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Music, Memory and Repression in Hitchcock's *Vertigo* (1958)

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Introduction

- 1 Alfred Hitchcock somehow retained a connection with the aesthetics of the silent film era in which he made his debut throughout his career, which can account for his reluctance to include dialogues when their content can be conveyed visually.¹ His reluctance never concerned music, however, since music was performed during the screening of silent films generally, though an experimental drive in the director's perspective on that subject can be observed through the fact for instance that *The Birds* (1963) dispenses with music altogether. The use (or absence) of music in Hitchcock's works seems also to originate in the genre of his works—the suspense film or thriller, i.e., films focusing on the ordeal of victimized characters embarked upon criminal adventures not of their own choosing—which seems to call for the presence of music as a device used either to stress the feeling of their familiar world collapsing for those characters or, conversely, to provide the spectators with hints about the actual state of affairs which those characters fail to understand. An example of the latter case might be found in the second version of *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1956), when the recurring song used throughout the film, “Que Sera Sera,” intervenes to signal to the viewers the helpless situation of Benjamin Mc Kenna (James Stewart) in his handling of his son's kidnapping and as a taunting reminder of the threat that hangs over him.² A myriad of issues are, of course, at stake in this topic, such as for instance the use of original or pre-existing music, but I will narrow the examination down to one film and one issue, namely the topic of memory and repression in *Vertigo*.
- 2 The 1958 film is singular in its use of music³ in that it conspicuously establishes a link between the score and Scottie's reconstruction of his love story with Madeleine by means of his somewhat manipulative relationship with Judy. This is effected not only through the visual reminiscence he gains of his lost love by dressing up and making up

Judy as Madeleine, but also through the recurrence of the same musical theme that accompanied his first romance and that, once Judy has been “properly” brought down (or rather up) to the initial ideal of love embodied by Madeleine, comes back to complete the transformation of one woman into another. Music thus seems to express, here, the success of the throwback to the first woman, but also to be laden with shades of guilt and self-hatred as experienced by Scottie owing to this reconstruction and exploitation of Judy. This ambivalence was noted by Royal Brown when he points to the uncertainty in Bernard Herrmann’s famous score between major and minor implications as a fit expression of Scottie’s “impossible” position (103); Brown interprets the openness of the chord pattern in the light of this necessity to register a lack of resolution in the plot, and to convey Scottie’s “irrational” approach to reality:

The very nature of these chords, with their simultaneously minor/major aura, immediately throws the viewer/listener off the rationalized center of normal Western tonality into a more irrational, mythic domain in which oppositions have no implications that will be resolved by the passing of time, but exist only as two equal poles of the same unity (106).

- 3 Brown points out that Herrmann’s score for *Psycho* (1960) is peculiar in that the film does not include any diegetic music,⁴ and thus “the nondiegetic music gets an even stronger weighting on the side of the irrational” (112)—a remark that is significant when comparing *Psycho* to *Vertigo*, which does feature diegetic music in a hospital scene that calls for comment. Brown concludes by foregrounding the notion of *correspondence* between the visual and the sound tracks—thus suggesting we should look further than a mere term-to-term, direct relationship between the two components: “Herrmann’s music, rather than mimicking the rhythm of the editing, creates a musical correspondence, working within its own temporal elaboration, of the movement established over the block of shots” (114).
- 4 This type of elaborate interaction between music and visuals is also investigated in Jack Sullivan’s chapter devoted to *Vertigo*. He focuses on the way Herrmann’s score conveys Scottie’s feeling of loss, especially when this music contradicts Scottie’s desire to revive Madeleine through Judy. This appears initially when Scottie realizes that Madeleine has been visiting Carlotta’s grave, and the music suggests dismal bell tolls, but it also recurs later in the film.

The organ-tinted cue in the Mission Dolores graveyard seems to waft from the instrument playing inside the church (an organ prelude composed by Herrmann). In his notes on the Mission Dolores bells, Hitchcock states: “When Scottie looks at the headstone and reads ‘Carlotta,’ we should hear the bang of the big bell from the basilica next door. It should ring about three times as Scottie is taking down the name.” Whether this fateful bang is a real bell or Herrmann’s score is deliberately ambiguous; bell sonorities continue ringing throughout the movie—tolling at Carlotta’s grave, clanging forlornly from the streetcar in the foggy San Francisco night, pealing from the tower at the end as Scottie looks fearlessly down into the final abyss. (230)

- 5 Music thus conveys both Scottie’s desire to revive Madeleine, his refusal of death, and the persistence of reality despite his desire. Together, these analyses tend to show that Herrmann’s score is far from a mere accompaniment; on the contrary, it is in Sullivan’s words “making its own commentary on the narrative rather than imitating images” (229). Yet this reading of the score as a (two-way) commentary on the narrative is also considered as problematic by critics like Kalinak, who quotes on this point Claudia Gorbman’s analysis of film music in general (189):

The restricted number of possible film/music relationships as discussed by most scholars seems curiously primitive, limited largely to the concepts of *parallelism* and *counterpoint*. Either the music “resembles” or it “contradicts” the action or mood of what appears on the screen [...]. Is there no other way to qualify film music which does not lie between these opposites but outside them? (29)

- 6 Another significant point on which Kalinak departs from Brown and Sullivan is when she locates ambiguity in Herrmann's score not only in its relation to the narrative, but rather in its innate, unexpected rhythmical structure, especially at the beginning of the film:

Besides avoiding identifiable melody and flirting with tonal ambiguity,⁵ the opening moments of the score exploit the effects of an unpredictable rhythmic change which contributes to the agitation many listeners feel in hearing this cue. (10)

- 7 This article means to contribute to this critical debate by examining in detail a number of scenes where music can be considered as connected to narrative developments rather than as a purely aesthetic medium in a musicological sense. The aim of my demonstration will be to highlight the specific interaction between music (whether diegetic or nondiegetic), narrative stakes, *mise en scène*, and diegetic sounds, so as to provide a larger perspective on the film's soundscape. To do so, attention will first be paid to the various, differing uses of recurring music in the film as indexes to this desire to reconstruct Madeleine; this part will try to clarify how exactly the score engages with Scottie's desire to revive Madeleine and allows the spectator some distance with the character's desire. We will then examine the relationship between music and memory. My perspective will be an aesthetic one⁶ and I will endeavor to clarify how Hitchcock uses various treatments of music in this film to formalize the theme of memory in the plot. The theme will be related to the protagonist, Scottie, rather than to the spectator's apprehension of the status of music in cognitive terms or in relation to the mechanisms of the spectator's own memory. The impact of music on the main character appears especially in a specific scene that takes place in the hospital where Scottie is staying after his nervous breakdown. The final section shall then deal with the issue of the subjective or non-subjective use of music as an expression of the character's feelings or as a part of the filmic apparatus meant for the viewer. Three related aspects of the score in its interaction with the narrative will then be examined successively: the repetition of musical themes, the use of diegetic music, and finally the subjective value of music.
- 8 A theoretical point has to be made right away about the meaning attributed to the term “subjective” here. This term does not suggest that Scottie, for instance, *actually* hears the score or that the music is audible by anyone other than the viewer. “Subjective” is to be understood, here, as reflecting the character's feelings (namely his desire *and* fear of making Madeleine alive again) as they are made perceptible to the spectators. In this sense “non-subjective” music will refer to the use of the score for the purpose of suggesting another take on the story that is detached from Scottie's desires and that relates to a potentially critical approach of these desires. The overall aim of this article will be to stress the self-conscious quality of music in *Vertigo*. We shall see that the variety of relationships *Vertigo* establishes between its score and the protagonist's psyche implicitly comments on the spectators' relation to film music in general.

Musical Repetition and Difference

- 9 A first step in the examination of the interaction between narrative elements and Herrmann's score lies in the analysis of the way music is used to stage Scottie's recreation of his lost lover. The key scene that stands out regarding this association between memory and music is the sequence where Scottie hallucinates the return of Madeleine in the stable scene in the Spanish mission, when he has successfully remodelled a new Madeleine from Judy and kisses Judy for the first time [1:54:55]. While embracing Judy in her hotel room, Scottie is embarked upon a subjective merry-go-round, with the room seemingly spinning around him. It is from here on out that he visualizes the setting of his last meeting with Madeleine, and it is accompanied by the repetition of a similar nondiegetic music as during his first kiss with Madeleine on the ocean shore [1:02:40], although in a different arrangement and style. The scene of the first kiss is accompanied by a much shorter version of the musical theme,⁷ whereas the hotel room sequence features a more elaborate version of the piece, which builds up slowly until Judy has agreed to pull back her hair so as to look more like (Scottie's memory of) Madeleine. This ties in to Graham Bruce's argument that the obsession Scottie is falling a prey to is expressed by a repeated *ostinato* rhythm (149). The fully orchestrated piece taking up the same theme with added force, especially with a more noticeable use of brass, reappears to signify the success of Scottie's reconstruction of Madeleine—he has managed to recreate the same emotional stimulus provoking the same response within himself. The *ostinato* theme then comes to embody the return to an earlier scene through the repetition of the accompaniment from the first to the second scene, which testifies to Scottie's psyche's collapsing of Madeleine and Judy refashioned as a second Madeleine.
- 10 From this perspective, Herrmann's score is used, to take up Gorbman's words, with a view to creating a "parallel" between the two scenes. It establishes a "resemblance" between them and validates Scottie's endeavor to recreate Madeleine. But music also conveys, together with the desire for repetition, the *flawed* nature of this repetition. It not only "mimics" Scottie's desire, but distances itself from it. This corresponds to the more complex, versatile relationships that film music may entertain with the audiovisual texture of the film and which, according to Michel Chion, implies that the meaning of film music depends on its interaction with other sounds and images in ways that are more varied than the merely illustrative.

En règle générale, il semble que la mise en rapport d'une image et d'une musique renforce et catalyse l'expression déjà contenue dans la musique seule. Une musique relativement triste en soi le paraîtra sensiblement plus si on la met sur une scène de film. [...] Mais, pour cet effet, la façon dont la musique *tombe* sur l'image (comme une robe tombe sur un corps) joue un rôle aussi important que la coupe de la musique elle-même. Les situations, les images, le point où l'on se trouve de l'action quand la musique démarre, la façon dont le rythme musical se coule dans celui de la scène – toutes données non intrinsèques à la musique – se chargent de *programmer* le sens qu'elle prend.⁸

- 11 Thus, music may not only confirm the drift of the audio-visual texture; it can also constitute a counterpoint to it or sometimes even a negative, ironical comment on the images. An instance that is not quoted by Chion but which comes to mind rather naturally, due to its exemplary value, is the last scene of *Dr. Strangelove* (Kubrick, 1964), which features images of nuclear bombings over Vera Lynn's song "We Will Meet

Again”—a fitting example of the range of possibilities of film music in its relation to images, that goes way beyond the illustrative. This article aims to show in detail how the score and the *mise en scène* in *Vertigo* interact to implement this versatile significance, between a mimetic and a critical function.

- 12 We may first view music in these scenes as mimetic⁹—that is, its repetition comes to embody another repetition from one situation to another, from Madeleine to Judy. The return of the same music testifies to the successful reconstruction of Madeline through Judy; it “illustrates” this reconstruction through the repetition on the soundtrack, and it fulfils a mimetic function in the sense that the repetition of music emulates their reunion. This mimetic status is argued by critics both from a structural and from an internal point of view (Blim 22; Eisentraut 444). Not only does the repetition of the same music justify the recurrence of the same feelings in Scottie (a structural analysis pertaining to the construction of the film proper), but this repetition is also inscribed internally within the peculiar construction of the score (as was argued by a number of critics like Blim or Sullivan). Sullivan thus suggests a match between the dolly zoom and the dissonance of the score: “Much of Herrmann’s music is astonishingly visceral, especially the famous ‘Vertigo’ chord, a dizzying dissonance spiked with harp glissandi as the camera pulls back and zooms in” (229). Dan Blim also remarks that the spiral and mirror motifs evoked in the film visually, motifs that in themselves signify repetition (for instance, when Madeleine observes and comments on a tree trunk that bears the marks of the passing of time), are also present in the musical construction of the accompanying score.

Herrmann’s score finds ways to echo a number of these mirrors and spirals through aural cues. [...] The “vertigo chord,” which accompanies the “vertigo shot,” is also an aural mirror. This chord combines an Eb minor chord and a D major chord. Like the shot it accompanies, it contains its own reversal, which is to say that it has inversive symmetry.¹⁰ (23)

- 13 This vision remains mimetic in that the film score is conceived here as an *illustration* of the main topic of the film—reincarnation—the repetition of the meeting with one being through another being. A similar vision also informs Alexander Binns’s view when he claims that in classical Hollywood cinema, music “sutures” within the fabric of the film the feelings that are supposed to be experienced by women (378).¹¹ Although we will not explore the technical and musical intricacies that may justify the definition of this music as cyclical or not—this is both beyond the scope of this study and not within our peculiar field of critical competence—the theoretical approach of music as purely illustrative does seem here somewhat flawed or excessively limited, for a number of reasons.
- 14 First of all, this mimetic conception of the repetition of music as an index to the reincarnation of Madeleine through Judy does not leave ample room for Scottie’s uneasy feelings of guilt and repression if we consider that this repetition merely points to the success of his reconstruction of Madeleine. Yet we know that Scottie does feel uneasy about the whole project of rebuilding Madeleine’s image, as his answer to Judy when she questions his desire to refashion her as Madeleine proves:
- Judy: Why are you doing this? What good will it do?
 Scottie: I don’t know. I don’t know. No good I guess. [1:44:53]
- 15 If we consider that the score is not purely contained in its repetitive function (i.e., in the expression of Madeleine’s “return” through Judy), then music may also express Scottie’s unease, or another perspective on his desire to make Madeleine live again.

This is one of the issues we will be examining below. Secondly, the idea that music merely conveys the throwback to the past overlooks the crucial question of the characters' relationship to this music—Scottie does not relate to the musical theme in the scene of his first kiss with Madeleine as he does in the second scene where he kisses Judy as Madeleine, for instance. Again, I am by no means suggesting that the character can hear the score but that it is intimately related to the way his emotions are portrayed. This repeated music in the second scene does not have the same status altogether.

- 16 In order to develop this idea, attention will first be paid to the issue of musical repetition as related to Scottie's belief that he has succeeded in reincarnating Madeleine in Judy. The repetition in itself conveys an element of difference, since conceptually repetition does not occur in the same circumstances and time as the initial occurrence and thus provides a distinctiveness of the repeated music or scene that brings about as much dissimilarity as similarity in the repetition. This theoretical concern becomes much more concrete in *Vertigo* if we notice that significant alterations are brought to the recurring music when compared to the first occurrence. The scene at the Spanish mission includes not only the initial musical theme that was the background of the first kiss between Scottie and Judy, but peculiar variations have been added to it, so that we have both a repetition of the first scene and a supplement. As mentioned earlier, the initial version of the musical theme is much shorter compared to the Spanish mission accompaniment, which features a slow build-up of tension with violins playing *crescendo* and a *finale* marked by the use of brass. This corresponds to Deleuze's concept of "clothed repetition," i.e. a repetition that is not a mechanical duplication of the same element but a process that includes—and conceals—variability.

The first type of repetition is a repetition of the Same, that can be accounted for by the identity of concept or of representation; the second type is a repetition that includes difference and can be understood through the otherness of Idea, through the heterogeneous quality of 'a-presentation'. [...] The former is "naked" repetition, the latter clothed repetition, coming into being through the clothing process, through disguise. The former is accuracy, the latter is based on genuineness.¹² (36-37, my translation)

- 17 We cannot fail to notice how Scottie turns away from Judy's face when he is kissing her, as if he could hear the musical theme bringing him back to his first kiss with Madeleine—as if he were suddenly made conscious of the artificiality of the reconstruction and discovering the appalling full extent of his own manipulation of reality (**Figure 1**).
- 18 Music expresses the desire to repeat the past *and* the doomed quality of this endeavour, since its value has now changed to express the obsessive quality of Scottie's desire to relive his past by hearing it again—even if he *cannot* hear it as the music obviously remains purely non-diegetic. Music and repetition thus point to the unreliability of Scottie's perceptions and to his manipulation, beyond the desire for memory and reconstruction which drive him. The music is, then, not only the expression of his desire but its deconstruction. With hindsight, a similar and stronger effect is reached if we return to the scene where Madeleine, confronted with the figuration of the flow of past centuries on a hewed down portion of a trunk cut down from a *sequoia*, pretends to remember her own past as Carlotta Valdes and thus presents herself to Scottie's gullible eyes as a reincarnation herself. This scene includes electronic distortion of another musical theme, and very fittingly so since it points to another lie, very much like the lie which leads Scottie to believe that he has resurrected Madeleine in Judy.

This lie—Madeleine's posing as a reincarnation—is signified through this artificial distortion. The point here lies not in any proleptic revelation of the manipulation Scottie has been a victim of, but in the role attributed to the score as an index to the unreality of the scene, hence as pointing, beyond the character's desire, to another dimension beyond his subjective approach.

- 19 We will now go beyond the role of music as pointing to Scottie's misreading of the plot to focus on the specific relation the musical themes entertain with the characters within the plot—as another aspect of the relation between the score and the narrative. For that purpose, we will concentrate on a particular scene that uses music as a crucial device: the hospital scene where Midge (Marjorie Wood by her real name), Scottie's old friend and former love interest, visits him in the resting home where he has been admitted after his nervous breakdown following Madeleine's presumed death. The point will be to show how the status of diegetic music interferes with the meaning it creates on screen, conferring on the scene a new dimension through audiovisual interaction.

Figure 1

Musical Therapy—"It's what the lady said."

- 20 This scene is remarkable in that it actually includes diegetic music, a piece by Mozart¹³ which is being played on a record player during Midge's visit, and it thematizes the notion that music is a device, in this case used by the doctors to cure or soothe the patients. It is also part of the discussion between the two characters, since Midge both expresses the justification for this use of music by the doctors and her own doubts about the success of this musical therapy: "It's wonderful how they have it taped now. They have music for dipsomaniacs and music for melancholiacs and music for hypochondriacs. I wonder what would happen if somebody got their files mixed up?" [1:22:53]. With this scene, the film makes a self-conscious, ironical comment on its own use of music—unlike what the scene of the first kiss with Judy superficially suggests, memory and happiness will not be revived through music, just as the repetition of the main musical theme bringing us spiralling back to the Spanish mission setting does not guarantee that Madeleine is won back.
- 21 Another level of meaning can also be ascribed to this scene; it has to do with the use of diegetic music in the sequence. Indeed, a complex relationship is established through the fact that the record player is actually playing the music in the sequence. This was noted by Sullivan:

From the beginning, when Scottie grumpily tells Midge to turn off the eighteenth-century music, art fails to tame chaos. A force of clarity and consonance associated with classicism, Midge can't compete with Scottie's attraction to the mysterious darkness embodied by Madeleine. (231)

- 22 This relationship can be considered along several lines. First, and according to Michel Chion's typology, the intensity, the volume of the music does seem to vary according to realistic concerns; the music is more or less present depending on the intensity of the dialogue between Scottie and Midge; this corresponds to what Chion would call a non-discontinuous use of music.¹⁴ Secondly, the dialogues that evoke music have direct relevance to Scottie's situation; as Midge suggests, Scottie does seem to have his files "mixed up," and like the record player, he "shuts off" Midge's soothing words "automatically."¹⁵ It seems that music, here, is more than a mere accompaniment or again an illustration of Scottie's disconnection from reality; rather, it has become a filmic element that both extrinsically comments on Scottie's situation and intrinsically influences his behavior. This function is visible when the editing and playacting endeavor to articulate the movements of Midge's solitary conversation to the pauses in the score. The intonations with which Midge utters her words of relief follow rather consistently the musical phrases from the music. For instance, the moment when Midge stands up and looks at Scottie in a high angle (**Figure 2**) corresponds to the moment in the music when the melody is least audible and when violins play in a gentler, lower tone, as if this musical pause corresponded to Scottie's disappearance from consciousness and from the scene where this one-sided dialogue with Midge takes place. Similarly, the passage where Midge urges Scottie to "please try" to recover consciousness coincides with a return of the higher, more audible melody from the violins, as if this request were made both in dialogue and on the music track. Once again, music turns out to activate and enact the plot more than just accompany it.

Figure 2

- 23 We could still think that the accompanying score simply functions as a device to reinforce the lack of communication between the characters, yet the view of music as mere illustration is shattered at the ending of the sequence when Midge stops the record player and thus abruptly brings to an end the fiction that life and music go hand

in hand—in other words, that this music could serve to explain and cure Scottie's illness, because by stopping this music she also reveals the artificiality of its relationship to Scottie's position. It is, after all, just an arbitrary layer added over the surface of reality that does not help the subject to recover memory. This arbitrariness has been noted by Chion (1985, 117) when he recalled composer Mauricio Kagel's experience with his students; using different kinds of music over the same film sequence he concluded that all musical pieces fitted the sequence—yet another way of foregrounding the lack of natural or illustrative function of music in films. This does not mean that the music fails to signify, but that as diegetic music, its value in the scene revolves around two ideas. First, it shows that the emotional quality of this music is misleading (it cannot help Scottie come round to reality, just as in the Spanish mission scene it wrongly confirms the reincarnation of Madeleine through Judy), and secondly, it sheds light on the repression at the heart of Scottie's being “locked up” or, in Midge's words, “shut off.” If musical therapy fails so obviously with him, it is because he represses any effect this music may have on him due to his guilt; this is why music cannot restore his memory, even by accident (as we have seen earlier). This leads us to the final topic in this study, i.e., the subjective apprehension of music as an expression of the character's feelings, especially when it concerns the recurrence of memories spurred on by music. This is yet another aspect of the interaction between music and narrative, more closely focused on the value of music as a device of ambivalent characterization and storytelling.

Subjective or Non-subjective Music

- 24 This part will revolve around the expression of the character's feelings by diegetic or nondiegetic music (in which case music will be called subjective, not in the sense it is actually experienced by the character but because it conveys the subject's emotions)¹⁶ and around the use of music as detached from, and anempathetic vis-à-vis the character's emotions (in which case it will be called non-subjective). A first approach revolves around the actual perception of music by the character, in a limited number of scenes—but from our perspective, subjective music is not restricted to this actual perception. Apart from rare cases (for instance when diegetic music is used and a character conspicuously turns towards its source), the determination of a character's perception of music can be awkward on screen. Few elements point to this subjective approach. Yet it is crucial in *Vertigo* since, as we have seen, it is Scottie's individual relation to (non-diegetic) music as the sign of Madeleine's reincarnation that explicates much of the music's meaning. Two criteria must be considered in the discussion of subjective music: the possibility of integrating music plausibly in the diegesis and narrative on the one hand, and the interaction between music and other parts of the soundtrack (dialogues, noises, etc.) on the other.
- 25 In the scene where Scottie goes back to the restaurant where he first saw Madeleine with Gavin Elster, both levels are interwoven [1:28:11]. The sequence begins with music that opens before Scottie enters the restaurant, so that it cannot be considered diegetic. Another element that points to its being related to Scottie's subjectivity is the articulation with the editing: the music becomes most dramatic when the woman he had mistaken for Madeleine walks right by him, so that the music tallies with his emotional perception of the scene (**Figure 3**). Yet this setting, a restaurant, suggests

that this music *could* be diegetic (an ambiance music played for the customers), and the ambiguity is maintained through the ending of the sequence when Scottie belatedly gives his order to the waiter for a scotch and soda, a cue we do hear distinctly on the soundtrack. If this music were entirely subjective, would we hear Scottie giving his order? And if it were purely attuned to the character's feelings, could it be interrupted by Scottie himself stooping to these petty acts of everyday life? Scottie ordering to the waiter testifies to the in-between status of this music as partly expressive of the character's desire and partly detached from his world view. Hitchcock is taking care, here, to maintain the ambiguity between Scottie's obsession and the remnants of reality that invade his own private world (it might have been easier for the director to elide these few words with the waiter at the bar). Of course, the remainder of the episode in which Scottie goes on looking for Madeleine does feature the non-diegetic version of the same music (for instance, in the art gallery where he mistakes for Madeleine a woman looking at the portrait of Carlotta Valdes [1:29:23]), yet this initial blurring of subjective markers tends to influence the later sequences.

Figure 3

- 26 The relation between subjective and non-subjective music appears quite significantly later on as well. Thus, the haunting presence of Madeleine's ghost in Scottie's obsessed mind recurs most conspicuously at the end of the film when Scottie figures out the sham and forces Judy to tell the truth. This scene repeats (for the second time) the kiss between both characters with the same music, but it ends with the arrival of a nun who unwittingly causes Judy's death by frightening her, and then with the sound of a bell being rung by the nun, which covers the music. The overlapping of the two sounds, the music and the diegetic sound of the bells, encapsulates the dead-end Scottie finds himself in. As a character obsessed with the reconstruction of the past, he lives in a world of his own fancy, but the sound of reality eventually annihilates his prospects of reviving Madeleine—a prospect he has not given up despite his claim that it is, in his own words, "too late," as evidenced by his kissing Judy. The "real," diegetic sounds of

the bells shatter the apprehension of music that has all along the film embodied Scottie's infatuation with his dream, and assert the inescapability of death in the face of wish-fulfilling self-indulgence. The character is confronted with a diegetic sound covering and denying the non-diegetic music emblematic of his dream of reviving Madeleine. The music remains non-diegetic, but in the context of the scene it conveys Scottie's desire (and temptation) to re-live his failed love story with Madeleine, a desire that is denied by the diegetic sound of the bells. Even if the film elsewhere manifests a sort of empathy for Scottie's fate, for example in the trial scene after Madeleine's fake suicide [1:15:50], music—the bells after all produce a kind of music— is integrated within a system of contrasted values and functions as a device that is instrumental in exposing the character's weakness and psychotic tendencies, his flawed reconstruction of reality. This system relies, as we have seen, on the discrete apprehension of several parts of the score, treated mimetically, subjectively or as a fateful embodiment of "reality."

Conclusion

- 27 Ultimately, the way *Vertigo* stages Scottie's manipulation by an intradiegetic plot has a lot to do with his response to the music as a vehicle for his desire to relive the past. Concurrently, the film also points to the subjective quality of this audiovisual approach and to the delusion Scottie labors under when this musical repetition accompanies the real return of Madeleine through Judy. That Hitchcock meant his viewers to be aware of this delusion—although the film is also enjoyable without this awareness—is made noticeable by the sound distortion utilized in the repeated scenes, which compromise Scottie's perfect reconstruction of the past. Scottie's repressing his desire also finds expression through this non-identical repetition if we consider that this subjective music, mirroring his own position towards the plot, evokes his guilty feelings about his own attempt at mending the past. The topic of the film is thus obviously reflexive, an exemplary case of self-consciousness, since it deals with the issue of representation—and of how Scottie wilfully misrepresents reality to fit his desire, to recreate Madeleine through Judy. But it is self-conscious in another, subtler way that reflects Hitchcock's more general concern with representation.¹⁷ By stressing the constructed, somewhat artificial way Scottie is connected to the music that accompanies his reconstruction of Madeleine, the film as a whole presents its own structure in terms of a reconstruction of reality that evinces its artificiality and relativity.
- 28 We have seen that Scottie's ambiguous desire to recreate Madeleine is expressed not only by the intrinsic qualities of Herrmann's score, as Brown and Sullivan have argued, but also, and maybe more importantly for the spectators, through the somewhat uncertain position the music occupies in relation to the story—as music that can be construed as almost simultaneously diegetic or non-diegetic. This blurring does not in any way contradict previous analyses, but it points to another dimension that can be added to the rich interaction between narrative and music, which has been the focus of this article. This is most obvious in the hospital scene where the music holds an ambiguous status between Scottie's apparent lack of perception of it, Midge's comments and the actual diegetic playing of the record. This ambiguity ultimately locates the meaning of the score in its (variable) relation to the narrative in the spectators' perception. As such, it constitutes an original (at the time) reflexive device

that foregrounds the constructed quality of our relationship to audiovisual representations.

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Vertigo. Dir. Alfred Hitchcock. Written by Alec Coppel and Samuel A. Taylor, based on the novel *D'entre les morts* by Boileau-Narcejac. With James Stewart (John "Scottie" Ferguson), Kim Novak (Madeleine Elster/Judy Barton), Barbara Bel Geddes (Midge Wood) and Tom Helmore (Gavin Elster). Cinematography by Robert Burks. Editing by George Tomasini. Music by Bernard Herrmann. Alfred J. Hitchcock Productions and Paramount, 1958. DVD. Universal Studios Home Entertainment, 2012.

NOTES

1. This is confirmed by many interviews of Hitchcock. See for instance this quotation: "The silent pictures were the purest form of cinema; the only thing they lacked was the sound of people talking and the noises. But this slight imperfection did not warrant the major changes that sound brought in [...]. In many of the films now being made, there is very little cinema: they are mostly what I call 'photographs of people talking.' When we tell a story in cinema, we should resort to dialogue only when it's impossible to do otherwise. I always try first to tell a story in the cinematic way, through a succession of shots and bits of film in between. In writing a screenplay it is essential to, whenever possible, rely more on the visual than on dialogue [...]. To me, one of the cardinal sins for a scriptwriter, when he runs into some difficulty, is to say 'We can cover that by a line of dialogue.' Dialogue should simply be a sound among sounds, just something that comes out of the mouths of people whose eyes tell the story in visual terms." (*Hitchcock/Truffaut* 61).
2. The meaning of this song title, included in the lyrics, translates as "whatever will be will be," a fit expression of the characters' feeling of a loss of control over their lives.
3. For Hitchcock's specific relationship to composer Bernard Herrmann during the production of the film, see Jochen Eisentraut and Auiler.
4. See also Sullivan (227) on this point.
5. Cooper (17) also deals with Herrmann's tendency towards tonal ambiguity in this score.
6. For a thorough study of the relationship between music and memory from a cognitive and psychological viewpoint, see Snyder.
7. For brevity's sake, I shall concentrate in this essay only on the "Madeleine" theme, connected diegetically with Scottie's sentimental relationship with the character, although a number of other musical themes appear, e.g. in the forest where Madeleine points to places which symbolise her "alternate" birth and death dates on the portion of a hewed down trunk.
8. "As a rule, it seems that the establishment of a relation between an image and a musical piece reinforces and unifies the expression conveyed in this music by itself. A music that seems sad enough in itself will sound all the sadder if it is played over a film sequence. [...] But to achieve this, what matters as much as the quality of music itself is the way the music *fits* the image (as a dress may fit a body). Dramatic situations, images, the development of the plot when the music is played, the way the musical rhythm accompanies the sequence—all these are elements that are not peculiar to the musical score and which act decisively in the way music makes sense in the sequence." (Chion, 1985, 119, my translation). These various semiotic possibilities tie in with Christian Metz's work (1986) on the five channels of filmic expression (moving images, written material, voice, noise, and music) which may either repeat the same information, complete or contradict each other, although this "closed" typology has also been questioned by critics (see Kristin Thompson 110).

9. The mimetic function of music is here understood as an illustrative, imitative function through which the film score merely reinforces the emotions suggested by the plot.

10. For further discussion of the specific chord construction in this film, see Eisentraut (439), Brown (105) and Kalinak (5).

11. Binns is interested in the stereotypes implemented by this cinema concerning women. He shows that the use of music enforces predetermined roles on female characters, as temptresses or wifely models. It could be argued that such stereotyping also affects male characterization partly, but Binns's point is that music particularly embodies and naturalizes stereotypes concerning women. See for instance the following quote: "Classical Hollywood cinema used music, among other components, to encode the presence and aura of women and, in so doing, perpetuated entrenched models of female sexuality. The cultural logic of this misogynist teleology is marked musically by an index of referential clichés annexed to the visual discourse" (375).

12. Original text: "La première répétition est répétition du Même, qui s'explique par l'identité du concept ou de la représentation ; la seconde est celle qui comprend la différence et se comprend elle-même dans l'altérité de l'Idée, dans l'hétérogénéité d'une « appréhension ». [...] L'une est une répétition « nue », l'autre une répétition vêtue, qui se forme elle-même en se vêtant, en se masquant, en se déguisant. L'une est d'exactitude, l'autre a pour critère l'authenticité."

13. It is actually an extract from Bach's *Sinfonia*, wrongly attributed to Mozart by Midge (see Sullivan 229-231).

14. Chion (2013) defines discontinuity as a rupture in the audio-visual sequence which means to emphasize the role of the sound track independently from the image track. Non-discontinuity occurs when the audiovisual sequence mingles the two tracks organically, developing consistently one along with the other. Discontinuity and non-discontinuity are often strategies that are found concurrently in the same film. As we shall see, the scene under study in *Vertigo* privileges non-discontinuity as diegetic music follows the characters' dialogues significantly. This does not preclude an analysis of this phenomenon of non-discontinuity as related to the film's specific strategy.

15. Sullivan also notes this metaphorical relationship (231).

16. This definition approximates Michel Chion's proposal concerning subjective-internal sounds: "Internal sound is sound which, although situated in the present action, corresponds to the physical and mental interior universe of a character. These include physiological sounds of breathing, moans or heartbeats, all of which could be called *objective-internal* sounds. Also in this category of internal sounds are mental voices, memories, and so on, which I call *subjective-internal* sounds" (Chion 2013, 85, my translation). Original text: "On appellera son interne celui qui, tout en étant situé dans le présent de l'action, correspond à l'intérieur aussi bien physique que mental d'un personnage: que ce soient ses sons physiologiques de respiration, de râles et de battements de cœur (qu'on pourrait baptiser *sons internes-objectifs*), que ses voix mentales, ses souvenirs, etc. (qu'on appellera *internes-subjectifs* ou *internes-mentaux*)."

There is still a difference with Chion's outlook, because the perspective we adopt in this paper does not imply, again, that the character is *conscious* of such a subjective music. We are only dealing with the relations between the character's feelings and this music in the filmic texture considered as a whole, noticeably because (as we shall see with the scene at the restaurant which is to be analyzed) the diegetic or non-diegetic quality of this music may vary tangentially.

17. Stam, in particular, emphasized a connection on this point between Buñuel and Hitchcock through the way "[e]ach creates an idiosyncratic universe crowded with self-referential icons: stairs, birds and lamps in Hitchcock; churches, bells and insects in Buñuel" (7).

ABSTRACTS

The musical dimension has always been presented by critics as an essential part of Hitchcock's narrative technique, with a view to showing how music works at emphasizing the suspense situations in his thrillers. This article tries to expand upon the complex, shifting role of music in the Hitchcock corpus by focusing on the case of *Vertigo* (1958), as a film which clearly makes use of musical references and repetitions as subjective landmarks pointing to the spectator's access to Scottie's psyche—hence as somewhat detached from the suspense-driven dramatic situations proper. Music can be related to the main character's reconstruction of Madeleine's image through Judy, but also appears as a possible expression of his hesitations and of the repression of this desire to recreate his dead lover. As such, it constitutes a potentially self-conscious part of the filmic discourse focused not only on the expression of characters' feelings but also on the necessary distance with them.

Les critiques de l'œuvre d'Hitchcock ont toujours considéré son utilisation de la musique comme une partie intégrale de sa technique narrative, ceci afin de montrer comment elle contribue à la tension dramatique dans ses films à suspense. Cet article tente de développer l'approche du rôle complexe et variable joué par la musique chez le réalisateur en concentrant l'étude sur *Sueurs froides* (1958), car il s'agit d'un film qui utilise des références musicales reprises tout au long du récit, afin de guider le spectateur dans son approche des mécanismes psychiques de Scottie, c'est-à-dire que cette utilisation de la musique est en partie détachée des situations de suspense en elles-mêmes. C'est ainsi que la musique du film renvoie à la reconstruction par Scottie de l'image de Madeleine à travers le personnage de Judy, mais elle exprime également ses doutes et le refoulement de ce désir de reconstruction. La musique constitue donc un élément potentiellement réflexif du récit, destiné non seulement à communiquer les sentiments du personnage mais aussi la distance qu'il importe pour le spectateur de conserver avec ces sentiments.

INDEX

Keywords: *Vertigo*, Hitchcock, music, repetition, difference, Gilles Deleuze, Michel Chion, mimesis, repression, memory, subjectivity

Mots-clés: *Sueurs froides*, Hitchcock, musique, répétition, différence, Gilles Deleuze, Michel Chion, mimétisme, refoulement, mémoire, subjectivité

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