Can Hitchcock be Saved from Hitchcock Studies?

by John Belton

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 Hitchcock 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 'spawnd' 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 "val-orized," "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-
Hitchcock Studies comes from Peter Conrad, author of The Hitchcock Murders. Conrad refers to scholarly work on Hitchcock as "bogus cerebration, 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 academicization of film studies, which is undoubtedly a factor that has contributed to the growth of scholarship on Hitchcock. Ray Durgnat'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. Durgnat 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 scopic 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 Noel 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. Durgnat 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 marketed 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 counter-part—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, focusing on his own intellectual, sexual, and ideological development from his first essay on Hitchcock's Psycho for Cahiers du cinema 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 in it and living through the consequences"). Through identification with the heroine, the audience undergoes a similar process of cathartic redemption. At the same time, Wood engaged in a kind of poststructuralism, 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..."
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, POVs 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 quasiapoetic 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 poetico-lyricat 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, Alex 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 hermia 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...
suggested 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 over sexual proposition that [Hedren] could neither ignore nor answer casually.”

Moral characterizes Spoto’s portrayal 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 firstrate 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 loyalists 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 unwavering 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
According to Coleman, the partnership fell apart when Hayes submitted a screenplay treatment of the story (and the possible script ranging from Cornell Woolrich's original short story to Joshua Logan's 1952 treatment of the story) 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 different 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 had not 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 Dalí, 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 imagina-
tion." This portrait of Hitchcock as a surre-
alist artist intent on the liberation of human-
ity from oppressive social, political, and cul-
tural 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 hodge-podge 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 complete
descriptions of Hitchcock's films alive with
brief biographical sketches that range from
major players such as Henry Bumstead, 
Robert Burks, Edith Head, Bernard Herr-
mann, Dimitri Tiomkin, and George
Tomasi to minor talents such as Alexandre
de Paris, Charles K. Hagedon, Howard
Smit, and Ernest B. Wehmeier. In addition
to discussions of each film, the book also
includes entries on adaptation, audience,
auteurism, awards, birds, brandy,
cameo appearances, death scenes, dreams,
eating and drinking, expressionism, families,
fear and pleasure, homes, homosexuality,
identification, ideology, long takes, mascu-
lnity, mothers, murder, police, practical
jokes, staircases, suspense, thrillers, VistaVi-
sion, 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/), is the first
I've ever seen to get rope right (Hitch's clas-
sic 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, pic-
ture book uses 400 historical and contempo-
rary photographs to document the produc-
tion of Shadow of a Doubt (Santa Rosa),
Vertigo (San Francisco), The Birds (Bodega
Bay), and other films set in the San Francis-
co area, such as Family Plot. It also provides
information about Hitchcock's use of the
locale for footage found in Rebecca, Suspi-
cion, Marnie, and Topaz, as well as motifs
from northern California that influenced/inspired films such as the "gothic" architec-
ture in Psycho. Lavishly illustrated with pho-
tographs of the locations used in these films,
the book provides photos of the actual loca-
tions used in the films from the period in
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 keep-
ing its actual name in the film (which
proved to be a boon to business) and for
naming the male lead after himself, "Mitch."

Believe it or not, this book is a perfect
companion for your next trip to the San Francisco
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 ques-
tion "Why should we take Hitchcock seri-
ously?" 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 ques-
tions posed in our pursuit of the object
Hitchcock have, like Wood's earlier ques-
tions, been shaped by the development of
Film Studies as an academic discipline
rather than by qualities inherent in Hitch-
cock'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 argu-
ments 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 conse-
quences, against the commodification, and
fetishization of the object of its study—the
films of Alfred Hitchcock.
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