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Five Tapes, Four Halls, Two Dreams

Vicissitudes of Surveillant Narration in Michael Haneke's Caché

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While most of the critical response to Michael Haneke's 2005 feature *Caché* ("Hidden") has noted its unusual and foregrounded appropriation of surveillance, the film's particular mobilization of surveillant audiovisuality and temporality (e.g., unusually long and static shots seemingly lacking in any diegetically attributable point of view) is almost never subjected to critical reading as a *narrative* practice. The perceived centrality of political allegory in *Caché* seems to have licensed a tsunami of *thematic* interpretations of the film.[1] What this essay will explore, instead, is the *aesthetic politics of the film's mise-en-scène of the surveillant.*[2] *Caché*'s intriguing narrative mobilization of surveillance effectively undergoes a fundamental transformation over the course of the film – so it will be argued here – such that by the time we get to the last shot, the concluding long take on the steps of the Lycée Stéphane Mallarmé, the nervous and unsettling quality of what could be described as a *panoptic undecidability* – which is the intriguing stylistic signature of much of the *first half* of the film – is now strikingly *absent*. Indeed, having operated as the motor of the film's diegetic call to ethical conscience, what I will call the film's surveillant narration has, by the end of the film, produced a spectatorial position that is, in fact, *fully identified with the panoptic*. As a result, irrespective of what the film may be doing at the thematic level, the aesthetic politics of *Caché*'s narrational economy is utterly at odds with its ostensible media-critical stance.

Some readers have suggested that the final scene in *Caché* – the very long immobile take of the children leaving the school – is so narratively unmarked that it could easily be placed at the beginning of the film (in the fashion of the brief shot of the cowboy aiming and firing his gun directly at the camera/audience which usually appears at the end of *The Great Train Robbery* [Edwin S. Porter, 1903] but was sometimes also placed at the beginning). This claim, I believe, is deeply mistaken, for it fails to recognize the degree to which this final shot has a very

specific narrative function carefully constructed by the film's complex internal economy of surveillant narration. It is only once this economy has been grasped that one can understand not only why the final shot *must* come at the end, but also how it plays a very specific role in the logic of the film's moralist invocation of surveillance. I will attempt to sketch that logic through the following close analysis of a series of key moments in *Caché*; specifically, five tapes, four halls, and two dreams.

From the very start of the film, the fascinatingly long, static, and ultimately complex opening shot that establishes the film's first, and crucial, internal norm, there is a curious tension. In many ways, of course, this sequence bears *none* of the classic hallmarks of ciné-surveillance: The patina of the image is high-definition and color (not the grainy black and white of classic surveillance videotape), the camera angle is straight-on (eschewing both the fish-eye perspective of a wide-angle lens and the classic high-angle surveillance point of view), and the shot is completely static (employing neither the mechanical back-and-forth pan of CCTV fame, nor the multiple screens of *Time Code* [Mike Figgis, 2000]). It is nevertheless a very specific *temporal* feature of this opening sequence – its extended duration and the concomitant recalibration of eventhood – that gives it its surveillant signature. This is only exacerbated by the credits themselves, which – expanding the on-image writing characteristic of the surveillant feed (which usually consists only in a date and time stamp, camera number and placement, etc.) – unfold interminably in data-entry fashion and ultimately form a rectangular shape (a screen perhaps?), the title of the film "hidden" within the textual mass (Fig. 2.1). Why are these credits so small? Could it be that the strikingly minuscule font size which requires the spectators to really work to make out what's there puts these viewers in a scrutinizing position which, as we will discover in a moment, is rather analogous to Georges's hermeneutic puzzlement (when viewing the first videotape) at the strange trace of the daily life outside his house that has burst into his domestic space? What might be at stake in this isomorphism of the spectatorial position of the film audience and that of the various forms of spectatorship staged within the film?

The long opening take is marked not only by its duration but also by a complex series of reframings on the part of the spectators as they attempt to establish the semiotic status of the shot. We first take it to be a still photograph and then recognize certain cues (sound, minimal movement within the frame) that reveal it to be a time-based image. We then assume that this footage is in the present tense but subsequently recognize that what it captures belongs to a (soon to be specified) time past while what is present is its status (revealed by the soundtrack) as a trace being re-viewed, a recognition subsequently confirmed and foregrounded by the fast-forwarding of the image *as videotape*. In other words, despite its surveillant signature, what the tape indexes is not simply what it depicts but rather the fact of its status as *something being viewed*. Indeed, one could say that what we see in the first scene of *Caché* is somebody discovering by watching the

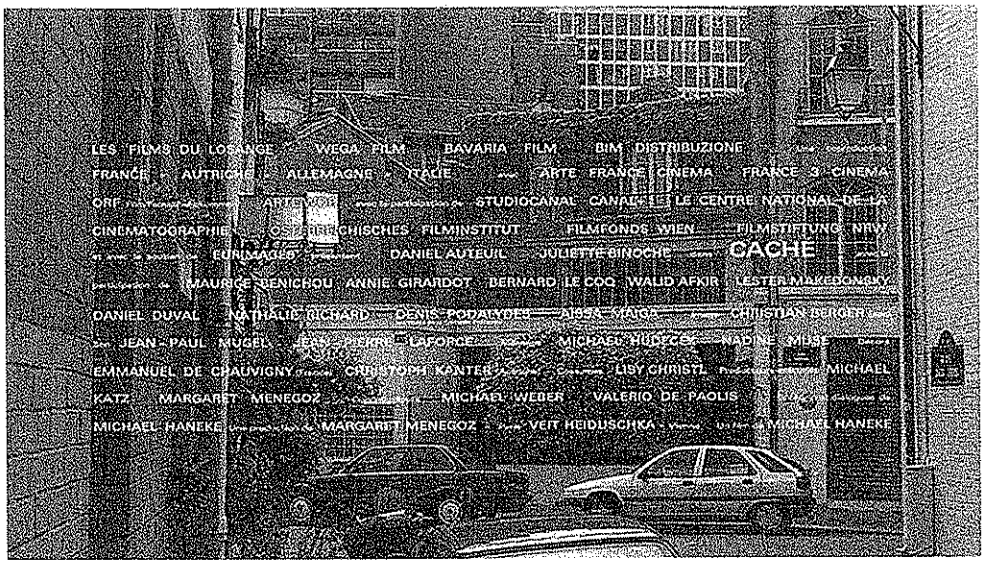

Fig. 2.1 Opening credits. *Caché* (2005), dir. Michael Haneke, prod. Andrew Colton and Veit Heiduschka.

fact that they are being watched. The narrative deployment of surveillant videotape in cinema seems to have an elective affinity for such metaleptic indexicality, to use Thomas Elsaesser's felicitous coinage,[3] which enables this sort of footage to serve a wide range of narrational functions.[4] It is of course tempting to read the very similar retrospective recasting that we undertake as spectators of the opening of *Caché* as the performance of what we will eventually recognize as the film's central gesture, to the extent that here we enact spectatorially what the film posits as the ethical imperative for its main character Georges: a retrospective re-vision, a rereading of a past that is (in his case) repressed and/or traumatic. In any event, one can certainly read the fast-forwarding of the tape – marked here by the rippling in the image (Fig. 2.2) – as the moment when the metalepsis (heretofore entirely acoustic) becomes inscribed *visually* in the readable trace of the image as a videotape-being-viewed. Indeed, the fast-forward could also be read as revealing the *character* of that viewing (both Georges's and ours) as a search for eventhood, the ripple marking visually the desire – schooled by a certain economy of narrative cinema – for a specific pace of events (sometimes called "action") largely absent in surveillant temporality. The tape, Anne tells us in the voice-over, runs for over two hours without much of anything happening. What they are searching for is in fact nothing other than an event, in this case something that indexes the duration temporally, a time code or other form of temporal marker that might reveal when (and in turn by whom) this sequence was shot (in this case it is the moment Georges leaves the house).

As if to foreground the specifically surveillant signature of the temporality of the film's opening sequence, the two subsequent scenes are effectively *variations on a durational theme*, each of which iterate in formally very different ways the

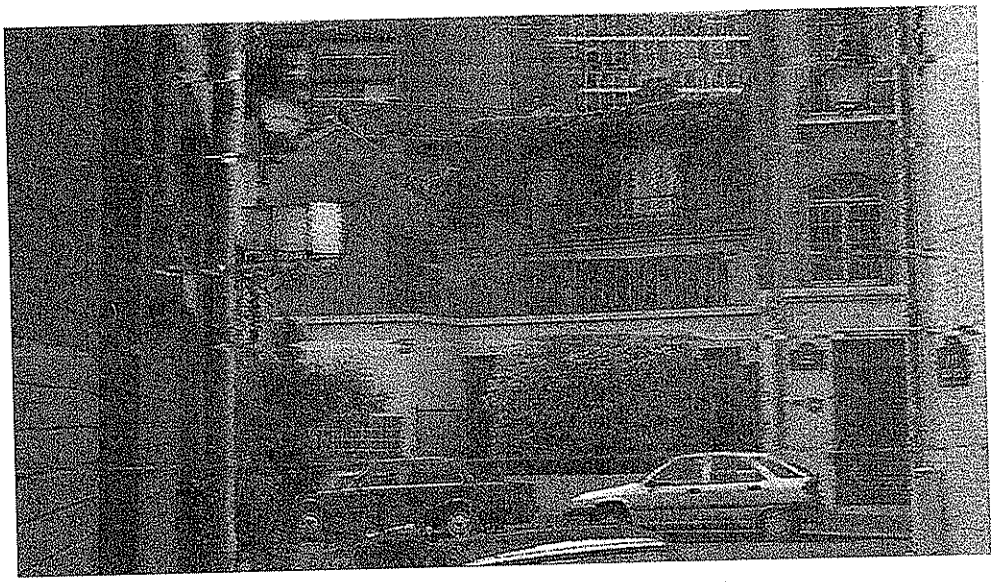

Fig. 2.2 Ripples in the image. *Caché* (2005), dir. Michael Haneke, prod. Andrew Colton and Veit Heiduschka.

durational character – and concomitant anxiety – characteristic of the panoptic narration in what we will soon learn is only the first of a series of surveillant videotapes. The first of these durational variants is a complex three-minute-sequence shot that relentlessly tracks into the kitchen and then back out to the dining room.[5] The next scene in the pool is also a long, continuous shot which is marked by a more insistent (parental?) observational formalism in the relentlessness of its up and down tilt. The signifying rift between the audio and visual components of the opening scene is here rehearsed in the subtle disconnect between the *sonic* trace of the attention of the acousmatic coach (who comments on the swimming technique of *each* of the three boys' "turns") and the *visual* focus of the camera, which relentlessly follows Pierrot and only Pierrot. What these two scenes already manifest, albeit in ways that only become legible retrospectively (and which will hopefully become clearer through what follows), is the surveillant dimension of the film's narration *even when and where it is not thematically motivated.*

Against the background of this newly established internal *temporal* norm – all scenes in the film so far having been of extended, indeed excessive and foregrounded duration – the pool scene cuts abruptly to yet another, this one seemingly a nocturnal iteration of the opening surveillant shot with nearly identical framing and stasis (Fig. 2.3). Based on our experience with the previous instance of this sort of largely still panoptic temporality, we anticipate (according to another of the film's internal norms) the moment when this shot will also in turn be *reframed*, its indexicality metaleptically recast by a voice-over or by some work on the image as the object of a diegetic gaze. But this time the only sound from the image is local and there is not a ripple or any other indication that it too is a taped sequence. Our search for a cue that will also reveal this image as one that is being watched

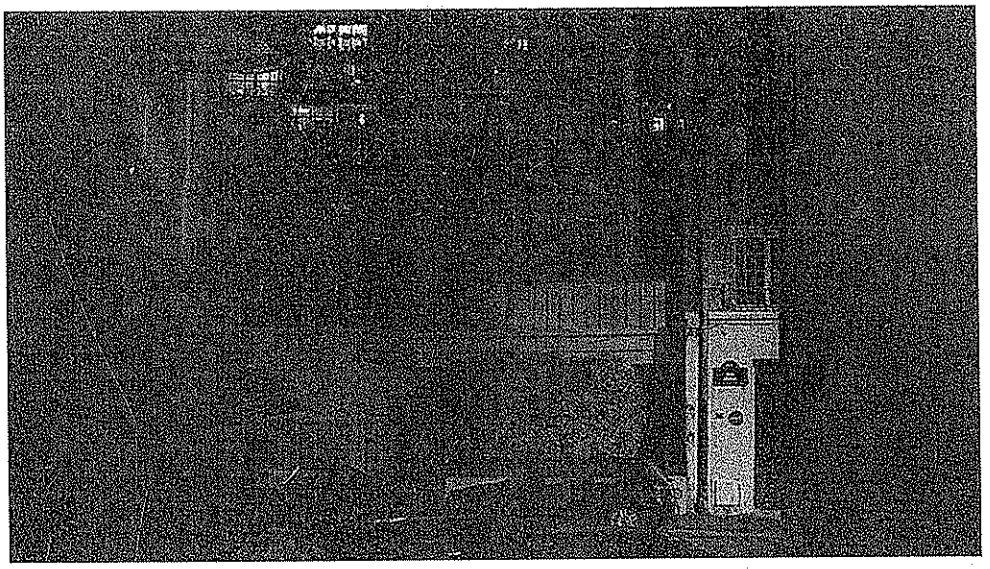

Fig. 2.3 The house at night. *Caché* (2005), dir. Michael Haneke, prod. Andrew Colton and Veit Heiduschka.

within the diegesis is in vain. So how do we read this scene? Is it not just as "unmarked" as the final scene, if taken on its own? But that is just the point – it cannot be taken on its own but must be read, indeed can *only* be read, in relation to what has preceded it and what follows. And this will turn out to be crucial. While the status of this sequence at this point is strictly *undecidable* within *Caché*'s narrative economy, the lack of alternative options to account for it opens up an intriguing possibility which (for reasons I hope will become clear) is *not* available for the final scene: One could say that here the *narration itself is functioning in a surveillant manner*, that is, that the diegetic issue of the surveillant observation of tape #1 has here become the very condition of the film's narration as such.

To get a sense of what this might mean, consider what I would insist is the paradigmatic instance of this migration of surveillance from the thematic and diegetic to the very condition of the narration itself, the final scene in Francis Ford Coppola's magisterial *The Conversation* (Fig. 2.4). In this closing sequence we find the film's paranoid hero Harry Caul suddenly confronted with the terrifying fact that now *he* is being listened to in his own home. Determined to uncover the condition of possibility of this invasive violation, he systematically takes apart his living quarters to find the bug – but to no avail. In the film's final shot we are shown Caul, sitting in the ruins of his deconstructed domesticity, from a high-angle camera that pans back and forth and back and forth, its foregrounded mechanical regularity formally invoking the movement of a surveillance camera. But, as I have argued at greater length elsewhere,[6] this panoptic device is not *in* Harry's space (since otherwise this surveillance expert would certainly have found it). Harry cannot locate this CCTV device because it is in a space that is epistemologically unavailable to him; the camera here is no longer part of but instead *the very*

Fig. 2.4 Harry Caul (Gene Hackman) in the ruins of his apartment. *The Conversation* (1974), dir. and prod. Francis Ford Coppola.

condition of possibility of the narrative space he inhabits. In short, the narration of the film as such has itself become surveillant, the explicit focus of the diegesis has begun to contaminate the extra-diegetic as well.[7] Returning now to the curious nocturnal surveillance scene in *Caché*, its very *lack* of any clear reframing cues (which would provide a diegetic source for its gaze) puts the viewer into a sort of hermeneutic overdrive, with his or her attention recalibrated to attend to the smallest detail, be it a passing car or the wind rustling the leaves. Exactly halfway through the scene a car arrives and as it parallel parks it exposes with its headlights a shadow of something that one is tempted to say looks like a movie camera. Is this a cue, a blooper, a Rorschach-like test of our hermeneutic projection – or perhaps what one might call a MacGuffin of surveillant narration? In any case, Georges eventually appears in the shot and walks towards and enters his house; a light is turned on – and that's it. Nothing else. The scene simply provides narrative information (Georges has returned home at night), but now does so using the vocabulary – static camera, surveillant duration, and identical framing – of the earlier diegeticized surveillant scene. As in the final scene of *The Conversation*, a surveillant activity that was previously the explicit object of attention within the narrative here seemingly has *become* the signature of the film's narrative activity itself.

The reframing we expected but were denied in this scene is then immediately provided *literally and figuratively* in the next scene in which, having cut to Georges speaking directly to the camera on the set of his literary TV talk show, as the shot pulls away (reframing him to include the guests on his program), we have an eruption of an acousmatic voice which instructs everyone not to get up during the credits – *which we do not see*.[8] As Georges leaves the set to take a phone call we cut to a close-up of a crude child's drawing and two remote controls (Fig. 2.5)

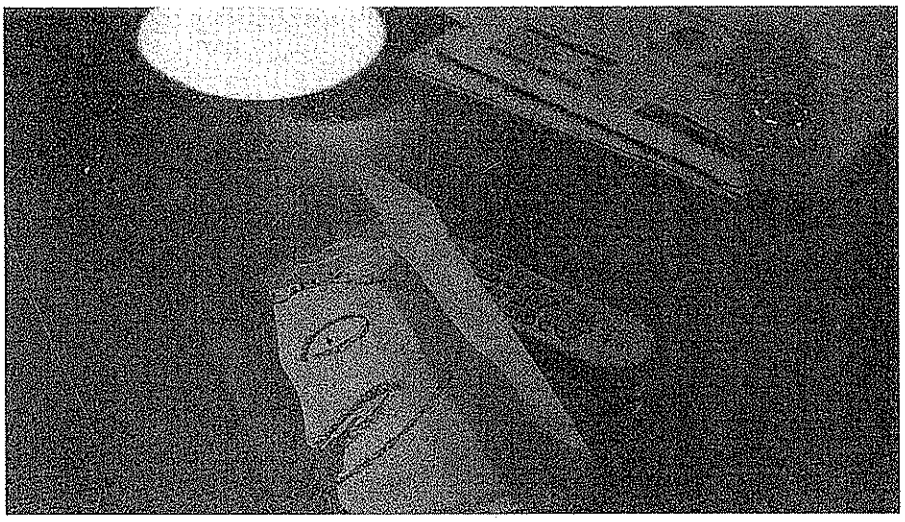

Fig. 2.5 Two remote controls. *Caché* (2005), dir. Michael Haneke, prod. Andrew Colton and Veit Heiduschka.

with Anne explaining in voice-over that yet another surveillant *envoi* (tape #2) was wrapped in it. The film then cuts to the *same* nocturnal shot of the house which was just shown, except now marked *from the start* by what we recognize (and were cued by the presence of the remote controls to read) as the ripples of the VCR *rewind*. This is significant, for Georges is here rewinding within the diegesis what *we* as spectators have already seen; the narration could thus be said to be effectively implicating *us* in the surveillant intrusion into Georges's life. Moreover, the reason Georges cannot find out who is "behind" the surveillance tapes is thus similar to the reason Harry Caul could not find the surveillant device in his apartment: The "sources" of the surveillance are epistemologically unavailable to both because in each case *it is the narration itself that is watching*.

The temptation here to *read* the rewind direction marked by the ripples in the image *figurally* – "going backward" as the *mise-en-scène* of recollection? – is then encouraged by a most curious montage immediately following the iteration of what my own hermeneutic overdrive (perhaps the *déformation professionnelle* of people who work on surveillance?) wants to read as a silhouetted camera: the shot of a bloody-mouthed North African child (Fig. 2.6), himself an invocation of the child's drawing of a bloody-mouthed stick figure that opened the scene, looking up as if startled and wiping his mouth. We now begin to read the surveillant image no longer simply as the object of a *diegetic* viewing by Georges and Anne (as before), but increasingly as a *psychologized* point of view belonging solely to Georges. This subjective cast of the surveillant image is emphasized by Georges's distracted non-response to the repeated voice-over questions by his wife: "Qu'est-ce qu'il y a?" ("What is it?") and then a few seconds later, "Qu'est-ce qui s'est passé?" (What happened?"), and then again, after a few moments, "Georges!" – to which he responds, "Quoi?" ("What?") and then, "Rien, rien. Je . . . Je suis fatigué" ("Nothing, nothing.

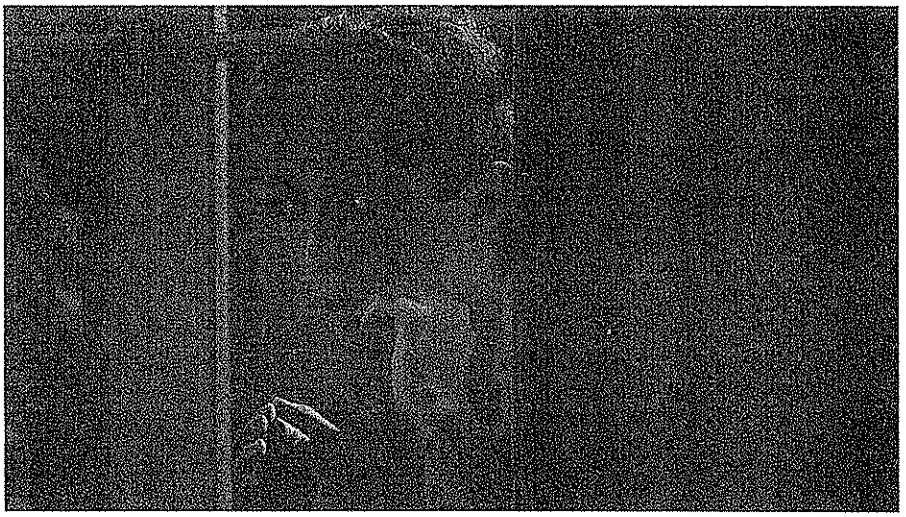

Fig. 2.6 The bloody-mouthed boy. *Caché* (2005), dir. Michael Haneke, prod. Andrew Colton and Veit Heiduschka.

I . . . I'm just tired"). Might this explain why, when we cut back to the drawing at the end of the scene we no longer see *two* remotes (figures of diegetic VCR watching) but only one: Not only is Georges's relation to these images no longer simply televisual or spectatorial (it is in the process of becoming something else), but also he is no longer "in control" of the remote (i.e., of the [repressed] past), which is here returning with a vengeance.

The last of the film's (hermeneutic) internal norms established here – read scenes marked by surveillant features as somehow a psychological manifestation or externalization of Georges's subjectivity – is confirmed by the next surveillant *envoi* (tape #3), which arrives (wrapped in the now *de rigueur* drawing) during the dinner party. This tape first violates at least two other internal norms: (1) surveillance tapes are always images of the outside of Anne and Georges's house; and (2) such tapes will always be marked by the ripples of a "fast-forward" and/or "rewind" that themselves betray the full-screen image of the tapes as images being watched (a violation whose frequency here risks making violation and its concomitant unsettling a new internal norm). Tape #3 is a video shot from inside a car (a fact emphasized by the windshield wipers; Fig. 2.7). This clearly readable framing has the effect of *foregrounding the agency* at work in the surveillance video, which was much more "unmarked" (even if no less of an issue) in the stasis and extended duration of the previous tapes. Indeed, this inscription of a foregrounded surveillant agency is rendered even more pronounced by the sudden 90-degree pan that reveals a country house which – as Georges explains in voice-over to the astonished (silent) dinner guests and fellow diegetic spectators of the surveillant *envoi* – was his childhood home. At this moment, the now full-screen image of the house is *exclusively* Georges's point of view since he alone is standing next to the large-screen TV while everyone else has remained seated at the dining table. What is this image

Fig. 2.7 Video shot from inside a car. *Caché* (2005), dir. Michael Haneke, prod. Andrew Colton and Veit Heiduschka.

if not the externalization of Georges's creeping – and as yet completely unarticulated – anxiety that whatever it is that these tapes represent has something to do with the complicated past of his childhood?

In a further confirmation of this new internal norm of surveillance-as-materialization-of-personal-psychology we now cut to tape #4 abruptly, without any prior notice or diegetic preparation, and directly after Georges has woken up from a bad dream in – and about – his childhood home. Like the initial "tape" of the film's opening scene, no drawing accompanies this one, whose first section is (again) shot from inside a car, this time driving down a street in a Parisian suburb before it cuts, again with local sound, to a hand-held track down the featureless hallway of a high-rise housing project until the camera stops in front of an apartment and pans to reveal the apartment number. At this point the image freezes and, in the by-now familiar gesture of metaleptic reframing, starts to rewind (Fig. 2.8), the ripples revealing once again that we are (indeed, have been from the start) watching watching, i.e., that we are/have been seeing what – as we (once again) quickly learn from the soundtrack – Anne and Georges are/have been seeing, a fact confirmed by the subsequent close analysis of the tape that the two of them undertake in order to decrypt the street sign (Avenue Lénine).[9]

The change of direction in mid-tape here (from "play" to "rewind") marks the film's *peripeteia*, a subtle but important shift clearly indicated shortly thereafter when Georges goes to visit the building seen on the tape. As he waits in a snack bar across the street (perhaps to get up the courage to actually undertake the pilgrimage to the scary site of surveillant reference), we see a long static shot of the building which has all the hallmarks of the surveillant aesthetic we have come to recognize. Like previous panoptic takes, this one is also subjected to a reframing,

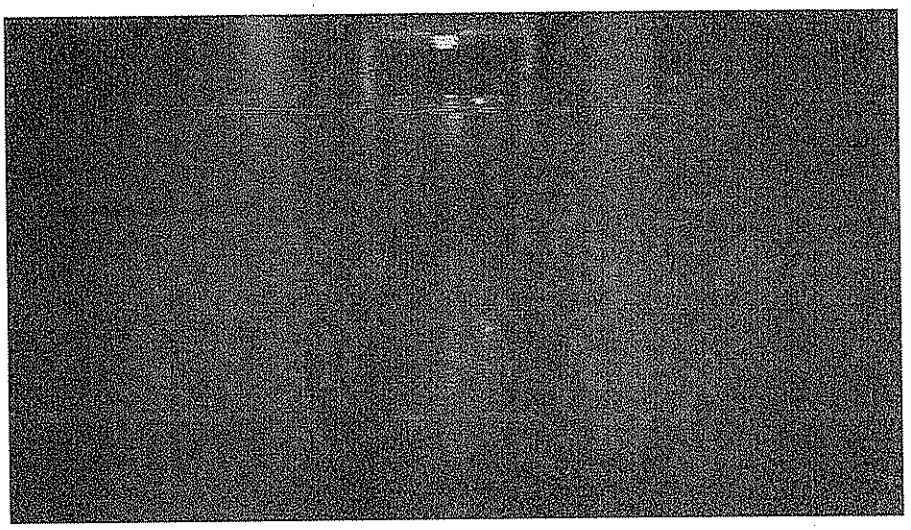

Fig. 2.8 Hallway (1), ripples. *Caché* (2005), dir. Michael Haneke, prod. Andrew Colton and Veit Heiduschka.

but of a wholly different sort. While once again the image is revealed as one that Georges is watching, in this case he is no longer watching an "other" watching (i.e., a videotape): This is now *his own point of view as a surveillant point of view*. As such this scene performs a dramatic modification, an almost complete evacuation of the anxiety from the surveillant point of view as that gaze increasingly becomes Georges's own – the unknown "agency" of the early tapes now recast as the externalized workings of Georges's bad conscience (think: return of the repressed).

The psychologized subjectivization of the only apparently panoptic sequences suddenly allows one to make sense of the striking difference in character of the fifth and last "surveillance" tape, which we cut into directly from a triumphant parental moment at a swimming match. As if signaled by the lack of any ominous arrival narrative or the concomitant menacing drawing, the question of who made this tape is no longer an issue as it was before. It is, rather, first and foremost about *what we see* after Georges leaves (i.e., the sobbing Majid) as a compelling performance of the truth of Majid's claim, reiterated here, that he had nothing to do with any of the tapes, drawings, etc. If the metaleptic reframing via the soundtrack (which reveals once again that we are watching Georges and Anne *watching* this tape) produces unease, it is now *not* due to the frustration of our desire to know who made this recording. Rather, the discomfort stems entirely from the deception on Georges's part that this tape reveals: He has lied to his wife and *that* is the issue here. The question as to *who* shot the footage has given way entirely to the issue of *what the tapes reveal* and, more specifically, what they reveal *about Georges*. Moreover, to the extent that the tape here seems to have taken on a truth function *qua surveillance*, we can begin to see a decisive shift in the viewer's relation to that surveillant position: Instead of being a source of anxiety, it now increasingly functions as a welcome locus of disambiguating omniscience.

We can track the very same shift from a disconcerting surveillant undecidability (with respect to the source of the image) to a completely decidable and no longer surveillant point of view by examining the four iterations of the scene in the hallway in Majid's building. The first time we see this space it is through a shot marked very clearly as a subjective camera while remaining entirely unascribed – and as such raising the by-now familiar yet still disturbing question, "Whose point of view is this?" When we return to the hall with Georges following the panoptic shot of the housing project that is then "revealed" as his point of view, we immediately perceive a marked difference: If Georges's relation to this hallway the first time we see it is as spectator (he is the person watching the surveillance tape), here the same shot has become his *actual* point of view, an "ownership" of the image that is complicated when, at the very moment in the previous iteration where the image rewound, this time Georges himself *enters* the shot to knock at the door (Fig. 2.9)! The third time we encounter the hallway it is almost a cut-on-action of Georges walking across the street towards the housing project and then down the hall *within the shot* (Fig. 2.10); there is no hint of ascriptive ambiguity here. By the time we see this same space a fourth time, when Georges returns for the rendezvous when Majid will commit suicide, Georges is now shot walking down the hall *towards* the camera (Fig. 2.11). While there surely are many ways to read this progression (from denial to acknowledgment, a formalism of a "working through"), it clearly marks a shift in the film's internal narrative economy – from a surveillant to a classical (i.e., unmarked) omniscience – which is anything but *caché*.

What is suggested by the comparison of the film's four different treatments of the hallway becomes equally manifest through the juxtaposition of the structural logics of Georges's two dreams. In the first, we cut from Georges at his mother's

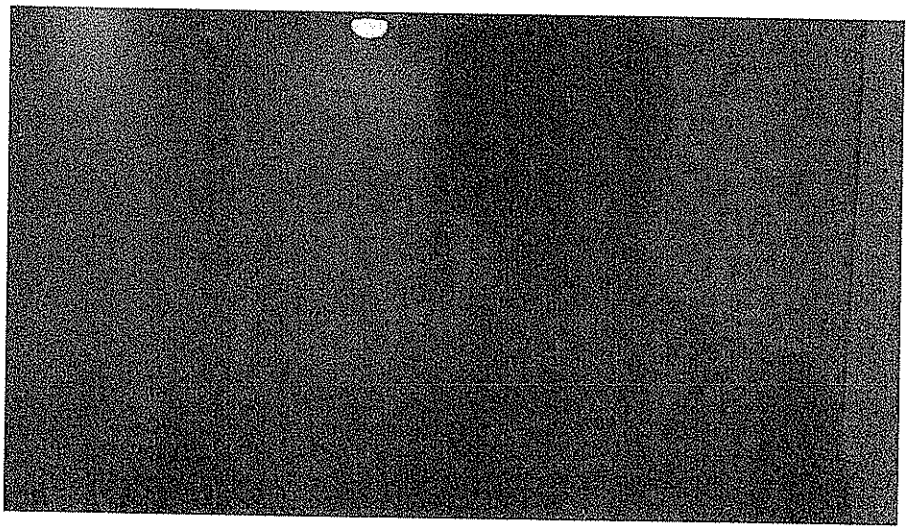

Fig. 2.9 Hallway (2), Georges (Daniel Auteuil) enters. *Caché* (2005), dir. Michael Haneke, prod. Andrew Colton and Veit Heiduschka.

Fig. 2.10 Hallway (3). *Caché* (2005), dir. Michael Haneke, prod. Andrew Colton and Veit Heiduschka.

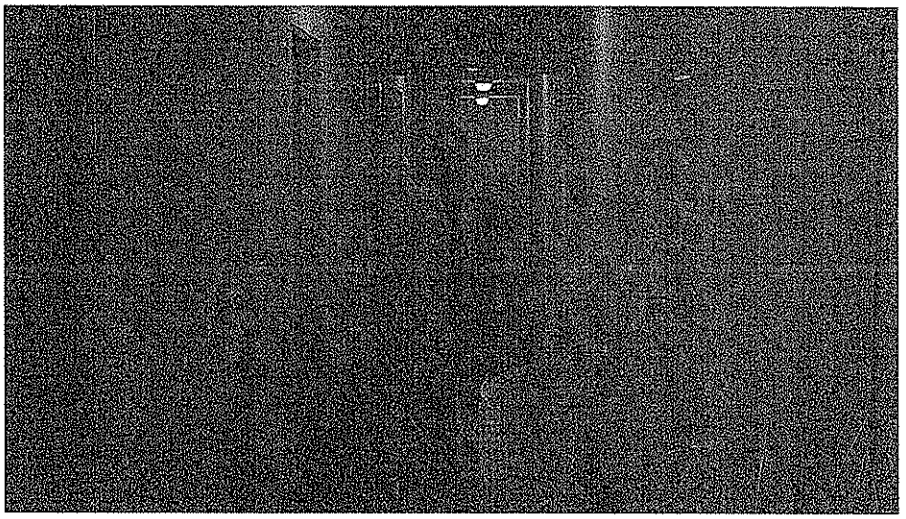

Fig. 2.11 Hallway (4). *Caché* (2005), dir. Michael Haneke, prod. Andrew Colton and Veit Heiduschka.

house to Anne at a book party and from there to the chicken being decapitated by the child Majid as seen from the point of view of Georges as a young boy. Only at the end of the sequence, as the axe-wielding Majid is about to envelop Georges, do we hear heavy breathing on the soundtrack – metaleptic reframing! – and then cut to an image of a sweat-drenched Georges in bed, awakening from the nightmare we have just seen. The recoding of the scene as the psychological point of view of a diegetic dreamer is here, obviously, *post factum*. By contrast, the *next* dream sequence not only establishes the fact that we are *about to see* a dream (by showing Georges taking a sleeping pill and getting into bed), but stays

with the sleeping Georges *a full twenty seconds* before cutting to the dream sequence of young Majid being taken away by force from Georges's childhood home. The scene is shot from an immobile point of view in the shadows (the same point of view that Georges had in the last dream) and the sync sound has bird sounds exactly like (if not identical to) the film's opening scene. Having thus gone from a dream only readable as such after a *post factum* reframing to a dream of the repressed *ur*-trauma, which the film goes to great lengths to present to us as such, it is not surprising that the shot that *precedes* the second dream sequence is one which revisits the film's very first image (Fig. 2.12). Here we see the same static surveillant framing of the film's opening moments, with a minutes-long duration that would otherwise mark it as surveillant, but now suddenly and strangely *evacuated* of all the anxiety associated with its prior iteration. It is just a scene of Georges arriving at, and parking his car in front of, his house. Period. The formal characteristics of what was previously read as surveillance are still present here, but are now no longer perceived as such: The stylistic signature of anxious omniscience *devoid of any unease* has here become the mode of the film's narrative omniscience.

The same holds for the final scene in *Caché* – the four-minute static shot of the kids leaving the (aptly named, given the film's formalist dynamics) Lycée Stéphane Mallarmé (Fig. 2.13). We could argue that this sequence effectively demands a surveillant attention to decipher what is going on in the busy comings and goings of the image field. However, the very fact of the huge amount of (ultimately futile) hermeneutic speculation about what is or is not happening in this shot – are Majid's son and Pierrot in fact *friends*? And if so, were the tapes their doing? etc. – is itself

Fig. 2.12 Georges arrives at his house. *Caché* (2005), dir. Michael Haneke, prod. Andrew Colton and Veit Heiduschka.

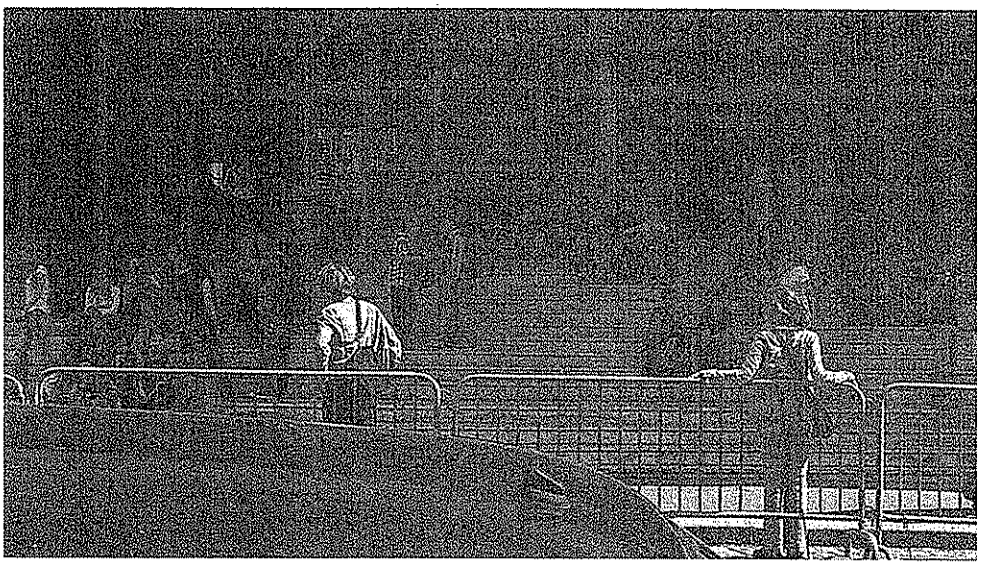

Fig. 2.13 The school entrance. *Caché* (2005), dir. Michael Haneke, prod. Andrew Colton and Veit Heiduschka.

indicative of the fact that, *despite the duration and the stasis of the scene*, it no longer provokes us to ask "Who is watching here?" but rather, "What is going on here?" This question, however, can only be asked from a spectatorial position that is itself fully identified with, rather than critically aware of, the surveillant point of view. If, as I have tried to show, this shift, this evacuation of the anxiety associated with the undecidability of a surveillant narration, is one that the entire film has worked very hard to prepare, then this would also mean that this scene can only be read in the polysemous manner in which it has been read *because* it occurs where it does, as the film's final scene. And this, in turn, is important because it reveals the absurdity of the claims of readers who, possibly following Haneke's lead,[10] have lauded *Caché* as an "open" film (in Umberto Eco's sense of the term[11]), that is, as a work whose ostensible lack of closure and seeming polyvalence allow for a multiplicity of readings. Indeed, unlike the irreducible polysemy of David Lynch's remarkable and deliciously baffling *Lost Highway* (1997) – whose three videocassettes of domestic surveillance mysteriously left at the front door have numerous intertextual resonances with *Caché* – Haneke's film is quite the opposite: a meticulously crafted, but ultimately very "closed" work which subtly mobilizes a narrative rhetoric of surveillance to tell – once again for those familiar with Haneke's other films – a media-critical *conte moral* about the bad faith (both personal and political) of a televisual star. In doing so, however, it ends up, literally and figuratively, with a narrative enunciation whose aesthetic politics is oddly complicit with the very surveillance so pejoratively connoted, at least ostensibly, by the film's thematic concerns.

Notes

1 Indeed, even where such politico-historical readings acknowledge the issue of surveillance, it is invariably reduced to a simple figure of power. In Ranjana Khanna's reading of *Caché* as "a film about anxiety in relation to a history of colonial violence and the technology associated with it," for example, she suggests that the film's invocation of surveillance "this time attributed to Algerians in spite of the surveillance mechanisms used against the Algerians by the French, unfolds a narrative of revenge in which a camera gaze is returned in an oppositional structure." See Ranjana Khanna (2007).

2 One can perhaps get a sense of what I mean by thinking of a film like *Enemy of the State* – Tony Scott's 1998 "remake" of the *ur*-surveillance classic *The Conversation* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1974). In the later Will Smith vehicle which also features Gene Hackman as (once again) the seasoned and rightly paranoid surveillance expert, the explicit focus on the threats of identity theft and the abuses of dataveillance on the part of a legislatively unrestrained government security agency seems at first glance to be thoroughly progressive and critical. Yet despite its extensive pedagogical catalog of the modalities and capacities of state-of-the-art invasive surveillance, and despite its articulation of important positions in the debate on the politics of security ("But who is watching the watchers?," Carla Dean asks her husband at one point), as the film unfolds the viewer finds him/herself increasingly placed in a narrative position where what *we* want to know – where is Robert Dean? – is exactly what the evil NSA operatives want to know. Thus despite its critical thematic proclivities, the film's narrative logic effectively produces a structural *identification* with surveillance which complicates, indeed compromises, the aesthetic politics of its enlightenment project.

3 In his plenary lecture at the interdisciplinary international conference "Michael Haneke: A Cinema of Provocation," which took place at Boston University, October 25–7, 2007. See also Elsaesser's chapter in this volume.

4 A marvelous example can be found in the complex narrative inflections performed by the surveillance camera footage in *Thelma and Louise* (Ridley Scott, 1991) following Thelma's robbery of the rural convenience store. In response to Louise's demand to know what happened, Thelma explains, "Well, I just walked on in there and . . . ," at which point the sequence cuts to an *enacted flashback* in the form of what is immediately readable as a black-and-white surveillance tape from the store's security camera. By means of a brief cut to a group of men focused on an off-screen monitor, this footage quickly changes its status to a *flash-forward* in which the same tape is being viewed by the police at an unspecified later date, before shifting back to the (immediate) past tense of the initial enacted flashback.

5 It is also worth noting how two future scenes are proleptically invoked here, the first by Georges' question "Where's Pierrot?," prefiguring his worrisome disappearance later in the film, and the second by the phrase "Was there a note with the tape?," which prepares us to expect the iconic supplements that will accompany the subsequent surveillance missives.

6 Levin (2002).

7 Were one tempted to give this formal dynamic a thematic reading, it could certainly be argued that it effectively performs the paranoid fear of a completely pervasive panopticism in the post-Watergate mid-1970s.

8 It is clear that *Caché* accords great significance to the question of credits both *seen* – as in the first and last shots – and *unseen* – as here and in the later scene where Majid explains that it was the credits at the end of Georges's TV show that allowed him (retrospectively of course) to realize that he was watching the terrible boy he knew from his childhood. Might it be because the anxiety posed by the so-called surveillance tapes is effectively nothing but the disturbance provoked by *images without credits*, by the absence of the desperately sought-after information as to who shot these scenes (and why)?

9 And since this is surveillance footage, this street of course really does exist, in a commune named Romainville in the eastern suburbs about 5 miles from the center of Paris. Appropriately for the context of the film, there is no way to get to this working-class neighborhood from Paris using public transportation as neither the subway nor the RER regional commuter lines go anywhere near what one can only call this non-place.

10 Consider, for example, the following, astonishingly neo-Bazinian statement that one finds in Haneke's interview with Serge Toubiana on the Sony Pictures Classics *Caché* DVD (#13875): "I always try to find an aesthetic that is open, that is readable, that is transparent for the viewer." Thus his preference for long takes which are supposedly easy to decipher and in which (unlike television, so the obvious implication) "there is no manipulation of the viewer [*sic*!]."

11 Umberto Eco, "The Poetics of the Open Work," *The Role of the Reader* (1984: 47–66).

References and Further Reading

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