Journal of the Film/Alfred Hitchcock Special Interest Group

The MacGuffin

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EDITORIAL

THOSE OF YOU WHO can access the Hitchcock Scholars/'MacGuffin' Web site are in for a treat starting immediately. I'm going on a few months' 'leave', and during that time the "Editor's Day" jottings will be contributed by some hugely capable people writing on a miscellany of film-related topics. Those people are: Dan Auiler (author of '*Vertigo*: The Making of a Hitchcock Classic' and compiler/editor of the forthcoming 'Hitchcock's Notebooks'); Adrian Martin (Australia's top film critic, whose BFI monograph on Sergio Leone's *Once a Time in America* has been drawing much praise); and Dr Tag Gallagher (author of the standard work, 'John Ford', and the newly published biography, 'The Adventures of Roberto Rossellini').

Now here's more good news. You will have noticed that this issue of 'The MacGuffin' hasn't as many pages as usual. In point of fact, it's a bonus issue, and *no subscriber will be charged for it*. In other words, instead of four issues in your current subscription, you will receive five.

I simply wanted to publish one more issue before I went on what I've called leave. And the reason for taking that leave is that a few weeks ago I was unexpectedly asked by Titan Books in London to write for them a book called 'The Alfred Hitchcock Story'. So I plan to make myself invisible for a while as I truckle down to some solid work. 'The MacGuffin' will return as soon as possible. Look for it again round about mid-1999.

By the way, I'm sure that parts of the book - which will cover all of Hitch's more than fifty films - will draw at times on material already written up in 'The MacGuffin'. (I'll be thinking of many of you as I work!) But of course there will also be a whole lot of new stuff - and I look forward to being able to tell you something about it when 'The MacGuffin' resumes.

Many thanks to those of you who responded so positively to the Editorial last time. I'm printing in this issue a couple of the letters received about that.

But before you read those, let me share the following relevant thought of Sol Stein, the well-known writer and book editor (whose clients included James Baldwin and Elia Kazan):

> *The writers of thousands of academic articles and books each year, of hundreds of thousands of legal papers and millions of business memoranda, are discourteous to their readers and fail in their purpose. They do not understand the power of language or the techniques for its use.*

That's from 'Stein on Writing' (1995), and I recommend it. It's published by St Martin's Press, New York, who more recently published Dan Auiler's book on *Vertigo* - which I also recommend. The only reason Dan's very professional book isn't reviewed in this issue, as promised in 'MacGuffin' 25, is that I haven't had the time to write the review. But let me say now that I find the book exemplary in its clarity and in the self-effacing way Dan has allowed his material to speak for itself wherever possible.

Okay, now to indicate what else is in this issue. My own article this time is on *Under Capricorn* (1949), the last of the three films that Hitchcock made with Ingrid Bergman. I think the film is masterly. The scene on the wharf at the end, for instance, deserves an analysis to itself. If you know the film, just consider the implications of the snatch of music that poses anew the question, 'Who gives the orders?' However, my article had to be exactly 2,000 words, and I could only pick out a few things to emphasise. I set the 2,000 word figure (and the inclusion in the article's first part of many of the film's production details) because that's what I'm restricted to in my book. A future 'MacGuffin' will have more to say on *Under Capricorn*.

Murray Pomerance, Professor of Film at Ryerson University in Toronto, has spent years teaching and writing about Hitchcock. From an as-yet unpublished book on *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1956), Murray has sent us part of his elaborate analysis of a key scene, the meal of Arab food shared by the McKennas (James Stewart and Doris Day) and the Draytons (Bernard Miles and Brenda de Banzie) at a restaurant in Marrakesh. Something that underlies the scene's formal surface and sense of more-or-less agreeable 'performance' by all concerned is a hint that civilisation is no more than a veneer. (Compare Schopenhauer: 'There really resides in the heart of each of us a wild beast that only awaits the opportunity to rage and rave ... and destroy.') Indeed, Mr Drayton, who's been an agronomist, comments elsewhere in the film about the African landscape: 'A thin layer of topsoil, and underneath ...' The note of surrealism is what Murray's analysis of the restaurant scene brings out.

Susan Smith obtained her PhD earlier this year at the University of Sunderland, England, with a thesis on Hitchcock. She now teaches there under Deborah Thomas, herself the author of a couple of exemplary articles on Hitchcock for 'CineAction' magazine. Dr Smith contributes to this issue an ingenious deconstruction of Hitchcock's cameo 'performance' in *Lifeboat* (1944), where the director is seen in a newspaper ad for 'Reduco', a dietary drug. The article illuminates the film's persistent note of (wartime) stringency and the need to shed all superfluity. (When you think about it, even the film's political theme is about the need by the Allies to *abandon* their differences.) Though Hitchcock may have had mixed motives for approaching his film in this way, Dr Smith's article, like Murray Pomerance's, helps us to appreciate the film's surrealist bent.

Surrealism in Hitchcock is something touched on by Camille Paglia in her monograph '*The Birds*', reviewed in this issue by Craig Richard Canfield, who lives in Tinton Falls, New Jersey. Craig regularly reviews books for 'The Newark Star Leger'. He deeply admires Paglia's writings but isn't uncritical of one aspect of her recent approach to Hitchcock, concerning precisely the director's 'daemonic' side. Craig quoted to me literary critic Northrop Frye on the 'daemonic erotic'. Frye describes this drive as 'a firece destructive passion that works against loyalty or frustrates the one who possesses it. It is generally symbolized by a harlot, witch, siren, or any other tantalizing female, a physical object of desire which is sought as a possession and therefore can never be possessed'. The repression of the daemon only causes more demons, noted Craig - who sees in Hitchcock's depiction of Melanie Daniels in *The Birds* (1963) just such an attitude to the daemonic. (For my part, I'm reminded again of Schopenhauer, who insisted that we're all a mix of basic ego, malice, and compassion - and undoubtedly very capable of projecting onto others the more negative aspects of that mix.) But, surprisingly, Camille Paglia, who in the past has written so well on such matters, soft-pedals this aspect of *The Birds*.

My thanks to all our contributors and letter-writers this issue.

The Table of Contents for issues 21-24 is held over until next time.

To everyone, good viewing - Ken.

LETTERS

NYU Hitchcock celebration, October 1999
Dr Greg Garrett, Baylor University, Waco, Texas, USA

I have a tentative program for the New York symposium being chaired by Richard Allen next October - this info below is from an e-mail today.

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

Hitchcock: A Centennial Celebration
October 13-17, 1999
Dept. of Cinema Studies
Tisch School of the Arts
New York University

Tuesday, Oct 12
8.00 Carnegie Hall Concert with the New York Filmharmonic in a program of Bernard Herrmann's Hitchcock scores.

Wednesday, Oct. 13
1.00-2.15 Conference Registration
2.30-4.45 Film Screening at Cantor Center: *Strangers on a Train* [British version], with Patricia Hitchcock and Farley Granger (in person)
5.00-7.00 Director's Forum: Hitchcock's Legacy, with Jonathan Demme, Brian DePalma, Martin Scorsese, GusVan Sant
8.00-11.00 Formal Dinner in the Ben Snow Dining Room, with Guest Speaker Gregory Peck

Thursday, Oct. 14
9.30-12.00 Plenary Session: Biographical Perspectives, with Dan Aulier, Leonard Leff, Donald Spoto
12.00-1.15 Lunch Break
1.30-3.30 Working with Hitch (I): A Screenwriter's Forum, with Evan Hunter (*The Birds*), Frederick Knott (*Dial M for Murder*), Joseph Stefano (*Psycho*), Samuel Taylor (*Vertigo*, *Topaz*)
4.00-6.00 Working with Hitch (II): An Actor's Forum, with Norman Lloyd, Eve Marie Saint, Sylvia Sydney, Teresa Wright
5.00-7.30 Film Screening at the Director's Guild: *Psycho* [new 35mm print], with Janet Leigh, Vera Miles, Patricia Hitchcock, Joseph Stefano (in person)
8.00-10.30 Film Screening at the Director's Guild: *Psycho* [new 35mm print], with Janet Leigh, Vera Miles, Patricia Hitchcock, Joseph Stefano (in person)

Friday, Oct. 15
8.00-10.00 Panel 1A Panel 1B Panel 1C Panel 1D
10.15-12.45 Plenary Session: Historical Perspectives, with Charles Barr, Paula Marantz Cohen, Robert J. Corber, Andrew Sarris
12.45-2.15 Buffet Lunch at Cantor Center
2.15-4.15 Digital Hitchcock, with Robert Kapsis, Lauren Rabinowitz, Steven Mamber
Panel 2A Panel 2B Panel 2C
4.30-6.30 French Hitchcock, with Eric Rohmer, Claude Chabrol, Jean Douchet
5.00-7.30 Film Screening at Director's Guild: *The Birds* [new 35mm print], with 'Tippi' Hendren, Suzanne Pleshette, Evan Hunter (in person)
8.00-10.30 Film Screening at Director's Guild: *The Birds* [new 35mm print] with 'Tippi' Hendren, Suzanne Pleshette, Evan Hunter (in person)

Saturday, Oct. 16
8.00-10.00 Panel 3A Panel 3B Panel 3C Panel 3D
10.15-12.45 Plenary Session: Critical Perspectives, Part One, with Lesley Brill, Thomas Leitch, Peter Wollen
12.45-2.00 Lunch Break
2.00-4.00 Panel 4A Panel 4B Panel 4C Panel 4D
4.15-6.45 Plenary Session: Theoretical Perspectives, with Raymond Bellour, Lee Edelman, Slavoj Zizek
5.30-8.00 Film Screening: *Rear Window* [Premiere of newly restored 35mm print]
8.30-11.00 Film Screening: *Rear Window* [Premiere of newly restored35mm print]

Sunday, Oct. 17
8.00-10.00 Panel 5A Panel 5B Panel 5C Panel 5D
10.15-12.45 Plenary Session: Critical Perspectives, Part Two, with Laura Mulvey, James Naremore, William Rothman, Robin Wood
12.45-2.00 Lunch Break
2.00-4.30 Film Screening at Director's Guild: *Vertigo* [new 35mm print], with Kim Novak, Barbara Bel Geddes, Samuel Taylor (in person)
5.00-7.00 Closing Reception

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'MacGuffin' 25
Dr Nandor Bokor, Universirty of Technology, Budapest, Hungary

1. About your Editorial: I very honestly think that the present form of the magazine (being neither a chat-group publication nor an *unintelligible* pseudo-scientific paper) is perfect. Of course, you have to take into account the fact that I'm not a film scholar myself; on the other hand, I most certainly don't consider myself a stupid person. And I'm

very grateful to you for trying to 'continue to write "The MacGuffin" in as concrete a style, using minimal jargon', as you can manage!

2. Just a remark about the book review. It seems to me that ['Hitchcock's Bi-Textuality'] is a book which it would exhaust me to read and which would provide few really illuminating thoughts as a compensation. (I agree with J. Lary Kuhns's comments.) But a humble question: you seem to agree with Robert Samuels that Alex in *Notorious* is 'clearly bisexual' (p.9, second para.). Could you explain to me why it is so obvious? It's not obvious to me at all.

3. Your *Vertigo* article, on the other hand, was crystal clear, it was perceptive, and it contained many things that were revelations for me. I haven't read the original version of the essay, so I don't exactly know the nature and extent of the corrections. But in the present form, it is a truly wonderful essay, one that is absolutely worth reading, because it gives you many new things. As I am leafing through it now, I am getting excited again! Practically, there isn't a single sentence in it which I couldn't agree with (including the parts where you agree with Freud, and other parts where you criticize him)! A minor remark I would make is that - according to my memory - it isn't Midge but Gavin who calls Scottie 'the hard-headed Scot' (see Note 43, on page 25).

[Editor's note. Oops, Nandor is right about that quote, of course. As for the matter of Alex's alleged bisexuality, it's an inference based on such things as his subjection to his mother, his smooth manner, and the fact that he stands in relation to Devlin much as Vandamm (*definitely* bisexual!) does to Thornhill in *North by Northwest*. Also, Samuels's analysis in the book under review indicates further nuances. However, I suppose that the matter isn't conclusive. I recently pointed out on the Web how the main precedent for Alex's relation to his mother in *Notorious* is the very similar relationship in *Easy Virtue* (1927) of John Whittaker to his grim mother, who quickly moves to end his marriage to a woman of dubious past, but I've noticed no indication there that John is bisexual - merely weak.]

* * *

Jim Vest, Rhodes College, Memphis, Tennessee, USA

What I most look for in 'The MacGuffin' is a variety of writings on diverse Hitchcockian subjects: everything from well-researched, properly documented essays and reviews, to brief practical matters and trivia, news items and notes, and even something of the unexpected or the superfluous (this is after all a *MacGuffin*) - all linked by your fellow aficionados' shared enthusiasm for Hitchcock's work and wit.

I would hope that, whether scholarly or casual, submissions to 'The MacGuffin' would strive to be stimulating, well thought-through with judgments supported by factual evidence - and above all accurate.

From this perspective, aiming for concrete style and minimal technical jargon are goals to be applauded.

So I say let the centennial party continue and in your pages may we continue to find a pertinent (or impertinent) reflection of Hitchcock's many paradoxes.

* * *

Vertigo
Ellen McKenzie, Stanmore, New South Wales, Australia

I wonder if anyone else ever vacillates from dismay and despair at Judy's death on a particular viewing to a sense of deep satisfaction on another?

[Editor's note. Interesting question, to which I might answer: why not? In watching a Hitchcock film, we're all bundles of paradoxes - compare Jim Vest's point above - and capable of giving the film different readings at different times. What do other readers think about this?]

Under Capricorn

Article by Ken Mogg

[*Australia, 1831. A new Governor has arrived. With him is his nephew, the Hon. Charles Adare (Michael Wilding), who soon finds himself invited to dinner by Samson Flusky (Joseph Cotten), a prospering ex-convict. Flusky lives outside Sydney in a house called 'Minyago Yugilla' ('Why Weepest Thou?') with his wife Lady Henrietta (Ingrid Bergman) who had been a friend of Charles's sister in Ireland. The house's name is fitting. The Fluskys are childless and Henrietta is an alcoholic. The young housekeeper, Milly (Margaret Leighton), secretly loves Flusky, a fellow commoner, and maliciously facilitates his wife's drinking. Charles undertakes to try and rehabilitate Henrietta, thus crossing Milly's schemes. Emotions in the household flare. Flusky becomes jealous of Charles, accidentally shooting and seriously wounding him. To protect her husband, Henrietta reveals that she is guilty of the original crime for which Flusky had been transported. Milly makes a last-ditch attempt to gain Flusky for herself by trying to poison Henrietta, who, however, manages to summon help. Flusky finally sees what Milly has been up to. Ironically, Charles, now recovered, who has been the instrument in a general therapy, knows he must move on. Even Australia is 'not quite big enough'.*]

UNDER CAPRICORN IS ONE of several Hitchcock films of the late 1940s and early 1950s that pleased few people at the time but can today be seen to contain great riches. Scottish playwright James Bridie wrote the scenario, detectably basing it not so much on the atmospheric novel by Helen Simpson (co-author of the novel that Hitchcock had filmed as *Murder!*) as on an unpublished dramatic version by Margaret Linden and John Colton. The result is a moody, stylised film where people talk endlessly - but whose real points stay unspoken. A key line is given to Flusky, who complains about the unfeeling legal process that it goes 'on and on and on'. The line is significant because beyond all the legality - and the talk - lies hope of something else, a return to a lost paradise. *Under Capricorn* may be Hitchcock's finest film to explore that theme.

Hitchcock, though, was never happy with the film, partly because of a series of mishaps connected with its production and later its reception by the public. It was the second Transatlantic picture. Within days of Hitchcock's arrival in London to begin shooting at MGM's Elstree Studios, an electricians' strike halted proceedings. When shooting resumed, a 'hostile feeling' still lingered (as Ingrid Bergman told a friend). This was exacerbated by Hitchcock's use in several scenes of elaborate long-takes, which tried everyone's nerves, much as *Rope*'s ten-minute takes had done.

Another blow came when Hitchcock returned to Hollywood to shoot exteriors. Bad weather delayed filming for two weeks, by which time the Warner Brothers lot was booked for another production. Afterwards, the film was found to need considerable 'tightening'. Urgent telegrams flowed back and forth between Hitchcock and producer Sidney Bernstein in London. The final cost of the picture was a massive $2.5 million.

The film premiered at the Radio City Music Hall, New York, on 8 September, 1949. Initial reviews were mixed. 'At best, a florid, historical romance', 'Time' called it; but several columnists gave plaudits to both Bergman and Michael Wilding. Then another blow fell. The previous year, during *Under Capricorn*'s shooting, Bergman had flown to Paris with her husband Petter Lindstrom to meet the great Italian director Roberto Rossellini. The meeting lasted two hours. There and then, Bergman agreed to appear in Rossellini's next film, and to that end, just before *Under Capricorn* was released, joined him in Stromboli. In fact, it was also a *rendevouz* of another kind. News of the resulting scandal spread quickly. Catholic organisations in America reacted by banning the Hitchcock film. Many cinema owners turned against it.

Hitchcock blamed Rossellini for what had happened and forever afterwards felt bitter towards him. (The feeling was mutual, and was not concealed on either side.) Nor was Hitchcock's temper improved by indifferent London reviews of the film. But 'The Tatler' at least tried to be fair. After calling the film 'ponderous', and professing shock at seeing 'our most promising young screen leading lady, Margaret Leighton' cast as the serpent-like housekeeper, it commented:

> *But both Miss Bergman and Mr Cotten succeed, against probability, in investing their stock characters with dignity and feeling. Miss Bergman, struggling not quite in vain, to translate her Swedish accent into a brogue, captures enough of the legendary glamour of the spirited Irish lady to make her humiliation genuinely touching. Mr. Cotten is authoritative enough to inspire respect as well as pity. Both are expert enough actors to make the passages in which each describes their early romance the most moving in the film.*

> *Michael Wilding, as a young Irish scapegrace, brings to the attempted rehabilitation of Lady Hattie the lightweight charm which makes him so pleasant a partner for Anna Neagle about Mayfair, [but] is here hopelessly outmatched. The Technicolor, too, does not become him.*

The film soon closed, and was eventually reclaimed by the bank that had financed it. It would be Transatlantic's last picture. The fact that in the 1950s the critics of 'Cahiers du Cinéma' in France voted it one of the ten greatest films ever made never changed Hitchcock's generally bad memories of it. He told Truffaut that he felt ashamed of being literally intoxicated beforehand at the thought of the cameras and flashbulbs that would welcome him and Bergman at London airport. (He effectively satirised that moment in the 1956 *The Man Who Knew Too Much.*) A certain general indifference to *Under Capricorn* has continued to the present day. Reportedly, not even the Hitchcock Estate now knows who, if anyone, owns the rights to the film or where the original negative is. If that's true, it's tragic.

For *Under Capricorn* is more than a key Hitchcock film: it is one of his most lovely pictures. Its artful construction keeps reminding you of life's ebb and flow, sometimes wasting, sometimes being savoured. An example of that is the wonderful verandah scene between Charles and Lady Hattie that begins with a view of the house bathed in afternoon sunlight. Appropriately, the shot is actually a painting. The matching passage in the novel speaks picturesquely of Hattie's head 'seen against red feathers of cloud' as she sits in a chair at a French window. In the film, there's an audible stillness - you almost *hear* sunset approaching. Meanwhile, the light is growing fiery. The sub-tropical feel is perfect, which perhaps reflects Hitchcock's researches into sun and cloud effects for *Rope*. What's also remarkable is how the effect here is so integral. First, it leads directly to the moment when Charles holds his jacket behind the window so as to make for Hattie what the novel calls 'a mirror impromptu': irradiated by the sunset, she's being shown that she may yet be queen again of her 'own kingdom'. Charles, whose inspired gesture with the jacket bespeaks his own nobility, will later keep telling her that she's 'coming back'.

Second, the fiery colour is one of several reminders that Hell haunts this harsh land 'down under', this 'infernal place' as the Governor calls it. Men and even animals are repeatedly described as having 'a bit of the Devil' in them. The contrast is with the 'Emerald Isle' back home, a remembered paradise, associated most of all with Hattie. When Charles speaks of taking her boating 'on the bay' (Sydney Harbour) or riding, as part of her rehabilitation, the phrasing recalls her beloved Galway Bay and how she used to ride beside it. Flusky remembers that 'she'd go at a fence as if it had the Kingdom of Heaven on the other side'.

Nonetheless, Australia's very harshness has its own beauty. Some things, Flusky will tell his wife, are 'all in your mind'. Third, then, the same fiery light that suggests the proximity of Hell is allowed, whenever it strikes Hattie's auburn hair, as in the verandah scene, to invoke a contrary condition. Several times during the film her hair is emphasised in this way, and each time we're invited to feel that Heaven may not be so distant after all.

Fourth, the verandah scene marks Hattie's resumption of her embroidery. A note of self-help is being sounded, and a first hint given of how art may activate inner healing. Then, in a brilliant passage, Charles's 'mirror' gesture is followed by a cut to Hattie's smiling reflection next day in an actual mirror that resembles one more painting. (Note how Hitchcock puts the audience in Hattie's position here.) Charles calls her 'the first work of art I've ever done' - and allows himself to kiss her on the cheek.

This is the crux of the film. From this point on, Charles will run the risk of falling in love with another man's wife and losing control. His situation thus duplicates Milly's apropos Flusky, and in fact no film better illustrates a famous remark of Hitchcock's that 'everything's perverted in a different way'. Implied is the existence of a basic life-force (in which James Bridie believed) plus a whole set of attendant ambiguities. Charles is a nobleman and Milly is a commoner, and they end up taking opposed courses of action, but the film is lucid about the hard choices involved. Charles, luxuriating in his upper-class idleness, and Milly, prepared to 'work to the death' for her master, both seemingly do what they are fated to do.

Cinematographer Jack Cardiff's work on *Under Capricorn* is thoroughly professional. Perhaps, though, his book 'Magic Hour' misses the point when it suggests the film was 'fatally inhibited' by its trundling camera and resulting loss of tempo. As already indicated, the theme of life's ebb and flow supports a case for technique drawing attention to itself in this way. Fine work was also done by composer Richard Addinsell whose evocative score suggests, in its principal motif, the young Australian colony vigorously pressing on. Costumes were designed by Roger Furse. He, too, made an important contribution to the film's sense of style. An inspired touch was giving Hattie a tiara for the Governor's Ball, where she really does seem to have returned to her 'kingdom'. Hitchcock had chosen his co-workers shrewdly. Laurence Olivier effectively complimented him a few years later by choosing the same triumvirate of Cardiff, Addinsell and Furse to work on *The Prince and the Showgirl* (1957).

Under Capricorn and Australia

Both Helen Simpson (1897-1940), the author of the original novel, and the film's makers did their homework. Sydney-born Simpson took the *donné* of her book - a man's transportation to Australia for a crime committed by another - from one of Australia's 19th-century classics: Marcus Clarke's 'His Natural Life'. And her novel's theme of a quest for freedom found an appropriate corollary in the history of Australia under Governor Richard Bourke (1777-1855), played by Cecil Parker in the film. Bourke, born of an Anglo-Irish family, had charm and humanity. During his six years in office, he became perhaps the most popular Governor to that time, implementing several progressive reforms. For their part, the film's researchers gave special attention to visual matters. The design of Flusky's residence, 'Minyago Yugilla' with its wide, turreted front, resembles work by ex-convict Francis Greenway (1777-1837), the most important architect in the young colony. And panoramic views of Sydney and its harbour seem based on oil paintings by Conrad Martens (1801-78) in the style of Claude Lorraine and Turner, done soon after he arrived in the colony in 1835.

BOOK REVIEW

Paglia, Camille: '*The Birds*' (BFI Publishing, 1998; 104pp; pb)

Review by Craig Richard Canfield

There appear to be many good reasons why Camille Paglia, professor at the University of Arts in Philadelphia, and author of 'Sexual Personae: Art and Decadence From Nefertiti to Emily Dickinson' (1990), should write a book for the British Film Institute on Hichcock's *The Birds* (1963). Who is more familiar with the depiction of the demonic aspects of Nature in literature than Paglia? The subject, well examined in her earlier work, parallels, at least on the surface, the theme of Hitchcock's film. 'The archetypal power of Alfred Hitchcock's great saga of malevolent nature, *The Birds*', wrote Paglia at the beginning of 'Sexual Personae', 'comes from its reactivation of the Harpy myth, shown as both bird and woman.' And at the end of the book, an essay on Emily Dickinson is nearly overrun by its avian imagery. All this is perfect preparation for '*The Birds*'.

Paglia not only looks at the technical aspects of the film, she also brings to the project her own metaphor-manufacturing plant, assembling poetic correspondences as she goes along, enlivening her scene-by-scene tour of the film. She may place Hitchcock in the tradition of the Surrealists, but Surrealist humor and imagination are her own as well. 'Academe breeds nightmares', she writes, echoing the Surrealists; 'the sleep of reason produces monsters.' Her brilliant linkage of the girl in the film 'kicking her legs like a windmill' as 'a gull steadily pecks the back of her head' with 'that famous definition of Surrealism, the chance encounter of an umbrella and a sewing machine on a dissecting table', is alone worth the small price of her book.

'Everyone has to stand in front of the house of his childhood in order to recover himself,' Kierkegard reminds us. The passages in which Paglia peers into what she calls 'the locked prisonhouse of harsh family memory' are the most provocative of all. She pitches into this mix bits of 'Hitchcock's own early family experiences that obsessively run through his work,' glimpses into the relationship between the director and his shadow.

At times, Paglia makes Melanie and Mitch, the main characters in *The Birds*, appear like Jungian projections of Hitchcock himself. Melanie plays Hitchcock's negative anima. Extremely manipulative, she has the clerk in the Bodega Bay post office 'bashfully bewitched, gazing at her like the elders of Troy thunderstruck by matchless Helen.' Before he can stop himself, the clerk is doing three things on top of one another: arranging for the boat to take Melanie across the bay, figuring out Mitch's daughter's name, and going outside to point out to Melanie where Mitch lives. Still another part of Melanie mirrors Hitchcock's own abandonment (psychological if not physical) by his own 'faithless' mother.

Paglia's depiction of Mitch makes one rethink an explanation of Robin Wood that the birds are 'sent by God to punish evil humanity'. Wood writes that 'this could only be the case if it we postulated an unusually monstrous and callous God, an Old Testament God, not a Christian one.' But perhaps this *is* the God of *The Birds*. William Blake's *Nobodaddy*, a God who turns into His Satanic opposite, comes to mind. Paglia states that there is no God in *The Birds*; however, a Blakeian God, monstrous and callous, seems to be everywhere. Mitch may be 'a masculine whirlwind'

when he's fighting the birds, but Paglia shows him to be peculiarly birdlike himself. (Everyone that loves Mitch is attacked: perhaps Melanie, in fighting back Mitch in the attic, is not so psychotic after all.) Paglia writes that Mitch is following a homing device in returning to Bodega Bay each weekend. When Mitch tends Melanie's wound, 'the movement becomes peck, peck, peck, like the crow.' He also pecks like a prosecutor. Paglia delights in the conversations between Mitch and Melanie where Melanie must defend herself against Mitch's accusations. Mitch connects with what Paglia's mentor Harold Bloom writes about another 'prosecutor turned persecutor', that he's a 'blocking agent'. 'In Greek,' Bloom tells us, 'a blocking agent is "diabolos".'

Donald Spoto in his Hitchcock biography reflects often on Hitchcock's demonic fantasies. There is an extended section on *The Birds* in which he compares Hitchcock's work to that of Hieronymous Bosch. 'Hitchcock,' he writes, 'using the birds of art and England and *Psycho*, explored with a demonic ferocity...' Paglia finds Spoto's biography 'excellent', and it is obvious from what she writes about Hitchcock in the '*The Birds*' that she has all the evidence to show how the birds are a depiction of Hitchcock's inner state. But something blocks her binoculars, and she draws back from making such connections. It is ironic that with all her excavation of the demonic in literature and art, Paglia has not followed the migration of the birds to their source in Hitchcock's psyche. Above her dazzling Dionysian leaps sits the intellectualizing Apollonian Paglia who has banished the Furies from her own book and consequently from our picture of Hitchcock as well.

How are Hitchcock's complexes or demons, that were brought to light by Spoto, implicated in the reactivation of the Harpy myth? On this, Paglia is silent. Rather, she continues to lionize Hitchcock, while projecting the demonic onto Tippi Hedren. After denouncing Wordsworth for fleeing from the specters of the pagan Nature cult he reawakened, Paglia has joined the blackout and backlash.

After Spoto, connections between the psyche of the director and the birds seem obvious; but Paglia in her defense of Hitchcock has reasons for not drawing them. Were she to show the birds as symbols of demons or complexes from which Hitchcock suffered as a result of his childhood, that Hitchcock's rape/murder fantasies projected into so much of his work were truly his own, that the birds were his judgmental avengers against flirtatious girls with whom, if we are to believe Spoto, he was obsessed, then Paglia would fear falling into the camp of feminists who with their own projections have hung Hitchcock on the peg of king misogynist.

Skirting the more nuanced account of Hitchcock's 'misogyny' found in the works of such writers as Tania Modeski, Paglia reinstates the blackout, cementing her hell's angels firmly into place on the frieze of her prose. With all her complicated, effervescent, poetic analysis of the film, she ends up playing the part of a Hitchcock apologist. Paglia is right, Hitchcock did love women and he can't simply be reduced to a 'misogynist'. But the 'God' that was in Hitchcock didn't love women, whom He saw as flirtatious, unfaithful, and complacent, and He sought to punish them, to punish them with *The Birds*. Hitchcock never wanted *The Birds* to have an ending. Perhaps this shows his understanding that the spectacle of the birds, the exhibition of it all, was as far as he was able to go. It was a parade, a way of acting out fantasies, without ever letting the ghost out of the closet. Such an exhibition, like any blocking agent, prohibited Hitchcock's true exorcism.

Hitchcock's cameo in *Lifeboat*

Article by Susan Smith

OF ALL HITCHCOCK'S CAMEO appearances, the one in *Lifeboat* is surely the most memorable.[1] It is here, of course, that the director ingeniously overcomes his most extreme experimentation with the single-set film by turning up in a newspaper advertisement for a fictitious dieting drug called 'REDUCO'. Yet what has tended to go unnoticed is the way in which Hitchcock's cameo serves to link the filmmaker directly to the characters and their (both literal and metaphorical) hunger by drawing attention to his own much publicised, drastic abstinence from food. Indeed, just as the characters' own debilitated condition tends to have a very detrimental effect upon their morale, so do the contrasting postures presented by the 'Before' and 'After' images of Hitchcock in the newspaper advertisement hint discreetly at the adverse impact of such extreme weight loss upon the filmmaker's own mood. So, contrary to the advertisement's ostensible purpose of celebrating the director's success in overcoming what had apparently become a life-threatening obesity in real life,[2] it is the heavier Hitchcock which strikes the most positive, energetic pose (standing assertively upright and looking straight ahead), as distinct from the more downcast, introverted stance in the second photograph (conveyed, above all, by the slight but significant drooping of the head). The full significance of the

cameo, however, derives not only from the sense it conveys of Hitchcock's empathy with the characters' plight but also from the way that it invites us to consider their unpleasant predicament and the film's own rather ill-humoured, uncompromisingly desolate tone as a consequence of the filmmaker's own 'hunger'. What, in fact, the cameo presents are two very different, competing notions of the filmmaker. The familiar, well-loved public persona of the corpulent, food-loving director is juxtaposed or 'doubled' with a much less recognisable alter ego version of this, consisting of a leaner, more morose, potentially meaner Hitchcock. And it is this second persona - whose ascetic, punitive, more malevolent mood is best encapsulated by the dieting drug's slogan 'OBESITY SLAYER' - which, in various forms, dominates and pervades *Lifeboat*.

One of the main casualties of this downbeat tone is the humour, which is confined mainly to Tallulah Bankhead's ironic performance-style and, somewhat appropriately, to a sequence centred upon the characters' attemp tto catch fish for food. But this filmmaking persona of 'obesity slayer' is suggested most emphatically and extensively by the way in which a knife is metaphorically taken to the film set itself. Effectively mirroring Hitchcock's own much reduced bodily state, the set is accordingly cut down from the standard Hollywood scale to the bare bones of a single lifeboat (itself a rather fragile wooden body compared to the forces of the sea and storm) and a minimal mise-en-scène (the latter becoming increasingly so with the progressive shedding of various objects, as well as people, as they go overboard). Such extreme set constraints necessitate, in turn, a further trimming down of the Hitchcock figure by forcing the director's usual walk-on role to be reduced instead to the size of a photographic image within the frame. There is an equivalent paring down in musical terms, too, as the movie's score is restricted to the opening and closing sequences, while the only source of diegetic music is supplied by a single flute played intermittently by two characters during the film. The only production value that the film seems to invest in is that of the glamorous female star and even here Hitchcock plays upon the incongruity of such a figure appearing in this unlikely setting at the beginning of the film, before proceeding to deprive Bankhead of that glamour (including the indispensable mink coat) as the narrative progresses.[3]

If the audience of *Lifeboat* is consequently allowed only a very small quota of the usual filmic 'supplies' enjoyed during the course of watching a Hollywood movie, then the notion of dieting is inflicted upon the characters in much more extreme, literal form via the rationing and eventual loss of their food and water supplies. The storm[4] which intervenes to sweep away their rations altogether itself appears as a manifestation of authorial bad temper, following on, as if in direct, punitive response, to their theft of the German's compass (an important symbol of directorial control). But Hitchcock's dieting condition is inflicted in the most macabre, debilitating fashion upon Gus via the operation to amputate this character's leg.[5] The connection between Gus's leg amputation and Hitchcock's own weight loss is suggested quite clearly by the fact that it is the same character who earlier held up the newspaper containing the director's cameo appearance. It is also Gus who, on regaining consciousness after the operation, tries to make his own (not surprisingly less successful) black joke about losing weight (Gus's joke also alluding to his own rather stocky build). The film's ambivalent attitude towards Gus is typified by the way that this character is allowed to drink a whole bottle of brandy (the director's favourite drink[6]) as a substitute anaesthetic, only to become, as a result, even more dehydrated than before.

If anything, the character who most closely embodies the full complexity of the filmmaker's implied persona in *Lifeboat* is the bulky German U-boat captain, Willie, in the sense that his own acts of deprivation towards the characters are increasingly motivated by a need to both satisfy and disavow his own hunger and thirst. This culminates in the murder of Gus which appears prompted not only by the German's overt attempt to stop the other crew members from finding out about his possession of the water bottle (the furtive manner in which his drinking is indulged enacting the dieter's guilty fantasy of secret 'bingeing'[7]) but also by a need to erase and deny this starved version of his own self:

> *You can't imagine how painful it was to me, all night long to watch him, turning and suffering and nothing I could do for him. ... The best way to help him was to let him go. I had no right to stop him, even if I wanted to.* A poor cripple dying of hunger and thirst. What good could ... life be to someone like that?

The final encounter between Willie and Gus while the other crew members are asleep thus becomes a rather private confrontation between these two Hitchcock selves. Their role as mirror images is made clear at the point when Gus, while hallucinating about having his thirst quenched, raises an imaginary drink to his lips, only to see the German doing likewise with a real bottle of water (the same one from which Gus had earlier drunk the brandy). The other crew members' subsequent murder of the German (the violence of which is itself motivated by their extreme hunger and thirst but only serves ultimately to leave them even more spent than before) therefore deprives them of this important, symbolic directing force within the narrative. The significance of Willie's ability to act as the engine that

drives the lifeboat ('When we killed the German, we killed our motor', accedes Rittenhouse) lies precisely in the way that it is linked so explicitly back to his access to the food and water supplies. The importance of these as symbols of directorial power is emphasized by the way that the water bottle replaces the compass as the secret, privileged object enabling Willie to control the boat's course. What *Lifeboat* effectively enacts through its narrative, then, is a demonstration of the twin consequences or dangers associated with 'hunger' in a Hitchcock film. Indeed, if the vessel itself can be seen as a metaphor for the film project as a whole (complete with crew/cast and a resident captain), then what its shifting course and battered condition seem to imply is that, without 'food' as its cinematic fuel, a Hitchcock movie is liable either to become sapped of its energy and tone and in danger of floating aimlessly along, or subject to a more malevolent driving force insistent upon curtailing every aspect of its narrative world.

Notes

1. Hitchcock's cameo in *Lifeboat* is also the director's own personal favourite. See his comments in Truffaut, 'Hitchcock', p.226.
2. See Donald Spoto, 'The Life of Alfred Hitchcock: The Dark Side of Genius' (London, Collins, 1983), pp.266-7.
3. Bankhead, who was praised by Hitchcock himself for having given a 'Bancock performance', applied the director's minimalist approach in her very own idiosyncratic way by turning up on the set without any underwear. See Spoto, ibid., pp. 268-9.
4. The two storms and the shipwreck at the beginning of the film strongly evoke Shakespeare's 'The Tempest' - a play which Hitchcock also alludes to in his earlier British film *Rich and Strange*. Interestingly, there were also two aborted Hitchcock films based on shipwrecks - *The Titanic*, Selznick's first planned production for the director on his arrival in Hollywood (see Spoto, ibid., p.179), and *The Wreck of the Mary Deare*, which was disbanded in favour of *Vertigo* (ibid., pp.392-3).
5. The amputation of Gus's leg is also mirrored later by the cracking of the boat's mast during the second, worst storm, a link even further suggested by the fact that Gus is tied to the mast when it snaps. This analogy between the boat and the male body is also alluded to on Gus's first arrival on the boat when he comments upon its battered condition ('Holy smokes, look at this mess') in a way that also seems to refer to the present and future state of his own injured body. In view of the demanding nature of Gus's relationship with Rosie, as implied by her love of marathon'dancing' for 'eighty consecutive hours', the gangrenous leg also becomes symptomatic of the romantic and sexual stresses placed upon this character's masculinity by the active female (the 'leg' buckling under the pressure of such demands), stresses which the amputation therefore helps to relieve (rather than merely heighten). Given the way that Gus's murder takes place (as with the other disposals of bodies) while the other characters are asleep, Willie can thus be seen to enact a corresponding collective desire on the part of these characters to efface and deny this embarrassing embodiment of impaired, castrated masculinity. Symbolically, then, *Lifeboat* also links weight loss and abstinence from 'food' to notions of masculine impairment and castration.
6. Spoto, op. cit., p.267.
7. See Spoto on Hitchcock's own apparent habit of secret eating and drinking. Ibid., p.172.

The Skin of Our Teeth
The Man Who Knew Too Much Dines Out

Article by Murray Pomerance

[Editor's introduction. Early in *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1956), Hitchcock allows Dr Ben McKenna (James Stewart) to seem more *knowing* than his wife Jo (Doris Day). With their young son Hank (Christopher Olsen), the couple are holidaying in Marrakesh, North Africa. In general, Ben appears to be the one who has the final say in family matters. We see him dismiss as unfounded Jo's feeling that they are being watched - specifically by an English couple, the Draytons (Bernard Miles and Brenda de Banzie). Ben has status (as a doctor), he has physical height, and, unlike Jo, he has been to Marrakesh before. Why shouldn't he know best (or more)?

But when the McKennas encounter the Draytons in a Marrakesh restaurant, Hitchcock reverses our sympathies vis-à-vis Ben and Jo. Jo is (apparently) vindicated, for Lucy Drayton admits that she and her husband, Edward, have indeed been watching the McKennas, Jo in particular - whose past career as a pop singer they have long followed, even to the extent of owning all her records. (Jo, though, had agreed to give up her career on marrying Ben, who had taken her to settle in Indianapolis where his general practice is located.)

In the restaurant, the two couples first find themselves seated in adjoining booths. The film extracts humour from Ben's discomfort at having to turn his apparently sore neck, with the implication that he is in fact discomforted at finding Jo not only vindicated but in the spotlight of admiring fans' attention, as in former days.

After some desultory conversation, the two couples decide to join each other in a communal meal, where the main course to be eaten is *tajine* of squab (pigeon). Visually, notes Murray Pomerance, the roasted squabs, appetizing but tiny upon their plate, bear to the gargantuan Ben and his presumably enormous appetite the same relation that the quail and an olive prepared by Mrs Oxford in *Frenzy* (1972) bear to her husband's appetite, honed on a hard day's detective work at Scotland Yard. (Mrs Oxford has been taking a course in gourmet cooking, none too successfully it seems.)

Here, then, is Professor Pomerance's analysis of the restaurant scene - or rather, a fragment of that analysis, which in turn forms part of an analysis of the whole film. The analysis is particularly indebted to the great theorist of 'performance', Erving Goffman.]

WE HAVE BEEN INTRODUCED to Ben and Jo McKenna as exemplars of two different approaches to the world, what might be called "knowledge" and "participation." In brief, by means of medical training and his rural standoffishness, Ben has been taught to "know" experience, to understand it from a distance by means of a mechanism of intelligent application. He will be in this film a man who knows too much. (To put a feminist slant on it: a man, who knows too much.) Jo's method, instead, is to project herself into a circumstance by means of her voice. If that voice is a trained instrument - compared to mine, it certainly is - it is still a little rough, a little familiar, not the voice of a diva. Now, a central purpose of the meal scene is to make a separation between Ben's analytical and Jo's participatorial way of approaching a situation. Hitchcock, after all, could have had the McKennas meet the Draytons in quite different circumstances: but it is while joining in the dismemberment of a bird that these people come, at the most barbaric level, to see and understand one another. It is while Edward Drayton speaks about his little property in the country ("Not what you'd call a farm, it's really more of a smallholding") that the food appears. We have not a single bird but a pair of squab, representing, some might suggest, Lucy and Jo, since they are the two rather expressive persons (the two "singers") at table; and certainly, as it will turn out, the two characters most devoured by the action in the film. But I think it is more likely the two squab are Ben and Jo, roasted to a turn. Soon the Draytons, plotting to kidnap Hank, will have the third McKenna bird in hand; and a bird in hand is worth two in the bush. But for now, the birds are delectable, and it will be sufficient to find a way to eat them. *And yet, why? Why, in this particular film, show eating at all?*

Squabs are pigeons, and in the convention of the mystery genre, pigeons are the marks of cons, or squealers. Ben's squealing to Jo is the spring of the plot. Further, the McKennas are certainly pigeons of the conspiracy, and educational pigeons of the Draytons, in the sense that they are taken for a ride.

Yet there is no real food in cinema, except the cinema itself. Roasted squab in a *tajine* are inaccessible to us, magnificent in their sunset color and accompanied by the *khubuz* bread Ben has trouble even recognizing as such:

> *The second waiter serves Ben and Jo a loaf of bread, as they lean over to savor the meat.*
> BEN *(A little puzzled):* Ah, looks like bread.

We can neither taste the birds, nor fully appreciate the experience of the McKennas and the Draytons, who presumably can. But, of course - they can't, either. Characters have no gravity as such.[1] Especially in film, where they so poignantly resemble the people of our lives, characters fool us in their seeming tactility, their seeming rotundness, especially with Hitchcock sculpting them. Ben and Jo do not taste the squab, but James Stewart and Doris Day do. So, by bringing us a scene of exactly these proportions at this critical juncture of the film, Hitchcock reminds us, at the deepest level, of the structure that has long and altogether fascinated us: actors playing characters, and very special characters, to be sure: characters who are one thing at home in Indianapolis but something quite different here on vacation in Marrakesh; that is to say, characters who can wear characters: *characterizing characters*.

For that matter, any characters we meet may be putting on characters for us to meet, acting friendly if not actually being friends. We must not be unprepared to discovered that the Lucy and Edward Drayton we now dine with are only masks.

And I think we will see, if we look closely at their "act," that the Draytons are the superior performers. English, after all, "is their language," as Ian Richardson once said of Shakespeare.[2] They have not just learned it, they have formed it. Every word uttered by the Draytons has both elegance, and directness, and appropriateness, and precision. Ben and Jo, for example, are having a little trouble breaking their bread - read that literally: *breaking bread with the Draytons* - and the problem is carried to such an extent that Jo whines, "It won't break," and then Ben grits his teeth and lifts his leg for thrust before giving it a severe rip. The women giggle. And Ben is a little frightened he may have broken with etiquette, shown bad form, so he says, "Is that the way you do it?" Lucy Drayton responds, giggling girlishly - with an innocent pleasure, giving us to sense that her own passion may as yet be undiscovered - "That's quite all right. That was a tough one."

Now, *tough* is the exact and particular word to describe the bread in this scene. Good, yes. Pleasing, no doubt. But *tough*. And tough suggests, too, "difficult," and "raw, uncivilized," and "challenging," and also "personably resistant." But as we recollect, the bread - central object in a hilarious interlude - *did* seem to be consciously resisting Ben, goading him, teasing him. And Lucy is also implying that the bread in this place can vary, and the one Ben picked up was a tough one. All of this in one word, and more. The "one" in her comment is not the loaf, or the morsel yanked from it, but the stagey little routine in which Ben managed to do the yanking without capsizing into his wife's lap. *That was a tough one*. To whatever extent she is putting on an act for the McKennas, then, it is made up not just of postures, jewelry, smiles, raisings of the eyebrows: but also carefully chosen words. Next to Jo (this meal scene allows us to see) the most sophisticated user of the voice in this film is Lucy Drayton.

The fluidity and timing with which each of these couples makes the switch from staged character (the stage is the table in the Moroccan restaurant) to observant audience and then back again, while the opposing couple moves in matched, but mirrored, relation, is a marvel of scriptwriting and direction. Just to emphasize that it is performance, not experience, that is going on - or experience *as* performance - Lucy rebounds with, "Does it chew any better than it tears?" *Chew*, a profound and very internal directness. Ben surely isn't chewing, he's eating, mouthing, nibbling. Even Ben's doppelgänger at table isn't quite *chewing*: we don't admit, when we chew, that we chew. But far under the socialized surface, back at the primordial campfire, the owner of Ben's teeth - an inside animal, a being before and without civility - is chewing. Lucy's question reveals this laminated structure of civilization laid upon raw stock, rather forcefully. Of course, the chewing is just a mouth-use, and in that sense different in manner but not in form from speaking itself. Ben McKenna the diner isn't speaking here either, nor is Ben McKenna the visiting American. They are silent while James Stewart uses a voice. If that is a general condition in film, here at the low table Hitchcock chooses to make us pointedly aware of it.

If the dining scene is a kind of tennis game of performances, in which the camera bounces back and forth to aid an avid viewer (who resembles, yes, most of the fans in the tennis sequence in *Strangers on a Train*), and if we can see that the McKennas are putting on "Dr. and Mrs. McKenna" for the Draytons who are putting on "Mr and Mrs Drayton" for them, we can illuminate the structure much further by asking after the presences who create, don, and sport these characters. Who are the McKennas who are putting on "The McKennas"? Who are the Draytons who are putting on "The Draytons"?

This is a central question. If the squab aren't really being devoured here, because they're filmic squab and, as such, inedible, then what's being devoured at this table is the act each couple is giving the other. The Draytons are eating the McKennas up, and vice versa. As we glance back we see easily enough that Ben McKenna who is performing "Dr. McKenna" is not as jovial, as goofy, as engaged, or as present to the moment as "Dr. McKenna" is. He is in a daydream, and has been since we came upon him at the back of the bus in the second shot of the film. He allows himself to be drawn by Jo, but he is not with her. They do not see eye-to-eye on some fundamental issues. He is somewhat uninterested in his son. He is perplexed by, and relatively uncaring about, Moroccan culture. He is irritable, and aloof: consider his alarmed and chilly facial expression when confronted at his hotel door by a very genteel man who asks, most politely, for the room of Monsieur Montgomery. He's not, in short, the sort of person cultivated middle-class English folk might like to dine with. Yet they have seemed eager to beckon him into the celebration, and with his mask intact he goes.

Jo is reserved, lost in thought, held back whenever she is not allowed to be her singing self. Singing with Hank she is free and delightful. Speaking with Ben she is afraid, cautious, obedient. Even probing Louis Bernard on the hotel balcony before coming to this restaurant, she was intimidated, hushed in tone, more cautious than eager. Now, however, in the presence of "fans," she is outgoing, giggly, warm, indeed brilliant.

But if we can say that the "Dr. and Mrs. McKenna" the Draytons are meeting are far more engaging than the Dr. and Mrs. McKenna putting them on, of the Draytons themselves we have seen very little and can say almost nothing. Lucy nudged Edward to notice Jo in front of the Hôtel de la Mamounia, and the nudge was, more than anything else, efficient. They've been married a long time, and have worked out all the minute delicacies of communication and a thousand ways to mount facades. Here at the restaurant we've encountered virtually nothing behind the "scene" they play; and so the underlying reality of the Draytons remains for us as alluring but evasive as the taste of those birds.

What is particularly important about the presentations taking place in the restaurant is this: that we are entirely aware of them, because they take place in a somewhat awkward and uncomfortable social setting, a dinner-out, where presentations are typically put in place. We would expect to see nothing else. That is why the word "chew" has such resonance. The acting is both expected and noticeable. Whenever, in a theatrical setting, we are shown the

mechanism of an actual performance in addition to the performance itself, the showing constitutes a *play-within-a-play*. This is a technique that is certainly present in the dramatizations of the fifteenth century, and probably earlier, but it was Shakespeare who gave the enterprise its greatest "play," and whose work certainly influenced Alfred Hitchcock. Ann Righter suggests that although it contains a play within it, *The Tempest* is entirely a play-within-a-play;[3] and Elizabeth Burns notes the re-toning of the presented play-within-the-play in modern life, where one finds a "devaluation of 'occasion' in a formal sense and the preference for unceremonious behaviour."[4]

We are likely to think it is performers who are performing these characters--for a quick example, that the Lucy Drayton giggling over squab is being played by Brenda de Banzie: but really, it is characters who are performing these characters. The Lucy Drayton giggling over squab is played by the Lucy Drayton we have really not met yet, and *she* is played by Brenda de Banzie. For an additional ironic twist, it is actually Brenda de Banzie playing both roles, but the one role is *inside*, not *beside*, the other.

What happens to the birds, therefore - that they are opened, that their surfaces are pulled back, that they are shown in manifold layers - is exactly what happens to the "people" in this sequence.

And our own ability to *see* - or *think* we see - the acting is exactly our trap. To exactly the extent that we can "see through" the artificiality, the gaudy sociability, of the Draytons, and the nervous presentation-of-self of the McKennas, we are seduced by the apparently innocuous and unmotivated "normalcy" of these characters. Therefore, finding them elsewhere in the film, in non-celebratory, "normal" daily life, we are moved to accept them unquestioningly.

Notes

1. Metz might have said, both diners and meal are without surface.
2. Innis College, University of Toronto, c. 1980.
3. 'Shakespeare and the Idea of the Play', Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1962, p. 81.
4. 'Theatricality: A Study of Convention in the Theatre and in Social Life', London: Longman, 1972, p. 48. See as well Silvio Gaggi, 'Modern/Postmodern: A Study in Twentieth Century Arts and Ideas', Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989.

Why I Make Melodramas (1936)

Article by Alfred Hitchcock

WHAT IS MELODRAMA? If I admit I prefer to make films that may be so classified I must first define it. Try to define it for yourself and see how difficult it is.

One man's drama is another man's melodrama. In the Victorian theatre there were only two divisions of entertainment - the melodrama and the comedy. Then snobbery asserted itself. What you saw at Drury Lane was drama. At the Lyceum it was melodrama. The only difference was the price of the seat.

"Melodrama" came to be applied by sophisticates to the more naive type of play or story, in which every situation was overdrawn and every emotion underlined.

But still the definition is not universal. The "melodrama" of the West-end may be taken as drama in the Provinces. To some extent "melodrama" seems to be in the eye - and mind - of the beholder.

In real life, to be called "melodramatic" is to be criticised. The term suggests behaviour which is hysterical and exaggerated.

A woman may receive the news of her husband's death by throwing up her arms and screaming, or she may sit quite still and say nothing. The first is melodramatic. But it may well happen in real life. In the cinema a melodramatic film is one based on a series of sensational incidents. So melodrama, you must admit, has been and is the backbone and lifeblood of the cinema.

I use melodrama because I have a tremendous desire for understatement in film-making. Understatement in a dramatic situation powerful enough to be called melodramatic is, I think, the way to achieve naturalism and realism, while keeping in mind the entertainment demands of the screen, the first of these being for colourful action.

Examine what was popular in the provincial theatre before films and you will see that the first essential was that the play had plenty of "meat." It is to that audience, multiplied many times, we must cater in films.

But - and it is a difficult "but" - the same audience has been taught to expect the modern, naturalistic treatment of their "meaty" dramas. The screen has created the expectation of a degree of realism which was never asked of the theatre.

Now realism on the screen would be impossible. Actual life would be dull, in all but its more exceptional aspects, such as crime. Realism, faithfully represented, would be unreal, because there is in the minds of the cinema or theatre audience what I would call the "habit of drama." This habit causes the audience to prefer on the screen things that are outside their own, real-life experience.

So there is the problem - how to combine colour, action, naturalism, the semblance of reality, and situations which will be intriguingly unfamiliar to most of the audience. All these must be blended.

My own greatest desire is for realism. Therefore I employ what is called melodrama - but which might as well be called ultra-realism - for all my thinking has led me to the conclusion that there is the only road to screen realism that will still be entertainment.

Perhaps the strangest criticism I encounter is that I sometimes put wildly improbable things, grotesque unrealities, on the screen when actually the incident criticised is lifted bodily from real life. The reason is that the strange anomalies of real life, the inconsequences of human nature, appear unreal.

On the other hand, if they *are* real they may be too near the onlooker's experience and he does not go to the cinema to see his own troubles at closer range.

The man who understands the psychology of the public better than anybody else to-day is the editor of the successful, popular modern newspaper. He deals to a great extent in melodrama. The modern treatment of news, with its simple statement, which makes the reader "live" the story, is brilliant in its analysis of the public mind.

If the film-makers understood the public as newspapers do they might hit the mark more often.

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ODD SPOT: LACK OF DIALOGUE

After completing *Blackmail* (1929) as a sound film, Hitchcock was slated to make his next film from an original script by novelist Arnold Bennett, famous for such books as 'Anna of the Five Towns' (1904) and 'The Old Wives' Tale' (1908). In January 1929, Hitchcock and Bennett met to discuss the script called *Punch and Judy* (possibly an anticipation of the quarrelling couple in *Rich and Strange*, 1931). Almost immediately, differences between the two men became apparent. Not only was the 61-year-old novelist not greatly sympathetic to the film medium - or to the still relatively unknown Hitchcock - but what seems to have most annoyed him was being told that, with the advent of the talkies, it would be necessary for him to supply his script with dialogue. By March the project had been abandoned.

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