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Guilty pleasures

MORAL ORDER, MEANING, AND CINEMATIC FORM
IN ALFRED HITCHCOCK'S FILMS

One might say that a particular kind of interaction links surface structure to deep structure, where 'realism' (verisimilitude) competes with 'fantasy' (a complex of desire and prohibition) and 'intelligibility' with 'real contradiction'¹.

A retrospective view and perspective of Alfred Hitchcock's (1899–1980) films is at once extensive in its volume and methodically delimited in its range of philosophical speculation and inquiry. The dimensions of his morality, meaning, and codes of form are in some sense simple and in another sense complicated. The thematic and narrative qualities of Hitchcock's work rely on the audiovisual design of the materials at hand. It points out the stretches of visual and aural materialism, which requires not just the command and readiness of an artist to see the elements of an individual shot, but also a larger, more developed *auteurial* vision needed to elaborate the interactions amidst all the other ingredients contributing to the language of cinema. It is clear that Hitchcock is one of the greatest inventors of the film form in the entire history of cinema.

Hitchcock was a true artist who directed in German, English and American studios. His art contains a reflection of the soul of the modern artist in a kind of a double pastiche. Although he worked inside the studio system, he retained a special control over his work. Although he created entertaining stories, he was still understood as an innovator of cinematic presentation and of technical mastery.

Myths of duality have haunted the imagination of all cultures and are consequently a significant aspect of their art. Reflections, doubles, lookalikes and twins, echoing the mimetic aspects of art as a mirror held up to nature, evoke a disquieting sense of the uncanny.² Doubles may suggest an inexplicable condition of symmetry and stasis, existing in the midst of a visual field that is simultaneously perceived as being chaotically asymmetrical and in a constant flux. Hitchcock uses parallelism and continuity to serve as bridges between the related levels of meaning in the fictional narrative and the formal structures by which these meanings are emphasized at the level of film design. Parallels, doubles and details in a Hitchcock film contribute to an intensification and stylization of the formal design that calls attention to the issues of art, aesthetics and psychological reality: associated by means of a character's ability to distinguish between direct, objective perceptions of reality and the need to modify or recast these perceptions by way of psychological subjectivity in a manner that echoes the similarly double articulation between reality and the mediating activities of the artist.

One of Hitchcock's strengths was his ability to frame and edit shots in such a way as to allow spectators to grasp character's thoughts.³

The word ‘suspense’, an epithet that is perhaps most commonly applied to Hitchcock’s films, is inevitably a result of interaction between characters and situations through which Hitchcock presents the viewer a world that is tenuously poised between the double possibilities of evanescent order and, more often than not, the eruption of chaos. Hitchcock uses the seemingly direct system of representation of the film medium – as opposed to the more overtly mediating process of authorship in other, earlier narrative forms such as literature – to link these double possibilities for defining the nature of reality to the moral and aesthetic dilemmas that must be acknowledged and reconciled by the characters experiencing and acting upon them.

Consequently, the response and action of such characters may be spoken of in moral terms, insofar as Hitchcock effectively makes these choices appear from the action and consciousness of the characters in relation to their visible situations, located somewhere beyond the material boundaries of the frame, direction, and the hermetic space that defines the world of the narrative. Hitchcock was eager to develop new technical solutions as a way to surprise the audience.

The secret of Hitchcock’s versatility is his constant references to what he calls ‘pure cinema’ – sharp angling, bold close-ups, taut cutting, the narrative crispness and emphasis on personal involvement characteristic of Hollywood classicism.⁴

The evolution of the Hitchcock oeuvre takes authorship as one of its central subjects. This process defines the reflexi-

ve level of each film. The parallel, simultaneous processes through which the characters affect or create their destinies, which also account for the formation of the narrative, merge the moral with the aesthetic. More specifically, in aesthetic inquiry, statements on art are examined as to their logical and rational truth and their persuasive power.⁵ In *Vertigo* (1958), Judy (Kim Novak) composes a letter to Scottie (James Stewart) and the spectator feels that she is deeply in love with him, while he is still in love with Madeleine (Novak). Hitchcock's images recall an earlier sequence showing Madeleine come to Scottie at dawn to recount her dream. The scenes resemble each other and invest the narrative with a double meaning. Even if all the connections are not immediately apparent, the spectator will nonetheless remain patient in waiting the narrative closure. Hitchcock's deepening concern with the moral implications of narrative art produce, from the very beginning and throughout his career, a kind of progressive intensification of moral and aesthetic balance, in which Hitchcock locates his own sense of the artist's or storyteller's most significant function. An artist must be capable of calling attention to the very means by which art often interposes a more satisfactory vision for the disquieting reality, the reflection of which it pretends to be. Hitchcock's use of morality, symmetry and doubles as both a subject of the films and the source of their formal organization and strategies allows one to trace the means and the sense of particularity, that is often an unavoidable self-declaration of the fictional narrative, by using the stylization of form as a means of enlarging the implications of fictional subjects to universality. The formal structure of his cinematic orchestrations

of incident, character and situation is the genesis of the formal complexity with which the issue of universal truth is treated. "Hitchcock's films can't be justified by reference to any one layer; their artistic impact is in the intermeshing of layers."⁶

The formal and thematic parallelism of Hitchcock's films may begin to come to terms with the symmetry that Hitchcock progressively assumes between the ethics of creation, incorporating a reflexive level of discourse, in which the responsibility for the outcome of the narrative appears to be directly related to visible action within its boundaries, and the larger issues of guilt, destiny, consciousness and personal authority over the events of one's life, for which the recurrent subjects of narrative art and its authorship serve as an epitome and paradigm. Films like *The Lodger* (1927), *Blackmail* (1929), and *Murder* (1930) are models by which one comes to understand the elaborate formal and thematic parallelism of the later American films. Containing the seeds of Hitchcock's ongoing pre-reflexive occupations, these films may be described as a trilogy related through parallelisms of formal composition. All three contain characters facing moral and aesthetic dilemmas, in which the ultimate reconciliation of the psychological divisions of personality is an act occurring simultaneously throughout a multiplicity of related divisions in the details of the narrative as well as in the formal symmetries of the overall creative filmic design. The formal and fictional narratives may be described as standing in reflexive opposition to one another. Now and then it may be difficult to accept a narrative take a certain attitude towards its events. There are, of course, differences between a fictional character

doing something and the viewer assuming an attitude toward the character because of what they have done.⁷ Characters are polarized by contesting urges and pressures to confront reality directly or to re-form its most disturbing features by imposing the superficial, illusory symmetries of art upon them are identified from these films onward as surrogate artists: narrators, actors, and authors within a subjective reality.

Moral choices and the dilemmas around them are reflected in many of Hitchcock's films.⁸ *Shadow of a Doubt* (1943) and *Strangers on a Train* (1951) treat and intensify the question of doubles as explicit concerns of narrative fiction. Admittedly, *Notorious* (1946) reflects the parallels and symmetries of the recurrent issue of how one may present and take responsibility of a public identity, whether in life or in dramatic situations. We may also consider it to reflect the contrivance and authorship, echoing the activities and conventions of theatrical roles and performances, an issue that is first introduced in the treatment of the central figure in *The Lodger*.

Defined this way, Hitchcock was an artist who could cut the conventions of narrative film like, for example, in *Psycho* (1960) by letting the sympathetic protagonist of the first part (Marion Crane, played by Janet Leigh) die early on in the narrative. Whether in the social or personal realm, Hitchcock emphasizes the objective basis of the cinematic medium for rendering the essentially non-visual, psychological or emotional states of his characters. From this decision emerges the structural irony of the classic Hitchcock situation: the intensity of frustration, guilt and terror, which a character experiences through a dilemma

pertaining to moral or spiritual isolation, is shown to be a complex set of material conditions. Metaphysical guilt, the transference of it through moving from the immanent to the transcendental, and a sort of substitute-suffering is described in *The Wrong Man* (1956). This is already characterized in the name of the film and becomes a major theme also in many other Hitchcock films. Let us make another point. The progression from psychological chaos through the events that lead to reconciliation and wholeness is presented as a picaresque journey through bizarre social and moral situations in which material objects and conditions are presented as the visual equivalents of psychological states. It is relevant that the elaborate composition of this metaphysical set-up varies from film to film in its specific locales and details, but remains constant in its repetition of prototypical structures and situations. This may help us to think that the theme of voyeurism goes through the visual structures of *Psycho*, and starts with the first movement of the camera in the beginning of the film. *Psycho* is untypical to the genre, since it represents larger symbolic meanings which deal with the 'real' nature of the psyche and the relationship between a film and its spectator.

DRAMATIC POWER

Doubling evokes the loss of selfhood more than the shadow of evil, which torments its literal and romantic predecessors.⁹

The strategy of contrast is applied in Hitchcock's narratives in which the central dramatic conflicts go together with

the struggle between personal, ethical and social values. Hitchcock's personal strategy includes a rare sense of understanding of how far dramatic conflicts can be complicated, and in which ways, in order to enhance the polarity of hope and fear, which itself remains emphatic and simple enough to galvanise everybody.¹⁰ The creation and use of formal structures to signify co-existent philosophical and ideological positions is an important characteristic of Hitchcock's work. The cineaste was able to produce a collection of films which were sufficiently extensive and coherent to allow for an evolutionary analysis of the progressive synthesis of narrative and aesthetic content. Hitchcock's films indicate and refer to a stylistic and thematic unity which lends itself to analysis and interpretation as an evolving entity, and although the originators of the *politique des auteurs* distinguish between the English and American periods of his work, looking more favourably upon the earlier period because of Hitchcock's greater control over the studio situation, it is clear that each of the films, including those of the American period, continue to use characteristic forms to treat themes and situations introduced already in the British films. In fact, a survey of the films shows that the elaboration of formal devices used to signify particular narrative and ideological features becomes more self-confident as the work progresses, accompanying a deepening of moral and psychological insight in the world of Hitchcock. The viewer's feelings of emotion and empathy create spaces of mind related to these aspirations.

Generally speaking, there are lots of doubles in Hitchcock's world, such as contradictions between collective and private ideas, legal and illegal issues, order and chaos,

past and future, innocence and guilt, rationality and irrationality. The structures of dreams and the unconscious come into play, connected with the structures of external space. These elements interact in many possible ways during the horizons of the narrative. It is apparent that the idea of repetition is itself central to the structure of Hitchcock's films. Begun in a period of literary experimentation, which is dominated by a concern for rendering psychological states in prose by means of the stream of consciousness and the interior monologue, Hitchcock uses the elaborate composition of images and multiple points of view, made possible through editing and montage, to suggest the process of experience and observation through which this consciousness is formed. Human nature and human condition can be treated in an illuminating way, concerning our experiences and contributions to understanding.¹¹ Many of Hitchcock's important concerns are formed out and developed against this perspective. The central character in a Hitchcock film experiences, in a particularly subjective way, the physical world around her/him. Objects of particular significance recur again and again; situations are repeated, permuted or symmetrically counterpointed. Understated in this sense, Hitchcock seems to think that there is something drawing the characters of his universe together, and if both were shown in the same shot, their movement toward one another could be arbitrary and unstructured.¹² Through the use of repetitions, Hitchcock creates a cinematic equivalent for the interior monologue, having discovered, after incorporating this technique in his films, that a cinematic interiority was possible through the filmic form.

In many films, Hitchcock's use of the interior monologue creates the true dramatic power of the narration, which occurs usually through complex visual counterpoints. The suggestive images of Marion in *Psycho* reflect the double emphasis of personality in the mirror reflections. Hitchcock offers constant and unresolved conflicts in his films. Related to this is the idea that the very limitations of the interior monologue as a literary device indicate the superiority of cinematic compositions as they are used to counterpoint complex physical details and to underscore psychological significance. As a consequence, Hitchcock's return to the interior monologue at the end of *Psycho* continues to take an ironic view of this literary contrivance by placing Norman Bates' interior monologue to follow the glib analysis of a police psychiatrist. Already at an early stage of his artistic development, Hitchcock acknowledged that it was essential to find more formally appropriate means to indicate the unresolved conditions of the psyche that were to be integral to his narratives. It is clear that Hitchcock's minute concern for social and physical detail clearly owed a large debt to literary and other traditions, and may have been more immediately influenced by social documentaries.

Along these lines of thought, we can assert that German Expressionism was one of the early influences behind Hitchcock. Other key elements and issues include French Surrealism, Scandinavian nature films (Sjöström, Stiller), explorations of the darker side of the psyche (Dreyer), and Soviet constructivism (Eisenstein, Pudovkin, Vertov) with a special emphasis on montage. An admirer of F. W. Murnau's work, Hitchcock incorporated German expressionist and stylistic elements in his own films. German style of

filmmaking seemed melodramatic, and its use of obsession with psychotic and criminal behavior had produced a formal vocabulary and use of the camera, which were congenial to the sort of films Hitchcock had in mind. While the treatment of criminal activity in the British tradition tended to originate in the scientific observation of social conditions, the portrayal of criminals in German films developed from a long Gothic tradition that presented deviant behavior as originating from a compulsive urge, related to the creative urge, deeply rooted in the human psyche. Hitchcock's camera reiterates this compulsive spontaneity.

*Hitchcock's sense of an implacable, severe, but somehow just moral order may well have come to him via the influence, on the British middle and lower-middle classes of Puritanism, which is the English expression of Calvinism.*¹³

From the perspective of historical understanding, for Hitchcock, the dualities of individual personality were a direct reflection of a world view in which the polarities of order and chaos are in constant opposition. Communication across cultural boundaries is possible. Consequently, these primary polarities provide the sub-structures or axes, or bridges, which account for analogical or double structures throughout the films. One might point out that formal axes establish symmetrical systems, which suggest, amidst the apparent confusion of an unsolved crime or an unidentified adversary, the possibility for synthesis and the restoration of a moral and ethical order.

Following this line of thought, *The Lodger* has a special place among Hitchcock's films, since it marks his first ex-

tended treatment of the existential issue of psychological identity as it is reflected in visible action, public figures, masks, disguises, and impersonation. It is evident that *The Lodger* deals with these issues in a narrative where the protagonist's appearance coincides with a series of murders of young blonde women. Vulnerable and chased, he is nearly killed in the hands of an angry mob because of his unwillingness, or inability, to declare his true identity. The mob scene contains a lot of Christian references. It is also a painterly reflection of Hitchcock's awareness of Christian imagery in painting. It appears that the sequence is like an act that has the power to dispel the illusions that proliferate the protagonist's silence and the threat that such ambiguity poses to the society at large. Similar aspects can be found later in *Marnie* (1964) in which the protagonist is a woman compelled to a life of crime because of her childhood experiences. She is driven to anxiety and suffering through her moral and guilt complexes and ultimately forced make the final and decisive decision concerning her own existence.¹⁴

In cinematic narration, the matter of this kind of division of personality can be observed in *The 39 Steps* (1935), in which Richard Hannay's (Robert Donat) entire journey between London and Scotland is an experience of chaos and disorder, reflected to us as an intensely subjective process, which dictates the actual narrative form. We can say that Hitchcock is equally capable of presenting both high and low culture as a mask for and an agent of crime. For example, in *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1934 and 1955), a musical notation is called into question when used as a device for precipitating social disorder. It should be emphasized that both versions of *The Man Who Knew*

Too Much deal with the parallel ideas of personal and social morality. In both versions a couple traveling abroad learns, by witnessing a murder which provides them with first material evidence, that there is a larger political plot for which their vision has made them in some way responsible. When their child is kidnapped, this ambiguity is clarified. As their roles as parents expand to those of detectives, they discover that the theatrical artifice of criminals is best countered by the parallel uses of theatre and disguise, equally necessary and capable of being utilized in performing moral acts. Later on, taking responsibility for recovering their child reiterates the simultaneous and larger process of assuming moral and ethical stance and perspective positions related to the society around them. All these larger variations are more or less noticeable and present in the narrative output of the film.

Returning to the Roman Catholic origins of Hitchcock's Jesuit education, Claude Chabrol provides a theological reading of the films in an attempt to explain the specific, recurrent structures of formal and narrative organization. Chabrol's observations about the formal use of the camera, varying its modes in relation to this objective-subjective division of the film (an objective use of the camera presents the character versus the dilemma; the subjective use presents the director versus the characters) is useful.¹⁵ This would imply that these symmetries refer to the Jesuit morals and the dialectical formulation in which ethics becomes the central fulcrum between the two narrative units of a Hitchcock film. In this structure, crime is a test for the character and places him at the fulcrum: a battle that man must sustain between his own potential for good and evil.

This situation is the origin of Hitchcock's obsession with a world that is further divided by illusion and reality: the evil which can never be concretized but exists in a constant suggestion of the infernal among the details of the ordinary. We are surrounded by these views of Hitchcock, and in this deeply Catholic view, man is completely free and a place of battle; God cannot directly intervene in man's struggle for salvation.

André Bazin's remarks represent a somewhat cynical departure from his early auteurist position. Based on his unintentionally hilarious account of a Hitchcock interview, Bazin relates Hitchcock's puzzlement when questioned about the inclusion of theological jokes and references in his work. Largely, one gathers in the tone of the writing, from the frustrations of this interview, Bazin concluded that Hitchcock's inscription of theology is a "smokescreen" for the embarrassment he felt after having become the commercial storyteller Hollywood studios wanted him to be.¹⁶ Bazin believed that his own questions had made Hitchcock aware of the moral themes in his films for the first time. Unable to make Hitchcock acknowledge the patterns and moral symmetries that he and the other auteur critics found in the films, Bazin concedes only the absolute control that Hitchcock exerts over the visual balance of the *mise-en-scène*, evident to the viewer in every frame.¹⁷

Of the French critics, it was left for Truffaut to navigate the endless traps and pitfalls of a Hitchcock interview. The extended form of his dialogue with Hitchcock, published as a separate volume, provides a point of departure for much of the analysis of specific films. Truffaut chides Bazin for his gullibility and goes on to bolster the theo-

gical readings of Hitchcock's auteur partisans.¹⁸ The article also provides the earliest and most convincing discussion of Hitchcock's obsessions and the association of his symmetrical unit with the theme of identity. Truffaut proceeds to test this hypothesis in the American films and concludes that it is through the use of reflective, symmetrical signifiers and the constant inclusion of doubles in joined images that Hitchcock treats the theme of identity in visual terms. Elaborating on this observation, Truffaut suggests that the struggle for domination in a Hitchcock couple is a visible extension of this division of the world. Truffaut affirms the centrality of *Shadow of a Doubt* and *Strangers on a Train* as evidence of Hitchcock's recurrent formal use of doubles as cosmological analogues.¹⁹

Some years later, Andrew Sarris places similar emphasis on the parallel but separate worlds of psychological and material reality, when he argues that material objects in Hitchcock's films are emblems of the characters' obsessions. For Sarris, Hitchcock is a rigorous moralist who counterpoints a 'dizzying number of levels' among which suspense and the comedy of manners are but two.²⁰ Sarris is also among the first American critic to apply an auteurist overview to the evolution of Hitchcock's editing structure as yet another level of narrative reiteration. According to Sarris, cutting is often used to underscore the difference between what people say and what they do, in addition to its other, more traditional functions.²¹

STRUCTURAL COMPLEXITY

*Cinema suspends in advance the promised mimeticism literalized in the critical tradition's major trends (humanist, identificatory, Oedipalist, historicist, auteurist), as though replacing it with webs of cross-relays and trace chains.*²²

Another insight may also serve as a justification: Bellour uses the word “rhyme” for the complex formal and thematic homologies which we have thus far been referring to as the symmetries of Hitchcock’s narrative construction. His declared purpose is to avoid the linguistic restrictions of semiology in carrying out this sort of structural analysis, all the while sharing the semiological view that the notion of inviolate beauty does not place an aesthetic object beyond one’s desire to analyze and know it. Bellour’s methodical analysis of a single sequence indicates the level of structural complexity, which will be considered in establishing the evolution and progressively deepening significance of symmetry and pattern as sources of meaning in Hitchcock’s films. The meaning emerges in the succession of a story in pictures by the double constraint of repetition and variation, hierarchized according to the logical progression of symmetry and asymmetry. Moreover, Bellour’s analysis indicates the possible ramifications of applying this structural approach to the whole film and to all of Hitchcock’s films. It stops considerably short, however, of Lévi-Strauss’ prescription for establishing the relationships with the formal lexicon, creating a structural analysis, which places the meaning of individual units within an entire body of work.

Illuminatingly, Robin Wood noted that in *The Birds*

(1963), central things are (1) the mother–son relationship, and (2) the use of audience-identification techniques already familiar from *Vertigo*.²³ The birds in the film express the tensions between the characters. They are not there to punish the people or to take revenge, since the explanation for their behavior is unknown. Maybe they are more or less reflecting the anxieties of the main characters. Melanie (Tippi Hedren) was abandoned by her mother at the age of eleven; the birds' aggression derives metaphorically from this anger and frustration. There are straight references to this in how Melanie is positioned in relation to the birds. According to Robert J. Yanal, explanations concerning the presence of the birds fit into three types: 1) Natural explanations, which try to explain what experience has told us about birds, 2) pre-natural explanations, which try to explain why the birds are behaving with malevolent intent, and 3) theological explanations, which consider the birds as instruments of divine justice or as emanations of evil.²⁴ More than this, Hitchcock is telling us about the inexplicability of the birds: *The Birds* is not about fear of the unknown, but fear of the unknowable.²⁵ In this film, Hitchcock focuses on the attention and perception of the spectator, controlling their reactions with the rhythms of editing and camera movement. This would imply that the film gets a lot of value from the intensity of its images, and that uncertainty is the keynote of the film. Under this scrutiny, every action becomes ambiguous. *The Birds* finds a balance and precariousness that runs through all of Hitchcock's films.²⁶

With respect to this, an exploration of the symmetry between formal structure and narrative meaning is provi-

ded in analyzing, for example, *Rope* (1948). In the film, a teacher called Rupert Cadell (James Stewart) is forced to confront the moral implications of his role in affecting the imaginations of his student audience, when his presence at a dinner party, given by two of his male students, becomes an occasion culminating in a homosexual murder, conceived by the students as an homage to Cadell's teaching of Nietzsche.

It is useful to approach the films in general, as well as provide specific insights into Hitchcock's methods and particularly into the aspects of the ontological connections between the film narrative and its subjects.²⁷ In considering the continuity of the Hitchcock canon, there is particular critical value in the discussion of the continuity of genres in general, and the persistence in film of the traditional or folk forms of narrative which presents characters as mythical types. These observations on the evolution of a narrative tradition lead to the considerations following Hitchcock's recurrent use of formal symmetry, the mythical type of the scapegoat, the archetypal resonance of narrative situations, and the subtle configuration of various types of characters in Hitchcock's films.

Furthermore, Hitchcock's close affinity with the reiterative patterns of other narratives, which deal with mysteries and their solutions, consider the cultural significance of a central character who pits himself against crime and assumes an explicitly psychological burden in committing himself to an analytical process, the solution of which brings the relief to his own anguish and restores the social order. The detective is an instance of the conventional isolated hero familiar from Romantic literature, so the re-

current identification of this character with the object of his pursuit, the multiplicity of disguises and mystifying situations in which the detective hero finds himself, elevates the question of identity and its many undercurrents to the status of a very real subject of the narrative.

MYSTERIOUS IDENTITIES

*The fact that the attitude that we as spectators adopt towards fictional narratives are important to us is manifested most strikingly in the occasions that we resist or refuse to accept, on moral grounds, the attitudes that a narrative invites us to take.*²⁸

In *The Lodger*, the intrusion of the irrational into the mundane world of daily events is treated as an overture to the complex variations on this theme that are to follow this establishing section. The first of the film's symmetries is that of a murderer and a victim: a situation which establishes a model for other human relationships that occur throughout the narrative. It is not the murder, therefore, that must be solved in order to restore the normal symmetry of erotic possibility, free of criminal taint, but the deeper mystery of where the murderous impulses originate. Following this, we find that until a psychological cataclysm is precipitated, by publicly revealing the criminal potential of the entire society, all attempts to restore balance are deformed and thwarted by the taint of bias and suspicion. In this sense, the formal use of point-of-view shots and moral vision are correlatives.

On the narrative level, it is a process which leads to a

series of events, testing the limits of physical endurance. Parallel to it on the psychological level is the loss of spiritual innocence: a vision beyond illusory materiality to an awareness of what lies behind it. On both levels, Hitchcock fills the landscape with a wealth of physical detail, the false clues which simultaneously deceive the eye and confound the analytical process. Vision and choice become essential. In *The Lodger*, like in many of his later films, Hitchcock emphasizes his concern with two separate forms of vision, sensory and moral, presented as a single interdependent unit. Visual components are born out of this. They are more than stylish and combined with suspense.²⁹ The darkness in which the expansion of panic occurs at the beginning of the film establishes the connection between emotional disorder and impeded vision. The middle part of the film, bracketed by the murder and the mob scene, is set to symmetrically oppose the earlier public sequences by contrasting the visual field to the scenes which are generally set within the claustrophobic house. In the narrative, the domestic and the global are made to share the formal opposition of microcosm and macrocosm.

The metaphorical dynamics of this situation are characteristic of Hitchcock's repeated use of personal sexual attraction as an extended metaphor for the seductive affinities of good and evil. The daughter is emotionally torn toward the lodger and the detective, but the separate presence of each, formally emphasized through parallel editing, makes erotic completion impossible. The restoration of sexual calm, like the restoration of social order, can only come about when she witnesses the public reconciliation of good and evil brought about by the mob (a formal and physical

convergence of her metaphorical lovers). The real irony is that the two men are nearly doubles in their likeness: both are rather ordinary men driven to the brink of murder by hidden rage. They are suggestive of the more subtle doubles of Guy (Farley Granger) and Bruno (Robert Walker) in *Strangers on a Train*, and the heroine's situation surely prefigures the dilemma of Charlie Newton (Theresa Wright) in *Shadow of a Doubt*, who must choose to rely on what she sees in order to dispel her erotic illusions about Uncle Charlie (Joseph Cotten) and survive. Innocence is clearly established as a form of moral blindness in Hitchcock's world, and disillusionment leads to salvation.

Blackmail is a film that recounts the psychological vicissitudes of Alice White (Anny Ondra) after her having betrayed her boyfriend, murdered the artist who attempted to seduce her in his studio, and allowed Frank Webber (John Longden) to pursue the blackmailer, whose ultimate violent death leaves her own moral dilemma ambiguously unresolved. It marks Hitchcock's serious return to formal innovation, using the camera and the formal construction of the cinematic narrative to create a non-didactic linkage between parallel visual and psychological texts. In the opening sequence, a criminal is caught in his room and taken off in handcuffs and fingerprinted. After that the arresting officers wash their hands. This scene is a pre-figuration of style and content of the elements, which begin to appear in all Hitchcock films from this point onward. The terseness of this sequence reflects, in nuclear form, Hitchcock's consistent inclusion within the larger narrative an introductory or overture section which introduces the motifs of an extended symphonic structure.

Hitchcock observes this with an intimate mixture of affection and sadness.³⁰ The symmetries of musical structure applied to a particular set of narrative call in Hitchcock's invocation of the Wagnerian technique of an epic plot that is organized through the recurrent use of leitmotifs, and indicates a model of self-referential organization that Hitchcock considers appropriate to the organization of his own narrative material. Music is seeking out the thoughts inside the narrative construction.³¹ The merger of elaborate plot and musical elements in the epic scope of Wagner merely points to a narrative tradition in which opera is a relatively late development. Certainly the Hitchcock narrative, in which repetitive detail and analogical situations are symmetrically organized in structure, which ultimately progresses from particularized detail to universal significance, returns to the origins of epic narratives in the earliest folk traditions.

This observation does not imply, however, that the narrative form of the epic, created for the listener, or the Hitchcock narrative, created for the viewer, subordinates formal complexity to the simplicity of storytelling; a trade-off of one for the other would diminish the grandeur of the ultimate effect. The materiality of guilt formally established in the shots of eyes and hands may appeal to the critics of Hitchcock's Jesuit upbringing as emblems of the pervasiveness of temptation and sin, but the evolution of hands and eyes as recurrent motifs in the Hitchcock canon is far more complex. As they are used in many films, hands assume a particular meaning. It is a visual analogue for the fragmented personality whose identity lies solely in reducing the capability, or lack of capability, for physical action. The

fingerprinting scene in *The Wrong Man*, works as an epitomizing image for Manny Balestrero's (Henry Fonda) passive acceptance of fate. Richard Hannay (Robert Donat) is handcuffed in *The 39 Steps*, a film in which an arch-criminal is identified by a disfigured hand. A criminal's (Norman Lloyd) hands cling unsuccessfully to the Statue of Liberty in *Saboteur* (1942) while Roger O. Thornhill's (Cary Grant) hands cling successfully to Mount Rushmore in *North by Northwest* (1959), and hands are clearly used as emblems of frustration by sexually repressed psychopaths in a number of the later films. In some cases, the spectator is aware of the genuinely guilty party, so her attention focuses on the behaviour of the guilty one. An interesting film in this case is *I Confess* (1953), which deals with the institution related to freeing oneself from the guilt, the confession. The narrative concerns the moral conflict and the suspense arising from it. The guilt in front of God, and in front of society, will be handled equally. This features a certain double-coding, in which the guilty person attempts to evade the condemnation of the people, whereas the priest (Montgomery Clift), guarding the secrecy of the confessional at the price of his life, attempts to fulfill God's will and the role he has in the confession.³² Hitchcock deploys his usual precision in establishing intimations of crime and sin through purely civic and ecclesiastical images.³³

If, for example, hands are established in many Hitchcock's films as a subtext of leitmotifs signifying the source of action, their parallel and closely related subtext is that of eyes, which stand for both actual and moral vision. Hitchcock creates an ongoing interplay between these two motifs. The progress of a character toward visual acuity, of-

ten through attention given to the visual aspects of a mystery, allows for the potential reactivation of hands required in the restoration of order. Conversely, the presentation of distorted vision as a motif is accompanied by hands which act as the agents of disorder. Norman Bates in *Psycho* embodies distorted vision and action, and the complex subtexts of eyeglasses and hands and the predatory emblems of lobsters on Bruno Anthony's tie in *Strangers on a Train* exemplify these interrelated motifs. Methodical development of eyes and hands as a system of non-literal representation in Hitchcock's films provides the sort of formal linkage between parallel worlds of illusory order and actual disorder.

SETS OF CRIME AND GUILT

Hitchcock's general orientation on moral and, in some cases guilt, in his films is characterized by Catholic and other cultural influences. Also, as Durgnat has noted, Hitchcock's morality has the characteristics of Anglo-Saxon lower-class Protestantism in its capacity for rapid oscillation between a post-Wesleyan evangelical optimism, and a grimmer, more punitive view of human depravity.³⁴

In many of Hitchcock's films, the guilty party is revealed for the spectator during the narrative. Hitchcock's solution points out how the guilty person faces his/her own guilt. This is a major change introduced by Hitchcock into the thriller canon. It also questions the idea of popular culture connected with these visions. One of Hitchcock's approaches deals with the original sin and its Christian af-

termaths. A person suffers from being guilty as a human, totally independent of how she or he has lived. This affects the characters already when they are relatively young, like Charlie (Teresa Wright) in the *Shadow of a Doubt*. In *Vertigo*, Scottie (James Stewart) is already guilty in the first frames of the narrative and has to punish himself for that. He cannot allow himself to be equally loved by Midge (Barbara Bel Geddes), so he chooses 'longing' and directs it towards Madeleine (Kim Novak) who has no prerequisite to be in this kind of situation. Moreover, there is Scottie's fear of heights, his vertigo, and the guilt embedded in it. He has "caused" two falls during the narrative, the policeman in the beginning and the fall of Madeleine because of his vertigo. In the end, he finds out about the double role of Madeleine, which frees him from one 'crime' and also from the vertigo. Now he is in a situation where he can continue to take care of his own guilt.³⁵

While the worlds of crime and psychological aberration are obscured by the confusion of superficial material detail, the abstractions of eyes and hands function as economical emblems of this divided world. The use of this formal shorthand in the narrative organization also motivates a set of formal structures in which the camera plays a large part. Hands are typically shot in isolation or in close-ups, which emphasizes their larger significance. The motif of eyes and vision is similarly formally elaborated in the extensive inclusion of shots of directional glances intercut with point-of-view shots. In *Psycho*, the shower sequence set was built so that the walls could be removed, thus allowing the camera in close enough to film the elaborate montage sequence of 78 shots the director needed to cap-

ture. The sequence suggests not only that one sees a naked woman, but that one also sees the knife entering flesh. Close scrutiny of the sequence proves that this is not the case; one is simply fooled by the rapid cuts. In fact, the scene is bloodless until the end.

Hitchcock's abstractions of eyes and hands are one indication of the emphasis he places on details, which act as material and visible analogues for the holism of the human body and universal order. In light of this formulation, the mutilation or fetishization of the body is invariably associated with the violation of a social or cosmic symmetry. Norman Bates' mummification of his mother, an attempt to fetishize the body of one of his early victims, is a perversion of the creative impulses of a psychotic personality. The elaborate fetishization of Madeleine by Scottie in *Vertigo* is a similar impulse of a psychologically deranged character striving to restore the illusion of superficial continuity in an emotionally disjointed situation. In a way, *Vertigo* has similarities in its basic idea with *Rear Window* (1954). The spectator follows, like Ferguson, this mystical Madeleine and shares both the wandering and the later guilty feelings related to the death of Madeleine with him.³⁶ The guilty feeling stays, although the spectator gets to know the story earlier than Ferguson. In spite of this, the spectator starts to participate in all this and is also involved with complex moral issues, including the question of cause and effect in relation to responsibility, and so on.³⁷ Moral pressures are cleared out and intensified through the suspense structure, which goes on all the time. *Vertigo* was based on the book, *D'Entre les Morts*, by Pierre Boileau and Thomas Narcejac. Hitchcock took very little from the book apart

from the basic plot line. Hitchcock revealed the surprises to the spectator, unlike the original French writers, but in Hitchcock's film, the organization and the structure of cinematic expression, plot, characterization, and psychological dilemmas are all subordinated to the general thematic development.

In *Vertigo*, Scottie tries to recreate Madeleine in the figure of Judy (Novak again). All these moral pressures and issues are intensified in the film through the construction of suspense, which is cleverly built up on the themes of vertigo and falling. As so often in Hitchcock, the creation of suspense deals with moral, psychological, and erotic motifs. The suspense creates not only the spectator's interest towards future, but at the same time brings in an evaluation of the past. The essential thing is to decode the setting, which in *Vertigo* means a therapeutic treatment of the protagonist, and also of the spectator. This is due to the carefully structured identification process Hitchcock uses in the film.³⁸ *Vertigo* has a unique continuity of development, which contains a brief prologue and three main movements. In prologue we have the incident that precipitates Ferguson's vertigo. The first movement deals with his consent to follow Madeleine and the gradual deepening of his involvement. The second movement shows her attempted suicide, their meeting, and the development of their relationship until her death and his breakdown. The third movement begins with his meeting with Judy, and passes through the development of their relationship, his attempted re-creation of Madeleine, to Judy's death and the curing of Ferguson's vertigo. Robin Wood thought that of Hitchcock's films, *Vertigo* was closest to perfection, since

its profundity is inseparable from the perfection of form: it is a perfect organism with each character, each sequence and each image illuminating each other.³⁹

Robin Wood's analysis of Hitchcock in the Shakespearean tradition lends insight to the antecedents to Hitchcock's view of human relationships as analogous to cosmic order or disorder. Although one may find elements of tragic sensibility in the violent struggles of Hitchcock's dramatic situations, it is ultimately the Shakespearean comedies that function as the prototypes of Hitchcock's treatment of courtship as a struggle, carried on in a milieu of social and emotional chaos and reconciled in the symmetry of marriage. Hitchcock's view of human relationships also produces comical approaches and consummation is the end result of an episodic series of extravagant events and trials. It is exemplified by films like *North by Northwest*, in which the murder of a diplomat at the United Nations is all but forgotten in the comic events of the narrative. A similar rejection of the tragic vision for the comedic is evident in the narrative emphasis of both versions of *The Man Who Knew Too Much*. The issue of marriage and family supercedes the ostensible social crisis connected to saving a diplomat's life. In the comic world of illusory doubles, the unity of marriage is the double structure which resolves all the others.

The reconciliation of illusion and reality comes to be recognizable as the moral torpor afflicting the Hitchcock character who is the victim of excessive innocence or moral blindness, like Joan Fontaine in *Rebecca* (1940) and *Suspicion* (1941) and Ingrid Bergman in *Notorious*. The unmasking of doubles is often the key to the resolution of

social chaos in the Hitchcock film. In *Shadow of a Doubt* and *Strangers on a Train*, these are literally doubles which represent some form of psychological and sexual split in the characters within the narrative. The centrality of the staircase motif in Hitchcock's films introduces the Hitchcock vertical on which the upper reaches are fraught with the terrors and anxieties traditionally associated with the lower depths. In the vertical as divided by Hitchcock, the upper half is the realm of dangerous confrontation and the lower half is generally some form of reintegration into ordinary life and order. Norman Bates and Uncle Charlie are associated with the psychological chaos at the top of the stairs; the mythical parody of Guy Haines' visit to Hades is shown as an ascent of Bruno Anthony's staircase in *Strangers on a Train*, and the space at the top of the stairs is the place where victims are sequestered or murdered in *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, *Notorious*, and *Frenzy* (1972). This view of the upper zone of the staircase as a locus of psychological disorientation is epitomized in the organization and emphasis on the dizzying point-of-view shots in *Vertigo*. When Scottie races up the bell tower and tries to stop Madeleine from committing suicide, Hitchcock uses shots combining a zoom out and a track in, reflecting Scottie's vertigo. It is also a sign of a sinister staircase motif in Hitchcock's films. The location of a corridor punctuated by doors – often bedroom doors – at the top of the stairs establishes a further connection between the erotic and deadly potential of this space.

Hitchcock's staircases frequently evoke fears: famous examples would be Melanie going up the staircase in the dark in the

Brenner house (The Birds), and *Lila going down into the cellar in the Bates house* (Psycho).⁴⁰

We may think that the staircase merely signifies a single aspect of the larger vertical system, which provides a pathway between the world of psychological disorientation and the earth-bound lower zone of stability. In many cases, this division is reflected in the use of perilous heights to underscore in spatial terms the psychological distance between these two worlds, especially in the case of characters who are capable of psychological reintegration. However, the view from these heights is a critical moment followed by deeper insights. These characters are able to survive the hazards of the situation: the transformation of the sterile eroticism of Eva Marie Saint and Cary Grant in *North by Northwest* as it culminates in the Mount Rushmore sequence; the use of a breathtaking descending crane shot to the key in *Notorious*, a metaphorical use of camera movement to signal the power of vision to find a way out of the dilemma; the complex relationship between the overhead camera angle and the race between Mitch (Rod Taylor) and Melanie (Tippi Hedren) in *The Birds*, in which their unnatural sexual rivalry is literally viewed from the lofty realm of the agents who wish to punish them for it. In *Rear Window*, L. B. Jefferies's (James Stewart) refusal to move beyond the view of life below him turns his physical paralysis into the moral and psychological paralysis of voyeurism. In *The Birds*, Hitchcock showed a continuation of the bird idea familiar from *Psycho* where the birds were stuffed and placed in the walls of Norman Bates' motel. In *The Birds*, the spectator's role is connected with this from

early on, when the narrative offers constant comparisons between animal and human behavior. The plot-twists are also related to the spectator's position inside the narrative. The description of the spectator's actions in *The Birds* shows how the viewer is being provoked during the watching of the narrative to take in and try various alternatives for interpretation. Hitchcock plays with our expectations, building up suspense and fear through seemingly arbitrary choices.

The natural behavior comes true in Melanie's (Tippi Hedren) actions. Through Melanie's actions and her walks, we learn to see and feel the nature of the narration. We also meet all the curious people related to advancing the plot and listen to all their viewpoints. A good example is the gas station sequence in which the metaphysical alternative comes to the fore with a certain irony, since it is heard from the mouths of representatives of the ordinary. The learned ornithologist tells us a lot about birds, an Irish drunk speaks about the end of the world, and a man plays absent-mindedly with matches. This is also the case in the Bible, especially in the evangelic stories, where the 'truth' is often told by ordinary people, like fishers and a tax-collector.

The guilt in *Vertigo* comes and expands through the three falls in the narrative. Obsession is generated and the confusion of fantasy and real time is intermingled. The image of Carlotta haunts Scottie, expanding his vulnerability and creating an extended sense of inability to deal with human relationships. Scottie's tragic flow towards his Freudian unconscious is described with the nightmarish visions of his dream. Scottie's fixation with an image is shown in the art gallery sequence, where he sees the portrait of Carlotta,

looking at it like it was a representation of some holy image. This is essential from our point-of-view as Hitchcock viewers, since it deals with the way the characters in the narration can be specifically tuned in for something. In Hitchcock's films, ordinary people are there in the middle of happenings with full receptiveness in scenes concerning the turning points of their lives, and then something extraordinary happens to them.

Hitchcock was an artist struggling with all these contradictions. He was in the sense of Walter Benjamin, 'an Author as a Producer', concerned with the clarity and 'truth' of his ambitions. We as the itinerant observers of his work try to carry the questions and problems from one place to another, encountering the rich palette of options that make up a Hitchcock film. In this sense, the spectator is a traveler inside the web of a narrative, embodying the difference, and through the process of narrating her or his remarks and findings, becomes a certain mediator, and an instrument in the middle of all this. We have made a commitment to this process, and, in this sense, sacrificed ourselves to the task. Our purpose is to create an interdisciplinary space for our views, and besides this, approach the practices of narrative and aesthetic judgment, pay close attention to detail, the elaboration of historical and contextual issues, and the variety of interpretative techniques.

Is it possible to draw some philosophical conclusions? The characters in physical or emotional isolation, like those who reject experience and cling to the illusions of innocence, place themselves in a particular jeopardy in Hitchcock's world. To be guilty of any of these is to defy the completion of a symmetry, in which psychological stability

is the culmination and reward for enduring the trials of the material world. The experience of reality in a world of deception and potential menace may bring a character to the brink of annihilation, but it also provides the only possibility for redemptive epiphany and self-knowledge. To reject this experience is to invite certain death or madness. *Rope* and *Psycho* exemplify extremes of the latter, but in many of the films, the wilful blindness and self-imposed isolation of a character provokes a visible state somewhere between madness and death. The agony of Joan Fontaine in *Rebecca* and *Suspicion*, James Stewart's torment in *Vertigo*, Theresa Wright's painful repression of doubts about Uncle Charlie in *Shadow of a Doubt*, the violent intrusion of Raymond Burr into James Stewart's world in *Rear Window*, and the suffering and suicide attempt of Marnie (Tippi Hedren) in *Marnie* are all examples of this process.

DISCURSIVE AND OTHER PARALLELISMS

*Phenomenological activities transpire within us, and this happens frequently so that we are not even aware of it. Some phenomenological and cognitive functions might be transparent to consciousness.*⁴¹

The use of an actual journey to represent the metaphorical journey away from moral innocence and to the recognition of global corruption is a keynote in films such as *The 39 Steps* and *The Lady Vanishes*. These are precursors to such American films as *Saboteur*, *Strangers on a Train* and *North by Northwest*. In the films of this mode, the double structure

of a physical and psychological journey is the extension of Hitchcock's systematic use of physical details as psychological symbols.

Alongside the familiar category of symbol one may adduce that of symptom, and that of mask, whose function is not to express something but to conceal it while permitting a covert (and deviated) discharge of its energy.⁴²

In discussing with Truffaut the picaresque journey depicted in *The 39 Steps*, Hitchcock said that he constructed it episodically, as a series of short films.⁴³ The conventions of the picaresque narrative, with its emphasis on the initiation of a youthful character through the experience of life, are especially appropriate, considering Hitchcock's belief in the therapeutic value of lost innocence as a sign of psychological growth. The presence of mothers or their surrogates, for example, as they are used in Hitchcock's films, is clearly intended to signify a state of emotional infantilism and arrested sexual capacity. An extreme example of this condition occurs in the relationship of Bruno Anthony and his mother in *Strangers on a Train*: her gift of a tie clasp with his name on it is the emblem of his infantile dependence on her for his identity.

In *Frenzy*, the lurid shot of the murderer's mother from his point-of-view, framed high above in his bedroom window, is an example of Hitchcock's schematic treatment of this relationship, a major origin of more severe sexual perversity. Similarly, the picaresque adventures of Roger O. Thornhill in *North by Northwest* are, among other things, a flight from a mother who grudgingly identifies him at

the police station and humiliates him publicly by treating his explanations as the lies of a naughty child. The explicit presentation of a character in a state of sexual paralysis in these situations allows one to speculate on the psychological condition of Richard Hannay in *The 39 Steps*, whose journey actually begins prior to the film's opening events with his flight from Canada to England. Like Thornhill, Hannay is drawn into a journey whose specific details suggest that expatriation and isolation are an intense form of his psychological break with the debilitating security of childhood.

Characters can also act like surrogate victims through masks, staging and misconceptions. They get punished in surreal, unusual and cruel ways. What is the meaning of this suffering? In *Suspicion*, *Spellbound* and *Marnie*, the important road to liberation goes through remembrance, but it is possible to get rid of suspicion only in an immanent and social way. The characters are involved in a situation, in which the key to a deeper, existentialist guilt becomes more and more important. Birds are caging persons like Melanie, who is trapped in a phone booth and experiences moments of utmost fear and terror. The birds might be a metaphor of evil things in peoples' minds, a dark area from where all hope is gone and we are left with our basic and partly unconscious emotions. In *Psycho*, it was Norman's hatred that caused most of the destruction. In *The Birds*, the aggressive behavior of the birds causes a supernatural crisis among people and the community, and also affects the moral and ethical divisions among the characters. The birds are, more or less, agents of chaos and turbulence in the middle of this small place. A Hitchcock film progres-

sively uses its fictional situations to provide what may be described as a reflexive commentary on the opposition of traditional narrative modes and those of film form, using its potential to present a reality the authorship of which can be located within the work itself, rather than in the dogmatic authority of an external narrator. Each film is polarized by, and poised between, contesting authorities who make claims and counterclaims. It is the ideological basis that identifies them as authorial surrogates, in that each proposes a function of narrative art. In this sense, the agony or contest of each film is between these two potential surrogates or factions, each attempting to assert its own authority by assigning meaning to the subjects of the narrative (i.e., what one is meant to comprehend as the meaning and, by extension, the necessity or destiny of the film's narrative).

NARRATIVE DESTINY

There is a growing awareness, from a number of areas within philosophy, of the role of narratives in our lives, in such disparate areas as theories of action and emotion, practical reasoning, personal identity, and ethics.⁴⁴

Characters in Hitchcock's films have many specific and interesting dimensions. They confront themselves or others, glimpsing the potential to reassume the moral or ethical freedom as if to define and create a synthesis of objective vision, which is based on the personal reconciliation of objective-subjective antinomies of their own consciousness of

reality.⁴⁵ By heightening the form of the films, Hitchcock emphasizes the temporality of consciousness in which characters ignore the implications of freedom and moral responsibility. “These complex socio-moral statements are represented through images and sounds relying on Hitchcock’s grasp of pure form.”⁴⁶ By the time Hitchcock devised the episodic form of *The 39 Steps*, the contest for the domination of narrative destiny was clearly inscribed as a major issue in both the fictional narrative and the formal intensifiers by which Hitchcock structures the narrative material. This contest is one of authorship, which determines whose position in relation to the mystery or secret plot will subordinate or subsume all others. This has to do with the process of creating a credible narrative illusion and the power of the spoken word in the mystery thrillers. Examples feature Richard Hannay’s amusing ‘double-talk’ in *The 39 Steps* as he uses the political platform to continue his flight, taking on darker implications in the stammer, and another sort of double-talk afflicting Norman Bates’ testimony in *Psycho* (his ‘story’), as he is questioned by detective Arbogast (Martin Balsam), concerning the inscriptions on the motel register. This is a view that dictates the moral order and its formations by exposing the nature of fictional characterization in order to evoke larger philosophical arguments.

The contest for the authorship of reality accounts for the increasing stylization and formal complexity of Hitchcock’s films by the end of the thirties, leading to the further stylization of this subject in the formal designs of the American period. Examples are the struggle to triumph over the legacy of the past in *Rebecca* and *Notorious*, and

the pure stylization of this contest in the use of opposing doubles in *Shadow of a Doubt* and *Strangers on a Train*. In the essay, 'Film Form: New Problems', Eisenstein defended the formal strategies of his own work against the charges of 'formalist excess', and they are similar, in many ways, to those levelled at Hitchcock's work of this period. In Eisenstein's essay, written after his return from Hollywood and Mexico, one senses that he has begun to see formal possibilities in the use of the medium that were evident in Hollywood productions, despite the studio system's primary emphasis on product marketability and the absolute power of its moguls, whose cultural and aesthetic obtuseness was a universally acknowledged commonplace, and the equally Byzantine moral regulations in the form of The Production Code.

*Hitchcock in this regard is the closest thing the cinematic canon has to a core text that can be cited or commonly referenced. That status places it in a peculiar, and empowered position for the reader.*⁴⁷

Beyond these restraints, Eisenstein recognizes a measure of formal and aesthetic freedom that the essay attempts to reconcile with the prevailing Soviet ideology of Socialist Realism. Hitchcock's own move to Hollywood was, in part, a response to the restrictions of similar ideologies propounded by British criticism. Among other considerations, Hitchcock came to realize that the cultural naiveté of Hollywood by the virtue of its sheer ideological diffuseness provided a greater measure of creative latitude than the realist proscriptions of British cinema of the period. Eisenstein's essay was poignant in its attempt to argue for

the aesthetic and moral possibilities of film form against the prevailing Soviet proscriptions. Eisenstein's views were similar in many ways to the tenets in Hitchcock's praxis and are valuable in formulating an analysis of the aesthetic and epistemological concerns of the two filmmakers. Hitchcock had a particular belief in the extended parameters of narrative form in using a pattern as a part of a referential design, which contains the evidence of its own historical development, denying the patently illogical dogmatism of modernist political and aesthetic pronouncements that certain art may be structurally unrelated to historical evolution and its ongoing cultural shifts and changes. The subject of history in the Hitchcock narrative becomes another of the axes by which the narrative is polarized between moral and immoral characters. These two potential sources of authority in the making of a particular narrative are, in fact, paradigmatic of the structurally related macrocosm of history itself. This is a potential source of freedom and enlightenment when the process of its making is visible and freely known, and a weapon of totalitarianism (*Notorious*, *Sabotage*, *North by Northwest*) when, like the mystery that is shrouded and guarded by criminals in many Hitchcock films, its structural evolution is falsified or withheld.

EMPHATIC AND HISTORICAL PATTERNS

*The network of traces and effects that we call 'Hitchcock' emerges in through proliferating signature systems, what might be called cameonomies.*⁴⁸

The fictional narratives may lead us to take complex emotional attitudes toward the characters. The various and sometimes surprising parallels of form and fictional situation mark steps in Hitchcock's development of a narrative paradigm of reality that is different from the earlier oral and literary paradigms but which, nonetheless, bears an important relationship to them. The fictional narrative can be a literary unfolding of the events that compose the film's story and contains a context between the characters who attempt, in differing ways, to define their values in the narrated world. There are micro and macro levels in the narrative ascribing alternative meanings to reality. The macrocosmic sense of narration can create a psychological uncertainty that has traditionally tended to emphasize the authority and power of the narrator as well as the willing passivity of the spectator. Where reality in the novel is brought into being by the ever-present voice of the narrator, the act of unfolding these reality-aspirations can sometimes define the contest of authority between the characters or fictions who can be also, in some cases, potential authorial surrogates within the Hitchcockian world of narrative complexity.

According to an idea here, the viewer follows the moral and ethical development of a character. Through a progressive sense of self-consciousness on part of the characters, the responsibility for their own identities and for the interpretation of the world is no longer viewed as a simple matter of destiny or aesthetic necessity. The spectator can have challenging and ambivalent attitudes toward the characters. As the characters withdraw or are forced by what they see to retreat from blind faith in traditional authority, they

begin to recognize that it is, in fact, the very willingness to accept a reality presented by these authorities that has created the isolation and stasis they feel. In each film, the characters whose isolation is the result of this disillusionment are made to re-experience a condition of self-consciousness, discomfort, and fear in which the historically obscured choice and personal responsibility for determining reality can once again occur. Hitchcock's narratives invite us to create attitudes toward the characters. Vertiginously poised between their objective isolation and repatriation in a world in which the unity of false patterns and symmetries is clearly a subjective illusion, Hitchcock's characters are forced to re-experience and live the conditions which potentially bring illusion into being. We believe that cinema addresses characters as moral beings, and this brings in the evaluative aspect of the viewer.

At this point, the fictional crises in the Hitchcock narrative invariably raise questions which, in large part, account for the philosophical unity of the work as a whole. We can think that the narrative poses challenges, creates moral dimensions and aspirations of credible truths beyond the surface of the narrative, and fabricates human actions to have moral consequences regardless of whether they occur in a fictional narrative or in real life. The crucial answers are connected to the choices and actions of essential elements in the basic philosophical problems and dilemmas of Hitchcock's films.

Hitchcock as a sort of Hegel of the cinematic, in excess of any aesthetic category or what one calls 'film,' maybe circled as an event within the histories of teletechnics and the advent of the

*cinematic.*⁴⁹

The similarities and differences in the ways Hitchcock's characters are formed and challenged by the spectatorship and the morally salient frameworks between the real world and the film world create an important perspective. Hitchcock addresses these questions by means of the consciousness of characters within the narrative, revealing that the form of the narrative is the visible result of acts and choices in which they demonstrate their willingness to accept or reject the freedom of consciousness to which the form of the medium bears a paradigmatic relationship. As Durganath has stated: "These complex socio-moral statements depend on Hitchcock's grasp of pure form."⁵⁰ It is possible, for example, to read an individual Hitchcock film as a formally microcosmic treatment of the larger process of historical evolution, a relationship that is born by the allusive, meaningfully orchestrated parallels, which punctuate the narrative thereby enlarging the range of its implications – details of the unique fiction establishing their relationship to the macrocosm of cultural history. The individual film, beyond the unique details of its fiction, is a section of reality whose form, recapitulating the genesis of cultural history, is determined by the reconciliation of subjective and objective impulses by those who exist within it. The function of the film form is to reveal, through an aggregation of objective and subjective views where characters are seen objectively in relation to the details of their physical setting, to the world as the characters see it, objectively, subjectively, and in the limitless permutations of the two.

When Marnie 'sees red' and the screen is suffused with that colour, Hitchcock doesn't merely tinge the emulsion. the red seems to be sprayed down, its liquid pulsation recalls the bloodstains; and the colour seems to burst, against pressure, just as an emotion does.⁵¹

It resembles the dialectical, synthetic process through which reality is created.

Finally, what we read from the images depends on our ability to recognize things that have reflections into our storage of images in our minds.⁵²

Hitchcock's fictional narratives are constructed in such a way that we as the viewers can take certain evaluative perspectives towards them. The genesis of fictional propositions, their history, is an essential part of the contesting possibilities which polarize the fictional situations of *Vertigo*, *Psycho* and *Marnie*.

The three films form a group, moving from bleakness to a positive faith in a humiliated moral decency. As the animal symbols recurring in all three suggest, they are not so much moral, as philosophical, enquiries into man.⁵³

In each, the opposing factions have a more or less subjective or objective interpretation of past events, effectively reiterating similar ideas of history, alternate possibilities for being viewed as a source of authority in defining what one comes to accept as true or meaningful.

*Marnie constitutes an explicit integration of problems which remained implicit in The Birds: morality, animal energy, spiritual judgment.*⁵⁴

This polarization of contesting urges is embodied in the single, paralyzed figure of James Stewart in *Rear Window*: lofty, morally detached and, consequently, incapable of distinguishing the aesthetic function of narration from the moral. In the café scene in *The Birds*, as the townspeople propose alternative explanations for what has come to pass, Hitchcock again suggests the contesting narratives from that of the religiously superstitious to the objectively scientific, each of which attempts to impose some authoritative reading on historical events and their implications. Hitchcock's cultural context includes elements that his stylization turns into national and transnational emblems of social communication and narrative interaction. The director's cinematic strategy is to investigate and mould his narrative choices. Perception of images or sounds, and their connections, requires knowledge, comparison and deduction. The perception of a representative sign is always a perception of something. Admittedly, perception of images and sounds as a representation requires more cognitive processes than the perception of physical objects. One creates expectations as soon as one sees an image or hears a sound. All this brings in philosophical and theoretical claims about the world.

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- 50 Durgnat (1974), 186.
- 51 Ibidem., 364.
- 52 Valkola (2012), 255.
- 53 Durgnat, (1974), 368.
- 54 Ibidem., 359.
- 55 Valkola (2012), *Thoughts on Images*, 355.