"I look up, I look down" Vertigo In Alfred Hitchcock's *Rebecca*

4

Richárd Hajdú

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Abstract

The present paper demonstrates that "vertigo" is the central theme at the core of Alfred Hitchcock's films. Vertiginous obsessions dominate all of his movies. In Hitchcock's career the decisive moment was 1938, the year when he signed a contract to work in Hollywood. He had to prove that he was able to shoot his movies according to the Hollywood conventions. Although we should bear in mind throughout the argument that Hitchcock was only able to talk absolutely freely about his main theme only after he had become a centrally important figure of the Hollywood studio system, the aim of the paper is to prove that he managed to talk about vertiginous obsessions, his potentially controversial main theme, even in his first Hollywood piece, *Rebecca*.

Keywords: *vertigo, obsession, Hollywood studio conventions, controversy*

1. Introduction

In this paper, I interpret Hitchcock movies from a specific point of view. According to my claim, in each and every Hitchcock movie "vertigo" is the centre of action. "Vertigo" is used throughout the argument in the sense that it is a term with the help of which we can describe vertiginous obsessions. Hitchcock's movies focus on obsessions: characters desire to achieve something and their desires start to dominate their lives. Desires might lead

characters to a happy ending, as in the Hitchcock romances, or to death and sorrow, as in his anti-romantic pieces.

The film has a special place in Hitchcock's *oeuvre*. *Rebecca* (1940) was his first film shot in the Hollywood studio system. As all the other Hitchcock movies, it deals with "vertigo", but has to do so in a very subtle way as Hitchcock could not risk a clash with the Hollywood conventions so early in his American career. Only after he had become an undisputed central figure of the Hollywood studio system, did Hitchcock have the possibility to fully communicate his major theme to the audience. The concept of "vertigo" stood at the centre of his world view. In 1940, he had to do everything in accordance with Hollywood conventions. Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca* (1938) contained some hints that Max de Winter and his second wife would not be entirely happy at the end of the story. As I will come back to it in my analysis, these hints were the following: Max murdered Rebecca, his first wife and aimed at committing suicide; and, after the fire, which destroyed their ancestral home, Manderley, Max and the second Mrs. de Winter did not manage to free themselves from the shadows of the past. Hitchcock's main task was to eliminate these references from the film to be able to create a movie with a happy ending. I argue that Hitchcock, while adapting to the Hollywood system, managed to get through the message: the couple would not be happy in the end. The failure of romance in *Rebecca* has to do with the fact that the characters are obsessed with the "wrong object": everyone desires "to be a man in Manderley."

I analyze the movie concentrating on the representations of "vertigo." My aim is to show that Hitchcock had a strong personality, that he was able to talk about "his own theme" even when he entered the Hollywood studio system as a newcomer. Of course, only the germs of his favourite theme can be detected in *Rebecca*. With the help of this movie and others up to the end of the 1950's, Hitchcock was able to achieve such a prominent status that he could talk about the issue of "vertigo" explicitly in his last couple of movies.

2. Discussion

2.1 Hitchcock Goes to Hollywood

Alfred Hitchcock always kept in mind that he made movies for people to entertain them. He was about to introduce his films to as many people as possible. His ideal was to work for an international audience. His dream came

true when in 1938 an American producer, David O. Selznick, offered him a Hollywood contract.

In case of Hitchcock movies a certain desire can be understood under the term vertigo: a desire that gradually starts to dominate the characters' lives. The characters become too obsessed with this desire. Something attracts them but when they think over what the object of their desire is, they are horrified and at the same time repelled by the very same object. As an example of this very unique feeling let us consider the opening sequence of *Rebecca*. At first, the heroine is almost mesmerized when she describes Manderley and her life there. However, after a few minutes, when she turns to the terrible aspects of her life there (i.e. realizes that the real object of her obsession was to take the place of the first Mrs. de Winter and rule the people around her the way Rebecca did), the tone becomes more pessimistic. Correspondingly, the audience is also attracted to the magnificent castle at first. When we comprehend its secrets our first impression is revised: we are repelled by the very same object that attracted us. The objects of our desire attract and repel us. Attraction and repulsion, looking up and looking down-this is the dialectics in which Hitchcock movies should be understood.

At this point, it is beneficial to consider the concept of the Kantian sublime which is a useful aesthetic category helping us understand the concept of 'vertigo.' Kant writes about the sublime in the *Critique of Judgement*. For our purposes, it is enough, at this point, to consider only some characteristics of the sublime. According to Kant,

> Sublime is the name given to what is absolutely great. But to be great and to be a magnitude are entirely different concepts (magnitudo and quantitas). In the same way, to assert without qualification (simpliciter) that something is great is quite a different thing from saying that it is absolutely great (absolute, non comparative magnum). The latter is what is beyond all comparison great… Moreover, the estimate of things as great or small extends to everything, even to all their qualities. Thus we call even their beauty great or small… If, however, we call anything not alone great, but, without qualification, absolutely, and in every respect (beyond all comparison) great, that is to say, sublime, we soon perceive that for this it is not permissible to seek an appropriate standard outside itself, but merely in itself. It is a greatness comparable to itself alone. Hence it comes that the sublime is not to be looked for in the things of nature, but only in our own ideas. But it must be left to the deduction to show in which of them it resides. The above definition may also be expressed in this way: that is sublime in comparison with which all else is small. Here we readily see that nothing can be given in

> nature, no matter how great we may judge it to be, which, regarded in some other relation, may not be degraded to the level of the infinitely little, and nothing so small which in comparison with some still smaller standard may not for our imagination be enlarged to the greatness of a world… since the mind is not simply attracted by the object, but is also alternately repelled thereby, the delight in the sublime does not so much involve positive pleasure as admiration or respect, i. e., merits the name of a negative pleasure. (Kant 1973, 1-5)

In the concept of the sublime we find some characteristics that lead us to the definition of vertigo. Sublime is something that is absolutely (i. e. beyond all comparison) great. It is an overwhelming presence. Moreover, it is something that is created only in our minds: it exits only in our ideas. Its mere presence has the potential to dominate our thinking because of its incomparable greatness and its inconceivable presence. Kant also points out that being struck by such greatness has a double-faced effect on our psyché. On the one hand we admire such magnitude, i. e. we are attracted by it. On the other hand we are also repelled by it at the very same time as we feel powerless and insignificant in the presence of such greatness. This mixture of admiration and repulsion can be the source of immense pleasure. However, in Kant's argument, it is clearly a negative pleasure: something that should not make us happy and still it does.

For the purposes of our argument, it is important not to confuse two concepts: obsession and mania. Mania is explicitly mentioned by Kant as something which is not compatible with the sublime for it is profoundly ridiculous. (Kant 1973, 22) I add to this that mania is "incurable": a maniac would not hesitate between attraction and repulsion but would be totally attracted to the object of desire. Vertiginous obsession, on the other hand, in Hitchcock movies offers the choice between the two. Thus the Hitchcockian vertigo has two distinct parts. It is a mixture of feelings just like the feeling of sublime itself is a two-layered phenomenon. The first part is the construction of the feeling of sublime in the characters' psyche (they are alternately attracted and repelled by something); and the second is their response to this strange feeling, their choice. After unbearable inner, psychological tortures, which nonetheless give them a huge amount of pleasure, Hitchcockian characters may arrive at two different solutions. They either abandon the object as soon as "the whole picture becomes clear for them" (in the romantic pieces/the pieces of "looking up") or they continue to be obsessed with it even if they are aware of the repelling aspects (in the anti-romantic pieces/the pieces of "looking down"). The Kantian mania is clearly the term for the latter: a constant, downward spiraling will be the characters' fate, a state which has

nothing to do with one of the major components of the sublime: repulsion. Repulsion is not part of the anti-romantic pieces as the very essence of the downward movement is attraction to the thing at the bottom.

Selznick commissioned Hitchcock to shoot a movie based on Daphne du Maurier's international bestseller, *Rebecca*. Hitchcock's films are mainly adaptations but they are very much, at times, radically different from the original pieces. In the case of *Rebecca*, this characteristic feature appears to an increased degree: Hitchcock had to go through a test as, obviously, the success or failure of *Rebecca* decided the newcomer's fate in Hollywood. He had to make a movie radically different from the novel as it contained elements ("the hero" as murderer, or the possible lesbian relationship between Rebecca and Mrs. Danvers) that had no place in mainstream Hollywood films of the 1940's.

Rebecca focuses on four main characters: three of them are alive (the heroine, Jane; her husband, Max de Winter; and the housekeeper, Mrs. Danvers), but Rebecca, Max's first wife is already dead when the story begins. The novel starts out with a dream narrated by Jane: she is visiting Manderley again. It becomes clear that this is a recurring dream that gives her much sorrow. She describes herself as a ghost gliding across the gate in order to get along the winding path and reach the castle:

> Last night I dreamt I went to Manderley again. It seemed that 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 of a sudden with supernatural powers and passed like a spirit through the barrier before me. (du Maurier 1938, 5)

She is the narrator throughout the book: she constantly reflects on the events actually happening. It is clear that she reveals the tragic story of Manderley well after the fire devastated the castle. However, the reader gets information about the fire only on the very last page. She constantly refers to the fact that returning to Manderley is impossible but does not tell us why. As the story unfolds, we are more and more interested: What happened to Manderley? Why can't they be entirely happy with their new life? - as we feel that something unresolved still stands between her and Max which, seemingly, cannot be overcome. We can read her internal feelings and thoughts, the way the world is constructed in her mind, through pages. The actual story is revealed in flashbacks: we are at a fixed point somewhere (probably, the couple is changing hotel after hotel as if they were escaping from someone or something) and some time (we do not get to know exactly when but obviously after the fire) and Jane recollects her memories about the events leading to the

fire. Moreover, the novel is open-ended exactly because of the uncertainties concerning the present state in the couple's relationship.

Hitchcock shot a seemingly typical classic Hollywood piece, totally in line with the conventions of the studio system. The opening credits show us the Selznick Studios and then Manderley. Soon an inscription appears on screen: "*The Selznick Studio presents its production of Daphne du Maurier's celebrated novel.*" (Hitchcock 1940) The inscription appears on the transitional level that mediates between nonfiction and fiction. As Edward Branigan puts it, it stands outside the film considered as a fiction in talking about what is to follow, i.e. this is an extra-fictional image. (Branigan 1992, 88-89) As David Bordwell writes:

> Classical narration usually begins before the action does . . . The classical Hollywood film typically uses the credits sequence to initiate the film's narration . . . In these moments the narration is self-conscious to a high degree . . . (it displays its recognition that it is presenting information to an audience) . . . The title will most probably name or describe the main character . . . Credits' imagery can also establish the space of the upcoming action . . . (Bordwell et al. 1985, 25)

The title indeed names one of the central characters (Rebecca) while the imagery clearly establishes Manderley as the space of action. Moreover, it is obvious that Selznick was about to base the movie's success on the novel's. Hitchcock had the task to make it a blockbuster, do everything in line with the Hollywood conventions and not to risk anything. However, in a delicate way, he managed to talk about vertigo, lesbian desires between Rebecca and Mrs. Danvers and Max as a murderer, as I will point out later.

At first, what is conspicuous is that Hitchcock, in contrast with du Maurier's novel, did not keep the heroine's voice-over throughout the film. Only in the first minutes do we hear her voice. At this point, we do not even know who the speaker is. We have not seen a human character on screen yet. As Seymour Chatman argues, in case of a voice-over "…all that is required is that the voice-over be identifiable as the character's, whose lips do not move" (Chatman

1980, 160). In other words, it is questionable whether we can consider this as a voice-over at all. At this point, we have no idea who is speaking. This way a disturbing presence is introduced in the first few minutes of the film: the presence not of a human being but of a ghost. Hitchcock tries to emphasize the heroine's ghostliness by not showing her, only presenting her voice. The first sequence is in subjective shots. When, in an establishing shot, we are shown the castle itself, Hitchcock manages to represent the heroine's feelings about her ghostliness visually: the subjective shot is kept but the camera slowly moving upwards occupies a position totally impossible in case of humans. It is as if she moved up a bit higher to see Manderley better while speaking about it. The other important feature in the establishing shot is that the castle is divided into two: a devastated and an undamaged part. As it turns out later, the devastated part is the western wing, Rebecca's favorite part of the castle. Jane and Max lived in the eastern wing. Hitchcock tells us visually concretely the reason why the couple cannot go back to the castle: we see the ruined building devastated by fire. However, the couple's territory, the eastern wing is untouched, i.e. the fire, Rebecca's presence could not devastate their future happiness. There is still hope that the couple may lead a life without fears, a careless viewer would think. When turning to the question of vertigo in the film, I explain why the couple will not be able to free itself from the past.



After this very first sequence, the heroine's narrating voice is totally eliminated from the story. This has at least one very important consequence: the heroine does not have the opportunity to reflect on her position. Her feelings and the special way of interpreting the world in her mind are seemingly unimportant.

Clearly, the first sequence is in flashbacks: Jane has a recurring dream about the events that led to her "present condition". Then, all the other scenes show us the events up to the fire. The voice-over never returns: we do not have the chance throughout the film to consider that actually we see a recollection of the past. The most striking feature of the plot is that the couple's "present condition" is not revealed. This has to do with the presence of vertigo in the movie as I argue in the upcoming chapter.

2.2 Vertigo

Hitchcock in his well-known interview with French film director, Francois Truffaut, referred to *Rebecca* as an atypical Hitchcock movie. (Truffaut 1996, 73) Clearly, he was not given *carte blanche* to shoot the film in his own style but, still, *Rebecca's* theme is very Hitchcockian. Daphne du Maurier's story concentrates on "vertigo" (the vertiginous obsession with something), a theme typical in case of Hitchcock movies.

Lesley Brill in his book, *The Hitchcock Romance. Love and Irony in Hitchcock's Films* divides Hitchcock movies into two categories: the romantic and the anti-romantic ones. He argues that all Hitchcock films are centered on issues of love, desires and death. In one way or another, a couple is formed and put to test. According to Slavoj Žižek, a couple in Hitchcock films can go through the test in three different ways. In the films of the 1930's, the couple is formed from the outside; they are first thrown together and love will emerge by itself in the relationship. In the 1940s, the couple is happily united, yet the price to be paid for this is the sacrifice of a third person. So the happy ending is always conceived as "a resigned acceptance of bourgeois everyday life". In the films of the third period, every relation of partnership is ultimately doomed to fail or be "void of libidinal content". So, the more we progress from the outside towards the inside, the more a love relation loses its external support, the more it acquires a lethal dimension and is doomed to fail. (Žižek 1992, 9-10) The couple is involved in all kinds of intrigue but, in most of the cases, love triumphs. Brill understands Hitchcock's oeuvre as the site for the struggles between romantic and ironic plots, images and structures. The romantic side in his films makes us believe that a harmonious world can be restored in the end. The ironic images, on the other hand, constantly subvert the romantic (or happy) endings: we feel that the problem is not resolved thoroughly. As Brill points out: the great majority of Hitchcock's films have elements of both romance and irony, with outcomes that usually favor romance (Brill 1988, 200). He identifies the two extreme ends of the spectrum: there are "relatively unalloyed romances" such as *Young and Innocent* and *To Catch a Thief* on one end of it and the most ironic films (*Vertigo* and *Psycho*) that "frustrate and reverse any romantic impulses toward clarity and fulfillment" on the other. According to Brill, confronting and overcoming a destructive past is at the heart of all romances and at the center of the failure of romance in *Vertigo, Psycho* and *Rebecca*. In these latter films, an oppressive past infects the protagonists' happiness. (Brill 1988)

Desires are with us all the time; their objects come from the external world. However, when we become obsessed with something, it is always internal. If the object of our desire is something that helps us reach higher spheres

of human existence, obsession is not a problem. However, when we desire the wrong object, something which only pulls us down, problems arise. Symbolically, "looking up and looking down" is the motor of all action in Hitchcock movies. As Brill puts it, "Hitchcock's films can be revealingly grouped according to their dominant vertical directionality, their ratio of downwardness to upwardness." (Brill 1988, 202) "Up" always means that the characters are obsessed with objects that help them reaching higher spheres, which will lead them to happiness. "Down", on the contrary, signifies the movement towards the bottom of the spiral, i.e. darkness. As Brill argues, "Downwardness in Hitchcock's movies is almost always associated with an imagery that suggests infernal regions, the land of the dead." (Brill 1988, 203) In *Rebecca,* Rebecca comes from the land of the dead. In the majority of Hitchcock's films characters look up and down but finally manage to resist the temptations of the downward movement, i.e. the film has a happy ending. In *Rebecca* this is not the case: downward spiraling will be the characters' predominant motion in the end.

2.3 Vertigo in *Rebecca*

While the object of obsession in du Maurier's novel is Manderley itself, Hitchcock takes another direction. The characters seem to be more obsessed with the question of 'who dares to be a man?' in Manderley. In Rebecca's life, it seems, she was the dominating force in Manderley. She had a charismatic personality and was able to make the others accept her prominent position. After Rebecca's death three possible candidates emerge for the position of a new leader of Manderley: Max, Jane and Mrs. Danvers. All of them have a special relationship with Rebecca: Mrs. Danvers adores her and is about to keep up the old ways, Rebecca's ways in Manderley; Jane as a Gothic heroine finds the dead wife's constant presence both frightening and magnificent; and Max hates his former wife, (he even killed her) and spends his life, basically, trying to overcome her memory.

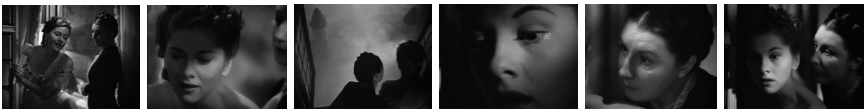
The novel deals a lot with the appearance and reappearance of the monogram "R" as well but in the film the letter "R" is overwhelmingly present everywhere in the castle. It pops up once on a letter in Rebecca's room then in the hut on the seaside or on the pillows: everywhere. It slowly turns out that Rebecca could not function as a partner for Max in keeping up the old ways in Manderley. After the discovery of her body in the sea, Max confesses everything to Jane: Rebecca and he got a special contract after Rebecca had told him her secrets. Neither the book, nor the novel discusses the exact nature of Rebecca's secrets. Du Maurier reinforces the idea that she led an immoral life: often left Max alone in the castle and held wild parties in her London flat.

Hitchcock is on the contrary silent on this issue: Max simply calls Rebecca a bad woman. However, on a subtextual level, we suspect that Rebecca did not fit into the aristocratic world of the de Winters' because she did not have socially accepted sexual desires. She might have been lesbian or bisexual. We cannot be absolutely sure that she was lesbian because it is only her suspected sexual partner, Mrs. Danvers who suggests that Rebecca only played with men, did not consider them equal partners and only laughed at them behind their backs. (du Maurier 1938, 310) We can interpret her words as merely her desires: it is obvious that she was for the relationship much more than Rebecca. Maybe, she wanted to keep Rebecca in her memories as a perfect, idealized partner. Mrs. Danvers' caring for Rebecca is depicted by du Maurier as an ideal relationship between lady and housekeeper. In the heroine's eyes, she represents Rebecca, she functions basically as "the ghost of Rebecca" who is frightening all the time and who has to be fought with. Hitchcock visually represents it: Mrs. Danvers is like a shadow always keeping trace of Jane, always following her on the walls when she is introduced into the world of Manderley, to the mysteries of the castle. Besides, it is as if she popped up from nowhere and arrives always from the left side of the picture. Moreover, in Jane's subjective shots the camera zooms at her frightening face in tracking shot.

On the other hand, Hitchcock manages to show us Mrs. Danvers's homoerotic feelings towards Rebecca: especially in the scene when she introduces Jane to their secret world, Rebecca's room. The unused suite in the Western wing functioned as a "pleasure chamber" for the couple in Rebecca's life. Mrs. Danvers vividly describes how she combed Rebecca's hair or how she dressed her. Here, it is important to note that Hitchcock left out the line which states in the novel that for a very long time, Max combed Rebecca's hair every night. Then she cut her hair short and from that time on it was Mrs. Danvers's duty to do that. (du Maurier 1938, 196) Here, novel and film mutually fortify each other: du Maurier sums up the masculinization of Rebecca's character in the act of the hair cut, while Hitchcock provides us visual representation of the tender, and probably sexual, relationship between Rebecca and the housekeeper.

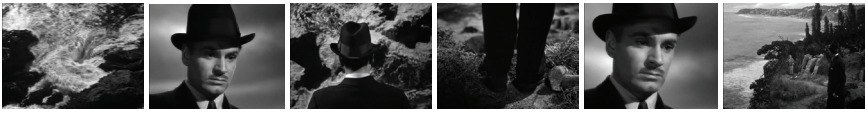
The second bedroom scene (right in the middle of the party) is the peak of Rebecca's torture: Mrs. Danvers is about to persuade Jane to commit suicide

jumping out of the window. For Jane the bedroom is a "torture chamber." Mrs. Danvers' persuasion is almost successful: the heroine becomes dizzy ("tumbles into her words"). The visual representation of the Hitchcockian theme, vertigo can be detected in this scene: Mrs. Danvers and Jane next to each other (medium shot) - the housekeeper starts whispering into her ears- Mrs. Danvers' wicked face (close up) - Jane's terrorized face (close up) - the sea is rough, the music becomes more and more unbearable -the women on the balcony (shot from below) - and, finally the solution (?): fireworks announcing the discovery of Rebecca's body.



It is remarkable that all the other visual representations of vertigo are also connected to the "presence of Rebecca": Max is about to commit suicide on the seaside; Jane faints in the courtroom while Max is questioned on Rebecca's murder; and Mrs. Danvers is burning in the fire at the end of the movie.

Max, at the beginning of the movie, is standing on top of a cliff in Southern France and considering the idea of suicide. He is on the brink of jumping to the sea when Jane saves him shouting at him. The fact that Max is about to commit suicide is represented only visually: his face (close up) – dizzy eyes- the sea- his face (close up again).



Here we are presented with the parody of the romantic cliché-scene: the couple at the seaside. (Two other scenes can be considered in the movie as parodies of romantic films: once a little statuette of Cupid breaks in Manderley; and the film, shot on Max and Jane's honeymoon, gets torn when they are watching it.) The couple is talking about death and darkness not typical in case of romantic movies. Water does not function as a promise of new life but as a dangerous site "conveying a threat of dissolution." (Brill 1988, 209) Rebecca died on the sea, so when water appears it always evokes Rebecca's overwhelming presence in the couple's life. Besides this scene, the sea becomes centrally important in the scenes when Max admits that he killed Rebecca and when Rebecca's boat is found. The sea becomes "the land of the

dead", from where Rebecca "emerges and visits" Max and Jane. This is the place of the characters' downward spiraling: they become obsessed with the wrong object. They want to fight Rebecca and become the dominating force in Manderley instead of her. The couple is put to test: who is afraid of Rebecca?; who dares to be a man in Manderley instead of her?

Later, Max never considers the idea of committing suicide again. However, we can be sure that Hitchcock had a clear-cut idea to represent us something hidden with the help of inserting this scene. (Note: the scene can be read in the novel, too, but in a modified version. There Jane is frightened by Max who is described as an aggressive man. Later it turns out that Max and Rebecca visited this very same seaside on their honeymoon and Max always becomes aggressive when something reminds him of his wife. It is really important in the novel that aggression comes not only from Rebecca/Mrs. Danvers but also from Max towards Jane. In the movie, we cannot really trace aggression of any kind from Max: he is rather a father figure for Jane looking for a companion in the girl. (du Maurier 1938, 36-37)) Throughout the movie we try to find reasons for Max's suicide attempt. As the story unfolds, all of our assumptions ("the cause was his love for Rebecca", "he thinks he can never find love in this world again", etc.) turn out to be wrong. Obviously, the only reason can be that he killed Rebecca and now has a guilty conscience: he cannot bear the idea that he, the member of a prestigious family would probably end up in prison. At this point something frustrating can be detected: on the surface, the movie ends with the promise that the new couple is able to start out again from scratch without the overwhelming presence of the past. However, du Maurier's novel leaves no question: Max murdered his wife and it is a question whether the new couple can ever be happy (taking into account that even Mrs. Danvers escaped after setting fire on the castle).

Hitchcock accepted the original ending but in a 1940's mainstream Hollywood movie he had no means to express it directly as the male protagonist was not supposed to be a murderer. The ending had to be radically transformed and that is why the closing thirty minutes of the movie seem flustered: everything should be done to prevent the careless viewer from remembering the couple's first meeting in France and asking the question: if Max is not the murderer, why did he decide to commit suicide? It is remarkable that the other two visual representations of vertigo in connection with Rebecca (when Jane faints in the courtroom while Max is questioned on Rebecca's murder, and when Mrs. Danvers is almost unconsciously running up and down in Rebecca's room at the end of the film) are squeezed into the last minutes. These scenes reinforce the idea that Rebecca dominates the narrative. While in the novel, Dr. Baker's appearance comes in the nick of time for Max to escape, Hitchcock is forced to provide this scene as a solution. Max is not the murderer

and the story has to have a happy ending: the past/Rebecca/Mrs. Danvers are all eliminated and the Western wing is destroyed. The new couple can start a completely new life somewhere far from the shadows of the past. Hitchcock shot the movie according to the Hollywood conventions but believed in the exact opposite: Max killed his wife and, in this way, is not a typical Hollywood hero. He had to find a way somehow to express Max's guilt on a subtextual level: Max and Jane's first meeting proves what happened exactly.

On the surface, Manderley is the castle, the world of customary rituals and the characters are about to live up to it. On a subtextual level, the central theme of the story is a power game: who dares to be a man?, who will have the upper hand over the others and control life in Manderley? Obviously, Rebecca had a strong desire to gain dominance over others and behaving as a man who, conventionally in Western patriarchal ideology, must fulfill this role. She masculinises herself by cutting her hair short, taking up hobbies typical of men (sailing, horse riding, etc.) and seeking ways of individual happiness (organizing wild parties in London and not caring for wifely duties such as childbearing, taking care of husband, etc.). She acquires a "middlesex" position, to refer here to one important character in the novel, the Duchess of Middlesex. She does not appear but the characters constantly refer to her as a lady who probably committed adultery and gave life to an illegitimate baby. On the surface, the importance of referring to the duchess' story lies in the fact that the de Winter family is also a noble one, their succession is also of primary importance and, last but not least, Max concentrates on Rebecca's lie about being pregnant with a stranger's baby when lists the reasons why he killed her. However, the word "middlesex" constantly turning up throughout the book, draws our attention to the fact that being in a position between femininity and masculinity is crucial in the story. Of course, Hitchcock eliminated the references to the duchess from the movie: a typical Hollywood narrative would not bear the representation of even the hinting at of any kind of deviant sexuality. (In this respect the bedroom scenes risk the conflict with censorship.)

After Rebecca's death, there are three possible candidates in the power game: Mrs. Danvers, Jane and Max. We should bear in mind that both du Maurier and the film set out to reinforce Western, patriarchal ideology. This ideology does not permit any kind of deviant sexuality in the first place. Rebecca may have been lesbian/bisexual or she may just have expressed her sexual desires explicitly. In both cases, she had to be "punished" as she represented deviance in patriarchal ideology. Clearly, Mrs. Danvers cannot win in the race either: she represents "Rebecca's ghost", she is on the side of a deviant woman. So, she also has to be punished. In other words, Max and Jane are the only possible candidates.

It is not by coincidence that the expression "who dares to be a man?" refers only to males. In the patriarchal ideology, it is only men who are supposed to rise into eminent positions. As Andrew Tolson argues:

> For most people . . . "masculinity" is a taken for granted part of everyday life. There is a masculine aura of competence, a way of talking and behaving towards others . . . images of masculinity enter into our most intimate communications… We can recall a whole repertoire of popular phrases and aphorisms- "take it like a man"; "big boys don't cry"- by which we continue to define personal experience . . . The "promise of power" is at the centre of a network of conventional masculine characteristics: authority, self-assertion, competitiveness, aggression, physical strength . . . Manhood is a perpetual future, a vision of inheritance, an emptiness waiting to be filled. (Tolson 1977, 7-8, 23)

According to the patriarchal logic of Western civilization, Max should rise to the dominant position in Manderley. However, he is unable to fulfill the expectations as he undergoes a crisis of masculinity. The main reason behind his crisis is that he was (and still is) surrounded by women who did not accept him as a strong, male leader. Rebecca ridiculed him all the time with her flirts and Mrs. Danvers organizes the household affairs instead of him. The two women excluded Max from the affairs of Manderley. It seems that Max accepted his secondary position in the castle in Rebecca's time. However, under the surface, he became more and more aggressive and waited for the time to regain his position. The time came when Rebecca shared her secrets with him. No matter what the secret was (Rebecca being pregnant with someone else's baby or being lesbian), it gave a fatal blow to Max. Max killed his wife in order to be able to gain the upper hand again in Manderley. However, he was mistaken. Mrs. Danvers remained in the castle and arranged everything in order to conserve Rebecca's presence. Max understands that first Mrs. Danvers' presence has to be eliminated. Only after that can he turn

to "behaving as a man in Manderley." However, Mrs. Danvers' presence is too strong: Max cannot win over her.

In his fight with Mrs. Danvers, Max finds a companion in Jane. Clearly, Jane cannot be "the man in Manderley." She is the heroine who has the task to support the hero throughout the narrative and not to risk being deviant. In patriarchal ideology, all women who are strong and capable of acquiring a dominant position instead of men are considered deviant and thus have to be punished. Jane never behaves as a strong woman: her character fits into patriarchal expectations. She is a sensitive, young and innocent girl who tries to understand the tragic story of Manderley. Moreover, her innocence is emphasized by the fact that du Maurier's story echoes Gothic features in a domestic context. Rebecca and Mrs. Danvers are created as terrifying women who bring death and sorrow as opposed to Jane who is supposed to bring new life into Manderley. She finds the story of Rebecca and Manderley both terrifying and impressive. The castle appears as a labyrinth for her: it is vast and obscure but at the same time magnificent. All in all, Jane cannot function as the dominating force in Manderley. This would be beyond the expectations of patriarchal ideology towards heroines.

We arrive at the conclusion that no-one dares to be a man in the story. The characters cannot live up to the expectations of patriarchal society. Manderley has to be lost at the end of the film because rejuvenation is possible only somewhere else. Hitchcock's first American anti-romantic movie ends with the devastating fire in Manderley. Mrs. Danvers sets fire on the castle and dies in the western wing. Max and Jane are looking up at the burning castle in the final shots and hope that this fire will eliminate the shadows of the past from their lives. Hitchcock seemingly ends the movie with the promise of new life and happiness. Max and Jane will move away and start everything from scratch. According to Žižek's model, the couple is happily united, even if a third person (Mrs. Danvers) has to be sacrificed and the couple has to accept bourgeois, everyday life. (Žižek 1992, 9) However, this is not the case. Max and Jane may start their life all over again somewhere else but will they be happy? The movie provides only one hint that the couple will not be able to free itself from the past: the very first sequence of Jane's dream. The film starts out with a flashback. As David Bordwell argues:

> In the fabula . . . (which embodies the action as a chronological, cause-and-effect chain of events occurring within a given duration and a spatial field) . . . events take place either simultaneously . . . or successively . . . it is obvious that fabula events can be deployed in the syuzhet . . . (the actual arrangement and presentation of the fabula) . . . in any fashion whatever . . . The fabula constitutes a chronological series of

> actions; the syuzhet can adhere to this chronology or shuffle events. The most vivid example is obviously the flashback, in which a prior fabula event is positioned later in the syuzhet . . . (we talk about) "enacted recounting" (when) a character tells about past events, and the syuzhet then presents the events in a flashback . . . Reordering fabula events also obviously creates narrational gaps, which may be temporary or permanent; focused or diffuse; flaunted or suppressed . . . The flashback may display events that occur prior to the first event represented in the syuzhet; this is the external flashback. (Bordwell 1986, 77-78)

In this case, the flashback creates a permanent, focused and suppressed narrational gap: where is the heroine while recollecting her memories and what is she doing? The gap is permanent because we do not get any information from the film about the couple's present situation. It is focused as we are after a specific information (Are they happy?), and suppressed as this question seems to be the least important in the movie. Actually, the whole movie is in external flashback: the heroine is recollecting not only her dream but also the events that took place in Manderley long ago. However, nothing guides us that actually this is what is happening: the voice-over is eliminated and no image is shown from the couple's new life. From the first scene it is obvious that the memories still give Jane much sorrow.

On the other hand, the novel makes references to the couple's new life constantly. There are hints that suggest that they are not entirely happy with the new situation: for example, Mrs. Danvers, after setting fire, left Manderley, or seemingly Max and Jane do not have anything to talk about except the past. In short, the couple has not freed itself from the shadows of the past. Here, du Maurier and Hitchcock mutually strengthen each other's story. Hitchcock believed in du Maurier's ending (as the incorporation of Max's suicide attempt shows) but he did not have the means to express it directly in a 1940's mainstream Hollywood movie. In the end, Max and Jane have "to look up"; Manderley is burning, the past is left behind and the couple may be able to live without fears. In fact, this is the beginning of the real tortures, of "looking down" as the couple will experience a deep emotional crisis described by Daphne du Maurier.

3. Conclusion

In this paper, I analyzed the appearance of "vertigo" in Alfred Hitchcock's *Rebecca* (1940). I identified the concept of "vertigo" at the heart of Hitchcock's

oeuvre. The most important finding was that Hitchcock was able to deal thoroughly with his theme only after he had established himself as a distinct figure in the Hollywood studio system. Thus, I could analyze only the germs of Hitchcock's favourite theme in *Rebecca*. "Looking up and looking down" is the central structure of feeling at the centre of Hitchcock's films. The characters experience both "harmonious, higher spheres of existence" (= love, happiness) and death and sorrow. Sometimes "looking up" is dominant at the end of the films, sometimes "looking down." In *Rebecca*, the couple is obsessed with the "wrong object" and they inevitably have "to go down" in the end. A world full of death and sorrow is presented, but, as the analysis shows, Hitchcock had to deal with these anti-Hollywood issues in a very subtle way at the beginning of his American career.

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