

VERTIGO: THE MOMENTUM OF THE EYE PAST DEATH

1 / Opening Sequence to Ernie's Restaurant (0:00–16:49)

The story for *Vertigo* was taken from a French novel by Pierre Bouilleau and Thomas Narcejac whose title literally means “from among the dead,” but the French words, *D'entre les morts* are curiously close to Jacques Lacan's expression, “between-the-two-deaths,” that period between a literal death and a final death, after the soul has wandered in the underworld to discover the truth of his or her death. All cultures celebrate some form of this interval, usually as a period of mourning marked by the stabilization of the corpse. The rather gruesome facts of the case are that it takes time to get from flesh to bone, and the meaning of the word “sarcophagus” means, literally, “eater of flesh.” Stone was a magic substance in ancient times, not just for its relation to the underworld, but for its role as the chief substance of architecture. Think, for example, of the Neolithic and Iron Age constructions of stone circles where ritual observation of the sun and other events were the first complex and completely accurate clocks that humans ever created. The Mayan calendar still stands as the most accurate mechanism ever created, with their unit of the *bakhtun*, lasting 144,000 days, and long cycle starting at creation and ending in a couple of years. The Mayans figured this out by creating stone monuments in the remarkably flat jungle of the Yucatan, using cornices, columns, staircases, and profiles on their pyramids and observatories to tighten up their night-time observations.

Stone figures in *Vertigo* as the stuff of the towers that mark critical points of the story. They are related to a specific dimension, height, which is the basis for the film's anxiety. Scottie's first trauma repeats a favorite Hitchcock motif: that of a subject suspended by the hand of an Other. Stone is literally going to eat up Scottie's flesh, and it does seem to eat up his colleague. This is one of those moments that we slip past and accept what comes next. But, does Scottie really survive? It seems impossible to get help in time; he was ready to fall when the uniformed policeman tried to pull him up. We are in a position to choose between two alternatives. Either Scottie does survive and we watch a story of a live character, or Scottie actually falls to his death and what we watch is the fantasy he constructs in the last few seconds of death, or the dream of his soul after death.

It really doesn't matter which we choose; the story makes sense either way, and there's no payoff for making the right guess. The reality of this alternative set-up, however, has been historically recognized. Ambrose Bierce, a writer of tales of the supernatural, lived in San Francisco and was a model for the book-

seller that Scottie consults later in the story. One of his most famous stories had to do with the execution of a Civil War spy. The noose goes around his neck and he's pushed off a bridge, but the rope gives way and miraculously he escapes by swimming down the river and running through the woods. He makes it back to his plantation home, where his wife anxiously waits, but just before they can embrace he is choked, violently, and we realize that this escape was imagined in the few seconds between his fall and his actual death.

The death narrative is a common plot device, and the benefit is that it works whether or not the audience knows or believes it's there. Bierce's story, “An Incident at Owl Creek Bridge,” puts it front and center, but in a general sense every story creates an interval between two deaths in relation to what happens to the audience. Sitting in a dark theater, the audience becomes as close to this idealized interval as it gets. Immobile, silent, watchful — they fantasize with the help of a mechanized eye that floats from place to place and is able to move back and forth through time. Their first death is literal: sitting down and staying quiet. The second death is the end of the story, the discovery of a truth or key to a puzzle. So, even without the specific motif such as Bierce's death narrative, the experience of any work of art involves taking a step across a boundary that separates life from death. This is not a choice but a necessity, something required to liberate our imaginative resources.

Does this mean that, like Scottie, we are also related to the vertical dimension of architecture, that this absence of ground beneath our feet create an anxiety that drives our interest and attention enough to make it through the fantasy of art? It certainly means that there is something like a wind-up effect of being at the top of a tower, that we go up, we come down. If, during this trip up and down we also watch a story about someone else going up and someone else going down, all the better. We immediately recognize the stakes of the game.

But, *architecture*? There is enough of it in *Vertigo*, whose recognizable sites and buildings in San Francisco add a component of realism. Process shots use editing to combine streets that don't really combine in the real San Francisco, but in most cases attention to actual landscape detailing is painstaking. The view out of Midge's window shows Russian Hill with the famous meander of Lombard Street. Coit tower locates Scottie's apartment, both for us and for Madeleine. We visit so many famous San Francisco sites that there are tours offered to take movie buffs around to all the scenes. This realism is needed to balance off Scottie's increasing involvement with the dream-like obsession of

Madeleine. He's isolated by his traumatic encounter with death. He's retired from the police force; his college friend and old sweetheart Midge watches him closely. His loss of the symbolic network that gave him an identity has left him at loose ends.

This feeling of isolation makes Scottie vulnerable to the proposition of Gavin Elster, an acquaintance from Scottie's past. His British accent makes us think that the two might have met at Oxford or Cambridge instead of Cal Poly, but we accept the device of a friend who married into money and is in the position to offer Scottie a job to keep him busy. Elster's office is in the middle of the docklands district that dominated before Oakland took over. Hitchcock walks past, carrying what everyone says is a trumpet case, but the curve on the end of the case makes it clear that is more like a cousin of the trumpet, a cornucopia: a horn out of which all kinds of goods — and evils — flow in abundance. In mythology, the cornucopia was a gift that Zeus gave back to Amalthea, a goat who had nourished Zeus in his infancy. He had broken off her real horn accidentally, so to make up for this he returned her a magic horn that would grant whoever possessed it whatever they wanted. The trick of the curved trumpet case can't be missed. It's one of those fine touches that Hitchcock loved to plant in his movies, and no critic has ever caught it. Like *Alladin's lamp*, Elster offers Scottie the chance of a lifetime, to spy on a beautiful woman; we also learn later that falling in love is a part of the plan.

The dead soul wandering in the underworld, one of the possible outcomes of the first minute of action, is the idealization of the eye. The body dies, but vision goes on, through a kind of momentum. The fact that Hades literally means "the invisible" means that the voyeur can't be seen. As a private detective, this is also part of the job, and the audience accepts Scottie's promised invisibility as a normal condition. But, the real voyeur of any and all films is the audience, who resembles nothing more than a bunch of dead people having a death dream. The camera mechanizes and floats the eye, carrying it into a gallery of idealized visibility. We can watch people in their most private moments, zip forward and backward in time, hide in objects, journey across the planet, even to some other planet.

The floating eye sensation is going to be a theme throughout the movie. We will follow Scottie's car as it sails over the waves of city streets, as it turns left and right, as it slides into the neo-classical spaces that Madeleine visits — places like the Palace of the Legion of Honor, which seems much larger than it needs to be for the few visitors we see. Again, the use of images of places in the film induces an effect of the uncanny — the story in the story that puts Scottie in the shadow of a "chiaroscuro" set up to create a frame inside the literal frame of the cinema. He watches from this shadow as Madeleine floats inside her own fantasy, just as we sit in the auditorium shadow watching the both of them from our own protected POV.

Elster's office, with its images of the San Francisco of the past and paintings of boats at sea sets up a kind of gallery of instruction. Scottie's given the program, a kind of map of the underworld he's asked to enter, and shown the kind of things he may encounter — everything, strangely, except an image of the woman Elster asks him to follow. This is another spring-loaded device, holding back the one thing we and Scottie want and need to see. Madeleine, the wife who is haunted by her dead grandmother, Carlotta Valdez, will be covered with veils that make Scottie all the more anxious to see her, while preserving his status as invisible.

Elster and Scottie play the parts of another ancient story, that of Gygis and Candaules. Heroditus tells of the king who offered his favorite commander the chance to see his beautiful wife unclothed. This is another Lacanian idea; it's not enough to have an experience, even the most intimate of experiences; one has to imagine a witness, a "Big Other," present to confer value and status on the experience. King Candaules wants Gygis, in effect, to know just how lucky he is. Gygis, however, realizes the danger of the situation, that in playing the Big Other, he will be subject to the King's later remorse and revenge, so he makes a secret deal with the wife to kill the king. *Vertigo* is this story in reverse. The king and the wife are partnering to victimize Scottie, by turning his voyeurism, his service as a perfect watcher, a professional watcher, in fact, to their own ends. Namely, they want him to witness a crime and testify as the expert that he is as a former policeman. — All of the crime except the final small part where a switch will be made. This part will be inaccessible, they know, because Scottie's fear of heights will prevent him from getting to this critical place in time. He will have to infer the truth from what he sees, but what he sees will be arranged, like Elster's office, as a series of images made on purpose to be seen in the right places and in the right order.

Isn't this the essence of what movies are all about?

2: Ernie's to Scottie's Apartment (16:49-45:53)

Holding back the image of Madeleine from the already image-intensive experiences Scottie got in Elster's office pays off. The rich red interior of the well-known restaurant provides a perfect jewel box from which Kim Novak, playing Madeleine and Judy, emerges as an emerald goddess. Scottie's anonymity is protected by his location and restrained observation. As our point of view character, he peeks at Madeleine out the corner of her eye. She doesn't return his gaze, although at one point this was planned. Hitchcock edited it out because it threatened to give away the secret that we don't learn until much later ... that Scottie is being cultivated as a voyeur, a professional voyeur, which is to say the perfect witness who later will be called to testify. Everything he sees and believes is being set out for him, just as in any film, the director and writers set out everything for us, the audience. In Scottie, we see how things might go if we never

asked questions, if we endured the traps and traumas set out to catch us.

The movie is divided into two main parts, with a margin in between and an intense finish. In the first part Scottie follows Madeleine, mad Madeleine, Madeleine who seems to be haunted by the idea that she is the reincarnation of her tragic ancestor, Carlotta Valdez. Do we believe in ghosts? We don't have to. We have two skeptics on board, Elster and Scottie, who hold the thesis that Madeleine is crazy, plain and simple. There are a few moments when we think that it doesn't matter, but generally we discount the supernatural thesis and regard Madeleine's obsession as something that could happen to anyone, through simple powers of suggestion.

Realism, or naturalism, is essential for the logic of detective fiction. If supernatural forces are allowed, then there's no way to solve a crime, and no point. Empiricism and logic have their hero in the detective, who emerged with Edgar Allan Poe's inspector Dupin, the ultimate "cool detective." The coolness of the detective dominated until the film noir period, when the detective became vulnerable to the double or twist plot. By planting false evidence, hot detectives such as Sam Spade or Mike Hammer could be set up by their adversaries. They started to carry guns and use them. Before that, the cool detective preferred to solve crimes from a distance that allowed for pure theory. The hero of G. K. Chesterton's Father Brown mysteries was the ultimate detached figure, perhaps, a priest forbidden by his profession to intervene except to give last rites. Sherlock Holmes became the cool detective par excellence, with his insistence on reading clues and strict deduction. The little gray cells of Agatha Christie's Hercule Poirot did all the work. The Belgian detective dressed immaculately and wore white gloves. He couldn't get his hands dirty even if he had wanted to.

Whatever happened to the cool detective? Hitchcock rescued the idea of coolness by showing us how a cool detective could be warmed up by clever villains who knew how to push the hot buttons. The audience of *Vertigo* can remain detached as long as Scottie keeps his cool, but that's not going to last very long.

The cool-hot issue takes us back to a film Hitchcock made four years earlier, in 1954, *Rear Window*. Here we also have a professional observer taken out of action, this time a photographer with a broken leg. The injury forces him to sit in the permanent chiaroscuro of his studio apartment and watch his Greenwich Village neighbors, who throw open their curtains and windows because of a summer heat wave. Like "Scottie," whose real name is John Ferguson, we have the case of a character who does not use his real name, "L. B. Jefferies." We never learn what L. B. stand for; we call him "Jeff." What does Hitchcock mean by these negotiated names? Even when a character gives his full and legal name, as does Roger O. Thornhill in *North by Northwest*, there's something wrong. When questioned, he

admits that the "O." "stands for nothing." This might have been a swipe against David O. Selznick, the contentious director who brought Hitchcock to the U. S. to do *Rebecca* and later films done until 1948 (*The Paradine Case*), after when the two parted ways. Selznick's O. was really for "Oliver," but the story is still told.

Heroes always have an identity problem, which Hitchcock works by showing them at a point when they are removed from the symbolic systems that give them their identities. Jefferies is taken away from his exciting photography job, Scottie isn't chasing criminals across rooftops any more. Even the high society cat burglar John Robie in *To Catch a Thief* is retired. Hitchcock heroes tend to be out of work or retired, and their names are sometimes a part of this identity problem.

When Scottie begins to follow Madeleine, shown driving a sleek green Mark 8 Jaguar, he seems to be slinking around. In the flower shop for example, both of them park in the alley but Scottie seems out of place. He cracks open the door to watch Madeleine order flowers. The door has a mirror on it, and in one of those brilliantly composed frames we see the logic of this part of the film. Madeleine is prepared to appear within a frame, a perfect reflection of the illusion that Elster wishes to develop. We, the audience, don't realize this yet. We are seeing her as a rich society wife with all the trimmings that wealth can provide. It's natural to see her in the flower shop and later a museum.

When we go to the Mission Dolores, we get reliable forensic evidence about Carlotta, the tombstone, dated 1831-1857, putting her age at death at 26, the anniversary date of which Elster later tells Scottie is coming up, setting a "ticking clock" device going that the audience can now anticipate.

When Scottie follows her to the Palace of the Legion of Honor building, a museum in Lincoln Park, we get a correlation between the red-and-pink bouquet she had ordered and the identical one shown in a painting of Carlotta Valdez. We also notice that her hair has the same spiral curl as Carlotta's. Madeleine seems mesmerized. Scottie gets some more disinterested exposition from the museum guard, which builds the credibility of Elster's case.

There is a strange moment when Scottie is shown in front of a painting, which is really located in that museum, an allegory of architecture. Three boy figures are shown holding an architectural plan. It's a painting of the façade of Madame de Pompadour's Chateau de Bellevue at Meudon by Charles-André Van Loo — what Steven Jacobs claims is a purposeful emblem planted to underline the theme of mistaken identities. Possibly, but at least we know that Hitchcock didn't hold the camera there by accident. His use of paintings in films — particularly portraits — was famous. Think of the husband's portrait in *The Paradine Case* or *Rebecca's* haunting portrait in that movie.

After some more stitching of an imaginary San Francisco streetscape, we are surprised when the Mark 8 is parked outside of McKittrick's Hotel, a somewhat shabby looking Italianate wooden building. She's slipped in and shown herself at the window — another frame for Scottie to see — and the clerk has missed her entry. We can explain this when we ourselves don't see the clerk at the desk until Scottie makes some noises, and the clerk appears with a pastry in hand; possibly she is not the best guardian of the gates. Still, it is her kind of evidence that builds the case the way Elster wants it to appear. Madeleine seems drawn to this hotel, which we learn later on was the family home of her great-grandmother's family. The room has nothing that draws out attention, but Madeleine's appearance and disappearance makes us think she has something of a ghost about her.

The use of windows, mirrors, and purposefully framed spaces shows how chiaroscuro can operate in an "orthogonal," or "right-angle" mode. In the museum, Scottie is watching Madeleine take in a painting. The line connecting her with the representation of Carlotta. His point of view is at an angle to this. We use the idea of it being a right angle because in mathematical graphs the 90° angle keeps the vectors independent of each other, and it is Scottie's desire to go undetected, in a dimension that does not interfere with Madeleine's. Scottie's role as a private investigator tailing Madeleine requires a permanent chiaroscuro, and it's important to examine this concept a bit.

Like Jeff Jefferies' apartment, the spectator sits in a shadow. In a live performance, this shadow is a disciplined space where we are commanded not to make noise or move around too much. In a movie, we do this to avoid disturbing other audience members. In front of a painting, we can move and the painting can't, but we observe the same logic. We practice a certain kind of immobility and silence. Chiaroscuro takes this audience effect into the representation itself. The earliest forms were simply shading and shadowing techniques, to indicate the three-dimensionality of objects, but also through this heightened illusion, our point of view was implicated. As chiaroscuro became a way of putting a frame inside a representation that framed another representation, it was more ideologically identified with the action and politics of watching. In this case, Scottie's surveillance has a moral dimension. If a real Madeleine knew she was being watched, she would naturally complain. Similarly, in *Rear Window*, although the neighbors don't seem to care if they're being watched, Jeff's nurse Stella warns him not to overstep the fragile boundary between casual looking and prying into his neighbors' private lives. In *Vertigo*, Scottie seems to be the voyeur, the victimizer, but we learn later that all the scenes are constructed to manipulate him, so the watcher is really the watched, the unwitting victim.

The chiaroscuro diagrams come in two varieties: one to show how the frame-within-the-frame works, a frontal form of chiaroscuro; another to show how an

independent viewer can watch someone viewing a representation, "from the side." The idea of independence built into the 90° angle between the two vectors in the second form of chiaroscuro is also present in the first, or "frontal" form. The dark space around the view in the distance is supposed to be indifferent from it, and the view to it. Chiaroscuro is the space of exposition, that part of a play or movie where characters tell each other what is happening so that the audience can overhear. *Vertigo* had a difficult problem when it began to convert the French novel, *D'Entre les Morts*, to a script. There was not enough exposition to let the audience consider what kind of story was going on. It was hard to determine Scottie's state of mind, and since Scottie is, for all intents and purposes, the POV of the audience, something more was needed.

One screenwriter, Alec Coppel, a playwright by trade, was an excellent constructionist, but it took Samuel Taylor, who came in during a period when Hitchcock was occupied by a hernia and then a gall-bladder operation, to realize that a new character was needed. Taylor invented Midge, the old chum who quizzes Scottie about his recovery and then follows him skeptically when he gets involved with Elster's assignment. She would like Scottie to propose, but he's a confirmed bachelor at the beginning of the film. When he starts to melt in the heat of Madeleine's beauty, Midge registers the audience's need to reserve some distance from this romance. She helps him uncover key evidence at the Argosy Book store, where "Pop Leibel" (spelled more like "libel"), whose name is related to *The Argonaut*, the paper that Ambrose Bierce edited in the early part of the century. "Pop" Leibel is another added exposition device. He gives the audience and Scottie the kind of disinterested background information that Elster knows he will find to prove the truth of Madeleine's insanity.

Midge is solicitous and maternal. What she lacks in sex appeal is contrasted with Kim Novak's more seething offerings, and her chummy apartment and casual clothes are a contrast to Novak's fancy apartment, Mark 8, and elegant clothes designed by Edith Head. We are allowed to hope, along with Scottie, that there is a goddess who knows his real name, John, not the stupid nickname Midge uses, Scottie-O. With elegance as a lure, Scottie himself becomes haunted, and this is where another theme of the uncanny is introduced.

There are three main sources for the theory of the uncanny. The first comes from Ernst Jentsch, the German psychologist whose 1906 essay influenced Freud to give some thought subject in his own essay, written in 1919. Jentsch gave us a very useful formula for the uncanny. It is most present, he claimed, in cases where a living person or being seems to contain some kernel of the dead, or death. This would be like the famous "Appointment in Samarra," a story retold by Somerset Maugham about a servant living in Bagdad who, hearing that death was looking for him, fled to the nearby town of Samarra. His master gets a visit from Death shortly

after, looking for the servant. Being told that the servant has gone to Samarra, Death says, "Very good, that's where we have an appointment tomorrow!" In other words, this is the idea of mechanism or fate, something that we accomplish inadvertently, often by trying to do the very opposite.

The second case of the uncanny, according to Jentsch, is the reverse situation, where something dead nonetheless has a kernel of life in it. This can be the model for Carlotta Valdez, who, although she has been dead for over 100 years, survives to haunt her great-granddaughter Madeleine. This can also be the formula for Lacan's famous "partial objects," things that seem to have a life of their own, a kind of "mind in the machine." This can be comic, as in the case of an appliance that refuses to work according to the rules, or any system of blind chance that seems to work against us, as when we catch all the red lights only when we're specifically in a hurry. We can abbreviate the first case, the live person with the element of compulsion planted inside, like some computer chip, as Ad. The second can be Da. Taken together these have an uncanny relationship to the logic of film. Hitchcock claimed that there were only two "correct" kinds of shots, an "objective shot of a subject" and a "subjective shot of an object." We can see things as some other character sees it, but not in any independent objective way. Conversely, we can see subjects objectively, taking into account some limitation of their point of view. Thus, when Scottie watches Madeleine in the museum, he is objectively taking in her subjective obsession with Carlotta's image. Going further, we can see Madeleine as a kind of zombie, Ad, possessed with the spirit of Carlotta. Scottie's objective subjectivity, Da, should be objective but it detects the defect, the 'a' element that makes the subject who she is, an Ad. The two work in tandem with each other, and Hitchcock's two allowed shots frequently alternate in close editing sequences.

Chiaroscuro is the technique for shadowing the smaller element within the larger. A picture on the wall of an ordinary room can give a sense of strange premonition, or our surveillance of someone looking at something the way we are looking at them, the "orthogonal chiaroscuro" situation, couples Ad with Da to produce something concrete: a metonymical condition. That is, without this coupling, we wouldn't have anything material to look at. Once it's materialized, we have both a logical condition and a perceivable scene. Chiaroscuro and the uncanny do the work for us.

By the time we get to the San Francisco Bay Bridge, where Madeleine will attempt suicide following Elster's prediction that Madeleine, we have both a literal case of city chiaroscuro, the space beneath the bridge, and a literal case of an "Appointment at Samarra," where it is Scottie rather than Madeleine who has an appointment with death. Scottie won't realize it for several more scenes, however. It will take his conversion from a cool detective to a hot one, which will take place in the next sequence of

scenes, to wean him from Midge and make him as obsessed with Madeleine as Madeleine appears to be with Carlotta. The temperature changes, thanks to the chiaroscuro that converts his neutral metonymical drop-out position as a pure POV character into the zone of metaphor, that is, into the story he was trying to hold at a distance, an objective shot of a subject. Now, he's a subject for us, the gaze is reversed.

Appropriately, Scottie has made a fire, undressed his ice queen, and begun to thaw out a relationship that will heat up romantically as well as dramatically. We have moved from exposition and the cool shadow provided by the two types of chiaroscuro into the action space where he and Madeleine will be drawn to the architectural dimension that opened up the story, a high place where, all of a sudden, the earth will be taken away from beneath the feet.

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. Undees 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 *Les 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 WALL-E.

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 Scottie 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!

4: Inquest to the Discovery of Judy (1:18:14 — 1:31:42)

The first part of the story is over. The inquest shows off Scottie as the ideal witness. He had played the part Elster has trained him to play. As a former policeman, his reliability is unquestioned in court, but we know him to be the most unreliable of witnesses, a witness who has allowed himself to be fed data, to be led by the nose, to be coached unconsciously to seeing what he did not see.

The trap's perfection was Judy's isolation from the real Madeleine. She didn't have to look like anyone, or act like anyone, because Scottie had never seen the real Madeleine, and there were no portraits or photographs — strangely! This is one of those MacGuffin element — something the audience has to swallow without complaining or the story won't work. Hitchcock discovered the role of the MacGuffin early, so it's important to mention it. The MacGuffin is the subject of a joke. Two men are in a compartment in a train, just before it leaves the station. One is securing a piece of luggage on the rack above the seats. The luggage has a strange shape (just like Hitchcock's trumpet case that is actually a Cornucopia case), and the traveling companion asks what it contains. "A MacGuffin," is the reply. But, "what is a MacGuffin?" the puzzled traveler asks. "It's a gun for shooting elephants in Scotland," he explains. "But there ARE no elephants in Scotland," the even-more-puzzled traveler responds, to which the companion replies, "Well, this isn't really a MacGuffin, either!"

The joke can be read in two ways. The first way is that it's a means of handling a nosey question that penetrates too far into a private matter. It turns an answer on itself in a way that the nosey inquirer should be able to realize that it's none of his business. The second way to read it is as a piece of deep philosophy. The MacGuffin exists as long as we don't know what it is. If we ask to see it, it won't be there. It exists because it doesn't exist. In this

sense, the MacGuffin is exactly like the uncanny, a meaning that grows out of its opposite. Freud discovered that the etymology of the German word for uncanny, *Unheimlich*, could be disassembled until you found that it was something concealed, but concealment, along with security and protection from the prying eyes of strangers, was the function of the home, the *Heim*. So the center of the meaning of the home was something un-home-like, something uncanny, *Unheimlich*.

A subtle MacGuffin that works throughout the story is Scottie's likely "death" at the beginning of the film. It is "metonymized" out of existence. We are asked not to think of it, not to accept it as even a possibility. Yet, we don't have any information about how he was rescued. We "catch him later," so to speak, balancing a cane in Midge's apartment, bragging about his recovery. This of course could be something he imagined in the final few seconds of life, but if we consider this consciously it will destroy the story. As a metonymy, however, it lurks in the background. It provides the suspicion that is the energy behind Madeleine's own "death narrative," her zombie like behavior. We can see it in the mirror, but when we look at the idea directly, it disappears. This is ideal for film, because too many ideas interfere with looking at the screen that is our mirror for the duration of the story. It shows us, it thinks for us, it does our feeling for us as well. All we have to do is pay attention, which is the reason for over-determination and the constant reminders provided by exposition.

There's not much to watch however during Scottie's recovery from his second trauma. Mozart is not going to do it. He's not going back to Midge no matter what. We know he's going to continue his obsession with the perfect woman of his dreams, the automaton version Madeleine, a perfect mirror for his desire.

Depression, obsession, suicidal thoughts? It's time for another joke, also involving a train. Two groups of travelers meet at a train station, a group of professors and a group of computer scientists. They are both going to conferences and it is essential for the logic of the joke that they are taking the train and not flying, as is the usual custom these days. The computer scientists are looking at their watch, thinking about boarding the train. They ask the professors if they've got their tickets, and the professors say, "yes," they have one ticket for the three of them, and that's all they are going to need. —How can that be? ask the puzzled computer scientists. —Just watch, reply the professors. The two groups board the train, taking the first available seats. The train starts up and leaves the station and fairly soon the conductor starts his walk down the aisle to collect tickets. Just before he comes to their compartment, the professors — all three of them — get up and pile inside the washroom at the end of the car. The conductor enters, cancels the computer scientists three tickets, and then knocks on the washroom door. One hand sticks out of the door, the conductor punches it and leaves. The computer

scientists are very impressed at this trick of saving the cost of two tickets.

It turns out they meet each other on the way back from their respective conferences. Waiting on the station platform, the computer scientists are acting now that they are "in the know" of this clever trick. They have bought their one ticket and plan to scoop the professors in using it. They ask, smugly, if the professors have bought their one ticket yet. —No, the professors reply, they have not bought any ticket.

—How can that be? ask the computer scientists. — Just watch! reply the professors.

They all board the train. The conductor starts his march down the aisle, and the computer scientist quickly rush into the washroom. The professors sit still. Before the conductor gets to their car, however, one of the professors gets up and walks to the washroom. He knocks on the door, announcing himself, "Conductor!"

If you're wondering how exactly the professors managed with just one cancelled ticket you're the kind of person who always misses the point and doesn't know when to laugh. The flaw in the logic of this joke is like the MacGuffin — it's to be ignored so that you can enjoy. The joke is about reception theory and suspension or concealment of knowledge. Like Scottie, the computer scientists do not know what the joke really is. It's on them, not on the conductor. They are made to witness the conductor, and this is part 1 of the joke that they will be victims of in part 2. Part 2 uses their knowledge as false knowledge, and the willingness that they demonstrate in offering up their ticket is amusing.

Vertigo is of course not so funny. Scottie's obsession, his two or three traumas, and his psychotic episodes are depressing for any audience to watch. The joke structure is, still, no matter, still a structure, and its construction of Scottie as a witness who will "automate" the perfect crime makes it all the more fascinating. Scottie, an expert observer, just like the computer scientists, doesn't realize that there is a part 2 to the joke, the part where we will voluntarily turn over the goods.

The depressing, spooky quality of *Vertigo* plus the enigma in death makes it a tragedy in main form, unless we take the death-narrative idea to its final conclusion. In these terms, we return to the high place twice, once in a way that does not resolve Scottie's original guilt over having let down his colleague, literally; again in a way that seems only to repeat the trauma. But, the story is, at least, played out for all to see. It's Judy who jumps out of guilt for her role and complicity in Madeleine's death. Just what did she think would happen at the top of the tower? She must have suspected that Elster would have his wife filled to the legal limit with tranquilisers. We can overlook the details of how Elster and Judy got down out of a tower and out of an area that must have been swarming with

emergency personnel. That's what the MacGuffin is for.

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 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 chiarascuro 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 *pointon* used by silversmiths to indicate solid silver, not silver plate. The great-than-and-lesser-than situation describes the geometry of Scottie as an 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, Coppola, an optometrist who was involved with Nathanael's father's tragic death during an alchemical experiment. "Coppola" is related to the Italian word for "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, Olympia, is based on the meager evidence of her charming silence. The less she says, the more he is convinced that she is brilliant. Like Olympia, 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 Olympia 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 analyst can only make errors — slips of the tongue, spoonerisms, puns. It is up to the analyst to pick these up, to hear within the analyst'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. Scotty 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 estimate, the superb and ultimate estimate: 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 Scotty'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. Green, 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. Green works like the tissue called the "lamella," a biological 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.

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 diagetic 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, Scottie 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 pray. 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.

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