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Abstract (185 words):

This article considers the figure of Majid in Michael Haneke’s *Caché* (2005) and the cinematic structures employed that influence both the spectator’s and the other protagonists’ ability to place his life within the sphere of the visible and the grievable. The formal tropes that Haneke employs emphasize Majid’s exclusion and his impenetrability, as well as generating a persistent anxiety in the spectator around meaning and signification in the film. Drawing on Judith Butler’s work on grievability and Jacques Ranicère’s thinking of visibility and the distribution of the sensible, this article argues that Haneke deliberately constructs a consistent tension between the seen and the unseen of representation, generating an anxious, uncertain rhythm which is violently ruptured by Majid’s suicide. This disturbing scene shatters the familiar frames and cadences that have thus far constituted the diegetic space of *Caché*, imposing a form of brutal visibility upon both Georges and the spectator. Ultimately, this article suggests that this scene forces the spectator into an unavoidable, albeit uncomfortable, form of political recognition, a recognition which points towards wider socio-political exclusions of marginal populations in twentieth and twenty-first century France.

Judith Butler, writing of the process of public mourning, states: ‘if there were to be an obituary, there would have been a life, a life worth noting, a life worth valuing and preserving, a life that qualifies for recognition’.[1] For Butler, it is not adequate to simply state that a life has been lost and therefore it can be grieved; it must be avowed as a human loss in a public, material, and visible realm. To be mournable is effectively to be humanized by another; to be unmournable is to be rendered as other. Butler’s theory also points towards the fact that unrecognized lost lives have already been inscribed in a framework of ungrievability. It is not just that the workings of discourse engender violence, but also that material violence necessitates and is a result of these omissions. Some lives are marked as not fully human, not fully visible or grievable, even before they are lost; as Butler writes, it is ‘not just that a death is poorly marked, but that it is unmarkable’.[1]

The human loss that structures the entire narrative of *Caché* is unmarked, invisible and unrecognized: Majid’s Algerian parents travelled to Paris to participate in the 17th October 1961 demonstrations in Paris, and never returned. As the central French protagonist Georges notes, Majid’s parents simply disappeared and when Georges’ father goes to search for them, he is summarily dismissed, told that he should be grateful to be rid of a couple of *bougnoules* (a racist term designating a person of Arab or North African origin). Public mourning was almost completely prohibited in the aftermath of the massacre, and the suppression and media censorship of representations of this event has been well documented, as has the trauma of survivors and family members in the face of a hostile society.[2]

Indeed, as Jacques Rancière writes, it may have been the very visibility of Algerians into public space that lead to the to violent reprisals and death, and the retreat into silence that followed the massacre. Writing about the October 1961 massacre specifically and political protests more generally, he notes:

> Une manifestation est politique non parce qu'elle a tel lieu et porte sur tel objet mais parce que sa forme est celle d'un affrontement entre deux partages du sensible […] La manifestation politique est ainsi toujours ponctuelle et ses sujets toujours précaires.[3]

The precariousness of the Algerian subjects who took part in the 17th October 1961 march was brutally underscored by the violence of the repression, and Rancière further suggests that the political protest represents not only a clash between two opposing groups or even ideologies, but more fundamentally, between divergent modes of regulating what is visible, what he calls the 'distribution of the sensible': 'on appellera partage du sensible la loi généralement implicite qui définit les formes de l'avoir-part en définissant d'abord les modes perceptifs dans lesquels ils s'inscrivent'.[4] The distribution of the sensible regulates what can be seen and not seen in public space, by prescribing what individuals and groups are visible, audible and participate in political life.

From the outset of *Caché*, Majid is a shadowy figure, situated beyond the posited bourgeois and normative frameworks of identification that connect the other characters and Haneke's implied middle-class spectator.[5] Georges is consistently linked to spatial and cultural tropes that accord with dominant conceptions of bourgeois Parisian life and the diegetic space that Haneke constructs visually underscores the cultural differentiation of Majid and Georges. This distinction is first of all inscribed in the geographical positioning and symbolic valences of Majid's apartment in relation to Georges' home. While Georges' house is located in the *13ème arrondissment*, a relatively affluent area, Majid lives almost 14kms away, on the outside of the *péripherique*, the ring road that was constructed by Maurice Papon, the *Préfet de police* in charge at the time of the 17th October 1961 massacre. Majid's physical distance from the centre of Paris, the centre that Georges inhabits so comfortably, is also reflected in the names of the streets where they live. As Elizabeth Ezra and Jane Sillars have noted, the camera that captures Georges' home is placed on Rue des Iris, Iris being a Goddess who carries message to the human plane from the non-human, thus already evoking the spectral aspect of the tapes, a quasi-divine association that positions Majid as an other worldly, opaque figure.[6] Moreover, while Majid lives on the communist and left-wing inspired Avenue Lenine, the road that Georges actually lives on is Rue Brillat-Savarin, Brillat-Savarin being an 18th century connoisseur of cheese who wrote a book entitled *Physiologie du gout* (The Physiology of Taste) thus linking Georges to an fundamentally French lineage of gastronomy, manners and good taste.

This positing of Georges as a classically French bourgeois figure is intentional, and represents another instance of Haneke's frequent treatment of manners and mores of the upper middle class family.[7] Georges' first suspicions in relation to the sender of the tapes are that one of his son's friends, 'un de ces abrutis […] veut se moquer des parents bobos de leur pote'. 'Bobo', or 'bourgeois bohémian', suggests both wealth as well as a cultural and artistic lifestyle, an idea that is reinforced by the bookshelves that form the backdrop to many domestic scenes in the film, as well as the tasteful and muted décor, its browns, creams and beiges blending with the monochrome tones of the family's clothing. In this first scene, the family sit down to a classically French supper, with delicately poured, moderately sized glasses of wine. Yet this meal is strangely lacking in emotional depth; the conversation seems stilted, excessively formal for a casual family gathering. They speak almost in monosyllables, and the only exchange is a cold interrogation of

Pierrot's tardiness. Ezra and Sillars have further commented upon an emotional coldness in the Laurent home, with reference to the dinner party scene, noting that 'that which does not fit in, or which causes discomfort – vulnerability, need, difference – is banished from "polite" (and political) society'.[8] In this sequence, the sick woman the Laurent's friends mention, who has separated from her partner and thus does not fit in to the neat heteronormative couplings that characterize this scene, incites an abrupt change in conversation. When the doorbell rings, this noise shatters the constructed conviviality of the scene, referencing an unknown and menacing external force.

The scene with Georges and his mother in his childhood home further illustrates the French characters discomfort with vulnerability and difficult emotional interactions. His mother's health has deteriorated, and Georges seems surprised by this, suggesting his contact with her is minimal. She asks him for information about Anne and Pierrot, and himself, and his answers are evasive and sparse: 'Je sais vraiment pas quoi te dire, on se voit rarement […] Je vais bien, Anne va bien, Pierrot va bien. Pour autant que je puisse en juger en tout cas'. Georges seems to just about maintain self-control in this scene, and that night he dreams of Majid beheading the cockerel, suggesting that even if he manages to maintain a calm exterior, violent images return in the form of nightmares. As Martine Beugnet remarks, Georges' dreams carry 'the depth of field and visual lyricism that is denied to the rest of the film'.[9] The formal structuring of the dream sequence, with its chiaroscuro lighting, mobile tracking, and horror genre aesthetics, mirrors a depth of thematic signification, just as the long shots, long takes, and excessively balanced framings of the rest of the diegesis echo Georges' emotional estrangement and Haneke's deliberate distancing of the spectator from the affective import of the action.

Haneke cites this excessive disaffection in Georges, asking ‘est-ce que cette froideur vient de tout ce qu’on a mis sous le tapis?’.[10] He thus explicitly connects the hidden and the invisible to Georges’ psychological state. Significantly, the two locations that incite a partial or total loss of control in Georges, his family home in the country and Majid’s apartment in the suburbs, are both removed from the comfortable centre of his existence in the heart of Paris. In contrast to the cavernous stillness and dispassionate colour scheme of the Laurent home, Majid’s apartment is a small but brightly lit space, cluttered with a variety of coloured objects. The groomed and narrow residential streets of Georges’ home give way to the wide concrete avenues and boulevards of peripheral Paris, ceding to the dark and ominous hallway that leads to Majid’s studio. Indeed, once the action is removed from the centre, from Georges’ terrain as it were, the constraints of his rigidly self-possessed world seem to collapse, and he threatens Majid with physical violence: ‘c’est étrange, hien? Je ne me suis pas battu une seule fois depuis que je suis adulte, je trouve ça repugnant. Et là, je...’.

This rupture in Georges’ civility recalls colonial fears of the collapse of civilisation in the colonies, revealed in texts like Gide’s *L’immoraliste* (1902) and Feydeau’s *Alger: Etude* (1962).[11] Critics have remarked upon the panoply of colonial stereotypes alluded to by Haneke, a schematic that Paul Gilroy reads as deeply troubling, a perspective which will be addressed later in the discussion of Majid’s death. Max Silverman has pointed out that there a startling echoes between Fanon’s description in *Les Damnés de la terre* (1961) of the racist stereotypes that the French project onto Arabs and the depiction of Majid in this film, including knives, suicide and throat-slitting. As Silverman notes, ‘uncannily, the images of the Algerian which returns to haunt Georges’ mind is composed of the same elements’.[12] Indeed, Georges’ semi-conscious, childhood cognizance of the normative prejudices of his culture (Arabs are violent and carry infection) allows him to manipulate his domestic situation and have Majid removed. Majid's suicide also echoes the *égorgeurs*, FLN soldiers who cut the throats of dissenting Algerians, recorded in the book of the same title by Benoît Rey (1961).[13] Throat cutting is also associated in a French imaginary of North Africans with the Islamic practice of cutting the throats of sheep and goats to produce halal meat. Ranjanna Khanna reiterates this link to animality, associating Majid's death with the death of the cockerel: 'the animal becomes the trace of the non-human and the foreigner […] the inhuman, as the trace of the animal, is dropped into the film again and again'.[14]

The social and cultural frameworks within which Majid and Georges are placed function according to fairly conventional evocations of what might be termed a *français de souche* and a French-Algerian. Geographical positioning in relation to a centre, the *mise-en-scène* of living space, and the evocation of both specifically Algerian stereotyping as well as the more generalized colonial prejudicial tropes of animality and primitivism all suggest an awareness of prevalent normative imaginaries. These tropes of animality and primitivism resonate with Butler's conception of how dominant national discourses can place certain lives beyond normative conceptions of the human. She specifically describes the framing of Arabs in contemporary mediatized discourse as barbaric, primitive, or pre-modern:

> To what extent have Arab peoples, predominantly practitioners of Islam, fallen outside the "human" as it has been naturalized in its "Western" mold by the contemporary workings of humanism? […] How do our cultural frames for thinking about the human set limits to the kinds of losses we can avow as loss?[15]

According to Butler, these frames serve to demarcate the field of the visible, a notion that accords with Rancière's distribution of the sensible as a regime of perception that regulates the social and political visibility of vulnerable or marginalized individuals. The frame, for Butler, has a dual function, constraining what may be seen, while simultaneously discarding what remains outside of the frame to the domain of the inadmissible, the invisible, and the ungrievable. In this sense, the frame not only distinguishes the inside from the outside, but it also creates the inside, designating a norm, what is perceived as ‘real’: ‘the represented image thereby signifies its admissibility into the domain of representability, and thus at the same time signifies the delimiting function of the frame – even as, or precisely because, it does not represent it’.[16]

Butler elaborates this conception of the frame, as a structure that confirms a norm that a dominant power wishes to propagate, in relation to war photographs. However, by citing the images taken by American soldiers of the torture of Iraqis in Abu Ghraib she points to another aspect of the frame, which through its formal operation, draws our attention precisely to what it excludes: ‘the photograph neither tortures nor redeems, but can be instrumentalized in radically different directions, depending on how it is discursively framed and through what form of media presentation it is displayed’.[17] The social, political and cultural context in which an image is received alters how it is interpreted and understood. The soldiers who took these horrific photographs were living in a framework context where the humiliation and debasement of Iraqi prisoners was perceived as ‘normal’. However, when the images were distributed around the world, outside of this wartime setting, their meaning was altered radically, becoming evidence of the dehumanizing practices of the American military.

In a similar sense, the aesthetic and narrative framework of the rest of the film contextualizes the spectator’s apprehension of Majid’s suicide. The overarching narrative of the story centres on Georges, and is aesthetically composed by the long takes, long shots, and high definition images that characterize the film. However, the dream sequences, and most particularly the scene depicting Majid's suicide, disrupt not only the thematic and political segregations between Majid and Georges, but also fracture the aesthetic predictability of the rest of the diegesis. In line with Butler's concept of the frame as a structure that both represents and excludes, Haneke's aesthetics play on the ambiguous functioning of the visual field, and what the image omits in *Caché* can be just as relevant as what it shows. The opening shot establishes a consistent rapport with what remains outside of the visual frame: when Anne and Georges' disembodied voices eventually appear on the soundtrack, the first words they speak are 'Alors?...Rien'.[18] Indeed, the videotapes that torment Georges effectively capture very little: his present day home, his childhood home. Even the police refuse to act upon the apparent menace of the tapes, and Georges notes 'tant qu'il met pas le feu à la baraque […] tout va pour le mieux'. The footage that we see of Georges' home might in fact be CCTV footage, banal surveillance of the most quotidian kind, that we either take for granted or assume is there for our own protection. Butler, explicitly breaking from Susan Sontag's early work on photography,[19] suggests that photographs are not merely selective; they are interpretations of the past, inscribing a particular and political vision within their borders. In a similar sense, the personal and discursive context in which the videotapes are received, that is, Georges' guilt about his past actions and the risk they pose to his self-image, create the menace.

The videotapes and the drawings arrive as unwelcome intrusions of an external threat that progressively encroaches upon the carefully constructed centre of Georges' life. It is particularly pertinent that the method chosen to torment a television star is video surveillance and visual images. *Caché* encodes and frames multiple registers of sight and vision: we watch Georges watching himself; Anne and their friends meet to view his show, as do his aunt and mother; we discover that he has many captive fans; Majid first encounters him through the medium of television. The crucial difference between these 'watchings' is the control that Georges exerts over his image; while he personally edits and reconfigures his own images for his television show, the videotapes that are delivered to his home disrupt the frames through which he wishes to perceive his life. He cannot alter or manipulate their content, although he does attempt to conceal their significance from his wife. Georges' loss may be conceived as a loss of a scopic privilege, the right to look but not necessarily be looked at, unless the image viewed is a controlled projection.

Yet Georges also suffers from the loss of a spatial privilege. While Georges seems oblivious to his own often violent and aggressive intrusions into Majid's home, he fully resents any incursion into his own domain, whether this is through the tapes or Majid's son arriving at his workplace. This desire for spatial dominance can be linked to France's actions as a colonizing power. While it was (and perhaps still is) perceived as acceptable for Western nations to send armies into foreign countries, the migration of individuals from these lands into European territories is perceived as an unwelcome intrusion, an invasion. As Butler notes in relation to the United States that 9/11 instituted 'the loss of the prerogative, only and always, to be the one who transgresses the sovereign boundaries of other states, but never be in the position of having one's own boundaries transgressed'.[20]

The carefully marked thematic and cultural distinctions between the city spaces that Georges and Majid inhabit are fractured by the videotapes and drawings, Georges visits to Majid's apartment and finally the arrival of Majid's son in Georges' workplace, and this rupture takes place both on the level of the narrative and in the formal structure of the film itself. The frame of Georges' life, the frame that excludes Majid and the past and that keeps Georges safely ensconced in his world of dinner parties and literary reviews, fragments slowly in Haneke's representation through a breaking of the narrative and visual consistency to which both Georges and the implied spectator have become accustomed. The opening scene of the film establishes the diegetic camera itself as an unreliable image source within the context of the film: the tape that has been made of Georges' house does not correspond to any workable angle, because he walked straight past the point where the tape should have been taken from, and did not see it. In this case, we are presented with both a failure to see on Georges' part, and a fundamental ambiguity about what has been seen. From the outset Haneke emphasizes impossible spaces of enunciation: the tape exists, but how or why remains uncertain.

These videotapes function as an intermediary element in all interactions between Majid and Georges, and yet the spectator's attention is consistently drawn to what the tapes, and the diegetic camera itself, may be omitting. As previously mentioned, the camera that captures Georges' house is positioned in an impossible angle; yet how the house was consequently filmed remains uncertain. Similarly, the tape that depicts Georges' childhood home finally allows him to articulate a link between the tapes and Majid; yet how Majid, portrayed as both financially and psychologically confined to his apartment in Paris, might have travelled to the South of France to make the tape is again unarticulated. Majid's first adult encounter with Georges is similarly mediated through the screen, this time through Georges' literary review show. But as the scene depicting Georges' editing of this program demonstrates, one again this is not a complete or coherent picture: the editing process selects and omits, leaving behind an unsaid and an unseen, outside of the diegetic frame.

Although interpretative failure takes its most obvious form in Georges' persistent refusal to confront the past with Majid, we see that within the broader thematic and aesthetic framework of the film, characters interpret each other's actions and words in erroneous and conflicting ways and the viewer is consistently implicated in the ambiguity of these potential misapprehensions. When her son accuses her of having an affair with her boss Pierre, Anne flatly denies it. However, the delicate kiss that Pierre has planted on the inside of her wrist, while comforting her about Georges' lies, remains an ambiguous gesture that strongly indicates infidelity, but does not prove it. As spectators, we may share her son's suspicions, but we are still situated in a similar position of uncertainty: we have seen something, but we cannot be sure how to interpret what we have seen.

The conflict between the 'said' and the 'seen' is further emphasized by the questionable 'evidence' of the tapes, that bluntly contradicts Georges' accounts to Anne of his transactions with Majid. Not only do the tapes reveal Georges' words to be false, but they also throw into question the narrative he has constructed of his life, undermining the self-image that he projects. We hear him telling his boss that the sender of these tapes is threatening him, and yet the visual evidence of the tapes rather poses him as the menacing figure. There is further confusion between the account Georges gives to Anne of his role in Majid's life, and those images that occur in his nightmares, that may be metaphorical invention (that Majid threatened him with an axe and was coughing blood) and those aspects of his nightmares that may, essentially, function as flashbacks (Majid did behead the rooster and he was taken away from the family home). The viewer is left in a state of interpretative anxiety as to the status of these images, not only because Georges has proved himself to be an unreliable witness, concealing or only partially revealing what he has seen, but also that the camera itself, through the aforementioned slippages, has proved deceptive and untrustworthy. The uncertainty about what is represented in the filmed tapes and what constitutes the camera of the director are disconcerting for the viewer, and as Libby Saxton points out, the fact that the entirety of the film is shot in high definition digital with many static shots obscures the question of who, exactly, is filming.[21]

Indeed, Haneke appears to be goading the viewer, inciting us to see what characters fail to apprehend. The dispute in the street between Georges, who steps out into the road, and the young male cyclist who almost knocks him down, is essentially a conflict about who was not looking. Anne manages to diffuse the situation by suggesting that they were both wrong because they both 'didn't look'. The publicity posters for the cinematic release of *Caché* use a still from this scene, with the Parisian backdrop of the sequence and the black cyclist edited out, replaced with a vacuum of hazy darkness. This points to the significance of this apparently minor incident, and its centrality to the themes of vision and seeing explored by the film. In the poster, Georges' reaching hand assumes the quality of a searching, uncertain, and fearful hesitancy, while in the narrative of the film, this is a gesture of aggression. The ambiguity of gestural signification points towards Haneke's belief that fear of, and aggression towards, a perceived outsider go hand in hand: Georges' anger again arises from the desire to control and appropriate a space that he believes he possesses, or has a greater right to possess. The incident further indicates an underlying distinction between forms of vision: it is not only a question of looking, but also of seeing, of a bodily perception that leads to cognitive understanding. Georges can look at the tapes as much as he wants, but that does not mean that he will see their meaning. This representational abstruseness, and the distinctions drawn between different forms of vision and meaning, indicates that Haneke is deliberately perplexing the viewer with a filmic form that refuses to infer knowledge of those who, like Majid, exist outside of normative frameworks.

The final scene in particular establishes visual ambiguity as a key element of the diegesis, and as Haneke notes, the scene delighted and frustrated spectators in equal measure.[22] The scene, an extended long take captured with a still lens depicts the after school gatherings of the *collegians* at Pierrot's school. In the left-hand corner of the frame, the figures of Pierrot and Majid's son converse, with relative ease and for a brief amount of time. Haneke notes that many viewers do not see the exchange at all, suggesting that it is an entirely contingent event whose significance to the story as a whole remains questionable. However, for the spectator who spots this interchange, several questions emerge: have the children been accomplices all along, tormenting Georges for unspecified reasons? Is Majid's son plotting to use Pierrot as an instrument of revenge against Georges, or can their interaction be read as a symbol of a new generation of intercultural possibility and understanding? The spectator is left with a frustrated desire to know 'the ending', and yet with the vague sense that this is a story that cannot have any concrete completion. The final scene turns the thrust towards vision, as both sight and comprehension, which has been tormenting Georges, back onto the viewer: have we seen this exchange, and if so, how do we interpret it?

This interpretive anxiety resonates with the fundamental uncertainty regarding inference and interpretation that surfaces and resurfaces consistently throughout *Caché*. The fluctuations between the diegesis, dreams, and videotapes create what Beugnet calls 'simultaneous presents that overlap in an uncanny fashion',[23] blocking concrete interpretation of the plot. Viewed alongside Rancière's conception of the distribution of the sensible, the techniques Hankeke employs are fundamentally engaged in the political work of fiction, as a deployment of aesthetics which disrupts dominant modes of regulating what, and who, can be seen, heard, and understood in public space:

> La fiction […] change les modes de présentation sensible et les formes d'énonciation en changeant les cadres, les échelles ou les rythmes, en construisant des rapports nouveaux entre l'apparence et le réalité, le singulier et le commun, le visible et sa signification.[24]

The deliberate evocation of aesthetic opacity is not merely a question of plot or story, but rather a varying of textures, rhythms, and frames that uses aesthetic disruption to re-organize our perception of the material world. The uncertain frontiers of appearance and reality, the lack of concordance between what is seen and witnessed and how it might be interpreted, and most especially, the relation of the individual to a broader social, and indeed historical, spaces constitute the central themes of *Caché*. The relationship between Georges and Majid hinges on these very characteristics: the impossibility of identifying Majid as the author of the tapes, although due to his unique access to this shared childhood memory his involvement appears inescapable; Georges' social capital contrasted with Majid's comparative economic exclusion, this dynamic serving as a microcosm of the sorry history of Franco-Algerian relations; and finally, the impossibility of interpreting the meaning of the tapes, and ultimately, of understanding the most brutally visual sequence of the entire film, Majid's suicide.

Seeing in *Caché* is not only dependant on what is inside the frame or even awareness of what may be beyond it, but also on knowing how to look, and how to interpret what has been seen. For Butler, this is fundamentally related to the question of grievability; the capacity to recognise the suffering of others and specifically those others ‘who seem to test our sense of belonging or defy available norms of likeness’.[25] In this context, I suggest that, following the analysis above of both norms and their structuring visual frameworks, the character of Majid proposes just such a test, to both Georges and the spectator. He seems to defy our expectations and presuppositions in his benign politeness, the tears he cries on the videotape that is sent to Anne, and his apparently truthful insistence that he is not responsible for the tapes. Majid has been presented as bound by ‘those exclusionary norms by which fields of recognisability are constituted’[26] and the act that concretizes this conception is his suicide. If grievability is dependant on the discourses and frameworks that interact to produce or inhibit the recognition of the human, of a life as a life, Majid’s suicide elicits complex moral responses. In a film about ‘watching and waiting and then not seeing what is right in front of you’,[27] Majid’s suicide is made conspicuous by its violent and unequivocal visibility.

For Haneke, the scene depicting Majid’s suicide is the most aesthetically significant moment of the entire film: ‘this is the most important shot of the film: if the suicide scene is not plausible then the entire film is spoiled […] A static and fast-paced, terribly realist shot’.[28] This notion of realism underscores the brutal visibility of the sequence: it is impossible not to see, both literally and intellectually. For both Georges and the viewer, it represents the culmination of a series of pervasive moments of haunting and hinting. These moments are echoed visually in the composition of the scene: the vertical gash of blood on the wall, the open mouth, the throat slitting. It constitutes a moment of narrative rupture, where the full significance of the uncanny haunting of the drawings, the cassettes, and Georges’ dream are suddenly and shockingly emblazoned in blood on the screen. Although as spectators we are at a representational remove from this traumatic scene, it is the first, and only, moment of the film when the Majid's trauma is unmediated by the *mise-en-abyme* of another intra-diegetic modes of representation, be it manual, technological or psychological. The absence of an intermediary frame separates the suicide scene from these potentially disturbing elements: the videotapes, the drawing and the dreams.[29]

A similar dynamic is at stake for Georges; all potential buffers have been definitively removed. When faced with so brutal a visual spectacle, he can no longer retreat into words: the lies he tells his wife, his verbose dinner parties, his literary talk show. His choice of escape following Majid's death is the moving image, the cinema, as he retreats from raw vision to the comfort of artificial spectacle. Similarly, Haneke's deployment of filmic rhythm breaks a kind of pact between the spectator and the film, between the seen and the unseen of representation. Until the moment of Majid's death, Haneke has teased the viewer with an irregular narrative pattern that poses minor, although disturbing, threats (such as the drawings, Georges' dreams or Pierrot's disappearance) which are directly alleviated by the return to the slow, banal, if tense pulsations of everyday life. This ebb and flow, between the triteness of bourgeois quotidian existence and the eruptions of violence, trauma and death into this world, is characteristic of Haneke's cinema, and often functions as trope to highlight how European middle-class characters exclude the violent, the difficult, and the different. As spectators, we have been conditioned to believe that each posited, real peril will ultimately be anti-climactic, and we can retreat once again into the quotidian, where the danger hovers on the margins, but remains unseen. The representational rupture that Majid's death constitutes within the context of the film's narrative also reflects a shattering of familiarity and expectation; his act evokes for both Georges and the spectator a realm of unpredictable and violent actions, where the buffers of civilisation no longer suffice to repel to unacceptable, the horrible and the inexplicable.

As spectators, we may be immediately repelled by the spectacle of self-violence, the extreme and brutal nature of Majid's action, yet simultaneously we are unable to divert our gaze, and sit, transfixed, just as Georges remains perfectly still, watching Majid's dying body on the floor. The considered and detailed *mise-en-scène* of the scene echoes not only the socio-cultural stereotypes previously mentioned (throat-slitting, for example) but also previous visual and narrative strands within the film, drawing our attention to the scene's formal construction. As Haneke himself has pointed out in relation to representations of violence, 'the form of representation determines the effect of its content'.[30] This emphasis on the formal construction of the image, its framing, refers in this case not only to the construction of the scene itself, but also to its context within the film, constituting as it does a sharp break in the narrative's otherwise steady rhythm of suspense.

The deployment of a shock aesthetic that punctures filmic rhythm relates to Haneke's desire to create what he calls a 'productive unease' a 'guiltless complicity'[31] in the spectator, as opposed to a passive consumption of images. Although Majid's act may not exactly be characterised as inexplicable, it certainly appears to be a distorted or exaggerated reaction to the reality of the events that touch his life, as they have been portrayed. His death fractures the constructed reality of the film, and from this point onwards the question of who has authored the tapes and the drawings becomes increasingly diminished in importance, and ultimately remains unsolved. Thus, the element of extremity in Majid's action serves to highlight a qualitative truth about the uncertainty of a posited reality, and of our presuppositions.

Yet the auto-destruction of a figure who has remained largely mysterious to the spectator and who represents an economically and socially marginalized immigrant population raises important questions about the political and ethical import of the scene. As previously mentioned, Paul Gilroy has read the adoption of a colonial imaginary in *Caché*, the referencing of tropes of barbarism and primitivism, as profoundly problematic, and his discomfort with these motifs centres on Majid's suicide. In a necessary and potent critique of the film, he writes that 'getting the Arabs to do away with themselves is a timely fantasy in the context of today's pervasive Islamophobia […] Majid's suicide becomes in effect an exclusively aesthetic event'.[32] However, Ranciere's thinking of the distribution of the sensible and Butler's work on the frame suggest that a clear division between political and aesthetic visibility is no longer tenable. Rancière insists that art and politics use the same sensory mechanisms to disrupt dominant forms of perception. Indeed, I suggest that Majid's suicide can be read in Rancière's terms as an instigation of *dissensus*, as a challenge to dominant distributions of the sensible and an attempt to bring visibility to excluded populations or individuals:

> Ce que j'entends par dissensus n'est pas le conflit des idées ou des sentiments. C'est le conflit de plusiers regimes de sensorilaité. C'est par là que l'art, dans le regime de la separation esthétique, se trouve toucher à la politique.

While Gilroy certainly points to a problematic aspect of *Caché*, citing a kind of 'guilty pleasure'[33] viewers might feel when confronted with Majid's death, I want to suggest that the revulsion, disquiet or guilt the spectator feels may apply not only to the horror of Majid's action or a latent Islamophobia, but also to our realization of the extent to which we have underestimated and misunderstood his character.

This scene makes us aware as spectators of our own presumptions about victimizer and victimized. As Butler writes, ‘when a frame breaks with itself […] a taken-for-granted reality is called into question’.[34] Once Majid is introduced into the narrative, it is almost impossible not to assume that either he or his son is creator of the tapes, despite Haneke’s frequent insistence through the switches between diegetic and extra-diegetic filmic space upon the unreliability of the narrative he appears to be constructing. Majid’s suicide shocks us into the realization that the rather easy terrorized/terrorist dialectic that we had been all too willing to construct no longer holds. Indeed, the theatricality, the associations with animality, primitivism and contemporary tropes relating the Muslim and the immigrant that Haneke plays on in this scene may serve to deepen our sense of discomfort in our previous assumptions regarding their guilt. Indeed, one of the primary aims of Haneke’s cinema of violence is to force spectator recognition of their own assumptions and presuppositions in the face of represented violence. He writes, ‘the question […] is not: “How do I show violence?” but rather: “How do I show the viewer his own position vis-à-vis violence and its portrayal?’.[35]

Majid’s death shocks the viewer, and this strategically elicited reaction that is not easy to achieve in an audio-visual affective and cultural age which is saturated with images of extreme violence. Butler, referring to Susan Sontag’s work on photography, notes the ‘shock factor’ of contemporary media images, and questions the extent to which shock itself has become a kind of cliché, due to our persistent exposure in the media to carefully curated images of war and violence. Butler asks how we might maintain a sense of moral indignation in the face of such images, and how that sense of outrage might be translated into action. For Sontag, this is far from evident: the image may incite a temporary flare of righteous anger, but narrative leads to sustained action: ‘narratives can make us understand: photographs do something else. They haunt us’.[36] The representation of Majid’s death haunts because within the broader context of the narrative, it cannot be explained, yet it forces the viewer to understand the extent to which we have failed to grasp his motivations and his character, and the extent to which they remain ungraspable. Understanding is in fact undermined by the narrative structure of the film, its diegetic and extra-diegetic switches and the slippages between dreams and flashbacks: visibility not only a question of being able to be seen, but also frameworks that structure that seeing.

For Butler, the assignation of a life to the domain of ungrievability lends it and unreal and even unearthly quality: ‘the derealization of the “Other” means that it is neither alive nor dead, but interminably spectral’.[37] Majid’s spectrality, his positioning as a forgotten or repressed aspect of the past that haunts the present, is given concrete audible form in this scene through the rasping noise of the burst artery, as his body hovers between life and death. This haunting is for Butler an essential part of the functioning of the image for ‘if we can be haunted, then we can acknowledge that there has been a loss and that there has been a life […] it requires that we conceive of grievability as a precondition of life’.[38] In this sense, the photograph or the image furnishes tangible and necessary evidence of war crimes, and Majid’s death provides a similar form of evidence, the ultimate physical exteriorisation of a psychic trauma, a visceral pain that is ended by the coetaneous cutting of his throat.

Majid’s suicide ruptures the threads of rhythm and narrative that have characterized the film up to this point, and shattering the normative frames in which both viewers and characters attempted to confine him. This emphasis on exteriorization, on a rendering visible that is literally inscribed into Majid’s act, is echoed in the plain austerity the words he speaks before he kills himself: ‘je voulais que tu sois présent’. The simplicity of this phase conceals the inference that only presence may be possible, a kind of visibility that does not necessarily imply comprehension. When a life exists outside of normative frameworks of grievability and identification, recognition of its existence, or its decease, may be all that can be accessed. As Rancière writes of dissensus in cinema, when meaning cannot be conferred through the narrative, significance can arrive by allowing the scene to unfold ‘dans sa simple présence’:

> En coupant le fil de toute raison, on laisse la scène, l’attitude, le visage au mutisme qui leur donne double pouvoir : arrêter le regard sur cette évidence d’existence liée à l’absence même de raison, dérouler cette évidence comme virtualité d’un autre monde sensible.[39]

Majid’s trauma would have remained unexpressed, although arguably it remains unexplained, because Georges, and to a certain extent the viewer, have failed to draw the necessary conclusions from what was presented in the drawings and the videotapes. When we fail to see, Majid’s suicide thrusts vision upon us, becoming evidence of another sensible space, of an existence, that we have lost the opportunity to comprehend.

Caché enacts a formal interrogation of normative frames that posit certain lives, like Majid’s, outside the domain of recognition through a continuous emphasis on the ambiguity of the image. As Haneke notes, ‘Il y a mille verités, c’est une question de point de vue. Nous savons tous ce que on peut manipuler avec l’image’.[40] Majid’s suicide forces us, through its extreme visibility, to come to terms with our own presuppositions, the ‘truth’ we may have drawn by adhering to a particular point of view. Thus, to draw on Libby Saxton’s phrase, I would suggest that the repressed in this film is not ‘revenge-bent’,[41] but rather recognition-bent, a form of recognition that does not seek to explain but rather to render visible, present. This push towards recognition initially remains on the borders of the narrative frame, yet in the end, all that Haneke offers a bemused and possibly guilty spectator is a violent spectacle of our own interpretative deficiency, and by extension, a haunting sense of broader social and political exclusions and misconceptions.

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[1] Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (London: Verso, 2006), p. 35.

[2] On this subject, see in particular Jean-Luc Einaudi, *La bataille de Paris* (Paris: Seuil, 1991), Joshua Cole 'Entering History: The Memory of Police Violence in Paris, October 1961', in *Algeria & France, 1800-2000: Identity, Memory, Nostalgia* ed. by P. M. E. Lorcin (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2006), pp. 117–134, and Jim House and Neil Macmaster *Paris 1961: Algerians, State Terror, and Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

[3] Jacques Rancière, *Au bords du politique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1998), p. 245.

[4] Ibid., p. 240.

[5] Alex Lykidis, 'Multicultural Encounters in Haneke's French-Language Cinema', in *A Companion to Michael Haneke*, ed. by Roy Grundmann, (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), pp. 455-476, (p. 455).

[6] Elizabeth Ezra & Jane Sillars, 'Hidden in Plain Sight: Bringing Terror Home', *Screen*, 48:2 (2007), pp. 215–221.

[7] See in particular *The Seventh Continent* (1989) and *Funny Games* (1998).

[8] Ezra and Sillars, 'Hidden in Plain Sight', p. 217.

[9] Martine Beugnet, 'Blind spot', *Screen*, 48:2 (2007), 227–231 (p. 230).

[10] *Caché*, dir. by Michael Haneke. France: Artificial Eye, Sony Pictures Classics, 1948. DVD extras.

[11] Ernest Feydeau, *Alger: etude* (Paris: Michel Lévy frères, 1862); André Gide, *L'Immoraliste* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1902). For more on the collapse of civility and morality of the colonizer in the colony, particularly in relation to sexuality, see Victoria Thompson, 'I went Pale with Pleasure', in *Algeria & France, 1800-2000: Identity, Memory, Nostalgia* ed. by P. M. E. Lorcin (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2006), pp. 18-32.

[12] Maxim Silverman (2007). 'The Empire Looks Back', *Screen*, 48:2 (2007), 245–249 (p. 246).

[13] Benoît Rey, *Les Égorgeurs* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1961).

[14] Ranjanna Khanna, 'From Rue Morgue to Rue des Iris', *Screen*, 48:2 (2007), 237–244 (p. 239).

[15] Judith Butler, *Precarious Life*, p. 32.

[16] Judith Butler, *Frames of War*, pp.74-5.

[17] Ibid., p. 92.

[18] This negation in relation to the act of visualizing trauma recalls the opening sequences of Renais' *Hiroshima mon amour* (France: Concinor, 1959), which posited a similar trope of denial in the repeated refutation, 'tu n'as rien vu à Hiroshima'. The refutation of sight and of the visual also resonates with Libby Saxton's work on Levinas, Derrida and blindness [Lisa Downing and Libby Saxton, *Film and Ethics: Foreclosed Encounters* (London: Routledge, 2010) pp. 95-119].

[19] Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (London: Picador, 2001).

[20] Judith Butler, *Precarious Life*, p. 39.

[21] Libby Saxton, 'Close Encounters with Distant Suffering: Michael Haneke's Disarming Visions', in *Five Directors: Auteurism from Assayas to Ozon*, ed. by Kate Ince (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008), 84–111 (p. 107).

[22] *Caché*, dir. by Michael Haneke. France: Artificial Eye, Sony Pictures Classics, 2005. DVD extras.

[23] Martine Beugnet, 'Blind spot', *Screen*, 48:2 (2007), 227–231 (p. 230).

[24] Rancière, *Le spectateur émancipé*, p. 72.

[25] Judith Butler, *Precarious Life*, p. 36.

[26] Judith Butler, *Precarious Life*, p. 36.

[27] Ezra and Sillars, 'Hidden in Plain Sight', p. 215.

[28] Michael Haneke, quoted in Ipek A. Celik, '"I wanted you to be present": guilt and the history of violence in Michael Haneke's *Caché*', *Cinema Journal*, 50.1 (2010), 59-80, (p. 60).

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[29] As Saxton points out, ‘the multiple frames, screens and lenses which vie for attention in Haneke’s cinema *mediate* access to the realities of pain and trauma, even to the reality of the other’s body’, in ‘Close Encounters with Distant Suffering’, p. 89.

[30] Judith Butler, *Frames of War*, p. 578.

[31] Micheal Haneke, ‘Violence and the Media’ in *A Companion to Michael Haneke,* ed. by Roy Grundmann, p. 576.

[32] Paul Gilroy, ‘Shooting crabs in a barrel’, *Screen*, 48:2 (2007), 233–235 (p. 234).

[33] Ibid., p.234.

[34] Judith Butler, *Frames of War* (London: Verso, 2010), p. 12.

[35] Michael Haneke, ‘Violence and the Media’, p. (579).

[36] Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (London: Penguin Modern Classics, 2003) p. 80.

[37] Judith Butler, *Precarious Life*, pp. 33-4.

[38] Judith Butler, *Frames of War*, p. 98.

[39] Jacques Rancière, *Figures de l’histoire* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2012), p. 23.

[40] Michael Haneke, *Caché*, DVD Extras.

[41] Saxton, ‘Close Encounters with Distant Suffering’, p. 107.