

# Can Hitchcock be Saved from Hitchcock Studies?

by John Belton

Photo of Alfred Hitchcock courtesy of Photofest



As Robert Kapsis has noted in *Hitchcock: The Making of a Reputation*, Alfred Hitchcock always courted the press. From the early years in England working for Michael Balcon at Gainsborough to his final years in Hollywood working for Lew Wasserman at Universal, Hitchcock attempted to produce and direct critical response to himself and to his work. One of Hitchcock's favorite screenwriters, Charles Bennett, told stories of Hitchcock spending his entire weekly salary on elaborate (self-) promotional parties for London's film critics back in the early 1930s. Hitchcock remained actively engaged in the publicity for and promotion of his films throughout his career, personally conducting national press tours.

It is possible, in other words, to trace the 'Hitchcock Industry,' the proliferation of essays, articles, trade press, and academic press books on Hitchcock, back to Hitch-

cock himself and his attempt to control his construction as a celebrity-entertainer-artist in the media. But Hitchcock has been dead for twenty-three years now. At the time of his death, according to Jane Sloan's *Alfred Hitchcock: A Guide to References and Sources* (1995), there were already over 540 articles and books on Hitchcock, including a handful of essays by Hitchcock himself, numerous interviews with him, and other pieces 'spawned' by the director's efforts at generating publicity. We can, perhaps, 'blame' Hitchcock for some of this material.

But he is not to be held entirely responsible for what happened after his death. From then (April 28, 1980) to his centennial in 1999, more than sixty-four new books and 371 new critical essays were published. Given that the 'Hitchcock Industry' really took off during the 100th anniversary of his birth (1999), one could guess that another twenty-or-so books had been published

since then, not to mention scores of new articles. At any rate, a quick count of books on Hitchcock currently available for sale on Amazon.com indicates eighty-seven new and old book titles.

Books on Hitchcock sell. For the past twenty-five years, since the heyday of high *auteurism*, university and trade presses have taken a beating on studies of film directors. But Hitchcock, partly because of his status as a cultural icon and partly because college film courses are regularly devoted to his work, has endured as a subject for popular biographies and scholarly monographs. Robin Wood's book, *Hitchcock's Films*, subsequently retitled *Hitchcock's Films Revisited*, is perhaps the best example of Hitchcock's enduring popularity. Originally published (in a green cover edition) by Zwemmer in 1965, it was reissued in 1969 (in a yellow cover edition that included a chapter on *Torn Curtain*). A third edition came out in 1977 with a "Retrospective" on the earlier editions. In 1989, Columbia University Press reprinted it along with about 200 pages of new material. That edition was revised yet again in 2002 with a new forty-page preface and a new essay on *Marnie*.

Wood's book holds a very special place in English-language scholarship on Hitchcock, being not only one of the first such books but also one of the best. At the same time, its various revisions document crucial shifts in films studies as a discipline and provide an important portrait of Hitchcock's role, as a figure of study, in the development of critical paradigms from early *auteurism*, to psychoanalysis, feminism, semiotics (of a sort), and queer studies.

There are various ways of accounting for the proliferation of books and essays on Hitchcock. The most obvious explanation would seem to be that Hitchcock's oeuvre merits such attention. Sidney Gottlieb, coeditor of a journal devoted exclusively to Hitchcock (*The Hitchcock Annual*) and of a recent anthology of essays from that journal, is one of the few scholars to address the phenomenon of "Hitchcock Studies." He observes that Hitchcock has been "valorized," "institutionalized," "commodified," and "proliferated" as a topic of study. Although he considers the Hitchcock Industry to be a "mixed blessing," the fact is that Hitchcock, like Shakespeare, is a major artist in an art form—the cinema—that has become the major artistic medium of the last century. To ensure the continued viability of Hitchcock Studies, Gottlieb then makes a series of recommendations designed to prevent the field from becoming yet another instance of cultural commodification, instrumentalization, and reification. One of his recommendations could be said to describe the best of recent work on Hitchcock; it involves "de-centering" Hitchcock—that is, exploring the various "contexts of his work," "...his collaborators, his historical milieu..."

A more cynical commentary on Hitch-

cock Studies comes from Peter Conrad, author of *The Hitchcock Murders*. Conrad refers to scholarly work on Hitchcock as “bogus ceneration, a means of securing academic jobs.” To some extent, the rise of Hitchcock Studies mirrors the rise of film studies as an academic discipline. This explanation is complicated, I would argue, by the appropriation of film as a topic of academic study by scholars (like Conrad) who know little or nothing about film itself. As David Bordwell has suggested, Hitchcock is the perfect object of study for English professors (see Jonathan Freedman and Richard Millington’s *Hitchcock’s America*, 1999). Hitchcock’s films enjoy a certain accessibility through their stylistic and thematic obviousness that is not the case for more ‘difficult’ filmmakers such as Robert Bresson, Carl Dreyer, Yasujiro Ozu, Edward Yang, Howard Hawks, Michael Powell, Otto Preminger, and John Stahl (who still has no book devoted to his work).

Conrad’s assault on the Hitchcock Industry is essentially an attack on the academization of film studies, which is undoubtedly a factor that has contributed to the growth of scholarship on Hitchcock. Ray Durnat’s new book on Hitchcock, *A Long Hard Look at Psycho* (BFI, 2002), expresses a similar skepticism toward certain forms of contemporary academic criticism, especially psychoanalysis, feminism, and structuralism. Durnat is contemptuous of what he refers to as “Brand X feminists” and dismisses psychoanalysis, arguing that “much Freudian theory tends to pansexualist reductionism” (i.e., Freudians tend to explain everything in sexual terms). He does not subscribe to theories of the gaze, the dominance of the scopie drive, or notions that the unconscious structures esthetic creation or our experience of esthetic objects.

The academization of film studies, spurred in part by the rise of Grand Theory in the 1970s, undoubtedly accounts for a certain proportion of the Hitchcock Industry. (“Grand Theory” or “SLAB” theory [for Saussure, Lacan, Althusser, and Barthes] is a term used by Bordwell and Noël Carroll to describe the appropriation of theories originally developed to explain society, language, and psychology for use in discussing the cinema.) But that industry is not confined to academe. Hitchcock continues to enjoy a tremendous popular appeal. Durnat refers to Hitchcock’s oft-quoted comments about his relationship with his audience in *Psycho*: “*Psycho* has a very interesting construction and that game with the audience was fascinating. I was directing the viewers. You might say I was playing them, like an organ.”

Hitchcock remains concerned for his audience and takes pride in his ability to gauge their interests and, thus, to control them. Hitchcock’s films continue, quite literally, to entertain audiences. For the general public, ‘Hitchcock’ has become a brand name product—his name, carefully market-

## Books Reviewed in This Article

### *Vertigo*

by Charles Barr. London: British Film Institute (Distributed in the U.S. by University of California Press), 2002. 96 pp., illus. Paperback: \$12.95.

### *The Analysis of Film*

by Raymond Bellour. Edited by Constance Penley. Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 2002. 328 pp., illus. Hardcover: \$49.95 and Paperback: \$19.95.

### *The Hollywood I Knew: A Memoir, 1916-1988*

by Herbert Coleman. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2003. 416 pp., illus. Hardcover: \$39.95.

### *The Hitchcock Murders*

by Peter Conrad. London: Faber and Faber, 2002. 368 pp., illus. Hardcover: \$25.00 and Paperback: \$15.00.

### *Writing with Hitchcock: The Collaboration of Alfred Hitchcock and John Michael Hayes*

by Stephen DeRosa. London: Faber and Faber, 2001. 326 pp., illus. Paperback: \$15.00.

### *A Long Hard Look at Psycho*

by Raymond Durnat. London: British Film Institute (Distributed in the U.S. by University of California Press), 2002. 250 pp., illus. Hardcover: \$65.00 and Paperback: \$19.95.

### *Footsteps in the Fog: Alfred Hitchcock’s San Francisco*

by Jeff Kraft and Aaron Leventhal. Introduction by Patricia Hitchcock O’Connell. Santa Monica, CA: Santa Monica Press, 2002. 288 pp., illus. Paperback: \$24.95.

### *The Encyclopedia of Alfred Hitchcock*

by Thomas Leitch. Foreword by Gene D. Phillips. New York: Checkmark Books (a division of Facts on File, Inc.), 2002. 432 pp., illus. Hardcover: \$60.00 and Paperback: \$19.95.

### *Hitchcock and the Making of Marnie*

by Tony Lee Moral. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2002. 245 pp., illus. Hardcover: \$29.95.

### *Hitchcock’s Films Revisited (Revised Edition)*

by Robin Wood. New York: Columbia University Press, 2002. 448 pp., illus. Paperback: \$23.50.

ed over the years in association with his own TV shows, mystery anthologies, and talk show appearances, guarantees the entertainment value of his films. Hitchcock has been commodified into a product line; the Hitchcock industry has its mass market counterpart—DVDs and videos of Hitchcock’s major films. Amazon currently lists forty of the director’s fifty-three feature films for sale on-line.

The best of the ‘new’ books on Hitchcock are, not surprisingly, older works, especially Wood’s *Hitchcock’s Films Revisited*, which dates back to 1965, and Raymond Bellour’s *The Analysis of Film* (Indiana University Press, 2000), a 1979 book originally published in French, which includes articles

written between 1969 and 1979, as well as a 1980 piece on D. W. Griffith’s *The Lonedale Operator*. Wood prefaces the new edition of his book with an extended discussion of his life as a critic, focussing on his own intellectual, sexual, and ideological development from his first essay on Hitchcock’s *Psycho* for *Cahiers du cinéma* in 1960 to his most recent work on *Marnie*, published in the Canadian journal *CineAction* in 1999. The new material is not what makes this book the best book on Hitchcock, but, for those interested in Wood as a critic, this revision provides a certain sense of closure to the Wood-Hitchcock relationship.

Wood’s initial readings of seven films (*Strangers on a Train*, *Rear Window*, *Vertigo*, *North by Northwest*, *Psycho*, *The Birds*, and *Marnie*) integrate sensitive analyses of narrative patterns and esthetic choices with the elaboration of several interrelated strands of themes addressing moral development, including the progression of Hitchcock’s central characters from a state of mental, emotional, moral, or physical paralysis toward some form of therapy or cure (“a character is cured of some weakness or obsession by indulging it and living through the consequences”). Through identification with the hero/ine, the audience undergoes a similar process of cathartic redemption. At the same time, Wood engaged in a kind of protostructuralism, tracing the moral vicissitudes of Hitchcock’s characters within a world of extremes—order and chaos, ego and id, innocence and guilt, past and present, free will and predetermination, sanity and insanity, and reality and fantasy/dream. For Wood, the common thread that ran throughout the films was the value of human relationships in navigating these oppositions.

Wood’s revised edition situates Hitchcock within larger contexts—the codes and conventions of British and American cinema, the studio and star systems, and the debates of 1970s Grand Theory. The relatively coherent construction of Hitchcock as *auteur* of the earlier book disintegrates into a fragmented, postmodern Hitchcock who provides Wood with a focal point for his rethinking of *auteurism*, his appropriation of a humanist Marxism, and his self-proclamation as gay feminist. This revision also explores issues of gender as they relate to identification and the director’s problematic relation to patriarchy.

Wood has never abandoned his notion of moral development; indeed, it structures the new preface and his account of his own “pilgrim’s” progress, which he equates, via a symmetrical arrangement, with his final chapter that documents *Marnie*’s movement toward a greater consciousness of who she is. As Wood writes: “I have never had the least difficulty in identifying with *Marnie*; I knew, the first time I saw the film, that I *am* *Marnie*. And so the end of this book, as with every good classical narrative, answers the beginning...”



The thrilling climax to *Strangers on a Train* (1951), as Bruno Anthony (Robert Walker) struggles with Guy Haines (Farley Granger) on a carousel (photo courtesy of Photofest).

Sections of Bellour's *The Analysis of Film* have been translated into English previously in *Camera Obscura* and *Screen*, but his magisterial, 115-page essay on *North by Northwest* ("Symbolic Blockage") appears here in English for the first time. In addition to essays on Hawks, Minnelli, and Griffith, the anthology includes analyses of segments from *The Birds*, *Marnie*, and *Psycho*, as well as meditations on film analysis itself ("A Bit of History," "The Unattainable Text"). Bellour's larger project is to identify and describe the oedipal structures that underlie classical Hollywood narrative cinema; Hitchcock's films function as his primary texts.

Bellour sees in classical American cinema the same preoccupation he found in his study of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century literature: the use of "Oedipus and castration to organize conflict and sexual difference around the restricted scene of the nuclear family." Hitchcock's films exemplify the oedipal nature of narrative through their implementation of what Bellour refers to as "symbolic blockage." By this he means that the films move through a "series of constraints" in which desire is gradually reconciled with the law. This movement occurs on a variety of levels. It can be seen narratively in terms of the hero's oedipalization, a process that is most elaborately worked out in the journey narrative of *North by Northwest*. But it can also be seen stylistically in the movement from shot to shot and from scene to scene—a movement which plays on difference, repetition, violations of expectation, variation, alternation, symmetry, and dis-symmetry. Unlike other close readings, his microscopic analyses in no way reduce the text to its fundamental elements nor do

they leave it like an autopsied cadaver in the morgue. They actually bring the text to life, lovingly animating its various pieces, and revealing the intellectual and emotional force—what Bellour calls "the desire of the film"—that drives the film itself.

This is more or less the obvious point to return to Durgnat's book-length essay on *Psycho*, *A Long Hard Look at 'Psycho'*, which is essentially a shot-by-shot reading of the film. (Sadly, Durgnat died shortly after completing this project.) Durgnat's work is decidedly not semiotic. It's influenced not by the structural linguistics of Roland Barthes and Christian Metz that inspired Bellour but by the "grammatical" notions of film language set forth in the work of Stefan Sharff on Hitchcock (*Alfred Hitchcock's High Vernacular*, 1991, and *The Art of Looking in Hitchcock's Rear Window*, 1997). Unlike Sharff, whose goal is purely formal (i.e., non-thematic), Durgnat grounds his essay in thematic concerns, in particular, on the optical motifs (eyes, looks, POV shots, mirrors) that run through the film from the voyeuristic "eye" of the camera during the credits and the opening hotel room sequence to Norman's "stare" at the end of the film.

Looking and spectatorship provide threads of unity for an essay that is otherwise digressive and fragmented. Indeed, Durgnat's running commentary attempts to reconstruct the experience of the spectator (Durgnat's own experience as spectator?) moment by moment through a quasipoetic redescription of the film, such as the following portrait of Marion "orbiting" the stolen money on her bed at home: "the scene is a soliloquy without words—it's thought 'spoken' by restless movements, body language

and 'business' with objects...It's also a 'dialog,' between Marion's silent looks and the blank envelope."

Though he does not openly acknowledge it, Durgnat seems to be writing a loosely-stitched-together, phenomenological version of what the editors of *Cahiers du cinéma* referred to as an "active reading" of the text. His goal is to capture the spectator's experience caught up in the "flow of uncertainties, the questions, the possibilities, in scenes as they go." Durgnat's account of the film mirrors his own thinking and argumentation as much as it does that of the film. For him, the narrative does not move "deterministically" through a tightly-knit chain of cause and effect but rather "indeterminately," through "webs of uncertainty." Bellour's *Psycho*, in which psychosis answers neurosis, would seem to contradict Durgnat's; Bellour suggests a more deterministic movement of the narrative.

Durgnat likens *Psycho* to "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" and to Books 1 and 2 of *Paradise Lost*—"a spiritual journey, a poético-lyrical description of twisted moral impulses," combining craftsmanship with "esthetic elegance." That works for me. As for Norman's stare at the end, for Durgnat it is not a return of the camera's look but a stare "at nothing." The look, in turn, signifies, for Durgnat, the operations of the film itself. Referring to this look, Durgnat writes: "Sometimes, evil seeks to abolish the world...Sometimes to abolish the world, it will first abolish itself; and that's Hitchcock's *Psycho*."

There are two other new books devoted to individual Hitchcock films—one by Charles Barr on *Vertigo* and another by Tony Lee Moral on *Marnie*. Both books explore the collaborative nature of Hitchcock's work, providing the sort of "de-centered" study that Gottlieb encouraged as a way of "growing" Hitchcock studies in a productive and useful manner. Barr documents the evolution of *Vertigo* from novel to film as it passed through the hands of three separate screenwriters—Maxwell Anderson, Alec Coppel, and Sam Taylor. Hitchcock frequently began script development with the screenwriter he had worked with on his previous film; in this case, it was Anderson, who had done the final script for *The Wrong Man*. Coppel was brought in to lay out the story in greater detail, Anderson left, Hitchcock had a hernia operation, and, by the time he was ready to start work again, Coppel was unavailable so he enlisted Taylor's help. Barr's research reveals the possible influence of an Ambrose Bierce story, "Man Out of the Nose," on Taylor's draft. Bierce, a San Francisco native, was cited on the title page of Taylor's script; the Bierce story dealt with one man's obsession with another's wife, who falls to her death when their eyes first meet.

Barr explores James Maxfield's reading of *Vertigo* as a reworking of Bierce's *An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge*, arguing that

“everything after the opening sequence is the dream or fantasy of a dying man.” Certainly, *Vertigo* is one of Hitchcock’s most oneiric works, as Barr suggests, but there is clearly a significant difference between being dreamlike and being an actual dream. Barr’s essay plays with these two possibilities, suggesting that the film encourages a kind of hesitation in the spectator between objective and subjective narration, between “yarn” and dream, between an experience of it all as “real” and all as a fantastical “construction.” This hesitation between one perception and another exactly describes the first half of the film in which the “reality” that Scottie actually sees is a fiction created by Gavin Elster (or Hitchcock or, if Maxfield is right, by Scottie himself). In this sense, *Vertigo* lays bare the operations of all cinema in which the spectator hesitates between an immersion of the pleasures of the deception and an awareness of the constructed nature of that deception. At any rate, Barr’s notion of hesitation offers one of the best explanations I’ve ever read of the film’s ending, which leaves both Scottie and the spectator suspended and the narrative unresolved.

Moral’s account of *Hitchcock and the Making of Marnie* also stresses the collaborative nature of the film’s production. But Moral’s book clearly belongs to a somewhat different genre of scholarship than Barr’s. Its focus and organization of topics looks back to earlier projects by Stephen Rebello (*Alfred Hitchcock and the Making of Psycho*, 1990) and Dan Auiler (*Vertigo: The Making of a Hitchcock Classic*, 1998). Moral’s research is impressive. Like many of the new wave of Hitchcock scholars, he relies extensively on the special collection of Hitchcock materials deposited at the Margaret Herrick Library of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences after the director’s death. He has supplemented this material with a series of interviews he conducted with many of those who worked on the film, including Jay Presson Allen, Diane Baker, Robert Boyle, Sean Connery, Winston Graham, Mariette Hartley, Tippi Hedren, Evan Hunter, Louise Latham, Joseph Stefano, and others.

A structuring absence in this book, Herbert Coleman’s autobiography, and one or two other recent books on Hitchcock is Donald Spoto, author of *The Dark Side of Genius: The Life of Alfred Hitchcock*, 1983). The “dark side” that Spoto focuses on in his biography is foregrounded in his discussion of *Marnie*. Spoto tells a story of Hitchcock’s personal fascination with his star, Tippi Hedren, his repeated, unreciprocated romantic gestures, and, finally, “an overt sexual proposition that [Hedren] could neither ignore nor answer casually.”

Moral characterizes Spoto’s portrait of Hitchcock as that of “a man [Hitchcock] in the grip of uncontrollable impulses, whose pathological urges included misogyny, sadism and sexual fantasies.” Moral concludes that Spoto’s “presentation of facts is suggestively biased.” In his autobiography,

*The Hollywood I Knew* Hitchcock’s longtime associate producer Herbert Coleman goes to similar lengths to discredit Spoto, referring to his “numerous misquotes, mistakes, and outright inventions.” The books by Moral and Coleman are presented as revisionist efforts to set the record straight.

Moral’s provides a first-rate history of the development of *Marnie* from its initial status as a vehicle for Grace Kelly to controversies generated during the scriptwriting process over the “rape scene” to the working relationship on the set between Hitchcock and his actors.

Reviewing the correspondence between Hitchcock and Grace Kelly, Moral makes it clear that Kelly’s withdrawal from the film had nothing to do with the common assumption that she did so out of deference to the people of Monaco who were unhappy with the thought of their princess playing a compulsive thief. In fact, Kelly withdrew because of a political crisis that had arisen between France and Monaco over the latter’s tax policies and both Kelly and her husband, Prince Rainier, deemed it inadvisable to leave the country at that time. With Kelly’s departure and the delay of the project, Hitchcock lost the services of Joseph Stefano, his original screenwriter. When he began work on the film again, it was with Evan Hunter (aka Ed McBain) who had worked with him on *The Birds*. Moral quotes some fascinating correspondence from Hunter to Tippi Hedren explaining “the psychological complex of the character Marnie” in the context of “the Oedipal situation” and Marnie’s incestuous desire for her lost father. More important, however, is Moral’s documentation of the dispute between Hitchcock and Hunter over the

shipboard, honeymoon “rape scene.” Hunter insisted that Mark was not the kind of person who would rape Marnie, explaining that “Stanley Kowalski might rape her, but not Mark Rutland.” When Hunter sent Hitchcock a script without the rape scene and with a different honeymoon night, Hitchcock replaced him with Allen, who agreed with the director’s original vision of the scene.

Moral admits that Hitchcock’s relationship with Hedren was tense during the making of *Marnie*. Hedren wanted out of her contract with Hitchcock and planned to marry her agent after the completion of filming. When Hedren wanted to fly to New York to accept a *Photoplay* award as “The Star of Tomorrow,” Hitchcock refused to let her go. Moral explains that “Hedren believed it was the culmination of Hitchcock’s excessive control over her life” and that their relationship never recovered from that dispute. Though Moral never directly refutes Spoto’s reports of an unwanted “sexual advance,” his book suggests that this was not the case and that Spoto’s accusations have subsequently distorted the reception of the film.

Moral’s book documents *Marnie* as a collaborative effort. Several of the new books suggest that Hitchcock was not always easy to work with. Evan Hunter and Tippi Hedren were not the only members of the Hitchcock team that had run-ins with the director. One of Hitchcock’s loyalist associates was producer Herbert Coleman, who worked with him at Paramount on films from *Rear Window* through *Vertigo* and did *The Wrong Man*, *North by Northwest* and *Topaz* as well as *The Alfred Hitchcock Hour*. Coleman’s largely laudatory portrait of Hitchcock does include accounts of disagreements between Hitch and his coworkers (including Coleman), as well as evidence of the director’s quasiobsessive need to control others. Coleman’s Hitchcock is cool and distant—a skilled professional who demands a high degree of competence and unswerving loyalty from those who work for him. His Hitchcock can be a bit stingy, asking Coleman to take a pay cut from his current salary of \$650 a week as a second-unit director on *To Catch a Thief* to \$375 a week as a producer on *The Trouble With Harry* (Coleman refused this “insult,” as he put it, and was eventually given “an offer [he] couldn’t refuse.”)

Coleman is a source for two anecdotes that undermine Hitchcock’s apparent infallibility as a director. The first concerns the “Gunnison office scene” in *Rear Window*; Hitch wanted to cut away from the Greenwich Village set to an interior shot of the office of Jeffries’s editor, Gunnison. Coleman told him it would be a mistake. The scene was shot, but (wisely) never used. To cut away would have been to violate the basic spatial premise of the film.

During postproduction on *Vertigo*, Joan Harrison, an associate of Hitch’s who was



James Stewart and Kim Novak star in Hitchcock’s *Vertigo* (photo courtesy of Photofest).



Advertising executive Roger Thornhill (Cary Grant), mistaken as an espionage agent, narrowly avoids being killed by a crop-dusting airplane in *North by Northwest* (1959) (photo courtesy of Photofest).

then producing *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*, advised Hitchcock to cut Judy's explanatory flashback. Coleman advised against it; Hitch ordered the cut made, but the head of Paramount, Barney Balaban, forced the director to restore the scene. Coleman proved mistaken himself, however, in at least one instance. After reading the initial treatment for *Psycho*, Coleman expressed his distaste for the project and left Hitchcock to become an independent producer.

Coleman was present during the Hitchcock-Hayes collaboration and gives his version of the disintegration of that partnership. Screenwriter John Michael Hayes worked with Hitchcock on four films—*Rear Window*, *To Catch a Thief*, *The Trouble With Harry*, and *The Man Who Knew Too Much*. By any account, this was an extremely productive association for the two artists. According to Coleman, the partnership fell apart when Hayes submitted a screenplay for *The Man Who Knew Too Much* that omitted the name of Hitchcock's old friend, Angus MacPhail, who had worked on the script. Hitchcock promptly fired Hayes.

Coleman's portrait of Hayes is certainly colored by the writer's subsequent efforts to establish his sole authorship on *Rear Window* and other films. Thus Coleman's account of his first encounter with Hayes notes that the writer was "unhappy" that Coleman was present during the story conferences and gave him "dirty looks." Coleman describes the collaboration as Hitchcock dictating the script to Hayes who merely typed what he was told. Hayes later took the dictated script and added dialog.

Hayes' account of the process, given in interviews such as that filmed for the *Rear Window* DVD, presented a completely dif-

ferent story in which he minimizes Hitchcock's contribution to the script. He claims that Hitchcock was so busy with *Dial M For Murder* that he hadn't worked up a treatment so Hayes went off and drafted a thirty-five-page treatment on his own. Hitchcock liked it and, according to Hayes, "made some suggestions—I can't recall them all." Hayes then claims he wrote a longer, seventy-five-page treatment by himself and that what he liked about Hitchcock was that "he let me work on my own." According to Hayes, all that Hitchcock did was to cut his script to a filmable length and break it down into shots. Anyone familiar with Hitchcock's working methods immediately realizes that Hayes has clearly stretched the truth here.

In *Writing With Hitchcock: The Collaboration of Alfred Hitchcock and John Michael Hayes*, Steven DeRosa tries to sort through the authorship controversy on *Rear Window*. DeRosa doesn't ever directly contradict Hayes's account of the creative process. In fact, his book, which is based on extensive interviews with Hayes, tends to take sides with the screenwriter in the disputes between him and Hitchcock. But DeRosa does provide valuable research into the development of the project that acknowledges a variety of influences on the final script ranging from Cornell Woolrich's original short story to Joshua Logan's 1952 treatment of the story (and the possible influence of an H.G. Wells story, "Through a Window," on Woolrich). At any rate, DeRosa clearly assumes that Hitchcock and Hayes collaborated equally on this and subsequent scripts.

Coleman and Hitchcock's annoyance with Hayes began with their dissatisfaction

with his first draft of the screenplay for *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, which Coleman described as "sadly lacking in form." At that point, according to Coleman, MacPhail was hired to work on the story line; Hayes continued to work on the dialog. But Hayes's final draft made no mention of MacPhail's contribution. According to DeRosa, however, MacPhail worked on a treatment prior to Hayes's preparation of a draft of the screenplay (rather than being hired subsequent to its completion) and his only work thereafter consisted of notes on Hayes's material. The fact that arbitration by the Writers Guild found that Hayes deserved sole credit would seem to support DeRosa's research, but this matter would seem to remain a subject of controversy given the conflicting, *Rashomon*-like accounts in Coleman's and DeRosa's books.

DeRosa attempts to construct Hayes as an *auteur*. Drawing on Thomas Leitch's work on Hayes and Hitchcock, DeRosa argues that Hayes's scripts tell the story of a hero who gives up his isolation to join the social order (Jeff accepts Lisa in *Rear Window*, Robie accepts Francie in *To Catch a Thief*, a community is formed in Vermont in *The Trouble With Harry*, the family is reconstituted in *The Man Who Knew Too Much*). Unlike earlier Hitchcock heroes who remain troubled, Hayes's heroes learn to live quite happily within the confines of the social order.

Peter Conrad's *The Hitchcock Murders* is quite remarkable in its deliberate attempt to ignore all previous literature on Hitchcock. Though I remain ambivalent about 'Hitchcock Studies,' I think it is somewhat irresponsible to write a critical study of the director as if other work on him didn't exist. Conrad actually takes pride in his ignorance, celebrating himself for writing a critical study of the director before reading any academic criticism on him.

Conrad, I think, would justify his rebelliousness as essential to the larger spirit of his project, which is to adopt a form of "automatic" writing in his reading of Hitchcock's work. Repeatedly invoking André Breton and the Surrealists, Conrad views Hitchcock's films as a mixture of dream and reality and engages in stream-of-consciousness, free-associational writing in an effort to make that aspect of Hitchcock visible. Rather than deal with Hitchcock on a film-by-film basis, Conrad views Hitchcock in terms of streams of motifs. Thus his final chapter explores Hitchcock's "houses," their bathrooms, staircases, windows, and doorways; their relative neatness or messiness. This segues into a description of Conrad's own house and the location of posters from various Hitchcock films.

Conrad argues that, "Like Freud, Hitchcock diagnosed the discontents that chafe and rankle beneath the decorum of civilization. Like Picasso or Dali, he registered the phenomenological threat of an abruptly modernized world." Hitchcock's films free our fantasies. His characters "act out the

lives we only dare to lead in our imagination.” This portrait of Hitchcock as a surrealist artist intent on the liberation of humanity from oppressive social, political, and cultural institutions works only if one ignores the deterministic narrative structures of the films in which these motifs circulate. Conrad’s final portrait of Hitchcock is less that of the Buddha, “a rotund joker, who smiled as he contemplated the void” than that of an exquisite corpse, a hodgepodge of random, unrelated perspectives, facets, and views.

You know that Hitchcock Studies has arrived when encyclopedias devoted to Hitchcock begin to appear. In spite of a somewhat conventional foreword by Gene Phillips, *The Encyclopedia of Alfred Hitchcock* by Thomas Leitch is an extremely valuable resource for information that relates to Hitchcock, his collaborators, his thematic concerns, and his critics. With more than 1,200 entries, the book brings the credit sequences of Hitchcock’s films alive with brief biographical sketches that range from major players such as Henry Bumstead, Robert Burks, Edith Head, Bernard Herrmann, Dimitri Tiomkin, and George Tomasini to minor talents such as Alexandre de Paris, Charles K. Hegedon, Howard Smit, and Ernest B. Wehmeyer. In addition to discussions of each film, the book also includes entries on adaptation, audience, auteurism, awards, birds, blondes, brandy, cameo appearances, death scenes, dreams, eating and drinking, expressionism, families, fear and pleasure, homes, homosexuality, identification, ideology, long takes, masculinity, mothers, murder, police, practical jokes, staircases, suspense, thrillers, VistaVision, and wit. Speaking of cameo appearances, Leitch’s list, based on work David Barraclough did for Ken Mogg’s website ([www.labyrinth.net.au/~muffin/](http://www.labyrinth.net.au/~muffin/)), is the first I’ve ever seen to get *Rope* right (Hitch’s classic profile appears on a flashing red neon sign outside the apartment window). There are also entries on critics from Bogdanovich and Sarris to Wood and Zizek. These entries give coverage to virtually every major text on Hitchcock.

My personal favorite of all the recent books on Hitchcock is *Footsteps in the Fog: Alfred Hitchcock’s San Francisco* by Jeff Kraft and Aaron Leventhal. This coffee-table, picture book uses 400 historical and contemporary photographs to document the production of *Shadow of a Doubt* (Santa Rosa), *Vertigo* (San Francisco), *The Birds* (Bodega Bay), and other films set in the San Francisco area, such as *Family Plot*. It also provides information about Hitchcock’s use of the locale for footage found in *Rebecca*, *Suspicion*, *Marnie*, and *Topaz*, as well as motifs from northern California that influenced/inspired films such as the “gothic” architecture in *Psycho*. Lavishly illustrated with photographs of the locations used in these films, the book provides photos of the actual locations used in the films from the period in



Norman Bates (Tony Perkins) goes home to visit mom in Hitchcock’s *Psycho* (1960) (photo courtesy of Photofest).

which the films were made and from the present. It’s possible to see the Newton house and the Til-Two bar from *Shadow of a Doubt*, Ernie’s and the McKittrick Hotel from *Vertigo*, and the Tides Restaurant from *The Birds*. One of the interesting tidbits about the production of the latter is that the owner of the Tides, Mitch Zankich (who actually gets a line in the film), let Hitchcock use the Tides for free in exchange for keeping its actual name in the film (which proved to be a boon to business) and for naming the male lead after himself, “Mitch.”



Sean Connery and Tippi Hedren star in Hitchcock’s *Marnie* (1964) (photo courtesy of Photofest).

Believe it or not. At any rate, this book is a perfect companion for your next trip to the Bay area.

To return to the question posed in the title of this piece, can Hitchcock be saved from Hitchcock Studies? In framing the question of “Hitchcock” in this particular way, I must admit to a certain ‘conceit.’ I was alluding to a series of similar questions that had been asked before by Robin Wood and that have marked the landscape of the history of thinking about Hitchcock. In 1965, Wood began his book with the question “Why should we take Hitchcock seriously?” His first book demonstrated why we should. In *Hitchcock’s Films Revisited* (1989), Wood’s question became “Can Hitchcock be saved for feminism?” His answer was “yes.” I would argue that, as Hitchcock Studies has grown, the nature of the questions posed in our pursuit of the object Hitchcock have, like Wood’s earlier questions, been shaped by the development of Film Studies as an academic discipline rather than by qualities inherent in Hitchcock’s films themselves. In other words, Hitchcock’s films have been repeatedly instrumentalized to exemplify the trendiest critical method *du jour*. In this sense, there is a need to keep a wary eye on the various ‘frames’ we use to see Hitchcock through. Those frames, which structure the arguments of a number of books reviewed here, reduce Hitchcock to a mere instance of a larger theoretical project.

Hitchcock Studies will continue to grow. How could it not? But as it grows, we must guard against its potential, unwanted consequences, against the commodification, and fetishization of the object of its study—the films of Alfred Hitchcock. ■

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