

FILMS: THE GAME OF 'METALEPSIS SPOTTING'

You only get good if you practice, and films offer the most entertaining and effective way of watching metalepsis in action. Where the director has realized the full potential of metalepsis, the "detached virtuality" of story-in-the-story, dream contamination, the double, and travel through time is exploited to the limit, affording some of the finest cases of fear, fright, and suspense (Freud's three cases of the negative) ever employed to make paying audiences keep coming back. Hitchcock, Lynch, Kieslowski, and Cavalcanti lead the pack on the dark side, Preston Sturges and Fellini are masters of the light side.

"Obligatory" (for the serious student of metalepsis)

Citizen Kane (Orson Welles, 1941)

Study especially the opening sequence with its exterior/interior window match, the use of signs, travel of the eye through layered spaces.

City Lights (Charlie Chaplin, 1931)

This "silent film" has a sound track; like *Modern Times* Chaplin is keenly aware of the use of the acousmatic voice. The opening scenes involve multiple metalepses.

Vertigo (Alfred Hitchcock, 1958)

With a copy of Bloom's *Anxiety of Influence* at your side, this film constitutes an encyclopedia of the six "ratios": askesis, demon, kenosis, clinamen, apophrades, tesseract. Can you figure out their symmetrical order based on this film and its two "matched" enunciations occurring at the beginning and end?

Rear Window (Alfred Hitchcock, 1954)

Hitchcock's "symptom" is to pair elements and use space as anthology.

Shadow of a Doubt (Alfred Hitchcock, 1943)

You might think this is a minor film but it's "two for" deals keep this on the list. Subjectivity is about mistaken identity.

High and Low (Akira Kurosawa, 1963)

The topography of the landscape, and the role of the "master's house" tells the story.

Dead of Night (A. Cavalcanti, C. Crichton, B. Deardon, R. Hamer, 1945)

An anthology film that uses *all* of the forms of detached virtuality, tied to Borges' list of the forms of the fantastic. In case you need something to quote from ...

Rebecca (Alfred Hitchcock, 1940)

Gorgeous! The possibility that this is a death dream has not been noticed, as in the equally unnoticed case of *Rear Window* or *Vertigo*. Vindication, horizontal travel after a vertical fall, reversed predications ... it's all there.

Veronika Voss (Rainer Werner Fassbinder, 1982)

The one film that would have to be my favorite on a number of counts. Watch this with your best eye. You will fall in love with this Veronika and then want to connect, for no obvious reason, Kieslowski's *La Double Vie de Véronique*.

Mulholland Drive (David Lynch, 2001)

Another "don't miss." Again, the doubles — two actresses playing one role, one actress playing two roles, with all the appropriate metalepsis in between.

North by Northwest (Alfred Hitchcock, 1959)

What does the 'O' stand for? Possibly Hitchcock's greatest funny line.

Strangers on a Train (Alfred Hitchcock, 1951)

A perfect chiasmus (predication reversal plot). "I do your murder and you do mine." The perfect crime if you don't forget to follow the letter of Aristotle's chain of causes and include *automaton* and *tuchē*. The lighter is the tip-off: From A to G. (Look closely at the letters.)

The Double Life of Véronique (Krzysztof Kieślowski, 1991)

Another chiasmus in the form of the theme of doubles. The enchanting butterfly-dancer puppet scene is worth the whole film.

Red (Krzysztof Kieślowski, 1991)

Does anyone else ever talk to the judge? Pay attention!

Babette's Feast (Gabriel Axel, 1987)

A sentimental chiasmus with possibly the best ending you can have in Northern Denmark.

8½ (Federico Fellini, 1963)

Troubled, touching; all the problems of the "nostalgic solution" to ideology.

Added Pleasure and Interest

Notorious (Alfred Hitchcock, 1946)

Limits of Control (Jim Jarmusch, 2009) — source for "I used my imagination."

Lost Highway (David Lynch, 1997)

Lady from Shanghai (Orson Welles, 1947)

The Day the Earth Stood Still (Robert Wise, 1951)

Lost Horizons (Frank Capra, 1937)

The Lady Eve (Preston Sturgis, 1941)

Duck Soup (Marx Brothers, 1933)

Johnny Stechino (Roberto Benigni, 1991)

Blind Chance (Krzysztof Kieślowski, 1987)

Inception (Christopher Nolan, 2010)

Memento (Christopher Nolan, 2000)