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NECROPHILIA:

BEYOND PERSUASION



Eyes. Everybody has a pair. Green eyes, blue eyes, hazel eyes, the occasional black or red eye. Most eyes see one thing one instant and something else the next. That's what advertising can do to somebody. That's also what today's slash movies (post-Halloween, post-Texas Chainsaw Massacre) can do to somebody. These films contain so many murder scenes that all the poetry has been taken out of death. Death becomes trivialized, as on TV, where most programmes have the look of lengthy commercials.



THE difference between mystery and suspense is that with a mystery the audience doesn't know why or how something did or will happen and the challenge for the audience lies in the potentialities of deduction. But with suspense the audience knows exactly what is going to happen, and that very predictability is the audience's motive for attending the movie in the first place. Certain genre conventions or signs create an anticipation which must be fulfilled. Anticipation (seduction), action (intercourse), climax (orgasm), and relief (satisfaction) are the four essential plot ingredients of the suspense cinema. At the height of suspense the camera masterfully alternates between the hero's point of view and the audience/observer's so the audience can simultaneously participate in and observe with detachment a decisive action. The decisive action in suspense cinema is murder, murder being the ultimate rhetorical weapon when all other methods of persuasion fail.

WHAT particularly frightened the bartender was the uncertainty of whether the Agent of Death intended him as a target, or merely a pawn in someone else's death. But there was no need for the bartender to lose any sleep tonight; the Agent of Death was only in love with the cinema. Unlike humanity, the cinema doesn't require persuasion.

Did the Agent of Death intend him as a target, or merely a pawn in someone else's death?

"THEY all believe I'm mad," the Agent of Death smiled to himself as he haunted the southeast corner of the Town Square. He'd frequently return to the scene of the crime over the last four years. Other people stared at him as if they could not believe their eyes. A man preserving his composure so close to death is always an attraction. But the Agent quickly moved beyond the novelty of being a local hero. He used to worry about appearances but now he was indifferent to his audience who had written him off as being hopelessly catatonic. Death strengthened his neckbe, "They think I'm catatonic because I don't talk to infants unless a basic financial transaction is involved. Such a limited perspective they have! It's hardly that I can't talk to them; it's that I won't. Voyeurs should remain voyeurs. They've written me off as already dead but if I actually did die then they would be severely wounded. Their eyes would have nothing to do nothing to photograph. They would have to find themselves a duplicate. Well good luck to all those pathetic parasites!"

THE inherent danger of image-oriented obsessions is once the original has disappeared, the hunter inevitably searches for duplicates of the original, because he cannot live with the fact that his beloved original is no longer. People who may only bear one or two traits or characteristics of the original live in danger of coercion by the now activated Agents of Death. Such hunters

VERTIGO is itself a form of necrophilia. To be afraid of heights is to be afraid of achievement, to have lost ambition. Or it is the revelation that one's own personal ambitions or objectives are relatively meaningless to anyone other than one's self. Vertigo is a desire to reject competition and return to one's place of origin, which is dust.

To be fixated upon one crucial image is to be an Agent of Death, to allow only information pertaining to the obsession to enter the mind, to cease thinking, to become intellectually dead. Both religion and murder (and its mirror image, suicide) require this mental stagnation in order to free the body to perform the only deed that matters.

DEATH'S eyes relentlessly stared at the bartender. This was the fourth consecutive night the ghostly figure sat motionless at the southeast end of the bar, staring at the point to which the bartender consistently returned. The numbed hands never participated in a cash transaction. The head never searched the bar for company because the head follows the eyes and the eyes were frozen. People frequent bars so that they can drink, and then do whatever it may be that they cannot do without drinking. But these eyes belonged to a body other than the stiff at the end of the bar. They were attached to a body who had once been here and then left for somewhere else. Four years ago.

THE James Stewart character in Hitchcock's VERTIGO (the 'hero') is not only a necrophiliac by virtue of his desire to recreate a woman who no longer exists but also, because his initial attraction to this one particular female image is based upon her necrophilia. A necrophile cannot and should not be foolish enough to become attracted to an organic or kinetic image, an image that is alive and uncontrollable after the moment of initial attraction is over. Because the Kim Novak character acts as if obsessed with the recreation of her own deceased ideal, she becomes an ideal for him. Agents of death inevitably attract one another, as all but the most determinedly omniscient voyeurs need to watch someone other than themselves, and all attitudes need some kind of an audience. "I was intrigued by the hero's attempt to re-create the image of a dead woman through another who's alive. To put it plainly, the man wants to go to bed with a woman who's dead; he's indulging in a form of necrophilia." (Hitchcock)

they separated permanently.

deal with the future, while he retreated into the past. Eventually as disposable as yesterday's business section. She prepared to wish to participate in capitalism; in a world where images were vented flexibility and therefore progress was impossible. She retreating hopelessly into a world in which photography pre-own birth; his lionization of icons and cinematic images. He was fed up with his stupid romanization of a period previous to his had rejected the notions of competition and exchange. She was potential business liaisons, he had become a loner because he they had been drifting apart. Her circle of acquaintances were SHE could no longer live with his necrophilia. For months now romanization.

TO have an obsession is to be a necrophiliac. Obsessiveness differs from love; love is supposedly a balance between the irrational desires and the rational practicalities. But, with obsession the irrational long since murdered the rational. To have an obsession about somebody or something is to be madly preoccupied with the past of somebody or someone. What once was will never be again. In a competitive society those who choose to compete have to balance their personal ambitions with a flexibility of focus; images must be measured desirable or undesirable according to their practicality rather than their potential for romanization.

SOME eyes demand better. Some eyes are romantic. But there are different types of romantic eyes. These types are:

(a) The kind which are shy because they are searching for something to focus on.

(b) The kind which are shy because they are searching for something or someone on whom they are already focused.

(c) The kind which are still because they have stopped searching. These eyes are completely focused and fixated.

HIS eyes were of the third type. This was the right place, no mistake about that. But he felt no need to verify the peripheral details. She'd stopped coming here four years ago and she wouldn't be coming here tonight. Now she was haunting someone else in a different location. But, he needed to visit the graveyard occasionally in order to recharge himself, to prove that the past had really existed as he believed it did. This graveyard of his was in reality a public meeting house, a bar filled with people who were collectively afraid to look out and see where they were really going. He was different from them. He knew.

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believe in guilt by coincidence or circumstance. Various situations and memories collide together and therefore are blamed for the loss of the Original.

THE eyes looked into the mirror, and the results were strained. This happens when the eyes have been fixated in one position for too long; like somebody who becomes so caught up in a piece of fiction that they become oblivious to the fading lights.

His eyes had lost their fluidity, all that remained was a dried-up reddish area around the lower edges. They had lost the fire which had characterized the obsession in its early stages.

BUT the obsession was still there. How could it have disappeared or else it wouldn't be an obsession, would it? It would have to be rejuvenated, taken to a higher degree of intensity. No longer satisfied by merely making other people extremely un-

comfortable, he would now have to initiate terror. In order to restore terror to his own eyes he would have to become an active Agent of Death. His necrophilia was now the kind which required physical confirmation. What he needed was a victim.

TWO-thirds of the way through VERTIGO Hitchcock suddenly deviates to the woman's point of view, for a brief but crucial flashback in which the audience is informed that the character Madelaine, over whom the 'hero' became hopelessly despondent, and the character Judy, to whom he is obsessively attracted because of her uncanny resemblance to Madelaine, are in reality the same woman. Therefore, the final third of the film consists of his attempt to re-impose Madelaine onto Judy, a process which the audience knows is both inevitably successful and fatalistically futile. So, he coerces Judy into wearing Madelaine's exact clothes, into returning her hair to Madelaine's exquisite blonde. "Ironically, it is exactly at the moment when he has achieved the transformation, and thus the identity of the two images (and just after a very long sequence, ending in a fade, signals the moment of sexual consummation), that he discovers the hoax by which Judy had impersonated Madelaine; which renders both their images equally 'untrue'" (Teresa de Lauretis, ALICE DOES N'T). As is consistently the case with necromasturbatory fantasies, physical contact or naturalistic sexuality can only trigger disillusionment and disgust. The 'hero's' inability to recognize himself as a victim now pushes him towards homicidal revenge. He must become the hunter, kill the false image; return it back to its place of origin. Temporarily overcoming his vertigo, he chases the false image up the tower and, without having to physically push her to her death, his hysteria causes the heroine to fall.

TO love the dead is to simultaneously love the unattainable and the most convenient. The desire for the unattainable is the definition itself of romance: romance referring to desire beyond the ordinary, above the mediocre, outside of any previous experience. To touch an untouchable is a demystification. But to desire an untouchable is to maintain its myth. And to desire the most convenient is as ancient as the inevitable failure of romance. If murder is the ultimate rhetorical weapon, then the dead are the post-rhetorical. Necrophilia is the final desire for those who, for whatever reason, must bypass the rhetoric of seduction.

