HUMANITIES INSTITUTE
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HIDDEN / Caché (2005)

Michael Haneke

OVERVIEW

Director: Austrian director Michael Haneke was born in Germany in 1942. Throughout his prolific, decades-long career he has made films in German, French and English, and has also worked in theater and television. *Caché*, or *Hidden*, is the eighth feature film that he both wrote and directed. The film is exemplary of much of Haneke's cinematic work, which often deals unsentimentally with themes of race, class, gender, and violence. His films often focus on the bourgeois family and make use of long takes and periods of silence. He is well known for other films, including *Das Weisse Band* (*The White Ribbon*, 2009) and *La Pianiste* (*The Piano Teacher*, 2001).

Film: *Caché* is a neo-noir, realist psychological thriller that portrays the upheaval of an upper middle-class Parisian couple, Georges and Anne Laurent, and their 12-year-old son, Pierrot. The family is plunged into turmoil as they begin to receive tapes and violent, childlike drawings from an anonymous sender that suggest they are being stalked. The mystery of these surveillance tapes exhumes Georges' memories of childhood and the Algerian boy, Majid, who briefly lived with the French family after the death of his parents. The tapes lead Georges back to Majid in the present as the Laurent family tries to discover who is sending the tapes and why.

Background: *Caché* is the subject of much scholarly examination and is considered an exemplary depiction of post-9/11 surveillance anxieties and the afterlives of French colonialism. During the development of the film, Haneke became familiar with the 1961 Paris Seine massacre, in which hundreds of Algerian protestors were killed by French police while demonstrating against colonial rule in their homeland. At the 2005 Cannes Film Festival, the film competed for the Palme d'Or prize; there, Haneke was award Best Director. It was also submitted as Austria's entry for Best Foreign Language Film for the Academy Awards, but was rejected since French is not the predominant language in Austria, and France could not submit the film for its entry since Haneke is Austrian. Previously, Haneke's French-language film *The Piano Teacher* (2001) had not been disqualified on this basis.

CHARACTERS

Georges Laurent	An affluent Parisian host of a literary television show
Anne Laurent	Georges's wife, who works in publishing
Pierrot Laurent	Georges and Anne's 12-year-old son
Majid	The adult son of Algerian farmhands who worked for Georges's family
Majid's son	Majid's son, a teenager a few years older than Pierrot

SYNOPSIS

Caché takes place in Paris in the early 2000s. An upper middle-class family, Georges and Anne Laurent and their son, Pierrot, begins to receive videotapes at their doorstep. The tapes, which begin to arrive accompanied with gruesome drawings, suggest that there is a hidden camera filming the family home from across the street. There are no clues as to who is shooting the tapes or why. As the family is plunged into turmoil and anxiety, Georges begins to dream about – and suspect – an Algerian man named Majid, who as a child briefly lived with Georges' family. Majid's parents, who worked for Georges's family, disappeared in the Paris Seine massacre of October 17, 1961. The family's subsequent plans to adopt Majid fell apart in mysterious circumstances. As the tapes lead an adult Georges back into contact with Majid, his repressed guilt resurfaces.

While the film's events point to clues as to who might be sending the tapes, this central mystery remains unresolved. Instead, *Caché* portrays the psychological unravelling of both Georges and Majid and their families. The surveillance of Georges' family reveals cracks in Anne and Georges's marriage, and underscores their son, Pierrot's, early teenage growing pains, manifesting in an angst-

ridden distancing from his parents. Majid's trauma also affects his son, who manifests anger at Georges and the police on his father's behalf.

SCENES

First Tape A woman, Anne, exits a door and walks offscreen. Some seconds later, a man rides a bike from the street towards the viewer. "Well?" says Georges, unpictured, over the still image. "Nothing," answers Anne. "Where was it?" he asks. "In a plastic bag on the porch," she says, the camera still unmoving after three full minutes.



Georges and Anne investigate: The camera cuts to a shot of a car parked outside the door where the woman had exited. Georges exits the door, followed by Anne. He looks around the street, walks across it, and says: "He must have been there." "Come inside," says his wife. He walks back across the street and follows her inside the same door they had exited.



Watching the first tape: We again see the same shot of the Laurents' home. This time, it is sunnier. "I'll ask the Rochants and Beaufays if they saw anybody hanging around," says Georges. Anne replies that neighbors she's already asked saw nothing. Suddenly, static appears onscreen. "The tape runs for over two hours," says Anne. The image – which we now understand to be the 'tape,' speeds up and rewinds, showing passersby, cyclists, and cars moving more quickly across the screen. The couple discusses when they each left the house that morning. "There," says Anne, seeing the moment on tape that Georges left. They speculate as to why Georges did not see the camera filming him.



Discussion at home: The camera cuts to Georges and Anne standing in their home in front of the tape, playing on their television. Georges switches the television off and follows Anne into the kitchen, wondering aloud if a friend of their son's is playing a practical joke with the tape. He asks where Pierrot, their son, is; Anne says she has no idea. Georges asks further questions about the details of Anne's finding the tape, and she gets exasperated. They sit down to dinner in a room whose walls are lined with books. Pierrot arrives home. Georges begins to question his whereabouts, and Pierrot says he was at his friend's house.



The second tape: We see an image of a naïvely rendered drawing, depicting a child spitting blood, resting on a table in the Laurents' house. "The tape was wrapped in it," says Anne. We see another shot of the exterior of the home, with static, as if the tape is being played on their television; it is the shot from nighttime, depicting Georges' arrival home. The camera cuts to a close-up of a young Arab boy, shrouded in darkness, with blood streaming down his chin. He wipes his mouth, and the camera returns to the shot of the Laurents' home. "What's up? What's wrong, Georges?" asks Anne. "Nothing, nothing, I… I'm tired," he responds. They discuss contacting the police and decide against asking Pierrot about the drawing and the tapes. "I don't buy the schoolboy prank theory," says Georges.



A mysterious call: It is morning at the Laurents' home. As Anne cleans up breakfast, the phone rings. She picks up. The call is from a friend, for either Georges or Pierrot, and she informs the caller they have just missed him. The phone rings again. This time, it's a stranger – a man asking for Georges. "Who are you? What do you want?" asks Anne, impatiently. When the caller reiterates that he'd like to speak to Georges, she slams the phone back into the receiver.

Georges' office: We see a cluttered desk and a conversation between Georges and a woman, who informs him that his wife has called. As he dials the phone, he sees a small, postcard-size drawing – the same childlike style from before, and another figure vomiting blood. His secretary tells him it was in the mail.



Confrontation outside the police station: Georges and Anne exit a police station; Georges leads and Anne follows him, as in the first scene of the film. A cyclist whizzing by very nearly hits Georges. "Watch out, dickhead!" yells George, as the cyclist, a Black man, comes to an abrupt halt. Georges continues to berate the cyclist, who calmly asks him to repeat himself and says: "Which moron stepped out without looking?" Anne, standing beside Georges, attempts to defuse the situation, arguing neither party was looking properly. Georges and Anne walk away. In their car, Georges apologizes to Anne, and then says: "In any case… we now know we're on our own. Until he torches the house or sends us bombs instead of tapes…" They drive away.



A postcard for Pierrot: Outside of Pierrot's school, children are gathered and cars line up to pick up students. Pierrot walks towards Georges' car, getting into the passenger seat. Inside the car, Pierrot asks why it is Georges picking him up. Georges says he has dropped Anne at work and wanted to speak to him. Before Georges can say anything else, Pierrot asks, "What's with that card you sent?" Georges doesn't know what he's talking about. Pierrot produces the card form his backpack and shows it to his father, saying: "My teacher gave it to me at recess. She didn't get the freaky drawing…" Georges examines the postcard, identical to the one he received at work, and flips it over; it reads "For Pierrot. From his dad."



The dinner party: A guest at the Laurents' home is telling a story to three couples, including Mathilde and Pierre, gathered at the table for dinner. The story he tells is about a dog with whom he shared a birthday, and that the dog died of a wound on its neck after being hit by a car. He says he has a scar in just the same place on his own neck. Everyone bursts into laughter, demanding to know whether the story is true; he coyly refuses tell them. The conversation turns towards the condition of a mutual friend who is ill. The doorbell rings, interrupting dinner; Anne and Georges aren't expecting more guests, so Georges goes to investigate.



The Third Tape: Georges goes into the private foyer to check who is at the door. "Who's there?" he demands, repeating himself. He opens the door and steps outside; no one is there. He exits the gate onto the empty street. "What's all this?" he shouts. "Show yourself, you coward! Show yourself and say what you want!" With no response, Georges re-enters the house. Upon closing the door, he bends down to find another bag. From it, he pulls another tape wrapped in another drawing, this time of a chicken bleeding from its neck. He packs it away into his coat pocket in the foyer before returning to the dinner party.



Back at the dinner party: Georges returns to the party, where he reports to have found no one. Anne divulges to their guests that they have been receiving anonymous tapes and calls for a few days. The guests are scandalized. He explains that the tapes show shots of their house, presumably to let the family know they are under surveillance. But this tape shows something new: a shot of countryside roads filmed from the interior of a car. The tape rests on a house in a distance, and Georges remarks that it is the house he grew up in.



A visit to mother: Georges is seated at the foot of a bed, flipping through a catalogue. An elderly woman, Georges' mother, enters the room with the help of an aide, who then exits. Georges and his mother exchange pleasantries. He divulges nothing about the tapes. He worries she is ill and lonely after his father's death; she notices he is "pent up." He tells her he dreamt about Majid, whom she doesn't remember. He says: "Hashem's son. The kid you planned to adopt." She says that she never thinks about Majid and remarks: "It's not a happy memory. As you know only too well." Georges says he's going out of town for work, and they bid each other good night.



Georges' dream: The previous scene cuts to a close-up of a chicken squawking as an axe is brought down on its neck. The child hitting it misses, but blood sprays across his face. It is the same child we have previously seen on the windowsill, bleeding from his mouth: Majid. A wide shot shows Georges' childhood home. There is another child present, this one white – Georges. He looks on with terror at the now-headless chicken flailing on the ground as it dies. Majid walks towards him with the axe, looking sinister. An adult Georges wakes from his nightmare with a start, breathing quickly and drenched with sweat.



Fourth Tape: **W**e then follow a car into a lower-income area of the city and down the hallway of an apartment building. Suddenly, the scene reveals itself to be another tape; it goes static and rewinds, back down the hallway and into the car. As the scene cuts back to the Laurents watching the tape in their living room, the couple deciphers a street sign in the image and retrieves a map. Georges announces he will go there, planning to "knock on the door and see what happens." Georges says he thinks he knows who it is, but won't share details with Anne. She flies into a rage.



Georges' first visit to Majid: Georges sips espresso in a convenience store, before walking down the hallway shown in the newest tape. He rings the doorbell and an Arab man opens the door, who says: "Look who it is." Georges asks the man who *he* is before entering his apartment. The man is friendly and inviting, but Georges asks brusquely: "What do you want from me? Do you want money?" The man wants to know how Georges found him; Georges produces one of the drawings, which the man does not recognize. They talk, both referencing a bygone conflict, or fight, one that did not damage the man's still-positive attitude towards Georges' parents. Georges insists this man – who is, it is now clear to us, Majid – sent the tapes, and Majid insists he did not. Georges leaves, threatening him to stop.



After the encounter: Georges returning to the same convenience store to sip a coffee and look at Majid's building from the window. He calls Anne at work, reporting that he "went round, nobody was in." He lies further that the door, which they had identified from a shot in the tape, had been locked and that a building manager had reported that it is unoccupied. "It must be a storeroom or something like that," he says.



Fifth Tape: Back inside Majid's apartment, the viewer (and camera) is positioned behind Georges. It is a replay of their conversation, showing from this different vantage point Majid's denial of Georges' allegations and Georges' exit from the apartment. After he leaves, Majid remains seated, sighing and fidgeting; he is visibly upset, and begins to sob. Anne's voice cuts in; "It runs for one hour if you want to watch how he feels." She and Georges have been sent the tape and are watching it in their home.



Georges opens up: Anne stops the tape that depicts Majid's crying. Georges apologizes for lying and explains his suspicion of Majid, after seeing the tape of his childhood home. Majid's parents, he says, worked for his family: "Dad liked them; I guess they were good workers." But in October 1961, the Algerian National Liberation

Front summoned all Algerians in France to a demonstration in Paris. In the infamous police massacre that day, Majid's parents were likely killed, and Georges' parents resolved to adopt Majid. He admits that having Majid in the house bothered him, so that, as a boy of six, Georges "told lies about him." He claims to not remember the details of those lies, and Majid was subsequently sent away. Anne says she thinks Majid is telling the truth and did not send the tapes.



Georges meets with his boss: Georges visits the office of his boss, and they exchange pleasantries. His boss tells him his secretary left a tape on his desk. It depicts Georges' conversation with Majid in Majid's apartment. Georges apologizes to his boss and explains that Majid has a "pathological hatred" of Georges' family. Georges' boss notes that it "would be unfortunate if news of this leaked out," and Georges says he will engage a lawyer. Right after, Georges drives again to Majid's apartment, knocking and demanding aggressively that he open the door. Majid is either not home or chooses not to answer the door.



Anne and Pierre's café encounter: Anne and Pierre – Mathilde's husband and a friend of the Laurents – sit in a café. Anne is crying as they discuss her fight with Georges. She sobs: "People talk to each other, don't they?" Pierre puts his hand over hers and embraces her. He wipes her tears and kisses her hand, before she says she has to get back to the office.



Crises at home. Anne comes home, late and they begin to argue about her whereabouts. Anne thought Pierrot was home, sleeping; Georges thought he was with Anne. They realize their son is missing, and when Pierrot's friend and his parents report on the phone he is not with them, Anne and Georges search Pierrot's room. Anne becomes increasingly frantic.



Back to the police station: Anne and Georges arrive at the same police station at which they registered a complaint about the tapes. Georges leads two policemen down the hall of Majid's apartment building to Majid's door. A young Arab man answers the door, and one of the policemen pushes him aside violently. They ask, "where is the boy?" But the young man does not know what the police are talking about. Georges calls Anne to ask about any sign of Pierrot, reporting that the young man is Majid's son, and that he must have been the one to send the tapes. Majid, his son, and Georges ride together in the back of the police van in silence.

Pierrot remains missing: Georges says the police had only been interested in the possible kidnapping, though Majid and his son say they haven't seen Pierrot. Georges reports that Majid and his son are nevertheless being kept in custody; he says: "the kid started yelling, so they locked him up." Georges walks into the kitchen to get something to eat and breaks into sobs.

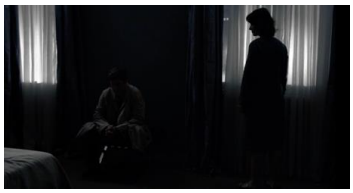


Pierrot's return: The next day, Pierrot is dropped off at home by a friend's mother, who hadn't known he didn't call his parents the night before. In Pierrot's room, Anne questions her sullen son as to why he didn't call home. Pierrot won't say what is wrong, but tells his mother sarcastically to "ask Pierre. He always knows everything," referring to Mathilde's husband with whom Anne may be having an affair. Anne says that it's absurd to imply she and Pierre are more than simply friends, and tries to reconcile with Pierrot, but he flees her embrace.



A final visit to Majid: Georges is editing his television show at work when he receives a call. He arrives at Majid's apartment, and Majid invites him in. Majid entreats Georges to sit down and again denies involvement with the tapes. Majid says: "I called you because I wanted you to be present." He takes a knife out of his pocket and slits his own throat. Blood splatters across the kitchen wall as he falls to the ground, dead. Georges stands over Majid's body in silence. In the

next shot, it is nighttime, and Georges exits a cinema alone.



An admission to Anne: Georges quietly returns home that night. He calls Anne from their bedroom, asking her to send her guests home, and that "something terrible has happened." She enters the room, and he tells her that Majid has committed suicide. He requests they remain in the dark while they talk. She tells Georges to report it so as not to be a suspect. Georges assumes that Majid intended to incriminate him. Anne asks what Georges did to Majid "back then." Georges tells her how he'd demanded Majid be examined by a doctor after coughing up blood, when they were children. After the doctor found nothing wrong with Majid, Georges had Majid decapitate the family rooster. Georges told his parents Majid had done so to scare Georges. Georges remarks that Majid's slitting his own throat that day was a 'heck of a twisted joke.'



Confrontation with Majid's son: As he waits for the elevator in his office lobby, Georges is confronted by Majid's son. When Georges says he does not have time to talk, Majid's son follows him into the elevator. They argue first outside of Georges' office, and then in the bathroom. Majid's son tells Georges that he deprived his father of a good education after forcing him into an orphanage. Majid's son says, "I wonder how it feels, having a man's life on your conscience." Georges departs angrily.



After the confrontation: We see another shot of the exterior of the Laurents' home, in the middle of the day. Georges enters the house, takes some pills, and makes a phone call to Anne, informing her he's come home early feeling ill, and not to wake him – he's taken two pills and will be sleeping. Georges gets into bed, and we see a shot of the exterior of his childhood farmhouse. A car pulls up in front of the house, presumably to take away Majid, who runs away, screaming, "I don't want to go." He is forced into the car, which then departs.



The Children: Outside of Pierrot's school, as students say goodbye and parents wait for their children, Majid's son walks up to Pierrot. The boys seem familiar with one another, stepping away from the crowd to talk. Majid's son leaves, and Pierrot returns to his friends, as the credits roll across the screen.

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Georges Laurent

Georges is the definitive protagonist of the film, a middle-aged, successful bourgeois father and husband whose rage and paranoia that surfaces as a result of the surveillance of his family betrays longer-standing tensions in his family life.

Hot-tempered: Georges is confrontational and quick to anger. He expresses his frustration and confusion at the family's being stalked not with despair or hopelessness but with rage, including in front of friends at the couple's dinner party. He readily levels accusations of stalking against both Majid and Majid's son. But he also clearly feels deeply the events of his past in dreams and the stresses of his present in fleeting moments, wracked by a guilt and pain he does not know how to express directly nor communicate to himself and others. For instance, he breaks into sobs alone the night that Pierrot is missing.

Secretive: Georges keeps his suspicions of Majid's culpability and his own childhood memories from his wife, even as they work together to uncover who and what is behind the tapes. He lies to her immediately after his first visit to Majid and does not want to divulge the truth of the surveillance nor Majid's suicide to the couple's friends .

Detached: Georges is quite literally distanced from Anne, consistently walking ahead of her – in the earliest scenes of the film (scene 2), leaving the police station and at one of Pierrot's swim practices. He demonstrates a disregard for her, or at least a desire to operate independently of his wife.

Anne Laurent

In many ways, Anne serves as a foil to her husband, but she also can be quick to anger and secretive, such as with her friendship and possible affair with Pierre. She wears her emotions on her sleeve as a wife and a mother, apparently taking on the majority of the reproductive household labor, but she also works in publishing.

Honest: She tells their friends the truth about the surveillance that the family is facing, while Georges instructs her to lie to them about what is going on. She is insistent on open communication and honesty, whereas Georges is taciturn and vague, shutting her out of his anxieties about Majid and the tapes.

Passionate: She is more emotive than Georges, rebelling against her exclusion from her husband's emotional life, often in outright rage. She cries openly to Pierre, a married friend of the Laurents, when they meet in a café . Her role as 'moral compass' of her marriage is complicated by the unresolved question of whether she is having an affair with Pierre. While Pierrot suspects this affair and the film depicts Pierre and Anne as having a close and emotional relationship, the question of whether there is a romantic extramarital affair taking place is left unanswered.

Majid

Majid appears to live alone, or perhaps with his son, in a working-class suburb of Paris. His innocuous, gracious nature as an adult contrasts with Georges' imagination of him as a foreboding or even threatening child in his dreams and memories.

Kind: Majid is remarkably mild-mannered, warm, and welcoming when Georges visits him, offering him a seat, and showing him no trace of anger or ill-will. Even Georges' boss notes that after having been sent the tape of Majid and Georges' conversation, Majid does not appear at all aggressive

Distressed Majid is clearly traumatized, though, by his childhood, the loss of his parents, and likely also by the experience of being racialized in France – Majid's son suggests as much when confronting Georges towards the end of the film. He sobs after Georges first visits him, as the tape from his own apartment depicts. His trauma forcefully makes itself known when Majid kills himself by slitting his own throat in front of Georges.

Dramatic: Majid's suicide is exceptionally violent. His demand for Georges to be present for it intensifies the suicide as a statement of anger and revenge. The shocking suicide, in which he slits his throat just as he killed a chicken in Georges's childhood memory, is arguably the climax of the film.

Majid's son:

Majid appears to live with his father at least part of the time. He is a teenager, a few years older than Pierrot. He is an intense, forceful, and self-possessed young adult, in contrast to his father's more subdued nature.

Confrontational: Majid's son is more confrontational than his father, saying out loud the things Majid will not: for instance (scene 35), that Georges deprived Majid of an education,

Volatile: He is the one to 'start screaming' while in police custody, causing himself and Majid to be 'locked up,' as Georges reports.

Confident: However, Majid's son is self-assured, showing no fear of Georges or Georges' colleagues and remaining measured as Georges breaks down during their confrontation.

THEMES

SOCIETY

Colonialism: Many critics and commentators have noted the film's thematization of the French postcolonial condition and the widespread repression or outright amnesia of colonial events in the country. The surveillance of the Laurent family could be considered as a kind of retribution or what Aimé Césaire has called the "boomerang effect" of colonization in his book *Discourse on Colonialism*. The film makes explicit reference to the massacre that took place in Paris on October 17, 1961, at the height of the Algerian War of Independence when French National Police killed many of the 30,000

protestors who were demonstrating against continued French colonization of Algeria. The French press did not acknowledge this massacre, which killed between 200 and 300 Algerians, until 1998. Georges tells Anne that it was in this massacre that Majid's parents disappeared, having likely been drowned in the Seine by the police. Pierrot's success as a competitive swimmer is arguably also an oblique and ironic reference to the many deaths by drowning during the Seine massacre. Other afterlives and ongoing machinations of European colonialism haunt the film, such as the news footage of crises in the Middle East that plays in the background of the Laurents' home as they begin to worry Pierrot is missing.

Race: Racial difference is also thematized in *Caché*. Outside the police office, we see the Laurents' behavior towards other racial minorities; Georges, for example, screams at a Black cyclist on the street, calling him a 'dickhead' and 'idiot' for nearly hitting Georges. While the majority of their friends are white, they have a Black guest at their dinner party. The Laurents, then, are portrayed as part of a liberal or left-leaning artistic elite, not a right-wing and overtly racist part of French society. Nevertheless, their treatment of racialized persons is varying and intersects with other categories of difference, such as class and gender. In other words, they behave very differently towards the Black male cyclist on the street than towards their Black female friend at dinner.

PSYCHOLOGY

Dreams: Georges' dreams of his childhood with Majid punctuate the film. The dreams are presented in the same realist style as the rest of the film, and it is impossible to know whether Georges is recalling events that have actually happened or merely imagining them. The vivid and violent dreams that clearly upset Georges contrast with his insistence that he does not remember what happened with Majid. While he prefers to 'forget' the events of his childhood and what happened to Majid in his waking life, both Georges's dreams and the tapes force him to relive and remember. Other characters touch on the subject of dreams. "I guess I just dreamt it all," says Anne to Georges, in disbelief he won't confide in her about his 'hunch' regarding who he thinks has sent the tapes. "I must be dreaming," says the Black cyclist in his confrontation with Georges, insisting that Georges had himself stepped into the cyclist's path without first looking. And Georges' mother remarks that it is normal to dream of one's childhood as one gets older.

Trauma: Trauma is in many ways the thematic engine of the film, on the scale of interpersonal conflict (between Majid and Georges) as well as geopolitical crisis (French (post)colonial brutality and police violence, in the past as well as the present). Themes associated with trauma, such as misremembering events and the compulsion to repeat traumatizing events, play out in the film, as well. As noted above, what 'actually' happened in Georges and Majid's childhood remains somewhat of an open question; it is the original event of trauma that can never be fully integrated into one's memory. Because of this indeterminacy, Georges and Majid restage their conflict in the present, each (re)traumatizing the other with accusations, surveillance, and threats.

Memory: The way in which Georges is forced to remember his childhood with Majid can be interpreted as a critique of the lack of public remembrance culture or social memory around the French colonization of Algeria in general, and the Seine massacre in particular. The depiction of memories in the film, like dreams, is potentially unreliable; for instance, did a young Majid actually threaten Georges after killing the chicken, or did Georges simply imagine Majid to be menacing, as he reported to his parents? Georges's repression – his refusal to acknowledge the violence to which he subjected Majid as a child, and the deaths of Majid's parents at the anti-colonial protest – mirrors the broader societal refusal to confront France's colonial history and violent repression of dissent. Memories, both personal and societal, appear only in flashes, through Georges's brief memory-images (such as of Majid as a child with a bloodied mouth) or remarks on the Seine massacre so brief one could miss them.

Childhood: Themes of childhood pervade the film, first and foremost as the events of Georges' and Majid's childhood drive the action of the film's plot in the present. The drawings that accompany the tapes are rendered in a remarkably child-like style, suggesting either a young creator or one with 'stunted' growth. Pierrot, the Laurents' son, is on the cusp of adulthood, "battling with puberty," as Georges reports to his mother. He is young enough for his parents to worry about his innocence, but old enough for them to initially suspect that his friends have pulled an elaborate prank and are behind the tapes. Over the course of the film, it becomes clear that Pierrot picks up on far more of the subtext in his parents' marriage and family's stalking than Georges and Anne may presume. The theme of inheritance from parent to child also appears with Majid's son, who emerges towards the end of the

film as a key suspect in the sending of the tapes, and who is well aware of his father's past and childhood with the Laurent family. The implied closeness between Majid and his son contrasts with the distance between Pierrot and his parents. While Georges and Anne clearly love their son deeply, Georges struggles to show affection to his son, whose whereabouts are unknown to both Georges and Anne at different instances in the film. The implied relationship or even collaboration between Majid's son and Pierrot at the end of the film suggests many possible reactions to parental inheritances in the younger generation.

Surveillance: The film examines the politics of watching, voyeurism, the gaze, and surveillance on multiple registers, notably in the wake of 9/11and its ensuing crisis of securitization. The tapes watch the Laurent family, and Majid; the Laurent family watches the tapes; the viewer of the film watches them watching. After the film's first shot, the viewer is never entirely sure that subsequent ones won't turn out to be tapes, such that the audience is watching onscreen what the Laurents are. The Laurents' home is even tellingly located on a street named "Rue de Iris," perhaps an allusion to the eye. Other shots in the film play with this confusion – whether the viewer of the film is watching 'live' what happens onscreen, or a recording of something filmed previously from within the world of the film itself – such as a tape of Georges' talk show, which appears to be playing 'live' before suddenly pausing and rewinding, revealing Georges and his colleague to be in an editing room (scene 33). Most scholarship on the film considers the tapes of the Laurent family to invert the typical direction of surveillance: it is now the bourgeois French family that is vulnerable to the surveilling gaze of the colonized subject (Majid and his son). Georges and Anne become increasingly tense as the tapes continue to accrue. Although they cannot comprehend the puzzle of the tapes and the mysterious drawings that accompany them, they feel incredibly threatened, as if their comfortable home, locked behind both a door and a gate, is being penetrated.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1) What do the formal elements of different scenes – the framing, camera angle, cuts, and speed/stillness of the camera – achieve in the film?
2) *Caché* plays with the 'whodunnit' or mystery genre, though Haneke never makes it clear who is culpable for the filming of the Laurents' home, sending the tapes, and creation of the accompanying drawings. (The director has also declined to provide closure on this matter in interviews about the film). Who do you believe sent the tapes? What might the implications be, depending on who is culpable? Why do you think the director left the film open-ended, with unresolved questions?
3) What do you think the overall intention of the film is?