

LANIN A.
GYURKO

SPELLBOUND

ALFRED HITCHCOCK

AND

CARLOS FUENTES

UNIVERSITY PRESS
OF THE SOUTH

2021

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Lanin A. Gyurko.

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To the memory of Dr. Gustavo Correa, eminent Professor of Spanish, Yale University, in honor of his masterful teaching, superb scholarship, and unremitting dedication to his students.

To the memory of the inimitable, highly versatile actor Warner Baxter (1889-1951). His greatest role, as Julian Marsh, the hard-biting, driven yet compassionate stage director in *42nd Street* (1933)—one of the most sparkling of Hollywood musicals—is paralleled by his flamboyant performance in the starring role of *In Old Arizona* (1929) and *The Cisco Kid* (1931).

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“Jean Harlow was very soft about her toughness.” GEORGE CUKOR

“Everybody wants to be Cary Grant. Even *I* want to be Cary Grant.” CARY GRANT

“Joan Crawford was the perfect image of the movie star, and, as such, was largely the creation of her own indomitable will.” GEORGE CUKOR

“With all the unrest in the world, I don’t think anybody should have a yacht that sleeps more than twelve.” JOE/JOSEPHINE IN BILLY WILDER’S *SOME LIKE IT HOT*

“Man’s main task is to give birth to himself.” ERICH FROMM, PSYCHOLOGIST AND SOCIOLOGIST

“To fulfill a dream, to be allowed to sweat over lonely labor, to be given the chance to create, is the meat and potatoes of life.” BETTE DAVIS, HOLLYWOOD SUPERSTAR

“Make visible what, without you, might perhaps never have been seen.” ROBERT BRESSON, FRENCH FILM DIRECTOR

The ten commandments of a film director, by BILLY WILDER:
Commandments one through nine: Never be boring. Tenth commandment: Always leave the final cut for yourself.

“We know that people like legends. I think people like legends more than they like truth. I think there is a fascination with the western hero, because the West is a great myth.” LINDSAY

VIII

ANDERSON, BRITISH FILMMAKER

“When legend becomes fact, print the legend”
THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALENCE, 1962

“If we were a primitive society, movie stars would be gods.”
SYDNEY POLLACK, HOLLYWOOD DIRECTOR

“No more goddamn shop girls. “ JOAN CRAWFORD TO LOUIS
B. MAYER, HEAD OF METRO-GOLDWYN-MAYER

“My movies have always been more devious, or, if you prefer a
more devious word, sinister.” ALFRED HITCHCOCK, MOTION
PICTURE DIRECTOR

“It is the way our sympathy flows and recoils that really
determines our lives. And here lies the importance of the novel,
properly handled: it can lead the sympathetic consciousness into
new places, and away in recoil from things gone dead.” D.H.
LAWRENCE, *LADY CHATTERLEY’S LOVER*

IX

“They were different from those coming along now, and they were conscious of it. They had a dignity and straightforwardness about them from the fact that they had worked in pictures before pictures were bathed in a golden haze of success. They were still rather humble before their amazing triumph, and thus, unlike the new generation, who took it all for granted, they were constantly in touch with reality. Half a dozen or so of the women were especially aware of being unique. No one had come along to fill their places; here and there a pretty face had caught the public imagination for a year, but those of the old crowd were already legends, ageless and disembodied. With all this, they were still young enough to believe that they would go on forever.”

F. SCOTT FITZGERALD, “MAGNETISM” (1928)

X

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INTRODUCTION: TWO MASTERS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL REALISM AND THE FANTASTIC

Why a book on Alfred Hitchcock and Carlos Fuentes? Since the 1980s, when the estate of Hitchcock re-released after a hiatus of twenty years major films like *Rear Window* and *Vertigo* and *Rope* which had been kept out of public circulation after the death of Hitchcock, the critical bibliography of the Hollywood master has rapidly expanded—testifying not only to the extraordinary impact of the superb, iconic director in Great Britain, the United States, and the world, but also to the depth and passion and power of his cinematic brilliance. At one point in his lengthy career, which spanned both Silent and Sound films, as Hitchcock began his film career in Great Britain as a titler in Silent Film, Hitchcock was regarded primarily as a gigantic commercial success—a fabulator of murder mysteries with a penchant for never-before screened violence and horror. It is only in the last twenty years that his art is being analyzed and interpreted—and enormously appreciated—as high art, and as the cornerstone of the development of the feature film industry. Similarly, the critical bibliography on the Mexican novelist, short story writer, dramatist and essayist Carlos Fuentes, the founder and leading exponent of the titanic Latin American Novel of the Boom—whose primary exponents also include two writers who have received the Nobel Prize in Literature—Gabriel García Márquez, the Colombian master of magical realism, whose most famous works are *Cien años de soledad* (*One Hundred Years of Solitude*) and *El amor en los tiempos de cólera* (*Love in the Time of Cholera*) and, in 2011, Mario Vargas Llosa, the great Realist author from Peru, among whose novels are *La ciudad y los perros*, *La casa verde*, *Conversación en la catedral* and *La tía Julia y el escribidor*, as well as the late Julio Cortázar, one of the most important short story writers of the twentieth century and the successor of Edgar Allan Poe and Franz Kafka. Cortázar's narrative masterpiece *Rayuela* (*Hopscotch*) thrust the Argentine expatriate, who for

much of his life resided in Saignon, France, near to his beloved Paris, into the limelight as a fitting successor to the Irish novelist who so brilliantly experimented with language and myth—James Joyce—in his masterful *Ulysses*. And Carlos Fuentes himself—a literary dynamo, still restlessly active in his eighties, the author of vast epic novels like *La región más transparente* and *La muerte de Artemio Cruz* and *Cambio de piel* and *Terra nostra*, has many times been among finalists for the coveted Nobel Prize in Literature, which thus far has eluded him but which he most assuredly deserves.

Fuentes through his outstanding literary art and through his relentless publicity and his success at attracting North American agents to promote his works in the United States, opened the doors for countless Latin American authors, like, in the 1960s and 1970s, the Chilean José Donoso, who in his seminal work *Historia personal del Boom* (*A Personal History of the Boom*) renders extensive homage to Fuentes's inspiring leadership as well as to many Mexican novelists, particularly those of a literary movement called La Onda including Gustavo Sainz and José Agustín. Similarly, the impact of Alfred Hitchcock on Hollywood directors is enormous—films, now regarded as cinematic classics, like *Psycho* and *Vertigo* and *To Catch a Thief* and *Dial M for Murder* and *North by Northwest* and *The Birds* and *Marnie* have had a decisive impact on leading contemporary Hollywood directors like Brian De Palma and on Latin American film directors like González Iñárritu in his brilliant film *Amores perros*.

What factors can join Hitchcock and Fuentes? Major cinematic currents which have deeply impacted both Hitchcock and Fuentes are the films of German Expressionism—*M* and *Dr. Mabuse der Spieler* of the inimitable Fritz Lang, *Das Kabinett des Doktor Caligari* of Robert Wiene, *Der blaue Engel* of Eric Von Sternberg as well as the dark, tragic Hollywood *film noir* of the 1940s. Literarily, the spellbinding short stories and poems of the master of the stunning depiction of Gothic horror, Edgar Allan Poe, from *The Fall of the House of Usher* to poems of dark and beauty and death and the supernatural like “The Raven” and “Annabel Lee” have exerted a powerful influence on the art of the psychological and the supernatural of both Carlos Fuentes and Alfred Hitchcock. Both outstanding Hollywood director and Latin

American narrative master are perfectionists, both are masters of the intricate interplay of darkness and light, death and new life, suffering and redemption. Both firmly believe in the art of illusion—the conjurer’s art—that casts a spell over its beholder.

Carlos Fuentes, the outstanding and chameleonic contemporary Mexican novelist, short story writer, essayist, and dramatist, is an extraordinarily eclectic writer, one who blends the worlds of painting, dance, sculpture, architecture, and film, both explicitly and implicitly, into his literary art. Indeed, Fuentes is one of the most visual of Latin American and world authors, and the dynamism, intensity, and depth of his creative vision owe much to the world of the Visual Arts.

In an interview with Fuentes conducted by the author of this study, the distinguished writer and dynamic, forceful public speaker commented on the great power which the cinematic image in particular exerts on the literary artist, and then added, somewhat apprehensively, that perhaps it was too powerful. One of the basic reasons for Fuentes’s skillful incorporation of themes, techniques and structures from the cinema into his literary vision may very well be an attempt to harness that power, and in the process to demonstrate the unity of the verbal and the visual modes of expression.

Fuentes’s masterful art is one of continual synthesis: of literary genres, historical epochs and humanistic disciplines. Indeed, he is the maximum exponent of the *novela totalizante* or all-encompassing novel in Latin America—a dazzling, experimental fusion of reality and fantasy, history and philosophy, architecture, sociology and psychology, linguistic innovations and anthropological themes, music, painting, theatre, and cinema. Cinema, the only original art form of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, can be seen as the culmination of all the arts—and so too is the highly eclectic universe elaborated by Carlos Fuentes. Fuentes’s works have markedly expanded the scope of the Mexican novel, as they stunningly evoke the Pre-Columbian, Aztec and Mayan era and world, and the sanguinary Conquest of Aztec Mexico by Hernán Cortés and Pedro de Alvarado to the Juárez Reform era in the nineteenth century and the French Intervention that led to the imposition of a monarchy under the ill-fated Emperor Maximilian and his consort Carlotta, and from the

Mexican Revolution of 1910 to the depiction of the massacre of the student protesters in the Plaza of Nonoalco-Tlatelolco in 1968. And, in vatic novels such as *Cristóbal nonato* (1987), Fuentes prophetically envisions the Mexico City of the year 1992, just as *Terra nostra* (1978) focuses prophetically on the world of 2000, which Fuentes evokes dramatically, in terms of the Apocalypse. And much of what Fuentes foresees as afflicting his country years in advance, comes tragically to occur, like his grim ecological predictions in *Cristóbal nonato*.

Fuentes's art is one of dynamic and extensive intertextuality, as he constantly builds literature out of literature, expertly weaving into mammoth creative novels, such as *Terra nostra*, themes and characters from the most important works of the literature of Spain in the Golden Age: characters such as Celestina, Don Juan, Don Quixote and Sancho Panza. Paralleling this complex intertextuality, in which authors such as Miguel de Cervantes, Alexandre Dumas, Franz Kafka, James Joyce, and Ramón López Velarde are all recreated in Fuentes's own works, to emphasize the art of literary creation as a communal and democratic process, is a phenomenon which can be termed "intervisuality"—Fuentes's incessant incorporation of characters, settings, themes and plots, as well as a plethora of cinematic techniques such as closeups and crosscutting, pan shots and dissolves, distant shots and forward and reverse zoom shots, as well as allusions to directors, actors, and actresses from myriad Hollywood, Mexican, European, and Asian films. Through this dexterous and highly imaginative employment of visual influences, Fuentes convincingly brings to fruition his theory of what the new novel in Latin America should be—a narrative of openness: "El lenguaje ... de la ambigüedad, de la pluralidad de significados, de la constelación de alusiones: de la apertura." ["The language of ambiguity, of the plurality of meanings, of the constellation of allusions: of openness."] ¹

In an interview, Fuentes has referred to himself as a "putter-inner, not a taker-outer," as he characterizes the vast scope of the many five and six-hundred page novels that he has written. ²

¹ See Carlos Fuentes, *La nueva novela hispanoamericana* (México: Joaquín Mortiz, 1969), p. 32. Translation by L.G.

² Consult the interview between Fuentes and Emir Rodríguez Monegal, included

In this regard, the definition of cinema as an all-encompassing art given by Canudo (*L'Usine aux images*) as “a fusion of the three arts of space—painting, architecture and dance, and of the three arts of time—music, theatre, and literature” helps to explain why Fuentes is so fascinated by the world of the cinema. Emphasizing the great importance of film for him, he states:

Plato defined time as the moving image of eternity. When eternity moves, it's called time. Well, I think the film has given us that. The greatest heartbreak of our personal lives can finally be inscribed in the permanent memory of film today. It gives an eternity as it moves. It gives us a chance to be present in time. The photograph gave us an identity in the 19th-century. The movie gives us our identity today.³

It is the intensely mythic nature of film as well as its constant emphasis on motion—indeed *Kino* in Greek signifies movement, giving us *cinema* and in English, movies—that so often inspires Fuentes. In an extensive interview with James Fortson, in response to the journalist's inquiry about what constitutes the fundamental significance of film for him, Fuentes replies eloquently:

Its mythologizing capacity. What finally matters to me about film is the structuring of a modern pantheon, the construction of a whole contemporary mythology . . . Film has created all the contemporary myths: those shadows move across the screen as Apollo and Venus and all of the gods of Olympus could have passed through the mind of an ancient Greek: the movie stars are the ghosts of the gods.⁴

in *Homenaje a Carlos Fuentes*, edited by Helmy Giacomani (New York: Las Américas, 1971), p. 43.

³ See Carlos Fuentes, interview conducted by Claudia Dreifus, *Film Comment*, XXII, 3 (May-June, 1986), p. 52.

⁴ Consult James R. Fortson, *Perspectivas mexicanas desde París: Un diálogo con Carlos Fuentes*, Supplement to *Él* (México: Corporación Editorial, 1973), p. 84. The translation is by L.G.

Orson Welles's cinematic masterpiece, *Citizen Kane* (1941), which was initially titled *The American*, and which from multiple and constantly changing perspectives evokes the career of the impetuous and titanic newspaper tycoon, banker, and industrialist Charles Foster Kane, and demonstrates how the conniving and easily corruptible Kane betrayed his initial idealism for social reform by becoming a ruthless exploiter and power monger, has exerted a profound thematic, structural, and stylistic influence on Fuentes's greatest novel, *La muerte de Artemio Cruz* (*The Death of Artemio Cruz*; 1962), a penetrating examination of the former revolutionary turned *hacendado* and industrial magnate, who like Kane also ends his life in virtual isolation, attempting to find in his tenacious embrace of material possessions a substitute for the idealism and the capacity to love which he has thoroughly suppressed.⁵ *Das Kabinett des Dr. Caligari*, the landmark German expressionist film directed by Robert Wiene (1919), piles dreams and nightmares on hallucinations, delusions, and megalomania, permeating the problematic world created by Fuentes in his novel *Cambio de piel*, whose very title reflects the world of *Caligari*, a silent horror film where identities suddenly shift and change, and the august, imperious director of an insane asylum is suddenly placed in a strait jacket by his fellow doctors and becomes one of its inmates. In this topsy turvy world, the very narrator of the film, Franz, at the end is revealed to be a rebellious inmate in the asylum, and his whole previous testimony, which has been accepted as the product of a concerned and rational mind, suddenly becomes that of a madman, unreliable and capricious. In *Cambio de piel* (*A Change of Skin*; 1968) Fuentes re-creates the demonic Dr. Caligari in the form of the monstrous Herr Urs, an egomaniacal painter and restorer of dolls, and Caligari's automaton-like servant Cesare is also brought back to life and permeates the highly

⁵ For an extensive examination of the thematic, stylistic, and structural influences of Welles's intricate and dynamic cinematic art on Fuentes, consult my study "Fuentes's *La muerte de Artemio Cruz* and Welles's *Citizen Kane*: A Comparative Analysis," in *Carlos Fuentes: A Critical View*, edited by Robert Brody and Charles Rossman (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982), pp. 64-94.

convoluted, expansive narrative. Similar to *Das Kabinett des Dr. Caligari*, *Cambio de piel* is plagued by violence from beginning to end—the savage violence of the Conquest of indigenous Mexico, such as the massacre in the sacred city of Cholula, consecrated to the Aztec deity Quetzalcóatl, the Plumed Serpent, where more than three thousand perished at the command of the wily and brutal Cortés, to the holocaust perpetuated by Nazi Germany in the twentieth century in which millions were imprisoned and perished. And just as the murder of the sensitive Alan in *Caligari* is shockingly predicted the night before by the somnambulist Cesare, so too does the enigmatic and highly manipulative narrator in *Cambio de piel*, Freddy Lambert, predict the death of Franz at the very outset of the novel, a death that the highly elusive and sinister Freddy conspires with another of the characters, Isabel, to bring about, just as Dr. Caligari conspires with Cesare to conduct mayhem and murder.

The multiple, contradictory endings of *Caligari* are paralleled by the many different endings of *Cambio de piel*, in one of which both Freddy Lambert and one of the central characters of his narrative, Elizabeth, are incarcerated in an insane asylum, just as are Franz and Jane, who walks in hallucination and madness, in *Caligari*. The backdrops to the scenes and action in Wiene's remarkable film of demonic possession—the possession of the twentieth century scientist by the terrifying spirit of a eleventh century mountebank named Caligari—are not realistic but instead composed of Expressionist paintings that dramatically and powerfully symbolize the inner states of the characters, their anxieties, murderous impulses, and self-ensnarement. Indeed, in this brilliant film, the lights and shadows were painted right onto the sets. This bizarre, grotesque world, designed to exteriorize the delusions of a madman, who in this case is both Franz and Dr. Caligari, has strongly influenced Fuentes's somber, expressionistic vision, as in *Cambio de piel* the backdrops to various scenes are fantastic ones—either a painting brought to life or a series of sculptures, or an entire city, in this case a fog-enshrouded Prague—the setting for the romantic yet fated interlude between Hanna and Franz—the architect who will later collaborate with the Nazis and refuse to aid Hanna when he later finds her in a concentration camp, imprisoned for being a Jew. The medieval

Czech capital city created by Fuentes is a fantasy Prague, the hallucinatory Prague of an Expressionist film such as *Der Student von Prag*, combined with the shadowy world of the medieval, shadow-drenched town in *Das Kabinett des Doktor Caligari*. In both *Das Kabinett*. and *Cambio de piel*, inner worlds, those of dream, nightmare, hallucination, revery and premonition, combine to create a highly unstable and disintegrating universe in which nothing is clear, in which the characters struggle through twisted labyrinths that symbolize the demented and anguished consciousness.

Fuentes has stated that filmic images often have greater meaning for him than do literary ones. He himself is a treasure house of filmic knowledge and indeed has written a novel entitled *Zona sagrada* (*Holy Place*; 1967), which is inspired by the career of one of the greatest of Mexican film stars and cinematic legends, the incomparable, relentlessly dynamic María Félix, the equivalent in Mexico to the Hollywood superstar who played so many roles as strong and independent and unconquerable woman, and who also appears in Fuentes's works, both *The Death of Artemio Cruz* and *A Change of Skin*: Joan Crawford. In the convoluted, highly complex novel that is *Zona sagrada*, written initially as a filmscript, cinematic myth is expertly blended with myths drawn from classical Greek and Roman sources such as the *Odyssey* and the *Telegonia*, as well as Egyptian and ancient Aztec myths.

Claudia Nervo, the *persona* of María Félix, is evoked mystically as *fascinatrix* and *femina saga*. She is stunningly portrayed as a combination of the deadly Circe from Homer's *The Odyssey* and Tlazoltéotl, the ancient Aztec goddess of filth and of carnal love. Just as Tlazoltéotl, evoked as both cruel and redeeming, demanded the sacrifice of women, and prostitutes were beheaded to propitiate her, so too does Claudia surround herself with a court of models who are forced to sacrifice their individuality and integrity to become her mincing puppets. And Fuentes's third drama, *Orquídeas a la luz de la luna* (*Orchids in the Moonlight*; 1982), constitutes an ironic but eloquent homage to three of the finest of Mexican actresses—María Félix, Dolores Del Río and Lupe Vélez—all of whom starred in films both in Mexico and in other countries, including the United States and France, and whose international careers and "celebrity status" reflect that of

Fuentes himself, who stated in an interview with the author of this study that he aspired to be a film actor, on the model of Sydney Greenstreet and Conrad Veidt. Fuentes in *Orquídeas a la luz de la luna* pays homage to the beautiful and extremely versatile Dolores Del Río, who began her film career in Hollywood in the silent era, starring in films such as Raoul Walsh's *What Price Glory?* (1926), and then made the important transition to sound films, a transition that some silent screen stars like Constance Talmadge publicly refuted and that they refused to make, and a transition that many leading stars of the silent screen attempted to make like the great John Gilbert but whose high-pitched voice made the *Cambio de piel* impossible. The highly versatile Dolores Del Río starred in Hollywood musicals such as *Flying Down to Rio* (1933), in which she dances a tango with Fred Astaire, the lilting "Orchids in the Moonlight," that Fuentes takes as the title of his drama. Directed by Orson Welles in the film *Journey into Fear* (1942), Del Río after her breakup with Welles returned to her native Mexico to inaugurate what is now regarded as the Golden Age of Mexican cinema. She starred in films directed by Emilio Fernández which are now regarded as classics: *María Candelaria* (1942), *Flor Silvestre* (1943), and *Las abandonadas* (1944), films whose plots and characters Fuentes repeatedly alludes to in *Orquídeas*, a drama built up of incessant cinematic roles and scenes.

The dazzling but ill-fated Hollywood actress Lupe Vélez is also alluded to in *Orquídeas*. Like Del Río, Guadalupe Vélez de Villalobos began her film career in the silent era in films such as *Lady of the Pavements*, and *Tiger Rose* (1929) and also became a Hollywood star, appearing in an enormously popular series entitled *Mexican Spitfire* (1942), before her untimely death by suicide at age thirty-four—a death that is paralleled in that of the vivacious yet death-haunted María in *Orquídeas*. Third, Fuentes re-creates the dynamic and irrepressible film star and national legend María Félix, the ravishing and imperious star of such films as Fernando de Fuentes's *Doña Bárbara* (1943) and Emilio Fernández's *Enamorada* (1948) and *Río escondido* (1947). In many of his works, such as *Diana, o la cazadora solitaria* (*Diana, or The Goddess Who Hunts Alone*; 1994), film is evoked explicitly, as Fuentes skillfully incorporates personalities and scenes as well as emotional milieu and psychic states from silent films such as Carl

Theodore Dreyer's classic silent film *The Passion of Joan of Arc*, Otto Preminger's modern version *Saint Joan*, starring the *ingenué* Jean Seberg as the titanic French Patriot and martyr, as well as cinematic techniques such as *chiaroscuro* and zoom shots and panoramic shots. Film is a commanding presence in *Zona sagrada*, with its allusion to the films of the great German director Fritz Lang like *Metropolis* (1927), the many films of María Félix like *El peñón de las ánimas*, *Río escondido*, *Enamorada*, *La monja Alférez*, even to the extent that the cast-off son Guillermo/Guillermito/Mito in *Holy Place* becomes both audience to the hypnotizing films of his mother Claudia Nervo, the imperious *persona* of María Félix and even director, as in his febrile imagination Mito attempts to film himself into the life of Claudia, to consummate vicariously an incestuous impulse, also conveyed through his secret donning of Claudia's cashmere sweater.

But in other works of this Latin American master, film is implicit as it is in one of Fuentes's most abstract and temporarily challenging works. *El instinto de Inez* (*Inez*; 2001) in which film is never mentioned but through which creation runs a deep and penetrating influence of one of the foremost films of the great Swedish director Ingmar Bergman, the enchanting and nightmare-suffused film classic *Wild Strawberries* (1957) and in the enigmatic *novela Aura* which is *per se* an extraordinarily visual work there is an implicit impact of the greatest of the films of Alfred Hitchcock, *Vertigo* (1955) which like *Aura* occurs half in reality but most of all in dream—in illusions and delusion, in nightmare and daytime recovery, in behavior that is obsessive-compulsive and paranoid and at times, megalomaniac.

It is significant that like Fuentes's all-encompassing, epic, brilliantly synthesizing work, Hollywood too throughout its turbulent, scandal-ridden, yet always fascinating history has constituted a remarkably open universe—giving immediate opportunity to the many emigré directors like Eric von Stroheim and Fritz Lang and Ernest Lubitsch and Billy Wilder and providing myriad acting opportunities to minority groups—Afro-Americans



Figure 1. Scottie to Madeleine: “There’s nothing you must do.” But what she does is ambivalent: assist in a murder or attempt to save victim?



Figure 2. Auburn-tressed, Judy has no meaning for Scottie as Judy Barton; Scottie is entranced by a revenant Madeleine.

and Native Americans and Hispanic Americans and Asian Americans, welcoming talented and versatile artists, technicians, products and directors from around the world. Indeed, it is this openness of Hollywood, as well as its perpetually magical quality that seems to draw Fuentes to Hollywood film. and to the cinematic triumphs of Alfred Hitchcock. Just as Alfred Hitchcock, unlike most film directors, who seem to shun the limelight, constantly drew attention to himself, carefully re-creating himself as a Hollywood celebrity, so too is Fuentes one of the most publicity seeking and image-creating of world writers. Just as Hitchcock relentlessly appeared before photographers and motion picture concerns and constantly inverted himself as a character in his films—giving himself a usual signature, Fuentes is a debonair, endlessly photographed fashion plate and intellectual eminence. One of the great differences between the two creators is Hitchcock's self-parody—having himself photographed with his enormous stomach wrapped in sausages to make fun of his expansive girth, or posing before a huge pie stuffed with black birds that he is about to consume, to publicize *The Birds*, or even appearing as a living scarecrow—symbolizing his love of frightening his audiences and his great sense of humor in mocking his own excesses. Fuentes is a dashing crowd-pleaser, a parallel to the tremendous public acclaim received in both England and the United States by the great author who also has inspired the highly eclectic Fuentes: Charles Dickens, who like the irrepressible Fuentes drew vast, appreciative crowds on both sides of the Atlantic.



Figure 3. Vertigo is crammed with ghostly labyrinths, signifying mystery, entrapment, and despair.



Figure 4. From beginning to end of Vertigo the hapless Scottie is a man dangling over an abyss.

CHAPTER I:
THE DEAD AMONG US:
HITCHCOCK'S *VERTIGO* AND FUENTES'S *AURA*

God helps those who invent what they need.

LILLIAN HELLMAN

I go but I return:

I would I were

The pilot of the darkness and the dream.

ALFRED LORD TENNYSON

Aura, a short novel by Fuentes published in 1962, shows an extensive incorporation of cinematic techniques. The fluid and hypnotic style of this work parallels and no doubt has been influenced by the movement of a travelling camera. Not only on the stylistic but also on the thematic level, *Aura* has been significantly influenced by Hollywood film, both by the now classic film *Sunset Boulevard* (1950) directed by the vibrant and inimitable Billy Wilder, and by the masterwork of Alfred Hitchcock, which many film critics now regard as Hitchcock's greatest achievement, *Vertigo* (1958). Like *Vertigo*, *Aura* from start to finish is a work of great hypnotic power. Indeed, both novel and film could very easily have been re-titled "Possession." The theme of possession functions on several levels in both Fuentes and Hitchcock: the physical, the psychological, and the

supernatural. Both *Vertigo* and *Aura* are remarkable works of synthesis that constantly blend present, recent past, and remote, nineteenth century past; both expertly fuse reality and illusion, and both are populated by the living who obsessively intermingle with the spirits of the dead. According to the spurious account given by Gavin Elster, his disturbed wife Madeleine is possessed by the revenant spirit of her great grandmother, Carlotta. Together Gavin and his lover Judy Barton, brilliantly played by Kim Novak in what is her finest Hollywood role, conspire to kill Madeleine so that Gavin can inherit her vast fortune. To make it seem as if the actual murder were instead a suicide, Gavin hires a dupe—Scottie Ferguson—a former detective who suffers from vertigo, to follow his seemingly demented wife in order to protect her. When Scottie subsequently sees her fall from the top of the tower at the Mission of San Juan Bautista, he mistakenly believes that it is his own illness which is to blame for her death, since a spell of vertigo prevents him from climbing to the very top of the tower to rescue her from her apparently devastating *thanatos* impulses.

In order to lure Scottie to the scene of the murder, Gavin Elster concocts an elaborate scheme whereby Judy is patiently but exactly coached to play the role of his presumably mentally disturbed wife Madeleine and to inveigle Scottie to bring her to the colonial mission of San Juan Bautista, where the crime against Elster's real wife is to be committed. Ironically, the only living person in *Vertigo* who is really mentally afflicted is the tortured and self-tortured Scottie. Thus Judy/Madeleine pretends to be highly distraught as she speaks as if she were possessed by the spirit of Carlotta risen from her tomb to drive her twentieth century descendant to madness and self-destruction, just as the original Carlotta took her life at an early age. Midway through the film the anguished Scottie, masterfully played by James Stewart, believes that Judy/Madeleine, with whom he has now fallen in love, has succumbed to this bizarre possession and hurled herself from the tower. Ironically, although Elster is the real murderer, at the coroner's hearing he is not suspected at all, as the extremely biased and even sadistic coroner blames the innocent yet guilt-stricken Scottie for failing to fulfill his assignment, which was to protect Madeleine from all harm.

At first Judy merely pretends that she is haunted by visions of a Spanish settlement and a dangerously high bell tower where as a child she had been forbidden to play—in order to attempt to convince an ever-more vulnerable Scottie that she has been possessed by a supernatural Other, the death-haunted spirit of her mad ancestor Carlotta. Scottie, at first highly rational and skeptical, scoffs at Elster's elaborate story of his wife's being possessed by a revenant spirit. Yet in both Hitchcock and Fuentes, fantasies suddenly and monstrosly become real. At the end of the film, Judy actually does become possessed psychologically, by her marked feelings of guilt over having been an accomplice in the murder of the real Madeleine. Thus, when Scottie, in the brutal conclusion of *Vertigo* drags Judy Barton, now once more exquisitely playing the role of Madeleine, this time to gratify her new lover and dominator, her replacement for Gavin Elster, Scottie Ferguson. Judy at the end is desperate to please the very man she has worked to destroy. Indeed Scottie, who now forcefully and unremittingly replaces Elster in Judy's life, literally drags Judy up the stairs of the tower in an attempt to repeat the circumstances of the original crime but this time to climb to the very top of the fated tower and master his vertigo. At the very moment when Scottie and Judy again embrace one another and seem to be reconciled, the masterful Hitchcock provides a shocking *cambio de piel*, as Judy suddenly sees a strange form issuing from the darkness and in her terror she steps back and accidentally plunges from the tower, through an open window to her death. Judy's sudden death is one more example of the fatalistic gloom that saturates *Vertigo*, just as it does Fuentes's elusive masterwork *Aura* which *Vertigo* has extensively influenced. Judy's startling plunge to her death thus duplicates that of the real Madeleine, thrown from the tower by Elster after her neck was broken, and also duplicates the death of Carlotta, who had thrown herself from the very same tower. Is Judy/Madeleine under the delusion that what she perceives as a ghostly presence coming toward her is the spirit of Carlotta or the ghost of a vengeful Madeleine? In any case, while Scottie remains unperturbed at the sudden intrusion, Judy is terrified of the seemingly sinister apparition that in reality is one of the nuns of San Juan Bautista. It is extremely ironic that the nun at the end orders the ringing of the bell tower—an echo of the ominous

ringing of a mission bell at the very beginning of *Vertigo*, as a bewitched Scottie gazes on the tombstone of Carlotta Valdés in the magically filmed garden which appears as an island of dream, a pocket of delusion, of the Mission Dolores in downtown San Francisco.

Possession operates on the psychological level with Scottie Ferguson as well. From the very first moment that he sights the enigmatic Judy/Madeleine in the luxurious, romantic setting of *Ernie's Restaurant* in downtown San Francisco, Scottie is awestruck, and he immediately begins to fall in love with her. Although he has been hired by Elster to trail his supposedly suicidal wife and report back to him on her strange behavior, so that a seemingly protective Elster can have his wife committed to an insane asylum, Scottie, imbued with a combination of paternalism and erotic attraction, seeks to cure Judy/Madeleine himself. But when he sees her apparently attempting to drown herself by suddenly leaping into the turbulent waters of San Francisco Bay near the Golden Gate Bridge, Scottie perceives her as a "damsel in distress" and claims her as his prize. And, after apparently witnessing his adored Madeleine's plunge from the tower of San Juan Bautista, Scottie suffers from excruciating grief and shock over the loss of his beloved. After being committed to a mental institution and subsequently released but not cured, Scottie is compelled by his feelings of guilt and desire to "resurrect" his beloved Madeleine, as he imposes her identity on many women who resemble her in their manner of dress, hair color and style, features, or bodily motion. When he meets the beautiful but commonplace Judy Barton, not realizing that she was the very Madeleine with whom he had fallen in love, he refuses to accept her as Judy but instead, rapidly and relentlessly, forces her to assume the identity of the dead Madeleine so that he can make love to her and at the same time free himself of his corrosive feelings of inadequacy and guilt. Although Judy, whose exaggerated makeup is cheap and even garish in contrast to the shimmering perfection of the makeup of the poised, stylish Madeleine, seeks to be loved for herself, she quickly submits to his game playing, just as she has remolded herself from a lower middle class girl from Salina, Kansas, into the reserved, demure upper class Madeleine, to please



Figure 5. Made it! But is Scottie's relentless Vertigo cured or exacerbated at the top of the tower?



Figure 6. Judy in profile; shadows derealize her as prelude to transformation into a ghost.

her former lover, Gavin Elster.

In *Vertigo*—as well as in *Aura*—a hypnotic mood is established from the outset, in the very credits of the film, masterfully done by Saul Bass who also collaborated in the production of the bewitching *Psycho*. Multicolored spirals emanate from the eyes of the bewitching Judy/Madeleine and thereby underscore her hypnotic and destructive power, as Kim Novak becomes the most deadly of Hitchcock's famed ice princesses, roles stunningly played by blonde actresses like Grace Kelly—*Rear Window* (1954), *Dial M for Murder*, *To Catch a Thief* (1955)—and Tippi Hedren (*The Birds*, 1963; *Marnie*, 1964). This spellbinding quality is also seen in *Aura*, as the gullible Felipe is soon entranced by the alluring green eyes of the beauteous Aura and rapidly falls under her spell. Hitchcock unfolds his compelling story in San Francisco, one of the most beautiful and the most haunting of American cities, with its fog-enshrouded bay, its sweeping, dramatic vistas of land and ocean, and its forests of giant and majestic sequoias. Indeed, San Francisco still contains traces of its romantic and adventurous past as part of the Barbary Coast laced with roving pirates. With its gleaming bay and its sinuous streets, its Golden Gate Bridge and its majestic, intricately designed Victorian houses, San Francisco is the North American city closest to dream. Although decked in realist trappings, *Vertigo* is essentially a film of myth and enchantment, of mystery and revelation, so very similar to the atmosphere of the uncanny and the supernatural established and masterfully sustained by Fuentes in *Aura*, which *Vertigo* has so strikingly and profoundly influenced. The enigmatic Madeleine, whose identity Scottie first patiently, then ruthlessly imposes on Judy Barton, can be seen as the working out of Scottie's obsession with reincarnation as leading to his personal redemption. This same fanatic desire to bring back the dead can be seen in Fuentes's magical work *Aura*, in Consuelo's persistent, even fanatic efforts to revive her husband Llorente, a vauntingly ambitious general in the imperial army of the doomed Emperor Maximilian and now dead for sixty years. The vessel of reincarnation is the body of the young historian Felipe Montero, whom Consuelo hires not merely, as she states, to revise and edit the dusty memoirs of Llorente, but to become the General reborn.

It is highly significant that the French novel which influenced Hitchcock's *Vertigo* is entitled *D'entre les morts* (The Living and the Dead; 1954). Both Scottie Ferguson and Consuelo are necrophilic; both insistently reject the living in their obsession with dead lovers who must be reborn body and soul in the form of the victimized Other. The ethereal young Aura is as ambiguous as is Madeleine in *Vertigo*—and as destructive to the male protagonist.

Just as Judy/Madeleine tricks Scottie into taking her to the colonial Spanish mission at San Juan Bautista, and despite her professed love for him, never tells him anything concerning her role as willing tool of Gavin Elster, so too is Aura, whom Felipe perceives as the victim kept imprisoned in her lair by the tyrannous Consuelo, actually a spirit, expertly controlled by Consuelo, sustained by the fierce mind and indomitable will of the aged woman—a sorceress who receives her power from the Devil. But *Aura* is a complex narrative that can also be interpreted on the psychological level. According to this perspective, Aura becomes a product of the highly unstable mind of Felipe, who under the influence of the drugs administered to him by Consuelo in the wine that he drinks, laced with the herbs that Consuelo cultivates in her secret garden like *bella donna*, suffers hallucinations and acts on suggestions of the one-hundred nine year old crone and falls readily under her hypnotic spell. The theme of psychological possession is reinforced by the very style of *Aura*, which is narrated in the second person singular—the very person that a hypnotist uses to entrance his subject, “You are getting drowsy, you are falling asleep...”

It is also significant that a person cannot be hypnotized unless he or she is willing. Felipe is a weak and malleable character, one literally without an “I,” bereft of a strong ego. Indeed, from start to finish he is totally the “you,” the Other. Felipe is thus very similar to the character of Scottie Ferguson, who is extremely frustrated and existentially adrift, and also parallels many of the indecisive, fantasy-prone male characters created by Fuentes in his other works. For example, the withdrawn and spineless, even masochistic youth Guillermo Nervo in *Zona sagrada* retreats into a defensive solitude and dedicates himself to looking for ways to take vengeance on his highly controlling

mother Claudia, who first kidnaps him from his irresolute father and then abandons him, paying for his apartment but sadistically withdrawing attention and love from him. Guillermo finally goes insane as the result of the severe alienation he has suffered. The highly insecure Javier Ortega, the frustrated, even paranoid writer in *Cambio de piel*, is another weak-willed male who is both extremely dependent on a strong female, his wife Elizabeth, a mother-substitute, and yet resents that dependency and seeks above all the fantasy female, the one whom he can summon up and suppress at will, the woman whom he can thoroughly control. The obsessed Javier is afflicted by severe ulcers and has terrifying nightmares of drowning in the sea, a vision that expresses his deep feelings of helplessness and perhaps also his subconscious longings to suppress the independent self in a more powerful Other. The spineless and hypocritical Jaime Ceballos, the young protagonist of Fuentes's novel, a *Bildungsroman* entitled *Las buenas conciencias* (*The Good Conscience*; 1959), initially makes feeble efforts to assert an independent, morally righteous self, to define himself as different from the vacillating and cowardly father Rodolfo, who allows himself to be pressured by his overbearing sister Asunción into permanently driving his own wife Adelita from the house.

Yet the vacillating Jaime cannot sustain his rebellion. His acts of defiance of his bourgeois family, as he shelters and aids the oppressed, protecting the indigenous boy Ezequiel Zuno, a fugitive who is being persecuted for his attempts to unionize the disadvantaged, quickly cede to accommodation to his wealthy aunt and sanctimonious uncle, and the suppression of his true conscience, as he adopts the posturing and self-righteousness and embraces the comfortable life of the uncle, Balcárcel, his very name signifying his oppressiveness—the extremely hypocritical, zealot uncle whom previously the self-righteous Jaime had loathed. *Las buenas conciencias* is another narrative significantly influenced by film, in this case by the savage film from the Mexican period of Luis Buñuel, the mentor and friend of Carlos Fuentes, the great Spanish (Aragonese) director. In one of his most brutal and violent films, *Los olvidados* (*The Young and the Damned*; 1950) a youth savagely kills his companion by beating him over the head with a boulder. This scene has impacted the

violent, sadistic ending of *Las buenas conciencias*, in which Jaime suddenly and pitilessly kills the cat of his aunt Asunción by smashing a rock over the skull of the trusting animal—an act symbolizing a final, ironic rebellion against the tyrannous aunt to whom he finally will succumb. Angel Fagoaga, the protagonist of Fuentes's *Cristóbal nonato*, is another vacillating male in the process of self-definition who allows himself to be carried away by his libido and temporarily sacrifices the love of the devoted Angeles to pursue the meretricious Penny López after whom he slavers, in what is Fuentes's parody of the egotistic and irresponsible male whose self-satisfaction takes precedence over his familial responsibility, as the pregnant Angeles carrying the foetus significantly named after the Discoverer of the New World, Christopher, is left alone and vulnerable and finally is kidnapped while Angel is indulging in his affairs.

Underscoring the complexity of both *Vertigo* and *Aura* is that the relentless quest of Scottie for Madeleine and that of Felipe to rescue Aura are but external manifestations of internal quests—the desperate search for an identity, for self-actualization and self-transcendence, on the part of these highly unstable, and in many senses self-loathing and extremely self-destructive protagonists. Yet the fundamental irony of both of these masterworks is that the nebulous Self, incarnated not only in Scottie but also in Judy Barton and in Felipe Montero, can find itself, assert itself, indeed, redeem itself, only in the spectral Other. Scottie is an extremely ambitious person who has longed to be police chief but whose ambitions crumble after he suffers his first devastating attack of vertigo while futilely chasing a criminal across the San Francisco rooftops. After his crippling attack, rather than accommodating to a routine and stifling desk job, the chagrined and, seemingly, stubbornly independent Scottie retires from the force all together. He is not only adrift professionally but emotionally as well. Scottie is unable to make a definite commitment to the ever comforting, consoling Midge, who loves him. She herself breaks off their engagement, yet Scottie, who is basically indifferent to her sexually, still clings to the highly protective Midge for her unremitting motherly support. Similar to the rootless Scottie, Felipe in *Aura* never mentions family or friends; he has no attachments in the outside world, a social vacuum that is quickly

filled by his experiences in the gloomy but often soothing and increasingly sensual realm of Consuelo. Like the dreaming Scottie, Felipe too is consumed by ambition. He is bored by his temporary position as secondary school history teacher and dreams of writing his thesis, one which will synthesize all of the diverse chronicles of the Conquest of the New World. Yet his already prolonged dissertation will never be finished, for once Felipe enters the realm of Consuelo, he will never re-emerge into reality.

At the end, the hapless Felipe has no identity other than that of the spectral Other, Llorente. Both Felipe and Scottie become similar to Orpheus in his descent into the land of the dead, in quest of his lost lover, Eurydice. Orpheus is reunited by Pluto, Lord of the Dead, with his cherished bride, yet he can bring her back into the realm of the living only if he fulfills the condition of never turning around to see if she is still following him out of the Underworld. But the deep insecurity of Orpheus, his desperate desire to confirm the presence of his beloved, compels him to turn around, and he loses his bride forever, as she fades back into the Land of the Dead.

Like the Orpheus myth, one of the excruciating and permanent loss of the beloved made all the more heart-rendering because that beloved has once been at least temporarily recovered from death, both *Vertigo* and *Aura* depict the desperate soul questing for the dead—or, as at the core of *Aura*—constantly disappearing lover. Indeed, in the Boileau/Narcejac novel in which *Vertigo* is based, there appears a Eurydice lighter—an allusion to the ghostly, lost love found in classical Greek and Roman mythology. Felipe's identity rapidly becomes an inextricable from that of *Aura*. The youth in the twentieth century repeats the servility of Llorente in the nineteenth, as the naïve and vulnerable Felipe readily consecrates himself to Consuelo/*Aura*. So too is Scottie in *Vertigo* unable to define himself independently of Judy/Madeleine. At the end of the rivetting film, the violent death of Judy again relegates Scottie to an existential limbo if not again to a full blown delirium and mental collapse. And even if Scottie recovers, he is permanently entrapped; he will immediately begin the quest for Madeleine all over again—and only in what has for the fated protagonist become a suffocating yet consecrated space—the confines of San Francisco. And Judy Barton too is a person

who almost without resistance allows herself to be molded—first by the iron will of Gavin Elster and then by an equally disciplined, even more fanatic Scottie. Although Judy is extremely attractive and personable, she is extraordinarily insecure about her identity. Ironically, she gains the poise and self-assertion and self-expression only as the consequence of appropriating the identity of the Other, of the ill-fated but sophisticated, aristocratic Madeleine Elster, a role that the coarse Judy Barton seems to relish playing. In what constitutes just one of the multiple mirrorings found in *Vertigo* the insecurity of Judy Barton mirrors the uncertainty and apprehensiveness of Kim Novak herself under the direction of the exacting and dictatorial Alfred Hitchcock. In both Hitchcock and Fuentes, the Other most always is a negative force, initially offering fulfillment but finally crushing the initial Self, just as Felipe's fragile identity is completely overwhelmed by that of Llorente, and Judy Barton is compelled to suffer a fate similar to that of the real Madeleine.

In both *Vertigo* and *Aura*, the physical self again and again becomes symbolic of the metaphysical. Fuentes has defined his literary style as one of Symbolic Realism. He creates a world in which apparently realistic structures, objects, characters and settings symbolize the fantastic. For example, the weird labyrinthine castle in which the sadistic, thirteenth century heretic Siger de Brabant dwells in Fuentes's brief, dense, metaphysical novel *Cumpleaños (Birthday; 1970)*, symbolizes the rancorous, self-divided personality of the supercilious Siger himself. The passageways of the strange, demonic structure constrict and entrap the protagonist, the twentieth century English architect George—an allusion to the distinguished Argentine poet, short story writer, and essayist Jorge Luis Borges, called Georgie by his Anglophilic family. The architect George symbolizes a positive, creative, constructive impulse. The contemporary figure George is a contrast figure with the repressive, constrictive, ever tyrannous machinations of Siger. The hapless George, paralleling the victimized Felipe in *Aura*, suddenly finds himself imprisoned in this house which is also a tomb—a symbol of Siger as voracious demiurge seeking victims of sacrifice throughout the centuries.



Figure 7. Scottie views not a flesh and blood reality but a mirror image that captures essence of Madeleine.



Figure 8. Kim Novak, as Madeleine naked in her "rescuer's" bed, projects animal sensuality with which Midge cannot compete.

And, like the doomed Felipe, George never wakes up from his supernatural experience, never escapes the dungeon of Siger's castle.

In Fuentes's *Cambio de piel*, the gigantic pyramid at Cholula into which descend the two middle-aged couples—Elizabeth and her effete husband Javier, the guilt-ridden Franz and his sensuous, fickle lover Isabel—is both a concrete structure and a symbol of the tormented consciousness, of inner anxieties and the relentless but ultimately frustrated quest for self-exploration and self-actualization that the protagonists undertake. This immense pyramid, the largest edifice in the Pre-Columbian world, is evoked as an anti-Manichean structure, as a place where opposites, good and evil, present and ancient past, cowardice and fearlessness, are terrifyingly fused. In the depths of the pyramid are the ancient idols of the dread locust gods of the ancient Aztecs, highly ambivalent deities, both the protectors and the destroyers of the harvest, both worshipped and feared by their human subjects. The pyramid thus symbolizes the duality of the male protagonists, the capacity for good and evil present in both Javier Ortega and Franz Jellinek, evoked as Self and Double, as artists and criminals—paralleling the castration by the rabidly jealous Franz of the lover of Hanna Werner in the concentration camp and the apparent strangulation by the highly paranoid Javier of his young and voluptuous lover Isabel—using the very same shawl that Javier's seemingly forgiving wife Elizabeth has presented to her rival Isabel as a gift—which now experiences its own *Change of Skin*, this time into a murder weapon.

That the darkened house of Consuelo in *Aura* in the very center of Mexico center is built of *tezontle* symbolizes Consuelo's realm as a mysterious house of Time. *Tezontle* is a volcanic stone, material that was originally part of the Aztec pyramids that had been destroyed by the *conquistadores* and the stones used again to erect their new colonial palaces. The allusion to *tezontle*, to the ancient Aztec past and the mythic time of the Aztec gods who inexorably demanded blood sacrifice, presages the functioning of Consuelo as a twentieth century equivalent of the ancient Aztec goddess Coatlicue, symbolic of the Earth as duality, as both nurturing womb and receptively fatalistic tomb. Consuelo/Coatlicue is both the generator of a new Felipe, bringing

to fruition an identity that was always present within him but previously suppressed, and the monstrous force that inexorably demands the surrender of his original identity as Felipe Montero. Consuelo's highly paradoxical functioning is indicated from the very start of the narrative, in the epigraph, a quotation from the work of Jules Michelet, *La Sorcière*:

Man hunts and struggles. Woman intrigues and dreams; she is the mother of fantasy, the mother of the gods. She has second sight, the wings that enable her to fly to the infinite of desire and the imagination . . . The gods are like men: they are born and they die on a woman's breast . . .

And the twisting, labyrinthine nature of the gloomy mansion of Consuelo also symbolizes the struggle of Felipe to differentiate and to assert his identity independently of Consuelo, his desperate attempts to move out of physical—and existential—darkness into the light. But this *novella*, like *Vertigo*, is a work of fatalistic, cyclical time, and Felipe is as doomed as was Llorente in a previous century and as doomed as is Scottie Ferguson in *Vertigo*. The highly impressionable Llorente in the nineteenth century—like Felipe in the present—was infused with grandiose ambitions that collapsed forever with the sudden fall and the execution at Querétaro, at the fated Cerro de las Campanas, The Hill of the Bells, of his patron, the Emperor Maximilian, executed along with two of his generals, Miramón and Mejía, by a firing squad at the orders of the implacable Benito Juárez.

In both *Vertigo* and *Aura*, journeys that begin through a concrete, definable space—Scottie's dogged pursuit of Madeleine through the sinuous streets of San Francisco, or his travels down the Peninsula to the Jesuit mission at San Juan Bautista, are symbolic of a journey through Time—to the highly constrictive past that suffuses and even dominates both of these works. Again and again the modern, commercialized San Francisco fades, and Scottie enters zones of an eerie quietude, such as the Mission Dolores, a pocket of suspended, apparently redemptive time in the midst of twentieth century San Francisco. Another house of deadening silence and past time eerily suspended in the present is the majestic Hotel McKittrick, which once was the lavishly ornate

Great House where Carlotta was brought by her husband, who took her away from her dance hall life imperiously to fashion her into a “Great Lady” before he suddenly and capriciously threw her away, forcing her to wander the streets—again adumbrating the behavior of the deracinated Judy Barton in contemporary San Francisco.

Though the process of cyclical time, which is so important in both *Vertigo* and *Aura*, this elaborate process of refashioning, of remaking a socioeconomically marginalized woman into a Grande Dame, is precisely what Gavin Elster will do after he one day by chance meets Judy, who is working as a waitress, and is struck by her resemblance to his wife, adumbrating, in this work spiralling with cyclical time, the chance encounter of a forlorn Scottie with Judy Barton—and Scottie like Gavin Elster before him, is struck by the seemingly uncanny resemblance between Judy Barton and Madeleine Elster. Like the nineteenth century potentate before him, Gavin Elster takes a very willing Judy Barton out of her marginal, drifter existence and installs her in a lavish apartment on Nob Hill. It is highly significant that we never see the inside of this love nest, just as we never see the inside of Felipe’s own apartment in *Aura*, so tightly constructed are both of these masterpieces. And, similar to the fated trajectory of the life of Carlotta, Judy too will be discarded, first by Elster, who after the coroner’s hearing permanently abandons Judy and flees to Europe, and then by the second person who re-creates her, the well-to-do Scottie. It is most significant that in the course of this extensive chase scene in *Vertigo*, in which a befuddled but increasingly infatuated Scottie pursues Madeleine through the streets of the city, the personage of Judy/Madeleine is never evoked—all attention is focussed only on Scottie as befuddled but maniacal pursuer—thus both her essential ambiguity and her elusiveness as well as the fact that she is but an intricate apparition of Scottie’s dreamworld are underscored. Instead of the traditional focus, first on the ardent pursuer, then on the desperate pursuer, for more than fifteen minutes Hitchcock’s ever probing camera as fixated only on a mesmerized Scottie, underscoring both his attraction to Judy/Madeleine and the obsessiveness of that desire. Similarly, the radiantly evil figure of *Aura* may be but an elaborate concoction of the febrile, drug-suffused mind of Felipe. Like the transfixed Scottie in *Vertigo*, who moves from contemporary time to past centuries and back

again, Felipe in *Aura* moves from the 1950s cosmopolitan and extremely traffic-congested Mexico City, to absorption into a sacred zone, a *zona sagrada* that is Consuelo's mansion, a house that like so many of the structures in *Vertigo* is suspended between reality and fantasy. Paralleling the increasingly befuddled Scottie Ferguson as he gazes at the second story of the McKittrick Hotel and spies Madeleine at one of the windows for a few seconds before she suddenly disappears, is the befuddled Felipe as he gazes not merely at the second floor of the nineteenth century Porfirista mansion in which Consuelo dwells alone, but also another world—suffused by a treacherous calm. Here is evidenced a seeming escapism that is but an elaborate, baroque mask over a hellworld. For Felipe, the mansion itself begins to hypnotize him, it is both eerie and inviting, like the mansion where Carlotta once dwelled in *Vertigo*:

You look up at the second stories. Up there, everything is the same as it was. The jukeboxes don't disturb them. The mercury streetlights don't shine in. The cheap merchandise on sale along the street doesn't have any effect on that upper level; on the baroque harmony of the carved stones; on the battered stone saints with pigeons clustering on their shoulders; on the latticed balconies, the copper gutters, the sandstone gargoyles; on the greenish curtains that darken the long windows; on that window from which someone draws back when you look at it. (A, 9-11)⁶

The movements of the beleaguered Scottie throughout the entire film are cyclical and fatalistic. The futile trajectory of his existence is symbolized early on, as he relentlessly follows Madeleine through the narrow, labyrinthine streets of San Francisco only to find that she has led him back to his own residence near the landmark Coit Tower. And at the end of *Vertigo*, an obsessed Scottie is impelled to return with

⁶ Consult Carlos Fuentes, *Aura* (México, D.F.: Ediciones Era, 1962). Subsequent references are to the bilingual English-Spanish translation *Aura*, translated by Lysander Kemp (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1963) and are included parenthetically in the text, preceded by A.

Judy/Madeleine, whom he forces to be by his side, to the colonial mission of San Juan Bautista and to re-enact the past with the hopes thereby of conquering his vertigo and freeing himself from the stranglehold of that past. An essential part of the vertigo movement seen throughout Hitchcock's masterpiece is the fatalistic operation of cyclic time. The spectre of Carlotta Valdés, imposed by a guileful Gavin Elster over his wife, seemingly transhabits Judy/Madeleine and finally is transmuted into an apparition that circumscribes Judy's life—and her manner of death. Scottie's compelling Judy/Madeleine to return to San Juan Bautista is a repetition of his first journey there—a romantic interlude that marked a sincere but thoroughly misguided attempt to free Madeleine from her obsessing—to prove to her that there is no ghost, that Madeleine's obsession with her great-grandmother can be explained—and expunged—rationally. Ironically, the movement of *Vertigo*, like that of *Aura*, is deeper and deeper into fantasy, delusion and madness. This is exactly how Scottie initially had desired to liberate Judy/Madeleine from her obsession with Carlotta, by bringing her to the Mission to prove to her that her visions are based not on the invasion of her being by a supernatural or demonic spirit of Carlotta but by real-life memories of a past visit to the monastery and carriage house at San Juan Bautista.

Similarly, *Aura* too is characterized by a monstrously cyclical time. At the end, Felipe and Consuelo and the ghost of Llorente are all united, in their abject devotion to Aura. Significantly, Aura can remain in the realm of Consuelo for only three days at a time. The first time Felipe sees her she is a young, virginal girl; the second time a hardened middle-aged woman, and the third time she has fused entirely with the decrepit Consuelo. In order for Aura to be reborn again, a new victim, a new Llorente must be found, and we can imagine the sequence to the ending of *Aura* being the placing by Consuelo of still another advertisement in the newspaper, as she again desperately seeks a replacement for Felipe. Similarly, at the end of *Vertigo*, now that for the third time the forlorn Scottie has been witness to a death, now that he again has lost his beloved Madeleine, we can imagine Scottie beginning the search anew for a replacement, for another hapless—and willing—Judy Barton whom he will painstakingly transform into Madeleine, just as Consuelo, at the very end of Fuentes's chilling

and masterful work, will transform Felipe's replacement again into the lost but cyclically returning Llorente.

In both *Vertigo* and *Aura*, the primacy of the past—threatening, fatalistic, inescapable—is emphasized. This is similar to other films of Hitchcock such as *Psycho*, in which the strange, warped devotion of Norman Bates to his mother and Norman's extreme jealousy of her lover both of whom Norman in his insane rage murders—is transferred to the fugitive Marion Crane, whom he murders while she is taking a shower, in one of the most shocking and brutal sequences in the cinema world. Indeed, the wanton Mother, whom the innocent appearing but in reality psychotic and murderous Norman Bates both fears and loathes as he becomes the demonic Other; is the most important character in the bizarre film. The dutiful yet rebellious son repeatedly stabs the innocent Marion while dressed as his mother, whose dead body he keeps in the cellar of his forbidding Gothic mansion. Norman utilizes his craft of taxidermy not only in stuffing and mounting birds—and it is no accident that his victim is named Marion Crane—but also on the mother whom he both reveres and despises for her wantonness—the mother whom he first kills then monstrously assumes her identity to kill again. The crazed Norman Bates, like the increasingly demented Scottie Ferguson, is dominated by the past. Fuentes too in other novels such as *La región más transparente* emphasizes the past as a negative force. Here the ancient Aztec past is revived as a monstrous force relentlessly at work in contemporary Mexico. The malefic narrator, Ixca Cienfuegos, is a reincarnation of the dread ancient Aztec god of war and death Huitzilopochtli. The commercial and technological Mexico of the twentieth century is portrayed as but a fragile and flimsy mask over its indelible ancient core of violence and blood sacrifice to propitiate the wrath of the Aztec gods.

At the beginning of *Vertigo*, the past is evoked romantically, as Scottie meets his old college friend Gavin Elster at the latter's lavish office on the Embarcadero and gazes at the romantic paintings that line the walls—paintings that evoke San Francisco's nineteenth century, seafaring past as colorful, adventurous and exciting. Throughout *Vertigo* as in *Aura*, the background to the episodes is not merely decorative or even secondary, it is often the key to what is transpiring in the



Figure 9. A stricken Scottie suspended in space, afflicted with incurable vertigo.



Figure 10. Titles radiate from nervous, frightened eyes of Madeleine—both cause and cure for Scottie's affliction.