

13. EXISTENTIAL THEMES IN THE FILMS OF ALFRED HITCHCOCK

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ABSTRACT. The *auteur* theory of film-making (usually attributed in film to the French director Francois Truffaut) is explored with specific reference to the films of Alfred Hitchcock. It is argued that Hitchcock's films, in particular his later films, present a common theme which is in fact quite consistent with the outlook of Phenomenological Existentialism, especially as it was espoused by the philosophers Jean-Paul Sartre and Martin Heidegger.

To support this position, textual analyses of various films directed and produced by Hitchcock are presented, including *Rear Window*, *The Trouble with Harry*, *The Wrong Man*, and *Vertigo*. The effects of this approach and its philosophical implications for the film-going audience are also examined.

The recent successful revival of many films directed by Alfred Hitchcock (some over thirty years old), demonstrates again the public's fascination with his work. Critics too have been fascinated by Hitchcock's films. What is it about these films that inspires such great interest? Superficially, most of Hitchcock's works may be characterized as suspense films presented with an appealing mixture of wit, sophistication, and humor. Yet, other films fit into the same classifications as those directed by Hitchcock without evoking the same appreciation. What makes *North by Northwest* superior to *From Russia With Love*, an early James Bond film which strongly resembles it?

One could answer that Hitchcock's superior technical expertise or his ability to prolong suspense renders his films so much better. Yet, in some of his greatest films, Hitchcock deliberately reduces the level of suspense felt by the audience. Furthermore, while his technical skills were unquestionably extraordinary, often his most elaborate technical tricks have been unnoticed by audiences.

It has been suggested that the prime difference between a *From Russia with Love* and a *North by Northwest* is that while both contain a plot or story line, only the latter has a subject, or theme. Both are entertaining and suspenseful films concerned with spies, romance, and chases, and both make fun of themselves in an appealing manner. Yet, *North by Northwest* is a classic which one might enjoyably watch again and again, while *From Russia with Love* is a light, superficial entertainment which few people would wish to sit through more than once.

Some people might explain the superior quality of *North by Northwest* by pointing to the derivative nature of *From Russia with Love* in relationship to it. In *From Russia with Love*, James Bond is attacked from the air by a helicopter which eventually explodes in a ball of flames, while in *North by Northwest* Roger Thornhill is attacked by a crop-dusting plane which meets the same end. However, this explanation falls short of justifying the superior quality of *North by Northwest*, for *North by Northwest* itself is a derivative film. In interviews, Hitchcock admitted that *North by Northwest* is a remake of similar films of his own, such as *The 39 Steps* and *Saboteur*.

The superiority of Hitchcock's films over other equally suspenseful and otherwise entertaining movies lies in the themes expressed by Hitchcock. The major theme expressed in many of Hitchcock's films is a similar one, roughly compatible with that expressed in the philosophical school known as Phenomenological Existentialism. A common theme permeates many of Hitchcock's films that, unintentionally or intentionally on Hitchcock's part, is consistent with the outlook of these philosophers. Hitchcock did not to my knowledge make a scholarly study of the works of these philosophers, nor was he necessarily aware of this compatibility. Nevertheless, this compatibility can be demonstrated through a textual analysis of some of Hitchcock's films.

In each of these films, we find existential philosophical themes clearly articulated. The protagonist is initially portrayed as afraid to become committed to anything. In the course of each film, that person is faced with a series of challenges, often life-threatening, which act as a catalyst in bringing that person face to face with their private fears of commitment. Hitchcock equates the achievement of full selfhood with the ability to successfully establish a romantic link with another person. He thus demonstrates that no one is able to create an honest, meaningful, loving relationship with another person without being honest with oneself. While these films partially reflect the darkly pessimistic views of such secular existential thinkers as Martin Heidegger and Jean-Paul Sartre: their basic themes are best understood as displaying the more optimistic outlooks of the so-called 'theistic existentialists' such as Gabriel Marcel, Martin Buber, and Karl Jaspers. In fact, given his Jesuit upbringing and acceptance of Catholicism, Hitchcock is probably best described as a Catholic existentialist.

In order to approach Hitchcock's films philosophically, we must view Hitchcock as the sole artist responsible for them. Francois Truffaut, the noted French film director, is generally conceded to be the inventor of the theory that the relationship between certain directors and their films should be regarded as equivalent to the relationship between artists and their works. This *auteur* theory subordinates the importance of the contributions of others involved in creating a film, e.g., the screenwriter, the producer, the cast, the technical crew, the film editor. Truffaut would acknowledge that the *auteur* theory does not apply to the works of directors whose films are clearly influenced by others involved in their production. Yet, the *auteur* theory is convincing as regards directors, such as Hitchcock, who take complete control over all facets of their films.

In the introduction to his book of interviews with Hitchcock, Truffaut explains his view of Hitchcock as the sole artist responsible for his films:

I know that many Americans are surprised that European cinéphiles--and the French in particular--regard Alfred Hitchcock as a "film author," in the sense that the term is applied to Ingmar Bergman, Federico Fellini, Luis Bunuel, or Jean-Luc Godard . . . If Hitchcock, to my way of thinking, outranks the rest, it is because he is the most complete filmmaker of all. He is not merely an expert at some specific aspect of cinema, but an all-round specialist, who excels at every image, each shot, and every scene. He masterminds the construction of the screenplay as well as the photography, the cutting, and the sound track, has creative ideas on everything and can handle anything, and is even, as we already know, expert at publicity!

Because he exercises such complete control over all the elements of his films and imprints his personal concepts at each step of the way, Hitchcock has a distinctive style of his own. He is undoubtedly one of the few film-makers on the horizon today whose screen signature can be identified as soon as the picture begins.¹

The most serious challenge to Truffaut's view of Hitchcock's relationship to his work rests on Ernest Lehmann's claim, in an article published in *Sight and Sound* (Autumn 1960), that he (the screenwriter) was truly responsible for the success of *North by Northwest*. According to Lehmann, Hitchcock only executed the script as it was written by Lehmann. In his book *Personal Views: Exploration in Film*² Robin Wood finds Lehmann's claim to be lacking. Comparing the quality of *North by Northwest* to the film *The Prize*, which superficially resembles it and was also written by Lehmann, Wood establishes the importance of Hitchcock's contribution to the former. *The Prize*, written by Lehmann and directed by Mark Robson, is judged by Wood a much inferior effort.

According to Wood, "the superiority of Hitchcock's sequences considered as isolated set-pieces, seem too obvious to need arguing."³ Furthermore, the overall dramatic construction of *North by Northwest* is of much greater quality than *The Prize*. Wood judges: "It is impossible on the strength of his screen plays to make out a case for Lehmann as an 'auteur' in the sense in which the 'auteur theory' is understood."⁴ Wood concludes, "My conviction that *North by Northwest* is ultimately a Hitchcock movie remains unshaken; it would remain unshaken if Lehmann could prove that every camera set-up and every cut were indicated by him in the script. If such an assertion seems excessive or paradoxical, one only has to ask whether *North by Northwest* is conceivable without Hitchcock."⁵

To support the claim that many of Hitchcock's films convey a theme compatible with phenomenological existentialism, let us briefly explore the major aesthetic influences on his work, including the cinematic movement Expressionism, which emphasized the expression of the phenomenological experiences of characters in a film by cinematic means. An Expressionist film-maker is more concerned with conveying the subjective experiences of the film's characters through techniques of audi-

ence-identification than with a realistic presentation of objective reality. The film-maker is willing to use techniques which distort "reality", as conventionally defined, in order to draw the audience into the flow of the characters' experience.

Another major aesthetic influence on Hitchcock's work is Soviet montage theory. These theorists, the most famous of which was Sergei Eisenstein, used techniques of *mise-en-scene* to provoke emotional responses from the audience. Hitchcock adapted these techniques primarily to create suspenseful sequences in his films which elicit strong reactions from his audiences. Both of these movements initially set themselves serious goals which Hitchcock, in utilizing their techniques, accepts. However, Hitchcock was most influenced by these schools' attempts to create films which place greatest emphasis on a presentation of the subjective experience of characters as it appears to them.⁶

Let us turn to the textual analyses of Hitchcock's films to demonstrate the validity of my thesis. I will assume that the reader is familiar with the tenets of Phenomenological Existentialism and is familiar with the films discussed. These films are frequently revived in theaters and are available on videocassette.

Rear Window is a 1954 production starring James Stewart, Grace Kelly, Thelma Ritter, and Raymond Burr. Stewart plays L.B. Jefferies, a magazine photographer, who first appears in the film on a hot summer day in his sweltering Manhattan apartment sitting in a wheelchair with a cast on his leg. Jefferies has broken his leg while attempting to photograph an auto race. He is portrayed as an adventurer who races from place to place courting danger in pursuit of his pictures. Yet, Hitchcock shows us that Jefferies is a man afraid to commit himself to anything; he uses his job to escape taking on responsibilities.

Jefferies' dilemma stems from his relationship with Lisa Fremont (Grace Kelly), his longtime girlfriend, who is seen pressuring Jefferies to marry her. Because of his broken leg, Jefferies is unable to make his usual escape from commitment by taking another assignment. Jefferies is only able to find escape from his situation by looking out of his rear window into the apartments of his neighbors. We see his frustration early in the film when he tries to persuade his editor to allow him to go on a dangerous foreign assignment despite the broken leg.

Throughout the film, Jefferies observes the activities of a carefully chosen set of his neighbors. The story line of the film follows Jefferies' building suspicion that one of his neighbors, Lars Thorvald, (Raymond Burr) has murdered and chopped up the body of his nagging invalid wife. From the beginning, Hitchcock encourages the audience to identify Thorvald as a reflection of some aspect of Jefferies' own fears. In his conversation with his editor, Jefferies complains of the boredom he faces waiting for his leg to heal. He tells the editor, "If you don't pull me out of this swamp of boredom, I'm going to do something drastic, like getting married. Then I'll never be able to go anywhere". As Jefferies says this he is watching Thorvald enter his apartment. "Can't you just see me rushing home to the hot apartment to listen to the automatic laundry, the garbage disposal, and the nagging wife." Just as he says the word "nagging", we see Thorvald's wife begin to nag him mercilessly. We sympathetically watch as Thorvald throws down his newspaper on his wife's bed in obvious frustration and we can barely

hear him cry, "Be quiet!" Thorvald's situation represents Jeffries' fears of what married life would be like. In this sense, Thorvald is identified as Jefferies' *doppelgänger* or double.

The French critic Jean Douchet, in the last of his series "La troisième clef d'Hitchcock" in *Cahiers du Cinema* (No. 113), presented his famous and sound interpretation of the film in which Jefferies is seen in the role of a moviegoer who watches a portrayal of his own fears and desires projected on the screen of the artificial apartments across from him. The only neighbors who Jefferies chooses to observe are those whose situation reflect his dilemma. Each has chosen a different solution to the question of marriage. We see Miss Torso, the beautiful young woman who has chosen to play the field; Miss Lonely Hearts, the despairing middle-aged woman who almost commits suicide to escape her loneliness; a pair of happy newlyweds who are humorously presented as continually making love behind a closed windowshade; a happily married middle-aged couple who have a small dog which they treat almost as a child; and finally, the Thorvalds, a couple in which the husband is so desperately unhappy that he risks murdering his wife. Jefferies has chosen to watch these neighbors intensely. Other neighbors (a male composer of music and a female sculptor), Jefferies pays much less attention to.

Jefferies is trying to decide whether to marry Lisa by weighing the pros and cons of married life as they are presented to him in the situations of his neighbors. Stella (Thelma Ritter), the insurance nurse, makes this point explicit when she catches Jefferies watching his neighbors and calls out accusingly, "Window Shopper!" She then lectures him on the evils of watching life without acting. "We have become a race of Peeping Toms", she argues, "we should get out and look in for a change".

Jefferies would prefer to evade the responsibility of introspection and commitment by going on assignment and acting "like a tourist on an endless holiday", as Lisa describes it to him, but his injury prevents that. Throughout his life, Jefferies has been no more than an observer of other people's activities. Through his photography, he attempted to escape responsibility for his life just as he attempts to escape that responsibility in the film by observing the actions of others through his rear window, and just as we, the moviegoing audience, attempted to escape from our responsibilities by observing the activities of the characters in the film. The similarities between the rear window and the movie screen are made explicit in the scene where Lisa lowers the blinds over the windows while explaining that "the show's over for tonight". She reinforces the movie house allusion by showing Jefferies her nightgown and saying, "preview of coming attractions".

The inability of Jeffries to commit himself to anything is illustrated early in the film in his conversation with Lisa who is trying to convince him to marry her. Jefferies presents all the reasons why marriage between them is impossible and, thus, their relationship is doomed. Lisa then asks, "So that's it? We can't change"? Jefferies states that they can't, yet when Lisa responds to this by preparing to leave him for good, Jefferies seems surprised and begs her to just "keep things status quo". As Jefferies is incapable of contemplating decisions about his life on any level other than the most theoretical, he is shocked when Lisa takes his words seriously and prepares to act on them. Because Li-

sa, unlike Jefferies, is committed to emotional honesty, she has trouble going on with their relationship "with no future". But, because she loves Jefferies, she can't stop seeing him. So, when Jefferies asks when he will see her again, she displays the conflict within her humorously by responding, "I don't know, not for a long time!" Pause. "At least, not until tomorrow night!"

The twinlike nature of Jefferies' relationship to Thorvald is again displayed in the next scene. Having just theoretically killed his relationship with Lisa, Jefferies sits in the dark looking out his rear window. As if in response to Jefferies' emotional mood, we hear a scream followed by a crash. Only later do we realize that this is the sound of Thorvald killing his wife. Thorvald, Jefferies' dark double, has just actually done what Jefferies only contemplated. Through his obsession with bringing Thorvald's deed to light, Jefferies uncovers and destroys his own fears of responsibility and marriage. Jefferies' suspicions of Thorvald lead him to act in ways which eventually engage him in his own life.

When his policeman friend Doyle (Wendell Corey) refuses to take his suspicions seriously, Jefferies takes the responsibility of proving Thorvald's guilt and in so doing, risks Lisa's life by initiating her activity as his agent. When she enthusiastically exceeds his instructions, by breaking into Thorvald's apartment to search for evidence (in an obvious attempt to demonstrate to Jefferies that she possesses the qualities he demands in a wife), he is placed in the horrifying position of a helpless spectator to the attempted murder of the woman he loves.

In one of the most suspenseful moments of the film, Jefferies must watch as Thorvald tries to strangle Lisa. His call to the police finally saves Lisa but only at the cost of placing himself in jeopardy as Thorvald finally realizes Jefferies' location. Through his involvement in the Thorvald case, a passive involvement which becomes active only at the end, Jefferies finally stops running from himself and must face the issues of his life authentically. When Thorvald confronts him in the photographer's apartment, Thorvald asks Jefferies, "what he wants", the question which Jefferies has been too afraid to answer until now. Jefferies refuses to answer Thorvald, and in a final effort to regain the role of an uninvolved spectator, Jefferies attempts to blind Thorvald with the light of his photographic flash. This is the only defense Jefferies could choose, and it is the defense he has used throughout his life to escape responsibility. But this time it fails and Jefferies must engage Thorvald, the embodiment of his darker impulses, in hand to hand combat in a struggle for survival and identity.

Jefferies hangs precariously from his window as Thorvald tries to kill him, until the police stop Thorvald and Jefferies falls frighteningly to the ground (a motif Hitchcock uses in many of his later films).

In the film's closing scene, we see Jefferies asleep in his wheelchair, with his back to the window. Lisa, in casual clothes, is lying on the bed apparently reading a book entitled *Beyond the High Himalayas*. When she notices that Jefferies is asleep, she puts the book down and begins reading *Bazaar*. Jefferies no longer needs to escape his life by viewing the lives of others. Yet, as we can see, the conflicts between Lisa and Jefferies have not been entirely resolved. Earlier in the film, Lisa tried to persuade Jefferies to give up his adventuresome career in favor of settling down in New York as a fashion photographer. Through-

out the film, the contrast between the cosmopolitan, fashion-conscious Lisa and the rough action-oriented Jefferies is maintained. At the film's end, this conflict is not resolved, but, through Lisa's brave contribution toward solving the case, we now see these conflicts as resolvable and perhaps even humorous.

Through his involvement in the Thorvald case, Jefferies has faced up to his life honestly. By watching the film-like occurrences out of his rear window, and allowing himself to become emotionally involved in them, Jefferies has overcome his anxieties about marrying Lisa. Returning to Douchet's interpretation of the film, the character of Thorvald can be understood as representing one of the courses of action contemplated by Jefferies for resolving the issues involved in his relationship with Lisa. The "Thorvald option" consists of destroying one's relationships with those to whom one should be emotionally bound. By the film's end, Jefferies has come face to face with this possibility, thus his battle against Thorvald symbolizes his struggle against his fear of marriage and commitment. As I have shown, here the familiar Hitchcock theme of the double emerges just as it did in *Strangers on a Train* (with Guy and Bruno), and just as it will in many of Hitchcock's later films.

Robin Wood expresses this point quite eloquently: "The effect is made more, not less frightening by the fact that Thorvald is presented, not as a monster, but as a human being, half terrible, half perplexed and pitiable. If he were merely a monster, we could reject him quite comfortably; because our reaction to him is mixed, we have to accept him as representative of potentialities in Jefferies and by extension, in all of us."⁷ Thus, when Truffaut suggests to Hitchcock that Jefferies cannot answer Thorvald's demand ("What do you want of me?") because Jefferies' actions have been unjustified, Hitchcock responds, "That's right, and he (Jefferies) deserves what's happening to him!"⁸

However, we should not let our pity for Thorvald lead us to believe either that Thorvald was justified in his act of murder or that Jefferies should not have uncovered Thorvald's crime. Thorvald represents Jefferies' worst fears about himself. Thorvald has chosen to kill another human being rather than to face up to his troubles responsibly. This act has destroyed Thorvald, not ennobled him. Evidence of this lies in Thorvald's other acts after having killed his wife. He brutally chops up her body and carries it out of their apartment in his sample case, piece by piece. At the film's conclusion, it is suggested that he buried her head in the flower garden. When a neighbor's small dog was found digging in the same garden, he strangled it to death. When Thorvald discovers Lisa hiding in his apartment, he begins beating her and might well have strangled her too if the police had not intervened. Finally, Thorvald attempts to strangle Jefferies himself when he discovers his location.

On the other hand, Hitchcock makes it clear that it is not Jefferies' 'Peeping Tom' activities which lead to his guilt. Jefferies deserves what is happening to him because of his earlier unwillingness to responsibly commit himself to life. While the suggestion is initially made in the film that Jefferies' voyeurism is immoral, this suggestion is dispelled in a crucial scene in the middle of the film. Jefferies and Lisa have been convinced by Doyle that their suspicions are without basis. Lisa has closed the blinds and they sit discussing what has happened. Jefferies concedes that Doyle was right in claiming that "what goes on out there

is a pretty private world". He then asks Lisa whether she thinks it's unethical for a man with binoculars to watch another man even if he thinks that man has committed a murder. Lisa responds that, "she's not much on rear window ethics". They open the blinds and look out the window to discover that the little dog has been murdered. The dog's owner (the wife mentioned earlier) cries out her grief to the entire neighborhood. "Which one of you did it?", she screams, "None of you are real neighbors. Neighbors care if anyone lives or dies. Did she like you? Did you kill her because she liked you"?

The point here is obvious. Hitchcock is answering Jefferies' question about ethics. It is moral for Jefferies to be concerned that one of his neighbors may have been murdered. If he and Lisa had been looking out the window, instead of discussing the morality of doing so, they might have caught Thorvald about to kill the dog. Their hesitations about pursuing Thorvald disappear entirely from this point in the film until its end.

One of Hitchcock's most interesting visual motifs for expressing the philosophical themes I have discussed is his use of light and dark. Throughout the film, darkness is used to represent the attempt to evade responsibility while light is used to represent an honest acceptance of commitment. Early in the film, after having expressed his fears of marriage, we see Jefferies sitting in the dark with his eyes closed. Lisa's face emerges bathed in light as she leans over to kiss him. He asks her who she is and she introduces herself to us (the audience) by saying each of her names as she turns on a different lamp: "Reading from top to bottom, Lisa (turns lamp on), Carol (turns another lamp on), Freemont (turns third lamp on)." The apartment is transformed from the darkness of Jefferies' fears to the light of Lisa's emotional honesty.

Later in the film, Jefferies' desire to play it safe is contrasted to Lisa's willingness to take risks in his reluctance to turn on the lights in his apartment even after Thorvald has left his. Lisa moves to turn on the lights and Jefferies stops her. More dramatically, Thorvald's guilt is visually illustrated as he sits in his apartment in the dark night after night with only the eerie red glow of his cigarette to indicate his presence. It is this habit which clinches his responsibility for the murder of the dog, in that he is the only one in the neighborhood who does not turn on his lights and look out his window when the dog's body is discovered. He continues to sit in the dark smoking his cigarette.

Finally, the use of darkness and light play a powerful role in the film's climax. When Jefferies realizes that Thorvald has discovered his location, he is sitting in his apartment alone with all the lights off as a way of evading discovery. He looks to the door of his apartment as he hears the sound of his apartment house door opening and closing. After a brief period of hysterically casting about the apartment for some method of escape, including a failed attempt to leave his wheelchair, Jefferies discovers his flash apparatus sitting right in his lap. Light streams in from the crack under the door until the sound of Thorvald's steps on the stairs stops at his floor.

As we hear Thorvald enter the hall, the light under the door goes out. Thorvald has obviously turned it out. But why? Rationally, Thorvald's action makes no sense but visually it further identifies Thorvald's actions with darkness. Thorvald opens the apartment door. His figure is

outlined in darkness. Only his eyes are illuminated and in those eyes we see his anxiety and fear.

He speaks to Jefferies out of fear and perhaps some wild hope that a bargain might be struck. "What do you want from me?" Pause. "Your friend the girl could have turned me in. Why didn't she?" Pause. "What is it you want, a lot of money? I don't have a lot of money." Pause. "Say something." Pause. "Say something! Tell me what you want!" Pause. "Can you get me that ring back?" Finally, Jefferies responds with obvious revulsion in his voice and a rejection of his own weaker impulses as they are embodied by Thorvald. "No!" "Tell her to bring it back!", Thorvald demands. "I can't, the police have it by now".

His hopes for a deal destroyed, Thorvald slowly approaches Jefferies. It is here that Jefferies uses the weapon of light from his flash to fend off the evil darkness of Thorvald. Four times Jefferies uses his flash to slow Thorvald in his tracks. Each time, we see from Thorvald's perspective the red haze which overcomes his vision as he approaches. Ultimately, as we discussed earlier, Jefferies is forced to engage in a physical struggle against Thorvald which results in the breaking of his other leg. Thus, when we last see Jefferies, both of his legs are in casts and his back is turned to the window. As he has now responsibly accepted his commitment to Lisa, he can sleep contentedly even though with both of his legs broken, all thoughts of escape have been destroyed.

Thus, I believe I have shown that Hitchcock's *Rear Window* displays the philosophical themes I have suggested. Jefferies begins the film as a man seeking to escape commitment and responsibility. Through his involvement in the Thorvald case, he is forced to face up to his fears and overcome them. This overcoming is demonstrated at the end of the film by his acceptance of his love for Lisa. In *Rear Window*, as in many other Hitchcock films, we find existential themes clearly articulated. In each of these films the protagonist is initially portrayed as being in "bad faith", afraid to become committed to anything. In the course of each film, that person is faced with a series of challenges, often life-threatening, which act as a catalyst in bringing that person into authentic being.

In Heideggerian terms, the realization of the possibility of death (non-being) calls the conscience of the individual to an acceptance of authenticity. In Sartrean terms, the protagonist is faced with a situation in which a fundamental choice must be made. In making that choice, the protagonist becomes engaged in life and, at least temporarily, overcomes bad faith.

Like Marcel and Buber, moreover, Hitchcock equates the achievement of authentic selfhood with the ability to successfully establish a romantic link with another person. Using Buber's terminology, Thorvald is a man who has chosen to maintain an "I - it" relationship with the other people in his life. Rather than working to obtain a genuine discourse with his wife, he is initially presented as engaging only in what Buber calls "pseudo-listening". Thorvald's decision to murder his wife and chop her up forever condemns him to the loneliness of the "I - it" relationship. In his rejection of Thorvald, Jefferies moves from the role of a mere spectator of life (characteristic of those in the "I - it" relationship) to that of the "I - Thou" relationship. The disclosure of

Thorvald's guilt forces Jefferies to open up those parts of himself which he had been hiding and allows him to fully participate in his relationship with Lisa.

In Marcel's terms, Jefferies begins the film in a metaphysical "disease" which is alleviated by his move from primary to secondary reflection as the film progresses. Hitchcock cleverly uses the mystery of Thorvald's wife to achieve these goals which Marcel describes as resulting from a confrontation with the "mystery" of life itself. In the process of resolving this mystery, Jefferies is converted into a participant in his own life. His "blinded intuition" about Thorvald establishes a discourse with others (Lisa and Stella) which allows him to experience all those emotions of which he was initially afraid.

The Trouble with Harry (1955) is a minor Hitchcock effort, but it has existential import. In this film, we are presented with characters who populate a surreal world where the absurd is accepted as a matter of fact. Hitchcock tells Truffaut:

I've always been interested in establishing a contrast, in going against the traditional and breaking away from clichés. With *Harry*, I took it out in the sunshine. It's as if I had set up a murder alongside a rustling brook and spilled a drop of blood in the clear water. These contrasts establish a counterpoint; they elevate the commonplace in life to a higher level".⁹

This approach is a reversal of Sartre's well-known passage in his novel *Nausea* where the protagonist is overwhelmed by his experience of observing a tree in the park. Sartre's protagonist is overcome by a sense both of the density and meaninglessness of the tree's existence. By placing a corpse in a lovely New England meadow on a beautiful fall day and by having his characters react to it in such a nonchalant, tongue-in-cheek manner, Hitchcock induces in the moviegoer a sense of the fragility of our common assumptions concerning reality and a sense of the absurdity of the world as we experience it. The movie's protagonist, Sam Marlowe (John Forsythe), is an abstract painter who rejects traditional values both in his paintings and in his life. Marlowe disclaims traditional notions of success and shows little interest in selling his paintings or in making money from their sale.

In a surprisingly up-to-date discussion with Jennifer Rogers (Shirley MacLaine) concerning her fears about losing independence if she marries him, Sam Marlowe blurts out (as though everyone, including the audience, should know it by now), "But I respect freedom, I love freedom". In this film, Hitchcock gives us a *passionate* affirmation of the fundamental existential theme of the ontologically free individual trying to fulfill one's project in a world which overwhelms one with its existence but which itself is absurd. The one value commonly affirmed by all the sympathetic characters is a belief in honesty over the conventional hypocrisy imposed on us by society and a willingness to engage in genuine discourse.

The characters say exactly what they feel, even when such expression defies conventional morality, and this creates the film's humor. Captain Wiles (Edmund Gwenn), Miss Gravely (Mildred Natwick), and Jennifer Rogers are only concerned with protecting themselves from the law

when each mistakenly believes that Harry's death was caused accidentally by them. None of them displays the conventional responses to discovering his body. All of them emulate the spontaneous, honest, and unconventional form of behavior usually shown by a small child. This is demonstrated by their common acceptance of the statements and behavior of Jennifer's small boy Arnie (Jerry Mathers), even when he is engaged in unconventional activities (such as continuing play with a dead rabbit). Throughout the film, each of the characters confesses his/her inner feelings and fears to the other(s). These confessions consist initially of confessions of guilt concerning Harry's death, and each confession results in that character's eventual exoneration. The confessions range to other topics as well, such as Captain Wiles' confession that he was only a tugboat captain and Sam's final confession that he wished for a double bed. Thus the film values honesty (authenticity) over the traditional (hypocritical) values of society. Again, Hitchcock associates the achievement of authenticity with successful romantic involvement (Jennifer with Sam, Captain Wiles with Miss Gravely).

"The Trouble with Harry" does not simply refer to the characters' difficulty in disposing of his body. The real trouble with Harry, as Jennifer tells Sam in a crucial scene, was his willingness to marry his deceased brother's sweetheart, even though he did not really love her. Harry was an inauthentic individual who acted not as he himself wished to act but as he thought others would wish him to act. Because of his inauthenticity, Harry never achieved full personhood, and thus his passing is not mourned by the characters of the film.

Hitchcock's 1956 film, *The Wrong Man*, is worth a brief examination in terms of the existential themes permeating Hitchcock's work. In this film, Christopher Emmanuel Ballestrero (Henry Fonda) is wrongly accused of committing a series of hold-ups. Based on a true story, the film portrays the effects of this mistake on Ballestrero's life, particularly on his wife Rose (Vera Miles), who suffers an emotional breakdown as a result of the stress caused by the mistake.

According to Donald Spoto, Hitchcock told Maxwell Anderson at the outset of the film's production that he

would stress an innocent man's terror and his wife's trauma, the loss of mental health and stability in a family not on vacation (as in the previous film, *The Man Who Knew Too Much*) but in familiar neighborhood settings. In the new film he would again detail the threat to a household and to sanity, but not in an exotic foreign locale, amid international assassination plots and mysterious governments; instead, the disorder and the madness would enter the living room. From this film on, mental trauma over confused identities marked all the Hitchcock pictures.¹⁰

At the film's beginning, we see Ballestrero playing the bass as part of a nightclub band. Without dialogue, he leaves the club, puts on his overcoat and hat, and walks to the subway. In the subway, we see him reading the newspaper. First, he turns to the racing news, then he reads an ad about buying a new car, an ad about investing his money, and finally he returns to the racing form to mark his picks. From these first few scenes, filmed in a very stark black and white, the audience is led to make certain assumptions about him.

Because of his appearance (somewhat menacing), his profession (somewhat disreputable), and his behavior in reading the newspaper (somewhat suspicious), the audience is initially led by Hitchcock to assume that Ballestrero is a shady character who bets the horses and might even be involved in criminal activities. The scenes immediately following these completely destroy those assumptions. We next see Ballestrero arriving home, where we discover that he is an honest, hard-working husband and father (with two children) who is struggling to make ends meet. We learn that he doesn't really play the horses and that he believes in borrowing money to get from paycheck to paycheck. We also discover that he is known for his reliability and his caring and gentle nature.

Thus in the first few minutes of the film, Hitchcock has warned us against accepting things as they seem. A major theme of this film is the philosophical problem of appearance and reality. When, a few minutes more into the film, the employees of an insurance company and later the police mistake Ballestrero for a notorious hold-up man, we do not regard them as fools or even villains, for we ourselves were ready to make the same mistake at the film's outset.

The police are portrayed as sincere individuals trying to do the best job with the tools at their command. Their mistake in arresting and charging Ballestrero does not result from dereliction of duty but from the belief that their techniques of crime detection are sufficient for getting at the truth. In a sense, the police in this film represent all of those people (scientists, philosophers, etc.) who believe that the world is rational and that their techniques, if properly applied, will always resolve all questions.

The first half of the film, in which we see Ballestrero methodically stripped of his dignity and his identity as he is arrested, questioned, booked, and thrown into a cell, makes one of Hitchcock's most powerful statements concerning the fragility of one's view of reality and the preservation of one's identity. Our view of the world as a rational, ordered environment is revealed as a thin veneer stretched over a reality which is chaotic, uncaring, and absurd.

In the second half of the film, the emphasis shifts from concern over Ballestrero's legal fate to the rapidly deteriorating mental condition of his wife. In making this shift, Hitchcock demonstrates that the vision of chaos presented in the first half is not a problem to be resolved simply by removing Ballestrero's legal trouble. The audience can guess Ballestrero will eventually be cleared and the real hold-up man captured. However, the portrayal of these events, seeming the most important of the film, are presented in a nonsuspenseful, pedestrian manner. Ballestrero's first trial results in a mistrial when a jury member asks the judge if they, the members of the jury, must bother to listen to all the evidence (the implication being that Ballestrero is obviously guilty so that no more evidence is required).

While awaiting his second trial, Ballestrero is advised by his mother to pray for strength. As the camera focuses on his face praying, we see it dissolve into the face of the real hold-up man as he is about to be captured in the course of attempting another robbery. A policeman who was present at Ballestrero's initial questioning accidentally passes

the real hold-up man as he is going off duty, and at the last moment he realizes the resemblance to Ballestrero. The events which clear Ballestrero of the charges against him are as arbitrary as those which initially led to his arrest. The reliability of standard police or legal proceedings does not lead to his release. Indeed, there are many innocent people not as lucky as Ballestrero who are convicted and remain in jail.

In Rose Ballestrero's mental breakdown we find the true expression of Hitchcock's existential themes in this film. Here the crucial scene occurs in the Ballestrero's bedroom about halfway through the film. We already know that something is wrong with Rose, but we do not know the extent of her collapse. Rose has not slept or eaten for days. She expresses her sense of guilt for all that has occurred and her terror of living. She expresses a desire to lock out the world and says, "it does not do to care". When her husband tries to comfort her, she hits him on the forehead with a hairbrush, simultaneously cracking their large bedroom mirror. This sequence is filmed in a horrifying manner with the same techniques which Hitchcock used later in the cinematic presentation of the murders committed in *Psycho*.

In the cracking of the mirror, we become aware of the final rupture of the fabric of reality, that thin veneer covering a world of chaos. In the next scene, a psychologist speaks with Rose. He describes her condition to Ballestrero, saying she inhabits "another world, as different from our world as the dark side of the moon", a world of "monstrous shadows" where she lives in a "landslide of fear and guilt".

At the film's end, when Ballestrero goes to the sanitarium where Rose is being treated to tell her of his exoneration, we are encouraged initially to believe, as Ballestrero does, that as soon as she hears the news she will snap out of her collapse. We are further encouraged in this belief by the suggestion of divine intervention Hitchcock makes earlier in the film.

These expectations are quickly dashed, however, when we discover that Rose's condition has worsened, not improved. She responds to his news by repeating, "That's fine for you", implying that it does not help her. She tells him that she does not care about ever leaving the sanitarium because "it doesn't matter where anyone is or what they do with their life". When Ballestrero tries to encourage and console her, the nurse tells him to leave because "Rose is not listening anymore". And when Ballestrero tells the nurse that he had hoped the news might help his wife, the nurse destroys any hope for instant divine intervention when she says, "Miracles take time". In this statement, there is rejection of any notion of quick or easy salvation. When Ballestrero prays, he initiates a personal relationship with what Marcel calls the "Absolute Thou". The resolution of the struggles of himself and his wife will come about only as the result of a long process of dialogue and loving testimony.

In the brief epilogue, we are shown the backs of what we take to be Ballestrero's family walking down a street, as a printed message tells us that two years later the family moved to Florida and that Rose is completely recovered.

His next film, *Vertigo* (1957), is Hitchcock's masterpiece of existential awareness. In it James Stewart plays a detective (John "Scottie" S

Ferguson) who discovers that he suffers from vertigo in the film's opening sequence in which he and another policeman are chasing a suspect over the rooftops of San Francisco. Scottie loses his footing and ends up hanging on for dear life from a rooftop gutter by his hands (not unlike Stewart's character Jefferies at the climax of *Rear Window*). His partner leans over to rescue Scottie and in the process loses his footing and falls to his death. As a result of this incident, Scottie quits the police force and appears unwilling to engage in any meaningful activity.

Robin Wood, in his insightful essay on the film, makes these comments concerning the opening sequence:

The sensation of vertigo is conveyed to the spectator by the most direct means, subjective shots using simultaneous zoom-in and tracking-back that makes the vast drop telescope out before our eyes; we watch, from Scottie's viewpoint, the policeman hurtle down. The sensation has been explained, I believe, by psychologists as arising from the tension between the desire to fall and the dread of falling--an idea it is worth bearing in relation to the whole film. In any case, we, with Scottie, are made to understand what it feels like to be so near death and to have death made so temptingly easy, yet so terrifying, a way out of pain and effort; to live, he must hold on desperately to the gutter, his fingers strained, his mind gripped by unendurable tension; to die, he has only to let go. When we next see Scottie, he is sitting in the apartment of Midge (Barbara Bel Geddes). We do not see and are never told how he got down from the gutter. There seems no possible way he *could* have got down. The effect is of leaving him, throughout the film metaphorically suspended over a great abyss.¹¹

The existential symbolism of this sequence is overwhelming and is worthy of a Kierkegaard, a Nietzsche, or a Heidegger. Scottie is presented as a man perpetually hanging over an abyss, a man filled with dread. He is in a situation in which he must make a choice to live or to die, but he is terrified of choosing. The nearness and easy security of death tempt him to suicide, yet within him there still exists a spark of life, a will to live authentically. The rest of the film portrays the struggle between the forces within him, and the primary suspense of the film derives from this battle. Will he choose an authentic, committed existence, or will he seek to escape the processes of living which so frighten him, by falling into bad faith (analogous to death) in which he lies to himself by pretending that fantasy is reality?

The dilemma is described by Sartre in a passage from his novel, *The Reprieve*, in which his character Mathieu visualizes his freedom in this way:

I am my freedom. He had hoped that there would come a day when he would be transfixed with joy, as by lightning. Now too would be an absolute. It would be a law, an ethic, a choice. It would be enough to bend down a little and the choice would be made for all eternity. . . . This act was in front of him, projected on the dark water, it was the pattern of his future. All the links with the past were cut,

there was nothing in the world to hold him back, therein lay--appallingly--his freedom. . . . The water was his future. Now--it is true--I shall kill myself. All at once he decided against it. He decided that it had been only a test. He found himself standing upright, walking, slipping on the crust of a dead planet. It would be for another time.¹²

The deathlike fantasy which tempts him in the film is embodied in the role played by Kim Novak. Initially, she portrays the mysteriously romantic Adeleine Elster, the wife of an old friend who hires Scottie to follow her. Gavin Elster (Tom Helmore) is seemingly concerned that his wife is going mad. He suspects that she has come to identify herself with the tragic nineteenth century Gothic heroine, Carlotta Valdez, who committed suicide in a fit of romantic despair.

Thus the Kim Novak character is immediately associated with a fantasy of despair, suicide, and escape. As we, along with Scottie, follow Madeleine in her romantically ghoulisg 'wanderings' around the picturesque old Spanish architecture of San Francisco¹³ we, like Scottie, fall into the obsessively pessimistic trance which Hitchcock weaves. This trance is deepened following Madeleine's attempt to drown herself near the Golden Gate Bridge. Scottie saves her and brings her back to his austere apartment where she awakens undressed in his bed. From this point on, Scottie feels that he is completely responsible for her and, in a sense, owns her. Thus, when he is unable, because of his vertigo, to prevent her committing suicide by jumping from the bell tower of the old Spanish Mission, he falls into psychological collapse. Scottie's crack-up marks the midpoint of the film. At the film's beginning, Scottie is hanging over the abyss between life and death. By his absorption in the fantasy character of Madeleine, Scottie chooses a kind of death, and, when Madeleine succeeds in killing herself, Scottie responds by falling even deeper into an inauthentic madness reminiscent of that of Rose Ballestrero in *The Wrong Man*.

In the film's first half, subtle touches add to the overall existential atmosphere. The opening credits are superimposed on a woman's face filmed in extreme close-up. Robin Wood has pointed out that the presentation of this face which appears blank and expressionless while "the eyes dart nervously from side to side" indicating "unknown emotions, fears, desperation", sets the stage for the themes to follow.¹⁴ According to Wood, "the theme of unstable identity is reflected in Scottie, the wanderer who is going to do nothing: he is Johnny or Johnny-O to Midge, John to Madeleine, (later he will be) Scottie to Judy: the identity is created in part by the relationship".¹⁵

In the first half the theme of the perfect moment is introduced. In Sartre's *Nausea* certain of the characters wish to create perfect moments, disjointed segments of time in which everything comes together just as it should. Sartre condemns this desire as inauthentic in its belief that our lives may be chopped up into small static units of perfect composition. Such a perfect moment for Scottie is his first sight of Madeleine as she emerges from the plush dining area of Ernie's restaurant. After emerging from his breakdown, one of Scottie's first acts is to return to the bar at Ernie's in the fantastic hope of recapturing that special moment.

Indeed, all of Scottie's activities at this stage in the film are directed toward reviving his dream-like experiences with Madeleine. He finally gets the opportunity to fulfill this desire when he stumbles upon the vulgar salesperson, Judy Barton (Kim Novak), who bears a strong facial (but not stylistic) resemblance to Madeleine. Scottie initially offers to pay Judy (like a prostitute) to spend time with him. He makes no bones about the fact that he wishes to do this to act out his fantasies of being with Madeleine again. And because of his recognition of the fantasy level of his desire, he has no interest in touching Judy physically, even when she makes it clear that she wishes him to. Scottie's relationship to Judy is clearly of the "I - it" variety. She is an object to be appropriated and manipulated until she can be made over to fulfill Scottie's romantic fantasies.

Hitchcock reveals to us, the audience (but not to Scottie), the fact that Judy really is Madeleine. He does this by allowing us to enter Judy's consciousness in order to remember with her the events directly leading up to Madeleine's death. We are allowed to see that Gavin Elster has used Judy/Madeleine to convince Scottie (and thus the authorities) that his wife's death was a suicide, where, in fact, he murdered her. Many critics have wondered why Hitchcock chose to reveal the truth about Judy's identity only two-thirds of the way through the film. The novel from which the film was taken (*D'entre les Morts* by Boileau and Warcejac) does not reveal the secret until the end, when the reader discovers it along with Scottie.

Hitchcock, in his interviews with Truffaut, responds to this point by suggesting that his version of the story presents the audience with greater suspense at the small cost of eliminating a portion of the element of surprise.¹⁶ While this may be true,¹⁷ this move on Hitchcock's part is essential for establishing the final resolution of the existential theme of the film.

By allowing us to know the secret of Judy's identity at this point, Hitchcock accomplishes a variety of goals. First, he severs the audience's perspective completely from the subjective awareness of Scottie. We are able to watch Scottie in such a way as to judge his actions and evaluate his condition. If we in the audience can learn from Scottie's story, then we must be critical of Scottie (and, in second-hand fashion, of ourselves for participating in Scottie's fantasy world up to this point). Second, Hitchcock reveals to us the illusory nature of the whole "Madeleine" experience. Not only is Madeleine now dead, but she never existed. The entire experience of the first half of the film is thoroughly betrayed. It is stripped brutally of all of its romantic and mysterious allure. We, like Scottie, allowed ourselves to be deceived into believing in a Platonic realm of perfect essences which, we should have known from the very beginning, could not exist. In this fashion, Hitchcock makes us startlingly aware of Scottie's--and our own--bad faith. We spend the rest of the film suspended over an abyss. We are torn between our desire to punish both Scottie and Judy for their deception of us; and our hope that things will work out satisfactorily for them, a desire grounded in that part of us which, albeit reluctantly, cannot but identify with them.

We watch in guilty anxiety as Judy allows Scottie to strip her of the fragile identity which she has created for herself. We are aware, as Judy is aware, that this process can end only in disaster, yet we un-

derstand her inability to resist Scottie's overwhelming and increasingly mad obsession. In his interview with Truffaut, Hitchcock points out the sexual and intimate nature of Scottie's transformation of Judy:

What I liked best is when the girl came back after having had her hair dyed blond. James Stewart is disappointed because she hasn't put her hair up in a bun. What this really means is that the girl has almost stripped, but she still won't take her knickers off. When he insists, she says, "All right!" and goes into the bathroom while he waits outside. What Stewart is really waiting for is for the woman to emerge totally naked this time, and ready for love.¹⁸

In allowing herself to be transformed by Scottie back into the non-existent character of Madeleine, Judy enters into a consciousness of such powerful inauthenticity that she virtually ceases to exist altogether. She is torn between the illusory persona of "Madeleine" and the equally illusory person of the "Judy" who knows nothing of "Madeleine". Her love for Scottie is an unhealthy emotion which results in a relationship of sado-masochism like those unfavorably described by Sartre in his section in *Being and Nothingness* on inauthentic love.¹⁹

When Judy emerges from that bathroom, she is bathed in a green light which, according to Hitchcock, "gives her the same subtle ghostlike quality"²⁰ she possessed in her role as Madeleine. It also communicates to us the eerie madness which has now taken over both Scottie and Judy. As they kiss, Spoto calls it "the ultimate kissing scene of his (Hitchcock's) career",²¹ the hotel room dissolves behind them first into solid greenness (madness), then into the livery stable scene where Scottie and Madeleine last kissed (in the first half of the film), and, finally, back into the hotel room again. "Judy" has now submerged her identity completely into the phony "Madeleine" character.

As Robin Wood says,

She wants to go to Ernie's ("Well, after all, it's our place"). She has re-entered the Madeleine world. When she makes the fatal, apparently so stupid and obvious, mistake of putting on the Carlotta Valdez necklace and asking Scottie to link it for her, it is simply the final surrender of her identity as Judy: she *is* Madeleine again. We are shown Scottie's realization subjectively: the necklace on Judy's throat in the mirror is juxtaposed with the same necklace in Carlotta's portrait.

Scottie is now, at last, aware of the deception which has been played upon him. But, instead of reacting spontaneously and honestly (by immediately challenging Judy/Madeleine while they are still in her hotel room), he chooses to plunge even deeper into bad faith by pretending that he has not realized the significance of the necklace, while, at the same time, he alters his behavior towards her dramatically, from that of an intoxicated lover to that of a coldly distant, angrily preoccupied individual. Judy/Madeleine, in her unstable mental condition, is initially incapable of understanding what has caused this change in the man for whom she has now sacrificed everything, including any hope of regaining her identity. As she gradually recognizes the route Scottie is taken, back to the old Mission, she realizes that all is lost for her, and

that, at the very moment of her sacrifice which was intended to regain Scottie's love for her, she has lost it forever.

When they arrive at the Mission, Scottie, as usual, thinks only of himself and his anger at being deceived. That anger (the first genuine, life-affirming emotion which Scottie has felt or expressed in the film) lashes out at Judy/Madeleine as he forces her and himself to ascend the Mission staircase. By coercing Judy/ Madeleine into a confession, Scottie overcomes his vertigo (existential dread) and at last chooses to live authentically. But his choice is bought at the expense of Judy/Madeleine's sanity, so that, when a dark figure appears behind them in the bell-tower, she hysterically loses her footing and plunges to her death.

Robin Wood says:

The film ends with the magnificent image of Scottie looking down from a great height to where Judy has fallen: magnificent, because it so perfectly crystallizes our complexity of response. Scottie is cured; yet his cure has destroyed at a blow both the reality and the illusion of Judy/Madeleine, has made the *illusion* of Madeleine's death real. He is cured, but empty, desolate. Triumph and tragedy are indistinguishably fused.²³

Vertigo is the story of a man suspended between his fear of living and his fear of death. He seeks to escape his condition first by doing "nothing" (quitting his job) and then by living in a world of fantasy all his own. His love for the non-existent Madeleine is never real. It is more akin to the Freudian notion of Thanatos, the death instinct. In *Vertigo* Hitchcock succeeds, more than in any other of his films, in visually portraying existential themes. Some critics have complained that the film's characters and plot are implausible. As individuals, the film's characters are outrageously implausible. As representatives of the existential human condition, however, they are emotionally and intellectually compelling. As for the film's murder plot, it is not meant to be believable. It is a perfect example of the Hitchcockian "MacGuffin". Hitchcock demonstrates his total unconcern for the film's murder plot by never bothering to inform the audience whether the murderer, Gavin Esler, was caught. Given the fundamental importance of the philosophical themes of the film, the fate of its murderer pales in comparison. Proof of the unimportance of this omission is that most members of the audience do not notice it.

It is important to note that the most significant events of the film take place in a Catholic mission and that the dark figure whose appearance startles Madeleine/Judy turns out to be a nun. The initial use of the mission as an integral setting in Elster's murder scheme reflects the heretical nature of Elster's plan. As we have already discussed, for religious existentialists like Buber and Marcel, the path to a personal relationship with the Absolute Thou (God) has its beginnings in one's concrete relations with others. Elster's use of the mission as an instrument in his plan to murder his wife shows his rejection of genuine discourse with God as well as with man.

Furthermore, the complicity of both Judy and Scottie in Elster's scheme indicates their own disassociation from God. In his obsession to possess and manipulate Judy in order to fulfill his internal fantasies,

Scottie remains in an "I - it" relationship with the world which rejects the possibility of any discourse with a living God. As Buber points out, those who live in such a relationship with the world can have no present or future, only a past. When, at the film's end, Scottie finally faces the truth and breaks the spell which Madeleine has held over him, he is at last susceptible to the possibility of religious consolation. Whether he will be able to fulfill this possibility or will fall back into his isolating rejection of others is not totally resolved. However, the fact that his vertigo has disappeared for the first time in the film does suggest that he is now at least capable of overcoming the psychological barriers he had constructed to distance himself from the world.

Judy, on the other hand, by the film's end, is so deeply mired in the "I - it" relationship that she is incapable of living. Her sense of self-worth has become so conditioned by her desire to please Scottie that she is thrown into complete madness by his final rejection of her. In the grasp of this hopelessness, she is incapable of seeing the nun (a symbol of religious redemption) as anything but a threat.

In his discussions with Hitchcock, Francois Truffaut asks, "How can anyone object to gratuity when it's so clearly deliberate--it's planned incongruity? It's obvious that the fantasy of the absurd is a key ingredient in your film-making formula". Hitchcock responds, "The fact is I practice absurdity quite *religiously!*"²⁴ (italics mine).

Truffaut and Hitchcock sum up the existential nature of Hitchcock's films when, at the end of their long series of interviews, they have the following interchange:

Truffaut: Exactly. It might be said that the texture of your films is made up of three elements: fear, sex, and death. These are not daytime preoccupations, like in films that deal with unemployment, racism, poverty, or in many pictures on everyday love conflicts between men and women. They are nighttime anxieties, therefore, metaphysical anxieties.

Hitchcock: Well, isn't the main thing that they be connected with life?²⁵

ENDNOTES

¹ Francois Truffaut, *Hitchcock* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1967), 12-13.

² Robin Wood, *Person Views: Explorations in Film* (London: Gordon Fraser Ltd., 1976)

³ Wood, *Views*, 176.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 179.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 178.

- ⁶ Robin Wood, *Hitchcock's Films* (Cranbury, NJ: A.S. Barnes and Co., 1977). A fuller discussion of the effects of these movements on Hitchcock's film-making techniques may be found in the first chapter, 11-28.
- ⁷ Wood, *Hitchcock's Films*, 75.
- ⁸ Truffaut, 163.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, 169.
- ¹⁰ Donald Spoto, *The Dark Side of Genius: The Life of Alfred Hitchcock* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1983), 396-97.
- ¹¹ Wood, *Hitchcock's Films*, 79.
- ¹² Gabriel Marcel, *The Philosophy of Existence* (London: Harvill Press, 1948), 56-57.
- ¹³ This is one of those special films in which the settings perfectly match the changing moods of the characters. See Wood, *Hitchcock's Films*, 80-81.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 78.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 91.
- ¹⁶ Truffaut, 184-85.
- ¹⁷ The French film of Boileau's and Marcejac's *Les Diaboliques* (1955), which had a similar plot line, did not reveal its secret until the very end. Most critics praised it as extremely suspenseful.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 186.
- ¹⁹ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, tr. Hazel Barnes (New York: Washington Square Press, 1971), 471-534.
- ²⁰ Truffaut, 186.
- ²¹ Spoto, 427.
- ²² Wood, *Hitchcock's Films*, 94.
- ²³ *Ibid.*, 95.
- ²⁴ Truffaut, 194.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*, 241-42.