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In his *Screen* article 'Dickens and Hitchcock'<sup>1</sup>, Edward Buscombe suggests links between the two artists; one can acknowledge the suggested links without finding them exhaustive enough to constitute a substantial affinity. Links of that general kind can be established between nineteenth-century writers and directors in the commercial cinema without ever scratching the surface of the question of what more profound links there might be between individual and individual. While Hitchcock's paternity (so far as one can be discerned) in the cinema is in German expressionism, in literature one can demonstrate his closeness to Joseph Conrad. Not, it must be said immediately, that the latter connection is simply that Hitchcock adapted 'The Secret Agent' (as *Sabotage*). Indeed, that adaptation could well be used to demonstrate the considerable contrast with Conrad since the film takes merely the skeleton of Conrad's tale, divesting it of the enveloping, gloomily funny irony which in that novel is Conrad's instrument for subjecting his characters to a comprehensive vision and for maintaining an impersonal control and unity. By the time he made *Sabotage*, Hitchcock had found his own characteristic methods and structures, and they are not, but are related to, Conrad's.

In *Politics and the Novel*<sup>2</sup> Irving Howe describes Conrad as 'a Tory with repressed affinities for anarchism'. Howe stresses 'the sense of repression' in Conrad, who, he says, 'violently resists the demonic and the sensual.' Howe doesn't understand Conrad's detachment, calling it a 'safe distance', and nor does he know how to cope with Conrad's honesty:

By straining his will, he suppresses the chaos within him; but it breaks past his guard in the shape of a free-floating anxiety, a sense that the universe is – not actively malicious, which might even be consoling, but – permanently treacherous and ominous.<sup>3</sup>

There is an accurate perception in this, but it seems wrong to suppose that this thematic material 'breaks past his guard'; it seems, rather, to be quite consciously present. Howe's idea that anarchism in Conrad's novel is 'a projection of an unrevealed self' is unnecessarily circuitous, and superficial. In Conrad, as in Hitchcock, political and other kinds of subversion are seen primarily as a *disorder*, which the novelist and the director react against but which they feel themselves compelled to deal with in their work. The theme becomes fully articulated in Hitchcock's thirties films, especially in *The Man Who Knew Too Much* and *Sabotage*, and is

52 one sign of a quite sudden arrival at a native style: taut and intricate as well as what it already was – devoted to the relative manoeuvring of order and disorder within a classical framework.

In his *Screen* article Edward Buscombe notes that Hitchcock's intricate plotting is to impose order on the irrationalities released by creative activity. It will be seen that this is related to Irving Howe's view, just quoted, of Conrad and the tensions in that novelist of conservatism and anarchism. Hitchcock's English films allow us to see this as thematic material, in several guises: it is, fundamentally, a question of individualism – exploring and disciplining it, suggesting its place, and (sometimes) finally placing it.

In a national cinema notable for its lack of success in world markets, Hitchcock was a remarkable exception, and that was the basis, of course, for his eventually being welcomed in Hollywood. But to use the commercial cinema, and in particular to use it supremely well, already implies much of a director: centrally his submission of himself to an ordered, traditional framework. Since this will inevitably be a characteristic of his work, it will also be present thematically (the work presenting an image of itself) – in the form already mentioned, of the place and placing of individuality. To be properly 'commercial' in the cinema also implies an international audience, rather than a simply national one: Hitchcock was quite clearly influenced by the German silent cinema, and drew on British literary sources and on the narrative methods of the American cinema; but his aptitude for the commercial cinema suggests more fundamental reasons than those for his ability to draw wide audiences. An impersonal style (I refer to that kind of artistic impersonality manifested in classicism, narrative discipline and stylistic homogeneity) already implies impersonality as thematic content, a submission of every character and event to a common level of being, and their common accession to an undisturbed unity which is the director's comprehensive vision. If this is achieved, as it is in Hitchcock, with lucidity and vigour, it is immediately recognisable by audiences not simply as referring to their own experience, but as offering a tool for their own structuring of their experience. This kind of comprehensive vision always offers itself authoritatively as being capable of coping with *all* experience; it presents itself thus by reducing a particular narrative content to its essentials in the light of the particular director's sense of what is fundamental. Classic narrative cinema always portrays life as meaningful, and as having qualities which (within each individual film) do not change and are always operative. In order to present a comprehensive vision, it has to present the universe as stable and homogeneous. If a film of this kind deals for instance with evil, even if in the course of the narrative the evil is defeated, it is nevertheless affirmed as a part of the film's unity, which is the film's particular sense of life. If it depicts instability, that too is presented as an element in a stable, finally hospitable universe.

*The Pleasure Garden* was his first completed film as sole director. As in so many of his English films, the theatre is a dominant image, which here provides a simple method to separate individuals (the performers) from a mass (the audience) – in this case, also it separates girls from the men for whom they perform. Women in Hitchcock frequently embody separateness and distinctness: the situation in which they find themselves is then capable of being interpreted as an expression of their own inner being. There always is present in Hitchcock this sense of an interior drama: in this case it works through the splitting of characters into qualities, and issues finally in an accession of self-limitation, mainly on the part of its central character, Patsy. Her strengths are evident from the start, as well as is her willing of a routine artificiality. She takes pity on an innocent, Jill, who turns out to be a gold-digger and who eventually, cruelly, humiliates her protectress. Jill is the unbridled individualism which has tempted Patsy but which she hasn't dared express: in her depression Patsy marries Levet, the weaker friend of Jill's fiancé, so compounding the connection between the two girls. Patsy and Jill form a unity (an image for which is their respective masculine and feminine characteristics). Jill pursues her social ambition while Patsy is brought low. The action moves to an unspecified place in the colonial 'East', the setting for the unravelling of the connection between the girls, expressed through the relationships of the two men (Levet and Hugh, Jill's fiancé) to Patsy. Hugh's disappointment in Jill is followed by his succumbing to a fever, in which he mistakes Patsy for Jill. Haunted by his own misdeeds, Levet tries to kill Patsy, but is himself killed. This leaves Patsy and Hugh: I put it this way to stress the absolute lack of conscious choice on their part, and their submission to the development. The two characters have each been 'split' into two, but have finally divested themselves, or have been divested by life, of their 'other' halves, which were also their elements of self-assertion, cruelty, evil and madness. It is on those elements that the film's structure rests; they drive the film forward, dragging the main characters in their wake, and when finally both Jill and Levet have disappeared from the film, Patsy and Hugh are left cheering each other up, with Hugh still too weak to walk. The final scene is prefigured much earlier in the film, and the general sense is of submission to impersonal forces; Patsy and Hugh wouldn't have experienced themselves, nor reached this resolution, without the anarchic individualism (in the persons of Jill and Levet) which has led them and has then subsided. The spectacle of the tension was the film's subject; its resolution is the film's end. Patsy and Hugh are, perhaps, belittled by the film's anti-idealism which suggests a potentiality in Hitchcock either for affirmation or for mere negation. Patsy's strength is established early, but is lost sight of. Finally she and Hugh are chastened, but the characters have become indistinct, and the structure itself has long since taken over from

54 them. The ending is absolutely neutral in feeling.

The film draws a stronger emotional response in its earlier sections, leading to and including the revelation of Jill's cruelty, than in what follows. Hitchcock seems more fully engaged in those earlier sections, where the settings are specifically and solidly established, where the characters are substantial, and where the director is prodigal in ideas, particularly in relation to the atmosphere of heightened sexuality and of the separateness of the sexes. In the latter parts of the film, when (for its emotional crisis) it moves to the 'East', with its associations of evasion and male profligacy, a lack of specificity takes over, which is partly a loss of contact, mainly on the male character's part, with reality. The idea of dissolution is firmly present. This film's 'East' is the origin of the dream-like sections of *Vertigo* and of the red suffusions in *Marnie*. In both of those later films, Hitchcock found a method of communicating the suffusion of consciousness with another part of life; In *The Pleasure Garden*, they are formally distinct, but connected. When Levet is shot, he suddenly becomes sane; that and his death signal the relaxation of the hold which the East has had upon the characters.

Hitchcock, and not only in the early films, has a constant problem: he must suggest both the solidity and reality of what is given initially, as well as suggesting its fragility, for he always breaks down the characters' defences. He then must give the dissolution its own substantiality, and the failure of *The Pleasure Garden* is there. To achieve these constant ends, *The Lodger* takes a different route. Though immensely detached in tone, the film deals with a situation impregnated with barely-suppressed excitement; the main character is not *apparently* in a changed state until the very end of the film. The situation in which he finds himself, however, does alter, and is used to convey his own inner being. Like Conrad or William Wellman, Hitchcock accompanies his mastery of concreteness with a deliberate courting of insubstantiality. In *The Lodger* this is present in the atmosphere of suspicion, anxiety, fear and frenzy. The conditions for hysteria are present in all the characters (sometimes only by implication, as with the central character). *The Lodger* deliberately tries to seek out evil and disorder; amid the popular excitement and sensationalism he pursues his own (deceptively) precise aim of vengeance, but the surrounding excitement nevertheless mirrors his own excess. The agitation of the populace is an exact enactment of brittleness, and the breakdown occurs in the mob violence near the film's end. The violence, while it is directed at the Lodger, is also his own emotional crisis: he is absolutely central to every development in the film, and is almost always a 'presence' when not actually present. Hitchcock makes no attempt to give us the man's psychology, remaining resolutely outside him, conveying the Lodger's own sense of otherness, as well as the other characters' reactions to his self-absorption. The famous

use of plate glass to show us the man pacing to and fro above the family's living room is not only a technical *jeu d'esprit*, and neither is it an acknowledgment of some technical lack in the silent form, but is, rather, a simple portrayal of the family noting his 'otherness' and a summation of the director's capacity for detachment from him.

The other characters are rendered with attention to the kind of detail which asserts their ordinariness in comparison with the Lodger. Hitchcock is alive to routineness, naïvety, lack of experience, the ordinary surface of life, giving them their due even as, by implication, he subverts them. But the Lodger himself is close to these other people – in spite of his preparations, he never makes contact with his enemy. The Lodger is caught up in the hysteria, not only in the external sense, but also as a participant in it, in his inner life. His plans are like those of the police (a dissolve links their map with his) but it is finally the police who find and deal with the Avenger, off-screen. The news of the arrest ends the mob's hysteria and enacts the re-imposition of order, so that the Lodger can emerge, finally whole. He is seen, at last, in his own proper social setting. Having been thought to be the murderer, and having invited such suspicion as part of a sense of guilt and involvement (Hitchcock leaves the motivation obscure, but we have what we need), he has his morbidity lifted from him by a distant event. It is all a process to which he has fully submitted himself. When Joe, the detective who is disappointed in his love for Daisy, realises that the pursuit and persecution is wrongly directed, he tries to stop it, acknowledging himself and his own condition at the same time as he acts on behalf of his rival: Joe's self-knowledge prefigures and helps bring about the Lodger's own. In the earlier state of 'excitement', normal sexual interest is mistaken for perversion, and the sexual basis of the sensationalism is constantly stressed. Since the Lodger is out to 'avenge' his sister, the sexual connotations of his ambition are those of incest. But by enduring the process of his own disorder, he issues from it having formed a stable, properly external sexual relationship.

This long 'endurance' is a commitment to individualism, which ends in a balanced acknowledgment of social reality. What immediately precedes the conclusion is the 'crucifixion' of the Lodger, as he hangs by his handcuffs from the railings and the crowd set upon him, and his 'entombment' (the shot is based on classical compositions from paintings of the entombment of Christ) as the character is taken down exhausted and bleeding from the railings. The man's own sense of martyrdom is of a piece with his earlier, very deliberate distinctness; he suffers for his excessive individuality, and survives its death.

The almost constant presence of sensationalism as a subject is only barely contained by the eventual imposition of plot-level of order, and Hitchcock's method in the film invites the suspicion that

56 he is tempted, at the very least, to test his grasp of classical technique: the 'crucifixion' and 'entombment' shots mark a near-identification of the director's treatment and the character's self-pitying self-evaluation. One could say that the 'East' of *The Pleasure Garden* is all around the central character in *The Lodger*, and part of him, threatening to engulf him entirely. His stated motive (vengeance) is given no real substance in the film, and his descent into himself has the quality, rather, of gratuitousness, an act undertaken for the sake of a particular concept of individuality, but through an innocent compulsion rather than through any conscious intent.

Hitchcock's sense of editing, already in these early films, is both architectural and calculated to promote fluidity of development (nearer to German and American, than to Russian emphases). Hitchcock has found his method of containing as well as promoting individualism, and of finding their relative balance. The narcissism of the central character in *The Lodger* is that of Marnie in *Marnie*: each is driven to the ends of himself. In the earlier film the Lodger's condition is defined as feminine (the references to his sister and mother, his theatricality, the fact of his narcissism); in *Marnie* this part of life is disciplined by the male principle, which structures and controls its development into self-knowledge. Hitchcock's acknowledgment in *Lifeboat* of the Nazi's energy, and the anti-Communism of the late films, are both already implied in the individualism, and the deliberate seeking-out of evil, in *The Lodger*; the 'martyrdom' scene, in particular, prefigures the death of the Nazi in *Lifeboat* (where the emphasis falls, ambiguously indeed, on the victory of democracy). The latter film's entire conception belittles all its characters, and one could argue that *The Lodger*'s extreme interest in excitement and various forms of hysteria deprives it of real value, since that interest is not very satisfactorily balanced by the forces making for order (in the structure, as well as on the level of plot, and in other senses).

The film, however, is rightly taken to be decisively 'Hitchcockian', with its suspense, its manipulation of audience-reactions, its strong audience-identification figure, its sense of absolute control on the part of the director, for most of its length. Because of the level of that control, one has the sense, already referred to, that the central character is, in spite of his activity, the essentially passive subject of a process which is both within himself and entailed by life. *The Lodger* is, because of this, not 'dramatic' in the sense of presenting any real conflict among its characters. I think this could be said of most of Hitchcock's English films. His central figures are victims of themselves rather than of any other person or external force. The films do embody a dialectic between the claims of the instincts and those of social proprieties, but 'conflict' never seems an appropriate description: there is always, rather, the submission to a process, fundamentally an inner one.

Very clear examples of the passivity this implies are *The Farmer's Wife* and *Champagne*, because of their absolute simplicity and their relaxation. In the latter, a girl is deceived by her wealthy father into thinking that he has lost all his money and that she must fend for herself. Her father subjects her (and the film implicitly endorses his act) to this experience, which occupies most of the film, to punish her for her choice of fiancé; the comedy is brought to a close by his acceptance of his daughter's choice and the ending of the deception with each of the main characters more securely himself. A more substantial subjection of a character, this time more clearly to his *own* inner processes, is to be found in *The Farmer's Wife*. The farmer's wife dies, and he must choose another. Slowness becomes the film's very subject: on the one hand there is the age, stability and habit suggested by the treatment of the farmer's household, where nothing happens with any speed, and on the other, the farmer himself, listing the possible choices of a wife, testing each of them while his maid, Minta, who has always been present, is eventually seen to be the one. The farmer's attempts to find a wife from beyond the household are a calm equivalent of the straining ambition in the central character of *The Lodger*; the choice of Minta is a return to the centre of the farmer's being, and a self-limitation. Diversity is assumed by him to be what is required; his temptation by it and his testing of it concern much of the film's length, but the rich continuities of the household and the farm are quietly present at every point and seen to be continuous with the countryside itself. The film's humour is perfectly contained within the formal integrity. In spite of the number of titles (it is adapted from a successful stage play), the film's weight falls without the least doubt on its *mise-en-scène*. Its intensity of feeling is invested in the quiet behaviour, appearance and compartment of the household's characters (Gordon Harker's performance as Ash is crucial), its objects and in its very fabric, rather than in anything brought to the film from outside, either by any character or by the director himself. Hitchcock is more completely detached and impersonal in this film than in any other that I know of. The discipline of the *direct* adaptation and quality of the film's feeling are inextricable in accounting for the work's formal and emotional success. Its untypicality in the Hitchcock *oeuvre* doesn't represent a defeat: it seems to me a higher achievement than *The Lodger*. (Any theory of creativity which doesn't allow for this kind of acknowledgment is certainly inadequate.) *The Farmer's Wife* convincingly eschews the 'permanently treacherous and ominous' universe one finds elsewhere in Hitchcock; the film's substance is its unforced respect for its main characters' separateness from and dependence upon each other. Minta is almost the very principle of quiet stability, and is central to the film's structure.

In spite of its 'Englishness', the film is specifically European rather than specifically English, and what marks it off from Ameri-

58 can films is the degree of its cool unassertiveness. The idea of characters being directed by life occurs in all narrative art, but in *The Farmer's Wife* there is a sense of absolute submission to provided rhythms, a simple, perfect logic quietly enacted – though the characters lose nothing of themselves in the submission: in fact, it is the submission itself which allows them their freedom (and this film is a clear example in this respect of what is always at least implicit in Hitchcock). The fact that one cannot look to Hitchcock for genuine 'Englishness' is consequent upon his individualism, his sense of an undifferentiated universe, to which one nevertheless submits and which can be assimilated into a sense of order and logic – though the assimilation implies no comfort. The closeness of Hitchcock and Conrad can be recalled: Conrad, beyond his adoption of and mastery of English, was a Pole and a sailor. The dangers, in artistic terms, which might be expected to arise from such a sense of the universe, are those of diffuseness and of a lack of faith in wholeness, strength and passion. Its potential strength are in its simple universality: the commercial cinema is exactly Hitchcock's place. The best response to those dangers is in concreteness and energy within the comprehensive framework and control provided by classic narrative techniques.

*The Farmer's Wife* could only be brought off once: Hitchcock developed the potentially more demanding and rewarding line of *The Lodger*, in which there is, above all, great pressure exerted on the logical framework of meaning by its central character's commitment to individualism.

The period from *Blackmail* to *Rich and Strange* precedes the best of Hitchcock's English films (which are among his thirties features), but represents a transition from the silent films, retaining a greater closeness to the films of the twenties than to their more substantial successors. One of these transitional films is *Murder*, belonging to a genre (the 'whodunit') in which the director was never to work again; the period also includes further literary adaptations (*Juno and the Paycock* from Sean O'Casey, and *The Skin Game* from Galsworthy) of a respectable kind which Hitchcock soon abandoned. Hitchcock can be seen to be gradually refining his own sense of the rules which were to govern his work, a sense, one might say, of propriety, of what works best with audiences and is artistically right. The kind of films which he decided to abandon amount, on this view to indiscretions. The greatest directors in the commercial cinema became themselves by knowing their audiences. Before arriving at his own conventions, Hitchcock constantly experimented with kinds of artifice, and turned frequently to the theatre for sustenance – not only in the evident sense that he adapted stage plays for films, but in using theatrical artifice as a theme or a characteristic of his own work.

Thus, the theatricality of the *Lodger* himself may be recalled; as

can the first half of *The Pleasure Garden*; and the idea of performance is strongly present in *Champagne*. Even more than the latter *Murder* is about performance, and directly so, in being concerned with the traditional theatre and drawing on its techniques (eg voices in unison, interior monologue). Characteristically, its theme is that of a disciplined individualist pursuing an extreme version of himself, or perhaps a component of himself, which is a riotous and narcissistic individualism (in this case that of a homosexual transvestite) which has no allegiance to anyone or anything beyond itself. The solving of the murder has the force of a self-discipline for the investigator, who, like the Lodger and his successors in Hitchcock, is an amateur. To overcome himself he must explore himself and go to his limits, breaking the rules in order to arrive at a genuine order which has a general social validity rather than a merely personal one: his act is the image of the film's moral nature, and the director virtually identifies himself with the character who is the film's single central consciousness and the source of the film's structure. It is a remarkably austere and disciplined film, and in that respect especially it gives us some of the tone of the later thirties features; also it is conceived as a film with sound rather than being in any sense a converted silent.

The others of the 'transitional' films which I want to deal with more nearly resemble the silents in tone and structure: *Blackmail* was conceived as a silent, while *Juno and the Paycock*, *The Skin Game* and *Rich and Strange* could all have been so conceived without much altering their form (*Juno* would have disposed of much of its dialogue, and that would have been an advantage). One of *Blackmail*'s two principal characters is a professional and a policeman: on both counts he is unusual among Hitchcock's major characters; the director seems to have used the occasion to exhaust his own interest in such a figure (although the detectives in *Sabotage* and *Frenzy* (1972) bear some relation to him) and the themes he introduces. Frank Webber is the stolid, stable detective who carries out his work impersonally and efficiently, and washes his hands of it at the end of each day. Alice is 'contrary', restless in the ordinariness which she is tempted to abandon. Her dissatisfaction leads her (she leads herself) to murder. The temptation, and then the headiness of her abandonment of the conventional, the known and the reliable is conveyed by the crane-shot which follows her to the artist's room, by the heavy, sensual lighting of the scene's conclusion as, all 'innocent' she takes off her dress and then struggles against an attempted rape and stabs the man; and finally there is the high-shot down the centre of the staircase, as in *Vertigo* (1958). There follows the justly famous silent sequence in which Alice, in a state of shock and obsessed by what she has done, walks desolate through the streets. The sequence successfully and relevantly contrasts with everything before and after it, being shot in the streets, in natural light, and it is, in particular, in such high-angled long-shots that

60 it contrasts forcefully with the mid-shots and close-up of Alice which we tend to have elsewhere in the film: we have to adjust our view of her because of that, and our sympathy has to then be based on detachment; it is technically the film's most perfectly classical sequence. When Alice feels most adrift after 'breaking the rules', Hitchcock gives us a *tour-de-force* of unobtrusive technical precision and control. (It seems worth stressing that the sequence is silent. The use of sound-dialogue in the film is usually either stilted or irritating, and though Hitchcock uses it quite as well in conveying Alice's earlier superficiality as in the more famous instance of her selection of the word 'knife' from the breakfast-table conversation, it is not essentially a sound film.) Alice's growing sense of guilt is paralleled by Frank's compounding of it in suppressing the evidence of her guilt. The blackmailer is parasitical: his brief domination of the situation is clearly felt to be unstable, an embodiment of the couple's pretence, but he is also the humane sense of guilt, in a grotesque form. His presence in the shop and in Alice's home, both of which represent a social stability, is a symbolic as well as a direct reminder of the disruption of normality. Frank's willingness to put aside his professionalism for Alice makes the disruption complete. When the blackmailer is pursued and dies in a fall from the roof of the British Museum (age and stability in concrete form), Frank stops Alice as she is about to give herself up to the police: she complies with his eagerness to evade the law and the truth (and that is the force of it; the similar ending of *Sabotage* has a rather different tone). Alice is finally reconciled to carrying with her the sense of, not just a particular indiscretion, no matter what its magnitude, but rather of her own capacity for disorder. Carrying that sense with her, she contains it; Frank's assistance is her own capability for reconstituting that necessary and sustaining normality which she earlier felt impelled to shatter. The film justifies her, at every stage, but the ending is deliberately low-key, as the endings of Hitchcock's films tend to be: there is rarely anything to celebrate.

The weaker films (*Juno*, *The Skin Game*, *Rich and Strange*) among this group go further in portraying their character's relationship with life as attritional and destructive. *Juno* is concerned with a family, with the mother, Juno herself, at its centre as it disintegrates. John Ford might well have taken the same subject (and did adapt O'Casey in *The Plough and the Stars*) but would certainly have given us a positive force in the enacted emotional values and in the strength of the mother: Hitchcock deprives the potentially positive forces of their weight so that the film is dominated by its mere sadness. The humour is usually so evidently cruel and selfish that it offers no counterweight. The early sound stage is a good equivalent to a theatrical stage, and the film is thoroughly enclosed; most of its characters are inward-turning, puritanical and morbid, and their actions contribute to the centrifugal forces which finally

leave only Juno herself on the 'stage'. The outer political and social situation simply helps to enact the innate tendencies of the characters; it has no independent existence beyond the way it is perceived by the characters and in the way they react to it. Insofar as there is a story-line beyond that of the mother losing her sons it is the comic interlude in which the family suppose they have come into money, but after which they have finally to return to themselves.

This interlude and its conclusion leads into *Rich and Strange* in which a very ordinary suburban couple 'escape' from routine after acquiring money (an exact inversion of *Champagne*) but are at last glad to return home with nausea among their last responses to their 'freedom'. Raymond Durnat sums up the film thus: 'They have settled again into their rut, a little more disillusioned with each other, but just as bored, and certainly no wiser about life, love, death, existence.'<sup>4</sup> A comparison with (for instance) *The Pleasure Garden*, *The Lodger* and *Blackmail* suggests that Hitchcock intended the experience to have been one of the revelation of disorder; although the film's meaning is plain without any comparison of that kind, we can see that Hitchcock places the couple in *Rich and Strange* among those characters who are dissatisfied with the stability of convention, are tempted out of it, and then return to the same state they left, understanding that it *contains* and controls what they have just experienced, the rest of life. 'The rest of life' provides the substance of the film, however, and Hitchcock wants the audience to be subjectively involved but under his control: the parallel with *Blackmail* is very close, and this is its comic counterpart. Durnat is right to point to the lack of any strong positive: the film is typical, in that, of these intermediate films. *The Skin Game*, however, is a partial exception.

The intermediate films tend to be accumulations of incident and 'ideas' rather than being complexly structured — closer to *The Lodger* than to *The Pleasure Garden*. But *The Skin Game*, because of its source material and also for more intriguing reasons, is very decisively structured as a conflict of characters and of the values they represent. Those films which seem to be loosely structured 'accumulations' leave us with their characters still seeming unformed, as though there were no possibilities of their genuinely structuring their experience or of their experience being, in itself, structured. *The Skin Game* looks forward to the later thirties films (which take almost picaresque elements and subject them to an absolute order) but does so by extracting the principle of order, almost as the looser films like *Rich and Strange* extract the principle of accumulation. Together, the two types form the unity found in each of the better thirties features.

*The Skin Game* contrasts the old order of the decent conservative, Hillcrest, with the irruption of the 'new' man, Hornblow, a self-made industrialist who ushers in modernity with its cruelty and dynamism. Hillcrest's insubstantial kind of purity is lost, and the

62 old order dies by virtue of the very fact of there being a conflict. The new force comes from beneath, and Hillcrest has to stoop to meanness in order to fight it, admitting his own capacity for cruel individualism, symbolised in his wife's investigations. Both sides are chastened, each having been cruel to the other, and each having acknowledged the other, while the young couple suggest a possible future unity. The shapelessness of *Juno* gives way to the comparatively tight form of *The Skin Game*. Both are faithful literary adaptations, but are also expressions of a stage in Hitchcock's own testing of priorities. This film's sense of form is enacted in the thematic material. There is sufficient social conservatism and desire for respectability in Hornblow, and sufficient puritanism, for him to back down in the face of the threat to reveal his daughter's sexual indiscretion. She kills herself. Hitchcock contains the whole development (the attritional relationship of the two families) with equanimity and detachment and suggests an order derived from the conflict. As at the end of *The Skin Game*, Hitchcock's characters lose any diffuseness in their sense of themselves and are made to acknowledge the simple concreteness of life, flesh and death – to acknowledge, in fact, their own limits, though the drama lay in their instinctive rebellions.

Lindsay Anderson's case for Hitchcock<sup>5</sup> was that his qualities were those of an entrepreneur and a technician: speed, surprise, boldness, excitement, flair, enterprise, skill – but not drama: 'Hitchcock has never been a serious director'. Anderson was, despite himself, recognising Hitchcock's impersonality, and was baffled by it. It is common for Left-wing writers to assume that conservatism has no intellectual status, and that, too, may be why Anderson really couldn't see anything but cleverness in Hitchcock. It is relevant to note that Anderson rated William Wellman's failure *The Ox-Bow Incident* far above the same director's *Westward the Women*: the first was wrongly interpreted as a Left-wing 'protest', while the latter (it seems to me) is an unpretentious but great film.

The qualities Anderson noted in Hitchcock are abundantly present in the English features from *The Man Who Knew Too Much* onwards, when the director had found his tone and style, and a characteristic balance of constraint and freedom. The contrast of *Rich and Strange* (1930) with *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1934) represents an amazing leap in technical accomplishment, part of a greater artistic discipline and precision, and of an increased ability to fully accommodate his characteristic themes within impersonal structures. It also marks the new discipline in general of the sound film's form: structurally there has been a reevaluation of priorities, a quite new tempo is established, and a new intricacy made possible. Intricacy isn't necessarily complexity, but it takes its place in Hitchcock's newly characteristic method partly as an expression of increased control – an image, in fact, of itself. Lindsay Anderson

seems to have recoiled from the degree of Hitchcock's control: he can't stand such detachment. Irving Howes' failure, which I mentioned near the beginning of the article, to grasp the sense of Conrad's impersonality is perhaps comparable. But the more secure an artist's control of his material, short of injuring it, the greater his ability to do exactly what he feels it necessary to do. An inarticulate artist may have much to communicate, but how can we tell what it is, much less evaluate it?

Hitchcock needed sound: his silents were his apprenticeship. *The Man Who Knew Too Much* is the beginning of a major period (just as its re-make heralded the beginning of his major American period). The film's tautness is new: he has the framework, now, to deal successfully with the themes already signalled – subversion as disorder, the place and placing of individuality and of individualism, with their capacity for disorder. 'Breaking the rules' becomes a major concern: it is a central thread in this film, in *The Thirty-Nine Steps* and in *Young and Innocent*. The achievement of meaning by those characters who break the rules is an image for the film's own formal achievement. The elliptical movement of the films has qualities analogous to the energy, impatience, mobility and directness of their central male characters, but also has qualities like those of the female characters who carry out or represent the restoration of order in *The Man Who Knew Too Much* and *Young and Innocent*.

In the former, structure has been elevated to a position at least equal to that of *mise-en-scène*, into which dialogue is now perfectly integrated. Indeed, the intonation and phrasing of the characters' speeches are an excellent guide to the film's own tone: the talkie had already found one of its masters. The intellectual conception of the film at stages before shooting commenced is just visible – most noticeably, near the film's opening in the accident on the skirun: the incident is conceived for the storyboard rather than for the film, and there is a general sense in the film that our attention is being organised for us. The best of the American films lead us without our necessarily being aware of it. But this doesn't simply mean that the English film is inferior. V. F. Perkins<sup>6</sup> compares the original and the remake of *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, using a specific detail; he concludes: 'The 1934 version has to be interpreted before it can create its emotional effect. The more subtle procedure made possible by colour allows Hitchcock to bypass the intellectual response and go straight to the emotions.' I don't see that this demonstrates inferiority in the earlier film: it is an economical and effective procedure, relevant to the thematic content of the sequence (the Albert Hall sequence) which is, to put it simply, the effort to think and the pressure of feeling, when each of these is pulling in two directions. (The use of colour in the 1956 version of the scene seems to me to be an unsuccessful element in an otherwise unflawed scene.)

In both versions the scene is one of the interconnected climaxes; in terms of suspense, *the* climax. In the English version Jill Lawrence finds herself present at the impending assassination of a foreign statesman; almost hysterical in her helplessness to prevent it, and knowing of the likely fate of her child is she gives warning, she screams at the moment the gunman shoots, spoiling his aim. The film has taken her from her earlier brittle narcissism into situations which have, progressively, made her morally and emotionally naked, at the centre of great stress and have tested her capacity for responsiveness to others. Her last acts in the film exactly reverse her earliest acts, in relation to her child; whom she now saves and embraces. In the Albert Hall sequence, which just preceded this, she was reduced to herself, her thoughts and feelings: her instinctive response broke through by itself, and this makes possible her final decisiveness.

The order she establishes is not the order represented by the government agents who advise her to act against her child's interest, neither is it of the kind represented by the choir and orchestra or by the police. Being a conservative individualist, Hitchcock portrays uniformity as either sinister, passive or brittle. In *The Pleasure Garden* when Levet is shot, he snaps out of his delusions and aimably greets the doctor who has shot him. His 'Hello, doctor' is paralleled in *The Man Who Knew Too Much*: Louis Bernard is shot on a dance-floor, and is so embarrassed at dying in a public place that he apologises politely. Hitchcock and the actor (Pierre Fresnay) bring it off so that the man doesn't seem ridiculous in spite of the incongruity. Bernard is trying, even as he dies, to see that order is restored, but the disorder claims him and he does die. Later in the film, Abbott (leader of the revolutionaries) says sinis-terly, but as though it came naturally to him, that 'It's impolite to be late for a concert'. The method of the planned assassination *uses* the civilised form against itself (the moment of the shooting can be exactly planned because of it). The precise concern of one individual for another is also used against itself (the child as hostage) but this puts in train the mother's development – from narcissism to her exact individualism and the active impatience of the father's love for his child.

The father, Bob Lawrence, encounters various forms of suppression (the padded door at the dentist's is echoed in the design of the door in the house where the final events take place). But, closer at first to his daughter than is her mother, he carries out the investigation (into lower-class areas, symbolic here as elsewhere in Hitchcock of disturbance and danger) and yields finally to his wife's action in concluding the danger to their daughter: it is Jill Lawrence's victory, which he, however, made possible. Her husband's fight eventually disintegrates: the gradual collapse of the revolutionaries under siege is the sapping of his energy, while Jill's new energy and control results from the extremity of her own

development. While her husband's inner conflict is represented in his being face to face with Abbott's corrupt narcissism (the extreme version of the father's own insistence on his individuality) her related conflict is portrayed as the loss of an inadequate self-control (she swoons; she is seen in tight, insistent profile close-up; her vision blurs). The emotional stress is hers, and Hitchcock emphasises the interiority of her struggle, as opposed to her husband's, which is enacted in character-confrontations. While the director gives convention its due (for instance, in the death of Louis Bernard) he portrays individualism and its personal emphases as the centre of a true order.

There follows a group of films – *The Thirty-Nine Steps*, *The Secret Agent* and *Sabotage* – in which there is always a political level thematically, and in which there continues to be the concluding victory of order and of the nation beyond the victory of individuals, as in *The Man Who Knew Too Much*. But individuals are now much more completely the subjects of the films. Hitchcock deliberately makes the political level in *The Thirty-Nine Steps* almost invisible, so that Hannay is evidently being himself rather than primarily pursuing a purpose beyond himself. In *The Secret Agent* the framework of espionage and counter-espionage is subservant to character-relationships: Ashenden is only led to know himself because of his compulsive professionalism, but it is noticeable that a sense of responsibility doesn't emerge as his motivation, unless it is an instinctive responsibility to himself. The same is true of *Sabotage*: the extinction of the anarchist Verloc is at his wife's hands, and because he has killed her little brother. In each of these films, the nation's good follows on individuals pursuing their own completion.

*The Thirty-Nine Steps* picks Richard Hannay out of a crowd, but only because he is himself picked out by events. Hitchcock doesn't trouble to prepare us; Hannay remains unpredictable, in accordance with the world in which he finds himself. In treating what is, in effect when not in evident fact, the pursuit of an isolated consciousness in whom is located a vital sense of urgency but who meets suspicion, treachery, fear and otherness, the film resembles *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*. In being so smooth, so fluid in style and so linear in structure, the resemblance is taken further, though Hitchcock's film has more distancing humour, and Hannay seems able to draw upon an almost unbroken outward relaxation and outward indifference even in extreme crisis. Hitchcock wants to depict that kind of character, but there is another reason for Hannay's outward indifference: his inner turmoil is being acted out beyond himself. The whole film is an extension of his being: the 'character' we watch is merely the core of his own being (in this respect only, Raoul Walsh's *Pursued* offers a parallel), hence his apparent lack of characteristics, beyond his resource and humour – though Robert Donat's performance and 'presence' are

He is constantly taking on, assuming, using aspects of the people and places in which he finds himself: the milkman's clothes, the train, the girder on the bridge, the crofter's jacket and prayer-book, the sheep, the waterfall, the procession, and so on – all are used as part of himself, rather than merely to hide or disguise himself with: they are those parts of his being which he can draw upon in his need, the concretisation of his adequacy, in the face of his own impulse to evil. It is Expressionism, but subjected to the absolute demands of concreteness and dramatic energy, and no character is denatured for the sake of any abstract scheme. The final stage of Hannay's struggle with himself are marked by Pamela's belief in him (the handcuffs only seemed a constraint; having slipped from them she decides to stay with him), by their bringing in the uncomprehending police, and by Hannay's incisive, direct question to Mr. Memory, who is subject to his own compulsive professionalism (his sense of form and performance) and who dies when he has completed Hannay's drive towards the truth. He completes Hannay's own sense of himself. The film's detachment and unruffled form shouldn't be mistaken (as they were by Lindsay Anderson) for indifference of any kind. A little like Hannay, Hitchcock subjects the entire development to himself in an exactly sufficient structure. Jacques Tourneur's adaptation of the film's final scene for his own *Berlin Express* is a confirmation of Hitchcock's affinity with the purity of the classic American cinema.

*The Secret Agent* begins with its hero's funeral (a fake, but the emphasis is clear) and his being given a new name. This marks off everything that might have gone before: the film sets out to present his completeness. The funeral also dominates not only his specific condition at the beginning of the film (a lack of fulfilment, a stagnation) but also his permanent condition, as he presides over or merely comes across, deaths. Unlike Hannay, Ashenden in this film is without any genuinely controlling humorous detachment and finds his drive towards knowledge of himself to be mainly just grinding and painful. Hannay's pretences and disguises seemed to emanate from no pressure, but rather from an endless resilience and capacity for action: Ashenden's ploys and deceits are shot with a sense of guilt. His eventual victory has little elation in it: 'Never again!' Thematic content of this kind needn't necessarily lead to inferior films, but it is hard not to note that *The Man Who Knew Too Much* and *The Thirty-Nine Steps*, both of which issue in unambiguous victories, have a much greater sense of inclusiveness and a greater dramatic richness than does *The Secret Agent*. The characteristic themes, of rooting out pretence in oneself by thoroughly acting it out, and of compulsive professionalism (Ashenden can't help pursuing the case even when he has decided not to – the compulsion being his instinctive drive to the completion of himself) are there, however. Also, the simplicity of the structure

and of the images themselves doesn't only indicate a lack; it is also a close relative to the stylistic boldness and lucidity of *Young and Innocent*.

*Sabotage* intervenes, in which, as in *The Secret Agent*, there is no relief when disorder is contained. Hitchcock chose to re-enact the ending of *Blackmail*: the murderess goes to give herself up to the police, but is persuaded by a policeman not to go through with it. As is often the case in Hitchcock, the sense of impurity dominates all other aspects of the film: we feel Mrs Verloc to be neither innocent nor guilty, but that she is beyond ethical judgment. Above everything else she carries away with her at the film's ending a knowledge of herself – not just of the murder, but of her naïve acceptance of Verloc's disdainful pretence that he was 'like a father' to the boy, of little Stevie's horrible death and, in general, of her own self-inflicted martyrdom. In this case the compulsion is the woman's while her male companion, a policeman, is a professional who, on a thematic level, cannot carry through the final action because it is *her* condition that is in question. She executes Verloc, and ends the various pretences which held the situation together, and which all carried overtones of possible treachery – including the policeman's ingratiating himself with Mrs Verloc and Stevie, and her own self-deception. The pretences are 'normal'; the murder of Verloc shatters the condition. What prevents this view of life being over-heated or hysterical is the director's evenness of tone, the sombreness of the style, the detachment of the presentation. When Mrs Verloc turns away from the police at the end she has been persuaded not to acquiesce in an order for its own sake: the law would have made a decision, a summing-up, an abstraction of her, which would have been tidy but evasive. The order to which Hitchcock is devoted is the logic of individualism.

Evading the law has a similar connotation in *Young and Innocent*. Robert is being taken to trial for a murder he did not commit: he escapes instead of acquiescing in the 'due process'. He finally clears himself and delivers the murder up to the system he had himself evaded. His ally throughout is Erica, daughter of the Lord Lieutenant of the county. There would be no difficulty in demonstrating the film's social conservatism (it invites us to do so): the lower classes and the socially deprived are used to represent violence, disorder and the general disturbance in the nature of things, while at the end of the film Robert is declared fit to be invited to dinner by Erica's father. Robert has delivered up the right man to the law, and in doing so has removed a factor of instability from the presented social situation (the earlier satire in the system, and the very fact of Robert's wrongful arrest are simply *there*). For the duration of Robert's 'pursued' period, he uses the social situation, at each of its levels, never genuinely participating in any of them. When finally, he can 'come to dinner' the dramatic development is concluded.

The development is partly where we would expect it: in his relationship with the murderer, who is another example of the undisciplined individualism which the Hitchcock hero pursues in order to eradicate his own worst impulses: one individualist in pursuit of another. The murderer and the murder are immediately associated with night, a stormy sea and height which are the symbolic, extreme extension of Robert's own instinctive and emotional life; when finally located, the murderer is in blackface, twitching. Robert is played off against the murderer, but also against the police whom he outwits. Erica, a character whose presence and solidity are major achievements of the *mise-en-scène*, is Robert's earnest of eventual social acceptance. She represents, without pretension on anyone's part, the unformed potential of the social order, and her awareness is modified by her embroilment with Robert. Her stability is essential to the film, and together with Robert she embodies the qualities of freshness, youth and resilience which Hitchcock had referred to in his early films (*The Pleasure Garden*, *The Lodger*.)

The film's simple, bold compositions derive from *The Secret Agent* rather than from the sombreness of *Sabotage*; the sparseness and lucidity of the structure and of the *mise-en-scène* are also closely related to those qualities in *The Secret Agent*. What makes the contrast is that *Young and Innocent* is a comedy (often brightly lit), solid because of Hitchcock's confidence in the solidity of the leading characters, on whom he relies to a very high degree, providing little which is of interest beyond them. But there is no suggestion of any pressure in Hitchcock's concentration on them or in the actor's performances. The simplicity of the spectacle becomes a major quality. The murderer is made to seem quite alien, so that the suspense which proceeds from the resemblance between his extremity and the hero's condition is lost sight of for most of the film: we are concerned more with the possibility of the hero being recaptured by the police. The murderer's violence and emotionalism are strongly presented at the film's opening, and then not referred to again; when finally caught, he seems pathetic. The murderer's decline and Robert's determination and resilience are closely related: the hero's self-discipline and his need to convince others are again main threads. But the playing down of the murderer's importance throws the weight almost entirely on the relationship of hero and heroine and on their discipline rather than on any implied capacity in them for evil and profound disorder. The solidity and substantially (a question of *mise-en-scène*) of the main characters seem to me to be major qualities, though the tone is certainly light. The shifting of emphasis away from the characteristic themes (the main themes of this article) and away from the suspense, onto the weight and presence of the characters makes the film an anticipation of the major American films, especially *Notorious* (1946) and *Marnie* (1964) (both of which are enormously superior to *Young and Innocent*). The virtual absence or modification (after the opening

sequences) of the usual undercurrents of sensationalism and of the usual sinister atmosphere of suspicion make *Young and Innocent* unusual in the major English sound period. The conservatism one finds everywhere in Hitchcock is rarely found with such a clear social dimension; this film is the simplest demonstration that his individualism is conservative. In the films which are more decisively concerned with evil and disorder, these qualities are always integrated into the respective final unities which the films represent: their characters have to live with the knowledge they have acquired, of what they themselves are. That is the characteristic balance, which *Young and Innocent* complements.

### Notes

1. *Screen*, vol 10, No 4/5.
2. Howe, Irving: *Politics and the Novel*, Horizon Press, New York, 1957 and (paperback) Meridian, New York, 1957.
3. *Ibid.* p 82.
4. Durgnat, Raymond: *A Mirror for England*, Faber, 1971, p 204
5. In *Sequence*, No 9, Autumn 1949.
6. V. F. Perkins: *Film as Film: Understanding and Judging Movies*, Pelican Original, 1972, p 56.

## HITCHCOCK'S ENGLISH FILMS PRE 1940

### Silent Films

- 1921 Always Tell Your Wife, Famous-Players-Lasky, Islington
- 1922 Number Thirteen, Famous-Players-Lasky (never completed)
- 1925 The Pleasure Garden, Gainsborough-Emelka
- 1926 The Mountain Eagle, Gainsborough-Emelka
- 1926 The Lodger, Gainsborough-Emelka
- 1927 Downhill, Gainsborough
- 1927 Easy Virtue, Gainsborough
- 1927 The Ring, British International Pictures
- 1928 The Farmer's Wife, British International Pictures
- 1928 Champagne, British International Pictures
- 1929 The Manxman, British International Pictures

### Sound Films

- 1929 Blackmail, British International Pictures
- 1930 Elstree Calling, directed by Adrian Brunel: Hitchcock directed two of the sketches. British International Pictures
- 1930 Juno & the Paycock, British International Pictures
- 1930 Murder, British International Pictures
- 1931 The Skin Game, British International Pictures
- 1932 Rich and Strange, British International Pictures
- 1932 Number Seventeen, British International Pictures
- 1932 Lord Camber's Ladies, produced by Hitchcock, directed by Benn W Levy. British International Pictures
- 1933 Waltzes from Vienna, Gaumont/British
- 1934 The Man Who Knew Too Much, Gaumont/British
- 1935 The Thirty-nine Steps, Gaumont/British

- 70 1936 The Secret Agent, Gaumont/British  
1936 Sabotage, Gaumont/British  
1937 Young and Innocent, Gainsborough  
1938 The Lady Vanishes, Gainsborough  
1939 Jamaica Inn, Mayflower Studios