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Trabajo Fin de Grado

The Use of Suspense in the Films of Alfred Hitchcock: The Case of *Strangers on a Train*

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Resumen

Este trabajo analiza las técnicas narrativas que utiliza Hitchcock para generar suspense en la película *Extraños en un tren* (1951) con la intención de determinar cómo se han transmitido los significados que el director ha querido poner en manifiesto principalmente mediante dicha emoción. Por un lado, el concepto de suspense se explora a través de las teorías de Meir Sternberg y Bordwell y Thompson para diferenciarlo de las otras dos emociones que son la curiosidad y la sorpresa. Para crear dicho estado de ansiedad el director utiliza diversos métodos que comprenden: el suministro de información, la identificación de la audiencia y subjetividad, el uso de imágenes en lugar de diálogos, la eliminación de personajes estereotipados, la utilización de lugares inesperados, la simplicidad de la historia y las escenas contrastadas. Por otro lado, la incertidumbre sobre la intención del director a la hora de generar tensión en la audiencia, se resuelve a través de la línea teórica de Robin Wood. Así, este trabajo muestra la obtención de un suspense gradual que se logra al interrelacionar las técnicas anteriormente citadas. Con ello, el propósito de Hitchcock es demostrar cómo en un momento determinado, y principalmente a través de la técnica de identificación con dos personajes que se encuentran en una situación inquietante, el espectador se ve forzado a reconocer sus deseos más recónditos.

Abstract

This essay offers an analysis of the narrative techniques that Hitchcock uses in order to generate suspense in *Strangers on a Train* (1951). My goal is to determine how the director has conveyed the meanings that he intended to bring to the fore mainly through this emotion. On the one hand, the concept of suspense is explored by means of Meir Sternberg and Bordwell and Thompson's theories to differentiate it from the other two emotions: curiosity and surprise. In order to build this state of anxiety the director makes use of several devices including the supply of information, audience identification and subjectivity, the use of images instead of dialogues, the avoidance of clichéd characters, the use of unexpected locations, the simplicity of the story and the use of contrasting scenes. On the other hand, the uncertainty around the director's intention when building tension in the audience is solved through Robin Wood's theories. Thus, the present essay shows the gradual deployment of suspense, which is achieved by interrelating the abovementioned techniques. By doing so, Hitchcock's purpose is to demonstrate how at some point in the movie and mainly through identification with two of the characters that find themselves in an unsettling situation, the spectator is forced to acknowledge his innermost desires.

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Introduction

Strangers on a Train (1951) is a suspense thriller directed by Alfred Hitchcock, an English film director and producer often referred to as the "Master of suspense". Hitchcock's *suspense* can be described as a series of formal strategies that he developed along his career which began with the production of silent films in the UK. The most successful British film in this respect was *The Lodger: a Story of the London Fog* (1927), which was followed by other movies including his first sound film *Blackmail* (1929). After having achieved an important success in Britain, he decided to move to Hollywood to start working with David O. Selznick, one of the major US film producers. Once there, he made popular films such as *Rebecca* (1940), *Notorious* (1946) and *Rope* (1948) – his first Technicolor film –, among others. Subsequently, he went through a period of little success with films such as *Stage Fright* (1949), but soon afterwards he re-established his former position as one of the most important directors of Hollywood productions with his major film *Strangers on a Train.* From the mid- 1950s to the mid- 1960s, Hitchcock reached a peak of popularity and artistic success with movies such as *Rear Widow* (1954) and *Psycho* (1960). After sixty years of cinematic success, Hitchcock put an end to his career with his last film *Family Plot* (1976).

As the director points out in a famous interview with François Truffaut, what made him the main director of suspense was the fact that throughout these films, and especially referring to *Strangers on a Train,* he developed and masterfully handled a series of narrative techniques in order to create the state of suspense. On this basis, the film was a great triumph, even though it also had certain weaknesses owing to the performances of some of the main actors.

Starring Farley Granger, Ruth Roman and Robert Walker, and featuring the director's daughter Patricia Hitchcock, Leo G. Carroll and Laura Elliot, *Strangers on a Train* was based on the novel of the same name by Patricia Highsmith, which falls into the category of suspense as well. The movie tells the story of a young tennis star, Guy Haines (Granger) and a friendly psychopath, Bruno Anthony (Walker), who meet on a train. The latter suggests exchanging murders in order to dispose of someone who is an obstacle in their lives. Guy takes the proposal as a joke, but Bruno is really serious about it and commits the first murder. Immediately afterwards, he demands for Guy to comply with the bargain too. In this essay I will offer an analysis of *Strangers on a Train* as an example of a suspense movie. To this end, I will first explore the concept of *suspense*.

The Use of Suspense in the Films of Alfred Hitchcock

Meir Sternberg (2001:120) states that Suspense, Curiosity and Surprise, referred to as the "Narrative Universals", converge in a narrativity – the amount of information that a text gives when telling a story. Each of the universals has in their turn the function of prospection, retrospection or recognition within the narrative. The first one is the act of anticipating future events, the second one is the act of looking back on past events, and the third one is the act of reconsidering something past. Thus, suspense is associated with prospection, curiosity with retrospection and surprise with recognition, respectively (Sternberg, 2003: 327).

Sternberg (1978:65) defines suspense as the feeling that "derives from a lack of desired information concerning the outcome of a conflict that is to take place in the narrative future, a lack that involves a clash of hope and fear". Thus, suspense is related to anticipation as it arises from the extent to which the text informs readers about what is happening in the story, what remains unknown because yet unsolved, and how readers look forward to a resolution. The limitation in the amount of information provided creates a conflict between readers' hypotheses and concerns about future events.

As stated above, this state of anxiety while waiting for an outcome that is unsure, differentiates itself from the two other Narrative Universals present in a narrative: *curiosity* and *surprise.* According to Sternberg, the former arises from having uncertainty about the past once the outcome has been resolved and the latter is produced by an unexpected event caused by the suppression of past material. Thus, contrary to *suspense,* these two variables are oriented towards the past, either because the readers are prompted to develop hypotheses about past events as they already know the outcome, or because

they are prompted to reconsider preceding stuff as the story reveals previously withheld information.

Bordwell and Thompson coincide with Sternberg as they argue that in a narrative there must be some restricted information in order to create *curiosity* and *surprise*. However, for them, *suspense* arises from having access to a certain amount of information at various stages in the plot, in order to create expectations (2004: 90). Their view could be applied to Hitchcock himself, for whom *suspense* has to do with the revealing and concealing of information, but more importantly with the former, as he claims that the audience must be informed as far as possible (Truffaut, 1967: 52)

In *39 Steps to the Genius of Hitchcock,* Philip Kemp mentions the example that Hitchcock used in an interview with Truffaut in order to show the difference between *suspense* and *surprise*, and how he considers the former much superior to the latter. What Hitchcock means by "superior" is the fact that in the event of having a bomb which explodes beneath a table where two people are having a conversation, the audience will be given more minutes of tension if they know in advance that the bomb has been placed there. While on the other hand, if both the audience and the characters first become aware of the bomb at the moment of the explosion, the tension lasts only a few seconds (2012: 14). Therefore, although Hitchcock makes use of both devices in his movies, he clearly suggests that *suspense* has a greater effect on the audience.

For Bordwell and Thompson, it is the fact that he is in close connection with human mental states that enables Hitchcock to create suspense. By supplying the audience with information, the director makes them aware of the situations during the film (2004: 90-91). Thus, we, in comparison with the characters, have a superior range of knowledge. Therefore, the audience has to endure the tension that is building up as we feel impotent to warn the characters about forthcoming events, which the audience is able

to anticipate. In sum, the director will often keep the audience on the hook by creating a cumulative suspense along his movies, and, in order to create this "state of anxiety", he uses certain narrative techniques including the following:

The first and most important technique employed by Hitchcock is the abovementioned *control of the information supplied to the audience*. According to Alex Ferrari, Hitchcock believed that it was important to acquaint the public with some information from the very beginning in order to later make the tension rise in the course of the movie as a result of what they already know and the character is unaware of (2014). He reveals that a method the director often uses in order to do so is to have the camera roaming around, allowing the audience to discover what may appear suspicious before the characters could become aware of it. Keith Bound (cited by Lindsay 2015) mentions the term "vicarious" to refer to the technique in which only the audience knows that the character is in danger. On this subject, Lindsay states that, the tension the audience feels in this respect is greater than if they were to share the same fears that the characters feel. He also adds that vicarious suspense could create this apprehension even if the spectator has seen the movie several times.

A related technique to be found in Hitchcock's films is the *intensification of subjectivity and audience identification.* As mentioned in the preceding paragraph, the director might choose for the audience to experience worry at the same time as the characters do. In in this regard, Parker Mott explains that Hitchcock is interested in placing the spectator inside the film in a particular position, usually following one of the characters (2010). To do so, the filmmaker gives the audience access to what characters see or hear through the "sound perspective" and "point-of-view shots", respectively (Bordwell & Thompson 2004: 91). Through this, viewers align themselves with the character in the film, which makes them look at the world through their eyes or listen to

what they hear. For Bordwell and Thompson (2004: 91) viewer identification often happens to be with unsympathetic characters, which forces the spectator to reflect on their own moral ambiguity. Thus, when those characters are exposed to a dangerous situation in the film, the spectator will simultaneously feel the fears that the characters feel too. Conversely, if the character with whom the audience identifies happens to be an evil one, the spectator would share his evil nature. Therefore, this technique allows the audience's involvement in the movie through identification with a character, which in turn results in the sharing of fear or evil acts on the part of both the characters and the audience.

The next important technique Hitchcock draws on is *the use of images instead of dialogue* in order to convey an idea. Often, this representation has the function of raising the tension in the spectator. According to Richard Schickel, Hitchcock said: "the focus of the scene should never be on what the characters are actually saying. Have something else going on" (1973). Thus, the director's films stand out for making every scene work iconographically and relegating the role of dialogue to a secondary place. Through the use of framing and the selection of facial or body expressions, the audience is able to associate what they see with a particular way of thinking, which usually seeks to put a strain on them. Thus, Hitchcock proves that no conversation is needed in order to understand a specific scene (Tesoro 2014). Hence, it is the image that is in charge of generating the tension in the audience.

Another fundamental of Hitchcock's suspense is *to show two things happening at the same time.* Bays (2004) states that a recurring way of building suspense the director makes use of is having two different circumstances happening at once. When the spectator is focused on an engaging event, it is suddenly interrupted by a different, unrelated one. This use of contrasting situations results in the feeling of suspense on the part of the audience as they are also unexpectedly disrupted by the shift from one condition to the

other. Therefore, the spectator will pay more attention to the circumstances and will feel this constant pressure as they need for the action to be resolved.

A further technique Hitchcock uses to build suspense in his films is *the avoidance of clichéd characters*. According to Michael Bays, Hitchcock believed that a trite character will bore the audience and will not have any effect on them, and that is why he introduces characters with unexpected personalities in his films. Some recurrent characters are upper-class criminals, wrongly accused men and foolish policemen. These sorts of characters seem much more realistic to viewers and the fact that they will act diabolically, be in danger, or perform the role of imprudent respectively, is more unexpected than if they were the stereotypical ones (2004). Therefore, the director wants to break with clichés in order to take the audience by surprise and consequently convey anxiety.

Another important technique to consider is *the simplicity of the story*. Hitchcock did not like complex storylines that would make the audience deconcentrate and lose interest. Instead, he preferred to include plain stories that would be easy for the audience to follow and understand. That is why he included crime stories in which espionages is carried out, people fleeing police's persecution, and murders. Through these plots, Hitchcock believed he could wring suspense from as they are within the realms of their own possibility (Ferrari 2017). That is to say, the incidents that occur to the characters in the film could easily happen to the spectators in real life too. So, if the characters are threatened at some point, we feel the same fear as them. Therefore, the director looks for the simplicity of his stories as another way to create suspense.

The final technique that increases the tension in the audience is *the use of unexpected locations*. Hitchcock once again demonstrates his preference for the unexpected when staging particular settings in surprising locations. Tony Lee Moral

claims that he usually presents murder scenes in the most peaceful and bright places, contrary to expectations (2017). By making use of this contrast, Hitchcock keeps the viewers alert throughout the movie as they feel uncertain about any circumstance. Therefore, the filmmaker's aim by presenting a crime out of place is to clearly generate suspense.

As we have seen in the previous paragraphs, Hitchcock's use of suspense is complex and multifaceted, resulting in a method that was both unique to the British director and very influential on subsequent filmmakers. In the following section I would like to explore how all of these interrelated strategies are used in order to build suspense in *Strangers on a Train* and how the film conveys its meanings at least partly through suspense.

Suspense at the Amusement Park

One of the most suspenseful scenes, one that leaves the spectator breathless, takes place near the start of the film. This scene presents Bruno's persecution of Miriam in the amusement park with the intention of murdering her (fig. 1). She has come to the amusement park to have fun with two men when she suddenly gazes at a man who appears to be much more appealing than her two uninteresting friends. By suggesting going to the Tunnel of Love loudly, she intends for him to follow her, and this is exactly what he does. In this chase scene, Hitchcock makes use of some of the above-mentioned techniques in order to increase the anxiety in his audience while they nervously wait for what is going to happen. Indeed, by relying on the principles of morality and making us associate Bruno with the bad guy as he intends and finally commits murder, Hitchcock aims to generate suspense too. Through identification with him, he wants to bring to the surface the dark side of our human nature.

Figure 1: Bruno's chase of Miriam

At the beginning of the film, Bruno and Guy had met on a train. In the course of the conversation, Bruno had suggested murdering Miriam, Guy's wife, in order to clear his way for him to marry another woman. The fact that the spectator knows in advance Bruno's plans to get rid of Miriam demonstrates Hitchcock's preference for giving a

certain amount of information to the audience from the very beginning in order to produce fear. On the other hand, the fact that the audience does not know how Bruno is going to kill Miriam, also indicates the director's strategy to keep certain information hidden, too. This is how Hitchcockian suspense is created. When Miriam, while talking to her friends, wants Bruno to follow them into the "Tunnel of Love", we learn that she is attracted to him. At this point, spectators begin to get restless as they know the tragic ending that awaits her, one of which, of course, she is unaware. Indeed, in this situation, as well as in the event of having a bomb beneath the table that Bordwell and Thompson (2004: 90) mention, the spectator feels the need to warn the characters on the screen. Benjamin (2014) classifies this scene as one of murderous suspense because a killing that the spectator expects is going to happen. He also mentions that this is mixed with erotic tension, as Miriam is seduced by the stranger. Thus, the sexual attraction, together with Bruno's murderous aim, creates something tremendously dramatic. Therefore, the director forewarns the spectator from the very beginning about Bruno's intentions. However, he also withholds a certain amount of information: he does not give details about how the character is going to carry out his plan. All this functions as a generator of constant tension in us to the point that we become frustrated as a result of not being able to alert the character in danger.

As mentioned above, the scene is set in an amusement park, which serves as an example of Hitchcock's inclination towards unexpected locations for a murder, one among his techniques to build tension in the spectator (fig. 2).

Figure 2: The fairground where the killing will take place

For Donald Spoto, the director sets the turmoil in places which appear to be safe for victims and situated away from evil actions (1992: 38). This, together with the abovementioned Hitchcockian preference for luminous and tranquil places to show a murder, pointed out by Moral, is unmistakably the case with the assassination of Miriam at the fairground, more precisely in the "Magic Isle". The audience expects an amusement park to be a safe place where to have fun, and they do not expect that something bad will happen (N. Molina 2018). However, it is there that one of the most tragic sequences takes place, a killing, and as a result, according to Wood, this "Magic Isle" ends up becoming "an island of lost souls" (90). The audience is so shocked to find out that such evil actions can happen where they least expect them that they will accumulate fear and insecurity towards forthcoming events. Hence, despite the fact that the spectators are always aware of the impending murder, they are surprised to realize that it will happen at a place which they associate with enjoyment and freedom from danger. Consequently, tension gradually rises.

In the same scene, the director makes use of another of his techniques in order to produce anxiety in the spectator when he uses images instead of dialogue to convey an idea in the film. When Hitchcock presents us the events prior to the strangulation of Miriam, he conveys the idea of the approaching killing again. According to Wood (174)

Bruno's flexing hands are shown through a low camera angle (fig. 3), which is used to emphasize them before demonstrating to Miriam his strength by playing the "Test your strength" game to win a prize in the amusement park.

Figure 3: Bruno flexing his hands

The emphasis on his hands is used by the director to show the character and the audience what the murder weapon will be. However, only the spectator can get to the much darker interpretation of this close-up, and therefore, feel the agitation that Hitchcock seeks to create. Another meaningful image is the one in the "Tunnel of Love" when Miriam together with her friends head to the "Magic Isle" followed by Bruno and his shadow on the wall seems to overtake Miriam's shadow (figs. 4-5).
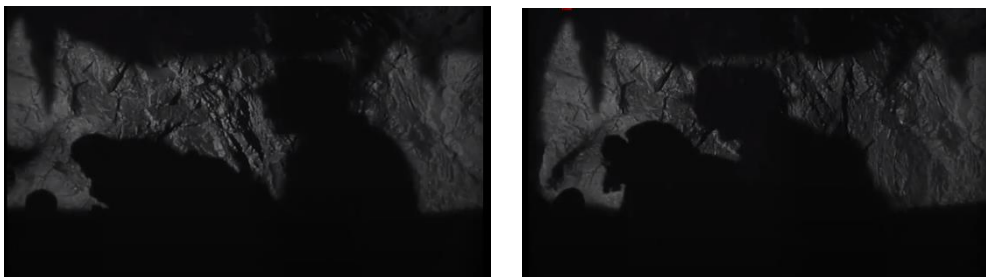
Figures 4-5: Bruno's shadow overtakes Miriam's

This again can be interpreted as an indication of Bruno's intentions to kill her, and thus keeps the spectator in tension. Actually, the audience comes to think that it is precisely at

this moment that he has decided to take action and kill Miriam, which as Molina says, would be a restful event for the audience, as they would not be exposed to the dreadful murder. In other words, we are less scared if the murder takes place offscreen than if it happens before our eyes. However, shortly after, we come to realize that this is not the case, as Miriam is still alive when they exit the tunnel, which gives rise to the continuous angst the director wants to convey. Therefore, the director's intention is to give the audience clues by framing and bodily expressions in order to make them associate what they see with what they already know and expect to happen. What Hitchcock really intends by showing these images and avoiding dialogues is to gradually increase anxiety in the spectators.

Another meaning the director wants to convey throughout this scene is Bruno's appearance and actions. This contributes to the construction of a complex character and, as a result, the avoidance in this as in many other cases of clichéd characters. By moving away from the stereotypical characters the audience is used to, Hitchcock is able to surprise and therefore frighten his audience. Bruno appears to have an extravagant lifestyle and to be a friendly, attractive man (fig. 6). By showing his intention to kill Miriam, he exemplifies a recurrent type of character in Hitchcock's movies – the upper-class criminal. As far as Diana is concerned, from the very beginning Bruno appears to the audience as a wealthy man: his appealing dress shoes, his tie clip bearing his name imprinted on in it, his soft silky robe (2015). This physical appearance is linked to his personality as he seems to be very gentle and attractive to the characters, and initially to the audience, too.

Figure 6: Bruno's friendly appearance

From the first time she looks at Bruno, Miriam sees something intriguing in him. This could be because he follows her always smiling, seeming to be interested in her, too. Indeed, she seems to be fascinated when he shows off his strength to her, interpreting it as an act of seduction on his part. As a result of her interpretation, she gives him the "come on", not suspecting his evil intentions. Like Miriam, we also tend at this point to believe in Bruno's benevolence since from the very beginning, as Hitchcock claims, he has "the gift of the gab" to start talking with Guy in the train and later with people around him (Truffaut 1967: 166). Consequently, he becomes sympathetic to the audience, too. However, beyond this façade, the director seems to want the audience to believe he is a fair man with good manners. He then surprises us when we come to realize that the rich, gentle man is evil. Moreover, as Bays argues, by presenting characters completely opposed to what the audience may expect, the director manages to make them appear much more realistic. In sum, Hitchcock seeks to becloud the audience by avoiding cliché characters and introducing more realistic ones whose personalities are not expected neither by characters in the film nor by the audience itself. Through this strategy, the spectators' expectations fall and their tension rises, fearing forthcoming events.

In this scene, the running up to the murder of Miriam, with Bruno following his future victim, is an example through which Hitchcock works on spectator's identification

by displaying strategies related to subjectivity. As stated above, the audience are often brought into the film in particular positions by following one of the characters (Parker 2010). This is the case with Bruno, as the spectator is made to follow his steps and therefore put themselves in his shoes. Bordwell & Thompson mention the use of "sound perspective" and "point-of-view shots" in order to make possible the spectator's placement inside the movie (91).

Figures 7-8: Subjective shot of Bruno following Miriam

Thus, the spectator is given several shot/reverse shot combinations and sometimes subjective shots of Bruno in which we see exactly what he sees (figs: 7-8); Bruno constantly follows Miriam with his eyes, looking for the perfect moment to get rid of her. The audience, seeing through his eyes, is also following her. The same thing happens with what Bruno hears. He is invited to follow her when she speaks loudly – as an announcement – where she and her friends are going. Thus, as we are given access to what Bruno hears, we receive the same signals as him. These subjective shots in which we are placed in Bruno's position make the audience identify with him. That is to say, through Bruno, we are, at least to some extent, implicated in his plan and intention to murder. This strategy allows the director to make the spectators experience fear as a result of feeling that they are involved in a crime. Hence, through the use of point of view shots and character's sound perspective, Hitchcock forces the spectator to become Bruno, at

least at certain moments, thereby promoting identification with him. This in turn provokes a sense of fear in us as we seem to share Bruno's desire to kill Miriam.

Going back to Bordwell and Thompson's notions, the spectator is often placed in the position of unsympathetic characters, which makes them consider their ethical uncertainty (91). According to Martin Burget, the director generally uses moral principles to make us identify with the character who behaves properly and does not commit any crime (2013: 64-65). However, he coincides with Bordwell and Thompson in that Hitchcock often makes the audience sympathize with the villain. He does so "by giving him sympathetic traits which allow the spectators to identify with him and share suspenseful situations" (62). Thus, despite sympathizing with Bruno at several stages in the film as a result of his friendly appearance, the audience is aware from the very beginning that he is an evil character whose aim is to murder. So, he is actually an unsympathetic character, and the spectator, who is informed in advance by the director, keeps this in mind, even if they end up identifying with him. Then, given the fact that the audience is somewhat compelled to align themselves with Bruno, and consequently seems to participate in his planning to murder, they are made to reflect on their own moral ambiguity. Alice Bentham points out that the audience does not sympathize with Bruno's murderous intentions, but they are eager for him to do it (2014: 174). In other words, the audience does not want to take part in a murder, but they want it to happen, and this is because, as Wood points out, it is the best for Guy so that he can marry the other woman (94). Hence, we do not want to be accused of having murderous instincts and that is why we want to distance ourselves from Bruno, but, narratively, we would want Miriam out of the way. As a result of this lack of certainty, the audience is made to reconsider their morality and they come to the conclusion that murderous desires exist, although repressed, in everybody (Wood 87). This can be seen as an expression of human

hypocrisy, as spectators tend to conceal their darkest desires. In view of this, through our identification with Bruno, *Strangers on a Train* may suggest that darkness is innate in every person, and in so far as we seek to hide it, hypocrisy is something that happens all the time. Summing up, the meaning that the spectator is somewhat compelled to acknowledge the evil within themselves is conveyed by means of identification and subjectivity, both constructed through suspense.

An Innocent Man?

We now move to the final section of the film that comprises two consecutive scenes in which the audience is shown Guy's endeavours to prove his innocence. From the very beginning we know that Guy is not guilty of the assassination of Miriam as we have witnessed Bruno's attempts to kill her and the final execution of the crime, but neither the policemen who are watching him nor the rest of the characters in the film are aware of this fact. That is why he must do his utmost to clear his image and attain justice, a situation in which many of Hitchcock's protagonists find themselves, from *The Thirty-Nine Steps* (1935) to *North by Northwest* (1959). In these two scenes, first we are shown how Guy rushes to finish his tennis match so that he can go to the amusement park to keep Bruno from planting the evidence – Guy's lighter – in the "Magic Isle", which would implicate him in Miriam's murder. At the same time, we see Bruno's trip to the fairground in order to do so, also with the same haste. In the latter scene, we see their encounter at the amusement park and the subsequent trip on the merry-go-round followed by Guy's attempt to retrieve his lighter and therefore prove Bruno's guilt. Thus, once again, through the use of some of his usual devices, the director creates a scene full of suspense in which the audience eagerly awaits the resolution to happen. In addition, we have another example of how he generates suspense on the basis of the principles of morality, too: he makes us associate Guy with the good guy as he has not committed any crime. Thus, through identification with him, he intends to convey a more positive vision of human nature.

In the first of the two scenes, which shows Guy playing a tennis match and Bruno on his way to the amusement park, the director displays the cross-cutting technique, thus bringing to the audience two different things happening at once. Owing to the scene's

unexpected shift, the spectators will accumulate a heavy mental strain which, in its turn, will boost their alertness. Returning to what Bays said about Hitchcock's strategy to create suspense by means of presenting two different circumstances happening at the same time, this is exactly what we have in this scene.
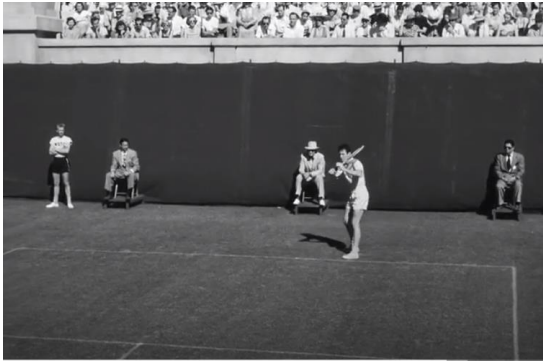

Figure 9: Guy rushing to finish the tennis match   Figure 10: Bruno on his way to the fairground

On the one hand, the audience is presented with several shots of Guy playing tennis in a tennis court, trying to rush the match to arrive on time at the fairground (fig. 9). On the other hand, we are shown Bruno on different means of transportation with the lighter in his hand, also making his way to the amusement park (fig. 10). Thus, each time the spectator engages with the predicament of one of the characters, the director suddenly interrupts it by going back to the other. By doing so, tension mounts and, therefore, the audience is required to be more mindful of future events. Moreover, as Paiman Mohammed says, to further increase tension in the spectator within the cross-cutting sequence, the director incorporates the moment when Bruno's lighter falls through the grid of a drain and he struggles to recover it. In addition, these jump cuts make the audience ready for the forthcoming outcome: their confrontation at the amusement park (2010). In other words, through the cross-cutting sequence we can anticipate that there might be an unpleasant encounter between them. This clearly illustrates Constantine Santas' definition of parallel montage in which he claims that both unrelated actions

converge "toward the same effect" (2001: 60-61). Although different locations and people are presented in the different shots, they have the same aim, which, in the case of Bruno and Guy, is to arrive first at the amusement park. Therefore, the director uses the parallel technique by showing both Guy's tennis-game and Bruno's trip simultaneously in order to create suspense and further engage the spectators in the movie.

Another technique the director makes use of in this scene is the previously analysed focus on images in preference over lines of dialogue. By using these meaningful images, Hitchcock expects the audience to associate ideas and, thus, to heighten moments of tension. When the director uses certain images during the scene, he conveys the idea of the importance of time for both Guy and Bruno, and thus, manipulates the spectator into feeling anxiety. During the match game, there are several moments in which the audience is shown a close-up of the clock on the wall (fig. 11).

Figure 11: Emphasis on the clock through close-up

As a result of the camera being so close to the clock, the audience can see time ticking away minute by minute in the silent stadium. As we know in advance that Guy has to arrive at the amusement park before Bruno does, we grasp the meaning of these images: through this emphasis on the clock, the director conveys the idea that time is running short for Guy, as the audience sees the clock through his eyes, and that Bruno may arrive first.

At the same time, Bruno's hand is brought into focus when he tries to retrieve the lighter that he accidentally dropped in the drain (fig. 12).

Figure 12: Emphasis on Bruno's hand

Through this emphasis, which lasts several minutes, Hitchcock conveys the same idea: in the same way as for Guy time is crucial, Bruno also has a limited amount of time to get the lighter and rush to lay it in the fairground. Here it is worth mentioning the compression and extension of time referred to by Truffaut in his interview with Hitchcock. According to Martin Rubin, Truffaut claims that "time is compressed" during Guy's tennis game, and this is so in order to express his frenetic haste to finish the match, and also during Bruno's attempts to retrieve the lighter to display his extreme anxiety after dropping it. However, Rubin is doubtful about the latter example as he considers that, actually, in Bruno's case, time is extended as it seems to progress much more slowly than in Guy's (1999: 215). As a result, like the clock in the first example, our heart accelerates, which is an example of the spike in tension. Conversely, although still tense, we tend to somewhat relax when Bruno drops the lighter as it seems that the process to retrieve it will be difficult and long – just what Guy needs. Summing up, Hitchcock once again succeeds in causing fear in the spectator without making use of dialogue lines, but images alone.

Bridging the two scenes under analysis, the filmmaker makes prominent use of the technique consisting of complicating clichéd characters, which he uses in order to keep surprising and causing distress in his audience. Given that Guy is accused of something he did not do, which he struggles to prove, he clearly stands for the wrongly accused man sort of character that Hitchcock often includes in his movies. But not only him, the police detectives that follow him constantly, although Guy manages to escape from their control sometimes, also represent a recurring character in Hitchcock movies: the foolish policeman. In order to break with the stereotyped characters that the audience was used to, James Bell mentions that Hitchcock introduces a character who is accused of something he has not done, and this is so in order to create another moment of suspense in his films. When the audience realises that the incriminated person is innocent, they come to identify with them because they perceive the danger in which they are. Therefore, the audience also feels anxious (2012: 56). In the case of Guy, he has been accused of Miriam's crime and as the audience knows from the very outset that he is not guilty, they come to sympathize with him. This awareness increases spectatorial tension since we do not know what his fate will be. In the case of the policemen, Guy manages to break free from their control when he finishes his match and heads to the fairground. Since they are easily distracted when, in fact, they are required not to lose sight on Guy, they clearly illustrate that they are bumbling fools (Yacowar 2009: 28). This unexpected personality feature on their part, surprises the audience as they become aware that not even the police is acting properly, which could imply that maybe the villain could get away with his plan, and therefore, incriminate the innocent. Besides, both the police's dumb nature and Guy's dangerous condition appear to be much more lifelike to the spectator, which in turn intrigues them and, again, increases tension. Hence, in these final scenes the audience is shown two sorts of characters recurrent in Hitchcock movies that he introduces in order

to avoid triteness. As usual, his main aim in doing so is to offer his public another moment of tension.

As mentioned before, there are certain moments in the film in which the spectator engages with Guy. Apart from the fact that he is a wrongly accused man, which makes the audience to undoubtedly emphasize with him, in the last scenes the director makes use of another technique to make us identify with Guy, and therefore, experience his same apprehension: the use of subjective shots. An example of this is at the beginning of the first of these two scenes when, as mentioned above, the audience sees the clock's minutes ticking away on the tennis court's wall through Guy's eyes (figs. 13-14).

Figures 13-14: Subjective shot of Guy concerned about the time

These point-of-view shots, that Bordwell and Thomson quite often refer to as examples of the alignment of the viewer with a character in a film, put us in his place and we come to feel the pressure that he feels when playing in such a way so as to finish it as soon as possible. Thus, we want Guy's plans to get to the fairground first to work out – we take sides with him. The same applies to the subsequent subjective shots in which Guy and thus we ourselves gaze at the police officers trying not to lose sight on him again when already at the amusement park, and also at Bruno in his attempt to flee, first, and to make Guy fall off the whirling carrousel, later. As Guy and the audience already know that the police detectives would try to impede him from going the fairground where the murder

he is accused of took place, we also come to see them as an obstacle for him. Thus, we want Guy to hide among crowds of people and manage to reach his aim. In the same way, when Guy sees Bruno in the distance, and later on when they are fighting in the insanely whirling merry-go-around, we come to see exactly what he sees: Bruno is trying to escape (figs. 15-18).

Figures 15-18: Subjective shot of Guy gazing at Bruno's escaping attempt

As a result, when Guy runs after Bruno trying to catch him, and ends up receiving his blows in the out-of-control carousel, he is fighting for his life, but more than his life, for his innocence (Wood 98). As we are made to align with him through the subjective shots, we also feel at risk when Bruno hits Guy. On the other hand, we have the same hope Guy seems to have that he will manage to intercept Bruno and prove his freedom from guilt. Hence, through the use of point-of-view shots the director has made us follow and thus identify with Guy in the last scenes of the film. By doing so, we are made to share the danger of the situation in which he finds himself. That is why we believe in his innocence more intensely.

Another technique that we find at this point in the film is the purity of the plot. For Hitchcock, to have a simple storyline means an easy way to create suspense in his movies. Thus, as he reaches the end of *Strangers on a Train*, we become aware that it is an example of the conventional crime story, and that the director has used it in order to bring us closer to his characters and to the story itself and thus share their anxieties. An illustration of this happens at the end when Guy is pursued by the police detectives. This persecution strongly resembles events that might happen in reality: we could also imagine ourselves being chased by the police for something we did not do. That is why we come to share Guy's feelings of fear and his seemingly no-win situation. The same happens with the previously presented events in which the spectators could easily follow the plot: we are shown Bruno's tracking and his final murder of Miriam. We can extrapolate Miriam's situation to our reality, too. Although in this case the spectator does not share Miriam's feelings as she is not aware of the fatal ending that awaits her, we are still worried since what happens to her could happen to us too at any time in real life. Therefore, Hitchcock uses common circumstances so as not to require his audiences to memorize so many details and feel overwhelmed. Actually, what he aims is to keep us on the hook throughout the movie and the only way to do so is by presenting uncomplicated events that can grab our attention and which we could easily transfer to real life.

The fact that in these scenes the audience is made to identify with Guy as he appears to them as a falsely accused man with positive character traits clearly demonstrates that Hitchcock's aim was to convey a positive idea of human nature through suspense. According to Burget, Hitchcock generally uses moral principles to manipulate his spectators into engaging with the characters who are in dangerous situations. By doing so, he generates suspense (2013: 64-65). Thus, as we see that Guy fits in our conception of what is morally right as he has not killed anyone, we undoubtedly sympathize and

therefore identify with him, thus becoming more likely to share his decisions and understand his actions. In this respect, it seems that the director's aim is to bring to the fore the spectator's morally upright side, as we come to identify with someone who acts in accordance with moral principles. However, Lee Russell mentions that "the wrongly accused man could very well have been guilty". In the case of Guy, the fact that he has strong motives to get rid of Miriam, although he does not want to confess it when Bruno considers the exchange of murders, complicates his character. Later he acknowledges it when having a conversation with his current girlfriend. Thus, when Bruno commits the assassination, Guy is unavoidably involved (1966). Therefore, although Guy has not committed Miriam's murder, the fact that he wants her out of his way to marry another woman, makes him responsible, if only indirectly. In turn, this is a feeling that, through identification with Guy, we, the spectators, are also forced to confront. By using this example, Russell wants to prove that in Hitchcock's films there is never a clear division between good and evil as the innocents are also implicated in the evil actions performed by the villains. The only difference is in the moral conventions, as they act differently. This makes us go back to Wood's assumption when he says that, although we do not want to carry out certain deeds, the fact that it crosses our minds demonstrates that dark desires exist in all of us (87). Therefore, although Hitchcock usually distinguishes between the innocent and the corrupt by making us align with innocent characters, there are critics who say that this division does not exist since the fact of not committing murder does not mean that the person is completely innocent. They suggest that the mere fact of thinking about it directly makes the person part of it. This in the case of Guy who happens to be the one we identify with, implies we are not innocent, either.

Conclusion

Strangers on a Train is an illustration of Hitchcock's practice of creating suspense around the principles of morality through the use of several interrelated techniques. In this way, he makes the audience distinguish between the morally sound and unsound characters, thus connecting us with those who act in accordance with what is considered appropriate morality. However, there are cases in which the director uses our lack of information to make us align with characters who do not deserve our sympathy as a result of their wicked actions, but who appear to be friendly at first glance. In the film, this dimension is reflected mainly in the characters of Bruno and Guy. Following this line of thought, in the present essay I have evaluated the spectators' identification with each of these characters to conclude on the fact that destructive urges exist, although repressed, in all of us and that therefore even when not being culpable in strict moral terms, humans are often to blame, too.

The general way Hitchcock seeks to create suspense is strongly related to the principles of morality. This in *Strangers on a Train* allows the director to manipulate his audience into identifying with Guy, who seems to act morally, and therefore appears to us worthy of support. In the same way, the audience is also able to discern Bruno's evil nature as he behaves in a totally opposite way to Guy, and hence we do not sympathize with him.

However, given that identification sometimes happens to be with the most deranged characters as a result of their sympathetic appearance, the spectators become aware that they are somehow at the same level as the evil character in the film since we sometimes come to see a narrative circumstance from their perspective. At this point, we come to share the evil character's intentions – in this case, Bruno's: he intends to kill

Miriam and we find ourselves in a position of complicitness. This consideration makes us doubt our moral soundness and subsequently, acknowledge the up-to-now repressed darkness within ourselves.

But not only does the audience somehow contemplate the possibility of a murder through our alignment with the murderer Bruno. The morally right protagonist, Guy, does, too. There comes a moment in the film when he expressly says that his life would be better without Miriam. As a result, Guy comes to be on a par with Bruno as well. So, if we happen to identify with Guy when he behaves in accordance with moral principles, we must also share what crosses his mind. Therefore, once again we come to acknowledge the same assumptions: evil propensities are there within ourselves as we all have the potentiality for good and evil, even if we try to hide the destructive ones (Wood 86-99).

At this point, we come to realize that although it may not be apparent because we are not acting against the law, the mere fact of wanting the death of someone moves us away from innocence. In this way, the feeling of guilt shifts from the external world to the internal world: our consciousness. In other words, we are aware of the fact that we are not guilty under the law but we see ourselves blameable inwardly.

In this respect, it seems that Bruno happens to be a personification of all the suppressed desires existing in both Guy and us. He is the one who takes action and paves Guy's way for marrying another woman by getting rid of his current wife. By doing so, Guy is free of any guilt before the law. We, too, feel blameless as we do not participate directly in the deed we have imagined. Yet this freedom from guilt is only at the level of social morality – internally we are forced to acknowledge the drives and instincts of our darker side. Hitchcock has used purely formal techniques to usher us into the world of our innermost desires.

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