

### Screening Report 3

#### Out of My Hands and Into Hitchcock's: The Viewer's Loss of Control in *Marnie*

Although the viewers of Alfred Hitchcock's *Marnie* are aware of the sexual undertone that is pervasive throughout the film, it is only in the moment of the alleged rape that the audience becomes connected to that very same sexuality, as Hitchcock uses editing, point of view shots and the positioning of the characters within the mise en scène and editing to alert, involve and implicate the viewer. Therefore, Hitchcock is able to successfully penetrate the screen itself, manipulating and controlling the audience into feeling powerless, the same way Marc does to Marnie.

Although there is little room for argument that what this scene depicts is rape, Hitchcock is specific in making this scene subjective, so much so that the viewer themselves are putting the pieces together. Therefore, the reality, that the character of Mark, who was once thought to be so regal and romantic in his attempt to save Marnie, possesses this dark and evil side becomes so much worse, as the viewers are forced to come to terms with this concept themselves, as Hitchcock refuses to do it for them. This sequence is cut in such a way that the audience is fed a series of images and then is only able to depend upon the feelings and connotations that these images evoke within them to decipher in fact did happen. Hitchcock plays with the line between sex and rape, allowing only the way in which these fragments of shots are cut to provide the semblance of a guide to the viewer. The first clue starts away from the bedroom in the sitting room. As Marnie explains that she wishes the door to be closed Mark appears to be ignoring her, however the way in which his eyes remain fixed upon her gives the audience the lingering feeling that he is objectifying her, seeing her as purely a warm female body standing in front of him. Despite the fact that he snaps out of this fixation in the next cut,

returning to his normal self, the audience is still left with the feeling that something is not right.

This feeling is brought to fruition when Mark eventually charges after Marnie and then

Hitchcock cuts to an image of the two standing facing each other. Although brief, this image

✓ highlights for the audience Marks' physical magnitude, placing the in back of the viewers mind

the thought that physically, Marnie would be rendered helpless to Marks strength had he

continue to charge upon her. The next image is that of Mark slamming the door shut, letting a

curtain of darkness fall over them. By not cutting here, Hitchcock allows the viewer to see how

this situation has gotten much worse although, neither of the characters have moved. The

darkness that surrounds them in the bedroom, already a symbol of dangerous sexuality, as it

creates an atmosphere that causes the viewer to realize that the two are not just going to talk

as they did before. Then the camera tracks and zooms in on Marc's face and by again not

cutting, Hitchcock heightens and holds the suspense of this moment, failing to give the viewer a

cut that might allow them to take a breath. Then suddenly Hitchcock cuts to Marnie, screaming

and as she screams "no" the way in which Hitchcock cuts to a shot of her alone isolates her,

causing the viewer to realize that something much more perverse than her just yelling at Marc

is going on. The next shot is that of Mark tearing Marnie's nightgown and although Hitchcock

✓ shows very little naked skin, his quick cuts from her bare shoulders to the cut of her uncovered

legs allows the realize what has just happened. Although they see none of Marnie exposed, it is

the inability of the viewer to see that makes this scene more violent, as the audience cannot be

adequately horrified with Mark's action because they cannot fully comprehend the damage he

✓ *mice* has done in violating her privacy. Hitchcock then plays with the reader's mind, suggesting

through the way in which Mark slowly places his robe around Marnie that he regrets what he

has done and the worst is over. However, Hitchcock soon cuts to a high angle shot, one that is

so high that it resembles birds-eye view and thus, the unexpected angle of this shot causes the

*light on the photo also creates sense of powerlessness in the viewer*

subconscious to register that something is wrong and the actions that follow are not what they had expected. The following shots of the low angle, Marnie facing the camera and Marnie being lowered onto the bed all give the reader the impression that although they have seen nothing abnormal, something very disturbing is taking place. It is only when Hitchcock cuts to Mark's face moving closer and closer however, that the audience is able to really understand that this moment can be interpreted as rape. The way in which the camera slowly zooms in and his sinister eyes fill the screen suggests that physically he is pushing himself on top of Marnie and emotionally, that he has completely suppressed her.

Hitchcock also works to intensify without showing the horror of this scene by bring his audience face to face with his characters through giving them their own personal perspective.

Although at first it appears that their gaze is simultaneously switching between that of Mark and Marnie, it soon becomes clear that the gaze of the audience is in fact their own. At first the sequence begins with a shot of Mark from a low angle. Not only does this cause Mark to look

ominous as he overpowers the shot, but also indicates that the source of this gaze rests from somewhere in front of Mark's legs and a different direction from where Mark is looking while speaking. Therefore, even when the next shot becomes Marnie draped against the doorframe, the viewer it can still be said that the origin of this point of view remains in the same location.

As the two speak in bitter tones, the shots switchback and forth with cuts, as if the audience is moving their head back and forth to assess the reaction of each character. Although, when Mark rushes into the bedroom, the gaze of the audience seems to be on a similar trajectory to that of

both Mark's and Marnie's, it is after Marnie screams in protest that the audience fully separates themselves from either character, reinforced by the way Hitchcock puts Mark and Marnie in the same shot for the first time in this sequence. Thus, as the scene continues, the audience looks on and takes the form of an innocent bystander watching this horror occur. Therefore, it is as if

*good catch*

the viewer is trapped and forced to watch, however displeasing, Hitchcock controls the audience's gaze and thus forces them to keep looking even as the camera zooms in to the private moment of Mark kissing Marnie's forehead and nose. Then the camera moves to another low angle shot, making the audience feel inferior to the large and looming mark who clutches Marnie, the character with whom the audience identifies. Thus, Hitchcock uses the camera angle in combination with the pov to remind the viewer again of how they too are being overpowered. However, Hitchcock again moves the gaze of the viewer to another location, cutting to the image of Marnie, trapped in Mark's dangerous embrace, facing the audience. Therefore, the audience remains watching in suspense as Mark begins to take advantage of the still and almost ~~corps~~ <sup>corpse</sup> like Marnie. Furthermore, Hitchcock chooses to align the gaze of his audience both with Marc and Marnie in the final shots. Therefore, he forces the audience to look at the situation from all perspectives, disturbing the audience as they too feel violated, having been forced to not only look through the eyes of the rapist, but also those of a woman being raped.

One could argue that the gritty horror of this scene lies not only in the way in which Hitchcock forces the audience to identify as a useless bystander, the attacker and the woman being raped, but also through the way in which he uses the positioning of Marnie within his shots to ensnare the viewer in feelings of guilt and frustration as she looks on asking for help and the viewer not being able to give it. Although for the majority of the film, Marnie faces towards Mark watching the predator's every move. Her immediate concession is obvious, as she is cognizant of the way in which she is helpless against Mark. Therefore, Marnie shows no emotion except for resignation as he strips off her nightgown and begins to kiss her, despite her lack of response. His hand is raised around her neck as if at any moment of resistance, he could choke her. However, it is only at the moment that it becomes clear what will happen next

that the shot switches to the camera facing Marnie in the full front position. As she looks the viewer directly in the eyes, the emotion of betrayal spreads across her face. This moment therefore, becomes very intimate between the audience and Marnie as she looks directly to them for help and yet they are able to do nothing, but are also unable to look away. It is at this moment that the audience becomes doubly trapped, as they are not only forced into being a bystander by Hitchcock's lens, but they are made to feel the guilt of doing nothing to save Marnie, abandoning her as they continue to watch. Furthermore, as the audience's gaze becomes not just one of a bystander, but that of Mark the rapist, the audience is made to feel as if their failure to help Marnie makes them equally as guilty of the rapist himself. This causes the audience to feel that they are just as bad as Mark is because they have done nothing to stop him. The way in which Hitchcock manipulates what the viewer sees and how they feel as a result serves to highlight that even the viewer of a film is ensnared into the horrors that he chooses to explore and thereby suggesting that in film, everyone is involved and no one is safe.

Savannah,

This is really great.

Well done.

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