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PERSPECTIVAL TRUTH: MICHAEL HANEKE'S «THE CASTLE» AND THE FRAGMENTATION OF THE REAL

1. «An honorable enterprise»

Haneke's 1997 adaptation of Franz Kafka's *Das Schloß* (*The Castle*) is thus far his last work for television[1]. Although «the Austrian film almanac lists» it «as a feature film» and it «was released in Austrian cinemas before its television première» (Holmes 2007, 109)[2], Haneke has always professed *The Castle* to be a TV film adaption, «an honorable enterprise» aimed at «bring[ing] litera-ture closer to an audience» (Haneke 1997, 33)[3]. This is a signifi-cant remark, as it conveys a belief that this specific double status – *qua* TV product and *qua* adaption of a literary work –prevents film adaptation from being considered «autonomous art» (Haneke 1997, 33). For one, he states, a work destined for TV by definition «serves audience expectations» (Haneke 2001). For another, as an adaptation, a work is necessarily dependent upon its original

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[1] Before being well-known as a very influential film director, Michael Haneke began working for television in 1967 (Holmes 2007, 109). His first TV film, i.e., *After Liverpool* (1974), was released long before his first feature film, *Der siebente Konti-nent* (*The Seventh Continent*), which was issued in 1989. This should not come as a sur-prise, since «practically every German-speaking filmmaker» at that time «started out directing films for television, taking advantage of the relatively generous system of sub-sidies and the general openness of German and Austrian state television channels to aes-thetic innovation» (Speck 2010, 63). In any case, Haneke later specified that directing for television was not solely a matter of opportunity, but also a fitting milieu in which to de-velop his own style (see Haneke 2001).

[2] However, that reportedly happened against Haneke's will: «*The Castle*, for example, was in fact made for television, even though it will now be shown in movie houses as well. In my view, film adaptations are not genuine works of art. And I don't really know of any film adaptation that really worked very well» (Haneke 1997, 33). Later he will confirm this point: «I would not have dared to turn *The Castle* into a movie for the big screen» (Haneke 2001).

[3] Let us note that this does not imply that Haneke feels a work formally presented as an adaptation cannot result in a great feature film. However, properly speaking, such a film could no longer be called an adaptation, since «it is not possible to serve two masters at the same time» (Haneke 1997, 33). Haneke is quite categorical on this point: «Thus one has to decide. Either I use a book as a quarry for ideas for something that I want to create myself, then it is a failed project as a film adaptation, or it is to be a film for a tele-vision program that has a commitment to cultural standards» (Haneke 1997, 33).

source. While, at least at this 'statement of intent' level, such assertions draw a clear distinction between *The Castle* and Haneke's films for theatrical release, they nevertheless outline a peculiar *Spielraum* for such an «honorable enterprise», particularly in two directions: (i) the issue of how this film deals with TV audience expectations, and (ii) the issue of how Haneke's declared faithful variation plays with its primary literary source.

As regards issue (i), it is worth recalling that, at the time he was making *The Castle,* Haneke had already strongly denounced both the ever-increasing speed through which TV and «electronic media» in general present images to the audience and the formal indistinguishability in how they treat very different contents – especially as regards the stylistic similarity characterizing the representation of real and fictitious occurrences. This is a phenomenon that Haneke also discusses in connection with mainstream cinema and its relationship of mutual influence with «electronic media»[4]. According to him, this has led to perilous consequences for the recipients' consciousnesses, a major one being that even those images purportedly depicting actual events are «deprived of reality» (Haneke 1998, 60, my translation), experienced as devoid of much of the complexity characterizing our encounters with real occurrences[5]. In such a «pollut[ed]» iconosphere, he claims, the audience becomes progressively «blind»[6] to the dimension of reality that those images still claim to show (a warning that clearly resonates with Jean Baudrillard's thesis concerning the forms of «modern iconoclasm»[7], i.e., a sort of destruction of images through their profusion, annihilation via multiplication).

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[4] See especially Haneke 1995a, 577-578. Haneke contends that «cinema tried to counter the overwhelming omnipresence of the electronic media by intensifying its own means, which television – as much as it was technically able – then immediately integrated into its system again. The compulsion to trump one another led to the permanent paroxysm of attempted intensity and, thus, indirectly to the further blurring of the boundary between reality and image as well» (Haneke 1995a, 578). A point resonating with the following Baudrillard's remarks: «No blanks, no gaps, no ellipses, no silence, just like television, with which cinema has become increasingly assimilated by losing the specificity of its own images. We are moving ever closer to high definition, in other words to the useless perfection of images» (Baudrillard 1996, 112-113).

[5] See Haneke 1995b, 25.

[6] «The eyes have become a little blind, overfed with images. Of course there is acoustic pollution, but it's less, and it can be cleansed with good music. In case of the eyes, it's more difficult» (Kusturica & Testor 2004).

[7] «Modern iconoclasm no longer consists in destroying images, but in manufacturing a profusion of images where there is nothing to see. These are literally images that leave no trace» (Baudrillard 1996, 118-119).

As for issue (ii), for one thing, it is important to stress that adapting the Kafka's novel was Haneke's own idea[8]. The explanation Haneke gives about his specific choice is highly significant for our present purposes, since he states that he was particularly interested in the approach Kafka chooses in order to «solve the question of how literature can reflect reality», i.e., through a «fragmented narration» (Haneke 1998, 45, my translation)[9]. Indeed, the relationship between fragmentation and reality is also one of the key issues informing Haneke's own cinematic explorations. Thus, confronting «Kafka's *fragmentary*, ambiguous perception of reality» also affords him an opportunity to focus and reflect cinematically on his own style by working with another person's style, by adopting another *perspective*, an opportunity «to remain true to [his] convictions and yet do the work of someone else» (Haneke 1997, 33, my italics)[10].

2. A fragmented narrative

It is well-known that Kafka's novel is, in fact, an unfinished work[11]. The story famously tells of a man, K., who arrives in a village one late evening and enters an inn looking for a place to spend the night; shortly thereafter, a young man claiming to be «the son of the castle warden» tells him that the village belongs to «the castle» and, without a permit, he must leave. Although initially puzzled, K. subsequently affirms that he has been summoned by the castle as a land surveyor [*Landvermesser*], adding that his two assistants are supposed to be joining him the day after. The young man immediately seeks confirmation by ringing up the castle; a representative of the castle initially seems to deny any association with the so-called land surveyor, but another phone call arrives

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[8] See Haneke 1997, 33; Haneke 1998, 45.

[9] Here, in addition to Kafka's fragmented narrative, Haneke also discusses Peter Rosei's in analogous terms. It is useful to recall that, before working on Kafka's text, he had already realized an adaptation of Rosei's *Wer war Edgar Allan?* (*Who Was Edgar Allan?*, 1984), and that he considers *The Castle* a «natural continuation of it» (see Haneke 1998, 46, my translation).

[10] On Haneke's declared interest in Kafka's fragmented style see also Haneke 1995b, 24: «I'm working on an adaptation of *The Castle* by Kafka. What interests me about Kafka's work is the fragmentation of all our perceptions. I'm looking for a way to translate this Kafkaesque literary trope to television».

[11] Written in 1922, *The Castle* was first posthumously released in 1926 (Kurt Wolff Verlag), edited by Kafka's friend Max Brod, who nevertheless, as is well known, made significant changes on Kafka's text. In particular, Brod did not include Kafka's fragmented end (which remained unpublished also in his 1935 second edition). The 1922 original version can be found in the *critical edition* first edited by Malcom Pasley in 1982.

shortly thereafter, admitting the possibility of such a request having been made. (At this point, we do not know for sure whether K. was truly summoned by the castle, or whether he made up the story and the castle is playing along; in fact, this question is never answered). From that point on, K. attempts to gain the castle's recognition as a land surveyor, albeit without success (at least until the end of the novel, which, as mentioned, breaks off midsentence).

Like the 1922 original version of the book, the film opens *in medias res* – as with Diderot's *Jacques the Fatalist*, we do not know 'where K. is coming from' or 'where he was truly headed' –and ends *ex abrupto*. In the very first scene, we see K. (Ulrich Mühe) arriving at the inn, his entrance accompanied by the voice-over reading the very first sentence from Kafka's novel: «It was late evening when K. arrived [*Es war spätabends, als K. ankam*]» (Kafka 1922, 5). After the final visual sequence, in which K. is shown walking with Gerstäcker (Wolfram Berger) through snow and heavy wind while the voice-over reads the novel's last fragmented sentence («she spoke with difficulty, it was hard to understand her, but what she said [*mühselig sprach sie, man hatte Mühe sie zu verstehen, aber was sie sagte*]» (Kafka 1922, 274)[12], the film ends with a black frame stating that «At this point, Franz Kafka's fragment ends [*An dieser Stelle endet Franz Kafkas Fragment*]» (fig. 1).
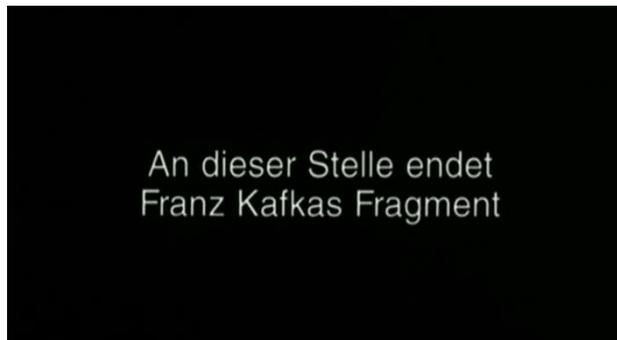

Figure 1. Screenshot from *The Castle*

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[12] Thus, it should be emphasized that «visually, Haneke cuts Kafka's unfinished story even shorter than it is the literary original. The narrative voice-over relates the novel's final two and half sentences, the description of Gerstäcker's house and his mother, over images of Gerstäcker and K. still making their way there through the snow. They never actually arrive, K's 'final' destination is not shown» (Holmes 2007, 118).

Indeed, the use of the black frames punctuates *The Castle*'s fragmented cinematic style[13], articulating the film in «segments». Such interruptions create an «in between» space, breaking the flux of the audience's vision and, in principle, leaving blanks for the audience's imagination to get in motion[14]. Besides, given Haneke's explicit reference to TV audience expectations, one might provocatively say that such moments of black emptiness are the antipode of commercial breaks, in which spectators' potential space for free imagination is overfilled with advertising content. This fractured structure is marked not only by black screens, but also using outdoor tracking shots showing K. laboring through the snow and (oftentimes) against the hostile wind (fig. 2; 4); these, too, can be seen as «in between» patterns (indeed, most of these transition shots are delimited by two black frames). They mostly take K. from one inside space to another, yet they never lead him to the source of his quest. Significantly, there are no establishing shots providing the audience with an overarching framework through which to unify the many fragmentary scenes into a cohesive whole.

Camera movements seem to stress the indoor/outdoor alternation. When K. is outdoors, he is almost invariably shown in profile, moving laterally across the screen (tracking shots). Outside, K only moves toward or away from the camera when he enters or exits an indoor space[15]. Conversely, when K. explores indoor environments, the camera employs a wider range of techniques: deep focus, reverse shots, close-ups that fragment the scene, partial or obstructed views of people or objects, and vary-

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[13] Let us recall that this is a technique that Haneke already experimented with in his *Der siebente Kontinent* (*The Seventh Continent*, 1989) and *71 Fragmente einer Chronologie des Zufalls* (*71 Fragments of a Chronology of Chance*, 1994) – the first and third films, the second being *Benny's Video* (1992), in his «glaciation of feelings» [*Vergletscherung der Gefühle*] trilogy – and that he employs again in *Code Unknown* (*Code inconnu: récit incomplet de divers voyages*, 2000). Also, it is interesting to remark that, in the 1994 and 2000 films, the titles themselves explicitly refer to the dimension of *fragmentation and incompleteness.*

[14] On the function of black frames in *The Castle* cf. the following passage in a 1997 Haneke's interview by Willy Riemer: «Riemer: Though film is so strongly iconic, nonetheless, the viewer's imagination is exercised between the images and shots. Haneke: Yes, in between, exactly. Certainly. In this film as well, I have two seconds of black film between scenes, the film is divided into segments, and one could say that the contradiction between these individual fragments produces that which goes beyond it» (Haneke 1997, 34).

[15] For a detailed analysis of these lateral tracking shots see Price 2010. Cf. also Riemer 2011, 136-137.

ing point-of-view angles. In a manner clearly evocative of Robert Bresson – one of Haneke's most influential sources of inspiration – the characters themselves are sometimes 'fragmented'[16]. Nevertheless, it should be emphasized that tracking shots are not essentially tied to the outdoor space – they may also be used inside, as in the scene in the «Castle Inn» where a traveling shot shows us K. running horizontally down the hallway connecting the rooms of the gentlemen from the castle. As has been aptly pointed out, the very «distinction between inside and outside also erodes» (Price 2010, 307) in such instances.

In fact, even though castle's indoor cinematography implies more 'in-depth' inspection (fig. 3; 5), it appears clear that going deeper does not lead to the end of the quest, either: zooming in brings us no closer to the 'truth' than the lateral motion of the outdoor shots, but rather merely creates new possibilities for fragmentation. This suggests that, as with the outdoor spaces, the indoor spaces might extend into infinity – to say it with Nietzsche, «every cave […] *must* […] have […] an even deeper cave behind it – a more extensive, stranger, richer world above the surface, an abyss behind every ground, under every 'groundwork'» (Nietzsche 1886, 173). Hence, regardless of whether our search progresses laterally, through tracking shots, or in profundity, by zooming in, there seems to be no final point representing the source or goal of the process in which the spectator is invited to participate.

Figure 2. Screenshot from *The Castle*

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[16] On this point see also Brady & Hughes 2016, 190.

Figure 3. Screenshot from *The Castle*

Figure 4. Screenshot from *The Castle*

Figure 5. Screenshot from *The Castle*

3. Defying TV expectations

The voice-over in the film reads from Kafka's novel verbatim; most of the dialogue between characters is taken directly from the literary source as well[17]. In keeping with the concept of adaptation described above, Haneke's work is focused not so much on rewriting Kafka's prose as on selecting which fragments to submit to his

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[17] «Haneke chooses to stick much closer to the wording of the text in his Kafka adaptation, adding virtually no dialogue and no more than two short sequences which do not appear in the novel fragment» (Holmes 2007, 116).

cinematic treatment, which passages to omit, how to fragmentize Kafka's long fragment even further[18]. Besides endeavoring to submit Kafka's text to a peculiar sound treatment aimed at making them «sound like spoken» words «rather than recited literature» (Haneke 1997, 33), Haneke aims to develop a specific strategy by which to push the audience to focus on the relationship between source text and cinematic images, «try[ing] to emphasize the mutual verifiability of the text and the image» (see Haneke 1998, 46, my translation).

Haneke seeks to call into question the ideal of a seamless and fluid relationship between text and image: his declared fidelity to the text does not imply that his imagery is merely obedient to it, acting as a sort of illustration, perhaps to generate interest in the book – Haneke's previous remarks on the primacy of the literary source undoubtedly cannot be reduced to such a banal interpretation. Rather, he wants to develop a specific rhythmic interchange between images and text, one wherein misalignment and mismatching foster mutual exchange and enrichment between iconic and literary dimensions, thereby eluding «the imperative that, in television productions, sound should mirror or double images (thereby avoiding any ambiguity for the viewers)» (Osborne 2018, 315, referring to Haneke 1996).

Thus, for instance, the voice-over can contrast with the action we see on-screen, eliciting a sense of ambiguity and a critical distance and mistrust in what is seen and said, respectively[19]. In several instances, the voice-over overlaps the dialogue «to indicate where a character's articulation is overlaid with K.'s or the narrator's interpretation of the reason for speaking rather than the spoken words themselves» (Brady & Hughes 2016, 190-191). Nevertheless, it should be stressed that the voice-over here is by

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[18] See for example Riemer 2011, 130.

[19] See also Schlicker 2013, 12-14. On several occasions, «sound and image are not in sync», a strategy that can be considered a feature of Haneke's style (see Knauβ 2005, 266-267). In fact, there is sometimes an overt discrepancy between what is narrated and what is shown: «*Das Schloβ* uses the relation between voice-over and visual image to imbue the narrative with a sense of internal disconnection and ambiguity reflected at the level of form. This nonsynchronization is particularly evident at points during which the actions described by the vocal narration and the actions performed by the actors are completely divergent. For example, when K. is visiting the home of the messenger Barnabas and his sister Olga, the voice-over states, in keeping with the novel, that» a «visitor [one of K's assistants] forces open the door to the point that Olga is 'scarcely able to keep him out', though the on-screen action shows her» closing the door «without any visible struggle» (Rowe 2017, 153).

no means an omniscient thread connecting the fragments, creating unequivocal order to guide the audience toward the correct interpretation. Rather, the voice-over is itself a part of the fragmented whole. Such interplays help establish mutual control between the two dimensions while also serving Haneke's aim of «slowing down the [audience's] speed of reception» (see Haneke 1998, 46, my translation) and thus creating contrast with the rapid and overwhelming deluge of information transmission that Haneke points out to be the standard for TV – a challenge significantly developed 'from within' the medium itself.

Let us recall that, the same year he made *The Castle*, Haneke launched an analogous, albeit certainly more widely known, challenge 'from within' against mainstream cinema audience expectations in the form of *Funny Games* (1997). Moreover, although this topic certainly deserves development in its own right, I do think that is not too much of a leap to affirm that the two notorious perpetrators in *Funny Games* can be seen as a possible variation, a metamorphosis, another mask of the two assistants in *The Castle*[20]. It is not irrelevant that the actor (Frank Giering) who plays Artur – one of the two assistants – in *The Castle* also plays one of the perpetrators, i.e., Peter, in *Funny Games* (see fig. 6-7); interestingly enough, Ulrich Mühe and Susanne Lothar, who play K. and Frieda in *The Castle*, also play leading roles in *Funny Games* – namely, as the father and mother subjected to unbearable violence along with their son (fig. 8-9).

Figure 6. Screenshot from *The Castle*

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20 On such an interfilmic connection cf. for example also Woods 2014, 205-207.

Figure 7. Screenshot from *Funny Games* (1997)

Figure 8. Screenshot from *The Castle*

Figure 9. Screenshot from *Funny Games* (1997)

Thus, Haneke makes no concessions here to what he considers to be TV audience expectations. There is no embellishment in *The Castle*, no extra-diegetic music or dramaturgical signposting to lead the audience to the 'correct' interpretation, nothing that caters to popular tastes acquired through standardized patterns of enjoyment or entertainment. Just as K., spectators are deprived of any fixed and reassuring point of reference to make sense of what is unraveling before their eyes. Appreciably, it should be empha-

sized that no concessions are *a fortiori* made to audience expectations as regards cliché and conventional assumptions as to what makes something «Kafkaesque»: it is Kafka as a «*great realist*» Haneke is interested in. Kafka's realism, of course, gave rise to the «Kafkaesque», but only as a one of the most peculiar effects of its faithful penetration into the structure of our existence.

Hence, for Haneke, merely «transpos[ing]» this effect «into a scenic effect» would lead to an overly theatrical, illustrative result that would cause the film to «lose[...] its quality of realism», thereby undermining the goal of his exercise. If elements of the Kafkaesque, as a peculiar kind of «grotesque», are to be found in *The Castle*, they do not come in the form of any ready-made clichés (e.g., a series of visual artifices commonly used to induce a sense of the grotesque in the audience). This does not mean that *The Castle* is incapable of expressing the «grotesque», but rather that it does so as an effect of Haneke's very precise realist approach[21]. The Kafkaesque, then, must be a result of a fragmented cinematic style – it is an effect that emerges from «describ[ing] reality with [...] *precision*», i.e., as it usually presents itself, through fragmentation.

Accordingly, for Haneke, this adaptation can also represent a sort of study, a cinematic critical-thinking activity[22] examining a way of exploring reality which he strongly relates to (i.e., Kafka's). This is why such a strategy might not only elicit audiences to pick up (or revisit) the book but, as spectators, to be forced to question their own receptivity toward the structure of the real. In fact, it should be emphasized that Haneke's *The Castle* is clearly not ex-

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[21] «Now if you become theatrical in film in order to transport the grotesque, then you lose the sense of reality. If you look at most of the Kafka films, reality withdraws from the viewer into something oversized and surreal. Take the adaptation by Orson Welles. His film is very impressive, but in my opinion, it does a disservice to the book, to Kafka. Because of his enormous talent, it turned into a great film by Orson Welles. But he works under the standard of the book because he abandons reality, and Kafka *is nothing if not real*. That means, if one decides to convey this *real level of Kafka*, then one has to sacrifice the grotesque. The grotesque then only appears, so to speak, in the contradictoriness between the individual components, but not in each scene itself. Everything that has been described about the grotesque is in my film, but my film has the look of a wholly naturalistic film. The grotesque appears only through what happens. In my adaptation there are none of these curiously exaggerated zombies that one frequently sees in Kafka films. All that is gone. It is an entirely realistic film, and I believe that it comes closest to the spirit of Kafka's work» (Haneke 1997, 33-34, my italics).

[22] We might also say that he believes in cinema's ability to elicit an «aesthetic mode of understanding, or an aesthetic perspective on what philosophy traditionally tries to pursue at the more conceptual level» (Pippin 2020, 11), a sort of cinematic reflection.

clusively aimed at people who are unfamiliar with Kafka's novel (this might well imply the assumption that television audiences are uncultured and need Haneke's help discovering Kafka, whereas arthouse film audiences are well-read and require no such invitation – a patronizing blanket judgment indeed). His film, *qua* selective fragmentation, is one possible variation of the novel played through another medium, one that might prompt viewers to consider, through a cinematic lens, *forces* and *values* that they cannot usually detect, yet that imbue the structure of their everyday lives.

4. Only representatives

One of the central issues both film and book resolutely confront us with regards the *true* nature of «the castle». This question relates intimately to our understanding of what we call «truth» (and, as just hinted, with our understanding of what we call «values»). More specifically, *The Castle*'s fragmented style appears to put into question a metaphysical construal of 'Truth' and 'Values' as self-sufficient dimensions existing, unaffected, behind the sensible world of appearances. For one thing, the castle does not seem to have a fixed, classically hierarchical structure. Actually, on a closer examination, it does not even look like a castle. At the very beginning of their 1975 text on Kafka – after the well-known passage characterizing the Czech writer's work as a «rhizome» – Deleuze and Guattari remark that «the castle has multiple entrances whose rules of usage and whose locations aren't very well known» (Deleuze & Guattari 1975, 3). These entrances are not governed by any specific order whereby one is assigned more importance than another – none of the castle's entrances can be deemed, a priori, more valuable than any other, though they may differ greatly in appearance; in principle, every fragment of the castle has the power to *lead* us into it[23]. In fact, even without having consciously chosen to enter the castle, one might later learn or realize that they have stepped through one of its manifold entrances – as might be the case with K., who ends up in castle territory seemingly by chance.

Nevertheless, it should be stressed that, even though it is possible to enter the castle from any of the fragments belonging to

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[23] «We will enter, then, by any point whatsoever; none matters more than another, and no entrance is more privileged even if it seems an impasse, a tight passage, a siphon» (Deleuze & Guattari 1975, 3).

it, it appears that one can never reach «the» castle, properly speaking. K. never gets to touch it, we might say, in its *original presence*. In the novel, when he arrives at the village «lay[ing] deep in snow», there is «nothing to be seen of Castle Mount, for mist and darkness [surround] it, and not the faintest glimmer of light show[s] where the great castle [lies]». Indeed, what appears to K. «seem[s]» even «to be a void» (Kafka 1922, 5). Still, he sometimes allegedly gets to see it from a distance; however, his vision is uncertain, ever-changing – and on closer inspection it looks more like «an extensive complex of buildings» than a castle, and «if you hadn't known it was a castle you might have taken it for a small town» (Kafka 1922, 11).

Throughout the film, the castle is always presentified by something or someone, but never shown directly, even from a distance. Significantly, Haneke decides against filming even the 'misty void' K. sees at the beginning of the novel. He could have considered, say, setting up an establishing shot showing the haze blanketing the castle, but instead chooses to intensify the sense of distance to the castle by shifting it to a representational level[24]. In fact, the very first frame is an enigmatic depiction that *might* picture the castle; the spatial distance becomes an iconic distance, a form of presentification through image: when K. makes his first entrance into the inn and the story, the film's opening image (fig. 10) is immediately revealed to be a fragmented picture hanging at the back of the entrance door (fig. 11). It shows what seems to be a small village at the foot of a hill. It might be a representation of the castle (as recalled above, the novel suggests that the castle looks like a «small town») or perhaps one of the village, with the castle possibly hidden by a chart partially covering the image[25]. Or neither, as far as we know.

Figure 10. Screenshot from *The Castle*

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[24] On this point see also Holmes 2011, 125-126.
[25] See Brady & Hughes 2016, 188.

Figure 11. Screenshot from *The Castle*

Later in the film, when K. returns to the inn and open the door – significantly, a sequence added in by Haneke[26] – , the audience for a moment is given to see the same depiction entirely, before a new sheet of charted paper, which was momentarily lifted by a gust of wind accompanying K.'s entrance, finally falls over the image, covering it completely and allowing only its shadowed outline to shine through (fig. 12-15). Let us remark that, in both these two entrances, the depiction is visible to the spectator's eye but not to K.'s. When he steps through the door, the image remains at his back; he cannot see it, or at least not while we are able to see it. As spectators, we *cannot* know if he might see it at any other moment. We are allowed to know only fragments of truth.

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[26] See Holmes 2011, 127, note 9.
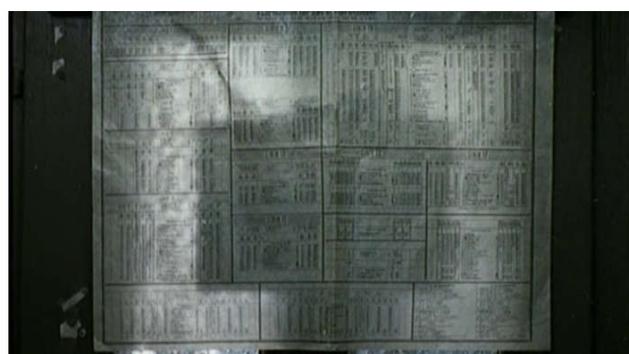
Figures 12-15. Screenshots from *The Castle*

In the film, as in the novel, we meet only representatives of the castle, people who allegedly speak for the castle, in its name – no one gets to unveil the 'thing in itself'. If anything, Haneke seems to intensify this point. Not only, as we said, are we denied even a single, distant glimpse of the castle, but other specific omissions with respect to the novel reinforce its impalpability. For instance, Haneke avoids mentioning «Count WestWest by name» (Riemer 2011, 130) to whom, in the novel, the castle is said to belong. The more important castle representatives are said to be, the more rarified they become. The name of the most influential castle proxy is «Klamm», which evokes the Czech word 'klam': illusion, mirage, fraud. In the novel, K. can see Klamm through a peephole upon his first meeting with Frieda, and the reader is given a description of what K. sees of Klamm (see Kafka 1922, 35-36). The film, on the other hand, shows K. looking through the peephole but does not let us see what Klamm looks like – we are called to imagine him.

In this sense, Haneke's treatment seems to emphasize that the castle is everywhere and yet nowhere. It is, in itself, ultimately invisible and impossible to grasp: in principle, everything can signify it, and yet every sign of it essentially points elsewhere,

beyond itself. The castle manifests itself only through its representatives (people, letters, phone calls) – that is, by delegation. Its representatives and signs may emerge from anywhere, at any time. However, the original castle, the alleged Truth beyond its manifestations, is never to be reached.

5. In the name of Whom/What?

We can then suggest that what emerges from such considerations is the idea that the castle is less a thing than a *process*, a *moving structure*. In this sense, there would be nothing physical *beyond* the castle as a process, and the idea of a 'castle in itself' might then turn out to be merely a deceptive effect – the castle is unreachable, 'untouchable'. At the same time, construing the castle as a fixed abstract *meaning* preceding and grounding this process would not be correct either; in that case, the process would simply be construed as symbolizing or metaphorizing its principle. In fact, every attempt to reduce this process to a rhetorical device serving to convey some kind of hidden meaning or value would ultimately prove inconsistent – and this holds true for both the novel and the film.

Although its principles and contents are impossible to grasp, village people submit to castle law. Its bureaucracy is *proteiform*, ever-changing, as are its borders and field of action. Even so, no one questions the existence of the castle or the righteousness of its law. Despite its inscrutability, it remains a fixed, unquestionable point. In fact, people K. encounters seem to embrace what Deleuze would call a Platonistic, «classical conception of the law» as «not a primary but only a [...] delegated power», namely, «a representative of the Good» (Deleuze 1967, 81); in this case, 'the Good' would be the castle as a transcendent principle universally recognized by the community.

Experiencing the Kafkan structure, however, might lead the audience to doubt the consistency of such a transcendent principle in the first place. Indeed, readers (and, even more so, spectators of Haneke's fragmented variation) are also confronted with the concept of a purely formal law, an idea Deleuze traces back to Kant's characterization of moral law in his second *Critique*, in which the latter – in a «revolution [...] perhaps even more» radical than the well-known Copernican revolution in his first *Critique* – overthrows the «classical conception of the law» by positing a law

that is no longer founded in the Good but rather makes the Good «revolv[e] around» itself (Deleuze 1967, 83).

There is no need to linger here on the specifics of how Deleuze interprets Kant's conception of the law. For our purposes, the key aspect to consider is that of these two contrasting views on the relationship between law and its alleged grounding principle – a point all the more important in that, ultimately, it concerns the nature of the relationships between fragments and truth as well as, as we shall see, between images and reality. According to this second, 'Kantian', view elucidated by Deleuze, the law is a process, one that may confront us with different values that, though seeming to claim transcendental justification, might in fact be merely effects of the process itself. According to Deleuze, this is especially apparent with regard to the relationship between guilt and punishment[27], a point that he significantly links directly to «the world described by Kafka» (Deleuze 1967, 84) – and let us remark how Haneke considers «guilt [...] the first question in all of Kafka's works», as well as in «all» his own «films, including *The Castle*» (Haneke 2000, 147).

Deleuze suggests that the continuous formal repetition of law's injunctions puts its subjects in a state of precarious equilibrium, implying an *a priori* possibility of guilt: the subject's obedience is always only a temporary reassurance and might even reinforce his or her sense of guilt[28]. In other words, the more one obeys the process and tries to follow it, the larger one's sense of guilt looms[29]. Through its sheer function, then, this 'headless' or 'rootless' law seems capable of establishing a dialectical relationship between the righteous satisfaction a subject feels when complying with the law on the one hand, and that satisfaction's essential counterpart on the other: the sense of guilt the subject feels

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[27] «THE LAW, as defined by its pure form [...], is such that no one knows nor *can* know what it is. It operates without making itself known. It defines a realm of transgression where one is already guilty, and where one oversteps the bounds without knowing what they are [...]. Even *guilt* and *punishment* do not tell us what the law is, but leave it in a state of indeterminacy equaled only by the extreme specificity of the punishment» (Deleuze 1967, 83-84, my italics).

[28] «The man who obeys the law [...] feels guilty and is guilty in advance, and the more strict his obedience, the greater his guilt. This is the process by which the law manifests itself in its absolute purity, and proves us guilty» (Deleuze 1967, 84).

[29] «Freud was the first to recognize the extraordinary paradox of the conscience. It is far from the case that obedience to the law secures a feeeling of righteousness» (Deleuze 1967, 84).

over the mere possibility of transgressing the law, even accidentally.

In a similar vein, Milan Kundera recognizes the concept of «labyrinthine institution» as «a mechanism that obeys its own laws» and «automatically produces its own theology» as an essential facet of Kafka's oeuvre: «the *Kafkan* (both in reality and in fiction) is inseparable from its theological (or rather: *pseudotheological*) dimension» (Kundera 1979, 101-102). In fact, Kundera emphasizes how the process carried out by the law's manifold representatives leads to the deceptive assumption of metaphysical truths underlying its effects. In response to the guilt induced through the process, the subject would tend to point to a principle external to that process as the grounds for this perceived culpability.

Within this framework, Kundera suggests, a mere formal punishment can prompt the victim to seek a cause to justify that punishment. To illustrate this effect-and-cause relationship, Kundera contrasts it with the one underlying Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, in which Raskolnikov «cannot bear the weight of his guilt, and to find peace he consents to his punishment of his own free will. It's the well-known situation where *the offense seeks the punishment*» (Kundera 1979, 102). Accordingly, then, we might say that the title of Dostoevsky's masterwork implies a consecution: the *Crime*, the offense, precedes *and* justifies the *Punishment*. In Kafka, on the other hand, Kundera suggests that «the logic is reversed. The person punished does not know the reason for the punishment. The absurdity of the punishment is so unbearable that to find peace, the accused needs to find a justification for his penalty: the *punishment seeks the offense*» (Kundera 1979, 102-103), i.e., *Punishment and Crime*.

Indeed, every decision allegedly made by the castle is not valued in itself, but *qua* uttered in the name of the castle, benefiting from the castle's aura. Depending on the positions they occupy within the process, certain individuals can appropriate this aura for themselves and exercise a portion of the castle's power over those in weaker positions. This can result in sadistic and masochistic dynamics within several layers of the community, a theme strongly present in Kafka's work. Haneke decides to show K. watching as Frieda cracks a whip at Klamm's servants «in the name of Klamm» (fig. 15). A moment later, Frieda puts her foot on K. (fig. 16), before they roll across the floor together and then

make love[30]. Later, once she has become K.'s lover and lost her privileged position with respect to Klamm, Frieda and K. are easy targets for the sadistic instincts of the schoolteacher and his assistant (fig. 17). Characters seem to endure situations like these out of their growing need for recognition.

Figure 15. Screenshot from *The Castle*

Figure 16. Screenshot from *The Castle*

Figure 17. Screenshot from *The Castle*

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[30] On these aspects cf. also Knauß 2005, 269-270.

In fact, being isolated might prove worse than accepting one's own role within the process, however painful: the village overtly shuns Amalia's family after she refuses to obey a letter from a castle functionary, Sortini, summoning her to the Castle Inn. As Amalia's sister Olga relates to K., upon receiving this missive from a messenger and reading it, Amalia tears the letter up and throws the pieces into the messenger's face. Amalia's father loses his job and his honor, and finally ends up begging anyone with any connection to the castle whatsoever to find a path for forgiveness (the story and the dynamics of Amalia's family disgrace are amply developed in the novel). However, although Amalia's family is punished *after* Amalia's refusal, the castle makes no official accusations on the matter[31]. Clearly, this is an example in which, in order to be able to atone and obtain forgiveness, the punished person must first be recognized as guilty[32]. In Kafka's worlds, where those judged often cannot find a place within *or* outside the process, leaving them in a kind of limbo, this might appear to be the only possibility.

6. Fragmentation as perspectivism
In *Twilight of the Idols,* Nietzsche warned that «no error is more dangerous than that of *confusing the cause with the effect*» (Nietzsche 1888, 176). From this standpoint, as we are trying to suggest, the idea of a castle as independent principle might also be construed as the result of a temporal illusion produced by the *après coup* phenomenon of projecting an effect of a process in the past, thereby retroactively deeming it the metaphysical origin of that process. This is not to imply that such a retrospective movement is erroneous *per se*. The danger, however, lies in potential blindness to the manner in which an effect, a result, is silently and inadvertently hypostatized as a fixe, separate origin of the process – what Bergson would call a «retrograde movement of the true» (Bergson 1922).

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[31] «But what was he [*scil.*: Amalia's father] to be forgiven for? they replied, no one had so far reported any wrongdoing of his, at least it wasn't in the records [...]. But to be forgiven he must first establish his guilt, and that very thing was denied him in the offices. He began thinking – and this showed that his mind was already failing – that they were keeping his wrongdoing secret because he didn't pay enough money» (Kafka 1922, 186-187).

[32] Members of Amalia's family «strive for the forgiveness of a guilt which does not exist – and which therefore [...] cannot be forgiven» (Knauß 2005, 275, my translation).

On the other hand, I would like to stress that pointing the finger at an illusive backward-projection of truths and values perceived within a process (thereby viewing them as the metaphysical foundation stones behind it) may deceive one into considering those values merely projectional – and thus purely relative – in nature. However, this relativistic stand would represent an overly simplistic upheaval of the classical, Platonistic view, one still caught within the framework of a true-false dichotomy: on the one side, we have the idea of a fixed, stable Truth that is the real cause of every appearance we encounter, a Truth that is always 'beyond', just as the castle is never originally present within its fragments but always presupposed beyond them – in other words, the primacy of the castle's hidden essence over the appearances of its representatives. On the other side, we have the notion that the negation of one metaphysical Truth must result in the negation of any essential truth whatsoever, in favor of a nihilistic outcome. Under this second dichotomic pole, without any metaphysical yardstick, one might be led to surmise that no single appearance can be claimed truer than any other; accordingly, truth would be construed as arbitrary. This nihilist conception of truth (one often too hastily linked to Nietzschean famous adage, «there are no facts, only interpretation») suggests that, if there is no Truth, *anything* – and, therefore, *nothing* – can be true.

Indeed, Nietzsche was already well aware of the potential pitfall here: denouncing the possible mistake of a naïve hypostatization of the effects of a process as their metaphysical origin need not *ipso facto* imply the reverse, i.e., affirming the relativistic omnipresence of the false[33] – he famously remarks that «*along with the true [world] we got rid of the illusory [one]*» (Nietzsche 1888, 171). Thus, moving beyond a Platonistic approach cannot simply mean declaring that all discourse about truth is illusory and that *all* values are merely the result of arbitrary, subjective projections induced through a process of ever-changing appearances. Rather,

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[33] This would clearly amount to a naïve reversal of Platonism. On this simplistic reversal see also Smith (2012, 4), who equally points out the possibility it produces positivistic outcomes, a danger against which Heidegger had already warned: «Plato, it is said, opposed essence to appearance, the original to the image, the sun of truth to the shadows of the cave, and to overturn Platonism would initially seem to imply a reversal of this standard relation: what languishes below in Platonism must be put on top; the supersensuous must be placed in the service of the sensuous. But such an interpretation, as Heidegger showed, only leads to the quagmire of positivism, an appeal to the *positum* rather than the *eidos*».

appearances themselves must be reassessed[34] and acquire a new kind of value:

> it is no more than a moral prejudice that the truth is worth more than appearance; in fact, it is the world's most poorly proven assumption. Let us admit this much: that life could not exist except on the basis of perspectival valuations and appearances; and if, with the virtuous enthusiasm and inanity of many philosophers, someone wanted to completely abolish the 'world of appearances,' – well, assuming *you* could do that, – at least there would not be any of your 'truth' left either! Actually, why do we even assume that 'true' and 'false' are intrinsically opposed? Isn't it enough to assume that there are levels of appearance and, as it were, lighter and darker shades and tones of appearance – different *valeurs*, to use the language of painters? (Nietzsche 1886, 35).

Affirming the essential perspectivism of our experiences (their way of manifesting and the values we perceive through them), then, is not tantamount to taking a relativistic stance; rather, it can offer a powerful alternative to the dichotomies of true vs. false, essence vs. appearance, or fact vs. interpretation.

Haneke's work develops this point extensively, especially through his above-mentioned theme of fragmentation. On the one hand, reality is an enigma to him[35], and he makes no hasty concessions to any metaphysical notion of reality independent of appearances; on the other hand, this does not lead him to dismiss the value of the quest to describe reality, the different *valeurs* of the diverse possible, albeit non-arbitrary, *narratives* through which we weave our fragmented experiences from our perspectives, continuously redefining the scope of what we consider real. He constantly denounces the phony sense of safety several mainstream directors give audiences through dramaturgical patterns thought to convey an expected outcome – always presupposing the existence of, if not directly disclosing, an objective and truthful narrative underlying the manifold appearances presented to the viewer.

Instead, as we have stressed, the castle world appears broken into fragments that no surveying eye seems capable of resolving into a cohesive whole. In fact, as Merleau-Ponty points out, the ideal of an all-embracing eye, a «*kosmotheoros*» capable of objectively measuring reality from above encompassing all its elements, reveals itself to be «forced into the bifurcation of the es-

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[34] On this point cf. also Gori 2016, 38.
[35] See Kusturica & Testor 2004.

sence and the fact» (Merleau-Ponty 1964, 113) – analogous to the Nietzschean bifurcation of truth and appearance described above. For such a panoptic conception of truth, 'good' images would be those most suitable for objectively and exhaustively measuring the truth – 'land surveying images', so to speak. However, this kind of abstract, overarching eye betrays the nature of truth, for our experiences of truth are *essentially* perspectives, and the perspectival view should not be considered a deficiency that an omniscient eye would come to adjust.

Cinematically, renouncing this construal of truth signifies abandonment of the «organic» description and narration Deleuze describes in his second book on cinema, specifically in the well-known chapter devoted to «the powers of the false». Organic approach presupposes an «independent» and «pre-existing reality» (Deleuze 1985, 126) to which 'good' images – 'land surveying images' – «truthful[ly] […] claim[…]» to conform, «even in fiction» (Deleuze 1985, 127). Within this framework, the 'good' narration disqualifies all others. One fairly banal example of this might be when, in a film (whether fictional or non-fictional), the camera lens shows us 'what really happened', thereby tacitly claiming that, at that moment, it is the neutral eye that can see the truth objectively, as if it were not perspectival itself.

This, of course, is exactly the kind of cinematic eye Haneke avoids using. As noted, *The Castle* uses no 'land surveying images' to give the spectator a reassuring overview; the opening image of the inn door, though, as we saw, it could potentially represent a sort of old map representing the village and the castle, is merely another fragment among fragments. Even the word «land surveyor [*Landvermesser*]» run through the film from mouth to mouth as an old function that can still be recognized as a name but has lost its meaning: everyone in the village refers to K. as the *Landvermesser*, without apparently know what the work involves and whether or not he will ever get to do it (probably not). We are invited to confront our fragmented development of knowledge.

In the same chapter on «the powers of the false», referring to the style of Bresson – as noted a Haneke's primary source, whose influence is clearly at work in *The Castle*[36] – , Deleuze significantly describes his cinematic reconfiguration of fragments in terms of «Riemanian spaces», a «connecti[on] of parts» that «is not prede-

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[36] In this respect cf. also Grundmann et al. 2020, xi.

termined but can take place in many ways» (Deleuze 1985, 129). As a matter of fact, Bresson's oeuvre is well within that «crystalline» regime that, here, Deleuze opposes to the «organic» (see Deleuze 1985, 126-137). In «crystalline narration», like the one we are seeking to outline here, the «fracture» (Deleuze 1985, 128), the *fragmentation* becomes the essential element that «puts the notion of truth into crisis» (Deleuze 1985, 130). Explicitly inspired by Nietzsche, Deleuze states that this new regime, one which he qualifies as «fundamentally falsifying» (Deleuze 1985, 131), brings about that «the truthful man dies», that «every model of truth collapses» (Deleuze 1985, 131). However, I would consider it paramount to specify that the models of truth collapsing are those construed as metaphysically separate from their narrative interpretations; this must not result – also from a Nietzschean standpoint – in the collapse of *all* ideas of truth whatsoever. Analogously, the general possibility that in the fragmented regime «the very possibility of judging is called into question» (Deleuze 1985, 138) must not result in the equally untenable assertion that no judgement is possible at all – in this sense, Nietzsche's well-known appeal to the creation of new values must be able to imply the possibility of a new way of judging[37].

In fact, in keeping with the Nietzschean project of reassessment of the appearance, once the idea of an appearance-independent truth has been dismissed, every manifestation *can* matter, can hold some specific value, without that specific value making the manifestation true or false – this, obviously, does not prevent it from being considered good or bad[38]. Every fragment participates in the movement through which only truth constitutes itself. This could certainly be one sense in which to consider Haneke's appreciation of Kafka's fragmented style: a fragmented approach might be more faithful to reality, because reality itself is constituted through a series of fragmented perspectives, frag-

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[37] And this holds true, I would maintain in contradiction of Deleuze's well-known interpretation, also as regards Welles' worlds. In fact, in «The powers of the false» chapter, Deleuze famously talks of the «Nietzscheanism» of Welles, stating that he «constantly constructs characters who are unjudicable and who have not to be judged, who evade any possible judgement. If the ideal of truth crumbles, the relations of appearance will no longer be sufficient to maintain the possibility of judgement. In Nietzsche's phrase, 'with the real world we have also abolished the apparent world'» (Deleuze 1985, 139). However, as we have already remarked, this very quote from Nietzsche is not incompatible with the Nietzschean endeavor towards a *revaluation* of appearances.

[38] A point explicitly remarked by Deleuze in reference to Nietzsche (cf. Deleuze 1985, 141).

ments we reconfigure through our changing and yet nonarbitrary narratives. This is also true axiologically, in that, for instance, 'the same' narrative can take on different values when incorporated into, or reacting to, other narratives (as an example, consider how in *The Castle* Frieda's actions take on a different color – to employ Nietzsche's painting metaphor – when viewed through Pepi's perspective). In that sense, I think Deleuze's insistence on «the powers of the false» risks to remain unduly fixated (both terminologically and philosophically) upon a dichotomic (and ultimately simplistic) reversal of the Platonistic stance. In fact, his interpretation of Nietzsche undeniably tends to disqualify the truthful narration in favor of a «falsifying» one (Deleuze 1985, 131) – which is not tantamount to the perspectivism of truth implying perspective-related (but non-arbitrary) axiological levels we have attempted to outline here. For this reason, I would avoid the term «false» for the *fragmented image*, as it is still too closely tied to the very dichotomy we are striving to avoid.

Rather, the fragment can be experienced as an appearance of greater or lesser value, one involved in a reconfiguration of reality that is unceasingly redefined through the intersections and interactions among different perspectives, each of which may be attributable to the same subject or different subjects[39]. Again and again, new perspectives can interact through contrasts, fractures, incorporations, and so on. This process might be endless, but it is not arbitrary. *The decisive question becomes: under what conditions, from what perspective, is it possible for a subject to feel that value, to perceive that reality, and correspondingly to react that way?*[40]. In this sense, the richness of the perspectives a subject considers when forming his or her notion of reality becomes decisive, although no overarching point of view can encompass all of these perspectives at once: however exhaustive a subject's position may be, there is always an *a priori* possibility of another perspective comprising it. The subject, then, is more a point of intersection for several perspectives than a fixed substance producing interpretations; even when they conflict with one another, the

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[39] «The one knows the other not only in what he suffers from him, but more generally as a witness, who can be challenged because he is also himself accused, because he is not a pure gaze upon pure being any more than I am, because his views and my own are in advance inserted into a system of *partial perspectives*, referred to one same world in which we coexist and where our views intersect» (Merleau-Ponty 1964, 82, my italics).

[40] Within this framework can also be seen Haneke's considerations on violence in Haneke 2009. See also Haneke 2005b, 38-39.

richness of the perspectives the subject experiences defines his or her spectrum of what he or she calls truth. In principle, each of these perspectives affects the constitution of the 'palette' of «different *valeurs*».

In this regard, Haneke goes as far as to describe postmodernism – or, at least, the postmodernism epitomized in the «claim that all the existential and moral questions are behind us»[41]–as «dangerous nonsense», as a «Fun-Ideology» (Haneke 2007, 122, my translation). Haneke places great importance on this point. We have stressed how he insists that the director must avoid imposing his or her own explanations of the on-screen action; rather, he says, directors must leave space for viewers to develop their own narratives and images, and to experience values essentially related to those perspectives. It should be mentioned that one might see a certain patronizing component to Haneke's expressed goal of shaking TV audiences awake from their 'iconically embedded sleep'. However, though there may be a pedagogical element to Haneke's intentions, there certainly is no didacticism involved.

He does not view his work as a medium through which to snobbishly hand nuggets of clearly defined truth to the audience 'from above', but rather an attempt to renounce the specific dramaturgical devices and tricks aimed at providing reassuring answers about reality and its complexity. Haneke's audiences are not given more freedom so much as more responsibility[42]: they have to form their own positions while grappling with the fragments they are presented. He even rejects the notion that he, as the creator of the film, possesses the objective truth regarding the motives behind his characters' actions[43]. For the spectator, the absence of ready-made truths calls for an effort of reconfiguration of fragments, which takes place through connection and jumps between imagination and memory, through a confrontation with public and personal narratives – just as occurs in our day-to-day construction and configuration of the real.

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[41] For an understanding of the postmodernism within the context of a larger discussion of modernism that does not dichotomically oppose the former and the latter cf. for example Franzini 2016.

[42] See also Grundmann 2010b, 384.

[43] See for instance Haneke considerations on *Caché* (2005)'s characters Georges (Daniel Auteuil) and Majid (Maurice Bénichou): «We don't know if Georges is telling the truth, and we don't know if Majid is telling the truth. We don't really know which one of the characters is lying – just as we don't know in real life» (Haneke 2005a, 80).

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