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When Forgetting is Remembering: Haneke's *Caché* and the Events of October 17 1961

Patrick Crowley

Caché is and is not a film about the events that occurred in Paris in October 17 1961 when scores of Algerians were killed by police officers and auxiliaries.[1] Within the film, Georges's single reference to the events surfaces to provide a rare unambiguous narrative before receding like previous attempts to bring this obscured event to the light of public history. It is this dynamic of remembering and forgetting and its relationship to guilt that I want to examine in my reading of *Caché*.

In an interview conducted with Michael Haneke for the Austrian Film Commission, Karin Schiefer notes that 'the war in Algeria, though mentioned only briefly, plays an important role in the conflict depicted in *Caché*' and goes on to ask whether Haneke meant this to be 'a reference to a sore spot in French history which isn't discussed'. Haneke's reply raises the matted issues of aesthetics and politics:

> **Michael Haneke:** I don't want to call too much attention to this issue, because I don't want the film to be regarded primarily in that light at Cannes. It's only an element which supplies a framework. During preparations before shooting *Caché* I learned about this massacre in a documentary on Arte, it took place in Paris in 1961, and about 200 Arabs were shot or thrown into the Seine, and it wasn't mentioned for four decades. I made use of this incident because it fits in a horrible way. You could find a similar story in any country, even though it took place at a different time. There's always a collective guilt which can be connected to a personal story, and that's how I want this film to be understood.[2]

Haneke's observation includes a reference to a documentary that is almost certainly *Drowning by bullets*/*Une journée portée disparue*, broadcast by the Franco-German channel Arte on October

[1] For the most comprehensive account of the events of October 1961, the historical context and the aftermath see Jim House and Neil MacMaster, *Paris 1961: Algerians, State Terror, and Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006). In this scrupulous work of historical research and analysis they address the question of how many Algerians were killed by police and auxiliaries during the night of October 17 1961 when tens of thousands took to the streets of Paris to protest against the curfew imposed on Algerians' right to movement and assembly between 19.00 and 05.30 (check). The initial official figure was three. The Algerian organisers of the march, the French wing of the FLN (Front de Libération Nationale – the principal orchestrators of the war) claimed over 200 were killed. This figure was taken up by Jean-Luc Einaudi. House and MacMaster, working with a complex range of archives suggest that well over 120 Algerians were killed by police in September and October of 1961. The figure for October appears to be at least 30.

[2] 'Caché von Michael Haneke – Interview' viewed on Austrian Film Commission site. Url http://www.afc.at/jart/prj3/afc/main.jart?rel=de&reserve-mode=active&content-id=1164272180506&artikel_id=13295. As viewed on November 15 2007.

17 2001 which I will return to below.[3] Haneke also acknowledges that the events of October 1961 offered a 'fit' for the kinds of ideas he was exploring but he also makes clear his desire for critics to move from the context of a particular event in French history and to focus instead upon an aesthetic structure, an allegory, that figures the wider notion of collective guilt through a personal story. The event, the massacre of unarmed civilians, is to function as a 'framework', to be forgotten, in a sense, within a film that pursues Haneke's engagement with history in the production of an aesthetic that figures collective guilt. *Caché*'s content and structures replicate the processes that Haneke seeks to track within his anatomy of guilt and memory, an interest that goes back to *Benny's Video* (1992), but, paradoxically, in doing so is a specific event of history to be reduced to a device quickly forgotten once its function has been exhausted? One way of examining the relationship between event and its aesthetic appropriation is by rethinking the relationship between historical event and its aesthetic configuration as a case of Hegelian *aufhebung* (sublation) where the element lifted to another level that, paradoxically, both preserves and changes it. I want to pursue this idea of the sublated event throughout what follows.

Paul Gilroy's comment that Haneke's 'overly casual citation of the 1961 anti-Arab pogrom by Papon's police in Paris' seems almost to find its confirmation in Haneke's view of the events as a suitable 'framework'. Gilroy raises the stakes beyond aesthetic success writing that 'many people involved in building a habitable multicultural Europe will feel that there are pressing issues of morality and responsibility involved in raising that history [October 1961] only to reduce it to nothing more than a piece of tragic machinery in the fatal antagonism that undoes *Caché*'s protagonists. The dead deserve better than that passing acknowledgement.'[4] Here Gilroy privileges morality and responsibility over Haneke's aesthetic choices. But this

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[3] Produced and directed by Philip Brooks and Alan Hayling, *Drowning by bullets/Une journée portée disparue* was first broadcast in the UK by Channel 4 in July, 1992. In March 1993 it was broadcast in France by France-3 and again by Arte on the fortieth anniversary of the events, October 17 2001.

[4] Paul Gilroy, 'Shooting crabs in a barrel', *Screen* 48:2 (2007), 233–35, p.233. Gilroy's piece forms part of the '*Caché* dossier' composed of an introduction and six articles'. France's colonial past in Algeria and its implications for the present and is referenced in four of these articles and given explicit treatment in Gilroy's contribution and in Max Silverman's piece, 'The empire looks back', *Screen* 48:2 (2007), 245–49. Haneke's oblique treatment of the events has prompted much critical discussion, far more than the TV docudrama, *Nuit noire, 17 octobre 1961* (directed by Alain Tasma) which was released in October 2005. Fully acknowledging the dead does not always have the effect that Gilroy, understandably, views as necessary. It is this paradox of acknowledgement and concealment that continues to animate debate in France. For a French reading of *Caché* from a post/colonial perspective see Saad Chakali, 'Le spectre du colonialisme, l'actualité du néocolonialisme postcolonial' in *Cadrage.net* an on-line journal. www.cadrage.net/films/cache.htm as viewed on 15 December 2007.

reading runs against the grain of *Caché*'s allegorical portrayal of guilt. Despite Haneke's comments on the need not to concentrate on the specific events of 1961, *Caché* critically raises the questions that so determine Gilroy's critique.

I will return to Gilroy later in this chapter but want first to consider the possible links between *Caché* and the documentary to which Haneke refers. On the same day that Arte broadcast *Drowning by bullets*/*Une journée portée disparue* the left-wing newspaper *L'Humanité* published the results of a CSA opinion poll which revealed that a majority of the French public was unaware of the events. Less than one in two had heard of the police massacre. It was an event that had yet to be written into France's national narrative. Within the documentary the voice-off comments that many French found it hard to believe in the reports of police killings because there were no images to substantiate the claims. In the absence of such images and in the face of official denials, many allowed the events to slip away from the concerns of their present. Nevertheless, the memory of what had happened was sustained by a minority that included survivors, left-wing activists as well as immigrant and anti-racist groups.[5] *Drowning by bullets/Une journée portée disparue* can be situated as part of a process of anamnesis operating within a general structure of (post/colonial) remembering and forgetting. *Caché* encodes this process as it traces the issue of guilt but *Caché* is also subject to that same structural play of memory and commemoration. Even as the film evokes the events of October 17 it contributes to their 'forgetting' by folding the events into a signifying structure that is built upon, and entombs, those same events.

Haneke's *Caché* draws on a specific event but can also be situated within a filmic genealogy that has also engaged with that same event. Hayling's and Brook's documentary, *Drowning by bullets*/*Une journée portée disparue*, was an attempt to rectify the absence of images of the events by including Eli Kagan's photographs of Algerians which he had taken that night shortly after the police attacks. The documentary includes a range of interviews and archival material as well as clips from two films that either directly or indirectly addressed the

[5] The poll confirms Haneke's sense that there was a general silence surrounding the events for forty years but also indicates that many knew of the events. The memory of the events was maintained largely by militants, anti-racist organisations and those who experienced the events. More widespread knowledge of what happened was mediated by novels such as Daniel Daeninckx's crime novel *Meurtres pour mémoire* (1984) and Nacer Kattane's novel *Le Sourire de Brahim* (1985). A son of one of the demonstrators, Medhi Lallaoui, published a novel that indirectly drew on the events *Les Beurs de Seine* (1986) and later produced a documentary on the events *Le Silence du fleuve* (1992) as well as a second novel dealing directly with the events, *Une nuit d'octobre*, which was published 17 October 2001.

events and their context. The first was *Octobre à Paris*/*October in Paris* (1961) filmed by Maurice Panijel. The second was Chris Marker's *Joli mai* (1962). Panijel's film is an effort to draw direct attention to what was a police cover-up. The film begins with reconstructions of the FLN preparations for the march and shows scenes of daily life in the Algerian shantytowns that lay beyond the centre of Paris such as Gennevilliers. This activist reconstruction drew upon the support of FLN activists and supporters who had participated in the march. Panijel's camera revisits the places where Algerians were struck down and thrown into the river Seine and to parts of the Canal St. Martin where bodies were found in the days following the massacre. The film was confiscated by police and has never been shown on French television. There are fewer images from Chris Marker's *Joli mai* and those that do appear are largely taken from Marker's lyrical opening shots of Paris. Nonetheless, these images and the references to Marker's *Joli mai* in the credits are invitations to return to Marker's project which, in many ways, returns us to Haneke's concern with collective guilt and the individual forms of its manifestation. After the lyrical opening the images of *Joli mai* are sober, grainy, filmed with a light camera and can be situated within the *cinéma vérité*/*cinéma direct* techniques of the period.[6] After the initial titles we learn that 'La scène se passe au mois de mai 1962, désigné par certains comme le premier printemps de la paix' [The scenes take place in May 1962, considered by some to be the first spring of peace][7] Marker interviews Parisians about their present circumstances and the concerns of the moment. Marker prompts his subjects, sometimes provokes them, at times sets them up but underlying much of what is said is the unsaid of the Algerian war which is only indirectly referenced. In this *Joli mai* emblematically captures France at the end of the Algerian war that had been censured, pushed towards the margins by an ever accelerating consumerist modernity, already, almost, forgotten. Though this dimension of Marker's film is not conveyed in *Drowning by bullets*/*Une journée portée disparue*, Brooks and Hayling include an interview with Panijel that forms the penultimate scene of the documentary. Commenting on the silence surrounding the massacre of October 1961, Panijel says that given what happened the French government had to 'étouffer, occulter, cacher, c'est tout simple' [suppress it, cover it up, hide it, it's simple really].

[6] See Geneviève Van Cauwenberge 'Le point de vue documentaire dans *Le joli mai*' in Philippe Dubois (ed.) *Théorem: Recherches sur Chris Marker* (Paris: Presses Sorbonne Nouvelle, 2002), pp.83–99.
[7] France has been at war almost continuously since 1939. The end of the Second World War was quickly followed by France's wars of decolonisation in Madagascar, Indochina (1946-54), Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria (1954-62).

The French authorities were able to 'manage' the aftermath of the events of October 1961 by stalling and ultimately preventing an official enquiry, by making it difficult to gain access to official archives and by introducing a range of amnesties that had been passed in law in the wake of the Evian Accords signed by France and Algeria in 1962. This official form of 'forgetting' is the subject of Dimitri Nicolaïdis's volumn, *Oublier nos crimes. L'amnésie nationale: une spécificité française*?. This collection of articles that deal with the use of amnesties in France since the nineteenth century includes an interview with the historian Benjamin Stora, a specialist of Algerian history, in which he makes the case that only a formal official acknowlegement of the events of October will permit the wounds of the past to close and heal.[8] Official police archives were only opened in May 1998 and then to a single historian, Jean-Paul Brunet. Official acknowledgement of the events remains limited to certain politicians on the Left. The Mayor of Paris, Bertrand Delanöe, placed a commemorative plaque on the wall of the quay that faces the Préfecture de Police beside the Pont St. Michel where many demonstrators were either truncheoned and, in some cases, thrown into the Seine. Successive attempts to suppress the historical truth have ultimately served to energise attempts to uncover what had happened. It's this dynamic of occlusion and memory, premised upon relations of power, which drives Haneke's allegory. These processes are symptomatic of a guilt denied.

Within *Caché* Georges's reference to 200 dead is the same figure proposed by Ali Haroun in *Drowning by bullets*/*Une journée portée disparue*.[9] In the face of an official figure of two, the lack of a public enquiry, the denial of access to police archives, it's understandable that the FLN figure would be accepted by many on the Left and used to pressure successive French governments to actively facilitate the pursuit of historical truth. But as *Drowning by numbers*/*Une journée portée disparue* makes clear, and as Haneke's film repeatedly suggests, the particular events of October 17 1961 raised further questions regarding France's Vichy past and the treatment of Jews during the Occupation. When Georges receives a call at work we see a range of books on a shelf. The title most easily read is *La Grande histoire des Français sous l'occupation* written by the historian Henri Amouroux and published in 1977 it was an early attempt to come to terms with the unpalatable truths of Vichy France when collaboration with

[8] Dimitri Nicolaïdis, *Oublier nos crimes. L'Amnésie nationale: une spécificité française*? (Paris: Éditions Autrement, 1994).
[9] Ali Haroun was the FLN leader in Paris who organised the march.

the Nazi forces of occupation was widespread.[10] This clear reference to Vichy France, to a period that France slowly began to come to terms with in the 1970s signifies that more general structure of guilt to which Haneke makes reference but also offers a further link to the events of October 17 through the figure of Maurice Papon.

Multidirectional memory

Papon was Prefect (Head) of the Paris police in 1961. He was also General Secretary of the Gironde in Bordeaux from 1942-45 where he directed the 'Service des questions juives' responsible for the arrest and deportation of thousands of Jews. Following the end of the Second World War he was quickly integrated into the administration of the Forth Republic and served as Prefect of Constantine, Algeria, from 1949-51 where torture was so widely practiced, and this before the War of Independence, that the Governor General Marcel-Edmond Naegelen and his successor Roger Léonard had to issue circulars condemning the practices.[11] Papon also served in Morocco before his appointment as Prefect of the Paris Police in 1958. Papon's active collaboration during the Second World War only came to the light of the public sphere in 1997 when he was brought to trial for crimes against humanity. As such the figure of Papon, though not mentioned within the film, provides a direct link the deportation of Jews, issues of torture and the events of October 1961 and generates a further level of complexity in the construction of what Michael Rothberg has called 'multi-directional memory'.[12] Rothberg's recent study of Charlotte Delbo's work demonstrates that while her formally complex and moving accounts of her imprisonment in Auschwitz has been the subject of critical appraisal, less attention has been paid to her writings on the Algerian war published in 1961. Rothberg's treatment draws out the impact of Delbo's use of juxtapositions and re-citations to create parallels between France's war in Algeria and Holocaust memory. This forms part of what Rothberg defines as multi-directional memory: 'the interference, overlap, and mutual constitution of seemingly distinct collective

[10] See Éric Conan et Henry Rousso, *Vichy, un passé qui ne passe pas* (Paris: Fayard, 1994) translated by Nathan Bracher and published as *Vichy: An Ever-Present Past* with a forward by Robert O. Paxton (Dartmouth, 1998).
[11] See House and MacMaster, *Paris 1961: Algerians, State Terror, and Memory*, p.38. It was during his trial for crimes against humanity relating to his period in the Prefecture of the Gironde that questions were raised relating to his role in the massacre of October 1961. Nevertheless, the question of torture and repression also needs to be assessed as systemic or institutional rather than simply through the prism of a single name.
[12] Michael Rothberg, 'Between Auschwitz and Algeria: Multidirectional Memory and the Counterpublic Witness', *Critical Inquiry* 33 (2006), pp. 158–84.

memories that define the postwar era and the workings of memory more generally.'[13] The work of multi-directional memory takes place within the public sphere where official public memory and counterpublic testimony overlap. Rothberg brings his article to a close by drawing on a particular scene from *Caché* to illustrate his argument. The scene in question is that moment when Anne and Georges realise that Pierrot, their son, had not yet returned home and has left no message. They panic and link his disappearance to the videocassettes and drawings they presume are being sent by Majid. The background to their conversation is dominated by a large TV screen framed by shelves of books, videocassettes and DVDs that stretch from floor to ceiling, from wall to wall. Euronews is broadcasting a report from Iraq on the lack of communication between the Allies which is followed by a piece on the trial of U.S. Army Specialist Charles Graner for his part in the torture of Abu Ghraib detainees. The final clip is of Palestinians fleeing Israeli army violence in the streets of the Occupied Territories. Rothberg highlights the 'interpenetration of different frames of reference' as well as 'the concatenation of media forms [that] embodies both the vexed relationship between public and private space and between everyday life and extreme violence.'[14] Rothberg argues that the return of the colonial repressed finds its echoes within contemporary forms of imperialism. *Caché* sponsors an uncertainty that keeps memory from condensing into a fixed image or from being locked into a particular moment through its generation of a network of crimes present (TV images of Charles Graner relating to torture in Iraq) and past (French collaboration with Nazi Germany).

The domestic scene of anxiety acted out against the background of world events offers further signifying possibilities. France's imperial ambitions since the nineteenth century have been underwritten by a colonial humanist vision: the *mission civilisatrice* that would bring the light of civilization to the benighted world beyond France. It was to be French imperialism's jingle. In the scene that depicts Georges's and Anne's anxious exchange, the books, dvds and videocassettes form a wall that protects and provides a cocoon for bourgeois sensibilities reaffirmed by a culture that comforts their sense of humanity through the signifiers of refined thought. Georges, as TV presenter with editorial input, and Anne, as publishing editor, are part of a system that instrumentalizes culture so that it might be more easily consumed. Georges cuts a section from his TV program in which the reviewer becomes 'too theoretical'. In erasing literary

[13] Rothberg, 'Between Auschwitz and Algeria: Multidirectional Memory and the Counterpublic Witness', p. 162.
[14] Rothberg, 'Between Auschwitz and Algeria: Multidirectional Memory and the Counterpublic Witness', p. 182.

difficulty and the resistances of theory, Georges drains literature of any residual capacity it might have to offer critique. The blank spines of the non-books that form the backdrop to Georges's literary program mirror the illegible titles of the books that line the walls of his study and suggest a bleached literary tradition that sees contemporary writers edited and past writers reduced to the public oblivion of streets names and school names. In another scene, we see a close-up of Pierrot's school address on the back of a postcard he receives: Collège/Lycée Pirandello, rue Mallarmé. Rather than convey the insights into humanity once expected of literature, French and European literary culture provide a backdrop as the film foregrounds silence, self-censorship, the inclination to edit, the repression and distortions of memory and the constant succession of images of contemporary imperialism that move so quickly that the subject is easily forgotten. At least within the film's diegesis. Haneke's deliberate referencing of Luigi Pirandello and Stéphane Mallarmé may have been determined by the existence of a real school and street bearing these names or by a desire to set up further intertextual traces that lead to an elsewhere that leaves behind the moral imperatives suspended within *Caché*.[15] At other times, Haneke places the spectator before the tangible immediacy of the referent.

Majid's death

Like the spectator in the cinema, Georges is witness to Majid's suicide. Shot in fixed frame, Georges and Majid are face to face in the living room of Majid's drab appartment. Majid cuts his own throat, the blood spurts violently towards the wall as Majid slumps to the floor. In *Drowning by bullets/Une journée portée disparue* we hear that the French refused to believe in what happened in the absence of any images.[16] In this scene, the referent is neither absent not mediated by the image; there is the palpable presence of an other. Gilroy reads Majid's suicide as somehow indicative of Haneke's collusion with the fantasy that the 'colonial native can be made to disappear in an instant through the auto-combustive agency of their own violence' and, as such, 'Majid's suicide becomes in effect an exclusively aesthetic event devoid of all meaning apart from what it communicates about Georges'. Gilroy goes further, however, and suggests

[15] For example, in the scene where we see Georges involved in editing his pre-recorded literary program we see clips of the writers invited to comment on a recent publication on Arthur Rimbaud. There is a brief shot of Mazarine Pingeot, the 'secret' daughter of French President François Mitterrand (1981–95).

[16] The documentary features a clip recorded on the afternoon of October 17 1961 in which an ITN journalist does a piece to camera reporting that the police had already begun to warn journalists and camera crews not to be present on the streets of Paris for the FLN demonstration to take place later that day after 7.00 p.m. This official concern to organize a media black-out was largely successful.

that the 'aesthetic event' in some way appeals to Haneke's audience 'because that horrible death can represent a flowering of their own investments in the idea that Europe's immigrants should be induced to disappear by any means possible.'[17] Here Gilroy has his own crabs to shoot but let's return to his commentary on Majid's suicide. Gilroy's objection is based, in part, on Majid's lack of psychological depth such that he becomes a token of white European anxiety. In this respect Gilroy's observation that Majid's suicide tells us more about Georges is as accurate as it is obvious: Georges is the film's subject and what we learn about him is central to *Caché*'s unfolding. Clearly, Majid's death in no way satisfies the fantasy of the fantasy of the disappearing immigrant. Neither Majid, as haunting image, nor his son, as troubling reality, go away and Georges does not return to a sanitised, urbane culture in which the unsettling presence of otherness is placed at a comfortable distance. The shock of Majid's death is at once a signature piece of Haneke's aesthetic interest in violence and while offering a reading that is neither one of trauma nor of accommodation but returns both Georges and the viewer to the responsibility of the gaze/*regard*. Where Georges has little difficulty in referring to the murder of 200 Algerians by French police, an event of which he is innocent, Majid's death implicates Georges. Here Georges is directly confronted with the death and blood of the referent. Unmediated, present, bloody, Majid's body lies before Georges. Gilroy bemoans that Georges had no opportunity to recover an innocence through (presumably political) action, yet Georges's responsibility lies in what he does next. He goes to the cinema, to the darkened room that frames his consumption of a reality through images, like the penultimate scene that we can read as a nightmare, the view from within the interior of the dark farmyard building of his childhood can be mapped onto that of the cinema. The entrance to the farm building, like the cinema screen, frames the scene of the six-year old Majid's forced removal by social welfare officials. Georges was responsible then for something for which he could have little understanding (Majid's future) but faced with the end of Majid's life his trauma leads him to the cinema. Later, and prompted by Anne, he informs the police.

[17] Gilroy, 'Shooting crabs in a barrel', p. 234.

Le pardon

The final confrontational dialogue that we witness in *Caché* takes place between Georges and Majid's son in the lavatory of a corporate building. Majid's son has already challenged Georges in the foyer, followed him into the elevator, pursued him to the threshold of his office before Georges accepts to hear him out in this a space that is neither of the public nor private sphere. And though the functionality of the lavatory is unambiguous its muted, sanitised, white decor offers the mask of hygienic space that signifies modernity's combat against unwanted human waste. This is where Haneke chooses to shoot the final scene of the sharp exhange between Georges and Majid's son. At one point the latter's formal French infuriates Georges who shouts at him to stop the pretense of politeness. Mastery of the French language had, throughout the period of the French Republican Empire, been a signifier of the colonized's successful assimilation. In this scene Georges appears to interpret it as a parody of French cultivation whereas Majid's son sees it as would any other French citizen, as a sign of a good education something he received from his father and of which his father had been deprived because of Georges. At this point Georges denies any responsibility for Majid's life: 'You won't convince me that I should have a guilty conscience ['mauvaise conscience'] because your father's life was sad and poussier. I'm not responsible. Do you understand?' How can a six year old who felt usurped by the arrival of another boy into his family be deemed responsible for the results of his actions? For Gilroy 'the relationship between of the colonial past to the postcolonial present is perverted and confused by the idea that today's complacent and indifferent adults bear no more responsibility for their resignation, inertia and poisonous choices than a conflicted six year old.'[18] The thrust of Haneke's dialogue suggests that the guilt at stake is not the result of the actions of a child but rather the legacy of the mark of the past upon the present that can provoke guilt even when responsibility cannot be wholly assumed. Georges's internal drama is not really that of trauma, or of individual responsibility, but of the inheritance of a trace that is something within him for which he is not responsible but which he needs to confront. And that's just it. Georges is incapable of doing so as an adult, his reaction to Majid's death compounded the legacy of guilt. After Georges refuses to accept responsibility for Majid's wasted life, he then asks Majid's son what he wants of him. To fight him? Majid's son refuses the bait. Georges warns him not to terrorize his family again and that if he does he will deal with him. Majid's son

[18] Gilroy, 'Shooting crabs in a barrel', p. 235.

reminds Georges, and the spectator-as-witness, that threatening people is what Georges does very well 'Well' responds Georges 'what do you want me to do, ask for forgiveness?' The question could be read as both rhetorical and pragmatic. Georges, we imagine, would be happy to be freed from his sense of guilt by an apology without depth. 'From whom? From Me?' Majid's son replies with scorn. Georges, for a brief moment, doesn't know what to say. His face is blank. It's a powerful exchange and one that raises the kinds of questions that have been circulating within the French public sphere over the past decade. How, for example, was France to apologize for the deportation of Jews without implicating the values of the Republic? In some cases apologies were made that were determined by political expediency and pragmatism. In July 2005, Jacques Chirac, the then President of France, made an official visit to Madagascar where he apologized for France's repression of the 1947 uprising that left between 90,000 and 100,000 Malagasy dead. In contrast, in December 2005 Chirac rejected calls that France formally apologize for acts of torture committed by the military during the Algeria war of independence.[19] More recently, a number of books have been published that argue against apologizing for France's colonial past.[20] When to apologize and when not to apologize can be seen as part of a geopolitics of seeking forgiveness that emerged in the late 1990s and continued into the new millennium. Majid's son's response suggests that the crimes of the past cannot be assuaged so easily. Majid is dead; to ask forgiveness of his son seems displaced as only Majid can forgive. And forgive what? Haneke's film is not about easy resolutions to questions but leaves things in suspense. The final scene in which Majid's son and Pierrot converse in front of the school, though read, in the main, as a gesture towards reconciliation by Gilroy and by Max Silverman, offers multiple readings, including conspiracy, none of which can be confirmed within the film or beyond it.[21] That the questions remain suspended, raised rather than answered, preserved and negated like the events of October 1961 that provided a 'fit' for Haneke's shaping of guilt, have provoked a reaction to *Caché* that has contributed to a wider debate about France's colonial past and the politics of the present. Gilroy's article is part of an Algerian dossier that appeared in *Screen* and though the francophone reception of the film focused less on the events of 1961 and

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[19] 'Algeria: Chirac rejects "torture apology"', December 15 2000. bbc.co.uk archives http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/1071504.stm as seen on 28 January 2008.
[20] See Pascale Bruckner, *La Tyrannie de la pénitence: essai sur le masochisme occidental* (Paris: Grasset 2006) and Daniel Lefeuvre, *Pour en finir avec la repentence coloniale* (Paris: Flammarion, 2006).
[21] Max Silverman, 'The empire looks back', 249.

more on Haneke’s aesthetic there are examples where the political pertinence of the film within the context of France’s postcolonial present is sharply brought to the fore.

Conclusion

Caché encodes and enacts the multidirectional dynamics of memory within its representation of guilt. Guilt and the task of construing its cause and meaning are juxtaposed and left open. In creating a tension within the film, within the viewer, Haneke folds the events of October 1961 into the shadows of the mind, the darkness of the farm-building, and the cinema in order to keep them from fading within the light of History and the overexposure of Culture. Haneke’s film is not about the events of October 1961: it puts in play the complex relationship of memory, forgetting and guilt that revives the after-effects of those events and lifts them into a modernist aesthetic that offers new readings of the political present and its relationship to the past.