



# Crisis Narrative and Affective Intermediality: Figuring Disaster in Michael Haneke's *Time of the Wolf*

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**Abstract.** Michael Haneke's *Time of the Wolf* (*Le temps du loup*, 2003) depicts a grim vision of the world in the aftermath of an unnamed catastrophe. Haneke turns the genre of dystopia into an experimental terrain where he can test the limits of the cinematic medium in the sense of “negating cinema in order to let reality speak for itself” (Nagib 2016, 147). An existential parable, *Time of the Wolf* envisions a sombre post-millennium age. It is a sharp analysis of what remains of man and society when the frame of civilization collapses. It scrutinizes the functioning mechanisms of the individual, the family and the social community in times of civilization undone. A harsh experiment towards a negative dialectics of the image, the film's exceptionally austere cinematic language confronts the spectator with the aesthetics of the “unwatchable” (Baer et al., 2019) and “cinematic unpleasure” (Aston 2010). The paper explores the ways in which Haneke's “intermedial realism” (Rowe 2017) also manifests in this film through photo-filmic images and painterly compositions, perceptions of stillness and motion, and cultural remnants of the past, giving way to affective sensations of intermediality.<sup>1</sup>

**Keywords:** dystopia, decivilization, intermedial realism, epistemic and affective images.

## *Time of the Wolf* as a Crisis Narrative

Born in the context of the post-9/11 global atmosphere of fear and uncertainty, Michael Haneke's *Time of the Wolf* (*Le temps du loup*, 2003) figures among the dystopias that were recommended for watching by *The Atlantic* during the first lockdown in spring 2020. The film depicts a grim vision of the world in the aftermath of an unnamed catastrophe. Withdrawing information regarding the

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cataclysm, the collectively experienced traumatic event that affects mankind, throws the spectator into a post-apocalyptic scenery *in medias res*, leaving room for the possibility of generalization and recontextualization, reverberating with today's global sense of impending doom. Haneke had kept the script, written in the early period of his cinematic career, in the drawer for long until he felt it topical to deal with in the shade of 9/11, the event that proved to be the first act of a long series of crises, including the 2008 financial crisis, the 2009 H1N1 pandemic, the terrorist attacks against the Western world, the start of the Syrian civil war in 2011, the Brexit vote in 2016, the increasingly pervasive environmental crisis, the Covid-19 pandemic and the Russia–Ukraine War, that have shaped the history of the 21st century. With *Time of the Wolf*, Haneke thus envisions a sombre post-millennium age, picturing a general state that György Kalmár words like this: “our time is that of shock, bewilderment, cognitive disorder, regressive escape from reality and the painful task of readjusting one’s sense of normalcy year after year. Oftentimes, the general sentiment is that there is something wrong with the twenty-first century, this is not what history was meant to be, there is something awfully off” (Kalmár 2020, viii).

Michael Haneke’s entire cinematic universe is related to crisis, to global crisis as well as to the crisis of the contemporary Western world, of European modernity. As Janina Falkowska suggests, “Haneke’s films must be seen in the context of the recent history of Europe: the dissolution of the communist system, German unification, terrorism, mass migratory movements in Europe, and increasing homophobia and terrorist paranoia, as well as general globalization and unification trends within the new global economy and the Western world” (2014, 85). Falkowska highlights mourning and melancholia as both being reactions to loss, may it be a person, an abstraction or an ideal.

In his feature films made since the end of the 1980s, Haneke looks at the unstable pillars Western modernity and identity is built on and at what makes them vulnerable in terms of repressed individual and collective tensions, unprocessed conflicts and historical traumas. Haneke’s films showcase apparently stable life patterns that drastically turn into liminal, existential situations due to some intrusion, unexpected invasion or unfolding tension. Haneke’s main target is the middle-class, bourgeois family; he looks at what lies behind the carefully sustained balance and façade of the core unit of society. The first feature film of the Viennese-Parisian transnational filmmaker, *The Seventh Continent* (*Der siebente Kontinent*, 1989), having as its protagonists Georg, Anna and Eva – names that will repeatedly turn up in his later films, also in *Time of the Wolf*,

suggesting the intratextual connections among Haneke's films and showing protagonists as "everymen" in parable-like narratives –, depicts a grim picture of a family that unexpectedly commit collective suicide. In *Benny's Video* (1992) the parents discover traces of a murder committed by their son Benny on a video cassette recorder and then become accomplices by keeping silent and family life becoming a nightmare; *Code Unknown* (*Code inconnu*, 2001) builds up, on parallel threads, convoluted identity patterns against the backdrop of immigration, social insecurity and existential despair. In the same year, *The Piano Teacher* (*La pianiste*, 2001), the screen adaptation of Elfriede Jelinek's novel, was released, followed, in a chronological order, by *Time of the Wolf* (2003); not ranked among Haneke's best creations, *Time of the Wolf* carries further the theme of the collapse of the bourgeois family but dissolves it in the larger context of a community of survivors. An ingenious mind game film, *Hidden* (*Caché*, 2005) is yet another grim depiction of the implosion of the bourgeois family under the impact of some threatening video tapes of unknown origin, the threads leading to the protagonist Georges's adopted half-brother of Algerian origin and his son, and, through that, to issues of collective guilt and collective memory. "Michael Haneke likes to say that his films are easier to make than to watch," a reviewer writes (Conrad 2012). Haneke confronts the spectator with violence inherent in modern society, with historically grounded fears and uncertainties, through the violence of the image. Perhaps the most brutal confrontation is provided by *Funny Games* (2007), in which two gentlemanly behaving youngsters, Peter and Paul intrude in the holiday home in the picturesque Alps of a consolidated bourgeois family and exterminate them in the untroubled manner of playing a computer game. Another instance, *The White Ribbon* (*Das weiße Band – Eine deutsche Kindergeschichte*, 2009), devised in high-contrast black-and-white images and extreme long takes that is characteristic in general of Haneke's real-time cinema, takes the spectator back to the period before WWI, and shows the domestic tensions and anxieties of a previous generation that point at the roots of transgenerational trauma transmission. To wrap up the selection of Haneke's filmography, *Love* (*Amour*, 2012) is an austere depiction of the intimate relation between an ageing couple, compromised by the limitations posed by the failing body. Based on the above, Haneke's spectator can be sure that a title such as his 2017 *Happy End* can never be taken for granted but rather as yet another a flick at the high bourgeois shams evoking classical Hanekean themes of crisis such as "family dysfunction, inter-generational revenge, the poisonous suppression of guilt and the return of the repressed" (Bradshaw 2017). In the context of the Hanekean oeuvre, the dystopian

*Time of the Wolf* stands apart in offering the largest spectrum of crisis, examining human behaviour at the level of the individual, the family, and the social group interacting in the loose frame of disintegrated community bonds, in times of post-crisis, in the sense György Kalmár defines it, “not after crisis but rather as the time when the effects of critical breakdowns are played out” (2020, viii).

## In-between Genre Film and Auteur Cinema

For connoisseurs of Haneke’s cinematic “mind games” and “performative self-contradictions” (Elsaesser 2010),<sup>2</sup> the choice of a popular film genre, that of a post-apocalyptic movie, must be suspicious from the outset. As nothing stands more apart from the European arthouse film director than Hollywood genres and clichés, which Haneke formulates as a program in his writing entitled *Film als Katharsis*: “[My films] are intended as polemical statements against the American barrel-down cinema and its dis-empowerment of the spectator. They are an appeal for a cinema of insistent questions instead of quick (because false) answers, for clarifying distance in place of violating closeness, for concentration rather than distraction, for provocation and dialogue instead of consumption and consensus” (quoted in Frey 2010, 155). Haneke’s dystopia rather draws on the European art-house tradition of post-apocalyptic cinema, most notably represented by Ingmar Bergman’s *The Seventh Seal* (*Det sjunde inseglet*, 1957), Chris Marker’s *La Jetée* (1962) and Andrei Tarkovsky’s *The Sacrifice* (*Offret*, 1986) (cf. Torner 2010). Generically speaking, *Time of the Wolf* fits into the framework of apocalyptic reactions to 9/11, however, it goes much beyond this reference; besides, as this paper tries to demonstrate, Haneke opts for a dystopian narrative only to deconstruct it and defy expectations arising from the genre, which has been one reason for its being downrated by critics.

The connections with the genre of the dystopia may as well be placed in the context of his “performative self-contradictions,” on the grounds that while adhering to its generic frame, Haneke also manifests his criticism towards it. Thus, unifying Tarkovskian powers of depicting scenery with Bressonian

2 Borrowing the term “performative self-contradiction” from the philosopher Karl Otto Apel, Thomas Elsaesser applies it to the ambivalent epistemological stance underlying in Haneke’s powerfully confrontational cinema: “Violence is bad for you, says the director who inflicts violence on me. But Haneke is also the control freak who likes to play games with chance and coincidence. Once formulated, the paradox becomes interesting, because it ties not only Haneke in knots, but also Haneke’s critics, who risk putting themselves into a double bind, contradicting Haneke contradicting them” (2010, 56).

minimalism, Haneke turns the genre of cinematic dystopia into the material of an *auteur*, leaving his authorial signature both on its narrative and its style. It is not accidental that modernist filmmakers' names are hereby mentioned: Haneke turns up in the post-media scene as an almost anachronistic descendant of modernism, but one who also "plays" the modernist and sets its aesthetic principles against the contemporary context. In a 2012 study on Haneke's *Caché*, I tried to grab Haneke's intermediary status as follows: "Haneke's position is, nevertheless, much more problematic and slippery than simply being labeled as a postmedia-age filmmaker. If we regard his affinities with philosophical and cinematic modernism, his influences such as Robert Bresson, Ingmar Bergman, Michelangelo Antonioni and Andrei Tarkovsky, his professional attitude reminding of modernist *auteurism*, then he seems to be rightfully considered as (one of) the last modernist(s). But once these affinities and attitudes are viewed as consciously assumed performative games, we are nowhere else but in the wide field of the postmodernist aesthetics of pastiche and games" (Pieldner 2012, 185).

Modernist connections are already suggested in the title: Haneke's film shares with Ingmar Bergman's 1968 psychological horror film *Hour of the Wolf* (*Vargtimmen*) the Ragnarök reference,<sup>3</sup> the title being a quote from *Völuspá*, the opening poem of the Edda. Bergman translates the mythical reference into a personal, psychological interpretation of one's deepest fears and anxieties; Haneke's film is also reticent about disclosing any further connections with the myth, displaying a more widely interpretable existential space which Kate Ince defines as one that "has 'atmosphere,' resonates with past happenings, and thrills with the possibility of future ones" and demonstrates as being "crucial to the atmosphere of anxiety and tension generated throughout Haneke's cinema – the pervasive questioning, uncertainty and fear that have become his trademark" (2011, 86).

## Depicting the Decivilizing Process

*Time of the Wolf* is an existential parable, a sharp analysis of what remains of man, family and society when the frame of civilization, including laws, morals and values such as democracy, human rights and dignity, suddenly collapses, and fear and uncertainty become dominant. It scrutinizes the functioning mechanisms of the individual, the family and the social community in times of

3 The last battle fought between the gods and the giants in the Skandinavian mythology, which ends with the destruction of almost the entire world. The ancient phrase "hour of the wolf" speaks for itself, suggesting a post-apocalyptic scenery when humans are degraded into animals.

civilization undone, the process of decivilizing or dyscivilizing whose emergence the German sociologist Norbert Elias describes like this: “The armour of civilized conduct would crumble very rapidly if, through a change in society, the degree of insecurity that existed earlier were to break in upon us again, and if danger became as incalculable as it once was. Corresponding fears would soon burst the limits set to them today” (2000, 523, quoted in Kınlı 2017, 34).

In *Time of the Wolf*, Haneke considers such a scenario of post-crisis regression, when processes take a downward trend. The original opening of the script has been removed, thus only the effects of some unknown catastrophe are imparted to the viewer, that cities have become uninhabitable, there is no electricity and the water is contaminated. The opening episode shows the Laurents, a middle-class family arriving at their weekend cottage; they are shocked to discover that the house has been occupied by a vagrant family. After a failed attempt of negotiating the situation, the foreigner shoots the father, Georges. The mutilated, fatherless family, Anna and her children, Eva and Ben, are compelled to seek shelter elsewhere. They are welcomed by no one in the nearby village and thus spend the night in a barn – a scene shown in pitch-dark images – where, after Ben’s pet bird is accidentally killed and ritually buried, the boy gets lost in the darkness. Mother and daughter try to keep the fire on to provide a spot of light for Ben to return, but Eva loses control of the fire, accidentally setting the barn aflame. Ben appears only in the morning; he has been held captive by a Romanian runaway youngster who informs them on the ongoing barter trade. The four of them set out on a journey together, across devastated scenery, seeing corpses of burnt horses and of a shepherd whose clothes they put on, then a train passes next to them with other refugees on, but they cannot stop it. They arrive at a railway depot, where they come across a rudimentary community of survivors desperately waiting for a train to stop [Fig. 1]. There is no schedule, it is totally unpredictable when the next train comes and if it does, whether it will stop or not. The rest of the episodes take place at the railway depot and show post-crisis community life based on insecurity, fight for a palm-sized spot, barter economy, self-imposed leadership, competition and violence. The act of waiting might as well outline a cinematic alternative to the Beckettian absurd; Haneke portrays an absurd life situation but in a less witty and tragicomic, much rather a cruel and confrontational manner, whereby the spectator is involved in the ghetto-life of the railway station and is constrained to adapt, together with the protagonists, to the given conditions. Without the perspective of mobility, the normal course of life comes to a halt, and social coexistence undergoes profound transformations.

The film is exemplary in depicting the end of civilization. In this respect, it carries an inherent epistemic potentiality and may nourish scientific research beyond the scope of film studies. An analysis of the film carried out by İrem Özgören Kınlı (2017) from the perspective of figurational sociology<sup>4</sup> sheds light on Haneke's scenario of deconstructing civilization, on the structural changes, changes in social conduct and emerging modes of knowledge in the time of crisis that are displayed in *Time of the Wolf*. This analysis from the perspective of figurational sociology is very helpful in understanding the chaotic social interactions that the film displays and, at the same time, how precisely Haneke depicts the reverse mechanism of dyscivilization. Kınlı's figurational analysis of the film looks at: 1. changes in the pattern of cooperation and competition; 2. we-I balance between established and outsider groups; 3. transformations in the control of nature, in social controls and in self-controls; 4. changes in modes of knowledge and the balance of involvement and detachment. In terms of changes in the pattern of cooperation and competition, the author points out how, in Haneke's film, the weakening of the central state's authority brings along the lessening of chains of social interdependence. This manifests in a highly competitive environment and the refusal of mutual assistance; the desire to possess poses a threat to cooperation. As concerns the we versus I balance between established and outsider groups, the article points out how in times of crisis the balance inclines towards the group since at lower stages of development the individual depends more on the group. By setting the Romanian runaway boy's individual strategies of survival against the group living in the ghetto of the railway depot, the film models two alternatives of subsistence and shows the superiority of the group and the exposedness of the individual (they accuse the boy of theft and chase him; only Eva keeps in contact with the boy and shows solidarity with him) [Figs. 2–3]. Within groups, the film also contrasts the established group – those arriving earlier at the depot having more rights and possessing more information – and the newcomers – those coming later have to fight their way into the larger group and are exposed to conflict and racial discrimination. The deepest point of the narrative is when a group of newcomers arrive at the depot and Anna faces the murderer of her husband but has no means to prove the murder. From the perspective of transformations in the control of nature, in social controls and in self-controls, the post-crisis scenario shows loss of control in all aspects (a suggestive example is how Eva

4 Figurational sociology is a research trend in sociology in which figurations of humans – evolving networks of interdependent humans – constitute the focus of investigation.



loses control of the fire which thus turns from protective to destructive force). At the same time, the loss of control over greater forces and structures brings along compensatory attempts at regaining control over smaller structures and weaker individuals. The survivors struggle to exercise control over each other, regularly manifested in form of manipulation, abuse, fight and rape. And finally, as regards changes in modes of knowledge and the balance of involvement and detachment, Kınlı's analysis points out how detachment proves to be a better strategy of survival in times of crisis than involvement: those who accept the primitive conditions with relative emotional detachment and surrender to the logic of barter economy, have better chances of survival than those who cannot overcome emotionally and commit suicide as in the case of a young girl. According to Kınlı, Haneke's film is exemplary in showing how myths and the desire for transcendence emerge in times of crisis.

"Crises precipitate a meaning deficit by disrupting the processes and patterns of sense making [...] There is a need, therefore, to tell stories and offer accounts and explanations to reduce the uncertainty and find perspective and create or recreate meaning" (Seeger and Sellnow 2016, 11). Along fits of rage and clashes of racism, sporadic gestures of solidarity emerge and the myth of the Thirty-Six Just starts to spread about the saviors of humanity; when one of them dies, another is born. Ben, who has become muted by the series of experienced traumas, hears the story and decides to become one of them, and in order to save the world by self-immolation, he makes a fire on the rails. He is saved from self-sacrifice by Fred, who has killed his father. With a sudden cut that, again, withdraws any narrative causality, the final scene seems almost supernatural and in stark contrast with the entire undoing and immobility that we got used to in the course of the film: for more than two minutes, we can see the image of the landscape passing by from the perspective of a mobile train, while nothing is known about how the train has stopped, who has boarded on it and what its destination is.

## The Crisis of the Image

In *Time of the Wolf*, the representation of crisis is rendered, at its best, through the crisis of representation. Crisis is simultaneously present at the level of both the theme and the style. Watching a film by Haneke is, without exception, a harsh experience; *Time of the Wolf* is, in particular, "a film that perfectly foils the escapism of the eye and mind" (Torner 2010, 548). In what follows, my analysis focuses on the ways in which the crisis of representation, the intended implosion



of image, relates to intermediality as visual excess, and describes the effects resulting from the tension underlying in these apparently divergent tendencies.

With a radical gesture that evokes the entropic postmodern (both in literature and cinema), whereby rendering a chaotic world takes place in a chaotic form, Haneke's cinematic disaster discourse undoes civilization via undoing the image itself. The viewers have to find their way out through images of pitch-darkness; Haneke uses no artificial lighting and seems to renounce the high aesthetic that results in glossy, glamorous, saturated images, which he used in *The White Ribbon*, abounding in poignant black-and-white photofilmic images. In setting up a dystopian scenery, Haneke strives to be as "real" as possible, apparently avoiding anything that goes in the direction of smooth arrangement in terms of narrative or style. This is the way in which the violence of the image<sup>5</sup> manifests here, via an exceptionally austere cinematic language which may stand in stark contrast with the rich intermedial connections that Haneke's films generally abound in.

As Christopher Rowe points out, Haneke's intermediality is profoundly connected with the representation of the real.<sup>6</sup> With reference to Haneke's films, he connects "intermediality" and "reality" by coining the term "intermedial realism" as Haneke's access to the crisis of contemporary life. According to Rowe, "intermedial realism suggests that 'this world' can no longer be defined without making recourse to the audiovisual media that structure our perceptual and affective apprehension of it, and to the transformations these media effect on sensation itself. A new and necessary mode of realism, a Hanekean realism is thus uncovered by an intermedial cinema that expresses the profoundly fractured and mediated reality of contemporary life" (2017, 209). By the title of the book, *The Intermedial Void*, Rowe suggests the tensions and disjunctions between film and other media. Haneke's aesthetic sustains and makes emphatic "performative contradictions" through convoluted media representations of reality. "In Haneke's strategy of medial fragmentation, cinema does not come to 'represent,' 'deconstruct' or otherwise implicitly master other media, but rather to establish irresolvable spatiotemporal discontinuities between these forms of expression, producing mimetically fractured yet profoundly affective and evocative images of thought" (Rowe 2017, 11).

5 In other films by Haneke, most conspicuously in *Funny Games*, the violence of the image, the "reinvestment of the shock value in the image" (Grønstad 2012, 14) can be encountered in the form of extended exposedness to painful images by means of long takes.

6 Christopher Rowe's volume entitled *Michael Haneke: The Intermedial Void*, published in 2017, is a remarkable achievement in intermediality studies as it discusses an entire directorial oeuvre from this vantage point.

At first glance, *Time of the Wolf* seems to stand apart from this aesthetic. Yet, I regard this film as an experiment with the limits of representation, with the degree to which the cinematic image can be itself “decivilized,” as an inquiry into whether it can be totally deprived of the (inter)medial traces in a downward process towards a negative dialectics of the image. In short, whether film can do without the excess of what elevates, what transcends the image and what can make it pleasurable for the eyes. By conveying a liminal experience of the “real,” Haneke challenges the spectator with the aesthetics of the “unwatchable” (Baer et al. 2019) and “cinematic unpleasure” (Aston 2010). *Time of the Wolf* is an instance of non-cinema, a gesture of “negating cinema in order to let reality speak for itself” (Nagib 2016, 147). The “decivilizing process” of the image operates with signifiers, remnants of the past whose code is unknown – to allude to another film by Haneke, *Code inconnu*. While we hear in voice-over the voice of the girl writing a letter to her dead father, her voice is accompanied by static, photo-filmic images created in the in-betweenness of photography and film. The scene thus turns into an aestheticized rendering of the delapidated scenery, contrasting the calmness of nature with the building interior showing human traces, erstwhile household utensils, photographs, fragments of documents, postcards pinned onto the wall, evoking the olden times of normalcy [Figs. 4–5]. These are visual signifiers, cultural codes, indexes of the past that grab the eye through their imageness and arrestedness. The static images suggest that time has come to a halt, the mobility of life has turned into immobility, inertia and lethargy.

Among them, a simple drawing that is actually part of Albrecht Dürer’s *Dream Vision* (1525, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna) turns up, almost unnoticed, a watercolour on paper of a landscape with trees, columns of water pouring down from heavens [Fig. 6]. The original drawing is accompanied by a handwritten text by Dürer [Fig. 7], in which he confesses that he made the drawing after a dream that he had: “in 1525, during the night between Wednesday and Thursday after Whitsuntide, I had this vision in my sleep, and saw how many great waters fell from heaven. The first struck the ground about four miles away from me with such a terrible force, enormous noise and splashing that it drowned the entire countryside. I was so greatly shocked at this that I awoke before the cloudburst. And the ensuing downpour was huge. Some of the waters fell some distance away and some close by. And they came from such a height that they seemed to fall at an equally slow pace. But the very first water that hit the ground so suddenly had fallen at such velocity, and was accompanied by wind and roaring so frightening, that when I awoke my whole body trembled and I could not

recover for a long time. When I arose in the morning, I painted the above as I had seen it. May the Lord turn all things to the best.”<sup>7</sup> It is regarded as the first faithful painterly representation of a dream, born in times of religious precariousness brought along by the birth of Reformation and marked by a general fear that a flood would put an end to the world. The plain, sketchy drawing in watercolour remarkably stands in opposition with representational conventions of the time, just as Haneke’s minimalist visionary realism stands in opposition with cinematic representational conventions of post-apocalypse. Thus, the unexpected painterly reference may be regarded as a moment of visual excess, an instance of intermediality as it transposes its media properties onto the medium of the film.

The ghetto life at the railway depot is characterized by a general stasis and inertia. However, together with the emergence of gestures of solidarity – a totally unexpected and “disruptive” behaviour in the context of the depicted decivilizing process – static images also appear when the camera becomes compassionate and pans the survivors one by one, grabbed in photofilmic arrestedness and chiaroscuro painterly compositions reminding of Georges de La Tour’s paintings [Fig. 8]. In this manner, the film signals the desire for transcendence inherent in the human being that manifests at the level of the images themselves. Thus, intermediality finds a way and “breaks in,” counterpointing the “unwatchable” with the poetic and the pleasurable. Concomitantly, intermediality re-fills the moving image with an affective and sensual quality.

The greatest change is introduced by the final scene of the film, which contains mobile images recorded as if viewed from the inside of a moving train. After prior images of cargo trains that do not stop, the much-awaited train is suggested to have finally arrived, most probably due to Ben’s commitment to sacrifice and the fire made on the rails. However, a lot of questions emerge: where is the train coming from and where is it heading to? Where is the place of salvation if the entire living space is contaminated after the catastrophe? Is there any perspective of “re-civilization”? There is no supportive information in this regard. Yet, with Ben’s symbolic performance – a gesture of individual responsibility –, accompanied by Fred’s compassion – a gesture of care for the other – the potential of community salvation sets in, opening up the way for a slight sensation of hope.

After the grim representation of stagnation at the depot, the motion provided by the train journey is cathartic. It is a two-minute scene of the landscape passing by and the sound of the train [Fig. 9]. It is non-human, what is more, post-human, as the medium of motion interacts with the spectacle without any reference to

7 [https://www.wga.hu/html\\_m/d/durer/2/16/2/12dream.html](https://www.wga.hu/html_m/d/durer/2/16/2/12dream.html). Last accessed 18. 06. 2022.

the possessor of the gaze. The alluring view of the supposedly contaminated landscape creates a sensation of the uncanny, the unbridled desire to regain the lost sense of the natural. It seems as if the entire prior state of immobility had prepared the single moment when, together with the protagonists' retrieved possibility of motion, the moving image itself were re-born, also literally, as an affective, "moving" image.

The train is essentially conjoined with the moving image. In this way, Haneke carries out a reverse media archaeology, leads the viewer back to early cinema by reconnecting to the first moving images of the *Arrival of a Train* (*L'Arrivée d'un train à La Ciotat*, 1896) by the Lumière brothers. Despite the significant difference in the representation of the train, with its passengers situated outside vs inside the train, waiting for the train and travelling by it respectively, the Hanekean rendering of the train motif may be regarded as a film-historical reference [Figs. 10–11]. A closer association to a rail journey in a post-apocalyptic scenery, showing the landscape of the Zone from the perspective of the railcar passengers, may be Andrei Tarkovsky's *Stalker* (1979) [Fig. 12], while strikingly similar snapshots may also be discovered in Alain Resnais' *Night and Fog* (*Nuit et brouillard*, 1956), a documentary recorded on the site of the former concentration camps of Auschwitz and Majdanek, a timeless memento of the Holocaust [Figs. 13–14]. The idea of salvation associated with the train as a cultural code remnant of the 20th century, a visual signifier of the Holocaust, provides an uncanny experience. In this way, the long take exerts effect on the viewer as an ethically loaded sequence, an unsettling lead into post-civilization as a future that folds back onto the past.

## Conclusions

Haneke's rendering of ghetto life and train transport, albeit in an indirect way, reconnects to the representations of the Holocaust and thus leaves the ending open, counterpointing relief with traumatic historical memories, suggesting that the moving images can no longer be innocent and are condensed as a constantly re-emerging ethical burden in the spectatorial experience. As the Hungarian experimental filmmaker, András Jeles said, "Auschwitz has always been and will never pass" (2007, 10). However, irrespective of the interpretation conferred to the final sequence, mobility in itself is relieving and there is no better moment to have this visceral experience than at the advent of the Virocene, when our perception of the naturalness of motion, our social interactions and our place in the world have been profoundly affected. A universal parable of the doom

of civilization and the chances of regeneration, Michael Haneke's *Time of the Wolf* is a rethinking of the genre within art-house cinema in general and the Hanekean aesthetic in particular. Its re-reading in the context of the current global crisis has tried to point at multiple sensations of in-betweenness granted by the film experience: between cinema and non-cinema, the unwatchable and the pleasurable, the epistemic and the affective, the real and the intermedial.

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**Figures 2-3.** Alternatives of subsistence: the superiority of the group vs the exposedness of the individual.





**Figures 4–5.** Eva writing a letter to her dead father; photo-filmic images evoking the olden times.



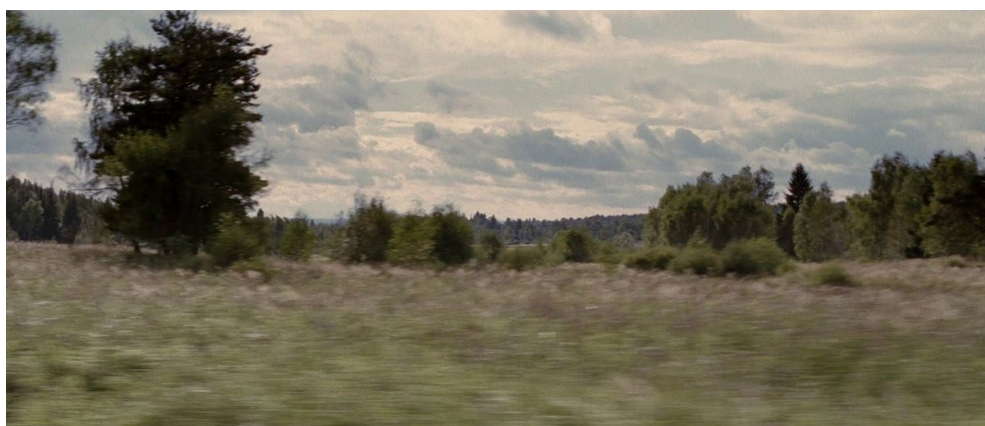
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