



Newsletter of the Film/Alfred Hitchcock Special Interest Group

# The MacGuffin

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## EDITORIAL

It's good to be back ... though with apologies to everyone for skipping a publication date. That's the privilege of a 'little magazine', I guess.

I thought our last issue had at least one thing going for it: the exactness of its references to particular films. As befits a newsletter, it didn't waffle!

Regarding this issue, I trust it meets the approval of Hitchcock enthusiasts especially. The main item is an analysis of Hitchcock and Cary Grant's first film together, **Suspicion** (1941). The article draws on one or two orthodox Freudian notions (e.g. of a death instinct) to reach some unlikely conclusions. Also, it suggests how the film is linked to the later **Vertigo** (1958) and **Psycho** (1960).

Reviewed in this issue is the book 'Cary Grant: the Lonely Heart'. Reading it, I sensed **Suspicion** might be telling more about Grant than audiences have thought. The book shows him to have been a mercurial yet perhaps rather shallow person. By the same token, the film incorporates some of co-star Joan Fontaine's own personal difficulties of the time. We're told that she was "suffering from an unsatisfactory marriage to Brian Aherne" and that "Hitchcock knew exactly how to use her nervousness and anxiety".

And speaking of a death instinct, I note the recent release of Paul Verhoeven's **Basic Instinct**. A newspaper review by one of our readers, Tom Ryan, calls it "a compelling depiction of the dark side of the male psyche" and mentions its explicit references to **Vertigo** - "but its knowingly over-the-top melodramatic style replaces that film's doomed romanticism with a hard-edged cynicism". Tom refers to the "brouhaha" that surrounded the film's release in America; for a caustic comment about that, see Irene Radek's column in this issue.

Two other books are reviewed this time: the stimulating 'Find the Director and other Hitchcock Games' and the splendid 'Alfred Hitchcock and the Making of **Psycho**'.

As for our next issue, it's scheduled for November. I've got some work to do meanwhile (writing about novelist Edith Wharton, whose 'The Age of Innocence' and 'Ethan Frome' are both in the film pipeline - see 'News'), so I can't promise to be punctual. But I'll try.

To everyone, good viewing.

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MESSAGE OF THE QUARTER: THOUGH 'THE MACGUFFIN' APPEARS TO HAVE BECOME LARGELY JUST A FORUM FOR HITCHCOCK ENTHUSIASTS AND SCHOLARS, IN THEORY IT WILL PRINT ANY INTERESTING MATERIAL ON FILMS - CONTRIBUTIONS, FORMAL OR INFORMAL, ARE INVITED ...

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LETTERS

Jennifer Winham, StKilda, Victoria, Australia.

I think my favourite Hitchcock is **Rebecca**; but I may be biased by the fact that I have enjoyed all Daphne du Maurier's books, and also by how, when I was a child, 'Jane Eyre' was compulsory reading.

(Editor's note. I think a lot of the film's fans share your identical bias, Jennifer! I've liked the novels 'Rebecca' and 'My Cousin Rachel' particularly - though I quickly gave up on the later 'The House on the Strand'. Anyway, a rather belated welcome to our SIG.)

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Bill Routt, Division of Cinema Studies, La Trobe University, Bundoora, Victoria, Australia.

Here's how Hitchcock is studied at La Trobe.

In 1993 Barbara Creed will be introducing a second year Cinema Studies subject on "Auteurism and Cinema", which will focus on Hitchcock. Hitchcock's films are often used in Barbara's subjects, which include "The Horror Film", "Feminist Film Theory", "Surrealism and Cinema" and "Psychoanalysis and the Cinema" as well as the above.

The two versions of **The Man Who Knew Too Much** as well as **Psycho** and **Marnie** are often featured in the first year "Introduction to Cinema Studies" subject.

There are no other subjects where one may be **certain** of finding the familiar profile, but quite a few where Hitchcock's work has made an appearance at one time or other. (I showed **Sabotage** in last year's "History of Sound Film" subject, **Shadow of a Doubt** has been used for "Close Analysis", etc, etc.) He is always lurking in the corridors somewhere.

Four staff members (Barbara, Chris Berry, Rick Thompson and I) are currently collaborating on a project to develop computer software for the analysis of films on laser disc, and our specimen film is **North by Northwest**. We will each develop a module around a topic related to the film, and the software will contain text and the ability to run extracts from the film to illustrate the points made. Barbara will be dealing with gender, Chris with ethnicity (an interesting, "invisible" component of that film), Rick with narrative, and I with authorship. Meanwhile, the Australian Film, Theatre and Radio School is working on more "production related" analyses, and firming up worldwide distribution deals for what we hope will be a joint venture.

Barbara's forthcoming book on the horror film will probably contain a chapter on **Psycho**, a chapter which will be the first full-scale discussion of the figure of the mother in that film.

\* \* \*

Professor Lee Poague, Department of English, Iowa State University, Ames, USA.

Please enrol me as a subscriber to 'The MacGuffin'.

I teach film in an English department, as part of what is becoming a "cultural studies" major. We have two "revolving subject matter" film courses, one at the junior level, though for most students it is their first film course, and a senior level seminar. I often team teach the junior course with Loring Silet; we tend to shift focus from one term to the next among auteurs, genres, and periods or movements. Hitchcock is often on the agenda (about once every five semesters); and a number of genres of current interest, especially noir and melodrama, encourage us to screen appropriate Hitchcock films even when he is not a special focus of attention. For that matter, we often use Bordwell and Thompson's 'Film Art' as a text, so will often show **North by Northwest** as instancing "The Classical Hollywood Narrative". I hope the near future will see me teaching a graduate class on "Hitchcock and the Philosophy of Criticism". I plan to use Bordwell's 'Making Meaning' to stage a conversation among Robin Wood, Raymond Bellour, Bill Rothman, and Tania Modleski.

(Editor's note. Many thanks to both Professor Poague and Bill Routt for responding to our call for information on how Hitchcock is being taught in academia - new readers might like to check out similar letters in the last issue. And how about that roll-call of some of the world's top Hitchcock experts at the end of Professor Poague's letter? I'm almost knocked out by it! Is there the slightest chance, I wonder, of our readers getting a précis of the resultant proceedings?)

Mind you, I hope Professor Poague has a sense of humour! The joke was on him and Donald Spoto recently - see 'Odd Spot' in this issue.)

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#### NEWS

(Readers are urged to send in reports and cuttings for this feature. Both general interest and Hitchcock-specific items are sought.)

#### The plot quickens

Fifty years ago there was George Polti's book 'The Thirty-six Dramatic Situations' where playwrights and scriptwriters could find 'instant' plots and subplots. The computer age brought such further aids for scriptwriters as 'Movie Master', which the Hollywood 'Writers Guild Journal' described in the 1980s as "a first-rate program for writing screenplays, sitcoms and stage plays".

Recently two more programs have been marketed in Britain to assist in script-related tasks like attaching a subplot to the main plot. One is 'Plots Unlimited' at £240 or \$555 Australian, the other is 'Collaborator' (a good deal cheaper). Both are reported to give value for money and to be a real help in tying loose ends.

Ironically, the same Hollywood Writers Guild that endorsed the earlier products now wants the new programs banned because they are putting some writers out of work ...

#### The Leopold and Loeb case filmed again

Quality low-budget films continue to be made, with or without computer assistance (see above). An instance is writer/director Tom Kallin's **Swoon**, which won the Critics Prize at Berlin this year. Its "seductive" account explores the interior world of Nathan Leopold and Richard Loeb, the notorious young Chicago murderers whose 1924 case inspired both Hitchcock's **Rope** (1948) and Richard Fleischer's **Compulsion** (1959).

Meanwhile, the famous defence attorney in that case, Clarence Darrow, has become the subject of a TV movie, **Darrow**, directed by John David Coles. Actor Kevin Spacey portrays Darrow as a man of compassion and every inch a pessimist. The Leopold-Loeb segment of the film begins with Darrow's words: "A true pessimist like myself knows that life is futile and his fellow-men are cruel, so that he expects very little and is seldom disappointed ..."

#### Strictly fun

Far from pessimistic - at any rate in the eyes of audiences - is the Australian 'David and Goliath' movie, **Strictly Ballroom**, made by first-time director Baz Luhrmann. Its ironic subject is backroom bickering in the dance world, and it features Sydney Dance Company lead Paul Mercurio. The film received a standing ovation at Cannes, where it won the Prix de la Jeunesse; and its 'feel good' message made it easily the most popular work with audiences at both the Sydney and Melbourne Film Festivals recently.

Soon to be published

Scarecrow Press in America have announced two forthcoming books on Hitchcock. The first, due out in paperback in September, is called 'Hitchcock and Homosexuality: His 50-Year Obsession with Jack the Ripper and the Superbitch Prostitute - A Psychoanalytic View' by Theodore Price. (The hardcover edition is already available, though it costs a rather forbidding \$100 Australian.) Coming later is 'The Soul in Suspense: Catholic/Jesuit Influences on Hitchcock' by Fr Neil P. Hurley.

Over the water, the British Film Institute has launched a series of 360 monographs about films. First title is 'The Wizard of Oz' by novelist-in-hiding Salman Rushdie.

Soon to be screened

Screen adaptations of classic literary works keep appearing. Anthony Hopkins is in two of them: Francis Ford Coppola's **Dracula**, taken from the 1897 horror story by Bram Stoker, and **The Trial**, adapted by Harold Pinter from the 1925 novel by Franz Kafka. Coppola is also updating Walt Disney's **Pinocchio**, with puppets rather than animation; the 1881 story was written by Carlo Collodi.

All the above are effectively re-makes of earlier adaptations. So, too, are a Latin-American co-production of **Oedipus Rex**, scripted by Gabriel Garcia Marquez, no less, and actor-director Bob Hoskins's adaptation of Joseph Conrad's 1907 'The Secret Agent', previously filmed by Hitchcock as **Sabotage**; it stars Gerard Depardieu. (Meanwhile the BBC is making yet another version.)

A version of Albert Camus's 1947 'The Plague', starring William Hurt, is currently in post-production. And Tim Burton (**Batman 2**) is filming the melodrama-cum-stage musical 'Sweeney Todd', about the infamous demon barber.

Lovers of American literature will soon have a chance to see Henry James's 1881 'The Portrait of a Lady' as filmed by the Merchant-Ivory-Jhabvala team for Warners. Also, at least two adaptations of stories by James's friend, Edith Wharton, are scheduled: Martin Scorsese's **The Age of Innocence**, from the sardonic 1920 Pulitzer Prize-winning novel set in New York and Europe, starring Michelle Pfeiffer, Daniel Day-Lewis and Winona Ryder; and **Ethan Frome**, the stark 1911 New England tragedy, which has been filmed for the big screen by the Public Broadcasting System, starring Liam Neeson.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Leitch, Thomas M.: 'Find the Director and other Hitchcock Games' (University of Georgia Press, 1991);  
 Higham, Charles, and Moseley, Roy: 'Cary Grant: The Lonely Heart' (New English Library, 1990);  
 Rebello, Stephen: 'Alfred Hitchcock and the Making of **Psycho** (Harper Perennial, 1991) - all in paperback.

It serves me right! I once read the English translation of Roger Caillois's 'Man, Play and Games', and promptly noted how it classified games into just four categories: **agôn** (competition), **alea** (chance), **mimicry** (simulation) and **ilinx** (vertigo). Here, I told myself, was a taxonomy which avoided your hackneyed Freudianism yet might perhaps be used to analyse Hitchcock's films! Then I filed the idea "for future use". Well, Professor Leitch went further! His recent book subjects most of Hitchcock's 50-odd films to close 'ludic' (games-related) scrutiny. And I see that his introductory chapter cites just two main theoretical texts: Caillois's book (1961) and Johan Huizinga's even better-known 'Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture' (1950).

Leitch distinguishes between Caillois's view of games which he calls "functional" and Huizinga's more 'Nietzschean' outlook which maintains "that culture itself is a game from which other games must periodically rescue" us (p. 265). He suggests that while both viewpoints inform Hitchcock's movies,

The ludic tendencies towards institutional recuperation [validation] and radical critique do not simply alternate in Hitchcock's films; they reinforce each other dialectically, both running in films like **Blackmail** and **Notorious** and **Vertigo** at full throttle. (p. 264)

Actually, Freud isn't far removed from what Leitch is driving at here. He has just invoked Gregory Bateson's analysis of play, which uses specifically Freudian terminology: primary-process thinking (unconscious reactions to given stimuli) and secondary-process thinking (the kind of self-awareness associated with ego formation). Leitch holds that a Hitchcock film requires the audience to assume a position both inside and outside the frame of primary-process thinking.

For example, Hitchcock encourages his audience to enjoy itself trying to 'spot the director' and guessing what story rules apply; then, when the characters also start playing games, such as tennis in **Easy Virtue** (1927), **Rebecca** (1940) and **Strangers on a Train** (1951), he invariably turns these into metaphors which shift the film's tone towards reflexivity ...

Leitch further draws on Bateson in suggesting that Hitchcock's 'play' resembles that of kittens or otters, i.e. its character isn't pre-defined but tends to evolve as it goes along. (I'd guess that many of Luis Buñuel's films function similarly.) Earlier, he'd made an important point, related to the above, about how after every few films Hitchcock would introduce a new item into his games repertoire. A typical example: the 'odd man out' game which Leitch says started at the time of the Daphne du Maurier adaptations, **Jamaica Inn** (1939) and **Rebecca**, with their emphasis on homelessness.<sup>1</sup>

Still, the book isn't totally satisfying. For one thing, the bulk of the unifying insights I've just mentioned turn up only at the end. Whatever rigorous examination of the films in terms of games theory, and the like, that initially seemed promised, isn't delivered. And, despite my jest about "hackneyed Freudianism", I find it excessive that Leitch never cites either Freud **or** Lacan unless someone else (e.g. Bateson) does it for him. The omission of all reference to 'Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious', and all but a short footnote on 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle', means that a thrust that should (in my view) have been at the core of the book is marginalised.

Perhaps Leitch didn't want to burden the reader with jargon. In which case, why did he include the introductory chapter at all? It's easily the driest - and weakest - in the book. Almost his only use of Caillois comes when he makes the following point:

No matter how familiar they are with the rules of his games, Hitchcock's audiences spend a great deal of time as if falling through his films because he keeps changing the rules, and indeed because the rules themselves - the rules of the Hitchcock thriller - stipulate an irreducible combination of controlled competition [audience versus director?], identification, and vertiginous surprise. (pp. 17-18)

Hardly profound. Mind you, Leitch says in his own defence that "Caillois's terminology provides an inadequate model for analysing Hitchcock's films". There's something in that. Hitchcock's audiences are often more self-conscious about their pleasure, and **pleasurably** so, than Caillois's model can accommodate.

Another text not mentioned by Leitch is Eric Berne's bestselling 'Games People Play', subtitled 'The Psychology of Human Relationships'. That book appeared in the same year as **Marnie** (1964); coincidentally or not, the Hitchcock film seems at times to provide a veritable exemplar of such games as 'Frigid Woman' and 'Rapo'. Moreover, the film's climax clearly represents an attempt by the two main characters to attain what Berne calls "game-free living". (Compare Van Damm's line in **North by Northwest**: "Games? Must we?") Given Leitch's seeming aversion to psychology, I doubt it's coincidental that I found his comments on **Marnie** to be among his most superficial ...

Certainly he never discusses that film's recurring, and repetitious, skipping game. As a likely metaphor for Marnie's repeated stealing - and her **skipping** with the proceeds! - it may not have been germane to his purpose, but it surely should have been. (He should also, I think, have consulted the well-known 'Lore and Language of Schoolchildren'<sup>2</sup> on how the game's rhyme about "the lady with the alligator purse" connotes emancipation from a fear of death.) Nor does Leitch discuss related children's games and rhymes in **The**

**Birds** (1963) and **Shadow of a Doubt** (1943). Further, even the moment in the latter film when we see Hitchcock on the train, "holding the world's best bridge hand", receives only a passing mention for being one of the director's memorable 'cameos' - Leitch makes no attempt to relate this to other scenes with playing-cards in Hitchcock movies (e.g. **Spellbound**, **Lifeboat**) or to a wider symbolism (e.g. expressionism).

So, apart from theory, what **does** the book offer? The short answer is that it provides a very useful survey of the films - for all that its author seems unaware of his employing key terminology from texts like Berne's. Memorably, he interprets **The Man Who Knew Too Much** (1934) using the Child/Parent/Adult distinction which is at the heart of Berne's 'transactional analysis' of games:

In posing as figures of parental authority, Hitchcock's characters, including Betty Lawrence's literal parents, are most decisively revealed as children ... In trying to suppress Betty's childishness, the Lawrences deny the children in themselves, children who will necessarily be instrumental in foiling the villains. (pp. 82-3)

Of course, there's again more than a touch of Freud here - proof, no doubt, of how Leitch is a learned fellow even if he's not always thorough with his references.

Still, he's very thorough when recounting the many witticisms of **The Man Who Knew Too Much**, which he calls "Hitchcock's pivotal achievement of the thirties and the most subversive movie he ever made" (p. 84). And that assessment of the film - which may tell you as much about Leitch as about Hitchcock - earns him full marks for assertiveness, at any rate. It's for just such fresh appraisals that you may most want to read the book.

I'm particularly grateful for one of Leitch's comments on **Under Capricorn** (1949). When he declares that "Charles Adare's interest in Lady Henrietta Flusky is mostly non-amatory" (p. 152), his reading effectively opposes Lesley Brill's in 'The Hitchcock Romance' (1988). There, we're told that Adare's "wish to help Hattie becomes indistinguishable from his unholy desire to pry her away from Flusky". Leitch gives me back the Adare I thought I knew, someone akin to the ne'er-do-well, but finally self-abnegating, Sydney Carton in Dickens's novel 'A Tale of Two Cities'.<sup>3</sup> That is, I think the truth about Adare is that early in his relations with Hattie he (more or less) knowingly subdues his **amour** to his intention to rehabilitate her - albeit not without consequent tensions throughout the Flusky household ...<sup>4</sup>

Finally, here's one of the book's outright errors. Leitch seems to think (p. 3) that Hitchcock makes his cameo appearance in **Rope** (1948) by momentarily doubling for actor Cedric Hardwicke in the background of a shot. That's nonsense. Hitchcock turns up in **Rope** as a red neon sign (!) on a distant building: the original, in fact, of the profile-caricature that became so familiar to viewers of Hitchcock's TV shows of the '50s and '60s. (For a colour photograph of the **Rope** set which clearly shows the sign in question, see Patrick Humphries's 'The Films of Alfred Hitchcock', p. 113.)

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In hindsight, an obvious contender to have written 'Cary Grant: The Lonely Heart' is Donald Spoto, a perceptive biographer not loathe to make juicy revelations about his show business subjects. But in the event, Charles Higham and Roy Moseley have done an excellent, responsible job. Among their revelations: that Grant was bisexual and that he spied for England during World War II.

A word about these two collaborators. Higham, a British-born poet and film critic, was once literary editor of Australia's 'Bulletin' magazine; his publications include 'Hollywood in the Forties' and several bestselling biographies. As for Moseley, who's perhaps best known for his book 'A Life With the Stars', his colleague claims that he's "a genius with people, [at] getting them to talk and confide in him". Both men met with Grant on several occasions.

Perhaps their book's single most admirable quality is its informed, fair-minded approach. Take two of its several references to director Leo McCarey. During the making of **The Awful Truth** (1937), McCarey would arrive on the set each day with a hangover and no shooting script. The result was a succession of script improvisations which at first threw cast and crew into confusion. But Grant was particularly quick to

adjust. Moreover, as Higham and Moseley note, in the long run the film's free-wheeling established an important precedent for how a creative filmmaker might defy the prevailing studio system. So that's McCarey as hero.

Five years later, he and Grant collaborated again, this time on an anti-Nazi adventure story set in Europe, **Once Upon a Honeymoon** (1942). Somehow the picture retained a disastrous sequence showing an American honeymoon couple (Cary and Ginger Rogers) posing as Jews in order to get into a concentration camp. As Higham and Moseley write:

How Cary could have lent his name to such a scene is beyond comprehension. It was oafish, vulgar and stupid, and reflected Leo McCarey's incipient anti-Semitism and total failure to understand the real purpose of World War II. (p. 171)

That's McCarey as villain.

Through no fault of the authors, you're likely to come away from their account of Grant's wartime activities feeling confused. On the one hand, you can read of occasions like the **Once Upon a Honeymoon** fiasco and about Cary's friendship with society hostess Countess Dorothy di Frasso - who must be the model for Mrs Van Sutton in Hitchcock's **Saboteur** (1942) - who ran a pro-fascist movement out of her house and gave parties for gangsters like 'Bugsy' Siegel and film stars including Gary Cooper. On the other hand, you can read how Cary had learned that his mother back in Bristol, England, had been Jewish (and either died in childbirth or disappeared), and how he was a brave wartime agent who served his country in both America and Europe.

Mind you, no one doubts that Grant always felt his roots to be in England, where he'd gone on the stage when he was six. Hence his profound satisfaction when he played the Cockney Ernie Mott in Clifford Odets's **None But the Lonely Heart** (1944), a film which Higham and Moseley see as providing the "finest moment on the screen" for both Cary and actress Ethel Barrymore. The scene in question is the one where Ernie's mother dies in prison:

Neither performer would ever match that moment of transcendent beauty and terror. It was cathartic and shattering, and Odets' direction had a sensitivity and delicacy virtually unmatched in American cinema. (p. 202)

I saw the film recently. The prison scene is indeed moving. Unfortunately, despite a superb East End set, and music by Hans Eisler which at times anticipates his score for Resnais's **Night and Fog** (1955), the picture overall is fairly static.

Grant's being English helps account for his striking up an immediate friendship with the Hitchcocks from the time they first met in New York in 1937. Hitchcock fans will find much to relish in the book. Some items are of a 'Did you know?' kind, like the fact that in **To Catch a Thief** (1955) you can glimpse the Monaco royal palace in the background of a shot of Cary with Grace Kelly (later Princess Grace), or the information that for the Grand Corniche scene in that film Kelly's reckless driving twice nearly carried her and her co-star over the edge. (In 1982 the Princess did indeed die at the wheel of her car when it plunged over a cliff.)

Other items illuminate Hitchcock's creative wit. Some of these are straightforward, as when the director reveals that it was the frequent culinary mishaps of Grant's third wife, actress Betsy Drake, which were satirised in **Frenzy** (1972). And some items definitely require you to draw inferences. As I've said, the book depicts Cary as a wartime hero, his duties including cracking safes in Europe. (Which is surely one reason why Hitchcock chose him to play the retired cat burglar in **To Catch a Thief**.) One day a curious episode occurred just as he was due to secretly fly out of the US. He found himself arrested in a department store for an incident with a young man in the store's public toilet. Somewhere between the store and the police precinct, a signal from headquarters to the radio patrol car caused it to divert course to a certain address. There, Cary was dropped off and another actor - well paid for his trouble - substituted, before later being released. Higham and Moseley note that an almost identical episode happened to billionaire Howard Hughes - one of Cary's former lovers and a lifetime friend - nine years later. The question is, was Hitchcock satirising either one or both of these incidents when in **North by Northwest**

(1959) two police officers who've arrested Thornhill/Kaplan (Grant) are suddenly ordered to detour to the airport and hand over their prisoner to the CIA? My guess is: yes, definitely.

One of Grant's former secretaries has commented, perhaps ungenerously, on his various weaknesses: "It would appear that [his] bisexuality took the form of alternate preferences. One period of his life it would be men, then he would be heterosexual for several years. I often wondered if he was capable of real, genuine feelings, so obsessed was he with his own public image." Typically playing fair, Higham and Moseley cite examples of how Cary himself could be generous when he chose to be (and notoriously stingy at other times); and they suggest what is surely only the truth, that anyway his film performances show how the actor in him had a timeless grace. Those performances will never date ...

\* \* \*

Alfred Hitchcock, too, sometimes proved an enigmatic figure, partly due to his toad-like appearance. But Stephen Rebello's remarkable book about **Psycho** helps set the record straight on that score - and a great many others. It quotes wardrobe mistress Rita Riggs on how she always thought of the director "as the prince locked in the frog". Hitchcock, she says, loved beauty

and set out to create it. I think his perversities and his frustration with his exterior were part of his wonderful creativity. Everyone talks about his pranksterism and practical jokes, but he had a sense of fun about him that I don't think some people picked up on. For instance, one night I came home to find a carton of wild, French strawberries on my doorstep because we had been talking about them recently. Is that perversity or is that doing something out of sheer enjoyment? (p. 99)

Like **Psycho** itself, Rebello's book is told with a keen sense of "fun". It's richly detailed and never just trivial - though it contains much material of the kind beloved by trivia-collectors (e.g. the names of at least six people, male and female, who got to play 'Mrs Bates', either on the screen or the soundtrack or during rehearsal ...). About as well as any **critical** text could, it shows why **Psycho** may be a masterpiece. The entire production process is explored, from deep background (e.g. concerning the real-life killer Ed Gein) through the scripting and shooting periods to the film's publicity and release, extending to what Rebello calls "afterglow and aftermath" (e.g. Hitchcock's intensive search for subsequent projects).

Nor is Rebello himself without critical acumen, for he sees well enough what was wrong with a meandering early draft of the screenplay, and he can describe Saul Bass's titles as being "In the style of a Rorschach ... simultaneously [suggesting] prison bars, city buildings, and sound waves".<sup>5</sup> In short, he has written a book which is almost as entertaining and as gutsy (!) as the very film it honours. The only other immediate comparison I can think of is with Raymond Durnat's celebrated essay, "Inside Mrs Bates".

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### Notes

1. Thinking about this example, I see that Leitch has got it wrong. 'Homelessness' is a trait of many central characters in Hitchcock from the eponymous lodger in the 1926 film to the heroes and heroines of several of the '30s comedy-thrillers. Thereafter, similar characters turn up constantly.
2. I. and P. Opie, 'The Lore and Language of Schoolchildren' (1959).
3. 'A Tale of Two Cities' was one of several Dickens novels Hitchcock read as a boy. (Others were 'Bleak House', 'Great Expectations' and 'Our Mutual Friend' - see D. Spoto, 'The Life of Alfred Hitchcock', pp. 28, 422.) In it, Sydney Carton admires the pretty Lucie Manette but knows that he can never press on her a claim for marriage; she marries Charles Darnay. Carton then becomes a good friend of the family. The Oedipal implications of this are obvious. They extend to Carton's ultimate moment of self-abnegation when he goes to the guillotine to save Darnay, a former French aristocrat who had renounced his title and fled abroad ... Given the structural opposition in **Under Capricorn** between Sydney, Australia, and Dublin, Ireland, Hitchcock's film might itself have been called **A Tale of Two Cities**. But the parallels between

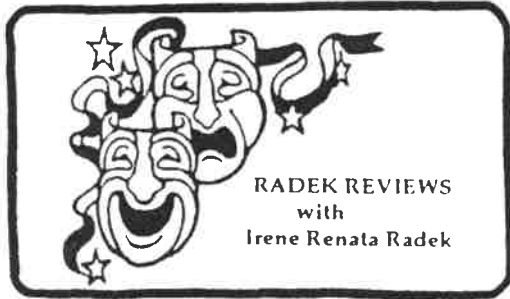


Dickens's novel and Hitchcock's film extend to various suggestive details. For one, consider the film's reference to a trade in shrunken heads, first mooted in a street outside a bank, and how the novel has a character named Jerry Cruncher who works as a bank messenger by day, as a grave-robber by night ...

4. Adare seems genuinely surprised when the housekeeper Milly takes offence when she finds him alone with Hattie in the latter's bedroom.

5. But Rebello misses one thing I consider most important, the virtual analogue of the titles-sequence to what Schopenhauer called Will!

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**BASIC INSTINCT** is controversial not for its alleged sexism, date rape and negative portrayal of lesbians but rather for the insidious dangers of rabid political correctness and special interest group censorship that the movie brings to light.

With **Basic Instinct**, Dutch director Paul Verhoeven (**Total Recall**) has created a "psycho-erotic thriller" about a serial killer who murders men with an ice pick during the sex act. Trigger-happy detective Nick Curran's chief suspect is icy, arrogant author Catherine Trammel, an amazingly beautiful bisexual with whom Nick is soon sexually obsessed.

As dick Nick, Michael Douglas (Oscar winner for **Wall Street**) is his typical tight-jawed, humourless self. You don't hate Nick for being flawed, but neither is it easy to care about him or understand why Catherine finds him appealing. She could do much better. Douglas is not an inherently **bad** actor but virtually all of his characters are one-dimensional, stone-faced clones sleepwalking across the screen.

So Sharon Stone (**Total Recall**) steals the show with her portrayal of Catherine, a Grace Kelly/Lizzie Borden hybrid. This cryogenic blonde won the part over such Hollywood names as Ellen Barkin (possible), Geena Davis (hardly) and Mariel Hemingway (not) and made it her own. Stone is at her spectacular best creating incredibly dangerous eroticism while seducing a mesmerised Nick and her lover Roxy (Leilani Sarelli).

Much-needed comic relief is generously provided by the film's most likable character, Nick's police partner Gus, played with humour and truth by George Dzundza (**Impulse**).

And the "Midge" to Stone's "Barbie" (all the **Basic Instinct** women look like dolls by Mattel) is stage actress Jeanne Tripplehorn as police psychiatrist and Nick's sometimes-girlfriend Lisa Gardner, a psychotic Betty Boop - pouty innocence one moment, a lightning temper telegraphing danger the next. Unfortunately Tripplehorn doesn't share Stone's talent for subtle subtext. Consequently her characterisation is much too obvious - one of the chief reasons why **Basic Instinct** is so predictable.

The other reason? Basically, Joe Ezsterhas's \$3 million script. Sledgehammer-strength clues are served up far too readily and far too soon. If you haven't identified the murderer 15 minutes into the film, you're not a Mensan (or shouldn't be!). And the tacky little twist at the film's end is too little too late for anyone to care.

Furthermore, without all the gratuitous sex, skin and overhyped controversy, **Basic Instinct** would be just another mediocre murder mystery quick to gather dust on video store shelves. But the mere hint of the MPAA's most restrictive rating is often enough to whet the public's taste for the taboo. And Verhoeven must've expected the film's initial NC-17 rating or why else would he have made tame versions of the steamier scenes?

In the no-no '90s, **Basic Instinct** gives us unsafe sex (eek), relentless smoking - in **restricted** areas no less (egads), drunk driving (yikes) and a dash of drugs and booze for good measure (get those smelling

salts). Such are the horrors and perversions of the 1990s. In the '60s, these elements would've been barely noticeable.

Conversely, in the violence-jaded present, it's the killing that is commonplace and expected. The suspense is not in the crimes but in who's going to get naked next and with whom. What a twisted world it is when violence has become more acceptable than human sexual contact. Now **this** is controversy!

Antithetically, the negative portrayal of lesbians, sexism and date rape allegations are **not**. Chris Fowler of the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation charges that **Basic Instinct** "depicts gays and lesbians as villains, as murderers, as emotionally unstable people and the community is outraged." Oh puh-leez. Catherine and Roxy's relationship is the most tender and functional of them all. Furthermore, bisexual Catherine is smart, sexy and very self-assured and what's so bad about that? Does the fact that Catherine is a bisexual murder suspect mean that ALL bisexuals are murderers? Hardly. So what else? Do homosexuals NEVER commit murder? Are straight WASPS the ONLY segment of society that kills? What a ridiculous concept.

As Douglas stated, "We're getting so politically correct that it's almost impossible to make a film." And Stone succinctly added, "I respect [GLADD's] freedom of speech; I want them to respect my freedom of expression." Fair enough. Otherwise we have the ominous and odious censorship that most of these self-same activists also rail against - but only, it seems, when it's convenient for **their** particular cause. In today's politically correct climate, even **The Wizard of Oz** would be impossible to make for all the protesting by activist groups representing small people, witches and monkeys. Selective free-speech-**only**-when-you-agree-with-my-point-of-view equals blatant censorship and the generally vituperative reaction to **Basic Instinct** proves that we are regressing where freedom is concerned.

As for sexism, all the film's women do look like Barbie dolls but they can outthink, outtalk and outdrive all the **Basic Instinct** men so this allegation is rather pointless.

And the alleged date rape scene between Nick and Lisa is quite obviously consensual sex. Just because Lisa mentions **after the fact** that Nick was unusually rough doesn't eliminate the fact that she was an eager and willing participant throughout their encounter.

Even Jan de Bont's spectacular cinematography raises audience eyebrows. **Basic Instinct**'s car chases over and around the San Francisco hills are stomach-churningly effective and the eye-popping up-the-dress shot of Stone is appropriately disconcerting. However, 7/8ths of the nudity (including Douglas's saggy butt) and the needlessly sensationalistic photos of brutally slain children are further examples of **Basic Instinct**'s shameless overkill.

**Basic Instinct** will leave both the murder mystery buff and the 'buff' buff wanting decidedly more as the film's real controversy lies not in what the public is shown but rather in what **Basic Instinct** shows about the public.

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.....

COMING ATTRACTIONS

Uncongenial stars: Hitchcock's **Torn Curtain**; the sources of Hitchcock's **Vertigo**; book reviews (e.g. 'A Heart at Fire's Centre', 'Hitchcock's Rereleased Films'). Plus 'News', 'Radek Reviews', etc. Additional items always wanted.

.....

'WE WERE WRONG'

'MacGuffin' 6 contained about the usual number of solecisms, gaffs and misspellings - despite our best efforts to eradicate them. Special apologies to Charles Barr for misspelling his key term 'hypnagogia' at one point. Another misspelling, elsewhere in the issue, was of 'Hays Office' as 'Hayes Office'. Will H. Hays (1879-1954) was, of course, president of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors Association of America when, in 1930, he drew up the strictures of the Production Code ...

In the same issue we claimed that Flaubert's 'Madame Bovary' had been filmed just twice before Chabrol's recent French version starring Isabelle Huppert. In fact, there have been at least four versions beside Chabrol's: (1) in 1932, with Lila Lee (**Unholy Love**, USA); (2) in 1934, with Valentine Tessier (France); (3) in 1937, with Pola Negri (Germany); and (4) in 1949, with Jennifer Jones (USA).

\* Irene Radek has written to tell us that she finally caught **Fried Green Tomatoes** ... and that it displaces **Hook** from her 10 best of '91 list.

.....

The Million Pound Mystery: Hitchcock's 'Suspicion' (1941)

In the end Lina's mind was made up for her.

After all these years she awoke to the realization that she was going to have a baby.

At all costs Johnnie must not be allowed to reproduce himself. Lina crushed ruthlessly down the new urge to live that her condition had induced. At **all** costs.

An illegal operation hardly entered her mind; suicide was terrible; Johnnie's way was the easiest of all.

Lina felt much calmer when her decision had been made at last. So much of her married life had been spent in beating from one side of the cage to the other. It would be peaceful just to sit and wait.

- 'Francis Iles' (A. B. Cox), 'Before the Fact' (1932)

It is well known that happy marriages are rare, just because it is of the essence of marriage that the principal aim is not the present, but the coming generation. However, let it be added for the consolation of tender and loving natures that passionate sexual love is sometimes associated with a feeling of an entirely different nature, namely real friendship based on harmony of disposition, which nevertheless often appears only when sexual love proper is extinguished in its satisfaction.

- Arthur Schopenhauer, 'The World as Will and Representation', Volume II

Clarity requires that we distinguish ... three elements in Freud's death instinct. Nirvana, the repetition-compulsion, and masochism may all represent death, but if they do, they represent different aspects of death.

- Norman O. Brown, 'Life Against Death: The Psychoanalytical Meaning of History' (1959)

All three elements of the death instinct figure in the ending Hitchcock wanted for **Suspicion**. The most obvious is masochism. Lina (Joan Fontaine) **submits** to her own murder because it's something she has half-desired all along. In effect, she's simply being feminine - in the sense proposed by Krafft-Ebing when he speaks of masochism as morbidly reinforcing "certain characteristics of woman's soul".<sup>1</sup>

But Lina's submissive death also accords with Freud's Nirvana principle, i.e. a tendency "to reduce ... or to remove internal tension due to stimuli".<sup>2</sup> There's a corresponding moment at the end of **Psycho** (1960) where 'Mrs Bates' tells us she's "not even going to swat that fly", i.e. she's no longer going to **react**. In turn, that remark (unwittingly?) points to the origin of the term 'Nirvana' in Buddhism, where taking even an insect's life is forbidden and where 'Nirvana' refers to "the abolition of [human] individuality ... a state of quietude and bliss".<sup>3</sup>

As for the element of repetition-compulsion, it's central to **Suspicion**. But I'll suggest in a moment that its relation to Lina's death-by-poisoning is ambiguous, and thus accords with Freud's own ambivalent position vis-à-vis the link between pleasure and annihilation.<sup>4</sup>

\* \* \*

The key to **Suspicion** may well be the early scene set on a hillock behind Lina's neighbourhood church. To this lonely, windswept spot Johnnie (Cary Grant) brings her on their first 'date'. Far from being a romantic place, it's more like a graveyard. We come upon the couple fiercely tussling, as if he'd just tried to murder, or rape, her. But she fends him off - then starts apologising. He must think her provincial, she says. Even so, she won't allow him a kiss. That only comes later - as a **reaction** on Lina's part to an overheard remark of her father's.

The hillock scene is later evoked three times. First, soon after the above incident, when Lina suspects Johnnie has ditched her, she wanders disconsolately back to the identical spot. It's as if she somehow felt guilty and, in Freud's words describing the repetition-compulsion, were trying "to make the psychic trauma real - to live through once more a repetition of it".<sup>5</sup> In other words, the spot has come to represent for Lina some still earlier, forgotten nay-saying.

Second, the hillock scene is evoked on the night Lina turns her husband out of their bedroom, i.e. in a prelude to the poisoning scene. (From the moment Lina suffers a fainting spell that night, she's destined not to leave the bedroom alive - at least, not in the version of the film Hitchcock wanted.) Third, the hillock scene is evoked in the last scene of the present film when Lina, still alive, decides she'll flee to her mother's ...

\* \* \*

In short, the scene on the hillock represents Lina's **repression**, and its recurring mention in the film corresponds to the repetitive aspect of Freud's death instinct. How ironic, though, that Lina's submission to her own murder should involve - at last - an aspect of yea-saying! Here's how Hitchcock describes the poisoning scene:

The scene I wanted, but it was never shot, was for Cary Grant to bring her a glass of milk that's been poisoned ... Joan Fontaine has just finished a letter to her mother: "Dear Mother, I'm desperately in love with him, but I don't want to live because he's a killer. Though I'd rather die, I think society should be protected from him." Then, Cary Grant comes in with the fatal glass and she says, "Will you mail this letter to Mother for me, dear?" She drinks the milk and dies.<sup>6</sup>

Hitchcock adds that a final shot would have shown Cary Grant, whistling cheerfully, popping the letter in the mailbox. Now, the symbolism here is complex, with several allusions being made to earlier scenes, but I'll argue shortly that the crucial thing is the description of **a parodic love scene**. In effect, we're being told that a husband resorts to impregnating his wife with a poison whose doubly fatal consequences (the offspring?) he has only half foreseen ...

\* \* \*

Here I want to refer to Norman O. Brown's speculative study of Freudian theory, 'Life Against Death'<sup>7</sup> - a most Hitchcockian title. To the extent that Brown envisages a future where "general repression" has ceased to exist - along with its accompanying "neurosis" and "unconscious bent for self-destruction" - he reminds us of just how different Lina and Johnnie's marriage might have been.

By contrast, what the film actually gives us is the emblematic hillock scene plus what is in some ways a very **English** marriage. The wedding ceremony takes place in a registry office on whose windows (a characteristically English) rain is falling. The foreshadowing is in keeping with a passage from Chapter 1 of the novel:

Having lived all her life in the country, where people do not talk about these things, [Lina] had never realized that the percentage of happy marriages among the population of Great Britain is probably something under .0001.

I mentioned Freud's ambivalence concerning pleasure versus annihilation. In **Suspicion**, it's fair to say, the dashing but irresponsible Johnnie represents the pleasure-principle while Lina - who shows a marked parental streak anyway - constantly finds herself having to invoke the reality-principle. As we've just seen, the outcome is suggestively ironic because it involves the annihilation of **both** characters.

Well, Brown would propose a 'Nietzschean' solution to the matter. He begins by noting how "the ultimate aim of the pleasure-principle" is Nirvana - but because the pessimistic Schopenhauer (who introduced the term 'Nirvana' to the West) "cannot affirm life", rejects that philosopher's seeming affirmation of death as "spurious". Instead, Brown turns to Nietzsche's Superman. Nietzsche, we're told, affirms both life **and** death. Further, whereas "repressed humanity" strives to immortalise individual life and property, thereby showing its own "flight from death", Nietzsche simply affirms an eternity of (non-neurotic) repetition:

'Joy ... does not want heirs, or children - joy wants itself, wants eternity, wants recurrence, wants everything eternally the same.'<sup>8</sup>

Which, historically, has made for some fine poetry and several interesting characters in drama and film, from Ibsen's Brand to Hitchcock's Brandon (in the 1948 **Rope**). Nevertheless, it would seem that Schopenhauer, Freud and Hitchcock, pessimists all, are united in doubting the **feasibility** of the Superman solution.

On the other hand, if Schopenhauer's view of marriage allows the possibility of eventual harmony, if not true Nirvana, "when sexual love proper is extinguished" - see the quote at the head of this article - then **Suspicion** follows suit to the extent of presenting at least a parody of such harmony in its final scene. The marriage itself is a succession of (decidedly non-Nietzschean) reactions ...

\* \* \*

The above sketch of the film obviously needs checking in detail against some key scenes and sequences. First, though, I must take issue with a couple of Donald Spoto's claims in his two Hitchcock books. Those claims are: (a) that the ending Hitchcock said he wanted for **Suspicion**, but didn't shoot, was only invented by him in hindsight, after the film's release;<sup>9</sup> and (b) that the film's present ending is "entirely consistent with everything that has preceded".<sup>10</sup>

As regards point (a), it can be refuted by internal evidence from the film itself. As for (b), it overlooks at least one glaring **inconsistency** in the present ending.

(a) Hitchcock was forbidden by RKO "to cast Cary Grant as a killer".<sup>11</sup> So it's naive of Spoto to expect that drafts of the script would disclose the ending in which Lina's worst suspicions about her husband prove true. That's just what the drafts could **not** disclose.

Actually, Hitchcock seems to have recalled a dodge he'd used in 1929 when shooting the silent version of **Blackmail**. On that occasion, as Charles Barr notes,<sup>12</sup> he'd "made contingency plans of his own" for converting the silent version to a sound version - which the producers duly commissioned. With **Suspicion**, there's evidence that Hitchcock shot the film hoping to get last-minute approval of his 'forbidden' ending. For instance, midway through the film Lina twice goes shopping in her local village. Both times, emphasis is given an old-fashioned English pillar-box. Hitchcock even makes his customary brief appearance posting a letter, and has the camera twice pan past the box to further stress it. Now, after allowing for the box's status as an icon of unchanging village life (cf. the mailbox outside the schoolteacher's house in **The Birds**), can anyone doubt that what Hitchcock is doing here is lay the foundation for his hoped-for ending - in which Johnnie cheerfully mails his own 'death-warrant'?

I'll mention shortly other examples which illustrate similar preparation.

(b) In the present ending, Johnnie says that far from intending to kill Lina, he'd been thinking of committing suicide because of his heavy gambling debts. He claims he'd even gone to Liverpool in order to try and borrow money on his wife's life-insurance policy, "but that didn't work". Which isn't surprising! Apart from the unlikelihood of his having driven so far instead of simply telephoning, the film has established that **Johnnie's two life insurance companies are both in London**. (For those wishing to check, see the scene in which Lina reads Johnnie's mail one morning while he's in the shower.) So much for his alibi for the time when his best friend, 'Beaky' (Nigel Bruce), had died mysteriously in Paris from an overdose of brandy - and so much, as I say, for Spoto's claim about the present ending being consistent with everything that has preceded!

\* \* \*

But why does Johnnie cite Liverpool specifically? The answer, surely, is that he's made a Freudian slip after reading 'The Trial of Richard Palmer' which he'd borrowed from Lina's friend, the detective story writer, Isobel.<sup>13</sup> For years Liverpool was the home of the real-life mass-poisoner and inveterate gambler, (William) Palmer, whose story Isobel's book tells. (The film changes Palmer's Christian name, but there's no doubt that the book - like much of the film - is about the real person, who was hanged in 1856. For one thing, Isobel mentions how one of Palmer's rich victims died after being challenged to a brandy-drinking contest. That fits the known facts.)<sup>14</sup>

It's not incongruous that Lina never questions Johnnie's Liverpool story. The film has established that he insured her life without consulting her; and she'd only momentarily seen the insurance companies' addresses when she'd once rifled his mail. Which leaves us this teaser: why is Johnnie so interested in reading about Palmer's case anyway? How bizarre that Beaky should die soon afterwards in a practically identical manner to one of Palmer's victims ...

\* \* \*

There's an instructive still,<sup>15</sup> apparently from the film's opening scene on a train, in which Lina reaches out to examine a book the man slumbering opposite her has let fall. The man is her future husband and the book is a detective story called 'The Million Pound Mystery'.

Well, the book's title fits well enough Hitchcock's own - richly ambiguous - tale of marriage, but the business with the book doesn't appear in the film. Perhaps, coming at the start, it struck someone as too portentous. Even so, in the film Johnnie **does** read detective stories and he **is** seen carrying a copy of 'The Million Pound Mystery'. The difference is that now he begins to read such books only after marrying Lina.<sup>16</sup> Notice the gain in ambiguity. For example, are we to infer that Johnnie has been tamed into adopting genteel country ways? Or are we meant to see that he has suddenly become dissatisfied and has taken to reading detective fiction for relief? Or both those things? Or neither? Given that Johnnie himself seems to have an ambiguous, even sinister, side, perhaps he only **pretends** to be interested in the genteel life. But if so, why? For Lina's sake? Or for some nefarious purpose of his own?

In her way, Lina is no less an ambiguous figure than her husband. Trying to be 'adult', she nevertheless often tends to swing between animated girlish rapture and equally girlish bouts of reverie. She's also prone to little social hypocrisies which she would probably scorn in others. That is, Schopenhauer's thoughts on the psychology of everyday life might have had Lina in mind:

[Just] how little absolute sincerity is to be expected, even from persons otherwise honest, whenever their interest in any way bears on a matter, can be judged from the fact that we often deceive ourselves where hope bribes us, or fear befools us, or suspicion torments us, ... or a small purpose close at hand interferes with one greater but more distant.<sup>17</sup>

Johnnie sees through Lina from the start, as when she tries to refuse his request for a second date (after the hillock scene) by saying she must "make calls with Mother" and he retorts "Liar!" Earlier, she'd accepted an invitation to attend church with the Barhams, her neighbours whom she claims to loathe, simply because Johnnie would be with them. And later, after Johnnie stands her up over the very date he'd so vehemently insisted on, she suffers a headache - from which she makes an instant recovery when he sends word that he'll see her at the Hunt Ball.<sup>18</sup>

Much as in **Psycho**, Hitchcock soon shifts from these everyday 'psychologies' to something on an altogether different plane and scale. But the actual mechanisms of fear and deception continue to operate. Up to a point, and allowing for the ambiguities, you could say that Lina is to Johnnie as Marion Crane is to Norman Bates.

\* \* \*

The remainder of this article will concentrate on three key scenes or episodes: the opening scene on the train, the long central sequence involving Beaky, and the final scene (both as Hitchcock intended it and as it was actually shot).

First, the scene on the train. I've already suggested a couple of reasons why the business with Johnnie's book was dropped; another is that it was supplanted by business we now have involving **Lina's** book. When the scene begins, Lina is reading 'Child Psychology' by Henrietta Wright M.A., M.D. From behind her reading glasses she snootily inspects the playboy-type who has suddenly invaded her first-class compartment. Then a uniformed ticket-inspector enters. The playboy-type proves to have only a third-class ticket but rises to the occasion and pays his excess fare in good style - after prevailing on Lina to contribute a postage stamp. For good measure, he sends the official packing with the remark, "Write to your mother!" Lina now puts her book away and takes up 'The Illustrated London News'. In the magazine's social pages she finds a photograph of "Mr. John (Johnnie) Aysgarth and Mrs. Helen Newsham" at the Merchester races. The man in the photograph is her fellow passenger.

It's a fine scene, transparently told, with several niggly undertones. In turn, most of these prove to be hooks to later scenes. When Johnnie invites the ticket-inspector to "Write to your mother!", the Oedipal assertion is obvious ("Who's a little boy now?"), and Lina is the visible prize. In a classic article,<sup>19</sup> Mark Crispin Miller suggests that the official, with his uniform and moustache, stands in for Lina's father, General McLaidlaw - who indeed takes an instant dislike to Johnnie when they eventually meet.

Not that Johnnie is yet particularly attracted to Lina, seen here at her most glacial. Even when he prevails on her for the loan of a stamp, and **all but** makes symbolic advances by invading her purse, his actions are essentially reflex, i.e. **reactions**. (Long afterwards, Beaky tells Lina how even at school her fast-talking husband had had a reputation for getting out of any scrape.)

Also, Johnnie may have got the better of officialdom on this occasion, yet the line "Write to your mother!" anticipates a time when he'll mail a letter to his own mother (-in-law), bringing officialdom down on him with a vengeance. That is, his penny-halfpenny debt to Lina from the opening scene will hang over him until the end - the one Hitchcock wanted, that is - when she'll give him the letter to mail and his debt will be paid in full.

There's another link between the opening and closing scenes. No doubt a reason why Lina reads 'Child Psychology' is that she works in, or is training for, that field. Hence her commuting each day from Hazledene to London, as indicated by her **monthly** rail ticket. No doubt, too, the book makes suitably proper reading for a young lady in her position, i.e. one who's a member of the gentry and who's travelling first-class and alone. But what's crucial about it is surely how it implies Lina's own psychology. She seems to see herself as both still a child (for whom adult psychology remains a mystery) and as a would-be **mother** of a child (with the book itself presently being a substitute source of gratification).<sup>20</sup> The film's climax, then, constitutes a rejoinder. In it, Lina is still childless. And lately she has even taken to expelling her husband from the bedroom. So it's with high irony that Johnnie brings her his final offering, an innocent glass of white liquid, which both panders to and mocks all her views of herself, her childish fears, her hopes ...

\* \* \*

'Beaky' Thwaite, a middle-aged bachelor, enters the film immediately after Lina and Johnnie have had their first tiff since getting married. He smokes a pipe and uses a peculiarly 'rural' turn of phrase about "putting my foot in it again, what?" Lina takes to this simple fellow, a parody of her gruff father, straight away.<sup>21</sup>

Yet Beaky is closely linked to the ambiguity attending Johnnie, an ambiguity seen through Lina's eyes and which keeps on deepening. Although he explains his visit by saying he'd just happened to be passing, it soon turns out that he'd run into Johnnie at the races and found himself invited back to stay the weekend. Thus we learn that Johnnie has broken a promise to Lina to keep away from race-tracks - and that he'd "lost a packet". Of course, there's no connection between the loss and his invitation to his rich friend to visit ...

Nor, of course, is there a link between Beaky's visit and the couple's tiff shortly before, nor any question of Johnnie's really being the "baby" Lina has suddenly claimed to see! (He's no **puer aeternis**, is he?) True, he plays up to her, e.g. by putting a pencil in his mouth and looking glum, but no doubt he'd defend himself by saying that his wife's estimation of him is distorted by her own needs. Why, look how she's soon even telling Beaky it's time **he** grew up! Beaky, that veritable Solomon!

Actually, the truth about Beaky is complex. At one level, he's the escapee from the never-never world of P. G. Wodehouse exactly as Lina, in the novel, imagines him to be. At another level, he's an extension of both Johnnie and the marriage, his arrival in the household coinciding with, for example, Johnnie's reading of (traditional English) detective novels which Lina buys her husband in the village. Finally, at the level of the film's subtext, he may seem to hold out the prospect of the marriage attaining the "real ... harmony of disposition" described by Schopenhauer - except that his very unreality makes that impossible. Beaky parodies, for example, virility, as he parodies Nietzschean "joy" ...

\* \* \*

Johnnie and Beaky's land speculation scheme provides the film with a **tour de force** of plotting and suspense. Behind the scheme, almost unmentioned after the initial tiff with Lina, are Johnnie's mounting debts, exacerbated by a spot of embezzlement that had got found out.

Needless to say, Beaky proves willing to put up the scheme's capital. Yet one day, after Lina raises objections, Johnnie says he's calling everything off. He'd merely like for Beaky to drive with him to the cliff-top site so that he can "prove" that the scheme was no good. That's all right, replies Beaky, he's satisfied with his friend's decision. But Johnnie insists. What's more, he stipulates "early tomorrow morning" for their departure, so as to avoid traffic. And that's surprising, because the film has established that Johnnie detests rising early.<sup>22</sup>

Again Beaky protests: "it'll be cold and nasty and wet". Johnnie says they'll leave at seven o'clock. Beaky is forced to make a joke in order to hide his annoyance. "That's a bit pig's tail", he says, meaning "twirly", meaning "too early". Suddenly, cutting off this badinage, the film gives us Lina's suspicion that Johnnie intends pushing his friend over a cliff. We're shown her horrified mental image of Beaky, laughing at his own joke, falling through space. Then she faints.

All along it's been plausible that Johnnie has simply wanted to do the decent thing by his friend's best interests and his wife's doubts, i.e. he has merely wanted to prove his point (which concerns the quality of the soil at the development site). After all, he's merely the same caring fellow (isn't he?) who got carried away and ran up huge debts at the start of the marriage so that his lovely wife could keep living in the style she'd been used to ... Yet the film also artfully manipulates us into seeing that Lina's fears may be justified, that Johnnie may really be planning murder.

Naturally, in true Hitchcock fashion, the matter isn't dismissed after just one or two good scenes. On the contrary, it intensifies. When Lina regains consciousness, she's in bed next morning. Johnnie and Beaky have already left. Hurriedly, she drives to the cliff-top where she sees tyre-marks indicating that a car may have gone over. But as there's no sign of the two men, she returns home. At first the house seems deserted. Then she hears Johnnie whistling, as if to himself - a Strauss waltz. Next moment, Beaky comes into view ...

Lina **reacts**. As if feeling guilty for having denied her husband something - unnamed - to which he'd been entitled, and overjoyed that he **hasn't** killed his best friend, she flings off her coat like a stripper's



gloves and runs to embrace him. Meanwhile, the Strauss waltz plays exultantly, and a cloud hovering over the house obligingly moves away.

But, no, a new era of Johnnie-Lina relations isn't about to begin. The very next minute, Lina learns that Beaky **had** nearly been killed. His car had rolled towards the edge of the cliff with him in it. Fortunately, Johnnie had been nearby and had managed to jump on board to grab the brake. Or that's how Beaky remembers it. (The novel gives Johnnie an additional motive for saving his friend: he'd suddenly realised that Beaky's money was tied up in a Paris bank under an alias ...)

\* \* \*

Again the ambiguity deepens. In subtle ways, Lina begins to suspect her husband of philandering. The implication is that infidelity is better than murder, whose possibility she doesn't want to face. Her suspicions are aroused when Beaky says he must go to Paris about some securities. He lets drop that on his last visit a prostitute had picked him up in the Champs Elysées and defrauded him. He invites Johnnie to come with him this time to celebrate having saved his life. Johnnie declines as "a married man" but says he'll accompany Beaky as far as London. In the next scene, Lina receives news from two county police officers that Beaky has died in Paris after drinking brandy given him by an unidentified Englishman.

This is the scene analysed by Stephen Heath in an article on "Narrative Space".<sup>23</sup> The two policemen are respectively a senior and a junior officer, like two bobbies in **The 39 Steps** (1935) who watch a show at the London Palladium from the wings. In both cases the naive reactions of the younger man provide a comic touch: for instance, the young policeman in **Suspicion** is visibly disconcerted by a Picasso-like painting in the Aysgarths' hall.

Perhaps the crucial thing about that painting, though, is how the dark lines of its design echo the dark shadows, like curving bars of a cage, cast on the surrounding walls. Which allows a further observation. The naive young policeman gazes at the painting, trying to fathom it, and has to be nudged by his colleague; "provincial" Lina gazes at a newspaper item about Beaky's death and goes into a trance, from which she has to be roused by the same senior officer. A moment later, as she turns from showing the policemen out, the shadows in the hall seem about to overwhelm her ...

Lina now apostrophises her late father's portrait: "He didn't go to Paris, I tell you." She rings Johnnie's club in London, the Hogarth Club. (Here's another subtle touch, and again one which concerns an artist: William Hogarth painted such famous subjects as 'Marriage à la Mode' and 'The Rake's Progress'.) But Johnnie had checked out the previous morning, in plenty of time to have accompanied Beaky. Lina sinks back into her trance - which is how Johnnie finds her when he enters silently, much as he'd found her the time her father died ...<sup>24</sup>

Johnnie professes to be cut up about his friend's death. "I loved that silly, generous, good-hearted fool", he tells his wife. "Next to you, I loved him more than anybody in the world." That's doubtless true. But next minute he speaks a palpable lie. He telephones the police to report that he's back from his trip, and tells them he'd seen Beaky off at Croydon Airport. Then he adds: "I stayed in London at my club until this afternoon."

There are, I think, essentially just three possible reasons for Johnnie's lie. First, the most obvious: he'd actually gone to Paris with Beaky and murdered him, knowing of his friend's allergy to brandy. Second, he'd gone to Paris with Beaky but only to engage in a little extra-marital fun.<sup>25</sup> Third, and this is the reason he gives at the end of the film: he'd gone alone to Liverpool to try and borrow money on his wife's life-insurance policy. But it's far from clear why, in the circumstances, he'd bother concealing the Liverpool trip - if that's where he'd really gone.

\* \* \*

Late in the film, Lina and Johnnie visit Isobel's for dinner. Muffled drumbeats are heard. Lina is subdued but looks particularly lovely; she's even wearing the pearls she wore the night she first waltzed with Johnnie, the night he proposed.<sup>26</sup> He, too, is almost his old self, being as alert and talkative as ever.

In contrast, the hostess and the other guests are a sexless bunch: the exceedingly self-sufficient Isobel (a parody of Lina?), her humourless pathologist brother, his mannish wife (friend? sister?).

The tone now approaches that of the MGM film **Night Must Fall** (1937).<sup>27</sup> On returning home, Johnnie locks up, pointing out that the cook and the maid are both away. He leads Lina by the hand upstairs; when he notices that she's shivering, he suggests that she undress for bed. By now it seems likely that he's either going to make love to her or kill her. In other words, as he himself notes, the situation reprises (the ambiguity of) the hillock scene. And once again Lina resists. Telling Johnnie to sleep in his dressing-room, she shuts the door on him. Then she faints.

Lina has reached a point where unwanted events must seem to be repeating themselves over and over. Consequently, she must feel rather like a helpless child again. Almost a corpse ... She wakes in bed next day to find Johnnie and Isobel looking at her concernedly. Isobel tells her that Bertram, i.e. the pathologist brother, has examined her and pronounced that she just needs "a little sleep". Johnnie goes to arrange some supper. From what Isobel says, it seems that he has spent the afternoon pressuring her to reveal her trade secrets - like the name of a certain poison, a common household substance, which induces "a most pleasant death" and leaves no trace ...

A premonitory shot of a clock ticking introduces the scene of Johnnie bringing Lina a glass of milk as a nightcap. (To the point where he sets down the milk and leaves the room, the scene apparently coincides with the 'forbidden' climax.) A sword-point of light from the kitchen thrusts its way into the hall. Then Johnnie mounts the stairs with the milk on a tray. The waltz love-theme plays slowly in a low, sinister register. Here it's impossible not to think of how the poet Keats invoked the nightingale (in lines which prompted the title of an early draft of **Vertigo**):

Darkling I listen; and for many a time  
I have been half in love with easeful death

. . .

Now more than ever seems it rich to die,  
To cease upon the midnight with no pain ...

"Goodnight, Lina", Johnnie says, leaving the milk by the bed.<sup>28</sup>

\* \* \*

A recurring Hitchcock theme is that of the second chance which comes too late. Were Lina to bravely drink that glass of milk which she suspects is poisoned, it's questionable whether her gesture would reconcile life and death in a 'Nietzschean' sense - at any rate, in her own case, for presumably she'd soon die (and Johnnie after), and that would be an end of it. But what of our case? Lina's gesture, **qua** gesture, effectively negates the hillock scene and the repression it stands for, as it effectively substitutes Nietzsche's joyful 'recurrence' for the repetition-compulsion. (Cf. Isobel's "a most pleasant death".) That is, in a poetic sense, which Keats called truth, **Lina is showing us the way**. In 'MacGuffin' 4, I ended my review of **Psycho** by quoting another poet, T. S. Eliot:

A condition of complete simplicity  
(Costing not less than everything) ...

That Nirvana-like condition does seem to me what Hitchcock's preferred ending for **Suspicion** would have parodied, too.

Let me be clear. Lina herself remains to the end provincial, repressed, estranged from her husband, given to (narcissistic) reverie or (masochistic) trance. The film isn't explicit about the couple's marital relations, but I think it's clear from the film's progressively ironic use of the waltz motif that those relations worsen rather than get better. (In the novel the opposite seems the case, and Lina ends up pregnant.)<sup>29</sup>

But more can be said about Lina's final gesture. For a start, it's obviously of the gallant, 'all for love'

kind that had appealed to Hitchcock since the silent days and which Lesley Brill writes about with feeling in 'The Hitchcock Romance'.<sup>30</sup> Also, the gesture may remind us of how Lina is one of several childless women in Hitchcock's films who are made to pay the ultimate price for their barrenness - yet who, in paying it, give us a glimpse of a **form of birth** that is edifying.

In **Suspicion** a glass of milk comes to stand for both motherhood and babyhood. Were Lina to drink that milk, to ingest that white fluid brought to her in waltz-time up a symbolic staircase<sup>31</sup> by her husband, she would be accepting the impregnation she has resisted all along. As well, such surrender on Lina's part would mean that she willingly became like a little child, something else she has strenuously opposed. But notice how in that case mother and child would be one! At such a rich moment, so near and yet so far from what Schopenhauer approximated as Nirvana, but which he freely admitted "remains for ever inaccessible to all human knowledge precisely as such",<sup>32</sup> Hitchcock's film raises issues of madness and incest. We are in Oedipal territory again, on a trajectory running from **The Lodger** (1926) through **Rebecca** (1940) and on through **Psycho** ...<sup>33</sup>

\* \* \*

Of course, in the final scene as we have it, Lina doesn't drink the milk, which may not be poisoned anyway, and she doesn't die. Now, I've noted that the marriage was undertaken in a spirit of reaction - less chemical than psychological (she'd feared being left an old maid). Since the honeymoon, it's been a pivotal irony how the very love that might have set everything right between the couple has itself become problematic. The marriage has continued in the spirit with which it began, of one reaction after another.

Unfortunately for the film, the fact that Lina leaves the milk undrunk proves little, and largely just sets up the possibility of a fresh round of fears and recriminations. Other endings than the present one were scripted and quickly rejected. (In one, Johnnie atones for his past misdeeds by going off to join the RAF.) In the present final scene, Lina packs to go to her mother's house, and Johnnie insists on driving her. **Again** she thinks he's trying to kill her (and **again** the hillock scene is evoked), but this time successive revelations come tumbling forth with unseemly haste. For a scene that's supposed to represent some sort of return to reality, it lacks conviction.

We hear that Lina has selfishly misconstrued almost everything, for Johnnie has been intending to commit not murder but suicide. (His dubious claim about having gone to Liverpool isn't cleared up, of course.) Altogether, the scene has the feel of a Monty Python skit:

Man, waving gun at frightened lady: 'Don't worry. I'm not going to shoot you.'  
Frightened lady, cheering up: 'Oh, that's all right, then.'

Yet a weak ending doesn't necessarily a bad film make. **Suspicion** has already presented us with an ingenious collection of thrills and twists, and given us a surreal account of a marriage which pre-dates Bunuel's **El** (1953) by more than a decade ...<sup>34</sup>

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### Notes

1. Quoted in J. Laplanche and J. B. Pontalis, 'The Language of Psychoanalysis' (1988), p. 245. For Lina's views (in the Francis Iles novel) on Krafft-Ebing, see note 29 below.
2. S. Freud, quoted in Laplanche & Pontalis, p. 272.
3. Laplanche & Pontalis, p. 272. For discussion of Buddhist parallels at the end of **Psycho**, see my review of that film in 'MacGuffin' 4. For Buddhist connotations in **Vertigo** (1958), and for a note on Scottie's refusal to 'let go', i.e. to cease reacting, see my review in 'MacGuffin' 1. Also, recall how **Rear Window** (1954) ends with Lisa putting aside the book 'Beyond the High Himalayas' - which she'd only started to read

to please Jeff - and turning to 'Harper's Bazaar' instead. It's a piece of business which parallels some business in the opening scene of **Suspicion**, which I discuss in the present article. But my point here is that 'Beyond the High Himalayas' evokes not just the political situation in Tibet - where the Dalai Lama would soon be forced to flee abroad - but also an alternative way of looking at the world which the already complacent Lisa now turns her back on ...

4. Freud's ambivalence re pleasure is discussed in Chapter VIII of Norman O. Brown, 'Life Against Death' (1959). See also Laplanche & Pontalis, p. 273.
5. Quoted in N. Fodor and F. Gaynor, 'Freud: Dictionary of Psychoanalysis' (1958), p. 131. The same quotation adds that if the psychic trauma "was [from] an early affective relationship it is revived in an analogous connection with another person".
6. Quoted in F. Truffaut, 'Hitchcock' (1967).
7. Brown, op. cit. The crucial chapter for the present analysis is the already-mentioned Chapter VIII, "Death, Time, and Eternity", from which I've drawn several quotations used in the text.
8. F. Nietzsche, quoted in Brown, Chapter VIII. Nothing changes, it seems. We're still in joyless flight from our own deaths, and a recent newspaper article noted how "human immortality is actually an item on the speculative scientific agenda these days". Again cf. **Vertigo**, and Scottie's reluctance to 'let go' ...
9. D. Spoto, 'The Art of Alfred Hitchcock' (1992 edition), p. 101; cf. D. Spoto, 'The Life of Alfred Hitchcock' (1983), pp. 243-4.
10. Spoto (1992), p. 107.
11. Ibid, p. 101.
12. C. Barr, "**Blackmail**: Silent & Sound", in 'Sight & Sound', Spring 1983.
13. According to author and crime writer H. R. F. Keating (e.g. in his book 'Crime & Mystery: the 100 Best Books', 1987), Francis Iles based the character of Isobel on Dorothy Sayers. Sayers was one of several writers after World War I who contributed to a cycle of novels and stories about spouse-murder. For instance, both Iles and Aldous Huxley wrote stories inspired by the Armstrong poisoning case. Agatha Christie's 'Philomel Cottage' was adapted to the stage - by Hitchcock actor Frank Vosper - as 'Love From a Stranger', and was twice filmed under that title, in 1936 and 1947. Sayers's contribution to the cycle includes a story 'Suspicion' (1939) ...
14. For a succinct biography of William Palmer, see the entry in C. Wilson and P. Pitman, 'Encyclopaedia of Murder' (1961).
15. Reproduced in G. Perry, 'Hitchcock' (1975), p. 57.
16. For confirmation, refer to the scene in Lina's local village where she runs into the catty Mrs Newsham.
17. A. Schopenhauer, 'The World as Will and Representation', Vol. II. What unifies all of Schopenhauer's observations, including those cited in the present article, is his emphasis on the generally pernicious function of Will. As regular 'MacGuffin' readers know, I think a similar pessimism informs Hitchcock's films, and especially those he made in America.
18. The headache business anticipates **Psycho**, of course. There's also a similar moment in William Wyler's **The Heiress** (1949) where Catherine Sloper (Olivia de Havilland) instantly recovers from headache on receiving a proposal of marriage from Morris Townsend (Montgomery Clift). I haven't checked whether Catherine's headache is mentioned in the film's ultimate source, Henry James's 'Washington Square' (1881), but that novel certainly offers many parallels to **Suspicion** (e.g. the repressed spinster, the fortune-hunting suitor, the repressive father).

19. M. C. Miller, "Hitchcock's Suspicions and **Suspicion**", 'Modern Language Notes' 98, no. 5 (December 1983), pp. 1143-1186.

20. Again this anticipates **Psycho** where Marion so badly wants a baby from boyfriend Sam that she **reacts** to the millionaire's reference to his (teenaged) "baby" - who's about to be married - and steals his \$40,000. As I suggested in 'MacGuffin' 4, that wad of banknotes ends up parodying the baby Marion never had.

21. Beaky represents a variant of the inoffensive character, Major Giles Lacy, that Nigel Bruce played in **Rebecca**. As a further instance of Hitchcock's audacious use of symbolism, consider the fancy-dress costumes assigned to Giles and his (barren) wife Beatrice, the host's sister, for the Manderley ball. Beatrice dresses up as Boedicea in an impregnable suit of mail; Giles poses as a strong-man in a leopard skin, completing the effect by carrying a couple of lightweight hollow orbs joined by a rod and representing a bar-bell ...

22. In the hunt scene, Johnnie has difficulty in raising a smile for the magazine photographer "at this hour of the morning". Of course, it's possible that marriage could have 'made a new man' of him. But cf. note 25 below.

23. Published in 'Screen', Autumn 1976. In 'MacGuffin' 6, I cited this article as an example of Heath's obscurantist writing style!

24. Like Mrs Danvers in **Rebecca**, Johnnie is seldom seen walking. On the two occasions Lina receives bad news and Johnnie comes to the door of her room, his silent arrival is ambiguous. Does it show considerateness or complicity? (In the novel, Johnnie poisons both Lina's father **and** Beaky.) As for the film's female Oedipal drama, implicit here, this was of course a feature of many '40s women's melodramas. In Robert Siodmak's **The File on Thelma Jordan** (1949), the Joan Tetzel character, like Lina in **Suspicion**, keeps on trying to be grown-up but remains "Daddy's little girl" ...

25. Re Johnnie's philandering, Miller, op. cit., notes on p. 1176 the 'innocent' exchange, overheard by Lina, between Johnnie and the maid Ethel as she wakes him one morning after bringing the morning tea and post. "Hello!" he says groggily. "You here again?" (In the novel, Johnnie seduces a succession of maids, and fathers a child by at least one of them.)

26. The film's most 'Nietzschean' moment, when almost anything seems possible, occurs when Johnnie proposes to Lina in front of her father's portrait - which has just slid down the wall with a crash. Lina defies the possible omen by crying out, "It doesn't matter, it doesn't matter!" In a magic touch, Johnnie then hears again the waltz from the Hunt Ball, and Lina hears it too. Henceforth it will be 'their' waltz. They dance. (For a comparable moment of rapport, I think of Howard Hawks's 1945 **To Have and Have Not** and the famous "no strings" scene between Bogart and Bacall.)

Incidentally, for those who worry about such matters, there's a continuity error involving Lina's pearls in the scene at Isobel's. The penultimate time we see her in medium close-up at dinner, the pearls have mysteriously lost a strand!

27. Based on the successful stage play by Hitchcock's friend, actor Emyln Williams, Richard Thorpe's **Night Must Fall** is perhaps the most obvious cinema precedent for **Suspicion**. (But see also note 13 above.) It, too, is about a boyish psychopath with a penchant for whistling, and here again there was a real-life model: the self-described 'Broth of a Bhoy', Patrick Mahon, executed for murder in 1924.

Hitchcock has acknowledged using a detail from the Mahon case in **Rear Window**. It's also likely that a crucial moment in **Rebecca** was drawn from the same source. Mahon claimed that his victim, Emily Kaye, had stumbled and hit her head on a coal scuttle, and that subsequently he'd taken fright and made efforts to dispose of the body. In **Rebecca**, Maxim claims that he didn't kill Rebecca but that she'd stumbled and hit her head on a piece of ship's tackle, and that subsequently he'd taken fright and made efforts to dispose of the body by burying it at sea. In other words, the ambiguity concerning Maxim provides another precedent - there are several - for Hitchcock's use of ambiguity in **Suspicion**. See also my comments on **Rebecca** in 'MacGuffin' 6.

28. In **The 39 Steps**, Hitchcock makes a joke of a murder which occurs early one morning near the BBC by having a character mimic the radio announcer signing off: "Goodnight, everyone" ...
29. Early in the novel (p. 95), Johnnie says that Lina is "in bed or at board about as much use to a man as a cold in the head". Sixty pages later, i.e. about half-way through, she has read some Krafft-Ebing but found it "very childish and silly ... Certainly it had not encouraged her to let Johnnie open his mind on the matter." However, she now enters on an extra-marital affair of her own, from which Johnnie eventually takes her back.
30. L. Brill, 'The Hitchcock Romance' (1988), passim.
31. Noting the German Expressionist obsession with stairs and corridors, Lotte Eisner cites Otto Rank: staircases are 'representations of the sexual act', while cellars and corridors stand for the female sexual organ. L. H. Eisner, 'The Haunted Screen' (1969), p. 121n.
32. Schopenhauer, Vol. II. Schopenhauer is referring to a point at which the will-to-live has denied itself: "through this denial, the individual will tears itself away from the stem of the species, and gives up that existence in it. We lack concepts for what the will now is ... We can only describe it as that which is free or not to be the will-to-live. For the latter case, Buddhism describes it by the word **Nirvana** ..."
33. In 'MacGuffin' 3, I noted how the Ivor Novello character in **The Lodger** aspires to the all-in-all perfection of Christ, and kills his sister at her coming-out ball as a sacrifice to that perfection, then promises his dying mother to find the killer and be avenged - which perhaps he is when he marries his sister's look-alike, Daisy, in a (seemingly) conventional happy ending and a conventional marriage ... For discussion of the **female** Oedipal trajectory in **Rebecca**, see T. Modleski, 'The Women Who Knew Too Much' (1988), Chapter Three.
34. Amongst several approximate parallels of **Suspicion** with **El**, consider how in both films a house becomes oppressive. In the Bunuel film, a psychotic husband brings his wife to live in a house designed long ago by his architect father; in **Suspicion**, Lina's new house both needs paying for and rapidly acquires ambiguous trappings of the past - her father's gift of two (ugly) old chairs, his (accusing) World War I portrait ...

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Another 'Best of 1991' list

(Astute Melbourne film critic Adrian Martin has "a constitutional objection" to staying strictly in the mainstream when deciding his best films of the year; the following list is drawn from the several hundred films from any source that Adrian viewed on first or re-release in 1991. The list has had to exclude some little-known videos, some Hong Kong actioners, and the final episode of the second series of 'Twin Peaks'.)

1. **L'Atalante** (Jean Vigo, 1934; restored 1991)
2. **The Colour of Pomegranates** (Sergei Paradjanov, 1969)
3. **Belle de Jour** (Luis Bunuel, 1967)
4. **Vinyl, Kiss, Sleep, Beauty No. 2, My Hustler** and **Blow Job** (Andy Warhol, 1964-66)
5. **Time of the Gypsies** (Emir Kusturica, 1989)
6. **Alice in the Cities** (Wim Wenders, 1974)
7. **Reversal of Fortune** (Barbet Schroeder, 1991)
8. **Sure Fire** and **All the Vermeers in New York** (Jon Jost, 1990)
9. **El Sur** (Victor Erice, 1983)
10. **Notre Mariage** (Valeria Sarmiento, 1984)
11. **The Last Woman** (Marco Ferreri, 1976)
12. **Sink or Swim** (Su Freidrich, 1990)
13. **The Sheltering Sky** (Bernardo Bertolucci, 1991)

.....

A Hitchcock Quiz

1. Which Hitchcock films had principal sequences set in the following countries or principalities? (a) Brazil, (b) Germany, (c) Canada, (d) Scotland, (e) Italy, (f) Cuba, (g) Australia, (h) Monaco, (i) Morocco, (j) Austria, (k) Ireland, (l) Switzerland, (m) The Netherlands.

Answers: (a) **Notorious**, (b) **Torn Curtain**, (c) **I Confess**, (d) **The 39 Steps**, (e) **The Pleasure Garden**, (f) **Topaz**, (g) **Under Capricorn**, (h) **To Catch a Thief**, (i) **The Man Who Knew Too Much** (1956 version), (j) **Waltzes from Vienna**, (k) **Juno and the Paycock**, (l) **The Man Who Knew Too Much** (1934 version) and **The Secret Agent**, (m) **Foreign Correspondent**.

2. In 1950 Hitchcock was asked to nominate the best movie chase he had ever seen. His answer was:  
 (a) Richard Barthelmess rescuing Lillian Gish in the ice-floe climax of **Way Down East** (D. W. Griffith, 1920)?  
 (b) Paul Muni fleeing through the swamps in **I am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang** (Mervyn Le Roy, 1932)?  
 (c) The 'double-chase' in Hitchcock's own **The 39 Steps** (1935)?  
 (d) Father and son searching for a stolen bicycle in **Bicycle Thieves** (Vittorio De Sica, 1948)?

Answer: (a). (The other titles are Hitchcock's 'runners-up'.)

3. "I had to eliminate every line about science that came out of her mouth." Of which actress in which film was Hitchcock being less than complimentary?  
 (a) Madeleine Carroll in **Secret Agent** (1936)?  
 (b) Laraine Day in **Foreign Correspondent** (1940)?  
 (c) Ingrid Bergman in **Notorious** (1946)?  
 (d) Julie Andrews in **Torn Curtain** (1966)?

Answer: (d).

4. In which Hitchcock film does he appear with his two Sealyham terriers, Geoffrey and Stanley? And the copyright of which film, as indicated by its credits, is held by these same two canines?  
 (a) **The Birds; The Birds?**  
 (b) **Torn Curtain; Topaz?**  
 (c) **The Birds; Marnie?**  
 (d) **Marnie; Topaz?**

Answer: (c).

5. More than one Hitchcock film has scenes set in the famous Old Bailey, but which film actually re-created the **entire** courtroom in the studio, even down to scratches on the walls?  
 (a) **Easy Virtue** (1927)?  
 (b) **The Paradine Case** (1947)?  
 (c) **Dial M For Murder** (1954)?  
 (d) **Frenzy** (1972)?

Answer: (b).

(Thanks to Evan Williams for contributing part of this quiz.)

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'MacGuffin' 5 included an article on Hitchcock's **No. 17** and a table of contents for issues 1-4.

'MacGuffin' 6 included an article on Hitchcock's **The Wrong Man** and a review of the book 'Making Meaning'.

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ODD SPOT: 'PSYCHO'-BABBLE!

When Marion Crane (Janet Leigh) arrives at Norman Bates's motel in **Psycho**, she is driving a Ford car whose licence number is NFB-418. That fact, and Norman's predilection for taxidermy, has prompted such exegeses as one by Donald Spoto - who suggests that the licence prefix stands for 'Norman **Francis** Bates' because Francis was "the saint frequently associated with birds" - and another, possibly made tongue in cheek, by Leland Poague, who claims that the initials refer to 'Norman **Ford** Bates' since "nearly every major character in the film ... is associated with cars produced by the Ford Motor Company".

Spoto made his point about the licence number in the first edition of 'The Art of Alfred Hitchcock' - it's missing from the second edition - and repeated it in public lectures he gave on the film. One day Hilton Green, the film's assistant director and producer of its three sequels, attended one of Spoto's lectures and heard this particular point with a pang of surprise. Turning to a companion, he mentioned that back in 1960, when **Psycho** was made, it was customary to use the crew's licence plates on prop vehicles (rather than the current practice of using phoney ones). Marion's plates had been his ...

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