



Everything You Always Wanted to Know about Lacan (But Were Afraid to Ask Hitchcock)

Slavoj Žižek (Editor, Contributor) , Fredric Jameson (Contributor) , Pascal Bonitzer (Contributor) , Miran Božovič (Contributor) , Michel Chion (Contributor) , Mladen Dolar (Contributor) , Stojan Pelko (Contributor) , Renata Salecl (Contributor) , more... Alenka Zupančič (Contributor) ...less

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Hitchcock is placed on the analyst's couch in this extraordinary volume of case studies, as its contributors bring to bear an unrivalled enthusiasm and theoretical sweep on the entire Hitchcock oeuvre, from *Rear Window* to *Psycho*, as an exemplar of 'postmodern' defamiliarization. Starting from the premise that 'everything has meaning', the films' ostensible narrative content and formal procedures are analysed to reveal a rich proliferation of ideological and psychical mechanisms at work. But Hitchcock is here to lure the reader into 'serious' Marxist and Lacanian considerations on the construction of meaning. Timely, provocative and original, this is sure to become a landmark of Hitchcock studies.

Everything You Always Wanted to Know about Lacan (But Were Afraid to Ask Hitchcock) Details

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From Reader Review Everything You Always Wanted to Know about Lacan (But Were Afraid to Ask Hitchcock) for online ebook

Al Bità says

As far as I can work out, this book brings together eight writers (the list of contributors at the back lists nine, but one seems to have slipped away in my 2010 edition of this 1992 work) in an attempt to apply Lacanian psychology to the works of Alfred Hitchcock. It presumes an awareness and familiarity with Lacan's work, as well as a pretty thorough knowledge of Hitchcock's works, or at least, those which the authors select for special comment. Some of the writers are more forthcoming than others in their work.

Personally I find this sort of 'analysis' almost impenetrable, suffused as it is with much jargon, most of which is not elaborated upon; some of which is presented in increasingly attenuated 'meaning' as to render its use meaningless, as far as I am concerned. One example is the use of the word 'gaze'. It is used mostly as a noun: 'the gaze', but is so qualified that it starts to become many things: a look, a stare, a glance, an application which examines the 'gaze' of the camera as opposed to the audience; the 'gaze' of the characters in the films (or is it Hitchcock's 'gaze'?), etc., and before you know it, even objects have a 'gaze': the windows in 'Rear Window' gaze at the other side of the set, just as the audience 'gazes' at them gazing; and the windows opposite, especially that of the murderer, suddenly 'gazes back' at us... In analysing a scene in 'The Wrong Man' when the protagonist is arguing with his increasingly disturbed wife, who throws an object at a mirror, cracking it, Hitchcock inserts a front-on shot of Henry Fonda's face reflected through the cracked mirror, so that it splits Fonda's face in two. The author asks who is this shot the 'gaze' of?, and after eliminating the only two characters in the scene, ends up stating that the 'gaze' is obviously and can only be that of the lamp in the background. Surely this way lies madness!

There are many other such examples throughout the texts. I found myself disagreeing with just about every single statement in the book (assuming that I actually understood what on earth was being written!). This type of highly self-reflective, self-defining writing hardly lends itself to acceptance by an outsider. One finds oneself in a forest of words which seem to be regular English, but eventually changes shape and meaning, effectively losing the normal reader in side-tracks, associations, literary, scientific, psychological, cultural, artistic, mathematical — whatever takes your fancy — references which confound rather than illuminate. And this is particularly disturbing when some of these references one might know a little about don't seem to be very good examples at all: e.g. at one point one of the authors is talking about a Moebius Band and uses this to 'illuminate' the scenes from the Shower Scene murder in 'Psycho' where it was noticed that the blood flows in one way down the drain, but flows in the opposite direction when superimposed on the eye of the victim. This is to be understood as moving from one side of the Moebius Band to the other side through/from the drain/eye. It seems to suggest some kind of 'wormhole' one might find in Science Fiction. Trouble is, the Moebius Band doesn't have 'another' side: the strange topography of this object is precisely that it has only one side! So presumably, going from 'one side' to the 'other side' is the same as saying it doesn't go anywhere... it's still on the same side...

My conclusion: this is lunacy writ large. It certainly does not tell one anything about Lacan's take on psychology (by the way, can 'psychology' (the 'study of the soul') be meaningfully applied to an inert object such as a film?) and ultimately is hardly revealing about either Hitchcock or his films.

Betsy says

Stunning parallels are drawn between the semiotician/philosopher/psychoanalyst and the director! You will not be able to watch certain scenes again without remembering the symbolic undertones. A must for any Hitchcock fan who understands the basis of Lacan's mirror stage theory! :)

Iris says

Like his "sublime object", Zizek's genius is hard to grasp and even harder to articulate but somehow that doesn't obfuscate the delightful experience of reading this book.

Marco Tulio says

Verdaderamente divertido, panorámico sin ser superficial, del tipo de libro que uno lo deja pensando que ha conseguido una llave de acceso importante a una realidad importante (el cine de Hitchcock).

Pablo Snazzy says

ugh. This was ok. interesting, but so dry and academic i could barely take it. i found a perverse pleasure in reading this, like i was doing something great, like going to the gym for my brain. yeah, i learned some stuff and it made me think about things and that was cool, but honestly it often, more than not, seemed like they were really really trying to force Lacanian thought on Hitchcock's movies. They really seemed to make more out of the movies, read into the movies, than they needed to or should, just to prove their point.

i like Zizek, i didn't realize he edited this, i thought he wrote this. my mistake.

i wouldn't recommend this.

M.moore says

Still don't like Hitchcock films..

Jessica says

Zizek makes me laugh, but Lacanian psychoanalysis *and* this book both need to go die in a fire.

Crystal Vales says

Not exceedingly clear, Zizek is at times pedantic and obscure in his references, but the context of Hitchcock's thrillers helps to make his arguments more worthwhile.

Christopher Roberts says

I have read a lot of analysis on Hitchcock and this is the most dull by far. There really isn't much more I can say about it. Nearly every essay takes the least interesting approach to its subject. If you are more interested in Lacan than Hitchcock you might fare better.
