

What's Hidden in *Caché*

NEIL CHRISTIAN PAGES

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OLIVER C. SPECK

Michael
Haneke
Vol. 43 • No. 2 • 2010
SPECIAL ISSUE

Modern
MAustrian
Literature

A Journal Devoted to the Study of Austrian Literature and Culture

What's Hidden in *Caché*

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A. A violent order is disorder; and
B. A great disorder is an order. These
Two things are one (Pages of illustrations.)

[...]

A great disorder is an order. Now, A
And B are not like statuary, posed
For a vista in the Louvre. They are things chalked
On the sidewalk so that the pensive man may see.

Wallace Stevens, "Connoisseur of Chaos"

Mehrfach ist, zuerst wohl von Karl Kraus, ausgesprochen worden, daß,
in der totalen Gesellschaft, Kunst eher Chaos in die Ordnung zu bringen
habe als das Gegenteil.

Theodor W. Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*



©MEGA Film

“Die Zuschauer erstarren, wenn der Zug vorbeifährt” (Kafka 9). So begin Franz Kafka’s diaries in 1910, with an oblique reference to the Lumière brothers’ 1895 *L’arrivée d’un train en gare de La Ciotat* and the potential of cinema to move an audience in awe of what it does not recognize as an image. Legend has it that some in the audience indeed dispersed, rising and running in the face of what appeared to be an oncoming train and therewith giving us a physical manifestation of the power of film at the hour of its birth (Packer 15; Cook 10–11). Disembedded from the intimate space of the diary, which Walter Benjamin contended has an architectural companion in the form of the bourgeois interior, Kafka’s cryptic line serves as a starting point for thinking about what cinema does, how it “remembers” and how it enters the spaces of private life by interpenetrating them with more properly public, and sometimes privately unwanted, discourses (“Paris” 177). After all, the cinema in recent times has engaged in the commemoration business, in the projection of historical “trauma” back onto the filmgoing public as a means of memory-making, urging us, ironically enough, to *never forget* via a medium so often associated with diversion and historical amnesia.

Thus, and despite a general sense of the escapist character of film consumption, violent historical events once elided in public discourse are often played out later at the movies, which interrogate collective myths and fantasies not only by offering counter-narratives but also by pointing to the viewer’s own complicity in the events represented on the screen. That seems to be the formula for the approach of Austrian filmmaker Michael Haneke, who has hardly been reticent in commenting on his intended aims and audiences. This is the case in part, I sense, because the director is keenly aware of the impact of the cinema on the construction of cultural memory and simultaneously cognizant of the limitations of his craft as a tool for bringing about social and political change. These conflicting views of what film can do come to the fore in Haneke’s many interviews and public statements concerning the links between the aesthetics and politics of his films. In a piece in the *New York Times Magazine* that appeared just prior to the American release of the remake of *Funny Games* (2007), Haneke seemed to play on the article’s provocative title, “Minister of Fear,” in claiming that his films were an attempt “to rape the viewer into independence” (Wray 47). The object of that metaphoric penetration is a very specific focus group since Haneke insists that his films “are made for our industrialized West, for our affluent society, that’s where they belong and that’s where they should be seen” (Riemer 170).²

Beyond the parameters Haneke imagines for when, where, and who should see his films, the *auteur* as controlling instance has emphasized a specific function for the moving images he creates, one that takes an overtly activist stance: “Ich versuche, dass sich der Zuschauer provoziert und gezwungen fühlt, etwas gegen das, was ich ihm zeige, zu unternehmen” (Grabner 35). This call for what Catherine Wheatley terms a “critically aware spectator” (*Haneke’s Cinema* 31) evokes something of a Brechtian turn for Haneke’s cinematic work, which also locates

its politics in the representation of what the filmmaker has identified in decidedly Freudian terms as the original sin of repression: “Der Name der Erbsünde ist Verdrängung” (Grabner 39). Not only a crafter of images, then, Haneke is also a didactic audience-maker whose desired viewers are those trained in the prosperous West where spectators will recognize, as the director noted in an interview in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, “daß es in jedem Land genügend schwarze oder braune Flecken gibt, an denen kollektive Schuld und Individualschuld zusammentreffen” (Körte). But what does it mean, then, for Haneke’s spectator to “feel compelled to do something,” to be raped into independence, to be, as Wheatley puts it, “at once manipulated and forced to be autonomous” (*Haneke’s Cinema* 31) by films that seem to mobilize distanciation (*Verfremdung*) for the sake of an aesthetic and political program whose representations of violence produce a shock effect that cannot help but provoke in the viewer a kind of *Erstarrung*? Are provocation and ossification, autonomy and manipulation, order and disorder one and the same in Haneke’s work?³

Haneke’s eighth feature film, *Caché* (2005), lends itself to an investigation of these questions due to its focus on repression and also because the film stands out in the director’s larger oeuvre for its historical and cultural specificity. Unlike the anonymous settings and contexts of many of Haneke’s earlier attempts to critique the Western imaginary and its penchant for amnesia, *Caché* makes explicit reference to an episode of historical violence that has become part of French collective memory, namely, the Paris Massacre of 1961. That event and its processing in the French national psyche provide the scrim against which the action unfolds as well as the requisite perpetrator and victim positions that necessarily lead an informed viewer to certain conclusions about the film’s allegiances. In the narrative of *Caché*, the more general indictment of viewers in the West for the sins of individual sublimation and collective repression (that *Erbsünde* Haneke mentioned in the interview cited above) is lodged *pars pro toto* against the film’s protagonist, Georges Laurent (Daniel Auteuil). He functions as a stand-in for the rest of us in the director’s supposedly preselected audience, but his life story intersects concretely, if in the end only tangentially, with the violence of the Paris Massacre of 1961, to which most spectators have access only as a historical moment or as part of a national collective memory.⁴ Characterized by one critic as an “anti-Arab pogrom” (Gilroy 233), the Paris Massacre of 1961 brought home to France the aftermath of the country’s colonial adventures and the very real violence of the long Algerian War (1954–62). In October 1961, the FLN (*Front de Libération Nationale*, the organization that directed the Algerian war for independence) called on Algerians in France to demonstrate against the colonial occupation. Some 20,000 to 30,000 men, women, and children gathered in the streets of Paris on the afternoon of October 17, many dressed, as one account describes them, “proudly in their Sunday best” (House and MacMaster, *Paris* 115). The authorities’ reaction to the protests led to what historians have

characterized as “probably the largest ‘peacetime’ massacre in Western Europe in the twentieth century” (House and MacMaster, “Une journée” 276): the Paris police under the direction of *Préfet* Maurice Papon, who had practiced his skills in brutal repression while organizing the deportations of Jews in Vichy, ordered the violent suppression of the demonstration.⁵ Police rounded up tens of thousands as the demonstrators made their way to the center of the capital. Between fifty and two hundred protesters were killed and some of the bodies were dumped in the Seine. The actual number of dead and wounded remains controversial even today (House and MacMaster, “Une journée” 267). Haneke draws *Caché*’s “victims” from this violent episode and its reverberations in the generations that did not witness the events directly but upon whose “people” or in whose name it was committed: the “Algerian” Majid (Maurice Bénichou) and Frenchman Georges Laurent.⁶

The present essay aims to explore Haneke’s appropriation of the French colonial past (with the Paris Massacre as its synecdoche) by reading the film’s mobilization of these two characters as parts (and metaphoric figurations) of a larger historical frame. That historical context provides the action with movements of repression and revelation that are reflected in and repeated by the desires of its characters to forget the past and to manage demands to work through it. At the same time, they lend the work its narrative tension. Reading these movements with and against Haneke’s implied critique of commemorative practice in a prosperous, present-day Europe and with his explicit statements about the film’s aims, I seek to move beyond an acknowledgment of the fact that *Caché* is, as Libby Saxton accurately puts it, “haunted by the hidden history and conflicted memory of this atrocity and the contemporary media’s complicity in its suppression” (10) in order to examine what Haneke’s film offers in terms of critique of both the medium and its subject matter. What does *Caché* actually show? My argument will propose that a compelling reading of *Caché* would need to view the film as a kind of ironic handbook for the successful expulsion of unwanted Others from both individual and collective memories. Indeed, the film’s narrative suggests that contemporary Europeans (and, by implication, their representations, their cultural productions) are remarkably deft at processing historical trauma and at reinforcing constructs of identity and belonging that remain largely untroubled by an ethical responsibility to an Other who, in fact, already dwells in the European present, who is “real” and not only an image.⁷ Thus, while the film’s depiction of violence in the broadest sense lends itself to an analysis informed by trauma theory, an approach that cinema scholars have already adopted, I will contend that its interventions and its specific pondering of the process of working through the past in the present are informed more deeply by the thinking of Theodor W. Adorno, whom Haneke cited as a crucial “Leitfigur,” one whose work the filmmaker insists is “bis heute nicht überholt” (Körte).⁸ The film’s politics are in the end deeply cynical, for while it refuses to give us the “who” of what is apparently a whodunit, *Caché*

readily offers up a convenient “victim” in the figure of Majid who provides the spectator with a consolation prize, a neat and explicable cause-and-effect relation that reflects standard Western commemorative discourse and practice.

For the spectator, of course, *Caché* begins far less comfortably. An almost excruciatingly long sequence shows a streetscape. We later learn that the prosperous and content Laurent family lives here. Georges is the successful host of a television talk show on books and culture; his wife, Anne (Juliette Binoche), works at a publishing house and seems to be the primary caretaker of the tasteful domestic interior; their son, Pierrot (Lester Makadonsky), appears to be the average grumpy teenager. Filmed from a street across from the family’s well-appointed home, which is guarded by the *über*-bourgeois accoutrement that is the privet hedge, the scene indicates that a camera must be located somewhere in the—tellingly named, given Haneke’s fondness for visual clues—Rue des Iris (a map of Paris shows a street with that name in the 13th *arrondissement*).⁹ As it turns out, that camera belongs to an unknown stalker who films the family’s daily routine from a static vantage point and then delivers the hours and hours of footage to its doorstep. The viewer first glimpses parts of the unwanted videotapes, which are sometimes accompanied by bizarre drawings of a bloody, childlike stick figure or a bloody rooster, when Anne hits fast-forward and the audience is pulled into the interior of the bourgeois home via the requisite media center. The spectator now realizes that the establishing shot is actually a multi-layered ruse that establishes nothing. Instead, it perforates the smooth surface of an image beneath which some kind of “hidden” meaning must wait. We have not “seen” the street scene, but instead have joined the Laurents in watching what appears to be a surveillance video on a television screen. The “voiceover” from Anne, given as an aside, informs us that the first tape is two hours in length, just about as long as *Caché* (which was also shot in high-definition digital video). We are clearly in the midst of a Haneke film.

The “objective” cinematic narration of the opening scene in *Caché* is “in fact” the gaze of a hidden subject who presents not himself or herself but rather a visual perspective as it captures the Laurents’ daily routine. This is an outsider looking in, bringing an exterior into an interior, turning the latter inside out and displaying it for voyeuristic consumption.¹⁰ This anonymous “hidden” camera becomes, in the process of taping, an impossible character in the film, one that remains without qualities but that functions nonetheless as the source of the story that will unfold. The film makes clear that none of what happens in terms of plot would have occurred without the intrusion of the images from the video camera, which calls to mind that Deleuzian “fourth-person singular” as an impersonal placeholder that is both individual and collective and that does nothing but record the passing of time in the domestic sphere (142). The film’s temporality thus embraces both the daily routine of the Laurents as recorded on film and the more than forty years that have passed since the Paris Massacre, which now enters the private space of the home as an unwanted apparition which had previously kept its distance.

This anonymous catalyst effectively “synchronizes” the viewer into the world of the Laurents and, because this is a “thriller,” we, too, want to uncover the hidden identity of the intruding eye/I and therewith confirm the narrative clues as to the source of the tapes. Haneke’s spectator joins the terrorized Georges in his manic attempt to seek out their origin(ator)—the ostensible stalker who films Georges’s actions all along. It quickly becomes clear, however, that Georges, unlike the viewer in the cinema, is able to ease the disorientation enacted upon him by the tapes because he can excavate specific information from his own past. These memories allow him to interpret the mysterious drawings before he sets out in search of the artist who made them. In fact, Georges seems already to “know” the identity of the cameraman who surveilles him, for the film shows him acting upon that knowledge and anticipating the actions that will follow. Unbeknownst to Anne and, for a moment, the spectator as well, the tapes have triggered the return of an involuntary and unwelcome series of memory fragments that function as an allegory of the crimes of France’s colonial past. From these childhood memories, Georges must now construct a logic of cause and effect. They will eventually transport the protagonist from his comfortable present as an urbane Parisian bobo to a more troubled history that he no longer wishes to recall.

Georges’s first *mémoire involuntaire* represents a collision between a historical and an individual past that produces an unwelcome relation with the present as a *mémoire désagréable*. As an educated reader (of images and texts), he differentiates between the primary signification of the videos and the drawings (someone is stalking the family) in order to determine a secondary, more meaningful signification that rewinds all the way back to his childhood on a French country estate and to the year 1961 (past transgressions that now demand atonement; fragmentary memories that require completion). The images return to Georges’s psyche the “memory” of a childhood act that the stalker’s videos suggest must now be processed *subsequently, nachträglich, après-coup*.¹¹ This is a memory that only comes to the fore because, as Kent Jones puts it, “guilt, paranoia and desperation blend into one harrowing psychic entity” in the film’s representation of Georges and his psyche (137). Read through Freud’s concept of *Nachträglichkeit*, the film’s protagonist would conjure the childhood memory (the first event) only through the impetus of a second event (the arrival of the tapes). As Cathy Caruth describes the process, through recollection “the second event projects, retroactively, what came before” and adjusts it for the present (“Interview” 105).¹² Thus the arrival of the videotapes catalyzes a return to a childhood memory that cannot be captured in a verifiable narrative while simultaneously projecting that “memory” into the film’s temporal “future,” the time at which it will come to be experienced “in full.” In a similar deferral, Georges will eventually confess this disagreeable past to his wife in the form of a reconstructed, seemingly reliable narrative in which the adult characterizes his childhood behavior as “normal” (“C’est normal, non?” he asks rhetorically). This fragmentary memory never becomes meaningful or

stable enough as to refuse interpretation, but instead circulates freely, plugging into all sorts of possible connections that confound the protagonists' attempts to lend it coherence and to make memory and "truth" converge in narrative.

Georges, it should come as no surprise, is not traumatized by his past. He is, however, tormented by its return in a form that has been processed and represented by another. For him, the tapes show a "reality" that is inconsistent with what he believes is true. His reaction is to rush to reconstruct the "forgotten" past, not in order to come to terms with it or to take responsibility for it, but rather to mine it for a solution to the present problem, namely, the need to identify the mysterious filmmaker (who perhaps *is* traumatized) and to stop the production of the threatening videotapes by giving the entire event a meaning. In particular, the tapes give the unsettling impression that the Laurents and the life they enjoy are objects of surveillance that deserve to be monitored. Further, they suggest that, while Georges might view his home as a protection against the intrusions of an unwanted and threatening "outside," the family is also imprisoned in a prefabricated domestic sphere which, although perhaps of their own construction, nonetheless requires that they relinquish "free will" and submit to the rules and regulations of a narratable domestic life. Like the predetermined nature of the domestic interior, Georges draws on another preformed narrative, this one of revenge. It lends his reasoning a structure, albeit one that lacks a fixed, concrete cause. This is the gap, the lack, the void that Georges must fill with expedient meaning in order to ensure that it can be verified through content. Here the target of the unanswered question that propels the narrative slips slyly from the identification of the tormentor as image-maker to the identification of the infraction that Georges must have somehow committed in the past. This Kafkaesque turn poses the question as to whether the spectator, too, is forced to consider historical crimes committed in his or her name, a crucial issue for evaluating the ethics of the work and a question to which I will return.

For now, the film has split the figure of Georges into both judge and executioner and has placed the action in the "courtroom" of his psyche (just as Georges serves as both the subject and the object of the video camera). In order to break open and expand this claustrophobic juridico-psychological *Geltungsbereich*, Georges turns to the past (also as history) he has forgotten or repressed. He seeks a witness in his ailing mother (Annie Girardot), to whom he pays a rare visit in hopes of learning something about his own childhood and of confirming the content of his fragmentary memories. She refuses to recall the unpleasant past, but her sublimation of the events and her rejection of their utterance in the present proves helpful for her son in as far as it suggests an effective mode for dealing with this troubled past. Called to memory duty by a possible "second event," namely, the arrival of the mysterious videotapes, Georges (a representative of the second generation) must recollect a childhood episode that is now informed also by the training of an educated adult who has been taught to view the period in the context

of a larger collective history but whose parents have withheld the truth as to how this history fits into his individual past. At the center of this episode are both the individual memory of a petty act of aggression against a young Algerian boy, Majid, and the collective memory of the violence of the Paris Massacre of 1961 that is part of Georges's identity as a Frenchman. In both cases the silent voids of what went unsaid and unnarrated allow for the creation of new and sometimes nefarious images in the present.

Through Georges's labored confession to his agitated wife, we learn that Majid's parents, the historical victims of the violence of 1961, were once well-regarded Algerian laborers on the provincial estate of the Laurents (senior). Following the FLN's call for a peaceful demonstration, Majid's parents set off for Paris but never returned. The Laurents seem, at least at first, to have taken their responsibilities seriously, for their plan was to adopt Majid. The six-year-old Georges, however, quickly acts to eliminate this potential competitor (as the adult Georges remembers) by turning him into a threat. Georges tells tales about the boy: "Je l'ai cafté," he confesses to Anne. The adult's guilty conscience in the present now imagines—as it works to find a cogent explanation for the videotapes—that this childhood tattling was the real cause of Majid's expulsion from a comfortable bourgeois existence and into an institution. This "Majid" must be the cameraman who exacts revenge for a "crime" that Georges never committed.

Georges's memories of these imagined transgressions are presented as a kind of flashback, as a series of confusing interludes, interruptions in the sequence of the film. Like the video footage, however, they appear to have no single identifiable source.¹³ This is an important detail for understanding the role of memory work in *Caché* and the nature of its highly mediated provocations, for the indeterminacy of the flashbacks points to the fact that they address both the individual subject, Georges Laurent, and the spectator in the audience. For the former, these unwanted images, however unstable, provide support for a logical explanation of events in the present (the tapes are part of an act of revenge). To the spectator, they indicate both the possibility of a reasonable explanation for Georges's predicament and an intrusion upon any attempt to construct a linear narrative. Untethered and circulating with some freedom as signs that can be interpreted in a number of ways, these images are remarkable for their ability to destabilize any fixed reading of the events in the film. They seem to have no truth value and thus would seem a part of Haneke's desire to provoke his spectator. These interludes also come to embody the problematic of collective memory more generally, for how can we take responsibility for the crimes of the past that we cannot properly remember and how can we commemorate the victims of history if what remains of their stories is only that which filled the voids of their absence after the fact, *nachträglich*?¹⁴

The flashback scenes, then, stand in marked contrast to the images on the videotapes in terms of both their composition and the reactions they provoke.

Like the spectator in the cinema who works to construct logical sequences of and explanations for the various temporalities presented on the screen, Georges views the tapes both for what they *present* (first the recording of the daily activities of a family, second an invasion of bourgeois privacy) and what they *re-present* (allegorically, past crimes that must now be made real in the present). In coming to terms with these first unwanted images, Georges demonstrates his canny ability to differentiate between pictorial and non-pictorial objects and to determine (qua interpretation) that it is *he* who is being threatened with some kind of violence.¹⁵ Despite his self-presentation as an intellectual able to discern the nuances of literary works, Georges is depicted more strongly in the film as an informed, modern consumer of images (the television news, featuring reports on the violence of the wars in the Middle East, is often in the background in *Caché*). He is thus accustomed to *expecting* such images to be violent. Indeed, even though there is initially no overt violence in the video footage itself, its production process recalls the live taping of violence we know from the news media and popular film, as well as terrorists, criminal gangs, soccer hooligans, and, of late, teenagers who use video cameras and mobile phones to record violent acts (in something of a return to Haneke's 1992 *Benny's Video*).¹⁶

While Georges knows what to do with the unwanted footage of the videotapes, the intrusive images they invoke in his psyche, the ones represented by jarring flashbacks, are another matter altogether. Here he needs the viewer's help, for although these scenes appear to be located in Georges's psyche where they transmit information from an individual past, their aesthetics are those of readymades (their composition suggests, among other sources, Diane Arbus's photographs of children, albeit in vivid, nostalgic Technicolor). Indeed, despite their necessarily private character as memories, they are oddly, and perhaps obscenely, accessible to the audience, which depends on their interruption of the film's narrative progression for a readability that reveals the process through which Georges's memories are reconstructed in the present. In three cases, the flashbacks are accompanied by telephone calls, as if Georges were being *tele-commanded* to remember his childhood past and therewith to make the *connection* to Majid, moving toward settling the unsettling question of the origin of the videotapes that propels the plot. The first intervening flashback comprises a brief image of a boy with a bloody mouth framed by a window (it functions like the oddly interpellative beach scenes that interrupt the action in *Der siebente Kontinent*). Preceded by a phone call from Anne at home to Georges in his television studio (from private to public), it also intrudes on the screening of a second videotape on the large television in the Laurents' book-lined salon. We hear Anne and Georges in the background while watching footage of the exterior of the Laurents' home (like the footage at the beginning of the film). This footage is then interrupted by the flashback that places the viewer in Georges's psyche for a moment—that is, until Anne asks him if anything is wrong. In its second incarnation, the flashback

acquires more context, if only after the fact. The careful viewer will recognize in a later shot that this is another domestic interior, the salon of Georges's childhood home where he goes to see his mother. The camera leads the viewer into the room and then to the window to the child with the bloody mouth (at this point in the film one can speculate that this is Majid and that this boy has something to do with the bizarre drawings). This scene is further complicated by a third flashback that intrudes upon Georges's reconnaissance mission at his mother's home. He receives another phone call from Anne, who this time is busy at a loud and festive book party (where the ambient sound includes the dropping of names like Spengler, Weininger, Heidegger, and Baudrillard). Here the narrative becomes more legible as we *recognize* what are apparently memories from Georges's childhood. This is one of two longer bookend scenes in the courtyard of the Laurent farm.

The enclosed courtyard of the family manor functions in the two longer flashbacks as a kind of Brechtian stage on which the arrival of unwanted memories is performed before the spectator (we view it from an exaggerated distance; the camera seems to be located in the interior of the barn/shed; we look out onto the harsh white light of a cobblestone courtyard from the shadows).¹⁷ In the first performance on this stage we see in the foreground the child Georges, who cowers against the back wall of a barn while a boy whom we assume to be Majid beheads a rooster, blood spattering onto his face. It is difficult to assign any identities to the roles in these scenes, since the spectator can only infer which child represents which adult (again, despite their apparent legibility, these entr'acte sequences are just as mysterious as those in *Der siebente Kontinent*). The camera lingers on the sight of the foundering, headless rooster as it flops around and out into the courtyard while Majid turns with the ax and heads toward a terrified Georges. The scene abruptly cuts to black. Now we see a panting, sweat-soaked Georges who awakens in his mother's house from what could have been a bad dream, thus providing the viewer with the option to choose a convenient explanation for the flashback. Georges then enters a room with the leather bergère that we saw in the earlier flashback of the boy with the bloody mouth and wishes his (absent) mother a good morning (now the image from the imagination is confirmed in "reality," but it seems like he is checking for ghosts). The flashback form returns for a fourth and last time at the end of the film and serves as a bookend to the scene above in which Majid beheads the rooster. This is the second scene in the courtyard of the farm and at this point congeals as a kind of coherent narrative of Majid's expulsion from the Laurent household as a memory that haunts Georges in the present. In the meantime, the film has established a context that makes its narrative action legible, also in terms of its iconography. Instead of the foundering rooster, in this repetition Majid flops about, frantically attempting to elude capture by a pair of (darker-skinned, it should be noted) figures who have apparently come to take him away. The Laurents (senior) stand by like immobile stick figures

before withdrawing into the house and leaving Majid to his fate. What this scene shows is also the moment at which Georges absented Majid from his memory, just as he is essentially absent from the mysterious videotapes. This, then, is the point at which the trajectory of events in Majid's life was cut in Georges's psyche.

Though they inform different levels of signification in the film, both the videotapes and the flashbacks play a role in impelling the adult Georges to track down his long-lost "brother" in a shabby *banlieue* flat on the decidedly downscale *Avenue Lenine* (where else would the downtrodden live?). Humble in his reception of this unwanted figure from a difficult past, Majid listens patiently to Georges's frantic accusations. He politely denies any knowledge of the tapes, recalling only that a glimpse of the adult Georges on television (a media specter to be sure) had once aroused in him "un sensation désagréable." Whereas Georges easily forgot Majid only to "rediscover" him in the images of the tapes, images that show not Majid but Georges, Majid retains his tormenting memories of Georges also because these penetrate *his* domestic sphere through the technology of the television (Georges has access to the airwaves). Ironically, both "brothers" are troubled by the unwanted intrusion of images into their physical and psychic spaces, but they are separated by their ability to do anything about those images. Unsurprisingly perhaps, the reunion is also captured on videotape which shows what the spectator did not see in the earlier scene, namely, Majid's tearful breakdown after Georges's departure. The frightened Anne views the tape at home on the VCR and finally discovers what her husband has been up to.

Since Anne reasonably recognizes the tapes for what they are—evidence of stalking—Georges's activities in Majid's apartment seem all the more bizarre. Her harried demands for a logical explanation lead Georges to confess as much. More importantly, he produces the operative keywords for a historical contextualization of events that shadow his biography and admits to the connection between the two. This context creates the ordering framework for an artificial reconstruction of individual memories that survive only as intractable images from the past: the Paris Massacre of 1961, the historical event that informs this confession, is represented in Haneke's film as "common knowledge" shared by Frenchmen (and Frenchwomen) as a collective patrimony and as part of a national identity.¹⁸ For that reason, Georges can speak to Anne in parataxis: "Enough said, Papon, the Police Massacre. They drowned 200 Arabs in the Seine, including probably Majid's parents, they never came back."¹⁹ An incredulous Anne, having viewed the evidence of the sobbing Majid, doubts the veracity of Georges's admittedly ridiculous account of the reasons for his recent activities, but Georges maintains his innocence (he was only six, after all), while simultaneously vacuuming that narrative of its force: "Je me ne souviens plus!" he insists. Uncertainty now rattles the *récit* of these events as Georges's language slips from what he originally characterized as an insignificant "interlude" ("un intermède") to what he now speculates could well be "une tragédie." This is the first and only moment in

which Georges considers the possibility of an alternative perspective on these events which he claims as “his,” but for which he feels no sense of actual personal responsibility.

Metonymically, the genre question as to whether the episode that plagues Georges is an “interlude” or a “tragedy” is *the* query that must be posed in the context of the larger relationship between France and its colonial past that informs the film. That history must also have been apparent to audiences when *Caché* premiered at the Cannes Film Festival in 2005 and where Haneke received the prize for Best Director. As if staged by some cynical marketing firm, *Caché* arrived in theaters just as the aftereffects of France’s colonial past returned to the present with violent force. In the autumn of 2005, disaffected youth, many the children of immigrants, of France’s “Majids,” rampaged through the *banlieue*, setting cars afire and clashing nightly with security forces in protests that began when two youths died accidentally during a police chase. It is hardly a leap to assume that moviegoers at the time, informed also by the extensive television news coverage of the three weeks of unrest in French cities (then Interior Minister Nicolas Sarkozy publicly referred to the rioters as “racailles,” scum), also viewed Haneke’s film with and against questions of race, citizenship, and national identity that were raised in the context of the riots. The violence followed a series of well-publicized conflicts about the relationship between “native” populations and new immigrants in contemporary Europe (France has Europe’s largest Muslim population). These controversies brought to the fore the issue of how to integrate marginalized communities of immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers and posed uncomfortable questions about the limits of tolerance and the endemic nature of racism in countries whose right-wing parties were becoming increasingly vocal about their understanding of cultural belonging. Such tensions were only exacerbated by events like the November 2004 murder of Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh by an Islamic extremist (with a Dutch passport) who considered van Gogh’s film *Submission* blasphemous and by the September 2005 publication in the Danish newspaper *Jyllandsposten* of a series of cartoons depicting the prophet Muhammad, images considered deeply offensive by many Muslims.²⁰ The cartoons were met with widespread international protests and violent riots in the Middle East while the Danish government remained steadfast in its defense of what it insisted was solely a question of *ytringsfrihed*, the right to free expression (the cartoonists live to this day under constant police protection, although the cartoons have been repeatedly published and even exhibited in a Danish art gallery).

These events demonstrated that in contemporary Europe images—their creation and their manipulation—were and are hardly peripheral issues. At the same time, these controversies drew attention to the fragile nature of that separation of “realities” into a prosperous Europe and its “Others” who have increasingly come to be seen as threats to the continent’s prosperity, its sense of identity, and its cultural

values.²¹ In this setting, framed as it was by the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the film took on an intensified significance, as did Haneke's attempt to probe the "crimes" of repression and the problem of historical memory with and against the commemoration of the Paris Massacre. In particular, the manner in which Majid exits Haneke's highly manipulated *mise en scène* deserves further interrogation for what it tells us about the film's representation of self and Other, ethics and politics. This, the film's most shocking and also its primal scene, is the one in which the notion of "trauma" becomes viable in the context of its narrative—just not as a representation of a traumatized Majid. Rather, the scene lends itself to an interpretation of the film in which Georges ironically becomes a traumatized "victim" in a moment that powerfully distills the film's myriad attempts to read the codes of memory and forgetting and the violence they engender into a single gesture.

Haneke's camera—and another located somewhere in Majid's apartment in an impossible *mise en abyme*—record Majid's final performance. The television talk show host is now on camera with the object of his interrogation, joined by the viewer of *Caché* as witness. Having reiterated his innocence in the matter of the vexing videotapes, Majid removes himself as prime (primal) suspect and simultaneously makes any definitive determination of the secret cameraman's identity impossible. He slashes his own throat with a straight razor. The trajectory of blood that shoots from Majid's neck onto the dingy kitchen wall leaves the intractable trace that provides the image for the logo on the film's promotional materials. It enacts a symbolic repetition of the first flashback scene in which Majid beheads the rooster and turns his blood-spattered face toward Georges. In the repetition the gash on the kitchen wall comes to symbolize a tear in the surface of Georges's identity and in the film itself, for it establishes the first substantial linkage between the violence Georges imagines and the hidden violence of the present.²² For some viewers, of course, the suicide simply confirms the impression that Majid was indeed violent, a threat to the civilized Laurents. Majid has now been caught in the act.

Georges, however, having had no empathy for Majid in the first place (that Majid is violent is a matter of course for him, for this is the phantasm he has crafted) and little interest in his story once it becomes accessible to him, misreads the scene and in his trauma fails to recognize its potential as a liberation from the burden that propelled the narrative in the first place: having summoned Georges as his witness, Majid renders the "thriller" aspect of *Caché* inoperable by removing himself as prime suspect. At the same time, he commits an act of twisted philanthropy, for the razor effectively cuts Georges's tormenter out of the picture just as Majid was removed from the trajectory of Georges's life in childhood. At this point, Georges's burden could be converted from the simple problem of finding a stalker who makes some annoying surveillance tapes to a question of how to take responsibility for an immense historical legacy of violence and repression.

But no matter the power wielded by Majid in this scene, the larger film of which it is a part remains focused on the psyche of Georges Laurent. Indeed, this is the moment in which the event that initiated Georges's search for the identity of the videographer could also be interpreted as *traumatic*, for now the external moment of trauma joins with the internal moment of memory. Jean Laplanche describes this movement as follows, "First, there is the implantation of something coming from the outside. And this experience, or the memory of it, must be reinvested in a second moment, and *then* it becomes traumatic. It is not the first act which is traumatic, it is the internal reviviscence of this memory that becomes traumatic" (Caruth, "Interview" 103). That first implantation, namely, the arrival of the videotapes, would constitute the first moment of trauma; the witnessing of Majid's suicide—as a reanimation, revivification of the first moment—the second. This plausible reading, then, would confirm once and for all that Georges's childhood memories as represented in the flashbacks are inaccessible *screen memories* that, like the processing of the French past on the level of collective memory, have been *subsequently interpreted* and are thus highly unreliable (Freud 519).

These speculative gambits are not without import for understanding the compulsions of *Caché*, particularly since, unlike Haneke's past practice of sequestering actual acts of violence in the offscreen space, the camera here focuses unflinchingly on the act. This central "wound" in the film demands that the spectator interpret it, give it meaning, and it seems to contain much that would absolve the film's protagonist (and with him, Haneke's viewer) of any guilt by association. Film scholars and critics have offered various takes on Majid's grisly end. In a review of *Caché*, Ara Osterweil describes the suicide as a "form of counter-attack" upon a "society that refuses to acknowledge the humanity of those it suppresses" (39). Majid's death in that view can be assigned to various cause-and-effect scenarios that are readily accessible in social reality. In this case, the binary of perpetrator and victim becomes complicated and both Majid and Georges get to play the role of the latter. Majid's suicide, seen as a terrorizing act like the recording of the video footage that rattles the Laurents, is here also a provocation to power (the classic definition of terrorism) and a final act of resistance against an oppressive system. It is, then, as if Majid were comparable to contemporary phenomena like the suicide bomber. Guy Austin reads the scene in terms of a theoretical relationship between interior and exterior, as visual corroboration of Majid's (inner) "suffering as trauma" and Georges's (inner) "guilt as trauma," a "making visible [of] the trauma inside, taking what has been internalized and revealing it, through the splashes of red blood seen in the drawings or on the wall above Majid's corpse" (532, 534). Majid's death in both interpretations becomes aesthetic and performative. It is also instrumentalized as a mode of resistance that makes a point for the cinematic *auteur*, one that implies the possibility of resistance in self-destruction, one that depends on the empathetic viewer who will necessarily be moved by the act.

When considered in terms of Haneke's remarks about the aims of his films, though, both approaches are conspicuous for their lack of empathy. Majid's self-elimination conveniently extends his objectification into a realm in which his body provides a visual trace of his lingering presence and a visible marker of the violence he ostensibly internalized in his past. However, Majid's act, despite its powerful visual impact, hardly compensates for his marginalization and objectification in the film itself.²³ Aesthetically, it is as if the bloody suicide were taking up the work of the Wiener Aktionisten while representing an act of martyrdom for a cause that remains unnamed and unimportant. Here, the cutting action of the film's shot-countershot is repeated almost mechanically by the razor-wielding, cutting hand of Majid, whose *Steckbrief*—recounted to us almost exclusively through Georges's, to put it mildly, biased mediation—is confirmed. It is only in the final flashback—in its contrast to the longer scene in which the child Majid wields the knife—that the viewer is given concrete evidence that it is, in fact, Majid who is the victim of trauma.

A more compelling examination of the scene's importance for understanding *Caché* would, I think, also need to account for Majid's conspicuous silence throughout the film and would consider the social conditions that the film (re)presents. (Majid seldom speaks in the film; it is noteworthy that both of the longer flashback sequences are dominated by ambient sound, in the first the clucking of chickens, in the second the chirping of birds.) Such an account would thus also pay attention to the instant in which Majid does speak, to the import of his words and to the manner in which the film then works to incorporate their utterance: "Je voulais que tu sois présent," he says to Georges and to Haneke's spectator just before committing suicide—"I wanted you to be present." Do the temporal registers of this statement of desire, embedded in an impossible subjunctive, imply that Majid's elimination was and is inevitable in terms of the film's narrative? What does it mean for Georges, or for the viewer of Haneke's film for that matter, to *be present* at the execution of a figure who proved so threatening in the entr'acte flashbacks? What does it mean to us that Majid is now *absent*, and do these aesthetic strategies also function as a mode of critique?²⁴

Responses to these questions, I sense, remain largely "hidden" in *Caché* which, to borrow from Martin Seel, avails itself of violence to create a cinematic *Raum* for the perception of how violence denies its actual victims any and all latitude, maneuvering room, "Spielraum" (319).²⁵ These questions, however, have serious implications for an evaluation of Haneke's cinema of provocation, particularly since *Caché* leaves its protagonist with options. Indeed, having witnessed such violence and lost what was perhaps his only chance to confirm the true identity of the vexing cameraman-filmmaker, Georges knows where to find some psychopharmaceutical solace: he *goes to the movies*. This medium, which up to this point in *Caché* has seemed largely concerned with manipulation (consider what the tapes make Georges do), will now arguably be used for distraction. Just

as the “recorded” scene of Majid’s grisly suicide, as D. I. Grossvogel observes, expels the viewer from Georges’s “subjective vision” since we view it from a vantage point behind him, the film also prevents us from accompanying him to the cinema (39). We are, after all, already there. It is now as if it were time for viewers to reflect upon their relation to Majid’s exit and not to the continued existence of a stunned Georges. Haneke’s camera blocks such reflection, however, because it gives us an out, an establishing shot of the bill of offerings at the movie theater that provides “meaningful” clues to the films Georges *could have viewed*. This wink to the use of the cinema as a means of escape is as telling as it is morbidly funny, for we, too, have gone to the movies to escape something and now we get to escape yet again, in this case, into a kind of interpretive game in which the riddle of *Caché* can be solved by the perceptive interpreter-reader. All of these cinematic references suggest possible meanings for the film and all of them elide Majid’s violent end in order to return the viewer’s attention to the plight of Georges Laurent (and therewith to our own).

At this point, the film—which has been Kafkan all along in the sense Adorno described with the observation that “[j]eder Satz spricht: deute mich, und keiner will es dulden” (“Aufzeichnungen” 255)—becomes Kafkaesque. When Georges exits the cinema and walks towards us on the nighttime streets of Paris, Haneke gives us a choice of six films our protagonist might have seen. The three most legible on the advertising posters are (and here I give the French titles as shown in the film) Pedro Almodóvar’s *La Mauvaise Éducation* (*La mala educación*, 2004), Jean-Jacques Annaud’s *Deux Freres* (2004), and Christophe Honoré’s *Ma mère* (2004). All three contain possible readings for savvy viewers of *Caché*: *La mala educación* involves the memories of two childhood friends and an act of murder; *Deux Freres* is the story of two “brothers,” tiger cubs separated by an unscrupulous explorer in the jungles of Cambodia but reunited in the end; and *Ma mère*, based on the posthumously published novel by that theorist of sacrifice Georges Bataille, presents the incestuous relationship between a seventeen year old and his mother (who eventually commits suicide). If we consider the codes of Haneke’s film, *Ma mère* makes the most sense (and not only because the film’s star, Isabelle Hupert, was the lead in Haneke’s *La Pianiste* [2001], an adaptation of Elfriede Jelinek’s novel *Die Klavierspielerin* [1983]). The title infers that Georges will return to his matriarchal home (his mother country, as it were) and forget as his own mother has.²⁶ The incest theme resonates here as well, not only in relation to the question of who belongs but also because Majid—Georges’s once intended “brother”—was, until recently, the object of his deep and desperate desire.

Now Majid, the object from which Georges must free himself in order to forget, lives on as a trace, even in death, and serves a reminder of an individual past and a larger collective responsibility for the crimes of colonialism that are represented metonymically by the events of October 1961. His demise provides the unpleasant evidence of a breakdown of the façade of tolerance and a remnant

of the colonial past that reminds both Georges and Haneke's target audience (also as a kind of *Mahnen*) of their own failure as representatives of a cultured, liberal bourgeoisie. It can also be read as a sacrifice, for Georges's behavior conforms to Slavoj Žižek's convincing characterization of the melancholic as one who is not "primarily the subject fixated on the lost object, unable to perform the work of mourning it, but, rather, the subject who *possesses* the object, but has lost his desire for it, because the cause which made him desire the object has withdrawn, lost its efficacy" (148). Georges "had" Majid all along, but simply could not get rid of him, and in a bizarre contortion (thematic) and distortion (aesthetic) of this relationship, Majid's death liberates Georges from an attachment to an unwieldy object that serves as a reminder of complicity and culpability.

In the film's larger context and aided and abetted by the commemorative practices of a nation that, post-post-Vichy, is absorbed with processing its historical traumas and revising its image of itself (evidenced most recently by a wave of interest in the construction of memorials and museums to the *pieds noirs* and to France's Algerian legacy), Georges's primary task in *Caché* seems to be to dispose of the object of his disappointment and to assign to it the identity of the troublesome filmmaker-in-the-film-cum-stalker. In the end, then, Majid is "sacrificed" in and digested by the film so that that identity can remain unresolved. This process of elimination actualizes "trauma" for Georges as the representative of a nation of perpetrators, but allows for a return to and a re-assimilation of an identity as liberal, tolerant, prosperous, white, privileged, cultured, and French. Georges's torment in *Caché* is that he is subjected to remembering not only the childhood episode in which his identity and that of an Other collide but also his present condition, one in which he *should* desire a connection to that Other but does not. Having thus successfully sublimated the childhood that needed to be left behind, Georges the adult is now allowed—with the help of some pills he takes in the next scene (the tablets are called *cachets* in French)—to "dream" of Majid's expulsion as a fully realized reconstruction, as a memory that functions in the present. This is the final polishing of the repeated flashback sequence in the Laurent farm courtyard that began as only a flicker of memory and now ends as what looks like a verifiable, reliable narrative.

What *Caché* shows—ironically through "hiding" this important trajectory in the framing of Majid's expulsion from the film—is an act that is essentially *nachtragend* (resentful, vindictive) toward an Other who refuses to evacuate the images in one's mind and whose body is a reminder of a past that refuses to go away, a past that continues in the present. The film avails itself of Majid's corporeality to stage a scene that leaves his identity and history remarkably abstract, perhaps lost to his utterly silent melancholy as a victim of the chill of a system that treated the real bodies of the protesters of October 1961 with such brutality. Thus Majid's suicide provides, as Austin notes, the film's "structuring absence" and leaves his suffering "as invisible to Georges as it is to French society

at large, for Majid has been displaced from both his own family (murdered in 1961) and Georges's (who first welcome and then reject him) and is hidden at the margins, in a council block" (534). However unfathomable that void may be, the image of the abyss still provides a very powerful structure of self and Other, white and black, rich and poor, and inside and outside, and the film's location of this violence in the peripheral *banlieue* in no way implies that those who are "hidden" from view are not nonetheless available for objectification by those at the center (the filmmaker included). In fact, the figure of Majid in *Caché* signals to us that we can have our *gâteau* and eat it too, that his image as projected to immobile viewers in the cinema is essentially accessible and portable—we can take it or leave it. Majid has now functioned in the film as a performance artist who makes his body his art. But the dead man will not tarry and is unlikely to be remembered (and re-membered) by an audience that was provoked to think about Haneke the filmmaker and not the representation of "real" human beings in his film. What we have "seen," then, is the mechanism of that original sin of repression, but one that traumatizes Georges, not Majid. This might well be what Haneke meant by the remark he made in an interview about "us" in the prosperous West: "Wir haben kein Recht auf Tragödie, und das wiederum ist unsere emotionale Tragödie, daß wir dieses Recht nicht haben" (Körte).

If, as the director's "Leitfigur" Adorno maintained, the purpose of art is to bring chaos into a compulsive social order (*Ästhetische Theorie* 144), then *Caché* seems primarily concerned with showing the ability of that system to restore and reconstitute itself almost immediately in a process that goes largely unperceived. That the colonial legacy continues to exist in the objective social conditions of our time allows the film to play with the suffering of the victims of those conditions and to confirm Haneke's impression that what the cinema can do in terms of real social and political change is, in fact, "Nicht viel" (Körte). *Caché*'s great untold is not the revelation-story of who made the tapes, not the continuing thriller-narrative suggested by the film's mysterious ending in which Pierrot and Majid's son (Walid Afkir) are shown in a rendezvous outside the former's school (that is, if the discerning spectator can identify them in the crowd), but rather the story of Majid, who serves as a metaphor for all that the film—and the spectator with it—forgets. Its chaos and violence are shown not through a representation of a perpetrator, but through the structuring absence of a victim who remains an impossible, if intractable, image.²⁷ Therewith the film confirms what Adorno posited in "Melange," an aphorism from *Minima Moralia*, his own reflections from a damaged life: "Der melting pot war eine Einrichtung des losgelassenen Industriekapitalismus. Der Gedanke, in ihn hineinzugeraten, beschwört den Martertod, nicht die Demokratie" (131). One hundred years after Kafka conjured in his imagination the *Erstarrung* of the first cinematic spectators, Haneke's petrified cognoscenti watch as Majid's "martyred" body disappears—much like those corpses in 1961 that, if only briefly, turned the Seine red.

NOTES

1. This essay began as a paper for the panel “Hidden Haneke” that I organized for the 2008 MALCA Symposium, “Cultures of Performance in Modern Austria.” I would like to thank Imke Meyer and Oliver Speck for our rich conversations about Haneke’s films at the conference and thereafter. I am grateful to Mary Rhiel, Markus Zisselsberger, Ingeborg Majer-O’Sickey, and the reviewers at *Modern Austrian Literature* for generous readings of a draft of this essay.

2. Haneke has repeatedly emphasized his interest in uncovering “repressed” pasts in his films, which, though aimed at an audience in the industrialized West, are not necessarily tied to a national context. Speaking of his Austrian *Heimat*, he noted: “In discussions I then always say, the films provoke you so much, whether in France, in America, or elsewhere, because you obviously know from your own experience what they are getting at. In other words, my films don’t specifically target Austria, they have to do with the entire advanced industrialized world. And for that reason these films are understood in Japan just as well as in Vienna. In India or Africa these films will no doubt be regarded as irrelevant, and rightfully so. In those countries there are problems of a very different nature” (Riemer 170).

3. Wheatley argues that Haneke’s object of critique is not some historically specific situation or even modernity generally, but rather the spectator’s “participation in the cinematic institution” as such. As a basic premise, then, Haneke’s works would not “set out to bring the political reality of the spectator’s situation to their attention” (*Haneke’s Cinema* 36). I think this is true. In the context of *Caché*, however, Wheatley’s insights suggest some problems because the film works directly with a recognizable political and social reality.

4. Kent Jones points to the amorphous national history that shadows the film and that makes of the Laurents a synecdoche for France itself, concluding: “If the film is, in the end, not much more than a brilliant exercise in nervous tension—a clever elaboration of *Rear Window*—it has to do with this national past question. At a certain point, Auteuil and Binoche are no longer a bourgeois couple—they are France, and a gauze curtain of national trauma is thrown over Haneke’s wonderful intricacies and beautifully engineered variations on privacy and revelation” (137).

5. Papon functions as a trope for a chain of violent events and commemorative practices in twentieth-century France. In 1997, he was tried for Vichy-era war crimes in what was part of the so-called second wave of Vichy Trials. As a representative of what is referred to as “un passé qui ne passe pas,” the past that cannot pass, the figure of Papon came to embody the inability of French society to accept responsibility for its complicity in both the Shoah and the violence of the Algerian War (see Conan and Rousso; as well as Booth 144ff.). For an overview of the events of 1961 in the context of the debates surrounding the memory of Vichy, the “Vichy Syndrome” and its presence in Haneke’s film, see Saxton and Austin.

6. Of late, French filmmakers have taken on this topic with some gusto, bringing the history of French involvement in Algeria to the cinema and television in an unprecedented manner. Examples of recent films that address the topic include *Mon Colonel* (dir. Laurent Herbier, 2006), *19 Octobre 1961* (dir. Alain Tasma, 2005), and *Indigènes* (by French-Algerian director Rachid Bouchareb, 2005, known in English as *Days of Glory*). Noteworthy in this context is also Leïla Sebbar’s 1999 novel, *La Seine était rouge* (*Paris, octobre 1961*), translated recently as *The Seine Was Red: Paris, October 1961*, which addresses the afterlife of the violence in the memories of subsequent generations.

7. Haneke’s film arrived in a cultural context in which trauma was understood as a cathartic object to be recuperated and overcome, be it through clinical interventions or, in terms of the collective or national trauma, through didactic practices of governments and other public institutions. This popular understanding of trauma—that we have the tools

(therapy, art, education) to work through “traumatic” events and therewith understand them—stands in contrast to scholarly work on trauma theory that purports the opposite view, namely, that trauma is that from which no one can recuperate or recover. As Cathy Caruth puts it, “while the images of traumatic reenactment remain absolutely accurate and precise, they are largely inaccessible to conscious recall and control (*Trauma* 151). For a convincing reading of *Caché* in the context of trauma theory, see Austin.

8. In a 2006 interview with Peter Körte, Haneke linked the film’s compulsions to Adorno’s thinking: “Adorno war eine Leitfigur für mich, und was er geschrieben hat, das ist bis heute nicht überholt. Wenn man verantwortlich handelt und kein Vertuscher und Beruhiger sein will, kann man gar nicht anders, als der bitteren Wahrheit ins Gesicht zu sehen.” Despite the film’s appropriation of the sufferings of the “Algerian” Majid, Haneke insisted that his focus was the Western spectator, for whom he appears to have created a kind of Benjaminian *Trauerspiel*: “Ich würde meinen Film wirklich keine Tragödie nennen, Tragödien finden in der Dritten Welt statt, und wir sind die Verursacher, aber das ist eine andere Frage. Wir haben kein Recht auf Tragödie, und das wiederum ist unsere emotionale Tragödie, daß wir dieses Recht nicht haben.” These statements imply some connections to Adorno’s famous essay from 1959, “Was bedeutet: Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit.” Adorno’s analysis of lasting anti-Semitism resonates with contemporary efforts to understand racism and xenophobia in the context of debates on migration and citizenship in Europe: “Vielmehr sollte man die Argumentation auf die Subjekte wenden, zu denen man redet. Ihnen wären die Mechanismen bewußt zu machen, die in ihnen selbst das Rassenvorurteil verursachen. Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit als Aufklärung ist wesentlich solche Wendung aufs Subjekt, Verstärkung von dessen Selbstbewußtsein und damit auch von dessen Selbst” (144). Haneke operates with a similar method in *Caché* in attempting, through the figure of Georges Laurent, to tease out the mechanisms that make repression possible in the first place and to show his viewer the consequences of such behaviors.

9. Working with the film’s various Paris locations, Gallagher deftly analyzes the interplay of private and public space in *Caché*.

10. The camera here recalls Chantal Akerman’s *Jeanne Dielman, 23 Quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles* (1975), in which the violently mind-numbing daily routine takes place in the domestic interior which later becomes the site of an act of violence that is far less routine. Wheatley also notes the similarities between Akerman’s film and Haneke’s *Der siebente Kontinent* (58–59).

11. The *après-coup* in the film is thus also an act of violence committed against Georges, for he is indeed shaken by the videotapes and the memories they invoke. At this point, and in light of Haneke’s remarks about the nature of tragedy in the contemporary Western imaginary, *Caché* seems again to work with the Benjaminian distinction between *Tragödie* and *Trauerspiel*, a theme that deserves further interrogation in the context of Haneke’s work, but one that I can only touch on briefly here. The narrative functions as a kind of “mourning play,” with the film’s tragic elements reserved wholly for what is not shown, namely, the story of Majid. In thinking about the “generic backdrop of the bourgeois melodrama” in Haneke’s earlier films, Brigitte Peucker has remarked that the “acts of violence that punctuate these films defy eighteenth-century conventions that bar dramatic events (*coups de théâtres*) and acts of violence from bourgeois drama. Violence is reserved for tragedy in which political events have a place and that is not located in the domestic space of the middle class” (155). In *Caché*, such “coups” are indeed, at least in terms of physical violence, confined to the domestic sphere of the Other, specifically to Majid’s flat, which functions as a kind of theatrical space in which Georges can safely confront the *representation* of violence (the tapes) that penetrates his own (Western, bourgeois) domestic sphere, therewith also reflecting Haneke’s contention that we in the West have “no right to tragedy.”

12. *Nachträglichkeit* has also been translated as “afterwards” or “afterwardsness.” Space will not allow for a detailed investigation of the term here. For an overview of its meanings and role in the development of Freud’s thinking, see Caruth, “Interview.” The term appears across Freud’s corpus, but most prominently in his correspondence with Wilhelm Fliess. For my purposes it becomes most operable as it is used in “Erinnern, Wiederholen und Durcharbeiten” (1914) where Freud locates “eine besondere Art von überaus wichtigen Erlebnissen, die in sehr frühe Zeiten der Kindheit fallen und seinerzeit ohne Verständnis erlebt worden sind, *nachträglich* aber Verständnis und Deutung gefunden haben” (520). Freud maintains that for these types of experiences a memory can usually not be revived. Haneke’s representation of Georges’s psychic crisis reveals the reconstruction of just such an inaccessible memory (shown in the film’s flashbacks from childhood) whose content is determined by a *subsequent* interpretation that works to mobilize memory as a mechanism for further repression. Thus Georges’s “victimization” by the stalker-filmmaker leads him to confront an episode from childhood that he cannot adequately remember but that now frees him of guilt by association as well as from facing his complicity in the larger crimes of colonialism that are “his” by virtue of his identity as a Frenchman.

13. While the flashbacks in *Caché* suggest that Georges grapples with a traumatic memory from childhood, what they in fact depict is the traumatic victimization of Majid as Georges imagines it while processing his own past in light of the demands of his present. As such, these intermezzos are scenes that are located entirely in the present, a temporality that the spectator shares with Georges as perpetrator. They are reminiscent of the scenes of the rocky shoreline that interrupt the narrative progression of Haneke’s *Der siebente Kontinent* (1989). For more on the relation between the flashback and trauma, see Caruth, *Trauma*, in which she notes that the flashback “provides a form of recall that survives at the cost of willed memory or of the very continuity of conscious thought. While the traumatized are called upon to see and to relive the insistent reality of the past, they recover a past that encounters consciousness only through the very denial of active recollection. The ability to recover the past is thus closely and paradoxically tied up, in trauma, with the inability to have access to it” (152).

14. These ethical concerns suggest affinities between Haneke’s work and the writing of W. G. Sebald.

15. For more on this aspect of perception, see Martin Seel, “Dreizehn Sätze über das Bild” (*Ästhetik des Erscheinens* 255–94).

16. Wheatley also mentions this connection, but deems it “superficial” (*Haneke’s Cinema* 159).

17. The theatrical setting is reminiscent of a Robert Wilson production or a stage design by Karl-Ernst Hermann, who designed the sets for the premiere of Thomas Bernhard’s *Heldenplatz* at the Vienna Burgtheater in November 1988 (another work about a repressed history that leads to madness). The fact that Haneke began his career in the theater lends such speculative observations some support.

18. The staging of this conversation in parataxis suggests such a view, but the historical record is more complicated. House and MacMaster insist that the events of October 17, 1961 “only represented a major event for some very limited sections of French society in addition, self-evidently, to the Algerian communities of the Paris region. This limited impact explained the difficulties in memorial terms that campaigners would later have. In addition, the controversies stemming from the immediate afterlife of the October events greatly informed the subsequent politics of memory of this violence” (*Paris* 241). Read with this historiographic context in mind, Georges’s account of the events is informed quite clearly by *subsequent* interpretation and reflects a high level of awareness about the past.

19. Georges's retelling of this episode in French history exemplifies a contemporary condition that Thomas Elsaesser describes with the observation that "our notion of history has entered a deep conceptual twilight zone, which seems to affect many of its traditional signposts and markers: our notion of temporality and causality, our notion of agency and veracity, our notion of absence and presence" (61).

20. *Submission* was a collaboration between van Gogh and Ayaan Hirsi Ali, a Somali-born member of the Dutch parliament whose citizenship was later revoked for a time on a technicality, an act that was seen by many to serve to placate Muslim constituencies in the Netherlands. Hirsi Ali lives in hiding because of death threats. Ian Buruma's *Murder in Amsterdam* describes the context of the event and analyzes its significance for debates on immigration and integration in Europe, particularly in light of the development of the postwar social welfare state.

21. For a nuanced summary of the historical problems of citizenship, assimilation, and integration that confront contemporary France, see Paxton.

22. D. I. Grossvogel provides a compelling reading of the scene, "The strongest distance from the fiction occurs during Majid's suicide. It happens in front of Georges and appears to be his view of the incident. But then the scene is repeated as the frame takes in Georges standing between Majid and an invisible camera. At that moment, the spectator is expelled from Georges's subjective vision—the vision from which the narrative flowed—in order to witness a *filmed* event, fictional continuity being compromised as the camera calls attention to itself through its repositioning in order to shoot the scene again" (39).

23. This would be a grotesque version of Benjamin's famous dictum on the traces left in the bourgeois interior, "Wohnen heißt Spuren hinterlassen" ("Paris" 178).

24. This scene suggests a further development of what Brigitte Peucker has argued, in the context of *Funny Games*, is Haneke's attempt to "establish a complicity between the film's spectators and the murderers depicted in the narrative": "But *Funny Games* manages not only to elicit an intense somatovisceral response from its spectators, as I will argue—a response that actually sets up an equivalence between the spectator and the film's diegetic victims—but also, by means of modernist strategies such as the direct look out of the frame, it establishes a complicity between the film's spectators and the murderers depicted in its narrative. It takes, therefore, an aggressive—not to say sadistic—posture toward its audience" (142).

25. Seel describes the relation between art and violence as follows: "Kunst, ob sie es will oder nicht, spielt ihr Spiel mit der von ihr gezeigten Gewalt: sie stellt dort einen Spielraum der Wahrnehmung her, wo die Gewalt ihren Opfern jeden Spielraum nimmt" (319). Few critics have considered the scene in relation to its aftermath. Romney is an exception. Saxton also mentions it, albeit as an aside (13).

26. Such a return implies that viewers of *Caché* are offered not a refusal of "the possibility of escape through fantasy" and the demand that they "question their relationship to the on-screen 'image,'" as Wheatley contends ("Secrets" 36), but rather the inevitability of that return as a restoration of the fault line between European self and "foreign" Other, as here between Georges's French identity and Majid's marginalization as an unwanted intruder who could never have become French.

27. Haneke insists that the violence in his films is represented in the context of the victim and not the perpetrator, "Erstens kommt die Gewalt als Täterschaft kaum vor. Sie kommt vor als das, was sie ist, als Leiden der Opfer. So sieht der Zuschauer, was es eigentlich bedeutet, Gewalt auszuüben und deswegen werden die Filme auch als schmerzhaft empfunden" (Grabner 45).

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