Pecking at *Rebecca*: Character(istics)s of Manderley as Symbolised in Hitchcock's Hollywood Practices in *Rebecca*

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Abstract

The current paper begins with an examination of the relationship between the producer David O. Selznick and the director Alfred Hitchcock, making the case that there are parallels between their relationship and the unnamed protagonist and other characters in Hitchcock's first Hollywood feature, *Rebecca* (1940). It then explores some of the Freudian and Lacanian symbols within the film and how these can allude to character traits of the main protagonists.

Keywords: Hitchcock; Freud; Selznick; Symbolism; *Rebecca*

Resumo

O presente artigo começa com uma análise do relacionamento entre o produtor David O. Selznick, e o realizador Alfred Hitchcock, a fim de identificar os paralelos entre o seu relacionamento e a personagem anónima, bem como outras personagens, da primeira produção de Hollywood feita por Hitchcock, *Rebecca* (1940). O artigo explora também alguns dos símbolos Freudianos e Lacanianos presentes no filme e como estes fazem referência a traços das personalidades dos protagonistas.

Palavras-chave: Hitchcock; Freud; Selznick; Simbolismo; *Rebecca*

As there is such a prevalence of material on the filmmaker Alfred Hitchcock and his 53 feature films, the question has to be asked: "Is it possible to explore any new angles or offer new insights in films when there is a 'conspicuously large volume of criticism'

(Roberts 182)?" I believe it is, for a number of reasons. Also, almost from the beginning of his career, he was both a popular and, consequently, a high-profile director. That is to say, his name alone was enough to attract a cinema audience as well as critical and, later, academic attention.

However, quantity, longevity and popularity are not reasons enough to make Hitchcock still a filmmaker whose work merits prolonged attention. Yet, such is the quantity of material that has been produced about Hitchcock and his films that there is, as Slavoj Žižek calls it, an "acceptance that Hitchcock is a 'serious artist'" (*Everything you Wanted to Know about Lacan but Were Afraid to Ask Hitchcock* 10). If he were not a serious artist, a status about which he might have demurred, then his work would long ago have ceased to be of interest to academics and audiences alike. It is in the context of treating Hitchcock as a serious artist that the present article is written.

Maxim: I'm asking you to marry me, you little fool. (*Rebecca*)

It is necessary to consider Hitchcock's first film in Hollywood, not just from the perspective of inherent symbolism, but from the way his move to Hollywood initially affected his working practices. *Rebecca* was Hitchcock's first film under contract to David O. Selznick and the relationship between the two men was complicated. With this in mind, I would contend that we could consider the positions occupied by both men as being concomitant with *Rebecca's* unnamed and unknown protagonist, a newcomer to an established household, and Mrs. Danvers, the controlling element of that household. To describe the 40-year-old Hitchcock as an unknown ingénue and the 38-year-old Selznick as a jealous, controlling individual might be considered inappropriate. Yet there are certain similarities that can be explored.

The first is the building that Selznick used for his productions: Selznick International, which Leff describes as follows: "Separated from Washington Boulevard by an expanse of verdant lawn and manicured hedge, Selznick International's colonnaded administration building resembled a wealthy Southern planter's home" (4). Thus, this elegant building, which is shown before the credits of films produced by Selznick, can be said to be a stand in for Manderley. I would suggest that part of the purpose for such a custom-built edifice[1] would be to impress and intimidate, just as the female protagonist is impressed and intimidated by Manderley. Truffaut refers to this when questioning Hitchcock about the making of *Rebecca*:

> Truffaut: Anyway, this was your first American project and I imagine you must have felt a little intimidated at the idea of undertaking it.
> Hitchcock: Well, not exactly, because in fact it's a completely British picture: the story, the actors and the director were all English. (Truffaut 128)

While Hitchcock brushes a valid question aside with his usual aplomb, his answer is disingenuous. It is true that the story, most of the actors, and Hitchcock were English, but this only reveals part of the story. Firstly, the crew, equipment and production methods were American, and this was a system he was entirely unfamiliar with. Furthermore, in Selznick, he had a producer who unlike Michael Balcon, for example, took a great and interventive interest in every aspect of the filmmaking process. Leff confirms this: "At Selznick International, however, David Selznick influenced everything that he touched, and he touched almost everything" (4). Thus, Selznick can be seen as an equivalent to Mrs. Danvers who ran every aspect of Manderley. Considering this, Spoto's comments on Hitchcock's usual approach to scriptwriting are relevant:

> This was how he had prepared his English films, and he foresaw no reason to alter his carefully thought out, economical, and visually arresting approach. Balcon, Black, and even Maxwell had not much interfered with this method, and Hitchcock did not expect interference from Selznick. This was his biggest and most unfortunate presumption. (Spoto 212-3)

At this nascent stage in his Hollywood career, Hitchcock was ingenuous in the assumptions he made. Furthermore, it suggests a lack of preparedness in his knowledge of Selznick and his working practices and contradicts what he wrote in 1937: "But it is being realised today that there must be one man at the helm. That man should be the producer. He should see the picture through from beginning to end. He must know all sides of the business and be a complete technician" (Gottlieb 183). It is somewhat ironic that only two years later, Hitchcock would be working for a man who precisely complies with his description and, eventually, causes Hitchcock much resentment.

Another point which suggests, if not naivety, then desperation on Hitchcock's part is the very contract he signed to work for Selznick. Leff describes aspects of the contract in the following three quotations:

> Examining this revised contract some time later, Hitchcock's business advisor called it "replete with provisions unfavourable to Hitchcock and advantageous to Selznick";

> the director himself would later come to regard it as a collar that rubbed and choked. In March 1939, however, with no pending offers from Zanuck or his peers, Hitchcock eagerly signed the amended contract. (35)
>
> By contract, Hitchcock had agreed to render his services "pursuant to Producer's directions, instructions and control." (51)
>
> His contract, after all, negated his claims of authorship. (56)

These quotations reveal certain interesting points. To the modern day reader, it might seem surprising that there were no other offers for Hitchcock's services from America in the late 1930s. However, the filmmaking world was very different then and while Hitchcock was the premiere British filmmaker, his reputation was very much a national one, with his films, in America, enjoying only limited audiences, and thus, more importantly, revenue. Leff states: "Selznick International and the other companies knew that Hitchcock had a small but loyal audience" (21).

The signing of a foreign director with limited box office draw in America would be considered a great risk in an industry that was focused on making money rather than artistic statements. It is therefore not surprising that Hitchcock gratefully signed a contract which restricted his artistic freedom. However, in retrospect, Hitchcock resented the contract and this resulting resentment we can interpret as being the result of an initial naivety when he signed it. This naivety also extends to the working practices in American studios. Leff notes:

> As he blocked the scene contrary to Selznick's design, Hitchcock received a memorandum in which Selznick criticised him for not following directions.
> Hitchcock felt ambushed "You're supposed to working with me, for me," he told Lydia Schiller, who had reported his deviation to her employer. . . . . . The response shows . . . his naiveté: every American studio maintained what Preston Sturges called a "News Gathering Service". (Leff 68-9)

Selznick's reputation for what could positively be interpreted as "creative input" or negatively interpreted as "meddling" is well documented. However, it is not surprising that, in a system where the producer and not the director was considered the main creative force and, most importantly the financing force, producers would view their directors as assets that needed to be controlled.

This, in particular, would apply to a first-time director in the Hollywood system and thus one who had not proved himself within that system. McGilligan confirms this:

> He moved to Hollywood, he said later, fully realising he was "a minor figure in a vast film industry made up of entrepreneurs who headed the studios." It was a system dominated by producers, not directors, and by the stars under studio contract who reigned at the box office. (233)

Hitchcock's comments resonate with the benefit of hindsight of a successful man. I would suggest, however, that Hitchcock, like his female protagonist, was underprepared for the Manderley of Hollywood he was walking into, particularly the controlling influence of Mrs. Danvers, otherwise known as David O. Selznick.

"I": Last night I dreamt I went to Manderley again. (*Rebecca*)

Rebecca tells the story of a woman with a body but no name attempting to understand and replace a woman with a name but no body. It is also the story of a living woman without a voice who tries to find her voice by competing against the memory of a dead woman with a voice who needs to be silenced. Within this battle lies the first problem that needs to be discussed. How should the character with a body but no name or voice, as in the sense of personality, be addressed?

The lack of a name makes her difficult to write about, since we cannot follow the normal conventions of stating the character's name followed by, in brackets, the actor playing them. If the title, the second Mrs. De Winter, is used then the character is reduced to the level of property. Whereas, if we use the name "Joan Fontaine", each time this central character is mentioned, then it imbues too much of the actress Joan Fontaine into the character she is playing.

This article will be using the form of address "I" to refer to her as a character in the film. This is being done for three reasons. In the screenplay, after originally using the name Daphne, which Selznick disapproved of, for obvious reasons given the name of the author of the source material, the name "I" was used. Secondly, and related to the concerns of this article, the name "I" clearly positions the character as the psychoanalytic concept of the ego. Finally, the opening voiceover includes nine first person subject pronouns and five uses of the first person object pronoun[2] suggesting that the film is primarily concerned with the ego of one individual.

The last line of the opening monologue is also interesting since it is explicitly positioning the film which follows it to being a representation of a dream. The film should be considered then as a depiction of a dream and "I"'s absence of a name is, therefore, a symbolic depiction in the dream of the crisis in "I"'s fragile ego. Freud supports this: "It has been my experience – and to this I have found no exception – that

every dream treats of oneself. Dreams are absolutely egoistic" (*The Interpretation of Dreams* 206). Thus, "I" is the dreamer of the film and we should seek representations of her Id and Superego in *Rebecca*. These can be easily found, and some examples will be examined below.

In fact, a first-time viewer who is unfamiliar with the book the film is based on would logically make the assumption that the bodiless voice heard is Rebecca herself. Equally logically they would carry this interpretation into the first scene of the film when "I" is seen for the first time. It is only when Mrs. Van Hopper[3] informs her (and us) that Maxim had married Rebecca that we divorce ourselves from this notion. As a result, this situation causes discomfort. Since the woman is denied the most basic unit of identity, which a child identifies with before gender, race, class or religion, she becomes a blank canvas to be filled in by those around her, a mere cipher. She becomes the ingénue in search of a personality. The events of the film depict the discovery of that personality.

The opening voiceover serves two other purposes, which reveal the sense of discomfort to be false. Firstly, it reveals that "I" will survive the events of the film as, at this stage in Hollywood history, voiceovers convey factual elements. Furthermore, the content, in contrast to "I"'s personality in the film, is the voice of an assured, eloquent woman, thus suggesting that "I" learns from the events of the film. As such, the opening monologue defuses any suspense which may have been achieved in the film.

Mrs. Danvers: It's not only in this room. It's in all the rooms of the house. (*Rebecca*)

Hitchcock noted of *Rebecca* in his extended interview with François Truffaut that: "In a sense the picture is the story of a house. The house was one of three key characters of the picture" (Truffaut 131). This leads to two questions, the first of which is, are there only three key characters in the film? The simple answer is "no". There are five: "I", the creator of the previously referred to dream; Rebecca, a symbol shifting effortlessly between the Id, Superego and Real; Manderley, the Superego constructed to exemplify duty; Mrs. Danvers, the male Superego, and Maxim, the female Superego. The interaction of "I" and the other four characters will now be discussed, with the first one being the character Hitchcock identified in the aforementioned quote.

Manderley is certainly a clear representation of the Superego, since it is the construct within which orders are given. Freud states:

> The super-ego is, however, not merely a deposit left by the earliest object-choices of the id; it also represents an energetic reaction-formation against these choices. Its relation is not exhausted by the precept, "You ought to be such and such (like your father)."
>
> It also comprises the prohibition, "You must not be such and such (like your father); that is, you may not do all that he does; many things are his prerogative." (*The Ego and The Id* 39)

On her first morning at Manderley, "I" is instructed of her duties by her husband, Frith and Mrs. Danvers. These duties involve nothing more taxing than moving between certain rooms in Manderley at specific times of the day so that the order of the Other is maintained. Thus, letters are written in the morning room after breakfast and the fire is lit in the library after lunch and orders are dispatched to the unseen gardener of a garden that is never shown. "I" complies with these demands of the Superego, not through an understanding of them but because her ego is overpowered by them. As Freud notes: "We see this same ego as a poor creature owing service to three masters and consequently menaced by three dangers: from the external world, from the libido of the id, and from the severity of the super-ego" (*The Ego and The Id* 81). This description precisely describes "I" in *Rebecca* with, as will be seen, the Superego and Id being externalised in this dream world.

However, Freud's description of the Superego, while referring to the father, can also be said to be a description of Rebecca herself, who is a shifting signifier. "I" is perpetually reminded in what ways she is not like her and in what ways she ought to be like her. Thus, Rebecca is also a mother figure to "I" and, because she is an absent mother, is as terrifying as the absent mother in *Psycho* since both the viewer and "I" imagine her to be everything "I" is not, in terms of compliance with the demands of the Superego. It is only when Maxim reveals the true nature of her character that we and "I" realise that she truly is everything "I" is not. In fact, what Rebecca is shown to be is a Symbolic depiction of rampant Id. An Id that is concerned only with servicing its own pleasures which are so heinous that Maxim "will never tell another living soul" (*Rebecca*) what they are.

The fact that Maxim will never tell another living soul, thus refusing to give Rebecca Symbolic representation beyond her name, also leaves her firmly in the realm of the Real. Samuels suggests that:

> Lacan argues that we negate the Real by representing it and that this act of Symbolic destruction or murder is at the root of all our unconscious guilt. In Hitchcock's films, we find a clear illustration of this connection between our acts and our killing off of the Real. (1)

Thus "I", who herself contains elements of the Real, since she has no Symbolic name from the Other, reacts to Rebecca as if she was a physical presence, receiving diverse opinions about her to build up a mental construction of the person who is not there. The audience does the same, but each and every construction will be completely different. Thus, the Real of Rebecca escapes capture. Or as Žižek puts it in his book *Event*: "As such, the Real can only be discerned in its traces, effects or aftershocks" (120). It is, therefore, with the derelict Manderley that we are confronted with at the beginning of the film that we experience the traces, effects and aftershocks of the Symbolic remains of the Real Rebecca represents. It is only with the destruction of Manderley that Rebecca and her alter-ego Mrs Danvers are destroyed and reduced to traces and effects.

Mrs. Danvers and Maxim are interesting characters in that they are inverted versions of traditional depictions of the requirements of the Superego. It is Maxim, upon his marriage to Rebecca who states that he was, "tremendously conscious of the family honour" (*Rebecca*). I would suggest that, within the strictures of upper-class family being depicted, this consciousness is a feminine requisite. Traditionally, the errant male's behaviour is tolerated, expected, and then covered up. This indicates that Rebecca is the embodiment of this male behaviour, as Maxim does all three in his relationship with Rebecca. Furthermore, Maxim, when he says, "But I never had a moment's happiness with her. She was incapable of love or tenderness or decency", he is voicing typically female worries about male behaviour.

In addition, his constant chiding of "I"'s behaviour, whether it be to tell her to stop biting her nails or to eat up like a good girl or to wear a mackintosh because, "You can't be too careful with the children" (*Rebecca*) are commands that depict the Superego. However, these are commands that can be considered as ones which the traditional mother figure would make, since the father would be concerned with other issues.

On the other hand, Mrs. Danvers' concerns are masculine. She is the character that "I" fears, not because she represents the Superego from a female perspective, but because she offers the perspective of "wait till your father gets home" (*Rebecca*), with the threat of punishment traditionally dispensed by the father. She is, initially, the ultimate masculine voice of the Other as a controlling force in the film.

This can be seen in the scene where the discovery that the statuette has been broken. "I" pleads with Maxim, as the mother, to confess her misdemeanour to Mrs. Danvers, as the father, and so act as a mediating force in the face of the Other. It should also be remembered that, within the context of the film, Maxim's responsibilities are unseen as they take place outside of the field of battle: Manderley. This makes them unimportant and, perhaps, traditionally female in their nature.

Maxim: You would like a bridal veil. Or at least. . . (*Rebecca*)

The line above is spoken immediately after Maxim and "I"'s marriage. Upon realising that their marriage might have lacked something for his young bride, Maxim buys all the carnations available at a conveniently placed flower seller and deposits them on "I"'s lap. This is significant for two reasons. The first is that their unarranged state, in keeping with Freudian symbolism, is suggestive of "I"'s unexplored sexuality, which is further indicated by Maxim depositing them in her lap. Secondly, the carnations which Maxim buys, while innocuous in terms of symbolic content to a British or American audience, are for Eastern European audiences a flower associated with the death of a loved one. This, inadvertently, evokes the figure of the dead Rebecca.

Flowers are further developed as a symbolic element within the film and one of which the makers were aware. Leff notes:

> Selznick had trimmed some dialogue in which Mrs. Danvers speaks of maintaining flowers in Rebecca's room; the line in question was, as Selznick argued, "Silly" and the idea could more economically be conveyed by simply placing fresh flowers in the scene's opening shot. (69)

While economical, I would suggest that Selznick was incorrect in this decision. The only remaining reference to flowers in the screenplay is made by Beatrice in passing when she says that Mrs. Danvers must have learnt her flower arranging from Rebecca. The line, which is important as it indicates Rebecca's skilled manipulation of her sexuality, if we accept that flowers are symbolic of female sexuality, loses significance as it is uttered by a minor character. By eradicating dialogue for one of the central characters as a means of indicating symbolic content, the causal viewer would merely interpret the flowers as a decorative element of the mise-en-scène and so disregard them from being visual clues indicating psychological depth.

As a result, the simple flower arrangements in "I"'s own room in comparison to the more complex ones in Rebecca's room, as suggestive of Mrs. Danver's attitude towards both characters, would be overlooked. Leff, however, correctly suggests:

> Hitchcock used the flowers even more tellingly. Danvers reverently holds out Rebecca's black nightgown and asks "I" whether she has seen anything "so delicate": the young woman stands frame left, her face mottled by the spindly shadows of the cut flowers as though entrapped by all that Rebecca meant to those at Manderley. (71)

This is, of course, a multi-faceted shot. Firstly, we have the frequently commented upon lesbian undertones of Mrs. Danver's treatment of the negligee. Secondly, at this stage in the film, the "so delicate" is an accurate description of "I"'s mental state. Finally, the shadows of the flowers develop the metaphor which has been introduced, albeit because of Selznick, not at the level of the text, throughout the film.

There is one final example that indicates that flowers should be treated as a serious thematic element in the film. It occurs during Rebecca's point of view shot in the seaside cottage while Maxim reveals the events leading up to her death. The camera, filming Rebecca's absent perspective, concentrates on the empty sofa and the filled ashtray. It then tilts up and pans slowly left before eventually focusing on Maxim. Within the pan, the camera views two vases full of dead flowers in front of a picture of a sailing vessel. These dead stems of flowers, due to the symbolic value already established in the film, clearly indicate the shrivelling female influence of Rebecca's Real, Id, and Superego on the ingenuous "I". Furthermore, the combination of the two vases of dead flowers and the picture of the sailing boat foreshadows Maxim's confession as to what he did with Rebecca's body by scuttling her boat. This scuttling leads to a further symbolic element which needs to be considered: the sea.

Mrs. Danvers: Listen to the sea. So soothing. (*Rebecca*)

The first point to note is that the sea is linked, at both the level of the script and through the mise-en-scène, to Rebecca's bedroom. Mrs. Danvers first introduces the room in the following manner: "That room in the west wing I was telling you about is there through that door. . . . . . The most beautiful room in the house. The only one that looks down across the lawns to the sea. It was Mrs. de Winter's room" (*Rebecca*). What is of note in this speech is that the words "beautiful", and "Mrs. De Winters" reinforce the impression the audience have already formed of Rebecca, but now deepen our apparent understanding of the character to include her taste. However, the key reference in the speech is that made to the sea.

Mrs. Danvers makes the above speech in a long shot from the end of the corridor leading to it where we see the ornate doors guarded by Jasper, the family

dog, making his first appearance. Unusually for Hitchcock and his normally positive treatment of dogs, Jasper's initial presence is perceived by "I" and the audience as threatening. Perhaps Hitchcock has intentionally done this so as to allude to Greek mythology and Cerberus guarding the gates of Hades.

After this initial, cursory, introduction to Rebecca's room, "I" enters the bedroom on two occasions and each of the visits ends with a reference to the sea. Her first entrance is the much-discussed scene in which Mrs. Danvers describes Rebecca getting ready for bed. This scene begins with a reverse tracking shot of "I" approaching Rebecca's door. This camera movement is suggestive of the spirit of Rebecca retreating before the advancement of "I" and is similar to the camera's evocation of mother in *Notorious*. This view is supported if we notice that Mrs. Danvers herself believes that Rebecca comes back from the dead to watch the living.

After entering the room, "I" is faced with a floor-to-ceiling-length veiled curtain which effectively divides the room into a (semi-) public and private space. The film cuts to the other side of this veil to see "I" enter Rebecca's private world. The gauze serves a further purpose than merely to divide the space. It also obfuscates what is either side of it since we can only see the outlines of objects and not details. In this respect, this veil is also in effect a screen, if we take into account McGowan's discussion of what Lacan means by a screen:

> One looks at a movie screen and sees images on the screen, but a screen in front of someone prevents one from seeing her or him. Lacan's conception of the screen is paradoxical: it "hides the real" when it functions as a site for seeing, but it "indicates" the real through the act of blocking what the subject can see. (McGowan 71)

This notion of obscuring the Real rather than revealing it is given further credence by Mrs. Danvers in her speech, apparently giving details of Rebecca's night-time preparations. What she is actually doing, in her lovingly obsessive depiction of Rebecca's bedtime preparations, is exacerbating "I"'s and, at this stage, the audience's, misunderstanding of Rebecca. In so doing, she acts to block what "I" can see, or rather, perceive of Rebecca. This screening through the use of the Symbolic realm of language only emphasises the Real.

In fact, Mrs. Danvers can be said to be Rebecca incarnate in the film, particularly in the two bedroom scenes. Rebecca's malevolence, as it is finally revealed, is manifest in Mrs. Danvers, almost from her first appearance. What we therefore have in Mrs. Danvers is a representation of the personality of Rebecca, while

others describe her physical beauty, which of course we don't see. If we regard Mrs. Danvers as a depiction of Rebecca's personality, then her love of Rebecca, is not simply the attraction of one woman to another, but also allusive of Rebecca's narcissism.

This notion is given credence if we consider how, according to Mrs. Danvers, Rebecca would laugh at them all, suggestive of a person who sees herself as superior to those around her. This I would assert is an illustration of Rebecca's and, through inference, Mrs. Danvers' megalomania which Freud links to narcissism in his eponymously-titled essay in the following manner: "This megalomania has no doubt come into being at the expense of object-libido. The libido that has been withdrawn from the external world has been directed to the ego and thus gives rise to an attitude which may be called narcissism" (Freud, *On Narcissism* 5). This narcissism is reflected in the fact that Mrs. Danvers' comments during this first visit are all to do with Rebecca's appearance and are consistent with what Joan Copjec states in "The Orthopsychic Subject: Film Theory and the Reception of Lacan": "The subject's narcissistic relation to the self is seen to conflict with and disrupt other social relations" (Stam *et al*. 442). Mrs. Danvers and Rebecca's narcissism serves precisely the purpose of disrupting "I"'s understanding just as Mrs. Danvers is in almost open conflict with "I" as soon as she arrives at Manderley.

The first bedroom scene ends with the audience being given the first clue, not just to Mrs. Danvers' burgeoning madness, but also to Rebecca's duplicitous nature. After Mrs. Danvers has uttered the words, "Listen to the sea. It's so soothing" (*Rebecca*) words which drive a tearful "I" out of the room, Hitchcock has a dissolve shot of a violent sea crashing against the shore. This is a relatively common Hitchcock symbol to represent extreme emotion[4] and here it serves, I would propose, three symbolic purposes. Firstly, through the juxtaposition of words and image, it alludes to Mrs. Danvers' delusional state. Secondly, it is the first indication that, contrary to Mrs. Danvers' description of her, Rebecca is not a soothing force of nature. Finally, this shot of the sea can also be said to represent "I"'s emotional state, since the shot of the sea dissolves into a shot of "I" tearful at her desk.

"I" enters Rebecca's bedroom on one other occasion and the sea is once more prominent: after her humiliating entrance at the ball, to confront Mrs. Danvers, who goads "I" into considering suicide. Tania Modleski comments on how the camera moves in this shot in the following manner: "The culminating instance of this backward movement occurs when Mrs. Danvers attempts to persuade her to jump out of the window to her death, and the camera, placed outside the window, begins to move

away as if inviting her and luring her to her doom" (45). While Modleski has rightly argued that, throughout the early part of the film, Hitchcock shoots "I" beginning in close up and then zooming or tracking out, so as to emphasise her feeling of psychic claustrophobia in close up moving to the long shot to express her isolation, I would claim that in the present example, Modleski's interpretation can be taken a degree further.

It has been suggested above that Rebecca's initial approach to the room, which was filmed in a reverse tracking shot, could be interpreted as the camera metaphorically being the spirit of Rebecca recoiling away. In this context, this final shot "luring her to her doom" (Modleski 45) mirrors the former shot and it is the spirit of Rebecca through the camera which is luring "I". Yet it is the sea, and, I would suggest, in this case, contrary to Michael Walker's assertion that "Water – especially the sea – is most often a source of threat" (388), which rescues "I" from the clutches of Rebecca and her physical manifestation, Mrs. Danvers. In the very next shot the camera reverts to a point of view shot of the flare announcing a ship on the rocks, which breaks the spell Mrs. Danvers has over "I". Thus, the sea, which Mrs. Danvers erroneously thinks has killed Rebecca and yet entirely in keeping with her deluded rationale, through the grounding of the ship and the consequent discovery of Rebecca's body, begins the process which leads to "I" becoming more mature. In addition, Rebecca is revealed as being absent in body, morals and any notion of love or empathy, someone whose interests were purely narcissistic.

Frith: I'm afraid the fire is not usually lit in the library till the afternoon. (*Rebecca*)

Fireplaces in *Rebecca*, due to their large size and frequency of appearance, can be interpreted symbolically as well. That Freud interpreted the symbol of the fireplace as representing female genitalia should not be considered coincidental in Hitchcock's filming of them, either in this film or other Hitchcock films.

The symbol of the fireplace is shown on three occasions. The first of which is when "I" enters the library on the morning after her arrival at Manderley. The room is obviously cold, as the windows are open and "I" is not just cold but lost. We see the fireplace fully loaded with logs waiting to be lit. Frith informs her, as the introductory line for this segment indicates, that, while the option is open to her, the fire is not normally lit at this time of day. This should be interpreted beyond the realm of the Superego and should be considered as a reference to her and Maxim's relationship at this time: the passion they wish to express should not be expressed at this time, as it is inappropriate due to unresolved issues.

The fireplace next makes a symbolic appearance during Maxim's confession at the cottage. Here, the symbolism refers to a different character. The empty cobwebbed fireplace is here a representation of Rebecca's barren sexuality, due to her death. The cobwebs on the fireplace also, however, symbolise Maxim being influenced by the past and his inability to move forward with "I".

Nevertheless, his speech in this scene is cathartic, not just from his point of view, but from "I"'s, as it leads to her assuming control of Manderley, albeit temporarily, with the yin and yang of Rebecca and Mrs. Danvers nearly defeated. As "I" descends the staircase of Manderley, after the confession scene, she is dressed more like Mrs. Danvers and Frith's attitude towards her is supportive, not just of her, but more importantly, the family she now represents. Upon meeting her in the library Maxim comments: "I can't forget what it's done to you. I killed that when I told you about Rebecca. In a few hours you have grown so much older" (*Rebecca*).

This murder was necessary, though, for the film is not just an exploration of a malevolent influence, but more importantly a rites of passage, the story of a girl growing into a woman and having to face adult responsibilities. It is at this point that, in an action that flaunts P.C.A. regulations, "I" and Maxim kiss properly and continually for eleven seconds. This kiss is framed under an arch, which is a Freudian symbol of unity. Yet the arch behind the kissing couple a fire burns in the fireplace. This not only foreshadows the final burning of Manderley and the removal of Mrs. Danvers but is an explicit symbol of the euphemism: the fire that has been lit between them.

Maxim: I hated her. (*Rebecca*)

Rebecca is a film which suffers from two steps forward and two steps back. Selznick was responsible for all four steps. His intrusion at the level of the script probably robbed the film of the typical Hitchcock humour, of which only a few examples remain. One is Beatrice's comment on teeth needing to be removed, as they are troublesome things, which echoes a similar reference in *Young and Innocent* and *The Man Who Knew Too Much*. The second is the policeman's bizarrely muttered swearing in of the witness at the coroner's hearing, as if to suggest that justice was an unwritten rule that did not need voicing.

Furthermore, the editing in the film, which Hitchcock largely stayed away from, apart from the sequence in the cottage discussed above, is less reliant on Hitchcock's "editing in the camera"[5] and more reliant on multiple takes from different angles. This allowed Selznick to tinker with the footage to select whichever particular

emphasis he wanted to achieve.

However, Selznick involvement gave Hitchcock's work a depth he had previously lacked. As Leff notes: "Hitchcock's British pictures lurched from one big moment to the next, the characters riding the roller coaster of the plot; Selznick helped bring mood, seamless continuity, and psychological nuance to the director's work" (82). While Hitchcock's film still had the roller coaster ride moments, his characters became more flawed and thus, psychologically deeper and more interesting.

Finally, the inevitable consequence of signing to Selznick and moving to America was that it gave Hitchcock access to the best of everything. This includes actors, equipment, filmmaking professionals and scriptwriters. These, in conjunction with more psychologically flawed characters, vastly improve the quality of Hitchcock's films from then on.

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[1] The building was initially used as a set by Thomas Ince and then converted by Cecil B. DeMille.

[2] The full opening monologue is as follows: "Last night I dreamt I went to Manderley again. It seemed to me I stood by the iron-gate leading to the drive and for a while, I could not enter for the way was barred to me. Then, like all dreamers, I was possessed all of a sudden with supernatural powers and passed through the barrier before me.
The drive wound away in front of me, twisting and turning as it always had done, but as I advanced, I was aware that a change had come upon it. Nature had come into her own again and little by little had encroached upon the drive with long tenacious fingers.
On and on wound the poor thread that had once been our drive and finally, there was Manderley. Manderley, secretive and silent – time could not mar the perfect symmetry of those walls.
Moonlight can play odd tricks upon the fancy and suddenly it seemed to me that light came from the windows and then a cloud came upon the moon and hovered an instant like a dark hand before a face. The illusion went with it. I looked upon a desolate shell with no whisper of the past about its staring walls. We can never go back to Manderley again, that much is certain. But sometimes, in my dreams, I go back to those strange days of my life, which began for me in the South of France" (*Rebecca*).

[3] Mrs. Van Hopper is the prototype of the aging libidinous widow Uncle Charlie exploits in *Shadow of a Doub*t. In fact, his description could have been written with Mrs. Van Hopper in mind: "And what do the wives do, these useless women? You see them in the hotels, the best hotels, every day by the thousands, drinking the money, eating the money, losing the money at bridge, playing all day and all night, smelling of money, proud of their jewelry but of nothing else, horrible, faded, fat, greedy women. . . Are they human or are they fat, wheezing animals, hmm?" (*Rebecca*).

[4] Examples of this can be seen in *Suspicion* and *Vertigo*.

[5] The strategy by which Hitchcock's storyboarding foresaw every camera position thus making filming more economical and assembling the final film more straightforward.