

5: Discovery of Judy to the Jewel (1:31:42 – 1:58:30)

We open the story of Scottie's release and recovery with a panorama of the San Francisco Bay. This elegant piece of landscape is still regarded as a kind of jewel, a perfect marriage of land and sea, with about a million good restaurants in between. But, given that this is a Hitchcock film, we know to expect trouble in any paradise. In this part of the film, Scottie will get past Madeleine's death, but what takes its place is more sinister. He will find a woman who is a working-class version of Madeleine, the shop-worn Judy, whose eyebrows are a bit too thick and hair a bit too unkempt. Needless to say, she doesn't drive a Mark 8 or have a wardrobe of Edith Head designed clothes, but we'll soon find out what. This seems to be just another girl from the Midwest, come to California to find love or money or both, but — wait! — this is not just another Dorothy from Kansas; this girl can act. We are put in the position of discovering that Kim Novak is quite an actress, when of course we are watching a film where there is nothing but actors on the other side of the screen, but here we have a case of what has been called "iconicity." The representation makes a reference to its own form. So, Kim Novak the actress plays an actress, and has to hide her acting skills as a part of her act. We might remember the scene from David Lynch's *Mulholland Drive*, where Naomi Watts plays Betty, an *ingénue* at an audition, where she turns into a real and compelling actress in the part she does with the slimey seducer, Woody Katz (Chad Everett), meaning that she must be an even better actress when she's playing the naïve Betty. Enough about doubles troubles.

Identity is the key issue at this point. We have gone through two phases, which corresponds to the first and second side of the triangle of displacement, scale, and identity. Displacement takes us all over San Francisco, with Scottie occupying the shadows of chiaroscuro constructed for him by Elster and Madeleine. He comes out of the shadows in the "scale" scenes. Here, the term Lacan used for the inside-out situation, the *extimate*, applies, and we can refer to the diamond symbol Lacan used to indicate something that is both "greater than and lesser than." The symbol was also a mark of authenticity, the *poignon* used by silversmiths to indicate solid silver, not silver plate. The great-than-and-lesser-than situation describes the geometry of Scottie as a insider and outsider as he gets close to Madeleine. He thinks he's on the inside because of their romance. He's really on the outside because he's still operating according to Elster's plan. He's inside, he's outside. He's up, he's down. This is starting to sound like a Michael Jackson song! He's in love with a dead person who is somehow still alive, or a living person haunted by a ghost. That's the *extimate* for you!

The Alive-Dead line is transitive in the Cartesian view. The uncanny of Jentsch shows how a criss-cross blends or blurs the boundary between the two. Connecting the alive thing that has a dead bit to the dead thing that has a live bit is a materialization that we can watch on screen, experience in real life, paint, draw, photograph. In contrast to the abstract Cartesian dividing line, the blurry criss-cross line of the uncanny, "intransitive" because we can't cross over and back in a neutral manner, is a twisted space, a Möbius-band affair. How to make

sense of this — and even how to draw it as a diagram — is the aim of this kind of criticism. With the help of our understanding of how Metaphor is projective and how metonymy works as a trap-door, we can arrange our shoots and ladders to create an exchange economy that works for the arts and popular culture. AND, by finding examples of the same diagrams in art and film history, as well as in architecture and the landscape, we have a way of corroborating this hypothetical amusement park.

In this portion of *Vertigo*, a part we might equate to an “enchantment,” Scotty is also treated to a dose of the Freudian uncanny.

There are two main components to Freud’s uncanny: optics, which covers both the displacement and scale part of our triangle; and the double, which covers the final side’s theme of identity. Freud drew not only from Jentsch’s thesis about the not-quite-dead and not-quite-alive, but also from the stories of E. T. A. Hoffman. In the most famous of these, “The Sandman” (a story that Hitchcock was intimately familiar with), a young student Nathanael is enchanted by an automaton, a mechanical doll ingeniously invented by a Professor Spalanzani and his co-conspirator, Copellius, an optometrist who was involved with Nathanael’s father’s tragic death during an alchemical experiment. “Coppelo” in Italian means “eye socket,” a reference to the loss of sight Nathanael was threatened with but ignored when he witnessed his father’s experiments. Hints of Gygis and Candaules, where Gygis is offered the chance to see Candaules’s wife naked. Now, he is unaware that the optometrist was the lawyer. His love for the automaton, Olimpia, is based on the meager evidence of her charming silence. The less she says, the more he is convinced that she is brilliant. Like Olimpia, Madeleine knows that the less she explains about herself, the more Scotty will be charmed.

It would be jumping the gun, literally, to skip to the end of the Hoffman tale, where Nathanael commits suicide by jumping from a tower. The creation of Olimpia has, Freud says, shown how the case of the double, a false personality, an invented persona, can create uncanny effects by altering our stable ideas about identity. Freud also draws from this story the optical theme, which he relates to the ancient lore about the evil eye. The eye was the eye of envy, which watched from an indefinite position and made a plan to steal back wealth and beauty from those who possessed too much. This seems to be what Madeleine fears — that the soul of Carlotta is jealous of her happiness and is drawing her towards suicide. In fact, it is Scotty who is cast in the role of the evil eye. He watches from his hidden margin, but when the second phase of the plan clicks in, he is made to repent his role. His evil eye becomes a desiring eye. His metonymical position has been converted into a metaphoric one, a “meaning effect,” that effect being one of a love. He has been played as an eye of exposition, recording Madeleine’s descent into madness. Now he is played as the eye that views Madeleine with fascination. He “can’t take his eyes off her,” so to speak.

The Freudian uncanny underscores the status of *Vertigo* as a film within the discourse of analysis. In analysis, the subject switches from observer of the pleasure he or she has “staged” to a reporter. In analysis, the subject cannot speak directly about the unconscious of desire. The analysand can only make errors — slips of the tongue, spoonerisms, puns. It is up to the analyst to pick these up, to hear within the analysand’s voice another voice, an “acousmatic” voice. In this process, the analyst must play the dummy, which in French is *le mort*, the dead man. Scotty, in his possible status as a dead man, between the two deaths, cannot yet play the dummy in the story because he is still the hot detective, drawn into the plot and no longer objective. He is still being manipulated, but he is like a zombie now that Judy, the live woman, seems to have something of the dead Madeleine in her. Scottie now becomes obsessed, seems wooden, driven, unable to stop pushing Judy to be the ideal, the Olympia.

The purpose of the design of the triangle that links movement with scale with identity is, in part, to relate to three themes that are fundamental to our understanding of landscape, place, architecture, and other things we do “out there,” in the physical world. This is to take up Agent Mulder’s X-Files thesis, that “the truth is out there,” but also the more ambitious claim that our unconscious is itself extimate, the superb and ultimate extimate: the thing we hold to be the most inside us that is actually the most external to us; or rather both inside and outside at the same time. This makes our involvement in the issues of the point of view and the vanishing point all the more critical. These are the ultimate inside and outside points. They are coordinated, as we know from personal experience, but their functions as antipodes, or opposite points can be carried into other fields.

We have the example of physics, where the strong version of Einstein’s relativity says about the same thing as Scottie’s return to the tower. When you’re as far away as you think you can get in the universe, you’re actually back home. Blaise Pascal, the French writer and sometimes theologian, put this in terms of his comparison of God to an “infinite sphere whose center is everywhere and circumference nowhere.” We should take this “everywhere” and “nowhere” seriously, and even sometimes literally, as did Jorge Luis Borges, who even wrote an essay using this quote.

Judy and the jewel ... these are antipodes of a more immediate kind. One is a metonymy of the character of Madeleine, the actress who played her part so well. The other is the metonymy of the deal Judy had with Elster, the mock-up or possibly real thing used to convince Scottie that the Madeleine he watched and loved was indeed the descendent of the madwoman Carlotta. Both of these metonymies had to be concealed for the plot to work. Neither does the audience suspect anything until Scottie sees the necklace and deduces the connections. When a metonymy is suspended while another is on view as a part of metaphor, we have the rhetorical figure of metalepsis. When we connect the two metonymies, we have analepsis. This connection constructs a diagonal line that runs back into the past, to connect

to the point where the first metonymy dropped out. This diagonal is like a regression line in statistical analysis. We can drop other things on to it, and see how they transform. Generally, the process resembles the trick used in painting and architecture called "anamorphosis." An anamorphic image is one that is plotted out carefully to be understandable from only one point of view. Sometimes the "sweet spot" is obvious, such as a peep hole in the broadened frame of a painting that allows the viewer to look down the surface at a steep angle. In other cases anamorphosis is like a forced perspective that makes objects look closer or further away, the kind of trick played with stage sets. Although not technically anamorphosis, the shrinking or lengthening of space is a way of making the viewer feel closer or further away, and any manipulation of the POV could be considered a cousin of this kind of visual alteration.

What we see when we change our POV is either more of the same or something that reveals an alternative reality. A true anamorphic object is one that sets up a radical either/or situation. We either tune in to one reality or another. The diagonal line of analepsis cuts across the ordinary view, which tolerates a broad bandwidth in the point of view. The new diagonal cut pulls down clues we have already encountered and turns them into what Lacan would call "partial objects." The jewel is a partial object *par excellence*, because it is radically out of place in Judy's jewelry box. Its location there means one thing only: Judy is really the Madeleine Scottie thought was dead. The effect of this realization is to collapse the dimensionality that had supported the previous story space. The jewel becomes unbearably close.

We now see how the question of identity works as a third side of the triangle of motility, scale, and identity. It's not about finding one's self, it's about the radical impossibility of this task. Judy can't be Madeleine but she's the only one who was ever Madeleine for Judy. Judy can't be Judy either, because a girl from the Midwest with no charm and no money has no attraction for Scottie. Their history was built on fiction, on fantasy, and without that fantasy nothing can exist. Judy's identity now works like an arrow shot to the heart of a target, the space that it vacated in order to make room for the illusion. When it arrives at this destination, all space disappears down the black hole it creates. A new frame is formed from this dense, dark center, and reality is now re-framed from the inside out. The "inside frame" is something we can walk around and hold in our hands, but it is more accurate — more Real — to say that it walks around us, it holds US while sitting in our hands. It is like a worm-hole penetrating into some parallel universe, in science-fiction terms, but in contrast to these kinds of constructs, this is a worm-hole to the center of the story that pulls the story inside out, and us with it.

Freud used a phrase to describe the goal of psychoanalysis, which was really the goal of discovery of the self: *Wo Es war, soll Ich Werden* — "Where 'it' was, there should I be." What is the "it"? Most commentators feel that it is the *id*, the pre-symbolic self, the emotional core of subjectivity. The triangle of motion, scale, and identity permit us to take a new stab at this. The "it," the German *Es*, could be object that dropped out, the first metonymy that starts the

show going. The “where,” *Wo*, is clearly the place, which in the case of the metonymy that drops out, an empty location, a blank spot. Something in the construction of the Big Other that is missing, incomplete. Here we may be on to one of Lacan’s ideas, in his coupling of a Big Other — whatever or whoever we take as authoritative, commanding, important — and a small other, the famous *objet petit a*. This can be pleasure or pain. It can be a lost valuable, a missed opportunity, a trauma. Whatever IT is, it is what disappears — but we can’t say that because it never appeared; we could say we lost it but we never possessed it. It has not just a negative quality but a negative NEGATIVE quality. Like the square root of -1, it has come about by means of a misfit, a wrong turn, a mistaken calculation.

So “it” and “location,” both cast in the negative, are like a dream of some utopia. Never happened, never will. We can’t find it because we never had it to lose. The one thing we can do is return to the spot, which is empty, and find where the symbolic self, the *Ich*, the “I,” is going to be. We will *become* something at this spot, but what? We can’t say because the spot forbids symbolization. We can paraphrase it in dramatic terms as a ghost, which is what Judy becomes when Scottie drives her out to the Convent. She’s symbolically going to play the part of Madeleine but she’s also going to BE Madeleine, the dead Madeleine. We are going to close the triangle through this act of identity, and in the process destroy the whole notion of identity as we had known it. The identity is the identity between the unthinkable, the square root of minus 1, and *identity itself*.

The ruby necklace may speak to this theme of anamorphosis and this negative negative quality. Ruby, after all, is the choice for the slippers that Dorothy, that other girl from Kansas, wears to gain the powers of time travel and royal status. Red is, however, a color for the concealed secret. It is the blood that taints the plan that has lured Scottie to be its key part. Green is Madeleine’s and Judy’s public color: Madeleine’s Jaguar and dresses, the green neon sign outside Judy’s window that drenches her in ghostly green light, the ever-green planted in the name of the sequoias. On the basic symbolic level, green is life and red is death. An evergreen forest, but with the association of *red* woods. A cut-down piece of trunk, but with marks of life inside. The shells of expensive dresses and cars, but with a creature of beauty inside. Red, however, is creepy in this film. It pulsates, comes from nowhere, is not a part of the colors that create the palette for the rest of the film. It is the mineral form of the is called the “lamella,” a substance that is neither dead nor living. Like the creatures in Stephen King’s *Pet Semetary*, who come back from the dead but you don’t want them back, this green comes back from nature all too green, all too alive. Just like the giant sequoias, they push everything aside in their triumphant survival.

As Judy gains back her beauty during the rounds to the dressmakers, beauty parlors, and hair salons, Scottie seems to retract. He’s content to see his dream come true, but his style and his gestures are constrained. He’s not funny any more. He seems to be losing momentum, moving automatically through the stations of memory.

The jolt of the jewel will trigger something vicious and sinister in the machine that Scottie has become. It is a rush to the finish, which is why we have to talk about the jewel before we see it in the next scene. Once this partial anamorphic object falls into place, Scottie will realize the real role for his POV, that prescribed by the Lacanian discourse of analysis: knowledge. His knowledge has been evidence. The etymology of testimony takes us back to the time when swearing an oath was made with ram's testicles, and now Scottie realizes that he has been symbolically castrated, which is to say, castrated by symbols, by this act of stealing his oath. The central symbol has been the necklace, the one piece of evidence that has survived from the 1850s intact. It's not so much the object itself as the place the object occupies. It is the square root of minus one in a room filled with whole numbers.