

‘Sculpting in Time’: Michael Haneke’s *Caché*

“Esculpindo o tempo”: Caché de Michael Haneke

Michael J. Shapiro

Abstract

In this essay I inquire into the way visual arts intervene to disclose and unsettle perspectives on the inequalities within the metropolitan venues in which immigrant populations from former colonies dwell and provide the historical context of the hegemonic structures that such interventions seek to challenge. The inquiry proceeds through a reading of Michael Haneke’s film *Caché*, which follows a family whose personal memories of a wrong perpetrated on an Algerian foster child is an allegory of France’s willful amnesia about the security forces October 1961 attack on Algerian demonstrators.

Keywords

Colonialism; Memory; History; Film; Scopic Fields.

Resumo

Neste ensaio, indago a forma como as artes visuais intervêm para revelar e desestabilizar as perspectivas sobre as desigualdades dentro dos espaços metropolitanos em que habitam as populações de imigrantes de ex-colônias e fornecer o contexto histórico das estruturas hegemônicas que tais intervenções procuram desafiar. O inquérito prossegue através da leitura do filme *Caché*, de Michael Haneke, que segue uma família cujas memórias pessoais de um erro cometido contra um filho adotivo argelino é uma alegoria da amnésia intencional da França em relação ao ataque das forças de segurança em outubro de 1961 contra manifestantes argelinos.

Palavras-chave

Colonialismo; Memória; História; Filme; Campos Escópicos.

Urban Interventions: Seizing a Right to the City

In this essay I inquire into the way visual arts intervene to disclose and unsettle perspectives on the inequalities within the metropolitan venues in which immigrant populations from former colonies dwell. In a reflection on the historical context for the hegemonic structures that such interventions seek to disclose and challenge, Edward Portes (2000, p. 161) points out, "The major contemporary migration flows do not follow a blind economic logic, but are commonly patterned by historical bonds of hegemony and the structural imbalance of peripheral societies subjected to the influence of more powerful nations". That structural imbalance follows migrants into their postcolonial status. Addressing an aspect of the hostile political reactions of portions of the host countries' long-term resident populations, Portes (2000, p. 165) notes that anti-immigrant nativist campaigns' "[...] aggressive measures against immigrants do not stop with their arrival"; they "render their process of social and economic incorporation much more difficult".

Seeking to obviate the social level difficulty to which Portes refers, the performance artist, Krzysztof Wodiczko stages interventions that introduce visual dissonance into metropolitan spaces. Turning immigrants from exotic, static bodies into durational lives, he creates what Theodor Adorno (1984, p. 34) attributes to one of the "invariable traits of [modern] art," a surface-disturbing "explosion" that inheres in the art work's "immanent temporality". Specially, Wodiczko has invented and distributed what he calls "critical vehicles" throughout urban spaces, among which is the *bâton d'étranger* (alien staff). It's "[...] a piece of storytelling equipment and a legal and ethical communication instrument and network for immigrants," (WODICZKO, 1999, p. 104), which he first introduced into public spaces in Barcelona in 1992 and subsequently in several other metropolises. The "staff," resembling the rod of a biblical shepherd, is equipped with a mini-video monitor running a short biographical sketch of the wearer. There's also a loudspeaker powered by batteries the wearer carries in a shoulder bag (Figure 1). The small size of the image on the screen induces an interested observer to move closer for a better look with the effect of diminishing the "[...] usual distance between the operator...and the passersby" (SHAPIRO, 1999, p. 70). Wodiczko's (1999, p. 104) invention is an incitement to infringe on the barrier between "stranger and non-stranger." As it disrupts the functionally and aesthetically designed urban environment, it opens it up to strangers, broadening the range of legitimate civic bodies. By re-punctuating the pattern of daily interpersonal encounters, Wodiczko's devices encourage wary residents to look more carefully at strangers whom

they have thought to be too exotic to engage. Politically, the force of his interventions impacts the “[...] inequalities and stratification [of]...public space [which] is often barricaded and monopolized by the voices of those who are born to speak and prepared to do so.” (PHILIPS, 2003, p. 35-36). Because Wodiczko’s devices broadcast voices as well as showing images, his inventions enable a subject/agency to lend visibility to the condition of democracy, while at the same time “[...] equip[ping] unheard individuals...so that they can more effectively break the silence” (PHILIPS, 2003, p. 38).

Figure 1 – The Alien Staff



Source: Wodiczko (1999).

In Paris there has been another kind of urban intervention that similarly affects the visibility of the city’s marginalized immigrant population. Beginning in the 1970s, the Arab-French theater troupes, Al Assifa and Kahina “[...] performed sketches on immigrant workers’ experiences in France” (Al Assifa) and “[...] gathered a mostly second-generation North African community to address the gender bias that plagued immigration politics” – Kahina (FIŞEK, 2017, p. 44).

Performing as street theater in Paris, the Al Assifa troupe would have an actor “[...] run down an unspecified street while two others yelled ‘stop him, stop him, he stole yogurt, it’s an Arab.’ The chaos that ensued would eventually be settled with a public conversation on the biases underlying the crowd’s reaction” (FIŞEK, 2017, p. 45). Such interventions are aimed at establishing what Ermine Fişek refers to as an “aesthetic citizenship” (FIŞEK, 2017, p. 45) that challenges the government-sponsored “aesthetic dimension” traditionally assigned to French citizenship (FIŞEK, 2017, p. 121).

What follows is an extended focus on another temporality-attuned urban intervention into a city’s field of vision, Michael Haneke’s film *Caché*, the essay’s primary object of analysis, which constitutes a different kind of disruption of a city’s visual exchanges. Instead of attempting to attract the gaze of established non-immigrant bourgeois citizens toward their “foreign” consociates, Haneke’s camera trains an anonymous gaze on one of them. He selects for surveillance the life of an exemplary Parisian bourgeois resident, Georges Laurent and creates a disruption that performs a different kind of ethno-political interpellation, one that targets white domestic rather than foreign bodies. What I want to emphasize is the disturbance the film enacts. It reverses the postcolonial realization of the “imperial gaze” (KAPLAN, 1997), challenging the ethnic hierarchy of a French society within which the identity/difference matrix – a result of France’s postcolonial immigration flows – is already disturbed. And crucially with respect to how the film is shot, it produces an unsettling phenomenology of reception by inhibiting the usual identification between viewer and camera focus. Incessantly concerning himself with a scene’s effect on the viewer – e.g., “[...] the question I ask myself isn’t ‘how do I show violence?’ but rather how do I show the spectator his [sic] position and its representation?” (LAWRENCE, 2010, p. 63) – Haneke’s “sustained acts of vision,” as David Rhodes puts it, “[...] force us to stand outside its images, to experience the unknown-ness of the world, our own strangeness to ourselves” (RHODES, 2006, p. 20). While making viewers aware of their narrative expectations, the film has them accompanying the protagonists in a search for answers that it never unambiguously delivers.

Racism/Xenophobia as Event

Haneke’s *Caché* is an aesthetico-political intervention into the history of a racial-spatial order. His political perspective is immanent in what he refers to as his aesthetic duty: “In all of my films, I try to fuel mistrust in our faith in reality. We know

nothing about the world, except the things we have experienced directly. And we can examine these things. But everything else we experience through the media... I see it as my aesthetic duty to reflect this.” (Haneke, 2006, s/p). Much of his focus is on “How do you behave when confronted with something that you should actually admit responsibility for? These are the sort of strategies that interest me, talking yourself out of guilt” (Haneke, 2006, s/p). While implicating the viewer in the film’s problematic by “[...] moving ‘the guilt out of the screen and into the auditorium of the arthouse’” (HERZOG, 2010, p. 27). Haneke makes architecture a pervasive protagonist within the film as well with an architectural narrative thread, that radiates out from a “juxtaposed home and media space” (GALLAGHER, 2011, p. 34), as it moves back and forth between domestic and media-franchised work spaces, taking the viewer on an “architectural itinerary” (BRUNO, 2002, p. 56). Much of the film’s thinking is delivered by the many shots of the exterior and interior of Georges and Anne Laurent’s (Daniel Auteuill and Juliette Binoche) capacious, fashionably furnished and decorated apartment in an upscale neighborhood, which are contrasted with shots of the interior of an Algerian immigrant’s, Majid’s (Maurice Benichou) cramped and barren apartment off a narrow corridor. The other main architectural object of scrutiny is the television studio in which Georges hosts a literary talk show. Television programs, as the film’s primary media space, intervene frequently, for example a news broadcast of occupying forces involved in the first Iraq War, which resonates with aspects of a French colonial history that has all but vanished from official and popular attention. That moment complements *Caché’s* implicit historiographic narrative, which references without directly witnessing a past historical moment, the French police’s use of killing force against peaceful Algerian French protesters.

The incident was enabled by a reciprocal historical process. After “[...] the police seep[ed] into army operations in Algeria [...] army activities [had] come to form part of the job description of the policeman in the large cities of metropolitan France” (ROSS, 2002, p. 51). The primary agent of that militarization of domestic policing was Maurice Papon, the head of the Paris police prefecture, who orchestrated the “infiltration of the French Army into the [domestic] police” (ROSS, 2002, p. 51). Having brought back to Paris the military measures he implemented during the Algerian War, Papon employed them to massacre hundreds of Algerians involved in the peaceful protest on October 17, 1961. As the film implies, responsibility for that atrocity had been conjured away in both official and popular media cultures. Significantly William Garner Smith, a Black American expatriate writer’s novel *The Stone Face* (1963), which provides “[...] a wrenching account of the police massacre

of Algerian protestors on October 17, 1961—[is] the only one that exists in the fiction of the period” (SHATZ, 2021, p. 13). Now, the massacre’s most palpable (albeit oblique) legacy exists in Haneke’s film through the character Majid, Georges’ would-be foster brother whose parents perished in the massacre.

As the film narrative progresses it becomes apparent that Majid’s temporary stay in the home of Georges’ parents has been repressed by both Georges and his mother (Annie Girardot), much as the Papon-instigated atrocities were largely ignored by much of the non-immigrant portion of a French society that, paradoxically, professed a republicanism that eschewed ethno-racial hierarchies of worthiness. Tzvetan Todorov (1986, p.172) identifies an irony associated with such historical moments, contending that “[...] racism [...] becomes an increasingly influential social phenomenon as societies approach the contemporary ideal of democracy.” There’s “the possible explanation of that fact,” he suggests...

[...] that in traditional, hierarchical societies, social differences are acknowledged by the common ideology hence physical differences play a less crucial role. In such societies it is more important to know who are masters and who are slaves than whose skin is light and whose dark. In democratic societies [...] although actual equality does not prevail, the ideal of equality becomes a commonly shared value; differences [...] continue to exist but the social ideology refuses to acknowledge them [as a result] we attribute to race what we no longer have the right to attribute to social difference. (TODOROV, 1986, p. 172-173).

Forty years after the Papon-led massacre, ethno-racial identity achieved intensified attention as a rightist ethno-national political party with growing support among diverse media sponsored a resurgence of anti-Muslim sentiment in reaction to a contemporary event, the beheading of a teacher by a Chechen religious militant (October 16, 2020) who was enraged because the teacher showed his students cartoons of “the prophet” Muhammad. The episode was akin to dropping a grain of sand into a super saturated solution, a reservoir of ethnic hatred already filled by the vociferations of Marine La Penn’s anti-immigrant National Front party. The growing wave of anti-immigrant sentiments put renewed pressure on France’s claim to be living up to the Liberty, Equality, Fraternity motto (the officially and popularly recognized legacy of the French Revolution). As is well known, it is not the first such test of French republicanism. As Adam Gopnik (2009) points out in his reprise of the (in)famous Dreyfus affair, “[...] it was the first indication that a new epoch of progress and

cosmopolitan optimism would be met by a countervailing wave of hatred that deformed the next half century of European history.” And as is the case with the current situation, diverse media rode the wave of anti-immigrant hatred, for example, Édouard Drumont’s “anti-immigrant manifesto,” which “[...] was responding to the waves of Jewish immigrants from Germany and Eastern Europe who had arrived in France during the previous twenty or so years, bringing with them, he argued, values and a faith alien to Christian France” (GOPNIK, 2009). The current anti-immigrant outburst is intimately tied to French colonialism, the historical trajectory of which has continually challenged the lived reality of France’s republicanism, initially in light of France’s violent treatment of the peoples within its colonial possessions and subsequently in its treatment of its domestic immigrant populations. Although the “[...] particular history of the *banlieues* varies from suburb to suburb...the ethnic segregation of [them] expresses the failure of [the] deep-seated French republican imaginary” (SCHAEFER, 2017, p. 52). The current hostile responses to the migrant Muslim population are, as Gopnik implies, a repeat of what happened during the Dreyfus affair, which was a decisive repudiation of the enlightenment narrative. It “[...] showed that a huge number of Europeans [...] liked engaging in raw, animal religious hatred, and only felt fully alive when they did. Hatred and bigotry were not a vestige of the superstitious past but a living fire - just what comes, and burns naturally” (GOPNIK, 2009).

Cinematic Reponses

France’s cultural/racial schism, articulated with social and economic inequalities and exacerbated by a smoldering racism that episodically ignites has been notably played out in Paris, the alleged “city of light.” The city harbors a microcosm of the geopolitical rift that separates white French citizens from its migrant non-white population, largely from Africa and consigned to heavily policed and surveilled *Banlieue*. That schism is elaborately explored in Mathieu Kassovitz’s 1995 film *La Haine*, and is revisited a decade later in a more oblique way in Haneke’s *Caché*, which is focused more on visibility within the social field as it bears on the legacy of Papon’s 1961 Paris massacre than on the contemporary unequal deployment of violent policing featured in *La Haine*. Haneke had learned the details of the 1961 Paris massacre of 200 plus French-Algerians, who ended up as bodies floating in the Seine. Taking that 1961 episode into account, and noting the extent to which it has been largely absent from official and popular versions of French history, Haneke invents Majid and Georges and has Georges’ lies about Majid, which gets him expelled from Georges’ parent’s home,

reflect the big lie that Papon employed to attribute terrorist danger to France’s Algerian immigrant population. Georges’ French parents had employed Majid’s parents on their farm as laborers. When they disappeared, presumably part of the 1961 massacre, the plan was to adopt their son Majid. Jealous of the older boy’s share of his parent’s affectionate solicitude, Georges engages in destructive and dishonest acts aimed at getting Majid expelled from his home. After convincing Majid to decapitate a chicken, he informs his parents about the attack on the chicken and also claims he has seen Majid coughing up blood. Once Majid is seen as both disruptive and dangerous, he’s forced to leave the farm. Instead of obtaining the benefits of bourgeois entitlements, he grows up in an orphan’s home. Thereafter, Georges represses his complicity in Majid’s fate until anonymous tapes and images start appearing at his home. He presumes that Majid is the one responsible for the surveillance and its material manifestation, video footage of the Laurent home and his son’s school, delivered along with drawn images of a decapitated fowl and of a head seeping blood from its mouth, because the drawings mimic the two blood-related episodes that Georges had ascribed to Majid on his family farm.

Inasmuch as Georges and the viewer are never apprised of the source of the videos and drawn images, Haneke’s interpersonal drama, which at a micropolitical level involves the abjection of an Algerian immigrant and at a macropolitical level refers allegorically to French society’s treatment of their immigrant population, is carried out in the genre of a whodunit (an unconsummated one in which the viewer is positioned as a co-investigator in a drama in which there is no singular “who” to find). Haneke’s cinematic, aesthetico-political intervention reverses the optics of *La Haine*’s drama. Where Kassovitz’s film focuses on the policing authority’s surveillance of Paris’s *banlieue*-residing immigrant population, Haneke’s film trains the gaze on a white bourgeois family and, by allegorical implication, contemporary France. It’s a destabilizing gaze that disturbs Georges’ will-to-forget his treatment of Majid, while it impugns France’s collective will-to-forget its treatment of its immigrant population.

That collective will-to-forget is energized by France’s distinctive form of cultural governance. The history of its violent treatment of immigrants is buried in part because of its long-standing cultural assimilation policy, which has been aimed at effacing ethno-racial difference. Echoing the pre-enlightenment past, it’s a secular version of “Christian efforts to exorcise Medieval Christendom of Jews and Moors” (GORDON, 2010, p. 196). And subsequent to the ending of its imperial hegemony, which had “[...] been so deeply entrenched in French identity, its loss (and especially

that of Algeria),” as Achille Mbembe notes, was experienced as “[...] tantamount to a veritable amputation in a national imaginary suddenly deprived of one of its sources of pride” (MBEMBE, 2010, p. 88). No longer able to hold on to an imperial historical narrative, its “[m]inorities were progressively hidden away, placed in the dark and covered with a veil of prudery that obfuscated their visibility in the nation’s political and public life” (MBEMBE, 2010, p. 89).

In the case of the Algerian immigrant population that Majid represents, that willful obscuring now includes the proscription of cultural emblems. A historical juxtaposition of dress codes provides a perspective on the contemporary version of France’s assimilation policy. “In 1416, a Jewish woman named Allegra was arrested in Ferrara, Italy, for not wearing earrings. The symbolism could not have been clearer. In an era when superfluous adornment was condemned as a sign of sin, Jews were required by law to wear conspicuous jewelry” (FORD, 2021). The distinctive attire “[...] reinforced the idea that Jews were a physically distinct and deviant people” (FORD, 2021, Apple Books). The assimilationist protocols of France’s cultural governance reverse that cultural identity policy. Exemplary is the famous 1989 *Affaire du Foulard* (the headscarf affair). When three young Muslim women entered a middle school in Ceil wearing them, they were expelled, and the expulsion was officially validated when the highest judicial body in France ruled that the girls were in violation of the *Laïcité* (secularism) law. Rather than being mere religious insignia, the wearing of the headscarves was deemed by the court to be an act of proselytizing.

Thus, while Ferrara’s cultural governance applied to their Jewish population required them to show their ethno-religious identity, France’s, applied to their Muslim population, required them to hide theirs, rendering their cultural being out of sight and out of mind. What is at stake for a France that seeks to hide cultural difference? To put it succinctly, “Postcolonial [...] migrants challenge the nation’s production of negative difference” (FERNANDES, 2008, p. 1). In France, as elsewhere, their “[...] presence denatures the link between nations and identities” (FERNANDES, 2008, p. 1). Featuring video long takes of Georges and Anne Laurent’s grand urban apartment and Majid’s modest one, Haneké’s *Caché* takes on France’s drive to hide disturbances to its identity narrative by turning to what an individual strives to hide. Concerned with what is “hidden” – out of sight and out of mind – at individual and collective levels, it thinks with a film technique that is best identified (using Andrei Tarkovsky expression for his filming style) as “sculpting in time” (TARKOVSKY, 2012). The political force of that filming style becomes apparent in juxtaposition with Kassovitz’s *La Haine*.

To review briefly the different formal approaches of the two films. *La Haine* opens with typically cinematic action footage, television news coverage of the urban riots in the *banlieue* of a commune on the fringe of Paris (in reaction to an episode of police brutality). While *La Haine*’s aesthetic approach evokes the MTV pop video style of a John Woo-directed film, *Caché*’s aesthetic is more photographic. Seeing- rather than action-oriented, the film begins with a long take of an urban villa in an upper middle-class section of Paris. Referring to such a filming style as transcendental, the filmmaker Paul Schrader describes the effect on the viewer: “By delaying edits, not moving the camera, forswearing musical clues, not employing coverage, and heightening the mundane, transcendental style creates a sense of unease the viewer must resolve” (SCHRADER, 2018, p. 121).

While in the film’s initial scene it appears that the viewer is seeing real time filming, it turns out to be a video of an earlier filming moment being watched by Georges (Daniel Auteuil) and his wife Anne (Juliette Binoche) Laurent, whose urban apartment is the object of the camera’s gaze. Their unease upon receiving an anonymous video of their home is shared by the viewer. Style-wise, rather than inviting the viewer to keep up with a rapid unfolding of action captured in the tracking and panning shots featured in *La Haine*, Haneke’s filming style is akin to that of Michelangelo Antonioni’s “cinema of poetry,” which, as Pier Paolo Pasolini puts it, “[...] allow[s] the camera to be felt” (PASOLINI, 2005, p. 184). Moreover, as is also the case with Antonioni’s films, Haneke’s *Caché*, is more an “*optical drama*” than a traditional one (DELEUZE, 1989, p. 9). And crucially for purposes of the egalitarian impetus of *Caché*’s optical drama, the film’s scopic field has no commanding center. No character has a privileged perspective because, as is the case in Antonioni’s films in which the camera’s perspective is “semi subjective,” (PALLASMA, 2001, p. 123); scenes are composed from points of view that do not coincide with the characters’ perceptions. And while the film summons the viewer’s “attentive perception,” (RHODES, 2006, p. 99), there are never unambiguous clues within the frame to provide a clear point of view. There’s always a sense that something off screen is impacting on what can be seen, a sense from which consummation is withheld. In cinema, “the ‘*champ visuel*’ (field of vision),” as Pascal Bonitzer notes, “is always doubled by a ‘*champ aveuglé*’ (field of blindness)” (SAXTON, 2002, p. 5), which in the case of *Caché* is “a site of historical trauma” (p. 9). As a result, the diremption between *Caché*’s camera consciousness and that of the perplexed protagonists whose home is under surveillance affects the viewer as well, whom Haneke endeavors to

unsettle in order to encourage “thinking” rather than (secure) “knowledge” (RHODES, 2006, p. 99). As he remarks, “I attempt to stir up the viewer’s distrust in the value of mediated images...when a film wants to be an art form, it has an aesthetic-moral obligation to reflect the questionability and dangers of its means of manipulation” (NIESSEN, 2009, p. 182).

Caché’s form resonates with another aspect of Antonioni’s cinematic poesis. In his criticism of what he regards as Alfred Hitchcock’s suspense narratives, Antonioni remarks, “Life is also made up of pauses” (MCELHANEY, 2006, p. 239). In contrast with Hitchcock, he “aspires to discharge suspense” and organize his camera work to create ambiguity as to whose point of view shapes the scene (MCELHANEY, 2006, p. 239). While supporting the view that Haneke’s *Caché* is composed as an Antonioni-like sequence of pauses, Lisa Coulthard suggests that the film is also a listening text. The soundtrack is punctuated by long silences, soundless pauses in the film narrative in those moments when the camera is aimed at the Laurent villa for several minutes. That aspect of the film’s style is what Coulthard (2012, p. 17) refers to as an “acoustic minimalism,” that renders *Caché* as an aurally- as well as an optically-oriented drama. I want to note however that the film’s punctuated silences frequently give way to a contrasting aspect of its aural composition. In the midst of dialogues among its characters, there are media voices that intervene and scramble the soundtrack, for example a moment in which the television in the Laurent home is broadcasting a noisy intervention in the couple’s conversation, the above noted *Euronews* report covering a gubernatorial appointment of an Italian diplomat to an Iraqi province during the Iraqi occupation. That oblique reference to France’s former colonial occupations is one among many instances of the film’s cluttered “aural canvass” (FLANNERY, 2011, p. 71).

Coming to Terms with the Ethnoscape

In a commentary on Haneke’s film, Eon Flannery refers to the complex choices involved in conceptualizing France’s postcolonial population: “Cultural hybridity, liminality, diasporic consciousness, nomadism, migrancy, exile,” are all possibilities, and “each has become differentially privileged in recent theoretical, schools” (FLANNERY, 2011, p. 66). Certainly, the choice will inflect the analysis’s conceptual home. For purposes of the direction toward which my argument points, a critical sense of the politics of equality, I am sorting two levels of interpellation. One is in accord with Flannery’s emphasis on the conceptual framing demands on the viewer’s reception, the need to compose an identity matrix with historical depth. The other

operates at a different level; it involves the specific identities ascribed to film's protagonists. With respect to that level of interpellation, our attention is drawn to an ethos that includes a commitment to civic recognition for marginalized bodies on their own terms – "enunciations of self" in Ermine Fişek's apropos expression (FIŞEK, 2017, p. 48-49) – and a historical accounting of those who have deprived them of their own terms (and accordingly of the material consequences of that deprivation). Such an ethos is reciprocal, for as Edward Glissant suggests, "Sometimes, by taking up the problem of the Other, it is possible to find oneself." (GLISSANT, 1997, p. 18).

In the case of France's relationship to the immigrant Other, self-assertion rather than self-discovery has been the dominant mode. Translating that situation for the field of visibility, the moving and still images that accompany the discursive agon within which postcolonial bodies have (and have had) to struggle in a state and society that has been unreciprocal, focus on aspects of control over how one can look at oneself. The film deconstructs what has historically been a hierarchically managed scopic field. As it does so, we witness the main protagonist, Georges Laurent increasingly agitated as he tries to cope with his loss of control of that field. That aspect of his experience constitutes the film's micropolitical level as it tracks the frantic process by which Georges seeks to reassert control over how he is looked at in order to be able once again to look at himself in the way he imagines himself seen (as the television talk show host mediating literary conversations). He identifies with a generalized social gaze that accords with how he locates himself in the present, while his retrospective gaze supports the normalizing autobiographical narrative with which he prefers to remember himself, enabling him to tell a story to himself and others that exonerates him from the violence he perpetrated on Majid.

The Gaze

As others have discerned, the film's rendering of a scopic field that destabilizes Georges domestic and biographical self, yields itself to interpretation through a Lacanian lens, heeding especially what Lacan refers to as "the split between the eye and the gaze." The latter as Lacan identifies it, is something disruptive to the subject, a sense of being seen that disrupts subjects' assumed positions in the scopic field, undermining their confidence in being in control of perceptions. Allocating the gaze to a level below one's conscious grasp, it is in his words,

[...] that which performs like a phantom force...In our relation to things, in so far as this relation is constituted by the way of vision, and ordered in the figures of representation, something slips, passes, is transmitted, from stage to stage, and is always to some degree eluded in it – that is what we call the gaze. (LACAN, 1979, p. 73).

Hugh Manon succinctly captures the relevance to *Caché* of the eye-gaze split that Lacan conceives: “By depicting the protagonists’ responses to an unseen (and ostensibly unseeable) video camera, repeatedly reminds us that the gaze is not the look,” (MANON, 2010, p. 109). Within a scopic field in which one is no longer in control, a sense of a returned gaze that does not coincide with the place from which the subject sees, the resulting trauma for the subject is induced by the recognition that it is not an autonomous agent (MANON, 2010). For Georges that trauma, associated with his loss of control over the scopic field, is especially disconcerting because he has been comfortably viewing himself as a popular commentator/interviewer on television, managing dialogues among well-known authors and critics. Given his frequent, programmed media exposure he has become used to being a figure that is valorized by a substantial viewing public. As the film progresses, we watch Georges’ personality disintegrate as he is haunted by a past that threatens his comfortable social and professional statuses. And by implication we observe the disclosure of a colonial past as the film deconstructs the egalitarian pretenses of France’s republican heritage. Crucial to what *Caché* states is the way it shows the past in France’s present.

Haneke’s “Sculpting in Time”

While much of the promotional material surrounding the release of *Caché* nominates it as a psychological thriller, it yields to critical interpretation if conceived instead as “historiographic metafiction” (HUTCHEON, 1988). Haneke’s film cuts back and forth between a present drama and what is a troubling (repressed) past for its protagonists. In a non-linear cinematic narrative that embeds the biographical times of its protagonists within portions of France’s historical time, it proceeds with “[...] flashbacks and reverse-rewind shots [that] disrupt linear narratives of time, and by implication, linear models of history” (GALLAGHER, 2011, p. 23). To appreciate the temporal confrontation that structures the film’s aesthetico-political contribution, we have to recover the key historical changes that have reformatted the city of Paris’s media ecology. As Friedrich Kittler points out, cities are media, among which are its architecture. Moreover, the “architectural media” that Brianne Gallagher emphasizes in her analysis of the film, represent a durational trajectory. Addressing architecture’s

temporal trajectory, Kittler points to the optical result of the city’s structural changes: “Since cities no longer lie within the panopticon of the cathedral or castle, and can no longer be enclosed by walls or fortifications, a network made up of intersecting networks dissects and connects the city – in particular its fringes, peripheries and tangents” (KITTLER, 1996, p. 718). Accordingly, while in her reading of Haneke’s film, Gallagher’s compelling focus on “policing Paris” concerns itself with contemporary coercive practices, I want to expand the bandwidth of that policing to note that the contemporary structure of Paris that Haneke’s camera explores contains an immanent temporality that results from earlier police initiatives concerning the city’s accessibility. For example, “It was the police prefects of absolutism (such as La Reynie in Paris) who saw to it that the hand painted guild signs on the older houses conformed to the same standard and ultimately made them independent from the location of the house number” (KITTLER, 1996, p. 725). Consequently, one aspect of the encounter of temporalities involved in the way *Caché*’s story is situated is the ease with which Georges, after watching a video that reveals street signs on a filmed drive to Majid’s apartment, finds his way there after having decided that Majid must be responsible for the videos and drawings arriving at his home and office.

Along with signage and other locational technologies (city maps, address and telephone catalogues) is another crucial technology on which Haneke’s camera is frequently focused, Paris’ inclusion in modern automobility (at least for the resident bourgeois portion of the population). The shots of the Laurent’s street, with its long rows of late-model passenger cars tells much of the contemporary story. However, if we imagine the sedimented history within the shot, we have to begin the story earlier. Automobility in France was spurred by an acceleration of production that was encouraged when France’s car manufacturers embraced the American production model: “Production managers at Citroen, Peugeot, and Renault...aware of the methods of Henry Ford and Frederick W. Taylor, adapted them to specific situations within the French industry and within their own companies” (COHEN, 1991, p. 754). And unlike the history of automobility in the U.S., automobility in France developed abruptly (after World War II). However, as regards effects of that consumption, the relationship between class and automobility functioned in France the way it did in the U. S. Car ownership rapidly became an “identity marker” (DENNY, 1957) as well as a means of transportation. But unlike the consumption demographic in the U. S., where people of color, especially African Americans, achieved a high level of car ownership after the automobile had begun dominating

American transportation, the film makes apparent that Paris's marginalized people of color, its primarily African origin *banlieue* residents, had not been largely incorporated into France's automobility.

A seemingly incidental moment in the film registers the rift in Paris's automobility. It's a moment when Georges and Anne are about to enter their parked car after leaving a police station where they have reported the reception of the anonymous video tapes and drawings. Failing to see an Afro-French bicyclist, Georges opens the street-side car door, steps out, and narrowly misses being hit by the cyclist, who swerves to avoid colliding with him. A hostile confrontation ensues. After Georges shouts an insult, "watch where you're going, dickhead," the cyclist returns to confront Georges, demanding that he repeat what he said. Intimidated, Georges shrinks from his earlier belligerent posture and is told to by the cyclist to keep his mouth shut as he departs.

The encounter distils several relevant aspects of what the film is thinking about. As regards Paris's unequally distributed automobility, what is telling is that the Afro-Frenchman is on a bicycle. That aspect of the encounter accords with what is shown when Georges makes his way to Majid's neighborhood, which is not as densely filled with late-model parked cars. And most significantly, while Georges uses his car to move about freely, driving around the city, out to the countryside to visit his mother, and thence beyond his old family residence to a business meeting, the only times Majid is in a car is as a result of coercion.

Two remarks during the encounter speak to how the film structures the equality- inequality thematic. Georges' shout, "look where you're going dickhead" raises the issue of the normative reciprocities of the gaze, i.e., on whom falls the responsibility to look (at what, at whom, when and how). It doesn't seem to occur to a self-righteous, privilege-assuming Georges that taking care to look for possible collisions is his responsibility. When the cyclist tells him to shut his mouth, he is referring to a speech organ that plays a crucial, continually referenced role throughout the film narrative. In terms of the allegorical connection between Georges and French colonial history, his mouth – hardly ever shut but ever unreliable - is crucial to how the film thinks about what it thinks. Georges continually dissembles, misleading himself and others during his frantic attempt to cope with the mystery of the tapes and images. It is with respect to the disconnect between what is the case and what comes out of Georges' mouth that a scene in which he visits his mother is telling.

Madam Laurent, an “Attendant”

The figure of the attendant is conceived in Gilles Deleuze’s analysis of some of Francis Bacon’s paintings in which he observes the presence of a figure or figures that have no narrative relationship to what is happening with the central figure. In his words, the attendant is “a constant or point of reference,” a “spectator,” but not in the ordinary sense. The attendant is a “kind of spectator” who “seems to subsist, distinct from the figure” (DELEUZE, 2003, p. 14). Deleuze’s attendant, a guide to what is taking place in the scene, “[...] is robust enough to apply to other visual media” as I have noted, it adapts well to cinema in which many characters play such a role (SHAPIRO, 2009, p. 100). In *Caché* Georges’ mother functions as an attendant who helps disclose what is the case, both immediately with respect to Georges’ penchant for denial and historically with respect of France’s denial of a historical atrocity.

Georges’ denials precede his conversation with his mother. It is shortly after a scene at a dinner party at his home that Georges drives out to his birth home to visit his mother. The party had been interrupted by another tape delivery, which Georges, coming back to his guest at his dining table from his front porch where he picks up the tape and stuffs it in a coat pocket, initially denies receiving the tape; “there was nothing,” he says. But when Anne then tells the guests about getting tapes and images, Georges confesses to the delivery while evoking the film’s title, saying, “I won’t hide it.” Nevertheless, his hiding persists. After he arrives at the family farm where his aging mother is now bedridden and attended by a nurse, a conversation ensues in which his mother exposes the egregious gap between what is the case and what Georges says. As Georges sits by her bed, she begins by asking after the wellbeing of the family. Lying, Georges says everything is fine. She avers to the contrary, saying he looks troubled. Thereafter, she continually challenges his utterances, which are consistently at variance with reality. When he refers to her being unwell, she corrects him, saying she’s not unwell; she has gotten old: “for my age I’m very well,” she says. When he wonders whether she’s lonely in her isolation, she points out that loneliness is a perspective, not a condition, asking if *he’s* lonely when he’s at home, when he’s at work, etc. When finally, he brings up what’s on his mind, telling her he has dreamed about Majid, she says “who’s Majid,” having repressed the memory of his stay on their farm. What she then says (after he reminds her about him: “Majid, Hashem’s son. The kid you planned to adopt...do you ever think about him?”), “It was a long time ago; it’s not a happy memory.” Although she too is part of the repression of Majid’s abjection from their home, she is also a voice that points out what is the case with Georges’ incessant reality

denials. Transcending her role in Georges' past family life, she's a figure who gestures toward the film's allegorical, macropolitical theme, France's willful "colonial amnesia," (GUILLEMET, ESKENAZI and CREER, 2007) in which its repression of the 1961 Papon-led atrocity participates. What mother and son repress stands in for a pervasive institutionalized forgetting. Government media control was so effective that a 2001 opinion poll "[...] revealed that most French citizens had never heard of the massacre" (CROWLEY, 2010, p. 269).

The conversation between Georges and his mother – redolent with repressions – barely touches on one of the film's primal scenes. Later in the film we witness the return of the repressed as an episode at the family farm returns during one of Georges' dreams. In the dream sequence the camera observes from a substantial distance (thereby conveying the scene as obscured history) the moment when Majid is forcibly packed into a car belonging to the orphanage to which he has been consigned. What Georges strives to repress stages an oneiric return, showing the viewer a past that has been hidden, generated by a memory that Georges would rather neither recall nor share. Georges repeats his subterfuge in conversations with Anne, claiming after his first visit to Majid that he could not find him. After he and Anne watch the tape that is delivered with a recording of his visit to Majid's apartment, he apologizes to Anne for lying. However, he is wholly unapologetic about why he had the hunch that Majid was responsible for the tapes (a hunch that he had refused to share). Pressed by Anne, he admits lying about Majid to his parents in order to get him sent away but claims he cannot recall the actual lies and adds that it was only a trivial "interlude" in his family's life. "I don't feel responsible," he says. Once again, what comes out of his mouth is contrary to what is the case, a profound sense of responsibility and guilt, made evident in his dream sequences, that in his waking life he will not acknowledge, even to himself.

While focusing extensively on what Georges is reluctant to admit, the film reflects allegorically on what France has been reluctant to admit. Sixty-four years passed before the French President, Emmanuel Macron admitted (in 2021) that Ali Boumendjel, a prominent wartime defender of Algerians imprisoned by the French in 1957 did not commit suicide; he was tortured and assassinated. As for who or what are responsible for recording the video sequences and drawing the images that afflict Georges, who never apologizes and never ultimately extracts an admission from his suspect, Majid, the viewer shares the enigma. We are never certain about the agency for what we are seeing. Rather than moralizing, Haneke's film withholds consummation and demands reflection. At a symbolic level that exceeds the specific

drama in which its characters are involved, the film places an ethico-political burden on France as it places it on the viewer.

***Caché* as a Cinema of Seeing**

In his analysis of the difference between a cinema of action and a cinema of seeing, Gilles Deleuze focuses on what it implies for viewer reception. In the former, “the viewer’s problem becomes ‘What are we going to see in the next image?’” while in the latter, it is “‘What is there to see in the image?’” because in the cinema of seeing, there is “no longer a sensory motor situation, but a purely optical and sound situation” (DELEUZE, 1989, p. 272.). That optical and sound situation emerges in *Caché*’s opening scene. The viewer, confronted with an almost two-minute long take of the Laurent’s urban apartment from across the street, has no context for what she is seeing until rewinds and dialogue intrude. Then it becomes evident that the shot is a video being watched and then rewound by the Laurents, who are in conversation about why the video was delivered and what it implies. Before the couple is introduced, what is heard is a male voice, “*Alors?*” (well), followed by a female voice, “*Rien,*” (nothing), then “*C’était ou,*” (where was it), followed by “*Dans un sac plastique dans la porte*” (in a plastic bag inside the entryway). Moreover, and revealingly, in a remark that characterizes both the characters and viewers of Haneke films, Georges says, “it’s dumb, I don’t know what to say.” That kind of experience is pervasive in Haneke films. In his *Code Unknown* (2000) for example, he uses a title that makes not knowing what to say explicit. It’s a film in which we are not sure what we’re seeing, what’s important (as the film takes us back and forth in time), or *what to say about it*.

What is most confounding in Haneke’s *Caché* is the source of the video footage. After the opening sequence, which reveals no apparent agent doing the filming, the viewer and the Laurents are faced with a mystery, sending both on a search for signs. What immediately ensues onscreen is a domestic disturbance, as Georges and Anne Laurent express their anxiety in irritable exchanges. While in the immediate foreground of the filming at that point we see an agitated couple bickering as they lay the table in preparation for their evening meal, in the background are objects with more temporal depth. There’s a large collection of books in floor to ceiling bookcases that dominate the room. While the couple is oblivious to what is simply a familiar background containing what they have accumulated during the span of their domestic life, the viewer is enjoined to read it as a sign. It’s a sign that is best read retrospectively,

after the film reveals Georges and Anne's literary vocations and subsequently visits Majid's humble apartment, a cramped space with virtually bare walls.

On the one hand, the books speak to Georges and Anne's class, educational backgrounds, and employment - the viewer sees in subsequent scenes that Georges is a moderator/host of a television literary talk show and that Anne is an employee in a book publishing company - on the other they reflect a crucial aspect of France's political economy. A huge personal library speaks less to the practice of reading than to the unequal distribution of capital, a process of accumulation that the French bourgeoisie's inherited wealth and associated educational capital makes possible. Inasmuch as no one is seen reading throughout the film narrative, the latter is the more important sign. The books serve as props whose content is irrelevant to the story. A reading of the book collection as a sign of class becomes especially compelling in a later scene when Majid's son confronts Georges in his workplace and accuses him of having deprived his father of an education.

Once Georges and Anne have begun their evening meal their son Pierrot (Lester Makedonsky) shows up a bit late and seems at that point to be a relatively inconsequential character, a typically laconic adolescent who delivers minimal responses to his parents' questions about his day. However, he subsequently becomes an important figure in the film narrative. Early in the film, his role is simply that of being a child of a bourgeois family. Thus, shortly after seeing him at dinner, he is a subject in another education-relevant sign, which surfaces when there's a cut from the scene at the family table to a pool where Pierrot is at swimming practice. There he becomes part of a revelatory process, one which typifies a preoccupation of the French bourgeoisie, an intense focus on inducting their children into meritocracy. Rather than a space of leisure, the pool is an intensively surveilled classroom where a swimming coach is micromanaging the students' form. He continually shouts corrections to their strokes, breathing, depth, and turns. The class-shaping pressures to which Pierrot is subjected are reaffirmed when his parents come to witness his performance at a swim meet later in the film (in which fortunately for him, he wins his heat). Revealingly as well, it's the only scene in which Georges and Anne appear emotionally in accord. Seated paratactically (side by side), in contrast with their usual face-to-face bickering - it's Anne *and* Georges rather than Anne *against* Georges (or vice versa) - they're cheering in unison for their son's achievement.

With a cut after Pierrot's swimming practice, the camera is again still. There's an even longer take of the Laurent's residence, taking between four and five minutes, this time in the evening. In the midst of that long take are two shots of Georges, one

which has him returning home while his villa is being filmed, another that takes us to his television studio as his interview program is signing off. Visible in the background is another floor to ceiling display of books. However, in this case there are no actual books. What is visible is a mural of shelves full of books without titles, implying once again that the film’s shots of books are meant to mark the class of those for whom they are signs of status. The scene speaks (in Jean Baudrillard’s terms) to a book’s “sign function value” rather than to what may be available in its distillation of thinking. As Baudrillard puts it, sign function value inheres in a “practice of objects,” a class’s engagement in a process of “sign exchange” that signals its status within a social hierarchy (BAUDRILLARD, 1981, p. 29). The book images are participating in “social pretention”.

Immediately after Georges’ interview program finishes signing off, ending with a close up of Georges mouthing his program’s usual closing remarks (about when to expect the next episode), he’s summoned by a TV station employee who hands him an image of a mouth spewing blood that has been delivered to his work place. Shortly thereafter, Haneke gives the viewer a clue about the significance of mouths. Within a few moments after the film has cut back to the evening’s video surveillance of the Laurent residence, there’s a break in the scene. The camera reverses and aims at a widow opposite *chez* Laurent, where an “ethnic,” i.e., Algerian immigrant-looking adolescent, is framed with red fluid dripping from his mouth and running down his chin. Although an initial look suggests that his mouth is mimicking the bloody mouth in the image delivered to Georges (doubtless an aspect of what is being conveyed), a closer inspection suggests that it’s likely juice from a piece of fruit he’s been eating while peering across the street toward the Laurent home. The image of the youth supports two of the film’s emphases. One is the increasing focus on mouths, another is a preview of an emerging theme, a child as witness. To provide a framing for that second aspect of the film I want to suggest that what emerges as the film reaches its conclusion is a Bergmanesque narrative thread (children play the role of witnesses in many of Ingmar Bergman’s films, pervasively in two of them: *The Silence* (1963) and *Fanny and Alexander* (1982)). Crucially however, Haneke resists an “idealization of children.” His “child figures,” as Alexandra Lloyd points out, are “[...] caught between victimhood and perpetratorship, innocence and guilt, and innocence and experience.” (LLOYD, 2016, p. 188).

Childhood looms large by the end of the film but is already seeded in earlier. Picking up the sequence: Although the next cut is to the inside of the Laurent’s home,

where Georges and Anne are discussing the latest delivery of a video and image, the viewer is already left to ponder the increased complexity of a scopic field to which an anonymous child-as-witness has been added. The importance of that aspect of the drama is to be subsequently reinforced. As the flow of symbolic assaults on the Laurent's increases – a pair anonymous phone calls asking for an absent Georges that Anne receives, and more deliveries of drawings with bloody images (from a mouth and from the neck of a chicken) – we again witness a Georges who continually refuses to share what he suspects as the source. After he first lies to Anne about what he knows and is pursuing, it drives her in despair to a tearful meeting with a male confidante, her work colleague with whom she has been involved in a mild flirtation. His warm, affectionate physical reaction, as he hugs her, is witnessed by Pierrot, who sees them through the window of the café where they're meeting. Disturbed, Pierrot disappears for a while, making his parents frantic and leading them to suspect that Majid has kidnapped him. When Pierrot finally shows up, having stayed overnight at a friend's house, he angrily pushes his mother away when she greets him emotionally, accusing her of an illicit romance.

With that latter act, a consequence of Pierrot's role as a witness, the film has elevated his significance as an agent in the drama, which is consummated in the last scene (an analysis of which I will defer for the conclusion). What I suggest at this point is that as the film turns Pierrot into a protagonist, Haneke's drama has begun mimicking the family stories in many of Ingmar Bergman's films. For example, in an analysis of Bergman's film *The Silence* (1963), in which a child, Johan, a preadolescent staying in a hotel with his mother and aunt, becomes the witness through whom the relationship between the sisters and between his mother and a lover is played out, I've put it his way:

While the fraught relationship between the sisters drives much of the film drama, as is the case with much of his film corpus, in Bergman's *The Silence* a child is the film's main witnessing protagonist. The film turns the hotel where most of the film drama takes place into a series of cameras managed by Johan and aimed both within and without. Within the hotel, Johan looks from room to room as the tense relationship between Anna and Ester proceeds; he peers around the empty hotel corridors; he looks into the hotel porter's room, and he peers into other rooms. (SHAPIRO, 2021, p. 101).

“Policing Paris”

By the end of the film, it has become clear that Pierrot is fed up with the neurotic antics of his parents, a mood that registers itself in his temporary disappearance. Panicked about Pierrot’s failure to return home, his parents involve the police, who, acceding to Georges’ suspicion of Majid’s role in his son’s disappearance, accompany Georges to Majid’s apartment, arrest him and his son and hold them temporarily until it becomes clear that they’re not involved in Pierrot’s absence. That form of coercive policing, visited disproportionately on Paris’s immigrant population speaks to their lack of equality before the law (as it’s implemented) by the actual police. However, in contrast to policing as carried out by Paris’s uniformed police personnel is a more abstract form of policing Paris. Gallagher provides a critical intervention into the concept of policing, changing it from its usual reference to the coercive tactics of official, uniformed police forces to a Deleuzian structural perspective, to what Deleuze refers to as contemporary “societies of control” (DELEUZE, 1992). Translating that perspective to illustrate what Haneke’s *Caché* discloses, Gallagher emphasizes the way the urban grid, and its related coding of habitation and movement within it, exercises a generalized form of control. She points out that Haneke maps and provides historical depth for “[...] the plan of Paris’s urban infrastructure... specifically, mapping the privacy of the [Laurent’s] home onto France’s historical and *ongoing* colonial practices” (GALLAGHER, 2011, p. 25). Heeding Gallagher’s translation, I want to emphasize the way the film treats the subjectivities assigned to alternative kinds of bodies, an aspect of policing that Jacques Rancière has famously theorized (in a way that comports well with a film that emphasizes what is willfully hidden). For Rancière (1998, p. 29),

The police [...] is first an order of bodies that defines the allocation of ways of doing, ways of being, and ways of saying, and sees that those bodies are assigned by name to particular place and task; it’s an order of the visible and the sayable that sees that a particular activity is visible and another is not.

A New York City episode that Rosalyn Deutsche reports and analyzes provides an exemplary illustration of Rancière’s conception of policing. A group of neighborhood residents took it upon themselves to police a park in Greenwich Village, locking it in the evening in order to prevent its use as a place to sleep by a homeless group. While a feature in the *New York Times* supported the initiative, bannering it,

“The Public’s Right to Padlock a Public Space,” and The City Parks Department “[...] welcomed [public collaboration,] ‘public’ help in achieving its aim, the eviction of homeless people from the park” (ROBERTS, 1991, p.1), Deutsche has a reaction that accords well with Rancière’s version of policing.

Is it possible to speak with assurance of a public space where social groups, even when physically present, are systematically denied a voice? Does anyone hold a key to public space? What does it mean to relegate groups to a sphere outside the public, to bar admission to the discursive construction of the public, and in this way prohibit participation in the space of public communication? (DEUTSCHE, 1992, p. 38).

Similarly, Majid’s voice went unheeded as he was evicted from the Laurent family farm. The policing in his case “assigned his body by name to a particular place,” an orphanage. A late scene, represented as Georges’ dream, reviews a collaboration involved in his eviction. It’s one between the family and the agents of the orphanage, as Majid’s odyssey from private space to a public institution is forcibly imposed; he’s dragged kicking and screaming by orphanage personnel into their vehicle (one of his earlier noted experiences of coercive automobility).

How Caché Thinks Ethico-Politically

In a critical review of Haneke’s *Caché*, Paul Gilroy, noting Haneke’s oblique, allegorical treatment of the Papon-instigated massacre, refers to it as “[...] an overly casual citation of the 1961 anti-Arab pogrom by Papon’s police,” and concludes, “The dead deserve better than that passing acknowledgement” (GILROY, 2007, p. 233). As an approach to aesthetics, Gilroy’s critique of *Caché* adheres to what Rancière call the “ethical regime of images,” which requires a work to point toward an ethical/political telos. He puts his sense of the film’s failure to do so this way:

Many people involved in building a habitable multicultural Europe will feel there are pressing issues of morality and responsibility involved in raising that history only to reduce it to nothing more than a piece of tragic machinery in the fatal antagonism that undoes Caché’s protagonists (Gilroy, 2007, p. 233).

What Gilroy’s review neglects is the way the film’s protagonists function as “aesthetic subjects” whose experiences and actions transcend the level of the individual and serve to animate the provocation of a whodunit narrative that challenges the viewer

to think about France’s historical responsibility for the 1961 atrocity. *Caché* is a feature film, not a documentary. Its allegorical structure delivers the indictment of the episode that Gilroy wanted to have directly addressed. While Gilroy refers to the “aestheticism” of the film’s “misplaced tactic,” its “whodunit narrative structure,” it is best viewed as a politics of aesthetics that discloses a particular historical atrocity and the persistent violation of France’s egalitarian pretensions. In his *Caché*, as in his other work, Haneke resists moralizing. “The role of the arts,” as the novelist and screenwriter Thornton Wilder (2014, p. 128) puts it (while pondering the undecidability between necessity and contingency that catastrophic events evoke) “is not to answer questions, but to state them fairly”.

Haneke states the questions visually, leaving the viewer to ponder fairness. As Nancy Virtue notes, “He is less interested in representing a consumable version of the historical ‘truth’ of 17 October 1961 than in creating for the viewers a film that requires interpretive work” (VIRTUE, 2011, p. 284-285). To demand that a moral treatise be embedded in *Caché* is to miss the subtle ways that its form encourages critical ethico-political thinking rather than “[...] reassuring or instructing its viewers” (VIRTUE, 2011, p. 284). For example, although we observe a “bifurcated past” (p. 285) in which Georges and Majid occupy vastly different circumstances – the former a successful media personality with an accumulation of material and cultural capital and the latter relatively impoverished in both senses – we also see them achieving an equivalence in two scenes that we should be able to connect, for they are clearly meant to refer to each other (one of the film’s many referential montages). Each scene shows one of them weeping. The first takes place after Georges’ first visit to Majid. The camera returns to Majid’s apartment where he is seen breaking into tears because the sight of Georges has brought back a painful recollection (he had told Georges that catching sight of him on television had made him feel ill). In the second, Georges is shown weeping after returning home, dissolving in tears of anxiety and frustration because his encounters with Majid have not yielded satisfaction with respect to the enigma of the tapes and because of the return of the repressed that they along with the sight of Majid deliver. Despite what divides the two in terms of the enormous differential in their possession of capital, they are shown to be equally human and thus equally vulnerable to despair. Although many of the film’s montage sequences articulate “[...] the various rifts that exist between its characters” (VIRTUE, 2011, p. 285), the weeping scenes respond to a question about what persons who are so divided fundamentally share. The juxtaposition of the scenes suggests that whether possessed of wealth and position or

not, no one is immune from being emotionally ambushed when an encounter with signs unleashes the hauntings of one's past. For both Georges and Majid, their encounters overcome a disjunction between "the calendar of facts" and "the calendar of feelings" (DELEUZE, 2000, p. 20).

The film's allegorical structure makes it evident as I've suggested that Georges' lies about Majid constitute a micro-level evil that gestures toward the France's lies about their colonial and postcolonial atrocities. That micro level registers itself in the two weeping scenes. As Haneke states (in an interview about the film), "[...] there's such a thing as emotional memory for evil deeds" (HANEKE, 2006). As for the macro (allegorical) level, what the film delivers is not an explicitly stated indictment of the excesses of France's colonial and postcolonial violence (much to the disappointment of reviewers who lament its lack of an explicit moral stance). Instead, it is a nuanced treatment of what Haneke refers to as "the primal legacy of colonialism," (HANEKE, 2006) expressed through a cinematic form that looks at the way the past registers itself in psyches that have closed themselves off from that legacy. At the same time, the film's implicit allegorical level creates an uneasy articulation between the characters' "emotional memory" and French history. It opens a thinking space to reflect on a (hi)story that official French cultural policy has sought to silence. Among the significant political questions pertaining to the memory-history relation is about whose memories become recognized as history, an issue that Pierre Nora has addressed extensively.

Identifying that issue in a way that pertains to Haneke's Majid and the like, Nora refers to "[...] a process of interior colonization [which] has affected ethnic minorities, families and groups that until now [the late twentieth century] have possessed reserves of memory but little or no historical capital" (NORA, 1989, p. 7). Nora's analysis of that memory-history divide effectively captures the politico-epistemological dynamic underway in *Cache's* Paris. The Georges-Majid struggle is about memory, which involves a "[...] dialectic of remembering and forgetting, unconscious of its successive deformations, vulnerable to manipulation and appropriation, susceptible to being dormant and periodically revived" (NORA, 1989, p. 8). In contrast, "history," as Nora (1989, p. 8) juxtaposes it, "[...] is the reconstruction, always problematic and incomplete, of what is no longer". And crucially with regard to what Haneke's film discloses, official history constitutes a "conquest and eradication of memory;" (p. 8). "[I]t's true mission," as Nora (1989, p. 9) puts it, "is to suppress and destroy it".

In response to that suppression, Haneke’s video camera, in particular the anonymous surveillance long takes, inter-articulate memory with history to provide a cinematically delivered combination of counter-memory and counter-history. To situate the implications of the agency of Haneke’s camera we can heed what Nora (1989, p. 9) refers to as “[...] the most tangible sign of the split between history and memory,” which has been “[...] the emergence of a history of history [...] in France [...] a historiographical consciousness”. That historiographic consciousness takes the form of what Michel Foucault famously calls counterhistory. Referring in one of his lectures to a history of race struggle as a counterhistory to the one preferred by the modern state, a consensual, self-congratulatory sovereignty-oriented history, he states:

Not only does counterhistory break up the unity of the sovereign law that imposes obligations, it also breaks up the continuity of glory [...] it reveals the light – the famous dazzling effect of power...a divisive light that illuminates one side of the social body but leaves the other side in shadow or casts it into darkness. And [a] [...] counterhistory [...] will of course speak from the side [...] of those [...] who now find themselves [...] in darkness and silence. (FOUCAULT, 2003, p. 70).

Foucault’s light/shadow imagery provides a propitious language for translating (what Andrei Bazin (1971) calls) “image facts” that Haneke’s camera illuminates. As it shines its light on the George-Majid relationship, it draws a shameful episode of French history out of the France’s officially and popularly imposed shadow. Cinema’s suitability for a counter historical sensibility is effectively demonstrated in Gilles Deleuze’s work on cinema’s time image, a direct image of time in which rather than basing temporality on the movement of characters (an indirect time image), time is a function of the director’s sequence of shots. Interpreting the time image’s functioning in a “counter-historical film” through Deleuze’s cinema analysis, Marcia Landy (2015, p. 2) writes, “Refusing to monumentalize, reinforce national identity, and elevate heroic action, [the] counter-historical film destabilizes revered styles of militarism and patriotism derived from popular history, photography, and cinema”.

I want to suggest, by way of confronting the enigma of the tapes and images, that Haneke’s *Caché* both uses and thematizes time. Dominated by time rather than movement images, the film lends agency to time. “Sculpting in time,” Haneke directs his surveillance videos (with their accompanying drawings) and assembles other video filmed scenes in a way that lends agency to a counter-historical temporality. The

camera evokes and shows obscured biographical memories that articulate with an obscured historical event. As exemplary historiographic metafiction, *Caché* makes use of cinematic flashbacks that insinuate the past in the present while it *hides* a compelling ethico-political challenge to France's egalitarian pretensions within a whodunit. Rather than providing a banal moral lesson, the film provokes the viewer to find that challenge. And importantly, its ethico-political sensibility gestures toward a future as well. An aspect to which I turn in the next section.

Liberty, Equality, Fraternity

As I suggested, Georges and Anne's son Pierrot ultimately becomes a major protagonist. By the end of the film, he is joined in that role by Majid's unnamed son (Walid Afkir), whose presence, while confronting Georges in his workplace, helps to move the film narrative from a drama involving two families to a collective national drama. However, what is immediately evident as the conversation begins is how Majid's son has inherited his father's emotional maturity - "in stark contrast with Georges' emotional immaturity," as Joy Schaefer (2017, p. 60) observes. As she points out, during his first conversation with Georges, after Majid says, "Why do you talk as if we're strangers," we see that "Majid has analyzed their *fraternal* affective economy" (my emphasis). He recognizes the combination of cultivation and aggressiveness of an assertive white bourgeois male. However, because Georges is unreflectively certain about his accusations, Majid's "[...] words are wasted on the deaf ears of Georges (and allegorically, the French government)" (SCHAEFER, 2017, p. 60), Majid ultimately selects a more dramatic statement, summoning Georges and then slitting his own throat in front of him, after saying, "I wanted you to be present for this." Majid's last words imply that he wanted Georges to be both present for the end of a life he has ruined - a decisive sundering of a relationship that *could have been fraternal* - and present to himself, i.e., finally confronting what he has been responsible for destroying (and allegorically confronting what France has been responsible for).

Paradoxically the bloody end of Majid, which actualizes the virtuality of the drawing of a head Georges received with blood flowing from its mouth, is carried out with remarkable *sang froid*. When Majid's son visits Georges in his workplace, he maintains the same *sang froid*, which contrasts with his agitated interlocutor. After he has chided Georges for having deprived his father of an education, an irritable and defensive Georges, still masking his anxiety with the outward sense of certainty about his conduct (which he has maintained with his "friends, colleagues and his wife"), asks if he's expected to apologize. To that Majid's son replies, "to whom would you

apologize, me?" To situate the sense of that reply I want to report an analogous situation in the U. S., reported by the Associated Press on August 6, 2005.

SAN FRANCISCO -- Giants [baseball] manager Felipe Alou called a one-week suspension given to a radio host for making racial remarks about the team's Latino players "a slap on the hand" and said he wouldn't accept an apology from Larry Krueger. "He came to apologize to me? You have to be kidding me," Alou said Saturday, one day after the suspension...Alou said he wasn't in position to accept an apology on behalf of the "hundreds of millions" of people offended earlier this week when Krueger went on the Giants' flagship station, KNBR, and went off about the struggling club and its "brain-dead Caribbean hitters hacking at slop nightly" (ALOU..., 2005).

Majid's son's similar question gestures toward the film's allegorical level. He is implying that he is in no position to accept an apology for the treatment not only of his father but also of millions of immigrants. It becomes evident that just as Georges and Majid are aesthetic subjects whose roles transcend the sundering of their personal potential brotherhood, so are their sons. As the last scene approaches, we observe how through them, the next generation, the film gestures toward a restoration of a fraternal bond.

The film ends with a scene in front of Pierrot's school. As the credits are run the viewer can catch a glimpse of the two son's Georges' and Majid's standing amiably side-by-side (posed paratactically with neither subordinate to other). There's a barely audible conversation in the background. A female voice says, "*Elle est ou?*" to which a reply is given by a girl wearing a purple backpack, "*Elle nique ton père*" (she fucking your dad). That remark has two resonances. First, as an obscenity, it accords with Haneke's challenge to the bourgeois habitus: "[...] in my definition," he says, "anything that could be termed obscene departs from the bourgeois norm. Whether concerned with sexuality of violence or another taboo issue, anything that breaks with the norm is obscene" (SHARRETT, 2003, p. 31). Second, and crucial to the last part of Haneke's "sculpting in time," it's a gesture toward a future carried out by the next generation. I suggest that rather than referring to a sexual encounter, the remark, "fucking your dad," is meant to say "fuck the dad"; he and his generation are unable to transcend their xenophobia and live up to France's republican motto, *Liberté, égalité, fraternité*. As the film closes, Haneke's sculpting in time is therefore reflected in imagery that articulates a grammatical shift, the subjunctive (fraternity as something

that might yet be) and the future anterior (fraternity as an impulse that always will have been). A Rancièrè assertion provides a fitting conclusion. “Fraternal community is won,” he suggests, “in the combat against the paternal community [...] By destroying the portrayal of the father [the burden of much of the film narrative], which is at the heart of the representative system, it opens the future of a fraternal humanity” (RANCIÈRE, 2004, p. 159).

■ Michael J. Shapiro é Professor na University of Hawai‘i, Manoa.
E-mail: shapiro@hawaii.edu.

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