

3: Scottie's Apartment to the Inquest (45:53 – 1:18:14)

In the warmth of Scottie's apartment, Madeleine regains her "cool," but Scottie gains some heat, both as detective and as a bachelor who has too long neglected the projects of physical love. He demonstrates his restraint, although it is risqué in this decade to indicate that a man has undressed a stranger while she has been unconscious. Undeeds hang in the kitchen, Madeleine wears Scottie's robe just as she might have after a romantic encounter. But, this is the 50s, and even in San Francisco the Hays Code is still in force. Coit Tower in the background of Scottie's apartment will have to do as a symbol of arousal, and Madeleine notes this monument as her means of remembering how to get back to the apartment to leave a thank-you note. Cool, hot, up, down, this is the language of vertigo that guides the film's relation to architecture and the unconscious of architecture that guides the eye after the first, possible death of our point of view character.

Returning to the theme of the death dream, we have now two examples of characters who should have died, and might have, but seem to go on acting on the screen. Hasn't this been the theme from the start, something dead that refuses to die? — Jentsch's type 1 uncanny that generates its opposite, type 2, the living thing with a will to die, the haunted character? Scottie may have died; we may be watching his dream in the final seconds of his life during the fall off the roof. Or, he may have survived. Then we are watching a woman who, though alive, acts like a zombie because there is an element of death, a dead woman, planted inside. Then we are watching a woman who commits suicide but is rescued, a dead thing that goes on living ... This is a lot of the uncanny for one film!

If we reconnect this uncanny to the dimension of the vertical itself, we have an automatic architectural correlate. And, if we connect the momentum of the eye that carries it past the apparent moment of death, we have the landscape correlate, the journey across rolling streets that is like the sea-journey of the first famous example of the possibly dead traveler, Odysseus. The eye, the ship, the soul, the survival of the gaze after it has been deprived of its body, its name, its phallic power.

So, when Madeleine restores Scottie to his real name, John Furgeson, we might notice that this is a return to some kind of sexual potential. The audience as well as Scottie is aroused, and at the 45-minute point in a film, this second plot-point needs some energy. A plot point is a juncture in a film narrative where the action takes a different direction. Things rapidly shift, and the audience is put to new interpretive tasks. Films require two plot points and can tolerate up to four, but more than two requires some in-flight re-fueling. For the film to go forward at this point requires emotional energy as well as some new mysteries. Here, we are able to put aside exposition, in the same way we put aside Midge, who does not appear in any major way in this segment, and go for action. Since this series ends and terminates the first

half of the film, we can tolerate this second plot point, although we will have a third when Scottie chases Madeleine up the tower at the Mission.

Plot points are switches. Something unnoticed from before becomes a clue or active force with a sudden new importance. In terms of metaphor, the "meaning effect," and metonymy, the artifact or means to an end, we would say that the invisible or silent metonymy had been swung up from its neutral position, where it was only a harmless component, to an active role. This makes metonymy a good place to store a detail that the audience sees but the director doesn't want noticed until the right moment.

The first plot point, for example, occurs when we see Scottie visits Elster. The thing we hadn't noticed was Scottie's skills as a policeman, which we took for granted. Now Elster wants to make use of them, make a whole job using them. In exchange for this plot point, Elster conceals a new metonymy: this is his motive for making Scottie into the ideal witness for a crime he has yet to commit. He will plant clues in all the right places. He will have Scottie follow an actress who, at the last minute, will step aside as the real Mrs. Elster is pushed out of a belfry to her death. This metonymy takes a long time to cook, and the audience cannot pull it out of the oven until it's ready.

Scottie must be "put to sleep," and the best medicine known to man is the intoxication of erotic attraction. This is not the first time we have suspected that we are watching a dream and not what is called "diagetic reality," a story purported to have happened that we could have witnessed had we been there. This new veil is part of the use of Madeleine as an image, pushed forward and pulled back. Madeleine in this sense is the phallic object. Phallic objects are those that appear and disappear, and objects that appear and disappear are, reciprocally, phallic. That is, they offer us a place in a symbolic network. This place is not entirely comfortable for us. It is a place that does not quite fit, but it is "for us" and no one else. Take it or leave it, we are "castrated" so to speak by the symbolic relationships that make the place ours and no one else's. The king is not a king without the crown, so he protects it more than his life.

If the first, detection segment of *Vertigo* corresponds to Jentsch's case of the Ad, Madeleine as a living woman haunted by a dead one, a zombie who has lost control, it must be developed through an exchange of Scottie's role from passive to active. As he warms up, so to speak, he will subjectify his formerly objective position. This is critical to Elster's plan, since without Madeleine's ability to lure Scottie to the tower but not the top of the tower, the plan will fail. Does this mean that, in switching to subjectivity for his point of view, he will have to turn Madeleine into an object? This does seem to happen, and we watch Madeleine's role as Ad turn into DA as she becomes an automaton, a construction, a mask, a ploy whose purpose is to pull off the scheme Elster has hired her for. Saving Madeleine from drowning has sealed Scottie's fate for this portion of the film. As he says during their stop by the seashore after a

visit to the Sequoia forest state park, the Chinese say that if you've saved someone's life they're your responsibility from then on.

Love, Hitchcock Style

During this segment where romantic love is front and center, some attention should be given to love, Hitchcock style. There are several models to follow. Clearly, Hitchcock does not tolerate the illusion that love is simple, or that it will be resolved without some struggle. There are many examples of happy romantic endings in Hitchcock: *The 39 Steps*, *Young and Innocent*, *The Lady Vanishes*, *North by Northwest*, *Rear Window*. We have to remember that tales of detection are a form of comedy. They are about finding the outsider who pretends to be an insider and ejecting them, so all of them in this sense are about the home, marriage, and the blurring of the boundary between inside and outside. The end of the classical comedy is a marriage, and Hitchcock supplies something like this in terms of a fantasy we see resolved, usually with a little joke, as when Grace Kelly is with Jeff, reading an adventure book, but as soon as she knows he's asleep, she pulls out a copy of *Vogue*, the fashion magazine.

To think about love, Hitchcock style, we have to go back to Marx — Karl not Groucho this time. In the idea of "surplus value" is the surprising kernel of wisdom about the fetish. This is the basis of modern marketing. A market may exist that is based on a need: food, fuel, the basics. But, these are not stable markets. The supply may be cut off, crops may fail, etc. Stable markets depend on supplying something that is not, technically speaking, manufactured, or even manufacturable. This is done by concealing, within something simple, gratuitous, easy to produce and often without any nutritional or other fundamental value, something that cannot be satisfied. The soft drink "Coke" is the perfect example. Made from a proprietary formula out of water, sugar, and small amounts of the copyright component, it can be supplied at almost any time, in a variety of containers, cheaply and continuously. But, marketing emphasizes something besides the product: as the saying that everyone remembers goes, an "it" that can't be satisfied, because "it" is not an "it" in the zone of reality or human needs, it is a non-existent entity, a place holder in the zone of the Real. The status of "it" is that it is always missing, always needing to be supplied. In fact, Coke doesn't satisfy thirst, it increases it, so even the formula plays into this logic.

Lacanian desire combines a Metaphoric component, what we can symbolize and ask for, the "demand" component, with an invisible and unrepresentable component, a part, an invisible and deniable part. Like the frame of the painting, it is not included in the meaning intentions of what it frames. It is as if the frame is a door or screen that has covered what we want to see, has delayed or postponed it, and we have to swing it down 90° so we can open up the hole in front of representation, pull the curtain aside. Even when we don't literally do this,

there is some component that has played the part of a metonymy, a part of representation that has been swung aside, dropped down, forgotten, ignored, *metonymized*.

But, we can include this metonymical element inside the meaning effect. We can “swing” the perpendicular vector up into the zone of metaphor, into the representation. For example, we can show a frame inside the painting; as in *Desmoiselles d’Avignon* we can show someone holding a curtain aside. Our demand to see the representation, delayed briefly by the metonymy of setting up our point of view and framing conditions, can thus be accompanied by a metonymy that will *appear later in a different form*. In the mirror stage, the mirror delays our appreciation of the reflection, by distancing it from us in a special way. The metonymy of the mirror takes our visual demand and packages it, metonymizes it in ways we first find stupid, minimal, unimportant. The first change is that space has been reversed. We get a knowledge but it is a stereo-knowledge, a stereo-gnosis. Our left-right world has been transferred in parallel lines, so that this world does not face us, as does another subject whose left is on our right and *vice versa*. Like the painting by Magritte, provocatively titled “Not to be Reproduced,” we see an image that in effect turns its back on us. The self we see in the mirror is more unified. It has stolen our being in an image and repackaged it with something extra that we don’t possess. It creates a loss of something we never had, a metonymy that now is identified with the “it” of Coke. Yet, it shows us something more consumable, more presentable, because it is, after all, a *re-presentation*. The mirror image has taken something in the past, our old self, and packaged it as a future. Like Jentsch’s uncanny, it has turned us from something Alive into something bound by this dropped out element, something that makes us play dead just in case this live element is going to call us, call *on* us; its desire now defines us. In the stereo logic of mirrors, the mirror of self-consciousness shows us something Alive, the image (it seems to move on its own), but something with an element, some “it” that is inanimate but a sign of fate, of death. The future it shows is an Appointment in Samarra, an appointment with death. The live element has been elevated, so to speak, to a position of potential kinetic energy. It can power the action of a film or even ordinary life. In coordination with this elevation is the *distantiation* of the other, the dead element, as a kind of vanishing point. Like all actual vanishing points, where parallel lines seem to converge, they move as we move. They are perfectly coordinated with the POV. They move as we move, so we might define the human subject as a moving mirror stage, a portable agent of stereognosis that creates, as it *moves along*, a dividing line that is a screen on to which we project demand along the line of sight and desire as a cover that opens and shuts off this portal of visibility to cultivate a desire for what we don’t see, things that are just out of reach, just a bit off stage, slightly beyond our technology. We are in the position of watching a Jack-in-the-box that gives us peek-a-boo appearing and disappearing images of objects that we desire but which are snatched away.

Marx and Freud were revolutionary because, in talking about ordinary human desire, they added this orthogonal element of fetish. In such a way, they mapped out the domain of the unconscious, and gave it the general name of the logic it used: metonymy. This refuted Descartes' "I think therefore I am" by showing that the "I am," existence, is always delayed, always put in terms that are linked like a Borromeo knot, where each two components are joined only by the presence of a third. Love, Hitchcock style, makes use of the diagrammatic potential of this situation. In the creation of Madeleine, we have, first of all, a woman who does not have to be a representation of anything but herself. Scotty has never met the real Madeleine, so the actress Judy is "the real thing" and not the real thing at the same time.

Freud says that there are always at least four people in every love relationship. There are the two literal partners, then there are the two imaginary partners generated by the desire of each, the person they are really in love with, contained as a kernel of being, a mysterious essence, of the other. This essence is the basis of the Lacanian slogan, "Desire is the desire of the Other." It's not what our beloved says it wants, but what we think it would say it wanted, if it really knew. I say "it" because it this extra element, this metonymy, is like an automaton, a mechanism that keeps on producing, keeps on working, even when the beloved is asleep. It is a kind of WALY.

Like the metaphor and metonym of the mirror stage, love depends on appearance and concealment, hence it's uncanny from the start. And, because the metonymy is suspended in space as well as in experience, and because this suspension, this hanging from the roof-top so to speak, is tied to the creation of a vanishing point, a permanently invisible spot from which the Other creates desire, a vanishing point, we can materialize spatial situations, even whole architectures and places, out of the geometry of the situation.

In *North by Northwest*, we have the Hitchcockian motif of the subject being held up by the Other on the chase scene across the faces of Mt. Rushmore, we have the vanishing point of the train tunnel, we have the field empty meanings — an Illinois cornfield — contaminated from above by an armed crop-duster, we have a subject "killed" by the fact that he is mistaken for a non-existent look-alike. We can find other versions of these scattered all across Hitchcock's work. The point is that this geometry, this fundamental architecture of desire, allows us to find actual buildings, actual landscapes, actual characters and situations, that any audience would recognize and find understandable. The geometry itself is the metonymy, the unconscious, the machine, the formula for entertainment, that allows us to enjoy without knowing how we are enjoying. Because this formula was created by the director working with writers, cameramen, set designers, and others; we know it was "inventable" and not just something we imagine in order to interpret Hitchcock's films. In fact, interpretation is made impossible, since there is only the experience of these structures, not any reference set of meanings. Hitchcock is perfectly Lacanian when he emphasizes meaning *effects* over referential meanings, basically saying that there is a template, that the template produces

material things we can experience, but that there isn't anything beyond this. Our chiaroscuro as an audience is based on our ability to move from type 1 to type 2, to the orthogonal position where we can see how the collection of things we see is patterned by a master template, a profile that can trace, on any accidental collection of details, an architecture that will make it click in relation to desire.

When Marx identified the fetish and Freud identified the symptom, they had found the machine in the brain, so to speak, that stabilized the otherwise unstable situation we find in nature, if we only talk about the supply and demand of essential goods such as food, shelter, and security. Our bodies still require these, but human culture adds that metonymical machine that brings stability to the unpredictable flow of supply and demand. It adds the invisible, unsymbolizable, technically non-existing element that, when located at the heart of the subject and the Other that the subject imagines, stabilizes the situation through a fiction. This was Lacan's discovery when he went back to rescue Freud from his followers. He went to find the details that Freud himself had forgotten about, and what he found was mostly the structures that made popular culture, the landscape, and the places we build and inhabit, the containers of our unconscious. So, as Agent Mulder says in *The X-Files*, "the truth is out there." The unconscious is relocated, remapped, from the inside to the outside, in a primary functionalism, an "F of 'x'," that makes the object into a subject and the subject into an object. Lacan's genius was to give this process, this function, the name of the extimate and tie it to the traditions of the uncanny that stretch back to the origins of human culture. The tendency of modern takes on the uncanny is to go as far as the French Revolution and the coincidental rise of the Gothic Novel, as if to say that only rationalism could be responsible for realizing the entertainment value of the uncanny. But, superstition existed long before there was anything that conceived itself to be superior to superstition. The Lacanian scholar Mladen Dolar points out that the uncanny was the primary component of ritual, religious practice, folk conceptions, and popular arts long before the French Revolution. Jentsch and Freud noticed this, but theorists such as Anthony Vidler, whose book on Architecture and the uncanny have regarded it as an Enlightenment project.

Love, Hitchcock style, is the creation of a stable situation out of an unstable one, but we see how this can be a plot device. Elster wants to insure that Scotty will show up at the Mission with the bell tower, so he has to stabilize romance, make sure it's not just a boy meets girl thing. His strategy is to "overdetermine" all of the layers of meaning that are created by his assigning Scottie to follow Madeleine. This overdetermination idea pervades the whole film, to the point where even the painting behind Scottie standing in the art museum is chosen to contain a clue. The Argosy book store takes us to the newspaper edited by Ambrose Bierce, which takes us to a story about a Civil War spy and the death narrative as a device. Pop Leibel's German accent ... is that an accident? Once we see that portraits, colors, magazines on coffee tables, the names of buildings, and all kinds of other things have been purposefully

planned, you start to pay attention; and paying attention is just what Hitchcock wants you to do.

So, over-determination is itself a product of the architecture that generates buildings and places. This is lucky for artists, who depend on material things rather than abstract theories. When things are the ideas themselves, we can set the machine on cruise control once we get the initial settings correct. This is the way Hitchcock made films, to turn us into ideal spectators, but also *Vertigo* is a film about Elster's own machine, his over-determined plan to turn Scottie into the ideal witness. Once we realize the set-up, we can enjoy the over-determination; but as we see after the tower scene, Scottie cannot. His reaction to Madeleine's death is only at first psychotic; later he becomes simply neurotic, like the rest of us. Our neurosis as spectators takes the form of hysteria. We enjoy being scared; we find anxiety entertaining, pleasurable. Scottie's anxiety becomes an obsession to return, first to the woman he has lost, he thinks; then he physically returns to the scene of the crime, which gives the plot a symmetry that we can recognize.

In Scottie's psychotic phase, we see animated images that combine the forms of memory into monsters or hieroglyphs, signs that keep permuting and spiraling, a nightmare that is a gallery of things that dissolve as soon as we get close. Distance collapses, dimensionality itself becomes rubbery and soluble. The subject, we discover, needs space to exist; a loss of space is suffocating, claustrophobic — indicating just what the main function of our fundamental architectures really is, to provide a model kit of dimensions and angles to keep space open, to keep the mirror image on the other side of the screen.

The cost of this space is like a Real Estate surcharge, a hidden cost inserted at the closing, when we sign the papers. It is the deal of the uncanny exchange, the small print that inserts the dead thing into the living thing and the living thing into the dead mechanism. The payoff is the material that thinks for us, the memory that remembers us, not us remembering it. So, after the ball drops at New Years, after the body falls, we're dead; we're the perfect spectator. Sit back and relax!