

# The End of the Body

## Serial killing and mediatization

*Henk Oosterling (EUR, Rotterdam)*

(Lecture at the Conference 'L'Anomalie : figure du tueur en série et imaginaire contemporain', 30-10, 31-10, 1-11 2003, Université Concordia, Montréal (QC), Canada)

In this short presentation I want to substantiate one simple claim: the ongoing fascination for the phenomenon of the serial killer correlates with the fear that we – inhabitants of the civilised Western hemisphere – are losing our bodies in its mediatization. In spite of – or perhaps we should say: precisely as a result of - the obsessive emphasis on the body in a body culture that is almost worshipping it by fetishizing its parts – from abs to noses, from DNA to neurotransmitters - we are getting out of touch with its wholeness. More and more we are experiencing our bodies through the technological mediations we invented in order to make our body less vulnerable, more efficient and much lighter, i.e. less heavy and opaque. With Jean Baudrillard and Paul Virilio in the back of my mind I prefer to label the Enlightenment that philosophers have embraced, as a threefold historical phenomenon: while enlightening our minds we have at the same time lighten our bodies by transporting it in ever-accelerating capsules – cars, planes, space shuttles, datasuits – and less opaque, more transparent by scanning it and showing its secrets on fluorescent interfaces. The heroes of Enlightenment are Kant, Philips and Ford.

Aiming at the reduction of pain and suffering we replaced body parts - our members, organs and senses - by artificial devices. In the 60s Marshall McLuhan has introduced the idea that 'media' - in the broadest sense of this concept - are extensions of our body: its elements are extended by means of glasses, telescopes, typewriters, telephones, cars, planes, cameras and television. These artificial means or media however gradually have become so irreplaceable, i.e. so inevitable and therefor necessary that we began to experience these means as authentic qualities of our lives: not longer as a medium but as the message. Physically spoken: as a beneficent massage. Asking to throw the TV out of the window is like proposing some one to blind himself like Oedipus once did, carpooling feels like being crippled.

McLuhan already understood that these extensions, these media, these means for transporting our bodies and projecting our sensations back and forth have fragmented our bodies. By now nearly all our bodily functions have been extended by media, far beyond what even McLuhan's could imagine. In contrast to his utopian vision that tele-vision – as an extension of our nervous system – would literally made us *re-member*, i.e. cancel out the amnesia of the wholeness of our communal existence – with the Global Village as its proto-political configuration - in contrast to this utopian vision the digital revolution has proven McLuhan's Hegelian dream to be a nightmare. The mediatization has fractalized global existence: the information revolution not only made the universe transparent, after the x-rays and MRI scans, the dive in our gene pool has resulted in the transhuman dream of immortality: through cryogen technology and cloning this has come within reach of mankind. Mankind. The worst scenario Jane Caputi ever dreamt off in her worst gyn/ecological nightmares has become possible: man is able to reproduce himself without the help of his most favourable medium: woman.

I label this almost completely mediatized mode d'existence: radical mediocrity. As Jacques Derrida did with his strategic quasi-concept 'différance' I – at least for the time being - prefer to leave aside whether 'mediocre' is written with an 'a' or an 'o'. I'll leave the core of the concept open by writing this as two brackets – (...) - accentuating the hypocritical in between position we're in. In between body and mind in approaching the horrific practices of the serial

killer, in between dismembering and remembering as to the wholeness of our existence, in between indifference and deference to the body in our body culture. This literal ‘inter-view’ to my opinion is the point of view we should take, in order to understand the ambiguousness of the masses’ – or to be less scientific and more honest – of *our* Batailleian attitude towards the phenomenon of the serial killer, i.e. being torn apart between repulsion and fascination.

My focus is political, biopolitical in a Foucauldian sense. However, acquainted with Philip Jenkins’ claim in *Using Murder. The Social Construction of Serial Homocide* (1994). From a contextual constructivist’s perspective à la Bruno Latour Jenkins substantiates the thesis that the boosting of the panic concerning the unintentionally miscalculated phenomenon of the serial killing served the purpose of both federal law enforcement – the power of the FBI over the CIA - and conservative Reaganesque politics in the 80s, centred on family values. And not Jane Caputi’s claim in *The age of the sex crime* that serial killing is primarily femicide. From a strategic point of view their political perspectives and mine will eventually coincide. My main focus for this moment however is the all over, nearly tautological mediatization of the brutal and horrifying factuality of the serial kill – the ‘degré’ less than zero of inhumanity – in relation to the pornological dynamics of the voyeuristic gaze, so characteristic for our bodyculture and for popular cultural efforts to communicate this degré zero. I will at the end of my presentation briefly thematize the mediums specific quality of this pornological gaze in four films on serial killers: *Psycho*, *Manhunter/Red Dragon*, *Man bites Dog* and *Funny Games*.

### **Ritualization and mediatization**

The first move I want to make is deconstructing the concept ‘ritual’ that is used by nearly all analysts in order to connect this to mediatization and subjectification. The qualification ‘ritual’ suggests a practice the dynamics of which is beyond the intentions and competencies of individuals. As Wittgenstein argues, a private language cannot exist. This argument is also applicable to the ritual: one person cannot invent a ritual. There have to be shared values and a collective imagination in order to communicate via the weird rituals something to society. A ritual presupposes a collective practice. But because ritual has a premodern or non-western connotation one wonders what explicatory power this concept still has for a phenomenon as modern as of the serial killer, that by sociologists as Jon Stratton is even qualified as a typical post-modern phenomenon. After all, both discourses, be it in opposite ways focus on the autonomy of the individual while premodern discourse accentuates the collective body and the sovereignty of the King.

I call the beginning of Foucault’s *Surveiller et Punir. La naissance de la prison* (1975) to mind. In a contrastive methodological gesture Foucault sketches first the horrific public execution of the regicide Damiens on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of March 1757 in Paris. After publicly having confessed in front of the main entrance of the Notre Dame and a literal ‘défilé’ (defile) to the scaffold through the yelling and cursing crowds, the flesh is torn from his legs and arms with tongs and pincers, lead and tar being poured into the open wounds. Symbolically the hand that held the knife is scorched with burning sulphur. Finally four strong horses fulfil the verdict by pulling Damiens apart, a task settled only after hours. His tendons had to be cut first. The public execution, performed by skilled executioners, has been held in the presence of magistrates, the representatives of the King. Referring to Kantorowitz’ theory of the double body of the King – both physical and transcendent or meta/physical: The King is dead, long live the King - Foucault explains how in the dismemberment of the law transgressor Damiens the transcendent Law is remembered and the societal body is made into a whole again.

The following dry account follows of the rules and regulations of the 19<sup>th</sup> century prison to which the inmates are subjected. The difference in punishment is radical. Moral reflection is

part of the program. The object of the punishment is man's self-consciousness. Publicly ritual torture is replaced by coercive disciplining. The confessions are no longer secretly extracted from accused bodies by torture in the dungeons of the magistrates, but publicly are in court, while punishment – imprisonment or capital punishment - is now an indoor operation. This legitimised state violence is communicated to the masses by the media: the narrators are replaced by police reports and commentaries in newspapers and true crime stories. During the process of modernization repressive, brutal violence is transformed into pedagogical coercion: children learn to constraint themselves. The violence is checked and invested in the production of selfdisciplined – Foucault says: docile – bodies. The results of human sciences, researching deviations in clinical and therapeutic situations, are implemented in educational practices - in family life and schooling - or reinvested in therapeutic and penitentiary practices.

Foucault is inspired by the ideas of Georges Bataille for whom the ritual performance of brutal sacrifices, periodically performed in public, reproduce the identity, i.e. the collective consciousness of a community. The ritual demands a deferring and suspending of ordinary time, the enclosure of a sacralized space, prescribed behaviour and formulas, and a sacrifice: precious goods, useful stock, but also slaves, criminals, supposed subversive men and women, from sectarian leaders to witches. By means of these literally 'sacrificed' goods the ecstatic community transgresses given taboos on death and sexuality that normally secure daily life in order for a short period to communicate with this Big Other, as Jacques Lacan would say. Bataille analyses the violence of his own days – fascism - as a spectral return of premodern imperial sovereignty.

### **The rituals of serial killings**

Is this distinction effective in the analysis of serial killers? I am not referring to the so called satanic cult murders, that are ascribed to the Manson family, the Jim Jones Sect or some religious cult killings like the Matamoros (1989), that were boosted on television by Geraldo Rivera and refuted by profiler Kenneth Lanning, but more worked through analyses. Jane Caputi, stating that serial killing is in the first and last instance a sex crime restoring the threatened dominance of patriarchy, draws a parallel between the European witch craze of the 15<sup>th</sup> till 17<sup>th</sup> century and the serial killing craze from the 70's and the 80's of the 20th century. 'Profound social changes'(103) and radical changes in the position of women in both periods would explain this parallel. "Contemporary sex crime", Caputi states, "is obviously ritualistic in its stereotyping of the victims, its structural continuations, signature styles and fetishes, and most clearly, in its repetitions"(6). Caputi implicitly shifts from the power invested, repressive ideology of the 15<sup>th</sup> century Catholic Church to the traumatised powerlessness of the deviant 20<sup>th</sup> century sociopath (121), whose violence is experienced as a threat to all. She can only do this because she presupposes the subliminal identification of 'normal' men with 'deviant' men. It is this symmetry – and the wish to 'not let them get away with it' – that incites Caputi to label their behaviour as 'a hypernormalcy'(115). Ritual does not fit in this perspective.

Joel Norris, the author of *Serial Killers* (1988) emphasises the ritual aspects of the whole process. Serial killers, Norris claims, "are addicted to the act of murder as if it were a drug" The serial murder is fully ritually embedded: specific times and places, rhythm of compulsive repetitive behaviour, excessive fragmenting violence aiming at an experience of wholeness. Norris categorises the ritual in phases: the initial aura-phase of hallucinatory intensification of sense impressions, a trolling-phase in which the killer in focused frenzy spots his victims on favorite sites – bars, campus, parking lots - and starts to stalk them; in the wooing phase he tries to win their confidence; the following murder phase "is a ritual re-enactment of the disastrous experiences of the killer's childhood"(32). The killer wants to "magically cancel out his earlier suffering and re-establish his own power and identity"(32). His specific trauma

regulates his fantasies. Some killers in the totem phase “prolong the feeling of power and triumph over their pasts, by attempting to preserve the body through a ritualistic dismemberment of the dead victim”(33), taking Polaroid snapshots, or by fetishization and even cannibalism. In the final phase of depression some are overcome by feelings of emptiness and hopelessness, due to the loss of identity and control, leaving notes for the police.

In contrast with Caputi Norris stresses power and identity, not lust. Being in total control of the body of his victims – some fight back (Bundy, Lambs) - the existence of the killer for a short period gains coherence. But without a collective resonance and a transcendent legitimisation this ritual can only be understood as an acting out of modern hyper-individualistic consumerism in the most perverse sense.

### **Levels of pseudo-ritual mediatization: the real**

How do rituals relate to media? Bataille recognises the more benign articulations of transgressions in modern life - as a sublimated transgressive violence on an individual scale - in erotic and avant-garde art practices, mainly Surrealism. But in opposition to the premodern ritual here collectively established laws are transgressed in order to subvert the existing community. These transgressive practices firstly and above all reinforce the identity of the individual, not of that of a community.

Baudrillard's critique on Bataille in *L'échange symbolique et la mort* (1976) and *Les Stratégies fatales* (1983) reject that the modern is about a transgressive anomie, about transgressing the Law. The violence is expressed as an excess, not a transgression. The excess is not an opposition to the Law, but an anomalie. The excess is related to the rule, not to the Law. There is no forbidden, no taboo and therefore no Law in the ritual sense. By now we know that for instance international law solely consists of jurisprudence and rules, that are so contradictory that no sensible person can identify with the Law.

Still playing with predicates as ‘ritual’ implying all the premodern practices is even counter productive: it can become a rhetorical device to interpret the serial killer as an articulation of the Other, the metaphysical Evil. If we reject the suggestion of Hannibal Lector in *The Silence of the Lambs* to Clarice Starling, the FBI agent, that he is radical Evil, serial killing has to be the failure of the very subjectification Foucault has described in *Surveiller et punir*. Something went really wrong along the way. And indeed, the childhood of sociopaths are characterized by parental neglect, peer humiliation, sexual abuse, and alcohol- and drug addiction. Neurophysiological or genetical damage are beyond Foucault's analysis, but might be included from a biogenetical perspective to explain the deviant behavior of sociopaths.

We have at least call it pseudo-ritual aspects. These still function within modern and postmodern society, be it on different levels and in a structural dynamics where they complement and enhance each other. Taking Foucault's analysis derisive means that we have to focus on the bifurcation of the ritual practice in the process of modernity: on the one hand the sacrificial violence is internalised via the discourse of human sciences in order to produce subjectivity in the docile body – and no longer via the sovereign discourse or in the case of the witch craze – as Carlo Ginzberg has analysed in his book in the Sabbath – via the demonology and the *Malleus Maleficarum*, the manual of the Inquisition. On the other hand the ritual is incorporated in public discourse of the media and popular culture, that make sense of the violent act of individuals and – in case of tabloids – slaughter them publicly. In this way – by subjectification and mediatization - a two headed modern ‘ritual’ practice produces the dichotomy between the private and the public.

Identity never is an immediate given: it is the result of ritualization or – if we transfer the premodern identity-constituting dynamics to modern times – of internalisation and externalisation of discourses, i.e. subjectivisation and mediatization of discourses. Fact and

fiction are no longer functional opposition: copycat phenomena transcend this opposition. If you allow me another to my opinion instructive neologism: identity is 'immediate'.

Only in this way to my opinion it is plausible to interpret aspects of serial killings in terms of the premodern ritual dynamics. These are of course less explicit and lack a transcendent legitimization, but still communicate something beyond the intentions of a psycho killer. We have to discern at least six levels where the discourses are produced and reproduced that make sensible what is in the final instance completely incomprehensible: the 'real' thing, the less than degree zero of the crime: the brutal incomprehensible factuality of the recovered remnants, that physically bare witness of the crime.

These senseless remnants of the mortal remains are complemented by 1) the fragmented statements of the very few victims who survived, but in the final instance by the confession of the killer. This transference to the level of consciousness of 2) the traumatised inner world of the killer as reconstructed by profilers (BSU of the FBI, the VICAP forms), psychiatrists and scientists is connected to 3) the archetypico-mythical affective layers of the mass consciousness by the discourses of 4) the mass media that write about private experiences of killer, profiler and victims or their next of kin and show pictures and documentaries of the crime and crime scene. In mediating media textually and audiovisually transfer coherent meanings to their audiences. This so called 'faction' is always already embedded in 5) a politico-scientific discourse analyses of what Jenkins calls 'claim makers' (feminists, gay movement, anti-racism groups, children's right and anti-abortion activists, reborn christians, conservative politicians and law enforcement lobbyists). And last but not least, the engendered fear and panic is checked by 6) popular culture: true crime books, literature and films. On all six levels – the remnants, psychopathological and collective consciousness, media, political claimmakers and popular culture – the pseudo-ritual dynamics of intramedial cross-references effectuates the truth of the real thing. In Lacanian terms however, this 'real' is a function of the symbolic and the imaginary; in my terms the real is a radical medi()cre effect of these pseudo-ritual oscillations.

### **The pornological gaze**

But of course this would never had succeeded had not yet another level of ritual dynamics been triggered: the rhetorical ritualization of the serial killing by the mass media. Driven by their inherent commercial logic - more than by political pressure – the media thrived on the collective, highly archetypal fear: the Monster as the imminent threat of the Other was revived through all the horrifying vivid details, that remind us of our childhood fears for werewolves, vampires, and cannibals. It is this highly affective content that is shaped by a range of media: from the tabloids using police materials, interviewing profilers and the next of kin always reproducing and never contesting the dividing line between the normal and the monster to television documentary and the true crime books the contract for which were already signed before the killer was convicted. Reality and fiction shaped the imagination of both the killer and the hunter. (copycat) Mutually they reproduce the discourse on psycho- and sociopathology. Cheque-book journalism - paying witnesses to gain material for the true crime book – is only the most explicit aspect. The shaping of the truth goes much deeper, as the trial on Aileen Wournock and the documentary of Bloomfield on this trial has proven.

What 'motivates' the sociopathic serial killer becomes one side of the coin. The other is the will to truth of the researcher that haunts the real in order to find it. The profiling 'Manhunter' who has descended into the mind of the serial killer that becomes a borderliner himself, a shaman that survived the horror. It is this 'mutual understanding' that Caputi points at for making her claim plausible that the witch craze parallels the sex crime. The triangle in which law enforcement politics and mass media politics are configured, the triad that encapsulates the phenomenon of the serial killer is completed by opening this last and apparently most

obvious layer of ritualization: the shaping of our imagination in the different expressions of popular culture: the entertainment industry of literature and films. The intrinsic relation between the film maker, the film spectator and the serial killer: their eyes meet on the cutting edge of the voyeuristic gaze that has exactly the subliminal pornographic quality that Caputi is criticizing.

politicization of the eye: the gaze and voyeurism

How does this imaginary production relate to the affective sensitivity of its audiences? How does it influence their minds, their attitude, their behavior? In *Looking Awry: an introduction to Jacques Lacan through popular culture* (1991) Slavoj Žižek analyzes *Manhunter* of Michael Mann. the first version of the 3<sup>rd</sup> film of the sequel on the serial killer Hannibal Lector - Hannibal the Cannibal – based on the novels of Thomas Harris. *Red Dragon* ends where *The Silence of the Lambs* starts: Hannibal being imprisoned is informed on the arrival of FBI agent Clarence, his female protagonist in *The Silence of the Lambs*. In *Manhunter* the police inspector who got the assignment compares super 8 home movies of the families found at the houses of the families that have been murdered by a serial killer. He is desperately looking for a clue on a content level: What common trait in all films can unveil the choice of the serial killer? By coincidental deduction – at the backdoor of the last family a tool is found that was unfit to force the door, but fit to the former door that was replaced a few weeks before the killing - the inspector realizes that it is not the content of the films, but the films itself as a medium that gives a clue to who the killer might be. It appears to be an assistant of the laboratory, where the films were developed.

The fixation on the content level, overseeing the plain fact of the film itself - the formal level - mislead the inspectors gaze. He realizes that he had already identified with the obsessive gaze of the murderer. The murderer, he realizes, has been looking at the film the same way he did, but not for staging his crime. It is this twofold selfreflectivity that disturbs the inspector. Žižek explains this disturbance using Lacan: “The coincidence of the subject’s view with the gaze of the Big Other, which defines perversion, enables us to conceptualize one of the fundamental features of the ideological functioning of ‘totalitarianism’”(108) Experiencing our gaze as being already the gaze of the other has most unpleasant and obscene aspects. Given his Lacanian background Žižek qualifies this identification with the gaze of the Other as a specific male ‘mystic’, incorporating a ‘perverse jouissance or enjoyment’.

I’ll leave this Lacanian manoeuvre for what it is – Žižek shifts to the theme of totalitarianism - in order to concentrate on the scopic regime that is exposed in this film: the pornographic gaze of voyeurism as a formal structure that mimics - and reproduces, even enhances - the intentional gaze of the serial killer. Of course, this gaze has been thematized *in* the film over and over again and is connected to the mask (Halloween/The Blair Witch Project).

But this is different because it jumps out of the frame and connects the eye of the spectator with the gaze of the killer. Žižek concludes:

“The final irony of *Manhunter* would, then, be the following: confronted with a perverse-sadistic content, the inspector is able to arrive at a solution only by taking into account the fact that his very procedure is, on a formal level, already ‘perverse’”(109). This ‘coincidence’ of the two gazes is structural for pornography. The similarities between hardcore porno and serial murder are multiple, be it that the real of the serial murder has become mediamatic in porno: the camera cuts the body in pieces, zooms in, enlarges and fetishizes body parts. In watching pornographic scenes however this mediamatic fragmentation is countered when the eye of the voyeur subject is connected to the gaze of the object of desire: the woman looks at the voyeur as a result of which the voyeur is objectified and the object is subjectified. According to Žižek the real subjects are the actors on the screen that arouse the senses of the voyeur, the spectator’s senses, our senses. The spectator is reduced to a paralyzed object-gaze,

thrown into a depressive desublimation.(145). But in loosing, as Baudrillard would phrase it, the ‘scene’ in the ob-scene that pretends to show everything destroys the sublimity and just uncovers the banality of the naked truth.

Criticizing the gaze: european and american reflection

I referred to Zizek in order to thematize the specific scopic regime of most serial killer movies. The question is whether it is possible to make films that include this formal level in the film itself. Can the obscene, perverse gaze be part of the film in such a way that the spectator is exposed in his subliminal identification with the serial killer? In comparing American and European films on serial killers I realized that some films that have been made in Europe reveal a specific kind of mediamatic reflection that is absent in the American films: the Belgian production *C’est arrivé pres de chez vous* with the English title *Man bites Dog* of ..... and the Austrian film *Funny Games* of Michael Haeneke.

### **The gaze**

Roughly spoken I would say that she configures the serial killing with the gynecologist and the film director – especially Hitchcock in *Psycho*. The activity of all three ‘men’ consists in cutting. As Joel Norris in *Serial Killers* has argued the serial killer via total control over his victims is unconsciously aiming at the total experience, at precisely the experience of identity he was not able to experience during his childhood. The gynecologist, at least according to Jane Caputi, cuts to heal, but on an ideological level this cutting can be understood as an effort to restore patriarchal dominance and male identity. The film director finally cuts in order to produce what I would like to qualify as an ‘intermedial’ composition: the cinematographic medium on a formal level is treated in the same way the victim is treated on a content level. As I already indicated Hitchcock’s *Psycho* is exemplary, but we could also think of the work of Peter Greenaway or .....

In all three practices the relation between parts and wholes, between body parts and the total body, between separate frames and the film as narrative structure, between individual members of society and the community as a whole is mediated.

### *The camera*

In *Man bites Dog* a film crew follows the serial killer Ben. It has the footage quality of *The Blair Witch Project* but it is too hilarious to be scary. In contrast to *The Silence of the Lamb*, *Henri, the life of a seriakiller*, *Seven* or *Copycat* the film crew gradually gets involved. Ben moordt er echter te lustig op los, niet gehinderd door de sociopathologische syndromen van de seriemoordenaars die wij uit de politieregisters en van het witte doek kennen. Hij moordt wel methodisch. Aan ieder begin van de maand een postbode en kinderen alleen als hij daartoe door de omstandigheden wordt genoodzaakt. Hij beperkt zich bijvoorbeeld niet uitsluitend tot oudere vrouwen, jonge meisjes of jongens. Hij moordt willekeurig wie uit: oude vrouwen, jonge en oude meisjes, jonge en oude mannen, postbodes, hele gezinnen – hoewel infanticide hem tegen de borst stuit – kleurlingen, taxichauffeurs en vrijende paren. Deze dumpst hij theoretisch onderbouwd – gewicht doorberekend in het drijfvermogen, zodat ze zinken - in een urban canyon.

Op de keper beschouwd gaat deze film dan ook niet over een seriemoordenaar. De ironische hyperreflectiviteit ervan laat een Brechtiaanse Verfremdungs-analyse toe. U zult met meer distantie kijken en ongetwijfeld meer zien. Op een dieper semiotisch niveau blijken de echte slachtoffers in de film de leden van de filmploeg zelf te zijn. Meestal blijven deze buiten de scene. Dat maakt ze in hun regiserende voyeurisme zo letterlijk ob-scene: buiten de scene steeds meekijken, maar niet meedoen en achteraf uit de beelden ook nog een eigen

werkelijkheid snijden. Maar zodra al vroeg in de film de regisseur als een soort interviewer voor de camera wordt getrokken en betrokken wordt in de gefilmde handelingen voelen we wel aan wat hier gaat gebeuren. Invites the filmdirector and audioman to help him Een ander geheim wordt ontsloten: het geheim van de filmploeg die door en in de film gecorrumpeerd wordt door hun object: de seriemoordenaar. Gaandeweg worden regisseur, geluidsman en cameraman handlangers en mededaders. Ze worden hoofdrolspelers in hun eigen film. De seriemoordenaar neemt de regie over en zit aan het eind aan de productietafel om de beelden van zijn laatste mislukte moord te analyseren.

But on a deeper level the anti-hero of the film is not the murderer nor the crew, not even the 'making of the film'. In the final scene it become clear.

In deze film die eigenlijk over zichzelf gaat, wordt – zo zou ik willen poneren – de hoofdrol gespeeld door dat wat per definitie buiten beeld blijft: Wat hier in het filmen, dat wil zeggen in het serieel vastleggen op lichtgevoelige materiaal, het serieel schieten van plaatjes en het chirurgisch ontleden van de geschoten beelden op de snijtafel van de regisseur en postproducer, wat hier geslachtofferd wordt, is de camera. Het is het nihilisme van het medium. Het medium dat zelf tot werkelijkheid is geworden, zoals Marshall McLuhan al aangaf in zijn slogan: The medium is the message.

De cinematografische blik

Funny Games goes beyond this enacting of the medium and turns to the voyeuristic gaze of the spectator, that is: us.

.....

Five times radical mediocrity manifests itself in Haeneke's film. The first time the smart guy winks in the camera, producing the pornographic reflectivity. But you don't realize it yet. The second time he looks into the camera making the spectator one of the conspirators.

, the third time the smart guy is more explicit in asking the spectator whether s/he thinks it is snough by now, the fourth time however is the most intriguing moment: in fighting back the battered woman manages to get a hold on the gun, her son had found in the neighbours house after having escaped through the ceilingwindow - the very same gun he was shot with after he was recaptured by the smart guy – and shoots the fat guy, his blood splattered on the wall. That the only moment the smart guy loses control, starts yelling in panic, frantically searching for the long distance device. When he finds the device he aims at the camera and suddenly the film rewinds till the moment the woman grabs the gun. Then the film restarts and the smart guy pulls the gun out of her hands. The fifth moment is the final shot when the smart guy after having knocked on the door of the next neighbour, cast a meaningful glance in the camera.

Tamagochi and the Ring

japanese and american version: father becomes mother. Caputi is right.

In Zizek's terms we are addicted to 'radical intersubjectivity'. In order to reinterpret the latter in my terms of radical mediocrity and inter-esse I will traverse Zizek's universe from Hegelian heights to the depths of the Lacanian and Heideggerian well, so horrifically fantasized in the Japanese film *Ring*. The spectral ghost of the Revolution might indeed be the innocent, but mediumistic girl in this film, violently murdered and thrown in the well by her Father, excavated by a nosy female reporter, who together with her divorced ex-husband – who finally will be killed by the Thing - tries to save her own child. The murdered girl, 'castrated' by the symbolic order, haunts all those who have watched a video with flashes of her life. As the real Thing she steps through the TV screen – the interface of the fantasmatic order – and kills within a week her victims. The name of the clip is not mentioned, but it could be: the Revenge of the Tamagochi.

In *Ring* the mediumistic girl's ghost looks like the animistic hideous, haglike water creatures on the wood block paintings of Hiroshige or Shunsho. In stepping through the TV screen she is not reversing Alice's stepping through the looking glass. The spectral obscene part 'gets Real'. She literally scaring her innocent victims, found with Gorgonesk distorted faces, to death.