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# The MacGuffin

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## EDITORIAL

Another issue! And very soon another! This 'MacGuffin' will shortly be followed by a book reviews 'special', our attempt on behalf of our readers to ingest and critique the many publications about Hitchcock and his films that began to appear in the Hitchcock Centennial year and are still coming out. (Among books we're looking forward to seeing in 2001 are Steven DeRosa's 'Writing With Hitchcock: The Collaboration of Alfred Hitchcock and John Michael Hayes' and Gary Giblin's 'Hitchcock's London', full of valuable research.)

Now, speaking of writers, I'm happy to run in this *Torn Curtain* issue of 'The MacGuffin' the chapter on that film from 'Hitchcock and Homosexuality' (1992) by Theodore Price. I reviewed Dr Price's now sadly out-of-print book in 'MacGuffin' 12, and I stand by the praise for the book's startling insights and general thesis that I wrote then. The bottom line is that Price has many brilliant things to say, even if sometimes it seems to the reader that he is wrong in his particular emphases (and sometimes is over-repetitive in his emphases anyway). Hitchcock famously declared that 'everything's perverted in a different way' - a statement which strikes me as a key to his work - and it doesn't exactly need a French theorist like Lacan or Derrida to tell us that perceptions made in this supposedly knowable, 'received' world of ours are in fact never absolute. (Just read the poets, for one thing.) Accordingly, when Price finds homosexual connotations in 'innocent' scenes from Hitchcock, he is surely entitled to do so. A scene may actually work as an equivalent of another that remains unshown, its mirror. Moreover, Price clearly anticipated, in a generally more engaging and energetic and 'popular' style, some of the main findings of such Hitchcock commentators as Robert Corber, Robert Samuels, and Lee Edelman. It seems scandalous that none of those commentators have acknowledged Price as their forerunner, and that the academic Hitchcock establishment hasn't taken them to task for the lacunae in their respective bibliographies. Even more scandalous, perhaps, is how the same academic establishment has never given Price's original research and - I repeat - often brilliant insights a fraction of the attention they deserve. But then, this is the Hitchcock establishment that, I'm convinced, has hardly begun to take Hitchcock's measure, either. (See my article, "Will and wilfulness: recent commentary on Hitchcock's *The birds*", to be published on the 'Screening the Past' website, La Trobe University, Australia, from about March.) In reproducing in this 'MacGuffin' the wonderfully suggestive chapter by Price on *Torn Curtain*, I have added several explanatory 'Editor's footnotes'. By the way, not all of those are uncritical of what Price is saying.

A different reading of *Torn Curtain* - but not perhaps incompatible with Price's - is my own "Submission, containment, liberation", here considerably revised and rewritten from the version we printed in 'MacGuffin' 8. (I was younger then, gentle reader, and less knowledgeable.) Also, we print in this issue an extract from the novelisation of *Torn Curtain*, based on Brian Moore's screenplay, that appeared at the time of the film's release in 1966.

One of the best and most solid books on Hitchcock to appear in recent times is Bill Krohn's award-winning 'Hitchcock au travail'/'Hitchcock at Work'. Krohn has sent us a brilliant short essay on *Family Plot* (1976), emphasising the 'resurrection' motif sounded in the funeral scene of that film. Reading the essay, I was immediately reminded of the 'resurrection' motif in a couple of Charles Dickens classics: 'A Tale of Two Cities' (which Hitchcock studied at school) and Dickens's last novel, the unfinished 'The Mystery of Edwin Drood'. In the former, the motif is particularly evident, from the Scriptural passage 'I am the Resurrection and the Life' that accompanies the guillotining of Sidney Carton at the end to, less exaltedly, the depiction of Jerry Cruncher, bank messenger by day and grave-robber ('resurrectionist') by night. (As once pointed out in 'The MacGuffin', there are many structural and other parallels between 'A Tale of Two Cities' and Hitchcock's *Under Capricorn*.)

James Vest has sent us a short, acute piece on the way some aspects of France are rendered in Hitchcock's films. Professor Vest and others see the influence of Poe here; I would simply add another name, that of Dickens's author friend Wilkie Collins (who wrote the much-anthologised "Tale of a Terribly Strange Bed", set in a squalid part of 19th-century Paris).

To everyone, good viewing - Ken.

## A Hitchcock mystery

By Bill Krohn

The brief chapter on *Family Plot* in my book 'Hitchcock au travail'<sup>1</sup> concerns the divergences between the storyboards for a particular scene and the scene itself. Although the book makes the same point about other Hitchcock storyboards, the case of *Family Plot*, Hitchcock's last film, is special. The idea that a good film could be made 'against' its screenplay became a commonplace among critics for whom *mise-en-scène* is an art in its own right after Eric Rohmer argued in his 1948 review of *Notorious* that Hitchcock had turned a routine spy thriller into a film about Ingrid Bergman's face, but on the evidence of surviving production sketches, *Family Plot* may be the first film in history to be made 'against' its storyboards.

The style that resulted diverges considerably from Hitchcock's habitual practice as a director: few closeups and even fewer inserts, scenes covered in 2-shots and long shots, pans and zooms replacing the meticulously planned camera moves in the storyboards drawn by Tom Wright, which closely follow the scene descriptions Hitchcock and Ernest Lehman wrote into the shooting script. Late films of great directors have often been surprising, but none ever reversed the premises of his oeuvre as drastically as Hitchcock did in *Family Plot*. It is as if this filmmaker known for planning every detail before the start of shooting had decided, because he was working with a generation of younger actors accustomed to improvisation, to free himself and his characters once and for all from the determinism of his own storyboards.

According to the production reports, Hitchcock began filming in the new style - which involved improvising the blocking of a scene with the actors on the set and picking his shots based on how they moved<sup>2</sup> - while shooting the scene discussed in my book, where Lumley, the sad-sack amateur detective played by Bruce Dern, pursues the widow of a man who died accidentally while trying to murder him through a cemetery in the middle of her husband's funeral. Hoping she will lead him to Eddie Shoebridge, the mystery man he is looking for, Lumley is still unaware that Shoebridge, who doesn't want to be found, was behind the failed murder attempt.

At the beginning of the scene the camera moves to a high angle that shows Lumley pursuing the frightened widow through the maze of paths in the cemetery. Even though biographer John Russell Taylor says that this shot, which Hitchcock called a 'living Mondrian,' was planned months before,<sup>3</sup> according to the production report for the day it was filmed - Friday of the first week of shooting - the first business of the day was to 'Rehearse and take Polaroids of actors and plan layout,' resulting in the actors taking different paths than those shown in the storyboard.

Then Hitchcock, ignoring the camera moves plotted in the boards for the pursuit and the ensuing dialogue, covered the rest of the scene very economically, letting all the dialogue between Lumley and the widow after he catches up with her play in a single shot while the camera panned to follow them. (This one rather ragged shot replaces three tracking shots in the storyboards, the last of which would have required a fair amount of choreography involving both the camera and the actors to bring Lumley and the widow into a tight two-shot at the end of the scene.) He thus covered a complex exterior scene in half the time allotted for it, and half the time it had taken him to film the picture's first scene, between Barbara Harris and Kathleen Nesbitt, on Monday and Tuesday. That weekend he viewed the footage with a group of close advisors that included his wife Alma, and afterward continued shooting in the same style till the picture wrapped.

Production reports can't tell us what was on the director's mind while he was dismantling one of the screen's most recognizable styles, but another change he made in the 'living Mondrian' may give us a clue. Although he had planned that the funeral service would break up after the widow's hasty departure, Hitchcock decided to keep it going when he filmed the high-angle shot and brought back the actor playing the pastor months later to record a longer speech to be heard over the rest of the scene.

The first part of the speech is audible over the 'Mondrian': 'Oh how great the holiness of our God! For he knoweth all things.' (At this point the camera has moved up into the all-seeing perspective Hitchcock always referred to as 'God's point of view.')

The voice continues during Lumley's pursuit of the widow, telling how Christ 'suffereth the pains of every living creature' (present tense: the actor might still be talking about the camera's relation to the tiny characters below) '...who belong to the family of Adam. And he does this that the Resurrection may pass on all men, that all may stand before him at the great and judgement day.' (Pursuer and pursued have stopped near the fake grave of Eddie Shoebridge, who has been resurrected, we will soon learn, as 'Arthur Adamson.')

Up to this point the pastor's speech is in ironic counterpoint to what we know about the dear departed, who is not going to come off well 'at the great and judgement day,' and about his 'resurrected' boss, Adamson, a member of the 'family of Adam' whose joyful pursuit of a criminal career stems from sins others committed before he was born. Yet the words spoken over the 'Mondrian' also stir feelings of sublimity with their references to Last Things: Hitchcock's dubbing notes

indicate that 'the sound of the pastor's voice should continue very faintly in the background' as Lumley questions his quarry, and though only snatches are audible, those same notes tell us what the voice is saying: 'There cometh ... a first resurrection ... the resurrection of the prophets, and all those who believed in their words, or all that have kept the commandments of God ... Those that died before Christ came, in their ignorance, not having salvation declared unto them ... have a part in the first resurrection, and have eternal life, being redeemed by the Lord. And the little child shall have eternal life ...' This passage draws on a particularly obscure part of the Book of Revelations: John the Apostle's description of a 'first' and 'second' resurrection. Church fathers who believed that the former would begin an earthly Millennium before the Last Judgement tended to limit participation in it to martyrs<sup>4</sup> - I can find no artistic or modern source that comes close to the liberality of Hitchcock's pastor, who is reciting a millennial 'A-list' that includes the Hebrew prophets, virtuous pagans and unbaptised children.

He then concludes, inaudibly except for a few words after the music starts up following the widow's description of Adamson's 'resurrection': 'The spirit and the body shall be reunited again in its perfect form, both limb and joint shall be restored to its proper frame, even as we now are at this time; and we shall be brought to stand before God, knowing even as we know now, and have a bright recollection of our guilt.'

The doctrine of physical resurrection - which is solidly rooted in Christian theological tradition - is only a virtual presence in the scene, but if, as would appear from its many archaisms, the pastor's speech is part of an actual text whose beginning is heard over the 'Mondrian,' it is present nonetheless, and Hitchcock wanted it to be. A practicing Catholic, he knew churchmen who could have supplied him with an historical text expressing ideas about the resurrection that resonated with his hopes and beliefs, to be murmured in the background of this scene which brings together so many mysteries: Predestination and Free Will, Original Sin, the Incarnation, the Resurrection and the Last Judgement.

The 'Mondrian' is also, of course, a metaphor for *Family Plot* itself, in which two seemingly unrelated stories pursue their course like Lumley and the widow - avoiding an early collision, then moving closer along parallel lines until, after a few more near misses, they finally connect. Which means that the design of the film, and the way it was realized through a new insistence on the physicality and the freedom of the actors, are also being commented on by those distant, murmured eschatological themes.

Raymond Bellour observes in an article on *Family Plot*<sup>5</sup> that Hitchcock always had to struggle to keep the geometrical patterns of his films from reducing the people caught up in them to mere 'figures' - 'the actual bodies of men and women being erased by the pressure of the story's logic and the abstract impulses it attempts to inscribe.' Contrary to the legend Hitchcock nurtured about himself, his strategy for modulating the excessive abstraction of his storyboards depended on his actors and his on-set encounters with them. If he allowed that counter-tendency to have its fullest expression in this lighthearted last testament, the *mise-en-scène* of the funeral sequence can also be said to express his faith that the paths of destiny finally lead to what theologians call the resurrection of the body - which could also be a name for modern cinema in its most radical, and 'un-Hitchcockian,' forms (Cassavetes, Warhol, Piat, Godard).

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Except where noted, all information in this article comes from the shooting script and from the Hitchcock Collection of the Margaret Herrick Library, Los Angeles: *Family Plot* files 212 (dubbing notes), 215 (production reports) and 230-1 (storyboards).

#### Notes

1. Bill Krohn, 'Hitchcock au travail' (Paris: 'Cahiers du Cinéma,' 1999), pp. 274-5.
2. This process is described by the script supervisor in the production report for a scene with Barbara Harris and Bruce Dern filmed the Monday of the second week: 'Rehearse and pick camera sizes [i.e. shots].' By the time 'Variety' reporter Joseph McBride visited the set near the end of shooting and observed Harris, William Devane and Karen Black working out the staging of a scene with Hitchcock, after which the director decided how to film it, the script supervisor was no longer bothering to describe a process that had become routine. Cf. Joseph McBride, "Nothing Will Ever Stop Hitch," 'Variety' 42nd Anniversary Issue, October 1975, 24.
3. John Russell Taylor, 'Hitch: The Life and Times of Alfred Hitchcock' (New York: Berkley Books, no date), pp. 302-3.
4. J. Webb Mealy, 'After the Thousand Years: Resurrection and Judgement in Revelation 20' (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), p. 102, notes that the passage in question 'is by common agreement one of the most difficult in the whole of Revelation.' I have referred to Mealy's history of how theologians have interpreted this passage (Revelation 20: 4-6), and to Caroline Walker Bynum's 1992 study 'The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity,' pp. 200-336, for the

history of the doctrine of physical resurrection.

5. Raymond Bellour, 'Traffic' #26 (Summer 1999), p. 100. Bellour goes on to argue that 'The strength of *Family Plot* is to have stopped ... believing in the characters and to have chosen instead to believe and to make [us] believe in their schematism, giving in to the vertigo of an abstraction extracted directly from [their] bodies...' (Ibid.) My interpretation, which is the opposite of Bellour's, takes seriously Hitchcock's comment to Ernest Lehman, who feared that the director might be giving in to his 'obsession with structure,' while they were working on the script: 'This film is going to be made by its characters!' Quoted from the transcript of a tape-recording of the November 5, 1973, meeting between Hitchcock and Lehman, in Donald Spoto, 'The Dark Side of Genius' (New York: Ballantine Books, 1983), p. 561. Hitchcock told Taylor (p. 304) that Barbara Harris had contributed more of her own ideas to the film than any actor he ever worked with.

Footnotes 62-end for article by Ken Mogg, "Some thoughts about Hitchcock's *Mr and Mrs Smith* (1941)", held over from last issue

62. Perhaps this emphasis on the personal was a reason the Romantics espoused the thought of Schopenhauer. The latter may be said to have anticipated the 'therapeutic' function (Robin Wood's term) of Hitchcock's filmmaking. 'The romantics', write Robert C. Solomon and Kathleen Higgins (in 'A Short History of Philosophy, 1996, p. 226), 'took [Schopenhauer's] emphasis on art and aesthetic appreciation as a mode of [personal] salvation (albeit temporary) quite seriously, and in his old age Schopenhauer became the philosophical darling of the romantic movement.' Cf. note 30 above. I also think of Camille Paglia's point about how incest (another form of subjectivity, and one invoked in several Hitchcock films from *The Lodger* onwards) provided subject-matter for Romantics like Goethe, Byron, Balzac. 'The Romantic prestige of incest springs from its reversal of history and its collapsing of psychic energies into the overenlarged self.' (C. Paglia, 'Sexual Personae: Art and Decadence From Nefertiti to Emily Dickinson', 1991, p. 267)
63. See Mogg, pp. 146-49 (essay on *Vertigo*).
64. R.C. Solomon, 'Continental Philosophy Since 1750: The Rise and Fall of the Self' (1988).
65. Solomon, p. 1.
66. Such thinking seems to be implicit in the dynamics of several Hitchcock films. See 'Author's Note' in Mogg, p. 4.
67. Solomon, p. 193.
68. Ibid.
69. Midge has several shots to herself (e.g., in the sanatorium corridor) that depict her suffering, and Judy's flashback begins with the camera on *her* anguished face. Even so, in the case of such a 'Schopenhauerian' film as *Vertigo* (which is how I've often described it), it helps to remember that Schopenhauer felt that *all* of us are suffering creatures, the result of the working of the world's Will. (I would ask: is even Gavin Elster happy?)
70. L. Brill, 'The Hitchcock Romance: Love and Irony in Hitchcock's Films' (1988), p. 180.
71. I'm thinking of the Hitchcock who could make *Champagne*, with its insights into the unruly libido, of *The Skin Game*, with its understanding of rampant human egoism, of *Rich and Strange*, with its comments on solipsism ...
72. Actually it reads 'Life Savers - the candy with the hole', but the film purposefully excludes most of it. (In my book, p. 77, I make the mistake of saying that Ann and Jeff go on the Ferris wheel itself, rather than on the nearby parachute-ascension.)
73. Mogg, p. 77
74. For a reading of how the 'Storm Cloud Cantata' belongs in *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, see Mogg, p. 143.
75. As I've indicated above, the term 'Will' is that of the philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860).
76. Apropos *The Wrong Man*, see Mogg, p. 145; or, for more detail, see my article in 'MacGuffin' 20.
77. Both of Jeff's parents are easily shockable Southern types ...
78. See D. Spoto, 'The Life of Alfred Hitchcock: The Dark Side of Genius' (1983), pp. 238-39 - where, though, the author's remarks about Hitchcock's 'iconoclastic, schoolboy perversity' are perhaps uncalled for, given the *aptness* of the intended scene to the film's near-surreal design.
79. Solomon, pp. 93-94.
80. Quoted in Leff, p. 243.
81. Kant's distinction between a knowable phenomenal realm and an unknowable noumenal realm has sometimes been ignored, but never disproven. (His views were merely modified by Schopenhauer.) In such a context, a remark of Kierkegaard's about the necessity of 'going right through to the other side' (of subjective existence) seems telling.
82. Quoted in Auden, p. 13.
83. J. Mosher, "Ellie May and her set", 'New Yorker', 1st March, 1942, p. 53. Cited in J. Sloan, 'Alfred Hitchcock: a guide to references and resources' (1995), p. 360.

BLOOPERS

Apologies to Inge Izzo, and our readers, for the mis-spelling of 'liaison' in the last paragraph of Inge's article on *Mr and Mrs Smith* in 'MacGuffin' 26, p. 14. The error was the proof-reader's, not the author's.

## Hitchcock's depiction of an aspect of France

By James M. Vest

Among the strengths of Dan Auiler's '*Vertigo: The Making of a Hitchcock Classic*' (1998) is the author's perceptive insistence (developing an idea advanced by Spoto, Taylor, and Yacowar) that much of what we think of as centrally Hitchcockian - settings, themes, imagery, pacing, narrative and visual emphases - was already present in germ in the director's 1919 story "Gas". This is a one-page tale about a young woman who is tracked and assaulted in the Montmartre district of Paris, 'where danger lurked . . . , where innocent souls perished without warning - where doom confronted the unwary - where the Apache revelled' (Auiler, p. 6).

Auiler is correct in identifying the 'darkly romantic side of France' as a dominant element in "Gas", but he is incorrect in asserting that Hitchcock 'never exploited [that] side of France in his films' (p. 7). A few prominent counter-examples will show what I mean. In *Champagne* (1928) the attractive young heroine is stalked, then robbed of her valuables by a Parisian thug. The difficulties that ensue in the dance halls of Paris recall the Apaches of "Gas". Disreputable French dance halls and ruffians appear center stage in *Downhill* (1927) as well, where in the final third of the film the degradation of an innocent British youth is visually and viscerally depicted first in Montmartre, the very setting of "Gas", then on the docks at Marseilles. The South of France is portrayed as locus of risk and major psychological displacement not only in *Downhill* but also in *Easy Virtue* (1927), and even in *Rebecca* (1940), where 'Monte' serves synecdochically to represent a culture of deceit and danger associated with that locale.

This conception carries through into Hitchcock's later work. The same themes were central to his 1944 short film *Bon Voyage*, which again recounts the misadventures of an innocent Briton (actually a Scot like *Vertigo*'s Ferguson) who nearly loses his life in threatening France. Even though *To Catch a Thief* (1955) may resemble, in Auiler's terms, 'a postcard valentine to the area [of Southern France]' (p. 7), it still manages to dwell on themes of deceit, threat, and risk-taking similar to those of "Gas".

From my perspective as researcher of Hitchcock's French connections, it appears that Auiler is correct in asserting that much of the mystery associated with the French setting in the Boileau-Narcejac novel 'D'Entre les Morts' is satisfactorily transposed to the San Francisco depicted in *Vertigo* (p. 7). According to Patricia Hitchcock O'Connell, in an interview included in Harrison Engle's short film on the restoration of *Vertigo* (1958), her father considered San Francisco to be 'rather like an American Paris'.

Indeed Hitchcock frequently reconstituted the dangerous, nightmarish ambiance described in "Gas", both explicitly, in the films mentioned above, and implicitly, referentially, as in pointed allusions to unsettling aspects of France in the dialogue of *Suspicion* (1941) or *Frenzy* (1972) or the more oblique displacements of *Vertigo*.

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**Indulgence: we catch up on our critics' 'best films' for 1998 and 1999 (with their lists for 2000 to follow next issue)**

Three of Australia's wisest film reviewers are Tom Ryan, Evan Williams, and Adrian Martin.

Here they choose the cream of new and classic feature films to be shown or re-released in Australia during the year in question.

Some of these films are already turning up, or have turned up, on television or in revival cinemas. Shop wisely, we say. If in doubt, follow our reviewers' recommendations!

### 1998

Tom's selection (from films released to general audiences):

1. Fast, Cheap & Out of Control (Errol Morris, USA)
2. The Truman Show (Peter Weir, USA)
3. The Wings of the Dove (Ian Softley, UK)
4. The Year of the Horse (Jim Jarmusch, USA)
5. As Good As It Gets (James L. Brooks, USA)
6. Marquise (Vera Belmont, France)
7. The Sweet Hereafter (Atom Egoyan, Canada)

*2 movies*

*2+*

*2+*

8. Welcome to Sarajevo (Michael Winterbottom, UK) 2x
9. Live Flesh (Pedro Almodovar, Spain)
10. Primary Colors (Mike Nichols, USA); Starship Troopers (Paul Verhoeven)

Evan's selection: x 2

1. The Truman Show
2. The Sweet Hereafter x 2
3. Hana-bi (Takeshi Kitano, Japan)
4. La Vita è Bella/ Life is Beautiful (Roberto Benigni, Italy)
5. Post Coitum Animal Triste/ After Sex (Brigitte Roüan, France)
6. The Boys (Rowan Woods, Australia)
7. Primary Colors
8. Gadjó Dilo/ The Crazy Stranger (Tony Gatlif, France)
9. Welcome to Sarajevo
10. The Tango Lesson (Sally Potter, UK/France/Argentina)

Adrian's selection (films released to general or film festival audiences, 5 only, as published in the Melbourne 'Age'):

1. Kundun (Martin Scorsese, USA)
2. Hana-bi
3. The Apostle (Robert Duvall, USA)
4. Alien Resurrection/ Alien 4 (Jean-Pierre Jeunet, USA)
5. As Good As It Gets

### 1999

Tom's selection (films released to general audiences):

1. Eyes Wide Shut (Stanley Kubrick, USA) 2 mentions
2. Run, Lola, Run Tom Tykwer, Germany)
3. Besieged (Bernardo Bertolucci, Italy)
4. Shakespeare in Love (John Madden, UK)
5. Marius et Jeannette (Robert Guediguian, France)
6. The Sixth Sense (M. Night Shyamalan, USA) x 2
7. 42 Up (Michael Apted, UK)
8. The Last Days (James Moll, USA)
9. The Winslow Boy (David Mamet, USA)
10. Toy Story 2 (John Lasseter, USA)

Tom's best re-release:

Touch of Evil (1958) x 2

Evan's selection:

1. Eyes Wide Shut
2. The Thin Red Line (Terrence Malick, Canada/USA) x 2
3. Being John Malkovich (Spike Jonze, USA)
4. My Name is Joe (Ken Loach, France, etc.)
5. The Sixth Sense
6. Love and Death on Long Island (Richard Kwietniowski, UK/Canada)
7. Praise (John S. Curran, Australia)
8. Pleasantville (Gary Ross, USA)
9. A Simple Plan (Sam Raimi, France, etc.)
10. Two Hands (Gregor Jordan, Australia)

Adrian's selection (all sources):

1. Haut Bas Fragile (Jacques Rivette, France, 1995)
  2. Eyes Wide Shut
  3. The Thin Red Line
  4. Sombre (Philippe Grandrieux, France)
  5. Touch of Evil
  6. Buena Vista Social Club (Wim Wenders, Germany, etc.)
  7. Rushmore (Wes Anderson, USA)
  8. Black Cat White Cat (Emir Kusturica, Federal Republic of Yugoslavia/France/Germany)
  9. eXistenZ (David Cronenberg, Canada/France/UK)
  10. Moonfleet (Fritz Lang, USA, 1955)
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HITCHCOCK AND HOMOSEXUALITY:  
*TORN CURTAIN* (1966)<sup>1</sup>

By Theodore Price

*Torn Curtain* is Hitchcock's most disguised film on the theme of homosexuality. So far as I know, in all Hitchcock criticism it has never been so interpreted.

Here is the ostensible storyline of the film. A young American atomic physicist (Paul Newman) is in Copenhagen on his way to attend a convention of world atomic physicists. Instead, he flies to East Berlin, where he announces that he has defected to the Communists.

His professional specialty is defense against atomic attack, and he says that the Americans, being interested in offensive weapons, did not give him the resources to complete his experiments. In Communist East Germany, he says, he will be able to complete his work with leading Communist physicists and develop his defensive system (to make the world safe against atomic attack).

The young American has been accompanied to Denmark by his associate and fiancée (Julie Andrews), who is appalled to learn in East Berlin (where she has followed him against his will) of his defection.

Very much in love with him, though horrified at his becoming an American traitor, she at first plans to stay with him behind the Iron Curtain. But when at last she does threaten to abandon him, he reveals to her that he is really a double agent; he has come to East Germany to steal (for America) the secret formula for the defense system which his scientific counterpart in Communist East Germany has recently discovered.

By every critical consensus, the best (if not the only) real Hitchcock sequence in the film is the harrowing murder scene, where the young American and his German-woman contact asphyxiate an East German Communist counter-intelligence agent who is about to expose them. They kill him by shoving his head into the gas oven in a farmhouse kitchen, after trying in vain to stab and beat him to death. The killing scene takes about ten full minutes of screen time.

As a teenager, I recall reading in some lurid tabloid the real-life story of a couple who insured the life of a lodger of theirs, with themselves as beneficiaries, in just this manner and under just these circumstances: they try to kill him with all sorts of weapons, but in vain, and succeed only at last by gassing him to death. I am convinced that Hitch, with his interest in such things, had read accounts of this particular murder. At any rate, Hitchcock's film was a critical and popular disaster.<sup>2</sup>

Is *Torn Curtain* about politics, or is politics in *Torn Curtain* just another Hitchcock "MacGuffin"? (To ask the question is to answer it.) Hitchcock has had a long and continued tradition of real-life, contemporary politics in his films, from early pacifist (after World War I) to anti-isolationist (just before World War II), and later to anti-Communist orientations. But these were all pretty much cardboard interpretations, quite silly when you got right down to them; and they really *were* MacGuffins, "what the spies were after but the audience don't care."

If you would like to see just how silly even a normally perceptive film critic can be when he takes Hitch's political orientation in a film seriously, you should read Raymond Durnat's full-length chapter discussion of the "politics" of *Torn Curtain*, and you will see that Durnat's elaborate discussion there has no relation whatever to the substance of what we actually see on the screen.

The political substance of *Torn Curtain* is, I suggest, of no more intellectual stature than the theological substance of *I Confess*;<sup>3</sup> and Durnat's taking that political substance seriously is just as silly as Rohmer and Chabrol's taking seriously the Roman Catholic substance of *I Confess*. If one concentrates on the political substance of *Torn Curtain*, and its elements of suspense in relation to this substance, one is, I feel, approaching the film quite barrenly; and, consequently, this very flawed film in the Hitchcock canon (flawed as almost everyone agrees) provides little interest. On the other hand, if one approaches the film from a Hitchcock and Homosexuality point of view, *Torn Curtain* becomes a very interesting film indeed.

From the Hitchcock and Homosexuality point of view, here is what the real storyline of the film is about, what the film is really about. As always, in the story outline that follows, I give nothing that is not in the film; I simply highlight those elements and signposts that give clues to what is really going on in the film. These are clues to those elements in the film that really interested Hitchcock in this respect.

First, and always most important, in *Torn Curtain* we have the story of a couple about to be married, already sleeping together; but soon things happen that will stop, or try to stop, that marriage!<sup>4</sup> For over and over again in Hitchcock's films, marriages (or affairs or simply going together) are thwarted, made fun of, or shown to be on a collision course. One could say that virtually Hitch's entire canon of films is one big Marriage Cycle, where the prognostication for each of those marriages is disaster.

A good case in point is *The Wrong Man*, where at the start of the film Henry Fonda and Vera Miles have what is seemingly an ideal marriage: children, no thought of adultery, even good in-laws. But when the film is through, the marriage is in absolute shambles, never to be reconstituted, with the wife driven (by destiny and the law) into a madhouse. Such is Henry Fonda's punishment for thinking that he could find happiness with a woman!<sup>5</sup>

*Torn Curtain* starts with just such a seemingly happy situation: the good-looking Paul Newman, naked and in bed with no less a faithful young lady than Mary Poppins (Julie Andrews). But, lo! he suddenly "changes," stops making love to her, deserts her (he had not wanted her to come with him to Europe in the first place), and runs off to a social life the complete opposite of what she had always expected him to engage in.

He is supposed to go on to Stockholm (on business), but at a stop in Copenhagen the young woman is dismayed to catch him in a series of lies. First, he lies to her about a bookshop in Copenhagen where he seems unusually interested in a special book (in plain wrapping) which, as soon as he lays hands on it, he takes to a stall in a men's room to read. Then, to her horror, she learns that he has made a secret plane reservation (for one) to Germany, and to that special part of Germany where the life-style is completely the antithesis of the life-style to which the two of them (about to be married to each other) have been accustomed. Indeed, one could say that this journey to Germany is a complete defection from, and betrayal of, that life-style.

At the time the film was made, Copenhagen, Denmark, had the reputation of being the pornography capital of the West, with complete sexual license permitted,<sup>6</sup> and many American homosexual men were looking forward to taking their vacations there. And in Hitchcock's mind, continental Europe, and Germany in particular, represented the land of netherworld sex (especially of homosexual sex) in the Weimar period of his youth.

In the movie, the young woman, against her erstwhile fiancé's wishes, flies with him behind this, so to speak, Iron Curtain, to the land of Weimar/German netherworld sex. Here she finds herself the lone woman among this unusual, other-oriented society of men, whose leading members make such references to her as "excess baggage," and exclaim in the greatest of scorn, "Women!"

We recall how in *Frenzy*, right after the rape-strangulation, Barry Foster exclaims, also in the greatest of scorn, "Women! They're all the same . . . bitches!" We should also recall how in *The Paradine Case* Louis Jourdan, the woman-hating homosexual who is seduced by Alida Valli into going to bed with her for that single night, employs the concept of "betrayal" of his "master," his homosexual lover, Colonel Paradine, to signify the betrayal of his (Jourdan's) true sexual orientation.

Throughout this early part of *Torn Curtain*, as the young woman is discovering the truth about her erstwhile fiancé, there is repeated dialogue about her not "knowing," and then, finally, "knowing." For example, Paul Newman says to his German compatriot, "She didn't know. She can't know. She just followed me."

A key scene in this storyline structure is the one at the Berlin hotel. The young man has announced his "defection," and his fiancée realizes to her chagrin and horror that he does not intend to go through with their coming marriage. Hitchcock has himself referred to this scene as "the dramatic showdown between the young couple" (Truffaut, *Hitchcock*, 233). In this scene the young man confirms that he has "changed": he tells the young woman that he does not need her. He does not want her. He asks her to go home.

As we can see, this is *just* the equivalent scene to the one on the riverboat in *I Confess*, where Montgomery Clift tells Anne Baxter that he has "changed," that he is what he is, that he can no longer continue their affair, that he has joined an order of men who just do not sleep with women, and that he prefers them to her.

We should understand that the Roman Catholic priesthood, which ends the affair between Clift and Baxter in *I Confess*, and the political defection to Communist East Germany, which ends the forthcoming marriage between Paul Newman and Julie Andrews in *Torn Curtain*, are equally, in every sense of that famous Hitchcock shorthand expression, MacGuffins. In each case, the affair and the marriage are ended because the young man is a homosexual, has discovered his homosexuality and accepted it, and has announced this fact to his mistress or to his fiancée. In each case, Roman



Catholicism and Communism, in their respective films, are "what the spies are after, but the audience don't [or shouldn't] care about."<sup>7</sup>

As a fixture in this showdown scene in *Torn Curtain* between Paul Newman and Julie Andrews in the East Berlin hotel, there is the large hotel room *bed*, which we see as the two young people discuss this matter. It is, it symbolizes, the marital bed. And that night. Julie sleeps in it alone. As we saw, the film began with Newman and Andrews making love together in the ship's stateroom. Now, this showdown scene tells us, visually as well as through the dialogue, that they are to make love no more.

But, as so often happens in real life, and which so often is implied to happen in Hitchcock's films, the young woman loves the young man so much that she will not give him up. Despite her humiliation, her "degradation" one might say,<sup>8</sup> she will (if he will have her) live with him, marry him, set up with him (as in *Rebecca*) a fraud of a marriage: They will live together as man and wife, they will make love when the man may be able to, but his true sexual pleasure will be reserved for those of his own kind.

What Hitchcock's *Torn Curtain* is about then, in a nutshell, is this. It is the story of a young woman, about to be married, who learns that her fiancé is not what he seems to be and has gone behind some "iron curtain" where he will be able to be what he really is. And what he really is is a homosexual.

If *Torn Curtain* is really a Hitchcock film about homosexuality, we can expect to find in it an important character who represents that common theme in this sort of film: the blackmailer. And we can expect him to be a blackmailer of a special type: a cat-and-mouse blackmailer, one who sadistically teases his victim, who gets pleasure out of seeing his victim squirm, who makes little jokes and innuendoes to let his victim know that *he* knows all about him, knows his secret, and can expose him at any moment.

Sure enough, in *Torn Curtain* we are not disappointed. The cat-and-mouse blackmailer in the film, played so marvelously by Wolfgang Kieling, is the East German Communist counter-intelligence agent, Gromek.

Gromek: who used to live in New York City, who keeps using the expression "Strictly for the birds," and to whom Hitchcock (unconsciously) assigns a cigarette lighter to play around with, just as he had assigned a cigarette lighter to Robert Walker to play around with in *Strangers on a Train*: Robert Walker, the homosexual blackmailer of *that* film. Walker: who keeps toying with *his* victim, the sometime homosexual Farley Granger, who now wants to marry his fiancée and go "straight."

Gromek does not believe that Paul Newman is really a homosexual. He thinks that he is only pretending to be one (and, of course, in the final storyline this is supposed to be the case).

In *Notorious*, there is that wonderful scene in the bedroom of Claude Rains' mother, when Rains confesses to her that he is "married to an American agent." And in our Hitchcock Films interpretation of that film, this translates into "I am married to a prostitute."<sup>9</sup> So in *Torn Curtain*, when Gromek discovers that Paul Newman is in fact an American agent (as Gromek has suspected right from the start), this translates into discovering that Newman is that most awful of outrages: a heterosexual!

Wolfgang Kieling, who plays Gromek in the film, is absolutely marvelous in the part. The sequence where Kieling is done to death by Newman and Newman's anti-Communist contact in the film, the German farm woman, when Kieling surprises the two of them in that out-of-the-way farmhouse, is the highlight of the film: a real Hitchcock sequence, right after the Old Master's murderous heart.

As Newman holds Kieling, the woman stabs him with a carving knife from the kitchen drawer. But when the handle breaks off, leaving the blade still protruding from his body but not killing him, she breaks Kieling's kneecap and shin with blows from a heavy shovel. Finally, the two force Kieling's head into the gas oven of the kitchen, and hold it there until he is slowly asphyxiated.

The scene takes a full ten minutes on the screen, and its emotional and artistic energy is terrific. This sequence, as is usually the case with such sequences in Hitchcock films, is over-determined; that is to say, it has more than one meaning.

We have here an absolutely unequivocal Oedipal situation, from a Hitchcock Films point of view: it is every son's wish fulfillment that the father would catch the mother and son in the act of love, and that the mother would help the son - indeed, take the active role - in killing the father.

The woman here (she is youngish and attractive, looking a little like Liv Ullmann) is the one who does the stabbing, the hitting with the shovel; and it is she who suggests the oven, opens the oven door, turns on the jets, helps Newman to shove Kieling's head in, and then turns off the jets when the job is done.

After the killing, Newman cries like a little boy, like a baby. The woman, on the other hand, is all businesslike (and mother-like): she washes the blood from Newman's jacket and hands, and helps him bury the dead man (and his motorcycle) in a deep pit outside the house.

The getting rid of the body (and the vehicle on which the murder victim had arrived at the farmhouse) reminds us of the way Tony Perkins in *Psycho* gets rid of Janet Leigh's body by putting it into the trunk of her car and sinking the whole lot into a pit. In *Psycho*, of course, the murder is, so to speak, a Mother-and-Son job. So, I suggest, it is here in *Torn Curtain*.

The sequence is so important that it stands out, really jumps out, from the rest of the film. From the Oedipal point of view, it is virtually undisguised: it seems so obvious. Freud and Theodor Reik have told us that while for the most part the unconscious deceives the "censorship" in a dream by disguising the forbidden meaning - and the more forbidden the meaning, the more disguised must be the representation - yet at times the unconscious simply overwhelms the censorship. That such a sequence is close to everything that Hitch's unconscious holds dear can be seen by the fact that the setting for this Oedipal vignette is identical to that of the sequence bearing just the same Oedipal content 30 years before in *The 39 Steps*: a farmhouse.

But for our purposes here, from the point of view of Hitchcock and Homosexuality, this same sequence - the killing of Gromek/Kieling - permits an additional interpretation. For just as in *Psycho* the murder of Janet Leigh in the shower stall is a representation of the rape of a *woman*, so here in *Torn Curtain* is the murder of Gromek/Kieling a representation of the rape of a *man*: a *homosexual* rape.

We should have been prepared for this by the beginning of *Rope*, where the symbolic meaning is clear and easy of interpretation. There, when the two young men (John Dall and Farley Granger) are strangling to death the third young man of that film (a former boyfriend of theirs, who has decided to get married, and this is their way of "stopping that marriage"), this really represents a homosexual rape of the boy. And, as in the shower scene in *Psycho*, the victim's scream stands for the moment of sexual climax.

In *Torn Curtain*, the details of the scene (which are executed in real Hitchcock fashion) are beyond Hitch's conscious control: they relate to, and dovetail with, familiar symbolic details of many of his other films. At the moment of Gromek/Kieling's asphyxiation (when Paul Newman is weeping as he holds the man's "head"), there is the emphasis on fingers that we see not only in *Vertigo* and *North by Northwest*, but in our ideal Touchstone Film, *Strangers on a Train*.

Here too Gromek/Kieling's fingers stiffen, shudder, then go limp. The killing, the rape, is complete.

And, of course, what is it that Gromek/Kieling does as he dies (asphyxiated by the gas)? He *faints!*<sup>10</sup>

The sequence, moreover, dovetails with other longstanding interests of Hitchcock's. There is the fairy tale aspect (which Hitch always likes) of Hansel and Gretel in the woods, turning the tables on *their* would-be killer and thrusting the wicked stepmother herself into an oven.

From a further Hitchcock and Homosexuality aspect, especially of the *Vertigo* variety, the man and the woman in the farmhouse may represent Paul Newman and Julie Andrews, where she, like so many of Hitch's women who find that they are in love with a homosexual, wants to try to bring him around to good heterosexual sex and make him forget that other life of his; and Gromek/Kieling may represent the young fiancé's phallus, which the two of them are trying to thrust into the woman's "oven," but in vain, for at the last minute, the phallus "faints."

This may be a far-fetched and unconvincing psychoanalytic interpretation, and I do not stress it. But that an oven is a standard symbol for a woman's sexual organ or womb can be seen in the common Cockney English slang expression (which Hitch must surely have been familiar with) of referring to a pregnant woman as having "a bun in the oven."

The third important scene in *Torn Curtain* is the one in the German Communist professor's university study with the blackboard, where Newman tricks the older man into revealing to him that anti-missile missile MacGuffin formula, which in the storyline Newman goes behind the Iron Curtain to obtain. The scene is important and instructive if only to demonstrate just how, for whatever reason, actors like Paul Newman were just not right for a Hitchcock movie. With the same props (the blackboard and writing the silly set of formulae upon it) and nothing much more than their acting ability,

Ludwig Donath is marvelous here, and Newman is something less than marvelous. One can sympathize with Hitchcock for regretting that he had been saddled with Newman (by Universal) for this film.

Robert Donat in *The 39 Steps*; Judith Anderson, George Sanders, and Florence Bates in *Rebecca*; Cary Grant in *Suspicion*; Joseph Cotten in *Shadow of a Doubt*; Tallulah Bankhead in *Lifeboat*; Claude Rains and Leopoldine Konstantin in *Notorious*; Charles Coburn in *The Paradine Case*; Alastair Sim in *Stage Fright*; Robert Walker, Laura Elliott, and Pat Hitchcock in *Strangers on a Train*; Karl Malden in *I Confess*; Ray Milland in *Dial M for Murder*; Jimmy Stewart in *Rear Window* and *Vertigo*; Martin Balsam and Tony Perkins in *Psycho*; Tippi Hedren in *Marnie*; Philippe Noiret in *Topaz*; Barry Foster, Barbara Leigh-Hunt, Anna Massey, Alec McCowen, Vivien Merchant, Bernard Cribbins, Elsie Randolph, Michael Bates, Jean Marsh, and Billie Whitelaw in *Frenzy*; Bruce Dern in *Family Plot*; and Wolfgang Kieling and Ludwig Donath in *Torn Curtain* - all these are square Hitchcock pegs to fit all those square Hitchcock holes.

But Paul Newman (the square peg for the square hole in a film like *The Hustler*) was certainly the roundest of round pegs for the square Hitchcock hole needed to make *Torn Curtain* really interesting.

As preparation for this blackboard scene, we have been told in the film (twice) by Newman that "the information I'm after is inside the head of a scientist at Leipzig University," and "he's got the key to a puzzle in his head." And in typical Fils fashion, the son *tricks* the father out of the secret information he (the son) is looking for.

As we have earlier learned, repeatedly, the "secrets" in general that younger men keep looking for are the secrets of sex, and, in particular, the secrets of the father's sexual achievement with the mother.

The scenes with the professor, and especially the scene with the professor and Newman at the blackboard ("You have told me nothing. You know nothing. I forbid you to leave this room!") are thus typical Hitchcock Fils scenes, representing the son's tricking the father in one way or another in order to extract sexual secrets from him. And the famous farmhouse killing scene is both a typical Hitchcock Fils Oedipal-scene, a wish fulfillment of the son, that the mother will help him do away with the father, and a typical Hitchcock Homosexual Rape scene, where the murder act is symbolically equivalent to the act of sexual rape.

But the scene in that East Berlin hotel room is not symbolic at all. Rather it is an integral part of the subtext of the Hitchcock and Homosexuality storyline, which Hitch himself labels the "showdown" scene of the film and of which, as a sophisticated graduate of the Weimar German netherworld scene of the mid-'20s, he must surely have been aware on the conscious level. For in this scene, or in close-by earlier scenes leading up to this "showdown" scene, there is the following pointed dialogue:

The young woman says to her fiancé, "You did everything you could to stop me from coming" (that is, from making the trip abroad with him at all). And she asks him, "Aren't I of use to you anymore?"

She has suggested that they might "get an apartment" and live together; and, of course, he has refused. She has started to check up on him, and now catches him repeatedly in lies.

Now, at last, we hear him say right out to her, "Well, now you know."

And she to him: "You must have been planning this for months. How could you tell those lies?"

And he: "I thought it would be better if you didn't know about this."

She: "I didn't know what to do. I had to follow you."

He: "You know how important this is to me. I have to go through with it."

She: "But you're a traitor." (Which translates to, "But you're a homosexual, and homosexuality is a sexual perversion.")

He: "That's not the way I see it ... I can't explain it to you."

And all the time the "marital" bed is there in the scene, between them; and that night they are not to sleep in it together.

Finally, what is the name that Hitch gives to the Paul Newman character? Why, it is *Michael*, the same name borne by the Montgomery Clift character in *I Confess*, and the very name of the nude model in a famous Weimar Era homosexual film of that name, *Mikael!*<sup>11</sup>

All of the above is evidence from a strictly internal point of view, using material from the storyline of *Torn Curtain* itself, and going to other Hitchcock films for themes and clues only to elicit signposts to guide us to the right and proper elements in the present film. Is there, however, any external evidence in connection with *Torn Curtain* to suggest that Hitchcock may have (quite consciously) been interested in this film from the Hitchcock and Homosexuality point of view?

That is to say, is there any external evidence that Hitchcock, quite consciously and deliberately, may have wanted to tell the story of a homosexual, married to or about to be married to a woman who did not suspect that he might be a homosexual, who has been playing the part of a sexual double agent with her, and who now decides to desert her and be true to his real nature? And, if so, what does the woman do when she at last "finds out"? And the answer is: of course!

The storyline of Hitchcock's *Torn Curtain* is based on the famous defection to Russia in 1951 of the long-standing British double agents, Guy Burgess and Donald Maclean, both homosexuals!

Burgess was a notorious, out-of-the-closet homosexual, and Maclean was suspected of being bisexual. Maclean was married; when he defected, his wife was pregnant and was supposed not to have known of either his spy work or his homosexual life.

In the past 25 years, since the Burgess and Maclean defection to Moscow in 1951, many books have added to the complexity of both the political and sexual lives of the members of this famous spy ring. (The ring included not only Burgess and Maclean, but a third man, and a fourth: Sir Anthony Blunt, and perhaps others.) Their story is quite remarkable, of great cultural and political interest in itself, one of the keys to how the Communists are able to attract the best and the brightest from our side to theirs, and why they have won, and are continuing to win, so many victories on the diplomatic, political, and military fronts.

But the point here is that at the time Hitchcock made *Torn Curtain*, he knew nothing of all this, only that two Britons had led a secret, double life for two decades (seemingly members of one order, the West, but in fact members, double agents, of another order, the Communist East), and that one of these double agents was a secret homosexual, married all the while, and his wife did not know. What would she do when she *found out*? Predictably, Hitch found this very interesting! In particular, he wondered just how the wife would react to the revelation that the man she had been living with, been married to all these years, was other than he seemed to be.

Donald Spoto tells us (significantly) that this idea of *Torn Curtain* was an old one "that had long intrigued" Hitchcock. And Hitch himself told Truffaut in 1967, "I got the idea from the disappearance of the two British diplomats, Burgess and Maclean, who deserted their country and went to Russia. I said to myself, 'What did Mrs. Maclean think of the whole thing?'" (Truffaut, 233).

Spoto tells us that Universal arranged for Hitchcock to have Paul Newman and Julie Andrews as stars of the picture but that they (Universal) insisted that the "homosexuality sub-theme" had to be "dropped" (*The Dark Side*, 488). Spoto gives no indication that the Hitchcock and Homosexuality theme might not in fact have been "dropped."

In discussing the film with Truffaut, Hitchcock has expressed considerable hostility towards Paul Newman and Julie Andrews, professionally and at times personally. I suggest that a more compelling reason for Hitchcock's animus against Newman and Andrews may derive from his associating with them the decision (by Universal) to drop the homosexuality theme. As evidenced throughout his films, that theme had great fascination for him; and he perhaps felt that it was this decision that ruined *Torn Curtain* for him.

I further suggest that it was Hitch's lack of real identification with the Newman character (an identification that would have given the film so much energy) that went against the grain of the "real" storyline. Instead, Hitch identifies almost surely with the German professor, Lindt, who gets all the good lines in the scenes in which he appears, and whom Ludwig Donath so brilliantly portrays.

In the key blackboard scene, Hitch has Lindt point to his head and say (just as Hitch points to his workbooks about his films rather than to the films [themselves], which, he claims, he does not really enjoy making): "Here's where the work is done. The rest is for mechanics." When Newman suggests that Lindt has misunderstood something, Lindt answers, "I, Lindt? Misunderstood? Rubbish!"

And when Newman, at the blackboard, open-mouthed, sees that Lindt has solved the problem that had licked Newman, and he calls Lindt "Brilliant," Hitchcock has Lindt answer, "Of course, it's brilliant. It's genius. The Russians thought I was crazy. They didn't know I was Lindt."

### Editor's Notes

1. What follows is Chapter 11 of Theodore Price, 'Hitchcock and Homosexuality: His 50-Year Obsession with Jack the Ripper and the Superbitch Prostitute - A Psychoanalytic View' (The Scarecrow Press, Inc., Metuchen, N.J., & London, 1992), reprinted with the author's permission. The Editor of 'The MacGuffin' wishes to express his gratitude to Dr Price for his kindness in offering us the chapter for publication.
2. Just how much of an alleged disaster was the film? See note 47 of the article "Submission, containment, liberation" elsewhere in this issue. Also, see Ken Mogg, 'The Alfred Hitchcock Story' (London, 1999), p. 173, which quotes veteran British reviewer Richard Mallett: 'The film as a whole may be a bit diffuse ... but it has some brilliant scenes, it's pleasing to the eye, and it is *continuously* entertaining.'
3. Price's book notes on p. 251: 'From this "religious" aspect, the only element of [*I Confess*] that counts is that a priest, officially hearing a confession, must not reveal that confession, no matter what the consequences, even if they should cost him his life. The reviewer in the *Catholic World* notes quite accurately that in the movie [Montgomery] Clift "has very little recourse to God" ...' And Price also quotes Donald Spoto's 'The Art of Alfred Hitchcock' on how, 'The film is not, in the last analysis, a religious film at all. The law of confessional secrecy is but an unusual dramatic device'. Price's chapter on *I Confess* is often brilliant (though not necessarily the final word on the film's true subject-matter).
4. Price is referring here to the Stop That Marriage! motif that he discerns in just about all of Hitchcock's movies. In one of Price's 'touchstone' films, *Strangers on a Train* (1951), he sees it thus: 'The passive homosexual tries to go straight and marry a woman (though he is panicky). The active homosexual tries to stop the marriage, and bring his sweetheart [sic] back to his homosexual senses.' (p. 22) Of *The Farmer's Wife* (1928), Price writes: 'This is an anti-marriage "comedy," where every eligible woman the farmer meets is shown to us as gross, monstrous, and ridiculous. The farmer decides at last not to marry any of them, but to stay as he is and to "marry" his mother-surrogate "housekeeper."' (p. 48) And so on. (Price doesn't always mention the contrary or countervailing ingredients in the films: e.g. the farmer in *The Farmer's Wife* had previously been happily married and has a grown-up daughter who herself gets married in the course of the film. But this perhaps hardly invalidates Price's basic insight.)
5. This is one of Price's weaker illustrations, it seems to me, for the very fragility of marriage, like the fragility of justice, and indeed of human civilisation, exposed by *The Wrong Man*, in a way only makes those institutions the more precious.
6. The year after *Torn Curtain* came out, the book 'Christine Jorgenson: A Personal Autobiography' was published. It included details of Jorgenson's highly-publicised sex-change operation which took place in Copenhagen in 1952-53. There's a veiled reference to the Jorgenson case in William Castle's estimable *Psycho* spin-off, *Homicidal* (1961), apropos how the character named Emily had been 'created' on a visit to Denmark years earlier. Denmark, it seems, was one of the few countries in those days that would allow such an operation to be performed. (My thanks to Denise Noe for the information about *Homicidal*.)
7. On the 'Homosexual Aspect' of *I Confess*, see Price, pp. 270-87. Noting that Father Logan (played by the gay Montgomery Clift) is being blackmailed, and that his 'double', the sacristan murderer, Keller (O.E. Hasse), is himself played by a gay actor, Price concludes: 'And so we have [a situation] where the leading man turns down the beautiful, ice-cool blonde heroine (with whom he has once been sleeping) with the remark that he has "changed," and that he "is what he is"; where blackmail is involved; where there is a Wrong Man and a Right Man, and the Right Man tells the Wrong Man that the latter is as "guilty" as himself; where the film ends in virtual Love/Death fashion, with the one Double dying in the other Double's arms (like the gay Doubles, Farley Granger and Robert Walker, in *Strangers on a Train*); and where, yes, both Doubles, hero and villain, are played by real-life homosexuals!' (p. 287) Cf Sidney Gottlieb (ed.), *Hitchcock on Hitchcock* (1995), p. 264, on how Hitchcock had written in 1938: 'I like an actor to play a part for which his personal experience in life has raised him.'
8. Price is quoting from Hitchcock's phrase 'degradation for love' here. Cf the entry on *The Paradine Case* (1948) in Truffaut's interview with Hitchcock: viz., 'the story of *The Paradine Case* is about the degradation of a gentleman who becomes enamoured of his client, a woman who is not only a murderess, but also a nymphomaniac. And that degradation reaches its climactic point when he's forced to confront the heroine with one of her lovers, who is a groom [and a homosexual].'
9. Price explains that in his psychoanalytic readings of the films, he uses the shorthand term *Hitchcock Fils* to designate an Oedipal interpretation from the perspective of the *son*, and the shorthand term *Hitchcock Père* to designate an Oedipal interpretation from the perspective of the *father*. (p. xvi) In another of Price's particularly brilliant chapters, on *Rebecca*

(1940), in which he finds the Joan Fontaine character to be cast, against appearances, in the role of a prostitute, he comments on the scene in *Notorious*: what the Claude Rains character 'has been forced to admit is the fact (or feeling) that the woman he has fallen in love with and gone to bed with is a whore!' (And whores are precisely what the misogynist Jack-the-Ripper surrogates in Hitchcock films are against, to the point of actual or symbolic murder.) Price sees a major recurrent theme in Hitchcock to be 'I have fallen in love with a prostitute.' (p. 163)

10. For Price, the significance of *males* fainting in later Hitchcock films (as opposed to the frequent fainting by *females* in the British films, though Price doesn't exactly note this distinction, I think) may be seen in his description of a moment in *Strangers on a Train*: 'think too of the scene at Leo G. Carroll's cocktail party, right after Robert Walker has almost strangled the old lady and has then, like some distraught young woman, fainted. He has been carried to another room, where the two young men are now alone and where the passive Farley, like a solicitous wife, revives him.' (pp. 24-25) (See also the main text of the present article.) The notion of Gromek's death by asphyxiation as being a form of fainting may not be the best, or most convincing, illustration of Price's insight, however.

11. The reference is to Carl Dreyer's *Mikael* (1924). Price notes that there were two German homosexual films at about this time, the earlier being *Different From the Others/ Anders Als Die Anderen* (1919), starring Conrad Veidt (who played the somnambulist Cesare in *Das Kabinett des Doktor Caligari* the same year). Of *Mikael*, Price writes that in it, 'the beautiful young artist model is named Mikael. This may seem to be no great argument, but to those of the orthodox psychoanalytic persuasion, this provides additional weight for suggesting that *I Confess* is indeed a disguised story on a homosexual theme. If Hitch did indeed see *Mikael* in 1924-1925 (as he more likely than not did), and was more or less affected by the visual image of the handsome, young nude male artist's model, then how appropriate to name his Clift hero of *I Confess*, Michael. (Freud says that names are always important.)' (p. 351) Price goes on to note that the blackmailer in *Different From the Others* was played by Reinhold Schünzel, who had a not unimportant role in *Notorious*, and that the artist's model in *Mikael* was played by Walter Slezak, who would portray the Nazi in *Lifeboat* (1944).

#### Further reading

Two recent articles on *Torn Curtain* are (1) Christopher D. Morris, "Torn Curtain's Futile Talk", in 'Cinema Journal' 39.1 (1999), pp. 54-73; and (2) James M. Vest, "The Consumer Controlled: Hitchcock's Cameo in *Torn Curtain*", in the 'Hitchcock Annual', 1998-99, pp. 3-19.

Excerpt from Chapter 12 of *Torn Curtain* (Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1966)

Novelisation by Richard Wormser (based on a screenplay by Brian Moore)<sup>1</sup>

The car was slowing down. Ahead of them one of the modern glass-aluminum-stainless steel-tile factories rose out of the plains. Manfred was saying that the manager of the factory was an old friend of his. "I think you will find a workers' factory interesting. Very different from the old days, certainly."

But except for one or two things, it was very much like any defense plant in Texas or California; one of the things that was different was the wintry landscape outside. The United States put its plants where the climate was good, and let the wandering labor force come to them. East Germany really had no place where the climate was good.

The other outstanding difference was the tables in the workers' canteen. In America they would have been small ones, for four or six or at most eight; and in all probability the workers would have served themselves, cafeteria style.

But here people ate at long refectory tables, and sat on long benches.

The manager's table was shorter than the others and set at right angles to them; the short table had chairs instead of benches. The manager was not very pretty, an ascetically thin man with tiny spectacle lenses held on a narrow nose by gold frames.

He was coldly effusive at meeting the defecting Americans about whom the radio had been spouting. Every time his bony frame jerked out a sentence, some sort of medal pinned to the right lapel of his business suit jerked and flapped.

Sarah, now that she suspected that Michael was not really a defector, was a little too bouncy. She tried to put the manager in his place by saying: "Shouldn't you eat at the long table with your workers? This arrangement doesn't seem very democratic."

"In the Democratic Republic," the thin man said coldly, "we waste no time. While the people are at their meal, we usually have a speaker. With chairs, one person can stand at a time and talk; with the table set so, all can hear him."

Manfred was looking at Sarah oddly. Michael distracted him by whispering, "I didn't get our friend's name when you introduced us, Karl,"

"Rudolph Gunter. We are very old comrades,"

"He must be clever to head such a large factory."

'Very clever.'

Then they were seated. Down at one of the long tables Michael saw their chauffeur, yakking rather intimately with two men and a woman. The men had the same G-man air about them; Michael studied the woman, almost certain he had finally isolated a G-woman.

Yep, she looked like an airline hostess, or at least an ex-hostess; she was close to forty.

The meal was very good: lentil soup, and then boiled spareribs with sauerkraut and dumplings. Dessert was tapioca pudding, but it was well flavored and served with little cookies that tasted of anise. Michael looked at the workers' tables from time to time; their fare seemed identical.

The coffee was hot and strong.

Karl Manfred said, "Now Gunter introduces you, Michael."

The manager stood up, pushed his chair away, and began a long, dull talk in German. Michael could read that language better than he could understand it; and anyway it was the sort of speech that didn't say anything.

He turned to Sarah and said shortly, "So you've settled for the sauerkraut-and-dumpling life?"

"I hope they're low-calorie dumplings."

"Next you'll turn into a beer drinker."

"The price for being in love with a defector."

He dropped his voice even lower, saying, "Very, very careful, baby. And you don't know a thing."

"I'm a hell of a good guesser."

The manager was coming to the end of his droning discourse, apparently. Yes. He was telling them how unhappy Michael had been, working for the war-mongers. Michael said, "Sarah, guessing is very unscientific."

She laughed, and Karl Manfred turned his head, frowning. Sarah folded her hands in her lap like a scolded kid in school.

Michael put on his best listening expression, but his eyes wandered out over the workers, listening at their long tables, hunched forward on their uncomfortable benches. When he had to talk, he'd make it short.

He started marshalling a little German in his head. The Germans weren't as bad as the French about foreigners speaking their language perfectly; the effort counted more than the smoothness.

Then his mind went dead, his stomach stopped digesting, his breathing almost stopped, too.

Mr. Gromek was leaning back from one of the tables so as to get an unblocked view of Michael; he was grinning broadly, right into Michael's face.

It couldn't be. Gromek was gone, done for, disposed of. Probably the Southern farmer had used his tractor to bury him; Michael could imagine the phony German peasant grinning at the idea that the agent would make good fertilizer.

Gromek was gone, but there he was.

No. Blood started circulating again; that wasn't Gromek. This man was balder, and he seemed older.

A brother, certainly; but what was he grinning about? His brother was dead, which was no laughing matter.

But, of course, this factory-Gromek couldn't know that the Security-Gromek was dead. With luck - an awful lot of it - and brains - at least a modicum of those - Michael would be out of East Germany before anyone knew that Mr. Gromek was dead.

Michael came to with a start. Apparently Karl Manfred had been trying to get his attention to respond to the factory manager's speech; the manager was back in his chair.

And apparently they had given up trying to get Michael's attention, because Sarah was standing and talking.

She did all right. She said that on the part of Professor Armstrong and herself they were very glad to be in the Democratic Republic, and that they hoped to do the sort of work here that would make the world a safer and better place for workers everywhere. She sat down to heavy applause; under cover of it Michael heard her mutter, "Father, forgive me," and knew she was not blaspheming; it was not the heavenly father that she meant.

Now the workers were getting up, lighting cigarettes and pipes, strolling around. The manager was explaining to Karl Manfred that this was the hour for committee meetings. "We have a dramatic club, a political-science study group, creative-writing and art groups, everything."

Except union committees, Some sort of Labor Front would be appointed by the government, and would decide when the workers had a grievance and when they didn't.

Then a strong hand was gripping Michael's forearm, heels were clicking in the Central European manner, a bald head was dipping in a bow. "Gromek!"

Michael was startled for a moment, then pulled his wits together. This was how a stranger greeted you in this part of the world.

He bowed, clicked his own heels inexpertly, and said, "Armstrong."

"*Jawohl*," the brother said. "We have seen Emil's picture with yours in the news. It is a great honor for him and for all our family. He is not here today?"

Careful, careful. "He is taking the luggage to Leipzig. Or so I was told by Mr. Gerhard."

Very good. The name of the head of Security did it. This Gromek stepped back a little, his face lost some of its geniality; he had been about to question an order of the dread Gerhard's, and had only been saved by Michael's quick talking.

Michael helped him further. "You work here, Mr. Gromek?"

"Yes, I am foreman of the fitting shop for five years now."

"Very good. I'll tell your brother when I see him at Leipzig." And that will be a long, hot day in Germany in winter.

"Oh, ~~he~~ knows what I do. We are a very tight family. Here, look, is a picture of me at the seashore last summer, with all of Emil's children. He was on duty, so I took the little ones on their holiday."

Michael stared through a red haze. Mr. Gromek was a family man; Mr. Gromek was loved; Mr. Gromek had - had had - four kids, three girls and a boy.

He stared at the picture, and then he was aware that Karl Manfred was staring at him. He swallowed and handed the snapshot back.

Gromek gave his little bow again. "Would it be asking too much, Professor, for you to take a present to Emil?" "Of course not, of course not."

"How happy he will be tonight in Leipzig. This is a special treat, since he was a little boy, garlic sausage has been a passion with him. Here, at our workers' canteen, it is particularly tasty."

The worker-Gromek bowed and was gone. Michael watched him push his way through a crowd of his fellow workers buying things at a counter at one side of the mess hall.

Apparently the workers bought the material for their evening meals at the factory; apparently the factory was the center of all their activities. But worker-Gromek must have told them that he was on an errand of international importance, because they parted to let him through.

He was back in a couple of minutes, brandishing a chunk of sausage that looked like salami to Michael, but undoubtedly wasn't. In his other hand Gromek waved a piece of butcher's paper. "I have told the canteen clerk that I will wrap it myself, so you can taste what a joy this sausage will be to my dear brother."

Holding sausage and paper in one hand, worker-Gromek reached in his pocket and pulled out a clasp knife.

Like the peasant woman's, it opened at a flick; like hers its handle was inlaid in silver.

This time the shock hit Michael's lungs rather than his stomach. He felt his breathing stop, his face grow pale.

But Manfred was still watching him. And now their chauffeur had left his Security pals and rejoined the group he was traveling with; he was watching, too.

Michael managed to chew the slice of sausage, dry; managed to swallow it; managed to say, "Delicious. Gromek will be overjoyed."

Worker-Gromek beamed, and the group moved away and out toward the car.

The manager went with them, and shook hands all around, and they were on their way, Michael carrying the wrapped garlic sausage.

The taste of the slice he had eaten was still with him when they stopped in front of the ancient main building of the University of Leipzig.

#### Editor's Note

1. This excerpt from the novelisation gives a good idea of what Hitchcock intended in the sequence of the film set in an East German workers' factory. The sequence was shot but never reached the final print. (Later, Hitchcock and Truffaut arranged for the cut footage to be donated to the Cinémathèque Française.) The trance-state into which Armstrong falls on seeing the dead Gromek's twin-brother may remind you that in 1959 Hitchcock shot an episode of 'Alfred Hitchcock Presents' called "Banquo's Chair" ...

### Coming attractions

Our book reviews issue will include reviews of all or most of the following:

First, books received:

Richard Allen & Sam Ishii-Gonzalès (eds): 'Alfred Hitchcock: Centenary Essays' (BFI)

Charles Barr: 'English Hitchcock' (Cameron & Hollis)

John Belton (ed.): 'Alfred Hitchcock's *Rear Window*' (Cambridge)

Bill Krohn: 'Hitchcock at Work' (Phaidon)

Susan Smith: 'Hitchcock: Suspense, Humour and Tone' (BFI)

Other books:

Peter Conrad: 'The Hitchcock Murders' (Faber)

Jonathan Freedman & Richard Millington (eds): 'Hitchcock's America' (Oxford)

Paul Jensen: 'Hitchcock Becomes "Hitchcock"' (Midnight Marquee)

Other items received:

'Hitchcock Annual', 2000-01

Video: 'Alfred Hitchcock' (Creative Arts Television, Connecticut)



Submission, containment, liberation: Hitchcock's *Torn Curtain* (1966)

Michael tried to determine what his own attitude would be if this were America; would he be more willing to risk his life for fellow Americans than for foreigners?

Probably, he thought. Undoubtedly Russians thought more of Russians than they did of East Germans or Poles; it was hopelessly built into the human frame, and too damned bad, but what were you going to do?

- Richard Wormser. 'Torn Curtain' (based on a screenplay by Brian Moore): the bus sequence<sup>1</sup>

For the world is Hell, and men are on the one hand the tormented souls and on the other the devils in it.

- Arthur Schopenhauer, "On the Suffering of the World"<sup>2</sup>

In *Buddhism* the world arises as a consequence of an inexplicable clouding of the heavenly clarity of ... Nirvana after a long period of quietude. Its origin is thus ... fundamentally to be understood in a moral sense, notwithstanding the case has an exact analogy in the ... origin of the sun in an inexplicable primeval streak of mist.

- Ibid

*Torn Curtain* begins as follows. The screen swirls with grey mist. Electronic rumblings are heard. Out of the mist emerges a spurt of flame. The flame continues to burn, sun-like, on the left while, on the right, a succession of faces is seen as if through the mist.<sup>3</sup> The main-titles music starts up - a lurching yet urgent theme of horns and xylophones. The flame and the faces fade. The grey mist still swirls. The view dissolves - and the music segues - to the start of the film proper. We see a grey ship proceeding through a grey and misty Norwegian fjord ...

Two hours later the film ends on a downbeat note with another grey image, an image of the two principals (Paul Newman, Julie Andrews) huddled for warmth beneath a blanket. Given that none of the faces during the credits sequence shows much sign of happiness, and that several show actual suffering, you would expect the film proper to be downbeat, too. And that's how it is. With perhaps one notable exception, all the film's characters seem joyless. Accordingly, an interpretation of the credits sequence might have it that it starts by showing the birth of a universe, then proceeds to represent what both Buddhism and Hinduism (and some early Greek faiths) call the 'sorrowful weary wheel' of time. Note the idea of recurrence implicit in the image of the wheel - and a possible counterpart in the film's recurring use of grey.

The exceptional character I mentioned who appears happier than everyone else is Professor Gustav Lindt (Ludwig Donath), a self-described 'genius'. Specifically, he's an aging nuclear physicist who clearly enjoys - in two senses - a unique status on the staff at the University of Leipzig in East Germany. A key scene has him instructing his young opposite number from the US, the apparent defector Professor Michael Armstrong (Newman), in some recondite aspects of missile propulsion. 'Learn!' he insists, with a patriarch's authority. (Little does he know that Armstrong has actually come to steal one of his secrets.)<sup>4</sup> But then, Hitchcock's geniuses are invariably exceptional. In *The Trouble With Harry* (1956), the artist who is called a 'genius' lives happily in backwater New England and couldn't care less about what city-people think of his work. He goes ahead regardless and paints his colourful canvases, one of which depicts, as he says, 'the beginning of the world'.<sup>5</sup>

John Koeber's

\* \* \*

More elaborate interpretations of the credits sequence may grow out of the one I've given. Allowing that the faces on screen-right represent 'sorrowful' human life, what story do they tell? Here's what we actually see: a couple making love; a watching eye; a succession of male and female faces, either contorted or impassively observing; finally, the distressed face of Sarah Sherman (Andrews) plummeting away from us. Broadly, the answer to my question about what story these faces tell could be given in philosophical terms as one of Will (life-force, or life-striving) and Representation (appearance) - here note two inseparable concepts of Arthur Schopenhauer, which I think effectively provide the key to the film. The left of screen depicts singular Will, symbolised by the sun; the right of screen depicts life's variegated Representation, the human condition.<sup>6</sup> Fittingly, composer John Addison's main-titles theme begins only when the faces start appearing. The full significance of this becomes more overt later when the same galumphing music recurs during the bus sequence, a sequence which again emphasises human diversity.

In less broad terms, those faces invite a further Schopenhauerian reading. For what we see (after the initial love-making, which somehow seems to cause what follows) are 'tormented souls' (the increasingly desperate, contorted faces) and 'devils' (the impassive watchers). Implicit in this concept is how members of both groups will soon enough find themselves swapping places. In short, what we see is a depiction of Hell (or Purgatory) on Earth.

That leaves the image of a darting eye. The image is at once ambiguous and, I think, over-determined. It might be thought of as both a literal sign of life and as implying a destructive force. (Schopenhauer's Will is in fact a life-force that is also a death-force.) It finds an immediate reciprocal image at the end of the sequence, in the shot of a woman apparently falling to her death.

By the same token, that ambiguous eye anticipates how in the film proper there are just two - opposed - close-ups of eyes. The first such shot shows Michael's eye when he is being examined by a doctor in the Leipzig University clinic. His ministering angel here is the worthy Dr Koska (Gisela Fischer), a member of the escape organisation known as 'Pi', and whose husband has already died for the cause.<sup>7</sup> Thus, by implication, what we see here is a 'good' eye, a symbol of positive action and hope. In contrast, the second close-up is of a 'bad' eye: it belongs to the vindictive ballerina (Tamara Toumanova) who is playing a creature from Hell in a performance of Tchaikovsky's 'Francesca da Rimini'.<sup>8</sup> (I've been using Hitchcock's own terminology here. In the bus sequence there are actually two buses. The first of these Hitchcock called the 'good' bus, its pursuer he called the 'bad' bus.)

\* \* \*

*Torn Curtain* owes something to Fritz Lang's *Cloak and Dagger* (1946) whose physicist hero joins the wartime secret service and is sent to Germany to interview a kidnapped scientist. Equally, Hitchcock's film depicts a new Cold War scepticism, to be seen in novels like John Le Carré's 'The Spy Who Came In From the Cold' (filmed in 1966 by Martin Ritt) and movies like Raoul Lévy's *The Defector* (1966). In Hitchcock's case, he quickly decided that his defector would be a bogus one, and that Armstrong's trip behind the Iron Curtain to try and obtain vital information relating to his stalled Gamma Five project would comprise little more than the film's MacGuffin. Much more important would be the emotional effect of Michael's actions on Sarah, his fiancée.<sup>9</sup>

But even here Hitchcock had obviously done his background research. He remembered the Burgess-Maclean spy case in England and asked himself how Mrs Maclean would have felt on hearing that her husband had turned up in Russia. As for the idea of Gamma Five, here the film scored a coup. Years ahead of the US Government's official Star Wars project, the film propounds the idea of an 'anti-missile missile' system. Probably the idea came indirectly from famous physicist Edward Teller, a real-life proponent of such a system, who in 1935 had fled his alma mater at Leipzig University to work in America.

Other precedents for *Torn Curtain* are to be found in Hitchcock's own work. *Secret Agent* (1936) concerns a naïve amateur spy dispatched on a deadly mission.<sup>10</sup> *Saboteur* (1942) advocates being mindful of American democratic ideals and respecting human diversity, but adds a caution concerning its characters' often 'cold-hearted' and insular views.<sup>11</sup>

\* \* \*

I've mentioned the inseparable nature of the concepts of Will and Representation. Dr Oliver Sacks was paraphrasing Schopenhauer when he said that to speak in terms of either concept alone is to lay oneself open to a destructive duality, to the impossibility of building a meaningful world.<sup>12</sup> This, I take it, amounts to an exhortation to be both subjective and objective at the same time. In other words, we must try to live as effective individuals in the phenomenal world yet be aware that right knowledge and values come from somewhere else: from the noumenal realm, representing what Schopenhauer called 'eternal justice' (as opposed to mere 'temporal justice').<sup>13</sup> However, for most of us, if we think of such matters at all, we are conscious mainly of having failed. We find that what Buddhists call 'the veil of Maya' (illusion) has clouded our vision and we have been forced into error. Certainly when Michael Armstrong penetrates the Iron Curtain, he (at best) only partially penetrates the veil of Maya ...

The early scenes of *Torn Curtain* are about Representation largely divorced from a knowledge of Will and are depicted in a literally light and playful way. Soon after Michael and Sarah arrive by ship in Copenhagen, the possibility of a united (or re-united) humankind, i.e., one without destructive duality, is raised in suitably quixotic fashion. Someone comments that the Hotel d'Angleterre is a Danish hotel whose French name means the Hotel of England. And staying at the hotel, adding its own Babel of tongues, is an international congress of physicists. Fortunately the congress members have their own common language - which nonetheless sets them apart - namely, mathematics. On the other hand, the film several times reminds us that this language has Greek origins (and uses such Greek letters as 'pi' and 'gamma'), just like democracy itself ...<sup>14</sup>

The Copenhagen scenes are the film's most colourful and lively. But English composer John Addison's music tells us how best to read the film's intentions here. For these scenes, Addison employs a theme recalling the signature-tune of one of J. Arthur Rank's popular but undemanding programme-fillers, the 'Look at Life' documentaries. The title logo of that series invariably showed a colourful rooster with vari-coloured tail feathers, and it carried a sub-title, 'This Colourful World'.<sup>15</sup> But, as I say, the series *was* lightweight.

\* \* \*

Now, the veil of Maya never gets to be fully lifted in this phenomenal world of ours. Hitchcock kept faith with such a notion by having his cinematographer John Warren shoot the entire film through a grey gauze. On the other hand, it's pertinent to recall that Schopenhauer allowed that there might be at least two ways for us to learn *something* of the Will and its attendant 'truths'. One way involves our inner awareness of our own bodies, through which the Will flows. In times of exceeding good health, or exceeding poor health, we may be particularly conscious of the Will inside us.<sup>16</sup> The second way is that of art (and its analogues, e.g., certain forms of meditation). Of music, Schopenhauer said boldly that it *is* Will, or anyway a close analogue thereof; of the other aesthetic forms (e.g., fine art, literature, sculpture), he said that they somehow make the Will more objectively accessible - here he evoked Plato's Ideas. And he implied how all art involves a temporary dissolution of the individual ego in order that the more objectified knowledge may enter. As for science, Schopenhauer felt that it could deal only with the phenomenal world.

How, then, should we respond to Michael's 'defection' speech on his arrival in East Germany, in which he says his 'work is more important than any personal considerations of loyalty to any one country'? Is this where impersonal truth, truth which may bring about a united humankind, is vested?

Fairly obviously, no. At best, the speech offers a *negative* guarantee about the future: if Michael's and Lindt's work is successful, it may ensure that humanity *doesn't* blow itself up. In any case, the presence of smug officials and a large media contingent should alert us to how the occasion is again one of mere shallowness and distortion. On show is the phoney world of political speechifying, whose language falsely promises Nirvana or a new Golden Age.<sup>17</sup> As Schopenhauer could tell us, what is involved is the politicians' and even the scientists' perversion of 'will-to-life' for their own ends. (In this special application of his insight concerning the nature of Will, Schopenhauer anticipated Nietzsche's concept of 'will-to-power'. But Schopenhauer, let's note, detested Will which he knew to be both amoral and blind.) Significantly, Michael is lying when he announces his defection; and his underlying motive is a selfish one, concerning the cutting off by the U.S. Government of funds for his ailing research.

\* \* \*

I'm about to describe the film's murder scene which, I'll argue, is designed to make us feel the nature of Will. (Later I'll describe the bus sequence with its emphasis on Representation.) For now, it's time to say something about Michael's Communist bodyguard Gromek (Wolfgang Kieling). He's a doughty little fellow, one of the film's many battlers.<sup>18</sup> True, he has acquired some unfortunate Americanisms, like his habit of chewing gum; and all his talk of having once lived in New York is certainly a sham. Even so, it's surely rather loose of critic Robin Wood to call him (as I recall) a 'lost soul'.

If the film had managed to include a key scene, soon after the murder, in which Michael encounters Gromek's twin brother at a workers' factory, we'd have learnt that Gromek had been an ordinary family man with wife and kids and holiday snaps to show for it. (The scene was shot, and provides the basis for a memorable episode remaining in the novel.)<sup>19</sup> In other words, we would have learnt that Gromek had been not so very different from the doughty-in-his-own-way 'Manny' Balestrero in *The Wrong Man* (1957). If that comparison sounds unlikely, consider the following. In 'MacGuffin' 20, I pointed out that Manny never really comprehends the forces that shape him. No more does Gromek. That's suggested in the small matter of how he never masters the operation of his (American?) cigarette lighter. It's also suggested by a further item that confused the 'Newsweek' film reviewer. 'Gromek', the reviewer scoffed, 'says he used to live on 88th Street and Eighth Avenue, but there is no such address in Manhattan.'<sup>20</sup> Quite so. Gromek's information about America has been obtained solely from the American movies and radio shows that he had been exposed to in spy school. (Cf. the novel, pp. 47, 76.) What he hasn't realised is that movies seldom tell the whole truth.

In other words, movies are typically all Representation, offering little or no insight into Will. And Gromek, even more than the religious Manny, neglects to consider the implications of this.<sup>21</sup> There's still another, related similarity between the two characters. Manny in *The Wrong Man* has a 'double' and several look-alikes (see 'MacGuffin' 20). *Torn Curtain* goes even further. Various characters are doubled, and there are several sets of twins (e.g., the two Gromeks). Even the good bus and the bad bus are twins, when you think about it. Now, the doubling in *The Wrong Man* implies a certain invisible interconnectedness of lives and fates which I've suggested in Manny's case is Dickensian - but a knowledge of which is unavailable to Manny as a lasting insight. More broadly, I'd say such doubling is Schopenhauerian, implying

how we (and everything else) are really just Will. In the case of *Torn Curtain*, the doubling is especially apposite. For again it stresses the idea of humanity's interconnectedness, its essential Oneness.<sup>22</sup>

\* \* \*

Any discussion of the murder scene should embrace the haunting 'echoing footsteps' scene in the museum, which immediately precedes it. The two scenes are integral, in much the same way as an 'echoing footsteps' episode in *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1956) relates, if in lighter vein, to the free-for-all in a taxidermist's workshop that follows. Both times, there's a death-and-life opposition ...

Michael visits the museum to try and elude Gromek. The setting figures naturally in the story inasmuch that East Berlin is noted for its fine museums. Significantly, the scene is introduced by an exterior view from a tourist-information brochure, followed by a dissolve which effectively allows Michael to walk into the photograph. (He's about to leave behind, perhaps for good, the 'tourist-y' shallowness of earlier scenes.) The Graeco-Roman facade dwarfs him, but the effect is accentuated once he enters the building. A high long-shot shows him crossing a tiled floor inlaid with a magnificent mandala, symbol of wholeness. In the middle of this he suddenly pauses, listening. All around him are classical columns and artifacts, though the museum seems strangely deserted of people. One feels that a timeless 'secret', representing our common heritage, awaits re-discovery here ...

Actually, the scene has another precedent, or rather two, for it combines aspects of the art gallery and sequoia forest scenes from *Vertigo* (1958). They, too, intimate timeless truths about art and life - and mortality - though it's significant that Scottie, like Armstrong, doesn't stay to heed.<sup>23</sup> I'm unsure how authentic the museum interior in *Torn Curtain* is. An article in 'American Cinematographer'<sup>24</sup> reports that only the floor of the film's museum was 'real', and that all the rest of the shot was a matte-painting. Still, you suppose that Hitchcock would have had an actual place in mind. Possibly he or his art director, Hein Heckroth,<sup>25</sup> was inspired by a memory of old Berlin, e.g., of the famous Hall of Pillars in Berlin Castle (demolished in 1950).

Of course, what most matters is the statement the scene makes. When Michael pauses at the very centre of the mandala, the moment combines classic German Expressionism with equally classic, and universal, symbolism. As I say, Michael is scarcely aware of any of this - he only has eyes and ears for his possible pursuer. In effect, the moment is meant for us. Nonetheless, it suggests our equivocal hero's need to look at himself, to judge what he sees (a typical German Expressionist motif),<sup>26</sup> and to begin an integration of ego and deep, even collective, unconscious (as Jung's work on mandala symbolism tells us). Another implication of the museum's near-emptiness is that people in this part of the world, no less than in the flashier Copenhagen scenes,<sup>27</sup> may not be in tune with, or have time for, such matters at present. Meanwhile, the museum continues to preserve part of our common human heritage, especially its Western aspects. The museum's statues and sculptures seem to portray mainly figures of Graeco-Roman mythology, in alternating black and white marble, and to tell a similar story of struggle to that of the film's credits. Also, an emblematic instance of that struggle is about to be played out in the film's farmhouse scene ...

Suspecting he is being followed, Michael keeps turning corners à la *Vertigo* (the sequoia forest scene, et al.), then stopping to try and identify the sound of footsteps echoing on the stone floor. Finally he leaves via a (strangely unsupervised) side door, still uncertain of where Gromek may be. In the street, a housewife trudges past the museum's long stone wall. Such walls figure prominently in the film, a reminder of the Berlin Wall itself and the country's divided condition.<sup>28</sup> Needing to hurry to an assignation with his 'Pi' contact outside the city, Michael takes a taxi. The driver has what the novel calls 'an incurious, pleasantly stupid face' (p. 69). He wears a pale open-necked shirt, making him an older version of the 'demure' and 'mild' identical twins we'll later see on the bus (pp. 149-50). Michael feels in luck.

\* \* \*

There are no echoing tile floors, or pavements, at the farm where Michael arrives by taxi.<sup>29</sup> He's met by a pleasant *Frau* (Carolyn Conwell) in an apron. With his shoe he draws the 'Pi' sign in the farmyard dirt. The woman points to a field where her husband is driving a tractor.

The farmer (Mort Mills) is described in the novel by one of his 'Pi' colleagues as 'the finest' of men (p. 176). In the film he's represented by the actor who played the highway patrolman in *Psycho* (1960), and commands a voice like that of Physics Nobel Laureate Steven Weinberg! (The novel, though, gives him an accent that is 'pure lower-class Southern', hinting that he's a former American Serviceman - p. 71.) His hearty first line both makes a plot point and is suitably thematic: 'Well, Professor Armstrong, how does it feel to play the part of a dirty defector?'

Both the farmer and his wife have their 'doubles'. The moustached farmer is a more robust version of Michael's Copenhagen contact, the bookstore proprietor named Freddy (Arthur Gould-Porter).<sup>30</sup> And the farmer's wife strikingly

resembles another brave 'Pi' member, Dr Koska at the University of Leipzig. The truth is that Michael himself is one of the few characters in the film who lacks a physical double. But the reason for this, I suggest, isn't that he's played by the inimitable Paul Newman. More likely, it's because, in the film's terms, he has failed to achieve a suitable merger with society, especially the demos, the people, a merger which the film is now increasingly going to insist on. For instance, it's about to deprive him of his distinctive overcoat ...<sup>31</sup>

As the farmer drives Michael back towards the farmhouse, the 'Pi' music starts up. Michael dismounts and the farmer deftly swings the tractor round and returns to work. Nearby are the remnants of an outhouse wall, a variant of the war ruins we've seen in Berlin (and one more reminder of the Berlin Wall). For the moment, Michael probably feels he's far from all that.

So when the 'Pi' music ends with an abrupt crash, the arrival of Gromek is doubly jolting. Moreover, the little fellow has put himself between Michael and the waiting taxi, and Michael must duck into the farmhouse. Quickly Gromek follows him. The ensuing scene is played without music.

Music would be redundant, and distracting, in a scene which Hitchcock said he designed 'to show how hard it is to kill a man'.<sup>32</sup> Inside the farmhouse, watched by the woman, Gromek has got Michael cornered. He soon shows he can get tough when he jabs at Michael's coat with an accusing fist - and, employing a 'subjective' effect, the film jabs *us* by excising a few frames from the middle of each shot. But next minute he's cracking jokes, speculating that Michael is headed for 'the Big House' as in certain Edward G. Robinson prison movies.<sup>33</sup>

Also, Gromek appears to have read some of the American press reviews of *The Birds* and *Marnie* ('It's strictly for the birds. You still say that.') The poor fellow virtually asks to be dispatched, like some stand-up comedian who has outstayed his welcome. I don't think I'm being callous in claiming this; at some level, the audience surely feels the working of just such a crazy logic as I'm implying. Compelled to watch a protracted and messy killing, we need to find something to laugh at. Of course, Hitchcock compounds the effect in various ways. Just to list what happens shows one of them: Gromek dies from a combination of a saucepan of scalding soup thrown in his face, a kitchen knife embedded in his shoulder, blows to his shins delivered with the edge of a spade, and finally asphyxiation in a gas oven. Only unexceptional, homely implements are used, notice.<sup>34</sup>

But Michael has got blood on his hands. And on his coat. Now he really is 'dirty'. And his shocked face clearly shows the sort of dissolution of ego Schopenhauer referred to (albeit with less drastic circumstances in mind). Above all, for the scene's participants, as well as for the audience, Will has been made palpable.<sup>35</sup> The rest of this article looks at how in subsequent scenes the film applies our new knowledge of Will, especially during the sequence on the bus, and considers the lessons to be drawn.

\* \* \*

Something else that Hitchcock remarked about the murder scene is revealing. He fully intended, he said, that the death of a man from asphyxiation in a gas oven should evoke Auschwitz. So far as I know, he didn't say why he intended it, but we may guess. Probably he was remembering how it was in just such tranquil surroundings as those of this German farm that some of the extermination camps operated. Further, we know that in 1945 Hitchcock was summoned by his friend Sidney Bernstein and the British Ministry of Information to supervise and edit footage of the camps. As the film flooded in, he could hardly bear to watch it.<sup>36</sup>

When Michael and Sarah escape from Leipzig to East Berlin, they do so on a 'Pi' bus which passes itself off as the route's regular bus. In charge of the escape is the Jew, Mr Jacobi (David Opatoshu). It's his quick thinking which at one point saves the couple from being recognised by searching police; and his coolness which prevents dissenting voices among the bus passengers, including an hysterical *Fraulein's*, from erupting into disaster. Connotations of the War are strong here, too.

However, a further connotation stresses the scene's element of diversity, its mix of people. Jacobi himself is another of the film's doubles: with his goatee, he resembles Professor Lindt. And though nearly all the passengers on the bus are members of 'Pi', they're a motley lot. They include a little man with a cold, a student and his girlfriend, identical twin brothers, and the hysterical *Fraulein Mann*. In short, they collectively resemble groups encountered in at least two other Hitchcock films having a pro-democracy message: *Saboteur* (with its bizarre circus troupe) and *Lifeboat* (1944). They are all ordinary-enough people, and for that reason represent those from whom Michael and Sarah have been shielded by their ivory-tower existence back in Washington, D.C. (With particular irony, Sarah in the novel is a Senator's daughter - p. 53.)<sup>37</sup>

Now, both the film and the novel are ambivalent about 'Pi'. Given a divisive, and divided, humanity, it's clear that an organisation like 'Pi' can't do much about the fundamental problem. (Again one may recall Schopenhauer's distinction between imperfect 'temporal' justice and ideal 'eternal' justice.) Besides, the members of 'Pi' are as capable of dissension and limited thinking as anyone. The novel is largely being polite when it calls some of the bus passengers 'nice' and 'well-meaning' (p. 149) - one thinks of Carol Fisher's remark in *Foreign Correspondent* (1940) about 'well-meaning' but ineffectual 'amateurs'. On the other hand, as many earlier Hitchcock films stress, it's almost a necessity that the hero (himself essentially an amateur) eventually makes a stand for what he believes in. Arguably, *Torn Curtain* doesn't disagree with that, but it does imply the importance of wisdom. Through the characters of Michael and Sarah, it shows the need to integrate public action and private insight, and to fuse knowledge of Will and of Representation.

As the film progresses, Michael increasingly questions the nature of appearances, and not just from a scientist's perspective. On the whole, he becomes more pessimistic. Note, for example, the quotation from the novel that heads this article, a very Schopenhauerian observation. Though the passengers on the bus represent demos, they also resemble the audience watching the film; and one of the characteristics of a film audience is that its members may seem a cohesive unit but really aren't, certainly not once the house-lights return. Of course, most of us are stimulated by group company. So it's understandable that the bus passengers see fit to applaud their collective performance. That moment gives us one of the film's few fleeting warm spots. But watch the bus passengers scatter afterwards, thereby anticipating the end of the ballet scene that soon follows - another dispersed audience. Audiences, like the ideal of democracy itself, are very vulnerable ...

Still, something else the bus scene shows is how a logical outcome of human selfishness (which is an aspect of Will), i.e., finding oneself in the cold, may sometimes be confounded by a no-less-human inconsistency (which we may call fellow-feeling). I'm not sure that Schopenhauer sufficiently acknowledged such a possibility.<sup>38</sup> However, the film's downbeat ending is generally pessimistic. Only a few moments, like the bus sequence, and some 'hopeful' signifiers, like the twins/doubles motif, have left us something firm to cling to. Their message seems to be: we're all both like and unlike each other. Each of the passengers on the bus is both universal Will *and* individual 'will' - in the latter case, sometimes inconveniently or irritatingly so. Accordingly, there's an ethical imperative here. We must sufficiently penetrate the veil of Maya to see that Representation (appearance) isn't everything.

\* \* \*

Michael and Sarah are promptly tested on how well they have learnt the lessons of the bus sequence. Few people could appear potentially more inconvenient or irritating than the scatty Countess Kuchinska, who approaches the American couple in the street. She's a displaced person, a former Polish aristocrat, though it's not inappropriate that she's played by Russian-French actress Lila Kedrova fresh from an Academy Award-winning performance in Michael Cacoyannis's *Zorba the Greek* (1964). In the *Torn Curtain* novel the Countess proclaims, 'I am an old woman. But there is *la vie* left in me. Lots of *la vie*' (p. 168). The film signals as much by giving her a multi-coloured scarf. Now, it would be easy for Michael and Sarah to dismiss her as of no more consequence to them than one of the tourists back in Copenhagen - in effect, their own former selves. But that would be seeing only half the picture.

Of course, the situation is ambiguous. The Countess, it turns out, can direct the couple to their next contact-point, the Friedrichstrasse Post Office. At the same time, she's happy to force the issue by employing a spot of blackmail, for she hopes that Michael and Sarah will sponsor her to the United States. That is, she's like everyone else in having a selfish side. Her double is Michael's nemesis-figure, the ballerina, inasmuch that both of these rather theatrical ladies wants her place in the sun; for the ballerina, that largely means the spotlight of public acclaim,<sup>39</sup> for the Countess it means having somewhere to enjoy her remaining *vie*. Before the end, the film will have implied that both ambitions are by themselves inadequate. But meanwhile, with whatever mixed motives of their own, Michael and Sarah agree to the Countess's deal.

\* \* \*

Another test comes when the couple seek to make their final 'Pi' contact by attending an evening at the ballet. The scene was shot on the set where *The Phantom of the Opera* had been filmed twice (in 1925 and 1943); film buffs may also detect in the scene allusions to such classic movies as *The Red Shoes* (1948) and *Hangover Square* (1944). With State Security closing in, some bravura gesture seems called for. Michael provides it when he turns the on-stage artifice to his own purpose with an inspired shout of 'Fire!', causing a general panic in which he and Sarah manage to escape. The stage flames, depicting Hell, neatly combine the film's symbol of Will (life-energy)<sup>40</sup> with what is patently Representation. By being able to merge - or rather, separate - the two aspects in his mind, Michael may be said to pass this test, too.

\* \* \*

But perhaps the final emphasis of the present article should be on the fact of the successive tests themselves. I've always thought of *Torn Curtain* as giving Michael and Sarah (and the audience) an initiation into deeper knowledge. My early notes on the film, made about the time I saw it on its first release, include a definition of initiation as a three-stage process: 'a rite of submission, followed by a period of containment, and then by a further rite of liberation'. Regrettably, I've no record of the source of that quotation. But it's likely that it came from Jung or one of his followers. Certainly Jung's 'Man and His Symbols' (1964) had recently been published in London - moreover, it's the sort of book Hitchcock himself might have consulted -<sup>41</sup> and it contained similar points about the psychology of initiation, etc.<sup>42</sup> As well, it carried Jung's keynote comment about how the world had become 'dissociated like a neurotic, with the Iron Curtain marking the symbolic line of division'.

Accordingly, I think we may sum up *Torn Curtain* as follows. The film is suggesting that the veil of Maya will continue to screen the heavenly clarity of Nirvana from us for some time yet. Equally, there can be no early prospect of one united humankind. All the more reason, then, why each of us should give thought to plotting our particular *inward* path. We may find there many of the sources of our problems. And not the least of those problems may simply be one of getting started. In Michael Armstrong's case, his inward journey appears to begin in a well-known fashion when he suffers a career setback (the halting of his Gamma Five project), which in turn affects his sense of self-esteem.

It's worth specifying the more obvious areas where Michael's perceptions are going to be altered or enlarged. For a start, both the museum and ballet scenes have hinted at how insulated from cultural matters, and the humanities generally, he has been. Near the end of the novel he muses that when he gets back home, 'he must make a point of broadening himself, going to ballet and maybe opera and reading some novels' (p. 177). Similarly, the scenes where he must literally make contact with ordinary people (the farm, the factory canteen, the bus) show how shielded from the roots of democracy his career has made him. The word 'democracy' is Greek - derived: from 'demos', the people, and 'kratos', strength. Yet if Michael knows anything at all of his Greek heritage, you feel that his knowledge relates just to his specialist fields of mathematics and physics. As for his relation to the natural world (represented by the Norwegian fjord, the farm, and finally the open sea), clearly that has also been largely off-limits for him. Sarah implies no less when she chides him in Copenhagen, 'A scientist is supposed to respect a natural order in all things'. The egoistical and too-intellectual Michael has been immured from Nature, reality, since before the film began. But a dissolution of his ego, something envisaged as desirable, even necessary, by both Schopenhauer and Jung, soon begins.<sup>43</sup>

There seems to be three ways in which Michael and Sarah undergo a process of submission/containment/ liberation. In a very broad sense, they do so as the rest of us do it, by being born and entering on the 'sorrowful weary wheel' of time. Less broadly, they undertake such a process when they go behind the Iron Curtain, experience various tests and perils there, and then effect their escape (in the end, by swimming to safety from an East German ship, which reminds at least one commentator of 'traversing ... the river Styx').<sup>44</sup> But even individual scenes pointedly follow the same pattern. The essential element of containment is stressed in the murder scene (the slammed-shut windows, the ripping out of the telephone, even Gromek's death by asphyxiation in a gas oven), the blackboard sequence in Professor Lindt's underground workroom, the bus sequence (although Fraulein Mann has to be expelled from the vehicle before the journey's end), and the ballet scene where armed Vopos arrive to guard each exit. And in case we've failed to spot the motif already, Hitchcock has Michael and Sarah finally smuggled out of the country in costume baskets belonging to the ballet company, on a ship bound for Sweden.

It comes to this. One of Jung's colleagues, Joseph L. Henderson, says that the purpose of initiation rites is always 'to create the symbolic mood of death from which may spring the symbolic mood of rebirth'.<sup>45</sup> Michael Armstrong is subjected to a succession of deaths and rebirths, each time having his eyes opened a little further to the - often Hellish but also grand - scheme of things, even as he and Sarah learn a new humility and maturity. Yet, precisely as a result, the two of them can huddle thankfully at last beneath the grey blanket provided by the Swedish assistant harbourmaster (who adds a further humbling perspective by noting, 'We keep a whole stack of blankets for refugees').

\* \* \*

I've my own thoughts on why *Torn Curtain* doesn't work as well as it might have, and they've little to do with Donald Spoto's questionable claim that the film has 'dated hopelessly since 1990 [sic]'.<sup>46</sup> In general, the film is just too downbeat and perhaps too philosophical for some audiences to enjoy.<sup>47</sup> And here's a more particular observation. Michael never makes more common cause with other people than when at the ballet he looks at the stage flames and yells 'Fire!', thus prompting a latent fear - of any audience indoors - to erupt in onscreen panic. But of course he's not really making common cause with the audience at the ballet at all, and that fact works against the scene's full effectiveness. The moment feels unconvincing and contrived. Even so, I've suggested that *philosophically* the concept is promising: a comment on the fragility of collective identity. A problem, I think, is the stolidity of Paul Newman's character from the start. Confusingly, his shout of 'Fire!' shows real quick-wittedness of a dramatic life-and-death kind. Accordingly, the scene

and the film needed a more endowed actor (a Gary Cooper, say). Michael is consistently too bland a character to excite strong viewer-feelings, whether of identification/admiration or just of sardonic appraisal.<sup>48</sup>

Likewise, Julie Andrews is wasted and unconvincing as a campus wife-to-be (or a 'corridor wife', which Sarah fears she may become). It seems almost emblematic that her strongest scene is her thirty seconds of silence in the Leipzig University lecture room after Lindt has asked her about the outcome of Gamma Five. (Her eventual, guarded answer: 'I have nothing to say.')49 Another of the Americans' minders, Professor Karl Manfred (Günter Strack), clearly fancies her; and there seems to have been some attempted 'influence' by Manfred while Michael was at the farm. On Michael's return from there, he's summoned by Gerhard and told that Sarah has been persuaded to come over to the East Germans. This is where we hear about Manfred's 'unique line in argument'.<sup>50</sup> Manfred remains possessive towards Sarah, at Leipzig even taking it upon himself to answer when Lindt asks a question of Michael, 'Have you your assistant [i.e., Sarah] with you?' Of course, all of this is resolved immediately afterwards in the controversial hillock scene (which I find tacky rather than liberating), but my point is that Sarah's key moments are significantly either static or coy or take place off-screen.

Finally, Hitchcock was surely right when he once said of his brand of thriller, 'The better the villain, the better the picture'. Unfortunately, the overt villainy in *Torn Curtain* is mainly conceptual - a matter of ideology - and I have real difficulty in thinking of its representatives - Gromek, Gerhard, Manfred - as anything but generally likable, and subject to the same Will as the rest of us. No doubt, most of this was intended by Hitchcock, but what does it do to the dynamics of his film?

\* \* \*

Postscript. More about the grey blanket that ends the film. That image goes all the way back to *Number Seventeen* via *Psycho*. Of course, it signifies coming out of the cold. But equally, and quite literally in *Torn Curtain*, it signifies turning one's back on the world, of having 'had enough'. It's interesting, therefore, that the *happiest* character in the film is so decidedly Professor Lindt, ensconced behind the Iron Curtain, which is also grey. But then, as we saw, Lindt is a self-described 'genius', like Dr Brulov in *Spellbound* or Sam Marlowe in *The Trouble With Harry*. And as Schopenhauer claims, only the genius, the artist and the saint regularly penetrate the veil of Maya, which so defeats everyone else. As I see the matter, the one optimistic connotation of the grey blanket which Michael and Sarah draw around themselves is this: like the word 'couple', it makes duality one. Oliver Sacks would surely understand and approve a certain symbolism here.

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## Notes

1. The novel was published by Dell in 1966 to coincide with the release of the film. It appears to adhere closely to the original screenplay, i.e., pre-dating the film's last-minute modifications. I consider it an authentic, and useful, research tool for scholars of the film, and quote from it several times during the present article.
  2. This particular English version of Schopenhauer's essay appears in A. Schopenhauer, 'Essays and Aphorisms' (Penguin Classics, 1970), translated and selected by R.J. Hollingdale.
  3. Hitchcock obtained the shot of the flame by sending a camera team to the Rocketdyne works where Saturn engines for the Apollo moon flight were tested. 'We were able to go out and photograph just the core of the flame and steam from half a mile away with a long-focus lens. ... On the morning they shot, \$34,000 worth of fuel was used for just three takes! We didn't pay, they were testing.' ('Film' [UK], Summer 1966, p.15.)
  4. Several times the film evokes myth, especially Greek myth. Here you naturally think of Prometheus's successful attempt to steal fire from the gods and give it to humankind (though Armstrong, unlike Prometheus, is no disinterested agent). The scene also has Oedipal connotations, which may make you think of the overthrow of the aging Dr Murchison in *Spellbound* (1945).
  5. Another such figure is the brilliant, if irascible, Dr Brulov in *Spellbound*. Brulov is that film's 'good' father-figure, Murchison its 'bad' father-figure. Lindt combines something of both these men, which is fitting, given *Torn Curtain*'s emphasis on the virtual interchangeability of 'good' and 'bad'. (Shades, here, of Hamlet's 'There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so.')
- In turn, both what the French critics call the 'transference of guilt' motif in Hitchcock's films, and Schopenhauer's emphasis on how, finally, it's all One - there is nothing but amoral Will - are other relevant considerations which the present article emphasises. Incidentally, the present article should ideally be read in conjunction



with an analysis by me of Hitchcock's *The Birds* (1963) due for publication in March 2001 on the 'Screening the Past' website (La Trobe University, Australia).

6. The film contains repeated allusions to fire (and coldness: its last shot again makes reference to both). Some are almost subliminal: e.g., the Norwegian ship at the start is 'M/S Meteor', while the name of the Elmo Bookstore suggests St Elmo's Fire. Others are more overt, notably the scene in the theatre discussed in the text. Fire is like pure Will; its opposite, coldness, is like a metaphor for mere random events and knowledge, the superficial world that entrammels us all, and where we seek what human warmth we can. See in particular the text's discussion of the museum, farm, and bus sequences.

7. See the novel, p. 132.

8. The vain, egotistical ballerina and her vindictiveness represent what the film opposes on all of its levels, including the political - which isn't to deny that there's something of these qualities in everyone, including Armstrong himself. Schopenhauer taught the same thing when he said that we're all made up of basic egoism plus malice and compassion - though the amounts and proportions vary widely in different individuals.

9. In the first half of the film, Sarah must endure hurt and doubt out of loyalty to Michael. The motif here - of 'suffering in silence' - is a familiar and effective one in stage and film melodrama. It can be found, for instance, in the various film versions (based on the 1909 play) of *Madame X*, in the Australian film *The Silence of Dean Maitland* (1914, remade in 1934), and in such Hitchcock films as *The Manxman* (1928), *Under Capricorn* (1949), and *I Confess* (1953).

10. There is even a shot, when the police arrive at Leipzig University to arrest Michael, that almost exactly matches a shot in *Secret Agent* of the police seen from an upstairs window arriving at the chocolate factory to arrest Ashenden and 'The General'.

11. In the circus scene of *Saboteur*, which prefigures the bus scene in *Torn Curtain*, the character known as 'Bones' (Pedro de Cordoba) speaks of normal people being 'normally cold-hearted'. This also anticipates the later film, notably its warm/cold motif.

12. O. Sacks, 'Awakenings' (revised edition, 1982), p. 219.

13. The noumenal is Kant's famous and unknowable 'Ding an Sich'/'Thing-in-Itself', which Schopenhauer took to be the same as the world's 'Will', or vital principle, as opposed to its mere manifestation as myriad phenomena, 'Representation'. So we have the One and the Many. Incidentally, I don't think Schopenhauer's concept of Will can be easily dismissed as mysticism. I notice, for instance, that Stephen Jay Gould recently wrote: 'I would nominate as most worthy of pure awe the continuity of the tree of earthly life for 3.5 billion years, without a single microsecond of disruption.' (S. Gould, "This View of Life"/ "I Have Landed", in 'Natural History', December 2000/ January 2001, reprinted on the 'Natural History' website.) Such continuity sounds closely akin to the notion of a single indestructible vital force, Will.

14. The novel contains a significant piece of dialogue when an impatient Professor Lindt mocks his colleagues' dithering. "The day has come [he says] when our universities are staffed from the barnyard. Pigs teach Greek, horses teach German, and chickens teach physics. A great age." (p. 108) This idea of a noble heritage (e.g., our *Greek* heritage) debased in times that are 'out of joint' runs through the film. It may also remind us of similar motifs in *Jamaica Inn* (1939) - where post-Byronic decadence (especially in remote Cornwall) has set in following the high Romantic Age - and *North by Northwest* (1959), where art (including Pre-Columbian figurines) has been debased to the level of one more commodity.

15. *Torn Curtain* uses colour as a metaphor of 'life' in its broad Representational aspect (e.g., the colourful tartan blanket beneath which Michael and Sarah engage in careless love-play early in the film; the equally colourful scarf worn by the Countess Kuchinska who announces in the novel that she has plenty of *la vie* left in her), and is contrasted with the drab grey of East Berlin generally and of the grey blanket beneath which Michael and Sarah retreat at the film's end - signalling a narrowing down, a loss of expectation.

16. This observation is mine, not Schopenhauer's, but I think it suitably conveys his meaning.

17. Shortly before Hitchcock's film was made, Carl Jung observed that the Communist world had one big myth, 'the time-hallowed archetypal dream of a Golden Age (or Paradise)'. But he was quick to add that the Western world, too, was 'in the grip of the same mythology'. See C. G. Jung (ed.), 'Man and His Symbols' (1964), p. 85. Certainly the film implies something of this idea by shooting several of the East German scenes in a honey-coloured oblique sunlight.

Perhaps equally, you sense an affinity with George Orwell's 'Nineteen Eighty-Four' (1949) with its oppressive regime and, initially, its characters' dream of 'the Golden Country'.

18. Watch him in action shouldering his way through the crush after Michael's press conference! Typically, he can afterwards manage a grin or a joke. By contrast, note the grim fellow among the 'swells' when panic breaks out at the ballet, who looks like an unredeemed W. C. Fields.
19. We reprint the episode in this issue of 'The MacGuffin'.
20. 'Newsweek', August 8, 1966. The review is unsigned.
21. 'But' [writes Oliver Sacks] 'how shall we unite the "final cause" with the "efficient [immediate] cause", the will with the matter, the motive with the molecule, when they seem so remote, and disparate from each other?' ('Awakenings', op. cit., pp. 219-20.) Sacks finds *one* answer to that question in a certain use of colloquial language, employing 'terms which unite in their two-facedness the concepts of structure and intention - words like *plan* and *design* [-] ... which we - as scientists - so often feel impelled to reject and ignore' (p.220).
22. As I say in my already-mentioned article on *The Birds*, the famous 'transference of guilt' motif in Hitchcock, first noted by the French critics, implies the same idea.
23. Gromek comments sardonically: 'In one door and out the other. What's wrong, Professor? Don't you like our museum?' Cf the motif in *Vertigo* of Scottie repeatedly entering a church or chapel and then immediately exiting again.
24. 'American Cinematographer', October 1966.
25. The German Heckroth's most famous work was done for Michael Powell's *The Red Shoes* (1948), a film to which Hitchcock seems to allude more than once in his own films: e.g., the ballet scene of *Torn Curtain*.
26. According to Dr Margery Morgan of Monash University, Australia, in a lecture I attended many years ago, a recurrent motif of German Expressionist art, etc, often signalled by converging lines painted on the set or canvas, was the need of the protagonist to bring himself to judgment in his own mind.
27. Where, too, a young 'hippie' named Magda (!), working in the Elmo Bookstore, removes apparently dusty Bibles to a storeroom.
28. Michael delivers his 'defection' speech at the East Berlin airport against a red-tiled background that suggests a brick wall; Gerhard's office has a grey stone wall; Sarah's room at the hotel is photographed in such a way as to emphasise its walls and the stage-like (or box-like) look of the set. See also next note.
29. The farm recalls the crofters' cottage in *The 39 Steps* (1935), both even having a similar box-bed in the kitchen wall. (The sound of hens in the farmyard is another point of overlap.) Given that the film contains a 'boxes' motif - the characters are forever being confined to small spaces (including the costume baskets in which Michael and Sarah finally escape from East Germany), perhaps Hitchcock included the box-bed as one such reference. For the record, there was a popular song at the time called, I think, 'Little Boxes', which had a similar motif, and concluded with the thought that we all depart the world in one more such box!
30. Freddy actually wears a hearing-aid, which may remind you of the gentleman with the hearing problem in *North by Northwest* (the scene in the Oak Bar), one of that film's many allusions to aging and mortality in the minor characters. (Surrealistically, the principals appear not to be beset with any such problems!)
31. A variant, this, on how characters in *Number Seventeen* (1932), *Foreign Correspondent* (1940), *North by Northwest*, and *The Birds*, for example, remove a hat or a jacket before getting down to physical action at the film's climax.
32. He also said he designed it to show how *long* it takes to kill a man - which seems significant, given the film's recurring emphasis on the stretching or protraction of time and events. (I briefly discuss this matter in my book, 'The Alfred Hitchcock Story', Titan Books, London, 1999, p. 173, where I conclude that it is all connected with showing how *alike*, as well as *unique*, people are - that we each occupy our own rightful time and space, and that we're each part of one collective human community.)
33. A likely example of such a film is Edward Ludwig's *The Last Gangster* (1937), a clip from which is included, I notice, in Woody Allen's *Crimes and Misdemeanours* (1989).

34. The basis for this scene, though, may well be the clumsy, drawn-out murder of the Earl of Clarence in Shakespeare's 'Richard III' (Act One, Scene Four). Hitchcock alluded to the Shakespeare play when he addressed a class of cinema students at the University of Southern California. See my article, "Out of Hitchcock's Filing Cabinet", on the Hitchcock Scholars/'MacGuffin' website.
35. As I say, though, music wasn't called for. Music may indeed be a close analogue of Will, but by that very fact would be superfluous here.
36. Not all of the concentration camps were isolated from population centres - something which Hitchcock noted at an early stage of planning the BMI film. By means of panning and tracking shots he was able to bring home this fact. See Elizabeth Sussex's article, "The Fate of F3080", in 'Sight & Sound', Spring 1984.
37. That ivory-tower existence stands in contrast to the getting-one's-hands-dirty learning experience that Armstrong, in particular, undergoes during the film.
38. Earlier in the film, Gerhard (Hanjörg Felmy) of State Security had referred to a colleague's 'unique line in argument, combining mathematical logic and romantic inconsistency' - which sounded vaguely threatening but may in fact represent Hitchcock's own 'solution' to the fundamental problem of a divided, and divisive, humanity. Incidentally, an aspect of the bus sequence reminds us that another American couple abroad, on a bus filled with Arabs, was once told by a beaming Frenchman, 'There are moments in life when we all need a little help'. I'm thinking, of course, of Hitchcock's *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1956).
39. In 'Odd Spot' in 'MacGuffin' 1, I mentioned how the film's business with the ballerina and the press photographers may have been suggested to Hitchcock by an embarrassing incident that had happened to him when he was staying at Lake Como in Italy. (This occurred some years before 1970, so the timing seems to fit.) As the person recounting the story remembers the incident, 'I think he was actually a little offended when we told him that [the photographers] were not there for him but for the wedding.'
40. Besides the on-stage flames, there's a fiery sun painted on the stage back-cloth.
41. Hitchcock's library in his office contained an impressive collection of art books and current magazines on graphics. (The Jung book mentioned in the text is profusely illustrated with pictures of classic paintings, stills from films, etc.) See Stephen Rebello, 'Alfred Hitchcock and the Making of *Psycho*' (1991), p. 142.
42. More recently, screenwriter Michael Eaton has said that 'the structure of the thriller narrative exactly corresponds to that of a rite of passage.' See his "Thrilling Rituals" in 'Sight & Sound', August 1991.
43. This, then, represents the breaking down of walls *of a kind*. Note that the word 'immure' comes from the Latin *murus*, a wall.
44. Gorham A. Kindem, "Towards a Semiotic Theory of Visual Communication in the Cinema", Ph. D. dissertation (Arno Press, 1980), p. 212. Note the citing of another Greek myth here.
45. Joseph L. Henderson, "Ancient myths and modern man", in Jung, op. cit., p. 132.
46. D. Spoto, 'The Art of Alfred Hitchcock' (1992), p. 354.
47. Actually, *Torn Curtain* attracted a surprisingly large audience, generating more domestic rental income (approximately \$7 million) for its distributor (MCA/Universal) than any of Hitchcock's other films after *Psycho*. Robert E. Kapsis, 'Hitchcock: The Making of a Reputation' (1992), p. 264 (n. 27).
48. This is one of those scenes mentioned in an earlier footnote whose conceptual basis seems to be Hitchcock's attempt to stretch or protract time and events.
49. Nonetheless, our feelings for Michael fluctuate as the film advances. In the case of the film as first conceived, our feelings would have been admiring, if not without irony. Hitchcock originally wanted to end the film with Michael, having arrived in Sweden, burning Lindt's formula in the fire. But commercial considerations precluded such a scene. See L. Furhammar & F. Isaksson, 'Politics and Film' (1971), p. 141.

50. A film like *The Birds* also seems to posit 'mathematical logic and romantic inconsistency' as the way to go, inasmuch as the film ends with the Brenners prudently fleeing their home but taking the emblematic love-birds with them. (Cf my point above about the show of fellow-feeling in the *Torn Curtain* bus sequence.) In turn, I see that ambiguous ending as akin to others (e.g., of *Shadow of a Doubt*) where the filmmakers seem torn between regret for a lost paradise (with connotations of closure and 'incest') and acknowledgment of the need for 'life' to renew itself (by allowing the wider world to re-enter). As the present text emphasises, *Torn Curtain* seems to be about the need to think 'dualistically'. The phrase 'mathematical logic and romantic inconsistency' particularly reminds me of Charles Dickens's critique in his novel 'Hard Times' (1854) of the mechanical Mr Bounderby, 'a man who proceeds upon the principle that two and two are four, and nothing over, and is not to be talked into allowing for anything over'.

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### ODD SPOT: 'G-R-O-M-E-K'

Hitchcock, we now know (thanks to research by Dan Auiler and Bill Krohn), regularly watched other directors' movies, often privately at the studio but also at Gary Graver's repertory cinema in San Francisco (where Hitch would invariably be accompanied by wife Alma). In 1954, when Hitch was making *Rear Window* for Paramount, that studio released the colourful spy comedy *Knock On Wood*, set in Paris, Zurich, and London, as a vehicle for Danny Kaye. Sadly, Norman Panama and Melvin Frank's script and direction were pedestrian; however, the film still proved a success at the box office. Hence, perhaps, shortly afterwards, Hitchcock dusted down the script of his 1934 spy classic, *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, set in the Swiss Alps and London, and began remaking it: he wanted to show how such a story *should* be done, and to achieve another popular success for Paramount after *The Trouble With Harry* (1955) had proved rather too specialised in its humour for general audiences. There is plenty of evidence that Hitchcock indeed saw *Knock On Wood*, but perhaps none more striking than the name of one of that film's bumbling, ill-fated spies, Gromek (Leon Askin), who twice spells out his surname in full - almost exactly as the bumbling, ill-fated character named Gromek does in Hitchcock's spy drama *Torn Curtain* (1966). The fact that the latter film climaxes in a theatre, at a performance of a ballet, offers a further parallel with the earlier film. [This 'Odd Spot' was inspired by a query posted on the <alt.movies.hitchcock> newsgroup.]

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