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Elevator Efficiency

Do you push both the UP and the DOWN button when you
are summoning an elevator? If you do, please read on.

Most people push both buttons in an effort to speed up the
service. What actually takes place is the opposite. If you
are on the second floor for example and you want to go up
to the ninth, and you push the UP and the DOWN buttons,
you will stop an express-to-main elevator at two for
nothing. You will also stop another elevator, or the same
one, in the UP direction. The next time it may be you who
gets delayed by someone else who pushed both buttons.

Therefore, for optimum elevator service, regardless of
whether the elevator is above or below you, push only the
UP to go up and only the DOWN to go down.

Your friendly elevator mechanic,
TED WALDRON.

Exploring Hitch's psyche

Robin Wood

The Art of Alfred Hitchcock: Fifty Years of His Motion Pictures by Donald Spoto; Doubleday, 1979. The appearance of Donald Spoto's new book **The Art of Alfred Hitchcock: Fifty Years of His Motion Pictures** roughly coincides with the third edition (Barnes) of my own **Hitchcock's Films** and a book by Maurice Jacowar on **Hitchcock's British Films** (Archon). Spoto's book comes to us complete with a preface by Princess Grace of Monaco, Hitchcock's own personal endorsement ('... a marvellous book... a great book'), and a review by Clyde Gilmour that took up a third of the front page of the entertainment section of the *Star*. It seems a good point at which to ask what progress Hitchcock criticism has made in the past decade, and to what extent the enormous developments in the theoretical study of film have affected the dominant film culture.

The answers are, respectively, none and not at all. Gilmour, as one would expect from an archetypal representative of the bourgeois press, is still back somewhere before where I began fifteen years ago, worrying over questions of intentionality that vanished forever with Freud. The Spoto book is exhaustively

detailed (achieving a remarkable level of accuracy), the Jacowar work honourable and intelligent within its limitations; but both writers seem to have become methodologically arrested at the phase of critical development in which I first wrote my book, and so much has happened in criticism since then that their work seems archaic if not obsolete.


I produced my book in the heyday of 'auteurism' and have tried (in a new retrospective chapter) to place it historically and suggest the limitations of its approach. The 'appreciation' of works of art in those days seemed a sufficient end; now it seems at best a means—a means to insights into, awareness of, the culture within which we live and seek to define ourselves. The politicization of film criticism in the past decade—the sense that films belong, not to individual 'great artists', but to the culture, and that they inflect in various ways the ideological strains, conflicts and contradictions within a civilisation in crisis and perhaps on the verge of disintegration—renders trivial the work of critics who ignore it.

For me, there is no longer any justification for a book, an article, a university course, that does not have the aim of contributing (in

however modest a way) to cultural awareness and social revolution (the latter following inevitably from the former: it is impossible to become aware of our cultural situation without wishing totally to transform it). We no longer have the time to sit



around 'appreciating' the 'great artist'. The continuing value and significance of Hitchcock's films—in themselves generally negative and cynical in their estimate of human possibilities—lies in their extraordinarily intense crystallization of strains central to patriarchal capitalist culture, creating a world in which all relations are characterized by domination, manipulation and possessiveness. Both formally and thematically, the films enact with peculiar vividness the impossible tensions under which we live. They are great films not because they encapsulate 'eternal truths' about 'the human condition', but because they can be used in the struggle towards liberation.



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