The Construction of the "Hitchcock Blonde" in Marnie (1964)

Jodi Ramer

Jodi Ramer offers a careful close analysis of extended sequences from Alfred Hitchock's *Marnie* (1964) to frame her discussion of the formal construction of the Hitchcock Blonde. Ramer employs a measured "soft psychoanalysis" with consideration of film style and the place of the film within a range of broader contextual fields (e.g., Hitchcock's oeuvre, the femme fatale, and issues of gender representation). The notion of style Ramer presents is informed by consideration of narrative and characterization as integral elements of a formal analysis of style.

The image of the "Hitchcock Blonde" is a familiar one, more specific but perhaps almost as well known as that of the femme fatale. The Hitchcock heroine, in her purified state, has a crown of well-peroxided hair, elaborately upswept and emphasizing an unfussy vista of forehead; she is well-groomed, even severe in the cut of her modest but moneyed clothing; she is "cool," a self-possessed WASP, the elegantly detached type. This type— seen through Grace Kelly, Kim Novak, Eva Marie Saint, et al—naturally has its variations, but does maintain, throughout several of Hitchcock's films, enough recognizable traits to merit investigation. Such investigation usually follows in the form of soft psychoanalysis, citing Hitchcock's impoverished self-esteem and his need to set up an unattainable glamour-girl as fodder for his propensity to lose himself in fantasy. But the ultimately elusive reason for Hitchcock's use of the "cool blonde" is less interesting than the consideration of just how Hitchcock as filmmaker makes use of the cool blonde, how her image is created—from costume, make-up and hair, through camera placement and editing. Does this heroine occupy a special place in a given film; is her presence signalled stylistically, her body treated in a distinct or identifiable manner?

Marnie (1964), starring Tippi Hedren, stands out as a Hitchcock film in which the "cool" heroine breaks out of her supporting role as poised-and-pretty love-interest and enters the fray. Here she is not just a protagonist who must deal with an external blight, as was Hedren's previous role of Melanie Daniels in *The Birds*, but as a character fraught with pathology, a pathology that in itself drives the narrative (Marnie thieves and cons, is blackmailed into marriage, is frigid and made suicidal and then finally is returned to a repressed memory, all because of her pathology—without it, there really is no narrative at all). As such, the film is really about the cool blonde rather than just featuring her, and for this reason I see *Marnie* as a good place to start in studying the employment of the "Hitchcock Blonde." My space here is unfortunately too limited to address similar female figures in other Hitchcock films, nor is my aim to establish a comparative study of the figure; rather, I endeavour to provide a detailed account of the filmic construction of a particular character in a particular film, and insofar as the Marnie character may be identified in typage as a cool blonde Hitchcockian heroine, this instance may also be seen as representative of an aspect of the so-called Hitchcock style.

The formal construction of Marnie as heroine is complex, for narratively she functions both as subject (the protagonist) and as object (the legendary cool

blonde). Furthermore, in either capacity she also alternates between femme fatale and particularly vulnerable ingénue. As the former, Marnie is a cunning thief, unencumbered by emotional involvements; as the latter, she is the inexplicably troubled young woman who cannot understand her own compulsions, nor trace her own past. Both types of gendered typage coexist in the female lead of *Marnie*, and yet, overall each mode is given differentiated treatment, such that Marnie as a character is at times formally coded as dangerous and mysterious in her attractiveness and at others as sympathetic and softly appealing.

In keeping with this complexity, Marnie's appearances on-screen—as well, tellingly, as the times she remains offscreen— are linked to the film's stylistic presentation of narrative and "atmospheric" elements of suspense. *Marnie* as a whole is nicely illustrative of a stylistic motif found throughout Hitchcock's oeuvre: the use of montage to pointedly—almost over-deliberately—convey information, chiefly through use of a point-of-view insert shots of a given object (or specific space/place). Often this object is connected to a character's train of thought by the inclusion of such an insert preceded by a shot indicating an actor's eye-line: the montage creates the illusion of the character gazing at a given object, thus drawing the viewer's attention to this detail. Marnie is often caught up in this montage network of gazes, objects, and focused attention, and I would argue that the variations of this filmic relay occur around and in regards to Marnie preponderantly, and in correspondence—though not always clearly definable—with the fluctuating positions she occupies within the narrative. Ultimately, though the playing out (through compulsion: thefts, assumed identities, avoidance of men) and uncovering of Marnie's pathology drives the story and defines the eponymous character, Marnie herself is placed within the film moreso as object than subject. This is to say, Marnie, as character and as a body on film, is generally acted upon, commented on, and positioned, within mise-en-scene and patterns of editing, as a passive rather than active party: as an object.

Discussing the female body on film as an object is, of course, entering into fraught territory. Laura Mulvey's enormously influential article "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1975) adopts a psychoanalytical model to account for dominant filmic codes in which the male character—and by extension the male viewer—is entitled to gaze at the female character with mastery, a privilege not granted to the objectified female and her spectatorial counterpart, who is excluded from anything but a masochist relationship to cinematic pleasures. Mulvey's polemic established a persuasive account of patriarchal norms in representation, but fails to acknowledge that, quite simply, women can and do experience pleasure at the movies, and that even when formally objectified, female characters may contain an affective potency that cannot be underestimated.

It must be noted that such qualifications of—and outright disagreement with—Mulvey's article have been wellvoiced by feminist critics and even Mulvey herself: current feminist discourse is not much interested in insular, hothouse psychoanalytical critique, and has eschewed the tendency of judging the merits of a given representation in binary terms (i.e. "good" or "bad" portrayals of women). [1] Such a departure from earlier models of feminist evaluation (important in their time) makes for a freer—and more sensible—approach to the study of filmic form and style, which otherwise is irrationally hindered by an imposed negative or positive value which would suggest that certain formal and stylistic choices are inherently reactionary or progressive (and, by extension, reactionary or progressive by specific, time-and-context-bound criteria). My investigation here of how the female lead in *Marnie* functions as an object, therefore, is not bound up in the negative valence that might be attributed to such observations; rather, I am interested in how Marnie is constructed on film and through filmic techniques, and how such construction adds to a complex characterization.

This complexity I do not take up in terms of psychological "depth" (a matter which is arguable, and has been debated, in relation to the overt and some say naïve treatment of psychoanalysis the narrative employs) [2], but as a suggestive and varied approach to characterization through film style. *Marnie* underwent critical complaint at its release (from Andrew Sarris, for one, and especially from many reviewers in England, nostalgic for Hitchcock's British period) for being, among other things, not enough of a thriller and too much of a psychodrama. [3] But *Marnie* certainly finds its place within Hitchcock's oeuvre in the film's use of a mystery or crime ultimately revealed as a MacGuffin: conventional tantalizing devices quite beside the point except in the crucial establishing of suspense and an atmosphere sinister or unsettling. The thefts committed by Marnie, her changes of identity, the threat of being exposed by Mr. Strutt and other ex-employers—even the details and convincingness (or lack thereof) of her psyche, its pathology, and her "treatment" under husband/amateur therapist Mark (Sean Connery)—all ultimately fall under the aegis of MacGuffin. These

details are not crucial in themselves, but are the kind of detail that contribute to the driving force of the film (like "realism" or continuity, issues that Hitchcock himself often insisted were not important if the movie is succeeding in drawing the viewer in).

In the case of *Marnie*, the female lead is constructed as the embodiment of an enigma, an enigma that constantly piques the interest of the characters who revolve around her. As such, the film's workings focus on Marnie's primary relationships (with Mark, and with her mother—which includes the traces of Marnie's mysterious past) and the secondary relationships that unfurl from these focal points (including Strutt, Lil Mainwaring, the man who recognizes her at the racetrack, the little girl Jessie). The suspense of the film certainly is in uncovering the mystery of Marnie, but moreso in watching the unfolding dynamics around Marnie as the fascinating centre, as the object around which curiosity and suspense revolve. Marnie participates as protagonist in this drama, and yet, as the centre, she is rather passive, really quite helpless and less involved, less interested in her cause than those around her. Thus, the character is treated throughout the film primarily as an object of intrigue.

My discussion of *Marnie*, then, is one that considers narrative and characterization as being integral to a formal analysis of style. If I see the film as being principally "about" the engagement and intrigue produced over Marnie's character, rather than, say, a serious treatment of a psychoanalytical case-study, or a crime thriller, this is not because the story or narrative alone produces this effect. To state the obvious: the script, taken in itself, could have privileged very different elements, altering the mood, altering what gets emphasized; likewise for the same script treated differently in production and post-production. As much as this point seems evident, it is worth making in order to demonstrate how it also works the other way, serving to reveal the holistic nature of film style: though formal elements may be separated from content and studied as such, style must be more of a merging of the two. Particularly in the case of Hitchcock, a director so motivated in telling a story with the most effective means possible, elements of the overall story become heightened and downplayed by his stylistic interventions in various ways that the screenplay alone would not reveal. [4]

Certainly Hitchcock, insistent on the nature of film as a visual medium, occupied himself with the craft of developing such elements through showing rather than telling. All of this is to establish my interest in the film's treatment of Marnie and the amount of showing that goes on around the development of her character and its function as intriguing object. The telling has a part to play in this—I will detail the opening sequences of Marnie, in which discussions around this mysterious female figure are key to her introduction—but Hitchcock would seem to be less invested in the affect produced by this aspect of the story. Thus, the repressed trauma Marnie had suffered as a child may not seem commensurate with her symptoms, or, to take it further, the entire psychoanalytical framework attached to Marnie's character, as some have scoffed, may seem just plain silly— and yet, the film's focus on showing us a stylized approximation of trauma and the return of the repressed would seem to be the affective core of the piece, with the details of Marnie's past and psychic journey just a way of getting us there for the show, as it were. Defenders and detractors of the film have both applied themselves to explaining the meaning of Marnie's episodes—either to justify or bemoan devices such as the red suffusion flashes or the patently artificial backdrops and rear projection. While the interpretation of these devices (as Expressionist, as an artful deployment of artifice, as distanciation, as encouraging subjective identification, or what have you) often blooms into the kind of purple over-reading that Hitchcock's apparent fascination with unattainable women receives, this tendency does point up the manner in which interpretation is inextricable from discussions of style.

This point warrants a somewhat lengthy detour: I have stated that I do not want to engage in the kind of interpretative overreaching that often characterises examinations of Hitchcock films, and any auteurist study, the kind that contorts itself to find (hopefully compelling and convincing) reasons for any given stylistic motif, a framework of justification for whatever the film, or the oeuvre, in question might contain. But I do not attempt to eschew interpretation altogether. To comment on the use of, say, red flashes in the film these flashes must be taken as something, must be given some kind of interpretive assessment. The use of rear projection is a formal device and recognizable as such, but pointing out its use falls short of providing a meaningful discussion of style. It means more if one is informed as to how common or rare the practise was at the time of the film's production— and in the case of *Marnie*, rear projection was beginning to look dated, at least according to reviewers' complaints on the issue. But to take up these complaints and defend rear projection and fake-looking backdrops as part of

Hitchcock's evolving style is to engage in interpretation. Either one judges these devices as looking realistically convincing enough to be in line with the tradition of Hollywood moviemaking of which Hitchcock was a part or one interprets them as looking sufficiently fake to be surely intentionally artful. One might argue that Hitchcock was simply using production methods with which he was most comfortable, not liking to shoot on location, and yet surely this claim, true as it may be, misses something in the overall effect of *Marnie*, with its undeniably strange blend of Hollywood realism, acidic-hued brittleness, and dream-quality hysteria. One cannot really do justice to the Hitchcock style without acknowledging the affect formal devices—in specific, notable instances and in overall, cumulative power—have on the viewer, as subjective as these affects necessarily are. The critic is not immune to such impressions, and it would not serve him or her to be immune: the critic's job is to refine such impressions and examine them with refined rigor. [5]

Ultimately, to me, the formal treatment of the titular character in *Marnie* makes for compelling study because the stylistic management of this on-screen body corresponds in a satisfying manner with a more impressionistic, interpretative reading of the film. For one, the overall construction of Marnie as a curiously contained, unreachable, elusive character—intriguing but somehow something short of compelling, too brittle, too unfathomable, yet also too commonplace to excite more than an intellectual curiosity—is a construction that nicely, microcosmically, mirrors my impression of the film as a whole. That is, I would describe *Marnie*, the film, just as I described Marnie, the character, above. And in having a mitigated response to the film, in finding it really very interesting but less than wholly successful, I am reluctant to apply a totalising interpretative vision to the film, and both suspicious of and dissatisfied with others' efforts to do so. Alongside other objections, I think that this approach diminishes what is so very interesting about *Marnie*, which is that one can hardly account for the strangeness of it: its combination of stylistic excellence and contextual naïveté, the artifice that is obviously intentional and yet which does not go far enough, the hysteria that references the best of classic "women's film" melodrama while foreshadowing the cheesy, overwrought sensibility of the TV-movie-of-the-week. Quite possibly *Marnie*—like the unenthusiastically received films that followed, *Torn Curtain* (1966), *Topaz* (1969), *Family Plot* (1978)—is indicative of Hitchcock operating within changing cinematic conventions and styles and being simply, stubbornly or cluelessly, old-fashioned (whereas *Frenzy* (1972) makes use of a gritty naturalism in vogue at the time). Such a possibility need not be fatal, but can be acknowledged without either dismissing the film as hopelessly dated or recouping it by claiming it as an artefact of genius—in which everything is intentional, brilliant, and never bound by history or context.

Finally, I am intrigued with how the formal patterns around Marnie's construction as female character invoke certain broader thematic experiences of gender difference and its representation. I do not need the film to be coherent or unified around such themes (and it is not), nor do I ascribe feminist—or misogynistic—intention to the filmmakers, nor rely upon encoded psychoanalytical/ideological "truths" to be channelled through the text. [6] Rather, I find enticing correspondences between what is concretely present on a formal level and what these devices suggest when expanding outward from straight formal analysis into the realm of interpretation.

***

The character of Marnie is introduced in a manner befitting a femme fatale, with a sense of mystery and vaguely menacing purpose. The film begins with a tight shot of a (perhaps seductively) plump and dimpled yellow handbag tucked under the arm of a well-suited-in-tweeds lady. The shot expands as the woman, whom we see from the back carrying, with her other arm, a suitcase, walks steadily, in high-heeled pumps, down a train platform. She then stops and, with a graceful little twist of the ankle, sets down her suitcase and gazes down the empty tracks. The viewer is given opportunity to contemplate this fetching figure with the flatteringly cut dress suit, as the camera follows the receding woman at an ever-slower tracking pace, adjusting to allow the figure to get ahead, until the camera becomes static, allowing her to ultimately walk into long shot during a long take of thirty seconds (not long for a long take, but it feels like one, letting this single action unfold in real time). We are soon to find that our attention has been directed at the handbag for reasons of narrative foreshadowing: a few sequences later the woman—still only viewed from the back and as body parts, particularly as agile hands—will dump from the handbag and into a suitcase large bundles of cash. The woman is to remain faceless for the first six and a half minutes of the film (following the credit sequence).

The interest in Marnie as a character—and additionally as a compelling femme fatale figure—is further created

around the idea of her in absence. After her halt on the train platform, a rather jarring straight cut takes us to a strikingly direct medium close-up of a put out-looking middle-aged man with glasses declaring, "Robbed!" He is almost looking into the camera, and seems to be addressing us. He then changes his eye-line, looking and gesturing left, adding "Cleaned out!" Cut and an insert of a safe—open, with the top shelf clearly emptied—appears, as if to indicate just-so-there-can-be-no-mistake. Cut back to Strutt, the strenuously complaining man, who goes on to say that $9,967 is missing, "And that girl did it. Marion Holland." We do not know who this Marion is, but Strutt goes on to describe her (in such detail—and as if he is describing a show horse, "good teeth"—that the policemen interviewing him and his dubious-looking secretary share a smirk at his expense). She sounds potentially like the mystery lady with the handbag. Strutt is then joined by Sean Connery's character Mark Rutland in confirming the comeliness of this "Marion," and while Strutt huffs about her having seemed so "nice, so efficient, so…" Mark offers wryly, "resourceful?" while the camera moves to hold him in a medium one-shot that lingers on his ironic, amused expression. He seems to be gazing off at something in the distance, at which point a straight cut takes us back to the tight shot of the handbag under the arm, though this time the setting is different. In the abstracted space created by cinema, Mark's gaze seems to be literally traveling toward this mystery lady and the proof of her crime, as a sort of literalization of the movement of his mental attention. As viewers, our attention had been drawn to the woman and her bag once before, and now again—with the addition of new information and the shared interest of other characters in this spectacle of lady and handbag—to heighten our suspense.

Again we are given the spectacle of the handbag/woman sashaying away from us, this time down a hotel hallway, tracked by a slowly moving camera that allows the receding figure to gain on it into several seconds of a full body shot in depth, before she turns the corner (just as Hitchcock emerges from a door into the hallway to put in his cameo). She is followed by a bellboy carrying large wrapped packages. The straight cut that immediately follows her turning the corner finds us in a generic-looking hotel room set in neutral colours, and we see the packages, evidently women's apparel wrapped in tissue and department store boxes, strewn about. Unpacking these boxes is the dark-haired figure, still with her back towards us but now in a bronze-patterned silk robe to the knees, much more opulent and exotic than the prim, practical robes we will later see Marnie wearing: here, with her raven tresses, as the attractive thief "Marion Holland," she functions in definitive femme fatale mode. [7]

The woman is transferring new clothing and accessories into a shell-pink suitcase, pearly and fresh beside the dark suitcase (the one she was carrying on the train platform) that receives cast-away, crumpled attire: the woman throws a lacy bra and slip (de rigueur vamp apparel) into the old suitcase, a gesture pointedly recorded by a crane shot which has come in over her back and moved in to a closer shot of the suitcases, giving us a good view of the cast-off items, as well as the careful way the new, pristine and lady-like articles (satin boudoir slippers and white gloves) are being arranged. All of this information signalling the process of changing personas (which is considerable—the boxes, the suitcases, the separated piles of personal effects) is handled with great economy. It is easy to miss the specific clues and simply notice that a woman is packing, but the camera and editing make sure that this impression of the scene is there to be had. At this point, not-yet-Marnie's body has functioned as yet another object, another clue within these introductory sequences, signifying in the details. The dark hair is now out of frame, and the delicate hands and refined coral-hued manicure now become the representative image of this woman, just as the thrown-aside brighter, flashier clothes are replaced by the subdued greys and creams of the new items.

The next cut follows along the same plane of action, a rapid readjustment from the close medium shot of the suitcases to the yellow handbag, also on the bed in front of the suitcases. The woman's hands smoothly open the purse, remove some essentials (comb, wallet, makeup compact) and then swiftly dump the remaining contents of the purse into the new suitcase, these contents being piles and piles of cash. The camera stays quite tight on these actions, following the flow of her arm movements. There is a fluidity and intimacy to all of this, in the closeness of the camera to the action, and its ease of movement, and also in the woman's smooth gestures: she obviously knows what she is doing, and has done it before, probably several times. This impression continues with the next shot, which is a close-up of the wallet, from which she removes a Social Security card, then picks up the golden face-powder compact, opens it and unhinges the mirror with a nail file to reveal a secret compartment, and sorts through a number of such cards, all with different names. She then replaces the old Marion Holland alias with a new one, Margaret Edgar, and slips it into the plastic folder in the wallet, in front of an "In event of an accident card" (a bit of

sly Hitchcock humour). The camera's holding on these methodical actions (this last sequence being all one shot of 26 seconds) is a very Hitchcockian device, taking us visually through the details rather than offering verbal exposition, and allowing for a focus on the intimate materiality of the diegetic world as experienced by the characters and thus by the viewer, rather than relying on the abstracted actions we only hear about, or infer.

From the minutiae of this task of identity-changing, the film moves into a dramatic revelation. As Bernard Herrmann's score suddenly soars with harps and violins, a dissolve (a dreamy contrast to the clean straight cuts we've had so far, and which are the norm of the film) transports us to a close up of a white ceramic sink in which the black hair is being washed. Artistic licence has black hair dye come off like spilled ink into the water (as it never would: only several rounds of bleaching would strip the hair of that dark stain) and voila!—cut to a slight low angle view (with the camera where the mirror should be) of a soggy mane poised above the sink and, with a toss of the head, the lovely face of our (now blonde) mystery lady is finally revealed!

The face we see is recognizably the shining face of an ingénue, not femme fatale. She looks like the Marnie we will come to know, but a glorified version, with sparkling eyes (Tippi Hedren's eyelashes, both real and fake, are very intricately mascara-ed, giving her particularly bright doll-like eyes), clean smooth peachy-white skin, and a refined smile of tasteful abandon: this is the carefree face of Marnie that we will only see in the forthcoming Forio-riding scenes, the ones with much maligned back-projection. Otherwise, Marnie looks composed, reserved, and often tense. She seldom actually looks distraught; even during her panic attacks she is presented as tight with shock. She only really comes undone in the final scenes, from the killing of her beloved horse Forio through to the confrontation of her mother and her past—at which time her hair is partially down rather than pulled into a complicated up-do, and through her distress she becomes bedraggled and dewy, like a child woken from a nightmare. Marnie is constructed as an elegantly withholding woman of refinement (seemingly classless, or classy—rather than actually high-class, as is the patrician Lil Mainwaring, or Grace Kelly's Hitchcock characters). In her pathologies, she becomes vulnerable and pitiable in a childlike manner; she never, except possibly when riding Forio, confronts her demons as a woman, nor expresses herself as a womanly sexual being. She is, then, quite convincingly "frigid." Much of this has to do with her smart sleek coifs and clean, business-like makeup, and especially her prim costuming: unflashy, practical suits and blouses; the robe she wears on the honeymoon cruise, which certainly sends a message of untouchableness to her unwanted new husband, as the neckline nearly comes up to her chin; the ice-white party gown, covering everything but her neck. But the sense of containment within Marnie is also a result of the containment around Marnie, and this is due to the placement of Marnie through montage as an object of contemplation.

After revealing her face, the film still employs the scheming, active femme fatale Marnie: the next scene returns to the previous stylistic motif of following her from behind; we are taken through her process of stashing the old suitcase in a locker, and then led, through Marnie's gaze off-screen, matched with an insert of a floor grill, to take careful notice of her covert toss down the grate of the yellow (like the money-filled handbag she has disposed of) locker key. But following this we get a glimpse of the leading lady Marnie in what is perhaps her "real" life, as she confidently checks into a cozy country bed-and-breakfast and, with relaxed hair and sporty outfit, takes her dearly loved horse for a ride. Here, Marnie's movements are monitored by the male stable hands—before cutting to a shot of Marnie and Forio galloping off in the distance, a shot of the unnamed (and unimportant as a character) stable hand watching Marnie intently as she rides off is held just long enough to strike one as uncomfortably or surprisingly over-long. This shot is easily forgotten when a cut later we are privileged to his view, and another quick cut finds Marnie in medium shot, astride a mechanical horse (that is out of the shot) and glowing with the pleasure of the ride. This shot not only contains the rather obvious (but not as strikingly fake as many of the film's supporters and detractors will declare) back projection, but also curiously has Marnie wearing an altogether different sweater than the one she had on previously. Whether due to continuity error or an almost avant-garde way of suggesting different days spent by Marnie at this activity, this scene does create a subtly jarring sense of dislocation or dream—an attempt by Marnie to escape reality? Or at least a sign that the film, stylistically, is not beholden to verisimilitude (especially as it is directly followed by the taxi's approach to Marnie's mothers house, with the dramatic painted backdrop of an imposing ship). And, retrospectively, the stable hand's gaze signals the kind of world that Marnie finds herself trapped in, a world of probing gazes in which, as criminal and psychically-scarred woman, she must navigate a safe, self-sufficient path.

Space does not permit me, here, to analyse the film as a whole with such detail. But I choose the opening sequences because they nicely set up the manner in which Marnie tends to function throughout the film. She is introduced as a captivating, attractive specimen, the object around which much intrigue revolves. She is at this time given the status of protagonist, a status that takes over as the blonde leading lady takes over from the darklady femme fatale. The narration remains almost exclusively (but not strictly so) with Marnie throughout the film, following her through her travels to her mother's, to Forio's stable, to her interview and working days at Rutland's, and in her encounters with Mark and his family. Likewise, after the opening sequence with Strutt, the narrative unfolding is fairly restricted to Marnie's experience and knowledge of events, though within this her own past, her thoughts and her secrets are not disclosed to the viewer until they are made known to another character, and even close-up and lingering shots of her face do not reveal much before it is explicitly stated— Marnie's facial expressions are not readily readable, and evidence points to Hitchcock's direction as largely responsible for Tippi Hedren's composed, inscrutable bearing here. Certainly Marnie's triggered phobias and panic attacks are treated with a stylized, expressive subjectivity. Considering the foregrounding of Marnie as protagonist, she is given few point-of-view shots, or at least her POV shots are diminished in emphasis among the other characters' POV shots (even incidental, non-recurring characters such as the stable hand and, pronouncedly, the shady, pestering man at the racetrack)—POV shots that take Marnie as their object.

Marnie's optical POV is utilised pointedly for the montage gaze-floor-grate-and-dropped-key referred to above. It is also in play in the early scene at her mother's house, an instance wherein Marnie's emotions—her discomfort with her mother and attempts to please her, her rather absurd jealousy of the little neighbour girl—register as repressed but acute. And the lurid close-ups of Mark's eyes as he forces himself upon her are expressively sinister Marnie points-of-view. But generally, POV shots are given to the characters that surround Marnie, and are directed at her. A number of scenes are organized around a given character or characters taking note of Marnie, their curiosity specifically piqued by her. Thus, a character newly introduced or coming into a scene midway are often granted POV shots of Marnie, such that Marnie's movements are tracked by others even when the scene "should" be Marnie's, that is, scenes that exist to further the information on or characterization of her, or the plot in which she is the protagonist. The racetrack scene, for example, actually begins, after a few establishing shots, with a medium close-up of a stranger, then cuts to a shot of Marnie and Mark in the distance, framed from the perspective of the stranger's spy-hole (a rolled up newspaper). When Marnie interviews at Rutland & Co. she is first spied on by an intrusive-feeling crane shot (in the famous Hitchcockian "voyeuristic" camera style) which backs up only to have Mark, upon his entrance, insistently follow Marnie with his gaze, with an intimidating high-angle among others, and then Lil, upon her entrance, to also monitor Marnie's presence with interest. Marnie POV shots are related to her criminal scheming: though watched by others on this, her first day in the office, her attention is captured by Mr. Ward's checking, in a locked drawer, on the combination of the safe. This is shown through an exaggerated POV shot, in that the action with the key and the drawer are presented in a close-up, as though Marnie's attention could allow her gaze to zoom in on the details. And in the subsequent scene, on another day at the office, the camera circles Marnie in a dramatic, bird-of-prey crane shot until it arrives at her face and her own gaze, which a straight cut reveals as a POV shot of the receptionist at the open safe, cut back to Marnie at which point the camera careens back, behind her, to reveal Mark watching her watching the safe. Marnie's every move, it would seem, is monitored, and even her own perspective, her own POV shots, are controlled, as it were, by a relay of gazes that fix her as the object. Caught in this containing relay of gazes, Marnie is cast as the intriguing but inscrutable object—the fascinating, unattainable, unforgettable Hitchcock blonde.

Jodi Ramer wrote on Post-Feminism and Boredom in Synoptique 4.

---

1 Feminist critics such as Miriam Hansen, Patrice Petro, Anne Friedberg and Giuliana Bruno are interested in the advent and development of cinema and cinema-going as commensurate with the experience of urban modernity. In both, women are and have been active participants in inevitably gendered, but not necessarily limiting, ways. The experience of popular culture—its pleasures as well as its disorientating and alienating effects—is central to this revisioning of the last century, which sees the so-called postmodern as just a continuation, and in many ways a replaying, of early twentieth century modernity

2 Robin Wood takes on such critiques in order

to defend *Marnie* as an accomplished and deliberately artful/artificial film; they can also be found in both of Spoto's studies on Hitchcock, though he aligns himself with Robin Wood's take in *The Art Of Alfred Hitchcock*, and then sides with the film's detractors when he writes his Hitchcock biography. A recent study of *Marnie*'s production history by Tony Lee Moral also addresses these criticisms.

3 See endnote above.

4 Hitchcock's intentions, while usefully telling as a source through which to study the film, are not ultimately at issue, but the signs of storyboarding, direction, mise-en-scene, art direction, set and costume design, and editing that are traceable in a given film and more widely across an oeuvre, add up to that thing called style. In all of these elements Hitchcock, with his attention to detail and concern with artistic control, was instrumental. His involvement extended to the development of a script in pre-production, often an adaptation from a novel, as in the case of *Marnie*, or from another source. Much has been made of the reoccurring thematic and narrative motifs in Hitchcock's movies; whatever the causality or degree of intent that may be attributed to these patterns, their presence indicates that the Hitchcock style is undeniably imbricated with aspects of story, narrative and characterization.

5 Spoto falls into a critical sandtrap when, after learning through research for his biography on Hitchcock that the director gave up on *Marnie* after suffering romantic rejection from Tippi Hedren, he denounces his former position as defender of the film's unnaturalness as expressive of the title character's subjectivity and writes, "But the real reason was simpler and sadder, and those reviewers who were critical, it should be admitted, were right: these moments in Marnie are not emotionally disturbing, they are simply visually jarring; they mark not a deliberate use of unconventional means, but are simply unpleasant examples of the director's cavalier disinterest in the final product" (476). This despite a production history and interviews by the director and his crew that express Hitchcock's desire to make a stylised, perverse and unconventional film from a novel which is more a standard psychological thriller; this despite a pronounced deliberateness accorded by Spoto—and everyone else —to Hitchcock's other films, which share with *Marnie* common stylistic motifs. But most problematic is Spoto's naïve assumption that "facts" turned up in research delimit the "right" approach to a film text. Again, the film itself cannot be ignored, and a text's impressions on the viewer must be reckoned with.

6 In his book on the making and reception of *Marnie*, Tony Lee Moral insists upon all of this, without examination, and it is annoying, to say the least.

7 But still within the modest reserve typical of the Hitchcock blonde: unlike another Marion, Marion Crane of *Psycho* (1960), who though blonde, is not really a Hitchcock blonde, not with her extreme bras and open sexuality. The formal use of Janet Leigh, including her style of dress, is pointedly different, with much more focus on the body than the rather spiritualised, clean-face-and-superb-clothing treatment the cool blondes receive. This dichotomy is somewhat merged but tellingly maintained in *Vertigo* (1958), wherein Kim Novak plays both Madeline, the sublime "face" type, and Judy, the lower-class "body" type.

Bibliography

Alfred Hitchcock Interviews. Ed. Sidney Gottlieb. Jackson: Mississippi UP, 2003.

Bellour, Raymond. "To Enunciate (on MARNIE)." *The Analysis of Film*. Ed. Constance Penley. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2000. p. 217-237.

Durgnat, Raymond. *The Strange Case of Alfred Hitchcock, or, The Plain Man's Hitchcock*. London: Faber and Faber, 1974.

Modleski, Tania. *The Women Who Knew Too Much: Hitchcock and Feminist Theory*. New York: Routledge, 1988.

Moral, Tony Lee. *Hitchcock and the Making of Marnie*. Oxford: The Scarecrow Press, 2002.

Smith, Susan. *Hitchcock: Suspense, Humour and Tone*. London: BFI, 2000.

Spoto, Donald. *The Art of Alfred Hitchcock*. New York: Doubleday and Company, 1976.

_____. *The Dark Side of Genius*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1983.

Truffaut, Francois. *Hitchcock*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1967.

Wood, Robin. *Hitchcock's Films Revisited*. New York: Columbia UP, 1989.