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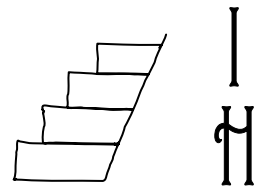
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Front Cover Image: Devon Estes, Missouri Southern State University

Alfred Hitchcock: A Series of Beneficial Shocks

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Editor's Introduction: Dial H for Hitchcock

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The first Alfred Hitchcock movie I ever saw was *North by Northwest*. It was a rainy Saturday morning and I was surfing channels, still rubbing the sleep from my eyes, when I came upon the opening title sequence by Saul Bass, that series of intersecting lines accompanied by Bernard Herrmann's score. I tossed the remote on the coffee table and lay back on the couch, my interest piqued. I watched Cary Grant kidnapped in the middle of a crowd, mistaken for a secret agent. I watched him run from the United Nations and sneak aboard a train, only to be romanced by the gorgeous Eva Marie Saint. I watched him stand alone in the middle of a cornfield and then run from a crop dusting plane that wanted to kill him.

Twenty-six years later and I'm still watching. I'm always searching for another Hitchcock film I've never seen, and there are many, especially his lesser-known ones. He directed over fifty films in a career that began in the silent era and lasted until his death in 1980; he was nominated five times for a Best Director Oscar, but never won an Academy Award until he received the Irving G. Thalberg Memorial Award in 1968; his famous profile sketch is one of the most famous; and he is the reason we have the term "Hitchcockian."

Alfred Hitchcock's legacy has never waned. Francois Truffaut famously met with him in the fall of 1962 for a series of extensive interviews that culminated in Truffaut's seminal text *Hitchcock*; famed director Brian de Palma has publicly stated Hitchcock's influence on his own films, specifically his 70s offerings like *Sisters* and *Obsession*; and Mel Brooks released *High Anxiety* in 1977, an entire movie constructed out of famous references from Hitchcock's most famous films. Even the past few years have shown that public interest for Hitchcock, a man who many consider to be the greatest film director ever, is still alive and well. *The Girl*, released by HBO in 2012, revolves around the tumultuous relationship between Hitchcock and actress Tippi Hedren on the set of *The Birds*; while *Hitchcock*, released the same year, revolves around the difficulties, both public and private, that he endured while directing *Psycho*.

Alfred Hitchcock once commented on his moviemaking by saying, "Some films are slices of life, mine are slices of cake." Perhaps, embedded somewhere in that witticism is the reason audiences continue to connect with his films. A Hitchcock film is attractive, and I don't just mean the actors and actresses who inhabit the screen like Cary Grant, Jimmy Stewart, Ingrid Bergman, and Grace Kelly. We are tempted by Hitchcock, always wondering what plot twists he will unravel and marveling at how he makes us laugh when we should be shocked, and how he shocks us when we should be laughing.

But what is it about Alfred Hitchcock that makes him eternal? His mastery of suspense in films such as *Strangers on a Train* and *Rear Window*? His daring artistic choices like the editing techniques employed in *Rope*? His presentation of an innocent man accused of a crime he didn't commit in films like *Frenzy* and *The 39 Steps* and *North by Northwest*? Or perhaps those rare times he veered away from menace and macabre to experiment with screwball comedy in *Mr. & Mrs. Smith*, or even Freudian sexuality in *Marnie*?

And where to begin when it comes to discussing the depth of his work and the constant rewards that multiple viewings yield? As a film professor, I can use Hitchcock to teach my students about the silent era. I can explain the influence of German Expressionism on his set design and lighting. Perhaps I can draw comparisons between his British films and his American films. Or I can discuss his profound influence on television as seen in his highly successful *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*, which still runs in syndication. Perhaps I can explain how Hitchcock excelled at placing ordinary people into extraordinary circumstances, how he made universal films that often felt deeply personal, films that catered to our everyday fears like rejection, denial, survival, guilt, or sexuality.

And still we watch. And still we discuss. Because when we see a great film, and Hitchcock certainly has many, we want to grab the nearest person and talk about it for hours. We want to share our love of it. Like slices of cake, Hitchcock's films are addictive, and we gorge on them whenever we can, ruminating on his themes and styles and mastery of technique. As viewers, we crave the terror and suspense even while we dread it, and we understand the frustrations and angst his characters must process while trying to survive in a world where no one can be trusted and where everyone is highly suspicious.

The articles in this issue are rich and varied, exploring many facets of Hitchcock's work and spanning the range of his career. They examine the role of the heroine in two of his early films: *The Lodger* and *Blackmail*; the issue of morality in *Sabotage*; screwball comedy in the underrated *Mr. and Mrs. Smith*; his use of Egyptian architecture in *Notorious*; space age conceptions of time in *Vertigo*; and dark comedy in *Frenzy*. In addition, there are interviews with a film scholar and graphic designers, two book reviews, an article discussing Hitchcock's time in television, and another that examines the importance of both blondes and brunettes in his oeuvre.

The following selections are more than a testament to Hitchcock's longevity. They attest not only to his indelible influence on filmmaking, but

also to his influence on pop culture, science, art, comedy theory, architecture…
And the list goes on.

So sit back, turn down the lights, and sample these selections carefully, one bite at a time, savoring each slice with every turn of the page.

Menace and Macabre: An Interview with Neil Sinyard

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Imagine my surprise when an e-mail from renowned film scholar Neil Sinyard appeared in my inbox last fall. I was already familiar with his many works, having read excerpts from his books on Richard Lester, Fred Zinnemann and, of course, Sir Alfred Hitchcock. In addition to publishing a wealth of books on such subjects as William Wyler, Clint Eastwood, and Woody Allen, he has been interviewed for the BBC, recorded an audio commentary for the Criterion release of Billy Wilder's *Ace in the Hole*, and founded the Film Studies Department at Hull University in 1999 where he served as its Director of Studies until 2009.

Neil introduced himself and explained how he had read with great interest about the Alfred Hitchcock panels at the Southwest Popular/American Culture Association's annual conference in Albuquerque. He expressed regret that he would be unable to attend the 2015 conference, but invited me to explore his personal website containing a number of lectures, reviews and articles he has written on Hitchcock over the years. He hoped it might be of interest to me and my fellow presenters at the conference, and he invited me to let others know of it who might be interested.

Several e-mails later I informed Neil I was putting together a special journal issue on "The Master of Suspense" and wondered if he might be willing to lend his expertise for a series of questions that roamed the Hitchcockian landscape in an attempt to better understand the famous director's themes, styles, and fascinations. The result, as you will certainly discover, is an in-depth discussion of arguably the greatest film director of the twentieth century.

MH: Which Hitchcock film is the most underrated?

NS: It's hard to think of an underrated Hitchcock film, because even the worst of them, like, in my view, *Jamaica Inn* or *Topaz*, seem to have their apologists.

But I'll offer three titles from different phases of Hitchcock's career. *Rich and Strange*, for example, which he made in 1932 and is indeed strange but also very rich. It comes from that period in the early talkies, between *Blackmail* and *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, when he was making a variety of different films and where he had not yet settled on his identity of "Master of Suspense." This is more a kind of suburban comedy that becomes progressively darker as this bored married couple goes on a cruise and begins to drift away from the comfortable moorings of their previous life. I think Robin Wood once summarized a key Hitchcock theme as being something like "bourgeois life is unsatisfactory but everything outside it is terrifying." *Shadow of a Doubt* will take some of the themes in here much further, but *Rich and Strange* is an interesting and unusual movie mainly flawed by weak casting.

Then there's *Under Capricorn*, a period drama set in Australia that he made in 1949 and his last collaboration with Ingrid Bergman. A difficult production by all accounts, which only becomes a thriller in about the last ten minutes, but with some riveting moments of cinema (he was still experimenting with the ten-minute take at this time), and with a very powerful, tormented romantic relationship at its heart between Bergman and Joseph Cotten. Bergman has a long confessional speech at one stage that, in lesser hands, could have been boring exposition, but which she delivers as an extraordinary outpouring of self-revelation: it's one of the best things she ever did on screen. It's a reminder of what a great director of actresses Hitchcock could be: up there with Cukor, Wyler, Ophuls, Bergman. The heroines in his films are never just romantic interest; they are invariably complex and compelling characters in their own right.

And finally there's *The Wrong Man* (1957), which I've always had a soft spot for; a typical Hitchcock theme, of course, with an innocent man being wrongly accused of a crime and struggling to prove his innocence, but here quite without the escapist élan of things like *The 39 Steps* or *North by Northwest*. His most Kafkaesque film perhaps and certainly the one that's most like Fritz Lang, with characters seemingly pursued by an implacable fate. What happens to Henry Fonda is horribly plausible but what happens to his wife, Vera Miles, is even worse: her breakdown is really painful to behold. And it has one of my favorite Hitchcock moments: that very slow dissolve, from Fonda's face as he is praying, to the face of the man for whom he has been mistaken and who is about to commit the crime that will clear Fonda's name. Wonderfully cinematic and haunting, and possibly a revelation of Hitchcock's Catholicism and his deep religious faith. It always reminds me of the strange miracles that conclude one of Graham Greene's most overtly Catholic novels, *The End of the Affair*, which has a lot of similarities with the film Hitchcock was going to make next, *Vertigo*.

MH: Why have these three films not earned the recognition they deserve?

NS: I suspect because all of them are not quite what one would usually expect from Alfred Hitchcock; they take him a little bit out of his comfort zone, and his audience too. The latter two films are also devoid of humor and I think it always worried Hitchcock, as it did John Ford, when he couldn't get some comedy into his films, to lighten the tone, but also, I think, to preserve his guard, to keep an audience slightly at arm's length about his own private fears. He had that feeling about *I Confess* too. He said that audiences couldn't identify with the priest's situation and the confidentiality of the confession which the priest refuses to violate even when it's a confession of murder and when he himself becomes the main suspect; but I wonder whether Hitchcock felt uneasy about being, as it were, too confessional himself about his own religious faith. But I like these films precisely because of that; the feeling that you're getting slightly behind the usual iron control and closer to the enigma of the man.

MH: Many scholars would argue that Hitchcock is the most imitated film director. Certainly, Mel Brooks' *High Anxiety* comes to mind, an entire film built on Hitchcockian characters and plots and classic scenes.

NS: Whilst it is true that Hitchcock is widely imitated, I also think that in a fundamental way Hitchcock is inimitable and unique. A classic demonstration of that would be Gus Van Sant's so-called shot-for-shot remake of *Psycho*—it wasn't quite, of course—which ended up having nothing like the power of the Hitchcock original, largely because it completely failed to match the imagination of Hitchcock's original conception and the way the creative personnel on the film collaborated to help realize that conception. It's not just a matter of having the same dialogue and even the same camera positioning: it had to do with casting and the performances he drew from his actors; and the way Bernard Herrmann's fabulous score matched the performances and the black-and-white chill of Hitchcock's conception but seemed out of place when accompanying the images of the remake.

MH: Which contemporary film directors do you think are most successful at imitating Hitchcock's themes and/or film techniques?

NS: Steven Spielberg, particularly in his early films, has sometimes reminded me of Hitchcock: the ordinary man in an extraordinary situation-type scenario; the careful visual craftsmanship which seems meticulously plotted in advance; the emphasis on emotion and the primacy of audience response which he is supremely skilled at eliciting. But the tone is very different. The humor is kinder and more good-natured, whereas Hitchcock's is much darker. Spielberg is also fundamentally an optimist whereas Hitchcock seems to me the opposite. I mean, *Psycho*, in its nihilism, seems to me a darker film than

Schindler's List, which can find redemptive humanity even amidst the Holocaust.

MH: What about Brian DePalma, who has been quite vocal about his reverence for Hitchcock, especially in his early years as a film director? I'm thinking, especially, of films like *Sisters* and *Obsession.*

NS: Brian DePalma's films are Hitchcock homages that have never really found a style of their own and thus tend to be pale imitations of their inspiration. Films like Haneke's *Hidden* and John Michael McDonagh's *Calvary* turn familiar Hitchcock situations from, respectively, *Rear Window* and *I Confess* inside out in interesting ways. Guillermo del Toro has said it is difficult now to film anyone walking up the stairs without first thinking of Hitchcock, and the bit in *Suspicion* when Cary Grant is ascending the stairs with a suspected poisoned glass of milk, or the detective ascending the stairs to meet his doom in *Psycho.* Martin Scorsese has acknowledged the influence of Hitchcock in individual shots of his films, like the shot of DeNiro carrying his gun on his vigilante spree in *Taxi Driver* and where the camera is positioned in exactly the same way as Hitchcock did it in *Marnie.* But there is something about Hitchcock that cannot be duplicated, and I think this has something to do with the way his complex personality (the English background, the Catholicism, the repression, even the sensitivity about his physique) found an outlet in a cinematic mastery that became self-conscious, tightly controlled and total, right down to the droll persona he projected of himself, in his personal appearances on film, interviews, TV introductions, his profile even. I can't think of any other director who put quite so much of himself into his films and was so much in command of the whole cinematic apparatus.

MH: Many critics have discussed the personal fears or desires that were represented in Hitchcock's films, but what social issues do you think his films touched on as well?

NS: That's an interesting question. Hitchcock's films are rarely overtly about social issues, but there is invariably a strong social subtext; he does take care to situate his characters in a recognizable social milieu. His 1930s thrillers in England concern espionage, sabotage, spies, secret agents etc. and although they are not exactly political commentaries of their time, they do counsel against complacency, and not to be taken in by appearances. It's no doubt a coincidence that Hitchcock's adaptation of John Buchan's *The 39 Steps* appeared in the same year as, for example, Vaughan Williams's 4th Symphony and Graham Greene's *England Made Me*, but I am intrigued by what they have in common: startling eruptions of chaos, intimations of war (the number '39' acquiring ominous overtones), the danger of English complacency. It's also the same year as the publication of Freud's *Civilisation and its Discontents*, whose major theme isn't that dissimilar from John Buchan's theme in his novel, *The*

Power House: "How thin is the protection of civilization." That's a Hitchcock theme if ever there was one. The terrorist bomb blowing up a London bus in *Sabotage*, which for me is the greatest of his English films, now has a terrifying contemporary resonance, of course.

MH: One of my favorites from that time period is *The Lady Vanishes.*

NS: *The Lady Vanishes* can be seen as a picture of English society and threatened by the turbulence in Europe, and pulling themselves together to fight the foe; it's no doubt significant that the character waving the white handkerchief of appeasement gets shot.

MH: Looking at Hitchcock, decade by decade, especially beginning in the 1940s when he began directing his American features, it's clear that his films often reflect contemporary societal fears and concerns, yet in ways that don't come off as preachy or didactic.

NS: It's not surprising that anti-Fascism is such a strong theme in his 40s films, such as *Foreign Correspondent, Saboteur, Lifeboat, Notorious* and even *Rope*; and in the 1950s I can see how both *I Confess* and *Rear Window* can be seen as responses to McCarthyism. *I Confess* is about a man who will not sacrifice his own principles simply to save his own skin, a sensitive subject at that time in Hollywood; and the theme of 'spying on neighbors' in *Rear Window* must have had uncomfortable overtones too for a film community at that time infected by an atmosphere of paranoia and betrayal. *The Birds* contemplates the possibility of global annihilation from the air only a year or so after the Cuban missile crisis; and I've always felt that Daphne Du Maurier's original story, published in 1952, was tapping into a post-war, post-nuclear anxiety about the survival of the planet. *The Birds* is also an ecological revenge story: Nature taking its revenge on the ravages of human nature: another very relevant topical theme these days.

MH: How conscious do you think Hitchcock was of including specific themes into his films?

NS: These big themes were not necessarily Hitchcock's primary concern, and indeed it has often been remarked how in interviews he would rarely talk about his films in thematic terms: he would invariably steer the conversation onto technique. The themes tended to be more personal and psychological than social: the fear and desire of sexual relationships, where the male's desire to dominate is countered by the woman's refusal to accept submission; the wrong man theme, that heightens his fear of the police and the theme of guilt; the duality between the public and the private image, where the villains often seem men of great charm and affability. He rarely made whodunits; he made whydunnits, that underline the mystery of personality. Only think of the way

the psychiatrist struggles to explain Norman Bates at the end of *Psycho*, his analysis undercut then by the following scene of Norman in the prison cell as if he is almost back in the womb, and with mother's voice challenging the police to see what kind of person she is, that she wouldn't hurt a fly.

In connection with the question, I want to dwell for a moment on the very last scene of *Shadow of a Doubt*, which seems to me so remarkable, because so much of Hitchcock's moral complexity seems compressed into that final minute. We see young Charlie and the detective sharing their knowledge of Uncle Charlie's true murderous nature whilst inside we can hear some of the eulogy being spoken on his behalf, with its reference to "the beauty of their souls, the sweetness of their character," etc. Hitchcock's use of counterpoint is at its most sharply ironic here; and it is a truth that can never be told. Uncle Charlie's moral compulsion to commit murder seems to anticipate Chaplin's Monsieur Verdoux, just as his contempt for humanity seems also to anticipate a character like Orson Welles's Harry Lime, literally looking down on the world from a great height and feeling little concern about the fate of the "poor devils" beneath him. Young Charlie has learned that there is evil in the world; that the emotions of love and hate can be closely akin. Normality is returning to Santa Rosa but at the cost of a suppression of the truth. "Sometimes the world needs a lot of watching," says the detective. " It goes a bit crazy now and then, like your Uncle Charlie." And incidentally, like Norman Bates: "We all go a little mad sometimes." In *Shadow of a Doubt*, it seems almost like a warning to America about what was going on in Europe and about the possible spread of evil. In part of an interview in Richard Schickel's book, *The Men Who Made the Movies*, Hitchcock talked a little about that scene and how Santa Rosa may have been young Charlie's world, but it wasn't *the* world; outside of her experience was something much darker. Uncle Charlie tells her the same thing, that people are swine, that the world is a foul sty; and, of course, this is before our (and Hitchcock's) full knowledge of the horror of the concentration camps. It's an extraordinary film for its time, anticipating both film noir, in its investigation of the shadowy sides of people's personality, and the modern horror film, where horror might reside not only as something out there but in the heart of family life—indeed the heart of the ultimate "average American family," which in *Shadow of a Doubt* harbors and indeed idolizes someone who turns out to be a serial killer. Schickel's sub-heading for that part of his interview with Hitchcock was "The Omnipresence of Evil."

MH: Hitchcock was known to have a dark sense of humor, especially in films like *Frenzy* or *The Trouble with Harry*. How would you define dark humor?

NS: Hitchcock was a renowned and incorrigible practical joker, and two elements that have always seemed to me characteristic of the practical joke are: the pleasure of superiority felt by the perpetrator over his victim; and the streak of cruelty that underlies this type of humor. It's designed not simply to

amuse, but to discomfort, even momentarily to humiliate, perhaps. There is an edge to it. Hitchcock once said of *Psycho* that it was made with a great sense of fun on his part; that it was like a fairground ride; the fear had in it more a sense of delight than disgust. The humor did not diminish the horror, but was a counterbalance to it. Think of that moment when Marion's car gets stuck in the swamp and we suddenly feel anxious and then relief on Norman Bates's behalf as it sinks; and then perhaps bemusedly chuckle at the perversity of our response, because after all the car contains a dead body- not to mention, $40,000. Or think of the final moments of the film when Norman Bates looks up and smiles at the camera and the shot dissolves into that of his mother's skull. It's a horrific image of the complete disintegration of a personality but there's also something mischievous about this mummy's grin from beyond the grave. Or the scene in *The Birds* when the heroine is sitting in the school playground on her own waiting for the hero's young sister to emerge from the classroom and, unbeknown to her, a bird flies down and lands on the climbing frame behind her. There's a real shiver of apprehension, because by this time the very sight of a bird is enough to scare us; but I love the way it then just hops across to another part of the climbing frame, as if expecting company and thoughtfully making a bit of room. It always makes me think of that moment in the press conference at Cannes after the film's screening, when a woman journalist asked Hitchcock how he'd managed to get the birds to act so well. "They were very well paid, Madam," he replied.

MH: Why do you think dark humor worked so well in many of his films?

NS: One of the great scenes in Hitchcock, I think, is the murder at the fairground in *Strangers on a Train*; and one of the reasons why the scene works so well is its brilliant blend of nervous humor and mounting suspense. We know who the murderer is; we know who the victim is going to be; yet somehow Hitchcock manages to build into this deadly pursuit all the fun of the fair. There's the little boy's game of "Bang, bang, you're dead!," which Bruno, almost offhandedly, responds to, and simultaneously deflates, by bursting the lad's balloon with his cigar; the 'Test Your Strength' game, which Bruno wins, and then looks across, fluttering his eyebrows flirtatiously, at an impressed Miriam, who is soon to be caught in the grip of that strength; the scream in the "Tunnel of Love," which is not the sound of murder but the sound of merriment. But then a still giggling Miriam becomes separated from her companions; the sound suddenly dips and we realize subliminally that she has strayed into Bruno's sound world. 'Is your name Miriam?' he asks, illuminating her face with Guy's lighter, as if making Guy a witness to the crime. "Why, yes," she replies, anticipating a romantic scene, "how- ?," but she never gets to complete the sentence. The embrace will be deadly, seen refracted and distorted through the lenses of her glasses that have fallen to the ground, and with the sound of "Strawberry Blonde" from the merry-go-round being dimly heard in the distance. How quickly laughter has turned to violence,

and anticipated romance has turned to murder. Remember what Truffaut said of Hitchcock: "He directs murder scenes as if they were love scenes, and love scenes as if they were murder scenes." Hitchcock was fond of quoting Oscar Wilde's "Each man kills the things he loves," and it underlies the feeling of some of his greatest films, like *Shadow of a Doubt* and *Vertigo*.

And yet this scene in *Strangers on a Train* would not be half as effective as it is without this vein of humor, which can catch an audience off-guard. It offers a safety-valve from a cinema of simple sadism or salaciousness; it provides an ironic and aesthetic distance. It is a measure of his quirky view of humanity and the sanity and stability with which he views a world that can seem insane and unstable but in which we must all live and cope. It is one of the reasons why I love *Rear Window,* which I think is perfectly poised between social comedy and physical and psychological suspense; and where it seems to me that its spying on human foible, weakness, loneliness and desperation, is as much comic and even compassionate as it is cruel. I think it was John Fawell in his excellent book on *Rear Window* who described it as "a Shakespearian comedy disguised as a suspense thriller," and I think that's absolutely right. "Lord, what fools these mortals be!" says Puck in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream.* I think Hitchcock's variation on that in *Rear Window* is: "What ghouls these mortals be!" He is implicating his characters in that observation and also his audience (i.e. us), but also himself. It's a droll recognition from a great artist of a fundamental truth about human nature.

MH: Hitchcock never seems to get stale, or fall out of favor the way some directors do. What makes him such an enduring figure?

NS: It's hard to know where to start in answering this. He was a director's director, and in a way the envy of all other directors. During his lifetime, he became an auteur, a genre, an adjective, a brand name, and a star. You could sell a film on his name alone: he was undoubtedly the star attraction behind, say, *Psycho* and *The Birds*: those films are inconceivable without him, and without the expectation that his name above the title or his presence on the posters bestows. He defamiliarized the familiar, forcing you to look at things in a new way and sense the potential threat behind them. The obvious example is the shower in *Psycho.* We thought it was a site of relaxation; Hitchcock suddenly made us realize that the shower is where we are at our most vulnerable. He saw the fearful potential in the everyday. There's the intensity of his visual imagination, so that practically every film he made had a scene or moment in it that would stay in your mind. When the magazine 'Sight and Sound' did a special number on him to commemorate his centenary in 1999 and asked about 30 different film makers for their favorite scene or moment, they came out with 30 different examples.

MH: He certainly knew how to market terror, and how to tap into our subconscious fears, everything from appearing in his own movie trailers to creating and hosting his own television show.

NS: As his book-length interview with Truffaut demonstrated, he had the gift of talking about his work analytically and technically but always in accessible terms. No other Hollywood director before him had explained his planning and his working methods so fascinatingly and in such detail. When I was teaching Film Studies and often being asked what a director actually did, I invariably chose Hitchcock as my example because you can pinpoint the director's presence and analyze every camera movement. There's a sequence from *The Birds* I particularly liked to discuss and illustrate: after the sparrows have come down the chimney to the point when Jessica Tandy discovers the farmer in his house with his eyes pecked out. You can just go through it and discuss the challenges Hitchcock saw in the sequence and how he solved them; his distinctive use of counterpoint where what a scene is about verbally (the bird attack) is not what the scene is about visually (the breakdown of the mother), and it is the visual narrative that predominates; his use of imagery such as china, which becomes a correlative to character, and which will carry you forward into the next scene; where to put the camera when a character moves, and why; finding visual, not verbal, solutions to dramatic problems, such as that extraordinary shot of the row of broken cups hanging by their handles, which is sufficiently odd and intriguing to keep Jessica Tandy in that farmhouse and investigating what has happened. Like us, she wants to leave but can't, until her curiosity, which is even stronger than her fear, is satisfied. His use of the camera was so extraordinary.

I love the bit in *Shadow of a Doubt* when Teresa Wright discovers the story in the newspaper in the library about the 'Merry Widow' murders that implicates her Uncle Charlie, and the camera pulls back, as if it's been looking over her shoulder and gasps at what it has seen. I was always struck by that thing he said to Truffaut about *Psycho*: that he didn't care about the subject-matter, and he didn't care about the acting, what he cared about was putting the pieces of film and soundtrack together to induce a powerful emotion in the audience: to arouse them by pure film. He talked a lot about 'pure cinema': *Rear Window* was another favorite example. And yet there's so much more to both films than pure technique. Behind the guise of a mystery thriller Hitchcock is delving, daringly and disturbingly, into some deep and dark areas of the human psyche. And, whatever he might say about not caring about the acting, he got some extraordinary performances out of the likes of James Stewart, Cary Grant, Ingrid Bergman, Teresa Wright, Anthony Perkins, Kim Novak, Robert Walker, and many others. One of the most extraordinary pieces of screen acting I've ever seen, I think, is Jimmy Stewart in the final scene of *Vertigo* where he somehow has to summarize the plot whilst maintaining the suspense

and projecting the character's angry derangement. Kim Novak is marvelous in this scene too.

MH: Do you think there are notable differences between Hitchcock's American and British films, whether stylistically or thematically?

NS: That's a big question, I think. I suppose the obvious test-case would be *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, the only occasion where he re-made an earlier success of his. The 1956 American remake is everything the 1934 wasn't: it's sumptuous and in color; it's 120 minutes long as opposed to the original's 75 minutes; and it has not one but two big Hollywood stars, James Stewart and Doris Day, whose screen persona he can explore quite interestingly, even subversively, in the film. It's always fascinated me, for example, how James Stewart becomes more and more neurotic in his Hitchcock films, in a way that quite subverts his conventional screen image as the likeable, even noble, American hero (except in his Anthony Mann films), so that by the time of *Vertigo*, he is playing someone who, on a psychological level, is clearly deeply disturbed. Hitchcock thought the first version was by a talented amateur and the second by a professional; and it's true that there are things in the later version that are explored in more detail: the tensions within the marriage, for example. And, of course, Hitchcock's use of color in his American films was always imaginative and an important part of his additional cinematic arsenal that had not been available to him in England. Just think of his use of green in *Vertigo* to give an extra ghostly dimension to the film, or his use of red in *Marnie* to signal those mysterious seizures of panic that afflict the heroine below the level of consciousness.

Interestingly, though, when that second version of *Man Who Knew Too Much* had appeared, it was quite common amongst English critics at that time particularly to prefer his English films to his American, and indeed the contemporary reviews reflected this. They liked the pace and unpretentiousness of them, whereas in America, Hitchcock's films, they thought, had become more ponderous and talky. It was only when the *Cahiers du Cinema* critics began extolling Hitchcock as a great auteur that the critical perspective began to shift, and then when Robin Wood weighed in with his stated preference for the Hollywood films ("who wants the leaf-buds when the rose has opened?" I think he wrote), this became the critical norm. In more recent times the English films have been re-valued and a more balanced attitude taken to these two halves of Hitchcock's career.

MH: Even when he moved to the United States and began the American period of his film career, it seems he kept some of his British attitudes, and that they often bled into his films, so to speak.

NS: Yes, I've always thought that part of Hitchcock's originality in Hollywood is that he never entirely shed all vestiges of Englishness. It was still there in the way he spoke; he had a tendency to cast British character actors in roles that didn't require them to be British; and he did like his English gentlemanly villains like James Mason in *North by Northwest* and even Tom Helmore in *Vertigo*. He only became an American citizen in the mid-1950s, ten years after his wife; and in the dozen or more films he made between 1940 and 1951, less than half are actually set in America and only one, *Shadow of a Doubt*, is really about America itself. I think he was slow to acclimatize; America seemed almost as much a place of dream, imagination and excitement to him as a new home. Conversely, I think he felt a residual resentment towards the English in begrudging him, through their preference for his English films, his success in Hollywood. And, of course, he had been very upset by the hurtful and unfair accusations of deserting his country in time of need when he emigrated in 1939 to make *Rebecca*.

In fact, *Rebecca* is an interesting film in this regard. He'd come to Hollywood, yet his first film there is an English story, set in England, with a largely English cast. He grumbled that it wasn't a Hitchcock film, he was inhibited by Selznick's interference, that the material was cheap romance etc., but Truffaut astutely put his finger on something that was new to Hitchcock's work in that film, whereby the element of suspense now was in the conflict and psychology of the characters more than in the dramatic situation, and this is where the American films represented a significant advance on the English films. Almost in spite of himself, it seems, *Rebecca* becomes a very Hitchcockian film, with its suffering heroine, its theme of romantic obsession. In fact, it is an interesting forerunner of *Vertigo*, what with its hero first seen hovering over a precipice; a significant portrait which the heroine tries to emulate; an obsession with a dead woman; the dead coming back to haunt the living, etc.

MH: It's wonderfully gothic and creepy, certainly a tragic romance, but also buoyed by the psychological conflicts that many of the characters suffer through, especially in the second half of the film.

NS: There's a quality of romantic anguish in the film that had never surfaced in his English films but will feature quite strongly in his Hollywood work, as if English repression and understatement are being sloughed off. The equivalent of great films like *Notorious* and *Vertigo* are virtually inconceivable in Hitchcock's English period. The themes are not dissimilar; we still have wrong men being pursued by the police or by fate, and the films are still attacks on complacency and how easily a person's world can slip from civilization to chaos, but the depth, the ambience, the use of star actors like Jimmy Stewart, Cary Grant, Ingrid Bergman, Grace Kelly in strikingly original ways all belong to a Hollywood cinema of a particular era and greatness.

Silent Blondes: The Heroines of Hitchcock's *Blackmail* and *The Lodger*

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In the British Film Institute Film Classics volume on *Blackmail*, Tom Ryall points out that *Blackmail* and *The Lodger* are the only two of Alfred Hitchcock's 1920s movies to include many of the thematic and stylistic elements we consider fundamental to his work:

> A blonde heroine, a dull policeman . . . a killing, suspense, even a cameo performance by the director himself, together with a number of stylistic "touches" readily ascribable to him.[1]

In fact, the two films have more in common than this. The recent British Film Institute restoration of "The Hitchcock 9," the director's silent films, has given us a new opportunity to analyze these movies—in particular, *Blackmail* in its silent version, which has not been readily accessible for years (and is still not available in a Region 1 DVD or Blu-Ray). The heroines of both films are ordinary middle-class women just beginning to realize how narrow their lives are and how little they can do to choose their own paths for the future. The female characters face unexpected danger and their first impulse is *not* to approach a man to help them make decisions on how to handle it.

The Lodger and *Blackmail* are crime films at the level of plot, but are also commentaries on the limited choices women had in 1920s middle-class Britain. Though some argue that it was David O. Selznick who helped Hitchcock adopt a woman's "point of view" when making *Rebecca*, these movies demonstrate that he was doing so long before he went to Hollywood. Both heroines are working women who live with their parents and have ordinary lives that are disrupted by violence. Complicating the women's situations is that their boyfriends are police officers. While this is a useful device to create an intersection between the investigation and romance plots, it's more

meaningful than that: the boyfriends represent safety, stability, and sameness, exactly the things our heroines are just beginning to resent and resist.

An interdisciplinary approach can help us to understand these characters and the worlds they live in. Encouraging viewers to analyze every film on its own terms, Hitchcock scholar Robin Wood recognized that "each theory has . . . its own validity . . . Each can offer insights into different areas of cinema and different aspects of a single film."[2] In this case, studying the adaptation process, from novel to play to screenplay, will reveal that these films deliberately place women characters at the center of the story. To understand how a female point of view is developed in both *The Lodger* and *Blackmail*, I will apply feminist theory, especially the work of Tania Modleski whose book on Hitchcock (*The Women Who Knew Too Much*) made the case that a director could *depict* the oppression of women without *endorsing* it. Furthermore, I will use close textual analysis to examine how Hitchcock draws on his own personal experiences, as well as on techniques adopted from the documentary tradition, to create the external worlds in which Daisy and Alice live.

In *The Lodger: A Story of the London Fog*, a series of murders has put the city on edge; young blonde women are being stalked by a strangler who leaves a note at each crime scene signed "The Avenger." Daisy Bunting (the actress, June Tripp), who lives at home with her parents and works as a "mannequin" modeling clothes at a women's shop, helps her mother prepare a room for the new boarder. He is nervous, highly sensitive to noise, and disapproving of the pictures of pretty women that hang on the walls of his new drawing room. In the following days, Daisy becomes friendly with the lodger, despite his suspicious manner and the disapproval of her policeman boyfriend, Joe. As more murders occur and as the lodger continues to behave strangely, it appears that Daisy may be in danger; the lodger and the Avenger may be one and the same.

In *Blackmail*, a similar heroine finds herself faced with danger and violence. Alice (played by Anny Ondra) works at her father's newsstand and her boyfriend is also a policeman. When we meet her, she is waiting for Frank to finish booking a robbery suspect so they can go on their usual date—dinner and a movie. But they quarrel at the restaurant, and Alice instead keeps an assignation with an artist named Crewe. At the end of the evening, he invites her to his studio where he attempts to rape her; she kills him in self-defense. Overwhelmed with shock and guilt, Alice wanders the London streets all night. The next day, as her parents and the shop's customers gossip about the "murder," Alice discovers that in her haste to leave the studio, she has left behind her gloves—one has been found by Frank and the other by a man who threatens to turn it in to the police unless Alice and Frank pay him off.

Often it's in the adaptation that the "Hitchcock" influence is first seen, and that is the case here. The female point of view is not a key characteristic of the stage plays (and in the case of *The Lodger*, the novel) from which the films were derived. The adaptations of *The Lodger* and *Blackmail* introduce a romance that will intersect with the crime plot. Daisy is not only one of the London

blondes who may become a victim of The Avenger; she also has a straight-arrow boyfriend in the police force with whom she is currently somewhat bored. For Alice in *Blackmail*, telling the truth about what happened will mean confessing twice; she is reluctant to tell Frank not only because she killed Crewe, but because she was in his studio late at night. Her sexual indiscretion makes her as much an outsider as the fact that she committed an act of violence.

In his biography of Hitchcock, Patrick McGilligan describes *The Lodger*'s pre-production and the writing partnership of Hitchcock, Alma Reville, and screenwriter Eliot Stannard. *The Lodger* had been highly successful as a 1913 novel and as a 1916 play. The writing team, McGilligan recounts, "made the telling decision to build up the part of young Daisy Bunting, the landlady's daughter. Daisy doesn't even *meet* the lodger until three-quarters of the way into . . . [the] novel."[3] McGilligan interprets this as making Daisy "an equal lead character," but the film is actually more Daisy's than the lodger's.[4] In part because the film devotes so much time to the details of her life and the development of her relationships with her parents and her boyfriend, it is her world we inhabit; the lodger is seen in relation to her and we care about him primarily because we are invested in Daisy's safety and security. In fact, we see two kinds of risk in her relationship with the lodger: Daisy may be in physical danger, which is certainly the more serious. But the lodger, even if he turns out to be harmless, has jeopardized her relationship with Joe. As McGilligan points out, "Joe's jealousy of Daisy's relationship with the lodge . . . [is] another 'triangulation' original to the film."[5] While the lodger may bring out the best in Daisy, namely her kindness and compassion, he brings out the worst in Joe, whose resentment reveals a desire to control Daisy. However the lodger's story is resolved, the relationship between Daisy and Joe will never be quite the same.

The adaptation of *Blackmail* also makes significant changes. The play is summarized in *Blood on the Stage, 1925-1950*, an encyclopedia compiled by Amnon Kabatchnik. Act One takes place in the artist's studio apartment, and the first character to appear is the man who will eventually be the blackmailer, Tracy. In fact, the play in many ways seems more his story than Alice's story. After the landlady has refused to let him in, Tracy slinks away. At midnight, the artist (here named Peter Hewitt) arrives home with Alice; of the sexual assault, Kabatchnik writes, "When she prepares to leave, Peter suddenly takes her in his arms and kisses her passionately. A struggle ensues."[6] Alice stabs him in the throat with a bread knife. Significantly, in Act Two of the play, Alice's parents are frantic because she has been out all night and when she does come in, they express their shock at her behavior. When the blackmailer appears, Alice tells both her boyfriend Harold and her brother (a character not in the film) what has happened. Therefore, both Alice's sexual indiscretion (inferred from the fact that she spent the night away from home) and the attack that leads to her killing the artist are revealed to other characters. In the film,

however, Alice is unable to tell anyone; the longer she keeps her secrets, the greater her shame and fear become.

This change is completely in keeping with Hitchcock's philosophy about suspense; as long as the viewers know what has happened to Alice, but she remains silent about it, tension continues to develop: will she tell anyone, and if so, whom will she tell, and when? In the play *Blackmail*, that sort of tension does not exist; instead, there is action: Tracy demands money, and Alice's boyfriend Harold pulls a gun on him. There is a struggle, and a shot goes over Tracy's head. This physical confrontation is followed by the reappearance of the brother, with late-breaking news that the police autopsy has concluded that the artist, who suffered from heart disease, had a heart attack and fell on his own knife. Compared to the film, this final act seems ludicrous. Though the film adaptation does include an action sequence (Tracy being chased through the British Museum), more important is the fact that the play provides a convenient and rather far-fetched explanation of Hewitt's death to ensure that everyone knows Alice did not kill him. Even during the British Museum sequence, the movie reminds us that this is really Alice's story; the chase is cross-cut with shots of Alice sitting at a table, writing a note which will be her confession. Furthermore, the film does not wipe the slate clean. Alice *did* kill the artist, and she must continue to cope with the horror and regret she feels—which may now be compounded by the fact that she is in part responsible for Tracy's death; had she gone to the police, Tracy would not be a murder suspect and would probably not be climbing the top of the British Museum dome.

Because of these changes made at the screenplay stage, *The Lodger* and *Blackmail* now revolve around the two young female characters, Daisy and Alice. We see the action of the films as it affects them; we feel anxiety and dread because of how they have been threatened. Moreover, both films clearly establish the narrow worlds and limited prospects these women must deal with. Feminist scholars such as Tania Modleski have pointed out that many Hitchcock films invite sympathy for women characters as they try to navigate the patriarchal society that so often places women in a no-win position. This is the case with Daisy and Alice. Their behavior is subject to everyone's scrutiny. Furthermore, the young men they are dating behave as if they have the right to tell Daisy and Alice what to do—a right which is more-than-usually difficult to dispute because the boyfriends represent the law.

The films devote quite a bit of screen time to establishing their routines. In *The Lodger*, the viewer is returned time and again to the family's kitchen, where Daisy's father, a waiter who sometimes works late-night banquets, reads the paper and dozes off while his wife cooks, sews, and handles the renting of rooms to mysterious men who arrive out of the gloomy London fog. We also see Daisy at work, modeling dresses at a woman's shop (a job that Hitchcock's sister Nelly had, Patrick McGilligan points out, at a shop on Oxford Street).[7] *Blackmail* also establishes the heroine's world. Her father runs a newsstand and the family lives in the rooms behind and above it; much of Alice's drama will

play out while she must cope with the daily grind of customers buying tobacco and postage stamps.

Many critics have pointed out the attention to detail in Hitchcock's British films; to establish the normalcy that will be disrupted by confusion and danger, he becomes a kind of documentarian. As David Sterritt asserts, the director has a "penchant for showing violence and chaos . . . in ordinary places . . . where ordinary people . . . go about their ordinary business."[8] Because of this, Sterritt continues, the director's British films have a documentary feel; ". . . homes and businesses in Hitchcock's early works are often filmed with an attention to gritty, workaday details."[9] In fact, he goes on to say, "Hitchcock acknowledged, in a 1937 article for *Kine Weekly*, that he was consciously trying to put what he called 'that vital central stratum of British humanity, the middle class' onto the screen."[10]

Other Hitchcock scholars agree. Biographer Donald Spoto makes the case that in *Blackmail* Hitchcock is creating onscreen a version of his own middle-class childhood spent in rooms above his father's greengrocer's shop. He writes,

> With a story set in his own London . . . he showed his easy, inventive and witty familiarity. The scenes in the shop and family quarters, complete with the drop-in neighbor, are right out of Hitchcock's own childhood, when mealtimes in the High Road were often interrupted by a friend or customer . .[11]

Moreover, Patrick McGilligan recounts that in the late 1920s, Hitchcock took his screenwriters on what might be called location scouting trips: "As part of the director's now standard operating procedure, Hitchcock and [Michael] Powell also visited a series of typical settings where their characters might live and work."[12] In describing the pre-production of *Blackmail*, McGilligan quotes Powell as saying:

> . . . with the lower-middle-class Londoners of our film, shopkeepers, barrow-boys, hawkers, match-girls, hangers-on at the tails of the garment business, policemen, detectives, reporters . . . he continually delighted me with the extent of his knowledge and the sharpness of his observation.[13]

Some film critics have considered this use of documentary techniques as an end in itself; in the 1940s, when Hitchcock was not yet seen as a serious or important director, one positive comment that Lindsay Anderson almost reluctantly made about *Blackmail* was that it included the "everyday locales—a Corner-House restaurant, the police station, the little tobacconist's shop . . . empty London streets at dawn."[14] However, these details are more than a mere exercise in documentary "realism." They help us to understand why Daisy is drawn to the lodger, and why Alice is restlessly making dates with Crewe while

she has Frank on stand-by. As David Sterritt points out, Hitchcock "places characters in confining environments that connote suffocation and paralysis rather than safety or security."[15] Daisy has a degree of independence since she works outside the home, while Alice works in the family shop; still, it's clear that the parents of both women expect them to marry and settle down with the suitable man who is already in the picture.

The Lodger develops a kind of unified female point of view; it's the women, after all—specifically, blondes—who are threatened by the Avenger. Women seem to understand the threat better than men. We see Daisy's friends donning "camouflage" as they leave work, using brunette hairpieces to disguise the fact that they're blondes. The chorus girls who have just finished the evening's performance of *Golden Curls* tease each other about the Avenger, but walk out of the theatre in twos and threes for safety's sake. Later, it is Daisy's mother who hears the lodger go out late at night and suspects he is the murderer.

The first image of the film is a close-up of a woman screaming. A few shots later, we see her lying dead on the ground, and the film shifts to another woman, this one older, who saw the killer and describes him for a policeman and a reporter: "Tall he was. And his face all wrapped up," she says, demonstrating how a scarf had been pulled up to cover his face. The policeman accompanies her to a lunch wagon, where a crowd gathers to hear her story. Almost at once, though, a man standing near her turns her horror into a joke, pulling his collar up high and facing so that his distorted reflection in the shiny metal of the lunch wagon frightens her, making her believe for an instant that this is the murderer. He doesn't get the laugh he wants, as the crowd berates him, but the incident demonstrates the impulse to undermine the woman or make her into a figure of fun.

Tellingly, even though he's a policeman, Joe's first impulse is to use the murders as a joke as well. When Daisy arrives home from work, Joe is already in the kitchen with her parents, relaxing as if he is quite one of the family, smoking and chatting while Mrs. Bunting rolls out dough on the kitchen table. They've been discussing the latest murder, and to get Daisy's attention, Joe says, "I'm keen on golden hair myself—same as the Avenger is." Daisy doesn't seem to think the comment is very funny; she appears to make a snide remark (which we must guess, because there is no inter-title), and Joe begins to flirt with her by cutting out two heart shapes in the dough spread on the kitchen table. Since we have already seen the Avenger's victim lying on the ground and the terrified witness, Joe's use of the murder as a vehicle for flirtation seems a bit odd. Daisy and her co-workers have already taken the threat seriously— "No more peroxide for yours truly" one of them announced as they all prepared to head home at the end of the day. Yet Joe doesn't seem all that concerned. In talking with Mr. Bunting about the murders later that evening, he even makes them the subject of a wager. "Bet they get him next Tuesday," he says.

Later, when Joe is assigned to join the team investigating the murders, he arrives at the Buntings' bursting with excitement. He enters the kitchen,

beaming, and tells Daisy's parents, "Great news. They've put me on the Avenger case." They're pleased, but it's Daisy he wants to tell; he at once asks where she is. She's been playing chess with the lodger in his rooms. Mrs. Bunting goes to get her. "Big show this Tuesday. Shan't be home till morning," Joe tells Mr. Bunting. He holds up a pair of handcuffs, calling them "a brand new pair of bracelets for the Avenger." When Daisy enters the kitchen, Joe continues to talk to her father as if she isn't there. He brags, "When I've put a rope round the Avenger's neck—I'll put a ring round Daisy's finger." Daisy looks away as if embarrassed for him and somewhat annoyed. Grinning and excited, Joe thinks of the case at that moment as a chance to be part of something big. He doesn't really take the murders seriously until he suspects that the lodger might be the Avenger; then he's practically falling over himself to search the lodger's rooms and to put those handcuffs on him.

A few minutes after this conversation, Joe chases Daisy upstairs and puts the handcuffs on her, though she begs him not to. Throughout the film, Joe touches and grabs her in a familiar way, as if being her steady boyfriend gives him the right to do so. He tries to kiss her when she pushes him away; he grabs her hand to drag her out of the lodger's room. His possessiveness is most evident when he sees Daisy and the lodger sitting close to each other and shouts, "Let go my girl's hand, damn you!" He is claiming her as his, even though they are not, as far as we know, even engaged to be married. In scene after scene, Daisy tries to navigate between her parents' and Joe's expectations of her and her own dissatisfaction. Her parents often watch her interact with Joe and smile approvingly; from their point of view, this match seems like a done deal. But often while Joe is talking, Daisy's back is turned to him, and the camera invites us to focus on her reactions. She seems bored at times, irritated; she is already a bit tired of his jokes, and though she sometimes embraces and kisses him, it is almost always after he has initiated it. At other times, she shrugs off his efforts to put his arms around her.

But Daisy is a proper middle-class "girl;" she seems unwilling to hurt Joe's feelings or to break off their relationship. Moreover, she accepts that her parents have authority over her in their home. When the lodger buys a dress for her, Daisy is pleased and excited, but her father, shocked, packs the dress back in its box and marches upstairs to return it to the lodger. She's unhappy about it, but she accepts her father's decision. She is acutely aware that they hope she will marry Joe; they are certainly more satisfied with him than she is. When Daisy listens to him, she often seems to be wondering, Is this the best I can do?

The lodger represents something quite different. She is relaxed with him; she first meets him after he has just moved in and has turned the pictures of beautiful women to face the walls because they "got on his nerves." When she sees the pictures hanging that way, Daisy laughs at once; her honest reaction seems to take him aback. They have an affinity for one another. We don't see how they reach the scene in which they play chess together—Did she ask him? Did he broach the subject? He is so distant and self-involved that it seems

impossible they would communicate on such a minor point as chess; and yet, there they are, perfectly at ease in each other's company. When Daisy's mother knocks on the door, the lodger visibly stiffens, as if he must keep up his guard when anyone other than Daisy enters the room.

While Daisy doesn't consider him a threat, the movie does play with our emotions and encourage us to worry about her safety. As they sit before the fire, Daisy doesn't see him reach for the poker—is he going to hit her with it? She doesn't notice him reaching out towards her face—or her neck—Is he going to strangle her? She seems to find him intriguing and appealing. He is, as her mother says (before listening to him sneak out late at night) a real gentleman. Class is a part of this to some extent; the lodger seems more refined than Joe, more sensitive. Joe's place is in the kitchen, where Daisy's parents spend their time; the lodger seems better suited to drawing rooms and libraries.

Tania Modleski analyzes the sound version of *Blackmail* in her book *The Women Who Knew Too Much*. Many of her observations about the film and about Alice as a character are relevant to the silent version; her argument that "the film undermines patriarchal law and creates sympathy for and an identification with the female outlaw" also applies to the silent film.[16] But because the sound version of *Blackmail* has been so celebrated for its innovations, she examines language and speech extensively. Ultimately, her analysis serves to demonstrate that the silent and sound *Blackmail*s are very different movies. Modleski, for instance, points out how the substitution of Joan Barry's voice for Anny Ondra's makes Ondra's performance seem halting and stiff. Since post-dubbing was not yet possible in 1929, Hitchcock famously worked out a system whereby Ondra mouthed the lines and Barry, sitting just off-camera, spoke the lines into a microphone. "As Ondra clearly hesitates before each line . . . and then accompanies the lines with slightly exaggerated gestures, she does indeed resemble . . . [an] automaton," Modleski argues.[17] Another important consequence of the dubbing, as I hear it, is that the voice with which Alice speaks is cultured, educated, and distinctly upper-class. This compromises the character, who is in all other respects carefully depicted as middle-class. Alice appears to be putting on airs, pretending to be someone she isn't. This makes her, I believe, less likeable.

After the killing, both versions encourage us to sympathize with Alice and to take on her point of view. Modleski, for example, cites the sequence after Alice has left the artist's studio and wanders the London streets throughout the night. She writes:

> The entire sequence works to draw us deeply into Alice's subjectivity, to make us identify with her anguish and fear . . . . As she walks aimlessly about in a state of shock, shots of passersby are superimposed over her image, lending the objective world around her a ghostly air . . .[18]

This sequence is almost identical in the two versions, and it is critical to our understanding of Alice. The world has not changed that night; she has. This is a significant point because Alice must live in an objective world whether she likes it or not. As disconnected as she feels, in the morning she must face her parents, her boyfriend Frank, the neighbors who drop by to gossip, the customers who must be waited on—and the blackmailer who has one of the gloves she left at the crime scene. If she feels that in some way she can return to "normal," then she is proven wrong; all anyone can talk about is the shocking "murder." Furthermore, in a kind of home invasion, Tracy saunters into her father's shop and then insinuates his way into Alice's home, inviting himself to breakfast in the living quarters behind the store. Though her parents are stunned at his rudeness, Alice waits on him, terrified of what he may say or do.

In *Blackmail*, the female point of view is solitary and desperate. The film doesn't attach itself to Alice at first; the opening is a much-discussed documentary-style prologue in which the police, among them the man who will turn out to be Alice's boyfriend Frank, track a man to his lodgings and arrest him there. When we do meet Alice, she's been waiting for Frank and expresses no interest in what he's been doing. She seems bored and capricious; it's hard for us—and for Frank—to know whether she wants to have dinner with him or not. To this point, it's not clear whose movie this is. Will it be Frank's—is it a police procedural, a whodunit? Or will it be Alice's—and if so, what will happen to her? The movie provides the answer when Frank leaves the restaurant in anger and sees Alice leave with another man. The movie follows Alice, not Frank, and it follows her to the sudden violence and horror of the sexual assault in Crewe's studio, and to her desperate act of self-defense.

At this point, we may not feel especially sympathetic to Alice, who seems to be taking advantage of a boyfriend she's tired of and takes for granted. She seems irritated and dissatisfied but we haven't yet seen why. This is one reason why some viewers have been ambivalent about Alice accepting Crewe's invitation to see his studio and about her behavior once she is there. Alice remains restless and uncertain; we don't understand what she wants. What does she intend by going up to his studio? The film withholds any real explanation of Alice until the day after the attempted rape and the killing. When we see her drab little room with its magazine picture cut-outs pasted on the walls and a few cheap items on her vanity table, then we see what Alice's world is like, and we begin to understand why she might have perceived Crewe and his artist's world as exciting and rather daring.

The morning after the killing, she takes off what may be her best dress, the one with the matching jacket that she wore for her date with Frank; in its place, she puts on a shapeless, unflattering dress with a bulky sweater attached—a far cry from the spangled dancer's costume she played dress-up with in Crewe's studio. Then Alice goes downstairs and faces her parents and the locals who are in the shop gossiping. Her mother is setting up breakfast on the oilcloth-covered table in the room behind the shop—an all-purpose room,

crowded with roll-top desk, shelves piled with papers, the mantle cluttered with a clock, a vase, and decorative figurines. Breakfast—and one can imagine, every meal—is interrupted by the shop bell—another customer comes in for one cigar, or one newspaper; another penny or two goes in the till. As the family tries to eat, neighbor stands in the doorway between the living room and the shop, speculating about the "murder," as everyone is calling it. Alice uses the shop-bell as an excuse to get away from the conversation by waiting on customers.

The shop is perhaps the clearest example of the documentarian in Hitchcock. Tacked up on the walls are advertising calendars and sample magazine covers. On the shelves behind the counter, there are literally hundreds of cardboard boxes—Warlock brand tobacco, Players cigarettes, Relief Nibs (fountain pen nibs, I believe). On the counter is a small scale for weighing the tobacco, and there's a wooden ladder standing by which Alice probably climbs at least a dozen times a day to get just the right cigar. You can almost smell the dust and tobacco. When Frank comes in to show Alice the glove he found at Crewe's studio, the only place they can have any privacy is the phone booth, just inside the shop door. Even there, they can be seen by everyone. In these scenes in the shop, as first Frank and then Tracy come in to confront her, Alice seems completely trapped.

By showing us her home, family, and work routine only after she has become estranged from them all, the film takes the chance that we will at first find her impulsive and unlikable. Her initial impatience with Frank and her ambivalence about keeping their date seem unmotivated, and the viewer is inclined to sympathize with him. Especially when she orders him, at the restaurant, to go and get the glove she has lost, her manner is brusque; he dutifully lumbers out of his chair and retrieves the glove. During that time, she has caught the eye of her other "date," so that when Frank returns, the audience knows Alice may be about to brush him off for a more exciting prospect.

But I believe that when we see this setting, the shop with the family's rooms behind and above, Alice is much easier to understand; she comes into focus as a character. In this little world, crowded with stuff, Alice has no privacy; she stands behind the counter as if on display. This is what her life is like; it has always been like this, and it may always be. Her future seems predictable: She has a steady boyfriend—a police officer, no less. Her parents obviously approve. When Dad realizes that something is troubling Alice, the worst thing he can think of to say is, "Did you have another row with Frank?" And when Frank announces that he has been put on the case, the parents react just as Joe did in *The Lodger*; Dad says, "Good! Hope you find who did it— Promotion for you—and nice for Alice too!" When we see this drab, painfully small world, we can better understand why, facing a lifetime of middle-class suffocation, Alice would have been tempted to have some frivolous, slightly scandalous adventure—maybe have her portrait painted, or maybe sneak a kiss with someone other than Frank.

The Lodger and *Blackmail* resolve their plots and the problems faced by Daisy and Alice in totally different ways. It may be that the endings of both films were devised out of necessity, as compromises between the producers and Hitchcock. The director claimed in many interviews that the casting of Ivor Novella as the lodger required him to use an ending he personally disliked. In his conversations with Francois Truffaut, Hitchcock declares that the producers insisted on unambiguously clearing Novella's character of all suspicion. Asked by Truffaut if he would have preferred that the lodger turn out to be the serial killer, Hitchcock replied, "Not necessarily. But in a story of this kind, I might have liked him to go off in the night, so that we would never really know for sure."[19] If this is true, then the producers saved Daisy from a sad fate and completely transformed her life. As the film ends, Joe is nowhere to be found. Daisy has married the lodger, who, as it turns out, is a wealthy man who really lives in a mansion. In the final scene, Daisy and the lodger embrace in a rather underfurnished but posh Art-Deco style living room, while her parents, looking distinctly uncomfortable in their best clothes, sit in front of the fireplace just as they had in their own kitchen.

The ending of *Blackmail* also appears to have been a compromise. The play ended with the revelation that the artist had had a heart attack and fallen on his own knife. Patrick McGilligan asserts that when she played the part of Alice in the original London production, Tallulah Bankhead rejected that ending, insisting that Alice surrender to the police.[20] Hitchcock himself discussed the structure of the film on several occasions, explaining that he had wanted to frame the film with two sequences that were not in the original play: the introductory scenes, in which we see the process through which the robbery suspect is tracked, arrested, and booked; and a similar sequence at the end, in which Frank would arrest and book Alice. Hitchcock told Truffaut that the producers rejected that as "too depressing."[21] Regardless of why it was discarded, the final sequence he describes would have shifted the balance of the movie to Frank, as it would resolve the issue of Alice's "guilt"; the police—including her boyfriend—would unambiguously perceive Crewe's death as a crime rather than as self-defense.

As McGilligan points out regarding *Blackmail*, "It's far from a happy ending, as the actors' haunted looks convey."[22] Modleski perceives a future in which "the bond linking the man and the woman is his knowledge of her guilty secret (guilty, that is, in patriarchal terms), that the union is founded on the man's ability to blackmail the woman sexually."[23] Though the producers apparently considered Alice being imprisoned "too depressing," they don't seem to have considered the fact that Alice has been imprisoned all along by the economic realities and cultural expectations of 1920s middle-class Britain. Through the calculations of the filmmakers—and, perhaps, the whims of the producers—Daisy has been rewarded for defying convention and for following her own instincts in trusting the lodger, while Alice has been punished for restlessly seeking some respite from the drab monotony of her

life. Daisy has judged correctly; Alice has not. Therein lies the dramatic difference and why Daisy can have the happy ending.

Notes

1. Tom Ryall, *Blackmail (BFI Film Classics)* (London: British Film Institute/Palgrave Macmillan,1993), 9.
2. Robin Wood, "Ideology, Genre, Auteur," in *Hitchcock's Film Revisited* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 288.
3. Patrick McGilligan, *Alfred Hitchcock: A Life in Darkness and Light* (New York: Regan Books/HarperCollins Publishers, 2003),79.
4. Ibid, 79.
5. Ibid, 81.
6. Amnon Kabatchnik, *Blood on the Stage, 1925-1950: Milestone Plays of Crime, Mystery, and Detection: An Annotated Repertoire* (New York: Scarecrow Press, 2009), 159.
7. McGilligan, *Alfred Hitchcock*, 16.
8. David Sterritt, *The Films of Alfred Hitchcock* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 5.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. Donald Spoto, *The Dark Side of Genius: The Life of Alfred Hitchcock* (New York: DaCapo Press, 1999), 122.
12. McGilligan, *Alfred Hitchcock*, 115.
13. Ibid.
14. Anderson quoted in Ryall, *Blackmail*, 33.
15. Sterritt, *Films of Alfred Hitchcock*, 1.
16. Tania Modleski, *The Women Who Knew Too Much: Hitchcock and Feminist Theory* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 30.
17. Ibid, 21.
18. Ibid, 25.
19. Francois Truffaut, with the collaboration of Helen G. Scott, *Hitchcock* (Revised ed.) (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1985), 43.
20. McGilligan, *Alfred Hitchcock*, 116.
21. Truffaut, *Hitchcock*, 64.
22. McGilligan, *Alfred Hitchcock*, 117.
23. Modleski, *Women*, 30.

Sometimes a Bomb is more like a Blowup: Hitchcock's *Sabotage*

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In the famous Truffaut/Hitchcock interviews,[1] Hitchcock makes a startling confession about the "grave error" he committed by "killing" Stevie in the (in)famous bus scene in his 1936 film *Sabotage*,[2] admitting to having caused the audience's "resentment" with that artistic faux pas. This famous scene begins with Mr. Verloc (the saboteur) sending Stevie (his wife's younger brother) out on a mission to deliver a package that, unknown to the boy, contains a bomb that the viewer has been forewarned is due to go off at a quarter to two in the afternoon. Stevie dallies but eventually manages to board a London bus where he sits, happily befriending a puppy belonging to a fellow passenger. Following a protracted suspense sequence that repeatedly foregrounds the hands of a clock moving towards the allotted time, the scene ends with the bomb exploding, killing Stevie along with all the other bus passengers. Truffaut wholeheartedly accepts Hitchcock's confession, but he calls Hitchcock to task further, claiming that by utilizing a child in the scene, Hitchcock committed an even graver moral error in what Truffaut describes as being "close to an abuse of cinematic power."

In my reassessment of Hitchcock's moral and artistic stance, based on the aural version of the Hitchcock/Truffaut interviews rather than the edited book, I suggest that Hitchcock's sabotage is very intentional and that his apology should not be read in moral terms. Hitchcock sets his tale in a movie theatre and constantly alludes to the power of films as "flammable" materials that can blow up in a resentful audience's face. He thus demonstrates how a seemingly harmless film reel, carried by a young and seemingly innocent boy, can be as dangerous as any bomb. In *Sabotage,* Hitchcock establishes himself as the master of cinematic suspense. His dark brand of humor puts at abeyance any calls for a strictly moral—or rather moralistic—stance. What Hitchcock seems to regret is not the "moral" error, which is Truffaut's main concern, but rather the loss of his audience's support. This "regret" proved to have a profound effect on his later films.

I contend that the well-known *Hitchcock*, in which Truffaut records the series of interviews he conducted with the British master of suspense, is not the whole story, as the Hitchcock/Truffaut unedited tapes, now available online, prove.[3] In these unedited tapes, the dialogue between the young director and the older director is fraught and hardly as smooth as the book version would have us believe. By listening to the aural version, we can learn more about the development of Hitchcock's artistic creed and about the ways his early films gesture towards his later ones.

In the interview, we find many instances in which Truffaut fails to grasp Hitchcock's unique sense of humor. The interviews are conducted in English, but, for Truffaut's benefit, via a translator. Communication between the two directors is thus mediated via a third party. The translator seems to "get" Hitchcock's inimitable sense of humor, whereas Truffaut seems less amused. This breakdown in communication informs the dialogue between the French and the British director. It seems Truffaut chooses to ignore Hitchcock's tongue-in-cheek comments throughout the interview, and, at the close of the dialogue, Truffaut's anxiety of influence becomes very marked as he attempts to separate his own highly ethical brand of cinema from Hitchcock's (perhaps questionable) ethics. By comparing one of his most successful films, *The Four Hundred Blows*, to Hitchcock's *Sabotage*, Truffaut gestures towards the ways his cinematic ethos can be seen as markedly different from Hitchcock's seeming abuse of cinematic power.

Truffaut compares Antoine, the "problem child" in *The Four Hundred Blows,* to Hitchcock's Stevie in *Sabotage,* claiming that he intended to make the boy in his film a very troublesome child so that his parents' treatment of him would not seem too harsh to the audience. This effort seems, however, to have failed, and the audience warmed up to the boy. Truffaut further mentions a plate stealing scene from his own film, which, as he comments, also appears in *Sabotage.* But he insists on telling Hitchcock that he did not borrow this idea from *Sabotage.*

As these two seemingly minor instances show, Truffaut takes great pains to separate his later film from Hitchcock's earlier one. He makes sure Hitchcock (and the implied listeners) are aware of the crucial difference between his brand of filmmaking and Hitchcock's early film. It would seem, then, that Truffaut reads Hitchcock's error in moral rather than in artistic terms and thus, whether intentionally or not, misreads Hitchcock's "admission" of (artistic) guilt, turning it into a confession of dubious morals, especially where children are concerned. I shall relate more closely to this aspect of Truffaut's critique of Hitchcock in the final section of this paper.

I first turn, however, to a discussion of *Sabotage* as a comment on cinema, morality and the idea of the "foreign," both in the film's plot, and, more broadly, as it is expressed in the dialogue between Truffaut and Hitchcock where this idea of the "foreign" is played out in interesting ways.

Subversion and Sabotage: Hitchcock's Explosive Film

In her reclaiming of *Sabotage* as a major contribution to Hitchcock's oeuvre, Susan Smith relates to the (in) famous bus scene:

> Hitchcock's tendency to dismiss this famous sequence has probably contributed…to the surprising critical neglect suffered by *Sabotage* over the years. The director's high-profile media stance towards the bomb scene—consisting of disapproval of his own filmmaking approach together with a rather apologetic attitude towards the audience—functions like an extra-textual tonal indifference that seeks to contain or "defuse" this film's more subversive elements.[4]

Although I accept Smith's claim about the film's subversive nature, I tend to disagree with her reading of Hitchcock's "apologetics." I maintain that Hitchcock only reproaches himself for his misreading of the audience's (and critics') wrath, but he does so, in typical Hitchcock fashion, in a tongue-in-cheek mode. In what follows, I show how his brand of dark humor is employed to put at abeyance any more rigorous ethical and moral claims. At this juncture, I shall only point out the closing words of the Truffaut /Hitchcock interview, where Hitchcock refers to the pivotal cartoon scene in the movie.

In this scene, Mrs. Verloc (Stevie's bereaved sister) watches a Disney cartoon with the audience at the Bijou, her husband's movie theatre. The short film entitled *Who Killed Cock Robin* reawakens the shocked sister who is reminded of her husband's culpability in her beloved young brother's death.[5] Hitchcock manages to get back at Truffaut by explaining that the Disney cartoon was "for the laughter of children," a dark and ironic comment since the film acts as a trigger for Mrs. Verloc's killing of her husband, the man responsible for her brother's death. For it is only after the (seemingly numb) Mrs. Verloc watches the first scene in the cartoon, a scene in which one bird is shot by the arrow of another anonymous bird, that she goes back into the house and kills her husband with a kitchen knife. This act, however, is not premeditated murder. Mrs. Verloc seems to be awakened from her stupor, following the death of her brother, by the suggestive images she sees onscreen.

The shift to the domestic scene, where the callous Mr. Verloc seems to be ready to go on with life as it was, without the boy whose death he caused, ends with his own death at the hands of his wife who is no longer willing to accept her husband's actions. We are made to understand over the course of the film that she had only married Mr. Verloc to provide a home and paternal protection for her brother. Ironically, the man she chose is the saboteur responsible for his death. The Disney cartoon foreshadows her actions, while also demonstrating, yet again, the "murderous" nature of films. That Verloc owns a movie theater as a "front" for his clandestine activities as a spy also

highlights the potentially subversive nature of the art of filmmaking and film viewing.

I shall elaborate on the games Hitchcock plays with the idea of a seemingly innocent film as a trigger for murder and with the way that birds of all feathers appear here, just as they would later appear in one of Hitchcock's most famous films. But at this point, suffice it to say that Hitchcock's dark brand of humor is not one which would "protect" childhood innocence from its barbed "arrows." Hitchcock's choice of the 1935 Disney film is intriguing, for this short animated masterpiece, one of Disney's famous "Silly Symphonies," featuring birds as characters, is a murder mystery, both funny and "dark" at the very same time.[6]

Who Killed Cock Robin thus becomes another skewed reflection of the "main feature," in this case, *Sabotage*, which shares a similar blend of comedy and sinister actions and figures. The very human "birds" in *Who Killed Cock Robin* are engaged in a murder mystery with a "happy ending": the dead bird turns out to be alive after all, having been shot by Cupid's arrow. In *Sabotage*, the husband and saboteur (Mr. Verloc) is killed by his wife, and she in turn runs away with her lover, the man who pursues her husband and aims to uncover his dark deeds. The sexual attraction between Mrs. Verloc and Spenser, the detective posing as a greengrocer, is presented from the outset as Spenser constantly seeks her out and even admits to his commander at Scotland Yard that his interest in her is far from purely professional. Hitchcock thus ends his own movie with a twisted version of a "happy ending" where the two lovers elope, but it is a very dark ending indeed as both "get away with murder."

The master of suspense's genius at manipulating cinema audiences is very evident in this early film, which gestures at the dangerous historical time in which it was created—a mere four years before the attacks on London in the infamous Blitz—yet he manages to transcend an overtly political statement on terrorism and "enemies from within." Although the movie is based on Joseph Conrad's novel *The Secret Agent*—the film's credits list the writers as Joseph Conrad (novel) and Charles Bennett (screenplay)—Hitchcock makes it perfectly clear in the Truffaut interview that his movie is a departure from the novel and that he had already the very same year made another film entitled *The Secret Agent*. *Sabotage* is a reworking of the idea of secret agents as domestic threats to the British nation, but it also stages the idea of a "foreign" agitator as a more complex psychological state. This tension between the "foreign" and the "British" is also apparent in the Truffaut/Hitchcock tapes, which become another instance of an intercultural clash. The interviews are thus a way of rereading the film in terms of both its moral and cultural assumptions.

Secret Agents and Saboteurs: The Failure of the "Foreigner"

The film deals with the notion of sabotage as a way of reading relations between people or "agents" rather than as a mere political weapon meant to

create confusion and chaos. In the very first scene, the saboteur, Mr. Verloc, causes a blackout in London as a means of creating panic and havoc. This act of sabotage is greeted with nothing but ridicule by the wary Londoners: Their only concern is missing the movie in the Bijou movie theatre owned by Mr. Verloc. A hilarious scene ensues where the ticket buyers ask for their money back. Mr. Verloc, who is busy pretending he had never left the house, agrees.

The psychological impact of an act of sabotage is thus presented from the very first scene as contingent upon human nature: To be a successful saboteur, you need to know your target audience. Mr. Verloc is a foreigner who is unaware of the spirit of the people. As such, he is bound to be a failed agent— in both senses of the word. It is interesting to note here that Truffaut seems to be as clueless as Verloc when it comes to British "nature." Although he admits to not liking *Sabotage*, he nevertheless identifies with Verloc, saying that the man is sympathetic (because he is a rather rotund man) and a cuckold. His wife flirts with the detective who follows him, and this seems very "wrong" in Truffaut's mind. Truffaut also seems to be poking fun at Hitchcock's own "rotund" figure at the very same time as he takes Verloc's "side" by empathizing with the "villain" of the piece. Truffaut might, however, also unwittingly take the "foreigner's" side over the snooty and witty British detective—and the director.

I would suggest then that Hitchcock's "sabotage" is, on the one hand, as "flawed" as that of the unwitting Mr. Verloc and his response to the "audience" in his cinema. As Hitchcock admits in the Truffaut interview, he committed a grave error of judgment by letting the audience become enamored of Stevie and then failing to "save" him by preventing the bomb from detonating. Hitchcock explains that he had to make the bomb explode in order to provide a convincing motive for Mrs. Verloc to kill her husband, but this reasoning also cost him his audience's trust. As he says in the interview, an audience will accept an "unhappy ending" but only if you first give them something in return. Hitchcock fails to do this in *Sabotage*, but in this "failure," which may be the reason critics have found the film lacking, I see one of Hitchcock's greatest successes.

Hitchcock admits that he broke his audience's "trust," but he also alerts us to the power of film as a flammable material that may blow up in a resentful audience's face. By that artistic and thematic move, he shows us that the seemingly harmless film reel, in this case the fictitious movie *Bartholomew the Strangler* that is carried by the innocent Stevie, and which also serves as Stevie's "alias" and metonymically signals the death/lack of the unruly boy, is as dangerous as any bomb. The (fictitious) film title may allude to the Saint Bartholomew Day Massacre in 1572, a historical scene of mass bloodshed, which may signal a "history of violence" at work in the world. It may also suggest, as Susan Smith contends, that Stevie is not a little "saint," an innocent victim of Mr. Verloc's plots. Susan Smith reads this association of the boy with the movie he loves so much as an "undercutting of the 'innocent victim' cliché."[7] Smith further contends that since Stevie is identified "quite directly

with the fictional male strangler figure himself (a link also alluded to visually via the 'B' emblem on the boy's school cap),"[8] one could point to "Stevie's association with such male violence as the underlying cause of his death."[9]

Smith goes as far as to suggest that:

> This unsentimental depiction of him encourages us instead to reassess and readjust our more conventional, predetermined response to the bomb explosion by opening up the possibility of there being deeper motives on Hitchcock's (not just Verloc's) part for having the boy killed off: in blowing up Stevie, it is as if the film-maker seeks to stop this embryonic version of a Hitchcock villain—this potential Uncle Charlie (*Shadow of a Doubt)*, Bruno Anthony (*Strangers on a Train*) or Bob Rusk (*Frenzy)*—in their tracks.[10]

I would suggest, however, that although Stevie is in some measure "identified" with the film he loves so much, so is Hitchcock. As Smith herself points out, *Bartholomew the Strangler* "could easily belong to the Hitchcock thriller genre."[11] If Stevie is not so "innocent" after all, then neither is his creator. And if, as Smith claims, "the bomb scene is emblematic not only for its disruptive use of suspense but also for its strategy of combining this with a rather ironic stance towards the film's main victim," then the strategy seems to have been a spectacular failure, as the audience, and critics were far from "ironic" towards Stevie.[12] In fact, they rejected the movie, and its director for his audacity to kill off such a lovable child.

The Frenzy of Consumption: Films, Food and Bombs

I would therefore like to turn to another reading of the possible links between *Sabotage* and later Hitchcock thrillers, notably *Frenzy*. As Adam Lowenstein points out in "The Master the Maniac and *Frenzy,*" the seemingly ludicrous name of this made-up film *Bartholomew the Strangler* is a foreshadowing of Hitchcock's later "strangler" character in *Frenzy*. Lowenstein locates *Sabotage* as an early case of Hitchcock's "major betrayal of audience expectations surrounding suspense and horror."[13]

Lowenstein remarks on the scene following the explosion, when the Scotland Yard detective (Spenser), who works undercover as a grocer in an attempt to catch Mr. Verloc, finds only a charred film reel of *Bartholomew the Strangler*. To a journalist's question about this sole relic remaining in the rabble, Spenser irately answers that it's not a film, it's "Sardines." Thus, the link is humorously drawn between one kind of consumption (food) and another (movies). As Lowenstein argues, however, this humor carries very sinister implications, which are fully played out in the character of the necktie strangler in *Frenzy*.

Hitchcock thus implicates his audience in the terrorist act. He lets us share the suspense and anxiety for this "innocent victim," while also showing us that "we," as much as the seemingly innocent viewers in The Bijou cinema who enjoy murder as long as it is committed "on screen," are also active participants in the subversive art and act of film making. This allusion to cinematic power as dangerous yet exceedingly alluring is most vividly demonstrated in the film when Stevie, aware that he has dallied along the way and needs to board a bus, convinces the conductor to let him board the bus against regulations; he is not supposed to carry "flammable" materials on board (the movie reel), but once the conductor recognizes the movie, he caves in. The power of cinema is so great that it surpasses authority and bends rules. In much the same way, *Sabotage* bends the rules of decency and morals in favor of an artistic truth that is at times hard to bear.

William Rothman offers us a way of reading this dark brand of cinematic genius: "In Hitchcock's dark vision, our world offers no real possibility of transcendence. Only in art—the art of cinema—perhaps the art of murder—can purity be glimpsed."[14] The allusion to *Rope* (1948), a better known and more successful Hitchcock film, where the "art of murder" is the central theme, suggests that the later Hitchcock engages further with this fascination with murder as an "art." But whereas in *Rope* the murderers are punished and the moral universe remains very clear cut—the audience is aware of the act of senseless murder and eagerly awaits for the moment of revelation and subsequent punishment of the evildoers—in *Sabotage* there seems to be less moral clarity. The suspense in *Sabotage*, especially in the famous bus scene, is based on the (frustrated) audience expectation that the lovable boy will finally be saved by some miracle or other. This is not the same type of suspense as in *Rope* where the audience is finally returned to the safety of its moral universe where good and evil are clearly demarcated. In *Sabotage*, the act of murder as revenge for the little boy's death is not as smooth. Although we understand why Mrs. Verloc kills her husband, this act is still strikingly violent, unexpected, and goes unpunished.

As Rothman rightly points out, the perverse and monstrous quest for purity is exposed in Hitchcock's films, but the films are also "the product of such a quest."[15] *Sabotage* is an early expression of Hitchcock's dark eye and "I" as it manifests itself in the act of murder as art, or of film as murder. This "monstrous purity" is achieved in *Sabotage*. From its pre-opening credits to its twisted "happy ending," the film joyously celebrates its own perversity while also acknowledging how its impact may be judged by cinema audiences and critics alike.

The happy-go-lucky "Professor"/bomb maker, who emerges as the most comically grotesque character in the film, is only one such instance of the delight Hitchcock takes in "playing with fire." As Susan Smith points out, the Professor is a stand in for the director as he both physically resembles Hitchcock and takes vicious delight in manipulating explosive materials. He is finally blown up alongside the already dead Mr. Verloc inside the Bijou theatre.

Smith alerts us to the ways this character becomes Hitchcock's "agent" in the film:

> The Professor's role as Hitchcock's agent…becomes even more evident during the bomb scene itself when his coded message to Verloc about the time for the explosion is appropriated by the film-maker as his own direct, suspense-inducing warning to the viewer (who is then confronted with an extreme close-up of it superimposed across the entire frame of the shot).[16]

Here again, as with the Bijou as a "front" for clandestine activities, the "front" is a bird shop and the back is a "bomb shop" where the Professor tricks his customer into believing that her canary *does* sing in an earlier scene in the film. This hilarious scene foreshadows the more ominous promise that "the birds will sing at 1:45," which is the coded message for the bomb to go off. If in the early scene in the film all the birds in the Professor's shop "sing" to hide one particular bird's lack of singing ability, then in the later bomb scene it is the seemingly innocuous boy carrying a film on board a bus that masks the real "singing," or rather "bombing," which takes place later.

When Mr. Verloc first encounters the Professor, the bomb maker laments no longer being out and about—blowing things up—and scares Verloc by pretending he has dynamite hidden in the cupboard alongside the condiments. Food items, and a domestic scene, are only a front for something else, as they are later in the film when Spenser makes a sardonic comment about the charred film reel as "sardines." The bomb maker also has a family: His (unmarried) daughter and her young daughter live with him, and his delight at playing with his grandchild makes his occupation even more sinister. In this case, as in the case of Verloc's cinema, the respectable front, a bird shop, hides a sinister occupation.

Thus, the film abounds with images of men as birds (of prey): The bomb hidden underneath a bird cage, the note in the cage reading: "the birds will sing at 1:45," and the "Cock Robin" scene all meet together as a comment on the "menagerie" in which we live. Coupled with the famous aquarium scene at the London Zoo early on in the film, where Verloc meets his "operator" for the first time in front of the aquarium, which acts as yet another surrogate film screen, these scenes involving animals (whether on-screen ones or real ones) form Hitchcock's wry and sardonic view of human /animal nature as both ravenous and predatory. The London Zoo scene is at the same time yet another instance where the movie screen, or in this case its surrogate, figures as a way of showcasing the danger in visual images.

This "consumption" in both its literal and figurative meanings seems to be a motivating force for the characters' actions. Even the seemingly innocent Stevie is not exempt from such desires. He is, after all, the avid consumer of violent movies like *Bartholomew the Strangler,* which he has seen many times. In

an early comic scene in his sister's kitchen, he breaks a plate after illicitly sampling his sister's cooking. In a later scene, Spenser invites Mrs. Verloc and Stevie to a fancy restaurant where, against his sister's wish that he only order the cheapest dish on the menu, poached egg, Stevie is tempted to order the meatiest dishes at Spenser's behest. This scene directly follows the dove feeding scene in the park where both Stevie and his sister comment on the "fat pigeons" that eat everything in sight. Giving in to your more base/animalistic desires, then, leads to very unpleasant results.

William Rothman, who seems to acknowledge Hitchcock's dark vision as the motivating power behind his art, condemns the master of suspense for not keeping up his "honorable" intentions. In an earlier book entitled *Hitchcock—the Murderous Gaze*, Rothman reads the violence inscribed in the author's role as being the "condition of the art of film itself"[17] and declares that although this violence is not uniquely Hitchcock's, he has "nevertheless made this role his own, personally dedicating his life to his authorship."[18] Hitchcock then "is not willing to deny film's capacity for violence or to disavow his own implication in it."[19] Having thus stated, Rothman nonetheless chastises Hitchcock for not always allowing his viewers the "liberties" of enjoying his films' "symbolic murder of them": "In *Sabotage*, for example, the author's murderousness directs itself, shockingly, against an innocent boy and a little dog."[20] Rothman seems almost as shocked as Truffaut was by this instance of misdirected violence. In the short paragraph Rothman devotes to the film, which he does not consider "important" enough to merit a lengthy reading, he acknowledges the film's "emotional gravity" as setting it apart from Hitchcock's other thrillers. Rothman reads the famous bus scene thus:

> Hitchcock plays the violent, senseless death of her (Mrs. Verloc) young brother—not to mention the puppy blown up with him in the bus—for suspense, forcing us to recognize that the author's capacity for cruelty equals that of his surrogate within the world of the film. It is also the thriller in the series that most emphatically declares that its real subject is film: the villain runs a movie theatre, an "innocent" mask for his real calling, sabotage.[21]

Rothman recognizes the importance of the film metaphor here, but leaves it at that. Indeed, Mr. Verloc runs the theatre as a front, or mask, but in the course of the film the nature of film itself is shown to be anything but innocent. When Verloc first finds out that Spenser, the greengrocer who befriends his wife and her brother, is really a Scotland Yard detective, he asks the owner of the shop why he is being followed. The real greengrocer replies that it might have to do with the nature of the movies Verloc is showing. This becomes yet another sly comment on Hitchcock's part on the nature of films as subversive and dangerous.

The Master and the Maniac

Sabotage thus manifests Hitchcock's mastery in blending the comic and the suspenseful in ways that may have remained unmatched in his later works. I follow Susan Smith's reading of *Sabotage* as a fulfillment of Hitchcock's contract with his audience via the subversive techniques or "sabotage" of narrative and cinematic conventions. As Smith claims:

> The film's breaking or sabotage of general, pregiven cinematic conventions and taboos constitutes, conversely, a *fulfillment* of the terms and conditions of the contract that it draws up with its own audience as the narrative progresses, one of the clauses of which could be described as "expect the unexpected." (According to this approach, then, it is Hitchcock's subsequent criticisms of the bomb scene which really break contract with the text.)[22]

Although I believe Hitchcock's criticism is not to be taken seriously but rather perceived as his authorial game, I nevertheless draw on this reevaluation of Hitchcock's authorial position to provide a possible defense of the film's narrative integrity and artistic honesty as well as its masterful manipulation of audiences and critics alike.

Hitchcock's artistic vision is best demonstrated by what at first seems to a failed integration of motifs. As one of the movies in which the playful Hitchcock *does not* make his signature cameo appearance, the film prefigures his later movies (*Frenzy*, *The Birds*) in the ways it gives us an authentic authorial voice that never wavers, even at the price of losing both the audience's and the critics' sympathy. In his 1949 essay, "The Enjoyment of Fear," Hitchcock relates to *Sabotage* and comments on the betrayal of his audience's expectations thus:

> [As] the audience sympathy for a character is built up, the audience assumes that a sort of invisible cloak to protect the wearer from harm is being fitted. Once the sympathies are fully established and the cloak is finished, it is not——in the audience opinion and in the opinion of many critics—fair play to violate the cloak and bring its wearer to a disastrous end.[23]

Hitchcock, however, admits that he "did it once":

> Had the audience not been informed of the real contents of the can, the explosion would have come as a complete surprise. As a result of a sort of emotional numbness induced by a shock of this kind, I believe their sensibilities might not

have been so thoroughly outraged. As it was, the audiences—
and the critics, too—would unanimously be of the opinion
that I should have been riding in the seat next to the lad,
preferably the seat he sat the bomb on.[24]

As mentioned above, Adam Lowenstein sees the film as a precursor of
Hitchcock's later masterpieces and also redefines this grave error as the basis
for Hitchcock's development as an author and a director. Lowenstein, in his
1949 essay "The Enjoyment of Fear," contends that Hitchcock's early
distinction between suspense and horror still maintains this strict demarcation
of these two categories and presents the bus scene in *Sabotage* as a breach of
contract between director and viewer. In the later film, this breach of contract
is celebrated, and the lesson of *Sabotage* is unlearned to produce a film that is
even truer to Hitchcock's artistic vision. Lowenstein sums up the fusion
between suspense and horror in Hitchcock's oeuvre as the meeting of "master
of suspense" and "maniac": "The film (*Frenzy*) revisits *Sabotage* and the lessons
learned there, but the goal is to unlearn these same lessons—to foreground
outrage in viewer response, rather than evade it through upheld contracts; to
blur suspense and horror, rather than alternate them; to fuse the 'master' and
the 'maniac'."[25]

In my reading of the earlier film, I have suggested how this fusion of the
"master" and the "maniac" that we think of as "Hitchcock" perhaps began
much earlier than Lowenstein would have it. For in *Sabotage* Hitchcock plays
his authorial game with audiences and critics alike in a twin gesture of
disavowal and acknowledged guilt, as the Truffaut interviews so clearly
demonstrate. It is this playful, sardonic, tongue-in-cheek attitude throughout
the interview and Hitchcock's almost cruel manipulation of his interlocutor's
misunderstandings, both linguistic and otherwise, which prove that the later
Hitchcock, looking back on this earlier "failure," still manages to show how his
artistic vision was as unfailing then as it would become later on. His take on
Sabotage reveals that although he may have regretted the bomb scene for
technical reasons, he did not regret it for the "moral" reasons for which
Truffaut wants him to atone. In the interview, as in the film itself, the
characters are failed moral agents, or very typical humans as "animals" or birds
of all feathers, if we remain faithful to Hitchcock's favorite stand-in for human
nature. There are no saints in Hitchcock's filmic universe. There are only
sinners of various hues.

Hitchcock does not offer any redemptive options. We do not have a
repentant director, or repentant characters. Mr. Verloc is not filled with
remorse when he learns his actions have caused Stevie's death; Mrs. Verloc
agrees to detective Spenser's offer to "get away with murder" and runs away
with him, and of course Spenser himself is as guilty of covering up Mr.
Verloc's murder.

To return to the Truffaut /Hitchcock interview with which I began this
essay, it is clear that the very "British" nature of Hitchcock's early film is what

may have baffled the French director. But the film also remains a tribute to British nature in the face of foreign sabotage, which only a few years later would have very deadly consequences. In the Hitchcockian universe, as it is presented in *Sabotage*, the movie-going Britons, who only four years later would demonstrate their unwavering resolve in the face of many air strikes and bombs in the Blitz, are depicted as a nation best able to deal with foreign sabotage armed with not much more than the British deadpan sense of humor. Hitchcock presents us with a world that is both funny and deadly, not sparing us, or his characters, from barbed arrows or loaded bombs, but making us laugh at them at the same time.

Notes

1. The Hitchcock/Truffaut Tapes #6. (1962), February 14, 2011.
http://www.filmdetail.com/2011/02/14/the-hitchcock-and-truffaut-tapes
2. *Sabotage,* directed by Alfred Hitchcock (1936; Beverly Hills, CA: MGM, 2008), DVD.
3. Francois Truffaut, *Hitchcock* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1985)
4. Susan Smith, *Hitchcock: Suspense, Humour and Tone* (London: BFI, 2000), 3.
5. "Who Killed Cock Robin" is an English nursery rhyme from the late 18th century which has been used as a murder archetype in world culture. Hitchcock employs the 1935 Disney animated burlesque of the poem featuring a Mae West like "bird," a trial complete with crows for cops, an owl as a judge, a parrot as the prosecutor, a black or rather Negro crow and a cuckoo bird modeled after Harpo of the Marx brothers as the accused. The Disney short has a happy ending though. Cupid appears saying he shot Cock Robin, but he isn't dead; he just fell for Jenny Wren (or Mae West). The couple is reunited. It is clear that Hitchcock both draws on the sinister and very English nursery rhyme, as well as on the Disney parody which introduces the sexual elements. Disney introduces the film as a satire on current day figures and has clearly made sure that the very sinister nature of the original verse is replaced by a funny musical parody with a happy ending. Disney's brilliant short film, however, still stages a "murder mystery" and links murder with sexual desire much as Hitchcock does.
6. See: James M. Vest, "To Catch a Liar: Bazin, Chabrol and Truffaut Encounter Hitchcock" in *Hitchcock Past and Future*, eds. Richard Allen and Samm Ishii-Gonzales (London: Routledge, 2004), 115. There, Vest explains Truffaut's suspicion of Hitchcock's "dissembling:" According to Truffaut, Hitchcock was in fact a Hitchcockian creature and thus extremely reluctant to explain himself. Nevertheless, Truffaut claimed, one day the director would be compelled to act like other Hitchcock characters that sealed their eternal destinies ...through confession. Truffaut himself would make everything in his power to make that happen. The concept of the famous marathon interview which Truffaut would conduct with Hitchcock…may be traced to that proposition, couched in terms of a righteous threat. I submit that Truffaut gloriously fails in this attempt, as the *Sabotage* interview amply demonstrates.
7. Smith, *Hitchcock,* 9.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.

10. Ibid.
11. Ibid., 6.
12. Ibid., 9.
13. Adam Lowenstein, "The Master, the Maniac, and *Frenzy:* Hitchcock's Legacy of Horror," in *Hitchcock Past and Future*, 186.
14. William Rothman, *The "I" of the Camera* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004), 272.
15. Ibid.
16. Smith, *Hitchcock*, 6.
17. William Rothman, *Hitchcock: The Murderous Gaze* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard UP, 1982), 107.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid.
21. Ibid., 174-5.
22. Smith, *Hitchcock*, 11.
23. Sidney Gottlieb, ed., "The Enjoyment of Fear," *Hitchcock on Hitchcock: Writings and Interviews* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1997), 120.
24. Ibid., 121.
25. Lowenstein, *The Master*, 187.

Mr. and Mrs. Smith: Alfred Hitchcock's Experiment in Screwball Comedy

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Rightly known as the master of suspense, Alfred Hitchcock directed one screwball comedy in 1941, *Mr. and Mrs. Smith*, when loaned by David O. Selznick to RKO studios shortly after he first began directing in the United States. Ina Rae Hark reveals that this film was uncommon for him because Hitchcock "had not worked in the pre-production phase and did not have his usual input into script development and casting."[1] Despite starring box office stars Carole Lombard and Robert Montgomery, and featuring a script by Academy Award winner Norman Krasna, this film was only a modest success and has remained a critical failure mostly ignored by Hitchcock scholars.[2]

If even mentioned in contemporary criticism, *Mr. and Mrs. Smith* is usually remarked as an aberration or a one-off favor for Hitchcock's friend Carole Lombard. Thomas Leitch recently labeled the film a "diversion" and, in fact, few critics have examined the film in much detail.[3] This essay surveys the opinions, and engages the critical suppositions, of critics who do engage the film, such as Lesley Brill and Dana Polan and Ed Sikov, while also positing that the film works through some major themes found in Hitchcock's more respected films. To the extent that *Mr. and Mrs. Smith* both accepts and rebels against the rules of screwball comedy, I will also test Stanley Cavell's claims that screwball films are about the romance of divorce or remarriage[4] and Wes Gehring's assertion that these films mirror the frustrations and temper tantrums of childhood.[5] Screwball comedy, the sex comedies without sex, often build their narratives from characters that are already sexually experienced, if not previously married. This given is one of the key differences between screwball comedies and traditional romance films, but it is also something that critics see as creating a theme that questions or troubles any assumptions about the viability of marriage as an institution.

As mentioned, most critical analyses of *Mr. and Mrs. Smith* have been dismissive. For example, in *The First Forty-Four Films*, Eric Rohmer and Claude Chabrol, seeing similarities between it and two earlier Hitchcock silent films (*Champagne* from 1928 and *Rich & Strange* from 1932) choose to unenthusiastically label *Mr. and Mrs. Smith* as "quite curious" and as containing gags that "lack sparkle."[6] Undoubtedly relying upon memory, they also include inaccurate details from the film when they discuss both the nightclub scene and the final scenes of the movie. François Truffaut and Hitchcock himself are even more dismissive in the famous interview book. Truffaut calls the film "rather out of line with the rest of your work" and Hitchcock responds, "in a weak moment . . . that picture was done as a friendly gesture to Carole Lombard."[7] He continues, "I really didn't understand the type of people who were portrayed in the film, all I did was photograph the scenes as written."[8] Michael Walker in *Hitchcock's Motifs* even claims rather outrageously that the unusual female lead played by fair-haired Ms. Lombard is, "in no sense . . . a *Hitchcock* blonde."[9]

In contrast, Dana Polan's essay on this film "The Light Side of Genius," argues that one must see *Mr. and Mrs. Smith* as both part of the screwball tradition, but also as a Hitchcock film. A more productive critical position, Polan reminds us that Alfred Hitchcock always sees marriage as "menacing rather than mirthful."[10] Maurice Yacowar concurs about the instability of human relationships when he states, "Hitchcock's art is based on the dramatic appeal of the insecure."[11] In addition to these crucial relationship insights, other typical Hitchcock themes and signatures are also located in *Mr. and Mrs. Smith*; these themes and signatures help to reveal some of what makes this film more interesting and disturbing than what other critics have noted.

To begin, *Mr. and Mrs. Smith* is as economically shot and carefully composed as any of Hitchcock's most famous films. The first five shots of the film occur in the title sequence and clearly introduce the upper-class world of the screwball comedy. The film begins with two extreme long establishing shots of the Manhattan skyline; followed by a shot with a road sign that states in medium close-up, "Park Ave. E. 12th Street"; followed by a long shot of a canopy with the address for building 309; followed by the director's credit that is framed by an extreme close-up of a doorbell and a shiny metallic name plate that reads, "David Smith." If the viewer pays attention to these visual cues behind the titles, then even before meeting one physical character, we expect to meet a wealthy, urbanite man who is the star of the film.

After these title credits, the film next establishes itself as a romantic comedy. A silent moving camera narrator moves around an ornate bedroom, noting the paradox of discarded dinner plates with half-eaten food and a pile of playing cards stacked as if someone is playing solitaire. When the camera tracks in to Mr. Smith (Robert Montgomery) in a medium close-up, his three-day beard, messed up hair, robe and bed clothes, and physical shuddering as if he is cold, all work against the visual expectations of the film's opening that implied a world of wealth and luxury. Once we cut to his wife Ann (Carole

Lombard), covered up under a heavy blanket on the bed, the visual exposition tells us this couple is in the midst of a three-day marital fight. Thus, the comedy of the disheveled visuals we have just seen can now be read as humorous and logical to the upcoming "comedy of remarriage"/battle of the sexes story.

The couple will soon make up, but not before dialogue reveals that Ann likes to make rules that the couple is supposed to keep, and that David likes to bend the rules to see what he can get away with. As Ed Sikov argues, "this marriage is held together by a whole set of rules that Ann rigidly enforces and David silently despises."[12] So David teases her by asking, "What would you do if I walked out that [bedroom] door, leave me? Forever?"

Ann nods her head "yes" twice and states, "As long as we live we must never change that rule. If every married couple had that, there'd never be a divorce. They ought to put it in the marriage ceremony. You are not allowed to leave the bedroom after a quarrel, unless you've made up." Because they are now getting along, they then joke together about the length of their record fights, their previous eight-day and two six-day arguments. Ann then introduces Rule #7 while shaving her husband:

> We've got respect for each other as persons, that's our big trick. Friends. Respect for each other as individuals, that's what counts. To always tell the truth no matter what the consequences. You know if we told each other just one lie, we'd have to admit we failed wouldn't we? And what would we have left? A marriage like other people's. Doubt. Distrust. Going on with each other because it's the easiest way.

Rule #7 is the key rule to the film, but never gets directly referred to again. In terms of Hitchcock's aesthetic, it might be seen as the disappearance that everyone denies.

While eating their make-up breakfast, David admits he was at fault for this latest fight and states that he should not be so jealous and that he should lay off criticizing her family. Ann placates David, too, and claims that she should conduct herself more to please her husband. Ann states, "That's one of the rules I'm gonna' make." David's sarcastic comment of, "Another one?" is a bit jarring during such make-up talk, but Ann is simultaneously sliding her bare feet under her husband's pant cuffs and up his legs, and it looks as if the couple is happy again and will make up for good.

Suddenly Rule #7, about honesty, resurfaces implicitly with Ann's monthly question. She asks David, "If you had it to do all over again, would you have married me?" David's seemingly truthful answer is unexpected. He says, "Honestly. No." With this comment, the mise-en-scène suddenly alters. Instead of two -shots and shot-reaction-shots between the couple, we see Ann pull her feet down and away from caressing her husband's legs in a medium shot as he elaborates:

> Not that I want to be married to anyone else. But I think that
> when a man marries he gives up a certain amount of freedom
> and independence. If I had to do it all over again, I think I
> would stay single. You wanted me to answer you truthfully
> because we respect each other. We're honest with each other.
> Your feelings aren't hurt are they?

Although Ann says "no," Hitchcock's camera now lingers in a medium shot on her stiffened body that has backed away from her husband whom she previously had been leaning toward. Her face is visibly disturbed by his comments. Seeing her concern, David makes things worse by continuing, "Darling I do want to be married to you. I love you. I worship you. I'm used to you."

In her general critique of heterosexual marriage ideology, Judith Mayne claims that the typical heterosexual couple is built upon "the promise of romantic fulfillment, at the same time that the couple seems constantly in crisis, constantly in need of reassurance."[13] Mayne's claim accurately illustrates the screwball aesthetic as this comedy of remarriage scenario is conveniently sealed in the very next scene when David Smith goes to work at his law office only to find a stranger, Harry Deevers, waiting to speak with him. Because of an obscure state line issue between Nevada and Idaho, Deevers informs Mr. Smith that that his three-year old marriage license is no longer legal and that he will thus have to re-marry Ann (who is originally from this contested area where they got married) for legal purposes. Instead of taking this opportunity to re-marry his wife and make up for his insensitive comments about preferring to be single, Smith seems unable to tame the child in him who desires some mischief instead. He begins by writing "Miss Krausheimer" (his wife's maiden name) on a piece of paper; he then writes "Miss Ann Krausheimer" into his date book, planning for a date with this newly single woman at 6:30 PM that evening.

David next calls his wife and tells her he is going to take her to dinner at Mamma Lucy's, the pizza joint they frequented when they were dating. Ann, remarking that she cannot believe he remembered the name of the place, reminds him that they have not been there since before they were married and re-states her love for David. David, only half listening, doodles over the paper where he had been writing his wife's maiden name with "Mistress Krausheimer," satisfied with himself that he has figured out a way to have an illicit romantic date with a mistress who is not his wife, while not exactly cheating on his wife either. In other words, he can be duplicitously dishonest and honest at the same time. Unfortunately for his plans, Mr. Deevers, a previous family acquaintance of Ann, decides to stop by David's home and inform Ann of the marriage license mix up as well. Ann's mother happens to be visiting at the time, overhears the crisis, and is shocked, exclaiming that Ann must get re-married immediately to avoid ethical issues and public

censure. Ann, confident in her husband after their make-up that morning, assures her mother, "He'll marry me tonight."

After a humorous date sequence in which Ann's dress suit from her dating years rips because she has grown larger, and in which the pizza restaurant Mamma Lucy's has turned into a nasty dive where even feral cats will not eat the food, Ann springs the following question to her husband: "Where should we go next?" She is expecting David to take her to their new wedding. He responds instead by telling her, "Home." Ann is shocked, but does not give up her line of inquiry or her hopes for her husband's follow-through. She asks him about his day at work, giving him a chance to tell the truth. Instead of telling her about Mr. Deevers, he is vague, speaks only of clients, and does not mention the nullified marriage license. They do go home together and, while David prepares for his sexual conquest (putting on his pajamas, whistling, and cooling down champagne), Ann drops the fancy tray, breaks the bottle of champagne, and calls David a beast, claiming, "You know we're not married." She kicks David out of the house and he spends the rest of the film trying to win his wife's hand again. In other words, David's little lie haunts him for the remainder of the film.

Hitchcock then uses another effective visual device to illustrate David's change in fortunes. The next name plate we see is a tiny, handmade typed sticker below a large board of room key holders for the decidedly less glamorous Beefeaters Gentleman's Club, David's new home while in the dog house—certainly a long way from the Park Avenue name plate that opened the film.

We see similar themes echoed in other more noteworthy Hitchcock films. *North by Northwest* (1959), a film universally accepted as a masterpiece, features Roger O. Thornhill, similarly committing a small sin, a moral transgression, at the film's beginning that he will pay for during the rest of the movie. His secretary gets mad at Roger when he lies to a person on the street in order to steal a cab to save them some time. Thornhill claims it was not a lie, but an "expedient exaggeration" such as those used by advertising men all the time, and that he has made the person who missed the cab feel like a Good Samaritan. Ironically, Thornhill is accused of a crime and then finds that no one believes in his innocence or is willing to help him because of their own self-interests.

In *Mr. and Mrs. Smith*, David is first to learn that his marriage is not strictly legal and the couple will need to, once more, make their marriage legal. Instead of telling his wife right away, however, he scribbles versions of Ann's maiden name on a piece of paper, planning a date with her where he plans to have sex with her by the end of the evening. While merely an amusing little joke that adds titillation to David's routine, when Ann discovers David's intentions she is shocked at his dishonesty and both refuses him and leaves him. David will spend the rest of the film trying to re-prove his true love to Ann so that he can atone and she will accept him back into her life. His seemingly tiny transgression has set into motion an intrigue that will involve numerous

innocent bystanders like his law partner and Ann's potential new paramour, southerner Jefferson Davis Custer (Gene Raymond).

But because *Mr. and Mrs. Smith* is a screwball comedy, and not a spy thriller like *North by Northwest*, the atonement and the definition of love may differ from most other Hitchcock movies. Lesley Brill argues that in Hitchcock, "love is not separated from ownership and control."[14] He offers proof from *Mr. and Mrs. Smith* with Ann's brilliant summary of her husband: "You know the real reason he keeps chasing me? He's still so much in love with me. He's such an egotist, he can't bear the idea of letting someone else kiss me." Male ego and the need to control, which gets both Thornhill and David Smith into trouble, are typical motifs in Hitchcock's films. Another good example occurs in Hitchcock's *The 39 Steps* (1935), during which Hannay, after first being frustrated with being handcuffed to the shrewish Pamela, is suddenly smiling and happy to run his hands up and down her bare legs while she removes her wet stockings in the inn later that evening.

As Brill correctly surmises, such situations are key to Hitchcock's view of romance: "Men and women, put in proximity and some need of each other, will come together, fall in love."[15] In *Mr. and Mrs. Smith*, remembering this credo illustrates why Ann's new lover Jeff Custer will not work as a substitute for her husband. Jeff, a very formal Southern lawyer (and David's partner), is a passive teetotaler; he is too polite, too attached to his parents, too organized, and too disinterested in messy entanglements to actively pursue Ann. As revealed on their disastrous "romantic" date at a fair, even while they are humorously stranded on a stalled vertical umbrella thrill ride in the rain, Jeff does nothing to solve the problem and only manages to sneeze, hold on to his bowler hat, and look uncomfortable.

On the other hand, David is keen to argue, drink, fight and have adventures, unlike Jeff. David needs Ann to shave him, to take care of him when he is ill, and to remind him when he is making bad judgments (which is often). In her constant need to discuss David during her dates with Jeff, Ann seems also to need her husband's childish behavior. As in many other Hitchcock films, the question becomes just how much do these misbehaving characters have to suffer in order to learn how to behave ethically?

In spy films such as *The 39 Steps* and *North by Northwest*, the male lovers learn their lessons and fully commit to the woman by the end of the film, but *Mr. and Mrs. Smith* reunites the lovers at the end in a much less comforting way. First of all, a key difference is that these lovers have been married for three years and most of Hitchcock's films deal with single heterosexual couples that will end up married. As his canon illustrates, Hitchcock's married characters are much more problematic. For instance, the old crofter and his young wife in *The 39 Steps*, besides their differences in age, are emotionally and intellectually estranged. He preaches morality and Bible verse at his young wife and constantly keeps her away from the evil city she came from while she helps Hannay to escape the authorities out of a combination of boredom, fascination with a sexy urban gentleman stranger, and a feeling about his

character that makes her trust Hannay over her husband's suspicions. The crofter's wife also pays for her choice to help Hannay by being physically hit (albeit off-screen) by her husband.

In Hitchcock's *Marnie* (1964), Mark and Marnie's more age-appropriate marriage is still a psychosexual battleground where the male does his best to manipulate and tame the wildness and mental illness out of his criminally sociopathic wife, including a sexual assault during their honeymoon. When discussing the couple's problems in *Marnie*, Murray Pomerance sees Mark Rutland's (Sean Connery) wife Marnie Edgar (Tippi Hedren) as "in flight from trust" and her disgust at male touch risks damaging their future together.[16] Mark and Marnie are further estranged by insurmountable social class differences. Yet, the worst marriage may belong to Lars Thorwald, who argues incessantly with his bed-ridden wife until he finally murders her in *Rear Window* (1954).

In contrast, Mr. and Mrs. Smith seem the least dysfunctional of Hitchcock's married couples. About the same age and social class, despite serious arguments, they still get along with each other. Lesley Brill states that, in Hitchcock films, marriage is "a state of adaptation, of being accustomed to someone,"[17] but the paradox is that the "attraction thrives on conflict."[18] Dana Polan posits the more compelling idea, "of the arbitrariness of any marriage: there can always be a fall from perfection that requires the whole process to start all over again."[19] One might see such a pattern followed once Bob (Leslie Banks) and Jill Lawrence's (Edna Best) young daughter Betty (Nova Pilbeam) is kidnapped in *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1934), disrupting their predictable marriage rituals, jokes, and other previous middle-class comforts. Perhaps this paradox, this dis-ease in marriage, helps explain another repeated Hitchcock motif, namely the reliance on, "public disturbances which violate bourgeois propriety."[20]

To return to *The 39 Steps* and *North by Northwest* for additional examples of public disturbances, one need only remember the scene in which Hannay gives his "McCrocodile" political speech to the crowd's amusement, or when Thornhill makes outrageous bids during an art auction and angers everyone in the room. In both cases public disruption attracts the police and allows the main character to escape from both evildoers and social censure. In *Mr. and Mrs. Smith*, when Ann refuses her husband's demands, David follows her to her new job and has a temper tantrum in the Hall's department store where she is a lingerie clerk, throwing women's intimates around the store and grabbing both her arms before the couple is thrown out by store detectives. David, still angry outside, continues his argument with Ann on the streets in front of the store until even a policeman kicks him off the streets, insisting he move on because he is drawing a crowd.

Furthermore, we have the hilarious Florida Club sequence, which James Naremore sees as a competition between the sexes, where David demonstrates a "failed attempt to show his wife that he has a date who is more impressive than hers."[21] Ann and David's competing dates are a test for David's ego, class

position, and pride. When he sees Ann out on a date with fellow lawyer Jeff, David goes so far as to punch and bloody his own nose with a napkin-wrapped saltshaker. He hopes this self-mutilation scene will distract Ann from realizing he is on a date with the average-looking working-class woman on his right, a blind date set up by his gentleman's club buddy. Simultaneously, David is trying to avoid embarrassment for being caught attempting to fool his wife, who is still across the club from him, by pretending to speak and flirt with the attractive middle-class married woman sitting on his left whose husband has just physically threatened David for being fresh with his wife. As the situation escalates, David can only "save face" by punching himself in the face.

If one remembers that the film begins with servants in shock and amazement, trying to discover what their bosses have been doing locked in their bedroom for three days, then critic Donald Spoto correctly reads these outrageous situations as just further examples of the tension between appearances and reality in Hitchcock films.[22] David's actual date at the Florida Club proves he is not doing well emotionally. Instead of dating someone of his own class and sophistication, he is "slumming it" with a woman lower on the class hierarchy than his wife, a date who repeatedly demonstrates that she is out of place both conversing with David and eating in this upscale nightclub.

Spoto also implies that trust and maturity are often questioned in screwball comedies. While the genre examines marriage and its rule-bound structures, screwball films privilege childlike adults who refuse to act like the staid and bored couples around them. In the case of David and Ann, Spoto argues that, "She is too immature to cope with truth, and he is too much a self-assured male strategist to accept his wife as an equal."[23] Interestingly, Ann, after realizing that Jeff is a boring date, starts to play games just like her husband does, and she seems to know what will light David's fuse. Spoto states that, "When David and Ann think they are married, they act like children, and so are told that they are not married at all."[24] In other words, in its childishness, the film does not move toward maturity and trust in any way. For example, late in the film, inside her adjoining cabin at Lake Placid, Ann puts on a loud soliloquy performance she knows David can hear through the thin walls by talking loudly and with exuberance about a date she has just had with Jeff. She intones, "Come on Jeff. It's early Jeff. Put me down!" She then laughs and continues, "Let me help you up. My, aren't you strong? Jeff, behave yourself!" With these lines barely uttered and his jealousy fully engaged by her dialogue, David bursts into her room only to find Ann alone. Perhaps, like other couples in screwball narratives, such a scene should serve as a lesson in self-realization for both partners that they must learn to be honest before they can rejoin in a mature marriage.

Yet, contained in this scene is also a deceitful switch that makes this film different than most screwball comedies and other Hitchcock films, as well as more interesting than previous critics have observed. David lies to Ann, such as when he pretends to have frostbite and is laid up in bed at his adjoining cabin in Lake Placid. Later caught by Ann, he is happily using her shaving

razor to peel and eat an apple in bed; he is once more called a beast and an outraged Ann labels him as dishonest and unworthy of her love. In other words, even late in the film, David Smith is playing games, lying, and acting up to rebel, to torture Ann, and to jeopardize his marriage.

This practice continues into the final scene of the film when David has strapped Ann into a pair of skis and she struggles to get out of them. The end of this sequence is usually remarked as a naughty sexual innuendo, or what Albert J. LaValley labels as the "conjugally crossed skis" because Ann crosses both skis and then pulls her husband's head down toward hers to kiss him, whereupon the image of the crossed skis fills the frame before the final theme music and fade to black.[25] But what actually occurs in this scene is directly connected to issues of honesty in relationships and seems to undercut all of the rules presented at the beginning of the film as truisms, especially Ann's fundamental Rule #7. For instance, we clearly see Ann's left foot come out of her ski while she yells at David to get her out of the skis. He, across the room, looks back in time to see Ann place her left foot back into the ski strap so she can pretend still to be trapped by the ski. In other words, to save her marriage, Ann lies about the truth of her situation. Instead of letting on that he knows and getting mad at her dishonesty, David comes over to her and they finish the film in the above-mentioned embrace and kiss.

The Smiths have resolved their quarrel and should be able to leave the cabin together, but still un-remarried they have resolved their quarrel through dishonesty. While, on the surface, the implied kiss looks like a happy ending, we are actually witnessing what Stanley Cavell labels, "the disturbing current under an agreeable surface."[26] In other words, the Smith's relationship can survive because now they *both* lie to each other. Thus their marriage has also failed according to Ann's initial rules—to always tell the truth no matter what the consequences.

As is made clear in *The Awful Truth* (1938), another screwball divorce comedy, "Marriage is based on faith. When that's gone everything's gone." So if David Smith wins—he does not change his childish ways and continues to play dishonest games with his wife—then he has also won a wife who has given up strict rules and is also willing to lie back to her husband. What could follow? Doubt. Distrust. Going on together with each other because it is the easiest way? Or, in the words of Hitchcock to his interviewer while in discussion about *Mr. and Mrs. Smith*, "You find it a sad comedy? Perhaps."[27]

Mr. And Mrs. Smith is a screwball comedy, but it is perhaps most interesting as an anomaly of the genre, a male-centered romantic comedy that is conspicuous because of its unusual manner of reworking humor conventions, its de-emphasis on the charisma of its leading lady (especially in a female-centered genre like the screwball comedy that Carole Lombard helped invent), its privileging of a male-centered narrative, and in its employment of some of the director's discomforting aesthetic techniques. James Naremore sees Hitchcock's humor as interesting in general because it can be "frightening, perverse and funny *at the same time*."[28] If most screwball comedies usually end

in audience comfort because the "heteronormative gender roles are restored," then by the end of *Mr. and Mrs. Smith*, the genre rules of screwball comedy are woven together with a perverse and disturbing thematic about perjured marriage bonds, both literal and ethical.[29] Mr. and Mrs. Smith are back together again, re-placed awkwardly inside a humorous genre about remarriage that is very clearly outside of Hitchcock's comfort zone. Yet, the audience leaves the film similarly doubtful and insecure about whom to trust and unsure how much longer the Smiths will continue to get along.

Notes

1. Ina Rae Hark, "Hitchcock Discovers America: The Selznick-Era Films," in *A Companion to Alfred Hitchcock*, eds. Thomas Leitch and Leland Poagu (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014), 302.

2. For example, the following critical books either ignore or barely mention *Mr. and Mrs. Smith*: Richard Allen and Sam Ishii-Gonzáles. *Hitchcock: Past and Future*. New York: Routledge, 2004; Dan Auiler. *Hitchcock's Notebooks*. New York: Avon Books, 1999; Marshall Deutelbaum and Leland Poague, Eds. *A Hitchcock Reader, 2nd edition*. Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2009; Jonathan Freedman and Richard Millington. *Hitchcock's America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999; Thomas Leitch and Leland Poague, Eds. *A Companion to Alfred Hitchcock*. Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2014; Tania Modleski. *The Women Who Knew Too Much: Hitchcock and Feminist Theory 2nd edition*. New York: Routledge, 2005; Eric Rohmer and Claude Chabrol. *Hitchcock: The First Forty-Four Films*. New York: Frederick Ungar, 1979; Murray Pomerance. *Alfred Hitchcock's America*. Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2013; Robin Wood. *Hitchcock's Films Revisited, Revised Edition*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2002; and Slavoj Zizek. *Everything You Always Wanted to Know about Lacan (But were Afraid to Ask Hitchcock)*. London: Verso, 1992.

3. Thomas Leitch, "Hitchcock's Lives" in *A Companion to Alfred Hitchcock*, eds. Thomas Leitch and Leland Poague (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014), 19.

4. Stanley Cavell, *Pursuits of Happiness: The Hollywood Comedy of Remarriage* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1981), 1-2.

5. Wes D. Gehring, "Screwball Comedy: An Overview," *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 13.4 (Winter 1986): 182.

6. Eric Rohmer and Claude Chabrol, *Hitchcock: The First Forty-Four Films* (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1979), 62; 66.

7. François Truffaut, *Hitchcock/Truffaut*, Revised edition (New York, Touchstone, 1983), 139.

8. Truffaut, *Hitchcock/Truffaut*, 139.

9. Michael Walker, *Hitchcock's Motifs* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam UP, 2005), 74.

10. Dana Polan, "The Light Side of Genius: Hitchcock's *Mr. and Mrs. Smith* in the Screwball Tradition" in *Comedy/Cinema/Theory*, ed. Andrew S. Horton (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 132.

11. Maurice Yacowar, "Hitchcock's Imagery and Art" in *A Hitchcock Reader*, 2nd Edition, eds. Marshall Deutelbaum and Leland Poague (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 27.

12. Ed Sikov, *Screwball: Hollywood's Madcap Romantic Comedies* (New York: Crown, 1989), 70.

13. Judith Mayne, "Paradoxes of Spectatorship" in *Critical Visions in Film Theory: Classic and Contemporary Readings*, eds. Timothy Corrigan and Patricia White (Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2011), 105.

14. Lesley Brill, *The Hitchcock Romance: Love and Irony in Hitchcock's Films* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1988), 178.

15. Brill, *The Hitchcock Romance*, 179.

16. Murray Pomerance, *Marnie*: BFI Film Classics (London: British Film Institute, 2014), 17.

17. Brill, *The Hitchcock Romance*, 181.

18. Ibid., 178.

19. Polan, "The Light Side of Genius," 137.

20. Walker, *Hitchcock's Motifs*, 337.

21. James Naremore, "Hitchcock and Humor," *Strategies* 14.1 (2001): 15.

22. Donald Spoto, *The Art of Alfred Hitchcock: Fifty Years of His Motion Pictures* (New York: Doubleday/Dolphin, 1979), 113.

23. Spoto, *The Art of Alfred Hitchcock*, 112.

24. Ibid., 113.

25. Albert J. LaValley, *Focus on Hitchcock* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1972), 89.

26. Cavell, *Pursuits of Happiness*, 243.

27. Rui Nogueira and Nicoletta Zalaffi, "Hitch, Hitch, Hitch, Hurrah!" in *Alfred Hitchcock Interviews*, ed. Sidney Gottlieb (Jackson, MI: University of Mississippi Press, 2003), 121.

28. Naremore, "Hitchcock and Humor," 13.

29. Olympia Kiriakou, "Carole Lombard as a Transcendental Comic" in *Film Matters* 3.4 (Winter 2012): 24.

Art, Architecture and Film: The Encounter between the Post-War Psyche and the Frame in Hitchcock's *Notorious*

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Alfred Hitchcock is well known for his perfectionistic tendencies, carefully constructing sets for his narratives through the use of the storyboard; each scene is artistically composed, designed and blocked to a cinematic effectiveness that creates tension, anxiety and suspense. In *Notorious* (1946), he designs sets and scenes with precision; nothing exists within the shot that is not purposely placed in exactitude. The result is an aesthetically seamless flow throughout this film.

Notorious is arguably one of Hitchcock's best films of the forties. As noted by Donald Spoto, "It is surely one of the dozen best in his catalog."[1] It stars Cary Grant and Ingrid Bergman in a complex narrative involving American FBI agents spying on Nazis who are presumably hiding uranium ore (the MacGuffin that, in the plot, works as a substance that could possibly be utilized to develop an atomic bomb). In this spy thriller, the Egyptian theme serves as an allegory that represents the post-war psyche of the West in the year following the end of World War II. This theme derives from his British roots and recalls the victory of the Allies in the North African Campaign in 1943 that ultimately stopped the Axis forces in that region. The film screened in August 1946, approximately one year after the atomic bombs devastated Japan and shocked the world with the horror of the reality of the Holocaust.

While an Egyptian theme is subdued in this film, it is there, quietly and subversively. Hitchcock employs pyramidal composition as a means to employ the Egyptian theme, and he also places objects d'art throughout the interiors, placing pyramids throughout the sets and drawing on the triangle motif as much as possible. Notably, they are built into the actual design of the doors of the FBI offices with three pyramids inlaid upon them. The Egyptian motif is there in the décor of Alicia's Rio de Janeiro apartment, as well as in two statues (one a Hindu god, referencing the Mata Hari, the other a bust of Cleopatra).

Both of these sculptures reference the sacred power of the feminine as well as its seductive power. Both allegorize particular aspects of Alicia's journey as well. Alicia acts as a modern Mata Hari: seductress and spy. She nearly dies of poison in similar fashion to Cleopatra's infamous suicide. As noted earlier, the set design ultimately works as a means to allegorize the post war psyche and, therefore, plays subversively upon the victory of the Allies.

The encounter between composition, frame and narrative formulated by Alfred Hitchcock in his films highlights the filmmaker's background in art and art history as well as his interest in psychology and the dark side of human nature. The filmmaker's mastery of the art of film is exhibited through the employment of cinematic techniques that are grounded in basic artistic practices, such as composition and lighting, which are often overlooked. These basic compositional strategies that he employs, developed through his perfection of the storyboard, invokes the association between art and film technology to design shots that perpetuate a dialogue between narrative, camera and frame. In particular, it is through the engagement of art and architecture, as well as symbols and motifs, that Hitchcock carefully constructs compositions that allegorize his films and deepen the narratives. Individual shots become allegories of the underlying meaning within the film.

The story opens in a courtroom with an American being sentenced to life in prison for spying for the Nazis. The daughter of the spy, Alicia Huberman (played by Ingrid Bergman), is distraught and spends the following evening throwing a wild drunken party where Devlin (played by Cary Grant) appears and seduces her into the late morning hours. It is during this first meeting that their desire for one another is sealed and Devlin later engages her as a counterspy for the FBI. Her target is Alexander Sebastian (played by Claude Rains), who is harboring a group of Nazis in his mansion in Rio de Janeiro. Although she and Devlin are in love, Alicia is pressured by Devlin via the FBI into seducing and eventually marrying Sebastian in order to spy on him and the Nazis he is working with. The character of Sebastian is featured as an impotent man who still lives with his elderly mother. His mother, in typical Hitchcockian style, is characterized as the classic overly-controlling, domineering and terrifying mother-figure, one who represents the archetypal foreboding and matriarchal character that appears in such Hitchcock films as *Rebecca* and *Psycho*. As such, in *Notorious,* it is Sebastian's mother who discovers that Alicia, her daughter-in-law, is a spy. She and Sebastian attempt to poison her, thereby creating the perfect scenario for her lover, Devlin, to rescue her from the arms of her Nazi husband and his mother.

Spoto points out that while, on the surface, *Notorious* appears to be

> [a] spy melodrama, in fact it is not. The espionage activities are really Hitchcock's MacGuffin, his ubiquitous pretext for more serious, abstract issues. Here, the serious issue is one of common humanity—the possibility of love and trust redeeming two lives from fear, guilt and meaninglessness.[2]

This is the same fear, guilt and meaninglessness that the West was reeling from in a post-war world that had just experienced the worst world war in history that included the Holocaust, Hiroshima and Nagasaki. That the film screened approximately one full year after the bombs dropped on Japan highlights the psychological impact on American audiences of the uranium-ore MacGuffin.

While uranium-ore serves as the plot device, driving the narrative is the sexual desire and romance between Alicia and Devlin and the people who interfere in the consummation of their relationship: Alexander, Mme. Alexander, and the FBI. The triangulation between these characters generates not only the suspense of the thriller, but also the sexual tension between Alicia and Devlin. In order to allegorize the complex dynamics of these relationships, Hitchcock employs an Egyptian theme and pyramidal composition throughout *Notorious* as a means to illustrate the two triangular relationships developed within the plot, as well as a way of symbolizing the defeat of the Nazis by the British in Egypt at the end of World War II. This compositional structure is developed not only through blocking, but also through the manipulation of light and shadow, which the director mastered during his early days of filmmaking with the German Expressionists. In particular, it is through the use of lighting techniques that he incorporates the illusion of the ancient Egyptian tomb and temple structure at the opening scene in the courtroom and in the final scenes outside of the Sebastian home.

In the opening courtroom scene, the camera is positioned behind a set of double doors, facing the inside of a courtroom. Beyond the frame of the doors is a courtroom where Alicia Huberman's unrepentant father is being sentenced to prison for being a German spy. Viewing the center of the courtroom through the set of doors on either side of the frame, and directly centered within the frame, is the judge seated at his bench with a court reporter directly beneath him at a desk, and with lawyers and defendant on either side. Behind the judge's bench, on either side of him, is a set of large columns. The doors on either side of the frame cast the illusion of another set of columns. At the bottom of the screen, the bar is designed with an inverted triangle.

As the camera pulls out, we begin to see the lighting effect of this black and white film; within this courtroom, through the use of architectural framing, lighting, and camera angle, Hitchcock has recreated a symbolic Egyptian temple facade. The dark diagonal shadow crossing over the top of the frame, beginning at the lower left and moving to the top right, symbolizes the lintel beam of the temple structure. The dark columns on either side of the judge are representative of the paired columns of the temple, while the horizontal lines of the judge's desk, the desk underneath him of the court reporter, and the bar are all symbolic of the steps leading to the entrance. The bar itself is designed in the shape of an inverted triangle, signifying distress. The back of the judge's chair rises above his head to create a distinct vertical rectangle, which is representative of a doorway. Here, in this Egyptian temple, representative of death and disguised as an American courtroom, the Americans send this Nazi spy to prison where he will ultimately die.

The position of the camera as it is placed beyond the courtroom, viewed through the doors, speaks to the notion that Brigette Peucker points out as the "(figurative) collapse of the image with the real; in Hitchcock's interrogation of vision, the look out of the frame is only part of the story."[3] It is by positioning the viewer as a spectator within the crowd outside of the courtroom, viewing the scene with the rest of the news media, that he employs the cinematic device of framing as a means to draw the audience into the narrative. Peucker's thesis is that:

> [the] coexistence of this realist collapse with the modernist strategy of the direct look in Hitchcock's films accords with Deleuze's sense of Hitchcock's pivotal position—as both "pushing the movement-image to its limit" and inventing the mental image that "makes relation itself the object of an image."[4]

Essentially, this follows Deleuze's notion that Hitchcock "implicates the spectator in the film."[5] The spectator is drawn into the film through the camera angle, manufacturing a cinematic gaze onto a narrative that is already unfolding.

The subtlety of the spectator gaze into the courtroom creates a sense of voyeurship not only in the typical Hitchcockian sense, but also through the angle of the camera and the lighting of the set. While the judge is sentencing Huberman to death, Hitchcock effectively manufactures a re-telling of the Allied Victory in the North African Campaign. There is a sense of not merely one Nazi being convicted, but all of them collectively through the subtle imagery of the ancient Egyptian temple motif.

It is logical that Hitchcock would reach for the symbolism of Egypt as a reminder that the British had defeated the Nazis, but also to create reassurance in a time of hopelessness and fear that the Holocaust and atomic bomb had created in the year following the end of the war. The mechanism of this motif serves to speak to the post war psyche, especially the guilt of those who had survived. As John Beebe observes:

> *Notorious* is interesting as an imaginative document of 1946, the first full year after World War II, because it links the unconscious, seemingly personal problem of the negative mother to the problem haunting the collective consciousness of its time—guilt for the war. The emotional tone of the film is oppression: the depressive anxiety of collective guilt nags at the characters like a mother, and *Notorious* suggests through the development of its fantasy that the Western soul must face down its unconscious negative mother complex if it is ever to forgive itself and recover its morale.[6]

In 1945, soon after the war ended, Sidney Bernstein hired Hitchcock to edit the footage that the British army filmed of the concentration camps during the last days of the war. Bernstein "believed it imperative that army photographers document the scene as they found it in each camp; the dead, the dying, and the few survivors, as well as those who ran the camps."[7] The images were said to have been so disturbing that the film was locked away for decades, and it "wasn't shown until the late 1980s, on British television, under the title *A Painful Reminder: Evidence for All Mankind* (1985) to an audience that tuned in never expecting to see such a disturbing program. Many turned away, unable to bear it."[8]

Seeing the horrific footage of the concentration camps at the end of the war had such an impact on Hitchcock that is has been reported that after viewing the reels, he was so traumatized that he avoided work for an entire week.[9] Recent updates regarding the documentary is that it is has been restored by curators at the Imperial War Museum and will be released in 2015 to be shown at film festivals and select cinemas to celebrate the seventieth anniversary of the liberation of Europe. As Beebe notes, the post war psyche played a large part in writing the script for *Notorious*, and in the development of the characters.[10] Here, the Egyptian motif is employed as a political statement that references the British defeat of the Germans in Egypt in 1942, which was a major turning point in the war and arguably contributed to the defeat of Nazi Germany.

As previously noted, it is not surprising that Hitchcock would reach for the symbolism of Egypt as a reminder that his countrymen had defeated the Germans during the war. Ancient Egyptian architecture, notably that of the great pyramids at Giza, Dahshur and Abu Sir, represent a culture that was completely immersed in the reality of death and the belief in life after death. This is represented through their construction of massive tombs in the shape of pyramids—the architecture of death symbolizing the hope of life in the hereafter.[11]

The pyramidal form stands as a foundation in art history, beginning with the ancient Egyptians and the compositional aspect perfected by the artists of the High Renaissance. A common theory in art history is that beauty creates empathy. William Worringer theorized that:

> Highly stylized and conservative character in Egyptian art did not mean that its practitioners were incompetent or incapable of recording reality with any accuracy, but because it satisfied deep psychological needs. He proposed that, in periods of anxiety and uncertainty, mankind seeks to abstract objects, transforming them into permanent, absolute, transcendental forms. Thus the fear and alienation experienced in a period of rapid social change and industrialization, the perception that individualism was being threatened by hostile collectivism, and the experience of the disaster, might be seen as rekindling

the ancient need for abstract forms to counteract that alienation.[12]

Architecture in a Hitchcock film is a key component of the narrative and often engages with the characters as a means to drive the narrative. Steven Jacobs points out that "the physical realm and abstract notions of space cannot be disconnected from our memories, dreams, fears, desires, and our everyday existence."[13] Alfred Hitchcock understood this on a profound level and generates architecture, landscape and monuments to perform powerful roles in his films. For example, as Jacobs notes, in *Blackmail* the climax occurs in London's British Museum:

> The blackmailer tries to evade the police by sneaking into the museum. He ends up in the rooms with ancient Egyptian statures and the famous circular reading room of the library. One shot, in particular, appeals to the imagination; foreshadowing the surreal landscapes of the Statue of Liberty in *Saboteur* or Mount Rushmore in *North by Northwest,* a man climbs a rope next to the huge stone face of an Egyptian colossus.[14]

Deaths and murders in Hitchcock films often occur at the site of great landmarks and prominent structures, as seen in *Vertigo, Psycho* and in *Notorious* where the Sebastian home becomes a claustrophobic prison for Alicia and ultimately becomes a tomb for Alexander. Furthermore, Jacobs reminds us that as the character falls from the dome of the museum in *Blackmail*, it literally and figuratively becomes his death tomb.[15]

Hitchcock had reached for the Egyptian theme in previous films and the fact that he had always used architecture as a major component of the plot is emblematic of his roots in Weimar cinema where the Germans were more interested in using space and lighting to highlight and express the horror, angst and drama of the narrative. Jacobs explains:

> As in the works by German Expressionism, Hitchcock presented the physical world as a dark, frightening, violent, and unstable place, which is often a projection of a disturbed person shown through striking set designs and lighting effects as well as subjective camera shots. However, in contrast with some trendsetting examples of expressionist cinema, Hitchcock seldom favored highly artificial environments or stylized sets but immersed his stories in the everyday.[16]

While his narratives were, in fact, immersed in the everyday, Jacobs was mistaken in regarding Hitchcock's appreciation and development of stylized sets. In fact, it is *because* of his Weimar roots that the sets of films such as *Rear*

Window, Rope, The Birds, Vertigo and *Notorious,* among others, *were* distinctively stylized. Both the interior and exterior spaces of the sets were constructed in a manner that would enhance the narrative, drive the plot and often work as an allegory. These sets also worked to generate atmosphere and to heighten tension and emotion.

In the aftermath of WWII, Hitchcock was able to tap into the American collective unconscious to reflect the isolation of and angst of the nation through the use of composition, light and space, as well as the development of the four main characters of *Notorious*. By 1946, when *Notorious* was in the can, Alfred Hitchcock's oeuvre had developed into a succinct and precise vision of filmmaking that was far removed from his German Expressionist roots, but continued to be influenced and inspired by the foundations of Weimar cinema. In fact, by the 1940s, his work had developed into a distinct style that incorporated aspects of Noir that exemplified his successful adaptation of Americana and the West's newly-developed post-war attitude. Although the filmmaker allegorized his contempt of Nazi Germany through his characterization of Alexander's spy ring in *Notorious*, his work had developed into a more personalized style. His new form of expressionistic tendencies, however, were just as stylized as the movement's early signatures, but had become more distinct, with more formal yet simplistic lines. In *Notorious,* the filmmaker began narrating in a seemingly more succinct manner, with a style that derived from a heightened level of perfectionism; everything within the frame is carefully constructed, lit, framed and blocked to precision.

Hitchcock's artistic craftsmanship is grounded in art from his early days as a young graphic designer who studied painting and drawing along with art history. These basic drawing and painting skills developed during his youth served him well when he became an art director at Berlin's UFA studios in the early 1920s where he eventually developed his own theories on the craft of filmmaking.[17] His theories and strategies for filmmaking are grounded in the foundations of art and the impact of the German Expressionists from whom he learned his craft. Where his earlier films were created in a more "painterly" manner, by the mid-1940s, his style had matured into a precision and form exhibited in his later films such as *Notorious, Spellbound* and that incorporated the architectural elements seen in *North by Northwest* and *Vertigo*. The classic elements of art and design are seen in his framing and composition, as well as in the architectural aspects of his films.

Notorious is a wartime narrative that screened approximately one year after the fall of Nazi Germany. The original idea for the screenplay came from a short story called "Song of the Dragon" that producer David Selznick had purchased. He hired Hitchcock and Ben Hecht to write the script, which took much longer than originally expected by Selznick, who was in the midst of producing two other movies. Due to a lack of patience and a need for more cash for the other productions that he had in the works, Selznick sold the entire package, including the screenplay, Hitchcock, Cary Grant and Ingrid Bergman to RKO studios for $800,000. Hitchcock, now free of Selznick's

overbearing demands, had the creative freedom to direct the film in the manner that he chose. His independence was secured by a clause in the contractual agreement with RKO Studios that denied Selznick "any voice in the production, or the supervision of the production, of the photoplay."[18] The fact that *Notorious* stands as one of Hitchcock's most successful films of the 1940s speaks to the power of the director's creative vision for this particular film as it lacked any interference from the famed producer.

In his interview with Truffaut, Hitchcock claims that Selznick felt as if the plot device of uranium ore did not make sense and created a problem with the narrative. Hitchcock's response was to take Hecht to the California Institute of Technology at Pasadena to meet with scientists to see if their theory of using uranium ore to make an atom bomb was plausible. As Hitchcock relates to Truffaut, one of the scientists "looked at us and said, 'You want to have yourselves arrested and have me arrested as well?' Then he spent an hour telling us how impossible our idea was, and he concluded that if only they could harness hydrogen, then that would be something."[19] One year later, the atom bomb fell on Hiroshima.

As Beebe observed, Hitchcock and screenwriter Ben Hecht could not help but project their own mood onto the film. It is also important to note that the opening of the film is a wide city shot with the following words superimposed: "Miami, Florida. Three-twenty P.M., April twenty-fourth, nineteen forty-six." By precisely locating the film's time, place and date, Hitchcock sets the theme of the post-war situation by locating it within approximately one year of Hitler's suicide.[20] As Charlotte Chandler points out, politically speaking, both men had personal reasons for their anti-German sentiment. Hecht was a Zionist, and highly active in supporting the Jews in Europe during the war while Hitchcock was working on a film about the Holocaust for the British government.[21]

The compositional strategies that Hitchcock uses to block his characters exhibit his deep sense of artistic persona and support his development of plot formation. Many of these compositional strategies that he employs are traditional and date back to the Renaissance era. Traditional pyramidal composition is used to create unity and to keep the eye moving around the frame. The goal is to create a visual sense of balance and symmetry and to naturally draw the eye around the composition, thereby having a continuous flow and creating a strong visual dynamic. A classic example of pyramidal composition in high art is Leonardo da Vinci's *Virgin of the Rocks*. Mary's head is located at the top and central part of the frame, forming the top of the pyramid design, with the infant John the Baptist, the Christ Child, and an angel flanking either side of her, all arranged in a perfect triangle. The eye naturally travels to the top of the pyramid where Mary's head is located, and then travels down and to the right, towards the angel and Christ, then across the canvass to the left towards John the Baptist, and then back to the top center of the pyramidal form. Artists have employed this essential composition in art throughout the ages. The essential purpose of this particular compositional

design is to invoke beauty, balance and perfection, the Neo-Platonic ideal of the Renaissance.

The use of pyramidal composition in *Notorious* is dynamic not only because of the powerful statement it makes aesthetically as it creates a seamless and fluid movement throughout the film via blocking, but it also symbolizes the strength and power of the characters. Hitchcock employs it within the context of the narrative to illustrate the two love triangles. The first is a love triangle that consists of Alicia, Devlin and Alexander; the second is a Freudian triangle that includes Alicia, Alex and Mme. Sebastian (Alex's mother). Each of the four main characters of *Notorious* is isolated within their own internal prisons. Devlin is complicated by his inability to trust or love Alicia; Alicia is in love with Devlin, however, her attempt at redemption for her father's sins, and Devlin's refusal to admit his love for her, keeps her embroiled in the effort to discover the secrets that the Germans are hiding; Alex, in his desperate unrequited love for Alicia, is incapable of seeing her for who she really is, namely an American spy. Each character is trapped within their own private hell, isolated yet lonely and desperate for love. Thus, the love triangle spins continuously. Through the use of pyramidal form to represent these relationship dynamics within the context of the film, Hitchcock deepens the development of the characters and their relationships to one another.

While there are several scenes where the filmmaker utilizes pyramidal composition to illuminate the characters and generate tension, there are two major scenes where Hitchcock constructs the scene within the frame using this artistic device as a means to allegorize the narrative. The first is an opening scene where a drunken Alicia is throwing a party late into the evening after her Nazi father has been convicted of spying. In this scene, Alicia is meeting Devlin for the first time. The characters are blocked using pyramidal composition with Alicia at the top of the frame. The camera is positioned so that it is shooting upwards from a low angle that places the emphasis on her face. This creates the peak of the pyramid. Her arm is bent at a right angle as she pours a drink for Devlin. The diagonal angle of her arm lines up perfectly with the diagonal line of the lampshade in the foreground, and the diagonal lines in the design of the bookshelves behind her are also in direct alignment with her arm. It is also interesting to note that the design on the shelves forms an "X," a motif used by Hitchcock, as noted earlier by Yacowar, which illustrates the complexity of the relationship dynamic between the two lovers. Devlin is located in the foreground of the shot with his back to the camera, his shoulders forming the base of the triangle. His point of view is directed towards Alicia's face, which ties the shot together to complete the composition.

This compositional strategy illuminates the focus on Alicia, notably Ingrid Bergman's face, which Hitchcock was fond of featuring using the close-up shot. Devlin's character is seated low and in complete shadow as he observes her, the camera located just behind his line of vision. The blocking within this scene speaks to the notion that Deleuze points out as "implicating the

spectator within the frame."[22] Just as Devlin has been observing Alicia during her party throughout the night, now the audience becomes an active participant in the voyeuristic tendencies of Devlin. Further, as John Orr observes, Hitchcock sets this scene:

> …with a *double positioning*. We are watching Alicia and seeing what Devlin sees, but we are also watching *her* gaze, sharpened by drink, flickering over him while his, conversely, remains withheld from point of view. Thus the primal gaze is *hers* but seen objectively and not from her point-of-view and we are left to imagine his response."[23]

Furthermore, this scene highlights the narrative's focus on Alicia's character as the central focus of the film; the narrative, as well as the male characters, all revolves around her.

The second major scene that exemplifies the use of pyramidal composition as an allegory is the scene where Alicia realizes that Alex and his mother are attempting to murder her. She is lying in bed, ill after having consumed tea poisoned by the mother and son. With Alex and Mme. Sebastian flanking either side of the bed, they loom over her, looking from one then the other. The camera closes in on her face as she realizes they have poisoned her. This is an inverted pyramid, with the two criminals looming over their victim, the most powerful characters within the scene featured above and Alicia lying on the bed beneath them as the victim and focus of the shot. Hitchcock frames the shot using an inverted pyramidal composition. Here, the inversion of the composition suggests the distress of the character. A drugged Alicia, who slowly realizes that they have poisoned her, gazes at her mother-in-law as her husband tells the butler to unplug the telephone from the bedroom so she can have "absolute quiet." Alicia's gaze at Mme. Sebastian within the shot exemplifies the Freudian triangle, a common theme found in many Hitchcock dramas. Mme. Alexander, as noted earlier, represents the disturbing and frightening mother-in-law figure seen in many Hitchcock films, such as Mrs. Bates in *Psycho,* Mrs. Danvers in *Rebecca* and Lydia Brenner in *The Birds*. She is all-powerful and controlling, or, as Michael Renov suggests, she is the dominant mother figure who holds the keys both literally and figuratively. It is she who holds the power, the keys representing the male power.[24]

Another key scene that is constructed using pyramidal composition that alludes to a power dynamic is the scene where the American agents are in a conference room at their offices in Rio de Janeiro. Here, the lead agent stands at the end of a long conference table that is positioned vertically and centrally within the frame. With the camera located at the opposite end of the table, the lines of the table create a strong diagonal that begins at the top center of the frame. This line is continued by the frame of the window located directly behind the agent standing at the head of the table. The diagonal lines created by the lines of the table form the top of a triangle that forms at the top of the

lead agent's head. Outside of the room, in the outdoor space of the building and rising directly behind him is an Egyptian obelisk with a bronze ornament on top of it.

Seated along the table are several agents. The backs of the chairs in the foreground of the shot form a clean horizontal line that follows the composition and point to the head of the table. The blocking and framing devices of this scene create balance and harmony. The American FBI agents hold real masculine power, will, and ability to effectively manage and defeat their opponents; the balance created within the frame also amplifies the institutional organization and power held by the Americans. In each of these scenes, Hitchcock constructs the composition and frames the scene to strategically locate the most powerful figure at the point of the triangular composition. The focus is always placed on the character within the narrative that is the most important in that particular scene.

Jacobs argues:

> [in addition to] the art of framing characters within diegetic architecture, cinema also creates architecture through the camera. In the process of creating cinematic space, phenomena such as lighting, sound, editing, camera positions, and camera movements can and should be interpreted as *architectonic* practices."[25]

However, it is the manner in which he incorporates the Egyptian temple structure, the mausoleum representative of death, into the opening and closing shots of the film that is most striking. The movie ends with another image of an Egyptian temple façade although this time it appears even more tomb-like. Hitchcock visually ties the opening and closing scenes of the film together by opening the film with the symbolic death of a Nazi in an American courtroom by visually constructing an Egyptian tomb-like structure through the use of light, shadow, line and form. He completes the film using the same effects.

The final scene of the film shows Devlin rescuing Alicia from the Sebastian house. He takes her from her sick bed, down the long winding staircase and out the front door. As he guides her out of the house, Alexander and his mother quietly follow them, trying not to raise suspicion from the group of Nazis they have been harboring. The scene is dark and foreboding as Alexander watches Alicia and Devlin drive away. He turns back towards the house where he must now face the suspicious Nazis who are looking on and whom he must now answer to. The house is representative of Egyptian funerary architecture and reminiscent of a mausoleum; massive, oversized columns flank the door, on either side are two enormous urns, and a heavy lintel structure on top. As Alex walks towards the entrance of the dark house, the only light comes from inside of the house, and the visual effect created through the lighting and architecture is of Alex entering his death chamber

with all of the appearances of an Egyptian temple that will now serve as his tomb. The Nazi is again sentenced to death, this time by his own colleagues.

In *Notorious*, Hitchcock strategically places Egyptian architecture, notably the temple facade, within the frame through intricately designed lighting within the sets. The symbolism of Egyptian architecture, as well as the pyramid itself, holds powerful meaning to the collective unconscious as it takes us back to our origins and speaks to us on an eternal level. In the emotionally heightened tension of the period following World War II, the use of the Egyptian motif, as well as the mysticism and symbolism of the pyramid, generates a psychological need within the collective unconscious of the spectator to reconnect to our collective ancient history. It is through the cinematic imagery that the director pulls together all of these elements to create an allegory of love, betrayal, lust, desire and fear; these emotions represent the primal nature that resides within all of humanity. Hitchcock successfully creates imagery and uses symbolism like Egyptian funerary architecture, pyramids, and objects d'art that resonate with the collective unconscious.

Furthermore, Hitchcock's use of the Egyptian motif is more of a political statement as opposed to the influence of the style as art of the period. These mystical symbols of the pyramid and the temple are developed in a manner that speaks to his audience in political terms. Opening the film in a courtroom featuring a Nazi being punished for his crimes is, in effect, Hitchcock's persecution of the Nazis for the Holocaust. It is his symbolic way of condemning the Nazis, defeating them just as his fellow Englishmen did in Egypt where Rommel, the Desert Fox, was pushed back by the British army.

Notes

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2. Ibid., 162.
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4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. John Beebe, "The Notorious Postwar Psyche," *Journal of Popular Film & Television* 18, no. 1 (Spring 1990): 28.
7. Ibid.
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17. Nathalie Pondil-Poupard, "Alfred Hitchcock: An Artist in Spite of Himself," in *Hitchcock and Art: Fatal Coincidences* (Montreal: Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, 2001), 179.
18. Bill Krohn, *Hitchcock at Work* (London: Phaidon, 2000), 84.
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25. Jacobs, *The Wrong House*, 11.

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Where No One Can Hear You Scream:
Alfred Hitchcock Brings Terror Back Into the Home . . . Where It Belongs

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In 1935, Imperial-Cameo Studios released *Murder by Television*, a crime film starring Bela Lugosi, about the murder of a scientist as he embarks on the first worldwide television broadcast.[1] Though it would be four years before television became widely known to Americans through FDR's broadcast from the 1939 World's Fair, and another decade and a half before most Americans interacted with television on a daily basis, director/producer Clifford Sanforth clearly understood that a sense of foreboding had attached itself to television as a medium and a technology. Though the film is, in many ways, a conventional 'B' crime picture, the title points to a very different reading: *Murder by Television* not only suggests a connection between crime and television technology, but actually situates the technology *as the murderer*. Only moments before the scientist's death, he has treated viewers to a "world tour" on television to their awe and delight. That the scientist is unexpectedly killed during his inaugural broadcast, immediately after the exquisite possibilities of television appear before the eyes of the world, indicates an ambivalent helplessness before the medium, what early television critic Gilbert Seldes would later call "television's *overwhelming* feel of reality."[2]

As critics like Gary Giddins, Lynn Spigel, and Jeffrey Sconce have pointed out, the intervention of broadcast technology into American homes seems to have caused widespread, but largely unacknowledged, anxiety. Before the threat of television was pre-eminent, the horror films of the 1930s, notably James Whale's *Frankenstein* (1931), grappled with anxiety about radio technology and its terrifying power:

> Radio's monstrous intrusion may be inferred by the first important picture to reflect radio culture, the 1931 horror epic *Frankenstein*. Updated [from Mary Shelley's 1816 novel] to the

twentieth century, James Whale's film is dizzy with radio talk and apparatuses as the scientist bridles electricity to replicate life, wearing earphones and muttering about correct frequencies. His creation has two bolts resembling vacuum tubes in his neck to attract electric current that will transform it into virtual humanity.[3]

 In *Frankenstein*, the Creature's (Boris Karloff's) body is activated through what looks like a radio signal; the creation of another Creature (Elsa Lanchester), the title character in Whale's popular sequel, *Bride of Frankenstein* (1935) is similarly reliant on electrical instruments resembling radio technology.[4] In both films, sympathy for the Creatures is evoked repeatedly: the Creatures are not evil or inhuman, but the unfortunate victims of fateful collisions between humanity and technology, a process that, once begun (*Frankenstein*) seems unstoppable (*Bride of Frankenstein*).

That the horror and thriller genres seem, in the late 1940s and 1950s, to move into the home—radio and television writers, directors, and producers take over from film as these genres' primary interlocutors—makes sense, given this anxiety about the terrors of home invasion by broadcast technologies. At the same time, the science fiction genre fills the space vacated by horror in American film, with emphasis on the scientific roots of terror appearing in classics like *The Thing* (Nyby/Hawks 1951)*, Invasion USA* (Green, 1952), *Them!* (Douglas, 1954)*, This Island Earth* (Newman, 1955)*,* and a great many others. Many critics have rightly suggested that the science fiction genre registered a fear of technology related to the invention and use of the atomic bomb: in this way, they account for the rise of science fiction film.[5] Several genre historians, notably Kevin Heffernan and J.P. Telotte, see the virtual replacement of horror, suspense, and thriller genres by science fiction in cinema as significant not strictly in laying bare Cold War anxieties about the bomb; they also see this replacement as related to the spectacular possibilities the science fiction genre offered to differentiate movie-going from television-watching.[6]

While thriller and suspense were primarily taken on by radio and television during the 1950s, just as the science fiction genre began to prevail in "genre" film, it is critical to note exceptions to that rule: *Rear Window* (1954), *To Catch a Thief* (1955)*, The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1956), *Vertigo* (1958), *North by Northwest* (1959)*,* and Orson Welles's *Touch of Evil* (Welles, 1958), were the only thriller/suspense films of the decade to become major box office successes, following the wane in film noir and other popular thriller styles.[7] That Alfred Hitchcock directed all but one of these successful thrillers in the 1950s suggests the extent of his celebrity as much as his "talent," but, most of all, the popularity of his films during a downward trend in thriller film indicates that his use of the genre was particularly effective for that contemporary moment. While he claimed that he entered into television for financial reasons, Hitchcock's well-known preoccupation with the dangerous domestic had no better expression. This paper looks at the televisual staging of American fears

about home invasion and home entrapment in *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*, which aired on CBS Sunday prime-time, premiering on October 2, 1955 and also explores why Alfred Hitchcock is a crucial figure to understanding how technology, medium, and genre functioned in the era.

The Hitchcock style, oft-copied, was defined by precise attention to visual detail and stylistic innovation, both qualities considered by critics and the public to be entirely exterior to television production. But Hitchcock used his status as a genre filmmaker with a somewhat respectable high-art reputation to experiment with new methods and technologies. In 1929, for example, Hitchcock made the ground-breaking *Blackmail,* which, as John Belton writes, "is so useful in documenting the transition-to-sound period and the aesthetic changes it introduced."[8] This is partly because Hitchcock himself sought to push the form, even shooting on sound-on-film to ensure that the film would be a "full talkie." And yet, he famously despised films that he called "pictures of people talking" and refused to let the advent of sound divert him from pursuing "pure cinema." Interestingly, much of the "pure cinema" approach describes what differentiated Hitchcock from other makers of *television* in the 1950s.

Just one year before Hitchcock tried his hand at television as a performer, director, and producer, he also directed *Dial M for Murder* (1954) as a 3-D film that took place almost entirely in one well-appointed domestic space (a conceit for which he is well-known). *Dial M for Murder*, unlike many of the other 3-D movies released in the period, relied little on cinema-of-attractions-style gimmick shots, seeming almost to resist calling attention to the technology.

Just as he confronted and manipulated technologies in sync-sound and 3-D, Hitchcock engaged the televisual with surprising if counterintuitive media specificity in an era in which television makers were often requested to mimic film. As a trade publication of the era put it: "Go to the movies; analyze everything you see in the picture, and . . . memorize the particular technique if you can."[9] Simultaneously though, Hitchcock played with the previous methods of television, shaking them up at times, to terrific effect.

The disruptions of traditional visuality and sound standards via new technology—3-D and directional sound, respectively—to create a feeling of "liveness" or "realness" actually do less to differentiate cinema from television than they might seem to, given the "liveness" that defined broadcasting's appeal from its inception.[10] The responses these two film technologies received are telling: viewers, critics, and theater owners had complex reactions to "liveness" and "realness," alternately awed and unnerved. Though 3-D films were economically unsustainable as common theater practice due to difficulties in standardizing the technology, 1950s audiences initially flocked to these technological fantasies. Heffernan notes that not all reactions to innovative sound technology were positive: "many 'hated the cacophonous sound,' . . . one Omaha theater owner complained that, at times, stereo sound is actually 'confusing to some patrons.'"[11]

The public's ambivalence to the seeming and sudden transformation of the cinema environment can be broadened to comment on the seeming and sudden transformation of the home by broadcasting: the new offerings were alluring and alarming in an age when Americans had a heightened sense of the power of technology, both for the expansion of knowledge *and* the destruction of ways of life that were previously commonplace. In other words, if American anxieties about technology in the 1950s can be associated with the atomic bomb, these fears were also compounded by the expansion of broadcast mediums into American homes, and were as much about the home's invasion as about science generally. Outside the home, this fear of new technologies was confronted more directly through film in the science fiction genre; inside the home, radio and television provided the perfect media for the horror and suspense/thriller genres, since both radio and television themselves contained this technological threat to the safe space of the home and, further, their existence in the home made "home" unsafe.

Horror and thriller programs at the time dramatized these fears of home invasion and home entrapment, but radio and television did so in ways specific to each. Trade publications from the 1940s and 1950s reveal that makers and sponsors of radio imagined the listener engaged in other tasks while listening, but that makers and sponsors of television believed their viewers were profoundly and singularly attentive to the program they were watching.[12] RCA Chairman David Sarnoff contrasted this mode of attention with ways of apprehending radio:

> Television reception is not, cannot be, like sound reception. Today, radio is used as a background for other entertainment, or by the housewife who . . . listens to the radio, while she goes on with her work. Television can never be like that, because not only will it require close attention on the part of the onlooker, but it will also be necessary for the room to be somewhat darkened. . . . [L]isteners . . . instead of roaming around as they do now while enjoying a program, will have to sit tight and pay close attention to whatever is thrown on their screen.[13]

Gilbert Seldes's discussion of television's receptive demands betrays some anxiety about television's power, figuring its audiences as physically helpless before it: "The thing moves, it requires your complete attention. You cannot walk away from it, you cannot turn your back on it, and you cannot do anything else except listen while you are looking."[14] Seldes does not simply suggest the proper mode for apprehending television, as in "one *should not* walk away from it," but claims that television's very existence is powerful enough to compel a particular bodily response, to hold a viewer captive.

In fact, industry professionals believed this attention was so intense as to require a concentration of certain effects meant to avoid both boredom and

oversaturation: many close-ups, condensed plots, and highly realistic acting.[15] Condensing films for television was not just for the benefit of sponsors, but because many in the industry believed viewers could not sustain more than 60 minutes of this acute, sedulous, non-stop attention while at home.[16]

So, while radio makers often attempted to jolt their listeners back to attention with sudden screams, effects, and crashes, television makers often avoided these very devices. Philip Kerby, in *Victory of Television*, specifically warned against these "interruptions," suggesting that the entire medium of television might cease to be "tolerated" by its new audiences should this attention be pressed; indeed, viewers might return to movie houses for their visual entertainment if television makers so disrespectfully breached the space of the home.[17] In other words, the cinema-of-attractions aspect of entertainment that had proven so crucial to the popularity of motion pictures was actually the element of film, as rendered aurally, which television makers, it was suggested, should tone down. Obviously, the difference between the aural and visual modes of these mediums is significant and both radio and television makers were aware of, and experimental with, these particular possibilities and limitations. While radio programs like *Suspense* and *Inner Sanctum* made the most of sound effects, television programs such as *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* and the television adaptation of *Inner Sanctum Mysteries,* among others, gave exaggerated emphasis to the visual.

In the pilot episode of *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*, written by Francis Cockrell and titled "Revenge," a newlywed couple moves into a California trailer park so that the wife Elsa (Vera Miles) can recover from her recent nervous breakdown with plenty of sun, as recommended by her doctors at the mental hospital.[18] Left alone while her husband Carl, (Ralph Meeker) is at work, Elsa is raped in their trailer.[19] Carl vows revenge and murders the man Elsa claims is her attacker. Only moments later, it becomes clear that Elsa's fragile emotional state makes her see all men as her assailant, but the murder has already been committed and Carl will be prosecuted for his crime.

The episode opens with Hitchcock's introduction, in which he explains his role as "accessory before and after the fact." Hitchcock's introductions are now famous, but the persona he cultivated was built on a tradition of sarcastic, playful horror and suspense hosting, dating back to Wyllis Cooper's *Lights Out!*, which started as a radio program in 1933, continued by Arch Oboler, and perfected by William Castle. Though the role of the horror/thriller host cannot be reduced entirely to this mechanism, for our purposes, he played an important role in protecting viewers from the threatening permeability of realistic diegesis and their home environment. In fact, Hitchcock draws attention to this aspect of his role. As an "accessory before and after the fact," he admits something: he is helping the medium of television "get away with" portraying rather chilling and gruesome stories. The bookends of the host's introduction and conclusion stand as boundaries between the scary story and the world at home.

Different programs dealt with this task in different ways: some shows located the host in a home-like environment (*The Veil*, featuring Boris Karloff as host and performer had him sitting by the fire in a haunted mansion-type parlor), while others showed the host on what was clearly a set. In the case of Hitchcock, his location was inconsistent. The pilot episode shows him in an unidentifiable space, probably a studio, with only a chair behind him. Though this would be replicated on many occasions, other episodes feature him behind a desk or on a set while shooting is in progress. The less descript the space Hitchcock occupied, the more seamless his interaction with the home viewer. Again, this sets off the episode's narrative as fictionally distant. The narrative portion of the episode also accretes fictionality through Hitchcock's many mentions of writers and actors of different episodes, as well as the original texts from which they were adapted to the small screen. In the pilot, Hitchcock is afforded the pleasures of a sort of meta-commentary, explaining how the show will work each week, even though the show would not differ appreciably from other anthology series.

The anthology series of early television were considered prestige projects, at first in their mimicry of live theater (most of these seemed to be plays filmed from one stationary position) and later in their mimicry of film (with increasing camera movement, expanded use of editing techniques, and more composed shots). The transition from live to filmed television allowed for greater and greater visual possibilities, though many within the industry were troubled by the "distance" interposed between actor and viewer by filmed drama. Early television critic Jack Gould famously distinguished between live and filmed television, saying: "It's the difference between being with somebody and looking at somebody."[20] But, when that somebody is a murderer, *looking* at them is perhaps the preferred mode of apprehension.

In the case of "Revenge," the act of "looking" is immediately foregrounded in a manner that is distinctly Hitchcockian. First, we get a long shot of the trailer park. This shot that may seem commonplace to 2000s television viewers would have been remarkable in 1954. Television professionals considered long shots cinematic, not televisual. When films were recut for TV, the editor's first step was to cut out every long shot. In this pre-big screen plasma era, when viewers and industry professionals were so engaged in comparisons between film and television, long shots were virtually impossible for viewers to fully interpret. Furthermore, as when Robert Bresson argued that "[t]he sound track invented silence," television may have, if more obliquely, invented the long shot.

At the time this episode initially aired, 20 inches was the largest home screen, soon to grow seven inches within the year, but most viewers were watching 16-inch screens in plywood cabinets. In an acknowledgement that the price of a larger screen set was prohibitive to many consumers, some electronics stores sold magnifying glasses with straps to attach them to the TV set for a larger picture, to be purchased with the smaller sets. Beyond the size, the quality of the image on even the best tube television sets in 1954 was

painfully low. The resolution enabled by the NTSC 525 line black-and-white set was mediocre, especially since many televisions Americans were watching during the early 1950s were not made with that standard in mind.

The early employment of "interlace scanning"—two fields, one containing the odd lines in the image and one containing the even lines of the image, are put together to constitute a frame—also created the "flickering" effect we associate with 1950s television, known as "interline twitter." Often, there were more horizontal lines of resolution than vertical, so vertical resolution suffered duly: often primitive interlace scanning methods landed even lines on top of odd lines or vice versa, compromising vertical resolution further. Simultaneously, even as the camera technology was improving much faster than the television technology, a great deal of light was required to capture a shot in a studio or on location.[21] So the detail of a long shot, like the first one in "Revenge," which appears to cover perhaps half a mile of ground, would have required effort—squinting, moving closer—to clearly see. Hitchcock demands of the viewer a keen awareness of her own "looking" from this opening shot of the narrative—he will do so through much of his work for *Presents*.

The assumption that this long shot was *the* establishing shot is immediately undermined when the viewer realizes it is merely part of a sequence of establishing shots that serve not only to destabilize a visual grammar common in film and television, but to confuse the viewer as to where the eventual scene will take place. Following the long shot, the next shot gives the viewer a closer look at one specific trailer, while the shot approaches yet another trailer more closely, in order to show us Elsa and Carl's relative poverty. Each shot seems to indicate that we will enter the trailer, but the cut forecloses on that entry.

The next two shots are most interesting in that both evoke a sense that the looker is hiding: in the first, a woman emerges from a trailer in the right side of the frame. The camera very slowly pans toward her movement, (though she remains in the right half of the shot, never centered,) but it does not zoom in: we remain very far from her activity as though afraid to approach. The last shot in the sequence is a low-angle shot, with the camera positioned as though from the point-of-view of someone hiding behind the car, watching the door. The viewer is not in his or her home, rather s/he is plotting the invasion of someone else's. Here we have a permutation of theories that posit the filmic apparatus as the spectator and vice versa: in television, this cinematic technique posited the TV viewer as the technology rendering the image, and the viewer as the potentially dangerous invader.[22]

The sense that the home is vulnerable to outside threat is not only indicated through Hitchcock's meticulous shot composition, but also at the level of plot. In both acts of violence, Elsa's rape and Carl's murder of the stranger, reasonable opportunities for the attacks happen outside the private space, but the attacker actually waits for the victim to go inside and follows, as though the danger only exists beyond the view of the public. Elsa is sunbathing outside the trailer alone. Only when she goes inside to check on

her baking cake does the assailant follow her and commit the rape. Similarly, though Carl has an opportunity to murder the presumed rapist while alone with him in a hotel elevator, he waits until the man has entered his room. Carl goes in after him for the kill. Again, we follow.

That both "private" spaces—the trailer and the hotel room—are less than idealized domestic spaces, ones figured temporary, unstable, and even threatening by middle-class value judgments, seems key to this analysis. Additionally, the situation of both "private spaces" in such unavoidable proximity to a surrounding, ever-encroaching public space of the trailer park and the hotel corridors and lobbies can be read in several ways. In one reading, the domestic sphere is troubled, unstable, and threatened by transience and temporal disruptions; this reading would make sense given the postwar moment. It is also possible that the "bookending" insulation, provided by the thriller host's introductions and conclusions, may also be replicated in the settings: to the viewer situated in a typically comfortable, middle-class domestic setting, the use of a trailer and a hotel room for containing acts of violence could impart a sense of one's own relative safety, whereas the viewer watching from a less idealized private sphere might be enticed to or soothed by the idea of suburban, protected domesticity. Finally, the temporary sense of the trailer or the hotel room can also be read as a comment of the de-temporalizing and destabilizing effects of television to which one surrenders to a rendered time and place, even becoming a victim of it.

Prior to and during the commission of violence in "Revenge," there is also a strange lack of sound. Though the viewer does not see Elsa's assault, testimony from her neighbors afterward centers on their horror that they were aware of nothing awry: they didn't hear her scream. In the attack that the viewer does, to some extent, witness, the visuality of the TV medium is asserted forcefully and to eerie effect. In the nearly two minutes leading up to the murder, there is almost no sound at all, including dialogue. When the murder itself takes place, not only is there no screaming, but there is almost no other aural indication of what is about to occur or is occurring. Though a man is being bludgeoned to death with a wrench, there is no aural communication that this violence is happening.

Understanding the narrative requires the sort of attention the industry expected specifically of television, but not of radio, audiences; also, this sequence necessitates an attention to looking that is just as intense as that which Hitchcock required in the opening sequence discussed earlier. The fear of home invasion is understandable through this heightened visuality: the home is dangerous because it appears silent to the world. The emphasis on the visual extends to the moment of the murder: we see shadows and Carl's reflection in the mirror though we can't see the actual violence; we are posed on the threshold of the room. However, the sound is misleading: the music seems to be neither diegetic nor non-diegetic, the wrench makes little sound on the man's body, and, again, there is no sound of struggle. The act of looking is heightened by the fact that it is, essentially, the only action we have.

Beyond the industrial calls for and against media specificity in the era, beyond the cinematic auteur's stylistic imprimatur, why such visual experimentation at the expense of sound? This emphasis on the visual makes sense at a time when television was rapidly overtaking radio as the major American broadcast medium, in other words, when TV was rapidly overtaking radio as the major invader of the home space. Television professionals could leave it to science fiction film to deal explicitly with the technological terror of the age because the technology of the television itself—it's visuality in particular—produced the terror. Just when Americans had begun to adjust to the presence of radio in their living rooms, television arrived as the new lure and the new threat. Through television, more danger, visual danger, a danger from which " [y]ou cannot walk away," was let inside.

The television pilot is a particular sort of object, meant to create anticipation for future episodes, not just to indicate the show's direction. This sense that "you cannot walk away" becomes, over the next several seasons, the hallmark of Hitchcock-directed episodes. The experience of being trapped is obviously a theme in Hitchcock's work overall, but he very effectively uses television to explore this theme in ways only that medium can.

In the fourth episode that Hitchcock directed, "Back for Christmas," the visual style captures the feeling of entrapment in the domestic sphere.[23] As in "Revenge," the domestic space is transitory: as the main couple, Herbert and Hermione, prepare to leave for an extended trip, they cover the furniture and fixtures, turn things off and put things away. Their space is far from "homey," though it is their home. After Hitchcock's introduction, the opening shot is a slow pan from one basement wall to another. When we arrive at the right wall, our protagonist, Herbert, is leaning down in the process of digging a hole. As the scene progresses and Hermione comes down to see his work, it becomes clear that while she can stand upright beneath the low ceiling, he for the most part cannot. When she has gone back up the stairs and we realize that he is digging this hole not for the wine cellar as he has indicated to Hermione, but for her body, he mutters to himself (and thus to us) "no use crowding." Even in death, he imagines she will feel less crowded than he.

Herbert's feeling "crowded" or trapped appears to be the motive for the murder and, frighteningly, the visual style cues us to sympathize with the man we know intends to (and later does) kill his wife. Hermione seems immensely capable and liable to run everything, but this is mostly portrayed with her *not* in view. When their friends come for a farewell tea, the scene is edited to show very little aside from Herbert's face. Hermione and their friends are sitting and he is standing. As the conversation takes place, the camera observes Herbert strictly and his expressions as they discuss the impending trip. His gaze remains just to the left of the camera and does not look down toward his wife and their guests. Only when he vaguely claims that they may never return does Hitchcock cut to Hermione, who is looking disapprovingly up at him, for an instant, before cutting back to him saying "very tentative" and pulling on his collar.

When the guests have gone and Herbert is "ready" to commit the murder, we view his figure at the bottom of the stairs as he calls to Hermione to join him in his cellar. She immediately requests he return upstairs to help her and we watch him, from behind, as he literally disappears head to foot up the stairs. He finally manages to get Hermione downstairs, as she says, "You know I always take an interest in your little enterprises," belittling him even as she is supporting him. When he asks her advice on his wine cellar excavations, she continues in this vein telling him that she "do[es]n't think it makes a particle of difference." Approaching her from behind, Herbert prepares his stick and, with neither character visible, the end of the stick enters the frame from the left and falls out of it. Only then does Herbert's head emerge into the frame, followed immediately by a fade.

As in "Revenge," very little sound exists to communicate the violent act. A mild thump on the back with a stick completes the murder. After the fade (which presumably moves into a commercial break), we return to Herbert patting down the soil over what we assume is Hermione's body. Herbert is thereafter unable to wash the dirt from his hands, realizing that Hermione has turned off the tap in preparation for their trip. She is already haunting him and doing so through her household vigilance. When friends drop by unexpectedly, Herbert hides (he is fully in our view, but obscured from theirs), but the sound of the water betrays him—they know someone remains.

The visual style of the next several minutes departs dramatically from the rest of the episode. Cutting from Herbert's fearful face to boats and city sights, Hitchcock then places Herbert in New York City, indicated by tilts toward skyscrapers, but, more interestingly, superimposing Herbert's image over the "city chaos" of traffic, lights, theater marquees, and high-rises, and then matched with whimsical music. This same superimposition and score continue over road images of his cross-country trip until the audience is presented with five establishing shots of hotels and apartment buildings in Beverly Hills. This sequence suggests domestic instability: we are never clear where Herbert settles, though we are misled several times into thinking we will be and, just as important, the transient-domestic is all we see (no houses, for example, are evident here).

Herbert sits and types, and the camera cuts to the paper in the typewriter, a forgery of sorts. In impersonating Hermione, his resentment comes through: "Hermione" tells her friends that, when it comes to staying in Los Angeles for Herbert's job "there will be none of that, of course." Pulling the paper from the typewriter and rereading it himself, he smiles for one of the only times in the episode: "the next time, I'll let the first shade of doubt creep in." When Herbert lets a colleague enter his home, the very strangeness of his domestic environment becomes clear: because his doors are all glass, it is unclear where the appropriate entrances and exits are and, additionally, it is obvious that he is doing his work outdoors. Furthermore, we can see only the entrance and exit, but the truly "domestic" parts of the domicile (sitting room, kitchen, and bedroom) are not visible.

While much about this episode is significant, perhaps the most important element is its resonance with "Revenge," in which the marital domestic is fundamentally inescapable. This is made clear in multiple ways. When Herbert arrives in Los Angeles, he is initially quite resistant to the presence of a housekeeper—he seems relieved to be able to manage his own bachelor household. Soon however he capitulates, realizing that he is not in fact equipped to run his life effectively. Within mere seconds of his exchange with the housekeeper, Herbert opens a letter which indicates that his wife has paid for the excavation of the home cellar (where she is now buried). She haunts him with her competency and planning, but also with her care for his "little enterprises." He must now return to the home as quickly as possible, and the audience will never know whether he will arrive in time to turn away the contractors.

In short, the marital domestic is a far more powerful trap than Herbert initially assumed and, as with "Revenge," the wife's obfuscations (however radically different) displace "horror" from the woman to the husband as the episode closes. It is men, not women, who are trapped in the domestic sphere.

Alfred Hitchcock famously commented on the importance of the television medium in American culture more than a decade after the first broadcast of *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*. What he said in that interview with the National Observer speaks volumes about the location of terror in American life during the first "Golden Age of Television" in the 1950s—60s. His words: "One of television's great contributions is that it brought murder back into the home, where it belongs."

Notes

1. I am indebted to J. P. Telotte's discussion of *Murder by Television* in *Science Fiction Film* (New York: Cambridge UP), 2001.

2. Gilbert Seldes, "The Trouble with Television." *Television*, September 1951.

3. Gary Giddins, *Bing Crosby: A Pocketful of Dreams—The Early Years 1903-1940* (New York: Little, Brown, and Company), 2001: 286.

4. Less directly relevant than the radio apparatuses perhaps, but still worth noting: it is an entirely anachronistic telephone that misleads Henry and Pretorious into completing the assembly of body parts into the Bride.

5. While this analysis is critical, it ignores the history of broadcasting—indeed of technology more generally—as one entangled with other, more explicitly political American histories of the era. As the *Frankenstein* example illustrates, anxiety about technology and its threat to safe domestic tranquility can be traced back to well before the atomic bomb was existent or publicly understood.

6. Both Heffernan and Telotte have an understandable tendency to collapse horror and science fiction, as a way of favoring their own chosen generic allegiance (horror and science fiction, respectively.) Distinctions between these genres are particularly difficult to make during the early 1950s, as horror's quintessential "monster" is

increasingly inflected with scientific calamity. Indeed, horror's debt to science fiction, and vice versa, seems obvious at least as far back as Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein.*

7. Rather than being viewed as "genre" pictures, audiences likely identified the films with their auteurs. It might be said also that Hitchcock was not merely a "highbrow" genre filmmaker, but actually transcended genre.

8. John Belton, "Awkward Transitions: Hitchcock's 'Blackmail' and the Dynamics of Early Film Sound," *The Musical Quarterly*, Vol. 83, No. 2 (Summer, 1999): 235.

9. Jeanne Allen, "The Social Matrix of Television: Invention in the United States," *Regarding Television: Critical Approaches—An Anthology*, ed. E. Ann Kaplan (Fredrick, MD: AFI Press,) 1983: 178.

10. It is useful to keep in mind the first major "scandal" covered in minute-by-minute live detail on radio: the Lindbergh kidnapping of 1932, when Charles Augustus Lindbergh, Junior, was abducted from his nursery by an intruder (Bruno Hauptmann was later convicted). The association of live real-time coverage with home invasion in the radio age was appropriate to reifying the fear of this electronic intruder.

11. Kevin Heffernan, *Ghouls, Gimmicks, and Gold: Horror Films and the American Movie Business, 1953-1968* (Durham, N.C.: Duke UP), 2004: 23-4.

12. This idea of the viewer's singular attention, over the first five years of network television's development, quickly becomes specific to prime-time. Housewives were considered daytime television's primary market, and many media historians have traced the dominance of the soap opera (and later the talk-show) on daytime TV to a different industry conception of attention: housewives needed to be able to perform household tasks while watching TV, so narratives were less compact, characters were residual, scenes were drawn out, and the sound was louder during commercials so as to draw shifted attention back to the TV set. In effect, daytime television mirrored radio. See Spigel, Modleski, Boddy, for a more thorough treatment of this transition.

13. Quoted in William Boddy, *Fifties Television: The Industry and its Critics* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press), 1992: 19-20. Note the aggression posited here: "whatever is *thrown* onto their screens." (My emphasis)

14. Boddy, *Fifties Television: The Industry and its Critics*, 19.

15. See William Hawes, *Filmed Television Drama: 1952-1958* (New York: McFarland and Company), 2002 and James L. Baughman, *Same Time, Same Station: Creating American Television, 1948-1961* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins UP), 2007.

16. It seems to me that the positing of viewership by the "household" in most audience measurement systems, rather than the individual viewer (starting with the Crossleys radio ratings in the 1930s and only partially abating in the Nielsons in the 1990s) partially explains the questionable sustainability of such focused attention.

17. Philip Kerby *Victory of Television* (New York: Harper and Brothers), 1942: 84.

18. "Revenge." *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*, October 2, 1955, CBS.

19. Alison McCracken makes a persuasive argument for the Gothic roots of thriller radio programming in the 1940s, suggesting that the essential formula for both was "woman plus habitation" (a formulation originally coined by Mary Ann Doane) and that these feature a "home [that] becomes a place of terror for the woman." ("Scary Women, Scarred Men, 187) It seems that this episode of *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* begins in keeping with that trope and that its use is important to the project of grappling with the fear of home invasion. Important differences appear in the cause of the woman's terror (not her husband, as in McCracken's examples, but a stranger) and the

significance of that terror to the plot (the climax is not the rape, but the murder which is pursued after it, hence the title, "Revenge.")

20. Jack Gould, *Watching Television Come of Age: The New York Times Reviews* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press), 2002: 41.

21. For further detail on the era's television technology, see Hartman.

22. For a complete overview and analysis of apparatus theory (as it relates to film), see Phil Rosen's collection, *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology: A Film Theory Reader* (New York: Columbia UP), 1986.

23. "Back for Christmas," *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*, March 4, 1956, CBS.

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Space Age Conceptions of Time in Alfred Hitchcock's *Vertigo*

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One of the most distinctive qualities of Hitchcock's *Vertigo* (1958) is that it upsets our classical conception of time—how we live it, its linearity (or nonlinearity), its ability to make co-present always the past, present, and future. The film's protagonist is retired detective John "Scottie" Ferguson (James Stewart). He has a simple assignment: follow his client's wife and try to discover why she is acting strangely. But Hitchcock masterfully sends Scottie and the moviegoer on a journey through time. Scottie's simple assignment becomes an impossible, madness-inducing effort to bring time under his control in order to resurrect his lover, Madeleine (Kim Novak), whom he believes he has lost. Filmmaker Chris Marker says in the *Vertigo* themed sequence of his masterpiece, *Sans Soleil* (1983), that Scottie "[invents] a double for Madeleine in another dimension of time, a zone that would belong only to him" in his attempt to decipher the ever-present enigma of time.[1] In the late 1950s, when *Vertigo* was produced and released, time itself had become the center of a great debate, a debate that welcomed *Vertigo's* concept of time and quickly placed it under scrutiny.

Perhaps the most widely read commentary on *Vertigo's* representation of time is James F. Maxfield's essay, "A Dreamer and His Dream: Another Way of Looking at Hitchcock's *Vertigo*." Maxfield argues, "'Everything after the opening sequence is the dream or fantasy of a dying man.'"[2] This interpretation means the events taking place after the opening rooftop chase occur only in Scottie's mind. If this analysis is valid, then all of the characters and situations in the film are extensions of Scottie's memories, desires, and fears. This conception of the film relies on an understanding of *Vertigo* as an adaptation of Ambrose Bierce's short story "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge." In that story a dying man hallucinates the entire narrative. Maxfield's interpretation makes much of the fact that one of the first versions of the *Vertigo* script was titled *From Among the Dead, or There'll Never Be Another You*, by Samuel Taylor and Ambrose Bierce. Although Bierce never actually worked on the script, citing him as a co-writer of the script suggests *Vertigo* is indeed an

adaptation of his short story, published sixty-eight years before *Vertigo's* release.

Influential Canadian film critic Robin Wood seems to agree with Maxfield's interpretation of the rooftop sequence. Wood, in a 1965 essay, comments on Scottie's seemingly miraculous survival from the rooftop chase: "There seems no possible way he could have got down. The effect is of having him, throughout the film, metaphorically suspended over a great abyss."[3] Both Wood and Maxfield bring much to the discussion. They both affirm that Hitchcock is not telling a conventionally linear narrative, an insight that is certainly true. They both also affirm that the story's non-linear structure is likely a function of Scottie's disintegrating psyche. That too, seems to be a key insight and valid interpretation.

Interestingly, though, neither Wood nor Maxfield addresses ideas about time that were commonplace subjects of speculation in the 1950s. These ideas spring directly from Einstein's special and general theories of relativity. Both of these theories were much in the air during Hitchcock's formative years as a filmmaker. Einstein's special theory of relativity, published in 1905, turned the world of Newtonian physics upside down by disregarding a single, one-dimensional perception of time in favor of a concept of time with the ability to speed up, slow down, and even change direction entirely; however, despite the groundbreaking claims of Einstein's theories, the philosophical and artistic implications of relativity remained unexplored for many years. When Einstein accepted the Nobel Prize in 1922, the award was not for his work on relativity; rather, the Royal Swedish Academy awarded the prize for his work in the field of quantum physics.[4] The Academy's decision suggests that the scientific community had yet to recognize the importance of Einstein's theories of relativity. In his biography on Einstein, Jeremy Bernstein says of the 1922 Nobel Prize, "It was as if the Swedish Academy was all but trying to rid itself of the ominous specter of the relativity theory."[5] In fairness, it is understandable that the Academy would be reluctant to reward the implications of these theories in their unproven and still very theoretical state. Thus, during Hitchcock's formative years as a filmmaker, relativity remained a specter lurking on the outskirts of the public consciousness.

However, by the mid-1950s, after Hitchcock had become a household name, the world watched the Soviet launch of Sputnik and the start of the Space Age. During this Space Age, as humankind turned its attention to other worlds (some of them millions of light-years away, and therefore completely inaccessible), classical conceptions of time began to prove more frustrating. The world waited expectantly for proof of Einstein's revolutionary theory. In 1952, Russia's *Red Fleet* newspaper published A.A. Maksimov's article denouncing Einstein's theories. Maksimov claimed relativity "had penetrated the physics and chemistry departments at the Moscow State University" and threatened to lead "physics 'into a morass of idealism.'"[6] In 1955, the *New York Times* argued for the validity of relativity when it published an in-depth explanation of Einstein's theories consisting of equations, historical proof, and

a declaration that Einstein's legacy reached the same status as Aristotle and Gelileo.[7] This intellectual environment contributed to the culture in which Hitchcock began his work on *Vertigo*. Today, the film represents the extent to which a master artist is able to explore and shape an as-yet-unformed cultural phenomenon such as relativity theory. The result is a film that marks a drastic change in Hitchcock's handling of time as Scottie clumsily attempts to understand and manipulate the flow of time in much the same way the Space Age man struggled to understand the implications of Einstein's theories of relativity.

To understand the significant change *Vertigo's* concept of time represents in relation to Hitchcock's previous work, we must look at classical conceptions, both cyclical and linear in nature, assumed by the world prior to relativity theory. In simple terms, man's measurements of time—days, seasons, and years—is a calendar of repeating cycles, but the overall march of time in such calendar measurements is linear. Attributing a cyclical nature to the passing of time is a practice with a long history. The ancient Mayans appear to have been particularly adept at marking time in this way, as indicated by their development of a calendar that accurately marked the length of a solar year.[8] Civilizations closer to the equator, such as the Mayans and Peruvians, "observed the periodical strange and momentary disappearance of shadows and interpreted it as 'a descent of the Sun-God.'"[9] Accompanied by great rains, this "descent of the Sun-God" led to the harvest of corn and other important crops.

Just as the men who could predict the cycles of the sun became vitally important to ancient civilizations, so too is Hitchcock's direction vitally important to the audience's cyclical understanding of time within his early films. A cyclical concept of time lies at the core of Hitchcock's 1926 film, *The Lodger*. In this film, a newsboy remarks that the murders always happen on "Tuesdays—that's my lucky day." This remark establishes a framework of time before a single character is introduced. The viewer is immediately given expectations as to when important events may occur based on events of the past, and suspense builds as the characters move through this cycle of conflict. Hitchcock builds on this framework throughout the film, resulting in a narrative that occurs within a concise two-week timespan. From the moment the audience is aware of the murderer's cyclical timeline, tension grows every time Hitchcock fades to black, simulating a clear passage from day to day. In this way, Hitchcock's cyclical narrative allows the audience to rely on steady solar cycles similar to those utilized by civilizations of the past.

However, for ancient civilizations, cyclical conceptions of time proved limiting because these cyclical worlds experienced little technological progress. As Daniel Boorstin argues in *The Discoverers*:

> The first grand discovery was time, the landscape of experience. Only by marking off months, weeks, and years, days and hours, minutes and seconds, would mankind be

liberated from the cyclical monotony of nature. The flow of
shadows, sand, and water, and time itself, translated into the
clock's staccato, became a useful measure of man's
movements across the planet. The discoveries of time and
space would become one continuous dimension.
Communities of time would bring the first communities of
knowledge, ways to share discovery, a common frontier of the
unknown.[10]

By definition, a cycle must repeat itself. Everything of great importance in an
ancient civilization is bound by repetition: seasons of the year, religious
practices, human lifespans, and even history itself. These cyclical civilizations
experienced time very differently than many religious cultures that adopted the
opposite worldview: understanding time as a linear progression. For example,
the first verse of the Bible, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the
earth," establishes a definite beginning of time.[11] Similarly, Revelations, the
final book of the New Testament, establishes a definite end of time with the
creation of a new heaven and earth coexisting with the Creator, presumably
poised to stand outside the flow of time. Therefore, having a definite
beginning, middle, and end makes the Christian view of time linear. According
to this concept, Christianity relies on a respect for the past. Christian
civilizations leave behind monuments too numerous to count, such as the
Christ the Redeemer statue towering over Rio de Janeiro in Brazil or the
frescos of the Sistine Chapel in Vatican City. These monuments preserve
traditions and stand as tangible reminders of the past; in other words, they
stand on display as living memories. Tradition plays a role in Christianity;
however, rather than arguing for their validity based only on tradition,
Christians can be expected to look to the past to influence future actions. In
this respect, Christianity serves as an example for the way in which Judaism
and Islam—as well as any religion whose timeline has a definite beginning,
middle, and end—may look to the past to guide the present and to promote a
linear progression of time into the future.

Just as repeating cycles influenced Hitchcock, so too does a linear
understanding of time greatly influence the way in which Hitchcock uses time
as a narrative device. Consider that Hitchcock's popular reputation as a
filmmaker is one that holds him out as the "master of suspense." Suspense is a
narrative technique that depends essentially on the suspension of time.
Suspense depends upon the audience's knowledge of events playing out across
a linear understanding of time and space. It makes much of the disconnect
between reality and what we know about reality at any given time; it draws the
viewer to the edge of his seat and begs the question, "How long before 'it'
happens?" Indeed, this linear framework shows up repeatedly in Hitchcock's
work prior to *Vertigo*. *Rope* (1948) anchors the viewer in an extremely tight
time-scale as the events unfolding on the screen unfold in real time. In *Rear
Window* (1954), Hitchcock uses the sleep pattern of L.B. Jeffries (James

Stewart) as the viewer's anchor in time. As Jefferies falls asleep each day, the camera fades to black, resulting in a passage of time from day to day. As in *The Lodger*, both of these films have the effect of anchoring the viewer in a clear period of time and propelling him through the narrative. In this way, Hitchcock's work prior to *Vertigo* employs both circular and linear concepts of time as a means of creating tension and propelling his characters through the narrative.

It is precisely this classical concept of time that Einstein's theories of relativity disrupt. Indeed, Einstein's theories have changed nearly every aspect of the way Space Age scientists, philosophers, and artists study and perceive time. The special theory of relativity, published in 1905, notes "how time in one reference system moving away at a constant velocity appears to slow down when viewed from another system at rest relative to it."[12] This theory extends Einstein's original thoughts to his new general theory of relativity, published in 1916, which applies the original claim to the time change of accelerated bodies. In other words, Einstein claimed, for the first time, that a body in motion experiences time at a different rate than a body at rest. When Einstein published his relativity theories, the general public perceived time much as Hitchcock's characters directly experienced it: as an irreversible and constant flow in a single direction (into the future). Relativity disrupted this single, one-dimensional perception of time in favor of a concept of time with the ability to speed up, slow down, and even change direction entirely.

Similarly, Hitchcock disrupts classical conceptions of time in the opening sequence of *Vertigo*. According to Wood, "before the film has begun, we are made aware that the vertigo of the title is to be more than a literal fear of heights."[13] The sequence begins by zooming into an eye that belongs to a blank, mask-like face. Within the eye the camera becomes lost in a spiral of light that looks similar to modern conceptions of black holes. Indeed, the year of *Vertigo's* production saw the publication of David Finkelstein's interpretation of relativity as it relates to black holes. Finkelstein stated that black holes represent a region of space in which nothing can escape.[14] The infinite spirals of *Vertigo's* opening sequence are evocative of such a region and create apprehensions about the nature of this particular love story. From Hannay (Robert Donat) and Pamela (Madeleine Carroll) in *The 39 Steps* to Guy Haines (Farley Granger) and Anne Morton (Ruth Roman) in *Strangers On A Train* (1951), Hitchcock's characters always somehow manage to escape cycles of violence and to find love. But the spirals of *Vertigo* imply the cycles created within this film may be infinite. As a result, before we even meet Scottie, our representative Space Age man, Hitchcock suggests his experience with love will be drastically different from all those who have come before him.

Hitchcock's reworking of his classic narrative comes at a time when the general public finally responded to the dramatic claims of relativity. During the year of *Vertigo's* production, at the same time that scientists like Finkelstein explored the theoretical possibilities of relativity, the *New York Times* reported proof of Einstein's theories. The *Times* reported that a scientist may have

"obtained experimental proof" of Einstein's special theory of relativity through his observations of mesons ("shattered pieces of primary cosmic particles") as they pass through the earth's atmosphere.[15] But the scientist's claims that the mesons aged slower at speeds during atmospheric entry were criticized by skeptics with the suggestion that the decay of these particles may have simply frozen with their acceleration.[16] As exciting as these meson experiments may have been to the general public, no definitive proof for relativity existed until 1971. In that year, scientists flew two atomic clocks twice around the world on jet aircrafts. When comparing these clocks to two identical stationary clocks, researchers found that the clocks flown around the world did not agree with their stationary control clocks due to the high speeds experienced on the planes. Physicist Brian Greene states, "The difference was tiny—a few hundred billionths of a second—but it was precisely in accord with Einstein's discoveries."[17] For the first time, this atomic clock experiment provided the world with definitive proof of relativity. But this definitive proof did not arrive until the 1970s. While the world waited for proof of relativity, Maksimov's claims in Russia and the *New York Times* response contributed to an ongoing public discourse and interpretation of relativity in the 1950s. As such, speculation on the effect of relativity on the public's conception of time remained under much debate during *Vertigo's* production.

May we reasonably assume this discourse influenced Hitchcock? We know Hitchcock readily absorbed cultural conversations and incorporated them into his movies. Just as a discourse on Freud's work influenced Hitchcock from the 1920s onward, discourse on Einstein may have had similar effects on the director's stories and style. Relativity represented a change in the classical conception of time and was much talked about as Hitchcock was making *Vertigo* and tinkering with a new handling of time in his work. We might be able to see hints of such a change coming in Hitchcock's 1940 film, *Rebecca*, which, like *Vertigo*, explores how the memory of a dead woman continually haunts characters in the present. But where *Rebecca* differs from *Vertigo* is that it places a discussion of memory amidst a classic Hitchcock formula. Just as *The Lodger*, *Rope,* and *Rear Window* rely on classical understandings of time, so too does *Rebecca* represent Hitchcock's popular reputation as a filmmaker as the "master of suspense."

Given such precedents, *Vertigo* represents a major break in form—a break in which suspense is essentially removed from the equation. As suggested, where previous Hitchcock films make use of a concise time-scale, *Vertigo* insists on the ambiguity of time throughout the duration of the film. An unknown amount of time, for example, passes between Scottie's near fall during the opening rooftop chase and the following sequence in which he appears in the apartment of Midge (Barbara Bel Geddes). For some, this strange ellipsis in time calls into question the point of view of the entire film. As we have seen, for some critics, like Maxfield, the rest of the film could be a dream. Ultimately, whether this initial ellipsis in time marks the beginning of a dream is unclear; however, it establishes the ambiguous nature of time

furthered throughout the rest of the film. After the "death" of Madeleine (Kim Novak), to take another example, Scottie falls into a deep depression and checks into a mental hospital. During this time, Scottie's memory opens like a floodgate. He recalls scenes from the past in an anxiety-inducing nightmare. Suddenly, the camera fades out. When it fades back in Scottie has returned to society and is making his way through the streets of San Francisco. How much time has passed since his mental breakdown? Several weeks, months, or even years? Has time "slowed" for Scottie? Has he experienced time differently? Hitchcock, just as he did in the opening ellipsis, denies the viewer a definitive answer, further disrupting the classically tight timescale he usually employs to develop his narrative. As Scottie floats through time so, too, does the viewer float through the film searching for some sort of anchor.

In other films, the viewer often finds this anchor in the narrative structure. However, just as *Vertigo* represents a deviation in Hitchcock's use of a concise timescale, it represents a similar change in narrative structure. As Judy (also Kim Novak) handwrites a confessional letter, a series of flashbacks reveal the plot solution with nearly thirty minutes of film remaining. Nearly all of Hitchcock's films rely on a plot solution for the resolution of the film. Revelations of the killer's identity occur prematurely in both *Rear Window* and *Psycho,* two examples of films in which the resolution relies strongly on the solution of the plot. *Vertigo*, however, refuses the viewer the opportunity for resolution in plot or timescale. As a result, the film represents a drastic change from the suspense thrillers that comprise the majority of Hitchcock's career. The lack of plot resolution and suspense forces the viewer to focus on the complex characters on the screen. As citizens of 1950s San Francisco, the characters necessarily act out their 1950s concept of time. Their confusion is at least in part a kind of cognitive dissonance: They do not know how to behave in a world no longer ordered by linear conceptions of time.

As suggested, this understanding manifests itself in the film most explicitly through Scottie's behavior. Hitchcock develops this behavior around a portrait of San Francisco's past and present that begins as Scottie admires the shipyard office of Gavin Elster (Tom Helmore). Elster, who ostensibly hires Scottie to follow Madeleine due to concerns for her sanity and safety, introduces the viewers to San Francisco's past, stating, "I would have liked to live here then. Color, excitement, power, freedom." Wood notes that, "prints of San Francisco in the 'old days'" occupy the walls of Elster's office, turning the inside of the room into a collage of the past.[18] Meanwhile, outside Elster's window, massive cranes and scaffolding loom in the sky as the modern development of shipbuilding is underway. According to Wood, the ship building industry, symbolized best through a model ship in Elster's office, carries "a suggestion of escape."[19] In this sequence, Hitchcock masterfully draws a relationship between the past and a new modern escapism. Why should the Space Age man be confined to a nostalgia for "power" and "freedom" when modern developments allow him to have these things now? Certainly Elster feels this way—enough, in fact, to commit murder.

This office sequence establishes the themes of power and freedom and elegantly sets the stage for Madeleine's arrival. A model of feminine beauty, Madeleine moves through San Francisco like a wisp of smoke, graceful and hypnotic to the observer yet beyond the touch and not unlike the past she comes to represent. As Scottie follows Madeleine through the city she visits historic monuments and buildings: the Mission Dolores, the Palace of the Legion of Honor and the McKittrick Hotel. With the help of Pop Leibel (Konstantin Shayne), Scottie learns the significance of these places to the narrative of Carlotta Valdez. Pop's story of "the sad Carlotta"—a young, nineteenth century San Francisco cabaret singer from a "mission settlement somewhere south of the city"—is a story of "male pride and oppression," one in which Carlotta's unnamed but wealthy suitor had the "power" and "freedom" to use her, take their child, "throw her away," and leave her with nothing but the "great house in the Western Addition," later to become the McKittrick Hotel.[20] Madeleine's obsession with Carlotta connects her to San Francisco's past, and though Scottie initially rejects the idea that Carlotta possesses Madeleine, he comes to treat her as though such is the case. Indeed, Scottie begins to obsess over the possibility of reclaiming the past that Madeleine represents.

This growing obsession becomes evident through Scottie's rejection of Midge as a suitable lover. The ever-present, always consistent Midge serves as a reminder of the college days. She is safe, reliable and, according to Scottie, "motherly;" however, since those "good ole college days," Scottie seems to have been unable to accept Midge as a suitable lover. The first time Scottie visits Midge's apartment they discuss their short-lived engagement. Scottie is quick to point out that Midge was the one who broke off the engagement while a curious, angled close up on Midge is quick to suggest more to the story than Scottie's glib response indicates. Whatever Scottie did to drive Midge to cancel the engagement remains unclear; however, this interaction gives the viewer the indication that Scottie has been intent on rejecting a romantic relationship with Midge since the college days. Now, consumed with the idea of Madeleine, he appears intent on rejecting Midge altogether.

After leaving Pop Leibel's bookstore, Scottie ignores Midge's justified curiosity as to his interest in San Francisco history in general and in Carlotta Valdes in particular. Scottie's annoyance with Midge does indeed turn to outright rejection when he sees the parody portrait she draws of Carlotta. As Wood states, "She is trying to make him see *her*, to substitute herself for the woman who obsesses him, at the same time making the obsession ridiculous by satirizing it."[21] Scottie resents the effort, and his immediate exit from Midge's apartment marks his complete rejection of Midge and the last time in the film he is able to interact with her. This rejection also marks a turning point in which Scottie has completely given in to his obsession with Madeleine and the past she represents. In doing so, Midge, as a symbol of the present, no longer has any hold on Scottie while Madeleine becomes a veritable "portal of the past," enabling him to wander through time, and Scottie, a self-proclaimed

wanderer, jumps at the opportunity to join her. Just as the Space Age man is afforded a rational and scientific rejection of the classical flow of time, so too does Midge's portrait of Carlotta afford Scottie the opportunity to reject a stable and constant relationship with Midge in favor of an exploration of San Francisco with Madeleine and the past she represents.

Scottie is not able to enjoy his exploration of the past very long as the romance of his journey is cut short by Madeleine's apparent suicide. Having rejected Midge and lost Madeleine, Scottie is institutionalized as he falls into a hallucinatory nightmare in which the past, present, and future coexist. In this dream, Scottie imagines Carlotta standing between himself and Elster. She has come back from the past to physically exist in the present, made evident as Elster is able to interact with her as he places his hand on her arm. Scottie then stares into the darkness of Madeleine's grave. As he contemplates the dark possibility of the grave in his future he becomes lost in the spiral of eternity. He struggles to make sense of Madeleine's coexistence in the past, present, and future; each existence fleeting from one second to the next and yet infinite at the same time. Unable to assimilate to this dizzying concept of time, Scottie loses his sense of time altogether, and this disorientation is passed on to the viewer by yet another ambiguous ellipsis in time after Scottie leaves the mental hospital. By leaving the amount of time Scottie was in the hospital unknown, Hitchcock insists on the ambiguity of time's passing. As he draws the viewer's attention away from the traditional flow of time, he also readjusts it to Scottie's attempt to manipulate time, a manipulation that begins when Scottie first sees Judy.

Initially drawn to Judy because of her physical resemblance to Madeleine, Scottie sees in her the opportunity to reclaim the past. At first, Scottie's grasp of a linear timeline seems stronger as he develops a relationship with Judy. Scottie says of their time wandering the city, "These are the first happy days I've known in a year." This remark is the only designation for time that Hitchcock gives the viewer after Scottie's institutionalization and it suggests Judy is becoming an anchor in Scottie's life. But again, as Marker says, Judy is not enough for him and he continues in his "attempt to invent a double for Madeleine in another dimension of time, a zone that would belong only to him." Judy submits to the extreme pressure of Scottie's manipulation and the viewer witnesses a reincarnation of the past. Scottie seems to have achieved the impossible when, against all odds, he is able to hold Madeleine again.

The power and freedom afforded to Scottie by his manipulation of Madeleine results in the coexistence of his past lover with the present, but this miracle does not come without consequences. With more than thirty minutes remaining in the film, Hitchcock reveals the plot twist to the audience in a series of flashbacks denied to Scottie. This sequence takes the viewer back in time and reveals the true identity of Madeleine and the entirety of Elster's plan to manipulate Scottie. This exploration of the past and subsequent revelation of truth remains off limits to Scottie. For all of his efforts to recreate the past, he is unable to truly travel through time and he remains in the dark. When

Scottie eventually does learn of Elster's plot and the true nature of Madeleine's existence he is wild with anger. The power and freedom he once felt in his manipulation of Judy turns to shame and rage as he learns he is the one to have been manipulated. Rather than achieving "another dimension of time belonging only to him," Scottie loses Madeleine for the second time and is once again left alone to consider how he might recreate her all over again.

Taking into consideration just how abruptly Einstein disrupted classical conceptions of time, it is possible to imagine Scottie's disastrous attempts at manipulating time as representative of Space Age apprehensions to the theories of relativity. Still unproven, relativity in the 1950s existed solely in the mind of the observer and was subject to the ideals, biases, and whims of the observer. These variables resulted in an ever-changing evolution—a living idea. As a result, all mediums that entertained the subject of time, whether scientific journals, novels, paintings, or films, contributed to the evolution of relativity and to a 1950s understanding of it. Because *Vertigo* is a product of the early Space Age and does not leave relativity out of its discourse, it contributes to the overall perception of relativity in the 1950s. As a result, it also represents one of the first films to portray non-linear concepts of time and space to an audience.

Consider the number of science fiction films that use light speed travel as a plot device. *Star Trek* (1966), *Star Wars* (1977), and *Ender's Game* (2013) are just a few examples of films that place terms like "warp speed" and "hyper drive" into the common lexicon. Christopher Nolan's space epic, *Interstellar* (2014), relies heavily on the audience's understanding that when characters engage in light speed travel they will necessarily experience time differently than their friends and family on earth. Yet, Nolan spends little time trying to convince the audience of this fact because he is building on a basic understanding of time travel that he knows to be cultivated within the audience from prior experiences at the movies. But these prior experiences did not exist for the average 1950s viewer. Indeed, the commonplace representation of relativity in modern films stands as a triumph over skeptics of the 1950s who claimed Einstein's theories to be a "'cul-de-sac' of contemporary physics."[22] Made in the midst of this skepticism, *Vertigo* represents a drastic change in Hitchcock's handling of time and is his own interpretation of theories that were only just beginning to pervade the public consciousness. As such, it clearly places new concepts of how we experience time on the screen for the first time. In this way, *Vertigo* greatly influences how modern filmmakers present and shape ideas related to time and space to their audience.

Yet, as Heraclitus states, though we might step into the river again and again, neither the river nor we are ever the same. In the years after *Vertigo's* release, events like the atomic clock experiment in 1971 definitively proved relativity, and the conversation on time continued with more pragmatic starting points. However, in the 1950s, classical conceptions of time still held the attention of a world that was apprehensive about the implications of

Einstein's theories. Year after year, viewers return to *Vertigo* to observe Scottie, Hitchcock's representative Space Age man, as he is tossed and turned through the river of time. As Scottie experiences the vagaries of time he challenges the theories of relativity and upsets our classical conception of time, earning *Vertigo* a place among the most important commentaries on this ever-present enigma.

Notes

1. *Sans Soleil*, Blu Ray, directed by Chris Marker (1983; New York, NY: Criterion Collection 2012).
2. Quoted in Robin Wood, "Vertigo," *Hitchcock's Films Revisited* (New York: Columbia UP, 1989), 108.
3. Ibid., 110.
4. Jeremy Bernstein, *Einstein.* (New York: Viking, 1973), 188.
5. Ibid., 188.
6. "Russian Denounces Theory of Einstein." *New York Times* 14 June 1952.
7. Ibid.
8. "Origin of the Maya Calendar," *The Science News-Letter* 11.307 (1927): 131.
9. Ibid., 132.
10. Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Discoverers: A History of Man's Search to Know His World and Himself* (New York: Vintage Books, 1983), 87.
11. "Genesis 1." *King James Bible* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible, 1973).
12. Brian Greene, *The Fabric of the Cosmos: Space, Time, and the Texture of Reality* (New York: Vintage, 2005), 50.
13. Wood, *Revisited*, 110.
14. David Finkelstein, "Past-Future Asymmetry of the Gravitational Field of a Point Particle," *Physical Review* 110.4 (1958): 965-67.
15. John Hillaby, "Einstein Paradox Reported Proved," *New York Times* 5 Jan. 1957.
16. Ibid.
17. Greene, *Fabric*, 128.
18. Wood, *Revisited*, 110.
19. Ibid., 110.
20. Ibid., 111.
21. Ibid.
22. Hillaby, *Times*.

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What Genre Is This? Suspense, Dark Comedy, and Morality in Hitchcock's *Frenzy*

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Alfred Hitchcock's *Frenzy* offers a dark yet playful viewing experience arousing emotions such as fear and suspense while simultaneously arousing laughter and levity, often in the same scene or sequence. Yet the process of how Hitchcock produces these opposed emotions remains relatively unexplored. As James Naremore argues, "Hitchcock's critics have never paid close attention to his habit of mingling suspense and humor."[1] While Hitchcock's mingling of suspense and humor may take different forms in different films, his 1972 film *Frenzy* is one suitable vehicle to explore his mingling of suspense and humor. *Frenzy* often lacks strong, consistent narrative cues signaling a specific genre (either suspense or humor) and, unlike much film, *Frenzy* lacks strong, consistent cues toward identification with a protagonist or against an antagonist.

This mingling of suspense and humor has a second dimension. *Frenzy*'s comedy allows not just the viewer, but Hitchcock's background Londoners, to laugh darkly at the film's serial murders. Such dark laughter at murder by the film's characters lets *Frenzy*'s viewer know that one should laugh at murder, yet the background Londoners' cheekiness in the face of serial murder also functions as social commentary, as a place of artistic reflection on graphic violence and the enjoyment of immoral actions in film and society. Such commentary and reflection are important to *Frenzy*; the film, Hitchcock's most graphic, can be read as Hitchcock's statement on the period's growing re-definition through graphic violence of the less graphic techniques of suspense that Hitchcock helped define during the twentieth century.

Frenzy and Viewer Emotion

Cognitive theories of audience response to film often use the incongruity between a character's goals and the character's inability to achieve these goals as the starting point of audience response. That is, viewers take on the goals of

the characters they view. Additionally, cognitive theories evaluate how a narrative or genre's expected outcomes create emotional identification or reaction to the viewing experience. Despite being scientific in nature, the goals of cognitive theories of film viewership coincide with the humanities. This school of film aims to explore "the vicissitudes of life,"[2] tackling basic humanities issues such as the subject, rational and irrational, shaped by environment.[3] Yet the cognitive basis moves investigation beyond pleasure and power to include "goals, objects, characteristics, behaviors, judgments, and motivations"[4] in viewers' response to film. While traditional cultural approaches to film, such as consideration of the viewer's ego are involved,[5] the school is also interested in the effects of predictable narrative outcomes,[6] maintaining desirable conflicts,[7] and identifying with characters, to name a few.[8]

Why use cognitive research in the humanities? Research indicates that one's inability to achieve goals is a hallmark of storytelling not just in fiction and film, but of storytelling in general. Jonathan Gottschall suggests in *The Storytelling Animal* that, cross-culturally and social biologically, narratives center on the idea of "trouble," of a person's well-being coming under threat, of desires thwarted, and other goals not being met.[9] This broad theory of "trouble"—narrowed to the concept of goal incongruence by cognitive film theorists—accords with traditional theories on the mechanics of laughter, such as Henri Bergson's essay "Laughter," which argues that incongruity, i.e. unexpected or thwarted outcome, is the causal factor for comedy. Bergson proclaimed that we laugh at others or ourselves when the hoped for, the predicted, or the mechanistic operations of the world do not occur. Thus, comedy requires trouble in the form of goal incongruence. Cognitive theorists of comedy agree, yet their tools can provide new lenses for interpretation. For example, cognitive scientist Seana Coulson extends comedy into a reinterpretation of linguistic and semiotic intention, wherein comedy is a "pragmatic reanalysis"[10] that alters the original message or intention.

Not coincidentally, the genre of suspense works from incongruence as well. Aristotle's *Poetics* is the oldest example of identifying drama through a reversal of expectations or a reversal of the meaning of actions (*peripeteia*)—in short, goal incongruence, or trouble, or the ability to meet one's goals. Unlike comedy, the results of incongruence in drama, suspense, and related genres are ones of pity or sadness, not laughter.

For cognitive theorists, a basic difference exists, however, between the process of interpreting incongruence as comedy and incongruence as suspense. Suspense provokes strong emotions and less emotional distance between viewer and character because a viewer of suspense associates closely with a character's goals. That is, strong emotional identification creates suspense. Comedy and laughter rely on weak identification with, and greater emotional distance from, a character, which allows us to laugh at misfortune, not to feel pity or experience the character's pain. Thus, incongruity, existing in both suspense and comedy, suggests one baseline mechanism, an emotional

distance, for how a text like *Frenzy* can produce emotions related to suspense and comedy in a single scene.

Just exactly how does *Frenzy* mingle suspense and humor? *Frenzy* tinkers with emotional distance and allows viewers to renegotiate emotional and moral identifications due to a lack of narrative and genre cues, and a lack of identification with characters. While current cognitive theories of film frame viewers' emotional and moral identification with a film as a generally continuous, consistent experience guided by character and/or genre cues toward desired outcomes, Hitchcock's *coup de grace* in *Frenzy* may be his ability to create not continuous identification with a protagonist, but *discrete moments* in which a viewer only temporarily identifies with either the protagonist and may identify temporarily with the antagonist as well. Therein, the viewing experience becomes less predictable, and *Frenzy* offers the viewer more choice in interpretation of a character's actions as humor or suspense (or both simultaneously).

The Narrative Structure and Characters of Alfred Hitchcock's *Frenzy*

Before unpacking the various aforementioned devices that allow Hitchcock to mingle suspense and humor, I will summarize the framework of Hitchcock's 1972, penultimate film *Frenzy*. *Frenzy*'s murderer/antagonist, Robert Rusk, aka the "necktie murderer," (played by Barry Foster) is a brutal strangler and rapist. The audience graphically witnesses his depravity, a sexual assault followed by a murder, before the halfway point in the movie, and other equally graphic murders are implied. The scenes are the most graphic of Hitchcock's career—the 1972 film includes Hitchcock's only onscreen rape and murder (with nudity as well), giving the movie a darker tone at times than Hitchcock's previous films. However, from the opening scene, Hitchcock's supernumerary Londoners—barmaids, businessmen, and market workers—are quite taken with the necktie murders and incessantly make dark jokes about the murders throughout the movie as the female bodies wash up on the banks of the Thames or are sensationalized in newspapers.

One of *Frenzy*'s most interesting complications, one that provides potential comedy and suspense, is Hitchcock's providing the audience with the highly unlikable male protagonist Richard Blaney (played by Jon Finch). Blaney is often unemployed, mildly alcoholic, and prone to fits of on-screen rage toward random strangers and, to a degree, his female acquaintance and eventual necktie victim, Babs (played by Anna Massey). This unlikable protagonist is a protagonist only in that he is innocent, despite looking guilty both before and after being framed for murder by his friend, Rusk, who is the true necktie murderer. Thus, the audience is not consistently encouraged to associate with the protagonist through his moral disposition, his kindness, or likeableness, but only through the narrative structure of the "innocent-man-wrongly-accused," a genre that requires eventual vindication of the protagonist if the

narrative is to provide the audience the expected narrative conclusion and restored moral order.

Extending the challenge to audience identification, the necktie murderer, when not murdering, is a good looking, affable antagonist who offers food and money to Blaney, introduces Blaney to his mum, gives him hints on winning horses, and hides Blaney while he is on the lam after being accused of the necktie murders. Thus, the audience's standard emotional identification with protagonist and antagonist are unsettled, and the audience remains emotionally distant from both characters until Hitchcock chooses to draw us toward identification with either Blaney or Rusk.

One key scene that illustrates Hitchcock's use of incongruence to trigger both suspense and comedy simultaneously, or at least allow for the possibility of both suspense and comedy, appears after approximately three-quarters of the film's running time. In this scene, the necktie murderer Rusk has just strangled the protagonist's female acquaintance, Babs, and has tossed her body onto the back of a delivery truck loaded with sacks of potatoes. After returning to his room, Rusk notices his custom suit pin missing and realizes his victim still clutches it in her dead hand. He dashes outside and climbs aboard the potato truck just as it departs for delivery. Both suspense and comedy ensue as he wrestles with his victim's dead body, whose stiffening limbs kick him, escape him, and clutch the pin he desires as the pair speed down the highway amongst the sacks of potatoes. In a scene such as this, the audience can temporarily identify with the goals of the antagonist. The necktie murderer Rusk wrestles with the dead body for several minutes, comically cursing at his victim as if still alive and with intention. Rusk is in danger of being caught, and a viewer's sense of suspense arises from identification with the antagonist's frustrated goal. Yet as he wrestles with the dead body that kicks him repeatedly and refuses to let go of his pin, as if actively resisting Rusk, the dark comedy of a dead body kicking its killer creates both the necessary suspense and the opportunity to laugh.

The potato truck scene is not the only scene in which Hitchcock interrupts our narrative expectations or shifts our identification and allegiance either for the antagonist or against the protagonist to mingle humor and suspense. *Frenzy* is, in fact, rife with such scenes and sequences. Several are worth recounting because of the variety of techniques through which Hitchcock mingles suspense and humor.

In one earlier sequence, the protagonist Richard Blaney is on the run with co-worker and female acquaintance Babs. Blaney, after becoming a suspect in the London papers for the necktie killing of his ex-wife, decides to approach his and his wife's old friends, the Porters, an upper-class husband and wife, with a request to hide in their condo until he can prove his innocence. Johnny Porter (played by Clive Swift) enthusiastically agrees to harbor his fugitive friend, saying "I haven't done any of this cloak and dagger business since Suez." After Porter smuggles Blaney and Babs to his apartment, whistling in the hallway to appear nonchalant, Porter re-introduces Blaney to Mrs. Porter

(played by Billie Whitelaw) who plays the character of Hetty Porter as a sharp-tongued, witty, and spiteful foil to Blaney's angry energy.

Hetty Porter greets Blaney by saying, "How's Brenda? Do you still hear from her?" as she turns away from Blaney. Blaney awkwardly and solemnly responds, "Well, she's dead I'm afraid." "Yes, and you killed her," Hetty Porter smugly replies, thrusting the headline of the killing into Blaney's chest. Amidst the awkwardness, Johnny Porter responds, "Oh steady on, Hetty. He didn't do it. He's just been telling me all about it," but Porter is sheepish throughout the sequence, like a little boy to his mother. "All he wants is a place to hide out," Johnny Porter pleads, bargaining with his wife pathetically yet comically.

Here, in this tension between Mrs. Porter and Blaney, we see Blaney's unlikableness as a protagonist complicating the plot, sustaining the suspense, and creating a nice comic turn for actress Billie Whitelaw, who plays Hetty Porter as sharper and superior to her browbeaten, defeated husband who hasn't the backbone to help his old friend Blaney, despite Johnny Porter's initial insistence to help because "you don't abandon a chap in trouble." The scene is clearly funny, especially with Johnny Porter's weak demeanor and tepid war buddy rhetoric as his only form of persuasion against his wife's stern logic and commandeering persona. However, the humor gives way to suspense: Blaney may not find safe haven at the Porters. Additionally, as a later scene involving Hetty Porter and Blaney develops, Hetty's self-assured demeanor and knowledge of Blaney's poor record as a husband also challenges the likability of Blaney, eroding the viewer's empathy toward him, with the sallow Mr. Porter and his feeble attempts to debate his wife interjecting comedy into the sterner stand-off between Hetty Porter and Blaney.

Initially, the weak-willed Mr. Porter wins out over his strong-willed wife's objections, and Blaney spends the night on their couch. During the protagonist's one-night stay with these friends, Blaney's innocence becomes apparent when Babs is strangled and found dead in the back of the potato truck. Babs' strangling is in the morning paper as Blaney and the Porters awaken. Despite Babs' death, Blaney's stay at the Porters' has become his very alibi to absolve him from accusations of being the necktie murderer. Normally, one would expect that the Porters would provide the alibi and exonerate their innocent friend. However, to prolong the suspense and to deliver some dark comedy simultaneously, Hetty Porter, who clearly dislikes Blaney, refuses to acknowledge Blaney's innocence and bars her husband from visiting Scotland Yard and presenting a solid alibi for his old friend—"You'll do no such thing," she declares.

Another good browbeating of Mr. Porter by Mrs. Porter then ensues, based upon Mrs. Porter's reasoning that Scotland Yard might find the Porters an accessory and "certainly won't let them go abroad" on a planned trip to Paris later that day. In a bright comic moment, Mr. Porter forlornly yields his hopes to his overbearing wife, saying "You can see she's right, Ol' Dicko….You see, I've got to get to Paris today. I can't afford to be kept here." The couple dismiss Blaney from the safety of their condo and alibi so the

couple may depart for France instead of aiding their innocent friend, providing both suspense by returning Blaney to potential guilt and a dark comic statement where self-interest has friends choosing French getaways over vindicating a friend accused of serial murder.

Frenzy also uses not just character identification to create suspense and humor, but the pub gossip of all classes of Londoners. However, the fictional Londoners' fascination with serial murder also opens a space for the film to be read as social commentary on a very real contemporary fascination with sensationalistic murder and violence in twentieth century society. In a comic scene early in the film, two doctors have entered a pub for lunch. Blaney sits reading the paper in the background of the scene. These professional medical men discuss the necktie killings, analyzing aloud the operations of the psychopath's mind while waiting for a pint of beer. As a middle-aged bar maid, Maisy, delivers the doctors' drinks, one doctor says to Maisy, "We were just talking about the tie murderer, Maisy. You'd better watch out." Maisy responds in a whispering, excited tone, "They say he rapes them first, doesn't he?" The second doctor responds drolly, "Well. . . I suppose it's nice to know every cloud has its silver lining." The three chuckle at the darkness of the joke. Although political correctness may have eliminated jokes such as these from major motion pictures today, the doctor's response to Maisy serves a larger purpose of capturing how murder and rape are not explored as acts of only horror to many, but how the graphic details and procedures of serial violence are used as entertainment. In this case, to comically turn for entertainment's sake a violent act into a dark laugh—what Coulson would term a "pragmatic re-analysis"[11] of the original context of rape.

After the joke Maisy exits, yet the scene presses on with a new comic tactic. One doctor begins a long description of the general psychopath by saying "on the surface, they appear ordinary" as Blaney, clearly visible in the background, quietly reads his paper. The camera shot is set to illustrate that the doctor's commentary can be applied to Blaney and his own ordinary appearance as he quietly reads the paper. The doctor continues: "But emotionally, they remain as dangerous children whose conduct may revert to a primitive, subhuman level at any time." As the doctor delivers this description of the psychopath, Blaney rises from his seat and makes his way to the bar next to the doctor, where he suddenly bursts into a yelling fit and gestures violently at the barman for pinching alcohol from his drink.

As opposed to the easy one-liner with Maisy that opens the scene, the development of the scene parallels a nature documentary in which an expert provides voiceover descriptions of an animal, in this case Blaney, displaying his lower behaviors while interacting with his natural environment. Thus, the scene opens with gossip and dark humor between citizens, but ends with a more subtle comedy of voiceover and action, of dialogue serving an ironic, second purpose in which Blaney's barroom behavior comically aligns with the descriptions of psychopathy. However, it is important to remember that his outburst at the barman provides motivation for his potential to be a

psychopath, to potentially be the necktie killer, during this early scene in the film. Thus, comedy and suspense both arise from the full development of the scene.

The film contains many moments similar to these, including the opening scene, which sets the film's tone by introducing the simultaneous suspense and dark humor of *Frenzy*. The film opens with a panoramic sweep of The Thames and draws down to a crowd of several hundred citizens attending a ribbon-cutting ceremony on the Queen's Walk. The grand marshall, Sir George, is delivering a speech. As he speaks, he elegantly quotes Wordsworth's "Prelude" and announces a project to clean the River Thames. The good and gentle crowd of British citizens listens stoically and nod appropriately. "Ladies and gentlemen, all the water above this point shall soon be clear. . . . Clear of the waste products of our society with which for so long we have poisoned our rivers and canals," Sir George announces just as a pollutant of sorts—a nude female body with a tie around its neck—washes up on the riverbank alongside the ceremony.

The crowd quickly abandons Sir George and surges to the Thames retaining wall. The crowd gawks, gossips, and revels in the necktie murderer's latest work. One woman declares of the necktie murderer, "He's a regular Jack the Ripper." A man behind her, presumably her husband, replies, "Not on your life. He used to carve them up. Sent a bird's kidney to Scotland Yard once. Wrapped in a bit of violet writing paper." A second woman interrupts him, "That'll do, Herb, I'm quite sure the lady doesn't want to hear any more about it." Yet all three are clearly interested and unbothered by both the riverside scene unfolding as Herb shares more Jack the Ripper details. Such gossip and lore on the sensationalistic details of violent murder is shared kindly and comically among strangers throughout the film, in this case with the tragedy of a young dead woman just several yards away.

From this general riverside bedlam in the opening scene arises one darkly comic comment that parses excellently any claims that not all parts of society partake in this sensationalism and mild bloodthirst: "I say, that's not my club tie, is it?" a surprised Sir George asks as the opening scene cuts from a final camera shot of a nude, strangled woman bobbing in the Thames to protagonist Richard Blaney tying his tie for work.

This opening riverside scene sets the tone for all of *Frenzy* as comedy, as suspense, and as social commentary on a love of graphic violence by Hitchcock's characters and film viewers alike. We laugh at the crowd's abandoning of Sir George and any claims of a preference for refined speech and deed over the spectacle of a dead body and gossip. The crowd's proclivity toward the unseemly clearly undercuts their attention for the tasteful and proper. Sir George's plea to clean the rivers of "the waste products of society" seems to apply not to industrial pollutants, but to both psychopathic murder and the tasteless throngs that rush to the riverside to catch a glimpse of a nude strangled woman. Simultaneously, the suspense of the film is set. The opening

scene provides a dead body with a camera cut to Blaney tying his tie, playful projecting the identify of tie murderer onto Blaney.

The Morals of *Frenzy:* Social Commentary on Violence in Film

The number of scenes in *Frenzy* that can be read as both suspense and humor can place viewers in an awkward moral position in which they must choose to laugh at murder and depravity. Joseph Carroll argues that horror and humor as individual genres are "rhetorics of . . . double duty. For not only do they brand their objects as morally depraved, but they also figure their victims as subhuman."[12] Yet Hitchcock is able to blend these two genres to create suspense, laughter, and a restored moral order by the end of the film. Perhaps this is because of humor's doubleness. After all, comedy is an art form of its own in which "much humour depends on following norms, not violating them,"[13] even if "one cannot define the formal object of humor in them."[14] If, as Gaut suggests, comedy's rhetorical process and operations are hard to define, the moral schema arising from comedy is equally hard to define. Murray Smith discusses morality as a factor in one's viewing experience, stating that:

> [t]he elicitations of sympathy and antipathy toward characters is provided by the moral structure of the film. Most basically, the moral structure of a film works in terms of whether characters are presented as "good" or "bad," but there are more subtle possibilities—a film may withhold obvious judgment, allowing only tentative patterns of allegiance, or ironically undercut judgments it has set up.[15]

Reframing Smith's insights through *Frenzy*, one sees that an inability to laugh at the necktie murderer would allow the audience to import only a single "everyday" moral schema that provides only condemnation of murder. If only one moral schema is cued, a viewer could not move beyond murder as bad. Thus, the audience must have the ability to laugh at murder, not just condemn murder, if *Frenzy* is to have that certain Hitchcockian mingling of suspense and humor, if it is to "undercut" and "withhold obvious judgment" of murder and violence. Thus, the ability to read scenes as both comic and suspenseful depends upon a second moral schema, the first immediate and the second with the distance of irony and comedy. Thus, as Carroll argues, horror and humor individually may have similar moral baggage, but the distance of the comedy may undercut the immediacy of suspense when they are layered atop or interlaced with each other.

With its comic, distant undercutting of its own potential moral freight, *Frenzy* can be seen as two things: first, Hitchcock's social commentary on changes in the genre of suspense and, relatedly, society's amusement over violence and murder in general. The film as commentary on modern film

viewer's expectations of violence parallels the film's crude send-ups of Hitchcock's bloodthirsty Londoners, who are titillated by the necktie murderer and laugh and joke at the killings. Thus, in *Frenzy,* comic distance makes not just Hitchcock's callous Londoners the object of reflection, but the film viewer the object of reflection as well—specifically the viewers' own intrigue with rape, murder, and crime, be it in a film such as *Frenzy* or in daily life such as the tabloids and press that Hitchcock's Londoners read.

This reading of *Frenzy*, in which Hitchcock mingles suspense and comedy for social commentary, as an invitation to reflect on a modern intrigue with graphic violence and murder, is supported by the film's production history. Raymond Foery's *Frenzy: The Last Great Masterpiece* details how, previous to *Frenzy*, Hitchcock had experienced not only three successive box office failures, but had received reviews such as that of *Marnie*'s (1964) review in the *L.A. Times*, which called the film "pathetically old-fashioned."[16] And perhaps Hitchcock did seem old fashioned. By the 1960s, in both film and society, graphic violence was more common than in Hitchcock's early and middle career. Although Hitchcock seems to have made no direct claims about *Frenzy*'s potential social commentary, *Frenzy*'s early dialogue has Londoners gleefully discussing a pair of murderers that captured London's imagination— the late Victorian period's Jack the Ripper and the Christie murders, which took place in *Frenzy*'s viewers' living memory—the 1950s. Clearly, Hitchcock is outlining society's attraction to "murder as entertainment" as a motif of the film.

Hitchcock's decision to include on-screen rape and murder for the first time in his career suggests that he did not wish to be perceived as "pathetically old-fashioned." However, Hitchcock used the hybrid of suspense and dark comedy to complicate our viewing experience with the graphic scenes that were becoming the norm in film, opening a space for commentary on this self-same graphic violence in cinema. In a press interview with *Newsweek*, Hitchcock said of *Frenzy*'s rape-murder scene that "you need a frank approach to that rape scene. . . . You can't get the audience to participate in a scene unless you bring them very close to the action."[17] I read Hitchcock's desire for frankness as a lack of moral interference in the presentation of the rape-murder, a style typical of Hitchcock films. However, with *Frenzy*'s graphic leanings, Hitchcock's desire for frankness and the audience's participation in the spectacle of killing implies some moral judgment of the audience's participation and enjoyment of the spectacle of violence; such judgment is triggered not during the audience's "participation" in the rape-murder scene, but later, when we laugh at or are intrigued by violent murder just as with the film's many Londoners.

Despite Hitchcock's overall desire for a light touch in much of *Frenzy*,[18] the film can clearly be interpreted as commentary on graphic violence in film for several other reasons. For instance, the rape-murder scene's point-of-view switches between victim and murderer, making the viewer take on the point-of-view of the murderer, but also the victim. Such identity shifting through

cinematic point-of-view allows us to identify with both the role of the killer and the victim, as opposed to seeking identification with only one character. In doing so, Hitchcock turns us into the killer, and we enjoy the experience.

Additionally, Hitchcock's adaptation of the film from a novel eliminated details of the novel, such as the killer placing bits of potato in his victims' vaginas,[19] a detail that is less capable of sustaining a viewer's identification with the necktie killer. Thus, Hitchcock expunged bizarre forms of psychopathy from the novel that would challenge a viewer's identification, therein creating a murderer that can create a higher degree of identification with the viewer at chosen moments in the film.

Placing *Frenzy* in Hitchcock's Moral Universe

The previous section detailed *Frenzy* as social commentary on the spectatorship of graphic violence and placed *Frenzy* in the realm of moral statement. Moral reflection in Hitchcock's penultimate film, *Frenzy*, continues a trend of moral playfulness and indeterminacy in Hitchcock's films. Gary McCarron argues that:

> justice, retribution, and punishment are unimportant motifs in Hitchcock's films. [Critics should] resist the temptation to simply bifurcate Hitchcock's moral world into good and evil, or guilty and innocent to highlight an overlooked element of moral thinking represented in his work. . . . Hitchcock's films frequently present moral agency in the context of concepts like indeterminacy, undecidability, and anti-foundationalism.[20]

Richard Allen has noted a similar indeterminant morality, specifically in Hitchcock's male characters. Allen notes that even in Hitchcock's romantic male protagonists, "duplicitous masculinity is embodied in Hitchcock's dandies and rogues whose ambivalent allure lies in the way that their identity is constituted by their potentially deceptive, surface appearance."[21]

This duplicitous masculinity is certainly on display in *Frenzy*, in which the necktie killer is a well-liked, gregarious neighborhood personality and in which Blaney the innocent-man-wrongly-accused is a rage-filled alcoholic. Gaut suggests this duplicitous masculinity is true not only in Hitchcock's characters, but in Hitchcock's choice of actors. Hitchcock was "a master of using actors with whom the audience can sympathize despite their role as an unsympathetic character," as with the choice to cast Jimmy Stewart as the male lead in *Vertigo*.[22] While Gaut references Hitchcock's use of real actors' reputations to upset audience identification, *Frenzy* has Hitchcock providing a shadowy moral world and masculinities by providing an unlikable protagonist and a sometimes affable antagonist, with each character resisting easy moral schemas. In *Frenzy*, improbable character identifications, not actors' reputations, upset the viewer's too-easy response to characters and their actions.

In the following passage, Greg Smith discusses conflicting moods based upon narrative expectation and character identification in a much simpler suspense-comedy hybrid with lesser moral implications than *Frenzy*. He suggests of the beginning of a simple hybrid, *Ghostbusters*, that:

> [t]he primary mood is comic, predisposing us to laugh, but this particular film will introduce strongly marked horror cues into the mix. If *Ghostbusters* used a long sequence of horror genre cues, the comic mood would gradually be extinguished, and a more fearful mood might take over. [If the film] keeps its horror cues fairly brief, the comic mood is not overturned.[23]

In a simple hybrid of suspense and comedy such as *Ghostbusters*, cues either sustain or overturn recognition of a genre. As I've argued, *Frenzy* easily breaks down, elides completely, or offers competing genre-based mood cues. *Ghostbusters* is, after all, meant to be a blockbuster comedy, and contains little or no dark comedy of the style or quality of *Frenzy*. *Ghostbusters* is certainly not a social commentary, nor is *Ghostbusters* even remotely a character-based exploration of psychopathy, and therein *Ghostbusters* should contain more obvious versions of Smith's mood cues and present a consistent, determinant moral order, whereas Hitchcock's preference for a less predictable film viewing experience and an indeterminate moral order relies on the intertwining of comedy and suspense cues that I've argued for thus far.

To press this issue further, Greg Smith sees in Hitchcock's *Psycho* uses of identification with the horrible to problematize morality. Smith argues that in Hitchcock's *Psycho*, we identify with the visiting Marion Crane for the beginning of the movie, but upon Marion's murder by Norman Bates, our identification shifts from Marion to Norman. Smith suggests that Norman Bates is "a seemingly perverse choice for our empathy. . . . The viewer is encouraged to identify with Norman as he carefully cleans the bloody bathroom. . . . Soon the film presents more morally acceptable figures for our identification."[24] The identification with Norman Bates in *Psycho* could be seen as a parallel to identification with the necktie murderer in *Frenzy*. However, *Psycho*'s narrative involves the long-term, continuous identification with an acceptable protagonist (Marion), then an unacceptable protagonist (Bates), also for a continuous span of the movie, then continuous identification with characters of acceptable morals appearing later in the film.

Frenzy's ambiguous identification with the protagonist and antagonist can cue at least two moral systems at any time. If *Psycho* was an experiment in having an audience temporarily identify with a murderer, it suggests a longer time frame for identification with the immoral and still provides just one moral schema at a time, whereas *Frenzy* offers two available moral schemas at any time, suspense and humor, so audiences may judge or withhold judgment and simply laugh. An audience may switch identifications with Blaney the

protagonist and even Rusk the necktie murderer at points throughout much of the film, a frame of identification not allowed by *Psycho*'s structure.

Finishing *Frenzy*

Frenzy can contribute new understandings of how incongruence between a character's goals and achievements can be read as comedy and/or suspense; such incongruence can create opposed emotions in a viewer. As I have argued, *Frenzy* offers discrete, not continuous, identification with its protagonist and its antagonist, as well as discrete, not continuous, genre cues to guide viewer expectations. Because most narrative and character identification has been theorized as continuous in nature, the discrete identification that *Frenzy* offers has been under-theorized and is worth exploring in readings of other film or fiction.

Theoretically speaking, this lack of genre and identification cueing seems to be a mark of subtle social commentary, at least in *Frenzy*, because of the film's ability to make the viewers aware that they are enjoying murder just as much as Hitchcock's wry yet callous Londoners. Shifting to Hitchcock as auteur, it's only by providing the most graphic scenes of his film career that he could make us think about a society that changed during his lifetime, specifically from one that demanded suspense with off-screen violence to one that was demanding on-screen graphic violence more often by *Frenzy*'s release in 1972.

Although Hitchcock gave *Frenzy*'s viewers an eyeful of the violence common to the age, he did so knowingly, creating, through suspense and humor, multiple emotions meant not to desensitize the viewer, but to sensitize the viewer. This may be Hitchcock's invitation to reflect on modern society's tolerance of and enjoyment of murder and psychopathy. For Hitchcock, instigating reflection on society's growing love of on-screen violence rekindled his dry, wry treatment of murder contained in his early career. But dark comedy as social commentary in *Frenzy* would also allow the spectatorship of graphic violence to be deadly serious, to be sublime social commentary, and to be more than simply a laughing matter.

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Hitchcock's Women: Reconsidering Blondes and Brunettes

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Film critics have devoted a significant amount of time and energy to excavating the figure of the "Hitchcock Blonde." This archetype is defined as an icy, reserved, attractive and extremely (often artificially) blonde woman, and illustrated most fully by the characters Madeleine in *Vertigo* (1958), Eve in *North-by-Northwest* (1959), and Melanie in *The Birds* (1963). The Hitchcock Blonde is known for her smoldering sexuality, a quality fully revealed only in private. She is also supremely feminine, well-dressed, impeccably groomed, and always in full makeup. The figure of the Hitchcock Blonde is often invoked by critics as an example of Hitchcock's sexism, or at the very least his desire to objectify women in his films.[1] The Hitchcock Blonde is also the female figure to whom the most critical attention has been turned in Hitchcock studies. But the icy Hitchcock Blonde is a figure present almost exclusively in his American films of the late 1950s and 1960s, and, therefore, not a useful cipher for his attitudes toward women in general. Though blonde actresses appear throughout Hitchcock's oeuvre, the most interesting and complex characters are often brunettes.

Many of Hitchcock's screenplays contain copious notes on costume for his actresses. Edith Head, costumer for many of his American-made films, noted that Hitchcock included costuming directions down to silhouette, garment, and color choices.[2] To suggest that the hair color of his female characters is simply the result of happenstance—or a natural occurrence—ignores Hitchcock's extraordinary attention to detail in his films, particularly his focus on shadow and light, and the extensive color symbolism of his American films. His casting choices were clearly made with the same precision.

The casting of actresses in lead roles also concerned Hitchcock in terms of audience identification. Hitchcock knew from very early on that a significant portion of his film audience consisted of women. He understood that in order to be successful, he needed sympathetic female characters to whom male

viewers might be attracted, and, perhaps more importantly, with whom female viewers could identify, particularly since his films move between traditional film genres, blurring the distinctions between mystery, thriller, spy film, and romance. While the Hitchcock Blondes of the 1950s and 1960s represent a certain post-war version of femininity that was remarkable in its artifice and tenuous performativity, the female characters—blonde and otherwise—who people his earlier films often provide much less rigid examples of womanhood. It is challenging to make sweeping generalizations about the female characters from across Hitchcock's filmography due to the large variety of characters that people his films; however, in his later films, one common thread is that many of the Hitchcock Blondes have information withheld from them, and are simultaneously punished for the secrets they hide beneath their impeccable facades. The brunettes, on the other hand, keep and communicate important knowledge, for which they are frequently rewarded rather than punished.

In this article I argue for a re-imagining of Hitchcock's leading female characters, with an emphasis on a new archetype, the "Clever Brunette." Sometimes mousy-brown in her hair color, sometimes nearly raven-haired, the Clever Brunette is observant, smart, tenacious, and often willing to sacrifice her traditional feminine qualities in order to prevent others from coming to harm. The Clever Brunettes I examine all emerge from the middle portion of Hitchcock's film career, from films that were shot in black and white. These leading brunette characters include Iris Henderson from *The Lady Vanishes* (1938), the second Mrs. de Winter from *Rebecca* (1940), and Charlotte "Charlie" Newton from *Shadow of a Doubt* (1943). I also briefly discuss blondes from two of Hitchcock's early films, other brunettes in secondary roles who possess important knowledge, and the construction of femininity through costume, make-up, and fashion in *Rear Window* and *Vertigo*. By focusing on a wide variety of women from Hitchcock's British and American filmography, I hope to complicate the figure of the Hitchcock Blonde and direct critical attention toward the Clever Brunette.

Early Hitchcock Blondes: Innocence and Femininity

In *The Women Who Knew Too Much*, Tania Modleski argues for more nuanced readings of Hitchcock's films in response to a body of feminist criticism that accuses Hitchcock of sadistic treatment of women. She rejects the "monolithic" picture of "male cinema" presented by Laura Mulvey because it offers only a position of "paralyzing nihilism."[3] Modleski observes that Hitchcock's films "reveal the difficulties inherent" in the processes of male and female socialization and "implicate the spectator in these difficulties as well."[4] She states her position as follows:

> what I want to argue is *neither* that Hitchcock is utterly
> misogynistic *nor* that he is largely sympathetic to women and

their plight in patriarchy, but that his work is characterized by
a thoroughgoing ambivalence about femininity.[5]

While I agree with Modleski's observation regarding Hitchcock's ambivalence about femininity, I counter with the argument that his depictions of women often present realistic social consequences and force viewers, both male and female, to experience the terror and anger of his female protagonists. Hitchcock's films do not present a utopian view of the world as it could be; rather they reveal the world as it is.

Hitchcock's early British films of the 1920s and 1930s and his American films of the late 1950s and 1960s both feature a number of blonde female protagonists and/or romantic leads. This similarity appears to lead easily to the conclusion that Hitchcock preferred blondes, or that there was a certain kind of blonde woman who typified femininity for him. Although Hitchcock frequently spoke about the blonde actresses he chose for later films, including Grace Kelly, Kim Novak, Eva Marie Saint and Tippi Hedren, the roles played by these women differ significantly from the blondes who appeared in his earlier films.

The female protagonists in *The Lodger* (1926) and *Blackmail* (1929), two of Hitchcock's earliest films, bear a remarkable resemblance to one another. They are blonde, petite, and working-class. They both exude a kind of innocent sexuality, and they are both placed in dangerous situations to which they must respond and act. For both women, the arts and show business play an important role, as do costumes and fashion. These early films may mark the beginning of Hitchcock's fascination with the Blonde, but later blonde characters differ in two important ways. First, the "Hitchcock Blonde" of *Rear Window*, *Vertigo*, *North-by-Northwest,* and *The Birds* is a wealthy woman, often spoiled by her moneyed upbringing, as compared to the working-class girls of the earlier films. Second, later blondes are sophisticated, often sexually, and not afraid to use sex—or the possibility of sex—to get what they want.

In *The Lodger*, the female protagonist, "Daisy," is the daughter of a working-class couple who own a boarding house. She works as both a performer and a model. Like many of the performers in the show "To-Night Golden Curls," Daisy is a blonde. Since "the Avenger," the murderer roaming the streets of London, seems to prefer blondes, Daisy is marked as both vulnerable and a possible victim from the very beginning of the film.

The dangerous romance that develops between Daisy and "the Lodger" does so seemingly as the result of his obsession with her blondness. At several points in the film, the Lodger examines or actually caresses Daisy's hair, exclaiming over her golden curls. In his essay "*The Lodger* and the Origins of Hitchcock's Aesthetic," Richard Allen describes the scene where Daisy and the Lodger play chess together:

> We return to the couple, [and] the Lodger is stoking a raging
> fire with his poker. He puts the poker down and impulsively

reaches to caress Daisy's hair. "Beautiful Golden Hair" he says, and they look into each other's eyes before they nervously pull back and the camera withdraws to a less intimate distance.[6]

The Lodger's attraction and anxiety over Daisy's hair replays again when they first kiss and at the conclusion of the film.

In *Blackmail*, the female protagonist, "Alice," is a shopkeeper's daughter and, as Tania Modleski notes, "one of the first in a long line of tormented blond heroines that Hitchcock features throughout his career."[7] But unlike the "tormented blonde heroines" of *The Birds* or *Vertigo*, Alice's predicament stems from naïveté rather than from overt risk-taking or sexual sophistication. In the course of the narrative, Alice is caught between two difficult positions. First, she accompanies a man—who is not her boyfriend or husband—into his apartment, where he tries to rape her. In self-defense, she kills him with the kitchen knife he has left next to his bed. If she confesses to the crime and pleads self-defense, Alice must admit to a lapse in morality as well as murder.

Alice's guilt is palpable throughout the film, for example when she wanders the streets of London in a daze after committing the murder, and again during the chase scene, when the perspective repeatedly shifts to close-ups on a remorseful and agitated Alice. Modleski points to this theme of women's guilt—often sexual—as a primary preoccupation of Hitchcock. But she stresses that:

> while on the surface *Blackmail* seems to offer an exemplary instance of Hitchcock's misogyny, his need to convict and punish women for their sexuality, the film, like so many of his others, actually allows for a critique of the structure it exploits, and for a sympathetic view of the heroine trapped within that structure.[8]

Later, Modleski suggests that Hitchcock's "obsession" with tormented women "often takes the form of a particularly lucid exposé of the predicaments and contradictions of women's experience under patriarchy."[9] His manipulation of audiences—male and female—through both suspense and camera work often results in the audience identifying with the tormented heroine: not simply observing her torment but experiencing it.

In addition to the reoccurring character of the innocent blonde, *The Lodger* and *Blackmail* also introduce the trope of the "room at the top of the stairs," which, according to Modleski, is associated "with sexuality and with danger and violence to a woman" (18). The Lodger's room is placed directly at the top of the stairs leading from the front door, and Daisy experiences a strange— and possibly dangerous—altercation with the Lodger here. In *Blackmail*, Alice is convinced to follow Crewe up to his studio at the top of a flight of stairs, and it is here that he tries to rape her. Both films rely on musical cues to

enforce the importance of the stairs as a space of transition and often danger. The camera work also places special importance on the stairs with dramatic single-angle shots and the manipulation of perspective.

Ultimately, Hitchcock's blonde heroines in *The Lodger* and *Blackmail* transcend the danger and violence to which they are exposed. Though the female characters are tormented in the course of the narrative, the films return again and again to appearances and artifice. As Allen notes when describing the moral ambiguity of *The Lodger*:

> Hitchcock is not interested in exploring motivation. Depth in Hitchcock's film is a matter of surface, as it were. Ambiguity resides not in the motivations of character but in visual narration, in the legibility of appearances. The pleasures of narrative suspense are not subservient to moral insight […] but become an end in themselves.[10]

The legibility of appearances continued to be a primary fascination for Hitchcock throughout his directorial career, particularly in mysterious female characters who are not who they say they are. Daisy and Alice are not interested in subterfuge. In contrast, Madeleine/Judy from *Vertigo* and Eve from *North-by-Northwest* engage in complex scenarios of false identity and manipulation, for which they are punished by the men in their lives.

Introducing the Clever Brunette

Three of Hitchcock's films from the 1930s and 1940s provide striking examples of the *bildungsroman(a)*[11]—a woman's coming of age story: *The Lady Vanishes*, *Rebecca*, and *Shadow of a Doubt*. All three films feature a brunette in the leading female role. The films differ considerably, in both their settings and genre designations, but all show the complex alliances and choices available as a girl moves into adulthood. An important aspect of the traditional *bildungsroman* is the struggle between the needs and desires of the individual and the existing social order.[12] This theme appears throughout Hitchcock's oeuvre; in fact, almost all of his films with female lead characters feature a plot line where the woman moves from innocence to experience in the course of the film.

The first example, *The Lady Vanishes* (1938), is prefigured by Hitchcock's 1935 "spy film" *The 39 Steps*. Compared to his early silent and talkie films made in Britain, the presence of blondes and representations of women in general become more complex in *The 39 Steps* and *The Lady Vanishes*. In these two films, Hitchcock shows women who have transcended the roles of ingénue, temptress, and mother. Both films utilize "lady spy" characters (Arabella and Miss Froy), and in *The Lady Vanishes* Hitchcock introduces Iris Henderson, the amateur "girl spy" whose detective work leads to a sexual or emotional transformation—a "coming of age."

The Lady Vanishes opens on Iris's final days as a bachelorette in the fictional eastern European country of Bandrika. She has decided to leave the homosocial world of her female friends (both of whom happen to be blonde) and return to London to marry her fiancé. In the course of the train ride back to England, Iris befriends an elderly lady named Miss Froy who subsequently disappears. Iris enlists the help of Gilbert, a dashing young music scholar who had kept her awake the previous evening with a performance of traditional Bandrikan song and dance in his hotel room. Iris initially dislikes Gilbert, but he is one of the few people on the train who believes her when she insists that Miss Froy isn't a figment of her imagination.

As Iris unravels the mystery of Miss Froy, she discovers a complex political plot revolving around espionage and government secrets. At every turn, the male characters—except, for the most part, Gilbert—tell Iris she is imagining things, when in fact she is simply the only person observant enough to begin to unravel the mystery. In *The Lady Vanishes*, the supporting characters do not want to believe Iris because her insights would call into question their political and personal alliances. In this way, the film becomes a spy mystery, as well as a romance, and a political drama. By the final scene Iris has become wiser about love, her government, and her position as a woman in the world. As a result of her transformation on the train, she marries for love, rather than out of social obligation, and plans to take up a life of further adventure with Gilbert. Though Iris often refuses to obey the rules, and her refusal to bow to male authority on the train marks her as an unusual woman, marriage is one form of authority she does not wish to avoid. While this ending is not the stuff of feminist utopia (which I imagine might have required Iris to stay with her friends in Bandrika), it does allow Iris significant agency in her choices.

Charlie, the teenage female lead in *Shadow of a Doubt,* follows in the steps of her brunette predecessor Iris. Charlie, like Iris, is working through a mystery, as well as forging her sexual identity as a woman. Her relationship to Uncle Charlie, her namesake, is dual, a mirror image (as elucidated first by Truffaut and later by Mladen Dolar) in the filmed scenes. Charlie is also clearly attracted to her uncle, and the events depicted in the film show a kind of Freudian undoing of this attraction. Uncle Charlie's use of his niece's bed adds an extra element of awkwardness to the dynamic of attraction and disgust. While at first her Uncle Charlie represents an escape from the life that she knows, Charlie soon comes to realize that her uncle's exoticism hides a dark secret.

Though Tania Modleski does not take up *Shadow of a Doubt* at length in *The Women Who Knew Too Much*, she does single out young Charlie as a typical Hitchcock heroine, for her knowingness, and for her complicated relationship to her mother. Modleski suggests Charlie is typical because "her close relationship to her mother arouses in her a longing for a different kind of life than the one her father offers them and because she seems to possess special incriminating knowledge about men."[13] Her journey through the course of the

film is one that requires questioning the adult life that has been set out for her, as well as unraveling her uncle's mystery. In the final scenes of the film, the two Charlies must either kill or be killed in order to continue: because of the knowledge they possess, they cannot both remain living. Throughout the film, young Charlie—like Iris before her—is a character imbued with a great deal of agency. She has privileged knowledge about her uncle, and she acts based on this information when she urges her uncle to leave.

In the book *Hitchcock Motifs*, Michael Walker examines the motif of the Blonde, the Brunette, and their relationship to one another in Hitchcock films. While acknowledging the work of Molly Haskell and Tania Modleski, Walker notes that most critical attention focuses on Hitchcock's icy, sophisticated blondes, and few critics examine the brunettes. Walker argues that Hitchcock's first concern was to have "heroines who through their characterization appeal strongly to women"[14] and that intentional use of hair color was one way to control this element of appeal. Using Iris and Charlie, as well as the second Mrs. De Winter in *Rebecca*—whom he categorizes as a "mousey brown" brunette—as his examples, Walker also suggests "an ideological coding: for the brunettes, the blacker the hair, the stronger the personality."[15] On the question of blonde vs. brunette, Walker surmises, "[o]ne feels that someone like Charlie in *Shadow of a Doubt* needs to be brunette; blondeness would make her a little too exotic for the role of a small-town girl."[16]

Like Hitchcock's other films told from the perspective of young female protagonists, *Shadow of a Doubt* ends on an ambivalent note. Sarah Berry, in "She's Too Everything," locates this ambivalence in the question of whether a woman must lose her sense of self when she marries. Though Charlie has escaped the murderous clutches of her uncle, her romance with the detective is not an unqualified good. Toward the end of the film, Charlie's mother describes losing touch with her brother after she married: "you sort of forget you're you. You're your husband's wife." Berry describes the way Hitchcock frames Charlie's reaction to her mother's words:

> The lingering close-up on Charlie's face indicates the "shadow of a doubt" cast over the institution of marriage not only by her mother's regretful comments, but also by her horror at the wife-murders of which she suspects her uncle.[17]

For Charlie, as for Iris, the "happy ending" of marriage and family is one of ambivalence.

In addition to featuring similar "Clever Brunette" heroines, *The Lady Vanishes* and *Shadow of a Doubt* also share another unique element. In both films music—or rather a single melody—serves as a form of privileged knowledge. Though Iris is barred from being the keeper of that (potentially deadly) knowledge in *The Lady Vanishes,* it is Charlie's own intelligence that leads her to identify the "Merry Widow" waltz as the key to her Uncle's secret in *Shadow of a Doubt*.

The third coming-of-age story from this trio of films is Hitchcock's gothic adaptation of Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca* (1940), which includes several complex female characters. Many of Hitchcock's early British films feature female characters that defy or trouble traditional notions of feminine sexuality. These include characters like Daisy and Alice in *The Lodger* and *Blackmail*, who are not afraid to acknowledge their desire even if it leads to disastrous consequences, as in the case of *Blackmail*. Films such as *The 39 Steps* and *The Lady Vanishes* offer female spy characters that represent a turning away from traditional notions of femininity and the female roles of wife and mother.

In *Rebecca*, Hitchcock presents a number of even more unusual women, both seen and unseen. Truffaut and McGillian note that Hitchcock played with images of female sexuality from the very beginning of his career. Both authors make a point to include Hitchcock's anecdote about his 1924 trip to Germany where a trip to a nightclub turned into a rather public display of lovemaking in the bedroom of two women. McGilligan notes:

> Sapphic overtones can be detected, right from the first film Hitchcock directed, *The Pleasure Garden*, which, as Truffaut noted, features a scene of two girlfriends "who really suggest a couple, the one dressed in pajamas, the other wearing a nightgown." (Yes, Hitchcock told Truffaut, that scene was "inspired" by the Berlin incident.) The lesbian feeling between Rebecca and Mrs. Danvers was the boldest conceit of his first Hollywood foray—and trousered ladies turn up regularly in other Hitchcock films.[18]

The element of suspense in *Rebecca* hinges on the slow revelation of the incidents surrounding the death of Rebecca de Winter. Though at the beginning it seems that her husband Maxim is grieving the loss of his beautiful young wife, this is not the case. Ultimately, viewers discover that Maxim is distraught over her sexual infidelities and his part in her death, and cannot bear to reveal the truth to his new, innocent wife.

The women in *Rebecca* all fail to reproduce traditional feminine desire. In the opening scenes of the film, the future second Mrs. de Winter (whose first name is never revealed) is serving as a paid companion ("friend of the bosom") to an older woman. After a whirlwind romance full of brooding looks and miscommunication, Maxim de Winter proposes marriage. His future wife retorts with the strangely impenetrable "I'm not the kind of person men marry."[19] Scant attention is paid to this remark at the time—we know she is an orphan, without financial security—though viewers soon learn that Maxim must have a strange affection for queer women.

By the end of the film, Maxim reveals that his previous wife was not only beautiful and accomplished, she was also subject to "sex perversions." The dialogue in the film as it was released makes Rebecca's relationship with her cousin, Favell, relatively visible—though not fully explicit—as well as her

pregnancy with a child that is not Maxim's. The other "perversions," however, are not addressed. The transformation of "the second Mrs. de Winter" occurs as the result of this revelation of Rebecca's true nature. Though he tries to protect her, and maintain the youthful innocence that he loves about her, Maxim cannot protect his new wife forever. In fact, his revelation comes just minutes after his wife tries to kill herself over what she perceives as his lingering love for Rebecca, and her failure as a wife. After he tells the full story of Rebecca's death, Maxim looks at his wife and laments,

> it's gone forever, that funny, young, lost look I loved. It won't
> ever come back. I killed that when I told you about Rebecca.
> It's gone… in a few hours… You've grown so much older.[20]

But the second Mrs. de Winter cannot stay a child forever. With the knowledge she acquires as the result of Maxim's revelation, the inept child-wife begins to transform into a highly competent woman. In the trial to acquit Maxim of Rebecca's murder, his wife's well-timed faint saves him from incriminating himself.

Though the second Mrs. de Winter may not be "the kind of person men marry," it is Mrs. Danvers, Rebecca's personal maid, who presents the most overt resistance to normative female sexuality. In her essay "Adaptation, Censorship, and Audiences of Questionable Type," Rhona Berenstein quotes from the correspondence between Joseph Breen, head of the Production Code Administration (PCA), and David O. Selznick, the film's producer, about the code violations of the film. Berenstein is particularly interested in Breen's focus on "sex perversion" and his concern over the unseen Rebecca's sexuality. The issue of incest is handled separately, and Berenstein argues for an intentional imprecision in Breen's language:

> there exists a compelling suggestion in Breen's
> correspondence that the primary form of perversion exhibited
> by Rebecca is decidedly nonheterosexual… [In his
> correspondence, Breen] implies but refuses to articulate the
> film's lesbian desires.[21]

In addition to his concern over Rebecca's "perversion," Breen wrote at length about the scenes in the film set in Rebecca's bedroom between the second Mrs. de Winter and Mrs. Danvers. A later letter from Breen to Selznick reads:

> it will be essential that there be no suggestion whatever of a
> perverted relationship between Mrs. Danvers and Rebecca. If
> any possible hint of this creeps into this scene, we will of
> course not be able to approve the picture. Specifically, we
> have in mind Mrs. Danvers' description of Rebecca's physical
> attributes, her handling of the various garments, particularly

the night gown [in the first bedroom scene with Maxim's new bride].[22]

Viewers of the film in its final version will easily recognize the anxiety and discomfort in the scene in question, as well as Mrs. Danver's rapturous description of Rebecca's nightgown. Selznick and Hitchcock may have changed the dialog sufficiently to please the PCA, but the specter of Rebecca *and* Mrs. Danver's "sex perversions" persist throughout the film.

Mrs. Danvers is an important example of the "Clever Brunette" in a supporting role. Other brunettes in secondary roles who hold or provide important knowledge include Anne and Barbara Morton in *Strangers on a Train*, Stella in *Rear Window*, and Anne in *The Birds*. Though these secondary brunettes are often less sympathetic or more one-dimensional than Hitchcock's brunette heroines, they still play important roles in the plot trajectories of their respective films as problem-solvers, agitators, and keepers of privileged knowledge.

Dressing the "Hitchcock Blonde:" *Rear Window* and *Vertigo*

Hitchcock's films *Rear Window* (1954) and *Vertigo* (1958) also explore issues of femininity and female subjectivity, through the lens of post-war anxieties about gender and marriage. In both films, Jimmy Stewart plays characters that have become disabled in the course of their work, and blonde actresses feature as Stewart's love interests. These two actresses—Grace Kelly and Kim Novak—might appear to represent the quintessential icy "Hitchcock Blonde," but each offers commentary on the roles and strictures enforced through femininity and marriage. Though *Rear Window* takes a guardedly optimistic view of love and marriage, *Vertigo* is oppressively dark in its conclusion.

Rear Window is often cited as one of the best examples of Hitchcock's masterful use of suspense and perspective; by the end of the film, viewers have become complicit in the voyeurism of Jimmy Stewart's injured photojournalist "L.B. 'Jeff' Jefferies" and convinced of the guilt of his neighbor Lars Thorwald. The film also offers a complex vision of femininity and marriage, as illustrated by Jeff's girlfriend/fiancée "Lisa Fremont" (Grace Kelly) and his nurse "Stella" (Thelma Ritter), a blonde and brunette, respectively. Jeff spends the film in a wheelchair, begrudgingly relying on Lisa and Stella to care for him and serve as his proxy in his "investigation" of what he believes to be Thorwald's murder of his ill, bed-bound wife. Throughout the film, Lisa and Stella act as powerful sources of both knowledge and action, yet must camouflage some of this agency so as not to antagonize Jeff, particularly in Lisa's case. Lisa's interest in fashion—captured most strikingly in the visual contrast of her elegant cocktail dresses and peignoir set to Jeff's blue pajamas—serves as a distraction for both Jeff and the audience, undermining (or perhaps just obscuring) her power and agency. Though there are moments in the film where Lisa appears to be in real danger, she is able to save herself

through quick thinking, and the assistance of Stella and Jeff. In fact, seeing Lisa's willingness to face danger convinces Jeff of his love for and commitment to her.

Hitchcock provides perhaps the most striking and complicated example of the "Hitchcock Blonde" in *Vertigo*. "Madeleine" (Kim Novak) is the quintessential archetype: impeccably dressed, with white-blonde hair, red lips, an aura of mystery. She is irresistible in her helplessness to Jimmy Stewart's detective character "John 'Scotty' Ferguson," who has been sent to follow her and unravel the mystery of her frequent disappearances and amnesia. He falls madly—obsessively—in love with her, and his guilt when she falls to her death drives him to literal madness. Yet Madeleine was/is not what she seems. When Scotty meets a young actress named Judy, he is struck by her resemblance to Madeleine. Though her clothes are quite different, and her eyebrows and mousy brown hair mark her as distinct from Madeleine, Scotty becomes fixated on her, eventually, in his madness, making her over to appear the facsimile of Madeleine. When the truth finally comes out, that Judy was simply performing Madeleine as part of a complicated murder plot, Scotty is driven to destroy the woman who has been both the object of his desire and the destroyer of his fantasy. As Judy/Madeleine, Kim Novak performs the perfect vision of Hitchcock Blonde femininity as Madeleine while simultaneously undoing the very artifice she has been forced to construct in her role as Judy— a Clever Brunette. Unfortunately for Judy, her cleverness is not enough to save her. She attempts to resist Scotty's attempts to make her over as Madeleine, but his perverse desire is too strong for her. The film ends with Scotty, unable to reconcile the truth with his reality, reenacting Madeleine's death with Judy in her place.

The struggle for power between men and women is a frequent feature of Hitchcock's films. In the article "'She's Too Everything': Marriage and Masquerade in *Rear Window* and *To Catch a Thief*," Sarah Berry argues that *Rear Window* represents marriage as "a struggle for control in which the women find that they must camouflage their equality in order to win a proposal."[23] She concludes: "Marriage thus acts to contain women within traditional norms of femininity."[24] Berry notes that the moment at the end of the film when Lisa pulls out her fashion magazine leaves open a reading of this containment as ironic. On the other hand, she suggests,

> In later films like *Vertigo* (1958), femininity has a double edge, because it represents both the power exerted over women and the power they assume by manipulating their self-presentation in order to elude control.[25]

Lisa seems in control of this manipulation in *Rear Window* and utilizes it to her own advantage, but Judy is undone by her performance of "Madeleine" in *Vertigo*.

Berry suggests that costume is one of the most important parts of Hitchcock's exploration of gender. She remarks that it is "central to Hitchcock's representation of this subversive masquerade, since clothing is used not only to indicate the heroines' shifting 'presentation of self,' but also to associate femininity with clothing and performance."[26] Christian Dior's "New Look" aesthetic of cinched waists, pencil skirts and crinolines—the predominant style in the postwar era—emphasizes a theatrical performance of traditional femininity. These silhouettes initially appeared in 1947, just as American men returned from war and their wives gave up jobs to return to the home. Berry sees the "New Look" style clothing, with its emphasis on breasts and hips, as "designed to reinforce gender difference and traditional social roles."[27] This silhouette also necessitated restrictive undergarments that contrasted sharply with the looser look favored in the preceding two decades. Both Lisa and Madeleine/Judy wear costumes exemplifying the defined waist and exaggerated hourglass figure of this style. However, unlike Judy in *Vertigo*, Lisa performs this femininity in *Rear Window* with a knowingness that gives her power.

In "Torturing Women and Mocking Men: Hitchcock's Rear Window" John Fawell concurs with Berry, refusing to see Lisa's attention to clothing as a sign that she is obsessed with fashion and therefore superficial. He suggests,

> *Rear Window* explores the way men underestimate women […] the way a woman's seeming delicacy masks a strength perhaps greater than a man's, the way style may be a manifestation, not of a more superficial person, but a more mature and competent one.[28]

After all, it is because of Lisa's quick thinking and agility that Jeff is able to confirm his suspicions about Mr. Thorwald. Sadly, by the time we meet brunette Judy in *Vertigo*, she has given up control over her performance as well as her clothing, and therefore any chance at subversive forms of femininity.

Hitchcock's heroines are more than just women assaulted and abused by the men in their lives—and by the male gaze of the films' audiences. The girls and women who populate the films of Hitchcock's middle period—particularly in *The Lady Vanishes*, *Shadow of a Doubt*, and *Rebecca*—come to recognize the complex social and familial networks in which they reside. When confronted with situations that require action, these women consider the many possible consequences of their choices, and act ethically and empathetically based on knowledge obtained through their awareness and excellent investigative skills. Not simply "tormented heroines," Hitchcock's women recognize the role and artifice of femininity, and manage their knowledge in important ways.

The "Hitchcock Blondes" of *Rear Window*, *Vertigo*, *Marnie*, *Psycho*, and *The Birds* deserve greater examination as complex culturally situated women, and not just Hitchcock's fetishes, or repeated examples of the same motif. The brunettes in these films, though not the central figures seen in earlier

Hitchcock work, can provide important commentary on femininity and relationships between women, particularly through their interactions with the blondes who often upstage them. The dynamic between Lisa Fremont and Stella (Jeff's nurse) in *Rear Window* deserves further attention, as does the relationship between Marion and Lillian Crane in *Psycho*—especially Lillian's performance of the "Clever Brunette"—and also the triangle between Melanie and the two brunettes, Anne and Lydia, in *The Birds*. Post-war America was a place where anxieties about gender roles collided with major cultural and economic changes. Hitchcock mined these tensions in his depictions of women. We should give the filmmaker and *all* his female characters the complex analysis they deserve.

Notes

[1]Michael Walker, *Hitchcock's Motifs* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam UP, 2005), 69-86. See the chapter "Blondes and Brunettes" in *Hitchcock's Motifs* for a full accounting of blondes, brunettes, and their critical reception.

[2]Sarah Berry, "'She's Too Everything': Marriage and Masquerade in *Rear Window* and *To Catch a Thief*." *Hitchcock Annual.* 10 (2001-02): 79-107. Berry's article includes a lengthy discussion of Hitchcock's costume collaboration with Edith Head.

[3]Tania Modleski, *The Women Who Knew Too Much: Hitchcock and Feminist Theory* (New York: Methuen, 1988), 9.

[4]Modleski, *The Women Who Knew Too Much,* 13.

[5] Ibid., 3. Emphasis in original.

[6] Richard Allen, "'The Lodger' and the Origins of Hitchcock's Aesthetic," *Hitchcock Annual* (2001-2002): 62.

[7] Modleski, *The Women Who Knew Too Much,* 18.

[8] Ibid*.,* 25.

[9] Ibid*.,* 27.

[10] Allen, "'The Lodger' and the Origins of Hitchcock's Aesthetic," 52.

[11]The term *buildungsromana* is sometimes used to differentiate between coming-of-age novels with a female protagonist from those with a male protagonist.

[12] I take this definition from M.H. Abrams' *Glossary of Literary Terms*, 8th ed. Boston: Thomson Wadsworth, 2005.

[13] Modleski, *The Women Who Knew Too Much,* 13.

[14] Walker, *Hitchcock's Motifs*, 71.

[15] Ibid., 75. As an aside: certainly this holds true for Mrs. Danvers in *Rebecca*!

[16] Ibid., 76.

[17] Sarah Berry, "'She's Too Everything': Marriage and Masquerade in *Rear Window* and *To Catch a Thief*," *Hitchcock Annual* 10 (2001-02): 102.

[18] Patrick McGillian, *Alfred Hitchcock: A Life in Darkness and Light* (New York: Reagan Books/HarperCollins, 2003): 65.

[19] Robert Yanal considers the subtext of this dialog at some length in his article '*Rebecca*'s Deceivers," as well as the response of Mrs. Van Hopper, the woman to whom the second Mrs. de Winter serves as a paid companion. Robert J. Yanal, "*Rebecca*'s Deceivers," *Philosophy and Literature* 24.1 (2000): 67-82.

[20] As quoted in Modleski, *The Women Who Knew Too Much,* 47.

[21] Rhona J. Berenstein, "Adaptation, Censorship, and Audiences of Questionable Type: Lesbian Sightings in 'Rebecca' (1940) and 'The Uninvited' (1944)," *Cinema Journal* 37. 3 (Spring 1998): 17-18.

[22] Berenstein, "Lesbian Sightings," 18.

[23] Berry, "'She's Too Everything,'" 79.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Ibid., 80.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Ibid., 81.

[28] John Fawell, "Torturing Women and Mocking Men: Hitchcock's *Rear Window*," *The Midwest Quarterly* 44.1 (2002): 100.

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Designing Terror: An Interview with Devon Estes

Michael Howarth
Missouri Southern State University

    The cover of a book is just as important as the content inside of it. The cover is the first thing people notice when they pick up the book, and their reaction to the pictures, lines, colors or shapes has a great influence on whether or not they want to continue reading. When I first began putting together this special issue on Alfred Hitchcock, I knew I wanted a knockout cover, and for that I knew I needed a knockout graphic designer, especially since my artistic talent extends as far as being able to draw a decent-looking stick figure.

    Devon Estes is a colleague of mine at MSSU, and her students speak highly of her. I was thrilled when she agreed to design the front cover. Hitchcock always spoke of how his films reflected his own personal fears or

values or beliefs, and Devon's design does a fantastic job of echoing that sentiment. By using Hitchcock's film titles to form his profile, the man and his films become inseparable. In gazing at this image of Hitchcock, which is accentuated by the white background, we can understand the power of film to shape who we are.

Interview:

MH: What is your specific artistic background, and what is it about that artistic background that appeals to you?

DE: I have a BA in Fine Art from Cornell College in Mt. Vernon, Iowa. Most of my college work is sculpture and assemblage, as well as fabric work such as quilting and weaving. The first college art class I ever took was weaving, and it led me to realize my love of and interest in art and that I wanted to switch majors from Geology and American History to Fine Art and American History. I loved working with my hands as well as my mind. There's a lot of freedom in creation.

I also have an MFA in Graphic Design from Iowa State University. I went to grad school eight years after leaving college, travelled the world a bit, then lived in New Zealand and a few different states. I moved back to Iowa and an opportunity came up to get an MA in design from ISU—I initially wanted to pursue a career in art direction. Once there I found my love of teaching and through encouragement from my professors I applied to the MFA program in graphic design. I graduated 2011 and have been teaching art and design ever since.

MH: Talk about your thought process in terms of designing the cover art for this particular issue.

DE: Well, initially, the idea of a typographic profile of Hitchcock was suggested by you. I looked at the profile image you gave me and tried a few things that I felt fell flat. Twisting the type into the shape of his head and torso warped the legibility far too much. I decided to look for another, more textured and complex image. I chose a photograph that portrayed almost a profile, but still shows much of the front of Hitchcock's face. I separated the shadows (darks) from the mid-tones and whites of the photo. The white I left white. With the shadows I used Helvetica Neue Bold and kerned and leaded the words very closely together.

For the mid-tones I used Helvetica Neue Light. The types are in the same type-family and the same size, but are at different weights. Because of this, the shadow type appears darker than the mid-tones even though it's all black ink in full opacity.

MH: Do you sketch your designs first before converting them to digital format?

DE: Yes, I usually do sketch quite a bit and often hand-illustrate elements of the design before scanning them into digital format. Also, I use photography quite a bit and then manipulate the images in Photoshop. Adobe software makes it easy to do this. Overall, it depends on the design project, but for something like a book cover I would first do a lot of research on similar/contemporary books, books with similar themes, etc. Then probably start sketching, maybe 10-20 initial concepts and then narrow down as I go.

MH: How many designs do you usually sketch before choosing one?

DE: It really depends on the specifics of the project. For a logo I might sketch out 100 initial concepts and narrow it down as I go along. The most important thing to consider with graphic design is the target-audience … who it is I am trying to visually communicate with. Different ages, genders, socio-economic backgrounds respond differently to design. Some elements of design are mostly universal. Round shapes are friendlier than jagged ones, etc.

MH: How do you plan your designs before you start drafting them?

DE: I don't completely plan the final design. Once I pick a concept to go with, I develop several "rough" drafts with varying options in color, size, typography, etc. I might take features of several or all of these rough drafts/concepts and fuse them into one design. I might just pick the first one and discard the others. It varies. Eventually the final design becomes itself.

MH: Since the subject of this spring's journal is Alfred Hitchcock, please tell us if you are familiar with his any of his work. If so, what interests you about his style/a particular film, etc.?

DE: Yes, I'm familiar with the work of Alfred Hitchcock. I was the character Melanie Daniels from *The Birds* for Halloween a few years ago. I had one bird perched on my head, ripping out an eyeball. I've seen many Hitchcock films and have always been a fan of the suspense and horror genres. Saul Bass, one of the most famous graphic designers of the twentieth century created many intro sequences for Hitchcock films, including *North by Northwest*, *Vertigo* and *Psycho*.

Location, Location, Location: Behind Alfred Hitchcock's Fascination with Domestic Real Estate and Cinematic Architecture
Book Review: ***The Wrong House: The Architecture of Alfred Hitchcock***
by Steven Jacobs. Rotterdam: nai010 publishers, 2013.

Take note, Hitchcock scholars: Steven Jacobs' *The Wrong House: The Architecture of Alfred Hitchcock* belongs on your required reading list, if not in your permanent research collection. Who hasn't wanted to investigate the rest of that midtown Manhattan penthouse, the west wing of that castle beneath the fog, or (admit it) the underbelly of that creepy motel and mansion just off the highway? Jacobs' comprehensive treatment provides these opportunities and more in its survey of the production designs from over twenty Hitchcock films.

Of course there is nothing original in arguing that Hitchcock meticulously curated his sets according to a practice that "privileged visual presence over narration," yet *The Wrong House* ventures into far riskier territory by reconstructing the legendary auteur as an architect.[1] Ostensibly Jacobs has taken this premise quite literally, insofar as *The Wrong House* adopts the conventional layout of an architectural monograph: its opening chapters establish a theoretical foundation that finds an application in a portfolio of projects that follow.

However, there is much more to this text than the novelty of its format. This is owing to its definition of Hitchcock as more of an honorary architect— a visual artist who conflates architectural history with cinematic space— meditating on the meaning of house and home. For those who have the wherewithal to accept Hitchcock as an interdisciplinary filmmaker with architectural credibility, *The Wrong House* will prove itself to be a complex, satisfying conceit.

The monograph begins with "Space Fright" and "The Tourist Who Knew Too Much," essay treatments that contextualize Jacobs' theory concerning the use of architectural space across Hitchcock's filmography. While "Space Fright" covers the requisite discourse on doors, windows, and staircases as the

filmmaker's iconographic motifs, it finds its authoritative voice when it highlights the paradox of an uncompromising auteur that sought out creative collaborations with his art directors. Contrary to the perception that Hitchcock had to be in absolute control of every detail of production design, he more than occasionally deferred to his art directors during the scripting stage and retained them to assist in *mise-en-scène* considerations. Elevating the role of art directors such as Henry Bumstead (*The Man Who Knew Too Much* and *Vertigo*) and Alexander Golitzen (*Foreign Correspondent*) meant that Hitchcock entrusted them to co-create his characters through the nuances of set design. Referencing Vincent LoBrutto's *By Design: Interviews with Film Production Designers*, Jacobs reveals how Hitchcock's production designers were the chosen few who had permission to depart from the filmmaker's storyboards. Bumstead, for one, made the executive decision that Scottie Fergusson's apartment in *Vertigo* should reflect a fetishistic obsession with objects of beauty. He accomplished this by creating a tableau in one corner of Scottie's living room with a stamp collector's magazines and magnifying glass, much to Hitchcock's approval. Jacobs' attention to insightful stories from the set such as this one adds considerable depth to his analysis.

A noteworthy feature of *The Wrong* House is its appendix of the 72 art directors who worked alongside Hitchcock. Spanning his half-century of filmmaking, this biographical listing makes a statement by honoring the collaboration between the filmmaker and his art directors and serving as a coda to "Space Fright." In placing this listing before the filmography appendix, Jacobs, much like Hitchcock, has privileged the art director's role in a production. For those studying the auteur, this listing is sure to be an invaluable resource.

Since Hitchcock's set design was the locus of his characters' development, he preferred to shoot in the controlled environment of the studio versus on location—a fact that Jacobs carefully documents. As he asserts, the director maintained artistic control over his location shoots by constantly subverting the viewer's perceptions of museums (the British Museum in *Blackmail*), national monuments (Mount Rushmore in *North by Northwest*), cities (San Francisco in *Vertigo*), and entire countries (Morocco in the American version of *The Man Who Knew Too Much*). "The Tourist Who Knew Too Much" elucidates the aim of this appropriation, which is to undermine the tourist gaze whereby the "monuments and famous places are turned into landscapes of terror."[2] Jacobs takes pleasure in warning the reader that Hitchcock is this subversive travel agent: one who will have you witness the transformation of your favorite tourist attraction into a site of voyeurism, inhumanity, psychological ruin, or death without your consent. Clinging to or falling from

an unforgiving structure, possibly your worst nightmare brought to life, is a memorable trope for which this chapter provides convincing case studies. The reader need look no further than the precipitous scenes in *Blackmail, Saboteur, Vertigo,* and *North by Northwest.* This chapter is adept at closely analyzing a broad cross-section of examples, all of which clarify how morbidity and trauma belie the urban architecture of the Hitchcockian universe. Jacobs shores up his point about the dark side of the tourist gaze with supporting theory from Leonard J. Leff, Alenka Zupancic, and Pascal Bonitzer, leaving the reader with a clear understanding of why location sequences must take precedence over the plots in Hitchcock productions.

It will come as no surprise that the focal point of *The Wrong House* lies in its visuals, especially given Steven Jacobs' background as an art historian and nai010's reputation for publishing aesthetically-pleasing architectural texts. Although potentially an argument in their own right, these visuals lead the textual discourse to support the thesis rather than functioning as a supplementary feature. Jacobs unpacks 26 of Hitchcock's set designs through an imaginatively curated collection of site plans, floor plans, renderings, and black and white digital frames that represent something of an architectural portfolio. Everything from a rendering of Jefferies' courtyard in *Rear Window* and Robert Boyle's sketches of *North by Northwest*'s Vandamm House to reimagined site and floor plans for Bates House and Motel are available in the project chapters. Organized under the banner of "Hitchcock's Domestic Architecture," these set designs are further categorized as "Houses," "Country Houses and Mansions," or "Modern Hide-Outs and Look-Outs" for ease of thematic reference. The organizational style of the monograph is ideal for those looking for an in-depth study of a particular Hitchcock film set.

A case in point would be "Schizoid Architecture: Bates House & Motel (*Psycho*)." A standout amongst the "Houses," this chapter offers a fascinating deconstruction of one of Hitchcock's most iconic sets through an investigation of its site and floor plans. Jacobs crafts an appealing analysis that illustrates how a menacing nature can be engendered when two architectural structures are at odds with one another. Erecting the Victorian house on the vertical above the mid-century motel on the horizontal was Hitchcock's way of manufacturing a dissonance that resituated horror in suburban architecture, as seen in Fig. 1's site plan.
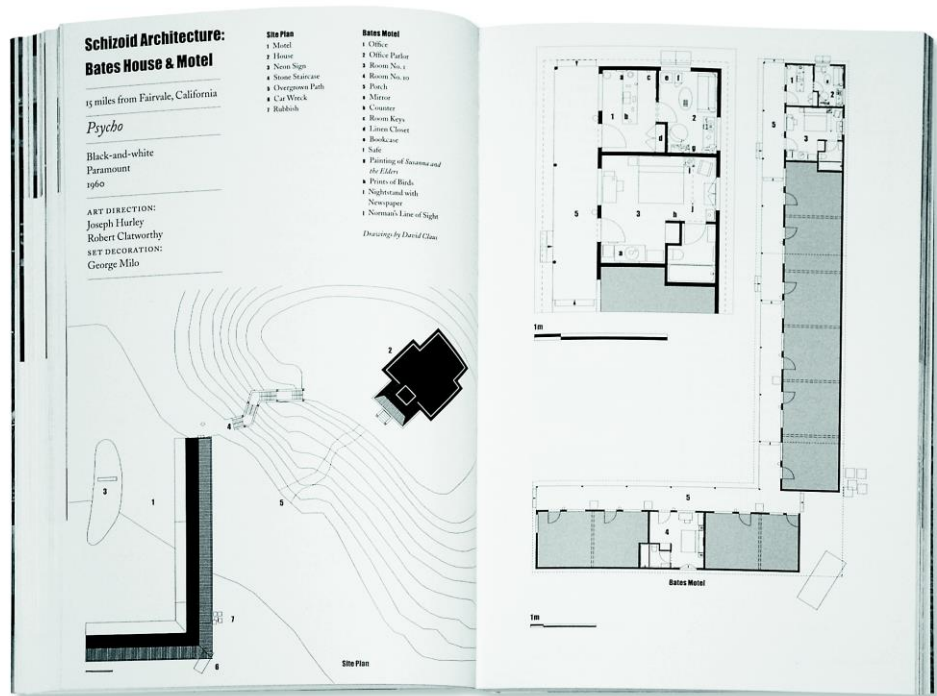
Figure 1: Architectural drawings of Bates Motel and house by David Claus (*The Wrong House*)

The aerial perspective of the site plan offers a new perspective on an iconic set by highlighting the tension between the two architectural structures—each isolated and separate from the other—while acknowledging their undeniable interconnectedness. This codependent structure, of course, metaphorically reflects Norman's relationship with Mother Bates. With vivid illustrations from David Claus, Jacobs proves that set design can be instrumental in plot and character development.

"Schizoid Architecture" goes a long way to reveal the architectural unreality of Hitchcockian space. Jacobs' attempt to reconstruct floor plans, which he apparently accomplished by multiple viewings of the film, produces drawings that "articulate the 'negative,' 'absent,' or invisible spaces in the plan—a feature that is also important in the Hitchcock narrative."[3] As seen in *Psycho*, for instance, Norman's bedroom is accessible from a short flight of

stairs just off the second floor landing; however, since this arrangement means that the mansion's roof would have to be asymmetrical, Jacobs reasons that Norman's 'real' bedroom would have to share space with his mother's bedroom on the second floor or be part of an invisible third floor plan. He upholds his thesis that Hitchcock's films conflate architectural theory with cinematic space by having Claus situate Norman's bedroom exactly where it appeared in the film.

Despite the architectural impossibility of this placement, it serves the narrative to have Norman isolated from and too close to his mother at the same time. "Schizoid Architecture" perfectly exemplifies the imaginative nature of the build within cinematic space.

If there has to be a shortcoming in *The Wrong House*, it would be that it caters to a rather exclusive readership limited to Hitchcock scholars and a secondary audience of architecture scholars. Jacobs chooses not to concern himself with readers who aren't fully versed in the Hitchcockian oeuvre to maintain the integrity of his argument. In fact, he spoils the plots of all the films under analysis in the monograph by routinely revealing key twists in the narratives and even the names of the killers. Those who are acquainted with some but not all of Hitchcock's films will find this practice frustrating. However, *The Wrong House* remains true to its argument by not looking to expand its audience.

Overall, Jacobs' *The Wrong House* will satisfy Hitchcockian and architectural scholars in equal measure. By utilizing a monograph format, visually-driven discourse, and theoretical analysis, it immerses the reader in the art direction that has made Alfred Hitchcock the most celebrated auteur of film studies. Readers not only will appreciate the text's authoritative argument regarding domestic space in the Hitchcockian universe, but also will be impressed by how it deconstructs the majority of Hitchcock's set designs across his filmography. *The Wrong House* banks on the reader's desire to explore what lies within Hitchcock's sets; when Mrs. Danvers asks the Second Mrs. De Winter the rhetorical question, "You've always wanted to see this room, haven't you Madam?," we all know her answer and ours.[4] Steven Jacobs takes us into that room—and into all the other rooms, hotels, bell towers, hideouts, and hidden spaces—for an unforgettable guided tour of the architecture of Alfred Hitchcock.

<div align="right">

Greg Chan
Kwantlen Polytechnic University

</div>

Notes

1. Steven Jacobs, *The Wrong House: The Architecture of Alfred Hitchcock*, 2nd ed.

(Rotterdam: nai010, 2013), 12.

2. Jacobs, *The Wrong House*, 52.

3. Ibid., 15.

4. Qtd. in Jacobs, 191.

Book Review

Dark Energy: Hitchcock's Absolute Camera and the Physics of Cinematic Spacetime by **Philip J. Skerry**. **New York: Bloomsbury, 2013.**

Philip J. Skerry's second publication on Alfred Hitchcock, *Dark Energy: Hitchcock's Absolute Camera and the Physics of Cinematic Spacetime* (2013), uses cinema to spotlight the underexplored relationship between the sciences and the humanities. This study celebrates Albert Einstein and Alfred Hitchcock, two figures who, according to Skerry, participated in the cultural zeitgeist that revolutionized their respective fields. *Dark Energy* comes at a moment when there is increased discussion about exploring the intersection between science and the humanities, and this book does just that. Skerry believes that cinema is an ideal place to begin an interdisciplinary discussion because it embodies the connection between science, technology, and art.

Skerry announces that his purpose in *Dark Energy* is to address the void between the science and the humanities "by paying close 'attention' to how one of the great masters of the cinema uses light and its complement dark to create what he called 'pure cinema.'"[1] He makes it clear that he is "not suggesting a direct cause and effect relationship between the early pioneers of cinema and the inventors of modern physics."[2] Instead, he argues that between physics and cinema, between Einstein and Hitchcock's focus on time and light in spacetime theory and in montage, there is the "sharing of a particular scientific and cultural zeitgeist."[3] The author distinguishes himself from other Hitchcock scholars because he concentrates on "the science and myth of light and dark in the Hitchcock canon" by applying physics as a metaphor for examining and studying Hitchcock and his films.[4] This innovative approach is one that benefits both physics and cinema.

The prologue opens with the event that inspired this study: a scene in which a projector malfunctions and burns a hole in the film Skerry is showing his class. He recalls that, in this moment, "The spacetime of 1943, captured by the images fixed on celluloid and projected in 1976, was obliterated by a light beam generated in 1976 that destroyed the light from 1943. I felt the presence of Einstein in the classroom."[5] This observation is the first of many creative connections between physics and cinema.

Skerry concentrates on five Hitchcock films: *Rear Window*, *Strangers on a Train*, *Shadow of a Doubt*, *Psycho*, and *Vertigo*. He concludes the book with two interviews of physicists whose research fuels this study. However, the chapters that promise discussions of the films themselves and an application of scientific concepts to characters and scenes actually include very little discussion about the films. *Dark Energy* is more about Hitchcock's influences and how his creative processes and techniques revolutionized cinema in the way that Einstein's processes and techniques revolutionized physics. Chapters one, two, and three, "In search of light and enlightenment," "Hitchcock's 'absolute camera,'" and "*Rear Window*: The apotheosis of the absolute camera," all focus on the ways that Einstein and Hitchcock "generated their ideas," their history, and their influences.[6] In chapters four, five, and six, "Two princes of Dark Energy," "*Psycho*: A New Paradigm," and "The quantum universe of *Vertigo*," Skerry applies physics concepts as metaphors to discuss characters and character relationships. He concludes the text with chapter seven, "The physicists speak," in which he transcribes his interviews with two scientists and their discussions about the connections between science and cinema.

In chapter one, Skerry details the uncanny parallel lives, interests, influences, and creative processes of Einstein and Hitchcock, specifically "the similarities between Einstein's thought experiments and theories, and Hitchcock's cinematic practices" and their shared interests in trains, in time, and in light and dark.[7] Einstein and Hitchcock also both shared "a strong visual imagination," a connection the author likens to a cinematic imagination.[8] Skerry concludes that this cinematic imagination enabled Einstein "to make conceptual leaps" and Hitchcock to construct films in his mind's eye before entering the studio.[9] He concentrates on the men's interest in light because he believes it "is the key to unlocking the close relationship between physics and cinema—between Einstein and Hitchcock."[10] Skerry examines how cinema embodies science and art, light and dark, and time and space. He writes, "a shot in a film is a perfect embodiment of spacetime, with the relativity of each depending on the movement and position of the camera, which melds space and time into one through the capturing of light rays."[11] To demonstrate this relationship, Skerry creates a scientific equation for Hitchcock's techniques that mirrors Einstein's famous calculation. Einstein's equation $E=mc^2$, in which energy equals mass x (the speed of light) squared, revolutionized physics. Likewise, Skerry claims that the Hitchcockian equation, $C=LM$, in which cinema equals light x motion, revolutionized film.

The second chapter in *Dark Energy* is dedicated to Hitchcock's 'absolute camera' and its contribution to film and to the industry's artistic, technological, and production advancements. Skerry defines Hitchcock's 'absolute camera'

from the director's explanation regarding the camera's purpose. According to Hitchcock, "'The only thing that matters is whether the installation of the camera at a given angle is going to give the scene its maximum impact. The beauty of the image and movement, the rhythm and the effects-everything must be subordinated to the purpose.'"[12] In this chapter, Skerry delves further into the history of the motion picture camera and the intersection of physics and art that created this piece of equipment. He concentrates on the camera because the "development of the movie camera can be seen as a veritable experiment in physics, in which photons of light are gathered by the camera lens and then captured in the chemistry of the emulsion layered onto the flexible celluloid base."[13]

Chapter two also includes details about Hitchcock's education as proof that he was actively involved in the cultural zeitgeist that Einstein initiated. Skerry writes that Hitchcock's knowledge of physics and chemistry came from attending lectures and that he studied electricity and "the principles of magnetism, force and motion."[14] He also places great emphasis on Hitchcock's birth year. He claims that the timeline of cultural events and innovations, such as German Expressionism, is evidence that Hitchcock's birth during this particular historical period is directly linked to his influence on cinema's trajectory. For Skerry, Hitchcock's unique combination of visual techniques, light, and sound influenced his mise-en-scène, which revolutionized film.

In chapter three, one of Skerry's goals is "to discuss Hitchcock's cinema in the context of modern physics and cosmology."[15] Concentrating on Einstein and Hitchcock's education both in science and in humanities, Skerry links the two men's interest in seeking knowledge of the unknown: Einstein was interested in what was the hidden in the natural world, and Hitchcock was interested in what was hidden in human nature. Skerry specifies that their processes differ, though. Because other scientists performed Einstein's experiments for him, Einstein was purely theoretical, but Hitchcock directed his own films, making him more product-oriented. Skerry continues these creative analogies when he likens production companies to science labs and Paramount Studios to the Large Hadron Collider (LHC), performing Hitchcock's cinematic experiments with light.

Skerry applies Sean Carroll's discussion on entropy in *From Eternity to Here: The Quest For the Ultimate Theory of Time* to deconstruct scenes in *Rear Window*. According to Carroll, entropy "measures the 'disorderliness' of an object or conglomeration of objects."[16] Entropy also either remains constant or increases; it does not decrease, so disorderliness will never lessen. Skerry argues that entropy can be used to dissect the mise-en-scène in *Rear Window,* which captures "the disorderliness of human affairs" that, like entropy, only increase as the film progresses.[17] Although the chapter is titled, "*Rear Window: The apotheosis of the absolute camera,*" only about one third of the chapter

includes discussion about the movie. The chapter is more about the techniques used in filming *Rear Window* than the film itself. He explains how, despite "mise-en-scène and montage play[ing] equally important roles" in *Rear Window*, it is more important to study the film's use of mise-en-scène rather than its use of montage.[18]

Chapter four is a highly complex chapter incorporating philosophers and physicists' quests to discover the meaning of the universe, the origin of evil, and the origin of dark energy. Skerry also makes an interdisciplinary connection between science and literature when he parallels John Milton's intent in *Paradise Lost* to "Justify the ways of God to Men" with physicists' intent "to explain the laws of the universe to man."[19] This fundamental link between the humanities and sciences fuels Skerry's examination of Uncle Charlie in *Shadow of a Doubt* and Bruno in *Strangers on a Train*.

This chapter also references Stephen Hawking and Leonard Mlodinow's book *The Grand Design*, in which they asserts that physicists are the new philosophers, seeking knowledge about the universe that philosophy cannot answer. Skerry uses Hawking's claims to advise that "film critics and scholars would be wise to look at what modern science has said about the universe and apply that to cinema."[20] To do this, Skerry likens Bruno and Guy to dark energy, a force that causes the universe to expand. He theorizes that just as dark energy generates the universe expansion, Uncle Charlie acts as a force of dark energy because he "bends the spacetime around him, causing other characters in the spacetime to react to his 'mass,' or his dark energy."[21] Uncle Charlie is the metaphoric dark energy, bringing "moral disorder" that "threaten[s] to destroy the system."[22] Skerry also uses matter and antimatter to discuss doppelgangers in both films, where matter and antimatter are opposite, but are drawn to each other. He writes that, because the protagonists and antagonists in both films are doppelgangers, they behave as matter and antimatter. In *Shadow of a Doubt*, Little Charlie is the matter and Uncle Charlie the antimatter, and in *Strangers on a Train*, Guy is the matter and Bruno the antimatter.

In *Strangers on a Train*, Skerry also investigates mise-en-scène "in which enclosed spaces filled with dark energy predominate."[23] He argues that Bruno's dark energy transforms Guy as he is pulled into "Bruno's guilty space."[24] Because "Bruno's powerful sexual presence bends the spacetime in the compartment, [he] draw[s] Guy into the orbit of his diabolical plan."[25] Just as dark energy warps Uncle Charlie's relationship with Little Charlie, it also warps Bruno's relationship with Guy. Skerry links dark energy to these particular villains because of their mysterious origin and because of their powerful

impact on others; scientists cannot explain the origin of dark energy, nor can Hitchcock concretely explain the source of evil in these villains.

In chapter five, Skerry applies Thomas Kuhn's theory on "normal science and scientific revolutions" to argue that *Psycho* initiated a cinematic revolution. Kuhn theorizes that one discovery can revolutionize science and scientific understandings, transforming what scientists once believed. These kinds of revolutions also offer new possibilities for discovery. Skerry likens *Psycho* to that kind of transformative discovery. This chapter focuses on the conditions in cinema production that paved the way for *Psycho* to shift the paradigm in film. According to Skerry, because of the weakening Production Code, in *Psycho,* Hitchcock is able to link violence and sexuality, thus transforming cinema by introducing cultural taboos of "incest, necrophilia, voyeurism, and transvestism."[26] Skerry applies physics again when he likens Norman Bates to a black hole. Physicists define the mysterious black hole as an area in which "light and time are trapped inescapably," and it destroys anything that ventures within its gravitational pull.[27] Skerry writes that, because of the conditions under which Norman's particular mental and emotional development was fostered, he is trapped in time and darkness, destroying anyone who ventures too close.

Chapter six is one of the most successful chapters in its application of physics to film. Skerry links quantum mechanics and *Vertigo* because both are shrouded by mystery. To dissect the character complexities in the film, he uses "Werner Heisenberg's uncertainty principle and Niels Bohr's probability theory of quantum mechanics."[28] Skerry creates character diagrams based on Richard Feynman's ideas in quantum electrodynamics (QED). In physics, these diagrams help "in understanding the likelihood of electrons moving as free particles and then emitting or absorbing virtual photons."[29] Skerry likens the characters in *Vertigo* to electrons, altering when they interact with others. To demonstrates this theory, he diagrams the multiple versions of Scotty after interactions with Midge, with Judy as the false Madeline, with Judy as Judy, and with Judy reincarnated into Madeline. He also charts the multiple versions of Judy after she encounters Gavin Elster, after she encounters Scotty before the real Madeline's murder, and after she encounters the post-mental institution Scotty. These diagrams allow readers to visualize the highly complex character intricacies, offering new possibilities for character studies.

The most concrete scientific and technical discussions take place in chapter seven, which consists of Skerry's interviews with cosmologist Sean Carroll from Cal Tech and Professor of Physics Martin Bojowald from Penn State. Both scientists have published on the need to reconnect the humanities and the sciences, and both men's research fuels this study. Carroll's article "From Experience to Metaphor by Way of Imagination" focuses on "using some of science as metaphor and trying to apply science in non-scientific areas to see if there is a way the groups could talk to each other," and in their

interview, Skerry and Carroll talk about the similarities between science and cinema, the use of light, observation, lenses, spacetime, and experiments.[30]

One of their most significant discussions is on terminology. Carroll articulates the problems that can arise in an interdisciplinary study when there are different definitions for the same terms. When asked whether dark energy or dark matter can be used as a way to talk about the dark side of human nature, Carroll explains that in the humanities, a reference to the dark side of human nature is based on the understanding that dark and light are metaphors for good and evil, but in science, there is no such connection. In physics, the term 'dark' translates as "invisible"; "dark means not effectively interacting with light" because "dark is different than black."[31] The closer scientific metaphor for dark and light would be "mystery vs clarity," and it is this metaphor that Skerry applies in *Dark Energy*.[32]

Martin Bojowald's book *Once Before Time: A Whole Story of the Universe* is interdisciplinary, associating science with "mythology and literature, and other fields that are related to science."[33] In the Bojowald interview, he and Skerry discuss the separation that has occurred between the sciences and the humanities and the need for more scholarly conversations about the scientific aspects of cinema. They talk about dark matter and dark energy, light, spacetime, and how montage can help physicists understand spacetime in a new way. According to Skerry, "Montage—that's time, and mise-en-scène is the space—and you combine them together, you've got a perfect illustration of spacetime where you're actually capturing light that existed forty years ago, for example, in some form and them showing it is the present."[34] This observation is significant because in physics, time cannot be stopped; it must move forward, but in cinema, montage allows time to be manipulated. Such connections could offer scientists new ways to think about spacetime. Countering Stephen Hawking's claim that physicists are the new philosophers, Bojowald argues that physics needs philosophy to "describe what it really means for space and time to behave in this way."[35] He specifies that, despite the illusion that science does not rely on the humanities in its quest for knowledge, the two fields rely on each other as new discoveries are made.

The first three chapters of *Dark Energy* succeed in establishing Hitchcock as a figure who revolutionized film. Skerry assumes an audience familiar with film studies and with Hitchcock but not necessarily with physics, though physicists who enjoy Hitchcock would likely be interested in this book. His detailed descriptions of Hitchcock's scenes benefit readers who have not seen all the films, and he provides clear explanations of physics terms and concepts. Skerry manages well the difficult task of presenting scientific concepts in ways that readers without scientific backgrounds will understand. Because of his

accessible style, the readability is ideal for anyone from undergraduates to scholars.

Dark Energy will benefit new students of Hitchcock in understanding the historical period and the conditions under which the films were made, more than the films themselves. Film studies students and film scholars will likely find this study more informative than the casual Hitchcock fan, and it is a helpful book for readers interested in Hitchcock's processes, discussions about mise-en-scène versus montage, absolute camera, and revolutions in filmmaking. Readers looking for scholarship on Hitchcock's films should look elsewhere, though, because Skerry is more interested in Hitchcock's life and his creative processes than he is in scene or character analysis.

Once the photos and charts and diagrams are removed, *Dark Energy* is quite a succinct book. The shortest chapter is eight pages and the longest, with two full-length interviews, is thirty-four pages. With only seven chapters, the average chapter length is fifteen pages. Its brevity is only an issue because so much page space is used recapping points from previous sections, and thus little page space is used to fully investigate the implications of the association between physics and film. While his approach is intriguing and the parallels between Einstein and Hitchcock are, at times, uncanny, the science metaphors vary in their success at offering new ways to examine the films.

The purpose in *Dark Energy* is to close the void between science and the humanities, but I question whether Skerry accomplished this goal because he does not flesh out his science/cinema metaphors. He almost seems more interested in formulating these connections than in exploring them. The similarities between Einstein and Hitchcock that Skerry pinpoints are a way to enter that conversation; however, he is better at articulating the parallels between Einstein and Hitchcock's lives and creative processes than he is at relating physics to the films. The ties Skerry makes between Einstein and Hitchcock's influences, interests, and theories are creative interdisciplinary connections, and his emphasis on the cultural zeitgeist that prepared the world for a shift in science, technology, and film is certainly relevant. However, Skerry merely scratches the surface of what could be an in-depth study of how physics influences the light/dark, innocent/evil patterns in Hitchcock's films. In *Dark Energy*, the analogies likening train tracks to film strips, studios to science labs, directors to scientists, Norman Bates to a black hole, Bruno and Uncle Charlie to dark energy, and characters in *Vertigo* to electrons are intriguing, but Skerry does not clarify what or how they add to critical scholarship on Hitchcock.

Although the films almost seem incidental to Skerry's discussion about Hitchcock's creative process, influences, and legacy, I recommend this text because it offers readers a better understanding of Hitchcock and of the conditions that fostered his revolutionary impact on cinema. Skerry does not, however, offer a deeper understanding of the films themselves. Overall, this is

an impressive initial foray into an interdisciplinary approach to Hitchcock and his films, and I look forward to the scholarly conversations that *Dark Energy* will initiate.

Samantha Lay
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Notes

1. Skerry, *Dark Energy*, xvii.
2. Ibid., xvii.
3. Ibid., xviii.
4. Ibid., xviii.
5. Ibid., xiii.
6. Ibid., xxii.
7. Ibid., 5.
8. Ibid., 3.
9. Ibid., 2.
10. Ibid., 3.
11. Ibid., 6.
12. Ibid., 21.
13. Ibid., 15.
14. Ibid., 16.
15. Ibid., 23
16. Ibid., 40-1.
17. Ibid., 42.
18. Ibid., 36.
19. Ibid., 63.
20. Ibid., 46.
21. Ibid., 57.
22. Ibid., 58.
23. Ibid., 64.
24. Ibid., 71.
25. Ibid., 71.
26. Ibid., 93.
27. Ibid., 93.
28. Ibid., xx.
29. Ibid., 109-10.
30. Ibid., 116.
31. Ibid., 121.

32. Ibid., 124.
33. Ibid., 134.
34. Ibid., 141.
35. Ibid., 149

Notes on Contributors

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