

6: Recognition to Final Fall (1:58:30 – 2:08:00)

We return to the Ambrose Bierce theme of "Incident at Owl Creek Bridge" at the point where Scottie discovers the jewel. Scottie doesn't recognize the necklace in the space of the room; but when he looks in the mirror, as if a frame and stereo-reversal were required to perfect this view, he realizes the enormity of the scheme that has involved him. He quickly adjusts the dinner plans to justify a drive in the country. As with the first drive to the mission, the process shot shows Scottie driving on the wrong side of the road. Is this to continue the theme of reversals, as if to say that the whole plot is a dream seen in reverse view? No importance — this is one detail among many that are planted for some reason that will be lost in the mists of time.

We shift to Judy's point of view so that we will experience more anxiety during this scene. Scottie's anger pushes his compulsion into the red zone. He recounts the whole story, for the sake of viewers who have been asleep for the film and didn't realize the importance of the jewel.

Scottie is now able to scale the stairs. His vertigo has been overcome. He is activating the tower's elevation. He's winding up the mechanism that will pull Judy down its height. We now see how the two metonymies have worked within the triangle of motion, scale, and identity. Each of the sides has been defined in terms of its dysfunction. Scottie *can't* climb stairs, and this is the key to why he's chosen as the ideal witness. The signifiers he will offer as an authentic testimony have been the goal. Motility dysfunction has led to a scale dysfunction that we first saw constructed in the two forms of chiaroscuro, the frontal and the orthogonal. He's looking but he can't be seen. Like Jefferies in *Rear Window*, there's no reciprocity in his surveillance, but this is a part of the scheme set by Elster. We have the defective views: the viewer and his viewing space is added to the diegetic action of Madeleine. We, as an audience, are always in the position of being rotated into the 90° POV position of type two chiaroscuro.

When Scottie moves from the cold detective to the hot detective, he puts himself in the scene, and the dimensions that served to hide him have collapsed. He is fully within the fantasy constructed by Madeleine, but he doesn't realize it's a fantasy deployed as a trap. Neither do we, the audience. The inside-outside situation of hunter becoming hunted is the other side of the *poignon* sign. Scottie's on the inside looking out. When the identity stuff rolls in, Scotty is a shadow of his former self, in a literal way that he's come unattached and is wandering around without a body, an eye with momentum.

With the three sides of the motility, scale, identity triangle pulling together, something very useful becomes apparent. If we look at the tower on the landscape from the side, we have an L-shaped diagram. If we draw a shadow line at a 45° angle, we construct a triangle. The tower is clearly the line that takes up the case for motility, and in the prescribed way that it's defined

by dysfunction. People are either dying because they fall down it or Scottie is psychotic because he can't go up it. It's a dimension with specific costs, and paying the costs are key points in the narrative.

The horizontal landscape line can possibly stand for all of the landscapes we see: rolling streets of San Francisco, coastal roads out to the mission, views in the distance, pictures of San Francisco in its historic past. It's the "OUT" to the tower's architectural "IN," and this OUT, as Hitchcock makes clear by showing us so many historic sites, is also about time. The further up we are, the further out we can see. But, this is where we equate the very top of the tower with the vanishing point in the visible scene, but also the first moments that have generated this story, when the metonym of Judy has been concealed — or should we say "suspended."

"Getting to the top," using our shadow triangle, also means getting to the origin, the cause of things. We've been restricted from the top and the origins by Elster's stagecraft. Knowing Scottie will not be able to climb the stairs, he's invented a fantasy origins, the story of Carlotta Valdez. This means that you can see the 1850s from the top of Elster's tourist tower, just as you can see prints of the San Francisco of the 1850s in his office. The vanishing point is supposed to be Carlotta's grave and other sites; but we discover that the real vanishing point is Judy working as an actress to play a fictional Madeleine. When Scottie actually does make it to the top of the tower he will see tell what he has previewed in the sparkling depths of the jewel that should not have been left behind. The jewel is the anamorph — it belongs to both worlds, but in either one of them it is only a partial object, an object that is uneasy in the place assigned to it.

The shadow line has been the "greater-than-and-less-than" scale device that has switched containers for contents, watchers with the watched, pursuers for prey. Coincidentally — or not — this shadow line has been a literal shadow line: the device of chiaroscuro that visually and narratively has managed the exchange of metonymies that have made this story work.

Shadow is a metaphor for death, and the nun is the final effective cause of Judy's jump. Does she think it's the ghost of the real Madeleine? We have forgotten about the accumulation of innocent victims, whose shades might call for some payback. But, for us, it's enough that the shadow itself has served as the pivot point that has allowed the story to rotate from a frontal view to an orthogonal one, where we now see how the tower is related to the landscape as a model of time.

It's coincidentally strange that Eratosthenes invented a similar experiment in 200 BCE to calculate the center of the earth, knowing the distance between two towns when, on the same day, there was a shadow in one but not in the other. This makes us think more seriously about the appointment in Samarra, which is planned to get every movie-goer in the audience to

think they want to go exactly where you want them to go and think they discovered it themselves.