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Tom Gunning

Hitchcock and the Picture in the Frame

Hitchcock's mastery of cinematic framing beckons to us from nearly every shot of his films. His visual style turns on careful consideration of where to place characters and objects within the filmic frame, the precise accent given by lighting, the shaping of space through his selection of lenses, the use of color as a means of attracting attention and creating visual relations, and a dynamic sense of how frames interact through editing or become transformed through movement within the frame—or the movement of the camera itself. Careful attention to Hitchcock's use of sketches and storyboards for the preparation of his filming reveals his system of plotting his shots as the act of framing and the staging of action within a frame. But beyond regulating the components of his visual style, the frame also plays an important thematic role in his films, especially when he uses an interior compositional frame, such as a window or a doorway, within the larger film frame. Although the meaning and use of such a frame varies from film to film, certain patterns are recurrent—derived often from his use of the thriller genre—such as the entrapment of characters. Other uses of such frames within frames relate to Hitchcock's stylistic use of point of view, underscoring the act of looking, as in the many views through the window or camera lenses central to one of his masterpieces, *Rear Window* (1954).

In addition to his use of windows and doorways, Hitchcock also used compositional frames to invoke the other arts, especially theater and painting. From his earliest films Hitchcock used stage prosceniums and paintings as ways of framing significant elements, endowing them with additional importance or ambiguity. Theater and painting also represent for Hitchcock concentrations of the gaze, and therefore make reference to such themes as voyeurism, masquerade, desire, and deception. In the pages that follow, I will trace the interrelation between paintings (or their reproductions), their frames (or edges), and the frame of Hitchcock's camera. This is not precisely virgin territory. Hitchcock's relation to the arts has been the subject of two exhibition catalogues and of an elegant and insightful essay by Brigitte Peucker, included in her book *The Material Image* (Stanford University Press, 2007). My treatment certainly overlaps with those earlier considerations, especially with Peucker's. However, my

This essay will appear, in somewhat different form, with full citations, notes, and illustrations, in *Casting a Shadow: Creating the Hitchcock Film*, edited by Will Schmenner, to be published in September 2007 by Northwestern University Press. Used by permission.



focus (or my frame) is a bit narrower. I am looking at precisely the way the formal aspects of painting, the differentiation between the space of representation and the space of the world of the observer, are both kept apart and interrelated. Paintings in Hitchcock rarely play a merely decorative role. Instead, through their dynamic relation to the act of framing, they project an influence into the world of the character as conduits of guilt and desire.

I. WARM AND REAL, OR COLD AND LONELY? WORKS OF ART IN HITCHCOCK

Let's begin at some apparent distance from our theme, with a song overheard in one of Hitchcock's greatest films, *Rear Window*. Like *The Birds* (1963), *Rear Window* lacks a conventional musical score, but instead features a carefully arranged aural accompaniment composed from the sounds that drift into L. B. Jefferies's (James Stewart) Greenwich Village apartment during a pre-air conditioning summer, when windows were left open and the street, back courtyard, and even fire escapes buzzed with noise and activity. This urban cacophony includes snatches of music (an eclectic mix of Leonard Bernstein, Béla Bartók, Rodgers and Hart, and hits from recent Paramount films, such as Dean Martin's "That's Amore"). Although this sound tapestry supposedly derives from contingent neighborhood activities, Hitchcock carefully matches it to events of the film, providing accompaniment as well as counterpoint. Central to these musical fragments, and behaving very much like a soundtrack theme song, is the tune "Lisa" (not so coincidentally named for the leading lady of the film, played by Grace Kelly), which is composed by one of Jefferies's neighbors, the songwriter (played by Ross Bagdasarian). Following Hitchcock's interest in portraying processes that develop parallel to the plot of his films, this song progresses from rough and halting improvisation on a piano, to a chamber music version (counterpointing Lisa's adventurous foray into Thorwald's apartment), to the final demo recording complete with lyrics that we hear over the film's denouement.

But there is another musical ode to Lisa tucked away in *Rear Window*, like so many *trouvées* in this film, as Hitchcock stuffs potential significance into every cranny of the courtyard beyond Jefferies's rear window. Detective Tom Doyle (Wendell Corey) has just left Jeff's apartment, deflating Lisa and Jeff's theories that cross-courtyard neighbor Lars Thorwald (Raymond Burr) has murdered his wife. Somberly, the couple look out their window at the apartment of the neighbor Jeff has dubbed "Miss Lonelyhearts" (Judith Evelyn). This unmarried, middle-aged woman has brought home a young man, who proceeds to put the moves on her quite aggressively. This rather unromantic scene becomes aurally counterpointed as the guests at a party taking place in the songwriter's apartment on the other side of the courtyard begin singing another hit song from a recent Paramount film (*Captain Carey, U.S.A.*), "Mona Lisa," which had won the Academy Award in 1950 with a version sung by Nat King Cole. The sad and tawdry tryst reaches its abrupt ending as we hear the lyrics drifting across the courtyard:

Many dreams have been brought to your doorstep
They just lie there, and they die there
Are you warm, are you real, Mona Lisa
Or just a cold and lonely, lovely work of art?

The song echoes and anticipates the film's theme song, "Lisa" (although Hitchcock indicated his own dissatisfaction with Franz Waxman's song and it certainly never gained the Academy Award or the popularity of "Mona Lisa"). The question these lyrics pose to the painting echoes Jefferies's own sense that his Lisa remains somehow too aesthetic and remote ("that rarefied atmosphere of Park Avenue"), too lovely and cold.

Rear Window presents a rather perverse romance: the story of a man overcoming his reluctance towards sex and marriage by learning to incorporate his mistress (a lesson, I should add, that she herself teaches him) into his fantasies of murder and detection. Lisa ceases to be the distant, fetishized image of a beautiful display (typified by her role as a fashion mannequin) and becomes an active "serial queen" heroine: digging in the garden at night in search of dead bodies; climbing into an apartment and diving through an opened window to gain evidence; and finally being subjected to a beating by the villain and to arrest by the police. Jefferies's intensely erotic response to Lisa after her tangle with Thorwald leaves no doubt that his passion has been rekindled. To describe Jefferies (as is often done) simply as a voyeur leaves out most of the story: to become truly excited, this peeping Tom demands a narrative frame for his vision. One could say that Hitchcock heats up Jefferies's heterosexual passion by moving Mona Lisa from her remote and statically posed frame and placing her within the more dynamic frame of an action film, in a self-reflexive scenario of danger and punishment, whose meta-psychological implications were detailed decades ago by Laura Mulvey in her classic description of Hitchcock's plots (*Visual and Other Pleasures*, University of Indiana Press, 1989).

Although *Rear Window* abounds with frames, and frames within frames, for the most part these refer to the mobile frames of photography and cinematography, rather than to the framed and still images of painting (even the still photographs constantly referenced in the film seem more important as indices of motion—the racing car wheel careening at the camera that caused Jefferies's injury—or of change—the slide image of the garden that reveals that something has been dug up by the differing height of the flowers). With one minor exception, which I will return to later, paintings play little role in this film. However, painting (and the frame that defines its images) plays a major role in Hitchcock's work as a whole, one that frequently raises "Mona Lisa's" questions about the relation the painted image bears to both reality and the warmth of desire. Hitchcock's fascination with portraits of women always raises the question of the power an image can exert on those outside the frame and, therefore, of the image's ability to exceed its static and framed existence. Thus the static image offered by a painting poses a crisis for Hitchcock, one evoking suspended desire contending with potentially deadly malevolence. Without aspiring to be exhaustive, I will attempt to survey here the key role painting plays in Hitchcock's films: as a way of framing frozen images suspended between desire and death; as the expression of guilt; and finally as the opening of a passage into another scene beyond the frame.

2. THE DEADLY LIVING IMAGE

The earliest significant paintings in Hitchcock's cinema succinctly prefigure themes that later films will unfold. When, in *The Lodger* (1927), Ivor Novello as the mysterious

lodger is shown by Daisy's mother (Marie Ault) the room he intends to rent, he reacts with unexpected alarm to the vaguely Pre-Raphaelite pictures of women with abundant blond hair that hang there. Hitchcock's camera responds to the images as well, tracking along the walls. The proud landlady is taken aback by her new tenant's negative reaction to her flair for interior decoration. He asks that the pictures be removed, which she agrees to somewhat reluctantly. In later scenes in the lodger's room, the former pictures have left signs of their absence, pale oblongs where they once hung and shielded the wallpaper from dust or sunlight. Novello's excessive reaction to the pictures provides another instance of the lodger's mysterious behavior that progressively makes him a suspect in the Jack the Ripper-type murders of young blond women occurring in this London neighborhood. We learn eventually, of course, that he is not the murderer, but rather an avenger, the brother of the murderer's first victim, trying to track her killer. This role provides Hitchcock's first developed instance of moral ambiguity based in ambiguous identifications, since the anonymous killer has taken precisely "The Avenger" as his epithet, proclaiming this in notes he attaches to his victims like an artist's signature. If suspicion of Novello proves unfounded, the series of connections between him and the Avenger reveals the ambiguity and possible perversity of the lodger's obsession with (and possibly identification with) his sister's murderer. In retrospect, therefore, we recognize the pictures of blond women as triggers for Novello's traumatic memory, multiple reproductions of his dead sister, a multiplication also reflected in the Avenger's serial victims. The attempt to repress these memories by removing the pictures from the wall cannot eradicate their indelible traces, sinister reminders alerting us that in Hitchcock such images carry a power beyond the merely pictorial: the ability to imprint themselves on a consciousness even when apparently removed from view.

Hitchcock's films feature a number of pivotal portraits of women, developing the themes adumbrated in *The Lodger*: erotic obsession, traumatic memory, thwarted attempts at repression. Hitchcock's treatment of portraits of dead women follow in the tradition of Poe's "The Oval Portrait" (and Romantic and Gothic fiction)—a transfer of life energy from the subject of the portrait to the portrait itself, so that the portrait seems to possess a vital energy even after (perhaps *especially* after) the death of the subject herself. Thus, in *Rebecca* (1940), the second Mrs. de Winter (Joan Fontaine) follows the sinister suggestion of housekeeper Mrs. Danvers (Judith Anderson) and agrees to come to a costume ball in a dress modeled on the portrait of a family ancestor, Caroline de Winter, that hangs at the head of the stairs of the family mansion, Manderley. Such imitation of a painting by a human figure invokes the tradition of the *tableau vivant*, a living picture. However, when she descends the stairway in this costume before the ball, passing the portrait itself which she checks expectantly (although most of the massive painting remains beyond the frame of this shot), her appearance does not recall an image come to life, as much as the influence of the dead reaching out and ensnaring the living. Her appearance as a living picture causes Max's sister (Gladys Cooper) to gasp the name of the deceased first Mrs. de Winter, "Rebecca," as husband Max (Lawrence Olivier) recoils in anger and orders her to take the costume off—an even more intense negative reaction than that of the lodger to the blond beauties hung along his wall, but amounting to the same

attempt at repression. It is revealed that the former Mrs. de Winter wore precisely such a costume, reproducing the portrait, at an earlier ball. Thus the “realization” of the portrait that hangs in the stairway expresses Rebecca’s continued power over Manderley and her former husband, and her baleful influence on his young bride. As Peucker nicely puts it, “It is not the ancestral portrait that is brought to life, in other words, but the dead Rebecca who had worn this same costume to an earlier ball.” Instead of bringing an ancient ancestor to life, this masquerade reduces the young bride to a facsimile of the dead wife, draining away her own life and identity.

While Hitchcock always remains on the Ann Radcliffe side of the Gothic romance, rationalizing the apparent supernatural as the psychological effects of ambiguous perceptual stimuli, these portraits of dead women embody a ghostly influence, the persistence of a fatal power not only beyond repression but beyond the barrier of death itself. In true Gothic tradition, the portraits embody a survival after death; nonetheless the effect on the living remains deadly. In *Vertigo* (1958), Hitchcock created the most complete and complex fashioning of this theme. The portrait of Carlotta Valdes provides an essential prop in Gavin Elster’s plot to murder his wife (and, incidentally, destroy the sanity of his former college chum, Scottie Ferguson). The sequence in the gallery of the San Francisco Legion of Honor, in which Scottie (James Stewart) finds the woman he takes to be Madeleine Elster (Kim Novak) seated entranced before the *Portrait of Carlotta*, shows Hitchcock’s mastery of doubling of image and meaning. This woman seated intently before a painting enacts Madeleine’s obsession with her dead ancestor, whose portrait transfixes her gaze, following the story Elster has fed Scottie. As the camera frames Madeleine from Scottie’s position, her back is turned to us, a sign of her absorption in the image before her and of his observation of her. Although the composition conveys her gaze at the painting, it is Scottie’s viewpoint that is given to us, as Scottie’s own growing obsession with Madeleine/Carlotta takes center stage, mirroring Madeleine’s supposed fantasy of possession.

Hitchcock uses camera movement to convey the force of a look: two dolly-ins place us within Scottie’s gaze, which is concentrated on the relation between Madeleine and the portrait. Thus Scottie’s fascination with the woman’s own obsession with the portrait sets up a *mise-en-abîme* of gazes: Scottie watches Madeleine’s gaze at the canvas, as the camera movement expresses his gaze and ends up merging the living woman with the subject of the painting. The tracking shots that link Madeleine and the portrait first draw a series of simple comparisons. The camera dollies from the floral bouquet Madeleine holds to the identical one held by Carlotta. Likewise the camera moves from the spiraling arrangement of Madeleine’s hairdo to Carlotta sporting the same curl in the portrait. Yet the camera movement used seems excessive if Hitchcock only intended to draw this comparison. A simple cut between the painted and the real hairdos and bouquets would make the relation clear, whereas the dolly-in camera makes us gradually approach the painting, finally drawing so close to its surface we feel we could touch it. There is more involved in this elegant scene than a detective noticing significant details. Through the dolly-in, the camera seems to sink into and open up the space of the painting, not only directing Scottie’s (and our) attention, but seemingly confusing the space of observer and painting, of representation and

reality. However, the closer we get, the more the flatness of the painting, a barrier to our penetration, asserts itself. We must linger over this paradox, because it lies at the core of Hitchcock's use of the painting and its frame.

The frame of a painting represents its aesthetic autonomy. Since the mastering of perspective and the development of easel painting, artists working in this tradition have aspired to create self-contained representations that retain a strong visual resemblance to our visual experience, while remaining separate from our world. The frame cuts the painting off from the surrounding world, funnels and directs the audience's viewpoint into the perspectival scheme of the painting. It works on a double logic: first, separating its image from surrounding space, and second, aesthetically (that is, *playfully*—we aren't dealing with literal illusions here) allowing the spatial order of the tableau to command the viewer's attention, creating a fantasy of a window or portal onto another world. This sets up the most basic contradiction of the perspectival system, an invitation to the viewer to enter visually the world of the painting while realizing the impossibility of actual physical penetration. Hitchcock's track forward into the *Portrait of Carlotta* plays with the fantasy of entering the world of the image, inviting *and* denying it simultaneously in a manner that a mere cut to an enlarged detail (as in an analytical illustration in an art history textbook) could not accomplish. We approach and are barred simultaneously. In *Vertigo* (and, as I will show, in *Blackmail* [1929]) Hitchcock moves his camera so that the frame of the shot interacts dynamically with the frame of a painting (or the edges of the canvas in *Blackmail*). Moving back and revealing the limits of the painting, it reveals it as an image. When the frame of a shot moves within the limits of the painting, the subject of the painting seems almost to overwhelm the film, to enter into the space of the film and dwell among the characters.

If the fantasy of entering a painting occurs commonly in the average observer's relation to perspectival painting, Hitchcock (and the Gothic tradition that he continually refers to, revises, and renews) also invokes its uncanny complement, the idea of the emergence of the subject from within the frame of the painting into the space of the observer. The fantasy of bodily emergence from the space of representation evokes more readily the frame of photography and the cinema (examples include the wheel coming towards the camera in Jeff's photograph in *Rear Window*, but also the *topos* in early cinema of trains rushing towards the viewer; the devices of 1950s 3-D movies; and, more recently, the video visitant of *The Ring*). In contrast to these invasive photographic and cinematic shocks, emergence from the portrait in the Gothic tradition has less physical impact. **Instead, the Gothic tradition invokes the uncanny power of a portrait's gaze, such as the fascination exerted by portraits that seem to look back at the viewer, or whose eyes even follow them around the room. Thus in this gallery sequence Madeleine seems poised between two gazes, that of Scottie behind her (of whom she is supposedly unaware) and the intently focused gaze of Carlotta in the portrait.**

Cued by Elster, Scottie believes that Madeleine believes that she is being taken over, possessed, by the spirit of her dead great-grandmother, the Carlotta in the portrait.

Scottie endeavors to convince Madeleine that such a loss of identity is impossible, but the implications of the plot indicate that he believes, or comes to believe, this supernatural influence might exist. Scottie's fascination with the story of Carlotta fuels his attraction to Madeleine, and his own obsession with the portrait expresses his growing erotic fixation with this fantasy. Thus the portrait in *Vertigo*, although dealing with some of the same themes as *The Lodger* and *Rebecca*, actually reverses the role portraits play in the earlier films. Whereas the pictures of blond women and the portrait-come-to-life engender something close to disgust in the lodger and Max, this portrait kindles Scottie's desire. The scene that parallels the anti-erotic reaction expressed by the male characters in the earlier film appears in *Vertigo* in an almost opposite context. When his friend Midge (Barbara Bel Geddes) displays her painted parody of *Portrait of Carlotta*, an exact duplicate—except for her own excessively familiar and bespectacled face replacing Carlotta's mysterious gaze—Scottie is not amused (“that’s not funny”). He walks out on their dinner date, shaking his head, causing the collapse of Midge's erotic hopes. Scottie needs the portrait as part of his erotic fantasy of Madeleine/Carlotta (hence the impossibility of the “happy ending” resolution found in *Rear Window* of integrating his lover into his fantasy—Scottie actually *does* desire a dead woman and her death plays an essential part in the fantasy).

Likewise Hitchcock employs the *tableau vivant* in *Vertigo* in a very different manner than in *Rebecca*. Hitchcock portrays Scottie's descent into madness as an elaborate dream sequence, involving a variety of filmic manipulations of space and image and the use of animation. The bouquet from the portrait appears, but as a filmic cartoon which proceeds to unravel itself in an animated flurry of petals and transforming colors. Within this dream Carlotta's portrait also appears, not as a painting but precisely as a *tableau vivant*, an actress filmed in the precise pose and costume of the portrait. The ontological status of this image within the film's diegesis poses a fascinating paradox. Hitchcock does not simply show the painting again, but rather a “real” woman. But could we claim the dream portrays the subject of the painting, Carlotta herself? The resemblance is precise (one assumes the portrait Hitchcock commissioned for the film took this young actress, Joanne Genthon, as its model). Yet there is little sense that we are supposed to take her as a “real” person within the film's diegesis. She appears frozen in her pose, a living picture, not a living person, an image visualized from Scottie's memory of the portrait, imprinted on his consciousness. As such, the presence of the living woman in the Carlotta pose represents not only his memory of the portrait, but his belief in the power Carlotta exerts: the return of the dead and their dreadful effect on the living. Overwhelmed by this persistence of the image of the portrait—not its emergence from the frame (at one point in the dream the wraith of Carlotta appears framed by the window between Scottie and Elster), but its transformation from the painterly to the virtual—Scottie becomes psychotic.

Scottie recovers from his psychosis and moves to an apparently more healthy neurotic obsession: his discovery of Judy and his attempt to recreate her in the image of Madeleine. The tragic ironies of this Pygmalion story have been well analyzed, and although it certainly involves acts of artistic creation—fashioning, rehearsing,

and recreating—the emphasis of this process lies more on bringing something to life than on the baleful image of the portrait (contrast this to Hitchcock’s most likely ultimate source for this part of the film, the novel *Bruges-la-Morte* by Belgian symbolist Georges Rodenbach and its operatic version *Die Tote Stadt* by Erich Korngold, in which a portrait of the dead wife plays an essential role). Scottie has no portrait of Madeleine that rules his recreation of Judy. Instead he attempts to recapture a memory, recreate it, and reinhabit it. At the film’s climax, Scottie recaptures his vanished love and recoups lost time as he embraces Judy, now clothed and coiffed as Madeleine, as their hotel-room present merges with the mission locale from the past where he last embraced Madeleine.

But this apparent triumph of love and fantasy over loss is followed by Scottie’s tragic discovery of the frame. Not only does the fatal portrait of Carlotta reappear, but it triggers Scottie’s realization that he has been duped, framed and manipulated within another man’s plot. Seated before a mirror, after their ecstatic act of lovemaking, Judy prepares to go out to dinner with her lover, and, while chatting about where they will go, she performs the fatal act of putting on the necklace, the replica (or the original? does it matter at this point?) of Carlotta’s necklace in the portrait. Within the logic of the story, this action betrays Judy’s complicity in Elster’s plot through her possession of, as Scottie later puts it, a sentimental souvenir of the murder that she assisted. She therefore reveals the dark truth about the past: its manufactured nature and her own complicity. Within the logic of images created by Hitchcock’s control of their visual presentation, an even more sinister pattern asserts itself. Scottie, standing behind his beloved, helps Judy with the clasp of the necklace. It is therefore as an image, a reflection in the mirror, that he first sees the fatal necklace. Hitchcock’s camera moves in on the reflected necklace, then cuts to a camera movement back from the portrait, a movement that pulls back from a close-up view of the painted necklace until we see the scene of Judy seated before the portrait in the gallery of the Legion of Honor. Reflection and painting, past and present, merge here—but lack the ecstatic eroticism of the previous embrace. The camera movements in and out on the images of the necklace certainly don’t indicate a movement through space. Rather, camera movement evokes the force of the portrait, its seeming reentrance into the space of the characters. One can certainly see the extended dolly-out revelation of the portrait as a visualization of Scottie’s memory, as he mentally compares the two necklaces. But the force of the camera movement signals not only the essential pivot of the plot of the film, but the reemergence of the power of Carlotta, of the fatal portrait itself (it reverses the absorption of the camera into the details of the painting in the earlier scene). If the spinning, ecstatic camera movement during the embrace in the previous scene in the hotel room captures Scottie’s triumph over time and loss, here the past reasserts its fatal claim, and the reemergence of the portrait (coming in effect from the depths of the mirror) announces the imminent death of Judy and of Scottie’s love.

3. TURN IT TO THE WALL: PAINTINGS AS INDICES OF GUILT

These uncanny portraits of women all invoke the vengeful triumph of Thanatos over Eros. In the case of *Vertigo*, it is not only an obsession with a lost love, but the

guilt over a past act of murder and deception that emerges with the portrait's return. *Vertigo* represents the climax of Hitchcock's erotic and deadly portraits of women. In Hitchcock's cinema, however, the portrait as sign of guilt does not always carry an erotic charge (overtly at least), or produce an obsessive relation of imitation, or have quite so deadly results. Some portraits function fairly simply as images of superegos, virtual parental presences, and these can be male as well as female. *Suspicion* (1941) introduces the military portrait of Lina's father, left to his daughter and her husband in his will, clearly with the intention of maintaining a sense of presence in his daughter's life, keeping an eye (even if a painted one) on them. Both Lina (Joan Fontaine) and Johnnie (Cary Grant) address the portrait at separate moments in the film; Lina at one point denies Johnnie's guilt as she speaks to it. Similarly, in *Psycho* (1960), Sam (John Gavin) asks Marion (Janet Leigh) whether, after the family dinner she has proposed to him as a way to meet respectably, they can send her sister to the movies and "turn mama's picture to the wall?" Marion reacts to this query with a surprising amount of alarm for a girl in a cheap hotel room meeting with her lover dressed only in a bra and slip. Like the paintings of the girls in *The Lodger*, Hitchcock uses these portraits to embody the lingering impressions that the parents leave on their offspring.

The opposite cathexis of a parental portrait comes in the delightful scene in *Strangers on a Train* (1951) when Bruno (Robert Walker) reacts to the expressionistic painting his mother (Marion Lorne) has completed of a rather demonic Saint Francis by bursting into delighted laughter and claiming, "That's him! That's Father!" Bruno scampers with joy at this simultaneously devilish and absurd portrait, believing he has abolished paternal authority with his plot to have his father killed. A reversal of Bruno's demonic rebellion before a parental portrait appears with the epiphanic climax of *The Wrong Man* (1956), as Manny Balestrero (Henry Fonda), falsely accused of robbery, prays humbly before an image of Christ. The shot-countershot between his beseeching gaze and the religious image eventually leads to a nearly supernatural dissolve between Fonda's face and the face of the actual thief (Richard Robbins), as if the all-seeing gaze of the Christ had sought out and revealed this elusive villain to the camera.

But the most focused treatment of a painting as an indication of guilt comes rather early in Hitchcock's career, with the painting of the jester in his first sound film, *Blackmail* (1929). Other than *The Trouble with Harry* (1955), *Blackmail* is the only Hitchcock film in which a painter plays a major character, in this case Crewe, the would-be rapist and later victim (Cyril Ritchard). The scene that culminates in the killing in *Blackmail* already reveals Hitchcock as a mature storyteller, able to manipulate audience point of view in order to build a complex logic of imagery. Alice's (Anny Ondra) trip upstairs to the wonderland of the artist's studio thrills her with the excitement and possible danger inherent in flaunting the rules of proper behavior for young girls. While the teasing games the young couple play with each other are certainly erotic, they also project the possibility of the artist creating a new identity for Alice, revealing her curiosity about a life outside her ordinary routine as a shopkeeping family's daughter and a policeman's girlfriend. As Alice looks around this strange yet inviting space, she crosses to the window and glances out. The point

of view shot that follows shows a policeman down on the street passing through the glow of a streetlamp. Alice's smile in the reaction shot that follows may indicate that the nearness of the law reassures her, or, alternatively, that she feels herself at this point to be above the law. She then glances off-screen to the left and seems more concerned by something she sees within the studio. Hitchcock cuts to a medium close-up of the face of a jester, contorted grotesquely and pointing his finger towards her. In this close framing, in which the limits of the canvas are not shown, the shot seems to reveal another person in the room. But Hitchcock's camera quickly pulls back, revealing that the face belongs to a painting on an easel, an academic image of a Rigoletto-like fool with cap and bells, who is pointing out of the frame and apparently roaring with laughter. Alice giggles with delight (and perhaps relief) as she proclaims, "I say, *that's* good, isn't it?"

This introduction of the painting of the jester sets up the ambiguous relation between the space of a painting and the space of the viewer that Hitchcock will continue to develop in his later films. First, the jester's dominating gesture (is the pun here intentional on Hitchcock's part?) sweeps out of the frame even more strongly than the concentrated gaze in the Gothic portraits. The pointing arm and finger deliver a phallic force to the jester's jovial, if not mocking, gaze. This truly is a painting that directly addresses its viewer aggressively. It seems to greet Alice's naïve appearance in this bachelor flat with a vulgar and slightly sinister "The joke's on you!" But if the painting's message is minatory, Alice doesn't get it—yet. Instead, her encounter with the painting sparks another Hitchcockian doubling of viewer and image. Alice's appreciation of it is accompanied by her own broad pointing gesture, her arm also upraised, as if the painting infected her with an impulse towards unconscious mimicry. Hitchcock intercuts the two pointing poses: they are not quite subject and portrait, but the visual doubling creates a sense of mirror and reflection, the image on the canvas seeming to have exerted an uncanny influence on the space outside.

After invoking the ambiguities of picturing, reference, and representation, Hitchcock provides, like the song in *Rear Window*, another tracing of the stages of the artistic process, beginning at the beginning: the blank canvas. Alice stands before a full-length canvas (which is propped on an easel) and strikes a pose, this time imitating an artist with palette and brush in hand, one of several role-playing games she performs in the studio. However, she holds the brush awkwardly and accidentally leaves a blot on the canvas. (In black and white, this blot appears as a dark black spot, but one wonders if a color was intended. Given the nature of stains in Hitchcock—think of *Stage Fright* [1950] and *Marnie* [1964] most especially—one suspects the blot would have been red. But black, with its polar contrast with Alice's last name, "White," works very well, too.) Alice reacts to disfiguring the blank canvas with childlike alarm ("ooo—look what I've done!"—perhaps calling for attention as much as apologizing), and the artist expresses mock anger. He proposes to cover the blot by incorporating it into an image, telling Alice to "draw something." Alice first daubs an extremely childish face of a girl, a sort of "Self-Portrait of the Artist as a Five-year-old." She seems rather proud of her production, but laughs when the artist pronounces it "Rotten." He then proceeds to give Alice an up-close and personal lesson in drawing,

attempting to make something out of “this masterpiece,” continuing the process of covering a botched job with a more encompassing figure. Guiding her hand as a clear excuse for physical intimacy and control, Crewe causes the brush Alice holds to trace a body below the grotesque head she drew. If the head recalls a child’s drawing and expression, the lithe form the artist makes Alice limn is clearly a sexually mature female nude. Alice blushes at her complicity in this image and stammers, “Oh, you *are* awful!” The total image is awful as well, a composite of overt childlike primitivism and muted academic eroticism (with its pronounced mismatch between head and body, the canvas anticipates Midge’s mocking self-portrait as Carlotta). However, in spite of her supposed embarrassment, Alice decides she should sign the collaboration. As awkward as a schoolgirl wielding a too-large pencil, she prints out her name, “Alice White,” beneath this semi-self-portrait.

The attempted rape by Crewe that follows and Alice killing him in self-defense remain hidden behind a curtain drawn around the bed. When Alice emerges, clad only in her underwear, she shivers with the cold of the studio and the horror of what has just happened. Searching out the dress the artist had tossed away from her, she finds it draped over an easel. Removing the dress, Alice uncovers the painting of the jester, with his outstretched finger. Hitchcock shoots Alice staring directly into the camera as she confronts this image. She reaches out in anger and tears the canvas with her fingernails (the camera angle makes it almost appear as if she were attempting to tear at the screen itself). Alice now takes the painting’s gesture as a leering accusation (and, one could add, an image of phallic violence pointed in her direction, a sort of visual rape). This direct interaction with Alice’s situation creates one of the strongest instances in Hitchcock’s cinema of the subject of a painting seeming to emerge from its frame and affect the viewer’s world. Alice perceives the painting as a threat. In defiance and anger she tears at the image as if it had a life of its own. The torn canvas, with its gaping hole, denies the lively appearance of the painting. But its merely material nature does not prevent the painting from exerting its force into the world of the film, both when seized as evidence by the police and as a continued image of Alice’s memory of the act.

Tearing the canvas, attempting to eradicate its image, expresses both Alice’s rage and her feelings of guilt. Morally, of course, she is guilty only of an act of self-defense, and the guilt Hitchcock portrays remains a psychological effect of a patriarchal culture. It combines guilt over the killing with guilt over sexual temptation, and possibly even loss of virginity (the advertising sign, “White for Purity,” that haunts Alice as she makes her way home through the London streets seems to indicate this). The ancient image of guilt as a stain or blot gives retroactive meaning to the daubed “self-portrait” that attempted to hide the original and accidental blot made by Alice’s brushstroke. Before she leaves the scene of the crime, she realizes she has left her name behind. She covers over her “signature” of the self-portrait with an emphatic brushstroke, making her name into an even larger blot than the one the painting was meant to refigure. The blotting out of her name removes essential evidence, of course, but also blots out her earlier childlike innocent identity as “Alice White,” now, within the system of patriarchy, reduced to a dark smudge.

Alice subsequently endures guilt, anxiety, and suspense over the discovery of the killing and the men who learn of her complicity (her policeman boyfriend and the eponymous blackmailer). Ultimately she makes a decision to confess to the police, an act interrupted by the death of her blackmailer and the intervention of her boyfriend. The apparently happy ending of Alice's deliverance from lawful punishment (and presumed social ostracism) is undercut brutally by the film's final images and sound. After being ignored by the police despite her desire to confess, Alice has her attempted confession silenced by her boyfriend. As she leaves police headquarters, an officer on duty mocks the possibility of her knowledge, asking if she were going to reveal the murderer. He jokes that soon they will be hiring "lady detectives." His laughter at his sexist remark fills the soundtrack, and Alice at first seems to join him with a relieved smile. However, she looks off-screen and sees the jester painting being carried down the corridor. Repeating its introduction in the studio, the camera initially frames the painting so that its edges are not visible and the jester for a moment seems alive. But the policeman carrying the canvas soon moves away from the camera, revealing the painting as a simple material object (and revealing the "self-portrait" being carried away as well). The framing of the jester, with his wide grin and his still pointing finger, and, especially, the soundtrack of the policeman's laughter heard over the image provide this painting with an uncanny life and a voice. Guilt seems inescapable, even for this reunited sympathetic couple, in one of Hitchcock's strongest images of a painting exerting a force beyond its edges.

4. THE OTHER SPACE: NEW PERSPECTIVES FOR HITCHCOCK

In many ways what I have been suggesting is inspired by one of the foundational essays of seventies film studies, Stephen Heath's "Narrative Space" (*Questions of Cinema*, University of Indiana Press, 1981), which begins with a discussion of two very different paintings in Hitchcock's *Suspicion*. The first is the portrait of Lina's father, discussed in the previous section, which Heath succinctly claims "bears with all its Oedipal weight on the whole action of the film—the woman held under the eye of the father. . . ." In contrast to this "massive portrait" so firmly anchored in the symbolic system of the film and congruent not only with its narrative structure but with the spatial logic of looks and reactions that structures the relations of suspicion and guilt between the characters, Heath notes a different painting, whose role is less certain. Two detectives visit Lina to question her about the death of Johnnie's companion, and their visit deepens her growing doubts about her husband's behavior. Benson (Vernon Downing), the younger detective (who, as Heath notes, plays little role in the questioning), encounters a different sort of painting (most likely a print) hanging in Lina's hallway. Heath underscores the lack of narrative purpose to this brief encounter, which is repeated: the detective reacts strangely to the picture, both as he comes in and as he leaves Lina's apartment. According to Heath, this reaction pulls the viewer "out of the action, breaking the clarity of direction" as Benson's gaze itself is "pulled to the left." The print is a cubistic still life vaguely reminiscent of Picasso's synthetic cubist period. The detective looks at it with incomprehension (Heath describes it as "fascinated panic"—perhaps a somewhat melodramatic description, but not entirely

off the mark). His reaction is underscored not only by the scene's repetition but by a unique, atonal piano phrase on the soundtrack.

Hitchcock's orchestration of the looks surrounding the second painting is, in Heath's judgment, a countermeasure to the clear regulation of narrative, significance, the rule of law, and the construction of narrative space that constitute a Hollywood film like *Suspicion*. This cubist print supplies no narrative clue, has no clear symbolic significance. Outside of this scene it is never returned to. From this point of view the picture is "useless." Its modernist space, which presumably provokes the detective's "panic," poses a possible threat to the traditional construction of story, space, and perspective. The picture, as Heath puts it, prompts a "disbalance of the law and its inspecting eye," opening up, if only briefly, "another scene, another story, another space." One could accuse Heath of making much ado about nothing (one thinks of the trailer for *Psycho*, where Hitchcock walking through the film's set points at a picture on the wall and says with ironic humor, "this picture has *great* significance"). But that is Heath's point. The sequence is negligible, narratively speaking—but then why is it there?



Two answers suggest themselves immediately. First, its presence has to be justified only if one thinks of narrative in film as a system that demands significance or some function for every element, or at least those elements that are given some saliency (as this one is through its repetition and its underlining on the soundtrack). But, in fact, I would argue against viewing Hollywood cinema as a classical system ruled exclusively by narrative coherence and economy. Instead I would maintain that Hollywood movies took as their model less the well-made play than the theatrical melodrama—a form overloaded with various attractions, hoping that narrative patterns would corral it, or at least most of it, into some manageable shape for viewers. In contrast to the Jamesian narrative tradition, Hollywood films aspired to be loose and baggy monsters. Thus, like their nineteenth-century models, they are filled with lots of "useless" stuff, moments of spectacle, musical numbers, attractive stars, and especially bits of comic business—all of which can even be deleterious to a classical conception of narrative as a carefully determined economy of cause-and-effect and resolution. Thus Benson's reaction provides a bit of comic relief, an example of the humor that Hitchcock was known to pepper throughout his films, often poking fun at the police. I would maintain that most Hollywood features do not display a narrative economy that uses up all of its elements by describing the environment, advancing the action, defining characters, or creating symbolic structures (to cover Barthes's main categories of narrative prose in *S/Z*). However . . . Alfred Hitchcock actually *did* seem to construct his films in an obsessive manner, so that it is possible to find cogent significance for most of his details (like the seeming ambient sounds in *Rear Window*). This partly explains the critical industry that has grown up around his films, which constantly reward interpretation and analysis.

Another obvious explanation for the scene would see it as a typical Hollywood joke about modern art, a smack at elitist taste sure to get a guffaw from the yokels (my favorite example comes in the lecture on surrealism by the "hard-boiled" museum curator played by Pat O'Brien in *Crack-up* [1946])—a tradition that continues at least

until the insult delivered by the drillmaster in Kubrick's *Full Metal Jacket* [1987]: "You're so ugly you could be a masterpiece of modern art!"). But does Hitchcock consistently show this attitude toward modern painting? Curiously, a similar reaction to a work of modern art occurs in *Rear Window* when detective Tom Doyle (brought to Jefferies's apartment to hear his suspicions of Thorwald) eyes, with confusion and possible disdain, a print Jefferies has of a Matisse still life on the wall. His reaction is not stressed as strongly as Benson's in *Suspicion* (and the lack of a conventional score forbids a piano motif underscoring it). But perhaps proving Heath's point about the oddness of Benson's reaction, Doyle does play a major character in the film, and his reaction accords with his pedestrian, prosaic lack of imagination or fancy.

Did Hitchcock share the typically negative attitudes towards modern and abstract art displayed by his detective characters? Such paintings subvert or avoid the perspectival system so essential for the effects of the paintings discussed so far, which depend on the creation of depth effects and a sense of illusionist representation. In this sense modern paintings open up a different scene, another space, and perhaps another story. The incomprehension displayed by detectives Benson and Doyle becomes more clearly the sign of a narrow and even nasty view of the world in the sardonic comments Deputy Sheriff Calvin Wiggs (Royal Dano) makes about the abstract expressionist canvas painted by leading man Sam Marlowe (John Forsythe) in the only Hitchcock film in which abstract art plays an important role, the unfairly neglected and delightful *The Trouble with Harry* (1955). *The Trouble with Harry* represents not only Hitchcock's most masterful comedy but his unique creation of a pastoral romance. By the end of the film Marlowe, the modern artist, becomes the center of a newly formed Dickensian community set in a bucolic New England. Hitchcock bases this ideal society in the **victory of Eros over Thanatos**, symbolized by the burying of the dead and the inauguration of new marriages among young and old alike, along with the recognition of the relativity of time ("tomorrow is yesterday") and the endless possibility of refashioning narrative explanations—even starting the action of the film over again at the ending.

As the narrow-minded maintainer of law and order, Wiggs plays a negative role and only overcomes his contempt for Marlowe's modern art when he believes it can be used as evidence of a crime. Sam's sketch of Harry's corpse is seized upon by Wiggs as proof that a dead body did exist in the forest (a fact the main characters wish to conceal because each of them, other than Sam, fears he may be guilty of killing Harry). In this film, in a comic inversion of the usual Hitchcock plot, all traces of guilt evaporate when it is revealed that Harry died of natural causes. This comic denouement is anticipated stylistically when, before Calvin's outraged eyes, Sam reworks his drawing of Harry, changing his features and opening his eyes in order to demonstrate before the outraged representative of the law that art is based in the freedom of the imagination. Here, uniquely among his works, Hitchcock celebrates a zone of liberty within representation, an alternative role for art aside from an index of guilt or image of obsession. It is as though Midge's joke portrait succeeded in dissolving Carlotta's spell. In *The Trouble with Harry* the dead stay dead, no matter how often they are taken from their graves.

Is Benson's reaction, then, simply a joke, a ludic interlude, an invocation of another tone that Hitchcock will include briefly in his other films, and develop fully only in *The Trouble with Harry* (and the humorous interludes in his television shows)? But rather than demonstrating its insignificance, this analysis perhaps shows that something very serious is at stake, a sort of reverse side to Hitchcock's concern with pictures and their limits. Hitchcock's playful nature often involves countermeasures within his significant structures, an impulse that, as Heath observes in his account of Benson's gaze, pulls us to the edge, out of the picture, hinting at another scene, another space. Like Edgar Allan Poe, to whom he is often compared (though usually with little thought about what the comparison would mean), Hitchcock knows that significance can hide itself in plain sight, that plain sight can be a form of hiding. Thus his own seemingly joking gesture of pointing at the picture in the trailer to *Psycho* should, at second glance, make us seriously consider its significance. If *The Trouble with Harry*, with its bright Technicolor images of a New England fall and its shaggy dog story of a corpse unable to rest in its grave, presents Hitchcock's sardonic comedy of death and remarriage, then *Psycho* could be seen as its negative image, its flip side—Hitchcock's ultimate meditation on the sinister influence of the dead on the living, stripped even of the romanticism of *Vertigo*. A painting in *Psycho* literally reveals its underside and thereby leads us into another space.

Hitchcock's comment in the *Psycho* trailer (like many of his teasing, slightly misleading comments in this preview, hinting at the plot of the upcoming film he is announcing without really explaining it) about the "great significance" of the picture can be affirmed on two levels: first, the painting *does* play a role in the plot; second, the subject of the painting itself has symbolic significance. Let's take the symbolic reference first. While I don't believe anyone has identified it specifically (it is not mentioned in any of the most famous treatments of the theme), the picture clearly portrays the biblical tale of Susanna and the Elders, as two elderly men struggle over a voluptuous female nude. An incident from the Old Testament (actually from the Apocryphal thirteenth chapter of the Book of Daniel included in the Vulgate), the story concerns a pair of church elders who spy the lovely Susanna at her bath, attempt to force her to have sex, and, when she refuses, falsely accuse her of adultery. A primary text in sermons on hypocrisy and bearing false witness, the theme also provided a religious alibi for painting the nude in the sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries (including treatments by Tintoretto, Rembrandt, Artemisia Gentileschi, and Rubens), when painting nudity still could be considered scandalous.

The congruence between the painting's subject and the use Norman Bates (Anthony Perkins) puts it to is so exact that it strikes one as a Hitchcockian joke (an instance of the black humor that haunts the film and makes one recall Hitchcock's enigmatic claim that he considered *Psycho* a comedy). After Marion Crane leaves Norman's parlor (where the painting hangs) to go to her motel room next door, Norman crosses to the painting. Framed in medium shot, he removes it from the wall, uncovering a large uneven circular indentation in the plaster revealing another surface, presumably the wall of Marion's adjoining room. In the center of this large opening, a small hole draws our attention through its bright illumination. Hitchcock cuts to a new angle,

shooting Norman from the side and a bit closer. The light streaming through the small hole hits his face as he leans towards it. The next shot reveals Norman's point of view of Marion in her room undressing, the uneven border from the hole in the wall softly framing the view. Cutting at the moment that it seems Marion is about to remove her underwear, Hitchcock shows an extreme close-up of Norman's eye peering through the hole (whose uneven torn edge is visible to the right), shot from the side, showing the beam of light from the hole brightly illuminating his eye as it shifts, watching intently. Hitchcock returns us to Norman's point of view, showing Marion pulling a robe about her before she exits from the frame. The instant of nakedness has been replaced by the almost clinical enlargement of the eyeball, almost pierced by a probing point of light. The nearly physical impact of voyeurism as an interplay of orifices and light has never been so brilliantly exposed.

Commentators have noted that Norman's voyeuristic entertainment recalls the cinema, the light coming from the peephole figuring the projector beam and Norman's position in the darkness of the parlor watching the bright spectacle of Marion's nudity recalling the archetypal cinema viewer (e.g., Bazin's description of the moviegoer as a voyeur looking through a keyhole, in contrast to a member of the more communal audience at the theater). I would agree with this, and relate it (as one could detail in another essay) to the many invocations of cinema projection in Hitchcock, most of them more literal (the complex play with the films shown in Verloc's cinema in *Sabotage* [1936], the film showing in *Saboteur* [1942], and, of course, the invocation of cinema spectatorship so often analyzed in *Rear Window*). There is no question that Hitchcock uses a system of references in his films to refer self-consciously to cinema spectatorship, including not only paintings but photographs, theatrical prosceniums, windows, costumes, performances, and arrangements of light. But within my more limited focus here on pictures and their edges and frames, I want to linger over the fact that Hitchcock conceals this private cinema *behind* a framed picture.

Although the picture hides something, the image actually displays what it hides: a scenography of voyeurism. As I indicated in the previous sections, the portraits of the dead and the pictures serving as indices of guilt seem to exceed their frames, projecting a baleful influence out from them, a process often visualized by camera movement both towards the painting (eliminating the frame from view) and back out (revealing the frame or edge, but often also expressing the force of their gaze or influence). In this sequence Hitchcock seems to turn his schema around, revealing the underside of representation. The projective power lies behind the painting, and its ultimate source lies literally in another space, another scene, the room next door. Rather than the force of guilt, it is the glaring illumination of the object of desire, which the screen cannot show directly, that projects itself into the eye of the beholder. After viewing this scene Norman replaces the picture over its aperture. In medium shot we see him, his face half-marked by shadow as his mouth compresses and his eyes stare intently. We know from the subsequent actions that his vision has excited not only his lust but also his guilt and impulse towards punishment, triggering the murder of Marion, punishing her for a sexual titillation entirely due to Norman's own voyeurism (like the plot of the Elders against Susanna). Thus guilt and violence of the sort depicted



in the painting serve as a screen to block and transform the image of desire, a visual filter that darkens and perverts the sexual impulse.

In his note for the all-too-famous shower scene (to which this act of voyeurism serves as prelude), Hitchcock described the knife thrusts as seeming to tear at the screen. This fascinating comment makes one reflect that violence in Hitchcock often seems to emerge from the screen, to target the viewer. The figure of the painting emerging from its frame fits into a larger Hitchcockian picture. As anchored as his space seems in its subservience to narrative, as centered and orderly as his compositions are, I would maintain, they recurringly open onto another space, onto energies that remain beyond the grasp of the visual and beyond the limits of the frame. If their source remains by necessity unnameable and beyond the configuration of the visual, we can nonetheless locate their destination in the reverse angle from the screen, in the eye of the viewer who receives the projected and reflected beam of light.

EPILOGUE: HITCHCOCK IN THE ART OF OTHERS

While Hitchcock can be, and has been, understood as the master of framing, the visual storyteller who above all knows how to make an image tell a story, how to make it bear meaning and narrative trajectory, we must acknowledge that this mastery is founded upon a deep suspicion of the lure of the picture, the trap that framing can imply. Behind his reveling in visual expression lies an abyss not only of violence but of the nothingness on which both desire and the image are founded and founders. I know of no more eloquent expression of this aspect of Hitchcock's work than comments in an essay by the contemporary artist Robert Morris in which he speaks of the influence of Hitchcock, and *Vertigo* specifically, on his own work from the 1969 *Finch College Project*. This work, which deals with the surfaces of the image as both reflection and depiction, its construction and disassembly, could hardly seem further from a Hitchcock film. And yet they share, according to Morris (and I think it is a profound insight), what he describes as his work's "iconoclastic and iconophobic tenor" ("Solecisms of Sight," *October* 103, 2003). While Morris's own fascination with visual erasure may seem part of a minimalist strategy of the late sixties art world, his own discussion invokes Hitchcock's "ability to at once deflate and promote the image, achieving a kind of simultaneous cancellation and elevation." Although Morris does not specifically cite the uses of painting in *Vertigo*, he indicates that he "was impressed with how Hitchcock loads and manipulates the image to create an illusory, irrational, delusional, and nauseating space. Always threatening in this film is that irrational, delusional, and nauseating space that overpowers linguistic rationality." We could see the frame in Hitchcock not only as an attempt to direct the viewer's attention, but also as an attempt at containment of threatening forces—a containment that his stories more often undermine than sustain. Something emerges from Hitchcock's frames, as something lies behind them. What? Perhaps what the painting in *Psycho* shows us is that behind the framed depiction lies the nothingness of infinite regress, the spirals of desire and the violence born of emptiness.

In this essay, I have treated the frame primarily as the periphery of a picture that defines its ontological separation from the world of the observer, even if, as we have

seen, Hitchcock ultimately questions the possibility of such a separation. But in his play between the fixity of the image and the motion that characterizes both the cinema and the phenomenal world, we can conceive of another sort of frame essential to the cinematographic illusion: the individual frames of film, projected in the sound era twenty-four times a second. In contrast to Hitchcock's display of the frame of paintings and the unique role they play within his oeuvre, the individual film frames remain invisible, an implicit technology rather than an aesthetic tool shared by all makers of cinema, the basis of its representation of motion. But perhaps the most famous and successful appropriation of Hitchcock by the contemporary art world (as opposed to his own appropriation of images of modern art), Douglas Gordon's *24 Hour Psycho*, undertakes to display precisely the individual frames that underlie one of Hitchcock's greatest works. This transformation of the narrative drive of *Psycho* into a stuttering, barely moving exercise in duration can be seen as another in the long (exhausted?) tradition of modernist works undoing the illusions of traditional works, alienating a viewer from their fascination and revealing their material substrate. More interesting, however, is Laura Mulvey's claim in *Death 24 x a Second* (Reaktion Books, 2006) that this work is "a celebration of the new radical possibilities offered by video viewing." Although Mulvey (somewhat too hastily, I think) sees the work as an elegy for the death of cinema, I believe that it reveals instead the inexhaustible nature of the cinematic image, its negotiations, within fragments of seconds, of the acts of narration and representation—and of their critique. Perhaps most revealing, Douglas has indicated that the piece occurred to him when he happened to watch a sequence of *Psycho* in frame-by-frame mode. What sequence? Norman Bates removing the painting of Susanna and the Elders and looking through the peephole at Marion. Douglas's dark transformation of Hitchcock springs, I would claim, from that discovery of the underside of representation: the interval between picture, image, and eye focused within the aggressive probe of light piercing the darkness, that slow, constant, and invisible series of eclipses triggered by the revolving shutter hiding and revealing the individual frames that make the illusion of cinema possible.