” that is, explained in the form of a history. However, as Baranger et al. stress, the resulting history is only valid from a very limited point of view: “This does not mean that historization is an arbitrary process. As analysts, we cannot propose to anyone any history that is not his own” (124). The historization that happens in Haneke’s cinema is also not arbitrary but belongs to the mad point of view, the only point of view that provides a meaning. Much like an analyst, the audience of a Haneke film has to

accept and identify with the mad point of view in order to avoid an arbitrary, i.e., relativistic, reading.

In *Caché* the actual traumata, always resulting from a failed integration into the symbolic framework, appear on three levels. The trigger for the events depicted in the film is the real trauma brought about by the brutal murder of up to 200 Algerians and the subsequent cover-up by French police in Paris on 17 October 1961. On a second, extradiegetic level, the audience can only imagine the abuse Majid must have received as a young Algerian boy, recently orphaned because of a massacre that was committed and covered up by the authorities. Majid's incapacity to deal with the traumatic loss of his parents and the abuse at the orphanage results in an apparently arrested development and his blaming Georges for his misery. The third type of trauma, finally, is the one to which Majid subjects Georges—and by extension the viewer—by his shocking and bloody suicide.

To take another example of Haneke's depiction of trauma, *Le Temps du loup* puts this depiction of the violent event that traumatizes the viewer right at the beginning of the film when the father, a figure of calm and sincere authority, is suddenly shot down by a squatter, an event which we witness only through the sound of the gunshot, the blood on the mother's face, and her vomiting in reaction to the slaughter of her husband. The camera carefully avoids a shot of the body. The unknown event that caused the civil order to break down is never explained and, as in the case of Majid's imagined past, stays outside the frame of events unfolding on the screen, always present (we see burning livestock) but unexplained.

Another example of this extradiegetic trauma is certainly the incredible hardship and abuse the young fugitive in *71 Fragments* must have suffered and to which he alludes in an interview he is giving on television. Again, it is an imagined trauma, requiring an act of imagination on the part of the audience. Apparently unfazed by his ordeals or the interview situation, the fugitive talks about his past. However, if a girl his age already works regularly as a prostitute, how desolate must his own life be? Likewise, the trauma of real historical event is, of course, omnipresent in Haneke's oeuvre in the form of news about violent conflicts that play unobserved in the background in, for example, Benny's room in *Benny's Video*, or the Laurents' living room in *Caché*. As in Godard's films—*Notre musique/Our Music* (2004) and *For Ever Mozart* (1996) come to mind—the war in Bosnia and the Gulf War are omnipresent here. And like Godard and other leading intellectuals, Haneke seems to suggest that the West has not dealt adequately with these traumatic events, that is, has

failed to integrate them in its symbolic framework by appropriately historicizing them.<sup>9</sup>

One could object, of course, that establishing trauma as the limit of representation is not exactly a new idea, especially in light of the paradoxes involved in representing the unimaginable of the Holocaust. What Haneke avoids with his complex strategy is the creation of a third, overarching position, one that embraces relativism in order to pursue a meta-truth. This relativism would indeed provide the closure that Haneke's films regularly deny. Again, Deleuze provides a theoretical rationale for this shift which he calls "perspectivism" and which he finds in the Baroque. As Deleuze puts it:

[P]erspectivism amounts to a relativism, but not the relativism we take for granted. It is not a variation of truth according to the subject, but the condition in which the truth of a variation appears to the subject. This is the very idea of Baroque perspective. (*The Fold*, 20)

Instead of the omniscient perspective of traditional narrative cinema, Haneke's films create conditions in which a truth appears to the viewer, as uncomfortable as this truth might be. The truth espoused by this position is not "capital t" Truth, but a plural truth that appears, sometimes briefly, in a given perspective and that is not subjective: just images, and definitely not a just image. Avoiding an image that somehow "captures" a transcendent truth is key here. The clichéd "life is crazy," for example, is inverted and appears as a life that suddenly makes sense when the viewer is forced to take the perspective of the senseless event.

As is the case especially in *71 Fragments* and *Code inconnu*, the events unfolding on the screen make sense only from the paradoxical point of view of the traumatic event, the *Wahnsinn*, that provides the only link for the different storylines. While in *71 Fragments* the characters are finally connected by the rampage and the contingency of being in the wrong place at the wrong time, *Code inconnu* adds another dimension by linking different kinds of racism: the thoughtless cruelty of Jean's action and the policeman who automatically takes Jean's side, but also the sexism and projected racism of the young Arab who attacks Anne. This perspective that is forced on the viewer is puzzling for many critics who seem to resist what Haneke's pedagogy of the image effectively demands, a thinking from the mad perspective of the traumatic event.<sup>10</sup> Here again we need to acknowledge that Georges and Anne in their different incarnations are objectively innocent. From the point of view of the event, however, their inability to work through or "historicize" the traumas makes them guilty. In this sense *Crash*, by Paul Haggis (2004), could be

considered the exact opposite of Haneke's *71 Fragments* and *Code Inconnu*, with which it shares some structural similarities. *Crash* attempts to find "just images" in order to purvey a strong message, while Haneke's films question the entire concept of the "just," overarching image.

That the appearance of trauma in different forms in Haneke's films can easily be mapped onto Lacan's well-known topology of the Borromean knot, which illustrates the formation of the subject using the entwined circles of Real/Imaginary/Symbolic, underlines the importance of this concept, enabling us to see even better the significance of the perspectival shifts in Haneke's films.<sup>11</sup> If we take the filmic text as a form of the Symbolic and the unseen traumas as the Imaginary, the Real appears mostly in the form of a historic event that is mediated by television. There is, however, another image that Haneke carefully constructs in his films, with the notable exception of the *Le Temps du loup* and *La Pianiste/The Piano Teacher* (2001). This pedagogical image appears *just* briefly with the shock of realizing that we are not gazing *at* something but *with* something, thereby traumatizing the viewer with an abrupt shift in perspective.

At the beginning of *Caché*, for example, a perfectly innocent shot of a tranquil urban neighborhood is suddenly revealed to be a surveillance video by a fast-forwarding of the tape and voices that comment on what can be seen on it. Here the gazes of spectator, surveillance- and film camera, characters, and unknown agent find themselves suddenly aligned—except that, of course, each of them sees something different. A similar moment appears twice in *Benny's Video*, first when the video of the killing is shown to the parents, and then when Benny shows a video of his parents to the police. And in *Code inconnu* we must realize that a puzzling scene showing Anne frolicking in a pool with another man and a dramatic last-minute rescue of a little boy is only a film in which she stars. The function of this shift is pedagogical in that it educates the viewer about trauma, giving him or her a wake-up call, a taste of trauma first-hand. It short-circuits viewer identification by suddenly putting the viewer in the subjective position of first-person narrative. This is doubly traumatizing because he or she never expected to occupy this position, and because it is also occupied by the unknown agent. The viewer is thus made to bear and confront a troubled ethical position with which he or she must identify at that moment.

However, the most pronounced instance of this traumatizing shift in perspective appears in *Funny Games*, certainly Haneke's most controversial film so far, shocking audiences and critics since its release.<sup>12</sup> While it might be possible for an audience to take a distanced stance

towards the violent events depicted in *Le Temps du loup* and *La Pianiste*, *Funny Games* refuses any relieving perspective. Again, this refusal of closure works on several levels, the most surprising being, of course, the mastery on the intradiegetic level over the diegesis that one of the sadistic killers suddenly deploys. When the mother can grab the shotgun and at least partially avenge the slaughter of her son, the other killer frantically looks for the remote control. He then proceeds to rewind the scene until the crucial moment and thus prevents the mother from reaching the gun in the rerun. This, along with the other self-referential moments, not only destroys the phantasm of an imagined, possible happy-ending, but also the spectator's mastery over the text.

In his perceptive reading of *Funny Games*, Brian Price recognizes that the theme of mastery is established already in the first game of *Funny Games*, the family's classical music guessing-game: "The satisfaction the couple takes in correctly matching name to sound, sign to signifier, is both an expression of cultural mastery and an expression of confidence in an essential bond between the word and sound, speech and authentic self" (26). This bond relates also to the mastery of the spectator, who expects a bond between the text and self, authentication of self by the filmic text. This expectation is mocked by the killers' discussion about the reality of fiction, which "is as real as the reality that you see likewise," right after they throw the mother overboard.

Read on a superficial level, the smug superiority of Peter and Paul, the killers, combined with the film's self-referentiality, would point to a "fallacious allegory," as an enraged reviewer has remarked. Tellingly, it is especially Haneke's refusal to show the acts of violence, focusing only on the effects, that angers this critic: "It is an immoral procedure and a lie to show the victim's bodies as the sole place of violence" (Masson, 39; my translation). Price is correct here in insisting that *Funny Games* is not about violence but about the unrepresentability of pain. As he explains, pain that is linked to a cathartic effect in the end serves an ideology: "Instead, pain here mobilizes thought, but ironically does so by its refusal to find a word or image identical to it" (29). A traditional moralist perspective would seek to provide a meaning, a transcendent point of view, while *Funny Games* insists that the body of the victim is indeed the only space where the image of violence can be found. The conscience of the perpetrator certainly stays clean. Hence the repeated instances of paradoxically innocent guilty persons, like Georges in *Caché*. The young black man in *Code inconnu* who berates Jean for his insulting gesture unwittingly condemns the woman whose dignity he wanted to protect to being deported. And even Benny's deed, as horrible as it is, would not

count as premeditated murder, while the parents' careful planning of their criminal act is perfectly rationalized by the reference to a higher order.

It seems, then, that the two clinical concepts that Haneke diagnoses—and that are here called “exchange” and “trauma”—are related in *Funny Games* insofar as there is a class conflict carrying the events. Interestingly enough, this class conflict relates to the audience, not the killers. Not only are the two killers familiar with their victims' way of life, easily able to turn the gated community into a prison camp, but, as their knowledge of golf and sailing shows, they are not impostors but clearly part of the upper-middle-class that they are murdering. Ultimately, the audience's envy of the life of the rich is punished by the traumatizing events we are forced to see, or, what is worse, the spectacle of which we are denied. Again, the killers' actions do not make sense unless we accept the point of view of the exchange fully. Indeed, the only difference between killer and victim seems to be that Peter and Paul do not buy into the values of high culture and morality but fully identify with completely free-floating, fully exchangeable rules of the game that they change at will, even breaking the basic rule of fiction when they break “the fourth wall” by addressing the spectator and changing the diegetic reality. To come back to the viewer of Haneke's films in general, he or she is thus forced to follow the logic of exchange to its end and to confront it in all its traumatic “fullness,” thus gaining insight into his or her own implication in this exchange. Or, to follow through the metaphor of the physician of culture, the viewer gains a bill of (ill) health regarding his or her stance on—and in—exchange.

What Haneke shows might be summarized thus: it is not so much that late capitalist culture is characterized by the disease of madness as regards the logic of exchange, but rather that the logic of exchange proceeds prosaically, sanely to its end. Furthermore, to invoke the task of the physician of culture introduced at the beginning, through the concept of trauma newly associated to that of exchange, the viewer is given a unique perspective or view, a brief but true image of that madness and his or her position, both ethical and structural, in it such that the “perspectivity” of the perspective—its constructedness, the manner of its production—is itself briefly visible. The view is thus also a view into the production of this (produced) perspective.

Inevitably, what follows Haneke's clinical diagnosis is the demand for a cure. However, here we need to resist again the temptation to find a cure in the form of a transcendent perspective. As was shown above, by reading the symptoms, Haneke's cinema proceeds in two related steps necessary to diagnose the disease in our culture, whereby the filmic text appears as a form of the Symbolic and the unseen traumas to which the characters are

subjected as the Imaginary, while the Real appears mostly in the form of a historic violent event mediated by television. First, Haneke's cinema forces the spectator to accept the only perspective that makes sense, the mad perspective of the *Wahnsinn*. Second, it employs a pedagogy of the image that teaches its audience new ways of seeing in order to avoid the construction of a finalizing—that is, true and just—perspective instead showing “just images.”

However, the formulation “just images” should not be understood as irrelevant images or images that convey a relativistic truth that, in the end, is as good as any other truth. As already stated, perspectival truth, while not the same as metaphysical Truth, does have a truth-value appearing in the perspective. To put it in other words, the value of the “cure” lies in the viewer's renewed critical stance that arises from the pedagogical initiation of Haneke's films. These mad—*wahnsinnige*—images demand that the spectator situate him- or herself vis-à-vis the new order that they create. The pedagogical initiation through these images is thus such that the viewer is made to look critically not only at the filmic images, but at his or her own extradiegetic reality implicated by the diegetic madness.

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*Code inconnu: Récit incomplet de divers voyages (Code unknown)* by Michael Haneke, 2000

*Crash* by Paul Haggis, 2004

*For Ever Mozart* by Jean-Luc Godard, 1996

*Funny Games* by Michael Haneke, 1997

*Le Temps du loup (Time of the Wolf)* by Michael Haneke, 2003

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*Pianiste, La (The Piano Teacher)* by Michael Haneke, 2001

*Siebente Kontinent, Der (The Seventh Continent)* by Michael Haneke, 1989

## <sup>1</sup>Notes

Haneke, “71 Fragments,” 171: “I provide a construct and nothing more—its interpretation and its integration into a value and belief system is always the work of the recipient.”

<sup>2</sup> Falcon, “Code Unknown,” 46. For a convincing reading of Haneke as modernist see also Peucker. As further proof of my thesis I would like to point to the interesting fact that critics on a regular basis vehemently attack one film in Haneke’s oeuvre that they perceive as bad, because it does not deliver the modernist critique they expect: “Without considerable reflection and inner struggle, serious social analysis, and compassion for human difficulty, one ends up with a mirror that merely reflects back at the spectator a vision of the world that is far too familiar, far too unmediated” (Walsh); “*Funny Games* (1997) stands as the one truly bad film on Haneke’s otherwise consistently excellent filmography. [...] *Funny Games* puts a naive faith in the confrontational power of the spectacle of sadistic violence, which Tarantino had already definitively tamed and thus undermined in his first two films” (Le Cain); “The conspicuously humourless Haneke started working with stars only in *Code Unknown*, one film ago, and hasn’t yet found a credible way to reconcile his determinedly dark-side view of humanity with his new-found need to attract the mass arthouse audience” (Rayns). What I suggest is a reading that takes seeming “exceptions” seriously and sees how they make sense in the entire oeuvre.

<sup>3</sup> For an in-depth analysis of Badiou’s concept of pedagogy in relation to art and philosophy see Bartlett.

<sup>4</sup> To put it bluntly, Haneke formulates his concepts in images. I would therefore strongly disagree with Frey, who, referring amongst others to Baudrillard, Foucault, and Deleuze, claims in his “Supermodernity, Capital, and Narcissus”: “Haneke and these thinkers share an important common perspective in their respective endeavors, seeking to revive moribund fields with a respective cinematic/theoretical shock therapy.”

<sup>5</sup> I exclude here the films Michael Haneke made for television. However, my arguments can certainly be extended for his adaptation of Kafka’s *The Castle*, *Das Schloß* (1997), where Haneke also points to the madness and lack of meaning the protagonist encounters in the castle with his use of fragmentation and black screen. For an analysis of this film, see Knauß. I will not address the music in Haneke’s films, which could also be seen as taking another perspective (see Wood, Wheatley).

<sup>6</sup> See also Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 248. For a detailed reading of Deleuze and Godard’s pedagogy, see Landy.

<sup>7</sup> Deleuze points out that the just images, or “just ideas,” as he calls them, have to be understood in the form of questions (see “Three Questions,” esp. 38-40).

<sup>8</sup> As a tongue-in-cheek reference in *Caché*, Haneke puts posters in the son’s bedroom, amongst others, of *The Matrix Reloaded* (2003), *The Chronicles of Riddick* (2004), *In Hell* (2003), and *Van Helsing* (2004), all action-films whose plot revolves around the violent destruction of an evil, sometimes literally inhuman adversary.

<sup>9</sup> See here esp. Baudrillard. An interesting and very personal perspective on the event of war and its mise-en-scène can be found in Jakovljevic.

<sup>10</sup> In an otherwise insightful exploration of Isabelle Huppert’s image, Bridget Birchall concludes “that her status as subject, as manifest in *La Pianiste*, remains frustratingly problematic” (6). I would argue that *La Pianiste* only makes sense from the perspective of the traumatized character of the piano teacher. Jean Wyatt seems to be the only critic who remarked on the necessary shift in perspective (466).

<sup>11</sup> This should be understood as a pedagogy: Badiou uses Lacan’s Borromean knot to explain the vocation of the philosophical institution.

<sup>12</sup> The film apparently divided the jury in Cannes (“Special Cannes”; see also Cieutat). At the time of this writing, Haneke is finishing an American remake of *Funny Games*.