



WILEY-BLACKWELL COMPANIONS TO FILM DIRECTORS

**A Companion to
Alfred Hitchcock**

Edited by

Thomas Leitch and Leland Poague

 WILEY-BLACKWELL

A Companion to Alfred Hitchcock

Wiley-Blackwell Companions to Film Directors

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A Companion to Alfred Hitchcock

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In memoriam
Robin Wood
1931–2009

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Introduction

Thomas Leitch and Leland Poague

Our dedication of this volume to the late Robin Wood honors one of the founding practitioners of Hitchcock studies. In looking backward to a departing generation of Hitchcock scholars that now sadly includes Raymond Durnat, Eric Rohmer, and Claude Chabrol, it seeks to root the present volume in a rich tradition of Hitchcock commentary that now numbers hundreds of books and essays. Alfred Hitchcock and his films have been the subject of biographies, thematic surveys of his entire career, scholarly monographs on aspects ranging from Hitchcock's Victorianism to his bi-textuality, case studies of individual films and even sequences from particular films, catalogues of Hitchcockian motifs, reference books, quiz books, and books for readers still too young to know what monster lurks in Norman Bates's fruit cellar.

In considering our place in this tradition of Hitchcockiana, we are especially mindful of other collections of essays on the Master of Suspense. If Hitchcock has commanded vastly more scholarly attention than any other filmmaker, he has also been incomparably well served by the anthologies that have done so much to set the course of Hitchcock studies. Albert J. LaValley's *Focus on Hitchcock* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1972), whose editor provided a masterful introduction to a potpourri of interviews, reviews, analyses, and polemics, went a long way toward consolidating Hitchcock's position in film studies. The two editions of Marshall Deutelbaum and Leland Poague's *A Hitchcock Reader* (Ames: Iowa State UP, 1986; Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), addressed alike to students in the university-level Hitchcock courses that LaValley's anthology clearly anticipated, proposed the director's work and its reception as embodiments of cinema's leading traditions and developments. Walter Raubicheck and Walter Srebnick's *Hitchcock's Rereleased Films: From Rope to Vertigo* (Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1991) made a case for the centrality of five Hitchcock films – *Rope* (1948), *Rear Window* (1954), *The Trouble*

with *Harry* (1955), *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1956), and *Vertigo* (1958) – long kept from audiences by contractual negotiations that outlived the director himself. Slavoj Žižek’s *Everything You Always Wanted to Know about Lacan (But Were Afraid to Ask Hitchcock)* (London: Verso, 1992) placed the director, who had already played a leading role in Žižek’s shotgun wedding of Lacan and pop culture, front and center in debates about cultural signification. Later in the same decade, Jonathan Freedman and Richard Millington’s *Hitchcock’s America* (New York: Oxford UP, 1999) joined Žižek and company in shifting the grounds of Hitchcock studies from formal and thematic studies that focused on mining each film for meaning to a cultural-studies perspective that took each film, and Hitchcock in general, as symptoms of larger signifying patterns. The two anthologies with which Richard Allen and Sam Ishii-González bookended the 1999 Hitchcock centennial conference – *Alfred Hitchcock: Centenary Essays* (London: BFI, 1999) and *Hitchcock: Past and Future* (New York: Routledge, 2004) – sought to reclaim film studies from the flattening sterility of reception studies, which too often saw the films as value-neutral or even pathologically symptomatic, and reestablish them as works of art. The two volumes of essays reprinted from the *Hitchcock Annual – Framing Hitchcock: Selected Essays from the Hitchcock Annual*, edited by Sidney Gottlieb and Christopher Brookhouse (Detroit: Wayne State UP, 2002), and *The Hitchcock Annual Anthology: Selected Essays from Volumes 10–15*, edited by Gottlieb and Allen (London: Wallflower, 2009) – offered specific suggestions for the responsible care and feeding of Hitchcock studies in light of the worrisome rise of “Big-Time Hitchcock” (*Framing* 15). And of course the venue in which the essays collected in these two volumes originally appeared, the *Hitchcock Annual*, is itself, like *The MacGuffin*, its sister publication edited by Ken Mogg, a constant source of new essays on Hitchcock.

Given such a long and varied tradition, not only of Hitchcock scholarship but of Hitchcock anthologies, why do we now extend the list with still another volume? Each of these earlier anthologies was organized more or less explicitly around a controversy. Was Hitchcock an artist or an entertainer? Did Hitchcock’s American films represent his crowning achievement or a falling-off from a series of faster-paced English films more immediately grounded in wit, brio, and social observation? How did the re-release of five long unavailable films reshape received wisdom about the shape of his career? What role did this most popular of genre filmmakers play in the commodification of meaning and the challenge to meaning-making systems? Could Hitchcock’s films more fruitfully be studied from aesthetic perspectives or when taken as symptomatic of the cultural pathologies of postmodern America or of global postmodernism more generally? How exactly was Big-Time Hitchcock to be managed?

Because Hitchcock always seems to be at the center of some controversy swirling around film studies or semiology or cultural studies, he has been incomparably useful in providing an accessible laboratory in which to test ideas about filmmakers, films, filmmaking, and popular culture. Even if there is always a Hitchcock controversy, however, the nature of the controversy is always shifting.

In particular, each Hitchcock anthology has taken previous Hitchcock criticism as an indispensable part of its subject. Every one of these anthologies, even those that rely entirely on previously published material, uses the retrospective force of its survey of Hitchcock scholarship as the basis for an argument about how Hitchcock studies can shape the disciplinary future of film studies or cultural studies or new media studies and so forth.

So part of our purpose here has been to provide a retrospective overview of some of the leading controversies that have shaped Hitchcock studies, establishing and confirming it as a discipline and marking the principal stages in its development. These controversies begin long before Robin Wood's pioneering interventions. They leave their traces in the extended 1950s debate in *Cahiers du cinéma* over Hitchcock's status as a film artist, and in Lindsay Anderson's even earlier dismissal of Hitchcock's American films as "heavy, tedious, glossed, at their best, ingenious, expert, synthetically entertaining" ("Alfred Hitchcock," in *Focus on Hitchcock*, LaValley, 1972, 48–59, at 59). But they are given their definitive articulation by the question with which Wood first called *Hitchcock's Films* to order in 1965: "Why should we take Hitchcock seriously?" (*Hitchcock's Films Revisited*. Rev. ed. New York: Columbia UP, 2002, 55) – a question that was enormously influential because it provided a primary impetus not only for Hitchcock studies but for cinema studies in general as it fought to establish its cultural and academic credentials by asserting that its subject, though originating as popular entertainment, could also have the power of art.

The present collection extends the tradition of anthologies that have sought to characterize Hitchcock studies by providing a retrospective snapshot, a time capsule of the debates that have shaped Hitchcock scholarship. But it differs from earlier collections in several important ways. The most obvious of these is its scope. Because we had the freedom to plan the collection on a generous scale, we sought to include as many approaches to Hitchcock, as many different Hitchcocks, as possible instead of focusing on a single aspect of Hitchcock's work or a single definitive Hitchcock. Moreover, we planned the collection from the top down. Instead of asking potential contributors what they most wanted to write about, we approached them with specific topics in mind in hopes of producing a volume that would be at once comprehensive and integrated. We commissioned virtually every contribution expressly for this volume, and the few exceptions were extensively revised for their appearance here. Although James Vest and Jack Sullivan were obvious choices to write on the French reception of Hitchcock and on the director's use of music, their essays extend rather than simply recapitulating their earlier work.

Our abiding concern was to nurture and extend the kind of productive debate that has been the lifeblood of Hitchcock studies. From its beginnings, the field has been driven by a series of antinomies that have allowed notable critics to weigh in on either side of the question. *Cahiers* contributors debated Hitchcock's status as maker and artist, and Durgnat developed his reading of Hitchcock in direct response to Wood's question, "Why should we take Hitchcock seriously?" Hitchcock studies

ever since has developed through a series of theses and antitheses that have led to syntheses capable of generating new antitheses. This collection continues this Hegelian pattern by emphasizing questions capable of generating a range of useful answers. Is Hitchcock inimitable, or is he everywhere imitated? Richard Allen contends that his influence has been extensive and multifarious, but by no means indiscriminate. Is Hitchcock fundamentally a creator of original works or the leading member of a production team? Leland Poague, Tania Modleski, and Susan White develop an impressively wide range of models for discussing Hitchcockian collaboration. Should Hitchcock's films be studied for their own virtues and values, or for what they can tell us about cultural currents, industry practices, and the nature of narrative suspense? Half a dozen different contributors show that his films can be at once admired and pressed into serving larger intellectual or cultural programs. Indeed, even those essays most overtly concerned with Hitchcock's status as auteur director – those by James Vest, Janet Bergstrom, and Harry Oldmeadow – observe how thoroughly his reputation was constructed, by his detractors as well as his partisans, though they focus alike on the crucial role played by critics associated with *Cahiers du cinéma*, especially François Truffaut and Robin Wood.

In soliciting contributions, we have aimed for a balance between established and emerging scholars, notable Hitchcockians and contributors from outside Hitchcock studies who could bring a fresh perspective to familiar material. An earlier policy we set proved still more decisive. Because we had no desire to build our collection out of authorized readings of canonical films, we chose to organize our contributions in terms of topics and approaches instead of soliciting new readings of individual films. This decision had the effect of subordinating each contributor's departures from scholarly consensus – how many of the numberless essays on *Psycho* (1960) cite earlier commentators on the film only to mark the given essay's distance from them? – to potential disagreements among the present contributors, who felt free to range outside the individual preserve of *The 39 Steps* (1935) or *Rear Window* to which assignments to write on individual films might have safely confined them.

In lieu of essays devoted to individual films that offer interpretations explaining what the films mean, we sought contextual essays on the circumstances under which Hitchcock's films have been produced and received, especially essays on topics most likely to lend themselves to productive debate. Ken Mogg and Charles Barr investigate the influence of earlier writers and filmmakers on a director notorious for the highly selective list of literary and cinematic influences he acknowledged. Thomas Hemmeter and Angelo Restivo consider Hitchcock's credentials as an exemplary modernist and postmodernist in a pair of essays whose relation to each other is far more complex than simple opposition.

Although we gave each contributor a specific topic, the inevitably serendipitous development of essays as they moved from topics through premises and examples to conclusions led to a wealth of unexpected results. We anticipated a good deal of emphasis on *Vertigo*, but not nearly so much on *Waltzes from Vienna* (1933) or *Under Capricorn* (1949). Imagine our surprise, then, when Richard Ness

announced his intention to focus on both of these neglected films in his essay on Hitchcockian melodrama. We were equally surprised by the number of contributors who wrote at length about *Marnie* (1964). In view of the fascinating differences that emerge from the considerations of *Marnie* in the essays by Tania Modleski, Brigitte Peucker, William Rothman, and Florence Jacobowitz, however, we were happy to be surprised, and we trust that readers will share our pleasure.

Enterprising readers might well imagine a collection using alternative topics for section headings or individual essays. To an extent, so did we, in that our table of contents shifted considerably as essays began to arrive and we saw how different authors treated their assigned topics, sometimes in ways we could not have anticipated. Our one obligatory section, the longest of our nine sections and the central one in the structure of the volume, surveys the historical development of Hitchcock's career. But this section is more notable than any other for its variety of approaches. Sidney Gottlieb contends that Hitchcock's silent films establish themselves as Hitchcockian years before he became identified with the thriller. Tom Ryall traces the relation between Hitchcock's films for Gaumont British and other contemporaneous English films. Ina Rae Hark, adopting a more thematic approach to Hitchcock's first American films, offers some highly original conclusions about Hitchcock and American masculine heroism. David Sterritt considers the ways in which Hitchcock's brief period as an independent producer laid the groundwork for his subsequent films. Joe McElhaney's emphasis on Hitchcock's distinctive *mise-en-scène* provides new insight into his years at Paramount. And William Rothman, emphasizing the disappointments of Hitchcock's last years at Universal, balances a sense of Hitchcock's compromises and missteps with his achievements in films from *The Birds* (1963) through *Family Plot* (1976). Since Gottlieb begins with an account of *The Blackguard* (Graham Cutts, 1925), on which Hitchcock worked as assistant director, art director, and screenwriter before he directed *The Pleasure Garden* (1925), and Rothman provides an extended consideration of *The Short Night*, Hitchcock's unproduced last project, this section on Hitchcock's development is as comprehensive as it is varied.

Both inside and outside this section on Hitchcock's development, there are many readings of individual films. McElhaney analyzes the ways *Psycho* marks a decisive turn in Hitchcock's *mise-en-scène*. Paula Marantz Cohen uses *Shadow of a Doubt* (1943) to anchor a notion of "conceptual suspense" that sheds new light on Hitchcock and narrative suspense generally. George Toles's meditation on the nature of moral experience in Hitchcock follows the affective itinerary of the cigarette lighter in *Strangers on a Train* (1951). In every case, the analysis of individual films illustrates a larger argument about Hitchcock, cinema, or storytelling.

Although we have not encouraged contributors to argue with each other directly, we must plead guilty as accessories before the fact in arranging categories and juxtapositions that would foster implicit controversy. Many of these essays, for example, dramatize a fundamental schism in Hitchcock studies between retrospective views that seek to consolidate Hitchcock's position as an auteur,

a brand name, an ascription of value, an historical function, or an otherwise privileged signifier, and prospective views that seek to expose ruptures in Hitchcock commentary in order to address a perceived absence. Lesley Brill looks backward at the enduring myths of Hitchcock romance; Thomas Leitch looks forward to ask whether Hitchcock's biography has been exhausted and how it might be replenished. What is more surprising is how many of these essays embody both impulses in different combinations. Brigitte Peucker and Murray Pomerance both argue for a fundamental reassessment of Hitchcock's visuals that would break sharply with earlier analyses. Yet their procedures – Peucker's motivic examination of Hitchcock's aestheticized public spaces versus Pomerance's cornucopia of isolated visual moments that break free of their films' narrative discipline – could not be more different from one another, even as they root themselves in earlier studies by Alenka Zupančič and Michel Mourlet respectively. No debate in contemporary cinema studies would seem more likely to divide conservatives from progressives than the question of whether films posed ethical dilemmas devised by individual filmmakers or were everywhere informed by deeper ideological commitments outside the control of any individual. Even so, both Toby Miller and Noel King's take on the ideology of Hitchcock's English spy films and Alexander Doty's interrogation of the term "queer Hitchcock" illustrate a far more nuanced conception of ideology than the earlier commentary they consider. And if Richard Gilmore's Socratic Hitchcock is a traditional ethicist in postmodern garb, Todd McGowan presents a director every bit as deeply invested in the ethical dimensions of experience who is still absolutely different from every other filmmaker.

Our effort to locate this anthology in the sequence of similar Hitchcock compendiums is, among other things, an acknowledgement of indebtedness to the larger critical tradition of Hitchcock scholarship. But many more specific debts require acknowledgment. Most of all, we are indebted to our contributors. This was a labor of love all around, in the sense that the main reward for participating in the project was the participation, the chance to contribute to an unprecedentedly compendious reassessment of Hitchcock's crucial role in film culture and modern culture. We were deeply gratified at the generous responses we received to our initial queries and for the wonderful essays we finally received. Not only were contributors generous with their time and their words, they had reason to be generous with their patience as well, given the editorial necessity we encountered to urge economy. To each and all, we offer heartfelt thanks.

Warm thanks are also due our Wiley-Blackwell editor Jayne Fagnoli, who suggested the project in the first place. Jayne was also the lead editor on the second edition of Marshall Deutelbaum and Leland Poague's *A Hitchcock Reader*, and it was midway through that effort that she posed the question to Marshall and Lee regarding their interest in joining her in yet another editorial project. Having recently retired, Marshall declined the opportunity while offering Lee steadfast encouragement. (Thanks, Marshall!) Lee Poague recruited Thomas Leitch to share editorial duties, and we soon confirmed our suspicion that there was work aplenty

to go around. Though Jayne Fagnoli's encouragement and sage counsel were exceptionally helpful, we are also eager to acknowledge and applaud the professionalism of Wiley-Blackwell editorial assistants Margot Morse and Matthew Baskin and production manager Lisa Eaton, and Revathy Kaliyamoorthy of SPi. Copyeditor Gillian Andrews did much to improve the volume, and we gladly express our gratitude for her conscientious editorial stewardship.

Portions of James Vest's essay "French Hitchcock, 1945–1955" are based upon materials published in Vest's earlier scholarship on Hitchcock and France, including his essay "The Emergence of an Auteur: Hitchcock and French Film Criticism, 1950–1954" in *Hitchcock Annual* (2001–02): 108–24 and his chapter "To Catch a Liar: Bazin, Chabrol, and Truffaut Encounter Hitchcock," which appeared in *Hitchcock: Past and Future*, edited by Richard Allen and Sam Ishii-González (London: Routledge, 2004, 109–18), both used and modified here with permission of the copyright holder and publishers. Portions are also derived from *Hitchcock and France: The Forging of an Auteur*, by James M. Vest. Copyright © 2003 by James M. Vest. Reproduced with permission of Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc., Westport, CT.

Toby Miller and Noel King's essay "Accidental Heroes and Gifted Amateurs: Hitchcock and Ideology" borrows from Toby Miller's "39 Steps to 'The Borders of the Possible': Alfred Hitchcock, Amateur Observer and the New Cultural History," which appeared in *Alfred Hitchcock: Centenary Essays*, edited by Richard Allen and S. Ishii-González (London: BFI, 1999): 316–31. The passages are reproduced here with the kind permission of Palgrave Macmillan. These involve Non-exclusive Print and Electronic rights in the English language for distribution in the following territory: World for one edition.

A shorter version of George Toles's essay "Occasions of Sin: The Forgotten Cigarette Lighter and Other Moral Accidents in Hitchcock" appeared in *Raritan* 28.4 (2009). The material in this shorter version was published by arrangement with Wiley-Blackwell.

Between its initial publication as *Hitchcock's Films* (London: A. Zwemmer; New York: A.S. Barnes, 1965) and its most recent iteration as *Hitchcock's Films Revisited*, revised edition, no book has proven more essential to Hitchcock studies than Robin Wood's. We are especially grateful to Columbia University Press for allowing us to quote extensively from *Hitchcock's Films Revisited*, revised edition, by Robin Wood. Copyright © 2002, 1989 Columbia University Press. Reprinted with permission of the publisher.

Lee Poague is grateful to Iowa State University's Center for Excellence in the Arts and Humanities for supporting both his research on Hitchcock's writers and his editorial efforts, as did the ISU Department of English, especially former chair Charlie Kostelnick and former assistant chair Debra Marquart. For research assistance, he is indebted to the Interlibrary Loan staff at the Parks Library, to Dan Coffey of the Parks Library faculty, and to Amy Poague, who ran down obscure periodical sources in the library of the University of Iowa. His admiration of Thomas Leitch as a discerning and eloquent Hitchcock scholar occasioned the hope

that Tom would agree to collaborate, and he is grateful that their collaboration proved so happily productive. Susan Poague has been patient beyond measure as the process of writing and editing has gone forward, but sympathetic and loving all the same, after all these years and Hitchcock books! Some debts defy repayment.

Thomas Leitch offers special thanks to Lee Poague for his example, wisdom, and patience, to Sidney Gottlieb and Ken Mogg for help above and beyond the duty of the most exemplary Hitchcockians, and to Lisa Elliott for her understanding, support, and love.

A word about style. Though we have done our best to follow the style mandates of the most recent *MLA Handbook* – still another way of trying the patience of our contributors – we have made no attempt to iron out all stylistic inconsistencies by making our contributors sound more like us. In addition, we have settled on several idiosyncratic or volume-specific usages. In honor of Robin Wood, for example, we spell *CineAction* with two capitals, though MLA style is clear about disregarding such accidentals. We have followed our contributors' practice of referring to foreign language films by the titles most often used in the English-speaking film community, though we have on occasion given the original title followed by an English translation. Where foreign language articles are cited, we have followed a similar practice, especially in James Vest's chapter. Except for the first film Hitchcock directed, *The Pleasure Garden*, which some authorities date to 1925, the year it was shot, and others to 1927, the year it was finally released, we have made every attempt to be consistent in providing the release date for each film (and the name of its director, if the director is not Hitchcock) and the name of the performer when a given film or character is first mentioned in a given essay.

In reviewing the contents of this volume, we are keenly aware of its omissions. There is nothing on Hitchcock's collaboration with cinematographers, costume designers, or other visual artists; nothing on *Bon Voyage* (1944) or *Aventure Malgache* (1944); very little on Hitchcock's work for television (though see Ness's provocative remarks on "Incident at a Corner" [1960]); and hardly anything on the non-musical elements of his soundtracks. The neglect of Hitchcockian comedy that Gottlieb lamented in 1995 (*Hitchcock on Hitchcock: Selected Writing and Interviews*, Berkeley: U of California P, xxiii) continues here. And of course the same antinomies that have made films like *North by Northwest* (1959) and *Psycho* so central to the Hitchcock canon continue to marginalize films as different as *Rich and Strange* (1931), *Jamaica Inn* (1939), and *The Trouble with Harry*. Given our decision to avoid the close-reading format, we are proud of the comprehensive (dare we say catholic) treatment of Hitchcock's work. We are well aware that this is not the ultimate Hitchcock anthology. But we hope the very omissions that make it less than definitive will help drive the continuing development of Hitchcock studies by provoking its readers to productive response. Although we are proud to salute the achievements of Hitchcock scholars past and present, we are convinced that the most exciting work on Hitchcock has yet to appear, and we hope that this collection will play a part in bringing it to birth.

PART I

Background

Hitchcock's Lives

Thomas Leitch

The appearance of Donald Spoto's *Spellbound by Beauty* (2008) marks a turning point in Hitchcock studies, though hardly for the reasons the author indicates. The dust-jacket description of the book as "the final volume in master biographer Donald Spoto's Hitchcock trilogy" will not be taken seriously by anyone who has read *The Art of Alfred Hitchcock*, the formal and thematic study of Hitchcock's films distinguished from other film-by-film surveys largely by Spoto's access to the production of *Family Plot* (1976), or *The Dark Side of Genius* (1983), the full-dress biography that cast Hitchcock as a tormented loner who delighted in sadistically teasing and sometimes torturing audiences and colleagues alike. Despite publisher claims of a volume "[r]ich with fresh revelations based on previously undisclosed" testimony or with materials offering "important insights into the life of a brilliant, powerful, eccentric and tortured artist," Spoto's new book, accurately subtitled *Alfred Hitchcock and His Leading Ladies*, does not complete a trilogy because it is neither a sequel nor a complement to his earlier volumes. It is something altogether more interesting.

Spoto is admirably direct in explaining the reasons he returned to Hitchcock after *The Dark Side of Genius* launched his career as a celebrity biographer whose subjects have included Marilyn Monroe, Princess Diana, Joan of Arc, and Jesus of Nazareth. Several of the collaborators he interviewed in preparation for the earlier volume asked him "to omit certain comments either for some years or until after their own deaths" (xxi). So much of Hitchcock's conduct toward his actresses "can only be called sexual harassment" that "his biography remains a cautionary tale of what can go wrong in any life" (xxi). Spoto felt particularly obliged to respond to legions of Hitchcock fans "who will not hear a syllable spoken against" him (xx). For Spoto, however, "the craft of biography requires that the shadow side of subjects be set forth and comprehended" (xx). Armed with previously withheld

confidences and a more comprehensive sense of Hitchcock's life, Spoto intends by focusing on the most problematic aspect of the director's professional life – his relationships with the actresses “for whom he had a strange amalgam of adoration and contempt” (xviii) – to rescue Hitchcock in all his dark complexity from a horde of uncritical admirers by offering “new insights into Hitchcock the filmmaker – in particular, how he understood the element of collaboration” (xxiii).

But these claims ring just as hollow as the publisher's claim that *Spellbound by Beauty* completes a trilogy. The new material at Spoto's disposal is of five kinds: new interviews he conducted with Alida Valli, Gregory Peck, Ann Todd, Diane Baker, and especially Tippi Hedren; previously withheld comments from interviews with a somewhat wider array of sources; the interviews with and writings by Hitchcock that Sidney Gottlieb collected in *Hitchcock on Hitchcock* and *Alfred Hitchcock: Interviews*; critical studies of Hitchcock's life, films, and working habits by Leonard J. Leff, Bill Krohn, and Ken Mogg published since *The Dark Side of Genius*; and intervening biographies of Hitchcock by Patrick McGilligan and Charlotte Chandler, as well as Patricia Hitchcock O'Connell's biography of her mother, Alma Reville, Hitchcock's wife.

All but the first two of these, of course, have been equally at the disposal of other commentators for years, but Spoto treats them as if they were his own private preserve. It is sadly ironic to see an author who so regularly castigates Hitchcock for his well-known inability to credit any of his collaborators for the success of his films – he shrewdly suggests that Hitchcock resented his screenwriters because “he wanted to write the script entirely on his own but could not” (50) – display an equal lack of generosity toward his own sources. Chandler is never identified by name outside Spoto's notes, for example, while John Russell Taylor is referred to by name only thrice in Spoto's text. Though Spoto cites McGilligan a dozen times in his notes, the only time he mentions McGilligan by name in his text is in his disapproving reference to McGilligan's account of a sexual liaison between Alma Reville and screenwriter Whitfield Cook, the single most salacious revelation in McGilligan's 864-page biography.

Just as he takes pains to correct the title of the 1936 film *Secret Agent* (57) – though this error has not appeared in Hitchcock commentary for years – Spoto treats Leonard J. Leff's long-ago-published revelations (*Hitchcock and Selznick*, 1987) about Hitchcock's bullying treatment of Joan Fontaine on and off the set of *Rebecca* (1940) and Bill Krohn's more recent account (*Hitchcock at Work*, 2000) of Hitchcock's often serendipitous collaborative working methods as if they were breaking news. Though biographers commonly depend on the work of earlier biographers and interpreters and scholars, it is surprising to see Spoto, who certainly was under no obligation to return to the subject of Hitchcock after 26 years, offer so little new material of his own. Apart from repeated denunciations of Hitchcock's misogynist cruelty and toilet humor, the most substantial additions Spoto makes here to the portrait of the director he presented in *The Dark Side of Genius* are a series of supplementary portraits, interpolated biographical sketches of leading ladies from

Virginia Valli to Madeleine Carroll to Ingrid Bergman to Tippi Hedren. In order to flesh out the Sardou motto – “Torture the women!” (xix) – that Hitchcock applied to plot construction and Spoto to Hitchcock’s life in *The Dark Side of Genius*, he adds a catalog of variously vulnerable young actresses Hitchcock either adoringly sought to dominate (Ingrid Bergman, Grace Kelly, Vera Miles) or tormented (June Howard-Tripp, Lilian Hall-Davis, Jessie Matthews, Madeleine Carroll, Joan Fontaine, Kim Novak) or both (Tippi Hedren), while passing hastily over his collaborations with actresses who fell into neither category (Isabel Jeans, Betty Balfour, Anny Ondra, Norah Baring, Joan Barry, Edna Best, Sylvia Sidney, Nova Pilbeam, Margaret Lockwood, Maureen O’Hara, Laraine Day, Carole Lombard, Priscilla Lane, Teresa Wright, Tallulah Bankhead, Marlene Dietrich, Ruth Roman, Shirley MacLaine, Eva Marie Saint, Janet Leigh, Julie Andrews, and Barbara Harris, the last of whom Spoto curiously fails to mention even in passing). The obvious conclusion, that Hitchcock tormented all his actresses except for the ones he didn’t, adds nothing compelling or new to the case Spoto documented so persuasively in *The Dark Side of Genius*.

In the years since Spoto’s influential biography was first published, many commentators, as he accurately notes, have taken exception to its portrait of Hitchcock as dominated by dark fantasies he felt compelled to play out onscreen. Except at book signings, however, it is hard to imagine where Spoto has run into fans quite as obtuse about either Hitchcock or sexual harassment as his description of “the consensus” would indicate. In *The Dark Side of Genius*, Spoto had revealingly noted the labored attempts of “Hitchcock’s admirers (this author among the most defensive of them)” to justify the “sloppy technique” of Hitchcock’s 1964 film, *Marnie* (476). In *Spellbound by Beauty*, his principal antagonist still seems to be the Spoto who wrote *The Art of Alfred Hitchcock*. On the whole, however, he redirects his unhappiness with uncritical defenses of Hitchcock onto other targets, like Patricia Hitchcock O’Connell’s reticence about her childhood in England, her relation to her father, and her mother’s contribution to Hitchcock’s films. Of O’Connell’s early days, he concludes that “her life sounded thumpingly dull – nothing stands out at all” (75). He disputes her recollection of her parents as “ordinary people. I know a lot of people insist that my father must have had a dark imagination. Well, he did not. He was a brilliant filmmaker and he knew how to tell a story. That’s all” (76).

Most characteristic of all is Spoto’s response to O’Connell’s claims that “her father ‘made all the important decisions with Alma as his closest collaborator’ and that ‘Alma’s participation was constant’” (89). These claims would seem to support Spoto’s view of Hitchcock, based on Bill Krohn’s research, as “a senior supervising collaborator” rather than “the sole creative force behind his pictures” (84). But Spoto remains curiously unconvinced: “The idea may provide a tender revisionist history in praise of a supposedly underrated wife, but it does not stand up to scrutiny, and Alma herself would swiftly have deflected such hyperbolic praise (indeed, she did when it was implied over the years)” (89–90). More curious yet is the fact that the contentious issue of Alma’s collaboration with her husband surfaces in

Spoto's discussion of *Rebecca*, where Alma's participation in the scripting process is frequently attested to, despite the lack of a formal screen credit. And the evidence Spoto does adduce to discount Patricia Hitchcock's suggestion that Hitchcock depended on his wife's collaboration seems just as ephemeral as Patricia Hitchcock O'Connell's familial perspective.

In fact, so few verifiable details are available concerning the extent of Reville's influence on Hitchcock's films that commentators are unlikely to reach a consensus on the subject anytime soon. Attempting to rise above this debate rather than entering into it, Spoto mostly reiterates the position he had taken in *The Dark Side of Genius*. So it is throughout *Spellbound by Beauty*. Although Spoto's avowed purpose in returning to Hitchcock is to set the record straight, he offers no compelling new evidence that would refute the biographers, critics, or scholars who have the temerity to present Hitchcocks different from his own. In the end, his decision to revisit Hitchcock produces nothing more than another visit, an invitation to reconsider Hitchcock directed toward a politically insensitive, art-for-art's-sake audience that in all likelihood no longer exists.

Even so, *Spellbound by Beauty* is much more interesting than a more successful book would have been because its very failure suggests a remarkable possibility: the depletion of Hitchcock's biography. Just because Spoto cannot find anything new to say about Hitchcock's life, of course, is no reason to conclude that there is nothing new to be said. But *Spellbound by Beauty* seems to mark a point of exhaustion in the course of Hitchcock biography. When it appeared in 1978, Taylor's authorized biography, *Hitch: The Life and Times of Alfred Hitchcock*, had presented an official, public life that focused on the director's career, larded with the sorts of anecdotes Hitchcock had been sharing with interviewers for years. Taylor's Hitchcock was an inveterate practical joker, but his pranks – inventive, good-humored, and often enough repaid in kind by “like-minded friends” (121) who knew that “if Hitch felt he had gone a little too far ... he always made generous amends” (121–22) – simply “kept his units cheery and ready for anything” (122) and incidentally provided leavening for a blow-by-blow chronicle of his public life, since Taylor provided little insight into Hitchcock's private life except the tacit implication that it was not eventful enough to be worth examining. Taylor's Hitchcock was neurotically fearful and obsessive in his professional habits, but urbanely, even comically so.

Five years later, Spoto, taking his cue from interviews with Hitchcock's collaborators rather than restricting his point of view to the director himself, portrayed a dramatically different Hitchcock in *The Dark Side of Genius: The Life of Alfred Hitchcock*. This filmmaker was still a practical joker, but in Spoto's telling the jokes did not provide relief from the tedious routine of filmmaking. Beginning with a prophetic childhood prank in which he and “an accomplice” dragged their younger schoolmate Robert Gould to the basement boiler room at St. Ignatius College, pinned “a string of firecrackers ... to his underwear and ignited” them (32), Spoto charts the way Hitchcock's pranks became “carefully controlled antisocial gestures”