Newsletter of the Film/Alfred Hitchcock Special Interest Group

The MacGuffin

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EDITORIAL

John Buchan (1875-1940) wrote stirring travel books and wonderfully 'picaresque' adventure tales, i.e. about a hero on an exciting journey, and he simultaneously pursued a career in public life. He became governor-general of Canada in the same year, 1935, that Alfred Hitchcock made a memorable film version of his most famous story, 'The Thirty-nine Steps'. In view of his eminence, perhaps it's surprising that some of the attitudes he expressed - including towards Jews and homosexuals - were no more enlightened than those held in the general community of his day. Then again, perhaps it isn't so surprising. The 'uncomplicated' nature of Buchan's melodramatic tales is one of the things that makes them compelling reading (much of the time), even today. There's a vigour in their telling which indicates a 'sublimation' of the self's darker side - a darker side which can only be permitted to show itself in the stories' villains. Perhaps, too, Buchan's attested popularity and success in his public career were due, in some degree, to the lack of 'complication' he also needed to display there.

When Hitchcock moved to America in 1939, he left behind his purely 'Buchanesque' self (if it could ever be said to have existed): 'adventure' films like **Foreign Correspondent** (1940), **Saboteur** (1942) and **North by Northwest** (1959) notwithstanding. The 'new' and deeper-running Hitchcock of the 1940s can be felt by a viewer of **Notorious** (1946), and I think it's not the least of the virtues of critic Adrian Martin's article on the film in this 'MacGuffin' that he most deftly indicates the dark currents and the shifting aspects located there. Not for nothing does Adrian call his article 'Around **Notorious**', for as he explains: 'I have not wanted to work towards a systematic textual analysis ... [but] have endeavoured to "circle" the film as I believe the film itself circles its characters, situations, themes.'

I'm not saying that Hitchcock in America 'forgot' John Buchan, exactly. A key ingredient in **Notorious** is the relationship of Alex (Claude Rains) to his mother, the immensely intimidating Mrs Sebastian (Leopoldine Konstantin) - a relationship which Hitchcock seems to have taken holus-bolus from Buchan's 'The Three Hostages' (Chapter VIII, 'The Blind Spinner'). And the climax of the same novel - a confrontation of hero Richard Hannay and the villain called Medina high up in some Scottish crags - conforms to a 'picaresque' tradition which is discussed elsewhere in this 'MacGuffin' in relation to **North by Northwest**.

What I **am** saying is that Hitchcock in America became a truer artist than John Buchan could ever have been. Some of the tension between Hitchcock the public entertainer and Hitchcock the 'serious' artist is conveyed in a recent book edited by Slavoj Zizek, an authority on the work of psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan (d. 1981) and on the relevance of Lacan's work to an understanding of popular culture. Zizek's book is reviewed in this issue.

Overall, I guess that this 'MacGuffin' is primarily one for the Hitchcock scholars. Next time, we may have a more varied bill of fare. Thanks to the many people who have helped bring this issue about, not least our letter-writers and contributors. And a warm welcome to the many new readers in Australia who heard about us from watching Bill Collins on TV host a wonderful Hitchcock 'retrospective'.

To everyone, good viewing.

Ken

LETTERS

Jeff Cross, Wheelers Hill, Victoria, Australia

As an aspiring film buff I am gratified to have acquired access to such an informative publication on Alfred Hitchcock. Because I'm only 17 I have not yet seen half of Hitchcock's films, namely his earlier ones like **The Lodger** and the 1934 version of **The Man Who Knew Too Much**. Some months ago I wrote a critique on **Psycho** for a media studies CAT [Common Assessment Task], therefore I hope you don't publish too much on that film, because after having studied every possible source on **Psycho** in the entire universe I've become sort of sick of it.

Did you hear an American cable TV network are making **The Birds II**, starring a wrinkled Tippie Hedren? Don't be surprised to see the robot penguins from **Batman Returns** pop up as stunt players. On a more mature note, I look forward to reading 'The MacGuffin'. Hitchcock has certainly become one of my five favourite directors, along with Scorsese, Spielberg, Coppola and Truffaut.

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Professor James Naremore, Department of English, Indiana University, USA

Thanks for the two issues of 'The MacGuffin', which I enjoyed a great deal. You can be sure I'll remain a faithful subscriber. Incidentally, your review of my book on acting [in 'MacGuffin' 4] is quite accurate and fair. I wish I had realized that the washroom scene in **North by Northwest** derives from 'The Confidential Agent' - a book I read many years ago. As you'll see, the introduction to my [forthcoming] Rutgers Press edition makes a good deal of the affinities among Hitchcock, Greene, and Ambler. I would have used that reference to Greene had I been aware of it.

[Editor's note. For the record, the incident in Greene's book involving a woman's razor comes at the end of Part One ('The Hunted').]

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John Reid, 16 Carob Place, Cherrybrook, NSW 2126, Australia

I enjoyed 'MacGuffin' 9. Enclosed is cheque for issues 1-8.

I have a number of original posters of Hitchcock's films. Do you know if there are many collectors in Australia?

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NEWS

(Readers are urged to send in reports and cuttings for this feature. Both general-interest and Hitchcock-specific items are sought.)

More light on 'Shadow'

Playwright Thornton Wilder's script for Hitchcock's **Shadow of a Doubt** (1943) was completed on board a train from California to Washington, D.C., where Wilder was due to start work with the Army's Psychological Warfare Department. Director Hitchcock and the film's genial producer, Jack Skirball, a former rabbi, went along too, and the three men held story conferences all over the train. By journey's end the script was finished, although Hitchcock and the others all felt that additional details of small-town family life were needed. Later, Hitchcock asked comedy playwright Sally Benson to contribute what he delightedly called 'dangling dialogue' - dialogue spoken at cross-purposes where nobody is really listening to what anybody else is saying. And Hitchcock's wife, Alma Reville, then polished the script, knowingly making provision for her husband's famous 'touches'.

Pull out the Zizek bits for a stand-alone piece on how he/Lacan are no more (perhaps less) perceptive than S

These insights into the making of **Shadow** are contained in a detailed article by George Turner in the May issue of 'American Cinematographer'. Turner notes that 'Broadway star Patricia Collinge, winningly vulnerable as the mother, also wrote the romantic dialogue between [Teresa] Wright and MacDonald Carey'. So the film was definitely something of an ensemble effort, a circumstance which fits well with the story's emphasis on a family and its surrounding community.

Interiors

Maverick director Paul Cox (**Man of Flowers**, **Vincent**) has finished shooting **Exile** in outback Tasmania, and will leave Australia for his next three films. The first is a film set in Israel, to be followed by a film on Nijinsky in Russia and the third, a film with the Greek actress Irene Pappas, to be made in India.

Dutch-born Cox, 53, who looks more like Rembrandt or Van Gogh every time he's interviewed for 'The Movie Show' (SBS-TV), told viewers recently: 'I'm very interested in making films about the interior, about what people think and feel. Our silences are far more important than the words we speak.'

Ozu and O. Henry

Recently discovered in a private collection in Japan was Yasujiro Ozu's 1929 comedy **A Straightforward Boy/Tokkan-kozo**, which had long been considered lost. It turns out to be an example of the director (**Tokyo Story**, **I Was Born, But ...**) at his most Hollywood. In fact, the story is O. Henry's admirable 'The Ransom of Red Chief', about a kidnapped boy so exasperating his captors that they release him, later filmed by Howard Hawks as his contribution to the portmanteau film **O. Henry's Full House** (1952). Ozu is said to have shot his version in just four days.

Kissing makes it better

Hitchcock's **Notorious** (1946), set in Brazil, probably holds the record for the longest screen-kiss, that between Ingrid Bergman and Cary Grant in a hotel room. Obviously impressed, Brazilian promoters recently organised a 'Kissathon' with cars as prizes. After 62 days, two couples were both announced winners.

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BOOK REVIEW

Zizek, Slavoj (ed.): 'Everything You Always Wanted to Know about Lacan (But Were Afraid to Ask Hitchcock)' (Verso, London & New York, 1992; paperback)

We are the hollow men
We are the stuffed men
Leaning together
Headpiece filled with straw. Alas!
- T.S. Eliot, 'The Hollow Men'

This, then, is the last misapprehension to be clarified: the ultimate 'secret' of **Psycho**, the secret epitomized by Norman's gaze into the camera ... is that this Beyond is in itself hollow, devoid of any positive content: there is no depth of 'soul' in it (Norman's gaze is ultimately 'soulless', like the gaze of monsters and the living dead) - as such, this Beyond **coincides with gaze itself**: 'beyond appearance there is not the Thing-in-itself, there is the gaze' - it is as if Lacan's proposition bears directly on Norman's final gaze into the camera; it is as if it were made to summarize the ultimate lesson of **Psycho**.
- Slavoj Zizek, 'Everything You Always Wanted to Know about Lacan', p. 257

That we abhor nothingness so much is simply another way of saying that we will life so much, and that we are nothing but this will and know nothing but it alone. But we now turn ... to those [saintly beings] who have

overcome the world, ... and who then merely wait to see the last trace of the will vanish with the body that is animated by that trace. Then, instead of the ... never-satisfied and never-dying hope that constitutes the life-dream of the man who wills, we see that peace that is higher than all reason ... whose mere reflection in the countenance, as depicted by Raphael and Correggio, is a complete and certain gospel.
- Arthur Schopenhauer, 'The World as Will and Representation', Vol. I

In 'MacGuffin' 4 I wrote an article on **Psycho** (1960) which suggested that the story of Norman Bates parodies both saintliness and creative imagination. The article proposed that everyone in the film is driven by blind Will, but that Marion Crane's unwitting allusion in the opening scene to Milton's famous sonnet, 'On His Blindness', may indicate the possibility of a different order of seeing, located 'offscreen'. Such seeing may have been granted Milton when, instead of despairing at his literal blindness and the waste of his 'one talent which is death to hide', he found serenity in writing his sonnet and then patiently 'waiting' before later composing 'Paradise Lost' and 'Paradise Regained'.

My article quoted another 'religious' poet, T.S. Eliot, in order to characterise the condition of both Milton and, in a sense, Norman Bates the last time we see him: 'complete simplicity/ (Costing not less than everything)'. Now, clearly that condition is very like the one evoked by Schopenhauer in the passage given above. Notice, especially, Schopenhauer's description of how the saintly person patiently **waits** 'to see the last trace of the will vanish with the body', thereby attaining 'that peace that is higher than all reason'. (Schopenhauer's abhorrence of suicide is related to his thinking here, something I'll take up shortly.)

However, Slavoj Zizek would reverse most of this. He's effectively saying that the saintly countenances depicted by a Raphael or a Correggio are themselves a parody of the truth - which is that there is **only** 'the gaze'. He's saying that Norman Bates is us, the viewers of Hitchcock's film, inasmuch that everything that happens in the film is animated by our gaze. Accordingly, the film ends when Norman gazes back at us, and we leave the cinema neither more nor less edified, in a sense, than if we had collectively looked in a mirror - and seen ourselves looking.

Hitchcock scholars will recognise that idea as coming from William Rothman's 'Hitchcock: The Murderous Gaze' (1982). Rothman's book is a major and painstaking work, if an overweening one. Its author would have us believe that there's just one essential Hitchcockian 'mystery' and that now he's solved it for us. Perhaps inevitably, the general approach taken in Zizek's book proves to be only slightly more open. Its various 'Marxist' contributors - several of whom teach with Zizek at the University of Ljubljana - too often (I suggest) interpret the films in ways that are ingenious but finally seem pat. Here's an instance. At least three contributors refer to how Hitchcock's films imply the existence of a place beyond the visible. Frederic Jameson's 'Spatial Systems in **North by Northwest**' does so by tracing the narrative to its double climax atop Mount Rushmore and in the train immediately afterwards, where at the literal edge of the film's world an 'ideal marriage' is transacted, implying 'a concept of the private' that's 'beyond representation' (p. 52). Alenka Zupancic follows up with a piece on the 1930 **Murder!** ('A Perfect Place to Die: Theatre in Hitchcock's Films') reminding us that the acrobat-murderer Handell Fane commits suicide by leaping from a trapeze - yet by **not looking at the audience** below him may be said to have escaped into a non-public space or 'dimension' (pp. 102-3). (Perhaps you'll hear yourself quoting Andrew Marvell: 'The Grave's a fine and private place'.) And Zizek's summary-essay ('"In His Bold Gaze My Ruin Is Writ Large"') makes **several** similar points concerning **Psycho**, among them a reference to Lacan's notion of a hypothetical subject dwelling '"beyond the wall of language"' (p. 245) and a description of the film as one which forces the viewer 'to **identify with the abyss beyond identification**' (p. 226).

Here's my point. Having conceptualised, with Hitchcock's help, an offscreen place or 'abyss' that can hardly be represented - surely not altogether unlike the Jesuit poet G.M. Hopkins's 'no-man-fathomed' cliffs of the mind - Zizek and his contributors interpret the concept only in the dreariest Lacanian terms. The imagination and the spirit seem to have **no** place with them. It's as if such things had been **foreclosed** from their consideration. In the light of the book's essay, discussed below, on **The Wrong Man**, which makes considerable play with the idea of foreclosure, this omission seems ironic.

I'll try and explain further. Zizek discusses notions of the Lacanian 'stain' and of the **unheimlich**, the uncanny: both of them, 'intrusions' in the film which you might think invite the viewer to profoundly question what is shown. Yet Zizek sees both things only as perversities which, respectively, **induce** the gaze and **remind** us of the 'threatening overproximity' (p. 244) of what we see. (His logic here is that the **unheimlich** signals 'absolute Strangeness' and thereby 'indexes its opposite'.) Now, I think Zizek tends to see 'stains' wherever it suits him (see below). Equally, he tends to overlook such things if they're inconvenient. For instance, in discussing **Psycho**, he makes no reference to the moment when Marion half-quotes a line from Milton. As to what the filmmakers intended by that allusion, it may help if I cite two parallel cases (which I also referred to in 'MacGuffin' 4). In **The Trouble With Harry** (1956), the eccentric Doctor Greenbow stumbles about quoting, barely audibly, Shakespeare's Sonnet 116 to the effect that 'Love alters not with [Time's] brief hours and weeks,/ But bears it out even to the edge of doom.' And in **Marnie** (1964), Mark Rutland misquotes some lines from one of Emerson's 'Voluntaries' - a misquotation gleefully pointed out by Lil, Mark's sister-in-law. Here the (ideal?) viewer-listener recalls the passage correctly, together with the equally well-known lines that immediately precede it in the poem: 'So nigh is grandeur to our dust,/ So near is God to man'. Thus in each case - a half-quoted line, a mumbled recitation, a misquotation - it's fair to say that Hitchcock is being both facetious and deadly earnest. In hinting to the audience at a broader perspective than meets the eye (a God's-eye view, even), he allows himself a certain play of wit; but most of all, he elevates 'the commonplace in life to a higher level'. At least, that's what he told Truffaut he intended in **The Trouble With Harry**. To illustrate the general idea, Hitchcock cited the image of blood suddenly spilt in a rustling brook. He called it a case of dramatic 'counterpoint'. But for our purpose, what matters is how such literal 'staining' may suggest something 'higher' ...

In sum, I would have to charge Zizek and several of his contributors with lacking imagination. Several of them, but not all. I'll largely exempt from my charge the two contributors who hail from 'Cahiers du Cinéma': Pascal Bonitzer and Michel Chion. Both of them write elegantly and without dogma. Chion especially. As for Bonitzer,[1] his best piece is the one on suspense, which I discuss later. Another of his essays, called 'The Skin and the Straw', isn't quite as satisfying. For instance, when it cites the passage from 'The Hollow Men' which heads this review, you can't help noticing how facilely Bonitzer uses Eliot's verse in order to leap from the taxidermist's-workshop scene in **The Man Who Knew Too Much** (1956) to a discussion of Norman Bates's favourite hobby in **Psycho**, and then to this conclusion:

> Such is Hitchcock's vision of [the hollow] man. ... This sombre image is our own. It is as if we were led by a kind of go-between, a double who, on the screen-mirror, moves at random ..., and as if we thought of ourselves as traversing with that double a domain of appearances, only to fall vertiginously into the void which constitutes us. (p. 184)

You may almost want to breathe a 'Quod erat demonstrandum' to yourself after that! (Bonitzer's essay was written in 1984, i.e. soon after the publication of Rothman's Hitchcock book.)

Moreover, the meaning of **The Man Who Knew Too Much** perhaps isn't as clear-cut as Bonitzer implies. To some degree, Hitchcock and his scriptwriter John Michael Hayes seem to have conceived their film as a commentary on the notion of 'kismet' (fate, destiny) following the widespread popularity of the stage musical of that name - and, to a rather lesser extent, of Vincente Minnelli's 1955 film version. Beginning with North African scenes which refer to the Islamic religion and incorporate, at one point, the Doris Day character's complacent singing of 'Que sera, sera' ('What will be, will be'), the story soon moves to London and successive climaxes emphasising different aspects of individual action and mutual help: first, James Stewart's ignominious escape from a locked nonconformist chapel by climbing its bell-rope; second, Day's deflection of a would-be assassin's aim by her scream during a performance of 'The Storm Cloud Cantata' at a packed Royal Albert Hall; and third, husband and wife (Stewart and Day) working concertedly at last to rescue their kidnapped son who is being held prisoner in a foreign embassy. Here, Day again sings 'Que sera, sera' but no longer complacently or blindly, and Stewart **again** ascends - a flight of stairs this time - but now specifically in order to locate the boy, who has heard his mother's singing and has cried out in answer.

Whether all these events amount to the working of kismet is something the film studiously avoids telling us. What it does seem to insist on is that, put crudely, two heads are better than one. Three may be even better. Now, given such human interaction, we may infer that the individual **is** more than a cipher, at least potentially. So here's a related point. Bonitzer's quoting of 'The Hollow Men' is legitimate to the extent that it respects both Eliot's and Hitchcock's meanings. As noted above, Eliot is a 'religious' poet. Bonitzer, though, rather neglects how the poem as a whole, although it may seem at times to be mocking Christian liturgy, doesn't rule out the **possibility** that the poet will eventually find a 'higher' peace. Which is to say, Eliot's isn't exactly a nihilist vision. Similarly, the inclusion in Hitchcock's film of various religions (Islam, nonconformism, an implied Anglicanism, and likewise a hint of pantheism) alongside several other forms of authority (the police, the state, royalty, art itself) may in the first instance do no more than remind us of the sheer multiplicity and diversity of **all** life's forms. But then, we may come to infer what Schopenhauer called that 'never-satisfied ... hope that constitutes the life-dream of the man who wills' - a hope which, in some sense, has 'religious' implication. As we'll see, it's also inextricably part of Hitchcockian suspense.

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I've begun with this rather inconclusive foray outside Zizek's book in order to nevertheless give what I think is a reasonable picture of the films' intent: which is to be, up to a point, all things to all people, or 'what you will'. In my view, that intent isn't the same as 'Lacanianism', although the two may overlap at times. Actually, I think Hitchcock's purpose resembles Shakespeare's, in the sense implied by Kierkegaard (1813-55) when he praised the dramatist for his 'objectivity'. Significantly, the 1956 version of **The Man Who Knew Too Much** was going to be called **Into Thin Air**, thus evoking the famous passage from 'The Tempest' beginning

> Our revels now are ended. These our actors,
> As I foretold you, were all spirits and
> Are melted into air, into thin air.

But perhaps because Hitchcock had already found the title of one of his films (the 1932 **Rich and Strange**) in the same play, he chose not to repeat the procedure. Nevertheless, and without contradicting what I've said above, the theme of life's insubstantiality always informs his work, often in quirky and unexpected ways. Michel Chion's delightful essay on the 1938 **The Lady Vanishes** ('The Cipher of Destiny') sees that film as 'a veritable narrative of initiation' (p. 138), a succession of literal and/or metaphoric vanishings or 'tunnels' leading to an appropriately musical ending - for, as Chion shows, the whole film has involved tunes carried inside people's heads. In the final scene, the tune of Mendelssohn's 'Wedding March' almost 'blacks out' the vital coded message, i.e. another tune. But now two heads again prove better than one (or three heads better than two), and all ends happily. Something **has** come of nothing - almost like one [illegible] film's conjuring tricks. And this time, at least, there's no nullifying gaze in sight.

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Alenka Zupancic's essay on **Murder!**, which I've already briefly mentioned, draws on the philosophy of Kant (a seminal influence on both Schopenhauer and Lacan) in order to suggest that the effeminate Handell Fane's suicide represents a triumph over his patrician opponent, Sir John:

> If, throughout the entire film, Fane is a mere shadow of Sir John, at the end he will radically subvert this situation by his act of 'pure autonomy': now Sir John emerges as nothing but Fane's pale shadow. (p. 98)

Unfortunately, Zupancic here not only jettisons common sense - which Hitchcock, at some level, always respected - but she misses how Fane's final gesture at best only **parodies** true spiritual attainment (thereby anticipating the end of **Psycho**). Schopenhauer saw that Kant was wrong in thinking suicide a pure moral act, what Zupancic would call an accession to Lacan's 'the Real' (cf. pp. 94-5). Crucially, Fane's suicide is a deliberate act, and the note he leaves Sir John shows well enough that his mind hasn't been unhinged. So Bryan Magee's 'The Philosophy of Schopenhauer' might almost have been referring to **Murder!**:

> the man who commits suicide does so (unless the balance of his mind is disturbed) because he sees it as the lesser of two evils - for instance as the only escape from an intolerable state of consciousness, or ... from some ignominious public disgrace - and therefore as his self-interested preference in the circumstances.[2]

Heightened File

Magee notes how Schopenhauer anticipates Freud (as so often) in considering suicide 'a form of aggression and quite specifically an assertion of self-will. "Just because the suicide cannot cease willing, he ceases to live."'[3]

Exactly. And when Fane, murderer and female impersonator, is **aggressively** hunted down by Sir John, we see him finally (or penultimately) enter, like Norman Bates, a state which is scarcely other than pure willing, before leaping to his death from the trapeze. If this does in fact represen a triumph, it's a hollow - and a fleeting - one indeed.[4] By the same token, we obviously can't say that **Sir John**'s victory is unequivocal. The paradigm displayed here is familiar from later films. For instance, Sir John is to Fane much as Devlin is to Sebastian in **Notorious** (1946), as Keane (and, in the background, the sadistic 'hanging judge', Horfield) is to Latour in **The Paradine Case** (1947), and as Sam is to Norman Bates in **Psycho**. Each time, the outwardly weaker, possibly homosexual, character wins a measure of our sympathy, typically because of the way the 'straight' character too readily, or brashly, assumes a superiority over him. And when the straight character nevertheless wins the ultimate contest, with a woman as prize, the aggression involved is such that the audience feels only a very mixed satisfaction (In this connection, though, you can't easily forget Hitchcock's private admission to Bernard Herrmann that he would have **enjoyed** being 'a hanging judge'. See 'MacGuffin' 8.)

The novel on which **Murder!** is based, Clemence Dane and Helen Simpson's 'Enter Sir John' (1929), is explicit about actor-manager Sir John's mixed motives, first in questioning the conviction for murder of the actress Martella Baring (the film's Nora), then in determining to track down the real culprit. And the book ends with Sir John relishing the publicity value of the lavish engagement party he is staging for himself and Martella. In fact, he freely acknowledges his self-interest. Yet I can't agree with Zizek who says (p. 246) that 'the shocking authenticity' of Fane's death shows up 'Sir John's activity [as] mere performance and his discourse [as] mere semblance'. On the contrary. Although Sir John has fallen into lazy bachelor ways and set professional habits,[5] it's emphasised in both novel and film that once he's aroused by Nora's/Martella's plight, he legitimately decides to apply the skills of his art to real life, and that this enterprise is what eventually 'saves' both of them. Closer to Hitchcock's own understanding, I suspect, is the view expressed by philosopher George Santayana (1863-1952) and quoted by Eric Bentley in 'The Life of the Drama':

> To embroider upon experience [i.e. to play or act] is not to bear false witness against one's neighbour, but to bear true witness to oneself.[6]

Such a non-Puritanic notion of maturity (as Bentley calls it) would seem to bring us straight to the heart of the film/theatre experience. Of course, one reason that such films as **Murder!**, **The 39 Steps** (1935), **Stage Fright** (1950), and **I Confess** (1953) climax in a theatre is to give us the (levelling) reminder that 'all the world's a stage'. But there's also an ironic reason: the 'villains' of these films (Fane, Professor Jordan, Jonathan Cooper, Otto Keller) are characters who either have themselves been rendered mute or have been denied access to any form of public platform, or have been forced to shun 'exposure' altogether. Hence, if these scenes constitute, in Zupancic's Lacanian phrase, the inscription of truth 'in the symbolic universe of the film' (p. 81), by the same token I don't think we should overlook the complex moral weight they carry.

Hitchcock's own ambivalence regarding some of the matters touched on above - among them, the 'responsibility' of the artist who plumbs a 'private' inner space - is most apparent in **Rope** (1948). The collusion of two sadistic young killers, Brandon and Phillip, provides a case where two heads are definitely **not** better than one; rather, theirs is the worst kind of **folie à deux**. Nor can their crime be said to have redeeming features, despite the witty 'theatricality' with which they at once display and conceal it. (The single set evidently represents a stage, but only at the end does the Symbolic make its presence felt. Before then, the Imaginary has had free play.) Moreover, an older - and lamed - character, Rupert, is effectively both the boys' guilty 'parent' and a surrogate for the film's audience which itself isn't 'innocent' of the crime committed. I wish that Zizek's book had more closely investigated these various matters of conscience, and especially those which seem to bear on the filmmaker's (as opposed to the audience's) view of things.

In a 'Schopenhauerian' interpretation, **Rope** may be seen to proceed as if the initial crime symbolised the murderous nature of Will itself; the subsequent 'theatricality', in which everyone participates with varying degrees of irresponsibility, the play of Representation; and the film's climax, a glimpsed fusing of Will **and** Representation - noumenon and phenomenon - in a healthier understanding, which nevertheless must always remain both tainted (as in Original Sin) and partial, unless some saintly being, or an exceptional artist, escapes the ties of Will altogether. Clearly, Rupert is no such being, as we're reminded in several ways. For instance, in denying Brandon the status of God ('Did you think you were God, Brandon?'), he thereby denies it to everyone else as well. In firing the gun at the end, to summon help, his resort to such a firearm is ambiguous, and virtually signals his complicity in his own wounding in the war. (He has sustained a further wound - to his hand this time - in wrestling the gun from Brandon, moments earlier.)

Several times Zizek's book uses a **virtual** Schopenhauerian terminology, as when he says (p. 222) that 'Once the viewer is filled out with the Will-to-Enjoy, Hitchcock closes the trap by simply realising the viewer's desire ... [whereupon] the viewer obtains more than he/she asked for (the act of murder in all its nauseous **presence** ...)'. Here Zizek cites not **Rope** but the murder of Gromek in **Torn Curtain** (1966). Later, returning to **Psycho**, he draws on the classics and mentions 'the veil painted by Parrhasius which brings forth the illusion of the content hidden behind it ...' (p. 257). Such a veil functions, in Zizek's view of Hitchcock, like the veil of Maya (illusion) to which I referred when analysing **Torn Curtain** in 'MacGuffin' 8. Overall, we may note that where Lacan (and therefore Zizek) modifies Kant by claiming that 'beyond appearance there is not the Thing-in-itself, there is the gaze', Schopenhauer also modifies Kant by identifying the Thing-in-itself with Will and saying that 'beyond' it there is just mystery or ... what you will (which, though, can only be mere **'phenomenon of the brain'** - see below). True, if you were to suspend your willing for even a moment, as Schopenhauer says superior art sometimes allows, you might glimpse various pure Ideas of truth, no doubt including the suprasensible Idea of Reason - which is what Zizek tells us the Lacanian psychoanalyst represents (p. 262) ...

Zizek/Lacan follow S's resort

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Another Lacanian term employed by Zizek is 'destitution subjective' (p. 254), implying: to (attempt to) be rid of subjectivity, i.e. of what Schopenhauer would call the state of willing. (Recall that Kierkegaard, who had read Schopenhauer, praised Shakespeare for his 'objectivity'.) Zizek tells us that Hitchcock's use of 'God's-eye' high-shots, as in **Psycho** when the camera looks down on the landing where Arbogast is killed, represents such an attainment, and **'is needed to clear the field of all subjective identifications'**. Further, 'it is only on this condition that the subjective point-of-view shot which follows it [of Arbogast's slashed face] is perceived not as a view of one of the diegetic subjects [i.e. of one of the characters] but as the impossible gaze of the Thing [i.e. of the murderous, and mysterious, 'Mother']'. With this reference to 'the Thing' (defined on p. 46 as implying an object 'endowed with sublime and lethal materiality'), we return, in effect, to the notion of 'the stain' (cf. p. 256) - although I wish (1) that Zizek had explained how the use here of a sudden cut from an extreme long-shot to an extreme close-up differs from Hitchcock's use of the same technique on many other occasions (e.g. the start of the scene with the farmer in **Torn Curtain**); and (2) that someone had reminded him that it isn't really 'Mother's' viewpoint we cut to from the high-shot, but that of Norman, a diegetic subject, **dressed up** as 'Mother' ...

Still, speaking of 'God's-eye' shots ... Hitchcock sometimes uses them in a way that is distinctly 'Schopenhauerian'! The memorable overhead view of Bodega Bay in **The Birds** (1963) always reminds me of a passage, cited in Magee's Schopenhauer book, from Turgenev, involving a view 'of the earth as seen from above, when the humans look small and unimportant and are locked in eternal struggle with blind forces which they cannot control'.[7] Turgenev's inspiration for that passage was the opening paragraph of the second volume of 'The World as Will and Representation', in which Schopenhauer reminds us that even from this 'godly' perspective what we see can still only be **'phenomenon of the brain**, [a view] ...encumbered by so many great and different **subjective** conditions that its supposed absolute reality vanishes ...' It may be significant that Zizek describes the shot in **The Birds** in a practically identical manner, although naturally his terminology is Lacanian:

> as soon as the birds enter the frame from behind the camera, the neutral 'objective' shot turns into the 'subjective' shot rendering the gaze of the obscene Thing, i.e. of the killing birds (p. 256)

Like 'Mother', the birds are both mysterious and murderous - so again we may seem free to choose either a

Schopenhauerian or a Lacanian interpretation. Notice, however, that Zizek doesn't draw the **other** principal **lesson** of the shot, the one concerning the relative unimportance of the humans running around 'blindly' on **the ground** ...

Here it seems fitting to turn to Hitchcock's **The Wrong Man** (1956), one of the director's most overtly Catholic films. Renata Salecl's essay on it, called 'The Right Man and the Wrong Woman', makes some acute and interesting comments, which I'll discuss shortly. But first, let's note how there's a sense in which the above-described shot from **The Birds** is at least doubly 'humbling'. Not only does the distant view of Bodega Bay make the disaster which strikes the town seem relatively unimportant, but we're reminded by the necessarily-subjective nature of the shot that we can't know the 'true' nature of what we see. Related to this, and perhaps more telling, is how birds are themselves terrestrial creatures which - as the character Mrs Bundy says - 'have been on this planet since archaeopteryx', i.e. since Jurassic times, and therefore long before humans! Now, in 'MacGuffin' 6 I described a pronounced 'evolution' motif operating in **The Wrong Man**, and noted how the characters barely begin to intuit the nature of the time-space-causality nexus which gives us our (subjective) knowledge of the world. Renata Salecl's otherwise stimulating essay misses some of this, and in particular misses some of the film's moral dimension.

Yet her weighty main argument, which certainly has moral implications, is this: Rose Balestrero's breakdown is an extension of her husband Manny's own, unacknowledged, 'psychosis' whereby he has striven to be the 'perfect father'. Salecl is quite specific about the mechanism which causes the family's disaster, and she shows how Manny's wrongful arrest for armed robbery is no more than the switch which sets that mechanism going. All along, Manny hasn't just sought to be a perfect or 'ideal' father; unconsciously, he has **denied** that achieving such a goal is impossible, i.e. that he's fallible. Moreover, the guilt which should attend Manny's denial has in him been totally **foreclosed** (p. 190). As Salecl puts it, 'Manny does not enter the dimension of guilt at all: he does not enter the relationship of symbolic debt'. Consequently, it's his family who bear the guilt instead.[8]

This may sound very conjectural. Nevertheless, the essay seems to me to be an insightful one, and to illuminate areas of Hitchcock's work generally.[9] I found myself remembering Edith Head's description of Hitchcock as a 'Rock of Gibralter' - and how a prominent Catholic acquaintance of mine once saw fit to describe himself the same way![10] A Rock of Gibralter, implies Salecl, is exactly what Manny aspires to be to his family, only in his case the end-result is that Rose 'assumes the role of a "public" madwoman [in order that] **his** madness can continue to wear the public mask of normality' (p. 193).

In short, Manny is another of Hitchcock's characters who tries to be God (or, at any rate, Christ). He seems to have misread his position as head-of-the-family which bestows on him Lacan's 'empty symbolic function of the Name-of-the-Father' (p. 190). Well, Hitchcock readily admitted to Truffaut that a fiction-film director should **play** at being God - no doubt having in mind the various aspects of a film that must be staged, or stage-managed. He also seemed willing in later years to go along with the public's image of him on the set as a kind of portly Buddha, all-seeing yet seldom moving! After reading Salecl, I think it likely that Hitchcock's films reflect certain dangers inherent in performing the 'master's' role. As to how conscious he was of making any such self-disclosure, that's another matter.

I'm saying that Salecl's essay stimulates us to modify, and expand, some of our previous thinking on Hitchcock, and therein lies its principal value. Its interpretation of **The Wrong Man** offers an informed explanation of Rose's breakdown,[11] which hitherto has looked to most viewers too sudden and unconvincing when it happens two-thirds of the way through the film. (Salecl doesn't say so, but perhaps the fact that the breakdown **does** seem so sudden is an indication that Hitchcock himself had only dimly come to grips with the phenomenon it represents.) Even so, the essay isn't always quite accurate. Salecl is wrong to claim that Manny never feels 'a single shred of guilt ... or ... a feeling of self-reproach' (p. 187). After Rose has entered a sanitarium, Manny tells his mother that 'You'd all be better off without me'. His mother responds by urging him to pray for strength, and soon afterwards the 'right man' is caught, signalling at least a partial alleviation of the family's nightmare.

Which may return us to the matter of a moral dimension. I would maintain that the fairest way of reading the film is to see both Manny **and** Rose as 'people who know too little'. I don't agree with Salecl (p. 186), nor with Zizek (cf. p. 218), that **'the story [of The Wrong Man] leaves us indifferent'** - even if, on this occasion, Hitchcock (somewhat like my Catholic acquaintance!) didn't exactly care to spell out his own limitations. One of the intriguing, even vertiginous, things about the film is how the very possibility of its director's being no less 'blind' than everyone else is artfully built into the film (see 'MacGuffin' 6) - a film whose admittedly bleak message includes how we are all flawed creatures, and weak.

Salecl splendidly describes the woman's psychology in **The Wrong Man**. What she doesn't appear to see is how Manny could so easily have followed Rose 'over the edge' by the film's end. In this ending there's a foretaste of **Vertigo** (1958),[12] and also some sort of parallel with **North by Northwest** (1959), if Frederic Jameson's reading of the latter film as climaxing on the 'edge' of a world is an indication.

* * *

Jameson's 'Marxist/Lacanian' essay is fittingly included in Zizek's book. I hope to review Jameson's own book, 'Signatures of the Visible', in a forthcoming 'MacGuffin', and will simply note here, with a brief comment, that his piece on **North by Northwest** mirrors several of the essays around it, thus: in each case, the reader must negotiate an elaborate theoretical edifice (what Lacan calls a 'lure'?) in order to arrive at ... a modicum of insight. For example, Jameson says helpfully that the various locations used in **North by Northwest** (including the, in 1959, newly-built Seagram Building in New York) may represent other - therefore all - parts of America. Mount Rushmore may stand in for the Rockies, etc. But why stop there? Something not remarked by Jameson is the film's 'picaresque' element, initially announced both by the title itself (see 'Odd Spot' in this issue) and by Saul Bass's 'arrowed' lettering of that title. Such an element runs through the film, inviting us to read the successive landscapes in terms of their fictional 'archetypes'. Notably, the Mount Rushmore climax can be read as the equivalent of the cave or mountain climaxes in novels like Haggard's 'King Solomon's Mines', Kipling's 'Kim', Buchan's 'Prester John', and Laurens van der Post's 'Flamingo Feather' - the latter at one time a work scheduled to be filmed by Hitchcock for MGM but later displaced by **North by Northwest**.[13]

Incidentally, having located Hitchcock's film in an English 'picaresue' tradition - whose roots might be traced to Bunyan's 'The Pilgrim's Progress' - let's note that such a tradition sufficiently accounts for an element of 'predestination' in Hitchcock's work - for which Zizek invokes, instead, the director's alleged 'Jansenism', i.e. a Continental influence (see p. 211ff).[14] I'll come back to this point.

To return to Jameson. Not without some straining, his analysis of **North by Northwest** notes (pp.64-5) two instances of 'a grid of parallel lines': on the ground (mainly - but also in the sky) during the crop-dusting sequence, and on the rock-face of Mount Rushmore. He concludes:

> what is confirmed by this pattern, and scored into the space of the scene, is the primacy of surface itself: the earth as a surface upon which the ant-like characters move and agitate, the sky as a surface from which intermittently a mobile and deadly technological mechanism dips ... (p. 64)

Actually, grids of parallel and intersecting lines figure repeatedly in the film from its titles-sequence onwards, and surely connote much more than Jameson allows. In particular, they suggest the ubiquitous and 'deathly' Symbolic - which is represented by the cross-hatched fronts of city buildings, by the bus-stop at a prairie crossroads, even by a pine plantation of upright young trees overlooked by the Mount Rushmore monument.[15] Importantly, whatever 'primacy of surface' exists here may be said to emanate from the superficial Roger Thornhill (Cary Grant) himself. But there's a further point. In Thornhill's case, this inadvertent 'pilgrim' - who acts like a buffoon - really does 'progress'. Hence the film has another 'lines' motif (not noted by Jameson) which corresponds to Thornhill's incessant use of vehicles - lifts, taxis, cars, trains, buses. It's like a thread which he must follow through a maze, and which momentarily becomes visible early in the film when he steers the stolen Mercedes (planted on him by Vandamm's men) along the centre-markings of the road; next, arrested for drunk driving, he has to walk a line chalked on the floor by a police doctor. Of course, the film never tells us if Thornhill's ultimate end is 'predestined'; yet the very locales that signal the clutching Symbolic also have another characteristic - they become increasingly 'three-dimensional', i.e. less 'superficial' ... cf [illegible]

I've spelt out this 'picaresque' design because it finally seems to oppose Jameson's interpretation. To my mind, **North by Northwest** recalls Professor Alan Sandison's reading of Kipling's 'Kim',[16] a reading which sees the novel as containing two different but related 'wheels' motifs. On the one hand, there's the great Wheel of Life itself. On the other hand, there are countless lesser wheels such as a humble turnstile which the novel mentions twice. Near the end, this passage occurs:

> [Kim] peered at the cross-legged figure [of his lama friend], outlined jet black against the lemon-coloured drift of light. So does the stone Bodhisat sit who looks down upon the patent self-registering turnstiles of the Lahore Museum.

'By such parallelisms', suggests Sandison, 'as wheel against Wheel, ... road against Way, the concrete is balanced against the abstract, ... the particular against the universal.' **Mutatis mutandis**, a similar process operates (I suggest) in **North by Northwest**, giving it a moral dimension which the 'postmodernist' Jameson seemingly would exclude. (As to what exactly constitutes the moral dimension of Hitchcock's film, that's another issue. Certainly one could draw parallels with the Lacanian and Schopenhauerian themes of **Rope**.)

* * *

I want to single out Pascal Bonitzer's essay on 'Hitchcockian Suspense'. 'The essence of Hitchcockian suspense' he tells us,

> is eroticism, and Hitchcockian editing is an erotic editing. As is well known, Hitchcock makes films about the couple, and what interests him in couples is, more specifically, coupling, or what he terms love 'at work'. (p. 24)

Bonitzer adds that watching the couple gives us a stake in the film. We're like the third party, the gaze, that welds the couple together (p. 26). Here you may think of Freud's remark (in 'Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious') that a joke must be told to someone else - and regular 'MacGuffin' readers may recall that an analogy between Freud's mechanism of the (tendentious) joke and the workings of suspense has been suggested here before (in 'MacGuffin' 5). Having now read Bonitzer, I would add a slightly broader perspective to that earlier suggestion. It's this. If Hitchcock's couple implies a third party, the watching 'I', such an arrangement may in turn imply a 'fourth' party, the audience as mass. Certainly Hitchcock was very conscious of such a factor. To an interviewer, he once described how the collective mind of the film audience isn't a thinking mind. Rather, the situation is like that encountered by a schoolboy who has asked his father why thunder turns the milk sour. The distracted parent responds, 'Aw, run along and don't bother me.'

Now, in discussing Hitchcockian suspense, it seems important to note just how integral to each film are scenes set in public places, where people gather **en masse**. In fact, such scenes are hardly less integral than the Hitchcockian couple itself. Think of **Notorious** (1946), with its Miami and Rio de Janeiro panoramas and streets, its courtroom episode, its parties, its riding-club and racetrack scenes. The places may not in themselves be either **intellectually** or **erotically** stimulating, exactly, but they definitely carry their own 'buzz' of pleasurable expectation (especially as photographed in sultry textures by Ted Tetzlaff). In terms of suspense, which is a pleasant form of anxiety, such places are - as Bonitzer might say - permissive. (It's okay for Dad to send Junior packing - he's earned himself some fantasy-time, hasn't he?)

Further, I suggested earlier that suspense and hope - hope as in Schopenhauer's 'the life-dream of the man who wills' - are inextricably connected. In the light of Bonitzer's essay, and the above remarks, it's possible to see how a Hitchcock film may generate a situation where the locales seem the very icons of our dream - like the film's stars themselves. Hitchcock frequently went out of his way to choose locales worthy of such iconic status. Examples include the Quebec of **I Confess**, the French Riviera of **To Catch a Thief** (1955), the San Francisco of **Vertigo**. Moreover, the Hitchcockian couple must seem no less worthy of our dreaming, our hope, and preferably should be immortal! When, late in **North by Northwest**, the ageless Cary Grant as Roger Thornhill declares, 'I never felt more alive', he's effectively telling us that he's ready to go and rescue the heroine, Eve, from the death-dealing Vandamm.

Bonitzer, then, seems well justified in saying that the essence of Hitchcockian suspense is eroticism. Yet no less is the essence of Hitchcockian suspense indestructible Will. Having referred in this review to two famous passages from 'The World as Will and Representation', I may as well refer to one more, the one in which Schopenhauer notes how 'the sexual impulse is the kernel of the will-to-live, and consequently the concentration of all willing' (an impulse which provides 'the basis of the serious and the aim of the joke, the inexhaustible source of wit, ... and the meaning of ... all stolen glances'). The passage concludes:

> in the text, therefore, I have called the genitals the focus of the will.[17]

Not for nothing does **North by Northwest** end with its celebrated phallic (or more accurately, copulation) symbol, the train entering a tunnel. The scene permits a Lacanian reading (like the celebrated one by Raymond Bellour); no less does it invite a Schopenhauerian one.

* * *

I've followed Bonitzer in saying that the existence of 'the couple' implies a third party, the gazing 'I', and have suggested that the third party implies in turn a fourth, the audience-as-mass. The logic of such a progression, though, invites the further consideration that there may be a fifth party! I leave it to the reader to consider whether the implied (I think) 'God's-eye view' has in Hitchcock's films any particular dwelling-place except that unspecified realm which is 'beyond representation', and what meaning (if any) attaches to it.

Of course, both Kant and Schopenhauer have warned us not to talk as if we could **know** what is 'beyond representation', for in that case we would be talking indubitable nonsense. Whether in fact Zizek oversteps by simply **denying** that there's anything there except our mirrored gaze, again I leave it to the reader to decide. I would only note how frequently Zizek pirouettes on the edge, so to speak. On one dismaying occasion, having declared (as we've seen) that **Psycho** forces the viewer 'to **identify with the abyss beyond identification**', he goes on to remark (p. 226) that the key to the film thus rests 'in the rupture, ... the change of modality, that separates the first third from the last two-thirds (in accordance with the "golden section" whereby the ratio of the smaller to the larger part coincides with the smaller part to the whole)'. Thank you, professor![18]

Zizek is wrong in saying that 'according to [Stephen] Rebello's **Alfred Hitchcock and the Making of "Psycho"**, [Edward Hopper's painting] "House by the Railroad" ... served as the model for the "mother's house"' (p. 231). In fact, Rebello's book does no more than speculate on the **possibility** of such an influence.[19]

One way to sum up this ground-breaking, but only intermittently rewarding, book is to simply note that Hitchcock scholars need to be aware of it. Here's a caveat, though. Anyone who doesn't already have some sort of background in Lacan might be advised to delay reading Zizek until they've first attempted 'The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis' (or at any rate a good paraphrase of Lacan's thought).

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Notes

1. Bonitzer, of course, is a screenwriter these days. He and Jacques Rivette recently collaborated on the latter's **La Belle Noiseuse**.

2. B. Magee, 'The Philosophy of Schopenhauer' (1983), p. 197.

3. Magee, p. 222. The quotation in this passage is from Schopenhauer's 'The World as Will and Representation', Vol. I.

4. Recall Andrew Marvell's 'To his Coy Mistress', quoted earlier in the text. Towards the lady in his poem, Marvell's attitude is much as Schopenhauer's was towards Kant - necessarily down-to-earth!

5. The novel seems, in its depiction of Sir John, to be satirising those successful London actor-managers like Sir Gerald du Maurier who, at about the time of World War I, expressed their distaste for touring and who 'depended entirely on their West End runs'. Cf. J.B. Priestley, 'The English' (1975), p. 118.

6. G. Santayana, quoted in E. Bentley, 'The Life of the Drama' (1969), p. 185.

7. L. Schapiro, 'Turgenev: His Life and Times', quoted in Magee, p. 381.

8. My article on **The Wrong Man** in 'MacGuffin' 6 quoted Carl Jung: 'The perfect has no need of the other, but weakness has, for it seeks support and does not confront its partner with anything that might force him into an inferior position and even humiliate him. This humiliation may happen only too easily when idealism plays too prominent a role.' Renata Salecl's essay has given me a fuller appreciation of the extreme pertinence of Jung's observation to Hitchcock's film.

9. Here, in view of Salecl's emphasis on Manny's 'psychosis', the following consideration seems worth quoting. 'Although many of [psychoanalyst] Melanie Klein's concepts remain unproven and unprovable,' writes Anthony Storr, 'her belief that "psychotic" mechanisms underlie and affect the emotional attitudes of "normal" people is convincing.' (A. Storr, 'The School of Genius', 1988, p. 100.)

10. Edith Head's description of Hitchcock, whom she obviously admired, was made to me when I met her in Melbourne, Australia. Later we came together again, at Universal Studios in Hollywood.

11. Salecl is a Researcher at the Institute for Criminology at the University of Ljubljana.

12. I'm thinking of how Hitchcock once told an interviewer that Scottie (James Stewart), at the end of **Vertigo**, might follow Judy (Kim Novak) and leap to his death from the mission bell-tower.

13. In making **North by Northwest** for MGM - his only film for that studio - Hitchcock seems to have been well aware of a certain Metro tradition of action-adventure and fantasy films, from **Trader Horn** and **The Wizard of Oz**, say, in the 1930s to **King Solomon's Mines** and **Kim** in the 1950s.

14. Cf. O.B. Hardison's essay, 'The Rhetoric of Hitchcock's Thrillers', in W.R. Robinson (ed.), 'Man and the Movies' (1969), p. 143. Professor Hardison likens the world of Hitchcock's thrillers to the Calvinist City of Man, and cites the Gothic novel, Dickens's 'Bleak House' and 'Our Mutual Friend', and the Scottish poet James Thomson's 'The City of Dreadful Night'.

15. In 'MacGuffin' 1, I noted a similar motif in **Vertigo** whereby wherever Scottie goes, even Muir Woods, there are signs of human presence, human intervention.

16. Professor Sandison, author of 'The Wheel of Empire', edited and wrote the Introduction for the Oxford 'World's Classics' edition of 'Kim' (1987). See especially pp. xviii-xxi.

17. Schopenhauer, 'The World as Will and Representation', Vol. II.

18. As we're discussing **Psycho**, a question arises: would you buy a used car from this man?

19. Cf. S. Rebello, 'Alfred Hitchcock and the Making of **Psycho**' (1991), pp. 68-9.

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BLOOPERS

The corrector corrected. A few copies of 'MacGuffin' 9 contained the embarrassing slip in which author Robert Stam ('Hitchcock and Bunuel', in 'Hitchcock's Rereleased Films') was taken to task for his use of 'Bretonian'. He had just referred to the '"English" absurdism of **The Trouble With Harry**', and I took his use of the phrase 'Bretonian **humor noir**' to be referring back to that. Of course he was alluding to André Breton (1896-1966), the founder of the surrealist movement.

Likewise, in 'MacGuffin' 8, I made a point of 'putting back' an exclamation-mark in the title of Larry Cohen's (acute and excellent) **It's Alive** (1974) which had never been there ...

Last issue, Evan Williams's description of the baggage-car scene in **The Lady Vanishes** referred to Michael Redgrave's impersonation of 'Mr Chips'. In fact, Redgrave was imitating the character-comedian Will Hay doing his famous schoolmaster routine in a film such as **Good Morning Boys** (1937). Also, Evan overlooked another of Redgrave's impersonations in the same scene, of a top-hatted detective (Raffles?, The Toff?).

If anyone was puzzled by the reference last time to Slavoj Zizek's 'Enjoy Your Symptom' (Routledge, 1992), note that the same book was published simultaneously in the US as 'Looking Awry' (MIT Press). Thanks to the Electric Shadows Bookshop in Canberra for confirming this.

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Luminous Alicia, Sore Devlin, Poor Alex: Around 'Notorious' (1946)

Notorious remains, for me, one of the most compelling and mysterious of Hitchcock's films.[1] As a 'three hander' tracing the shifting, dramatic relationships between a group of characters - Alicia (Ingrid Bergman), Devlin (Cary Grant) and Alex (Claude Rains) - it has proved remarkably open to different responses, different readings. It is particularly striking that while virtually all critics agree that Hitchcock's central strategy is to shift the narrational 'point of view' throughout the film - favouring one character and then another, creating a mosaic of viewer identifications - almost none concur on exactly where and how this happens, and which particular characters Hitchcock is favouring in any one scene.

In accounts that stress the insidious workings of patriarchal ideology in the film (including those by Michael Renov,[2] or myself in 1979), the point of view belongs essentially to Grant, and his various male 'delegates' (such as the reporters and state agents seen in the opening courtroom scene). For Tania Modleski,[3] in her balanced and sophisticated assessment, the gaze may start off as male, but is soon converted into Alicia's point of view upon her entry into Alex's sinister household. However, in the final twist of her analysis, Modleski reminds us of the imagery of Alicia's 'impaired vision' (hair in her eyes, hung over, upside-down view of Devlin) that returns with a vengeance in the final movement of the story, when Alicia is full of poison and Devlin well and truly drives the action to its conclusion. And what of Alex? While I concluded in 1979 that the film effectively denies all point of view avenues to him, William Rothman sees a key transfer, in the second half of the film, from Alicia's subjectivity to Alex's.[4]

Analyses of **Notorious** over the last two decades have oscillated - sometimes uneasily and unconsciously - between two rather different understandings of cinematic identification. The more recently influential theories of identification (or 'enunciation') circulating since the mid '70s stress the literal, mechanical structures of point-of-view sequencing - subjective 'first person' shots, which character is favoured in shot-reverse shot volleys, and so on - as if one could quantify or tabulate our emotional involvement as 'interpellated' spectators by a textual analysis that rendered all the supposedly 'invisible' devices of classical Hollywood cinema visible, and thus culpable. **Notorious**, like all Hitchcock's films, has indeed many subjective shots, of various scales and sorts (some of them are in fact quite ambiguous - is it Alicia or Devlin, for instance, looking over at the roadside cop?), and many intricately patterned shot-reverse shot dialogue exchanges that repay close scrutiny.

But an older style of criticism - one that is perhaps returning increasingly to the agenda to the agenda of serious film study in a revised mode - would pose the question of cinematic identification in a broader and more flexible way. From Robin Wood's original 1966 edition of 'Hitchcock's Films' to the case studies offered by George Wilson in 'Narration in Light', the working assumption is that the filmmaker's attitude towards events and characters that he or she presents can only be intuited by a spectator from a gestalt of many stylistic variables - **mise en scene**, the emotional 'weighting' of a scene, its associations, suggestiveness, tone, texture - which can artfully shift or colour our emotional involvement and our complex, partial, ongoing, evolving identifications.[5] Explicitly marked point-of-view devices would only be one strategy - and sometimes an ambiguous or devious one - within this broad framework of identificatory processes.

It is almost mind-boggling to scan the literature on this film, and lay out an array of the different identifications (or investments) that have been made in relation to its key characters. Consider Alicia - or rather, consider the conjunction on the surface of the screen of the character of Alicia and the star figure of Ingrid Bergman. She is a creature of light - shimmering in black and white and shades of grey, caught in sudden, breathless soft focus close ups, swimming in pools of light (and with a low, musical voice that is often placed extremely close to the microphone, as if whispering seductively in the viewer's ear). Commentators on the film invariably describe her as radiant Alicia, luminous Alicia. But what exactly does this light reflect or illuminate?

To Michael Atkinson, writing in the 'Sex, Sex, Sex' issue of 'Movieline',[6] Alicia is a sizzling role model for modern film goers. Hitchcock's 'fleshiest object of desire', Alicia is 'a willful party beast trapped in the body of the girl next door'. 'You can see the little girl in Bergman's bruised gaze as clearly as you can see the man-hungry trollop trying to wipe away countless disappointments by throwing her legs open to any smoothie with a new bottle and a fresh line'. Ignoring altogether the presence of Alex in the plot, Atkinson derives from the dynamics of the Alicia-Devlin relationship the line that '**Notorious** becomes, at least on one level, a study of [Alicia's] appetite for nooky and her struggle to regain control over her own body'. This Alicia - who 'radiates haunted, impatient anxiety' - is, in the final staircase scene, 'blissed out, struck dumb with longing ... female desire stripped of barriers, a delirious testament in a conservative era of a woman's will to fuck'.

Laura Mulvey, in her 1992 article 'Pandora: Topographies of the Mask and Curiosity', is a little more circumspect as she enters a discussion of **Notorious** via the opening courtroom scene, and the striking introductory shot of the behatted Alicia. 'Ingrid Bergman ... is filmed with the privileged codes and conventions that Hollywood has reserved, regardless of stylistic changes, for the female star'.[7] Some critical references to the film pretty much leave the matter at that - case closed, **Notorious** is a typical example of the 'classical Hollywood text' and its abject ideology. Yet although Alicia may be initially positioned, in this most familiar way, as the pristine object of the male gaze and the living 'mask' of feminine mystery and artifice, a mythic Pandora, Mulvey sees a conversion staged in the body of the film's plot: like Pandora, Alicia becomes the bearer of not so much a scopic drive as an epistemological hunger, a desire to explore, question, unravel the terms of her own (deadly) positioning within a specific male fantasy. And Modleski, as we shall later note, takes this enquiry into a speculative 'female spectatorship' of the film further still.

Alain Bergala, in the course of his contribution to the wonderful recent book 'Jean-Luc Godard: Son + Image', suggests a very different view of Hitchcock's luminous images of Ingrid Bergman in **Notorious** (as well as the other films he made with her). As Bergala notes, Godard has frequently used charged, 'star' images (still and moving) of Bergman in his recent film, TV and video 'essays', such as the fragment broadcast by Australia's SBS in the 'Art of Video' series. According to Bergala, what is at stake for Godard in this pinpointing of specific images from Hitchcock is the fleeting moment when the truly 'visual' triumphs over the merely 'visible' - when 'the filmmaker, suddenly inspired, forgets all habits, becomes oblivious to codes', causing us to really **see** something (or someone) as if for the first time. Bergala's beautiful description of what he calls the 'Hitchcockian skid' is worth quoting in full:

> The Hitchcockian look is sometimes allowed to ignore the master's main concern, for the 'spectator's direction', and reveal what his obsession with a perfect economy of readability forced itself precisely to repress: his relation to the body of the actress, for example, whenever she took precedence, in the drive to shoot, over the function of the shot in the scene. These Hitchcockian skids have given us some of his visually most unforgettable shots.[8]

John Beebe, by taking a Jungian approach to the film in his article 'The Notorious Postwar Psyche', comes up with yet another angle on the character of Alicia. She is once more the creature of light, except that now '[h]er troubled radiance suggests the ideal vibrancy of an archetype of life being poisoned by doubt and shame'. To Beebe - drawing on the background information on the films' production supplied by Leonard Leff in 'Hitchcock & Selznick' - Alicia is the heart and centre of the film, because the whole script grew from Hitchcock's and writer Ben Hecht's intense psychic investment in her as an archetype, an anima figure through which they could work out the moral uncertainties of their shared historical moment. 'In delineating the twists and turns of her fate, they also managed to formulate for their fantasy figure the deepest concerns, needs, and possibilities of the postwar psyche'.[9]

I have no desire to now pursue a critical 'aggregate' of these different responses to and readings of the figure of Alicia. There are elements or overtones that I find myself uneasy with in each account. Atkinson's appropriation of the film for a cool, modern sensibility is painfully hip; while Bergala's reverie is carelessly sexist. On a more theoretical plane, I find the Freudian-Lacanian theory of cross-gender identification used by Mulvey and Modleski (to account for how a male viewer might identify with a female heroine) altogether too convoluted and tortuous, as if these kinds of fantasies don't go on fluidly every day. But, by the same token, I find Beebe's invocation of the Jungian anima to explain Hitchcock's investment in Alicia too easy, without a necessary sense of the drama of passage that such gender phantasms can indeed incur. I can't somehow sift and combine these different accounts; they're just too damn incommensurable. Yet I feel equally certain that each response offers something which is deeply true to the film, taken in the complete experience of its systems and textures.

Although less written about, Devlin is a figure who also occasions diverse, virtually incommensurable readings. But again a motif persists: if Alicia is luminous, Devlin is 'sore' - and critics have found different ways of responding to his rigidity, his silence and his brooding hostility. In a discussion among contemporary French filmmakers of the aesthetic line linking Hitchcock, Robert Bresson and Jean-Pierre Melville, Benoit Jacquot (**The Disenchanted**) describes Devlin as a ghostly, 'almost disincarnated' character in the Bressonian manner (crediting Hitchcock as the 'only person who has ever done that with a Hollywood actor').[10] This places Devlin, for Jacquot, somewhere in hailing distance of the mystical, the religious, and the sublime - with the film tracing a trajectory for this character from abjection and self-repression to enlightenment and the acceptance of love (as in Bresson's **Pickpocket**).

For Andrew Britton, in his monograph 'Cary Grant: Comedy and Male Desire', Devlin exists to point up Hitchcock's 'thematic concern with the male need to possess and subjugate female sexuality'.[11] Among the film's commentators, Britton goes furthest in making Devlin's darkest traits explicit: sexual egoism, brutal misogyny, sexual opportunism. Yet what of the eventual change in his character, supposedly for the better? In my 1979 piece, I was willing to see the film's final gesture of 'softening' Devlin as the most insidious ruse of patriarchal ideology. After all, as Modleski affirms in her account, when Devlin swings into action on the stairs as the Oedipal hero with 'the full power of the law behind him', violence returns with a vengeance to his actions - except this time directed at 'shutting out' poor Alex rather than Alicia.

I wonder if another reading of **Notorious**, centring on Devlin and his evolution, is not also possible. A particular line from that final sequence is one of the most resonant of the entire film: 'I was a fat headed guy full of pain ...'. Without abstracting the dramatic situation entirely into a Bressonian reverie, I think one can experience the film (especially in the light of current, New Age 'masculinist' reflections) as a male melodrama, a terse but trembling 'male weepie'. Here, it would join a tradition running from certain of Nicholas Ray's post-World War II films (especially **On Dangerous Ground** and **In a Lonely Place**) to Cronenberg's contemporary horror psychodramas (particularly **Dead Ringers**) - movies that, beginning from an overwhelming sense of masculine guilt and self-loathing, confront a male protagonist with his own inherently violent impulses, and force him to somehow work them out of his system so that he can finally rejoin the world of daily sociality and intimacy (or die unreconciled). **Vertigo**, too, can be approached in this light.

For me, the lesson of all this is clear. **Notorious** veritably demands that we explore our more free-floating, subtle responses to the behaviour of characters and their relationships. The question of point of view, as I have argued, is complex, and constantly unsettled by the film itself. For instance, it may be quite accurate to say that, in some senses, Hitchcock places Devlin in the patriarchal position demanded by the dominant ideology of the post-war period (at times quite literally, as in the famous intro framing the back of his head in blackness at Alicia's party). But is he at all a likable or admirable hero? Alex presents us with a similar paradox; how do we square his obvious generic position in the scenario (as a cloying, slightly creepy, un-American Nazi) with the pathos that Truffaut shares with the director in their famous interview sessions: 'It's rather touching: the small man in love with a taller woman ...'[12]

Notorious seems to be, in short, an extraordinarily open film. It is this openness, especially in relation to the character triangle which is its main subject, that I wish to discuss a little here. I have no wish to simply rehearse the post-structuralist wisdom that all films have multiple meanings, or at least are inevitably subject to vastly different readings according to historic and social context. On the contrary, I do believe that some readings of a film are bound to be better (more sensitive, complete, material, adequate to the complexities of the work) than others. What makes **Notorious** such a unique film is the way it actively creates and structures its own openness.

* * *

This quality of openness is achieved on many levels of the film simultaneously. One of these levels is genre. Like a number of Hitchcock's films (**North by Northwest** especially), **Notorious** does not fit any one Hollywood genre of its time; from whichever way you approach it, it is a fascinating hybrid mapping of elements from several genres. On the most immediate level, the film brings together action genre elements - spies, murders, political intrigue, uranium down in the cellar - with an intensely reflective emphasis on a complex character psychology. At the very least, we'd have to say that the film is both a love story and an action thriller - and thus a Hitchcock movie that fully incorporates at least two of what Evan Williams has proposed (in 'MacGuffin' 9) as 'the three great elements in Hitchcock's work - comedy, romance and suspense', held once more in 'the most delicate equilibrium'.

But we can't let the matter go at that. Reading William Rothman's account of the film, with its use of key terms from Stanley Cavell's interpersonal philosophy like 'acknowledgement' and 'argument' to describe the love relationship of Alicia and Devlin, one is reminded of the two film genres that Cavell has himself addressed, both of which feed so much into **Notorious**, especially via its chosen stars - the romantic comedies of 'remarriage' (where Cary Grant so often featured), and the tragic 'melodramas of the unknown woman' (like the 1944 **Gaslight** with Ingrid Bergman). For if Hitchcock's film brilliantly extrapolates from the hints of a 'dark side' in the Grant persona that were evident in earlier films like **Penny Serenade** (1941), it also locates Bergman inside a tale where she is (in Modleski's chapter title) 'The Woman Who Was Known Too Much'.

Modleski and Dana Polan[13] describe the generic mix of the film in another way. They rightly stress that the emotional drama of the film as it pivots on Alicia evokes the genre of the 'female gothic' - with its familiar themes of masochism, sickness, entrapment in a house, and the ambiguous threat offered by male 'saviours'. This essentially female story is then counterposed 'dialogically' to the masculine thriller adventures that are centred on Devlin and his frankly oedipal struggle with Alex. Modleski sees the shuffling between, and comparison of, differently gendered parts of the film as crucial to its complex emotional effects: for her, the potential distress evoked in the female viewer over Alicia's suffering at the hands of men is not mere masochistic compliance, but serves indirectly to channel the rage that particular women may feel towards patriarchy. And, even better, it may work as a kind of double-back psychic mechanism, whereby the melodramatic anguish generated by the film causes men (both Devlin and male viewers) to suffer a little in turn for the suffering they inflict with such relish.

I'd like to try out one further generic description. The film starts out something like **a film noir**, with its title and opening scenes evoking the perhaps dangerous enigma of Alicia's sexuality and her political affiliations. These ambiguities are soon dispelled, to be replaced by others that centre on Devlin's psychology, or even psychopathology - what does he really want, what does he really feel towards Alicia? - and the twisted, even perverse logic of Alicia and Devlin's relationship. In this respect, the film evokes a less well recognised, more subterranean, less moored genre of the 1940s and 1950s, which could well be called the **film blanc**. In this genre - which includes Preminger's **Angel Face** (1953) and **Whirlpool** (1949), Tourneur's supernatural fantasies made with Val Lewton, and some of Renoir's and Lang's American films - the thriller elements of the plot become attenuated, almost irrelevant, and the mystery explored is invariably the mystery of personal motivations and relationships.[14]

Watching **Notorious**, I am reminded of André Bazin's note on Renoir's contemporaneous **The Woman on the Beach**, a supreme and enigmatic **film blanc**. 'Renoir says that he wanted to portray pure sexual attraction, but between which characters? The sensuality is there certainly, but it goes from one character to another to another like a mysterious ball of fire. We don't know exactly where it is.' And Bazin intuitively links the feel of Renoir's film - 'strange, stubborn, sincere, elusive, obscure' - to its mixing of genres. 'Was not **The Woman on the Beach** conceived and executed in the manner of the mystery film, pressed in its mold but with another material, not at all conventional, rather very personal?'[14] Interestingly, in his book on Renoir, Raymond Durgnat suggests we imaginatively 'transpose the film into Hitchcock's terms' - specifically the Hitchcock of **Vertigo**, which is another 'melodrama of an unknown woman woven into a mystery plot'.[15]

All the **films blanc** I have nominated have an atmosphere of the uncanny - not the dark underworld, but the naggingly unsettled and unsettling everyday, the well-lit space of a home which is in fact distressingly 'unhomely'. As 'Cahiers' critic and screenwriter Pascal Bonitzer has strongly argued (in 'Hitchcockian Suspense' and his review of **Notorious**), this sense of the uncanny is a key defining feature of Hitchcock's storytelling sensibility. 'The **unheimlich**, or the uncanny, occurs when a known subject suddenly presents an unfamiliar aspect. It is the same, yet it is other'.[17] Bonitzer draws his particular understanding of the uncanny from Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis, but is an intuition that many Hitchcock commentators have elaborated within their own frameworks, from Durgnat in 'The Strange Case of Alfred Hitchcock' to Sylvia Lawson in her 1973 article 'Hitch and Unhitch'.[18] The theory of the uncanny even tallies well with one of the popular cliches about the director, that he succeeded in making the most ordinary domestic fixture (like the bathroom) scary.

I view **Notorious** as a film that - by exploiting its hovering, 'intermediate' status between several available genres - circles around its three central characters and the enigmatic logic of their relationships. Another aspect of the film's openness is the space it explores between the 'type' that a character fills - with the more or less determined generic role that this type is allotted in the scenario - and the intricacies of his or her psychology, which allows for an excess and a freedom beyond strict ideological determinism. William Rothman suggests, in a rather metaphysical mode, that Hitchcock constantly shaped his films in 'response to the free actions of the beings within the world of the film ... as if these beings have made private arrangements with the camera - arrangements consonant with their freedom'.[19] I see more tension in the relation between self and role - and also more torment in the 'argument' between the characters and the accommodation of their emotions to the film's style - but I take Rothman's insight as crucial.

Consider the role of Alex in this regard. As a type, he has a clear cinematic, generic pedigree. He is the older, smaller, foreign, sometimes politically reprehensible, perhaps sexually perverse point of a classic Hollywood triangle. There are many personal and/or political fables that position one woman between such a man and another more conventionally heroic one, taking her through to an ultimate moment of choice. **Morocco** (1930, with Marlene Dietrich positioned between Adolphe Menjou and Gary Cooper) and **Notorious** mark two key points in this history; others suggested by John Flaus that fall in the period in-between include **Gilda** (1946), **Flame of the Barbary Coast** (1945), **Casablanca** (1942) and **Deception** (1946, the last two featuring Claude Rains).[20] Like Wolfenstein and Leites in their 1950s book 'Movies: A Psychological Study', Flaus stresses the strict Oedipal logic of many plots of this type: a young man who wins a woman and achieves power and authority by vanquishing the 'weak' father who is his sexual rival. In **Notorious**, Alex's 'aberrant' masculinity is given a crowning twist: not only is he small, Nazi and cultivated, he is also 'castrated' by a monstrous, overbearing mother (played unforgettably by Leopoldine Konstantin).[21]

Yet no viewer who is at all open to the emotional atmosphere of the film can remain satisfied for long with that analysis. The character of Alex seems to bear an emotion, and a meaning, in excess of this strict, determined, social-ideological role. The uniqueness of **Notorious** in this respect became startlingly clear to me when I recently saw Frank Borzage's **Strange Cargo** (1940) on TV. In this scenario, Peter Lorre takes the Alex role in a triangle with Joan Crawford and Clark Gable. In the crowning moment, when Crawford finally deserts Lorre for Gable, we get a final reaction shot of Lorre which is so brief, so insignificant and so forcibly drained of any possibility of identificatory emotion (sympathy, pity, tragedy) that it may as well not be there. The situation, with its moment of choice, is itself a typical one for films within this formula. In **Morocco**, there is undeniable emotion granted the abandoned Menjou, but these feelings run particularly intense at the end of **Notorious**.

Here, our identification seems almost split three ways between Alex, Alicia and Devlin. Or perhaps it is multiplied, in a dazzling enactment of the ambivalent push-and-pull of our conscious and unconscious emotions as participant viewers. 'It goes from one character to another like a mysterious ball of fire. We don't know exactly where it is' - Bazin's words capture the play of our identification as much as a psychological property inherent to the drama itself. And insofar as this 'play' implies a potential freedom in relation not only to individual characters (and their destinies) but also the more transpersonal social roles that these characters represent, it is important to note Dana Polan's conclusion: 'In its variations on a theme, **Notorious** can suggest the permutational openness of the gothic as symbolic form'.

Polan's analysis refers to a feature of the film remarked on by many commentators: the spectre of interchangeability between Alex and Devlin, the reversal of their 'typed' good and evil positions, especially in their acts of spying and aggression directed at Alicia. There is a system of suggestive rhymes across the length of the film: Alex's poison is prefigured by Devlin's looming, upside-down glass of milk; Devlin's punch is a preview of the brutal 'containment' of Alicia carried out later. In relation to the typical 'wife in peril' scenario of the female gothic (as in **Gaslight**), Polan stresses the uniqueness of **Notorious**, which suggests that '[a]ny man - husband or not, Nazi or figure of benign authority - can be a source of dread'.

* * *

The 'permutational openness' of **Notorious** can be explored on other levels as well. I have referred to the film as a classic 'three-hander' drama. The potentially very rich and flexible structures of triangular stories in cinema have not, to my knowledge, been sufficiently explored by criticism. With three key 'points' in an interpersonal, intersubjective relation, there is always the possibility of suddenly shifting the narrational point of view in a new and surprising way, by taking a subjective angle on events hitherto concealed.

Post-Hitchcock filmmakers like Brian De Palma have often exploited this effect of shifting, sometimes to the point of sheer narrative vertigo (as in **Dressed to Kill**, 1980). A less pyrotechnical example - and thus one closer to the spirit and method of **Notorious** - is Carl Colpaert's three-handed thriller **Delusion** (1990). This film belongs to a modern tradition that grows out of the **films blanc** of the '40s and '50s, including Stephen Frears's **The Hit** (1984), Eric Red's **Cohen and Tate** (1989), and virtually all of Monte Hellmann's movies. As De Palma would, Colpaert structures the moves of the characters in **Delusion** around a MacGuffin (a stash of money in the boot of a car) which the characters have unequal and changing amounts of knowledge about - one character knows when another doesn't, thinks another doesn't know when she does, etc. An important phase in the film is marked by a shift from Jim Metzler as captive, observing with an eagle eye his captors Jennifer Rubin and Kyle Secor, to a disenchanted Rubin removing herself from the jousting of the two men. In a showdown that strangely recalls the finale of Hitchcock's film, Rubin drives up to the two men holding guns to each other in a deadlock, asks whether either is willing to go away with her, and then drives off alone.

In **Notorious**, Hitchcock exploits a simple but brilliant structural device - who, out of the three characters, he chooses to end a scene on. Whenever a film does this - merely by closing a scene on a shot of a character reflecting, 'absorbing' what has come before - it has the effect (ideally) of bringing us closer, for a moment, to that character's subjectivity. Hitchcock rotates this scenographic 'grace note' around all the points of his triangle. Each time it engenders a subtle emotional effect: shots of Devlin alone imply that he is less brutish than his actions towards Alicia have just made out; shots of Alicia draw us closer to her feelings of hurt, and her dilemma in being constantly unacknowledged by Devlin; shots of Alex allow him the kind of pathos denied (as already noted) to the evil, little foreigner in stories of this type.

On top of these shifts around and between the three central characters, Hitchcock superimposes another kind of narrational 'break' - sudden leaps to events occurring outside the space of the triangle, but events which will have a determining effect on its shape, direction and outcome. In Hitchcock, as in Lang or De Palma, these kinds of overarching narrative intrusions often deal with powerful schemers on either side of the law - cops, espionage chiefs, underworld bosses, Dr Mabuse-type madmen in their surveillance centres - who are like chess masters moving character-pieces on the board of the narrative. In **Notorious**, the moments that take us to spy chief Prescott (Louis Calhern) function like this.

Beyond these narrative games, and their various implications, there is a further rich possibility inherent in the three-handed dramatic structure. 'The triangle is the fundamentally vulgar figure' - this line, from Andrzej Zulawski's bizarre horror-psychodrama **Possession** (1981), did not escape the attention of Pascal Bonitzer when he reviewed it. For Hitchcock's triangles, to Bonitzer and several contemporary commentators, are essentially **perverse** configurations - structures where desire slips, treacherously, between one couple and another as they form, break apart and reform within the space of the story. Within a perverse relationship, desire 'never goes straight, one way', as is said in Paul Morissey's **Beethoven's Nephew** (1987) - it goes via detours, masks, calculated exchanges, such as the bargain struck between Holly Hunter and Harvey Keitel in Jane Campion's **The Piano** (1993).

In Lacanian psychoanalysis, desire's perverse detour is particularly pronounced. A relationship between two people is always constituted, perversely, in reference to a third, imaginary or absent, person - and, as Bonitzer notes, Hitchcock conceived even the most intimate moment between Bergman and Grant in **Notorious** as one that crucially included the audience, via his camera, in a 'kind of temporary **menage a trois**'. In a perverse triangle, the excluded 'third point' can be placed in many positions - foolish dupe, pathetic victim, sinister ringmaster, aggrieved lover, vengeful schemer - and can experience many possible emotions, from murderous envy to voyeuristic delight.

Looking back from a contemporary vantage point at what I am calling the **film blanc**, one sees such constitutive perversity in a heightened way, as if a hidden, secret aspect of these films had been suddenly, shockingly, illuminated. Look at Lang's **Scarlet Street** (1945) - with its relentlessly cruel diagram of perverse relations structured on narrative 'delusions', gaps in the characters' knowledge and their differences of 'perspective' - or Jacques Tourneur's **I Walked with a Zombie** (1943). One reason this is so apparent today, specifically in relation to Hitchcock, is that a number of filmmakers who have rigorously applied themselves to the task of 'mutating' Hitchcockian elements into their own style and vision - like Polanski (**Repulsion**, 1965), Almodóvar (**Matador**, 1986), Valeria Sarmiento (**Notre Mariage**, 1984) and Bigas Luna (**Anguish**, 1987) - have stressed, even celebrated perversity as part and parcel of a modern sensibility.

Perhaps the most completely perverse of the 'mutant Hitchcocks' is the French director André Téchiné, an ex-'Cahiers' critic whose regular script collaborator is Bonitzer. Téchiné's **blanc** thrillers - **Hôtel des Amériques** (1981), **Les Innocents** (1989) and the ghost story **Rendez-vous** (1985) - take the homoerotic allusions in **Strangers on a Train** and **Rope** to a perverse logical extreme, creating 'polysexual' character configurations in which repressed homosexuality and bisexuality play a major part.[22] Neil Jordan's **The Crying Game** (1992) is a film which - until its intersubjective tensions fizzle - operates very much in the Téchiné manner, structuring its narrative around an evolving, overlapping series of perverse, murderous and sexually ambiguous triangles.

Perversity also invades the micro-structures of Hitchcock's style - especially his famous 'fetishistic' way of framing and presenting bodily parts. Visual fetishism is a special kind of perverse detour, in which the camera, as it were, 'overinvests' its gaze in a minor or insignificant detail at the momentary expense of the otherwise 'classical' sense and direction of a scene. This is one of the structures that most clearly unites Hitchcock with Luis Bunuel, whose Surrealist method from **Un Chien Andalou** (1929) to **That Obscure Object of Desire** (1977) is largely based on the casual but deadly disruption of conventional scenes by fetishistic deviations and apparitions. (In a Lacanian-influenced essay on Surrealist art - Lacan himself had close dalliances with the Surrealist movement, especially Georges Bataille - Paul Foss cites Bunuel's story of his encounter with Hitchcock, and the latter's rapt appreciation of the amputated limb in **Tristana** (1970): 'Ah, that leg ... that leg'.)[23] This is certainly how Alain Bergala sees the above-mentioned 'skids' of Hitchcock's visual style, with its 'fine collection of perverse shots of women's backs and shoulders'.

Today, the perverse Hitchcockian path through the 'female gothic' laid down by **Notorious** reaches delirious new heights in **The Piano**. Campion stages an absolutely stunning moment - reminiscent of a key image in **Vertigo** - where the camera approaches Hunter from behind, as she dangles her hand in an odd manner, to close in on the tight bun of her hair; this then cuts to a wild, unruly thicket of trees. As in the most hallucinatory passages of Hitchcock's work, it is as if such charged, fetishistic 'nodal points' offer a gateway to the unconscious itself, into which the film eagerly plunges. When a film emerges from these dives, it is itself inexorably transformed by the phantasm it previously sought to circle and describe.

Before discussing further some of the micro-structures of **Notorious**, I want to ask one last macro question. What is the 'theme' of the film? The concept of a theme, so beloved of arts criticism, is best understood here in its most supple and open sense, as a question or proposition which a work poses and explores. Hitchcock, I believe, is a problem for thematic criticism (such as is practised by Robin Wood, for example). It seems fruitful enough to discuss some of his films starting from a broad thematic proposition - **Vertigo** is about the nature of romantic love, **Shadow of a Doubt** explores the hidden aspects of the American family, **Marnie** is about repressed sexual trauma - but others, including **The Birds** and **Family Plot**, obstinately resist this kind of ambit claim. I cited earlier Andrew Britton's assertion about the theme of **Notorious** -

its 'concern with the male need to possess and subjugate female sexuality' - but this seems to me as unsatisfying a statement as Donald Spoto's airy notion that the film deals with 'common humanity'[24]

Criticism, it seems to me, is often too ready to translate the specific materials of a film - the actuality of its characters, events, moods, textures - into a 'higher order' abstraction which is implicitly preferred because it is symbolic and general, not 'merely' singular, sufficient unto the artwork itself. Themes, as construed, are most often symbolic entities of this lofty kind. But I do not believe that filmmakers actually approach what they do in such an abstracted fashion. It is telling that, in the discussion among French directors mentioned earlier, there is much speculation on the **subject** of whichever film comes up, but never a dissertation on its **theme**. (Example: 'the passage from ecstasy to love ... that is a beautiful way of defining the subject of **Pickpocket**').

This is not a merely semantic distinction: a subject is physical, contingent, material, specific, in a way that a theme is not. So, what is the subject of **Notorious**? Beginning from Victor Perkins's description of the embrace between Alicia and Alex in the cellar - 'we are shown (and shown that we are shown) the formality, the passion, the convincing enactment of impulse, and the calculation'[25] - one might define the subject of the film as the mapping of particular, interrelated subjective and intersubjective states: emotional masquerade, suspicion, betrayal, desire, the passage from perverse to direct and authentic expression of love ... In this light, I take the subject of the film to be that 'fundamentally vulgar figure' itself, the character triangle, with every narrative and formal game, every perverse and humanist reflection, that it allows. I don't believe Hitchcock 'says anything' about this triangle - the play of his subject cannot be reduced to a moral statement or conclusion. Indeed, the elusive aura of mystery crucial to the **film blanc** shrouds the subject as much as the characters: watching **Notorious**, we circle the very mystery of its theme, or in Bonitzer's formulation its 'capital secret, which contains all the ambiguities and things which cannot be spoken aloud'.[26]

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There is a tendency, in much Hitchcock criticism, to reduce his films to their set pieces and their 'striking' moments: shower scene, rock face chase, bird attack, dream sequence, etc. Stylistically, this confines Hitchcock's 'touch' to broad effects of montage, bravura camera movements, and 'expressionist' compositions - of the kind seized on and exaggerated by a De Palma. Approaching **Notorious**, this awestruck eye for spectacle pauses over very little of the film: the famous camera movement from the ceiling to the key in Alicia's hand; the long take kissing scene; the final showdown on the stairs; the shot of Alicia imprisoned between Alex and his mother; the movement out from behind Grant's dark head; and not much more. Even Bonitzer's suggestive idea that Hitchcock is an 'architectural' filmmaker who 'dramatizes' the space of a set - transforming it into 'a labyrinth in which everyone - characters, director and audience - loses and finds themselves, in the intensity of their emotions' - does not get us very far off the beaten track of these stylistically heightened milestones.

What is overwhelmingly absent from accounts that fixate on these 'high points' is any holistic sense of the film's **mise en scene** - and any apprehension that **Notorious** is, essentially, a film comprised of scenes of characters talking to each other. Indeed, in this light, it needs to be appreciated as a chamber drama in the manner of Nicholas Ray's **In a Lonely Place**, or indeed many of the **films blanc** like **The Woman on the Beach**. Yet, apart from Rothman's notation of some rather free-floating visual motifs, only Perkins's brief comments serve to hint that **Notorious** is (as Godard said of **The Wrong Man**) 'a lesson in **mise en scene** every foot of the way', and a truly masterful chamber piece.

Here I must take a necessary sidestep. Remakes are always interesting artifacts for study - especially when they are dismal. **Notorious** was remade as a telemovie in 1992 by Colin Bucksey, with John Shea, Jenny Robertson and jean-Pierre Cassel in the lead roles. There is much that could be said about this sorry attempt to 'modernise' the script and its characters, but what is particularly striking for my purpose is the complete absence of any intersubjective tension, any trembling aura of mystery, any uncanny strangeness, in the bland, telemovie **mise en scene** of the remake. This occurs not simply because Bucksey lacks Hitchcock's 'touch'; but above all because the ground rules of verisimilitude, of dramaturgical 'realism', have changed so radically between the Hollywood of 1946 and 1992.

When revisiting the original after viewing the remake, one realises with a jolt how extraordinarily elliptical and abstract Hitchcock's film is, and how astonishingly minimal many of its scenes are. It is this quality which gives the French directors cited earlier the liberty to make the aesthetic comparison between Hitchcock and Bresson, Dreyer or Melville. But this abstraction is not Hitchcock's sole innovation - he was not really, in my view, a modernist straining at the limits of classicism (as was Nicholas Ray or sam Fuller). This attenuated, minimal style is a key feature of the **film blanc**, and even more generally it is characteristic of a certain 'Hollywood studio' manner common to many lesser films, across many genres.[27]

Virtually every scene of the remake loses specific atmospheric qualities and crucial layers of meaning from the original by having to 'fill out' the staging in a manner that will not be jarringly stylised or unrealistic to the contemporary viewer. Thus, in the party scene near the start, Bucksey cannot risk placing Shea's head entirely in blackness, nor even so prominently in the foreground of the shot; and, lacking the licence to so completely 'focalise' the scene on the exchange between Shea and Robertson once this starts getting more intimate, he constantly dissipates the tension by cutting away to business with surrounding party goers. Every stylistic aspect of the remake is 'inflated' to currently realistic standards in a like manner: always more background noise in place of the silences of the original; always some redundant 'in-between' shots of travel to explain the relocation of the characters and their permutations from one situation to another.

Like similar American films of the period, **Notorious** is a remarkably economic movie - tightly articulated to the point of a certain dream-like abstraction. Decades later, it is this same dreamlike permutation of a group of shadowy characters on the logic of what Bonitzer calls a 'strong, disquieting intersubjectivity', that modernist directors like Téchiné, Jacquot and Chantal Akerman will aspire to re-create and enhance. 'Today', writes Bonitzer, 'we are impressed by the power and efficacy of the scenario, and by the mounting intensity bestowed upon it by the staging'. I would go further and suggest that Ben Hechtg's script and Hitchcock's **mise en scene** were conceived and mapped out in an absolutely interdependent relation.

The **mise en scene** of **Notorious** is based on a highly supple and varied but extremely systematic principle. As it happens, I stumbled upon this principle inadvertently, while zipping through the video on fast forward to find a particular scene. In that sped-up mode, it became clear to me that the staging of the film, as a series of dialogue exchanges between couples, is devoted to the edgy impossibility of full, face-to-face intimacy between two people. The variations of this 'face-off' are amazingly inventive: Hitchcock explores just about every possible way that characters can be manoeuvred into a dissymetrical pictorial relation, constantly contriving imbalances in height, position, shape of gesture, direction of movement. This tension invades even the most normally stable of 'classical' filmic figures, the shot-reverse shot volley - in the early party scene, Hitchcock has Bergman in close-up constantly tip so that half her face is obliterated by Grant's shoulder.

Clearly, the systematic 'disequilibrium' of Hitchcock's **mise en scene** bears a close relation to the prevailing **film blanc** atmosphere of the uncanny. Bonitzer notes that, insofar as Hitchcock's films are regularly and almost routinely devoted to the formation of a romantic couple, they develop a particularly fraught and unsettled picture of that couple, right to the very end of the story: many are the instances in the director's work where characters bound in love and hate are pitching to and fro, grasping or struggling for balance, such as in **The 39 Steps** or the kissing scenes in **Notorious** and **North by Northwest**. And it is indeed telling that, at the centre of the **mise en scene** system of **Notorious**, even when Alicia and Devlin are finally locked in face to face embrace in the course of a dazzling sequence shot, Hitchcock introduces every conceivable note of tension, disruption and disequilibrium into an apparently harmonious and resolved continuity.

One can go further. Earlier I noted the palpably perverse presence of a 'third eye' in the gaze of Hitchcock's camera upon the intimacy of the lovers. This relation between characters and the camera can be understood in another way, also. Contrary to Rothman's assertion that the protagonists possess a metaphysical freedom vis-a-vis the camera, I think one can sense that Hitchcock's camera sometimes takes the position of a cold, unblinking, public eye - the social superego spying, recording, making implacably public the private lives and exchanges of its citizens. The figures in **Notorious** give off an air of always and unconsciously performing circumspectly for this social eye; that is one reason why they are turned towards the world rather than toward each other. A number of Hitchcock's films offer, in this regard, a notion of **mise en scene** quite similar to the one theorised by Jean-Louis Comolli in 1980: a mapping of the changing postures and gestures that unfold 'everywhere where the social regulations order the place, the behaviour and almost the 'form' of subjects in the various configurations in which they are caught'.[28] **Shadow of a Doubt** offers an especially rich and tense map of the 'social **mise en scene**' of family relationships.[29]

If we see the events and exchanges of **Notorious** as taking place in a social realm which is always too public for private intimacy to ever properly begin, the cleverness of Hitchcock's work with Hecht becomes particularly apparent. So many of the scripted scenes are located in spaces where a certain propriety rules even when emotions are simmering - restaurant, bar, racetrack, cab, plane. This propriety is doubled by the masquerades that go on, and contradicted by the emotions that rise up. In these spaces, Hitchcock is able to play in his staging both on the closeness of bodies and their postural 'stand off', the stiffness of the characters and their palpable relief (or frustration) at not having to look directly at each other.

In an even more intricate way, Hitchcock is able to introduce into this behavioural dynamic tiny but dramatic flashes of a 'suspense effect' linking up to the more heightened and action-oriented passages of the narrative: moments where one character suddenly sees and experiences what the other character doesn't, as in the plane scene where Devlin turns back to the front to suddenly find that Alicia has pushed herself across virtually right into his lap. He sees her and we 'enter into' his awareness of her erotic presence, but she does not see or feel what he and we are seeing and feeling. (Again, the almost identically scripted scene in the remake loses virtually all the **mise en scene** dynamic, and thus the entire point, of this exchange.)

* * *

This essay is a fragmentary discussion of **Notorious**. In re-watching the film, I have deliberately held myself back from taking detailed analytical notes on each scene, each shot, as I would naturally have done at other times of my life as a critic. I have not wanted to work towards a systematic textual analysis - one that 'scans' the film and tries to cohere it in the unfolding of its articulations. On the contrary, I have endeavoured to 'circle' the film as I believe the film itself circles its characters, situations, themes.

Perhaps this reticence on my part reflects on matters wider than this one, unique film. I believe that the experience of many great films is injured by a certain form of systematic analysis. It is as if, in the process of trying to approach and intimately understand the workings of a beloved cinematic object, one has somehow reduced its richness, and the reservoir of emotions it prompts in oneself. What is lost in such an act of criticism is not exactly - as the cliche goes - the 'mystery' of the film, but rather what Raymond Bellour once called its **volume**, its multiple resonances, its floating interplay of levels actual and virtual. Film is 'an art of suggestion, of rhetoric, of graphic-semantic construction', as Raymond Durgnat has mused, with 'nine tenths of it exist[ing] below the surface of the film, deep down in the spectator's own mind'.[30]

This state of film's being poses a challenge to the act of critical writing. The attempt to respect and prolong - as well as critically discuss - a certain 'trembling', fragile, emotional quality unique to the film viewing experience is, for me at least, one of the highest tasks bequeathed to the labourers in this field. Clearly, such a mission demands a style of critical writing which is closer to poetic literature than your average academic thesis. Camille Paglia speaks of criticism as 'ceremonial revivification': 'I try not to allude to but to re-create, to reproduce the first, baffling experience of reading a text or seeing a painting or film'. She quotes an aphorism coined by Harold Bloom: 'the meaning of a poem can only be another poem'.[31]

Jean-Luc Godard once coined an equally priceless aphorism when he remarked that a film happens not solely on the screen or in the spectator's head, but in that strange, uncanny space between screen and spectator. Few films demonstrate this relation more profoundly, or command our poetic attention more fiercely, than Alfred Hitchcock's **Notorious**.

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Notes

1. This essay began when Ken Mogg asked me to shorten for 'The MacGuffin' a long article I wrote on **Notorious** back in 1979. Almost nothing of that piece (which is heavily marked by the trends of its historical moment) remains here, but anyone wanting to compare two very different accounts of the film can find the original, 'Reading **Notorious**', in 'Filmviews' 119, April 1984, pp. 5-15. I have tried to reflect, in this essay, some of the most interesting ideas on the film that I have encountered since 1979 - particularly in works by Pascal Bonitzer, Tania Modleski, William Rothman and V.F. Perkins (see references below).

2. Michael Renov, 'From Identification to Ideology: The Male System of Hitchcock's **Notorious**', 'Wide Angle', Vol. 4, no. 1, 1980.

3. Tania Modleski, 'The Women Who Knew Too Much: Hitchcock and Feminist Theory', New York: Methuen, 1988, Chapter 4.

4. William Rothman, 'Alfred Hitchcock's **Notorious**', 'Georgia Review', Vol. 29, no. 4, 1975.

5. For more on this comparison of prevailing critical methods ('expressive' criticism vs. textual analysis), see my article '**Mise En Scene** is Dead, or The Expressive, The Excessive, The Technical and The Stylish', 'Continuum', Vol. 5, no. 2, 1992.

6. Michael Atkinson, 'Role Models: Ingrid Bergman in **Notorious**', 'Movieline', Jan-Feb 1993, p. 87.

7. Laura Mulvey, 'Pandora: Topographies of the Mask and Curiosity', in Beatriz Colomina (ed.), 'Sexuality and Space', New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1992, p. 58.

8. Alain Bergala, 'The Other Side of the Bouquet', in Raymond Bellour and Mary Lea Bandy (eds), 'Jean-Luc Godard; Son + Image', New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1992, p. 30.

9. John Beebe, 'The Notorious Postwar Psyche', 'Journal of Popular Film and Television', Vol. 18, no. 1, Spring 1990, p. 30.

10. 'Autour de **Pickpocket**' ('Around **Pickpocket**'), roundtable discussion with Olivier Assayas, Jean-Claude Brisseau, Benoit Jacquot, André Téchiné, Thierry Jousse and Serge Toubiana, 'Cahiers du Cinema' 416, February 1989, p. 31 (my translation).

11. Andrew Britton, 'Cary Grant: Comedy and Male Desire', Tyneside Press, 1984. Reprinted in 'Cineaction' 7, December 1986. The quotation is from p. 38 of the reprint.

12. Francois Truffaut, 'Hitchcock', New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983.

13. Dana Polan, 'Power and Paranoia: History, Narrative, and the American Cinema, 1940-1950', New York: Columbia University Press, 1986, pp. 280-1.

14. For more on the **film blanc**, with Katt Shea Ruben's **Poison Ivy** (1991) as a contemporary example, see my article 'Unlawful Entries: The Anatomy of a Popular Film Cycle', forthcoming in 'Scripsi', late 1993.

15. André Bazin, 'Jean Renoir', New York: Simon and Schuster, 1986, pp. 98-9. See also the Filmography section of this book, pp. 272-3, for Jacques Rivette's appreciation of the film.

16. Raymond Durgnat, 'Jean Renoir', London: Studio Vista, 1975, p. 267.

17. Pascal Bonitzer, '**Notorious**', in Slavoj Zizek (ed.), 'Everything You Always Wanted to Know about Lacan (But Were Afraid to Ask Hitchcock)', London: Verso, 1992, p. 153.

18. Raymond Durgnat, 'The Strange Case of Alfred Hitchcock, or the Plain Man's Hitchcock', Cambridge: MIT Press, 1974; Sylvia Lawson, 'Hitch and Unhitch', 'Lumiere' 22, April 1973.

19. Rothman, 'Alfred Hitchcock's **Notorious**', pp. 885-6.

20. I thank John Flaus for his private correspondence on this point.

21. I say nothing more in this essay about Alex's mother, and the larger issue of Nazism associated with her. However, as a film at some level about Nazism, **Notorious** is clearly a propagandistic 'fiction of hate', and deserves the same analysis at this level as the similar fictions (Lang's **Hangmen Also Die**, 1943, and Lubitsch's **To Be Or Not To Be**, 1944) treated by Jean-Louis Comolli and historian Francois Géré (for a translated extract, see Steve Jenkins [ed.], 'Fritz Lang: The Image and the Look', British Film Institute, 1981). On another political level, Polan's 'Power and Paranoia' suggests a historical understanding of the 'uncanny' as it operates, in a displaced, metaphoric fashion, in **Notorious** - as an anxiety that attaches itself to the 'unsettled' post-war American home in which the returned serviceman and the suddenly retrenched working woman must now cohabit as if nothing had ever happened.

22. For more on Téchiné and the perverse tradition, see my 'After **Wet Madeline**', 'Tension' 23, Oct-Nov 1990, a review of a short film by Edward Colless, whose article 'Vengeance, Is Mine' ('Agenda' 12, August 1990) is a key text on the perverse impulse in cinema; it cites Hitchcock among the directors who 'trusted their perversions as the essences of their individual expression and style'.

23. Paul Foss, 'Eyes, Fetishism, and the Gaze', 'Art & Text' 20, February-April 1986. Bunuel's anecdote is from his autobiography, 'My Last Breath', London: Fontana, 1985. For more on fetishism and other stylistic 'perturbations' in the films of Bunuel and Raûl Ruiz, see my 'The Impossible Scene', 'Photofile' 38, March 1993.

24. Donald Spoto, 'The Art of Alfred Hitchcock', New York: Doubleday, 1976, p. 162.

25. V.F. Perkins, 'Film Authorship: The Premature Burial', 'Cineaction!' 21/22, Summer/Fall 1990, p. 61.

26. Pascal Bonitzer, 'Une Certaine Tendance du Cinéma Americain' ('A Certain Tendency of the American Cinema'), 'Cahiers du Cinéma' 382, January 1988, p. 38 (my translation).

27. Robert B. Ray's important meta-critical article 'The Avant-Garde Finds Andy Hardy', in James Naremore and Patrick Brantlinger (eds), 'Modernity and Mass Culture', Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991, uncovers, through a 'surrealist' critical method, 'how elliptical, how witty (in Freud's sense of condensation) cinematic realism is' (p. 243).

28. Jean-Louis Comolli, 'Machines of the Visible', in Teresa de Lauretis and Stephen Heath (eds), 'The Cinematic Apparatus', London: MacMillan, 1980, p. 139.

29. See Ronnie Scheib's brilliant article 'Charlie's Uncle', 'Film Comment', March-April 1976.

30. Raymond Durgnat, 'Towards Practical Criticism', 'AFI Education Newsletter', Vol. 4, no. 4, March-April 1981, p. 10.

31. Camille Paglia, 'Sex, Art, and American Culture', London: Viking, 1992, p. 117.

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Frenzy for a Notorious Artist

by Timothy M. Walters

Master of suspense, the rotund auteur
delighted generations with the gift of fear,
advised weary travelers that they would do well
to keep a safe distance from a certain motel.
Ornithological invasions came from the sky,
the birds descended on us, we never knew why.
Political historians defiantly ignore
the day Cary Grant hung on Mount Rushmore.
Rebecca and Carlotta are women of mystery
to all who are current on cinema history.
The master's disciples remember with joy
the mind of Mister Memory, the heart of Miss Froy.
With shadow of a doubt, I confess a suspicion
all are spellbound by the movie master's mission.
If you crave entertainment, rewarding and rich,
before your next film foray, dial H for Hitch.

(Timothy Walters lives in Muskogee, Oklahoma, USA. His poem originally appeared in 'Calliope', newsletter of the American Mensa Writers' SIG.)

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* * *

ODD SPOT: MISDIRECTIONS

The latest scholar to allude to the title of **North by Northwest**, and get the allusion wrong, is Alenka Zupancic (in 'Everything You Always Wanted to Know about Lacan', p. 73). She writes that the title of Hitchcock's film 'is taken from Shakespeare's **Hamlet**'. Where Zupancic errs is in supposing that the filmmakers meant to refer to the Danish prince's wild remark, 'I am but mad North, North-West: when the winde is Southerly, I know a Hawke from a Handsaw', which is the same error made by Stanley Cavell in 'A Hitchcock Reader' (1986) - although in Cavell's case, he didn't stop there but spent further ink on explaining Hitchcock's intentions. The truth is that the film's working-title of **In a North-westerly Direction** was changed by Kenneth McKenna, head of the MGM script department, to **North by Northwest** for want of anything better, although no doubt he intended a punning reference to the name of a well-known airline. 'Any allusion to Hamlet's madness was entirely accidental' (John Russell Taylor, 'Hitch, 1978, p. 248).

These scholars are showing their ignorance in another way, because Hamlet's isn't the only literary reference to the compass-point lying between north and north-west. Chaucer's reference in 'The Parlement of Foules'/ 'The Parliament of Birds' ('As wisly as I saw thee north-north-west,/ When I began my sweven for to wryte,/ So yif me might to ryme hit and endyte!' - 11. 117-9) might just as appropriately as Hamlet's remark be applied to Hitchcock's film - given the latter's considerable resemblance to a crazy dream ('sweven')!

In fact, though, the most probable, or valid, literary resonance of **North by Northwest**'s title is surely its suggestion of a tradition of English adventure-fiction which includes Rudyard Kipling's 'Kim' (1901) and John Buchan's 'Prester John' (1910) - works whose stories invariably move in a northerly or north-westerly direction to a thrilling climax, typically involving spies, in some high and craggy place. For further thoughts on this, see 'Book Review' in this issue.

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COMING ATTRACTIONS

Vertigo and **The Paradine Case**; Jane Campion; 'Hitchcock and Homosexuality'. Extra items always wanted.

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