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The MacGuffin

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EDITORIAL

'MACGUFFIN' READERS NANDOR BOKOR and Danny Nissim attended the Hitchcock Centennial celebrations in London last year, including some of the rare screenings held by the BFI. Nandor has sent a description of *Lord Camber's Ladies* (1932), which Hitchcock produced and Benn Levy directed: 'a charming romantic comedy with some crime and mystery elements thrown in. It starts with a very long kiss (cf. *Notorious*), and at one point resembles *The Trouble With Harry*: Lord Camber (Nigel Bruce) *thinks* he has murdered his wife (which he hasn't) and *thinks* he is poisoning himself (which he isn't). A huge bottle of poison in the foreground of one shot anticipates both *The Lady Vanishes* and *Notorious*.'

To show that nothing is ever really new, Danny emailed me this excerpt from the 1861 Preface to Wilkie Collins's novel 'The Dead Secret' (1857): 'It may not be out of place, here, to notice a critical objection which was raised, in certain quarters, against the construction of the narrative. I was blamed for allowing the "Secret" to glimmer on the reader at an early period of the story, instead of keeping it in total darkness till the end. If this was a mistake (which I venture to doubt), I committed it with both eyes open. After careful consideration, and after trying the experiment both ways, I thought it most desirable to let the effect of the story depend on expectation rather than surprise ...' Clearly a foreshadowing, this, of Hitchcock's decision to reveal the secret of *Vertigo* before the end!

Someone else who was regularly in touch while 'The MacGuffin' was in recess was screenwriter and sculptor Robert Schoen. In view of our mutual regard for Hitchcock's screwball comedy *Mr and Mrs Smith* - see my article, one of several on that film, in this issue - I'm happy to quote Robert's estimation of it: '*Mr and Mrs Smith* is a great film *because* of its subversiveness. The back half has a darkness to it that approaches more tension than humour, and a gruelling realism shines through material that would only be a farce in other hands. Sort of like Kubrick's *The Shining*, where the real horror is everyday family relationships.'

Finally, I thank Australian film lecturer and critic Tom Ryan whose comments by email last October on the NYU Hitchcock Celebration, which he attended, were most interesting. Some of Tom's generally enthusiastic remarks on that event are echoed in this issue by other correspondents. So I'll just quote this: 'Of the various papers I attended (a mixture of the pointless and the intriguing), the two highlights for me were Bill Paul's reading of *I Confess* - very good textual analysis - and Angelo Restivo's presentation of sound in *The Birds*.' 'The MacGuffin' understands that many of the papers from the NYU event will be published in book form.

To all our readers and contributors, welcome to this long-delayed issue of 'The MacGuffin'. Thank you for being patient.

Good (reading and) viewing!

Coming attractions

Book review issue (including reviews of 'Alfred Hitchcock: Centenary Essays', 'English Hitchcock', 'Hitchcock in America', etc.); transcripts from star and writer sessions of NYU Hitchcock Celebration; Theodore Price on *Torn Curtain*; 'An aspect of Hitchcock's France'; 'Reincarnation and Hitchcock'. Plus the usual features, incl. 'Letters'.

LETTERS

Mike McCrann, Los Angeles, USA

Last night I saw the restored *Rear Window* at the Leo S. Bing theater at the Los Angeles Museum of Art. Patricia Hitchcock and Georgine Darcy ['Miss Torso' - Ed.] and the restorer Jim Katz were there and had a question and answer session after the screening.

The new print looked good. Unfortunately, the Paramount Color of their 50s films was never the greatest to begin with. Nothing like the old technicolor. So as good as the print looks, the cinematography is only so-so to begin with. I know it is heresy, but *Rear Window* has never been one of my Hitchcock favorites. I find it enjoyable - funny and fairly well acted - but I have always thought it rather dragged and was not really very suspenseful. This time around I paid special attention to Grace Kelly (a favorite) and Thelma Ritter. Thelma was as good as I remembered and Grace was just starting to become the STAR. Her performance is a little strained in the beginning but as the film unwinds she gets better. Especially when her humor is allowed to shine. James Stewart is wonderful of course. Wendell Corey is so-so as always. I enjoyed the film but would much rather they'd spent the time and money restoring *Under Capricorn* or even *The Man Who Knew Too Much*. Jim Katz never specifically stated that they would work on *Man Who Knew Too Much* next.

The question and answer session was fun, but with way too many technical restoration questions. Jim Katz finally turned the attention to Pat and Georgine and both were amusing even if they did not get as much time as I would have liked. Georgine talked about being a dancer working with Ben Blue in Vegas and having them call about the part. She said she waited till her engagement was finished then came to LA. She met with Hitchcock and received the part on the spot without a screentest. She said she used her set 'apartment' as a place to rest while she was not needed, and that it was not built to scale. She said she did her own choreography of her dances as they did not provide one and only told her to 'do a little dance'.

Pat Hitchcock talked about visiting the set in 1954 and how the basement was hollowed out for the lower floor. You entered on the James Stewart level and the rest was actually up and down. She said how much her father liked working with Stewart as he was the 'Everyman', and did not really say much new about the film or its making. When someone asked her about her two Hitchcock appearances, she corrected him as it was three. Mentioning *Stage Fright*, she said if you looked away you would have missed her, which is, of course, not true as she had a substantial and amusing part. She looked wonderful and I think wanted to talk more, but the questions went back to restorations and questions about violating the original and lot of boring crap. Most of these questions came from people who really seemed to be trying to impress the audience. Georgine brought the house down when Jim Katz asked her to take something out of her bag and she brought out the actual shorts she had worn in the film with the Paramount logo inside. Someone in the audience yelled out \$1000 like a bid and it brought a big laugh. Georgine looked great. She must be in her late 60s at least but looked 45 and was as trim as in the film. She said she had married for 7 years and retired, but then divorced and came back to Vegas to work with Jerry Lewis. She is on her second marriage (25 years) and seemed really happy.

Fergal Hughes, Renmore, County Galway, Irish Republic

I recently got to attend a number of the plenary sessions of the recent Hitchcock Centennial Conference in New York. It was damned good, what I remember of it; I didn't take notes and, due to the discovery of a number of good Manhattan pubs, was hungover a lot of the time!

It seemed to me that *Marnie* was a big winner (so-to-speak) ... probably because I was expecting almost everyone to trounce on it.

(Crude paraphrasing of ideas follow:)

ZIZEK: Although I love *Marnie*, I dislike the 'psychological' aspect. As with *Spellbound*, it doesn't sit well that a protagonist be 'explained' by another.

SPOTO: I love *Marnie* ... although I do feel that the 'obvious special effects' were simply Hitch's devil-may-care attitude to the film after his 'to-do with 'Tippi' Hedren.

HUNTER: (repeating what he'd already said in 'Hitch & Me') Hitchcock's reason for making *Marnie* was the rape scene. I couldn't continue with the screenplay because I felt Mark's rape of Marnie was a dreadful mistake; I didn't know how to 'save' his character after that.

ALLEN: The rape scene was only one of the reasons Hitch made *Marnie*. Evan Hunter, although a good friend, is very psychologically naive [giggles from audience]; he doesn't understand that, sometimes, a woman might 'want' to be raped [slightly shocked gasps from audience].

(This last statement I found the most interesting and was amazed when neither I nor anybody else questioned her on it!)

Robin Wood put to Ms Allen that the controversial rape scene in *Marnie* seems to have been shot in such a way as to give two impressions:

1. That Mark (feeling guilty) believes he is 'comforting' his traumatised wife whereas Marnie feels 'raped'.
2. That the moment when Mark embraces Marnie in her mother's house and pats her gently on the head, rubbing her hair tenderly (unlike her mother, who was unable to bring herself to do likewise) is *the* moment the whole film has been moving towards.

Allen agreed on both counts (to Wood's delight).

After Ms Allen's interview, convenor Richard Allen wrapped up proceedings, and invited more questions. Then (after saying 'Robin's going to hate this!') he suggested a conference be held concerning 'Hitchcock Studies' every two years. Actually, I got the impression Wood wasn't so against the idea, as he was in fact the one who suggested the next conference be held in England and titled 'Hitchcock - coming home'.

[Editor's note. Other reports on the NYU Hitchcock Celebration appear elsewhere in this issue.]

Evan Williams, Killara, NSW, Australia

My apologies for taking so long to reply to your letter, Ken. In truth I have been waiting for the video release of Van Sant's *Psycho* to look at it again and refresh my early impressions. I didn't much care for it at first, but a second viewing has inclined me more to your [favourable] point of view. There is a strange fascination about it; and whatever one thinks of the film Van Sant's decision to film it as he did was surely courageous, and to my knowledge, unprecedented. Can you recall another shot-by-shot remake of a classic film? Plenty of remakes, but surely never one like this.

Van Sant was deliberately leaving himself open to all the obvious criticisms: 'futile exercise', 'lack of imagination', 'what's the point of a mere copy?', etc. Was he testing the validity of Hitchcock's original conception by framing the same film in a contemporary context and exploring the reactions of a modern audience? I agree that he catches and expands the note of sadness in the original; Vince Vaughan, a more ordinary and less attractive figure than the perversely charismatic Perkins, is somehow more touching.

But why, if making a shot-by-shot remake, has Van Sant departed from the rule in the two most famous sequences (the murders)? I suggest that the inclusion of 'subjective' flashes - the clouds, the child - is intended to make these sequences a little less brutally voyeuristic, to provide a last insight into the sub-conscious of the victim. The effect is oddly compassionate and unsettling.

I have been asking myself this question: if Hitchcock's *Psycho* had never been made, and all we had was Van Sant's *Psycho*, what would be the general opinion of it? Setting aside casting and performances (important factors, of course), and changes in dialogue (a less important factor, except perhaps in the opening scene, where the differences are quite striking), can it be said that this is Hitchcock's film *as he would have made it today* (in colour, modern backgrounds, a more Nineties feel)? If so, would it be considered a masterpiece? If Van Sant's *Psycho* is inferior to Hitchcock's *only* because it is a remake, what objective standards do we have? If the value of a work of art can never be wholly divorced from its context or its time, I suspect that critical reaction to Van Sant's *Psycho* (if it were an original work) would be fairly negative. If we had never seen Hitchcock's *Psycho* would Van Sant's *Psycho* look dated and strange, or would it seem modern and relevant? Would it shake and disturb us in the same way? Many of the kids who hire the video would never have seen the original (strange as it may seem to us), and one would like to explore their reactions in some depth. My chief regret is that Van Sant chose to shoot in colour. Black and white was such an essential element in the original that its absence seems strange in an otherwise scrupulously faithful reconstruction. The beginning and the ending were both notable: digital technology allowed Van Sant to execute the initial tracking/zoom shot as Hitch would have wished, and the final credit sequence beside the swamp is full of interest. (I waited for a distant glimpse of the car trunk being opened, but missed it!)

[Editor's note. I do think that a review that treated Van Sant's *Psycho* on its own merits, right from the elegiac lime-green of its opening titles, would be more positive than most of the so-far published analyses.]

The NYU Hitchcock Celebration (I)

Report by Jim Davidson

I recently attended 'Hitchcock: A Centennial Celebration', a major film conference that ran from Oct. 13-17, 1999, and was held at the Directors Guild of America Theatre and the St. Moritz Hotel in midtown Manhattan. The conference featured four plenary sessions with the world's top Hitchcock scholars, theorists and biographers, a forum with screenwriters Evan Hunter, Arthur Laurents and Joseph Stefano, and a collaborators forum with actresses Eva Marie Saint, Janet Leigh, Teresa Wright and Patricia Hitchcock. In addition there was a special forum entitled 'French Hitchcock', numerous academic panels at which papers were presented and issues discussed, and the screening of three films, *North by Northwest*, *Psycho* and *The Birds*. 'Hitchcock: A Centennial Celebration' was sponsored by the Tisch School of the Arts at NYU and organized by Dr Richard Allen, chair of the Department of Cinema Studies. In his opening remarks, Dr Allen stated his belief that in 'the academy' the study of film as an art form has been eclipsed, and that one of his motivations in organizing the conference was to initiate a dialogue between Hitchcock scholars of different points of view.

One of the issues to emerge from the conference was the state of Hitchcock scholarship in the 'post-auteur' era, as academics teaching Hitchcock studies continue to grapple with the extent of Hitchcock's involvement in the creation of the films and his status as the author of their texts. In the opening plenary session, Robin Wood threw down the gauntlet by stating that Hitchcock studies has reached a 'dangerous' phase; Hitchcock's greatness has by now become a given and so scholars are now challenged to come up with continually new things to say about the films without being redundant. As a result, he implied, there is a risk of over or mis-interpretation. Leslie Brill, meanwhile, while differing with Wood on several occasions, suggested Hitchcock scholars stay 'close to the text' of the films. Otherwise, the result is that the 'educational apparatus surrounding the arts acts - mostly unintentionally, I think - to appropriate, tame or neutralize' the films in question.

Conference attendees, many of whom teach college level courses on Hitchcock's films, posed such questions as: what elements in the films have legitimate significance and what are being over interpreted? How much that we read into the films did Hitchcock actually intend us to read? How much personal control did Hitchcock exert over these works in what is a highly collaborative medium? Susan White of the University of Arizona put the question plainly to the panelists at the screenwriters conference when she asked if the letters on the license plates on Marion Crane's car in *Psycho* were intended to have some meaning, or, at the very minimum, were they meant as a self referential joke? Joseph Stefano, the screenwriter of *Psycho*, was unaware that there had even been any meaning ascribed to the license plates ('ANL' and 'NFB'). He stated that - as far as he knew - the license plates were only significant as far as they showed that Marion had changed from Arizona to California plates, suggesting that she had traveled quite a distance from Phoenix.

Meanwhile, at the next academic panel that I attended, Martin Kevorkian of UCLA and Stanley Orr of CBU gave a presentation of the California Mission Revival and its relationship to *Vertigo*. They pointed out during the presentation that Scottie Ferguson drives a DeSoto automobile while he pursues the dreamlike Madeline, and that the use of the DeSoto was significant in linking Scottie and his quest to that of the Spanish explorer of the same name. I had to suppress the urge at this point to leap up and yell out 'Didn't you just hear what Joseph Stefano said? Sometimes a DeSoto is just a car!' While this presentation made some interesting points - although it is terrain that has been often covered before - I couldn't help feel that Kevorkian and Orr had fallen into a trap they could have easily avoided. It is clear, therefore, that up and coming Hitchcock scholars will have to continue to guard against over interpretation in their analysis of the films, or risk damning by association their legitimate arguments with their specious ones.

Throughout the conference, Hitchcock's collaborators attested to the fact that the director gave them a substantial amount of freedom while working on the films. Arthur Laurents, the screenwriter of *Rope*, stated conclusively that Hitchcock had nothing to do with the writing of the script for *Rope* and was only concerned with what the camera would show. Joseph Stefano, as a young writer working on *Psycho*, was amazed at the amount of independence that he had. Though he avoided confrontation in his personal relationships, Hitchcock usually got his way when it came to final decisions about the films. Laurents said that he was opposed to showing the murder of David Kentley in the opening shots of the film, preferring to stay faithful to the play on which *Rope* is based, but that Hitchcock prevailed and the murder was shown. Evan Hunter stated that he had the idea to make *The Birds* begin as a screwball comedy, then slowly turns to terror; while Hitchcock didn't directly oppose him on this point, that aspect of the script was eventually phased out. Hunter also said that the scene in which Melanie and Mitch discuss Melanie's mother at the children's party was not in his script, and that he believes Hitchcock wrote that scene personally and added it to the film.¹

Hunter did eventually find out what happened when he directly opposed Hitchcock. While working on the script for *Marnie*, he and Hitchcock disagreed over the inclusion of the rape scene during the honeymoon, so Hunter submitted the script with drafts of two different versions. But, he noted, the version without the rape was submitted on white paper and included within the script of the rest of the film, while the version with the rape scene was written on yellow paper and submitted outside of the rest of the script. Hunter feels that Hitchcock took this to imply that the version without the rape (on the white paper) was the correct way to do it, and was what eventually led to his being dismissed as the film's screenwriter. Hunter also stated that until he spoke to Stefano the day of the conference, he had no idea that Stefano had worked on an original treatment of *Marnie*, when Grace Kelly was originally considering the role in 1961. Later in the conference, Jay Presson Allen stated that she was also kept in the dark about the work that Stefano and Hunter had done when she came on board to write and eventually finish the script for the film.

The notion of Hitchcock's need for control was echoed in the opening plenary session of the conference by Robin Wood, who stated that Hitchcock's working methods suggested a form of fascism. Despite this, Wood voiced his admiration for *Lifeboat*, which he called under-appreciated, and commented that the film offers a compelling critique of the American free enterprise system in its depiction of the wealthy character Rittenhouse and his complicity with the Nazi. But even here one cannot help but think of the influence of Hitchcock's collaborators, in this case author John Steinbeck, who wrote the treatment for *Lifeboat* and was well known for his leftist views.

Hitchcock's collaborators were the subject of at least one of the academic panels and mentioned frequently in the second plenary session. Charles Barr, author of the new book 'English Hitchcock', mentioned the importance that screenwriters Charles Bennett and Elliott Stannard had in constructing Hitchcock's early films and the extent to which their influence is unacknowledged even now. He also noted that *Rich and Strange*, long thought to be a semi-autobiographical work, actually stays close to the Dale Collins novel on which it is based. Leonard Leff made the interesting point that Hollywood censors such as Joseph Breen acted as indirect collaborators in the way they forced Hitchcock to rework several films, making their themes more subtle and character motivations more mysterious. Joan Harrison was mentioned as an important collaborator by Donald Spoto. Harrison was also the subject of a paper delivered at one of the academic panels, as was Saul Bass, John Michael Hayes and Edith Head. And of course, Alma Reville Hitchcock was mentioned frequently as an important collaborator. Patrick McGilligan noted Charles Bennett's statement that Alma was 'just put on the payroll', but the general consensus was that she was very important to Hitchcock as a hands-on collaborator during the British years and that, while her day-to-day presence diminished during the American years, she remained a significant presence in his work and life.

Again and again as the conference went on, particularly during the plenary session mentioned above, a variety of Hitchcocks seemed to emerge. To Spoto, who was quick to point out that he actually knew Hitchcock later in his life, the director 'lived his 80 years in an envelope of unimaginable pain.' Spoto believes that Hitchcock wanted to be thought of as a respectable bourgeois, but that at home he sometimes lived the life of a crude, vulgar Cockney. This account was contradicted by the person at the conference who knew Hitchcock best, his daughter Patricia, who stated that home life with her parents was quiet and orderly. Peter Wollen made the interesting comment that Hitchcock did all he could to 'Americanize' himself while he lived in England but, once he moved to America, he clung to his English ways. Wollen also suggested that Hitchcock's Catholic background had more of an effect on his personality than his Cockney upbringing. Patrick McGilligan, who is writing a new biography of Hitchcock, promised that his book would challenge previously published materials and beliefs about the director. He also stated that 7 or 8 short stories had been discovered that Hitchcock wrote during the 'Henley's period' (while working at the Henley Telegraph and Cable Company from 1914-21) and that a 'very different Hitchcock' will emerge from this era.

As one who does not deal with Hitchcock studies as a profession, I found 'Hitchcock: a Centennial Celebration' to be a fascinating experience, a wonderful opportunity to meet and talk with those intimately involved with the director's life and work. For scholars, it must have been a great opportunity to have questions answered and to meet and exchange ideas with others that work in their field. Hopefully, future Hitchcock scholarship will stay 'close to the text' of the films and avoid the type of misinterpretation that has appeared in the past, with the result being valid new insights into a body of work that continues to interest the public and scholars alike.

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1. Editor's note. I think that Bill Krohn's 'Hitchcock at Work' will state conclusively that the scene was written by Hitchcock's friend, noted English writer and man of letters, V.S. Pritchett.

The NYU Hitchcock Celebration (2)

Report by Sarah Nichols

Every evening, around 11:30, I watch 'Alfred Hitchcock Presents'. His familiar shadow fills the frame; it has somehow become a part of my own shadow, my own life. I sense that for not a few of the attendees at the Hitchcock conference (held in New York this past October, sponsored by New York University), this has happened also. We have studied and dissected his work so voraciously that we feel him to be a part of us, a shadow and a body merged with our own, but at the same time, more malleable: a shapeshifter who will conform to our individual needs and philosophies as scholars, critics, and film lovers.

It is not so much that our identities are erased when we watch a Hitchcock film; rather, they are marked by it, and, in the most profound instances, we take what we see into ourselves. We carry the film around in our heads, where it unrolls, endlessly. We experience new shocks of recognition, and we subject the film to new interpretations.

There were few 'new interpretations' at the New York conference; some fine papers were given (one, presented by Susan White of the University of Arizona, examined how faces in Hitchcock's films act as receptacles for the interior lives of the characters and reflectors of the situation [and the culture] in which they live). Others waded and drowned in the muck of structural and psychoanalytical theory (an example, from a paper on *Vertigo*, given by Calvin Thomas of Georgia State: 'The nun symbolizes symbolization itself'¹), providing evidence for Robin Wood's claim, made at the first plenary session, that most academic writing on film is for the express purpose of 'showing off' to other academics.

The plenary sessions provided most of what was worthwhile at the conference; they offered glimpses into lives and persons that had been indelibly marked by Hitchcock, either through their working with him or through their critical studies. A few highlights:

* Robin Wood, announcing that Hitchcock studies were in a dangerous state, and yet not offering any real remedy

* Donald Spoto, whose view of Hitchcock's life and the people in it was shamelessly proprietary

* The Writer's Panel, with Arthur Laurents, Joseph Stephano, and Evan Hunter, Laurents being less enthusiastic than the others about his work for Hitchcock on the screenplay for *Rope*: 'I think that if you rejected his ideas then you rejected him ... he wasn't interested in the words.'

* The Actor's Panel, with Eva Marie Saint, Teresa Wright, Janet Leigh, and Patricia Hitchcock-O'Connell. A fascinating and lively account of a director and a father, with Ms. Hitchcock-O'Connell wishing that she had been cast in more of her father's films

* Jay Presson Allen, recounting her experience of writing the *Marnie* screenplay: Hitchcock was 'a great teacher' but 'my own take on the film is that it's not a very good one ... I thought she ['Tippi' Hedren] was miscast.' When asked about the obviousness of much of the rear projection in the film, and if it had any significance, Ms. Allen replied that 'Hitch was very thrifty.' None of Allen's comments, however, stopped Robin Wood from speaking for many in the audience when he told her that the film was an 'unqualified masterpiece.'

The conference ended, and the seal on a rarified atmosphere lifted. It was time to go home; back to the routine of teaching and study, back to places where movie stars and screenwriters rarely come. But Hitchcock's shadow follows us, and we carry him home.

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1. Editor's note. I think the speaker may have been referring to Lacan's notion of the Symbolic, seeing the authority-figure of the nun as its enforcer. But I take Sarah Nichols's point, and am sympathetic.

Hitchcock's Screwed-up Screwball? - Notes on *Mr & Mrs Smith* (1941)¹

Article by Philip Kemp

WHY DID HITCH DECIDE to make, of all things, a screwball comedy, with not a murder, a corpse, or so much as a pair of handcuffs in sight? His standard reason - as a favour to Carole Lombard - doesn't seem quite convincing; and

anyway, we know that Hitch's comments in interviews can't always be relied on. Was it one of his series of self-challenges, just to see if he could do it? Or an attempt to get away from the straitjacket of thrillers? This was only his third American picture, and he may have hoped he hadn't yet been typecast. ('If I seem doomed to make only one type of picture,' he later gloomily remarked, 'the movie audience is responsible.' And the producers, he might have added.) Or was it a bid to show he could make a movie in a thoroughly American genre? (Random thought: what would a Hitchcock western have been like?) Or was it the subject matter - an opportunity for another of his acrid studies of marriage as a battlefield?

Is the film a failure as a comedy? Robin Wood: 'An almost painfully unfunny screwball comedy, the film's peculiar character - its thin and crabbed distinctiveness - develops out of a direct conflict between auteur and genre.' Wood goes on to compare it with Leo McCarey's *The Awful Truth* (which has a very similar plot) adding 'McCarey's genius being as compatible with the genre as Hitchcock's is alien to it'.

Of course Hitchcock could do comedy - look at *The Trouble with Harry*, *North by Northwest*, etc. In fact apart from *I Confess* and *The Wrong Man*, it's hard to think of any of Hitchcock's mature work that's wholly devoid of comedy. But screwball was a very distinct and formalised genre, which by this late stage (1941, nearing the end of the cycle) had developed its own style and conventions. Hitch famously told Truffaut that 'I didn't understand the type of people who were portrayed in the film' - meaning, surely, not well-off New Yorkers, but screwball comedy characters.

Mr and Mrs Smith follows all the screwball conventions. We get the comedy of public embarrassment (the scene at the department store), offbeat dialogue ('She once chased a dog-catcher half a mile with a baseball bat') and characters (the little man from Nevada, played by screwball regular Charles Halton), sight gags (the key at David's club), physical discomfort (the fairground scene where Ann and Jeff get trapped on the big wheel).

And in its plot *Mr and Mrs Smith* fits perfectly into the screwball mainstream. One of the most common themes of the genre is the comedy of remarriage, where an estranged, separated or divorced couple have to be brought back together again, usually by eliminating the wife's stuffy or wimpish suitor. Besides *The Awful Truth* there's *Twentieth Century*, *The Philadelphia Story*, *His Girl Friday*, *The Palm Beach Story*, *I Love You Again*, *My Favorite Wife*, etc. etc. The process usually involves humiliating the suitor, as here with Gene Raymond's hapless (and apparently gay) Jeff. In all these films, the message is that despite the seeming antagonism between them, the original couple are true soulmates.

Yet *Mr and Mrs Smith* really isn't very funny. Why not? Maybe Wood, though over-severe on the film, had a point - there's a basic incompatibility between director and genre. Screwball is superficially subversive, but fundamentally conservative. Hitchcock is the reverse - seemingly conservative (look at the Magritte-like way he dressed) but fundamentally subversive. Screwball is essentially benevolent, romantic; it nearly always ends with the uniting - or reuniting - of the central pair. Its key concern is with courtship rituals, and the final joining together feels reassuring. Hitchcock's slant on such last-reel unions generally has a far more pessimistic edge - cf. *Blackmail*, *Sabotage*, *Suspicion*, *Shadow of a Doubt*, *Notorious*, *Marnie* - what future can we expect for these couples? Do any of them suggest happy ever after?

Perhaps Hitchcock was just too *knowing* for the screwball genre. 'He makes it quite clear that the woman is a monster, and the film leaves a sharp, bitter aftertaste.' (John Russell Taylor) *Mr and Mrs Smith* lines up with *The Ring* and *Rich and Strange* in leaving us doubtful that the reconciliation can hold - Hitchcock's bleak, even ruthless take on marriage prevents the comic closure from coming across as convincing. Consider Ann's pronouncement on the married state in general: 'Doubt, distress, going on at each other because it's the easiest way.'

Hence the film's increasingly uncomfortable feeling. It starts quite well, but around halfway something seems to go wrong with the momentum of individual scenes. Several times - e.g., the scene of Jeff getting drunk, or the noisy plumbing in the office washroom - we're left waiting for a final clinching gag that never comes. And after the action moves to Lake Placid the situations become steadily more contrived, and the laughs are few and strained. It seems less that Hitch didn't understand his characters as that he never believed in them, or cared about them. And since he doesn't, neither do we.

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1. [Editor's note. A synopsis of the film appears later in this issue.]

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Rabinovitz, Lauren, and Greg Easley	'The <i>Rebecca</i> Project' [CD-ROM review by Charles L.P. Silet]	25; 4-5
Samuels, Robert	'Hitchcock's Bi-Textuality: Lacan, Feminisms, and Queer Theory'	25; 6-11
Paglia, Camille	' <i>The Birds</i> ' [review by Craig Richard Canfield]	25a; 7-8

Other articles, etc.

Fehr, Rudi	Editor Rudi Fehr interviewed by Tag Gallagher	23; 5-7
Freiberg, Freda	Oz-Report: Multicultural Melodramas Down Under	22; 5-6
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Gottlieb, Sidney	Interview with Sidney Gottlieb, editor of 'Hitchcock on Hitchcock'	22; 7-10
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BOOK REVIEW

Naremore, James: 'More Than Night: Film Noir in its Contexts' (University of California Press: Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1998; 359 pp, pb)

Reviewed by Freda Freiberg

Like the English word black, the French adjective *noir* embraces aesthetic, moral, emotional and racial categories. It typically refers to the absence of light, the darkness of night, in which the outlines of things are obscured, and identity is difficult to discern. A gloomy mood, a macabre imagination and immoral behaviour are all described as *noir*. In painting, literature and film, white artists have long exploited the association of blackness with villainy, corruption, decadence, depression, and death, creating potent melodramatic and expressionistic effects. Only recently have the racist implications of these associations become apparent - what *noir* might mean for *les noirs*, black people.

One of the strengths of this new survey of *film noir* is its sensitivity to the issue of race. Naremore admits that both the concept and the cult texts of classical *film noir* were creations of white male Europeans and Americans. He rightly

recognises that *films noirs* could be translated as films made by blacks; and proceeds accordingly to examine a broad spectrum of films directed by Afro-Americans. These aren't confined to films that could be described as neo-noir or as containing black revisions of classical white *film noir* motifs and styles - although Naremore is especially interested in this category.

But race is just one of the issues that Naremore explores in a book that ranges far and wide. Because he views *film noir* as 'only a discursive construction' (rather than a historically specific genre, style or cycle), albeit one with 'remarkable flexibility, range and mythic force', he covers sixty years of American film production, embracing modernist and postmodernist texts, classical noir and neo-noir, B&W and colour movies, as well as a similar span of critical discourse. He traces the discursive, political, stylistic and industrial history of American *film noir* over these sixty years, relating the films and their critical reception to their social, cultural, political and industrial contexts. Each of his seven chapters is devoted to a different theme. In turn, they survey and explore the history of the concept of film noir; the hard-boiled fiction of Hammett, Chandler, Cain, and Greene, and its filmic adaptations; forms and effects of moral and political censorship on studio-era noir; economic and industrial issues; styles of noir; representations of racial difference; and the place of noir in an enlarged contemporary mediascape. He himself says that an alternate sub-title of the book could be 'Seven ways of looking at American film noir' (p8).

In the course of these thematic explorations, Naremore makes passing reference to hundreds of film titles, but devotes more extended treatment to a few films which he presents as outstanding or exemplary cases of the theme under discussion. Thus, the original script of *Double Indemnity* is presented as a powerful modernist text with a biting social critique, in which American hard-boiled fiction (represented here by Cain and Chandler) is inflected by Weimar cinema motifs and an alienated émigré view of American society (contributed by Wilder). The film also serves to exemplify negative and positive effects of censorship. *The Blue Dahlia* and *Crossfire*, two early postwar films about neurotic war veterans faced with re-adjustment to civilian society, are examined as case studies of censorship. *Detour* is discussed as an exceptional instance of low budget noir. *Out of the Past* receives detailed analysis as an exemplary case of the use of lighting and editing in classic B&W noir. *Chinatown* is discussed as the most innovative and politically incisive of the retro-noir cycle of films which emerged in the Seventies. *The Glass Shield* and *Devil in a Blue Dress* are isolated as examples of 'the most impressive Afro-American movies about crime' which share 'a high degree of artistry, plus a tendency to refigure or transform the familiar patterns of noir.' (p 246) David Lynch's *Lost Highway*, Steven Soderbergh's *The Underneath* (a re-make of Siodmak and Hellinger's 1949 film, *Criss Cross*) and Billy Bob Thornton's *Sling Blade* are discussed as three different recent examples of art-film noir.

Despite his measured scholarly tone and avoidance of the movie buff's rave-or-rejection mode of appraisal, it becomes clear, especially towards the end of the book, that he greatly admires certain films and dislikes others. He has respect and affection for movies which bring a European artistic sensibility and a critical social perspective to work on popular genre conventions. He has strong reservations about the films of the movie brat generation, movies about other movies. He clearly is more attuned to modernism than postmodernism, wants movies to say something about the real world, not just play clever games. The Afro-American films he approves are not just nostalgic and not just about movies; they address the real condition of blacks in America. He becomes quite hostile towards some popular recent films. Unlike *Chinatown*, *LA Confidential* 'uses the past superficially and hypocritically' (p 275). *Basic Instinct* is deemed a perverse and pornographic reworking of Hitchcockian and Sternbergian narrative (p 264). In comparison to *Double Indemnity*, *Body Heat* has a conventional narrative, familiar characters and a merely decorative location (p 263). He concludes that 'most examples of neo-noir are less artistically sophisticated and politically interesting than the films they emulate.' (p 262). Sexual politics seems not to count as politics. Having conceded that classical *film noir* was often misogynist and homophobic, he oddly refuses to see the unvanquished *femmes fatales* of *Body Heat* and *Basic Instinct* as significant post-feminist narrative shifts.

One wonders if Naremore would have identified the misogyny and homophobia in classic era movies without two decades of feminist film criticism - which he fails to include in his initial survey chapter on the development of the discourse on film noir. Later, as a prelude to his discussion of the race issue, he briefly acknowledges feminist work on noir, deeming it ambivalent and inconclusive. Perhaps he feels that the terrain of gender has been too well covered; this is implied when he asserts that in reference to noir the race issue has been comparatively neglected. But, it seems to me that both the resurgence of interest in classic film noir and the popularity of neo-noir movies with audiences (and film students) over the past twenty years resulted to a large extent from the work of feminist and queer film critics and theorists. Employing a variety of approaches (sociological, psychoanalytic, structural and post-structural), they revealed that the texts were driven aesthetically and emotionally by white male fears and desires, and that the place of woman in the text was to service those needs. Certainly, an initial concentration on the sadistic male gaze, seeking to pursue, investigate and tame or punish the independent woman, gave way to identification of an equally strong male masochism. But these theories were tested out on classic *noir* films, and the debates were accompanied by, in fact necessitated, repeated viewings and close analysis of noir texts.

The feminist enterprise aside, Naremore has covered the ground exhaustively, researching the histories and pre-histories of his subject comprehensively and intensively. He has researched the industrial archives, the censorship archives, the literature on modernism and post-modernism, 50 years of male film criticism on noir (in France, Britain and the US), classic and recent American hard-boiled literature and the history of film technology, in addition to viewing hundreds of films and reading the critical literature on them. He not only summarizes the pre-existing literature on his subject but uses his research to refute some of the prevailing myths about or around film noir.

Firstly, he contests the widely promulgated belief that *film noir* was adapted from low-status pulp fiction. His research leads him to place Hammett, Greene and Chandler inside the modernist literary scene and to claim that they enjoyed a respectable reputation among the literati. Secondly, he contests the association of classic noir with low budget filmmaking. By carefully examining film budgets and industrial strategies, he demonstrates that all the cult noir movies, with the exception of *Detour*, were medium to high budget films. Thirdly, he refutes the identification of noir with a particular style of filmmaking - distorted angles, deep shadows, outdoor night locations, abrupt editing. He argues that the style of classic noir movies was in fact very varied, that many of them were shot in the studio and used the camera in quite straightforward or conventional ways. What unites them is less a common style of filming than a common visual iconography, which persists through the B&W era into the colour era and beyond.

With its extensively researched coverage of a broad span of films and issues, this book is a useful addition to the proliferating literature on *film noir*. Because it situates the films historically in their social, cultural and industrial contexts, it pursues issues neglected by the practitioners of close textual analysis (of both neo-formalist and psycho-analytic persuasions). Its meticulous documentation, measured scholarly tone and elegant jargon-free prose make it ideally suited to the undergraduate film education market. It is more scholarly than the popular cult literature on noir and more accessible than many other academic books on noir which employ difficult theoretical concepts and highly specialized terminology.

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‘For the Love of Fear’

Conference and forums in conjunction with the exhibition ‘HITCHCOCK: Art, Cinema and ? Suspense’
Museum of Contemporary Art, Circular Quay, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia
Friday 31 March, Saturday 1 and Sunday 2 April, 2000

Friday 31 March

3.00pm - 5.00pm Level 3 Galleries

Moral Hallucination - Confessions

Exhibiting artists Rosemarie Laing, Robyn Stacey, Sandy Nicholson and Andrew Hurlle discuss the work of art as a perfect crime with Edward Colless, Senior Lecturer School of Art, University of Tasmania and MCA Guest Curator of Moral Hallucination

Cost: Free with Conference fee or gallery admission

Saturday 1 April

9.00am - 6.30pm Level 6 Northern Harbour Terrace

For the Love of Fear - The Hitchcock Conference

9.00am - 9.30am Registration

9.30am - 9.35am Welcome by MCA Director Elizabeth Ann Macgregor

This session is presented in association with the University of Western Sydney

9.35am - 9.45am Introduction by Dr Helen Grace, University of Western Sydney

9.45am - 10.15am Dr Peter Hutchings, Faculty of Humanities, UWS Hawkesbury

‘Modernity, a film by Hitchcock.’ Alfred Hitchcock began his screen career as a writer of inter-titles, progressing through art direction to direction. The inter-titles in his films are notable for their compression and wit, yet he had been inspired by F.W. Murnau's *The Last Man* (1924) with the idea of a silent cinema without inter-titles, one which would make meaning through purely visual means. This ambition works alongside his attention to the technologies and visual impact of modernity, and his exploitation of the characteristically modern effect of shock.

10.15am - 10.45am Dr Barrett Hodsdon, freelance film scholar examines Hitchcock's influence in Australia

10.45am - 11.00am Questions and discussion

11.00am - 11.30am Morning Tea

This session is presented in association with the University of Technology Sydney

11.30am - 11.40am Introduction by Professor Elizabeth Jacka, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Technology, Sydney

11.40am - 12.10pm Michael Eaton, noted English screen writer, discusses the filmic conflict between spectacle and narrative with reference to his original screenplay, 'Drella and the MacGuffin', in which Warhol and Hitchcock meet.

12.10pm - 12.40pm Dr David Boyd, Department of English, University of Newcastle.

In his paper '*Spellbound*, *Vertigo* and the Parted Eye', Dr Boyd examines the similarities between these two films, particularly Hitchcock's manipulation of barely concealed Oedipal scenarios as part of an affective strategy.

12.40pm - 1.00pm Questions and discussion

1.00pm - 2.00pm Lunch

This session is presented by the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney with support from The Power Institute of Contemporary Visual Culture

Introduction by Elizabeth Ann Macgregor, MCA Director

2.00pm - 2.30pm Dr Barbara Creed, Cinema Studies, Fine Arts Department, University of Melbourne. Dr Creed will speak on 'Alfred Hitchcock and the Surrealists'.

2.30pm - 3.00pm Dr E. Ann Kaplan, Professor of English and Comparative Literature, Stanford University New York, Stony Brook, USA and Visiting Fellow at Humanities Research Centre, Australian National University.

Dr Kaplan discusses trauma and melodrama in Alfred Hitchcock's *Spellbound*.

3.00pm - 3.15pm Questions and discussion

3.15pm - 3.45pm Afternoon Tea

Presented in association with the Australian Film and Television and Radio School and Macquarie University, Sydney

Introduction by Jane Mills, Head, Screen Studies; Australian Film, Television and Radio School, Sydney

3.45pm - 4.15pm Dr Patrick Crogan - Senior Lecturer in Screen Studies at AFTRS.

'Between Heads: Thoughts on the Merry Widow tune in *Shadow of a Doubt*' examines the passage between sound and image in Hitchcock's early American 'classic' *Shadow of a Doubt*, with reference to Gilles Deleuze.

4.15pm - 4.45pm Dr William Schaffer, Film Studies, English Dept, University of Newcastle

In 'Cutting the Flow: violence, gender & privacy in *Psycho*', William Schaffer proposes new perspectives on *Psycho* as a powerful and suggestive exploration of cinematic obsession within the limits of privacy, gender and violence. The paper proposes an original analysis of the 'shower scene' where Hitchcock's perverse genius is expressed in the unfolding of divisions between inside and outside creating a uniquely evocative image of fascination and fear.

4.45pm - 5.15pm McKenzie Wark, Senior Lecturer, Department of Media and Communications, Macquarie University

In 'Knowing Too Much: Hitchcock's Media', Wark discusses the way that Hitchcock's films are populated by people who, like the filmmaker himself, work in what we would now call the media. He discusses problems of the image, the copy and the reliability of information which occurs over and over again in Hitchcock's films.

5.15pm - 5.30pm Questions and discussion

5.40pm - 6.30pm Drinks on the Terrace

Conference Fee: \$100 (\$60 students and other concession) includes lunch, refreshments and admittance to galleries on 31 March, 1 April, 2 April.

Sunday 2 April 11:00am - 1:00pm Level 6 Northern Harbour Terrace

For the Love of Fear - The Psychiatrist and the Crime Writer

Stephanie Winfield and Peter Corris

Stephanie Winfield is a psychiatrist, a visiting lecturer in the School of Philosophy at the University of Sydney and is currently completing her Doctorate in Philosophy at UNSW. In her work in contemporary philosophy of mind, she is focussing on theories recently employed to explain a particular delusional belief, the Capgras syndrome, in which someone believes that another person, usually someone well-known to them, has been replaced by a double. She will examine the vulnerable Scotty who becomes trapped in a 'vertiginous regression to a primitive solipsistic state' in *Vertigo*.

Peter Corris, author of 46 books of fiction and 12 non-fiction titles is best known for his 23 books about Cliff Hardy, the Sydney private detective. He will screen the scene in Hitchcock's *The Man Who Knew Too Much* where James Stewart and Doris Day arrive in Marrakesh. He will describe the impact of the film, which he first saw this as a fourteen year old in relation to Hitchcock's influential principle that things are never what they seem.

Sunday 2 April

2.30pm - 4.00pm Level 6 Northern Harbour Terrace

For the Love of Fear - The Panel

Edward Colless, Curator of Moral Hallucination, and John Conomos, media artist, critic, writer and Lecturer in Film at Sydney College of the Arts, discuss Alfred Hitchcock and contemporary Australian visual culture. Discussion chaired by MCA Director Elizabeth Ann Macgregor.

Cost: Free with Conference Fee

Day ticket for Sunday's sessions only: \$20 (includes admission to galleries). Concession \$15

4.00pm -5.00pm Drinks on the terrace

Conference fee Saturday 1 April 2000 \$100 (\$60 for students and other concessions) includes lunch and refreshments on Saturday, free entry to Moral Hallucination Gallery talks on Friday 31 March as well as full-day program on Sunday 2 April.

Day ticket for Sunday's sessions only: \$20 (\$15 for students and other concession) which includes admission to exhibitions for that day.

*Mr and Mrs Smith (1941)*¹

Article by Inge Izzo

MR AND MRS SMITH seems at first glance a light comedy satirising a couple who play silly games with each other. Hitchcock himself admitted to Truffaut that he did not understand these characters, but there is no doubt that he spiritedly charts the hidden energies which drive them. Often through visual rather than verbal details Hitchcock creates a film which is more multi-layered than a cursory viewing would suggest.

The fortunes of Mr and Mrs Smith, or David and Ann, hinge on the sudden appearance of a Mr Deever, who informs each one separately that they are not in fact legally married. The film then proceeds to track the wanderings of each half of the couple until the two are made one again at the end.

It seems to me that *Mr and Mrs Smith* is constructed on the pattern of the fairy story, 'The Three Wishes'. This familiar tale concerns a poor married couple. There are two versions in folklore, one where the husband makes the first wish and ends up with a sausage attached to the end of his nose (Joseph Jacobs), and the other where the wife makes the first wish and ends up with the sausage dangling on the end of *her* nose (a version reported by both Freud and Bruno Bettelheim). In both cases the third wish is needed to bring the situation back to the original status quo. Hence the three wishes have been effectively squandered.

I would argue that Krasna/Hitchcock opt for the second version, which actually renders the husband less blameworthy, a view which may seem at odds with a superficial viewing of the film, where David's wish miraculously comes true (through the appearance of Mr Deever) and seems a slap in the face to Ann.. On closer inspection, though, it is Ann who makes the first wish.

David and Ann's relationship is a warring one, a common enough feature of screwball comedies. The film opens in their bedroom, with many references to previous such sieges, where the couple lived out their rule of not parting until they have made up. This time, a half-hearted reconciliation takes place, with David appeasingly calling Ann 'mother' and 'my little girl' (in fact anything but 'woman', but more on that later), both inadequate non-sexual terms to use for one's wife. Ann rather smugly philosophises on her recipe for a happy marriage: respect for each other as individuals and 'always tell the truth no matter what the consequences.' Little does she know she is inviting 'consequences' which will split them apart. Ann's 'rule no.7' asks for complete honesty and this is where the argument of the film, and its 'Three Wishes' parallel really begins.

In the 'Three Wishes' folktale a good fairy grants a poor married couple three wishes. The outcomes are as follows (in the Freud version):

1. First, the wife wishes for some sausages.
2. Second, the husband, angered by her foolish wish, himself wishes a sausage to attach itself to her nose.
3. Third, they agree to wish for the sausages to disappear. Thus they have wasted all three wishes.

Similarly, in *Mr and Mrs Smith*, Ann makes the first wish :

1. I wish to know the truth. (Ann wishes for the truth/sausage).
2. I wish I had not got married. (This second wish , made by David, rebounds unfavourably on Ann. I'll bet she didn't expect *this* reply. The sausage is now dangling on Ann's nose).
3. I wish we could get back together again. (This third wish, implicitly wished by both characters, provides the impetus for the film.)

Each half of the couple is given a chance to be free of the other. The film humorously explores Ann's dissatisfaction with Jeff as an alternative suitor, and David's discomfort at being single and available, a newly-minted bachelor. The splitting of the couple is symbolically rendered by a nice visual detail: Mr Deever hands back two *single* dollar bills. If Ann and David are to come together again, they will need to reconstruct and reinvent their relationship, learning to value what was good and jettisoning what was bad in their past marriage.

Freud brings an illuminating perspective to the 'Three Wishes' story when he explores it in relation to the mechanics of anxiety dreams. 'This fairy tale might be used in many other connections; but here it serves only to illustrate the possibility that if two people are not at one with each other *the fulfilment of a wish of one of them may bring nothing but unpleasure to the other.*' (Freud, p.253-4) (my emphasis). This is definitely relevant to wish-making in *Mr and Mrs Smith*. Freud further develops his argument to show that wish no.2 is actually a *punishment*: 'The fried sausages on a plate were the direct fulfilment of the wish of the first person, the woman.' (that is, Ann wishes for the truth. And let us remember that it *is* Ann, not David, who wants to play 'rule number 7' David's weary reply is 'Not again.')

Freud continues: 'The sausages on her nose were the fulfilment of the wish of the second person, the man, but were at the same time a punishment for the woman's foolish wish.' (Freud, p.256)

When the couple are ostensibly 'reconciled' at the beginning and having breakfast, it is obvious from David's anxious face and uneasy silences that he has wearied of Ann's games. She is making all the rules, and it seems these always lead to a marital quarrel.. He feels her accusations and jealousies are not merited, saying, 'But I was only 21...' Thus his reply about not wishing to be married comes as a climax to all the minor irritations preceding it.

Furthermore, he blames Ann - 'You wanted me to answer truthfully because we respect each other, we're honest with each other.' Her own words are thrown back at her, and implicit in this is the idea that she has brought the punishment on herself. David's reply that he would prefer not to be married is a wish 'most disagreeable to his wife'. Ann's reaction is anger, just like the wife in the fairy tale who finds herself sporting a sausage on the end of her nose. Thus the second wish is indeed a punishment meted out by David, in answer to his wife's first and foolish wish.

The appearance of Mr Deever is not strictly essential to the structure of the 'Three Wishes' parallel, as the damage is done by the time David gives his 'honest' answer. However, Deever's news permits the second wish to be played out with all its ramifications, that is, it allows the film to set up a 'what if .?.' situation and explore its implications for each half of the couple. Hitchcock puts Ann and David under the microscope to observe their behaviour, and each one finds they are only half a unit without the other.

Ann huffily makes a grand gesture by flaunting David's best friend and partner as her new beau. However, poor Jefferson Custer proves time and time again that he is lacking in all David's qualities, good as well as bad. Ann describes him as 'kind, simple and gentle', but she knows these are not qualities that will set her heart afire. Jeff himself has no delusions, and this is why his comic moments of ineptitude never sink into pathos or humiliation. He knows Ann and his best friend should be together: 'My first wish is to see you happy,' he tells Ann. 'And it's more than possible that as peculiar as David is, you still couldn't be happy without him.'

David, on the other hand, surreptitiously enjoys the idea of having a wife and mistress in one woman. Equality (so valued by Ann) is all very well, but the erotic pleasure principle must also be alive in a successful marriage. David's foray into the sexual singles jungle is his friendship with Chuck. The latter's relaxed animal sensuality is foreign to David who is awkward and easily shocked, as for example in the steam-bath scene: 'I thought there was a woman in here!' Chuck

quickly sees through David's obfuscations : 'Yeah, I had a fight with my wife too.' But even David momentarily lights up when Gertrude tells him he has a 'nice voice' However, the single life leaves David miserable and jealous and it won't be long before he finds a way to split apart the happy couple at Lake Placid.

The sexual nature of Mr and Mrs Smith's problems is hinted at throughout the film. David's pen is a running gag, being either non-existent (Davis signs in pencil), or else it is tossed back by Ann (an implied sexual rejection of David). However, Jeff fares no better as his inadequacy is comically suggested by his mimed inability to light Ann's cigarette at the Florida Club, the cigarette being a classic sexual symbol in movies of the forties. Epithets applied to Ann move through 'sweet kid', 'mother', 'my little girl', until finally she is accused by Jeff's parents of being a *woman*, heralding Ann as a sexual being. Even the rather surreal appearance of the children staring at the couple at Momma Lucy's are a silent accusation of the couple's childless state. This is counterpointed with Deever's earlier insistence that his sister Bertha has four children.

As the film progresses, Ann learns that Jeff is not her 'lifesaver' (these candies are advertised on the Ferris wheel behind them), and David learns a different way of looking at things from Chuck (not all is negative in the Chuck episode). Each will bring added self-knowledge when the final reconciliation is reached.

Although Ann and David individually learn that they can only be happy if their couple is reformed, it is telling that an actual 'remarriage' ceremony does not take place. The exact, pre-'Three Wishes' status quo is not regained, and it appears the couple will have their sausage and eat it too! This is a slap in the face to all the parents in the film, and the prevailing morality of society. Ironically at the end, Mr and Mrs Smith are no longer married, and yet their bonds are stronger than ever.

The title itself undergoes a transformation. When David and Ann reclaim their privacy behind the crossed skis of the last frame, they also reclaim a more sexually charged relationship. The title *Mr and Mrs Smith* now takes on its illicit, anonymous connotations (as if the pair were checking into a hotel for a secret liason), thereby restoring the missing erotic dimension to this couple. Hitchcock's subversive attack on traditional morality should not go unnoticed.

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1. [Editor's note. A synopsis of the film appears below.]

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Some thoughts about Hitchcock's *Mr and Mrs Smith* (1941)

Article by Ken Mogg

[Synopsis of the film. Lawyer David Smith (Robert Montgomery) and his wife Ann (Carole Lombard) live in a Park Avenue apartment and sometimes quarrel, as married couples will. So far they've always made up. One day, David learns that a technicality means that their marriage isn't legal. Unknown to him, Ann also finds out. When, without saying why, he decides to romance her all over again, the plan backfires because Ann, insecure and fiery, resents being a potential 'squeezed lemon'. She throws him out. Now David really must court his wife - but she has tasted the thrill of independence. She takes a job as a sales clerk, though David soon has her fired. Also, she encourages the attentions of David's partner, Jefferson Custer (Gene Raymond). Custer's parents take their son's half-hearted romance seriously. They invite the couple to stay with them at the ski resort of Lake Placid, but David turns up, pretending to be suffering from pneumonia brought on by lovesick drinking. Ann can't help feeling concerned. Jefferson, rather wimpishly, doesn't intervene. David traps Ann in her skis, tips her over, and makes love to her. She reciprocates.]¹

David gets Ann clumsily into a pair of skis, which function much like straightjackets do in *The Moon's Our Home* [1936] and *Bluebeard's Eighth Wife* [1938]. She's unable to walk away or even stand up, a constriction that enables David to get his ex-wife into a half nelson and lock her legs around a post. 'Someday when your back is turned, I'll stab you!' she cries in a fury. The threat signals to her husband, and to the audience as well, that this infuriated, defeated woman does indeed plan to spend her life with the one man who enrages her like no other.

- Ed Sikov²

IN SHORT, SHE LOVES him. Probably these two separated spouses have been fated all along to get back together. 'There's a destiny that shapes our ends', Shakespeare wrote, 'rough-hew them how we will.' Less poetically, but to similar effect, David's men's-club acquaintance Chuck Benson (Jack Carson) had made light of David's predicament. 'Simplest thing in the world - ignore it', he'd advised.³ Still, nothing is certain. Neither David nor Ann is what you would call the passive type. Ann is especially headstrong. Soon events in this screwball comedy are threatening to separate the Smiths for good.

So conflicted do both Ann and David become that they often speak and act in contradictions. In the final scene, even as he removes his tie and prepares to make love to his wife, David tells her, 'Don't think you're doing me any favours by staying here.' And she replies, 'We see eye to eye.'⁴ In many ways, the Smiths are a typical wealthy-bourgeois couple. Both learn that neither really knows his/her own mind, and both are discomfited to find how insecure he/she is. Ann's line about seeing 'eye to eye' picks up on the charming moment in the opening scene where, after David's trick with a slammed door, the pair do indeed lock eyes, smile, and put their latest quarrel behind them. But Ann's look of relief at this moment betrays her basic fear. So what makes the Smiths so insecure? The film seems to offer several reasons. For instance, after three years of childless marriage, both partners have been showing signs of restlessness. Over breakfast, a contrite David admits, 'I shouldn't be jealous so much, and I should lay off your family.' In turn, his remark raises the unanswered question, what has *Ann* been up to?

As a film about an erring couple who finally get back together, *Mr and Mrs Smith* echoes *Rich and Strange* (1932).⁵ There's also a reverse-echo. If such films as *Secret Agent* (1936) and *Spellbound* (1945) are about 'trial marriages', *Mr and Mrs Smith* is about a trial *un*-marriage. Even more basically, Hitchcock films in which the characters don't know, or can scarcely control, their own minds and impulses, are legion. Such a film is *Champagne* (1928), which has its own headstrong heroine, played by Betty Balfour. Writing about that film's near-surrealism in 'The Alfred Hitchcock Story', I commented that few of us are ever sure about the nature and limits of our self-knowledge, especially where our libido is concerned.⁶ As a corollary, few things that Hitchcock shows us, or tells us, are ever clear-cut. For instance, is Ed Sikov correct in saying that the last scene of *Mr and Mrs Smith* shows a woman who is defeated?⁷ Isn't it equally possible that she is a woman triumphant, who has subconsciously sought this reconciliation from the moment she saw what David was playing at on the night he took her back to Mamma Lucy's restaurant (where they'd had their first date), and she subsequently threw him out of their apartment to teach him a lesson? If David's little trick with the slammed door had earlier brought them back together, seeing eye to eye, doesn't the rest of the film achieve the same result at a deeper, more ineffable level? Shades, in fact, of *The Birds* (1963), which repeats on an apocalyptic scale the gag Mitch plays on Melanie in the pet shop in the opening scene.⁸ Let's investigate ...

* * *

Like screwball's narrative of re-'marriage', Hitchcockian romance works to bring characters back to a point where reality can be added to what had previously been only a theatricalised simulacrum of that reality.

- Dana Polan⁹

Let us now glance at the relation between romantic and conjugal love. Romantic love remains constantly abstract in itself, and if it able to acquire no external history, death already is lying in wait for it, because its eternity is illusory. Conjugal love begins with possession and acquires inward history.

- Søren Kierkegaard¹⁰

Mr and Mrs Smith has several ingredients of a crowd-pleaser. According to Sikov, the film played to sellout crowds at Radio City and became, if not a total smash, a solid commercial hit on its general release.¹¹ Significantly, of all the Hitchcock films that were given radio dramatisations in the decade 1941-1950, only *Rebecca* seems to have been broadcast more often (at least six times, as opposed to at least five times for *Mr and Mrs Smith*).¹² Though Hitchcock announced during the first week of shooting that he wanted to direct a typical American comedy about typical Americans, it seems legitimate to think that other, more universal concerns - for example, to show the very psychology of marriage - also engaged the filmmakers. Such substantial concerns by Hitchcock had already been apparent in a film like *The Farmer's Wife* (1928) where the process of Farmer Sweetland's inward transformation, his gradual and unconscious acquiring of humility, is central.

Also, *Mr and Mrs Smith* contains audience-pleasing features from earlier Hitchcock films that engage us in their own right even if they're not exactly serious or substantial. The first of Hitchcock's films to contain the 'trial marriage' theme was *Mountain Eagle* (1926), in which Beatrice and Fearogod live together for convenience in his remote cabin and then get married to avoid any scandal. Their plan is to obtain a divorce later if necessary, though in the event they stay married. Meanwhile, the film has trod a knife-edge of propriety, something that its director always favoured! Another 'trial marriage' film, *The 39 Steps* (1935), is the best instance of that, its unmarried hero and heroine spending much of the time in enforced intimacy, handcuffed together. According to John Russell Taylor, Hitchcock nearly added a scene at the end in which Hannay whimsically tells Pamela that they're *already* married, since by Scottish law you can be married by declaration, stating yourselves before witnesses, as they had at the inn, to be man and wife.¹³ Then there was *Secret Agent*, in which 'Ashenden' and Elsa pose as husband and wife and take the opportunity to sleep together. Only at the end of the film do they formally get married.

Some of these ingredients, then, anticipate or match those of screwball comedy. As a 'trial un-marriage' film, *Mr and Mrs Smith* seemingly reverses the basic situation; nonetheless, it warrants the description 'comedy of re-marriage' applied to several representative screwball comedies by Stanley Cavell. So, too, do the already-mentioned *The Farmer's Wife* and *Rich and Strange*. Now, what it means to call *Mr and Mrs Smith* a trial un-marriage film is approximately this: David and Ann really do love each other but they haven't yet tested their love and therefore haven't yet grasped its true nature. They must find out, in Kierkegaard's terms, the difference between romantic and conjugal love. A hint of what is to come is given in another moment of significant eye-contact. In the office of Ann's boss, Mr Flugel (Francis Compton), David calls Flugel an 'old goat'. Ann can't help catching her husband's eye in amused acknowledgment, even though, nominally, the pair are at loggerheads. Thus we're tipped off to their likely reconciliation by the film's end. There's some foreshadowing here of *Family Plot* (1976), where the hitherto-bickering Blanche and George finally 'move as one' and thus defeat the villains, literally on the latter's own terms.¹⁴

This is again typical of screwball comedy. As crowd-pleasing comedies go, Leo McCarey's *The Awful Truth* (1937) is exemplary, so madcap are its improvisations and so joyous to behold the understanding between stars Irene Dunne and Cary Grant playing the estranged husband and wife who will be reconciled and sleep together at the film's end - ironically, at the very moment their divorce becomes official. *Officialdom* is typically the villain to be defeated in screwball comedy and for much the same reasons that Kierkegaard found repugnant 'everything which is official'. 'The official', he wrote, 'is impersonal and therefore the deepest insult which can be offered to a personality.'¹⁵

I mention *The Awful Truth* because of its obvious influences on *Mr and Mrs Smith*, scripted by Norman Krasna. Of course, Hitchcock's film has its own special qualities, such as how it juxtaposes subjective points of view that also represent audience sympathies - a matter to be discussed below, where I'll suggest that Hitchcock's interest in subjectivity ran at least as deep as Kierkegaard's, and with an anti-officialdom stance to match.

Several commentators have felt impelled to note that *Mr and Mrs Smith* has been undervalued critically. It works best, I believe, if you approach it on its own terms, neither as pure screwball nor as typical Hitchcock, but as a sagacious blend of the two. One defender of Hitchcock's film was David Thomson in 'A Biographical Dictionary of Film' (1976). Calling it 'underrated', he thought it hinted at 'how well [Lombard] and Hitch might have worked together'.

* * *

Screwball comedy owes so much to Carole Lombard's looks and gestures that one could almost say that she defines the genre - the way clothes fall on her body, the colour of her hair, the way she laughs, the confident manner with which she delivers ridiculous lines.

- Ed Sikov¹⁶

Neither Lombard nor Montgomery gets to deliver a Shakespearian soliloquy, exactly, in *Mr and Mrs Smith*, but each has at least one notable solo moment. Montgomery does a very funny mime when, at the Florida Club, David seeks to make Ann jealous by pretending to be in conversation with a statuesque blonde (Georgia Carroll) seated at his table.¹⁷ Montgomery's comedy technique is in evidence throughout the film. There's a scene outside a department store where David and Ann start to argue, attracting a crowd. When a policeman arrives, David reacts by immediately turning *away* from the cop, thus appearing even more exasperated - and avoiding what would have been the actor's predictable response. Likewise, there's the moment in a steam-room at the Beefeaters Club where Chuck Benson phones a girlfriend named Gloria (Patricia Farr). When the number answers and Chuck responds excitedly, 'Gloria?', David, nearby, is

startled and sits up to see if there's a woman in the room. But he first looks not towards Chuck on the telephone but in the opposite direction ...

In the same scene, Chuck arranges a date for David. This is Gertie (Betty Compson, the former British star), who will be his companion for the evening at the Florida Club. On the phone, she immediately flirts with David, praising his (i.e., Montgomery's) 'nice voice', and kissing at him. Montgomery seems a natural for screwball comedy, though he'd made just one or two such films previously (e.g., Edwin Marin's *Fast and Loose* [1937]), and only got the part in *Mr and Mrs Smith* because several other actors, including Cary Grant, weren't available.

Carol Lombard, though, was decidedly a veteran of the genre (e.g., Gregory La Cava's *My Man Godfrey* [1936], William Wellman's *Nothing Sacred* [1937]), which may explain why she'd asked Hitchcock to direct her in *Mr and Mrs Smith*, wanting to please her fans with more of the same. Her memorable solo scene is the one near the end where, ostensibly to give David reason to leave in a huff, Ann feigns that Jeff is mauling her. 'Don't Jeff, don't', she cries, using a girlish voice that David seems to find irresistible - more than once he has called her 'a great kid' and his 'little girl'. When he comes charging to Ann's rescue, he finds her alone in her room. Yet the half-nelson he applies seems more an embrace than a remonstrance. Finally, he up-ends her in her skis. Here, a photogenic view of Ann's haunches certainly echoes the famous scene in Howard Hawks's *Twentieth Century* (1934) in which 'Lily Garland' (Lombard), wearing satin pyjamas, bends her legs and kicks out at her obnoxious actor-manager Oscar Jaffe ...

The sheer physical attractiveness of Lombard had also been emphasised during the scene in Jeff's apartment after Ann and Jeff got drenched at the New York World's Fair. Ann makes her intentions apparent by immediately eyeing the bedroom and declaring it 'the most tasteful man's bedroom I've ever seen'. To this compliment (if that's what it is) Jeff merely says, 'Thank you', and refuses to take the bait - exactly how he'll respond for the rest of the evening! But for now, he excuses himself to 'get into something more comfortable', which gives Ann time to remove her coat and start to dry her hair before the fire. Her gown with its plunging back, and the attractive look of the shot itself, suggest that she's readying herself for a pleasant time *chez* her host. Here Hitchcock lets the scene's atmosphere build, just as he'll do in a matching scene in *Vertigo* (1958).¹⁸ Comically, when Jeff returns, he's wearing evening dress, as if to go out again. But the fast-thinking Ann prevails on him to stay indoors and take some brandy. Accordingly, despite it's being apparent by now that Jeff's no Lothario, when he tilts backwards and says in an ominous voice, 'Miss Ann', we allow ourselves to hope that he's about to kiss her. Sadly, he merely excuses himself again, this time to throw up ...¹⁹

Lombard took full advantage of her status as the film's uncredited producer. During the shoot, she good-humouredly insisted on directing Hitchcock's cameo appearance as a passer-by in the street outside the Smiths' apartment when David and Jeff emerge together.²⁰ Lombard ordered retake after retake! However, this was not originally where Hitchcock's cameo was to go. He had intended to appear outside Mamma Lucy's as a panhandler who unsuccessfully tries to cadge from David the price of a drink.²¹ In that scene now, a little man wearing a bowler hat goes by. Bill Krohn, who told me this, thinks that Hitchcock simply dressed an actor up as Stan Laurel and had him walk on in Hitch's place!²²

* * *

The rule of law degenerates [in *The Awful Truth*] into farce as the two adults do battle in court for custody of their dog, Mr Smith (played by the personable Asta of the *Thin Man* series and, later, *Bringing Up Baby* [1938]). The judge, unable to decide the custody fight on his own, becomes an effective symbol for empty law and collapsing order when he finally leaves the matter up to the terrier.

- Ed Sikov²³

There's another moment in *Mr and Mrs Smith* involving eye-contact, and that's when David and Ann at Mamma Lucy's attempt to out-stare some street urchins who have gathered to watch them dine *alfresco* at a table on the footpath. The pair lose the contest, an instance of how children in Hitchcock's films sometimes get the better of adults because children are more spontaneous or because they apparently 'know something' that adults don't. A moment later, David is even complaining that the restaurant's cat knows more than he does about the (off-colour?) food. The pair's tribulations - there will be more - signal that their precious marriage is coming apart, that they're no longer moving as one. Aware of the potential for such a thing to happen, Ann had earlier sought to impose a series of rules or laws on their relationship, but such 'legality' had been no substitute for the spirit of true marriage.²⁴ Hitchcock would see fit to employ a similar theme again when dealing with marriage matters, notably in *Marnie* (1964) with its play on the term 'legal possession'.

The Awful Truth again offers a precedent. In the courtroom scene, Lucy (Dunne) tricks the judge into giving her possession of the dog called Mr Smith by surreptitiously coaxing it to come to her. In *Mr and Mrs Smith*, the law is

mocked when the Smiths' marriage is held to be invalid because of a technicality: this forces lawyer David to get involved in areas where he must needs operate in unorthodox ways, not strictly legal. Such pointed ironies often occur in Hitchcock films. The ambiguous shot in *The Paradine Case* (1947) of the statue of blind Justice over the Old Bailey is not so far removed in its implications from the shots in *North by Northwest* (1959) of the Presidents 'overseeing' events at Mount Rushmore. There's a similar occasion, mocking 'officialdom', in *Mr and Mrs Smith* where events at Lake Placid occur in and around the lodge whose cabins are all named after Presidents. Equally, there's a key motif in films like *To Catch a Thief* (1955), *The Wrong Man* (1956), and *The Birds* (1963), that might be called 'temporal justice versus eternal justice', and which I've analysed in 'The Alfred Hitchcock Story'.²⁵ As it happens, another recent book, 'Fiction and the Law', by Kieran Dolin,²⁶ deals with similar matters. Dolin sees the concept of law as ultimately a 'nomos', a 'normative universe ... a world of right and wrong, of lawful and unlawful, of valid and void'. This concept of the nomos represents a much broader understanding of law than mere judgements laid down in particular cases, for it is intended to capture the very antinomies, often shadowy, that are involved. Dolin feels that only through fiction can a multi-layered and nuanced understanding of a nomos be fully apprehended.²⁷

Indeed, he thinks that the best evidence may come through 'telepathy'. To illustrate this, he focusses on the Marabah caves incident in E.M. Forster's 'A Passage to India' (1924) and on the subsequent courtroom scenes that are finally so destabilising of the imperial Anglo-Indian nomos that has prevailed. (It's relevant to recall that Robin Wood evokes the Marabah caves incident when describing Lydia Brenner's ineffable anguish in *The Birds* when she finds the body of Dan Fawcett.) Next, Dolin highlights the way that fiction lets in what law deems to be inadmissible. This time, one of his object-cases is Charles Dickens's 'mighty mystery of Iniquity and Equity', 'Bleak House' (1853), the very novel that Donald Spoto feels 'engraved itself on Hitchcock's memory' and which is surely a major influence on *The Wrong Man*.²⁸ Much of this sort of apprehension of a desirable nomos by a work of fiction does seem to me inherent in Hitchcock's filmmaking. By the end of *Mr and Mrs Smith*, the film has become, arguably, something of a Blakean parable of innocence regained, a 'higher' innocence. The resulting marriage-state is far from being a paradise, but David and Ann now have a finer and deeper appreciation of what they mean to each other. This goes way beyond a simple matter of 'legal possession'.

The actual dynamics of the film are complicated. For example, Dana Polan seeks to distinguish David, because of his surname ('Smith'), from 'the old aristocrat', his legal colleague and friend, Jefferson Custer. But this simplifies matters. David and Jeff both attended the same school together in Alabama. Both now live in New York City. And 'Smith' is actually an English name. One notes that David's club is called the Beefeaters Club and that among the portraits that hang on David's office walls is one of Shakespeare (and another, I think, of either Byron or Keats). Another complication is that the ordinary Yankee, Chuck, attends the Beefeaters Club too. Accordingly, the situation may be this. David is positioned between the over-gentlemanly, by-the-book Jeff, on the one hand, and the uncomplicated, macho Chuck, on the other. The film associates David with things English partly because, like even Chuck, he is a would-be social climber (Chuck admires anything or anyone with 'class'), but also because he is eminently civilised, in the best Hitchcock tradition. Typically in Hitchcock's films to this time, the English represent the most civilised race. Thus it seems fitting that, at David's office, his job of lawyer requires him to be controlled and courteous, even at some expense to his 'virility'. (Jeff, naturally, is fully at home here!) But you always sense that David has what it takes. In this respect, he's like Richard Hannay in *The 39 Steps*, who is a Canadian but as civilised - and capable - as they come.

There's another aspect of the name 'Smith'. In the film's title it seems to identify David and Ann as typical, even ordinary. That sounds vaguely pessimistic. Yet, as noted, *Mr and Mrs Smith* belongs in the comedy-of-remarriage genre whose pastoral idea, or 'green world', *optimistically* offers 'perspective and renewal', as Stanley Cavell says.²⁹ In point of fact, the film's ending is ambiguous. If a 'higher innocence' is being held out, it may be, for most of us, only a fleeting one that we glimpse before reluctantly (though exuberantly) coming back to the real world.³⁰ We need to remember that Hitchcock in private rather looked down on 'the moron masses' who comprised the bulk of his audience.³¹ Accordingly, 'average' characters like David and Ann are finally just pointers to a 'paradise' beyond their present experience - though, it's true, this has lately been privileged.³² The 'green world' becomes in Hitchcock a limbo. And *Mr and Mrs Smith* (or *Mr and Mrs Ordinary*), while implying the possibility of something more, and extraordinary, is just a hinting. A whole new nomos remains to be established.

* * *

Conjugal love does not come with any outward sign, like 'the rich bird' with whizzing and bluster, but it is the imperishable nature of a quiet spirit.

- Søren Kierkegaard³³

The institution on which the Family in bourgeois capitalist society depends - legal marriage - appears flagrantly neurotic, its sole function being to make it more difficult for couples to separate if they are miserable.

- Robin Wood³⁴

Hitchcock's films have always seemed to me to reflect an affinity of their director to that supreme exponent of subjectivity - and hence the Romantic outlook - Søren Kierkegaard (1813-55). Consider *Vertigo*. Its 'pessimistic' ending may serve as a profound rebuke to those of us who cling, Hamlet-like, to this worldly life and refuse to make the 'leap' into faith which for Kierkegaard constitutes the true religious outlook.³⁵ For clearly Scottie's vertigo carries a suggestion of cowardice, and Madeleine's other-worldly quality is one that the 'hard-headed' Scottie both finds intriguing and yet, because of his cowardice, devalues: he has wanted to save Madeleine for *this* world rather than accompany her into another, to truly 'know' her mystery. By the time that Judy appears in the film, it is already 'too late' for Scottie, for his notion of his lost Madeleine has been coarsened into purely physical terms (Madeleine as the archetypal cool blonde), an image or simulacrum of what she might originally have given him.

I don't make this reading of *Vertigo* lightly. I detect a similar hinting at something ineffable beyond normal or ordinary comprehension in *The Manxman* (1929), *Under Capricorn* (1949), *The Wrong Man*, and *Marnie*. For instance, Manny in *The Wrong Man* simply cannot grasp the nature and magnitude of what befalls him, though the film takes pains to suggest the massive forces bearing upon him from all sides.³⁶ Manny clings for refuge to his Catholic faith and his rosary, but the film leaves ambiguous the true nature and depth of that faith. Is he, then, just one more of Hitchcock's 'moron millions'? After all, Kierkegaard, anticipating Nietzsche in this respect, saw *all* official religion as an abstraction, lacking the subjectivity of the true religious outlook.

I also think of *Psycho* (1960), hinging as it does on the Miltonic paradox of whether to act ('leap') or 'wait'.³⁷ Marion Crane, whom Hitchcock described to Truffaut as 'a perfectly ordinary bourgeoisie', i.e., probably another of 'the moron millions', becomes impatient, and pays the extreme penalty. Later on, Lila Crane indicates that nothing much has changed when she says, 'Patience doesn't run in my family'.³⁸ (Likewise, in *Mr and Mrs Smith*, David ignores Chuck's injunction to wait for Ann to get over her wrath ...) ³⁹ So when, in dialogue and imagery, the film compares Marion and her sister to angels, the effect is striking but ambiguous. If they're angels, Marion and her sister are nonetheless of the lower orders who simply serve as messengers of God's worldly purpose, not the higher orders who attend on Him personally and are privy to His thought. Thus *Psycho*, too, presents us with a limbo-world, located somewhere between 'lower' and 'higher'.⁴⁰

Now, Kierkegaard's thoughts on marriage, which we started to examine earlier, not surprisingly bear a relation to his overall philosophy. Roughly speaking, the distinction he makes between romantic and conjugal love parallels his celebrated distinction between 'Aesthetic' and 'Ethical' outlooks - where the Ethical offers decidedly the more mature mode of living. Taking *Vertigo* as an example, we can say that Madeleine arouses in Scottie an Aesthetic awareness (which is already an advance on his purely utilitarian relationship with Midge)⁴¹ akin to romantic love. But, as Kierkegaard indicates, such love without real commitment is likely to acquire no external history, and its eternity is illusory. Fittingly, perhaps, Scottie loses Madeleine. True, he had told her that he *was* committed to her, after saving her from drowning, but he had mistaken the sham for the real.⁴² Likewise, when he does try with Judy to establish an Ethical (caring) relationship, it is again an unreal one.⁴³ Again he loses the woman he has briefly possessed. Moreover, by the end, a more basic lack in Scottie has been implied. I'll refer to the *religious* symbolism of the mission and its tower below ...

It has to be said, I think, that Kierkegaard has a profounder understanding of conjugal love, and the limits it may finally impose on individual self-knowledge and happiness, than Robin Wood displays in the passage quoted. Still, there's a certain irony in the fact that neither man could actually write from direct experience of the issue, or at any rate, without prejudice. The homosexual Wood's view of (heterosexual) marriage as 'neurotic' sounds a little like sour grapes on his part, or a projection of a neurosis of his own, or both those things.⁴⁴ Yet Kierkegaard himself never married, and he broke off his engagement to Regina Olsen after proclaiming that he was 'a thousand years too old' for her. (As we'll see, he had his reasons.) Nonetheless, our knowledge of such opposing views (i.e., Kierkegaard's, Wood's) may help to suggest a play of polarities that I think is operating in *Mr and Mrs Smith*.

Let's come back to that film. In David and Ann we certainly detect few 'outward signs' of 'the imperishable nature of a quiet spirit' - only much 'whizzing and bluster'! Yet, as always in Hitchcock, it's conceivable that outward events carry an essentially opposite, and invisible, meaning. Another of the film's moments involving eye-contact occurs when Ann pointedly avoids looking at David, and, over his shoulder, tells Jeff that she accepts his invitation to dinner. She is

sending messages to both men at once, but the one to David is richer and deeper (and as so often in such cases, requires a sense of irony for its correct interpretation).⁴⁵ It means, in effect, 'Just wait until all this is over!' That 'wait' is crucial. Both David and Ann undergo a learning experience in the film, and it involves the importance of waiting.⁴⁶ Now, I have little doubt that Hitchcock's attitude to marriage and sexuality (insofar as matters of the libido can ever be definite and certain) resembled that of his favourite painter, Paul Klee (1879-1940). Just before World War I, Klee was friends with a 'Sturm und Drang' artist whose life was indeed a willed storm of feelings and activity, including sexual activity. But soon, Klee noted, there was nothing new left for the artist and his sexual partners to try! By contrast, Klee himself, who was always devoted to his wife, Lili, soon happily came to see marriage as 'a sexual cure'. Monogamy, he felt, was 'enough'.⁴⁷ What I'm suggesting apropos *Mr and Mrs Smith* is simply that Hitchcock would have seen in the Smiths' marriage both its dangers of disintegration *and* its potential for something stable and lasting - and that the film at least hints at the latter possibility.

The fact that it culminates in scenes set at a place called Lake Placid is typical of Hitchcock. The overt, *non-placid* content of these scenes rather implies an opposite state as being desirable or attainable, maybe already, if invisibly, existing or coming into being. The inspiration for this particular setting was probably the first film of skating star Sonje Henie, Sidney Lanfield's *One in a Million* (1936). That film had centred on the Winter Olympics, held at Lake Placid the same year. Hitchcock may have begun by reasoning that the location in New York State would provide a change from the Connecticut climaxes of other screwball comedies like *The Awful Truth* and Hawks's *Bringing Up Baby*. Later on, when making *Spellbound*, he again thought of using Lake Placid as a locale within his film, though he finally chose 'Gabriel Valley'.⁴⁸ Structurally, either locale serves as a 'lost paradise' image. That's something that constantly recurs in Hitchcock's work.⁴⁹ It carries great psychological acumen, and in *Spellbound* Hitchcock was even able to give it a Freudian underpinning: the Gabriel Valley sequence, with its flashback to Ballyntine's childhood, effectively evokes original sin.⁵⁰ There's an obvious connection with what I've already written above about the quest for a higher innocence.

The most 'placid' character in the Lake Placid scenes of *Mr and Mrs Smith* is Jeff, and he is mocked.⁵¹ The film doesn't exactly endorse placidity even if it posits (as I've been doing) placidity as a goal. This paradox is like that of life itself: the ubiquitous life-force in Hitchcock's films (e.g., *Lifeboat*, *Spellbound*, *Marnie*) is constantly shown to veer between storm and stillness.⁵² But always these films have a *transcendent* implication. Theirs may be the Surrealist goal, expressed by André Breton, of attaining 'a certain point of the mind where life and death, the real and the imagined, ... cease to be perceived as contradictions'.⁵³

The events that happen at Lake Placid are engineered by David. When Ann and Jeff first turn up there, they learn that their rooms at the main lodge have been mysteriously changed to cabins half a mile away. 'That's funny', says Jeff, but he accepts the switch, only pausing to express a puritanical hope that 'they're not connecting rooms, are they?' It's appropriate to Jeff's concern that all of the cabins are named after American Presidents, i.e., father-figures! On arriving at Cabin McKinley, Ann and Jeff are startled to find that the cabin next to theirs is occupied by David. Standing in the snow to greet them, he appears literally frozen, or drunk. As they approach him, he falls forward. They carry him indoors.

Ann soon betrays her concern at David's condition, reminding us of her remark in the opening scene about mothering him.⁵⁴ Now follows a key episode where she shaves David propped up in bed. We already know that she had regularly shaved him when they were married. The act has faintly sexual connotations, something which Hitchcock would exploit further in *Spellbound*, *The Paradine Case*, *Rear Window*, *North by Northwest*, and *Topaz* (1969). At the same time, Jeff is roped into playing manicurist to David! The cunning David, who is supposedly still unconscious, not only lies back and enjoys the attention he's receiving, he does his best to protract it. In this, he's like a film director who grasps that the more screen-time a character is given, the more an audience will become interested in him, and even identify with him. Ann is his audience! She and David (if not Jeff) are in perfect empathy during the delicate business of shaving: at one point, she screws her face to one side, inviting him to 'make like this', which he does. Clearly, there's an overlap with the scene in *Spellbound* of Ballyntine and Constance skiing in unison, and with the close-ups in *The Birds* of the pair of identically swaying lovebirds.

By the very next scene, Jeff is acknowledging to Ann that 'it's possible' that she still loves David and that he, Jeff, may be an interloper.

In sum, the Lake Placid scenes reflect something of the calm certitude with which a gifted director can lead his audience where he wants them to go. It's this same calm certitude that I feel Hitchcock's films are often about, thematically.⁵⁵

[Kierkegaard's] concern with subjectivity opened the way to a new kind of philosophical sensibility and a new consideration of the value of the human individual. But the same concern with subjectivity also produced some dubious although deeply interesting implications, for Kierkegaard believed that truth is truth for a subject; otherwise it is empty. This seems to obliterate any distinction between how things seem to be and how they may be in reality.

- Diané Collinson⁵⁶

As well as its several instances of eye-contact, or avoided eye-contact, *Mr and Mrs Smith* has much use of subjective camera, in which the audience is, actually or metaphorically, put *behind* the eyes of one of the characters. Rohmer and Chabrol note this departure from the usual way of American (screwball) comedy, which 'gets its effects from the assumption of objective observation: it is a report on madness'.⁵⁷ They instance the scene at the Florida Club, one typical of Hitchcock in switching its narrative point of view midway.⁵⁸ 'During the first part of the scene, we have shared [David's] embarrassment and then his triumph.' This refers to how in order to impress Ann, David has pretended to be accompanying the classy blonde. But later, when he develops a nose-bleed, and his actual date, Gertie, goes to work on him to stop it, Ann thinks that he looks ridiculous. Now, say Rohmer and Chabrol, 'we find ourselves on the other side of the fence, with [Ann]. This leap from one "subjectivity" to another sparks laughter, but it is not cathartic laughter since we feel that we are mocking ourselves.'⁵⁹

To perform her ministrations, Gertie forces David to lie on his back. All the points-scoring over Ann that he had managed in the early part of the scene is worthless to him now that Ann sees how absurd he looks (and perhaps realises that he has been with Gertie all along). To drive home to us the matter of David's discomfiture, Hitchcock gives us a canted point-of-view shot from David's perspective of Ann and Jeff looking shocked. Such a subjective shot resembles ones in *Downhill* (1927) and *Notorious* (1946). Notice that the shot is literally from David's point-of-view but is subsumed within Ann and Jeff's general view of events, i.e., this part of the sequence tends to 'side' with them. Then, too, Hitchcock was keenly aware of the *audience's* subjectivity. For instance, the initial shots of the Florida Club as David follows a waiter across a crowded dance-floor to his table are designed not just to introduce his first view of the group he'll be spending the evening with - Chuck, Gloria, and Gertie - but to establish in the audience's mind a strong sense of place and atmosphere, in this respect recalling the already-mentioned shots by the fireplace in Jeff's apartment. Also, it's probably significant that the crowded dance-floor recalls the one in *Champagne*, a film that is at times subjective in an almost surreal way. There, the obvious and literal subjective shots through an up-ended champagne glass belonging to the mysterious figure called The Man hint at a deeper subjectivity, that of our own mischievous libido ...

The soundtrack, too, can turn subjective. One example of this in the Florida Club scene is the way a modulation of the musical numbers typically suggests the evening's progression, time passing, something that Hitchcock and his composers would also use to excellent effect in *To Catch a Thief* and *The Wrong Man*.⁶⁰

Paradoxically, Hitchcock's capacity to oversee all of these 'subjectivities' suggests his own relative objectivity.⁶¹ But something similar was always a Romantic paradox. Many Romantic figures, from Rousseau ('The Social Contract', 'Émile') onwards, dealt with the broadest of canvasses, yet kept a personal note.⁶² Invariably, it was the impersonal that was anathema to them. Now, despite what I've just said about Hitchcock's objectivity, can anyone doubt, as they watch *Vertigo*, his emotional investment in Scottie's attempt, while pursuing Madeleine/Judy, to turn an abstract, impersonal ideal of femininity into a living, fleshly embodiment of that ideal? The fact that Scottie fails in his quest seems to me the very expression of the paradox that is at the heart of Romanticism, if not Hitchcock himself.

Here's what I mean. In 'The Alfred Hitchcock Story', I note how Scottie embodies the Romantic flaw of the 'transcendental pretence', the wilful belief that the Self is everything.⁶³ I took the term from Robert C. Solomon,⁶⁴ who has brilliantly put his finger on why the over-emphasis on subjectivity by the Romantics constituted their fatal error. The transcendental pretence, reports Solomon, 'appeared as innocence and common sense, but it embodied a profound arrogance that promoted self-righteousness, prohibited mutual understanding, and belied human diversity'.⁶⁵ The Self *isn't* everything, though someone like Kierkegaard came close to believing that it was. Indeed, in the field of 'existentialist' and 'vitalist' thinking,⁶⁶ Solomon considers that right up to Jean-Paul Sartre a degree of commitment to the efficacy of the transcendental pretence to reveal life's underlying meaning, or to give that life a meaning it otherwise lacks, prevailed. It took someone like Simone de Beauvoir 'to move beyond Sartre ... in her keen awareness of caring for others and respecting their freedom'.⁶⁷

In particular, Solomon praises de Beauvoir's emphasis on distinctively *female* ways of experiencing the world, something that Sartre ignored. Referring to de Beauvoir's 'Le Deuxième Sexe' (1949), Solomon notes that her 'analysis flies in the

face of the transcendental pretence, for once we acknowledge this one major split in the idea of humanity, it [is] difficult to deny any number of others'.⁶⁸ Indeed it is. And it seems to me that though Hitchcock was often prepared to enter deeply into the emotions of his characters, such as Scottie's feelings for Madeleine/Judy, another part of him retained the capacity to be objective and detached. Especially, he did *not* consistently ignore female and/or feminine experience. For example, in the character of Midge, wonderfully played by Barbara Bel Geddes, he gives us a picture of, precisely, the female and femininity being ignored. The picture is at once subjective and objective. Recall what I said earlier about Midge being reduced to a 'utilitarian' character by her relationship with Scottie. She has become 'utilitarian' - designing brassières, etc. - in both her own and Scottie's eyes, just *because* of the way that he has ignored her essential nature, while he himself has taken to pursuing elsewhere what the film implies is ultimately a chimera, a male construct of ideal femininity. Scottie's subjectivity proves fiercely destructive. Yet the film itself shows us these *women's* essential nature by reminding us that they, too, are suffering creatures.⁶⁹

In sum, Hitchcock was capable of both deeply understanding, and profoundly critiquing, the transcendental pretence and the way it finally overemphasises subjectivity. How, then, does this cast light on *Mr and Mrs Smith*?

* * *

The soaking that Ann and Jeff suffer at the carnival represents the final diminution of the tremendous storm that Murnau made the climax of *Sunrise* [1927] and that Hitchcock first adapted to comic and ironic purposes in *Rich and Strange*.

- Lesley Brill⁷⁰

The Lake Placid scenes satisfy us, rather than merely seem contrived, when we grasp that David has set everything up and then let events take their natural course. His plan hiccups when, feigning illness, he gets 'found out'; but all along it has seemed that Ann's unacknowledged thought has been to rejoin her husband and that David would somehow manage it. Mind you, this is never entirely clear or unambiguous. These typical screwball characters scarcely know the depths of their own minds, even if Hitchcock does.⁷¹ When I often speak of Hitchcock's 'outflanking technique' - for example, in discussing *Rich and Strange* - I typically mean his capacity in all kinds of ways to defeat or expose his characters' limited understanding of how things are. Yet it is done with tremendous empathy on his part, amounting to what Keats called a poet's 'negative capability'. It is really a form of genius. Accordingly, I think I see why Hitchcock, when making *Psycho*, apparently identified with the Milton who wrote 'On His Blindness' to justify his inner certitude while waiting patiently to do what God had chosen for him. In turn, I think it very likely that Hitchcock had long ago arrived at what Kierkegaard called the 'Religious' stage of inward development, that which is superior to the Aesthetic and Ethical stages.

Let me refer to something we know about Hitchcock's career. From almost the first moment that young Alfred entered the Famous Players-Lasky studios in London, it was noticed that he possessed 'a master mind'. I think that such a mind was closely connected with his total commitment, almost from the start, to being a filmmaker who had mastered every aspect of his art and craft. I would equate that commitment with Kierkegaard's notion of a 'leap' into faith. For Hitchcock, filmmaking *was* his religion. Just think of some of his remarks to Truffaut, such as how no considerations of morality could have stopped him making *Rear Window*, such was his love of 'pure film'. Hitchcock's characters may not have known their own minds, but Hitchcock always knew his. And he regularly applied that knowledge in what amounted to an ongoing critique of his characters' limited commitments and ways of seeing.

Now, another key scene in *Mr and Mrs Smith*, which I've already briefly mentioned, is the one at the fair where Ann and Jeff get stuck on a broken-down parachute-ascension during a storm. Hours later, wet and dispirited, they're finally brought down. The prominent sign on the nearby Ferris wheel reads 'Life'.⁷² In 'The Alfred Hitchcock Story', I compare this episode to the home-movies scene in *Rebecca* (1940) where the film breaks in the projector, and I suggest that both scenes work as metaphors 'for the woman's and the man's separate dilemmas. For the woman, there's a reminder of her imperilled marriage - Ann is left feeling literally uncomfortable, if not unbowed. For the man, there's a reminder that life is always forcing itself on us.'⁷³

Both of these aspects - the woman's and the man's perspectives - complement each other. The overall message might be seeking, as we often must, 'any port in a storm', we may find marriage such a port, for 'life' gets very stormy indeed, and even the Smiths' tempestuous marriage is a potential haven from that. Storms, or references to storms, figure in such Hitchcock films as *Rich and Strange*, *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (both versions), *Young and Innocent* (1937), *Jamaica Inn* (1939), *Rebecca*, *Foreign Correspondent* (1940), *Suspicion* (1941), *Lifeboat* (1944), *Spellbound*, *Under Capricorn*, *I Confess*, *Rear Window*, *Psycho*, and *Marnie*.⁷⁴ Discussing this matter recently on the Internet, I invoked what is clearly one of Hitchcock's perennial themes: the working of a life-force that is also a death-force, the immanent

'Will' of the world.⁷⁵ The fact that individual characters, such as Fred in *Rich and Strange* and Manny in *The Wrong Man*, never really grasp what is going on is exactly the point Hitchcock makes.⁷⁶

I see *Mr and Mrs Smith* as being, almost surrealistically, about the psychology of marriage, its angsts and its angers, and its often unvoiced fantasies. An example of the latter is David Smith's fantasy of having both a wife *and* a mistress. Hitchcock in his films liked nothing better than to limn the very edges of his characters' consciousness. The broken-down parachute-ascension prefigures a theme of *The Birds*, that catastrophe surrounds us all - even if for most of the time we stay oblivious of it. Further, the scene effectively complements the one in the washroom adjoining Jeff's office, in which the clanking plumbing interrupts the huddled conversation between Jeff and his parents.⁷⁷ Hitchcock's intention had been to use the sound of toilets flushing on the floor above; regrettably, RKO insisted on something a little less daring ...⁷⁸

What I'm saying is that Hitchcock, if not his characters, saw the bigger picture, and that his outlook was ultimately a 'Religious' one in Kierkegaard's sense of that term. Here's how Robert C. Solomon describes Kierkegaard's choice of the 'Religious' outlook:

Although he explicitly contrasts the aesthetic and the ethical in his early works, in his own life it was clear that the choice was more between the ethical and the religious life (he had indulged himself as an aesthete as a youth, but without great success). For the sake of his religion he gave up the considerable comforts and satisfactions of married life. The religious life is one of [deeply personal] commitment to God. But although it was Kierkegaard's personal choice, his philosophy prevented him from ever defending it as the 'right' choice. All he could do was to choose it, live as an example, and 'seduce' the rest of us into choosing it too.⁷⁹

Obviously, this isn't exactly a picture of Hitchcock, married to Alma for more than fifty years. Nonetheless, I do find it suggestive of why Hitchcock's films often seem to speak of something more, or other, that lies beyond the ethical/conjugal sphere. I think that a part of Hitchcock always deeply valued the notion of a person's *subjective* relation to God, a Romantic position, one not based on (for example) merely a mechanical attendance at religious services. Hitchcock deeply loved Alma, of course, yet for most of their married life he adopted a self-described 'celibate' lifestyle that is surely revealing. Author Robert Schoen seems to have felt so: his screenplay-cum-novel, 'Hitch and Alma' (1998) is built on the premise that Hitchcock maintained a 'secret life', hidden from Alma, represented by a hoard of 'alternative' sequences, outtakes from his movies, which he ran to himself in his home screening-room, which Alma was forbidden to enter.

Or consider some of the remarks about marriage that are in Hitchcock's films. Near the end of *Shadow of a Doubt* (1943), the mother is heard to murmur that, in marriage, you may very soon 'forget you're you'. In *The Trouble With Harry*, Jennifer and Sam hope, optimistically, that their forthcoming marriage may be 'practically unique', and that they'll get to keep their individual freedoms.

I can't say with certainty that Hitchcock was finally more of a 'Religious' person than he was an 'Aesthetic' or an 'Ethical' one. He was full of paradoxes. George Cukor once called him 'so perverse! He'd never tell you what he really thinks, never, never!'⁸⁰ But so was Kierkegaard paradoxical, perhaps finding in subjectivity as good a route to an *objective* appreciation of the universe as any of us may hope for.⁸¹ Also, Kierkegaard loved the theatre and music, yet he observed of art that to the elect it ceased to be any kind of religious ritual and was seen, rather, for what it was, 'an immoral sham, useful only as [an] ... effective method of making the ignorant masses conform to the law of virtue which they do not understand'.⁸² In Hitchcock's case, I've suggested that he made of filmmaking a religion; yet he was detached enough to sometimes say that, after all, it was 'only a movie'. I would gloss the latter remark like this. To 'the moron masses', as he called them, it was indeed only a movie; and yet to Hitchcock with his 'master mind', the cinema was actually more of a religious calling, and scarcely separable from a religious knowledge. In *Vertigo*, Scottie is repeatedly entering churches *and then immediately exiting them again*. The film seems to imply that his quest has been misguided from the outset, that what he was truly seeking, if only he'd known it, was always close by - or its religious symbols were - but that he has *wilfully* overlooked them.

Ann's crossed skis at the end of *Mr and Mrs Smith* may, or may not, be a Christian symbol. Personally, I don't think so. But you are free to read such a meaning into the image, if you wish. What is scarcely deniable is that the crossed skis - Ann's yielding legs - are a *sexual* symbol, like the last shot of *North by Northwest*. Beyond such a final statement, Hitchcock's films seldom go, only hint at the journey still to be travelled by all concerned and perhaps 'seduce' us into further speculation based on hints earlier thrown out. I have tried to highlight some of those hints and to give them a wider Hitchcockian context. John Mosher in the 'New Yorker' called *Mr and Mrs Smith* '[a]s commonplace a film as one may find anywhere',⁸³ but I think he overlooked the wisdom that Hitchcock brought to his *investigation* of the

commonplace, the very subject of the film (as its title implies). Hitchcock aficionados may find in this excellent screwball comedy much to satisfy them.

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Notes

1. Synopsis from K. Mogg, 'The Alfred Hitchcock Story' (London, 1999), p. 76. Note: all citations of my book in these notes will refer to the UK edition, as opposed to the cut and 'simplified' US edition, which I disown.
2. E. Sikov, 'Screwball: Hollywood's Madcap Romantic Comedies' (1989), p. 71. Cf. a recent observation by University of Washington psychologist and marriage counsellor John Gottman, that anger in married couples 'did not indicate an imminent divorce or marital unhappiness - indeed, some of the most happily married couples went at it hammer and tongs'. (The film's Jeff, on the other hand, I see as an early instance of a Hitchcock 'neurotic' - whose most extreme case is Norman Bates.)
3. Chuck's line was incorrectly quoted in my book, p. 77.
4. Another instance of an apparent contradiction occurs when Ann, drenched by rain on the parachute-ascension, assures the mousey Jeff, 'I've never been so happy in all my life.'
5. Not quite so obviously, a similar theme operates in *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (both versions). It is also a staple theme of screwball comedies like *The Awful Truth*.
6. Again the screwball genre itself is predisposed to treating similar subject-matter. I think it was Martin Scorsese who remarked in a recent episode of 'American Cinema' that screwball comedies typically show our libidinous impulses. Hitchcock's *Champagne*, it's relevant to note, contains several pre-echoes of Capra's screwball comedy, *It Happened One Night* (1934) ...
7. Sikov is certainly mistaken about one or two factual matters in the passage quoted. The scene where David gets Ann in a half nelson precedes by several minutes the final scene where he traps her in her skis.
8. Melanie is stung by Mitch's teasing into tracking him to his home in Bodega Bay - on which the birds eventually vent their fury.
9. D. Polan, "The Light Side of Genius: Hitchcock's *Mr and Mrs Smith* in the Screwball Tradition", in A.S. Horton (ed.), 'Comedy/Cinema/Theory' (1991), p. 149.
10. S. Kierkegaard, 'Either/Or' (Vol. II: The Aesthetic Validity of Marriage), in R. Bretall (ed.), 'A Kierkegaard Anthology' (Modern Library, New York, n.d.), p. 88. Cf. the definition of successful marriage offered by essayist Lynn Darling: 'an intricate pattern of consideration and savagery that only two human beings moving together through time can produce'.
11. Sikov, p. 66. In contrast, Lombard's earlier *Twentieth Century* (1934) had hardly been a big hit in the cities, let alone in the small towns of middle America (the places that made *It Happened One Night* a huge success), where it bombed. See Sikov, p. 178.
12. Statistics based on those supplied by Martin Grams Jr and published in Mogg, p. 191. I have added one more to the number of times *Mr and Mrs Smith* was performed on radio in the 1940s (Grams lists four occasions), thanks to a tape supplied by Dr Ulrich Rüdell of a 'Screen Director's Playhouse' production on 30th January, 1949.
13. J.R. Taylor, 'Hitch: The Life and Work of Alfred Hitchcock' (1978), p. 130.
14. See Mogg, p. 181.
15. Quoted in W.H. Auden, 'The Living Thoughts of Kierkegaard' (1963), p. 27.
16. Sikov, p. 66.
17. David's actual date for the evening, Gertie, is a brunette. The contrast prefigures the two Kim Novak characters in *Vertigo*.
18. The scene in *Vertigo* is of course the one where Scottie brings Madeleine, soaked from jumping into San Francisco Bay, back to his bachelor's apartment, and plies her with brandy. (*Mr and Mrs Smith* has other scenes that anticipate *Vertigo*, notably the one where David trails Ann and she leads him to his own office: 'She's going to visit me.' And the scene on the Ferris wheel, with its subjective shots of the ground, is another.)
19. We'd been prepared for this moment in a preceding scene. On the parachute-ascension at the fair, a rain-drenched Jeff had reached across to help himself to Ann's breast-pocket handkerchief, and Ann had momentarily thought that he was groping her ...
20. This event was chronicled in the RKO short subject, *Picture People*. ('Leonard Maltin's Movie Encyclopedia', 1994, p. 536.)
21. Cf Taylor, p. 172. It was Bill Krohn who told me where the cameo was originally supposed to go. See next note.
22. Bill Krohn's 'Hitchcock au travail' (1999) has already been published in France, to considerable acclaim. The English edition is due out in March, 2000.
23. Sikov, p. 37.
24. In the 1949 radio production, the Smiths were called 'a family with a constitution' - perhaps implying that they were representative of the American state itself.
25. Mogg, p. 133.
26. K. Dolin, 'Fiction and the Law: Legal Discourse in Victorian and Modernist Literature' (1999).
27. Dolin's book was reviewed at length in the Higher Education pages of 'The Australian' by Professor Margaret Thornton, on 3rd November, 1999. On the matter of how the law proves less than flexible, or insightful, in particular cases, a similar idea may be seen to operate in such Hitchcock films as *The Lodger*, *Blackmail*, *Murder!*, *The Skin Game*, *Rebecca*, *The Paradine Case*, *The Wrong Man*, and *Vertigo*.
28. I explored the parallels between *The Wrong Man* and 'Bleak House' in 'MacGuffin' 20 (August 1999) and, at less length, in my book, p. 145.
29. S. Cavell, 'Pursuits of Happiness: The Hollywood Comedy of Remarriage' (1981), p. 47.

30. This is roughly consistent with the 'pessimistic' Schopenhauer's view of how art may temporarily free us from our wilful understanding of things. In Hitchcock's case, though, his showmanship and sleight of hand are such that we actually almost welcome our return to 'normality' at the film's end, albeit we may recognise that something definitive (e.g., the essence of a marriage, our unfree condition, etc.) has been shown us. Cf note 62 below.
31. Taylor, p. 181.
32. David and Ann experience a representative series of adventures which show them 'life' (as discussed in the present text) and which teach them a salutary lesson. The same paradigm is found in *Rich and Strange* (where Fred seeks 'more life') and *North by Northwest* (where Roger comes 'alive'). Their privilege is the concentrated nature of what they undergo, and the fact of their surviving it.
33. Bretall, p. 90.
34. R. Wood, "The American Family Comedy: From *Meet Me in St. Louis* to *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*", 'Wide Angle' 3, no. 2 (1979), p. 6, quoted in Polan, p. 138.
35. In Hamlet's famous soliloquy on death he speaks of 'The undiscovered country from whose bourn/ No traveller returns .../ Thus conscience [thinking about death] does make cowards of us all ...' Fragments from Hamlet's soliloquy are heard in *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1934) and *Topaz*. That Kiekegaard's 'leap' into faith (in his case, after breaking off his engagement) still retains an ambiguity, concerning life and death, may be surmised from his remark (quoted in Cavell, p. 43), 'Had I had faith I should have remained with Regine [sic]'.
36. I discuss this matter in 'MacGuffin' 20. Of course, the several forces bearing upon Manny are perhaps really just one force, Schopenhauer's Will.
37. See Mogg, p. 159, concerning Marion's allusion to Milton. Milton's sonnet known as 'On His Blindness' represents the great poet's justification of his decision to bide his time, having confidence that his God-given 'talent' will finally be vindicated (as it was, with 'Paradise Lost'). Milton's is a 'master mind', if ever there were one. Cf. notes 40 and 46 below.
38. This is one of several such remarks in the film (another is Lila's, 'What am I supposed to do - just sit here and wait?') that indicate how impetuous Marion and her sister are - in contrast to the lordly Milton.
39. Once again, David's is the ordinary person's response ...
40. In this paragraph, I have tried to clarify the over-concise interpretation of *Psycho*'s 'Miltonic' imagery that I gave in my book. In particular, I have tried to indicate the important distinction between two orders of angels. Milton clearly identified himself with the higher orders, 'who only stand and wait'.
41. I'll say more later in the text about how Scottie has reduced Midge to a utilitarian figure. (His influence on her seems related to how for her he is still 'the only one', even though it was she who broke off their engagement.)
42. The 'Madeleine' that Scottie knows is an impostor, and what she appears to offer him and embody - surely nothing less than the answer to the world's riddle - is, to re-quote Polan's words apropos *The 39 Steps*, 'only a theatricalised simulacrum of ... reality'.
43. Scottie sees in Judy the chimerical Madeleine, and cannot love her until he has made her over in Madeleine's image. In other words, it isn't Judy Scottie loves but an ideal image of femininity.
44. It makes no difference to my estimation that Wood had been married before coming out and declaring himself gay.
45. I have asked myself whether I'm being a male chauvinist - siding with David and wanting to interpret Ann's message thus - but I don't think so. Of course, I recognise that there's a typical Hitchcockian ambiguity about what exactly Ann's message is.
46. This, too, is ambiguous. David and Ann are one of Hitchcock's 'restless' married couples (cf. *Rich and Strange*, both versions of *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, *The Wrong Man*) who are shown the risks of their impatience, and have their consciousness raised, at least momentarily, about the value of their marriage. But elsewhere in the present article, I make the point that Hitchcock's characters seldom fully grasp the implications of what has happened to them. The case of *The Trouble With Harry* is slightly different. Using a psychoanalytic perspective, I argue in 'MacGuffin' 21 (February, 1997) that it shows characters re-living the infant's *impatience* with its mother when she doesn't immediately respond to its demands for food. The film is about enduring life's 'in-between periods'. As such, it anticipates the premise of *Psycho* concerning Marion's all-too-human impatience, as opposed to the vision of a 'master mind' like John Milton, whose 'On His Blindness' is about biding one's time, patiently waiting to fulfil one's destiny. Milton 'knew' himself to be one of the elect. Cf. notes 37 and 40 above.
47. The reader will recall that in Hitchcock's case he claimed that his marriage to his beloved Alma was largely 'celibate'. The information about Klee in the text comes mainly from a BBC radio feature, "Going for a Walk with a Line", originally broadcast in the 1980s, I think.
48. L.J. Leff, 'Hitchcock and Selznick: The Rich and Strange Collaboration of Alfred Hitchcock and David O. Selznick in Hollywood' (1988), p. 125.
49. I give several instances in my book, starting with Hitchcock's first film, *The Pleasure Garden*, and including his penultimate film, *Frenzy*, set largely in Covent Garden.
50. Mogg, p. 96. Ballyntine in *Spellbound* hadn't murdered his brother but might well have, out of 'sibling rivalry' occasioned by Oedipal jealousy.
51. Also mocked, elsewhere in the film, is the meek bureaucrat Mr Deever (Charles Halton).
52. Cf. my discussion of the 'Storm Cloud Cantata' in the 1956 *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, in Mogg, p. 143.
53. Cf. E. Stern, "Hitchcock's *Marnie*: Dreams, Surrealism, and the Sublime", in the 'Hitchcock Annual' (1999-2000), p.42, where the author quotes Breton's remark apropos Marnie's state of mind after the death of Forio. (I'm not sure of the aptness of the quote in such a context, though.) I also think of Paul Klee's reference to 'those [privileged] artists who penetrate to the region of that secret place where primeval power nurtures all evolution ... the power-house of all time and space - call it brain or heart of creation' ('Paul Klee on Modern Art', 1948, p. 49), or even just of the notion of a still point in a turning world (every meditator's goal). In my understanding, *The Trouble With Harry* speaks from such a place. Cf. note 55 below.
54. In *Rich and Strange*, Emily says, 'A wife is more than half a mother'.
55. For an artist, a special form of 'placidity' may represent the 'still point in a turning world' that balances his active engagement with the kaleidoscopic world of appearances. (Cf. Schopenhauer's notion of the world as both Will and Representation, the one and the many.) This seems to me to square both with Klee's notion of a 'secret place ... the power-house of all time and space' and with Breton's notion of 'a certain point of the

mind where [opposites] ... cease to be perceived as contradictions'. In turn, I'm reminded again of Milton's supreme calmness and detachment, his 'master mind', if you will.

56. D. Collinson. 'Fifty Major Philosophers: A Reference Guide' (1988), p. 109.

57. E. Rohmer and C. Chabrol. 'Hitchcock: The First Forty-Four Films', translated by S. Hochman (1979), p. 64.

58. Interviewed for the 'New York Times' when he was making *Marnie*, Hitchcock dwelt on this aspect of his technique.

59. Rohmer and Chabrol, p. 64.

60. Another form of subjectivity in Hitchcock occurs when a whole film, or a lengthy portion of it, gives a 'portrait' of the main character: e.g., *North by Northwest*, which is effectively a portrait of Roger Thornhill. See Mogg, p. 154. A comparable technique is used by the artist Saul Steinberg (he did the drawings for the credits-sequence of *The Trouble With Harry*) in a family portrait called 'Drawing' where the three persons depicted - father, mother, daughter - is each drawn in a different manner to suit the individual: the father in a commercial-graphic style, the mother in a traditional or 'Renaissance' style, the daughter in a naïf style.

61. Here, I'm reminded of critic Adrian Martin's insistence in a recent article on *Notorious* on its director's capacity to identify 'intensely with each character in turn, sometimes with all of them at once'. Martin continues: 'To me, it is a fantastically polymorphous, frankly bisexual film, in the deepest sense that much great art is. I don't mean that Hitchcock shows characters who are secretly bisexual, but that he lets us get inside everybody's skin and live there, feel there, imaginatively. Hitchcock is sometimes portrayed (unfairly, stupidly) as the rigid, censorious, sadistic purveyor of a punishing, ultra-straight, male gaze; but no one so inflexible in their head or heart could have made a film like this one.' (A. Martin, "Inside *Notorious*", on the 'Senses of Cinema' website; issue number 3) Martin is effectively (and forcefully) attributing to Hitchcock what the poet Keats called 'negative capability', something which I have invoked when writing of Hitchcock previously. I take this matter up in the present text.

[Notes 62-83 will appear in our next issue.]

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ODD SPOT: OO LA LA, TALLULAH!

David Bret's 'Tallulah Bankhead: A Scandalous Life' (1996) claims that the American-born actress (1902-68) had 500 lovers of both sexes. Typically, within days of starting work on the set of *Lifeboat* (1944), she had begun sleeping with leading man John Hodiak. Tallulah was in the news again recently after Britain's Public Record Office released files showing that in the 1920s the government tried to have her deported as a danger to public morality: it seems that MI5 had secretly accused the actress of indulging in 'indecent and unnatural practices' with five Eton schoolboys. Such a news item gives added piquancy to the character Markham's line in *Murder!* (1930) describing his actress wife as 'very versatile - last week she was pure Tallulah!' Still, when Hitchcock cast Tallulah in *Lifeboat*, it was a serious role, more serious than David Bret seems to have realised. On page 150 of his book he writes: 'When [the Hodiak character] loses his temper and one of the others tells him to keep his shirt on, he responds, "I haven't got a shirt ... or a mink coat," at which point Tallulah interjects with, "And I thought the common turn [sic] was dissolved."' Perhaps someone should tell Brett about the Russian *Comintern* (the so-called Third International, established in March 1919 to work for communist revolutions) which had been dissolved in May 1943 as a gesture of reassurance to Russia's capitalist allies.

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