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The MacGuffin

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EDITORIAL

I SERIOUSLY THOUGHT OF beginning the Editorial last time with a quote from *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955), 'You're tearing me apart!' Now, one issue later, here I am doing exactly that! Quoting James Dean, I mean. And still quite seriously. The fact is, I increasingly find two sets of our readers vying with each other - and with me - to determine what sort of film analysis and general content we should run in these pages. Should it be ruthlessly 'faultless', and encrypted in an academic idiom, as if it were camera-ready copy for a journal overseen by a board of professors? Or should it have a more informal style that may seem more 'natural' but does permit, let's face it, occasional sloppy thinking?

Of course, the above is a simplification. Yet I believe it's fair to the spirit of what I want to say. I remember that when 'The MacGuffin' began in late 1990, as a Mensa SIG newsletter (which it supposedly still is), the main model was another SIG newsletter - that of a books group in the US - none of whose articles exceeded a few paragraphs and whose editorial might typically be about what bulbs the editor had lately planted in her garden or what type of scones she'd baked that morning. All quite chatty and nothing too elevated or arty, you understand.

Well, 'The MacGuffin' has always aimed to be a bit more than a chat-group publication. Nonetheless, I've tried to keep a certain informality about it, as befits a 'newsletter', and as a way (I'd hoped) of staying honest and not being stuffy. Maybe that shows the wary Aussie in me, but also it pays tribute to Hitch - among the least stuffy of filmmakers! So I felt hurt when, in recent times, along have come academics and others who've looked at some of our earlier issues and said, in effect, well of course you're not sophisticated or up to our own high standards of impeccable Hitchcock scholarship!

But equally, I felt hurt when after our recent *Rear Window* issue, a large number of subscriptions weren't renewed. I thought - brooded? - about that, and consoled myself as follows. Those people had just received four of our best issues! Number 20 on *The Wrong Man*, number 21 on *The Trouble With Harry*, number 22 on *Rich and Strange*, and number 23 on *Rear Window*, were each praised by some leading professional and/or academic film writers. (On the other hand, our readers' issue last time, number 24, has noticeably been given the silent treatment by our academic subscribers.)

Here's what I've decided. On the whole, the academics have been right! However much I detest the irrelevance and narrowness of some academic film writing, those very academics are better able than most to spot where a writer has inadequately grasped his subject - and to hold him to account! When I wrote on *Vertigo* in 'MacGuffin' 11, there were several weak spots; it was those passages that seemed to glare at me when I came to rewrite the article the other day. The article was always meant to be revised at some stage, but that was now no help to me at all. 'The MacGuffin' had already been judged on what it actually said, and had been found wanting.

The rewritten *Vertigo* article appears in this issue. I've added after it a critique, pointing out that I'm aware that the article still has shortcomings - not least, the fact that much more could be said about Hitchcock's 'sources'. Just tonight I've watched on TV a 1943 B-picture, Edward Dmytryk's *The Falcon Strikes Back*, which contains one more instance (cf. *North by Northwest*) of the scene where a man returns next day to the place where he'd been abducted and is met with denials that it ever happened. How many times have variants of that scene been used in film and fiction? Certainly many more times than my article, which speculates on the topic, indicates.

But before I list the main content of our new issue, here are two further points. First, please note that the availability of back-issues is henceforth restricted to issue 20 and above. The only exceptions that I'll allow to this rule are where specific research requests are involved. For example, if someone is researching *Spellbound*, I'll be happy to supply a copy of our issue 15, on that film. Second, 'The MacGuffin' will continue to be written in as concrete a style, using

minimal jargon, as I can manage - and will still critique in book-reviews, etc., the more pretentious or inadequate writing on Hitchcock when we meet it!

* * *

As indicated, the main article this time is a revised version of the piece on *Vertigo*'s 'sources' that originally appeared in 'MacGuffin' 11. A new book, Dan Auiler's '*Vertigo: The Making of a Hitchcock Classic*' (there's a favourable review on our Web site), actually said some nice things about the article! For the revision, I've added passages such as one referring to the likely influence on *Vertigo* of the British film *Corridor of Mirrors*.

Auiler's book is one of several that we'll try to review fully in our next issue. Another, of course, is Camille Paglia's BFI monograph on *The Birds* - which, as I've said on the Web, fully vindicates our past claims that the writer of 'Sexual Personae' should turn her hand to Hitchcock! (We suspect that more writing by Paglia on Hitchcock will be forthcoming.) Meanwhile, I'll try to squeeze into the present issue some of my recent jottings from the Web about Paglia.

The actual book-review this time is long, and is devoted to just one book: Robert Samuels's 'Hitchcock's Bi-Textuality'. Such a review illustrates the sort of pressures I began this Editorial by mentioning. Because it's a 'difficult' book, I've chosen to write what is perhaps more of a synopsis than a review. If 'The MacGuffin' were strictly an academic publication, my approach would doubtless have been different. (But reader J. Lary Kuhns has his own, quite valid criticism of the book - see our 'Letters' page.)

Also reviewed this issue (finally!) is 'The *Rebecca* Project' released on CD-ROM. Apologies to Charles Silet for our accidental omission of his review last time. He has lately reviewed the Project elsewhere at slightly greater length. Those interested should consult 'Film Criticism', Spring 1998, pp. 60-64.

We heartily thank our various letter-writers. Note in particular Dr Greg Garrett's exciting letter about the planning for the Hitchcock Centennial next year.

There will be another 'MacGuffin' later this year, probably on *Under Capricorn* (1949) and/or the 1956 version of *The Man Who Knew Too Much*. A table of contents for issues 20-24 will also be included next time.

To everyone, good viewing - Ken.

LETTERS

The Lady Vanishes

J. Lary Kuhns, Woodland Hills, California, USA

Sorry Ken, but upon glancing through Robert Samuel's 'Hitchcock's Bi-Textuality' it appeared to me - since I did not see a meaningful sentence - basically just incomprehensible drivel! I did see one paragraph that was meaningful in the sense that it could be verified as true or false - the slur on the masculinity of Caldicott and Charters, supported only by the assertion that they were in bed together sans pants. But to anyone who has seen *The Lady Vanishes* it is clear that one is wearing the pajama top and the other the bottom.

So here we have another case of a self-styled Hitchcock 'scholar' who apparently has not bothered to study the movies he writes about. For if Samuels had studied the movie, he would have noted that the following dialogue describes unambiguously the characters' sexuality. Upon being told they could have the servant girl's room and being introduced to her, Caldicott says, 'Pity we can't have one each' - pause for Charters's 'What?' - 'room, I mean.' Here the character reveals through humor his desire for a female, but he is unable to express this openly, even to his friend because of their social class (*vide* Freud's 'Wit and Its Relation to the Unconscious'). He then declares a preference for separate quarters, to which Charters accedes.

This scene thus shows that the two gentlemen are clearly heterosexual, and evidently respectable married men (possibly on a business trip). For, were they bachelors, they would speak more openly about the girl; but our characters do not, since it would show a disrespect for their wives. They must mask their feelings through humor.

* * *

Hitchcock centennial

Greg Garrett, Baylor University, Texas, USA

Here is the latest info on the centennial events, which I notice you have already devoted some Web space to discussing. One caveat: plans are subject to change.

First, Hitch's birthday will be commemorated next *August 11-13* in Hollywood with a three-day Hitchcock 100 Celebration tentatively hosted by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences and sponsored by American Movie Classics, the Writers Guild of America, and the Hitchcock Centennial Project, which is housed at Baylor. We're currently discussing guests and program with the Academy and nothing has been finalized, but I'm hoping to show *North by Northwest* and involve Lehman and Eva Marie Saint; other names floated for the program so far include Bogdanovich, Spielberg, DePalma, Leigh, Hedren. This event will be geared primarily to a general and industry audience, although there will be a scholarly component where several major critics (perhaps Leff, Sterritt, Ebert) will address Hitchcock's work and continuing influence.

Web site: <<http://www.baylor.edu/~Hitchcock/Hitch.html>> .

October 13-17. Richard Allen is coordinating Hitchcock: A Centennial Celebration in New York. Sam Gonzales, Walter Raubicheck, and I make up the rest of the coordinating committee. This will be a conference/symposium featuring scholarly papers, panels, appearances by many of Hitchcock's associates, and - we hope - a showing of the restored *Rear Window*. Since Richard is in charge of this event I don't have even a tentative list of sponsors, but in addition to NYU, Pace University, and Baylor, I expect it will include the AFI, the Writers Guild, and others. Pat Hitchcock and Lew Wasserman have announced plans to attend, and we expect many other figures - from Samuel Taylor to Robin Wood to Martin Scorsese - to be involved. This will be an event which involves virtually every major Hitchcock critic of the past three decades as well as many of Hitchcock's contemporaries and products of his influence. Richard Allen and I are also discussing including a component intended for a more general audience in which great teachers 'teach' aspects/films of Hitchcock to high school students or members of the community. If any of your readers has suggestions about this aspect of the conference, I'd encourage them to contact me at <Greg_Garrett@baylor.edu> ; I'd be interested in hearing suggestions for possible participants, formats, subjects to be covered in this proposed area.

Deadline for 500-word abstracts of papers on any aspect of Hitchcock studies for presentation at the conference is February 1, 1999. They should be sent to: Hitchcock Conference, Dept of Cinema Studies, Tisch School of the Arts, 721 Broadway, New York, NY 10003, marked attn: Sam Gonzales.

Web site: <<http://www.nyu.edu/tisch/cinema/hitchcock>> .

* * *

Vertigo

John Sheridan, Oakland, California, USA

Has anyone ever written on the correspondences between the 1947 Bacall/Bogart *Dark Passage* and Hitch's *Vertigo*? There are so many parallels as to be almost dizzying! My girlfriend and I began making a list of the scenes in *Dark Passage*:

1. The shots under the Golden Gate Bridge, near Fort Point.
2. Other shots of San Francisco: Bay Bridge, Coit Tower, downtown, skylines, rooftops.
3. Both Bogey and Scottie run over SF rooftops, using the metal railings to go from one part of a roof to another.
4. Bogey is made a fall-guy.
5. He has to 'recover' for a period of time, in his case after plastic surgery.
6. His surgeon's face during the anaesthesia looks 'vertiginous' (cf. the animated sequence of Scottie's nervous breakdown).
7. Bacall, like Midge, is a painter who also does sketches.
8. Bacall, like Midge, nurses the injured leading man back to health.
9. The falling out of the window by Agnes Moorhead.
10. The falling death of the crook near the GG Bridge (near where Madeleine 'falls' into the bay).
11. Agnes Moorhead's name in the film is Madge (cf. Midge).

12. At one point, Bogey has to run down a number of fire-escape stairs (cf. the dizzying stairs in *Vertigo*).
13. Bogey, in the earlier *Maltese Falcon*, had played a SF private eye who tails a mystery person under misleading circumstances, as does Scottie ...

[Editor's note. We remarked, without enumerating, resemblances between Delmer Daves's *Dark Passage* and Hitchcock's *Vertigo* in 'MacGuffin' 1. The above list is very welcome. Thanks, John.]

* * *

Ross Campbell, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

I have been researching reasons as to why the 70mm restoration of *Vertigo* looks so cold and lifeless in its colour, compared to the warm, fully saturated colour of the Technicolor original. I have seen similar results when the Technicolor print is projected on modern equipment that utilises xenon arc lamps, as distinct from carbon arc illumination that prevailed up until the 1970s. I'm currently having conversations with technicians in Melbourne to determine if there is a substantial difference in colour temperature between the two systems. When, or if, I receive more information I'll let you know!

* * *

Information/texts wanted

Carlos A. Altgelt, 25734 Hopkins Street, Dearborn Heights, MI 48125, USA (phone 313 317 9264; email <thuergo@aol.com >)

Gentlemen: I'm interested in the following plays and novels. Independent of condition, I'd like to read them, not collect them.

Plays:

Paul Anthelme, 'Nos Deux Consciences' ('Our Two Consciences'); Charles Bennett, 'Blackmail'; Guy Bolton, 'Waltzes from Vienna'; John Colton and Margaret Linden, 'Under Capricorn'; Campbell Dixon, 'Secret Agent'; Jefferson Farjeon, 'Number Seventeen'; David Lestrangle (Ivor Novello and Constance Collier), 'Downhill'.

Novels:

Maxwell Anderson, 'The True Story of Christopher Emmanuel Balestrero' (non-fiction); Norman Krasna, 'Mr and Mrs Smith' (probably from collected stories); Gordon McDonnell, 'Shadow of a Doubt' (from collected stories?); Oliver Sandys, 'The Pleasure Garden'.

[Editor's note. The Bennett work is *surely* in the library of the British Museum! We're told, by Charles Barr, that the Sandys novel is certainly there. Further comments, anyone?]

CD-ROM Review

Rabinovitz, Lauren, and Greg Easley: 'The *Rebecca* Project'. CD-ROM for Macintosh computers only. With additional programming by Robert McBurney. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1995. \$69.95 (US).

Review by Charles L.P. Silet

'The *Rebecca* Project' is an enhanced computer text which provides both written material - biographies, historical information, and analysis - and various forms of illustration: studio stills, photographs of pressbook items, newspaper clippings, book jackets, and actual clips from not only *Rebecca* (1940) but also from other Hitchcock films, screen tests, and even a panoramic shot of the Cornwall coast. In the process, the editors have used computer technology to indicate how film study can be revolutionised. As a concept, 'The *Rebecca* Project' offers an exciting look into the future of film scholarship; in its execution, it suggests that much work still needs to be done.

Most innovative uses of technology may seem at first rather clumsy and unsophisticated, and in this regard 'The *Rebecca* Project' is no exception. There are annoying glitches in the program which slice off the last lines of the written texts and garble the bibliographic entries. Portions of the CD-ROM seem to be included simply for visual effect and contain very little or no commentary. The critical essays sometimes appear overly cut or are sketchy in the presentation of analysis and information.

'The *Rebecca* Project' is divided into six sections: Authorship, Feminist Approaches, Genre, Production, Screening Room, and Marketing & Publicity. Except for Screening Room, each section has a bibliography for further readings. The various sections contain materials which when taken as a whole provide a general background for understanding the multiple forces, historical and aesthetic, that helped to shape Hitchcock's classic film.

The Authorship section provides short biographies of Daphne du Maurier, David O. Selznick, and Hitchcock, and each of the biographies includes not only a brief overview of the subject's life but also some discussion of his/her work, its basic themes and approaches. They are also accompanied by lots of visual material. For example, when du Maurier's residence in Cornwall is being discussed, there are shots of the coastline and of 'Menabilly', du Maurier's home which became the model for 'Manderley' in her novel called 'Rebecca'.

The section on Feminist Approaches contains essays by Diana Waldman, Tania Modleski, Mary Ann Doan, and Rhona J. Berenstein which present various gender issues in the film, and collectively they provide a fairly comprehensive reading of *Rebecca* along feminist lines. Again, each essay is accompanied by film clips which illustrate the points being made in the analysis.

The Genre portion contains an outline of contemporary notions of the Gothic Romance, and there are also a series of stills of book covers from modern Gothic novels including several from various editions of du Maurier's 'Rebecca' as well as cover art from books by Mary Stewart, Victoria Holt, and Phillis A. Whitney. Each of these illustrations shows the entire cover, but there is also a close-up feature which allows the user to see in more detail a portion of the art work.

The section on Production offers a history of the film by Lauren Rabinovitz. Besides the usual chronological sequence of the events in the making of the film, there are such features as portions of the screen tests for the central role by Vivien Leigh and Anne Baxter as well as Joan Fontaine. There is loads of important detail here which is genuinely insightful about the various ways the studio influenced the final version of the film. Screening Room contains a separate listing of all the film clips, over eighty in all, arranged in alphabetical order by title. This section allows the user to scan through them without having to go back into the individual sections. Finally, Marketing & Publicity provides information on the 1940 advertising campaign, the revised trailer which was used when the film was played after its initial release, materials from the pressbook sent to exhibitors, and a selection of the film's publicity stills.

In sum, 'The *Rebecca* Project' provides a fairly thorough examination of the various elements involved in the making and promoting of the film. It offers a tantalising look into the ways computer technologies can be used to change future film scholarship when, for instance, articles can actually use moving, and talking, examples from the film itself. The interactive nature of the computer also allows the reader to move around among the various sections of the 'Project', so that its component parts can be linked together. The 'close-up' feature, used in several of the visuals, allows the reader to see a smaller portion in greater detail, and so provides an additional analytical tool.

Unfortunately, as I say, there are some annoying glitches in the applications within the 'Project'. Too many of the written texts have their final lines cropped, and when the text is provided with markers for textual interaction, they are often superimposed over words in the text. The formatting of the bibliographic entries is also a mess with the titles spread over two or three lines, leaving large blanks and the entries seem to tumble down the screen. Furthermore, the written text of 'The *Rebecca* Project' appears skimpy, and many of the clips are under-analysed. Also, the exclusively 'feminist' reading of the film may strike some as unnecessarily narrow. Then, too, there are the parts which appear merely tacked on like the book covers of paperback versions of contemporary gothic novels which are never discussed.

While the editors and programmers of 'The *Rebecca* Project' should be praised for producing such a ground-breaking text, it remains to work out more fully and in better detail, the implications of their ideas. Yet the prospects for such computer-enhanced film study are truly extraordinary, suggesting enlarged possibilities for the ways film criticism will be written in the future.

Best films of 1997

Here are three 'ten best' lists of films screened in Australia last year, compiled by three top film critics, all of them male (but who, we're sure, have tried not to be sexist). The critics are Evan Williams, Tom Ryan, and Adrian Martin. Thanks, guys.

Surprisingly, just three films received more than one vote. They were the genuinely moving *Breaking the Waves* (Denmark) and *The Ice Storm* (USA), and *Gabbeh* (Iran) which Adrian Martin described as 'wonderful, soulful, energetic and affecting'.

Evan Williams appended a note to his list, as follows. 'I was tempted to include *Titanic* on the grounds of special effects alone, but thought better of it. *Hamlet* is included *pour encourager les autres* - full-length Shakespeare treatments, even silly ones, deserve some recognition!'

Evan's list

1. L.A. Confidential (Curtis Hanson, USA)
2. Breaking the Waves (Lars Von Trier, Denmark)
3. Lone Star (John Sayles, USA)
4. The Ice Storm (Ang Lee, USA)
5. The Portrait of a Lady (Jane Campion, USA)
6. Pretty Villages, Pretty Flames (S. Dragojevic)
7. Trees Lounge (Steve Buscemi, USA)
8. Mother (Albert Brooks, USA)
9. Kiss or Kill (Bill Bennett, Australia)
10. Hamlet (Kenneth Branagh, UK)

Tom's list

1. Breaking the Waves
2. The Quiet Room (Rolf De Heer, Australia)
3. Exile in Sarajevo (Tahir Cambis, Alma Sahbaz, Australia)
4. A Summer's Tale Eric Rohmer, France)
5. The Truce (Francesco Rosi, Italy)
6. Gabbeh (Mohsen Makhmalbaf, Iran)
7. The Ice Storm
8. My Best Friend's Wedding (P.J. Hogan, USA)
9. L'Appartement (Gilles Mimouni, France)
10. Jerry Maguire Cameron Crowe, USA)

Adrian's list

1. Vertigo (newly-restored version) (Alfred Hitchcock, USA, 1958)/ Days of Heaven (Terrence Malick, USA, 1978)
2. Gabbeh
3. Crash (David Cronenberg, Canada)
4. Libera Me (Alain Cavalier, France, 1993)/ La Promesse (Luc and Jean-Pierre Dardenne, Belgium)
5. The Bride With White Hair (Ronny Yu, Hong Kong, 1993)
6. Lost Highway (David Lynch, USA)/ Three Lives and Only One Death (Raul Ruiz, France)
7. Fallen Angels (Wong Kar-Wai, Hong Kong, 1995)/ Happy Together (same director)
8. Pitfall (Andre de Toth, USA, 1948)
9. Irma Vep (Olivier Assayas, France)/ Love's Debris (Werner Schroeter, France)
10. Happy-End (Peter Tscherkassky, Austria, 1996)/ Guys and Dolls (Joseph Mankiewicz, USA, 1955)

BOOK REVIEW

Samuels, Robert: 'Hitchcock's Bi-Textuality: Lacan, Feminisms, and Queer Theory' (State University of New York Press, 1998; 166 pp; pb)

Reality is something none of us can stand, at any time.

- Alfred Hitchcock¹

There's an entry in 'The Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought' that offers a definition of the Lacanian term 'desire'. It says that 'desire is intrinsically unfulfillable, because it is desire for something else which is always missing in us. It is desire for the Other (mother, for example) who will never fill our own lack of being, however hard she might try, but it is also desire of [by? from?] the Other, as all we find in this Other is his or her desire, by which we are captured.'

If, gentle reader, you negotiated the above without stumbling, my guess is that you're probably already well acquainted with Jacques Lacan and all his works (well, the gist of them!). In which case, I'd say you're favourably placed to extract the most benefit from Robert Samuels's 'Hitchcock's Bi-Textuality', which I judge to be a worthwhile book though not one for beginners, either in matters Hitchcock or Lacan.

The book makes a lot of sense, after a fashion. Lacanians should enjoy it, for they will probably take to its tendentious style and content like the proverbial duck to water. Talk about the desire of the Other capturing us! Once inducted into the works of Lacan and his kind - by Slavoj Žižek, say - many readers typically cry 'more!' And not too critically, it seems to me. Samuels himself quotes Žižek often, though seldom does he challenge his judgements.

Thus even though Samuels's chapter on *The Birds* (1963) initially seems to have reservations about Žižek's understanding of what the birds represent, it ends up by saying that Žižek in fact has seen more deeply than we have supposed. Žižek, we're told, 'argues that "the birds do not 'signify' the maternal [Mrs Brenner's] super-ego, they do not 'symbolize' [Mitch and Melanie's] blocked sexual relations, ... and so on'. Rather, 'the birds "are ... the making present in the real, the objectivization, the incarnation of the fact that, on the symbolizing level, something 'has not worked out'..."' (p. 126)

Has this anything to do with desire for/of the Other? Yes, it does. Desire is as basic to Lacan's system of psychoanalysis as 'Will' is to Arthur Schopenhauer's philosophy - though I'd say that the latter subsumes Lacan's system just as Will itself subsumes psychoanalysis (and everything else). Which is one reason why I believe Schopenhauer is finally more relevant than Lacan to an overall understanding of Hitchcock's films ...

These are matters to come back to. My main purpose in this review is to explain exactly why the birds in *The Birds* represent what Žižek calls 'a failed symbolization', and why Samuels can gloss this by saying that the birds effectively make 'present in the Real a lack in the Symbolic order' (p. 127). To facilitate my explanation, I'll first summarise the thesis of Samuels's book, and then try to set down briefly his main ideas about the eight or nine films to which the book devotes individual chapters. My criticisms of the book should emerge along the way.

'Lacan', says Samuels, 'argues that we negate the Real by representing it and that this act of Symbolic destruction or murder is at the root of all our unconscious guilt' (p. 1). One way to begin to understand this remark is to remember what Schopenhauer told us long ago: that our culture consists of one vast series of representations, but that this Representation is never the Will itself - which is effectively everywhere and nowhere (and infinitely extended). Lacan's term, the Symbolic, refers of course to the set of pre-existing cultural structures into which the child is born (e.g., kindred relations, language), while the Real is essentially that which is excluded from the Symbolic - and hence, says Lacan, impossible to know.

In an obvious echo of Kant, Lacan tells us that the child's acquisition of language is what negates or murders the original natural Thing (cf. Kant's Thing-in-itself, which Schopenhauer equated with Will). Samuels notes (p. 6) that this carries strong echoes of the Garden of Eden myth; and I'm reminded of a perceptive remark of Orson Welles, that the main theme of Western art is the search for a lost paradise. Such a theme is consistently found in Hitchcock's films, starting with his first feature, *The Pleasure Garden* (1925).

Next, Lacan follows Freud in arguing that one can never refind the original thing that one seeks; frustratingly, one can only find the *absence* of the Thing (p. 7). This introduces that crucial Lacanian concept, the object (a). The object (a) serves to remind the individual subject of the loss of the Thing. When language originally 'swallowed' the Real, there was a tell-tale residue rather like Adam's apple that stuck in his throat. In short, the object (a) is a rem(a)inder of the Real that could not 'be swallowed in the throat of the Symbolic' (p. 8). Here for some reason I think of Hitchcock's *Marnie* (1964). Mark Rutland says that he has nothing left of his wife, only an artifact that had once *belonged* to his wife. That artifact, then, is no object (a) ...

The object (a) resists what Lacan calls the death drive, the working of the Symbolic whose signifying structures operate regardless of the contingencies of human activity and are thus in a sense 'beyond' life. And as already noted, because at some level we're aware of how we murder the Real by Symbolising it, we feel guilt. Indeed Samuels says that our original sin is repeated every time that we speak or articulate something in a Symbolic form (p. 8).

There's another crucial matter. In Lacanian theory, the object (a) is what you offer/become as a response to the desire of the Other, and thus it functions as the cause/stimulus of desire. In Hitchcock's films, as in most classical narratives, typically a woman plays the role of the lost object that causes/stimulates (a man's) desire. Moreover, '[s]ince desire is always a desire for something that one doesn't have, the key to the feminine object will be the presentation of a form of absence.' (p. 8) How the woman presents herself to the subject is all-determining. If she too closely resembles the lost Mother, there's bound to be trouble. For we inhabit a patriarchal culture ruled by the Symbolic 'law of the father', i.e., the incest taboo. In such a culture, the original desire for the mother is forced into the subject's unconscious (p. 7).

Nonetheless, there the Mother then remains. Samuels quotes Julia Kristeva on why masculine desire represses the mother's creative role: 'Fear of the archaic mother [is] essentially fear of her generative power. It is this power, a dreaded one, that patrilineal filiation has the burden of subduing.' (p. 21) Kristeva here effectively refers to what Camille Paglia calls the Great Mother - whose presence, as well as absence, I believe to be felt in many of the best Hitchcock films ...

* * *

Why is *The Lady Vanishes* (1938) so-called? Samuels has a ready answer. The 'motherly' Miss Froy 'vanishes because she has no place in the male-directed discourse of film representation, just as the [original] subject vanishes beneath the power of language and the desire of the Other' (p. 19). And Iris Henderson? 'Iris', says Samuels, 'plays the role of the female who refuses to give up her initial relation with the maternal order. All of the men on the train continuously attempt to get her to stop her search for her lost object, Miss Froy, but she resists.' (p. 24) Simple!

Matters become more complicated when Samuels turns to *Spellbound* (1945). I find this chapter to be the least satisfying of the book, but it does establish some essential Lacanian ideas that have evident relevance to Hitchcock's work. Notably, Samuels describes one variant of female presentation in which the feminine form becomes split between being an object of horror to the male, the so-called 'debased' object (a), and an object of desired completeness and fulfilment (p. 29). The concept of woman as horrifying has gained greater understanding since the publication of Kristeva's 'Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection' in 1980. Samuels shows convincingly in his chapter on *Marnie* that Marnie herself has taken on such an abject role. But in *Spellbound*, how Ballantine sees Constance is essentially 'all in his (own) mind'.

Unfortunately, what Samuels asserts about *Spellbound* never seems to quite square with the film itself. Hitchcock clearly had his own (classically) Freudian agenda during its making, and Samuels's Lacanian (and Derridian) interpretation placed on top of - or alongside - Hitchcock's material just won't engage or stick. Revealingly, the description of the dream is very tentative: 'I would like to read this image as ... We can read this as ... this could refer to ... The broken wheel then represents ... Perhaps we can read this dream symbol as ... This might indicate ...'. (p. 37)²

The chapter on *Rebecca* (1940), though, fittingly reminds us that in classical psychoanalytic theory 'the first ideal object of love for [both] the boy and the girl is the mother'. What this means is that the little girl's love 'starts out to be a lesbian love while the boy's desire starts out to be a heterosexual one' (p. 54). When we first encounter the Joan Fontaine character, she is serving as a paid companion to Mrs Van Hopper, and she tells Maxim that the term 'companion' means 'a friend of the bosom'. In other words, we're shown a literalised version of a little girl's earliest relation with her mother (though you wish that Samuels had noted how such a relation is here forced on the character by the power of money ...). Hitchcock seems to have *enjoyed* being literal when depicting psychoanalytic material! According to Samuels, the transvestite Norman Bates in *Psycho* (1960) enacts literally, i.e., on the level of the Real, 'the subject's Symbolic desire to identify with his mother' (p. 136). And in *Marnie*, the flashback in which the sailor is killed is 'a classic reenactment of the (negative) Oedipus Complex. The daughter hates the father for sleeping with her mother, so she attempts to get rid of him. However, instead of this feminine subject simply repressing the existence of her father by identifying with the desire of her mother, she literally kills off the Symbolic father figure.' (pp. 104-05)

(Here, in parenthesis, I speak as the bemused general reader. It puzzles me that 'identifying with the desire of the mother' would 'get rid of' the father. For surely the mother's desire is *for* the father? Likewise, I was puzzled for a while by that remark apropos *Psycho* about 'the subject's Symbolic desire to identify with his mother'. I had thought that in the Symbolic realm such a desire was ruled out by the incest taboo. But then I recalled remarks about 'identification' from later in the book which proved helpful, at least up to a point - see below.)

After the chapter on *Rebecca*, with its emphasis on that film's 'lesbian homosocial structure' (p. 52), the chapter on *Notorious* (1946) takes up further the notion of a repressed 'primal scene' which is, in fact, a bisexual one. For it appears that Freud was right - that we're all fundamentally bisexual - and that 'in the first instance the primal scene is always perceived [by the child] as sodomitical ... it specifically takes shape as a sodomitical scene between sexually undifferentiated parents' (p. 61). Samuels is here quoting queer-theorist Lee Edelman. In turn, this enables him to adduce various 'sodomitical' scenes in *Notorious* (e.g., Devlin's head photographed from behind) and to entertain us with the notion that the film is, in effect, making fun of the stuffy male characters such as Devlin and his boss Prescott who want everything patriarchal and proper. They would control Alicia if they could, but her female fluidity (cf. the work of Luce Irigaray) is hard to pin down. I was distinctly reminded of my analysis of *Rebecca* in 'The MacGuffin' and on the

Web in which Rebecca's 'polymorphous perversity' (not just her Sapphic tendencies) has almost totally traumatised aristocratic husband Max.

According to Samuels, *Notorious* contains many instances in which Alicia 'mediates the same-sex desire that is circulated between men' (p. 63). For example, Alicia is told by husband Alex, who is clearly bisexual, that he considers Prescott 'rather handsome'; when Alicia later conveys this remark to Prescott, the latter 'seems quite pleased by this disclosure'. I think that Samuels's *Notorious* chapter may contain both the best and the worst of his book - unfortunately, some of his interpretations, such as about the precise meaning of the sand in the champagne bottle, approach wildness.

Incidentally, though, Samuels makes a nice point about the keys: that they represent the mother-controlled family secrets which in turn can be associated with the blocked primal scene. They are thus like the MacGuffin: not just a 'hole in the middle of Hitchcock's discourse' but rather the missing object (the so-called maternal phallus) that functions as 'the sign of the missing primal scene' (p. 63).

The *Vertigo* chapter, another helpful one, takes up some of these ideas. We're told, for example, that in Lacan's theory of castration anxiety, the female genitals frighten the male not because they represent the possibility that he may lose his own genitals, but because they reflect his own nothingness - an image of absence that is really the presence of a Real that resists being Symbolised (or Imagined, referring to that part of 'the discourse of everyday life' that is 'the realm of illusion'). The female genitals are thus, in Lacan's words, 'the object of anxiety par excellence' (p. 81). Samuels links this to Freud's theory of foundational bisexuality by adding that 'the horror of the Real is fundamentally a horror of the lack of sexual orientation' (p. 82) - the horror that Devlin had felt in *Notorious*.

Samuels finds here the key to such films as *Vertigo* (1958) itself, and *Rear Window* (1954). For if the horror of the feminine may often represent a displaced horror of bisexuality, of a feminine that brings the Real 'too close' (as they say in *Psycho*), then the male must employ various mental subterfuges or sublimations. For instance, he may 'attempt to sublimate his relationship with the original love-object ... by placing his beloved in the position of an Imaginary identification'. Hence, says Samuels, the appeal of the mysterious Madeleine to Scottie when she masquerades as being possessed by Carlotta (p. 84).

On the other hand, Midge's attempt to intervene and break the hold that Madeleine has over Scottie - the gambit involving Midge's self-portrait - fails utterly, for all the portrait does is remind Scottie of Midge's 'motherliness': it 'subverts [the] process of erasing all traces of the original maternal object' (p. 85).

In effect, then, Madeleine presents herself to Scottie as an absence, artfully evoking, in a non-threatening way, the absence of the Thing. Here I'm reminded of Schopenhauer's theory about art, that it may provide intimations not so much of the 'unknowable' Will as of the 'intermediate' Platonic ideal forms.³ Religion, likewise, respects what Samuels calls the 'emptiness' of the absent Thing, and he refers to the spaciousness and curved lines of *Vertigo*'s scenes in the church and the museum (pp. 88-89). And again, 'worshipful' attitudes to women, that place them on a pedestal or define them in terms of their inaccessibility, as in the tradition of Courtly Love, provide ways of getting around the incest taboo, of transforming the original bisexual Thing into an acceptable heterosexual object-choice (pp. 87-88).

Other psychological mechanisms are also at work in *Vertigo*. Scottie, after Madeleine's 'suicide', clearly now identifies 'with the lost object - he is no longer trying to hide his own nothingness by projecting it onto the female subject, but rather he is living this nothingness himself' (p. 90). This provides the logic of the image in his dream in which he falls into the open grave, just as Madeleine had supposedly earlier fallen. However, in the last part of the film, we see Scottie once again attaching the idea of freedom 'to the masculine desire to efface the Real by Symbolizing it, by returning to a past event and reversing it in the structure of the death drive' (p. 90). Such returnings as Samuels mentions here are indeed signs of the death drive and its compulsions. Scottie, as I've often said in 'The MacGuffin', is not exactly detached ...

Nor, of course, is Marnie, about whom Samuels makes some acute observations. She wants, he remarks, to 'remain virginal', and she suffers from a 'sense of self-revulsion' (p. 96). What we don't know is whether she 'is a heterosexual woman who hates men, or if she is a lesbian that prefers women, or if she identifies with being a man who loves women, or a bisexual who desires everyone or no one'. Moreover, '[t]he multiplicity of her possible sexual desires is matched by the endless variety of Hitchcock's own subjective positions' (p. 102). To a considerable degree, we're talking now of what I call Hitchcock's 'negative capability' - which I see as embodying a profoundly moral position. Several times in the past, I've invoked, apropos Hitchcock, Schopenhauer's description of the truly compassionate man capable of seeing in endless others 'his own true being', not a non-I but an 'I once more' - which also describes the empathic position attained at times by the true artist, in Schopenhauer's view.⁴ And now Samuels tells us that such a position is very much

the basis of Lacan's theory of ethics, a position that allows us to understand how our systems of representation kill off the Real of human existence (p. 147), and where a voice is given to repressed sexualities and subjectivities (p. 2). The chapter on *Marnie* exemplifies what Samuels is talking about here.

Let me be clearer about this. In such films as *Rope* (1948), *Under Capricorn* (1949), and *Marnie*, I see Hitchcock prepared to empathise with characters who are plainly 'beyond the pale', losers, the abject, and to still see in them our common humanity, which is Will. Not only that, but Hitchcock shows here a definite understanding of how we may do such people injustice because of the very mechanisms with which we live our lives. In fact, Samuels notes that Hitchcock's films have often been subjected to the same repressions that they critique, not least because 'the dominant social order cannot tolerate the threat of bisexual desire and multitextuality' (p. 103).

I consider *Marnie* a masterpiece, and I think Samuels helps to show exactly why that may be so. When Marnie steals money from men, he says, what she is really doing is 'challenge the law that has determined her sexuality and presence to be outside of the Symbolic order'. By identifying with the abject object, by resisting being captured by the Other, 'this female subject is able to dig a hole in the place of the Other' (p. 98). Ironically, that hole in which Marnie lives for a time is a true reflection of the nothingness (Kristeva's term) on which society itself is founded, having allowed language to kill the original thing or object. Note that Marnie, in this interpretation, is in direct line of descent from Iris Henderson, the second Mrs de Winter (and/or Rebecca herself), Alicia Huberman, and all the other Hitchcock heroines who fight to hold onto their Real nature ...

Sadly, perhaps, there comes the inevitable surrender. At the end of the film, Marnie tells her husband Mark, 'I don't want to go to jail, I'd rather stay with you.' As Samuels notes, her absorption into the male-controlled heterosexual order is made under the threat of punishment and containment. (Her forced choice can only parody, it seems to me, the Nirvana-like surrender to a truly cosmic nothingness of which Schopenhauer wrote.) Thus the ending of *Marnie* 'reflects on the way that we are socialized to read texts [language] and our selves on the level of deadly choices between identification and abjection' (p. 107).

Samuels's chapter on *Rear Window* strikes me as only a little better than his chapter on *Spellbound*, being altogether too nebulous, not to say humourless. His main idea is that '[w]hat Jefferies wants to see is a certain absence that will block the presence of his own homosexual desire' (p. 115). This formulation derives from Lacan's theory of voyeurism: 'what the voyeur looks to see is the shadow of the Other because shadows make present a certain absence' (p. 113). I'm not saying that either Samuels or Lacan is 'wrong' - or 'right' - only that with such a theory there's not too much that the film critic can convincingly demonstrate. Nonetheless, it's not without interest that Samuels finds Jefferies's very camera 'phallic' (maybe because of its white flashes ...) and interprets the final confrontation between Jefferies and Thorwald as an attempt by the former to blind the all-seeing Other. 'He is not yet ready to come out and speak about his true desire.' (p. 120)

And I readily accept the chapter's conclusion, which defines the whole notion of bi-textuality: 'In Hitchcock's works, we often find the representation of a straight heterosexual narrative that is coupled with a visual bi-textual discourse. Linked to this bi-textuality is the recognition that every subject of the unconscious finds themselves lacking in relation to the dominant Symbolic order.' (p. 121)

* * *

Which brings us back to *The Birds*. Having surveyed various possible readings of what the birds represent, and having decided, with Žižek, that ultimately they represent 'a failed symbolization', Samuels elaborates by saying that 'the birds stand in for the nothingness that is the other side of consciousness and vision' (p. 128). Presumably this nothingness is the same as Marnie senses from her position of abjectness, the nothingness that results from the negation of the original Thing. Žižek's 'failed symbolization', then, is a denial by the Symbolic realm of the Real and hence a failure to give (guilt-free) satisfaction.

Samuels proceeds to note how various characters in the film, and critics/scholars of the film, both feel constrained to provide explanations of the bird attacks, as if they all want to deny and 'hold at bay the possibility that in the Real there is no intentionality or reason' (p. 128). My comment on this must be that all of it was anticipated by Kant and Schopenhauer. The latter formulated his 'principle of sufficient reason' whereby everything must have a why. But what he also reported was that beyond all our explanations will always be Kant's Thing-in-itself, i.e., Will, which is essentially unknowable. It's not just the same as desire, though, and it includes the natural realm. For that reason, I end up agreeing more with Camille Paglia's 'Coleridgean' reading of *The Birds* than with Samuels's Lacanian one. In a recent interview, Paglia referred to *The Birds*'s 'vision of nature as savage ... as this enormous unknowable force, much

greater than human life'. For me, the birds *are* Will, just as we all are, and though we attempt to 'explain' them, or to explain them away, or to deny them significance altogether, the fact of the matter is that they are simply *there*.

Of course, Samuels does see most of this. His chapter on *The Birds* concludes with the wise remark that the film presents us with 'our true presence in the world divorced from any level of Imaginary intentionality and Symbolic definition' (p. 132). No less wise is Samuels's call, in an Epilogue ("Psycho and the Horror of the Bi-Textual Unconscious"), for that new order of knowledge that would have us recognise our Real nature. He refers us to none other than 'Mrs Bates' herself. At the end of *Psycho*, her voice 'has become the bi-textual voice of the unconscious that calls out of the void and articulates the ethical demand for a return to the Real' (p. 147).

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Notes

1. In a BBC interview, date unknown.
2. For another reading of the *Spellbound* dream sequence, and of the film itself, see 'MacGuffin' 15.
3. Commentators have questioned why Schopenhauer introduced the matter of 'forms' into his theory at all, seeing it as unnecessary (at best). Why not, rather, intimations of Will itself? But could Schopenhauer have felt some 'Lacanian' imperative at this point, that he 'softened' his brilliant insight? (I still maintain, though, that overall Schopenhauer's philosophy subsumes Lacan's psychoanalytic theory.)
4. See, in particular, my essay on *The Trouble With Harry* (1956) in 'MacGuffin' 21, p. 19, where I quote Schopenhauer on how the good person 'feels himself intimately akin to all beings' - an idea that is surely very potent in that film, a favourite of Hitchcock himself.

Some thoughts occasioned by reading Camille Paglia's 'The Birds'

[The following musings are re-printed verbatim from the nightly (four nights a week) "Editor's Day" feature of our Web site. A full book-review of *The Birds* will appear in our next issue.]

August 3 An enthusiastic review of Camille Paglia's BFI monograph on Hitchcock's *The Birds* is now up on our New Publications page. I note there that Paglia locates the film in the line of Coleridge and British Romanticism, and I say how well this fits with my own 'Schopenhauerian' understanding of the film. 'Coleridge and Schopenhauer', I point out, 'were contemporaries, deeply influenced by Plato and Kant; and both held that animal nature is red in tooth and claw.' Tonight I received a message from friend TG suggesting that it's wrong to mix Coleridge and Kant. But Coleridge-authority Kathleen Raine disagrees. 'As a young man', she notes, 'Coleridge visited Germany in order to study the language and philosophy of Kant and Schelling, with whom he has many affinities.' Also, Raine notes that '[f]or Coleridge, both as Christian and Platonist, and as transcendentalist, mind is primary ... he considered Imagination to be "the living Power and prime Agent of all human Perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM."' Paglia's chapter on Coleridge in her great book 'Sexual Personae' comments that '[t]he self-divinizing Romantic poet displaces Jehovah'. This is very close, I suggest, to Schopenhauer's notion of genius - and what I call elsewhere on this Web site 'the transcendental pretence', something that's effectively critiqued by Hitchcock's own *Vertigo* (1958). Moreover, it seems to me that the line of Coleridge and Romanticism that Paglia detects in *The Birds* may in fact have arrived there via Germany, so to speak. As for the idea that 'nature can be awfully rough on you' (as Hitchcock said apropos *The Birds*), that's quite in keeping with Schopenhauer's understanding. For him, 'the world of nature is a world of perpetual screaming. Schopenhauer's view of this is a nightmare vision' (Bryan Magee, 'The Great Philosophers', 1987). Paglia notes that initial sketches by art-designer Robert Boyle for *The Birds* were based on Edvard Munch's 'The Scream' (1893) - a work often considered pre-(German) Expressionist. Okay. This has all been preliminary. Tomorrow the fun begins.

August 4 One of the films that Hitchcock certainly saw, as part of his mandatory research, when he was making *Psycho* (1960) was Joseph L. Mankiewicz's *Suddenly, Last Summer* (1959), adapted from the 1958 play by Tennessee Williams. It stars Katherine Hepburn as the possessive, oddball mother, Montgomery Clift as the ambivalent young neuro-surgeon, and Elizabeth Taylor as the young woman whom the Hepburn character wants lobotomised because she effectively knows too much ... In Camille Paglia's great monograph on *The Birds*, she notes a likely influence on that film of the Tennessee Williams play, and refers to the latter's vision of nature as voracious: as the character Mrs Venables says, 'We're all of us trapped by this devouring creation.' In turn, Paglia speculates that the possessive Mrs Brenner in *The Birds* effectively 'lobotomises' Melanie Daniels ('Tippi' Hedren), her rival for her son Mitch (Rod Taylor), and notes that by the end of the film Melanie is 'out of her mind' (p. 87). I agree with Paglia that the influence is likely (or, anyway, that a parallel exists), and tonight I simply want to point out how *Suddenly, Last Summer* has other echoes in Hitchcock's films that Paglia hasn't recorded. First, the possessive mother with a sexually ambivalent or gay son (the homosexual Sebastian in Mankiewicz's film) is one obvious parallel with *Psycho* that Hitchcock would have immediately spotted. Note that by the end of

Suddenly, Last Summer the viewer somehow thinks of the Cliff character as a 'double' for the dead Sebastian (both have occasion to dress in white, for example). And indeed Mrs Venables finally goes 'psycho' and *does* address the doctor as Sebastian. Bird imagery and the line about how we're all 'trapped' are further parallels between the two films. But there's something else. Sebastian, we're told, had once thought to 'give up the torments of this world and become a Buddhist monk'. Is this the inspiration for why Norman at the end of *Psycho* so much resembles a Buddhist monk - as discussed on our FAQs page? Certainly the final flashback of *Suddenly, Last Summer* is the structural model for the climactic scene of Hitchcock's *Marnie* (1964)! More later.

August 5 Note that *Suddenly, Last Summer* gives us a son-dependent mother who finally goes 'psycho', whereas *Psycho* reverses the situation by giving us a mother-dependent son who finally ... And in both cases, there's a strange interiority at the end, in which different identities merge, and the viewer may wonder just who is who - and whether s/he, the viewer, isn't just a bit 'psycho', too! (However, both films are careful to also leave us with a feeling of having been extricated from the mire, or swamp: e.g., in *Suddenly, Last Summer*, the character played by Elizabeth Taylor is 'saved'.) I see here a paradigm for the 'subjectivity' of *The Birds*, in which the viewer is again 'implicated' in the story. That's what I want to talk about tonight. There are a couple of key shots. One is the literally birds'-eye view of Bodega Bay after fire has broken out in the town square (outside the Tides Restaurant). This always reminds me of a scene from Turgenev's story 'Ghosts' describing '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' - a scene, Turgenev's biographer tells us, that was inspired by a passage in Schopenhauer. And the other key shot in *The Birds* occurs when the frightened mother inside the Tides Restaurant turns to Melanie Daniels - and us (represented by the camera lens) - and says, 'I think you're the cause of all this'. This really turns the tables on us with a vengeance, because each viewer naturally wonders what has caused the birds to attack! As Kant and Schopenhauer remind us, the idea of a causal principle which 'authorizes us everywhere to search for the why' is inherent in all our dealings with the world. Schopenhauer calls it 'the principle of sufficient reason'. However, what he also tells us is that beyond all our explanations is another, greater reality. Kant's *Ding-an-sich* (the Thing-in-itself), which is unknowable. Schopenhauer called it the world's 'Will'. Okay. As I've said here before, I see the birds in Hitchcock's film as finally representing the inexplicable: they function as Will. Camille Paglia, though, sees the birds as expressing the film's (Coleridgean) 'vision of nature as savage ... as this enormous unknowable force, much greater than human life'. Is there a difference in our views? Find out tomorrow!

August 6 In *The Birds*, when the birds are massing for an aerial bombardment outside the Tides Restaurant, Mitch confers with the fisherman Sebastian and proposes a strategy of making smoke-bombs to confuse the attackers, just as fog has done in the past. Camille Paglia has a clever observation about this: "'Make our own fog!" - [is this] a wry comment by the script on the human hunger for meaning?' (p. 71) It may well be, and Paglia has her own explanation of the birds. She sees the crows who attack the school children 'as Coleridgean emissaries vandalising sentimental Wordsworthian notions of childhood' (p. 67). You think of how Wordsworth is effectively mocked early in Hitchcock's *Frenzy* (1972) when a politician who is glibly quoting him ('Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive!') is suddenly interrupted by the presence of a dead body ... Hitchcock of course delights in defeating everybody's complacent notions, and *The Birds* may be the ultimate example of what I call his 'outflanking technique'. I agree with Paglia that the birds represent an 'enormous unknowable force, much greater than human life', which is why I see them as embodying 'Will' (which Schopenhauer likened to a life-force that is also a death-force), but even that way of thinking about them by Paglia may not be adequate as a definition. It rather *reifies* the birds as (mere) force. When the frightened mother addresses the camera and says, 'I think you're the cause of all this', Paglia can only say that the moment has 'a mythic power' (p. 74). In fact, it's an excellent example of how, when confronted (so to speak) by the world's Will, which Schopenhauer further defined as the mysterious Thing-in-itself, human grasp is plainly inadequate. In making *Lifeboat* (1944), Hitchcock said that he intended to show up the Allies' disunity so that they might then find common cause against their enemy, the Nazi. Effectively, *The Birds* operates on a similar principle, first showing up individual (subjective) inadequacy so that a truer knowledge may be arrived at. (Which isn't to say that the birds are our natural enemy, and young Cathy's line at the end about the love-birds may be a nod to that fact.)

August 10 As I say on our New Publications page, practically the only criticism I can make of Camille Paglia's book on *The Birds* is that she doesn't take the full measure of Hitchcock's 'subjective cinema'. Here's another example. After the birds' final dive-bombing of the Brenners' house, a lull occurs. 'They're going', says Mitch (Rod Taylor). Three successive shots of individuals in close-up show each person, in turn, rising into the frame which is initially empty. Three times the frame is filled. Then the camera pulls back, showing the characters at full length, together ... What this does is involve the audience, who three times must say, 'What's going on here? ... Ah, now we see.' And finally what we see are the three main characters (Mitch, Melanie, Lydia) united by their ordeal. Which of course is the idea. But first we've had to be as puzzled as they have been: our visual puzzle (the

empty frame) matches their aural puzzle (the diminishing sound of the birds outside the house). Though Paglia misses all of this, she describes the actual shots splendidly: 'in flickering chiaroscuro from the fireplace ... the three figures ... [finally] stand stock-still, listening, turned to stone like entombed colossi. ... The scene is as beautifully blocked as in live theatre.' (p. 81) Now let's come back to the scene in the Tides Restaurant where the frightened mother accuses Melanie/the camera/ us: 'I think you're the cause of all this.' Given the subjective nature of Hitchcock's cinema, she's dead right, of course! Right from the start of the film, we've become more and more involved, exactly as Melanie has been getting more deeply involved with Mitch and the people of Bodega Bay. But Hitchcock's cinema is really *doubly* subjective, because it naturally partakes of the nature of our experiences generally. As Schopenhauer insisted, we're constantly bound in subjectivity. That's why he began his most famous book by saying, 'The world is my representation' - which I take to be the exact equivalent of what the frightened mother tells Melanie/us. We are watching the film, and thus in Schopenhauer's sense we are making or causing it to happen! But there's still another aspect of this moment in which the mother gazes straight at the camera, and I'll talk about that tomorrow.

August 11 When the frightened mother in the Tides Restaurant in *The Birds* accuses us of being 'the cause of all this', I don't think she's only remarking on how we each create our own cinema inside our head, so to speak. I think she's also reminding us of our predatory nature, of how looking isn't a purely neutral act - it has an aggressive component. Being alive and being predatory are connected (as Schopenhauer, for one, well knew). Now, it's pertinent that the author Charles Dickens (1812-1870), surely Hitchcock's main artistic forebear, was fascinated by waxworks and corpses; both, he once remarked, possess the 'one underlying expression of *looking at something that could not return a look*' (his italics). Eyes fascinated Dickens (see, for example, John Carey, 'The Violent Effigy: a study of Dickens's imagination', pp. 103-04), as I think they fascinated Hitchcock. And whenever in Hitchcock's films a look is returned directly to the camera, as by the murderer (Raymond Burr) in *Rear Window* (1954), the effect is complex. It can simultaneously startle us (because it goes against a film convention), make us feel uneasy (it's aggressive), and yet also make us feel acknowledged and that much more alive. Hitchcock was aware of all these matters; and I recall a line of dialogue that was going to be included in *Vertigo* (1958) and spoken by Judy (Kim Novak): 'You've got to prove you're alive, these days.' In the life-and-death world of *The Birds*, eyes are a special item of attention. 'Cover your eyes!' shouts Mitch, as the birds begin one of their attacks. It does the farmer Dan Fawcett no good, of course, for he dies horribly with his eyes pecked out (as we, and Lydia Brenner, see). It's the deep logic of the film that we feel that the birds' actions are somehow our own, that they emanate with us, though that we're also vulnerable ourselves, and hence the appropriateness of all the film's eye-imagery and of the frightened mother's accusatory gaze at us in the Tides Restaurant. But finally it all comes down to a matter of the nature of Will, of that which is everywhere and in everything, and is a life-force that is also a death-force (as Schopenhauer defined it). A 'no exit' situation, really.

The Fragments of the Mirror: *Vertigo* and its Sources

(a) Prologue

In Hitchcock's *To Catch a Thief* (1955), ex-cat-burglar John Robie (Cary Grant) has returned to his hotel room from a tryst with Francie Stevens (Grace Kelly) during which the two of them had dined in her mother's suite and watched, through the window, a display of fireworks above the bay. Suddenly Francie invades John's room with an anguished demand that he 'give them back - Mother's jewels!' This incident isn't to be found in David Dodge's novel (1953) on which the film is based. Rather, it may recall a much earlier, and famous, episode in fiction: the central incident of William Wilkie Collins's great mystery-story about a jewel, 'The Moonstone' (1868). Of the latter, scholar Anthea Trodd writes: 'the novel owes its career in the psychoanalytic journals to the fact that its central episode takes place at midnight in the heroine's bedroom when her tacit acquiescence in the theft of her valuable becomes hysterical reaction by morning'.¹

As we'll see, there are other cases of Collins's (direct or indirect) influence on Hitchcock. But here's a rather different kind of 'borrowing' by the director. Stephen Rebello has shown that when Hitchcock was planning *Psycho* (1960), he looked again at Henri-Georges Clouzot's *Les Diaboliques/The Fiends* (1954), which was based on the novel by Pierre Boileau and Thomas Narcejac. Hitchcock particularly noted aspects of the French film's publicity campaign, as well as its use of 'moody, dirty-dishes-in-the-sink black and white'.² In addition, he probably enjoyed seeing again on screen the actor Charles Vanel who in *Les Diaboliques* plays the snooping Inspector Fichet and in *To Catch a Thief* the edgy restaurateur Bertani. We'll see that Vanel (1892-1979) seems to have specialised in appearing in plots based on a 'big lie'. *Les Diaboliques* is certainly that, as it involves characters conspiring to stage an elaborate hoax version of events in order to try and frighten their victim to death.

Such plots found their way into several Hollywood movies, and Humphrey Bogart appeared in at least two of them. In Curtis Bernhardt's *Conflict* (1945), he plays a wife-murderer whom psychiatrist Sydney Greenstreet tries to scare into a confession by making it seem that the wife is still alive. At one point, Bogart visits a pawnshop and sees what looks like his wife's recent handwriting in the ledger. He leaves to fetch a police officer. When the two men return, a different pawnbroker awaits them. This man denies all knowledge of a colleague or an assistant. Moreover, the line in the ledger now bears someone else's signature. Here of course there are echoes of Hitchcock's *The Lady Vanishes* (1938) and an anticipation - perhaps a direct influence on - the scene in *North by Northwest* (1959) in which Roger Thornhill (Cary Grant) returns with the police to his abductor's house where all evidence of what happened the night before has been erased or removed. We'll see that *Conflict* certainly influenced a key moment in *Vertigo*.

But another influence on the scene in *North by Northwest* (and the one in *Conflict*) is likely. Vincent Sherman's *All Through the Night* (1942) depicts Bogart as a good-at-heart racketeer who helps to smash a gang of Nazi fifth-columnists who use a New York antique-auction business as their cover. After Bogart is kidnapped by the gang, he manages to escape and return with the police - only to find a surly, know-nothing attendant minding the tidied-up premises. The attendant denies everything! Now, the influence of *All Through the Night* on *North by Northwest* is made especially likely by the fact that another of the scenes in Sherman's film looks like the forerunner of Hitchcock's memorable auction-gallery episode. Needing an excuse to enter the gang's storeroom next to the auction room, Bogart hits on the ruse of making an unusually high (and therefore unbeatable) bid for an old desk - to the consternation of the auctioneer (Conrad Veidt) and his sinister offshoots (Judith Anderson, Peter Lorre), who see what he is up to.

Of course, in Thornhill's case, he makes crazier bids, for his intention is to force the gallery staff to call the police. Another 1942 film may have inspired this aspect of Hitchcock's auction-gallery scene. Sidney Lanfield's *My Favourite Blonde* is actually something of a spoof of Hitchcock's *The 39 Steps* (1935), and it cast Madeleine Carroll alongside Bob Hope to help make its point. In a typical escapade, Hope and Carroll find themselves holed-up in a hotel room by foreign agents who have staked out the building. Desperate, the pair pretend to be a feuding husband and wife (as in Hitchcock's recently-released *Mr and Mrs Smith*), and start to wreck everything in sight. Soon the hotel management arrives with the law ...

So it looks as though Hitchcock, somewhere along the line, saw how he might amalgamate these two scenes from different films in order to maximise the comic effect. That he kept a file of just such ideas was revealed in an exhibitors' campaign-sheet for *Torn Curtain* (1966). Most of Hitchcock's films, it said, 'begin in pigeonholes where he stores sudden thoughts and ideas'. The release quoted Hitchcock as saying that his file contained 'several score' ideas for films. But he then added: 'The volume is the least important aspect of all. Only quality counts in that file.'

I've cited Curtis Bernhardt as a director who may have influenced Hitchcock, i.e., whose film *Conflict* contains at least one scene that is echoed in Hitchcock's work. Bernhardt (1899-1981) was a German who came to Hollywood after working in Great Britain and France; what's to our purpose is that *Conflict* was based on a story by two authors at least one of whom had his own roots in Germany - the American-born Robert Siodmak (1900-1973). Siodmak's career had definite involvement with Hitchcock's: for a time in the 1940s both men even shared the same producer, Joan Harrison.³ Moreover, like Bernhardt, Siodmak had worked in both Germany and France, before he returned to America in 1937. Siodmak's *The File on Thelma Jordan* (1949) stars Barbara Stanwyk and Wendell Corey. Not only does its noirish plot combine elements of Billy Wilder's *Double Indemnity* (1944) with aspects of Hitchcock's *The Paradine Case* (1947), but it contains a key moment in which the two principals, hitherto separated in the frame, back together behind a barred gate - thereby providing an image of complicity which Hitchcock almost certainly noted and then used with telling effect in *Strangers on a Train* (1951).⁴

And there's one more German expatriate who belongs in this article. I'm thinking of William Dieterle (1893-1972) whose career, initially as an actor, had already begun when Hitchcock worked for a year in Germany in 1925. Coming to Hollywood at the start of the sound era, Dieterle soon confirmed his already high reputation as a director. By the time he made *The Life of Emile Zola* (1937), he had shown himself to be 'at his best, an incomparable master of crowd scenes and pictorial composition'.⁵ In that film, an 'umbrella' motif is artfully used. It culminates in the spectacle of a vast sea of umbrellas belonging to an angry mob waiting in the rain outside the Palais de Justice where Zola (Paul Muni) is on trial. Most of the shouts heard are against Zola and for the Army; when a pro-Zola voice is raised, its owner is promptly set upon by the other 'umbrellas' nearby. This intriguing scene would be echoed three years later by the episode in Hitchcock's *Foreign Correspondent* involving the assassination of a diplomat on the rain-swept steps of the Amsterdam town hall and the gunman's escape across a square full of bobbing brollies.⁶

(b) *Vertigo* and vitalism

'The world', said the philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860), 'is my representation'. He meant that everyone sees the world subjectively, as mere appearance. But the world is also what it really is, Kant's unknowable *Ding-an-sich*. Schopenhauer called that reality the world's Will, and characterised it as a life-force that is also a death-force. Schopenhauer's heirs included Nietzsche and Freud.

It's to Freud in particular, and his writings on instinctual repression and other matters, that I want to turn. For reasons of space, I'll concentrate on the brilliant essay, "Delusions and Dreams in Jensen's *Gradiva*" (1907). This analyses the 1903 novella by North German playwright and novelist Wilhelm Jensen (1837-1911), a work described by its author as a 'Pompeian fantasy'.⁷ Here's a synopsis:

A young German archeologist, Norbert Hanold, is so attracted to the image of a girl in an ancient relief which he sees in a Roman museum, that he makes a plaster cast of the relief and begins to fantasise and dream about it. Part of his fantasy is that the girl had died in Pompeii when Vesuvius erupted in 79 A.D. The obsessed Hanold calls the girl Gradiva, 'she who steps along' (so-named by him because of her distinctive gait), and he resolves to visit Pompeii that very spring in a seemingly impossible quest to find the girl herself. When he gets there, he does indeed see someone who resembles her! She comes out of a house and passes trippingly across a row of stepping-stones to the other side of the street. Hanold follows her. It's midday, the traditional 'hour of ghosts'. Suddenly the girl vanishes into a building. Hanold hastens after her and, entering the building, soon finds her again, sitting on some low steps between two yellow columns. He is emboldened to make her acquaintance. She tells him in German that her name is Zöe (which means 'life' in Greek). Over the ensuing days the acquaintance grows, though Hanold persists in his belief that Gradiva and Zöe are one and the same person. In fact, the girl happens to be a childhood sweetheart of his, which explains why she is happy to enact his fantasy. Finally, she reveals to him who she is (her German surname, Bertgang, actually means the same as Gradiva). Hanold finds that he is cured of his delusion, and his repressions, and the two people become lovers.

So here life triumphs over death. A deep subjective fantasy having its roots in a forgotten childhood memory receives an elaborate unearthing, which suffices to free both people to face the world afresh - though that world no doubt still holds unknown rigours of its own. For some reason, I think of *Last Year at Marienbad* (Alain Resnais, 1961), as well as Hitchcock's *Spellbound* (1945) and *Vertigo*!⁸

We know that Hitchcock in the 1940s studied Freud.⁹ Given the close resemblance of parts of 'Gradiva' (even in synopsis) to parts of *Vertigo* - witness the respective heroines' 'vanishing acts'¹⁰ - can one doubt that one of Freud's essays that Hitchcock sooner or later read was the analysis of 'Gradiva', and/or perhaps Jensen's original novella? In any event, many of Freud's comments in the essay are pertinent to Hitchcock's film. I'll mention a few of them.

Importantly, Hanold in 'Gradiva' at first actually prefers his fantasy to the reality. The real Gradiva/Zöe turns out to be a neighbour of his whose existence he had simply 'forgotten'. As Freud shows, Hanold goes to Italy to indulge the fantasy and escape the reality. Moreover, after he discovers the relief in the museum, he's happy to elaborate his fantasy so long as it seems to fit his professional interest as an archeologist - but he's more than a little disconcerted when the flesh-and-blood Gradiva/Zöe materialises. And not just because a dream isn't supposed to turn real. There's an Oedipal conflict going on in Hanold, though ironically Freud never refers to it as such. We learn that Zöe lives with her father, a noted Professor of Zoology, over the way from Hanold in a university town in Germany. Hanold seems to have been cowered by the proximity of such an eminent man and his daughter. As children, he and Zöe had played together, but the time soon came when he had felt the need to put aside childish things and concentrate on his own career. He had abandoned his playmate. At the same time, Zöe's work-preoccupied father had tended to ignore her as well - a man's prerogative, no doubt.

Concerning an Oedipal syndrome in *Vertigo*, we may sense how Gavin Elster's relation to Madeleine/Judy initially appears to Scottie to be that of a (fairly amenable) father/guardian, as well as that of a husband. On another occasion, Freud would note that in some male fantasies, a woman already attached to another man - husband, fiancé, or friend - is an especially desirable love-object.¹¹ Thus we may infer special reasons for why Madeleine/Judy appeals to Scottie, and what she means to him. But there may be others. When Scottie finally loses his beloved, it's due to the intervention of a shadowy mother-figure (about whom I'll say more below).

Freud emphasises how Hanold succeeds for a time in keeping Gradiva/Zöe at a certain distance. By identifying her with a classical setting, as for instance in an early dream when he sees her enter the temple of Apollo, Hanold puts her on a pedestal. But now, at Pompeii, a turning-point is reached. He rests his hand on hers, ostensibly to test her corporeal reality yet clearly with an underlying erotic motive. You think of how in *Vertigo*, sitting before the fire in his apartment, Scottie places his hand on Madeleine's as if by accident when he reaches for her coffee-cup ...

Above all, it's Freud's comments on how Gradiva/Zöe shows a 'peculiar oscillation between death and life'¹² that seem to me to catch the *Vertigo* note. Freud remarks that Pompeii provides an apt symbol for both repression and for the excavation of buried memories. Clearly, San Francisco, with its colourful history part-destroyed by earthquake and fire, and by the fog of memory itself, offers an equivalent. And if Gradiva/Zöe and Harold both move between death and life, Madeleine/Judy and Scottie do the same. Indeed, *everything* in *Vertigo* reflects such a dualism or ambiguity. For instance, is the Sequoia forest (whose trees are 'always green, ever-living') really a place of life, or is it rather (being dark and overwhelming) a place of death? Is even the busy city itself truly living, or is it just a place of death-in-life? (Its people seem to move as if underwater.)

Here I'm reminded of Nietzsche's phrase, 'Man is something to be overcome',¹³ and of how Hitchcock had encountered that German philosopher, if only indirectly, through the writings of such authors as John Buchan ('The Power-House', 1913) and George Bernard Shaw ('Man and Superman', 1903). I think Scottie aspires to be an *Übermensch* figure, and that he betrays as much when, for example, he disdains both Midge's pity and Judy's 'sentimentality'. Nietzsche of course despised compassion as a sign of the inauthentic individual, of the common herd, though he allowed it in the Superman himself.¹⁴ However, Hitchcock's attitude to the Superman was always ambivalent. Hence the critiques of that figure you find in *Lifeboat* (1944), *Rope* (1948) - and *Vertigo*. And hence the ambivalence the latter film shows towards life, for such ambivalence marks a continuing degree of repression in Scottie certainly but maybe also in the filmmakers.

That's to say, I think Hitchcock's position was closer to the pessimist Schopenhauer's than to the optimist Nietzsche's. Whereas Nietzsche regarded will as entirely positive, as the source of man's strength,¹⁵ Schopenhauer saw Will as a mixed blessing (though it's all we've got), as inherently blind and destructive as well as vitalising and procreative.

As we're about to see, the author Edgar Allan Poe expressed 'a wish to get out of the world'. Was this *just* a neurotic impulse?

(c) Some literary sources for *Vertigo*

Here I want to treat, quite briefly, works by half-a-dozen authors of differing nationalities and reputations. Those authors are: Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Edgar Allan Poe, Alexandre Dumas *films*, William Wilkie Collins, Thomas Mann, and Robert Nathan.

(i) Hitchcock expresses appreciation of Goethe's 'Faust' (1808, 1831) in his article "Pourquoi J'ai Peur la Nuit"/ "Why I Am Afraid of the Dark".¹⁶ I think Scottie in *Vertigo* may be seen to resemble a Faust-figure (as well as an aspiring Superman), and in evidence it will be helpful to consider Camille Paglia's thumbnail summary of Goethe's great drama:

*Gretchen is naïve sentiment, Mephistopheles cynical sophistication. Faust is caught in the middle, like all mankind.*¹⁷

Scottie, too, is someone 'caught in the middle'. He aspires to rise above the common herd but is finally defeated by his own repressions, a condition represented by his acrophobia (fear of heights). Midge notes his considerable ambition when she remarks on how he'd wanted to be not just a 'bright young lawyer' but Chief of Police. Right there, though, she's implying why she'd broken off her engagement to him as far back as their college days. In effect, she was always destined to play Gretchen (Margaret) to his Faust. She had sensed almost from the start that she lacked something that he sought, something linked to a will-to-power. Something ultimately mysterious. Nonetheless, for those with eyes to see it, Midge has a special quality of her own, her capacity for compassion. Think of her reaction to the story of Carlotta ('Poor thing!')¹⁸ ...

Then there's the film's Mephistopheles, the suave and fiendish Gavin Elster. He quickly grasps Scottie's frustrations and discontent. In effect, he tempts him with his true heart's-desire, for Madeleine is to Scottie the very symbol of worldly 'colour, excitement, power, freedom' yet she's also someone who is still mysterious and *other*-worldly.

That is, Madeleine is like Goethe's Helen of Troy who supplants the simple and abused Gretchen in Faust's fancy and points him toward 'the world of eternity where all the opposites are transcended' (as Jungian analyst Jolande Jacobi puts it).¹⁹ In Scottie's and Madeleine's case, I think that for 'opposites' we may also read 'dualisms'. And Scottie, like Faust, glimpses happiness for a time, only to be left desolate when Madeleine/Judy 'departs' (cf 'Faust', Part Two, Act III).

Moreover, Goethe's drama surely gives us the best clue as to why Scottie finally loses Judy. His loss, remember, follows hard on the mother-superior's intervention, her apparition rising up like some dark, chthonic threat. As her very title suggests, she represents what Camille Paglia calls the Great Mother! In turn, her apparition may recall Faust's journey to the supernatural realm of 'the Mothers' where the spirit of Helen exists in eternity. As Paglia says:

*The Mothers appear in 'Faust' when the hero tries to materialise the spirit of Helen. Adult love is overshadowed by maternal claims to priority. The male struggles through his sexual stages, returning to the mother even when he thinks himself most free of her.*²⁰

Paglia notes how Faust 'descending to the Mothers makes a journey to *terra incognita*, his own repressed feminine side, where his mother still dwells'.²¹ Curiously, whereas in most modern treatments by artists of the Great Mother, 'she controls only green nature', in 'Faust' she inhabits a 'gloomy Stygian cavern with which western myth associates swarthy male hierarchs'.²² Once again *Vertigo's* Sequoia forest and its dualisms comes to mind.

(ii) Of all authors, Edgar Allan Poe (1809-49) fascinated the young Hitchcock 'most of all'.²³ Interestingly, Hitchcock would remark that he had felt 'an enormous pity' for Poe's life which 'had never been happy'.²⁴ He added that it was because he had been so taken with Poe's stories that he afterwards made suspense films. Literary scholar Karl Miller²⁵ says many illuminating things about Poe's work that I find relevant to *Vertigo*. For instance, he notes that several of the stories express 'a wish to get out of the world', and cites as examples 'William Wilson' and 'The Unparalleled Adventures of One Hans Pfaall'. It's an observation that surely applies with equal force to Scottie, a part of whom clearly wishes to be, in a sense, upwardly mobile. If he could, he would even escape the spiral of history itself, whose image is the cross-section of the felled Sequoia. (In this connection, I also think of how Schopenhauer praised Kant for showing that we can't get out of the world 'by horizontal movement, but that by perpendicular movement it is perhaps not impossible to do so'.²⁶ I'll come back to this.)

However, Miller adds that there was a more cautious, stay-at-home side to Poe:

But romance is variance, as well as velocity and vertigo, and the soaring self vies with a self that stays, knowing that flights may fail.

What Poe wanted, says Miller, was to escape life's 'enigmas' but not to go too far away: 'to depart, yet live' (the quoted words are Hans Pfaall's). Accordingly, Poe once told a woman friend that he'd like to live in a cottage 'not *too* far secluded from the world'. In turn, Poe's own journeys are said to

embody the search for a mother, and an effort to regain the mother he had lost, and his 'depart, yet live' may be matched with the tension in his writings between an impulse to guard against the horrors of premature burial and an impulse to be interred with the maternal remains. No one has given such point to the traditional joke about the romantic rhyme of 'womb' and 'tomb'.

The single tale of Poe's most relevant to *Vertigo* is certainly 'Ligeia' - where, though, contra Hitchcock's film, the lost love, Ligeia, is the dark-haired one, and the woman who comes to embody her is a blonde, the Lady Rowena. Nonetheless, it's clear that Ligeia is one of Poe's 'tyrant mothers', as Camille Paglia calls her: 'The [male] narrator of *Ligeia* is a "child" beneath the tutelage and "infinite supremacy" of the heroine'.²⁷ The narrator describes her as having 'the beauty of beings either above or apart from the earth', and as a woman of 'immense' learning. You think of how Scottie's obsessed, even worshipful, pursuit of Madeleine (like also Harold's of *Gradiva*, and Faust's of Helen) accrues ever-richer associations of religion, art, and Romantic-cum-Platonic ideality. As for Madeleine's blonde, i.e., non-dark hair, it's one more of the ambiguous or conflicting details that the Catholic Hitchcock gave the character: Madeleine's very name can connote both the Virgin Mary and Mary Magdalene.²⁸

Central to 'Ligeia' is the notion that death is but an infirmity of man's will. Three times Poe's tale quotes the following passage from 'Lux Orientalis' by English theologian Joseph Glanvill (1636-80):

And the will ... dieth not. Who knoweth the mysteries of the will, with its vigor? For God is but a great will pervading all things by nature of its intentness. Man doeth not yield himself to the angels, nor unto death utterly, save only through the weakness of his feeble will.

Ligeia dies with that last sentence on her lips. Earlier, the following crucial passage had given us the narrator's train of association even as it eerily anticipates Scottie's view of Madeleine and evokes Kim Novak's remarkable performance in Hitchcock's film:

An intensity in thought, action, or speech was possibly, in her, a result, or at least an index, of that gigantic volition which, during our long intercourse, failed to give other and more immediate evidence of its existence. Of all the women whom I have ever known, she, the outwardly calm, the ever-placid Ligeia, was the most violently a prey to the tumultuous vultures of stern passion. And of such passion I could form no estimate, save by the miraculous expansion of those eyes ...

The links to *Vertigo* are several: for example, you think immediately of the film's credits-sequence and the woman's darting eyes. Most crucially, though, what connects the female protagonists of the two works is how they are seen by the respective men (Poe's narrator; Scottie) to embody the key to escaping, or explaining, life's cruel enigmas - though still themselves subject to that cruelty. The question I would ask is: whence comes the cruelty? Is it, as Nietzsche would imply, all a matter of the world's will that can be opposed (so to speak) by *stronger* human willing? Or is there an impersonal element, as I think both Joseph Glanvill and Arthur Schopenhauer saw? 'Ligeia' pivots on that question. Some commentators interpret the end of the story as signifying the woman's actually being, or becoming, God: Ligeia reappears in the flesh and lineaments of the second wife's corpse.²⁹ But is the intensity of will manifested here really that of Ligeia herself? Or of some other agency turned against itself, such as Kant's *Ding-an-sich*? Or nature? That is, is it mainly a *symbolic* willing? In truth, I find the ending of Hitchcock's film rather more compatible with the understanding shared by Glanvill and by Schopenhauer, that 'God' or 'Will' is ultimately not a matter of deliberate human volition at all. To me, the ending of *Vertigo* shows Scottie's inability to abandon self-centredness ('I made it', he exclaims, revealingly). After all, a definition of Nirvana is that it requires a *yielding*, even unto death, of the individual will to the world's Will; and Scottie's inability to do that indeed leaves him more desolate than ever. In short, his ascent of the mission bell-tower merely *parodies* the 'perpendicular movement', i.e., transcendence, of which Schopenhauer spoke, as it also parodies Nietzsche's notion of the soaring, joyous Superman. We'll shortly see a similar paradox operating in Thomas Mann's 'Death in Venice'.

(iii) First, though, a word about Hitchcock's 'quoting' of the novel and play 'La Dame aux Camélias' by Alexandre Dumas *fiils* (1824-95). That work, of course, contains another of fiction's 'archetypal' fascinating women (like Ligeia), justifying literary scholar David Coward's recent claim that courtesan Marguerite Gautier exists 'at the centre of the collective unconscious' - even though, by the same token, she doesn't 'properly belong with Emma Bovary or Anna Karenina on the high slopes of literature'.³⁰ When making *Vertigo*, Hitchcock surely had Marguerite in mind, and specifically this passage from the novel (spoken by Armand Duval):

'A few minutes later, as I loitered on the boulevard, I saw Marguerite at the window of one of the restaurant's large rooms: leaning on the balcony, she was pulling the petals one by one off the camellias in her bouquet.'

Armand has just been introduced to Marguerite in a box at the Opera, and now he is more than ever infatuated with this woman whom he had hitherto watched only from a distance. The moment he describes here has at least three distinct correspondences in *Vertigo*. For a start, Scottie first sees 'Madeleine' at Ernie's Restaurant dining with Gavin after husband and wife have been to the Opera. (Perhaps it had been 'La Traviata', with its re-telling of the Marguerite Gautier story.) But for some days after that, he watches her only from a distance as he trails her around San Francisco at Gavin's request (Gavin professes to be troubled by his wife's recent behaviour).

Later, just before Madeleine's first suicide attempt, Scottie sees her pulling apart a nosegay of flowers and throwing them one by one into the bay. The flowers appear to be mainly rosebuds, i.e., not camellias, but in any case what we sense from Madeleine's gesture is her feeling that her past life (with its various affairs?) hasn't amounted to much. The *surrendering* of the nosegay to the sea thus serves as an image of the death drive and of 'Nirvana' which, significantly, appals the Scottie character in the *Vertigo* novel, discussed below, where such an attitude is likened to the alleged unthinking passivity of animals.

And again, Scottie twice sees the woman he has been following appear at an upstairs window, once as Madeleine and once as Judy. The 'theatrical' connotations of these two moments suitably suggest Scottie's rivetted attention.³¹ I was reminded that Hitchcock may have previously found occasion to refer to Dumas's tale when I recently re-read Australian critic Adrian Martin's 1984 article on *Notorious* (1946), where he notes how the self-disgusted Alicia in that film 'corresponds to a certain feminine stereotype leading back precisely one hundred years to Marguerite Gautier in Dumas's *Lady of the Camellias* ("I had a sort of hope I should kill myself by all these excesses")'.³²

(iv) Hitchcock called English novelist William Wilkie Collins (1824-89) 'quite brilliant',³³ and Collins's 'The Woman in White' (1860) has been described by at least one authority as, 'in the highest sense of the term, the greatest melodrama

ever written'.³⁴ Here, I simply want to note how that novel provides, in its haunting apparition of the woman-in-white herself, one more precedent for the numinous Madeleine in *Vertigo*; and likewise, how the opera-loving, cosmopolitan Count Fosco, whom another critic suggests is 'the most brilliantly portrayed villain in mystery fiction',³⁵ anticipates aspects of the malevolent Gavin Elster. Crucially, Collins helped pioneer in fiction the type of plot I've referred to as the 'big lie'.

(v) Clearly, Thomas Mann's 'Der Tod in Venedig'/'Death in Venice' (1913) resembles Jensen's 'Gradiva' in some aspects of basic plot, being about a German man who, on an impulse, makes a springtime journey to an historic seaside city in Italy (Pompeii; Venice) where he becomes obsessed with, and starts to follow around, a classically beautiful figure (the girl Gradiva/Zöe; the Polish boy Tadzio). A direct influence of Jensen's novella on Mann's seems likely, although in the case of Mann (1875-1955), he is said to have drawn on events in his own life which occurred in the summer of 1911 - to the extent that the real-life Tadzio, one Baron Moes, eventually recognised 'himself' in Visconti's superb 1971 film.³⁶ Also, Mann said that he partly modelled the German writer in his tale on the Austrian composer Gustav Mahler; and the tale overall shows the influence of the thought of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, both of whom Mann admired.³⁷

The image of Venice in Mann's tale, like that of San Francisco in *Vertigo*, is ambiguous. Venice is described by Mann as 'half fairy-tale, half-snare'. (I'm reminded of Oscar Wilde's description of San Francisco as a city with 'all the attractions of the next world'.) Thus Aschenbach, the writer in the tale, and very much an Apollonian figure, has always striven in his work to create forms which 'would body forth to men ... the mirror and image of spiritual beauty'. He might be echoing Schopenhauer's notion of great art's capacity to reveal Platonic Ideas - just as one possible function of the many mirrors in *Vertigo* is to show the viewer (Scottie; the film audience) the eternal forms hidden within temporal ones. But now Aschenbach is growing weary, and for him the nearby ocean begins to exert that part of its profound appeal that is almost sensual and 'opposed to his art ... a lure, for the unorganised, the immeasurable, the eternal - in short, for nothingness'. For the artist, to succumb to the eternal is to stop creating, and it is on this ironic note that Mann's tale does in fact end.

Yet one of the great and affecting scenes in fiction - and perhaps in film - is surely Aschenbach's death presided over by a seemingly abandoned camera on a tripod, whose 'black cloth snapped in the freshening wind'. Nearby, the entrancing figure of Tadzio wades into the water, and it seems to the dying man that

the pale and lovely Summoner out there smiled at him and beckoned; as though, with the hand he lifted from his hip, he pointed outwards as he hovered on before into an immensity of richest expectation.

In its way, this is almost Wagnerian, evoking thoughts of 'Tristan und Isolde' and Wagner's own comment on his opera that 'With the black flag that floats at the end of it I shall cover myself to die'.³⁸ Wagner-authority Bryan Magee has no doubt that 'Tristan really is. ... as it so obviously appears to be, all-engulfingly erotic'.³⁹ But Magee is equally a Schopenhauer-authority, and he has shown how the end of 'Tristan' was profoundly influenced by Wagner's reading of Schopenhauer.⁴⁰ He then makes a comment which I think is pertinent to 'Death in Venice':

*However, on the basis of Schopenhauer's philosophy there is an unresolved problem posed by [Wagner's] work, and it is this: the lovers speak endlessly of unity with each other in death, but they will be united in death only in the sense that they will be united with everything and everybody else, including all the other characters in the opera.*⁴¹

I think it's possible, and valid, to extrapolate from this the meaning attaching to the camera at the end of 'Death in Venice', and why that ending is problematic. Quite simply, the image of the black-draped camera may be said to stand both for Aschenbach at the moment of his dying - a forlorn enough sight - and for how each of the mundane photos taken by the camera has its own story to tell. (Moreover, the photographer will be back at work tomorrow, and the day after that ...) Can we ever 'know' more than representations? Or, at least, can we ever know that we can know ...? It seems to me likely that Aschenbach's 'relaxed and brooding expression of deep slumber' as he gazes for the last time on the ocean, and on Tadzio's beckoning figure, is again no more than a parody of Schopenhauerian or Nietzschean values. Of true Nirvana.

Something that reinforces my view is Magee's saying that, according to Schopenhauer, only 'compassionate, not sexual, love, a love in which the will is denied', could achieve a true oneness of individuals in this world, the world of phenomena (representations).⁴² In 'Death in Venice', we're specifically told that Aschenbach, a very one-sided man, no Superman in fact, has rejected all 'compassion with the abyss', i.e., the world at large, and that his concern has been 'with beauty only'.

Now I come back to *Vertigo*. Very much the equivalent of Mann's image of the camera is (I suggest) Hitchcock's image of the mother-superior, the nun whose black-clad figure becomes literally one of death when Judy falls from the bell-tower, yet whose valedictory line for the film's characters - 'I heard voices ... God have mercy' - carries the note of Hitchcockian compassion. But Scottie, as we've seen, has rejected compassion, which he seems to think amounts to merely being 'sentimental'.⁴³ In a film about 'the small stuff of history', and people's brief lives, the nun's words do bring a touch of resignation and Nirvana, but the wilful Scottie is oblivious of it.

The ending of Mann's novella plays on the Schopenhauerian term 'nothingness', an ambiguous concept both in Schopenhauer and in Hitchcock.⁴⁴ It's important, I think, to recognise that 'knowledge' (which, however, is still something ...) may take various 'forms', including the Platonic ones mentioned above. So we may indeed know something more than representations, and art offers one means to obtain such knowledge. It's far from being the only means, though. Now, I've deliberately allowed into the present article more than just, say, Freudian matters. And in both 'Death in Venice' and *Vertigo* I see 'Freudian' elements that in fact should probably be understood more broadly. A couple of these are what is often called the oceanic feeling (which Freud paraphrased as the feeling of 'oneness with the universe') and its concomitant notion of the dissolution of the ego. On the first of these Freud corresponded with the French writer and musicologist, Romain Rolland, but professed that he could find no trace of such a feeling in himself. However, he proceeded to characterise it as a regression to an earlier state: that of the infant at the breast. His somewhat dismissive estimation doesn't satisfy psychiatrist and author Anthony Storr, who comments drily that the oceanic feeling 'seems a more important experience than [Freud] admits'.⁴⁵ Storr acknowledges that the feeling may indeed be related to early infantile experience of unity with the mother, but he observes:

*those who have experienced the states of mind recorded by [Admiral] Byrd and by William James record them as having had a permanent effect upon their perception of themselves and of the world; as being the profoundest moments of their existence. This is true both of those who have felt the sense of unity with the universe and of those who have felt the sense of unity with a beloved person.*⁴⁶

However, Storr does note as comparable expressions of the oceanic feeling two moments from works of art, which happen to coincide with two key moments sometimes cited in connection with *Vertigo*: the *Liebeshod* from 'Tristan und Isolde' (on which, see above), and the lines commencing 'Darkling I Listen' from Keats's 'Ode to a Nightingale', which provided the very title of an early script-draft of Hitchcock's film.⁴⁷ Though Hitchcock was careful to provide strict narrative or naturalistic reasons for everything he showed (e.g., Judy's 'ghostly' transformation back into Madeleine, the green haze surrounding her ostensibly caused by the neon sign outside the hotel window), it's impossible to doubt that many of the feelings thus filmed came from deep within him.

(vi) A synopsis of the short novel, 'Portrait of Jennie' (1940), by American writer Robert Nathan (1894-?), is included in the useful book 'A Treasury of Literary Masterpieces' (1969), and I must confess to having read only that potted version. But of course I've watched many times the exquisite 1948 film, starring Jennifer Jones and Joseph Cotten, to which I'm coming. I want to mention the novella at this point if only because it so obviously belongs with the other novellas already discussed. Also, there's at least one moment in Nathan's story which, though 'Hitchcockian', I don't recall from the film version. Here's an excerpt from the synopsis:

One afternoon Jennie appears at [the artist] Eben's studio; she has come to pose. During their conversation, Eben mentions how lost he had been at the time they first met [in Central Park]. Jennie seems upset at the word 'lost'. She says that they couldn't both have been lost. On returning to the room after a brief departure, Eben finds Jennie gone. He had not heard the hall door close.

Jennie's saying that she and Eben couldn't *both* have been lost seems to anticipate the moment in *Vertigo* when Madeleine laughingly tells Scottie that 'Only one [person] is a wanderer - two are always going somewhere'. And the subtle suggestion of Jennie's ghostliness, in the detail about the door, likewise anticipates the several eerie moments in *Vertigo* when Madeleine seems to disappear around corners.

(d) A brief note on 'D'Entre les Morts'

So far is Boileau and Narcejac's novel⁴⁸ from being merely 'a squalid exercise in sub-Graham Greenery', as Robin Wood unfairly calls it, that I would venture to suggest that it represents one of the best novels Hitchcock filmed in America - contending in that respect with Daphne du Maurier's 'Rebecca', Helen Simpson's 'Under Capricorn', and Jack Trevor Story's 'The Trouble With Harry'. Its most obvious progenitor is Georges Simenon's 'Lettre à mon juge' (1947),⁴⁹ whose author had been extolled by Narcejac in his study, 'Le Cas "Simenon"' (1950). Moreover, nothing

could be further from the truth than claims by Wood and others that ‘Hitchcock took very little from “D’Entre les Morts” apart from the basic plot line’.

For instance, Wood says that ‘the novel offers no equivalent for the sequoias [scene]’ in the film. Not only do Flavières (the Scottie character) and Madeleine visit the Forêt de Fontainebleau (Part I, Chapter 4), although this is just mentioned, but a key scene soon follows that takes place in the Louvre. Here, the couple pass ‘through a dark entrance’ to where they saunter ‘among Egyptian gods in the coolness of a cathedral’, and they converse on the very matters that Scottie and Madeleine raise in the film’s Sequoia forest. Finally, Flavières and Madeleine leave the building and find themselves, ‘somewhat breathless, in front of a lawn in the middle of which a sprinkler was shedding a rainbow’. (As Scottie and Madeleine leave the forest, the impression given is indeed that of their emerging from a cathedral into the light, a moment soon followed by the scene on the clifftop with its piece of overt romanticism, the crashing waves.)

Moreover, Flavières now begins to feel the same ‘peaceful exhaustion he had known as a boy when he had been running the whole day along the banks of the Loire’. I’d make two observations here. First, that childhood haunt includes some ancient caves, which the novel repeatedly mentions as a place of mystery and of the earth. At one point (Part II, Chapter 4) Flavières is reminded of how Christ’s body had lain in such a cave before the Resurrection, which connects with the novel’s frequent references to how Orpheus had tried to bring back Eurydice from the underworld. Second, Flavières’ ‘peaceful exhaustion’ is part of a pattern in the novel whereby he is simultaneously drawn to, and repelled by, a peculiar passivity in Madeleine which he sees as being like that of animals, which ‘have no pasts and no futures’ (Part I, Chapter 5). For what this signifies, we need only look at a reference in the novel’s first chapter.

The novel’s equivalent of Gavin Elster is the prospering shipbuilder, Gévigne (prospering, because it’s wartime and ships are in demand). When Gévigne mentions his wife’s troubling recent behaviour, in which she suddenly appears to enter a trance and her face becomes like a ‘mystic’s’, he refers Flavières to ‘a German film called *Jacob Boehme* we saw at the *Ursulines* back in the ‘twenties’ (Part I, Chapter 1). The reference to the mystic Boehme (1575-1624) is a key to the novel and, to some extent, Hitchcock’s film. Not only had Boehme hoped, as part of a general reformation of Christendom, to reunite Protestants and Catholics, but his writings influenced later thinkers like Schopenhauer and Nietzsche in Germany and other groups and individuals like the Quakers and William Blake in England. Importantly for what I’ve been trying to show in this article, Boehme taught that ‘will’ is the original force.⁵⁰ Also, that

*Man must die to self-centredness and enter a state of total surrender ... In this state he is ‘reborn’.
For Boehme ... rebirth is at the heart of all processes, both in man and in the universe.*⁵¹

But sadly for Flavières, another of the novel’s themes is more pessimistic. It’s true that he twice seems to come close to being ‘reborn’: first, when he almost possesses Madeleine, his eternal-feminine figure; and again, when he starts to re-model Madeleine’s look-alike, Renée, as if he were an artist ‘painting the portrait of the Madeleine he remembered’ (Part II, Chapter 4). But, like Hans Castorp in Mann’s ‘The Magic Mountain’, he finally isn’t good enough. (Literary scholar Frederick Hoffmann has noted how Hans Castorp, a trainee shipbuilder, becomes for the time he spends in the Swiss sanatorium, ‘a student, an intellectual, *almost an artist*’ - my emphasis - but then returns to the lowlands and a conventional young-man’s death on the battlefield.)⁵² In *Vertigo*, the failed artistic aspirations are given to Midge, but the implication concerning Scottie himself is clear.

As for Protestants versus Catholics, such a theme is just detectable in Hitchcock’s film where I take it that Scottie (whose real name is John Ferguson) is a (Scottish Lowland) Protestant who finds himself at variance, so to speak, with the film’s omnipresent Catholic iconography and the yet more exotic, almost at times non-human, passivity of Madeleine.

(e) Some cinema sources of *Vertigo*

For convenience, these can be listed as German, British, French, and American - though the distinction isn’t clear-cut, as we’ll see.

(i) The influence of German Expressionism on *Vertigo* has often been remarked, and is anticipated in the Boileau and Narcejac novel when it refers to a German film seen in the ‘20s (although, as far as I know, ‘*Jacob Boehme*’ is purely an invented film-title). Similarly, Lotte Eisner’s book about such German films, ‘L’Ecran Démoniaque’/ ‘The Haunted Screen’, first published in France in 1952, contains several entries on a kind of psychological vertigo. As for the actual ‘vertigo’ effect in Hitchcock’s film, it’s basically just a more elaborate subjective effect than the one used by E.A. Dupont in *Variety* (1925) and then re-worked by Hitchcock in the circus climax of *Murder!* (1930). And German Expressionism’s emphasis on mother-figures, remarked by Siegfried Kracauer in ‘From Caligari to Hitler’ (1947), is echoed in Hitchcock’s film in some scenes with Midge. Specifically, Kracauer mentions the films *The Street* (1923) and

New Year's Eve (1923), in both of which a man breaks down and rests his head on a woman's bosom, a gesture signifying 'desire to return to the maternal womb'.⁵³ It's like the gesture seen in *Vertigo* when Scottie collapses off the kitchen-stool into Midge's arms.

(ii) When Madeleine describes her dream of 'walking down a long corridor that once was mirrored', she is echoing imagery and indeed the title of a little-known British film, *The Corridor of Mirrors* (Terence Young, 1948). But it's likely that Hitchcock had seen the film: for a start, it contains several Hitchcockian elements, among them a jealous housekeeper (like those of *Rebecca* and *Under Capricorn*) and a suitably macabre climax set in Madame Tussaud's (like the one in Mrs Belloc Lowndes's 'The Lodger'). The very plot shows more than a passing resemblance to *Vertigo*'s, being about an artist obsessed with a Venetian woman in a 400-years-old portrait, whose living double he encounters in present-day London and makes his mistress. In *Under Capricorn*, which Hitchcock filmed in England after Young's film came out, Lady Henrietta (Ingrid Bergman) is described by Adare (Michael Wilding) as both a 'work of art' and a 'reincarnation'.

Moreover, the corridor and mirror imagery of Young's film has a distinctly Cocteauesque look, which is literally underscored by Georges Auric's music, and reminds you of Hitchcock's admiration for Cocteau's *Le Sang d'un Poète/The Blood of a Poet* (1932).⁵⁴ Such imagery in *Vertigo* is ubiquitous - even the famous shot down the bell-tower is a corridor image. It's evoked, too, in the smallest details, such as Madeleine's memory of having once fallen into a river, 'trying to leap from one stone to the next'. That image conflates Cocteau's/Young's idea of a fraught corridor with the memorable image of the stepping-stones in 'Gradiva'. But underlying it is Madeleine's fear, which she tells Scottie, of the darkness outside the corridor and her knowledge 'that when I [finally] walk into the darkness that I'll die'.

British director Noel Langley effectively helped 'licence' Hitchcock to make *Vertigo* when in 1956 he went to Hollywood and filmed a 'true' story of reincarnation, *The Search for Bridey Murphy*, starring Teresa Wright, which caught the public's imagination. But of course Hitchcock's own fascination with such material had begun long ago - as far back as 1920 - when he attended the original London stage production of James Barrie's mystical 'Mary Rose' whose title-character lives in and out of time and whose mother has cause to wonder, 'where is my child?' ...⁵⁵

(iii) In an article on Belgian director Jacques Feyder, author and critic Peter Cowie refers to an influential film made by Feyder for Films de France, *Le Grand Jeu/The Great Game* (1933). The Foreign Legion story is set mainly in Morocco, and the actress Marie Bell plays two different women. Here's Cowie:

*The film's device of having a man haunted by the vision of a blonde woman he loved, and seeing her materialize in subtly changed guise as a brunette, would be used subsequently by Pierre Boileau and Thomas Narcejac for the novel that became the basis of Hitchcock's Vertigo.*⁵⁶

But Cowie doesn't indicate how the alleged influence on the novel occurred. It may have been indirectly. In 1953, *Le Grand Jeu* was remade as a Franco-Italian co-production directed by Robert Siodmak (who had once shared a producer with Hitchcock, remember). The new film starred Gina Lollobrigida (with first red hair, then black), and was in colour. More than likely, it was the remake that Boileau and Narcejac saw just before they wrote their novel. Another film they may have seen at that time was Henri Verneuil's *Le Fruit Défendu/Forbidden Fruit*, adapted from Simenon's 'Lettre à mon juge' and starring Fernandel in a non-comedy role. It came out in 1952.⁵⁷

In the original *Le Grand Jeu*, actor Charles Vanel had a supporting role. As we've noted, Vanel would later play Bertani in *To Catch a Thief*. In 1938 he was seen in the French film *Carrefour*, directed by Curtis Bernhardt. Like Siodmak (and Hitchcock), Bernhardt had earlier worked in Germany. He and Vanel now co-operated to make one of the touchstone 'big lie' films, which may well have influenced 'D'Entre les Morts' and *Vertigo*. Briefly, the plot of *Carrefour* concerns amnesia. The film's evil mastermind (Vanel) learns of a diplomat who has lost part of his memory, and sees in this an opportunity for blackmail. He employs an elderly actress to impersonate the diplomat's mother who will convince him that he has committed a crime. When Hollywood remade the film in 1942, as *Crossroads*, it had William Powell as victim, and Basil Rathbone as villain. Parallels with *Vertigo* include the mastermind figure (whose origins lie in melodrama and its mutation, German Expressionism),⁵⁸ and the attempt to take advantage of a man's infirmity by means of an elaborate hoax, the 'big lie'. In *Vertigo*, Judy imitates the real Madeleine, whom Gavin has murdered; and an elderly lady, presumably a paid actress, compounds the subterfuge by playing the 'innocent' landlady of the McKittrick Hotel.

(iv) If there's one American film that is the progenitor of *Vertigo*, that film is *Portrait of Jennie* adapted from the Robert Nathan novella by German expatriate director William Dieterle. It was made at the Selznick studio in 1947, at about the time Hitchcock was filming *The Paradine Case* there. Hitchcock already admired Dieterle's work to the point of

imitation (the umbrellas scene in *Foreign Correspondent*). On seeing *Portrait of Jennie*, he would have noticed how Jennie resembles Mary Rose, a girl who lives in and out of time. But Dieterle's haunting film and *Vertigo* have other correspondences. For instance, both move towards a tragic climax involving a tower. And both are memorable for their sea-imagery. Further, the films' similarity is underlined by the fact that composer Bernard Herrmann worked on both. (For Dieterle, though, Herrmann composed just 'Jennie's Song' - while Dimitri Tiomkin, the film's official composer, adapted various themes of Debussy, including passages from 'La Mer'.)

Another fine American film of the '40s, showing indebtedness to Hitchcock's *Rebecca* (1940), is Lewis Allen's ghost tale, *The Uninvited* (1944). Set on the coast of Cornwall and Devon, it anticipates *Vertigo* by referring to a Spanish ancestor (Carmel, instead of Carlotta), to the *Liebestod* from 'Tristan und Isolde' (a rather sardonic touch this time), and to the sea as a place 'of life and death and eternity, too'. But what is certainly the most direct link to *Vertigo* is seen when the haunted heroine, played by Gail Russell, breaks away from her would-be protector (Ray Milland) and runs toward the nearby cliff-edge, clearly intending to commit suicide at the very place where she had been told her mother threw herself over. The spot is marked by a single, gnarled tree - a tree identical to the one we see in Hitchcock's film when Madeleine breaks away from Scottie and runs towards the cliff-edge ...

There are many such 'quotes' in *Vertigo*, and here are some more. When Scottie throws down several cushions before his fire and invites Madeleine to make herself comfortable, the moment recalls a famous scene early in *A Bill of Divorcement* (1932), the first film of Katherine Hepburn. The film's producer, David Selznick, afterwards described the scene as having given him 'one of the greatest experiences I've ever had'.⁵⁹ (The film was directed by George Cukor from the play by 'Clemence Dane'/Winifred Ashton, who co-wrote the novel on which Hitchcock's *Murder!* was based.)

In 1940 Hitchcock directed a few scenes in the San Francisco movie *The House Across the Bay* when regular director Archie Mayo fell ill. As one of its characters is an aircraft engineer, perhaps a memory of that film occurred to Hitchcock apropos the moment in *Vertigo* when Midge mentions a new type of brassière designed by 'an aircraft engineer down the peninsula'. But there's another possibility: as is well known, aircraft magnate and movie tycoon Howard Hughes once attempted to design a seamless bra for Jane Russell ...

Undoubtedly, Hitchcock and scriptwriter Samuel Taylor looked at various San Francisco movies before making their own. One that certainly impressed them was George Stevens's *I Remember Mama* (1948) in which Barbara Bel Geddes plays Katrin, the film's narrator, who is first seen in the attic of her immigrant-family's house, where she has just finished typing her first novel. Her window looks out upon the city. In other words, this artistically-inclined spinster is a prototype for Midge. Indeed, it looks as if Hitchcock and Taylor noted and deliberately re-used some of Bel Geddes's mannerisms, such as when in the earlier film Katrin ventures to criticise a patrician doctor (a bearded Rudy Vallee) and then blushes in confusion at her temerity. The corresponding moment in *Vertigo* comes, of course, when Midge suggests to Scottie's doctor in the sanatorium that the use of Mozart as therapy 'isn't going to help at all'.

Underlining the connection between the two films, actress Ellen Corby, the landlady of *Vertigo*'s McKittrick Hotel, appears in *I Remember Mama* as, even then, a wiry old maid - who aspires to marry an undertaker. Leslie Halliwell's 'Filmgoer's Companion' says that Corby specialised 'in nose-y neighbours and prim spinsters'.

Anatole Litvak's vehicle for Bette Davis and Errol Flynn, *The Sisters* (1938), features the San Francisco earthquake at its climax and has an earlier scene in which actress Lee Patrick plays Davis's empty-headed neighbour whom we hear incessantly chattering - until the soundtrack fades her voice and we see that Davis has just received a note from her husband (Flynn) saying he has left her. Similar use of the soundtrack occurs in *Vertigo*, and for an identical reason: to silence Lee Patrik, this time playing the woman at the Brocklebank Apartments whom Scottie asks about her car. Donald Spoto's 'The Art of Alfred Hitchcock' describes Patrik as 'the archetypal flibbertijibber'.⁶⁰

We've already encountered in this article director Vincent Sherman whose *All Through the Night* may have inspired the auction-gallery episode in *North by Northwest*. Sherman's *Nora Prentiss* (1947) is basically set in San Francisco though it's said to be part-based on two British murder cases (presumably the Rouse and Crippen cases). Several moments anticipate *Vertigo*, including the one when the lovers (Ann Sheridan and Kent Smith) head out of town. Feeling suddenly happy, the Smith character announces their destination as 'anywhere you like' - the same fate-sealing line the *Vertigo* script gives Scottie just before Judy dons her earrings and the couple drive away for the last time. (Jewellery serving as a giveaway is itself a detail taken from the Crippen case.)

Finally, I want to say something more about the work of directors Robert Siodmak and Curtis Bernhardt. In 1946 they both made films in Hollywood about twin sisters, i.e., look-alike women, respectively *The Dark Mirror* (with Olivia de Havilland) and *A Stolen Life* (with Bette Davis). The latter film, especially, anticipates *Vertigo* by having a scene set in

an apartment store where Glenn Ford asks the 'good' sister - who secretly loves him - to try on a dress which he is thinking of giving to his wife, the 'bad' sister. The audience is acutely aware of the woman's discomfort and the man's insensitivity, a situation that obviously prefigures the *Vertigo* scenes where Judy is made over by Scottie.

Given these two directors' similarity of background (earlier work in Germany and France) and apparent shared predilection for certain themes and subjects (including crime dramas), their eventual co-operation on a project is hardly surprising: as we've already seen, Bernhardt's *Conflict* was based on a story co-written by Siodmak (with Alfred Neumann). This is the film where Bogart, who has murdered his wife, is tricked by psychiatrist Sydney Greenstreet into a confession. It's a good example of the 'big lie' story, like *Carrefour* which Bernhardt had made in France before the War. We've seen how it anticipated a scene in *North by Northwest*; now let's see how it anticipates a scene in *Vertigo*.

The basis of Greenstreet's scheme is that Bogart must be made to think that his wife has come back from the dead or, at any rate, never died. In the street one day, Bogart thinks he sees his wife walk by, wearing her customary green outfit, and he follows her into a building where she enters an upstairs flat. At this point a landlady blocks Bogart's way, saying how that particular flat is vacant and is always kept locked. Bogart protests, so she leads him upstairs - where the flat indeed proves to be empty. Thus the scene anticipates the McKittrick Hotel episode in *Vertigo*, where Ellen Corby plays the seemingly guileless landlady, just as it harks back to *Carrefour*, where an elderly actress impersonates the amnesiac diplomat's mother.

Presumably, in the case of the *Vertigo* episode, it represents a trick engineered by Gavin Elster to make Scottie become even more obsessed with the mysterious Madeleine.⁶¹ Such a playing on a character's infirmity (amnesia, acrophobia) is itself a characteristic of these films. To end on, then, here's a more general example of a film anticipating *Vertigo*. Robert Siodmak's *The Great Sinner* (1949) is loosely based on an aspect of Dostoyevsky, and stars Gregory Peck as a man effectively held captive in the Wiesbaden casino by his new-found mania for gambling. With beginner's luck he wins a fortune, but, as the casino's wily proprietor had foreseen, soon loses it again. Later he is visited in the casino grounds by the apparition of another victim who says, in effect, 'I told you so'. In all of this I see not so much a set of direct parallels with *Vertigo* as a significant general ambience common to several such films. For instance, gambling or infatuation or vertigo itself are recurrent expressionist or *noir* motifs. When Peck finds out his weakness for gambling, it's like the moment when Scottie, clinging to a San Francisco rooftop, suddenly finds out he suffers from acrophobia. And when Peck wins a fortune only to lose it, this isn't very different from how Scottie 'wins' Madeleine from death and then loses her. As for the wily proprietor, he of course may be found in German films of the '20s (and Hitchcock's *Spellbound*), as well as making common cause with all the other mastermind figures we've noted. Above all, as the ghostly apparition in the casino grounds could testify, what these various films most share is perhaps their general sense of worldly entrapment - a snare disguised as a fairy-tale.

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Notes

1. A Trodd, Introduction to W. W. Collins, 'The Moonstone' (World's Classics, 1982), p. xiii. Hitchcock's actress daughter Patricia was heard in a radio production of 'The Moonstone' on 16 November, 1953. See Martin Grams Jr, "Murder and *Suspense*: Hitchcock's Established reputation", on the Hitchcock Scholars/MacGuffin' Web site.
2. S. Rebello, 'Alfred Hitchcock and the Making of *Psycho*' (1991), p. 20.
3. J. Basinger, entry on Robert Siodmak, in 'The International Dictionary of Films and Filmmakers', Vol. 2 (Directors/Filmmakers) (1987), p. 502.
4. While Siodmak's *The File on Thelma Jordan* evidently borrows from Hitchcock's *The Paradine Case*, even in matters of casting (Joan Tetzel appears in both films), Bernhardt's *High Wall* (1947) seems indebted in matters of plot and characters to Hitchcock's *Spellbound* (though Audrey Totter is no Ingrid Bergman).
5. Entry on Dieterle in L. Halliwell's 'Filmgoer's Companion' (all editions).
6. I discount as a major influence on Hitchcock's 'umbrellas' scene the relatively static scene in Sam Woods's *Our Town* (1940) of a funeral in the rain, as suggested in the monograph 'Thames Television's The Art of Hollywood: Fifty Years of Art Direction' (n.d.), pp. 95-96. Nonetheless, Hitchcock probably did see Woods's film, on which William Cameron Menzies worked before turning to *Foreign Correspondent*.
7. Peter Wollen alluded to the relevance of Freud's essay to *Vertigo* in "Hitchcock's Vision", 'Cinema' (UK), No. 3, June 1969, pp. 2-4. Donald Chankin's "Delusions and Dreams in Hitchcock's *Vertigo*" appeared in the 'Hitchcock Annual', 1993 edition, just before the present article was first published in 'MacGuffin' 11.
8. Obviously, the story and setting of *Last Year at Marienbad* suggest a persuasion that is also an exhumation and an unfreezing. It ends with X's voice intoning: 'It seemed, at first glance, impossible to get lost here ... at first glance ... down straight paths, between the statues with frozen gestures and the granite slabs, where you were now already getting lost, forever, in the calm night, alone with me.' In 'MacGuffin' 15, I drew some parallels between *Marienbad* and *Spellbound*, including between the respective films' endings.
9. See P. French, "Alfred Hitchcock: The Film-maker as Englishman and exile", in 'Sight and Sound', Spring 1985, pp. 116-22.
10. I'm thinking of course of the resemblance between Zoë's disappearance and her reappearance between two yellow columns and Madeleine's disappearance in the Sequoia forest and her reappearance between two trees.
11. Cf. V. Burgin, "Diderot, Barthes, *Vertigo*", in V. Burgin, J. Donald, and C. Kaplan, eds, 'Formations of Fantasy' (1986), pp. 85-108. Accompanying the text is an illustration of John Everett Millais's painting, 'Ophelia' (1851), included for comparison with Madeleine's attempted watery suicide in *Vertigo*.
12. S. Freud, "Delusions and Dreams in Jensen's *Gradiva*", in S. Freud, 'Art and Literature', Vol. 14 of the Pelican Freud Library (1985), p. 103.

13. F. Nietzsche, 'Thus Spake Zarathustra: A Book for Everyone and No One', Part One, Zarathustra's Prologue. Hugely influenced by Nietzsche, of course, is Norman O. Brown, 'Life Against Death: The Psychoanalytical Meaning of History' (Sphere Books edition, 1968), which includes the following: 'psychoanalysis suggests the eschatological proposition that mankind will not put aside its sickness and its discontent until it is able to abolish every dualism'. (Chapter IV, p. 55)
14. "Nietzsche: Dialogue with J.P. Stern", in B. Magee, 'The Great Philosophers' (1987), p. 236. Professor Stern adds: '[Nietzsche's] reason for being against [compassion] lay in his fundamental appeal to authenticity, to selfhood, to the *élan vital*, to the life within the person lived to the full. It is this person, who should be living life to the full, whom the need for pity and compassion dishonours, who is diminished by compassion.'
15. *Ibid.*, p. 245.
16. Translated in S. Gottlieb, ed., 'Hitchcock on Hitchcock' (1995), pp. 142-45.
17. C. Paglia, 'Sexual Personae' (Penguin Books edition, 1991), pp. 254-55.
18. In Hitchcock's *The Birds* (1963), no fewer than three different women utter this same line.
19. J. Jacobi, 'The Psychology of C.G. Jung' (1968), p. 124.
20. Paglia, p. 257.
21. *Ibid.*
22. *Ibid.*, p. 256.
23. D. Spoto, 'The Life of Alfred Hitchcock' (1983), p. 39.
24. *Ibid.* (Spoto is using his own translation of the article "Pourquoi J'ai Peur la Nuit".)
25. K. Miller, 'Doubles' (1987), pp. 154-66.
26. See Schopenhauer's Appendix, "Criticisms of the Kantian Philosophy", to his 'The World as Will and Representation', Vol. 1. Schopenhauer adds 'that Kant's teaching gives us the insight that the beginning and end of the world are to be sought not without us, but rather within.'
27. Paglia, p. 573. Paglia adds that Ligeia 'defies God's law of mortality because she, not he, is the resurrection and the life'.
28. Marina Warner's splendid study of fairy tales, 'From the Beast to the Blonde' (1994), notes that besides being associated with beauty and erotic attraction, value and fertility, the luminosity of blonde hair linked it to virginity (p. 367). That's a good Hitchcockian paradox! Warner continues: 'After the fifteenth century, the Virgin Mary herself ... is frequently depicted as a blonde.'
29. Cf. note 27 above. It's interesting to compare the original *Vertigo* novel, where the Scottie character, Flavières, upbraids himself for losing Madeleine: 'It was will-power he lacked. ... He would have had to pour out far more vitality than he possessed to keep her in this world.' (Part I, Chapter Six - the G. Sainsbury translation.)
30. D. Coward, Introduction to A. Dumas *filis*, 'La Dame aux Camélias' (World's Classics, 1986), p. xix. This novel has a strong tinge of necrophilia, a fact which may also have been in Hitchcock's and/or screenwriter Sam Taylor's mind when they were preparing *Vertigo*.
31. Plus the whole Pirandellian element of the film, with its various levels of 'performance' watched by us as well as by Scottie.
32. A. Martin, "Reading *Notorious*", in 'Filmviews' (Melbourne), No. 119, April 1984, p. 9.
33. Quoted in N.P. Hurley, 'Soul in Suspense' (1993), p. 293.
34. H.P. Sucksmith, Introduction to W.W. Collins, 'The Woman in White' (World's Classics, 1973), p. xx.
35. A Peterson, 'Victorian Masters of Mystery' (1984), p. 46.
36. This dramatic moment was recounted by film critic Gilbert Adair in an English Sunday newspaper in 1990. It's possible, though, that it isn't wholly accurate. Monica Stirling, in her study of Visconti, 'A Screen of Time' (1979), pp. 214-15, gives a different version of events: 'About ten years after Thomas Mann's death [in 1955], his daughter Erika received a letter from an elderly Polish nobleman, Count Vladislav Moes, saying that friends had recently given him the Polish translation of a novella in which he himself, his sisters, all his family were minutely described.' But it seems that Count Moes was 'not in the least offended'.
37. Cf. note 52 below. Mann, of course, was another author influenced by the Faust theme (as was Oscar Wilde when he wrote 'The Picture of Dorian Gray', a work that, according to Spoto, Hitchcock read 'several times').
38. Quoted in B. Magee, 'The Philosophy of Schopenhauer' (1983), p. 355.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 363.
40. *Ibid.*, pp. 354-63.
41. *Ibid.*, p. 363.
42. *Ibid.*, pp. 363-64. Mind you, as Magee adds, 'Wagner was aware of this inconsistency with Schopenhauer's teaching, and he considered it was a point on which Schopenhauer was wrong ... that sexual love is also a way in which the will can be led to self-awareness and self-denial'.
43. Scottie, in Midge's words, is 'the hard-headed Scot'. Another Scotsman, Sir Kenneth Clark, says in his 'Civilisation' (1969), p. 182, that 'The Scottish character ... shows an extraordinary combination of realism and reckless sentiment' - a remark which tells a good deal about Scottie. But sentiment is not sentimentality, and it's the latter of which Scottie, for whatever reason, is so suspicious. Actually, as I suggest in the text, I think Scottie lacks both sentimentality (as usually understood) *and* compassion - though clearly his attempt to re-create Madeleine in Judy represents a form of sentimentality on a grand scale.
44. The famous last paragraph of Volume I of 'The World as Will and Representation', Schopenhauer's magnum opus, observes: '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 [because all of our being and knowledge are but an expression of willing].' But in true 'ocean-like calmness of the spirit', in a Nirvana-state of self-denial, Schopenhauer tells us, may lie an individual's only redemption short of death itself from the world's woes and suffering. Naturally a Hitchcock film advocates no such course; nonetheless, many of the films, including *Vertigo*, seem to me to pivot on just such an insight into the nature of the world and of willing as Schopenhauer shows in the above passage. Significantly, *North by Northwest* (1959) almost lampoons several of the themes that inform *Vertigo*. The brash, shallow, instinctive Roger Thornhill experiences a series of events that make him exclaim, 'I never felt more alive!' He freely avows, though, that he's only interested in 'the art of survival' - *mere* life. On the other hand, the urbane, cultured, considerate Vandamm is clearly a true art-lover and *thinker*, not without a touch of world-weariness (and is associated with things Eastern - the oriental statuette containing microfilm). Just as Scottie's final ascent of the bell-tower in *Vertigo* proves a hollow triumph, so Thornhill's 'triumph' at the end of *North by Northwest*, which even puts him on top of that national monument, Mount Rushmore, doesn't go unquestioned.
45. A Storr, 'The School of Genius' (1988), p. 38. Storr notes: 'Freud is not impressed with Rolland's claim that the oceanic feeling is the source of religious sentiments. Freud claimed that man's need for religion originated with the infant's sense of helplessness ...'. How Nietzschean!
46. *Ibid.*
47. D. Auiler, 'Vertigo: The Making of a Hitchcock Classic' (1998), p. 34. Auiler notes that Maxwell Anderson's script-draft, 'Darkling, I Listen', was completed in September 1956.
48. Translated into English by G. Sainsbury as 'The Living and the Dead'.
49. See my article, "Engendering the Truth about *Vertigo*", in 'MacGuffin' 17 for a detailed comparison of Simenon's novel and Hitchcock's film.
50. See the entry on Boehme in M. Drabble, ed., 'The Oxford Companion to English Literature' (1985). Norman O. Brown's 'Life Against Death' frequently cites Boehme in the context of Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Freud, et al. For example: 'Boehme conceived of God's life as it is in itself as play. Eternity is the mode of play.' (Chapter VIII, p. 91) Cf. note 13 above.
51. H. Popper, "Jacob Boehme", in R. Cavendish, ed., 'Man, Myth and Magic' (1970), p. 302.

52. F.J. Hoffmann, 'Freudianism and the Literary Mind' (1959), p. 212. Hoffmann says that Hans Castorp's stay in the sanatorium frees him from 'bourgeois time' and 'directs his attention inward'; and that 'Mann, from his reading of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche and his observation of the powerful effect of Wagner's music, participates in the nineteenth-century romantic-irrational revolt against the sanctity of consciousness'.
53. See, in particular, illustration 22, and accompanying caption, in Kracauer's book (Noonday edition, 1959). There's a good, long chapter on German Silent Films in T. Price, 'Hitchcock and Homosexuality' (1992), pp. 288-354.
54. See, for example, the essay already mentioned, "Why I Am Afraid of the Dark", in Gottlieb, p. 144.
55. Hitchcock recounts the plot of 'Mary Rose' to Truffaut in their interview. For more on the play and Hitchcock's feelings about it, see Spoto, pp. 474-75 and passim, and Auiler, p. 47 and p. 140.
56. P. Cowie, "An unfading talent: Jacques Feyder", in 'The Movie' (1982), p. 2403.
57. I discuss Verneuil's film in my article on *Vertigo* in 'MacGuffin' 17. Cf. note 49 above.
58. Cf. E. Bentley, 'The Life of the Drama' (1969), p. 214.
59. Quoted in R. Behlmer, 'Memo From: David O. Selznick' (Avon pb, 1973), p. 74.
60. See also Auiler, p. 76.
61. Actor Tom Helmore, who plays Elster, thus corresponds to Charles Vanel in *Carrefour* (and Basil Rathbone in *Crossroads*) and Sydney Greenstreet in *Conflict*. Greenstreet wasn't actually an *evil* mastermind-figure in *Conflict*, though. But he was certainly that when he played Count Fosco in Peter Godfrey's 1948 film of *The Woman in White*!

Brief critique of the above article, by its author

To begin on a fairly positive note, I would have to say that "Fragments of the Mirror", in its revised form, is a better article than Royal Brown's "*Vertigo* as Orphic Tragedy" (1986)!¹ Picking up on references to Eurydice in the Boileau and Narcejac novel, Brown tried to show that *Vertigo* is essentially a rigorous reworking of the Orpheus and Eurydice myth - and seemingly little else! To me, that epitomises the sort of prosaic single-vision that continues to inform much academic writing on Hitchcock, and which flies directly in the face of the rich allusiveness that *Vertigo* actually offers the viewer.

The trouble is, very few critics and scholars - myself among them - are capable of the full four-fold vision that poet William Blake equated with a total grasp of reality, and which *Vertigo* (not so far removed from the spirit of Blake, after all) surely asks us to bring to it.² In many ways, I'm as dissatisfied with my own article as I am with Brown's.

There's little in my article on the sheer facility of Hitchcock's filmmaking craft. Such matters might be said to lie outside the scope of an article on 'sources', but I know that readers still want to hear about them! In fact, someone like Martin Scorsese has taught us that in matters of craft lie the essence of filmmaking, and of course he's right. Fortunately, Dan Auiler's book '*Vertigo: The Making of a Hitchcock Classic*' (with foreword by Scorsese) is now available. It can give deep insights into Hitchcock's artistry. Here's one example. Though the remarkable scene of Judy's final transformation into Madeleine was achieved with hardly any re-takes, it had been preceded by much experimentation involving the use of a stand-in for Kim Novak. On that occasion, nine different takes of the green-light effect in Judy's bedroom were made, with slight variation each time to create the striking green silhouette of Judy when Scottie sees her at her window. Judy's actual emergence from the bathroom as Madeleine was filmed just three times, including one time when less green light was used.³ Auiler's account also indicates the importance of Scottie's close-up here (his 'longing and expectation ... are painfully visible and real'), and adds, for good measure, Kim Novak's truly acute comment that the scene 'was the ultimate defining moment of anybody when they're going to someone they love and they just want to be perfect for them'. (Auiler, pp. 111, 116-17)

So what is my main criticism of my article? That is, apart from its failure to give an intimate account of the actual *feel* and *working* of the film? I suppose the answer to that is the irrelevance at one level of the reference to Thomas Mann's 'Der Tod in Venedig'. There's not the slightest evidence that Hitchcock had read Mann's novella. And yet, I felt strongly that the Mann material *should* go into the article, and even as I'm writing this I see more clearly why that was so. For one thing, the sense of longing that's clearly experienced in the story by Aschenbach for the boy Tadzio is simply the nearest equivalent I know to Scottie's longing in the film for Madeleine! To fully justify what I've just said would take paragraphs. But basically, if we're talking of artistic influence, it does seem wise to me to allow that such works as Mann's and Hitchcock's may *both* spring from a common allegiance to Romanticism and all that such allegiance entails. For example: a longing for the infinite.

Anyway, that's one criticism - and defence - that I'd make of my article. Another is this. No sooner had I posted a draft of the article on the Web recently, and invited constructive comment, than someone simply asked, 'so?' Which would seem to indicate that what the article says is less than self-evidently worthwhile! That is, I've failed to give it a sense of purposiveness. I had hoped that I'd hit upon a way of showing how a filmmaker's creativity seldom proceeds *ex nihilo* though at the same time it may be richly resourceful in ways that an uninformed viewer wouldn't suspect. How many viewers, indeed, would know of the film *Corridor of Mirrors* and thus how Hitchcock seems to have fully

understood its relevance to his own project, which accommodates it in all kinds of ways, including using images of both corridors and mirrors throughout? (Memo to myself: need to fully spell out and justify what you're writing about!)

That brings me to another of my dissatisfactions with my article: it's forever proving incomplete! Let me illustrate. First, as I was reading Rhona J. Berenstein's perceptive 1992 article on *Rebecca*⁴ the other day, I was reminded that Hitchcock had placed Manderley's doorknobs 'at a height which makes [Joan] Fontaine look child-like in her attempts to turn them'.⁵ Immediately, I recognised where that idea of Hitchcock's probably came from: namely, from Lewis Carroll's 'Alice's Adventures in Wonderland' and 'Through the Looking-Glass'! That added a fresh slant to Hitchcock's remark to Truffaut that *Rebecca* borrows from 'Cinderella' and also from Pintero's 'His House in Order'. But then I remembered that Hitchcock had *Rebecca* in mind when he was making *Vertigo* (Auiler, p. 45). Hence it now seems to me that the middle section of *Vertigo* might be described as being about two people who find themselves trapped in the mundane world and who yearn to visit (or re-visit) a different world on the far side of the looking-glass - though a part of Madeleine senses that all that they may find there is 'darkness'. Well, how poignant! Furthermore, you could easily liken Madeleine and Scottie here to two of Plato's cave-dwellers who have suddenly awakened to the fact that there may be a different, vaster world somewhere above them - an idea that almost certainly influenced Schopenhauer's and hence Nietzsche's respective philosophies ...

And again, just the other day I came across an old note of mine to the effect that Madeleine's line in *Vertigo*, 'Sister Teresa would scold us', comes from Eugene O'Neill's masterpiece, 'Long Day's Journey Into Night' - which proved, when I checked, to have been first published in 1956 and to have had its first US performances later that same year. That's not all. I actually inquired on the 'Film Theory' newsgroup earlier this month about this matter, and was asked by one anonymous respondent (to whom I'm deeply grateful) did I know that the name of O'Neill's wife was Carlotta Monterey O'Neill? The same respondent then quoted from the Gelbs' biography of O'Neill:

[Carlotta O'Neill's] final years of loneliness and desperation and her eventual mental collapse were part of the O'Neill scenario. She became, like Mary Tyrone in 'Long Day's Journey Into Night', a ghost haunting the past. There were no happy endings for O'Neill heroines, and Carlotta was the ultimate O'Neill heroine. ...

Apparently, Carlotta O'Neill, in her final years, believed herself to be in touch with her dead husband's spirit, who would dictate various instructions to her.

None of this information is exactly irrelevant to *Vertigo*! In fact, I'd surmise that screenwriter Sam Taylor and possibly Hitchcock had seen O'Neill's play in New York, and had looked further into O'Neill's life (the play itself is autobiographical, of course, and not incidentally contains much quoting of Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, et al.). And I'd say that *Vertigo*'s Carlotta may well be a composite of the character Carmel from *The Uninvited* and Carlotta Monterey O'Neill. The latter certainly seems to have had much in common with 'the mad Carlotta, the sad Carlotta' of Hitchcock's film.

Dr Tag Gallagher responded to my request for constructive comment on my article with a couple of observations. The first was that I may have misrepresented Nietzsche by suggesting that he was against compassion. But in the article I tried to be clear that Nietzsche was in fact ambivalent about this. Moreover, I'm aware that Hitchcock himself was likewise ambivalent. One part of him was capable of deep compassion and also of deep sentiment. (Hence, I believe, his strong feelings about a play like 'Mary Rose'.) But another part of him evinced a cruel streak, as he himself seems to have recognised when he once told Bernard Herrmann, as they washed dishes at the Hitchcocks' house, that he'd have liked to have been a hanging judge! Donald Spoto gives several instances in his Hitchcock biography of the director's callousness, such as the time he continually plied Montgomery Clift with alcohol, knowing that the result might be dangerous, even fatal, for the (gay) actor. None of this is out of keeping, by the way, with how Schopenhauer characterised all human beings: as a compound of basic ego, malice, and compassion - though these might be present in vastly different proportions in different individuals.

Anyway, I do see Scottie in *Vertigo* as an aspiring Superman figure, as I see Hitchcock himself as having had similar aspirations. (In fact, Tag Gallagher noted to me that Catholics have seldom felt a difficulty in reconciling Nietzsche's philosophy with their faith.)

Tag Gallagher's other criticism of my article was this: that very few Americans think of San Francisco in terms of its past, of its 'colourful history part-destroyed by earthquake and fire, and by the fog of memory itself' (as I say in the article). So I'm again reminded of how my article seems to fail to evoke the actual experience of viewing Hitchcock's great film. Nonetheless, the film *is* about the historical San Francisco as well as the present-day city (as photographed,

that is, in 1957 by cinematographer Robert Burks), and I can't forget that one reason Hitchcock gave for setting his film in that hugely evocative metropolis (see 'MacGuffin' 1) was to have Madeleine turn up in her grey suit 'as if she'd just materialised out of the San Francisco fog' - and all that that implies.

Equally, I'm reminded of Pop Liebel's evocation, in Scottie's words, of 'the small stuff of history', of history's forgotten people (such as those whose lives were snuffed out in the earthquake and fire of 1906). Viewing a recent television documentary about the woman who achieved brief notoriety in New York early this century as 'Typhoid Mary', and who died forgotten years later in a mental home where she'd been consigned (though there was little mentally wrong with her), I felt strong parallels with what presumably befell Carlotta Valdes. Hitchcock's film hints, moreover, that perhaps Midge may die equally forgotten ...

No, if one responds to *Vertigo* at the level of association my article was attempting - and which I believe that the film in its rich immediacy paradoxically invites us to work towards (a level which Hitchcock had clearly felt and researched) - then I'd say that San Francisco's 'historicity' is a vital ingredient of what the film is about ...

I could criticise, as well as critique, my article a good deal further (e.g., for not relating the chthonic, earthy passages of the novel to my analysis of similar material in the film), but I had better stop. My main aim in writing the article was to be relatively concrete, and to show at least some aspects of the film 'as they really are' - as against what I'd say is the general failure to do this of such an abstract and narrow article as Royal Brown's, cited earlier. However, I do ask the reader to forgive both any presumption on my part and my own limited vision ...

- For still more *Vertigo* source-material, see John Sheridan's interesting letter, printed in this issue, concerning 'overlap' of Hitchcock's film with Delmer Daves's *Dark Passage* (1947).

Notes

1. R. S. Brown, "Vertigo as Orphic Tragedy", 'Literature/Film Quarterly', Vol. 14, No. 1, 1986, pp. 32-43.
2. I trust that the reader will allow me this metaphorical way of putting things. Blake followed the Cabalistic tradition of four worlds, each representing a state of consciousness. His supreme rebuke to Newton and his materialist philosophy was to cry, 'God us keep/ From Single vision and Newton's sleep.'
3. The following month, an additional take of the green-haze effect was attempted. (Auiler, p. 117)
4. R.J. Berenstein, "'I'm not the sort of person men marry': Monsters, Queers, and Hitchcock's *Rebecca*", 'CineAction', No. 29, Fall 1992, pp. 82-96.
5. I believe that Leonard Leff earlier pointed this out in his 'Hitchcock and Selznick' (1987).

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ODD SPOT: MORE (AND MORE) INFLUENCES

How many Irishmen does it take to replace a light-bulb? We're not sure (we've heard so many variants!), so here's an easier question. How many factors influenced the look of the Bates house in *Psycho* (1960)? Robert Bloch's novel describes it as 'the big frame house on the hillside' whose 'highbacked furniture and paneled fireplace were straight out of the Gay Nineties' (Chapter Three). Hitchcock told Truffaut that the house's setting was northern California and that its architectural style was 'California Gothic' or 'California gingerbread'. And Stephen Rebello's 'Alfred Hitchcock and the Making of *Psycho*' (1991) notes that Art Directors Joseph Hurley and Robert Clatworthy took the house's front turret from the house used in the James Stewart man-and-his-rabbit comedy *Harvey* (Universal-International, 1950). Now a recent book, 'Edward Hopper: An Intimate Biography', by Gail Levin, has confirmed a Rebello hunch: that another influence was Hopper's famous 1925 painting, 'The House by the Railroad', which Hitchcock had seen. As Levin puts it, 'Edward, who had found so much inspiration in literature and the dramatic arts, was beginning to repay the debt.' (She gives the source of her information as Jo Hopper's diary, which in turn cites the New York Evening Post, June 13, 1960, p. 41.)

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