DEUTSCHES FORUM FÜR KUNSTGESCHICHTE/
CENTRE ALLEMAND D'HISTOIRE DE L'ART

PASSAGEN/PASSAGES
BAND 56

Begründet von Thomas W. Gaehtgens
Herausgegeben von Thomas Kirchner

WIEDERHOLUNG. RÉPÉTITION

Wiederkehr, Variation und Übersetzung in der Kunst

Herausgegeben von
Andreas Beyer, Étienne Jollet und Markus Rath

DEUTSCHER KUNSTVERLAG

Sites/Sights of Repetition in Hitchcock's *Vertigo*

Maria H. Loh

Alfred Hitchcock's *Vertigo* tells the story of a policeman, Scottie Ferguson (Jimmy Stewart) who discovers that he suffers from a fear of heights during a chase scene at the start of the film. His condition leads to the accidental death of his partner. The trauma leads to his retirement, and in an early scene from the film we see him loitering at the apartment of his friend Midge Wood (Barbara Bel Geddes) where he tells her that a college acquaintance named Gavin Elster (Tom Helmore) has contacted him. The next day he meets with Elster in his office, where Scottie is asked to follow Elster's wife Madeleine (Kim Novak). Elster is afraid that Madeleine is haunted by the ghost of her grandmother, Carlotta Valdes, who had committed suicide at the same age. Enchanted by her beauty, Scottie trails Madeleine through the city until eventually one day she jumps into the San Francisco Bay. He saves her, brings her back to his apartment, and then she slips out while he is on the phone with Elster. The next day she returns to Scottie's apartment to apologize, they go for a walk in the redwood forest, she confesses to him that she is afraid of dying, Scottie declares his love to her and promises to solve the mystery of her haunting. Believing to have identified the place markers in Madeleine's recurrent dream, Scottie then brings her to an old Spanish mission in an attempt to exorcise her from the past. She confesses her love to him, but suddenly bolts into the nearby church and up the bell tower, Scottie is unable to follow because of his vertigo and witnesses Madeleine fall to her death. An inquest absolves Scottie of any wrong doing, but shortly afterward, he has a nervous breakdown (rendered in John Ferren's famous animated dream sequence). In the second half of the film Scottie encounters a young woman named Judy (also played by Kim Novak), who resembles Madeleine. He courts her and then slowly begins to transform her into his image of Madeleine despite her protests. In the final act of the film, Scottie actualizes his dream, but this is the beginning of a darker dénouement that brings him back, in the tragic finale, to the bell tower at San Juan Bautista.

Focusing on three props that appear in *Vertigo* – the "double happiness" gate at Scottie's apartment, the hummingbird brooch on Madeleine's grey suit, and the portrait of *Carlotta Valdes* – this essay will consider the staging of repetition in its relation to lovesickness, temporality, and multiplicity in Hitchcock's masterpiece. The close consideration of each object demonstrates the expansive potential that lies in the detail and in the repetition of the detail, an on-screen instance that pushes and pulls *Vertigo* between the diegetic narrative within the film and the extradiegetic histories that linger beyond the cinematic surface of the image. The analysis will

explore these visual puns embedded within ⸱ uncanny architectural ornament, mythopoetic avian iconographies, and multiple all-but-forgotten microhistories as a means to move beyond extant interpretations of the polyvalent Madeleine/Judy/Novak construction.[1]

Double Happiness

In his 1919 essay on "The Uncanny", Sigmund Freud argued that unintended repetition possesses the power to transform "what would otherwise seem quite harmless into something uncanny"; unintended repetition "forces us to entertain the idea of the fateful and the inescapable".[2] Freud then continued in a well-known passage with the etymological dissection of *das Unheimliche* and its origin in the German word for "homely" (*heimlich*). Evoking the phrase *ein unheimliches Haus*, Freud concluded that "the acme of the uncanny" has to do with "death, dead bodies, revenants, spirits and ghosts".[3]

There are three scenes of surveillance in the first half of *Vertigo*. In the first sequence Scottie follows Mrs Elster in her green car from her luxury apartment building to the Podesta Baldocchi flowershop where she orders a bouquet, to the cemetery where Carlotta Valdes is buried, to the picture gallery where Scottie watches Madeleine gazing upon the portrait of Carlotta with the emblematic bouquet, and finally to the McKittrick Hotel where he mysteriously loses her trail. When he returns to the Elster residence, he finds Madeleine's green car exactly as he had first seen it in the morning. The other details also seem to twist into a knot like Madeleine's bun: the pink roses and forget-me-nots that move from the flower shop, into the portrait, and then onto Madeleine's dashboard in the last shot. The towering, grey façade of the house that used to be Carlotta's home echoes back to her tombstone at Mission Dolores. The scene of pursuit is then repeated in a second sequence, which begins with Madeleine's trance before Carlotta's portrait (again) and ends with Madeleine's suicide attempt and Scottie's heroic rescue attempt. If the first instance of pursuit ended in failure and confusion, the second time around, it could be argued, Scottie redeems himself as Madeleine's saviour.

The third repetition of Scottie's pursuit of Madeleine occurs the next day and reads as a case study of the uncanny. It begins with Scottie in his white car and brown suit in front of the Elster residence (again) from where he trails Madeleine's green car through the twisting, winding, curving streets in a confused, seemingly aimless route. Towards the end of the scene, Scottie suddenly realizes that he has encircled the city and returned in an ever-tightening spiral and followed Madeleine back to his own apartment (plate VIII). As Scottie approaches her, we see that Madeleine has slipped a note into his mail slot. He takes it, reads it, and responds:

Scottie:	I hope we will, too.
Madeleine:	What?
Scottie:	Meet again, sometime.
Madeleine:	We have.

The erotic tension between the two is displaced within this brief conversation into a complex temporal embrace where past, present, and future tenses interpenetrate each other. The first line – *I hope we will, too* – signals a future event that is (actually) in the process of taking place: Scottie's enunciation coincides with their meeting again. The single interrogative word that makes up the second line – *What?* – causes Scottie to repeat the words that Madeleine is likely to have written (past tense) in her note – that they *meet again*, which opens the third line. The word *again*, however, suggests the repetition of their reunion at an unspecified *sometime* in a future yet to come. The past tense that structures the final reply – *We have* – is uttered in a present tense that overflows with the possibility of a future *sometime* that has now just transpired, circling back to the poly-temporality already there in the first line. *I hope we will too*.

It may seem that the discussion has already departed from the theme of repetition and lovesickness and arrived at repetition and temporality, but the point I would like to make is that these categories are more often than not intertwined in affairs of the heart. At the end of the second section in the essay on "The Uncanny", Freud introduces the memorable line that love is a "longing for home"– in other words, "love is homesickness".[4] The specific argument Freud is proposing refers to the male subject's desire in sexual intercourse to return to the mother's womb, the primal "home". On a less clinical level, the adage can also be associated with homesickness as the sting of nostalgia, a longing for that which is irretrievably lost to the past. Beyond Freud's concerns with sexuality, the idea of love as homesickness also articulates the journey towards self-knowledge in which the wandering subject finds him or herself returning to the same sites time and again only to discover that true repetition cannot occur.

In the scene from *Vertigo*, Scottie and Madeleine's multi-temporal lexical embrace unfolds against a minor architectural detail that has escaped the attention of most Hitchcock commentators, that may or may not have been part of the deliberate scheme in Hitchcock's set design, and that may ultimately be an inside joke so internal that only a Hitchcock obsessive would pick up on it.[5] This scene takes place at the site of Scottie's home – the *Heimat* – framed by the repetition, three times in the gate to his house, of 喜喜 (*shuang xî*), the Chinese ideogram for double happiness, hung above the doors of lovers for good fortune. *Shuang xî* is itself composed of an internal repetition of the character 喜 (*xî*), the Chinese verb meaning "to like" or "to love." With this the discussion passes from the semantic minutia of Chinese to German and more specifically onto the consideration of repetition and temporality.

One for Sorrow, Two for Joy

In the *Vertigo* literature, some interpreters have identified the piece of jewellery that Madeleine Elster wears on her grey suit as a magpie on account of the visual pun that is to be made in German with *die Elster*.[6] Magpies feature in all sorts of superstitious lore.[7] One is meant to greet a lone magpie with the salutation "Good morning Mr Magpie, how is your lovely wife today?" in order to avoid bad luck. Magpies are believed to mate for life so a single magpie represents emotional and erotic loss. However, magpies also symbolize joy: "one for sorrow, two for joy" as a popular nursery rhyme begins. Strangely enough, in Chinese, magpies are sometimes called *xî què*, sharing the first character that appears in *shuang xî*. Consequently, two magpies facing each other were said to represent double happiness to bring things back to where we were once more. As tidy as this reading is, I would like to complicate matters and propose an alternative.

The linguistic resemblance and iconographical sympathy here are false starts, what Hitchcock would have called a *MacGuffin*, for the bird depicted in Madeleine's brooch is, in fact, a hummingbird. Like a diamond engagement ring, friendship lockets, and pearl necklaces, hummingbird brooches are common mid-to-late twentieth-century American fashion items. The morphological resemblance between magpies and hummingbirds cannot be denied, but the symbolism of the latter shifts the emphasis from a meditation on repetition and eros to repetition and time. Iconographically, reading the bird as a hummingbird also opens up a more poignant interpretation of the scenes where the prop appears in the film.

Madeleine is seen wearing this pin on two occasions in *Vertigo*: first, when Scottie is following her for the first time at the start of the film. When Scottie spies on her at Podesta Baldocchi's, the pin is clearly visible in Hitchcock's brilliant close-up where Scottie 's point of view is conflated through the reflection of the mirror with the object of his gaze: we see him watching her from behind a mirrored door; her reflection is framed in that space and pinned on the lapel of her grey suit is the hummingbird brooch. The second appearance of the brooch takes place in the scene that concludes the first half of the film, when Scottie takes Madeleine to Mission San Juan Bautista (fig. 1), shortly before he witnesses her leap to her death from the bell tower. The repetition of Madeleine's costume is more significant than one might think, for Scottie effectively sees Madeleine during his first assignment dressed as she will be when she dies. The grey suit marked by the glint of the hummingbird pin demarcates the totality of Judy's first performance as Madeleine; drained of colour and pinned like a butterfly, she is, in this guise, a cipher of death. Significantly enough, when Scottie revives Judy as Madeleine for a second time, the pin will not be recalled, as if to suggest that true repetition is always-already an impossibility. And here repetition and lovesickness and repetition and temporality collapse in upon each other once more.



1 Film still from *Vertigo*, USA 1958, direction: Alfred Hitchcock, TC: 01:09:00

In popular folklore, the hummingbird is a powerful symbol of time. For instance, in pre-Columbian ethno-zoology, it was believed that they hibernated during the dry season and would come back to life when the trees were filled with spring sap.[8] For this reason it also came to be associated with the cyclical path of the sun, with the human soul, with resurrection, and with love and death. Zinacantan men were said to carry dead hummingbirds tied with green ribbons when they visited their mistresses.[9] And finally, because hummingbirds possessed the unique ability to fly forward, backward, and hover in place, they were seen as "an unfolding symbol of the passage of time".[10] Even in new age culture today, the hummingbird is said to teach us "that we can look back on our past" but "that we must not dwell on our past; we need to move forward".[11] One really could not find a better emblem than the hummingbird to summarize the necrophilic eroticism at the heart of Hitchcock's *Vertigo*. And with this we move to the final section on repetition and multiplicity.

Too late. I've got my face on

If the architectural ornament of Scottie's apartment hints at the disturbing impossibility of repeated love and if the pin on Madeleine's suit betrays the difference even in the most studied repetition, the most important prop in *Vertigo* is undoubtedly the portrait of Carlotta Valdes (fig. 2). Portraiture entails by its very nature a doubling of the sitter; it creates through the magic of art one body too much, a body moreover that will outlast the subject from which it was pulled. Within the film there are



2 Film still from *Vertigo*, USA 1958, direction: Alfred Hitchcock, TC: 00:25:51



3 Film still from *Vertigo*, USA 1958, direction: Alfred Hitchcock, TC: 01:21:07

two moments when the portrait itself is doubled – and on both occasions, inanimate representation is challenged by an animate presence. In the first instance, during Scottie's nightmare, the image of Carlotta literally comes to life as portrayed by the actress Joanne Genthon (fig. 3). Scottie dreams that Elster appears before him with Carlotta who wears her tell-tale necklace and the shimmering blue dress from



4 Film still from *Vertigo*, USA 1958, direction: Alfred Hitchcock, TC: 01:05:00

the painting in the museum. In another moment in the film, Scottie's friend Midge paints herself onto the portrait of Carlotta in an attempt to impress him, but instead causes Scottie to slip into a despondent rage and to cancel their plans to go out to the cinema (fig. 4).

The portrait of Midge-as-Carlotta was painted by Henry Bumstead, the art director for the film, and was sold allegedly at auction years ago at the Collector's Bookshop in Hollywood. Hitchcock's ingenious framing underlines the stark difference that lies in repetition.[12] Herbert Coleman, associate producer of *Vertigo*, remarked that Carlotta's portrait caused us "more trouble than any other prop in the whole picture". A disagreement occurred between Coleman and Hitchcock as to where to have the painting done. Hitchcock wanted to have it painted in England, but Coleman wanted to send it to Rome in order "to put an aristocratic face on the woman".[13] Instructions were sent to Luigi Zaccardi in the Paramount offices in Rome to find a capable artist to render Carlotta's portrait "in the Italian style", although the names of other painters ranging from Ingres, Corot, Courbet and Couture were also mentioned in the correspondence.[14] According to various sources, the abstract painter, Manlio Sarra, was engaged for the task although studio records and eye-witness accounts seem to be at odds with each other, and eye-witness accounts often ended up contradicting each other as well, producing a multiplicity of ersatz Carlotta portraits. In the end, the Italian painting was rejected because, as Coleman recalled, it looked as if "they'd hired someone for fifteen cents I think to do the painting" and the one that was sent back from England was "almost as bad".[15]

There are, however, more than just these ghosts haunting Carlotta's portrait. It is well known that Vera Miles had been cast originally for the role of Madeleine. Miles had starred as the wife of the wrongly accused protagonist in Hitchcock's thriller *The Wrong Man* (1956). As Royal S. Brown noted, Miles' character descended, "by the end of the film, into a state of psychotic depression that paves the way for the death-obsessed madness of Madeleine".[16] The elegant star was being groomed by Hitchcock to be his new Grace Kelly after his favourite blonde had married Prince Rainier III of Monaco in April 1956 and retired from acting. By the autumn of that same year, Miles had completed makeup and hairstyle tests for *Vertigo*.

A black and white test photo of Miles, bearing the date "12.7.56", was taken, and the director and his protégé were promoted soon after on the cover of *Parade*, the *Chicago Sunday Times* weekend magazine, on 13 January 1957, with the caption "Alfred Hitchcock and his new find". Photographed on a sunny day, Hitchcock and Miles are shown on the front page: Hitchcock in a black suit and tie on the right; the actress on the left dressed in the same white blouse and light grey suit that she wore in the studio photos from the month before (the test and publicity shots were probably produced in the same moment).[17] By February 1957, Edith Head had finished designing the remaining costumes for Madeleine's character. Hitchcock then fell ill, was in hospital for a gall bladder operation, and then Miles became pregnant and had to drop out of the project to Hitchcock's great dismay (although he would cast her in 1960 as Lila Crane, the devoted young sister in *Psycho*).

In the period between the final months of 1956 and the beginning of 1957, a portrait of Miles as Carlotta had been commissioned (this painting hung in the office of Robert Harris and James Katz while they were restoring the film in the 1990s, but it was returned shortly afterward to the archives at Paramount Studios, who owned Hitchcock's film).[18] Strangely enough, Coleman also recounted a peculiar story about an unnamed Hollywood painter who did lots of studio work in the late 1960s and who had been commissioned to do another version of the painting. The artist asked to meet Miles, suggesting the photographs supplied by the studio were inadequate, but then, in a strange case of life imitating art, it turned out that he was in love with the actress.[19] It is uncertain what happened to the painting that resulted (if indeed anything was ever produced) and, as mentioned before, various accounts and studio documents contradict the authorship and provenance of the multiple portraits of Carlotta that were in circulation in the late 50s. The only consensus among *Vertigo* scholars is that John Ferren (who was also responsible for illustrating Scottie's psychedelic nightmare sequence) made the final painting that was used in the film, although knowledge of the subsequent whereabouts of that canvas was eventually lost in time.

Beyond the physical paintings, there was also the portrait as it was described in Pierre Boileu and Thomas Narcejac's 1954 novel *D'Entre les morts* on which the screenplay for *Vertigo* was based. Significantly enough, the portrait of the dead grandmother, named Pauline Lagerac in the novel, was a self-portrait. This detail was not developed in the film, but it brings out the tragic tension between a subject transforming herself into an image and the image that immolates the granddaughter in a lateral process that equates portraiture with still life.

In *D'Entre les morts*, Madeleine is often described to be like a portrait: for instance, when Flavières (the character who would become Scottie in *Vertigo*) sees Madeleine at the theatre for the first time, Boileau and Narcejac describe it in the following manner:

> "Honteusement, du coin de l'oeil, il chercha Madeleine. Dans la pénombre dorée, elle détachait à la manière d'un portrait. Des bijoux scintillaient sur elle, à son cou, à ses oreilles. Ses yeaux paraissaient lumineux. Elle écoutait, le visage incliné, immobile commes ces inconnues admirées au passage, dans les musées, la Joconde, la Belle Ferronière… Elle portrait sur la nuque une savante torsade de cheveux où couraient des reflets acajou. Mme Gévigne…" [20]

> (Shamefully, from the corner of his eye, he searched for Madeleine. In the golden shadows, she appeared like a portrait. Jewellery shined upon her, around her neck and on her ears. Her eyes seemed to glow. She listened with her face inclined, motionless like those anonymous women one came across in admiration in the museums – the Mona Lisa, the Belle Ferronière… A knowing lock of hair with auburn highlights sat on the nape of her neck. Madame Gévigne …)

The passage is written in such a seductive manner, which seems to anticipate the visual artistry of Hitchcock's celebrated panning shot at Ernie's restaurant when Scottie sees Madeleine for the first time in *Vertigo* where she, too, would be framed by the camera in profile like a Renaissance portrait.[21]

In addition to these multiple literary and visual models, the portrait of Carlotta was also haunted by a strange news story from 1952 about a housewife named Virginia Tighe in Colorado who discovered while under hypnosis that she had been an Irish woman named Bridey Murphy in a past life. Hitchcock often drew inspiration from current events – *The Wrong Man*, too, was based on a true story culled from a *Life* magazine article.[22] The public's fascination with the topic of reincarnation was satisfied by an unauthorized book by Morey Bernstein (1952) and a film based on Morey's bestseller, both called *The Search for Bridey Murphy* (1956). Hitchcock's trusted assistant Edith Head worked as the costume designer on the film.[23] The public's obsession with the return of the dead was satiated in another Universal Studios vehicle, *I've Lived Before* (directed by Richard Bartlett), a romantic thriller about a commercial pilot named John Bolan who believed that he was the reincarnated soul of an army pilot who had died in World War I. And on March 19, 1958 – i. e. just a month and a half before the premiere of *Vertigo* – *Life* magazine ran an extended article at the height of Bridey Murphy madness entitled: "Bridey Murphy

Puts Nation in a Hypnotizzy". Journalists were sent to Ireland in hopes of tracking down any traces of the nineteenth-century Bridey, the opinions of scientists were canvassed, and, as P. Adams Sitney pointed out, the sensation caused the Roman Catholic Church to denounce reincarnation as a theological error.[24] In short, by the time *Vertigo* was released in May 1958, audiences were well primed for yet another fabulous tale about reincarnation.

Pauline Lagerac, Madeleine Gévigne, Madeleine Elster, Midge Wood, Joanne Genthon, Manlio Sarra, Henry Bumstead, John Ferren, Vera Miles, Bridey Murphy – multiple ghosts haunted the portrait of Carlotta Valdes in Hitchcock's film. But if Miles had been contracted to play the ethereal Madeleine Elster, it would be the blonde box-office superstar Kim Novak from Columbia Pictures who would deliver the final performance. It seems almost impossible today to imagine any other actress in the dual role of Madeleine and Judy. When Miles could not fulfil her contract, it seems that Hitchcock too did not envision anyone other than Novak to step into the role, and the actress was "loaned" by Paramount Studios from Harry Cohn at Columbia for the hefty sum of $250,000. If the prim and proper Miles was cut more like Hitchcock's other protégés – Grace Kelly and Tippi Hedren – Novak was decidedly not. George Sidney, who directed Novak in *The Eddy Duchin Story* (1956) summarized her unique quality in the following manner: "She has the façade and the equipment of a bitch in the long shot. Yet when you look in Kim Novak's eyes in a closeup, she's like a baby. There is fire with the sweetness, a bitchery with the virtue, all in one package".[25] *Vertigo* starring Miles in the lead role might have come across to audiences as a neo-Gothic romantic thriller in the same vein as Hitchcock's first American venture, *Rebecca* (1940); however, as Sidney's pointed language confirms, with Novak on screen, the story would be transformed forevermore through the erotic codes of film noir.

Vertigo scholars have often noted how closely Novak identified with her character in the film: "It was what I felt", she explained, "when I came to Hollywood as a young girl. They do your hair and makeup and it was always like I was fighting to show some of my real self. So I related to the resentment of being made over and to the need for approval and the desire to be loved".[26] Novak's story is neither original nor unique in Hollywood, but who or what was "Kim Novak" in the mid-1950s before her career-defining role in Hitchcock's film?

In retrospect, there is a certain inevitability and logic about how things unfolded. Novak's two most successful performances prior to *Vertigo* were *Picnic* (1955) and *Jeanne Eagels* (1957). Both films bear an uncanny resemblance to her character in Hitchcock's film and her personality in real life. In *Picnic*, Novak plays Madge Owens, a red-haired girl who escapes the stifling conformity and moralism of a small town in Kansas with a drifter named Hal Carter (William Holden). One hardly needs to underline the parallels between Madge and Judy Barton, the ambitious and defiant girl from Salina, Kansas in *Vertigo*. In contrast to the vernacular feel of

Picnic, *Jeanne Eagels* (1957) was full-on Hollywood melodrama. The story was based on a real-life actress of the same name who began as a "hootchy-kootchy dancer" at a carnival and went on to become a celebrated actress of the 1910s and 1920s and then died suddenly at the age of 39. The plot is part *Sunset Boulevard*, part *All About Eve*, part *Vertigo*, and all Novak.

In 1956 Novak would be voted America's most popular movie star in *Box Office Magazine*.[27] By 1958 she would appear on numerous national glossies depicted sometimes as an innocent and sometimes as a temptress, sometimes as both. This contrast is nowhere more evident than in the cover story on the actress that appeared in *Life* magazine on 5 March 1956. On the front page, the reader is greeted by the fresh-faced ingénue dressed in a modest lavender turtleneck and uninspiring lavender cardigan with matching lavender accessories (lavender, as it turned out, was a colour Novak detested).[28] In the ten-page spread, "A Lovely Girl Tries to Catch Up with a Runaway Career", the reader is then presented with a series of intimate black-and-white photographs chronicling Novak's train journey between her career in New York and her family in Chicago. In the first image, she is framed against a large chair; the photo bears the caption: "in a Bevelry Hills restaurant Kim Novak sits with a faraway look as agents Al and Wilt Melnick hotly discuss her blossoming movie career".[29] Across the bottom of two pages, she is seen having dinner with her family in Chicago, while in the upper right-hand corner of the same spread, she is photographed having dinner with a group of young aspiring actresses in Hollywood at the Studio Club; the article details that Novak "now earns $750 a week" and "pays $19.50 for a room" at the aforementioned all-girl residence.[30] In a particularly striking image, *Life* photographer, Leonard McCombe, captured the twenty-three year old blonde sliding into a seat in the dining carriage of the train.[31] Novak, shown in profile, wearing a stripped boat-neck top, is slightly out of focus, while a row of unflinching male onlookers stare at her from the left. Some men cross their hands and lean forward, while other men lean backward in order to maximize the view. It is almost as if the intensity of their accumulative gazes has caused Novak to go slightly blurry. "A little privacy and back in circulation for a big public hello" reads the caption, attesting to the pressures of maintaining multiple private and public personalities. A 1957 cover story for *Time* magazine, running with the title "A Star Is Made", reiterated Novak's explicit constructedness. "Kim Novak herself was virtually invented", the story asserted, "the first top-flight star ever made strictly to order, for delivery when needed".[32]

The various accounts of her rise to fame are careful to note how Marilyn Pauline Novak, the daughter of Czech immigrants, was transformed by the legendary head of Columbia Pictures, Harry Cohn. "One of the first rites", the *Time* feature stated, "was to change her name. Cohn liked the name Kit Marlowe. She insisted on keeping Novak. But the name Marilyn had to go because it suggested another blonde".[33] So in an ironic twist, because the original Norma Jeane Mortensen had become Mar-

ilyn Monroe, the original Marilyn Pauline Novak was forced to relinquish her name. Yet she was being crafted in these profiles to be somehow different from the others. A comment in the article noted that "With no effort at all, she generates a kind of sex appeal that is strangely rare in a town where sex is a major product. Marilyn Monroe parodies sex and Jayne Mansfield parodies Marilyn Monroe. Kim Novak simply communicates sex without leers. She moves in a kind of rapt trance that is oddly provocative because it also seems innocent".[34]

Vincent L. Barnett found a wonderful set of "Kim Novak paper dolls" dating to 1957: on the cover Novak is drawn as a smiling young woman in a dress sitting on the floor, talking on a phone with a pile of letters from admirers before her.[35] Inside, various outfits can be cut out and clipped onto the paper bodies of two versions of Novak posed next to each other before an iron gate. It would seem from the start, therefore, that she was always-already a split double of herself or rather of her many selves.

If Novak's life story, early roles, and public persona had prepared her for the plot of *Vertigo*, her star-crossed love affairs in the waning years of the 1950s were probably what she channelled into the morbid romantic urgency of her character in the film. While Cohn had built her up to be the next Rita Hayworth at Columbia Pictures, Novak (unlike Judy) was fighting back every step of the way. Most infamously, she struck up an affair with the Rat Pack singer, actor, and performer Sammy Davis Jr in the days when inter-racial relationships were unquestionably taboo in Hollywood.[36] Their story was scandalous, intense, and came to an abrupt and sad ending.

Novak and Davis were introduced at a dinner party set up by Tony Curtis in the fall of 1957. In other words, events in life were unfolding as shooting began for *Vertigo* on 30 September 1957. By Christmas, things had gotten out of control as rumours of marriage began to circulate. The tabloids had picked up on the illicit liaison. Cohn was furious. The Mob was brought in. Sinatra had to intervene. A contract to disfigure and brutalize Davis was ordered. In a 1976 tell-tale book entitled *Hollywood is a Four Letter Town*, it is reported that Davis was threatened by Cohn's men: "Stay away from Kim Novak for good and marry a colored girl as soon as possible. I don't care who, just so she's Black understand?"[37] The terrified entertainer did just that in January 1958, when he wed a black performer named Loray White who had recently appeared as an uncredited extra (as a Nubian slave) in *The Ten Commandments* (1956). In an exposé in *Jet* magazine of Davis and White's surprise wedding, it was noted that the bride showed up forty-minutes late and dressed herself at the wedding and that "Sammy became so nervous that he had to have help from his publicist, Jesse Rand, in filling out the license application" and that White misspelled her own name as "Leroy".[38] Years later, Cohn's widow Joan Perry would blame Novak's "scandalous behavior" for the heart attack that would end her husband's life in March 1958, just months before the premier of *Vertigo*.[39]

The tragic demise of Madeleine/Judy's enacted love affair with Scottie in *Vertigo* would be re-enacted in Novak's real-life love affair with Davis. By spring 1958, however, Novak was involved in another doomed romantic entanglement with the Latin American playboy, Rafael Trujillo Jr, the son of the brutal dictator known as El Jefe who was ruling the Dominican Republic. In a press photograph taken of the lovebirds dining at the Beverly Hilton Hotel (fig. 5), one cannot help but note Madeleine's hummingbird brooch from *Vertigo* pinned on Novak's black dress, hovering quietly below her rapt profile.[40] Art had an uncanny way of infiltrating life, but life, too, was full of surprises.



5 Kim Novak and Rafael Trujillo, 1958

The world premier of *Vertigo* took place in San Francisco on 8 May 1958.[41] A cocktail party was held at the Clift Hotel where the stars had been staying, followed by a French-themed dinner at the real Ernie's Restaurant (the restaurant in the film was actually an exact replica constructed in a sound stage at the Columbia Studios in Los Angeles). The following morning Novak was forced to hold a different press conference in order to answer questions about her relationship to Trujillo, who had already been investigated in April that year by the House Foreign Affairs Committee for his flashy expenditure including luxury cars and fur coats given as gifts to his steady female friends, most notably Zsa Zsa Gabor and Novak.[42] In 1958, the Dominican Republic had been earmarked to receive $1.3 million in US aid; Trujillo's playboy behaviour caused much scandal, once more compromising Novak's position as one of Hollywood's top-grossing female stars. The official story in the end that Novak rehearsed for the press was that Trujillo's Mercedes-Benz was "a temporary loan", it was never meant to be any kind of permanent monetary exchange, and she was more than willing to ask Trujillo to remove the car if it had indeed been intended as a gift.[43]

By May 20, eight days before the general release of *Vertigo* in American cinemas, Novak was reported in local American papers saying goodbye to Trujillo as he set off for the military academy at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Ironically enough, the *Salina Journal* would report on 20 May 1958: "General Trujillo confesses he's in love with



6 Film still from *Bell, Book and Candle*, USA 1958, direction: Richard Quine, TC: 00:35:39

Kim Novak".[44] I emphasize the phrase "ironically enough" here because the *Salina Journal* is the small town newspaper of one Salina, Kansas, hometown of the fictive Judy Barton in *Vertigo*.

Before leaving the momentous year of 1958, one must point out Stewart and Novak's repeat performance in *Bell, Book, and Candle*. If *Vertigo* had presented tragedy, *Bell, Book, and Candle* decidedly offered farce the second time around. The agreement between Paramount Studios and Harry Cohn for Novak's participation in *Vertigo* stipulated that Stewart would have to appear in a Columbia Pictures production later that year. *Bell, Book, and Candle* was a romantic comedy about a lonely witch set in Manhattan during Christmas and was to open in theatres during the holiday season. Novak plays a sorceress, Gillian Holroyd, who decides to bewitch her neighbour, Shep Henderson (Stewart), when she discovers that he is about to marry her old college rival. In a memorable scene that culminates in a close-up embrace that seems to have been cut and pasted straight out of *Vertigo*, Gillian uses witchcraft to make Shep fall in love with her.

Following this seduction scene half way into the film, the two characters then find themselves on the top of the Flatiron Building in Manhattan (fig. 6) and again, the scene seems to be a sly wink to the opening rooftop sequence from *Vertigo*, emphasized further by a real-time panning shot that follows the vertiginous descent of Shep's hat as he tosses it from the top of the skyscraper onto the street below. There even seem to be parallels (whether intentional or not) in the dialogue. When Shep says "I remember every single moment and I'm gonna mush your nose", the scene seems to echo Judy's protestations towards the end of *Vertigo* when Scottie calls her to

him and she replies "Oh no, you'll muss me… Too late. I've got my face on". When the two characters exchange the lines: "There is a timelessness about this, I feel spellbound" (Stewart), "I want you as much as you want me" (Novak) and "would you like it to go on for always?" (Stewart), it becomes almost impossible to determine from which film these words have been taken.

Finally, the clincher in *Bell, Book, and Candle* is that if Novak's character truly falls in love she will then lose her witch's powers. On the one hand, this pact evokes Judy's flashback in *Vertigo* where she confesses: "I made the mistake. I fell in love. That wasn't part of the plan. If I had the nerve, I would stay and lie, hoping that I could make you love me again, as I am for myself… and so forget the other and forget the past." On the other hand, the psychomachia for Novak and her character in *Bell, Book, and Candle* is, in a sense, the choice between love and a career, where we might easily substitute witchcraft as a profession for acting.

How uncanny it must have been for audiences who had only just seen *Vertigo* in theatres some months ago to now see the same actors in another onscreen romance (although this time, the film would deliver a happy ending); and how cruel the irony must have been for the real-life actress whose previous Christmas had culminated in a declaration of love from Davis, who had travelled across the country at great danger to see Novak in Chicago. What it must have been like for Novak, as *Bell, Book, and Candle* premiered on Christmas Day 1958, to watch her characters repeat onscreen again and again what she had had to endure in life. And here we have a vertiginous spiralling of life imitating art imitating life imitating art imitating life…

1 For one of the most thorough recent critical surveys of the vast *Vertigo* literature, see: Kriss Ravetto-Biagioli, "Vertigo and the Vertiginous History of Film Theory", in *Camera Obscura* 25/3, 2011, pp. 101–141.
2 Sigmund Freud, *The Uncanny*, trans. by David McLintock, Middlesex 2003, p. 144.
3 Ibid., p. 148.
4 Ibid., p. 151.
5 Chris Marker, "A Free Replay. Notes on Vertigo", in *Positif* 40, 1994, pp. 79–84 is the only other scholar to have noticed this detail in a passage about the actual apartment in San Francisco used for Scottie's home in the film: "La maison elle-même, au numéro 900, a changé, les nouveaux propriétaires ont fait disparaître (ou l'ancien propriétaire a gardé) le balcon de fer forgé qui portait, dans le film comme dans la ville, les signes du caractère chinois du 'double-bonheur'". I would like to thank Charlie Cook for pointing out this reference to me.
6 Camille Paglia, *The Birds*, London 1998, p. 10.
7 Peter Tate, *Flight of Fancy. Birds in Myth, Legend and Superstition*, London, 2007, pp. 76–80.
8 Eva Hunt, *The Transformation of the Hummingbird. Cultural Roots of a Zinacantecan Mythical Poem*, Ithaca, 1977, p. 62.
9 Ibid., p. 69.
10 Ibid., p. 242.
11 See for instance: http://mara-gamiel.blogspot.co.uk/2009/09/hummingbird-symbolism.html [accessed: 15.03.17].
12 For an analysis of mimesis and the tragedy of Midge's portrait, see Nickolas Pappas, "Magic and Art in 'Vertigo'", in Katalin Makkai (ed.), *Vertigo*, London, 2013, pp. 18–44.
13 Coleman quoted in DVD commentary, *Vertigo* [Chapter 7. A Portrait of Carlotta].
14 Noted in Steven Jacobs, *Framing Pictures. Film and the Visual Arts*, Oxford Press, 2011, p. 70.
15 Coleman quoted in DVD commentary, *Vertigo*.
16 Royal S. Brown, "Back from Among the Dead. The Restoration of Alfred Hitchcock's Vertigo", in *Cineaste* 23/1, 1997, pp. 4–9.
17 Reproductions of Vera Miles' test shot and *Parade* cover with Hitchcock can be found at: https://the.hitchcock.zone/wiki/Hitchcock%20Gallery:%20image%207354; https://the.hitchcock.zone/wiki/Hitchcock_Gallery:_image_5648 [accessed: 15.03.17].
18 Dan Auiler, *Vertigo. The Making of a Hitchcock Classic*, London 1999, p. 83. Coleman quoted in DVD commentary, *Vertigo* [Chapter 7. A Portrait of Carlotta].
19 Coleman quoted in DVD commentary, *Vertigo* [Chapter 7. A Portrait of Carlotta].
20 Pierre Boileau and Thomas Narcejac, *D'Entre les morts*, Paris, 1958, p. 30.
21 Robin Wood, "Male Desire, Male Anxiety. The Essential Hitchcock", in Marshall Deutelbaum and Leland Poague (eds.), *A Hitchcock Reader*, Ames, 1986, pp. 230–231: "Madeleine is presented in terms of the 'work of art', which is precisely what she is. Her movement through the doorway suggests a portrait coming to life, or a gliding statue; when she pauses and turns her head into profile, the suggestion is of a cameo or silhouette, an image that will recur throughout the film".
22 Paula Marantz Cohen, *Alfred Hitchcock. The Legacy of Victorianism*, Lexington, 1995, pp. 124–125.
23 P. Adams Sitney, "Let Me Go into the Church Alone. The Roman Catholic Subtext of 'Vertigo'", in Mary Lea Bandy and Antonio Monda (eds.), *The Hidden God. Film and Faith*, New York, 2003, pp. 253–254.
24 Herbert Bream, "Bridey Murphy Puts Nation in a Hypnotizzy", in *Life* 20/12, 1958, pp. 28–36; Sitney, 2003 (note 23), p. 253.
25 George Sidney quoted in "A Star Is Made", in *Time* 70/5, 1957, p. 38.
26 Kim Novak quoted in Auiler, 1999 (note 18), p. 25. On the parallels between Novak's life and screen personae, see in particular Vincent L. Barnett, "Dualling for Judy. The Concept of the Double in the Films of Kim Novak", in *Film History* 19, 2007, pp. 86–101.
27 Barnett, 2007 (note 26), p. 88.
28 Sam Kashner, "The Color of Love", in *Vanity Fair* 464, 1999, pp. 378–409.
29 "A Lovely Girl Tries to Catch up with a Runaway Career," in *Life* 40/10, 1956, p. 149.
30 Ibid., pp. 150–151.
31 A reproduction of this editorial photo can be found at: http://time.com/3650229/i-was-in-life-kim-novak-remembers/ [accessed: 15.03.17].
32 "A Star Is Made", in *Time*, 1957 (note 25), p. 38.
33 Ibid., p. 40.
34 Ibid., p. 38.
35 Barnett, 2007 (note 26), p. 95 (fig. 57).
36 On the Novak-Davis affair, see Kashner, 1999 (note 28).
37 James Bacon, *Hollywood is a Four Letter Town*, Chicago, 1976, p. 109. Years after the relationship had been forcibly dissolved by Cohn, gossip magazines were still speculating over the affair. In 1965, the Hollywood tabloids, *Confidential* (January) and *Whisper* (May 1965), ran sensationalist stories with the headlines "Kim Novak's Strange Desire for Love without Marriage" and "Is Kim Novak Still in Love with Sammy Davis?" in which her affair with Davis is pointed out.

38 "Sammy Davis Jr., Loray White Marry in Vegas", in *Jet* 13/1, 1958, pp. 58–62.
39 Joan Perry quoted in Kashner, 1999 (note 28).
40 I would like to thank Markus Rath for pointing out this detail to me.
41 Auiler, 1999 (note 18), p. 165.
42 "A Real Nice Party Group", in *Life* 44/21, 1958, pp. 153–154.
43 Auiler, 1999 (note 18), pp. 166–169.
44 *Salina Journal* 20, 1958, p. 3.



VIII Film still from *Vertigo*, USA 1958, direction: Alfred Hitchcock, TC: 00:53:17