



CULTURAL THEORY IN THE FILMS OF ALFRED HITCHCOCK



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By Gary McCarron

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Alfred Hitchcock continues to be an important figure in the history of cinema. This book raises several issues in film studies pertaining to aspects of Hitchcock's work that are closely related to theories drawn from the social sciences and philosophy.

This book is neither biography nor a conventional film critique. Rather, the text explores aspects of Hitchcock's work in relation to theories drawn from the social sciences and philosophy. The various chapters focus not on specific films, but on broader ideas central to Hitchcock's work. There is, for instance, a chapter on his idea of the MacGuffin in which I use Ernesto Laclau's theories of equivalent substitution to explain how the MacGuffin functions in Hitchcock's works. There is also a chapter on his notion of 'pure cinema' which moves from the idea of purity as an anthropological concept to consider purity in relation to current debates regarding so-called hybrid media, and Hitchcock's relevance to these issues in respect of his dissatisfaction with the advent of sound to the cinema world. Broadly speaking, the book uses Hitchcock's films to illustrate ideas in the social sciences and philosophy and uses those same ideas to illustrate aspects of Hitchcock's films.

Key selling points

- Updates several debates in film studies in relation to Hitchcock's films.
- Develops a rigorous approach to the study of specifically 'Hitchcockian' themes such as his theory of 'pure cinema.'
- Establishes that Hitchcock's films as texts can be applied to the analysis of questions raised in a variety of philosophical circles.
- Provokes further discussion of the nuances of Hitchcock's filmmaking technique.

Contents

Introduction: Reviewing Hitchcock's Films; Chapter One: The Incidental MacGuffin: Equivalence and Substitution; Chapter Two: The Myth of Ideal Form: Hitchcock's Quest for Pure Cinema; Chapter Three: The Birds versus 'The Birds': Problems of Ambiguity and Complexity; Chapter Four: Telling the Truth and the Wrong/ed Man; Chapter Five: Undecided Stories: 'Blackmail' and the Problem of Moral Agency; Chapter Six: Hitchcock's Debt to Silence: Time and Space in 'The Lodger'; Chapter Seven: Hitchcock's Deferred Dénouement and the Problem of Rhetorical Form; Chapter Eight: Moralizing Uncertainty: Suspicion and Faith in Hitchcock's 'Suspicion'

About the Author(s) / Editor(s)

Gary McCarron is an associate professor in the School of Communication at Simon Fraser University. He is also the Graduate Chair of Simon Fraser University's program for Graduate Liberal Studies.

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