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EDITORIAL

WELCOME, READER, TO THIS 29th issue of 'The MacGuffin'. Despite promises made last time, it arrives very late. But I believe it is a substantial issue, providing stimulus for thought that will be taken up in subsequent issues and hopefully elsewhere. (My article herein called "Basically English", analysing *The Pleasure Garden* and *Family Plot* and asserting the importance of several 'English' qualities in Hitchcock, can be modified or expanded, in whole or in part, for other publications, if anyone out there wants to extend an invitation. I would appreciate the opportunity.) I can say now, though, that our next issue will be the long-promised book reviews issue, and will follow soon.

As for the 'MacGuffin' website (www.labyrinth.net.au/~muffin), it continues to attract new readers. I will do my best this year to make some of its content less ephemeral than in the past - for one thing, by expanding the section called 'Selections' (based on items already posted and then taken down again for reasons of space). Also, I'm currently reading a stimulating little book by Grahame Smith (Emeritus Professor of English Studies at the University of Stirling) called 'Dickens and the Dream of Cinema' (2003). It may not be as *original* as its author believes - an earlier book exists that I love, called 'Dickens: The Dreamer's Stance' (1965), by Taylor Stoehr, and which covers similar ground yet is never mentioned by Smith. Nonetheless, I foresee that Smith's book, drawing extensively on concepts and strategies of Walter Benjamin, will provide me (and readers) with a springboard for a year of posts and discussion on the 'MacGuffin' website! Advance 2004!

Smith and I certainly agree that Charles Dickens loved melodrama (see this issue) and took every opportunity to embody its forms and latent insights in his novels. A typically fine passage from Smith's book:

Dickens understood that the violent contrasts of melodrama, its reliance on coincidence, and its unexpected connections between people and things made it the perfect vehicle for his fictional exploration of the modern world as it was coming into being, above all in its manifestation in urban life. (p. 98)

I wish to thank the people who have contributed in various ways to this issue. Michael Walker is an inveterate attendee at film retrospectives and silent film festivals, as befits his being a splendid critic who for many years has written for 'Movie' (UK) and who is a notable contributor to 'The Movie Book of Film Noir' (1993), for example. He has a Hitchcock book or two coming out soon, including his essays in 'Unknown Hitchcock' edited by Ian Cameron. (Incidentally, 2004 looks like seeing a continuation of the flood of Hitchcock books generally.) Michael has written "Antecedents of Hitchcock: two unlikely candidates" which appears below.

Another fine English critic is Philip Kemp, back again in these pages with a book review which is printed below. It originally appeared in the 'Times' Higher Education Supplement, and I thank Philip for making it available. I also want to thank Inge Pruks whose alertness sparked the 'Odd Spot' in this issue referring to a possible influence of Samuel Beckett on the soundtrack of *Rear Window*. As for our regular 'team' of critics who contribute 10-best lists to us each year, they are back in this issue (and will be back again next time as we have some catching up to do).

To everyone, good viewing.

Antecedents of Hitchcock: two unlikely candidates

By Michael Walker

IT IS A COMMONPLACE that there are no new stories, merely old ones recycled in different forms and with elements combined in different ways. Filmmakers freely admit that they rework the plots of the past, and it is not difficult to trace common threads and patterns in movies: this is a fundamental feature of, for example, genre studies. Even Hitchcock, a number of whose films are seminal, drew freely on earlier sources, as Ken Mogg stresses throughout 'The Alfred Hitchcock Story' (Titan Books, London, 1999) and - with reference to *Vertigo* (1958), the film in question here - in his article "The Fragments of the Mirror: *Vertigo* and its Sources" in 'The MacGuffin' #11 and #25. Occasionally, however, one finds antecedents to a particular work which are surprising. In 'Movie' 29/30 (Summer 1982), I argue that, in translating Libbie Block's novel 'Wild Calendar' (1946) into the movie *Caught* (1949), director Max Ophüls and screenwriter Arthur Laurents reworked the story so that it became quite astonishingly similar in structure to that of (one half of) George Eliot's novel 'Daniel Deronda' (1876).

This article looks at two films which, in retrospect, can be seen to have elements which are surprising anticipations of *Vertigo*. The first is a one-reeler directed by Léonce Perret in 1910, a film so obscure that, when it was shown in 2002 at the Cinema Ritrovato festival in Bologna, it was known only by its Dutch release title, *Het Onvoltooide Portret* (*The Unfinished Portrait*). Bernard Bastide, who co-edited (with Jean A. Gili) - and researched the filmography for - a recent anthology, 'Léonce Perret' (AFRHC & Cinteca di Bologna, 2003), informed me that he had been unable to identify the original French title of the film, which means, in effect, that one cannot be certain that the film - for all its resonances with his other work - was indeed directed by Perret. The other is a relatively well-known Hollywood movie, *The Enforcer* / *Murder Inc.* (Bretaigne Windust, 1950). But *The Enforcer* is a gangster movie about a police investigation into the organisation known as 'Murder, Incorporated': not exactly an obvious source for Hitchcock.

Léonce Perret (1880-1935) is not a widely-known figure in film history. However, with Il Cinema Ritrovato currently showing his films over three successive years (2002-04) and with the publication (albeit, thus far, only in French) of Bastide and Gili's anthology on the writer-director, one trusts that this will change. His most famous film is probably *Le mystère des roches de Kador* (1912), remarkable for its early use of the cinema itself in a psychoanalytical context. In the introductory chapter

to 'Endless Night: Cinema and Psychoanalysis, Parallel Histories' (ed. Janet Bergstrom, University of California Press, 1999), Bergstrom herself gives this film pride of place, discussing it in some detail.

As archivists and critics have rediscovered Perret's films, some have commented on their anticipations of Hitchcock. This shows perhaps most strongly in Perret's understanding of the nature of the cinema itself; several of his most distinctive films deal with film-making or film-viewing - *Le mystère des roches de Kador* includes both. In his 1923 version of *Koenigsmark* (much better than Maurice Tourneur's 1935 remake), at the crucial point when the heroine receives the news that her husband has died of sunstroke in Africa, she is actually watching a home movie of him on his African safari. After she has received the news, Perret shows several frames of the home movie in close-up, inviting us to contemplate the husband and his companion as shown in the frames. The close-up is enigmatic, and it is only after the film's twist (which I won't reveal) that we grasp just how sophisticated Perret's use of the film-within-the film has been.

In an essay, "Léonce Perret, le dernier symboliste", in 'Léonce Perret', Dominique Paini mentions how *The Unfinished Portrait* (as I'll call it) is a fascinating anticipation of *Vertigo* (pp 117-8). His account is brief; mine will be a little more detailed, but it is limited by the fact that I've only seen the film once, and am writing now from notes taken over a year ago. Slightly longer, at 369 metres, than a standard one-reeler (200-300 metres), the film begins in a hunting lodge, with Pierre (Marc Mario) painting a portrait of his wife Jeanne (Fabienne Fabrèges, a Perret regular) in her hunting outfit. When they are subsequently out hunting, Pierre embraces Jeanne at the same time as he reaches for his shot-gun, and accidentally discharges it, killing her. Grieving for Jeanne and unable to finish the portrait, he returns to Paris. There in a café he encounters, by chance, Jeanne's double, Madeleine (Fabrèges) and immediately chats her up. But, when he subsequently visits her in her apartment, Jeanne's apparition enters the room (clad, in the manner of movie ghosts, in a white nightie), sees them together on the sofa and recoils. Pierre is disturbed by the apparition, which in effect blocks his romantic advances to Madeleine: he leaves. Subsequently, he invites Madeleine - whose response to the invitation reveals her own romantic hopes - to his apartment, but, when she enters, she observes him at his desk, with Jeanne's letters and looking at her photograph. He doesn't realise that Madeleine is watching him; she doesn't reveal her presence. When he leaves the room, Madeleine - noticing the likeness - compares herself in a mirror with the woman in the photograph. She then makes herself up to look like Jeanne, so that, when Pierre returns, he thinks that she, too, is Jeanne's apparition. She tells him

who she is, but the film ends at this point, with him still unsure how to react to the situation. I assume that the ending is missing.

Even without the coincidence that one of the women in *The Unfinished Portrait* is called Madeleine (albeit the 'wrong' one), the film seems like a summary of key aspects of *Vertigo* (I am assuming that the plot of *Vertigo* is familiar to readers of 'The MacGuffin'). These include: the association of the beloved with a portrait; her 'death' (here, genuine) in an incident which the hero feels is his fault (here, correctly); the grieving hero meeting a woman who, played by the same actress, strongly resembles the dead woman; this woman allowing herself to be transformed (here, transforming herself) out of love for the hero into the dead woman's exact double; the hero's psychic confusion over the identities of the two women. It will be noted, by those who have read the novel on which *Vertigo* was based - 'D'Entre les Morts' (1954) by Pierre Boileau and Thomas Narcejac - that there are elements in common here which are not in 'D'Entre les Morts', notably the use of the portrait. Nevertheless, 'D'Entre les Morts' effects the crucial rearticulation of the material which distinguishes *Vertigo* from this early film. In *The Unfinished Portrait*, because (a) the two women, unlike Judy and Madeleine in *Vertigo*, are not the same, and (b) Jeanne appears after her death as a ghost, the story is closer than *Vertigo* to Freud's formulation of "The Uncanny" in his 1919 essay (published in *The Pelican Freud Library* No. 14, Penguin Books, 1985). It's as if *The Unfinished Portrait* represents a core narrative, dealing with loss, mourning, and the ghost-like terrain of 'the uncanny' which *Vertigo*, following 'D'Entre les Morts', deconstructs. The material of the uncanny is certainly present in *Vertigo*, but it is re-presented as illusion: a ghost-like 'possession' (of Madeleine by Carlotta Valdez) is exposed as a masquerade; a double is revealed to be a fraud; the supernatural turns out to be a fiction, crafted and staged by a murderer, Gavin Elster.

Dominique Païni suggests that the plot of *The Unfinished Portrait* evokes that of the symbolist novel, 'Bruges-la-morte' (1892) by Georges Rodenbach; on 'The MacGuffin' website, Ken Mogg has made the same suggestion concerning Rodenbach's novel and *Vertigo*. It is indeed likely that behind many works - literary and cinematic - there is a lineage, stretching back to a seminal work (or works) in the past. Nevertheless, the use of the portrait in the two films is not in either 'D'Entre les Morts' or 'Bruges-la-morte' (I am going on the synopsis on 'The MacGuffin' website), so that another thread is in play here. Those intrigued by the (in fact, very common) association of a portrait with death in both literature and film are referred to a special edition of the bilingual (French and English) magazine 'Iris', (No. 14-15, Autumn 1992) devoted to "The Painted Portrait in Film" (and edited by Dominique

Païni and Mark Vernet): see, especially, the articles in the issue by Thomas Elsasser and Susan Felleman.

The Enforcer has a special status in Hitchcock's work: it makes an appearance in one of his films. In *I Confess* (1953) as Father Michael Logan (Montgomery Clift) walks the streets of Quebec, trying to decide whether to give himself up to the police for a murder he did not commit, he passes a cinema showing the film, and looks at - and reacts to - a publicity still (in the cinema's display) showing a man in handcuffs flanked by two police officers. It was my sense that the depicted still does not refer to a scene in *The Enforcer* (it doesn't) that led me to rewatch the film.

One reason why Hitchcock might have been happy to include this particular film in one of his own is as a tribute to Robert Burks: *The Enforcer* was the film Burks made as director of photography immediately before *Strangers on a Train* (1951), i.e., it was his last film before he began his long period of association with Hitchcock. It is also a film of contested authorship: filmographies today routinely record that Raoul Walsh had a hand in the film's direction. The only source I have traced for this story is an interview with Martin Rackin, the film's scriptwriter, in 'Présence du Cinema' 14 (June 1962). Since this is not a readily available source, I'll quote what Rackin said: 'I wrote the script of a film called *The Enforcer*, which is perhaps my best scenario. The direction was credited to Bretagne Windust, a young theatre director from Broadway. After several days, he was evidently so weak and incapable that Walsh was summoned. He directed the entire film, giving it its violence and brutality' (p 12).

But this 'violent and brutal' film, too, turns out to have elements which anticipate *Vertigo*. In this case, the elements are fragments rather than a complete story, but they are intriguing. As in *Vertigo*, the hero is associated with the police (here, he's the assistant DA), and is called Ferguson (Humphrey Bogart). The opening scenes depict Ferguson's attempts to keep a terrified mobster, Rico (Ted de Corsia), from being killed so that he can testify against Mendoza (Everett Sloane), the head of 'Murder Incorporated', an organisation of professional killers. Ferguson fails: in his fear, Rico attempts to escape from police custody by climbing out of a high window, and when he changes his mind and tries to return to safety, Ferguson is unable to hold on to him, and he slips, falling to his death. Although the man falling to his death on the hero's account occurs at the end of the first act, rather than the first scene (as in *Vertigo*), it is similarly devastating for the hero. In *Vertigo*, its effect is psychological: Scottie Ferguson's vertigo haunts the rest of the movie. In *The Enforcer*, the impact on the hero is professional: with no witnesses left to testify against him, Mendoza will walk free tomorrow.

In both films, then, the fall and death mark a rupture, and the scenes which follow have a different feel. The ensuing narrative in *Vertigo* explores Scottie's psychological state: the scenes have an oneiric feel, as if Hitchcock is suggesting that the narrative should be read not realistically but as expressing the inner world of his hero. The ensuing events in *The Enforcer* are, by contrast, *narratively* complex. As Ferguson and the investigating police officer Nelson (Roy Roberts) review the evidence against Mendoza, the film moves first into flashback, then into a series of flashbacks within the main flashback, as different characters tell their own stories. This is not a character's inner world, but a narrative of past events. However, because the events are presented in the order in which they came to the attention of the police, in narrative terms, they function, rather, as the pieces of a puzzle which (a) have to be fitted together to form a coherent chronology and (b) are sifted through to find a detail which doesn't fit, which could lead to an unexplored avenue.

Vertigo, too, depicts a murder mystery, but Scottie does not grasp this until close to the end, when he suddenly realises that Madeleine and Judy, her 'romantic replacement' are in fact the same woman. And the crucial piece of evidence that 'doesn't fit' in *The Enforcer* also concerns a woman's identity: Ferguson realises that the gangsters have confused two women, and murdered the wrong one. A connection here with *Vertigo* may seem tenuous, but, crucially, in a statement to Ferguson and Nelson, the woman left alive, who now calls herself Teresa Davis (Pat Joiner), gives the murdered woman her own past identity - as Angela Vetto - as a way of warding off her anxiety that she should have been the victim. (As a child, Angela and her father witnessed a murder by Mendoza: hence his concern to have them both tracked down and killed.) In other words, Teresa/Angela quite consciously attempts to 'switch pasts' (in effect, identities) with the murdered woman in order to hide her own past. And in the first half of *Vertigo*, Judy impersonates the real Madeleine Elster, who thus - in some sense - dies in her place. There is a similar 'point of disturbance' here. In *The Enforcer*, one woman is killed in place of another, and the latter retrospectively attempts to bestow on the victim her own past identity. In *Vertigo*, one woman assumes the identity of another, in order that the latter can be murdered without anyone realising that it is murder. In both films, the woman left alive knows that she is assumed to be dead, which causes her a great deal of anxiety. And in both films, the hero is in the dark, struggling to disentangle fact from fiction. The details are different, but the inner core of the stories is strangely similar.

Perhaps it is simply coincidence that there are these echoes of *The Enforcer* in *Vertigo*. But, I am certain that Hitchcock, working at Warner Bros. when it was made

there, would have seen the film (not least because it is, in effect, advertised in *I Confess*), and it is possible that certain elements stuck in his mind, to be reworked later during the development of *Vertigo*. Nor is *Vertigo* the only Hitchcock film to contain elements from *The Enforcer*. The gangsters dispose of the bodies of their victims in a swamp, and, in one scene, we see a station wagon, containing a woman's body, being hauled out of the swamp. Here, quite clearly, is an anticipation of the final shot of *Psycho*.

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BLOOPERS

In 'Odd Spot' last time, in line 6, the phrase 'in a created theatre' should of course have read 'in a crowded theatre'.

Best films of 2002

The view from Down Under!

Here are our three Australian critics' ten-best lists of 2002. (Their lists for 2003 will appear next time.)

Four films received two out of three possible votes, namely, *The Piano Teacher* (Michael Haneke), *Yi Yi* (Edward Yang), *Pollock* (Ed Harris), and *Mulholland Drive* (David Lynch).

Our three critics are: author and film critic Adrian Martin, who co-edits the 'Rouge' website (www.rouge.com.au); Tom Ryan, freelance critic and principal film reviewer for the 'Sunday Age', Melbourne; and Fiona Villella, who co-edits the 'Senses of Cinema' website (www.sensesofcinema.com). I thank them, one and all! (KM)

Adrian's list

Baise-moi (Coralie Trinh Thi and Virginie Despentes, France)
 The Piano Teacher (Michael Haneke, Austria)
 Yi Yi (Edward Yang, Taiwan)
 Pollock (Ed Harris, USA)
 Mulholland Drive (David Lynch, USA)
 Bully (Larry Clark, USA)
 Italian for Beginners (Lone Scherfig, Denmark)
 The Devil's Backbone (Guillermo del Toro, Mexico/Spain/USA)
 8 Femmes (François Ozon, Italy/France)
 Va Savoir (Jacques Rivette, France/Italy/Germany)

Tom's list

1. Yi Yi
2. The Gleaners And I (Agnes Varda, France)
3. L'emploi du temps/ Time Out (Laurent Cantet, France)
4. Atarnajuat: The Fast Runner (Zacharias Kunuk, Alaska)
5. Ali (Michael Mann, USA)
6. Last Orders (Fred Schepisi, UK)
7. The Piano Teacher
8. Under the Sand (François Ozon, France)
9. Adaptation (Spike Jonze, USA)
10. Pollock

Honorable mentions to *The Circle* (Jafar Panahi, Iran), *The Son's Room* (Nanni Moretti, Italy), *In the Bedroom* (Todd Field, USA), *Bloody Sunday* (Paul Greengrass, UK), and *Mostly Martha* (Sandra Nettelbeck, Germany)

Fiona's list

Corpus Callosum (Michael Snow, Canada)
 Domestic Violence (Frederick Wiseman, USA)
 Dream Work (Peter Tscherkassky, Austria) (short)
 Le Fils/ The Son (Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne, France/Belgium)
 Mulholland Drive
 Silence...on tourne/ Silence...We're Rolling (Youssef Chahine, France)
 The Universal Clock: the Resistance of Peter Watkins (Geoff Bowie, Canada) (documentary)
 Unknown Pleasures (Jia Zhang-ke)
 Vou para casa/ I'm Going Home (Manoel de Oliveira, Portugal/France)
 What Time is it There? (Tsai Ming-liang, Taiwan/France)

With a few not very far behind: *L'emploi du temps/ Time Out*, *Ghost World* (Terry Zwigoff, Germany/GB/USA), *Baise-moi*, *Bloody Sunday*, *Donnie Darko* (Richard Kelly, USA), *Où gît votre sourire enfoui?* (Pedro Costa, France), *Sauvage Innocence/ Wild Innocence* (Philippe Garrel, France).

BOOKS REVIEW

What you see, what you 'get'

By Philip Kemp

Durgnat, Raymond: 'A Long Hard Look at *Psycho*' (BFI Publishing, 2002; 248 pp; pb)

Moral, Tony Lee: 'Hitchcock and the Making of *Marnie*' (Manchester University Press, 2003; 215pp; pb)

RAYMOND DURGNAT, WHO DIED recently, was one of the liveliest, most stimulating and, sometimes, most infuriating of film critics. His mind, ceaselessly enquiring and inventive, sparked off ideas, insights and pan-cultural cross-references ad lib, so that his writing is scattered with a restless patchwork of speculative parentheses, often upholstered with question-marks. Untrammelled by orthodoxy or dogmatism, he valued exploration far above consistency, and would quite happily turn around and demolish his own argument just to see where the volte-face might lead. At times his questing, impressionistic style of criticism could turn frustratingly nebulous, but an irrepressible joy in the infinite potentials of cinema and its processes always shone through. In an obituary tribute in 'Film Comment' Richard Combs wrote: 'Durgnat hardly ever seemed to operate in the realm of first-person opinion but instead mined an amplitude of possible responses to, and meanings within, a film.'

'A Long Hard Look at *Psycho*' was Durgnat's last book, completed shortly before his death (although a collection of his essays is promised). It's also one of his best. In terms of format, it might at first sight seem surprisingly predictable for such an unconventional writer. In the traditional style of close exegesis, Durgnat examines Alfred Hitchcock's film scene by succeeding scene, from the opening credits to the final shot. But as always with this critic, what matters is less what he does than the way that he does it. Operating very much after the manner of a director, Durgnat varies his composition and focus – now moving in for the close-up scrutiny of a sequence almost frame-by frame, now pulling back to survey the film's psychological and emotional landscape.

The effect isn't unlike Douglas Gordon's art installation, *24 Hour Psycho*, first presented at the Hayward Gallery in 1996, in which the film is slowed down from its normal 109 minutes to run a full 24 hours. But where Gordon simply holds up each successive frozen frame for our appraisal, giving no greater weight to one than to another, Durgnat's approach homes in on those moments where Hitchcock's mischievous, meticulous exercise in 'playing [the audience] like an organ' (as he provocatively termed it) most cunningly works its effects, and teases out his secrets. In the famous (or infamous) shower scene, of course – but also at less obvious junctures, such as tracing the power-play dynamics underlying the scene where the fugitive Janet Leigh exchanges her car.

This process of subtly arousing our apprehension, Durgnat makes clear, starts right in with *Psycho*'s credits, where Saul Bass's slithering geometric title design and the stabbing violins of Bernard Herrmann's strings-only score combine to unsettle the audience before a single image has appeared on screen. Durgnat's account of this credit sequence is a tour-de-force of description in itself: 'Against the last [black] bands, streaking across at middle height, white angular flecks appear, like enigmatic signs, and turn out to be the tips and tails of letters, slashed laterally and vertically disaligned...'

Hard to imagine, perhaps, that anyone who reads this book won't already have seen *Psycho*, probably several times – but if there are any such readers, they'll surely be sent scurrying to their nearest video store, their curiosity intolerably piqued. Meanwhile, those of us who know the film well will want to sit through it again, if only to check our perceptions against Durgnat's. Time and again he prods our imagination with his insights – as often as not in casual *aperçus* with only tangential bearing on the subject at hand. 'By and large,' he remarks at one point, 'a film is like an iceberg: What You See Is a Lot Less Than What You Get. ("Get" in the American sense – "to intuitively understand"...)' Or, comparing Anthony Perkins with other Hitchcock leading men, 'From a certain angle, he's not so far from Cary Grant; but where Grant slid lightly and politely over everything, like a mildly irascible eel, Perkins put more depth, thoughtful or disturbing, into every role.' I suspect I shall never again be able to view Cary Grant in quite the same light.

It's Tony Lee Moral's ill luck that his book on *Marnie*, Hitchcock's next-but-one film after *Psycho*, should have appeared in the wake of Durgnat's idiosyncratic, illuminating study. At any time Moral's book would have made a fairly modest splash in the overstocked pool of literary Hitchcockiana, but set beside Durgnat his staid, conscientious account appears particularly drab. Unlike *Psycho*, which after some initial shrieks of synthetic outrage from the reviewers was rapidly recognised as one of Hitchcock's greatest films, *Marnie* has always been the subject of controversy: Hitch's last major film, or the onset of his decline?

In his introduction Moral makes grand proposals towards tackling this and other cruxes associated with the film, although his stiff academic phraseology ('I will cite why...', 'I will highlight multivocality...', 'I will unequivocally argue...') already arouses misgivings. In the event he largely sidesteps most of the more problematic aspects of the film, or ignores the contradictions of his own material. Much debate around *Marnie* has centred on the blatantly painted backdrops and crude back-projections used in several scenes, often cited as evidence of Hitchcock's growing indifference to technical matters. Moral concludes that Hitchcock was deliberately aiming for an expressionist, non-naturalistic effect, but his argument is undermined by the testimony he cites (from the film's assistant director James Brown) that a huge and much-derided backdrop of a docked liner was carefully designed to look convincing from the planned high camera angle – which Hitchcock then impulsively changed at the last minute.

For the rest, Moral plods dutifully through all the stages of the film's production, interviewing most of the survivors – actors and crew – as he goes. Much of this is informative, though Moral's clumsy, inelegant style hardly helps. (Nor do some elementary howlers – at one point we're introduced to a German film-maker called Weiner Fassbinder.) The debate over *Marnie* will undoubtedly continue; this study provides useful primary material, but it's a long way from concluding the argument.

[This review was originally published last year in the 'Times' Higher Education Supplement.]

Hitchcock's *The Pleasure Garden* (1925) and *Family Plot* (1976): basically English

By Ken Mogg

'Here's wishing Jill something greater than fame - happiness.'
- Patsy, in *The Pleasure Garden*

'In the end there will be happiness. From the tears of the past, the desert of the heart will bloom.'
- 'Henry', in *Family Plot*

Introduction to both films: beyond 'fakery'?

WHAT FOLLOWS IS AN essay on Hitchcock's 'Englishness' incorporating an analysis of his first and his last films. Or perhaps the other way about. At all events, I'll be drawing extensively on two studies: J.B. Priestley's 'The English' (1973) and Peter Ackroyd's 'Albion: The Origins of the English Imagination' (2002). Neither work mentions Hitchcock, though he of course admired Priestley's writing¹ and employed him to provide 'additional dialogue' for *Jamaica Inn* (1939). Significantly, both Priestley and Ackroyd wrote biographies of England's greatest novelist, Charles Dickens (1812-70). I'll have things to say below about the schoolboy Hitchcock's reading of both Dickens and the poet John Milton (1608-74). As Ackroyd notes, Milton and Dickens were 'visionaries', and I see nothing fanciful in applying such a term to Hitchcock too. I'll also be comparing below Hitchcock and Dickens as 'melodramatists'. Crucially, I believe Hitchcock's films, like Dickens's novels, to be full of 'life', or 'Will', that is, a life-force that is also a death-force. Dickens wrote: 'I am always deeply sensible of the wonderful exercise I have of life and its highest sensations.' For Hitchcock's part, I believe that he came to see 'pure film' as analogous to Will.

The titles sequence of *The Pleasure Garden* consists of a double-exposure done in the camera.² The credits occupy one part of the screen, a female dancer another. She is gyrating and shimmying with gusto, a spotlight shining down on her. Despite the use here of a *cinematic* technique, the immediate reference is unmistakably to the *theatre* and to *life*. The slanting beam of the spotlight anticipates the dynamic titles for *Young and Innocent* (1937), another of Hitchcock's films to draw, with Shakespeare, the lesson, 'All the world's a stage'.³ Equally, the dancer's energy anticipates the credits sequence of the suitably-named *Lifeboat* (1944), featuring a sinking ship's funnel in which the flame of the boiler can be seen still burning⁴ ...

That dancer, significantly, is Jill, the film's ambitious, star-struck 'bad girl'. Her fortunes will increasingly oppose those of the heroine Patsy, destined to stay in the chorus until marriage takes her away. In several respects *The Pleasure Garden* anticipates *The Ring* (1927). For one thing, the titles sequence of the latter shows a distant, lit-up boxing ring at the Albert Hall. Surrounded by near-invisible watchers, the ring suggests destiny and, indeed, the contending nature of Will itself.⁵ Also, the image is a *theatrical* one. Secondly, both *The Pleasure Garden* and *The Ring* desist from judging

their respective characters though remaining clear-eyed about moral issues. Tough-minded Jill will probably stay afloat for years in the particular London society she has been privileged to enter (though it isn't the *highest* society); roughly speaking, her counterpart in *The Ring* is Bob Corby, the devil-may-care boxing champion who finally loses both the girl Mabel and the prize-fight to his rival Jack. At the end, you feel that Bob will pick himself up and carry on his life regardless. Here's how I describe him in 'The Alfred Hitchcock Story' (1999):

But Hitchcock appears to bear no malice towards the worldly Bob. During the title-fight, Bob is depicted as the total professional - at one point he helps Jack to his feet after the bell. When the fight ends, Bob gives Mabel a wry smile and nods acknowledgment of his (double) defeat.⁶

In much of this I sense an affinity of Hitchcock to both a philosopher, the German Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860), and to the great English caricaturist and engraver William Hogarth (1697-1764). There's nothing esoteric in my reasoning, I think. On the basis of Schopenhauer's understanding that all creatures, great and small, are subject to blind Will, he arrived at an ethical and aesthetic worldview. I happen to believe that it comes close to Hitchcock's. Likewise, apropos Hogarth, Peter Ackroyd notes that much British 'low' humour has a 'levelling' intent⁷ (and we know from reports that Hitchcock was a deft exponent of such humour, not to mention a connoisseur of Hogarth's work).⁸ That leads Ackroyd to make this observation about such Hogarths as 'Beer Street' and 'Gin Lane':

Here dwell incongruity and difference but, curiously, in the light and atmosphere of London they are for a moment united. It may be wrong, then, to conclude that London artists are not capable of profundity.⁹

In such a context, I find significant Patricia Hitchcock's testimony: 'I became aware as I got older that my parents were never judgmental of others'.¹⁰

Next, some introductory remarks about *Family Plot*. In several ways, it resembles *The Pleasure Garden*. The worldly ambition of kidnapper 'Eddie Shoebridge'/'Arthur Adamson' and his partner Fran contrasts with the 'muddling through' of kooky Blanche, a medium, and her boyfriend George. Blanche is thus the equivalent of the suitably named Patsy in *The Pleasure Garden*. Neither woman is particularly sophisticated and each is a typical Hitchcock heroine in having a lot of the would-be mother about her. In fact, I intend to show that both films pivot on the maternal instinct which, along with the sex instinct, is a key manifestation of Will in living creatures. Not unrelated to the maternal instinct for Hitchcock was his ingrained Romanticism, and that's something else I'll be discussing below. For now, I think it sufficient to say that Blanche's excursions in a 'fake' spirit-world, plumbing even what she calls the 'outer darkness', are in some tour-de-force way the equivalent of the idyllic Lake Como sequence in *The Pleasure Garden*. Both films are about seeking to make the 'fake' authentic.

Further, both films are notable for sophisticated cross-cutting. By 1925, Hitchcock and his screenwriter Eliot Stannard were moving beyond Griffith's cross-cutting for narrative suspense à la *Intolerance* (1916) and were using the technique to make particular points. Here's an instance. Patsy, at home, relaxed in a cardigan, first meets Hugh, neatly dressed in a suit, when he comes to visit his fiancée Jill. Straight away the pair feel at ease with each other. When Patsy mentions that Jill has gone to a costume fitting, Hitchcock cuts to a title, 'The "try-on"', then to a showroom where an *exotically-dressed* Jill strikes a pose. On the right of screen, a fluttering male couturier undrapes his arm from the shoulder of Jill's boss Hamilton and attends to her. Next, Hitchcock cuts again to Patsy and Hugh enjoying afternoon tea, and then back to Jill and Hamilton also taking tea but amidst the showroom's *ornate* surroundings. And so on.

In the case of *Family Plot*, its now veteran director asked Edith Head to design four 'levels' of costume.¹¹ Adamson and Fran were to be seen as figures of fashion (cf Jill), George and Blanche as workaday (cf Patsy), wealthy Julia Rainbird as fastidious (cf Jill's wealthy suitors), and a figure like Blanche's client Ida Cookson as dowdy (cf Patsy's landlord and landlady, Mr and Mrs Sidey). It thus became quite easy for cross-cutting to hinge on the contrasts of the different milieus. From George in his cab-driver's uniform listening over his shoulder to Blanche in the back seat recount how the séance with Julia Rainbird has just gone, the camera (momentarily inhabiting a *literal* 'outer darkness') now suddenly swoops down to show Fran crossing in front of them on her way by foot to collect a ransom diamond from the Police Aviation Academy. Fran is wearing high boots, a broad-shouldered trench coat, and a long blonde wig for disguise. Shortly she will join Adamson in his car and tell him how the escapade with the diamond has just gone ...

In sum, both films range freely across their respective societies, being not unlike a Dickens novel in that respect. *Family Plot* is almost quaint in the way that it gradually draws together its hitherto separate plot strands (cf 'Bleak House', 1853) though the matter of a wealthy family's hidden shame is disclosed at the outset and not held back for the climax. Depicting a cross-section of society became in fact a regular device of Hitchcock's: as he said pragmatically of *Rear*

Window (1954), it wouldn't have worked as well without the sense of a representative cross-section of people living in the apartments opposite Jeff's.¹² Pointedly, many of those people are shown *suffering* the same everyday frustrations and disappointments that Schopenhauer's theory of Will insists is the very nature of humanity. I would invoke here a phrase of Goethe's - 'the dignity of significance' - while being mindful, too, of another of Ackroyd's observations, that *Cockney* artists and writers (in particular) are inclined to all-inclusiveness. 'There are [for example] images in Thomas More's writing', Ackroyd notes, 'which are ... of urban provenance, particularly those of the prison and of the theatre. What better metaphors could ... be chosen to represent the condition of the [whole] city?'¹³

* * *

[T]he pose, or poses, which [the Romantic hero] Byron adopted were 'a logical continuation of the Wordsworthian preoccupation with role'. We revert inevitably to the vocabulary and manner of the stage.

- Peter Ackroyd, "The Romantic Fallacy", in 'Albion' (2002), pp.436-37

Vertigo is a thriller whose subject is Romanticism. Madeleine awakens in Scottie the 'transcendental pretence', the belief that the Self is everything. But when he finally confronts that Self, he finds it treacherous ...

- Ken Mogg, 'The Alfred Hitchcock Story' (London, 1999), p.146

It is not irrelevant that Robert Browning parodied romantic sentiment through the voice of 'Mr Sludge', a fake spiritualist medium. One critic has discovered, in the narratives of British romanticism, a 'problematical self-consciousness' and a 'division in the self' ...

- Peter Ackroyd, 'Albion', p. 437

Excursion 1: the importance of being theatrical

Hitchcock, I have always insisted, was a Romantic-eclectic director. That is, despite his flights of fancy he was both down-to-earth and pragmatic. And all the more English for it. Take his eclecticism. How well this further observation by Ackroyd fits a filmmaker who once said that '[d]irectors who lose control are concerned with the abstract':¹⁴

In English literature, music and painting, heterogeneity becomes the form and type of art. ... The English have in this sense always been a practical and pragmatic race ... This native aptitude has in turn led to disaffection from, or dissatisfaction with, all abstract speculation.¹⁵

In *The Pleasure Garden*, photographed by Baron Ventimiglia, the first part of the Lake Como sequence is a Romantic idyll. We may discern here a mix of influences: Hitchcock's Catholic faith, his English upbringing, his German training. (No matter that the latter seems in some ways reacted *against*: Lang's *Die Nibelungen*, with its *studio* forests and landscapes, had preceded *The Pleasure Garden* by just a year.) But as the sequence draws to a close, the mood is undercut in a way that would become typical of Hitchcock. Realistically, he shows us how Patsy's dream of happiness is destined to be short-lived or, at best, compromised ...

Romanticism and German Expressionist cinema are associated, of course. However, several English poets and artists at roughly the end of the 18th century had first helped pioneer the new Romantic movement, then had led the way in questioning its excesses and darker aspects. I want to highlight one of those aspects. Robert C. Solomon calls it 'the transcendental pretence'.¹⁶ The fact is that even as Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-78) was proclaiming that all knowledge and goodness await discovery within, and that the individual Self is also the self of all humanity,¹⁷ Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) was concluding that the human mind is forever barred from knowing 'ultimate' truth. That is, the transcendental pretence had already been found wanting. Yet, as Hitchcock's *Vertigo* (1958) goes to show, it would take at least a century and a half before we could see fully what was involved. Pursuing the mysterious 'eternal-feminine' figure, Madeleine/Judy, the hitherto 'hard-headed' Scottie effectively embarks on a Faustian quest to find 'the key'¹⁸ that will free the two of them from the bonds of time and space (and causal interconnection). In other words, Scottie's wish to *ascend*, to make it up the church tower, is no mere phallic motif but rather the transcendental pretence itself. Here, then, is Robert Solomon's critique of that (very wilful) entity:

It appeared as innocence and common sense, but it embodied a profound arrogance that promoted self-righteousness, prohibited mutual understanding, and belied human diversity. Fully developed, the transcendental pretence has two central components: first, the remarkable inner richness and expanse of the self, ultimately

encompassing everything; and secondly, the consequent right to project from the subjective structures of one's own mind, and ascertain the nature of humanity as such.¹⁹

'It is suggestive', adds Solomon, 'that the transcendental pretence was discovered by a sociopath, free and alone with his self-aggrandizement'.²⁰ Scottie in *Vertigo* seems increasingly such a sociopath, and he lives alone. And his ambition to be Chief of Police is ambiguous. It certainly *could* suggest an urge for self-aggrandizement. In turn, that may have been what led Midge to break off their engagement back in college days.

Now, something very like the transcendental pretence (or its mindset), what Keats called 'the Wordsworthian or egotistical sublime', has been critiqued recently in Althusserian terms:

With the romantic centre interpellating the romantic poet into an enabling position, and the entire interpellary relationship being reflected in the [poetic] landscape, the universe appeared unified but it was an illusion. Because any ideology necessarily creates a cultural unconscious, or that which is not allowed in that ideology's imaginative representation of the world, there can be no universal consciousness.²¹

Quite so. But precisely because we can't know 'ultimate' truth, there remains room for Romantic hope. ('In the end there will be happiness' intones 'Henry' in *Family Plot*.) And certainly for panache. Which brings me to my argument of the next few pages. Hitchcock, I believe, had a wonderful facility to straddle interior and exterior 'worlds', and to be both introvert and extravert. Allied to this was how he seemed always to understand the importance of theatricality, role-playing, in everyday life. Thus provided, he was able to eat his cake and keep it too. That is, he retained his Romantic 'vision' while being capable of critiquing it and of avoiding most of its dangers. (The same can not be said of Scottie in *Vertigo*.) I like to think that he chose intuitively to out-Wordsworth Wordsworth when it came to this broad matter of theatricality, and that he emerged the better for it as a compassionate, perceiving individual.

This is not a simple matter (though my argument is). I ask the reader to keep in mind my point about Hitchcock straddling two worlds, roughly 'interior' and 'exterior', and my sense that 'theatricality' was something that he held to be literally vital. Palpably, Scottie's tragedy in *Vertigo* is that he fails in these respects. Indeed, the original novel, 'D'Entre les Morts' (1954), depicts Scottie as a failed 'artist' and one whose feelings of guilt after Madeleine 'dies' are described thus: 'It was will-power he lacked ... He would have had to pour out far more vitality than he possessed to keep her in this world.'²² A similar motif runs through the *film* - except that it has been displaced, by a form of dream logic, onto Midge with her shallow commercial designs.

Of course, 'theatricality' involves much more than energy or the life-force. I see good reason to think that Hitchcock was influenced by writer and playwright Luigi Pirandello (1867-1936) who in turn was influenced by the ethical worldview of the philosopher Schopenhauer. Pirandello, who in his family had known insanity, developed in his plays a form of 'pure theatre' that was also 'psycho-drama'. The title of his most famous work, 'Six Characters in Search of an Author' (1921), intimates how the play is about a group of despairing people who yet hope to be redeemed by an act of performance. In Hitchcock's *The 39 Steps* (1935), the character Mr Memory is like a Pirandellian character. Sadly, his life has revolved around just 'facts' - fifty new ones to be learned every day - and his death in the wings of a theatre is ironic, especially as he dies with a plaintive question to Hannay who has just been through a 'quickening' process in the real world that is quintessential Hitchcock.²³ (Hannay's descendent, Roger Thornhill, in *North by Northwest* [1959] will say near the end of that film, 'I never felt more alive!') 'Am I right, sir?' he asks, and an audience cannot miss how the answer may indeed redeem him. 'Quite right, old man', responds Hannay, generously ...

Here, Hitchcock may have had in mind the title of another Pirandello play, 'Right You Are (If You Think So)', which had its first London performance in 1925, when it starred Claude Rains. The title is not cynical but rather indicates the play's wise compassion (such as Hannay shows Mr Memory). Tellingly, the play ends to the accompaniment of ringing laughter, a comment on the assumption by some of its characters (and its audience) that truth is simple and knowable.

Does that not sound familiar, fellow Hitchcockians? It should do, for Hitchcock appears to have borrowed the effect to end the sound version of *Blackmail* (1929). There, the ringing laughter is accompanied by a jester's finger pointing directly at us, the audience. How very theatrical! Much of the later Hitchcock is surely in that moment; for example, the scene in *The Birds* (1963) where an hysterical mother breaks the 'fourth wall' of an invisible stage and addresses the camera with her accusation, 'I think you're evil!' Undeniably, there is a sort of cynicism here, and I would describe the moment as pure Schopenhauer (as well as pure Pirandello).²⁴ But it's Hitchcock's *own* theatricality that I want to discuss now.

Amongst British intellectuals in the 1920s it was widely held, with Nietzsche, that 'most people are dead'. So reports John Carey in his book 'The Intellectuals and the Masses' (1994). Hitchcock was influenced by the prevailing attitude, possibly from mixing with his fellow members of the London Film Society. In *Rich and Strange* (1932) he depicted a drab suburban couple, Fred and Emily, living in one of several identical row-houses. It comes as no surprise to hear Fred complaining at the start, 'I want more life - life, I tell you!' Another organisation to which Hitchcock belonged in the 1920s was the informal Hate Club which discussed (often with animosity) those elements of society that interfered with art and artistic cinema. Given Hitchcock's early bad experiences with distributor C.M. Woolf, one readily understands his apparently life-long distrust, and even fear, of such front-office types. Accordingly, he seems to have always seen himself as surrounded by death-dealers. How, then, was he best to safeguard his artistic 'vision'?

There are several answers to that question. One is 'cunning'. Another is what director Richard Franklin (*Psycho II*) on the 'MacGuffin' website recently called Hitchcock's 'chutzpah'. And yet another, but related, answer is most certainly 'theatricality'. Numerous anecdotes tell of Hitchcock's resort to 'drama' in his everyday life, from his smashing of a cup at every tea break, to his often notorious practical jokes, to his celebrated 'lift story' (which so bemused Peter Bogdanovich). What these anecdotes invariably neglect to mention is the vital reason for such drama on Hitchcock's part. I believe it concerns his endeavour at all costs to keep his 'vision' *alive* and to beat off the death-dealers. No settling into a rut for *him*, contra Fred and Emily in *Rich and Strange* or characters in certain Buñuel films ...

I want to continue being anecdotal for a moment. On at least one occasion - though I forget when and where - Hitchcock told an interviewer that as an inveterate theatre-goer all of his life, he had been careful never to lose his 'innocence'. He explained that by this he meant that he had refrained from concerning himself with behind-the-scenes matters of staging, the private lives of the performers, etc., so as to better surrender to the onstage illusion. This, from a master of *cinematic* staging! It is a telling instance of Hitchcock's belief in literal mind-over-matter and one that surely bears directly on his battle with the death-dealers to uphold his (Romantic) vision. Further, consider how he chose to appear in a prologue of *The Wrong Man* (1957) rather than in the film proper. As I noted in 'The MacGuffin' #20, the prologue is set on a deserted soundstage - deserted, that is, except for Hitchcock's backlit figure - whose visual expressionism links it to the equally shadowy and bleak New York of Manny Balestrero's story. And what we see in that latter place is *suffering* and un-freedom (the very place, in effect, that Scottie in Hitchcock's next film is seeking to 'transcend'), much as we've noted already in *Rear Window*. By filming himself in the prologue in this way, you could say that Hitchcock was asserting how (his kind of) an artist is *in* the world but not wholly *of* it. Alternatively, you could read the prologue as saying, 'There but for the grace of God, go I'.²⁵ Which brings me to Hitchcock's affinity with another Cockney visionary, John Milton.

For the book 'Dark Thoughts: Philosophic Reflections on Cinematic Horror' (2003), I recently elaborated my conviction that not only does Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960) allude verbally to Milton's famous sonnet known as 'On His Blindness' but itself employs Miltonic imagery. Notably, it likens Marion Crane and her sister Lila to 'angels' who lack the 'patience' to 'wait'. (The words just quoted all come, in the first instance, from Milton's sonnet.) Both sisters are given visual 'markers' that denote their 'angelic' status: Marion a halo-like shower-nozzle, Lila an 'effulgence' of garden rakes. Those images in turn relate to others such as the painting in Norman Bates's parlour of angels ascending into Heaven. We also hear such key lines as 'Patience doesn't run in my family, Sam' (spoken by Lila). But of course in Milton's sonnet the poet is not comparing himself to just *any* angels, and certainly not the common or garden variety that 'post o'er land and ocean without rest'! Rather, he thinks of himself, afflicted by blindness but still planning to write 'Paradise Lost', as like the *highest* angelic order, those who 'also serve' though they 'only stand and wait' (where 'wait' has the two senses of 'stay expectant' and 'attend'). It is a beautiful conceit on Milton's part - and I use that term advisedly! - which I believe *Psycho*'s director has in turn appropriated to himself, though perhaps not without a sense of irony. That is, I think that Hitchcock in *Psycho* is silently affirming his own feeling of being *graced* as an artist.

I hasten to elaborate. First, the connection to the prologue of *The Wrong Man* is both more direct and more worked out in *Psycho* than I have shown so far. Milton in his sonnet speculates momentarily whether he must not now turn to 'day-labour' like a common hired hand, then hears a personified Patience telling him that such thinking is needless and foolish. 'There but for the grace of God go I' is again the message. Further, the poet's distinction between two orders of angels effectively draws the same fine line between himself and others as Hitchcock does with his prologue. I'm reminded that John Steinbeck, who worked with Hitchcock on *Lifeboat*, considered the director a real English snob!

On the other hand, *Psycho* seems to imply that Marion Crane may not have died unredeemed. (Again one remembers the death of Mr Memory in *The 39 Steps*.) Such a reading is certainly consistent with Catholic doctrine. A recent article, "The Catholic Vision in Hollywood", by María Elena de las Carreras Kuntz, observes: 'The Catholic understanding ... is that human nature is weakened by original sin but capable of redemption through the exercise of free will.'²⁶ Hence perhaps the importance in *Psycho* of the moment when Marion sits down to reckon how much of the stolen \$40,000 she

has spent and will need to make up. At this instant she comes closest to the poet of the sonnet who speaks of 'my soul more bent' to present to God 'my true account'. Equally, she may here come closest to earning the sympathy of her 'director' who is nonetheless watching over her story impartially, without judgement.

This again is a beautiful conceit, not unconnected with theatricality. 'All the world's a stage, / And all the men and women merely players.' For reasons why Hitchcock would have identified himself with the poet of 'On His Blindness' I refer the reader to my article in the book 'Dark Thoughts'. What I would like to note here is further evidence that has occurred to me since that article was written, supporting its claims. For a start, we know that Hitchcock was very capable of loading a screenplay with symbolic meanings, if sometimes at the last minute. Writing on *Strangers on a Train* (1951), Donald Spoto tells of how its inspired profusion of 'doubles' imagery was 'quite deliberately added by Hitchcock' in notes dictated during final script preparation.²⁷ As for Milton's poem itself, I have come to realise that in all probability Hitchcock as a boy had to learn it by rote at his Jesuit school in London. Few poems more likely, in fact! Some of its concepts seem to have stayed with him all of his life. When he received the American Film Institute's Lifetime Achievement Award in 1979, he chose in his brief acceptance speech to suggest that 'this is what happens to good little boys'. (After all, his father, seemingly ignorant of original sin, had once called him 'my little lamb without a spot'.) In perhaps questionable taste, he added that he might otherwise have been found elsewhere in the room serving as one of the 'slower waiters'. The essential imagery and the pun are surely Milton's, right down to the contrast with the *lesser* 'waiters' from whom Hitchcock chose to differentiate himself.

As for the shower-nozzle in *Psycho* to which I have attributed halo-like properties - consistent with the 'angels' imagery and symbolism in surrounding scenes - I would note that halo-imagery was literally on Hitchcock's mind that year. Watching recently the Hitchcock-directed episode of 'Alfred Hitchcock Presents' called "Mrs Bixby and the Colonel's Coat" (aired 27 September 1960), I was amused by Hitchcock's introduction. Depending on how glowingly he spoke of his sponsor, a halo (identical in size to the *Psycho* shower-nozzle) would appear or disappear above his head.

I must now try to bring my argument full circle. Hamming-it-up, or a form of theatricality, was one of Hitchcock's ways of safeguarding his 'vision' that was already inherent in his first film, *The Pleasure Garden*. I would say that it was a two-fold vision (at least), being Romantic at the core but hedged around with a keen sense of how the world goes. In the Lake Como sequence, Hitchcock momentarily indulged his yearning for the 'lost paradise', the original 'pleasure garden' denied us since the Fall. As I'll discuss below, the scene actually gives us a snake-in-the-grass: the villainous Levet, reclining in a banded jumper on a turfey hillside, beyond which may be seen a phallic tower.

Rather than be a death-dealer himself, I like to think that Hitchcock chose to follow Somerset Maugham's admittedly ambiguous dictum: 'Only the artist, and maybe the criminal, can make his own life.' The artist in turn might help others to live. In 1936, Hitchcock did indeed write that it was the cinema's role to provide good healthy 'shake-ups' to audiences whose sheltering civilisation threatened to make them 'sluggish and jellified'.²⁸ Nor, he evidently felt, had very much changed by 1975 when he made *Family Plot*. As Adamson had foreseen, the kidnapping of the Archbishop from St Anselm's Cathedral goes off without a hitch. 'I told you it would be all right, didn't I?' Adamson asks Fran. 'People in church are inhibited. They don't jump up and make noises and run around. They're all too religiously polite.' In short, this scene accepts Nietzsche's premise that organised religion (if not society at large) is stultifying. It is Hitchcock's equivalent of the final scene of Buñuel's *The Exterminating Angel* (1962).

I have two further observations to make at this stage. The first concerns Blanche, the medium, in *Family Plot*. Hitchcock's attitude to her is divided, in keeping with the whole 'straddling two worlds' stance he always adopted. On the one hand, he had no hesitation in calling her (in a trailer) 'very definitely a fake'. What I think he meant by that is not just that Blanche isn't all she claims to be but that she isn't exceptional. She is neither truly religious nor truly Romantic, and yet she is a bit of both (as we'll see). And in being that much, she fits the critique of the contemporary 1970s world that *Family Plot* perhaps inadvertently offers. As I said before, Blanche is basically another Patsy, another 'slower waiter' if you will. Yet, on the other hand, she is made to carry the bulk of the viewer's sympathies. Her likeableness is palpable. So what exactly is she doing in Hitchcock's film?

Hitchcock originally saw Blanche as a Madame Arcati-like figure as played by the highly theatrical Margaret Rutherford in the stage and film versions of Noël Coward's 'Blithe Spirit' (1941;1945).²⁹ Madame Arcati in turn was originally to have been played by Coward's friend, the writer and actress 'Clemence Dane' (Winifred Ashton), whom Hitchcock had met when he was preparing to film *Murder!* (1930).³⁰ He seems to have been taken with this sociable, if eccentric, woman. If 'most people are dead', she at least was an exception, with a chutzpah matching his own. So I think we can

say that *Blanche* has something of the life-force about her. And with her own natural chutzpah (it may seem), she functions in the film to both critique and affirm Hitchcock's persona of showman-artist. Her wink that ends the film is his. It is benign. It shows a good conscience.

However, my final observation for now concerns the pointing jester in *Blackmail*. I said above that there *is* a degree of cynicism in that final gesture of the film, effectively confirmed later when the hysterical mother in *The Birds* tells us, 'I think you're the cause of all this - I think you're *evil!*' Not much benignity there! But let's not overlook the fact that the woman *is* hysterical and that she receives a sobering slap from Melanie Daniels for her trouble. If the woman had read her Schopenhauer, she would have understood that evil and original sin are the products of Will and that the malign and benign aspects of Will are always intertwined. Further, the moment is *especially* Schopenhauerian because it refers to the *subjective* nature of our viewing films - and everything else. Not for nothing did Schopenhauer begin his *magnum opus* by asserting, 'The world is my representation'.³¹ In studying Hitchcock's films, it is fascinating to observe his increasing philosophical sophistication over the years. Nonetheless, I'm convinced that his deepest insights were intuitive, following from his always-held conviction that 'life' is the film medium's essential subject. 'Just so long as it's not dull', the pragmatic side of him would add.

* * *

[T]he English depend more upon instinct and intuition than other West Europeans do. They are not unreasonable, but they are hardly ever strictly rational, and almost always they suspect the closed-in creations of pure rationality: they prefer the open-ended.

- J.B. Priestley, 'The English' (1975 Penguin edition), p. 10

Hitchcock's 'open-ended pessimism'.

- Neil P. Hurley, SJ, 'Soul in Suspense: Hitchcock's Fright and Delight' (1993), p. xiii

If we are to denote a London style, then [exaggeration] is one of its most significant tokens. It suggests aggression, and a measure of latent cynicism, which has never been absent from the city; it reveals also the need to impress, in a milieu where everyone and everything competes to demand attention, as well as an appetite for extravagance and theatricality. These are all qualities which may be traced in the line of Cockney visionaries, no less in Milton and More, Blake and Turner and Dickens, than in Chaucer.

- Peter Ackroyd, 'Albion', pp. 307-08

Excursion 2: 'mastering' the force

Melodrama fitted the liveliest art perfectly. As a form, it was born with Romanticism. Indeed, Jean Jacques Rousseau is credited with authoring one of the earliest, most literal melodramas, 'Pygmalion' (1770), in which music was used to express its sculptor-protagonist's moods, from dejection to elation.³² Very arguably, the form was a necessary invention, given both Romanticism's emphasis on subjectivity and the altogether new emphasis by poets and thinkers on life as a whole, including the lives of ordinary people. Contrariwise, Schopenhauer's notion of 'Will' is in many respects a Platonic ideal of melodrama applied to the cosmos. The English, with their openness to life, readily took to melodrama. As Ackroyd notes: 'One of the delights of the English theatre has always been its morbid sensationalism, not unconnected with a fascination for the "Gothic" and the grotesque. ... To laugh in the midst of horrors - it is another example of the heterogeneity, that medley of moods, that makes up the English imagination.'³³

Charles Dickens, loved melodrama and wrote his novels accordingly. He has been called the inventor of the modern 'thriller'³⁴ but he anticipated Hitchcock in plenty of other ways too. For example, both men took the minutest interest in how their work was perceived by the public - in Dickens's case, down to careful supervision of the illustrations that accompanied his novels, including any visual symbols therein. But it was the very force and rhythm of melodrama that always underlay Dickens's work. In 'Nicholas Nickleby' (1839) there's even a literal melodrama-within-the-melodrama, staged by Mr Crummles and his theatrical troupe and significantly named 'The Mortal Struggle'. In turn, that title echoes a phrase of the Victorians, 'the battle of life', which then provided the title of a Dickens short story.³⁵ Further, the best of Dickens's novels, like the best of the stage melodramas, might contrive to suggest the quality of open-endedness, for wasn't that the nature of the cosmos itself? The Victorians were not fools, and could see past the requisite happy endings with their multiple marriages, disclosures, etc., to reflect on the stylised form of the genre as a whole. Ackroyd has a related point. With the publication in 1859 of Charles Darwin's 'The Origin of Species', written in part like a novel and

'essentially a work of fiction', there occurred further 'blurring of boundaries and of genres, so instinct and vital an aspect of the English imagination'.³⁶

Of course, the first flush of Romanticism, with its considerable optimism, was well and truly past by the time Dickens came to write his mature novels. Accordingly, his melodramatic 'vision' was always going to be inflected by rather more than just the natural cynicism - not to mention 'levelling' humour - of the Cockney. In episode 12, "Forces of Nature", of Simon Scharma's recent 15-part 'A History of Britain' for the BBC, covering the period 1780 to 1832, Scharma notes the Romantic vision of Britain as a threatened paradise. The fall of the Bastille initially seemed to point a way forward for Britain, but when the terrifying reality of the French Revolution set in, the patriots turned rather to Nature itself. And even that entity soon palled in the hands of such writers as Dickens. With him, the hopeful figure of *the child* always remained a potential hero (as in 'Oliver Twist' [1838] and 'Great Expectations' [1862]) but his essential vision is an early modern instance of 'the lost paradise'. It is a vision which the coming of Freud and others served to underline and confirm.

One of the 'heroes' of Scharma's 'A History of Britain' is Thomas Bewick [1753-1828], the famed wood engraver of animal and bird subjects. It emerges that he was a campaigner for a universal ethics of sympathy based on our common shared nature - Scharma calls it a '*politics* of sympathy'.³⁷ I find this a fascinating contemporary instance of an understanding very close to that of Arthur Schopenhauer. It is to the latter I want to turn now, to further insist on *his* affinities with Hitchcock. Curiously enough, the revised edition of Bryan Magee's 'The Philosophy of Schopenhauer' (1997) notes of Schopenhauer, who went to school in England, how he was in many respects a spiritual Englishman. 'He is given quite often', writes Magee, 'to praising England for being "the most intelligent nation, which is in almost every respect the first in Europe" ...'³⁸ And the strong empiricist bent in Schopenhauer's approach to knowledge is thoroughly English. When Ackroyd notes how '[t]he history of English philosophy is also the history of empiricism' and quotes William of Ockham (c.1285-c.1349) - 'all knowledge is derived from experience'³⁹ - it's instructive to remember Schopenhauer's fierce insistence on the primacy of percepts over concepts ...

Now, I said above that I believe Hitchcock came to see 'pure film' as analogous to Will. That discovery, though, may be deemed to have precedents in the findings of such artists/thinkers as Richard Wagner, Walter Pater, and Paul Klee. For example, the latter wrote of art embracing 'the life force itself ... that Romanticism which is one with the universe'.⁴⁰ A very Schopenhauerian remark! D.W. Griffith, too, came close to Hitchcock's position when he called film the universal language, 'like music'. According to Lillian Gish, Griffith symbolised this vision in the recurring image of the 'eternal mother' rocking the cradle in *Intolerance*.⁴¹ In this, I sense archetypal evidence for why Hitchcock gives the maternal instinct especial importance in both *The Pleasure Garden* and *Family Plot*. Perhaps, as we'll see, there's also a connection with the emphasis on compassion in the work of the Schopenhauerian playwright, Pirandello.

For me, Will is not problematic. It is what springs to mind when I hear that most salient question of Parmenides (c. 510-450 B.C.), 'Why is there not nothing?' Schopenhauer of course equated it with Kant's unknowable *Ding-an-sich*. So far as we can understand Will's working in the phenomenal world, I value this passage from a book by eminent Australian biologist Charles Birch, 'Regaining Compassion for Humanity and Nature' (1993):

There is every reason to suppose that [at the very least] living creatures have an inner life and internal relations. ... [Moreover,] the concept of internal relations extends right down to entities such as protons. Of course, we don't talk about conscious feelings at that level, but we do suppose that something analogous to mind is present there.⁴²

Not coincidentally, Charles Birch is an animal lover. So was Hitchcock. His daughter has recently given an account of how the film *Born Free* (1965) moved both of her parents to tears.⁴³ In such a context, I find Schopenhauer highly relevant:

One must be blind, deaf and dumb ... not to see that the animal is in essence absolutely the same thing that we are, and that the difference lies merely in the accident, the [superficial] intellect, and not in the substance, which is the [W]ill.⁴⁴

I want to suggest that Hitchcock, in his Romantic way, and true to his English independence of mind, held a practically identical understanding of our basic creaturely nature, and that in the last analysis such an understanding constitutes what 'pure film' is all about. Consider for a moment *Frenzy* (1972). It begins of course with Wordsworth mocked, as a glib politician recites lines from 'The Prelude' and boasts of the Thames's new cleanliness. Then a cry of 'Look!' announces the discovery of a strangled woman's body in the river. Evil, we quickly gather, is still with us. And so it proves as

another of Hitchcock's 'lost paradise' metaphors, Covent Garden and its produce market, is shown to be home to the strangler, Bob Rusk. But Hitchcock isn't finished. He proceeds to remind us that *we all* literally partake of not just the produce but also the evil. The film's eating scenes are very pointed. The message - if we have the intellectual courage to admit it - is the same as that of the trailer for *The Birds*, of the Hitchcock-directed episode of 'Alfred Hitchcock Presents' called "Arthur" (aired 27 September 1959), and of several other instances in Hitchcock: we murder our fellow creatures but, rather like that glib politician, typically deceive ourselves by saying, 'Oh, but that's different!' That is, we're happy to take refuge in Hamlet's adage, 'There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so.' True, the philosopher David Hume would announce much the same thing (with no 'solution' offered), and I have to say that neither Schopenhauer nor Hitchcock became vegetarians. Notice, though, the applicability of Hamlet's words to what I was saying about 'pure film'. By taking thought, one may refine manifest 'content' into pure 'form' - just as, with Schopenhauer, he refined manifest Representation (appearance) into its underlying unity, Will (reality). 'Pure film' and Will are analogous.

Gentle reader, in this 29th issue of 'The MacGuffin', do I need to put more strongly or plainly the relevance of Schopenhauer to Hitchcock? I'm afraid that I must try, since some of Hitchcock's 'gatekeepers' are still sceptical! True! (On the other hand, I feel only gratitude to Prof. Tony Williams, author of 'Structures of Desire: British Cinema, 1939-1955' [2000], for his support lately.) Firstly, then, consider this, which has the merit of topicality. The main contention of the sumptuous catalogue called 'Hitchcock and Art: Fatal Coincidences' (Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, 2000), edited by Dominique Païni and Guy Cogeval, is that Hitchcock was a *Symbolist* filmmaker. Hitchcockians will only welcome that informed insight, so superbly illustrated by scores of fine plates of artworks and film frames. But as the 'MacGuffin' website demonstrated recently, *the philosopher of Symbolism is Schopenhauer*. Here is the start of an essay by Shehira Doss-Davezac tracing Schopenhauer's influence on both the Symbolist and Decadent movements:

Almost all the painters, writers and critics of the late nineteenth century in France frequently mentioned the influence of Schopenhauer on their ideas. Every literary critic and art historian writing on the period today associates the Symbolists with Schopenhauer.⁴⁵

The second point I would make about Schopenhauer and Hitchcock is as follows. Director Richard Franklin wrote on the 'MacGuffin' website: 'Identification with both sides of a conflict, and our oscillating between those two sides, is the basis of Hitchcockian suspense'. Reading that, I was instantly reminded of Schopenhauer's brilliant piece of empirical observation about the working of blind, amoral Will, that it *does not take sides*. Indeed, rightly understood, *there are no sides* but only the single ultimate reality, the *Ding-an-sich*. Thus suspense is an analogue for what it means to be human - both driven and riven - and again *Schopenhauer is its philosopher*. Schopenhauer himself drew parallels with music, contending that the progression of notes through time is immediately understood by the human mind as analogous to the progress of our inner strivings, such as produce happiness or sadness. A particular example he used was the phenomenon in Wagner's music known as the *suspension*:

It is a dissonance delaying the final consonance that is with certainty awaited; in this way the longing for it is strengthened, and its appearance affords the greater satisfaction. This is clearly an analogue of the satisfaction of the [individual] will which is enhanced through delay.⁴⁶

Such a passage could easily be adapted to fit, say, Hitchcock's use in *Family Plot* of twin plot strands that gradually come together. But here's Christopher Janaway's comment on Schopenhauer's musical understanding: 'Many have found these ideas reflected especially in the composition of Wagner's "Tristan and Isolde"'.⁴⁷ How apt! If Klee was Hitchcock's favourite artist, Wagner was his favourite composer. No fewer than three of his films allude specifically to 'Tristan'.

Thirdly, I offer this. I've just said that Schopenhauer has special relevance to Hitchcock's Symbolist (or mystical) tendencies and to suspense. I find the same philosopher no less relevant to an important aspect of Hitchcock's stock-in-trade: his dealing in everyday subjectivities and their opposite, the special capacities of the artist. On the one hand, Schopenhauer had a singular eye for matters of basic everyday psychology. He stressed, for example, that *boredom* is something fundamental in human experience, which we will do our utmost to minimise (even, say, by going to the movies). He knew, too, that much of our affective life is governed not by our intellects but by subconscious and unconscious needs and tendencies. Janaway writes:

Anybody wishing to describe the mind as a centre of pure perception and reasoning would have to overcome the considerable evidence Schopenhauer amasses (from anecdote, general observation, and introspection) for the contrary view, that our experience is largely governed by what fits our own aims, instincts, and emotional needs.⁴⁸

The above might serve as an epigraph for several of Hitchcock's films of the 1940s whose deluded hero or heroine must battle painfully towards the light.

On the other hand, when Arthur Schopenhauer, in his Romantic way, writes of the capacity of the disinterested *genius* to see with 'the clear eye of the world',⁴⁹ he himself is nobody's fool. He is another 'mastermind', like Milton or Hitchcock. Moreover, as Janaway paraphrases:

A great painter or sculptor *sees* with more intensity and more detail, and has greater ability to retain or reproduce what is seen. But perceiving merely what is present to hand is not enough: '*imagination* is needed in order to complete, arrange, amplify, fix, retain, and repeat at pleasure all the significant pictures of life'. Thus genius, in whichever art form, may go one better than actual experience: a great work of art may reflect reality all the better when the picture it conveys is a heightened one ...⁵⁰

Doesn't that summarise, with uncanny exactitude, what we know of Hitchcock's creative procedure - and his credo that a film 'must look real but it must never be real'?⁵¹ In any case, Hitchcock's genius has often been described in the very terms used by Schopenhauer. Screenwriter Stirling Silliphant, for one, has spoken of his amazement when, on giving Hitchcock a mere outline for a projected episode of 'Alfred Hitchcock Presents' (I think it was), the director went away and returned next day with the entire show blocked out in his head, right down to individual shots and elaborate camera moves.⁵² Or there's the story that Hitchcock himself told, of how he *dictated* to his secretary the entire rape sequence for *Frenzy* - over 100 shots - after lunch one day. And at a seminar for the American Film Institute in 1972, the following exchange occurred between Hitchcock and publisher James Silke, obviously slightly stunned:

Silke: Are you saying that when you see the material, you can visualize the entire movement of that film?
Hitchcock: Yes, definitely.
Silke: The whole film?
Hitchcock: Beginning to end.
Silke: Could you do that in 1922?
Hitchcock: Yes.⁵³

My essential point is that a writer like Schopenhauer - perhaps none better - can draw our attention, time and again, to what is central to Hitchcock and his work.

Time to turn to an analysis of Hitchcock's first and last films ...

* * *

Patsy Brand (Virginia Valli), a dancer in the chorus of *The Pleasure Garden* theatre, befriends Jill Cheyne (Carmelita Geraghty), just up from the country, and helps her get work at the theatre. Jill proves talented but ruthless, determined to be a star. Engaged to Hugh Fielding (John Stuart), who is about to go East for two years, she invites the attentions of wealthy admirers who may help her, including a supposed Russian prince (C. Falkenburg). Meanwhile, Patsy meets Hugh's friend Levet (Miles Mander), who smooth-talks her into marrying him. They spend their honeymoon at Lake Como. Afterwards, both Levet and Hugh leave for the Tropics, where Levet begins living with a native girl (Nita Naldi). Patsy learns the truth about her husband when, hearing that he's ill with fever, she rushes to join him. (Jill is about to marry the Russian, and refuses to help with the fare.) Confronted, Levet becomes half-mad, and drowns the native girl. Later, he lunges at Patsy with a scimitar, but is shot by the plantation manager. Patsy finally finds love and consolation with Hugh, nursing him through an attack of fever and returning with him to London.

Analysis of *The Pleasure Garden*

The above synopsis is based on the content of two non-identical prints of *The Pleasure Garden*. (A third print, held in the G. William Jones Collection, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas, has been ascertained by 'The MacGuffin' not to contain significant additional material.)⁵⁴ The first of these is the British NFTA print, screened on German television in 1999. Supplementing it is what I'll call the Rohauer print which seems to have been screened originally on Scandinavian television and also in the US. The NFTA print is the longer of the two. It includes the original titles sequence and intertitles, both undoubtedly designed by Hitchcock. But the Rohauer print has several extra scenes. On the other hand,

the Lake Como sequence is significantly extended in the NFTA print ...⁵⁵

Why the differences? Pat Hitchcock's recent book may give a clue. She writes:

Following the end of filming, my parents had their first - and rare - disagreement. It had to do with the editing of the picture, which my mother supervised; my father said it was 'flashy'! What I believe he meant was that the scenes were more edited than usual. With her editing skills, Alma had made the film more dynamic but might have overdone it a bit.⁵⁶

Accordingly, I wonder whether the film wasn't *released* in two versions, with Alma's cut perhaps approximating the Rohauer print and Hitchcock's version being represented by the staterlier NFTA print. The latter sacrifices some comedy business with Mr and Mrs Sidey, for example, but gives more footage to the audition scenes in the Pleasure Garden theatre and considerably extends the Lake Como sequence. However, I emphasise that this is just an hypothesis by me.

According to Dominique Païni, the title of *The Pleasure Garden* was 'borrowed from a London cabaret show'.⁵⁷ Curiously, though, there had already been a *play* of the same name, not otherwise related to Hitchcock's film or its source novel, which had been first performed at London's Regent Theatre in June 1924 and which is set entirely in a public park.⁵⁸ I mention this only as a reminder of the possible ironic or 'lost paradise' connotations of *all* these works. Another curiosity is this. Mrs Oliver Sandys (Marguerite Florence Barclay), the author of the novel on which Hitchcock's film was based, wrote many novels during her lifetime and several of them had theatrical settings. One of these, 'Mops', was filmed in 1932 as the musical *Born Lucky*, starring René Ray and John Longden (*Blackmail*) and directed by Michael Powell. Inasmuch as its plot concerns a humble waitress who becomes a successful singer and marries a writer, it bears an intriguing relation to Jill's story in *The Pleasure Garden*.

Now to try and clear up a confusion. Both Charles Barr ('English Hitchcock', 1999) and Patrick McGilligan ('Alfred Hitchcock: A Life In Darkness and Light', 2003) write that the film's action moves from London to Africa - Barr repeatedly says 'West Africa', McGilligan says 'an African outpost'. In fact, the film's dialogue never specifies Africa at all, instead using such non-specific phrases as 'out East'. For example, when Levet seduces Patsy in London by telling her how lonely he and Hugh will be while working for two years on a plantation, he uses the line 'I don't go back to the East for a month, darling - take pity on me.' (Subtle, subtle!) Later, in the NFTA print, once the action moves to the plantation, the music score added for the German TV screening begins to sound quite Oriental, using gongs and chimes - suggesting that the score's composer, at any rate, believed that the setting is the Far East⁵⁹ rather than Africa. In fact, as I say, the tropical setting is non-specific, and surely Hitchcock intended it that way. He did something similar in *Family Plot* when he deliberately chose not to specify what city (Los Angeles or San Francisco) the events occur in. ('I want it no-city', he reportedly instructed Assistant Director, Howard Kazanjian.)⁶⁰ Perhaps we may infer that Hitchcock in 1925 was already more concerned, at certain points in his film, with rendering a country of the mind, or subjective state, than with matters of strict realism.

The film's realism comes at the start, and is hugely impressive. As 'The Alfred Hitchcock Story' puts it:

The show business world of the opening scenes is lovingly detailed, literally and figuratively from all angles, right down to the symbolic moment when Jill first arrives at the stage door, to be promptly relieved of the contents of her purse by one of the shady types loitering there.⁶¹

I've already described the titles sequence. The film proper begins with a vertically-masked shot of showgirls scampering down a narrow spiral stairway and disgorging onto a stage. A high-angle view from the wings shows them spreading out, Patsy taking her place in the chorus-line. Momentum is maintained as the camera tracks past several obviously well-pleased gentlemen in the front row of the audience, though a lady at the end of the row is already asleep! A cut then brings us back to one of the men. He is elderly and slightly tipsy. He uses opera-glasses to inspect the line of chorines before raising his monocle to admire Patsy in particular. A subjective shot from his viewpoint shows us her legs. You surmise that Hitchcock had just seen E.A. Dupont's *Variety* (1925) which in similar fashion comments on the indolent spectators at the Berlin Wintergarten who use opera-glasses, lorgnettes, etc., to scrutinise the performers while staying oblivious of their individual humanity. If that's so, the line to *Rear Window* is clear.

The theatre's impresario, Oscar Hamilton, is introduced by a couple of sight-gags. When not preening his moustache (à la Inspector Hubbard in *Dial M For Murder* [1954]), he puffs on a cigar in front of a 'Smoking Prohibited' notice (shades of Captain Wiles in *The Trouble With Harry* tut-tutting hypocritically over a bullet-hole in a 'No Shooting' sign). A patriarchal figure, Hamilton will later avail himself of his position as Jill's boss to have his way with her (the casting-

couch syndrome returns in *Stage Fright* [1950] ...) ⁶² Not that Jill had ever expected anything different, we gather. And the theatre *is* called The Pleasure Garden ...

For the moment, though, Hamilton is concerned to please not himself but his patrons. When the elderly gentleman comes backstage and asks to be introduced to Patsy, Hamilton obliges. However, the old chap turns bashful. Indicating Patsy's blonde hair, he stammers that he has fallen in love with her kiss-curl. Patsy promptly detaches the phoney ringlet and hands it to him. 'Then I hope you'll be very happy together', she smiles. When the gentleman shows his disappointment at being so easily brushed off, Patsy chides him: 'Your love wasn't very lasting, was it?' She makes her escape.

The above exchange introduces the 'happiness' motif, significantly keyed to matters of illusion-versus-reality and youth-versus-age. All the characters are seeking happiness; few of them find it. Patsy's first marriage, to Levet, will quickly sour, and her very honeymoon at Lake Como will foreshadow her disappointment to come. However, Hugh will provide her 'second chance'. It's notable that the NFTA print of *The Pleasure Garden* ends with Patsy asking Hugh: 'We've both suffered ... what have either of us got to live for now?' To which he replies: 'We have one of the greatest things of life ... youth.' Whatever platitudes are here, there is also reasonableness and perhaps something more. A 'second chance' motif would recur in Hitchcock's work, and Donald Spoto has commented on its Catholic significance. 'Hitchcock shared an intuition', writes Spoto, 'that one can, in the last analysis, be freed from corruption only by guilt - by standing condemned and accepting forgiveness and redemption freely or enduring punishment and hoping for a second chance'. ⁶³ Suffering, the human condition, is part of the deal, so to speak - something which Milton's 'On His Blindness' certainly acknowledges. But, yes, it probably helps to have youth on one's side. The realist in Hitchcock notes as much, both in *The Pleasure Garden* and in *Family Plot*. In the latter, elderly Julia Rainbird observes that she has no time left for *trying*, only for *results*.

Realism, then, only *facilitates* Hitchcock's expression of how he sees the world. I've already noted an affinity of Hitchcock with both Hogarth and Dickens, all three Londoners given to some exaggeration of effect but always with an eye for the telling detail, the *realistic* detail. The couturier's arm draped around (the presumably bisexual) Hamilton's shoulder, for example. Or the up-to-the-minute touch that has a copy of the 'Radio Times' in Mr Sidey's lap as he happily beats time to the music in his headphones (the 'Radio Times' first appeared on 28 September 1923). Or the detail of the plank that bridges auditorium and stage at the 'Passion Flowers' rehearsal and across which Hamilton strides with the authority and nonchalance of his station and long practice ...

Mind you, Hitchcock's later *elaborateness* of detail isn't yet fully apparent in *The Pleasure Garden*. There's also some lack of rigour, as when a supposed point-of-view shot of the two girls' clothes being thrown in a heap as they disrobe for bed proves not to have its source in Patsy's glance that had preceded it. The later Hitchcock wouldn't have permitted such laxness.

On the matter of Hitchcock's even-handedness towards the two girls, I wrote in 'The Alfred Hitchcock Story' how they are like the two rival boxers in *The Ring*, propelling each other to their respective destinies:

Patsy is 'nicer', Jill has more God-given talent. Hitchcock simply tells their two stories, which are ultimately one story. ⁶⁴

All is One. Or Will. Or just 'pure film'. Which isn't to say that moral issues don't arise, only that Hitchcock doesn't foreclose on them. He was never particularly concerned in his films - not even *The Paradine Case* (1947) or *The Wrong Man* - with what Schopenhauer calls 'temporal justice' as opposed to 'eternal justice'. He clearly shows a degree of admiration for Jill. Significantly, her success can't be separated from the way she *uses* her God-given talent, and that takes chutzpah. Watch how she stands up to Hamilton from the start and demands a salary of £20 instead of the £5 he has just offered her. Or how she 'plays the field' of her admirers (Hamilton, the Russian Prince, et al.) to facilitate her new lifestyle and its attendant benefits. In accordance with the Biblical parable, she is not one to hide her talent under a bushel - another of the lessons of Milton's 'On His Blindness'.

Eliot Stannard's script for *The Pleasure Garden* has several interesting aspects. Stannard, eleven years Hitchcock's senior, may have been largely responsible for the sophisticated cross-cutting described earlier. Charles Barr refers to 'a succession of articles around 1920' in which Stannard 'showed that he was alive to the possibilities of ... cross-cutting and metonymy'. ⁶⁵ Further, Barr's 'English Hitchcock' quotes a passage from Stannard criticising scripts that have 'a series of exciting incidents' but no 'central motive [sic] or theme'. ⁶⁶ Such principles of construction very quickly became Hitchcock's own. (The question of whether or not he afterwards gave Stannard due credit may thus be academic. After

all, his own brilliant script for *The Ring* shows that by 1927 he had already mastered Stannard's principles.) More than forty years before *Topaz* (1969), flower imagery in *The Pleasure Garden* helps signal a 'lost paradise' motif. For a start, the theatre is called *The Pleasure Garden* and its current show is 'Passion Flowers'. In the Rohauer print, just after Levet has been introduced to Patsy and he has asked her, 'Do you believe in love?' (in the NFTA print, 'Love is a wonderful thing, isn't it?'), we see her shake her head - whereupon he removes a flower from his buttonhole and tosses it away. A moment before, *Hugh* had turned to the fickle *Jill* and had nervously fingered the flower she was wearing as if to reassure himself of her love. His gesture in turn harks back to that of the elderly gentleman who had reached for Patsy's phoney kiss-curl. *Hugh's* nervousness proves justified, of course. *Jill* acknowledges as much when, in a restaurant-cum-ballroom, she mocks him: 'Poor *Hugh* thinks he might lose his tender flower.' However, at the end of the film, he seems to have the last laugh. As he lies in his verandah hammock, recovering from fever but now assured of Patsy's love, the camera pulls back to disclose flowers blooming where they hadn't been apparent before.

Another visual motif, attributable to Stannard, is the film's sea imagery. It represents flux - not yet, as in the later Hitchcock, the Will itself or its direct effects. In the several intertitles featuring sea and clouds, the mood grows increasingly troubled. Such titles can occur even when the nominal setting is London, for Patsy is thinking of either Levet or *Hugh* out East. The restaurant sequence is pivotal for events to follow, being where the Russian Prince makes his successful play for *Jill*. In the background, visible through a window, the sea (or the Thames) ripples benignly - an image that made me think of the opening pages of Conrad's 'Heart of Darkness' (1902). The film's climactic scenes, in Levet's hut, also take place beside rippling water, that of a lagoon. But though the water again appears benign, events will show otherwise. Levet (who had told *Hugh*, 'There are as good fish in the sea as ever came out of it') kills his native mistress by drowning her - at the very moment she has thrust out her arms to him in gratitude for her supposed rescue. Soon afterwards, back inside the hut now lit by a lamp that throws garish shadows, he attempts to kill Patsy too - with a scimitar. The Exotic, supposedly tamed by Civilisation, may prove murderous yet. Call it the Other, that which lies deep within.

Levet is the prototype of a Hitchcock villain, and in his case the director allows that evil may corrupt a person beyond redemption. Superficially charming and a smooth talker, such a person typically preys on the goodness or frailty of his victims. One of Levet's descendants is Adamson in *Family Plot*. Prototypical, too, is the scene where Levet comes on Patsy in the street when she is feeling cast down by the behaviour of *Jill* (whom she has promised *Hugh* to steer from temptation). A bare stucco wall and a small high window make the shot look as desolate as any in Karl Grune's *Die Strasse/The Street* (1923). Levet's shadow preceding him, he is the Vile Seducer, perhaps the very Devil. In fact, the shot is the predecessor of the one in *Frenzy* in which Rusk in the street comes upon Babs who is feeling low, having just quit her job at the Globe public house. In a sudden deathly silence, Rusk's voice intrudes, preceding him with its fateful question, 'Got a place to stay?'

Another first for *The Pleasure Garden* is the fact that Hitchcock the animal lover included a dog (cf the French poodle and the British bulldog in *Easy Virtue* [1927], Towser in *Young and Innocent*, Jasper in *Rebecca* [1940]). This one sees through Levet from the start, growling at him. Also, he recognises *Hugh* from the start as a friend. His name is Cuddles and he belongs to Patsy (the Sideys take care of him when Patsy is abroad). To anthropomorphise for a moment, Cuddles's intuitions are not only suitably English but they show that he possesses what Carl Jung calls the 'natural mind'.⁶⁷ Of his own such faculty, Jung wrote that 'it is linked with the gift - not always pleasant - of seeing people and things as they are ... In this I am like a dog - he can be tricked, but he always smells it out in the end.'⁶⁸ Jung tells us that he inherited his 'natural mind' from his mother.⁶⁹ He adds:

This 'insight' is based on instinct, or on a '*participation mystique*' with others. It is as if the 'eyes of the background' do the seeing in an impersonal act of perception.⁷⁰

For what it's worth, the Rohauer print of *The Pleasure Garden* ends with Cuddles happy. Patsy and *Hugh* have returned safely to England, to be greeted by Cuddles and the Sideys. Cuddles is last seen expressing his pleasure by chomping through the cord of Mr Sidey's headphones.

Now, what Jung calls the 'eyes of the background' seems to me a pertinent phrase to apply to aspects of *Family Plot*. But first, in order to better understand the continuity of that film and *The Pleasure Garden*, we need to consider the latter's Lake Como sequence ...

* * *

The Lake Como sequence. This runs for nearly nine minutes in the NFTA print as against about four minutes in the

Rohauer print. Essentially it represents Patsy's view of her honeymoon. Hers are the great expectations - something deeper than just sensual delight - that are soon crushed when Levet tells her not to be 'sentimental' over the village bambinos, 'those filthy brats' as he calls them. What I would extrapolate from this sequence is how the maternal instinct has already a central place in Hitchcock's work. Always, like Jung, he seems to have sensed that powerful mysteries - or mysterious powers - are bound up with it. That is surely one reason why Blanche in *Family Plot* is treated by the film so sympathetically. Through her 'control' named 'Henry' (one of her 'children of the night'?) she is able to plumb the 'outer darkness' for the secret knowledge concealed there.

What is not yet present, in 1925, in Hitchcock's work is the *ambiguity* that he would attach to the maternal. Both the Italian village women and Mrs Sidey in London (for whom Patsy has been like a daughter) are depicted realistically. The threatening Great Mother figures, as in *Rebecca* (Rebecca herself), *Vertigo* (the mother superior), and *Psycho* (the spirit of Mrs Bates), lie well ahead. In those three films, religious iconography - the organ motif in Franz Waxman's score for *Rebecca*, say, which in turn evokes the sea - carries the sense of ultimate mystery which I would further link with the ambivalent life-death force, Will. However, there's already a moment when Patsy at Lake Como prays to a religious statue in the village. Also, the sequence evokes *both* sexuality and the maternal instinct, which are certainly the two primary aspects of the will-to-life. If we now understand that, for Hitchcock, sexuality is essentially masculine and the maternal instinct feminine, we are well positioned to appreciate what he is doing not only in *The Pleasure Garden* and *Family Plot* but also in a film like *Psycho*.

Concerning the latter, I wrote in 'The Alfred Hitchcock Story':

In the manner of [German] Expressionism, Marion wants a more 'authentic' existence, though in her case this simply means marrying Sam and having a child by him. Here, she is like Patsy in *The Pleasure Garden*, whom we see at Lake Como gaze wistfully at several mothers with their babies. A photo of a baby is on the wall of Marion's room as she packs to run away (presumably the photo is of Marion herself); the stolen money had been intended by Cassidy as a wedding-present for his 'baby' daughter. Thus the maternal instinct, even when travestied, is basic to *Psycho*.⁷¹

I'm saying that the sex drive, the maternal instinct, and the religious impulse run side by side in practically any Hitchcock film you might name. In their perfect conjunction, Hitchcock implies, we might have the 'lost paradise'.

Many of the director's deeper intuitions, then, were already being called into play when he filmed the Lake Como sequence. For example, what the Lake represents in terms of water symbolism is placidness, water *tamed*. This corresponds more to Patsy's ideal of happiness than the restless Levet's, though for a few short hours it is realisable, and both partake of it. Fittingly, the sequence begins in moonlight (or day-for-night, to be exact). A title speaks of 'Moonlight and soft music over the waters', and an artfully framed shot shows Patsy and Levet in evening clothes sitting at a small table beside the Lake, in a kind of bower. A rose lies on the table, and Patsy reaches out for it; not the first such gesture in the film. But when Levet, too brusquely, takes her hand for a kiss, the rose is crushed. As this is the couple's bridal night, we might see here a prolepsis of Patsy's de-flowering - yet her troubled expression in much of the remainder of the sequence seems to refer to something else. To intimations from her 'natural mind' perhaps?

Hitchcock once said that his own idea of happiness was 'a clear horizon'. Lake Como, of course, does not offer that, and in fact Baron Ventimiglia has photographed it as if it were a dark bowl. This was deliberate, for the lines from the 'Rubaiyat' that announce the 'morning after' contain the same idea:

Awake! For Morning in the Bowl of Night
Has flung the Stone that puts the Stars to flight.

Only, we may well feel, with Patsy, that something more than the stars have been put to flight, and that the 'Bowl of Night' has contained something almost sinister. Hitchcock undercuts his basic Romanticism in several ways. All of them are subtle - even the symbolism of Levet as a snake-in-the-grass - but none more so than the scenes of *the boat on the Lake*. The seductive title that speaks of 'soft music over the waters' refers to this boat containing a musician and his lady. Eventually, though, we realise that it has been paid for by Levet to be there - part of the bridal package bought by him for the occasion and including the hire of the vast bridal suite itself. Next day, to further sober us up, Hitchcock works in a shot of the same boat (or its twin), now moored and skeletal-looking. He would use a similar night/day effect in *Downhill* (1927) to characterise a Paris dance hall, first alluring, then drab.

The sequence overall is the basis of future sequences in such films as *The Manxman* (1928) and *I Confess* (1953), and even

arguably of whole films, such as *Vertigo*. When in the latter Scottie chides Madeleine/Judy, 'You shouldn't have been [so] sentimental', his remark is, well, a bit rich. The 'hard-headed' ex-detective has just indulged both himself and his director in the most sumptuous sequences of 'sentimental' Romanticism that Hitchcock ever filmed! But that's Hitchcock's chutzpah for you. In 1925 he had said, in effect, 'But I *like* sentimentality' - and had got away with it. Brilliantly.

* * *

Schopenhauer's thesis is that the world presents itself to us under two aspects - as Will and [Representation] - and that these two aspects are always distinct and always conjoined; that they totally embrace, or inform, one another. To speak in terms of either alone is to lay oneself open to a destructive duality ...

- Oliver Sacks, 'Awakenings' (Picador edition, 1982), p.219

On the coincidences, resemblances and surprises of life, Dickens liked especially to dwell, and few things moved his fancy so pleasantly. The world, he would say, was so much smaller than we thought it; we were all so connected by fate without knowing it and people supposed to be far apart were so constantly elbowing each other; and tomorrow bore so close a resemblance to nothing half so much as yesterday.

- John Forster, 'The Life of Charles Dickens' (1871-74)

Hitchcock several times discussed with me what the theme of [*Family Plot*] was and how it was structured. It was two separate stories about two different pairs of people - how they eventually criss-cross and pass each other. He was fascinated by that. And that really *is* the movie.

- Howard Kazanjian, interviewed on the *Family Plot* DVD

Analysis of *Family Plot* (1): a certain 'equilibrium'

Hitchcock's famous remark to the editors of 'Movie' (UK), about how 'everything's perverted in a different way',⁷² is pure Schopenhauer. On the one hand, the director is effectively acknowledging the existence of Will, which is in everything though it will finally play each of us for a sucker. On the other hand, there are the numberless *components* of Will, including human beings, none of which is the Thing-in-itself though all partake of it. They are all 'perversions', or diminishments, of Will, and Schopenhauer gave them the collective name of Representation. Moreover, because each of us is subject to the mental and physical categories of time and space, and of causal interconnection, we are further made powerless to know the whole picture. (How pathetic is the attempt of the hysterical mother in *The Birds* to attribute a cause of the bird attacks.) In short, we are all 'fakes', both existentially and intellectually.

And then there are the 'performances' people give. In *Family Plot* everyone is a 'performer', with greater or lesser degrees of 'sincerity'. Ernest Lehman's earlier Hitchcock screenplay, *North by Northwest*, had a similar premise: life is an insubstantial pageant, or game, full of 'nothing' where you thought there was 'reality'. Yet Hitchcock again manages to have his cake and eat it. Like the Lake Como sequence in *The Pleasure Garden*, the classic opening scene of *Family Plot* gives full bent to his Romantic intuitions while appearing to undercut them. The *basso profundo* voice of 'Henry' lampoons the possessed Regan in William Friedkin's *The Exorcist* (1973); a shot of 'Madame' Blanche (Barbara Harris) pecking through her fingers at her client, Julia Rainbird (Cathleen Nesbitt), would seem to tell us unequivocally that Blanche is a fake. Yet listen to the marvellous, swirling John Williams score, attend to the masterly economy of Hitchcock's camera moves (when he allows Leonard South to make them), note the modulated performances by two fine actresses. Perhaps above all, savour the plush, red décor of the wealthy Miss Rainbird's sitting-room, red being the colour of *life*. To shore herself against age and loneliness, the spinster has settled herself in a Tudor-fronted California mansion in which are beautiful objects that might do honour to the English good taste of Hitchcock himself: tall vases, fine silverware, leather-bound books, rich carpet. If all of this constitutes the *mise-en-scène* for simply a caustic satire on Miss Rainbird's gullibility, and perhaps of Hitchcock's audience, then it is extraordinarily painstaking. And such an explanation of the director's intentions doesn't begin to account for either the scene's power or, yes, its special *sincerity* on Hitchcock's part.

In this respect, notice too how Blanche is Miss Rainbird's counterpart - mirroring both her movements and her apparel. It is the first of several scenes that emphasise *rapport*. In her slightly kooky way (Hitchcock seems to have briefly considered Goldie Hawn for the part), Blanche is indeed a figure of life. She is first seen at the end of the brief credits sequence, her head seeming to emerge from swirling green 'ectoplasm' in a crystal ball (which may suggest a mandala symbol), and we hear women's voices singing. Both the 'ghostly' green colour and the 'ethereal' choir derive from

Hitchcock's cherished memory of seeing J.M. Barrie's 'Mary Rose' in 1920, starring Fay Compton. That play's effect, notes Cynthia Asquith, was indeed 'greatly enhanced by [the] haunting music'.⁷³ And of ghost stories in general, Peter Ackroyd cites the statistic that roughly 70% are written by English men and women.⁷⁴ His explanation? '[T]he island has always been filled with ghosts. ... They may be said to haunt the English sensibility. ... The English tone has been described as one of "romantic strangeness".'⁷⁵ Given that the splendid Barbara Harris plays Blanche to perfection, it seems almost un-gallant of Hitchcock to declare in a *Family Plot* trailer: 'Being a master spiritualist myself, I can assure you that Madame Blanche is very definitely a fake.' But anyway there you have it: the director's avowed identification with Blanche as a delver into life's occult mysteries - albeit with himself cast as her superior! Does that make him less, or more, of a charlatan? He carefully doesn't tell us! His insouciance is effectively another case of his saying, 'But I like sentimentality!' Another case of his chutzpah. Still, there's a clear connection with the wink that ends the film. It's Blanche's wink but in breaking the so-called 'fourth wall' (like the finger of the pointing jester at the end of *Blackmail*), it comes from Hitchcock. Far from being pretentious or trite, it is as apt a resolution to any film that poses 'Pirandellian' questions of the relation of cinema and audience (Bergman's *Persona* included) as one could ask.

Hitchcock, I'm convinced, intuited that a reason we go to the cinema is to try and regain a sense of wholeness, and with it our sense of humanity. Recall the importance he attached to giving us a cross-section of society. Here, I would ask the reader to consider what John Forster tells us so delighted Dickens - his intuition that everyone is 'connected by fate without knowing it' and that 'tomorrow' is very like 'yesterday'. In 'The MacGuffin' #20, I showed by analysis the bearing of such observations on Hitchcock's *The Wrong Man* where the paths of the 'right' man and the 'wrong' man cross at least once before their eventual uncomprehending (and indeed hostile) final encounter. The Forster passage seems to me even more pertinent to the effect Hitchcock wanted for *Family Plot*. In fact, I believe that the passage expresses something that most thoughtful or creative people have felt, notwithstanding that few of them have been as well placed as Dickens or Hitchcock to apprehend its truth to millions of readers or viewers. Boiled down, that truth represents our old friend, the notion that the Many is One. I'm not referring to the transcendental pretence - which Hitchcock saw through - but to Schopenhauer's understanding that Will and Representation are two sides of the same coin. If we were freed of the mental and physical categories of time and space and causal interconnection, such as Manny in *The Wrong Man* cannot begin to grasp (as I again showed by analysis) and which Scottie in *Vertigo* would 'transcend' if he could, we would perhaps enjoy a state of all-at-once-ness in which direct knowledge of the Thing-in-itself were possible. As things stand, all such intuitions are mere inklings of a much more intense state of apprehension and being.

Nonetheless, artists have always sought to find suitable forms to *represent* such intuitions. Hitchcock's *Torn Curtain* (1966), with its allusions to the Tower of Babel,⁷⁶ and *Family Plot* are two such representations, and I use Schopenhauer's term advisedly. It suggests modesty of intent, for one thing. Hitchcock (or a part of him) always knew that he was *faking* a knowledge he did not really have, for *nobody* has it though we may appreciate its forms when we encounter them in art, dream, etc. And the *quality* of the forms matters, of course. When Blanche goes calling on the 'A. Adamsons' listed in the phone book, amongst her encounters are a pair of twins, both motor mechanics. The effect is both comical and uncanny, for it sounds the film's main motif, of the search for interconnectedness which is bound to disappoint or end in bathos. (A variant on this effect is the film's 'Mondrian', the overhead shot in the cemetery that shows George [Bruce Dern] pursuing and catching up with Mrs Maloney [Katherine Helmond], widow of a murderer. Cornered, she reacts by kicking the gravestone of 'Eddie Shoebridge'. 'Fake!' she admonishes.) Manny's crooked double in *The Wrong Man*, the feuding Siamese twins in *Saboteur* (1942), and the plain-looking, open-necked twins on the bus in *Torn Curtain* provide further variants, again with obvious irony. Dickens, on the other hand, who must have been more taken with the whole idea, chose to give us the benevolent Cheeryble brothers in 'Nicholas Nickleby' ...

So why is Hitchcock so well-disposed towards that *other* fake spiritualist, Blanche? Or, perhaps better, why *shouldn't* he be? Remember we noted that Blanche and Patsy (in *The Pleasure Garden*) have much in common. Both are basically good people, and indomitable. Just as Patsy's would-be nemesis is the villainous Levet, so Blanche's is Adamson (William Devane). In addition, Blanche has chutzpah, like Madame Arcati in *Blithe Spirit*, and that is a quality which Hitchcock was the last person to underestimate. Some fine observations on the topic I am considering here are made by Eric Bentley in 'The Life of the Drama' (1965). Consider:

The limitation of [the] popular understanding of acting in everyday life is that it is marked with disapproval, applies only to hypocritical activity, and presupposes that most action is not acting.⁷⁷

Turning to Spanish-American philosopher George Santayana's 'Soliloquies in England' (a text, as we'll see, also endorsed by J.B. Priestley), Bentley then quotes this gem:

What ... could be more splendidly sincere than the impulse to play in real life, to rise on the rising wave of every

feeling and let it burst, if it will, into the foam of exaggeration? ... To embroider upon experience is not to bear false witness against one's neighbour, but to bear true witness to oneself.⁷⁸

However, even this idea of self-realisation through performance, or exaggeration, though very applicable to the Cockney in Hitchcock himself, doesn't quite say what I want to say about Blanche. First, then: Blanche doesn't know how good she is until she tries, really tries, and thereby releases her deepest intuitions. Second, I believe that Hitchcock took on board lessons he learned from the Italian Pirandello (whose fame was peaking in the 1920s) and ascribes them to Blanche's work as a medium. Bentley writes:

[Pirandello] went much further than [Erving] Goffman, and spoke, not just of *presenting* oneself, but of constructing oneself [and others].

...

[T]he ending of 'Right You Are' is a paean of praise to role-playing, to the theatrical view of life, for what it says is: whatever the veiled lady's lost birth certificate may have on it, ... [s]he plays the role each [relative] wishes her to play. Everyone would agree that this is most feminine of her, and Pirandello is adding that he considers it most human and right.⁷⁹

Gentle reader, I told you that Pirandello was a Schopenhauerian! When Bentley, in a further passage, likens the veiled Mrs Ponza's self-abnegation to Cordelia's eventual 'melting' towards her father in 'King Lear' - becoming 'as he would desire her'⁸⁰ - the essential *ethical* idea resembles Schopenhauer's teaching apropos the temporary stilling of individual will by great art, right living, etc.⁸¹

Now, for all her 'fakery', I see Blanche as a *facilitator*. She facilitates her clients' well-being (whether or not she exactly sees it that way), but, even more importantly, by being such a sympathetic character, she facilitates *our* entry into the film and thus its humanity. I'll make an analogy. Carl Jung wrote of the medieval practice of alchemy that it wasn't just phoney 'science' or 'chemistry' as those terms have meaning today: its formulae and mystique embodied the timeless quest for individuation, wholeness, the 'lost paradise' even. It's no accident, for example, that alchemy contains numerous - and psychologically potent - mandala symbols.

Likewise, it finally doesn't matter that dear Blanche is a 'fake' like everyone else in the film. On the contrary, she may the better *redeem* us in the Pirandellian sense, which is how I think Hitchcock sees her role. As a person, she is at times exemplary. In that remarkable opening scene, 'Henry' speaks of 'a holding back' because of 'selfishness' - not a reflection on Blanche herself. Rather, she strikes me as being already well on the way to overcoming just such obstacles to individuation. That is, she has an excellent set of life skills. Witness her virtuoso 'performance', so unselfconscious, in the scene where she simultaneously conducts under her breath a fierce argument with George over car keys, and, as 'Henry', emits extravagant whoops for the benefit of Ida Cookson (Louise Lorrimer) in the next room! Also, like Hitchcock, she seems to have the skill of deliberately keeping her 'innocence', of concealing from her left hand what her right hand is doing! Good for you, Blanche!

In essential respects, Blanche is the opposite of the ambitious Scottie in *Vertigo*. *He* is no facilitator - he will not 'melt' - and his tragedy is that of the *arrogance* of the transcendental pretence. By contrast, Blanche is naturally resourceful in helping others. She is potentially a Good Mother figure, someone scarcely seen in Hitchcock since *Juno and the Paycock* (1930). That, too, seems to me implicit in her wink at the end.

Mind you, the female and male principles perennially clash in Hitchcock, for he was a realist as well as a Romantic. Nonetheless, he lived in hope that they might be reconciled, and in that respect his 'solution' was no different from that of Wagner and of many others. In a famous letter of 1854, Wagner wrote:

The highest satisfaction and expression of the individual is to be found only in his complete absorption, and that is only possible through love. Now a human being is both *man* and *woman*, and it is only when these two are united that the real human being exists, and thus it is only by love that man and woman attain to the full measure of humanity.⁸²

There, I think, you have the main subject and message of *Family Plot*, and there isn't a lot that I wish to add. I watched Hitchcock direct part of this film, and I have seen the result many times. Also, I have now viewed the excellent Laurent Bouzereau documentary about it which is included on the DVD. (Perhaps my one major criticism of the documentary is

that it includes so much footage from the film itself, from every key scene, that viewing the film becomes anti-climactic as it has been divested of its narrative rhythm and power to surprise.) I feel strongly that *Family Plot* reveals part of the essential Alfred Hitchcock. So, briefly, here are two or three more observations that I like from Santayana's 'Soliloquies in England', as quoted by J.B. Priestley. After calling Santayana 'the visitor who came closest [in his views] to my own idea of Englishness', Priestley first quotes this:

... I could see clearly that this [post-Edwardian] England was pre-eminently the home of decent happiness and a quiet pleasure in being oneself. ... Such modesty in strength is entirely absent from the effusive temperament of the Latin, who is cocky and punctilious so long as his conceit holds out, and then utterly humbled and easily corrupted; entirely absent also from the doctrinaire of the German school, in his dense vanity and officiousness that nothing can put to shame.⁸³

Santayana, notes Priestley, considered England 'the paradise of individuality, eccentricity, heresy ...' Finally, we're given a couple of overlapping statements by Santayana that Priestley feels 'take us close to [the] secret of Englishness'. The first: 'What governs the Englishman is his inner atmosphere, the weather in his soul.' The second: 'The Englishman establishes a sort of satisfaction and equilibrium in his inner man, and from that citadel of rightness he easily measures the value of everything that comes within his moral horizon.'⁸⁴

It's true that producer David Selznick once called Hitchcock 'not exactly a man to go camping with'. Nonetheless, I believe Hitchcock to have found the 'equilibrium in his inner man' that Santayana talks of; and that by knowing how to film, if always obliquely, just such a wise self-possession and the knowledge it brings, Hitchcock was sharing with us his special genius. He certainly shares it with us in *Family Plot*. To me, that's a film which embraces 'the life force itself' and what Klee called 'that Romanticism which is one with the universe'.

But to show how little of the wisdom I see distilled in *Family Plot* is inadvertent, I'll conclude by analysing a very pragmatic aspect of the film. I mean its organisation of our sympathies and antipathies.

* * *

'Isn't muddle a better breeding ground for kindness and individuality than a world order that's imposed?'
- Agatha Christie⁸⁵

Analysing *Family Plot* (2): muddling through

The male and female principles contend in *Family Plot*, as in practically every Hitchcock film, but seldom look like coming to a rapprochement. To offset the sense of perpetual conflict, or just of emptiness, this genial film offers fleeting scenes of *rapport*. More often, though, we feel that something essential has gone missing, that the world is a disembodied place. Hitchcock switches our sympathies and emotions every which way, but ultimately the wink that ends the film tells us that he knew all the time what we wanted, and what we were looking for. *None of this is accidental*.

Now, I've already mentioned the 'rhyming' of the two central couples and I've referred to the significance of the twin motor mechanics. But opposing a real coming together, on every side there's fakery and 'deceit' (the working-title of the film) and also the sense of 'ghostly' absence. The latter extends even to the dialogue, such as Adamson's remark, 'A spirit is never at home' and the description for the police by the kidnapped businessman Constantine (Nicolas Colasanto) of how he'd been imprisoned in a room where a 'disembodied' voice gave him instructions. Appropriately, the film was advertised with the catchphrase, 'There's no body in the family plot!'

Just about the only image of *community* is that of the buttoned-down congregation in St Anselm's Cathedral, with some obvious irony. The *idea* of community is posited more by the absence of groups of people than their presence, so again there's no *body* to be found! The 'no-city' of the film is almost literally that at times: streets after hours with little visible activity except for a few passing cars; some isolated rural spots. Trade is generally slow both at the garage run by Maloney (Ed Lauter) at Barlow Creek and at 'Dave & Mabel's' café on the quiet upper reaches of Mount Sherman. (Perhaps it's significant, too, that when on Mount Sherman a sizeable party of people *does* appear, it's a pack of bikies, possibly Hell's Angels!)

Of his partnership, both business and sexual, with Fran (Karen Black), Adamson rather wilfully says, 'We move as one!' But before the end there will be signs that the partnership is cracking up. (Maloney's garage business with his wife has

already dissolved, following his fiery death on Mount Sherman.) On the other hand, our 'Everyman' couple, Blanche and George, have somehow muddled through in approved English fashion! All of which goes to show how carefully Hitchcock has been manipulating our hopes and feelings.

The film's *ground*, on which all of its moves occur, is sexuality, that single most potent manifestation of the will-to-life, as Schopenhauer always said. Critic Jack Foley is correct when he notes: 'There are a staggering number of sexual references in *Family Plot*'.⁸⁶ But, then, that was always pretty much the case with Hitchcock, going right back to *The Pleasure Garden*. In *Family Plot* emphasis is also given to the community that is *absent*, 'family' in the broadest sense of that term. So this is where our sympathies for Blanche the facilitator are made to come into play. She has a mother's role to perform ...

There's a whole pattern to this. Typically, whenever Blanche or George range about, they strike up a rapport with people. Ironically, this occurs more often with other people than with each other! With women, in particular, both Blanche and George bring out a warmth that is partly, at least, maternal. You can see it as George wins the confidence of Mrs Hannagan (Marge Redmond) in the department store, their identical red hair straight away making the point of their mateyness (facilitated by George's hint of a payment for information, of course!). The screenplay's description of the *mise-en-scène* emphasises the *feminine* and *maternal* aspects: 'The HUBBUB OF VOICES is mostly female, and the display counters show mostly feminine, intimate mysteries ...'.⁸⁷ Vera Hannagan works at the Playtex brassiere counter - she's '[a] mid-fiftyish SALESWOMAN who fills her [own] Playtex very well ...'.⁸⁸ Hitchcock modified this slightly in the filming, the pink tone of the décor now carrying much of the suggestiveness. Its reminder of the 'maternal' Blanche is intentional, of course. But, paradigmatically, the tone is abruptly shattered when the mannish Senior Saleswoman appears and orders Mrs Hannagan back to work. Paradigmatic, too, is how George *fails to deliver* on his promise of payment ...

Likewise, when Blanche herself goes investigating late in the film, it's clear that she has a winning way with people. Mrs Clay (Edith Atwater) in Adamson's jewellery store divulges her boss's private address - this for a total stranger with whom she is alone in the shop at closing time. (I give the scene just 5/10 for plausibility, it must be said.) And the hotel doorman, Pete, who supervises a row of cabs, greets Blanche as an old buddy when she asks him if he's seen George recently ('Hello, there, Blanche baby ...').

Both Blanche and George are hugely fallible, at times gauche or clumsy. George can be taken unawares or literally trip himself up. That's the very best part of the gag where he stumbles in the cemetery - he's already stumbling when he tries to avoid a grave, and so stumbles some more! Blanche, in gratitude to Mrs Clay, seems to want to tell the lady's horoscope, but guesses her star-sign wrongly and must beat a hasty retreat.

By contrast, Fran and Arthur for much of the film are depicted as smoothly, efficiently sexual in everything they do. Their relationship should be seen in the context of the film's seeming critique of modern life, circa 1975. Organised religion is particularly singled out. A teasing part of the scene in 'Dave & Mabel's' café is the arrival of 'the scarlet woman' for her assignation with the priest. The colour red is very pronounced in this scene: the café has homey red-checkered curtains and tablecloths, and Mabel herself is another redhead like George. Nonetheless, the young lady in the red dress doesn't really 'fit' the scene. In fact, she bears a striking resemblance to Fran: she is another 'modern miss'. I actually think of her as like Alice in *Blackmail* who visits the lecherous artist in his studio and dresses up for him in a tutu while he plays 'Miss Up-to-Date' on the piano.

On this reading, the priest is an out-and-out scoundrel, up there with Adamson! But, no, that's not how the film works, either! Hitchcock is not so much (or at all) judging the priest or his lady friend as presenting an interesting situation non-committally! I've suggested that the respect in which Hitchcock held the life-force is bound up with his concern with 'pure film'. I find that very healthy and non-destructive of him, frankly. For reasons I've given, I suspect that he often felt, with Hamlet, that 'There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so.' Short of murder, anyway.

To return to Blanche now. She is religious after a fashion, as *both* Patsy and Jill were in *The Pleasure Garden*. There's a dusty religious statue in a niche above her desk, and we hear her at least once pulling George up for blaspheming. So again our sympathies are being manipulated in favour of good Blanche! On the other hand, I've just spoken of the relativity of truth - *phenomenal* truth, that is. Accordingly, that religious statue *may* win Blanche points for 'goodness'. Equally, that same detail fits with the film's apparent critique of organised religion, especially modern Catholicism. 'See', it could be surmised, 'a good soul like Blanche, a former believer, has been *lost* to the Church and now resorts to occultism, to being a medium!' Fitting the same pattern, even some of the Church's priests now seem compelled to seek non-orthodox means of attaining solace ...

A lot is going on in *Family Plot*, but not all of it is fully communicated or fully realised. The funeral service in the quiet green cemetery at Barlow Creek uses a Mormon text. But why? May we infer that the Irish killer Maloney had been converted from Catholicism at some stage, perhaps when he married Mrs Maloney? In any event, Bill Krohn believes that Hitchcock felt strongly about the wording of that text with its emphasis on how Christ 'suffereth the pains of every living creature. ... And he does this that the Resurrection may pass on all men, that all may stand before him at the great and judgement day.'⁸⁹ Such a reference to the Resurrection matches a theme of *The Trouble With Harry* (1955), not to mention central themes of Dickens's 'A Tale of Two Cities' (1859) and 'The Mystery of Edwin Drood' (1870) respectively. However, any intended contrast by Hitchcock of heterodox and orthodox lifestyles, of small but vital rural community and big-city church with bloated congregation (and the rest of the world perhaps leading a spiritually 'disembodied' existence) doesn't really come across. Not that I want to impose any such pat reading on the film in any case! A general sense that something important is missing or stagnating but life goes bravely on (rather as in Dickens's 'Drood', his final, life-affirming work) engages me amply.

Speaking of Dickens, and life going bravely on, may bring me to my final point. The 'maternal' motif in *Family Plot*, which Hitchcock here clearly connects with goodness, comes to the fore again near the end of the film. It has been linked with Blanche but now it is Fran's turn to embody it. In *The Pleasure Garden*, as we saw, Patsy at Lake Como had yearningly eyed the local bambinos in their mothers' arms. Then, at the end, she nurses Hugh back to health (as Lisa in *Rear Window* nurses Jeff). In *Rich and Strange*, Emily actually says, 'A wife is more than half a mother!' In *Psycho*, although the 'maternal' theme is essentially satirised, one thing about Marion is very plain: her motivation for crazily scaling the \$40,000 is to have a child by Sam. (The novel reminds us that she is not getting any younger.) My point about Fran, then, is that she finally shows signs of rebelling against the ruthlessness of her partner, Adamson, who has announced that Blanche must die. And that this is very 'feminine', even 'maternal', of her.

Again there are precedents. It is basically a melodramatic thing. In Dickens's 'Oliver Twist', the hitherto submerged 'womanly feeling' (Chapter XL) of the moll Nancy finally compels her to betray Bill Sikes by arranging the abducted Oliver's escape. In Hitchcock's *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1956), the kidnappers are a childless couple, the Draytons. When Mr Drayton is ordered by his political bosses to kill young Hank, Mrs Drayton secretly facilitates Hank's rescue by his father. In *Family Plot*, Fran baulks at Adamson's plan to do away with Blanche. Detecting her resistance, he becomes increasingly wilful. 'Will you do as I say?' he demands. But when circumstances deliver Blanche to them, Fran panics. Her blunder in allowing Blanche to see the kidnapped Archbishop brings matters to a head. We sense Fran's resistance to her jeweller lover's 'practically flawless' schemes - to *the masculine principle run amok*. And *that* is part of our secret satisfaction when our 'Everyman' couple, George and Blanche, who are somehow so English, finally and literally slam the door on the matter.

Wink, wink, gentle reader.

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Notes

1. See S. Gottlieb (ed.), 'Hitchcock on Hitchcock' (1995), p. 131
2. I thank Michael Walker for this information.
3. Note, for example, the theatrical connotations of the *thé dansant* climax.
4. This sequence indubitably helped inspire the life-vs-death credits sequence of *Torn Curtain* (1966). See 'The MacGuffin' #27.
5. I believe that Christopher Morris has made a similar point.
6. K. Mogg, 'The Alfred Hitchcock Story' (uncut UK edition, 1999), p. 19
7. P. Ackroyd, 'Albion' (2002), p. 280
8. I thank Bill Krohn for telling me that Hitchcock owned several Hogarth prints. He also tells me that Hitchcock owned various editions of Dickens, including several sets of the original novels in their serial parts.
9. Ackroyd, p. 321
10. P. Hitchcock & L. Bouzereau, 'The Woman Behind the Man' (2003), p. 82
11. Quoted in Mogg, p. 180
12. See Truffaut's 'Hitchcock', any edition
13. Ackroyd, pp. 311-12. All-inclusiveness is also a trait of some Romantic writers, as I believe Jacques Barzun has noted.
14. See Truffaut, any edition.
15. Ackroyd, p. 448. Both Ackroyd and Priestley point out that eclecticism and being pragmatic are English qualities.
16. See R. Solomon, 'Continental Philosophy Since 1750' (1988), p. 1 and passim.
17. Solomon, p. 1
18. A quote from the film, of course. I see Hitchcock's *The Wrong Man* (1957) and *Vertigo* as companion-pieces in their philosophical understanding; I analysed *The Wrong Man* in 'The MacGuffin' #20.
19. Solomon, pp. 1-2
20. Solomon, p. 2
21. B. Garrett, "Poet as Prophet", on the www. Brenda Garrett teaches at the University of Alberta. There are, of course, other modern critiques of

- Romantic attitudes. I believe that Christopher Morris uses the writings of Paul De Man for this purpose.
22. Quoted in Mogg, p. 146
 23. I have analysed this 'quickenning' process on the 'MacGuffin' website. See, for example, the page on *The 39 Steps* that I have put up there.
 24. How pathetic, I suggest later, is the mother's attempt to attribute a *cause* of the bird attacks. And yet how Schopenhauerian that the viewer should be 'singled out' for blame. Of course, the real 'cause' is Will, which is everywhere and nowhere (in this phenomenal world), yet the mother has a point. According to Schopenhauer's *principium individuationis*, i.e., the principle of individuation, 'the [phenomenal] world is *my* representation'. Each *one* of us is bound in subjectivity, or illusion, and the need to attribute a cause is *part* of that illusion-making process. (The need to think in terms of time and space, which according to Kant and Schopenhauer are mental categories, is the remaining part of that process.)
 25. An emphasis on grace, detectable in Hitchcock's films, was no doubt a reason why some French critics considered him a 'Jansenist'.
 26. M. Kuntz, "The Catholic Vision in Hollywood", in 'Film History', Vol. 14, No. 2, 2002, p. 130
 27. D. Spoto, 'The Life of Alfred Hitchcock' (1983), p. 328
 28. See Gottlieb (1995), p. 109
 29. Cf Mogg, p. 180
 30. Mogg, p. 180. Additional information off the www.
 31. A. Schopenhauer, 'The World as Will and Representation', Vol. 1
 32. J.L. Smith, 'Melodrama' (1973), p. 1
 33. Ackroyd, p. 371
 34. O. Sitwell, 'Dickens', (1932), p. 15
 35. Cf Ackroyd, p. 258
 36. Ackroyd, pp. 258-59
 37. In episode 12 again.
 38. B. Magee, 'The Philosophy of Schopenhauer' (1997), p. 265
 39. Ackroyd, p. 384. Of course, like Schopenhauer, Hitchcock was thoroughly aware of the *drawbacks* (as well as *strengths*) of such knowledge. See his remarks to Oriana Fallaci in S. Gottlieb, 'Alfred Hitchcock Interviews' (2003), p. 61.
 40. P. Klee, 'On Modern Art' (1966), p. 43
 41. Gish says this in a documentary *Lillian Gish: The Actor's Life ...* (n.d.) that I watched recently.
 42. C. Birch, 'Regaining Compassion for Humanity and Nature' (1993), p. 223
 43. Hitchcock & Bouzereau, p. 214
 44. E.J. Hollingdale (ed.), 'Schopenhauer: Essays and Aphorisms' (1970), p. 189
 45. S Doss-Davezac, "Schopenhauer according to the Symbolists", in D. Jacqueline (ed.), 'Schopenhauer, Philosophy, and the Arts' (1996), p. 249
 46. Quoted in C. Janaway, 'Schopenhauer' (1994), p. 71
 47. Janaway, p. 71
 48. Janaway, p. 48
 49. Janaway, p. 63
 50. Janaway, p. 64
 51. See Gottlieb (2003), p. 70.
 52. The interview is in one of Patrick McGilligan's 'Backstory' series. I quote from memory.
 53. See Gottlieb (2003), p. 90.
 54. I thank Robert Eason, Dr Tinsley Sincox, and Dr Rick Worland, all of Southern Methodist University, for arranging for my 'representative', Kelly Greene (whom I also thank), to view the print of *The Pleasure Garden* held in the G. William Jones Collection.
 55. Both prints are available on DVD from a Hitchcock aficionado, Al Chafin, in Florida. Al's website has full details and is located at <www.AlfredsPlace.com>. (Mention us!)
 56. Hitchcock & Bouzereau, p. 42
 57. D. Paim, "All the World's a Stage ...", in D. Paim and G. Cogeval (eds), 'Hitchcock and Art' (Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, 2000), p. 245
 58. Beatrice Mayor's play is included in 'Plays of Today', Third Volume (1930)
 59. Or India. The novel's author spent her early years there. See O. Sandys, 'Full and Frank' (1941), Ch. 1.
 60. This is stated by Kazanjian himself on the *Family Plot* DVD.
 61. Mogg, p.12
 62. I'm thinking of the 'Laziest Gal in Town' number in *Stage Fright*. Actually, re Hamilton and Jill in *The Pleasure Garden*, I'm only speculating, or assuming, that he makes out with her. I wouldn't be categorical about it.
 63. Spoto, p. 17
 64. Mogg, p. 12
 65. C. Barr, "Stannard, Eliot", in B. McFarlane (ed.), 'The Encyclopedia of British Film' (2003), p. 633
 66. C. Barr, 'English Hitchcock' (1999), p. 25
 67. C. Jung, 'Memories, Dreams, Reflections' (1971), p. 68, including its footnote
 68. Jung, p. 68
 69. Jung, p. 69
 70. Jung, p. 68
 71. Mogg, p. 158
 72. See Gottlieb (2003), p. 51.
 73. C. Asquith, 'Portrait of Barrie' (1954), p. 34
 74. Ackroyd, p. 375
 75. Ackroyd, p. 376
 76. See 'The MacGuffin' #27.
 77. E. Bentley, 'The Life of the Drama' (1969), p. 184
 78. Bentley, pp. 184-85
 79. Bentley, p. 189
 80. Bentley, p. 190
 81. Cf Janaway, pp. 82-83
 82. Wagner, quoted in Magee, p. 387. Hitchcock, it's worth pointing out, often emphasised that he regarded acting as a very protean matter, even to the point where a good actor must, psychologically at least, be bisexual.
 83. Quoted in J.B. Priestley, 'The English' (1975 Penguin edition), p. 30

84. Both quotes in Priestley, p. 30

85. Quoted on the www in an article on Agatha Christie originally published in 'The Independent on Sunday', 4 October, 2003

86. J. Foley, "Doubleness in Hitchcock: Seeing the Family Plot", 'Bright Lights' #7 (1978), p. 16

87. *Family Plot* studio screenplay (#02079), January 13, 1975, shot 79, p. 43

88. *Family Plot* studio screenplay, shot 80, p. 43

89. See B. Krohn, "A Hitchcock Mystery", 'The MacGuffin' #27 (December 2000), pp. 2-4.

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ODD SPOT: THE SAMUEL BECKETT CONNECTION IN REAR WINDOW

Remember the hurdy-gurdy tune that is playing in *Rear Window* (1954) when Thorwald (Raymond Burr) shoos away the little dog that is sniffing in his flower bed - the little dog who is later found strangled? (For those who want to check, the tune begins at about the 53-minute mark of the film.) In one of Hitchcock's most complex - soundtrack-wise - of films, this touch is particularly inspired. The tune is based on Paginini's 'Carneval di Venezia' (heard during the 'railway carriage' scene in Max Ophuls's *Letter From An Unknown Woman* [1948]), which became attached, with undoubted ironic intent, to *two* tunes associated with the violent death of a dog (before *Rear Window*, that is). The first of these was the German drinking song 'Ein Hund kam in die Küche' ('A dog came in the kitchen'), the second the ditty 'Un chien vint dans l'office' heard at the start of Act II of Samuel Beckett's 'En attendant Godot'/'Waiting For Godot' (1952). In other words, Hitchcock's and Franz Waxman's use of the tune in *Rear Window* is proleptic, signalling the unfortunate dog's death at the hands of the murderer, Thorwald.

- Patrick McGilligan's 'Alfred Hitchcock: A Life In Darkness and Light' (2003) notes that the idea of the upstairs couple in *Rear Window* who put their dog in a basket and lower it to the courtyard (with its fatal garden bed) was sold to Hitchcock by screenwriter Whitfield Cook (*Stage Fright* [1950]) for a cool \$5,000.

(This 'Odd Spot' is based on an original insight of Inge Pruks.)

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