

In the long lost golden days of a previous century when I first came to the study of Talmud (which is to say, also the study of Mishna), I found myself caught with wonder in what felt at the time a densely communal activity. My sense of those invisible personae whose arguments adorned the page, all too neatly compacted in framing rectangles that fenced in the holy scripture of the Torah, was that far from being of necessity technical experts in diegesis and debate, they were just voluble and eager readers who chose to speak up and be recorded as to their considered opinions of the moment. Rabbis all, perhaps; and yet I had known rabbis intelligent and lofty and also rabbis less intelligent and less lofty. What I carried away from my (all too limited) studies was the distinct feeling that it was all right to make contributions to a text out of the good will of mixed devotion, reflection, and trust. If Hitchcock's *Vertigo* (its recent nomination by *Sight & Sound* as best film of all time entirely notwithstanding) is no Torah; and if the manifold exegeses that have been published upon it, including more than one of my own, hardly constitute Mishnaic or Talmudic comment, yet the Talmudic impulse will be raised in any lover of this film, especially one, like me, whose conviction it is that the author has not yet – not yet – been fully understood. In the spirit of a continued reading of the film, then, let me offer a few not-quite-Talmudic (but Talmudically intentioned) comments about the space and place of the story, perhaps reflecting what Yi-Fu Tuan called 'attachment to place as a function of time, captured in the phrase, "it takes time to know a place"' (1977: 179).

If in considering certain moments in *Vertigo* here I might be guilty of (or at least responsible for) reading beyond the surface of a film, suggesting a character's thoughts or intuitions, wondering about the possible metaphorical overlap between a character's speech and his geographic placement, my guilt and embarrassment, strategically considered but not feared, are allayed by the consideration that without such a mode of reading, any film remains only a kaleidoscope of sights and a stream of sounds.

#### **'I look up, I look down.'**

A strange little utterance that Scottie Ferguson makes while he is perched on Midge's yellow stepladder is my beginning. The ostensible text of the moment is that, while demonstrating to her his recovery from the horrifying incident of the collapsing gutter and making the claim in this context that his acrophobia has basically disappeared, Scottie remains prey to the lurking after-effects of his condition, to the degree that his boundless optimism is felt by viewers as a hollow preparation for puncture. When he (rather directly) collapses into Midge's arms (a *pietà*), we are thus hardly surprised, since we have been waiting for the syllable of the collapse all through his self-comforting speech. And that little speech, as we may remember, is: 'I look up. I look down. I look up. I look down.' Stewart's pronunciation stretches the word 'down' to make it rhyme with 'clown' or 'frown' (as contrasted with the shortening we would hear in 'town and country'), and curtails the word 'up,' as though in saying 'pup' or 'sup'. He lifts his eyes at 'I look up,' in order to signal the geophysical implications of his language – that 'up' means not toward high concepts or high hopes but in plain fact toward a ceiling (or sky) above his head. This sets up the camera's shot down into the street when he counters with 'I look down'. I want to say a few things about this mantra, 'I look up. I look down,' beyond playing with the clear Freudian implication of the binary; the fort-da give and take of up and down used as antonyms and antinomies, directional choices, constituents of a see-saw experience (that rests with Scottie for the duration of the film).

First, it may well be the case that if we were in most other urban locations in the world, 'I look up, I look down' would mean very little beyond what it points to on its surface: a man testing his musculature and balance against gravity by doing head tilts. But in San Francisco, one's life every day of the year is a matter of looking up and looking down, especially if one lives, as Scottie Ferguson does, on Russian Hill. His quotidian reality is looking up and looking



(1) *Scottie's apartment at 900 Lombard Street, August 2012. Photograph by the author.*

down. And to experience the city as he must be experiencing it, the act of looking up one street and looking down another would hardly threaten his acrophobia. So it is that his obvious sense that looking up and looking down might be safe activities to perform on that stepladder is hardly twisted or misled. He's been able to handle looking up and looking down (on the streets), and so he should be able to handle it here (on the ladder), all of this neglecting, of course, that the verticality is made emphatic (even for San Francisco standards) by two features of the act itself: that he is perched on a stepladder with a forward rake of almost 65 degrees; and that, on top of all this, he is in Midge's apartment, which is itself elevated and looks down into the street from several storeys of height.

Equally interesting, perhaps, is that 'I look up, I look down' is sufficiently close, both linguistically and experientially, to 'I walk up, I walk down'. The eye, perusing text or the environment, walks through it; so looking *is* walking. Scottie's self-assurance looking up and down, then, is equivalent in some ways to his self-assurance navigating the streets of the area, which climb at a roughly 45-degree angle, some a little less, some a little more. Let me walk

through this, just a little, since both Scottie's comment to Midge, persuading her that he doesn't need her help upon the ladder, and his experience of life in his relationship with her are interestingly implicated with his looking up and looking down.

Scottie resides – we will later in the film learn – at 900 Lombard Street, at the corner of Jones. When he walks out the door of his flat, he can turn left around the corner and be treated to a pretty spectacular view of Alcatraz and the Bay (northbound). But if he doesn't turn left at the corner, and simply gazes eastward down the street, what he sees, as do we in a nocturnal scene from his living area after he has saved Madeleine from the Bay, and through the agency of a transparency plate rear-projected behind the set (and photographed Saturday March 2, 1957 between 6:10 and 6:25 p.m.)<sup>1</sup>, is Telegraph Hill leading up to Coit Tower.

Midge Wood (Barbara Bel Geddes) has a flat in a building on Filbert Street, between Jasper and Grant Avenues. Were she to step onto the road and look (westward) down the street in the direction of Russian Hill, Coit Tower would be above her and just behind her back. She is two short blocks to the side of Scottie's street, and five medium-sized blocks away. When he looks at Telegraph Hill he can virtually see her place; when she looks at Russian Hill she can virtually see his. The walk between the two apartments can be accomplished easily in ten minutes or less. In short, these two persons, who were engaged in some sort of love affair before the story began, very likely hiked back and forth to visit one another. As Scottie walks to visit Midge, he moves downward past Taylor, Mason, Powell, and then Stockton Street, and then sharply upward from Stockton to her place. For him to navigate from his own territory to hers, then, not only in this scene but always, is a matter, literally, of looking / walking up and down, down and up.

Therefore, the instant when he collapses from that stepladder, when the continuously alternating experiential motion of looking up and looking down is fractured by his fear so that he plummets into a darkness from which she hopes to save him, is a direct metaphor of another navigational collapse between moving down and climbing up, his stepping through geography and time to visit and then temporarily leave Midge at her place. Looking up and down from the



(2) *View looking eastward from outside Scottie's apartment toward Telegraph Hill. (Coit Tower is just beyond the right edge of the photograph at the top of the hill.) This is roughly analogous to what we see outside his window as he drinks coffee at night (see Image 5 and Note 1). Photograph by the author.*



(3) *View looking westward from outside Midge's apartment on Filbert Street toward Russian Hill. Lombard Street is just off the right edge of the photograph. Photograph by the author.*



stepladder in *Midge's keenly observing presence*, he is experientially also moving toward and away from Midge. He has stepped up today, in fact, to visit her in the scene we are watching. The end of the relationship with Midge (that has serious implications for the movement of the story) is another intercession, into the long yo-yo descent and climb of their time together. Some dark interruption has separated them, that, to this minute, she does not fully understand (nor, as far as we can tell, does he).

### ***A Bourgeois Gentleman***

Sound and place. One of the principal reasons filmmakers opted for studio photography in the heyday of the 1950s, and certainly one of the strong motives that affected Hitchcock at all times, lay in technicians' ability on a closed stage to optimise both lighting and sound recording. When you are shooting on location, it is a nightmare to control for local sounds, unless, of course, you shoot m.o.s. (*mit out sound*) and add in all the effects later. Wind, local noises, the variant reflectability of construction or natural materials all make for recording headaches. As Scottie approaches Fort Point, following Madeleine in his car, the shot we are looking at, made from the promontory of the point with a panning motion as the cars sweep along Marine Drive and stop,<sup>2</sup> could have been taken without sound (but wasn't): I know from Robert Harris that recovering the track for that particular shot was one of the difficult challenges he faced with James Katz as they did the restoration, and that the addition into the film by them, as Scottie's car slinks along, of a gull sound was partially inspired by the poor quality of the mag track they found. At any rate, my point in focusing this moment and the way it was recorded is to establish that one thing missing from the sequence, and thus possibly deceiving for viewers (although Hitchcock does a lot to minimise this possibility) is the fact that Fort Point is notably windy.

The wind coming in through the Golden Gate is powerful and chilly, practically vocal, and a demanding force.

Madeleine has not chosen a bucolic and tranquil spot for her 'attempted suicide'. She has chosen a tempestuous hell. Scottie, therefore, is being not only chivalrous but also self-



(4) *The Golden Gate Bridge (1937) seen from Fort Point. The channel of the Golden Gate is notably blustery, and the winds move with real force and chill. The fog visible in this photograph (taken August 2012) is far from abnormal in this spot; so the Vertigo crew would have to have found an ideal time for foglessly making the shots that have come to emblemise the film. Photograph by the author.*



*On a clear day you can see forever. Madeleine under the Golden Gate.*

sacrificing when he jumps into the water to save her, since this is really no place anyone wants to jump for happy reasons. Had the shots involving her jumping been taken with live sound, the wind sound would have been loud and forceful enough to obstruct them (and would have detracted from our crisp, even meditative vision of her plunge). Could Aeolus, hovering in this place, not have reached out a curling finger to snatch her into the Bay? (Readers may wish to know that a Frost fence is in place now to prevent copycats from sharing Madeleine's experience.)

It is worthwhile to consider the personality and qualities of Scottie, as made manifest in this scene through his emplacement in such a forbidding setting, in comparison with what we see and learn about him in the scenes that immediately follow. At his apartment, he is shown to be, if not a wealthy man then at least a very comfortable one, who can dry himself at a charming hearth and serve coffee in a handsome cashmere sweater that indicates both that he has some money and that he doesn't mind indulging himself in comforts. The custard yellow blanket on his bed is no cheap blanket, and it is possible to conclude that he has decorated his place with sensitivity and taste. Thus, he is a man of feeling and quality, whose manners are notably graceful and whose calmness of bearing points to class, style, self-assurance, and a caring state of mind. At Fort Point, by contrast, he was, to put it bluntly, rugged (the man we never saw Jeff Jeffries having a chance to be in *Rear Window* [Hitchcock, 1954]).

This combination of rugged derring-do and civilised temperateness need not be understood as a production by Mr. James Stewart working out of himself (an example of the 'doctrine of natural expression' [see Goffman, 1976]). We get the contrast because of the settings into which he is put and their cultural meaning conceptually prior to the actions he undertakes there. Fort Point is a rough spot before Scottie jumps into the water and seems rugged; the apartment is a civilised spot before he serves coffee there (in china) and seems *gemutlich*. The (former) policeman is a poet. (The poet was a policeman.)

What is it that helps us see Fort Point as dangerous, when the sound track has been mollified and the scenes there shot in glorious, vivifying sunlight? It has all the visual charm that blue swells and sunny vistas can provide. And the answer to this riddle, I think, lies in that single, terribly iconic shot, the one image that has become known around the world as an index for this entire film, not Jimmy Stewart's anxious face superimposed on the vortex from the dream sequence but the Golden Gate Bridge yawning outward from behind us, spanning the watery gap all the way to we know not what land of hope and promise on the other side. Beneath it is a vast penumbra, a canopy of



(5) *Comforts. Scottie Ferguson at home. The plate of nocturnal Telegraph Hill behind his back was shot in the late night of March 1, 1957, and the foreground action in Scottie's apartment was filmed on Paramount's Stage 5, Monday October 21, 1957 commencing at 9 a.m.*

unpredictability, the underside of high technology, the secret zone where the bolts are screwed in. Before us, and covered by the bridge, is the vast waterway that leads outward to China. And here, abrupt and concrete – it seems the last gravitationally supportive foothold in America – is the quai beside the fort. The bridge has been foretold in Midge's studio (as she speaks of the principal of the cantilever and how it will work in a new bra), and so instantly, when we see it here, we know it as a monument to engineering genius, a form of what David Nye calls the technological sublime (1994). It fills us with admiration, but equally with terror, since the vast extent of the bridge instantly puts us in mind of the thought that it can (and thus ultimately will) collapse. Fall into the water and be drowned, disappear forever, indeed, tumble upon our heads. Madeleine is choosing to visit and depart from a spot *underneath* the spans. What if the cables snap? (Impossible? Why impossible?)

So the roughening soundtrack isn't needed, in any event. The optical of the bridge will provide exactly the sense of danger that is needed. And when he throws himself into the water to save her there – there of all possible places – Scottie becomes a man of steel. He has her in his arms in the green cold water. Then after a fade, he is wearing a sweater of that same color, now a *bourgeois gentilhomme*, cautious, polite, polished.

### Mission Time

I suggest in *An Eye for Hitchcock* that 'a realization of history and its persistence, is vertiginous' (2004: 247) and also that 'a descent past the surface that is laid upon a structure that is hidden is one of the deep themes of this film' (244). What this means to approach is the display of the archaic intermingling with the contemporary, the sense we have that we are looking down into the well of history past the evocative lip that is our present experience. A conjunction in one shot between an unknown woman dressed like the dead Madeleine (Lee Patrick) outside the Brocklebank and a modern skyscraper behind her punches out this temporal rift

for us (246). Scottie is looking to find the past again; in short, to travel back to it, and thus down in history.

An incomparable aid toward a fuller understanding of *Vertigo* is some knowledge of Californian history, one particularly generous source being Carey McWilliams's notable *Southern California Country* (which does not deal only with the south). The mission tradition, he warns, came around 1888 to have 'a great commercial value' (1946: 23), but it has cultural significance independently of that. The missions, Franciscan constructions, were associated with Indian settlement. 'The padres built where the Indians were established in greatest numbers' (22). The Californian mission, then – we are exposed to two of the ten that existed in northern California – invoked at once Christianising, pre-Christian (even pre-Columbian) pagan culture, and the deep mystery of the topological past. To stand in one of the missions is to have a keen sense of a California outside of, prior to, and mythically beyond what is configured by, say, the Golden Gate Bridge or Coit Tower (1933). By invoking the deep history of the place, the mission setting calls up the fact that California was made a state in 1851, two years after the Gold Rush; that as of 1822 there was already formal discussion about severing northern from southern Californian culture; that while Los Angeles and the southern districts below the Tehachapi range weren't settled until thirty years after the Gold Rush, their inhabitants were 'older people who came from Eastern and Middle Western regions thirty years more mature than the regions from which forty-niners had set forth for the gold fields [of the north]' (16). By 1880, writes McWilliams, 'the settlers of Northern California had come to think of themselves as native sons and believed they had a special mandate to rule the state' (16). They adopted the habit of 'referring to San Francisco as "The City"' (16). We hear an echo of this in Henry Jones's intonation at the inquest, as he introduces the police captain 'from that great City to the North'.

But again, once the mission legends became commercialised, and associated with 'real estate ballyhoo' (24), the



'Mission Indian' was 'created and invested with the sentiments of a New England schoolmarm' (24), invoking both sacred and profane connotations. It is necessary only to re-imagine the contemporised Franciscan mission as part of a cultural construction to realise that the trick of connecting the unseen character Carlotta Valdes to mission settlements is a way of hinting at her constructedness just as much as it is a way of using her name to invoke the deep past. We come to the point where any mention of the word 'Carlotta' immediately causes a vertiginous sensation.

I should add, to be faithful to McWilliams and to the truths of mission history, that the Franciscans were not exactly benevolent. 'The chain of Missions along the coast,' he writes, 'might best be described as a series of picturesque charnel houses,' and further, 'with the best intentions in the world, the Franciscan padres eliminated Indians with the effectiveness of Nazis operating concentration camps' (29). The mortality rates for Indians associated with the missions were very high, and between the mid-eighteenth and late nineteenth centuries the decline in the Indian population was itself vertiginous: 'From a total of 30,000 in 1769, the number of Indians in Southern California declined to approximately 1,260 by 1910' (29). As soon as they were

living in Mission compounds, lethargy and inaction 'seemed to possess them' (30). As a cinematic invocation, then, the mission calls into play old California and the old times (as evinced also in Pop Leibel's tale); fading, dessication, and decay (the missions are adobe structures, planted round with roses and cacti, by and large); falling population figures and the tumble into death; and also 'bally-hoo'.

At San Juan Bautista, Madeleine and Scottie play with a mock horse and carriage that allow them to engage in the interactional game of pretending they are living a century before. The structure of the mission itself is discernably old, while at the same time being sturdy. The arches and colonnade, for example, suggest very strongly something built by human hands long dead but vigorously surviving into the contemporary world: in short, the presence here and now of spiritual material from a dead past.

There is every reason for assuming that in 1957, when this film was being shot there, Mission San Juan Bautista – roughly a hundred miles south of San Francisco – was being operated as a tourist venue just as it is today. The stables, filled with mid-nineteenth-century carriages and early automobiles, were literally a museum of the cultural past. Carlotta Valdes is a figure out of a museum, then, and in being fixated upon her Madeleine (as I persist in calling her) is a fascinated tourist as well as a clairvoyante and addict.

(It may interest a reader or two to learn that the grass sward that centers the mission compound – and across which Scottie races to catch Madeleine and later Judy – remains now precisely as it was during the filming, the grass lush and full and deep dark green. The footprints of Madeline, Judy, and Scottie can just barely be distinguished – if that is your true desire – from those of the many nuns who flocked to ring the bells when there was a tower there. [There were indeed bell towers, one even in the early twentieth century, although, as is well known, at the time of principal photography no tower existed and what we see in the film is a matte composition.])

Mission Dolores, officially the Misión San Francisco de Asís, and founded five days before the Declaration of Independence near the small nearby stream, Arroyo de Nuestra Señora de los Dolores, hosted burials until the 1890s in its diminutive cemetery, many of those interred, the Mission's publicity materials aver, being 'people who died in the decades following the Gold Rush, when San Francisco was a rapidly growing City which experienced much illness and



(6) *The horse mock-up used in Vertigo, still waiting patiently in the blacksmith's barn at Mission San Juan Bautista. Photograph by the author.*



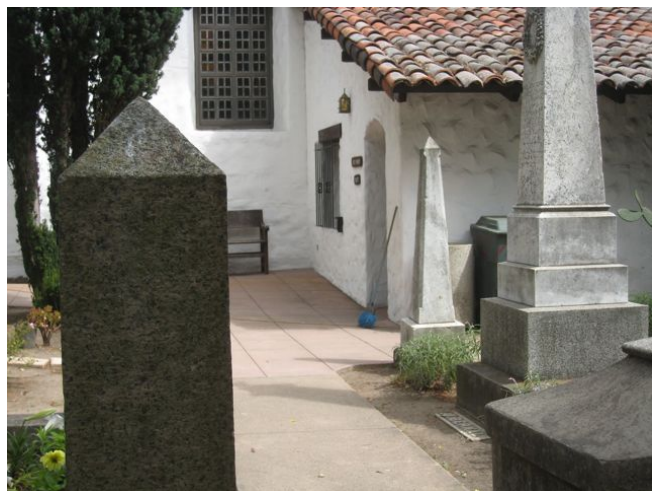
(7) *The colonnade at Mission San Juan Bautista, August 2012. Madeleine and Judy both rushed through the doorway at right to climb the tower: Photograph by the author.*



(8) *Historical photograph on display at Mission San Juan Bautista, showing the bell tower that existed earlier in the twentieth century. The matte construction shows a higher tower for the film.*

many early deaths'. While the chapel, entered by Madeleine and then by her follower Scottie has considerable charm it also reeks of age (being inside the oldest building in the city at this time). The production performed some door tricks here (perfectly typical, for movie makers), since the exit from the altar to the right, that both protagonists use, does not actually lead into the cemetery (as the diegesis suggests). The Mission's situation on Dolores Avenue at 16<sup>th</sup> Street places it in direct abutment with residential buildings running from Chula Lane to 17<sup>th</sup> Street and immediately adjacent to one side of the cemetery. But because in the film there is such lush vegetation for Madeleine and Scottie to walk around and hide behind, the cemetery seems isolated from the city as a whole, and has the quality of floating in a kind of metaphysical island. This isolation assists Madeleine in her belief in the compelling power of Carlotta (who is buried there – was she one of those who 'experienced much illness', given her deplorable treatment by that man 'who built for her that great house in the Western addition'?) It assists us too, as we ourselves fall into the chasm that is belief through identification with the characters visiting the grave.

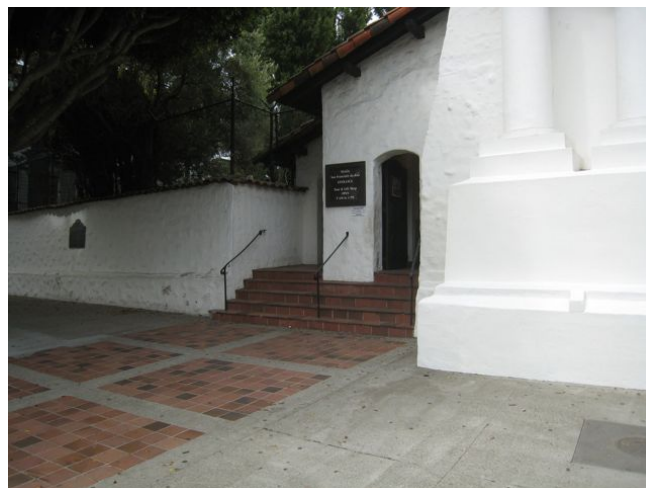
(For those wishing to visit Mission Dolores, Carlotta Valdes has been disinterred and is now buried in the Internet Movie Database.)



(9) *The cemetery in the Mission Dolores, with a view of the door from which Scottie emerges to make his way there. Photograph by the author.*



(10) *The 16<sup>th</sup> Street side entrance of the Mission Dolores (with cemetery behind the dark vegetation at upper left). Photograph by the author.*



(11) *A view of Mission Dolores from the corner of 16<sup>th</sup> Street and Dolores, showing the entrance Madeleine and Scottie use, behind two other possible ways in, including the ornate doorways at right off-camera. Photograph by the author.*

When one stands in this cemetery it is impossible not to feel the security and repose that are produced in the observation that the place has, for all its smallness, an exquisitely Greek proportion, cut here and there by small, gnarled olive trees or Lombardy poplars. The stone grave markers that ornament the shots each make the pronouncement of old time captured in a present moment, the long lasting drawing-forth of an ironic acknowledgment of life in death.

As to the building itself: there is a pair of high bell towers with considerable decorative stonework, this detail of the setting being yet another indicator for the viewer who watches Scottie park his car (on 16<sup>th</sup> Street) and walk, not up the Mission's steps and through its gaudy basilica doors but, into a modest side door (at which he pauses for emphasis). He is trailing a person who has been in this place before, who doesn't use the formal entrance but goes in by the back (informal, familial) way, as it were. It's beautiful to see how Hitchcock uses a tiny gestural effect like this – having Novak and then Stewart use the undecorated, simple doorway next to the formal and elaborately decorated main entrance – to convey extradiegetic information that is relevant to our knowledge of the characters here and now but not something he needs to set out through dedicated dialogue or action.

Hitchcock is in this way making his setting speak. As he does with the other settings I have discussed, he animates the places in which his characters find themselves, this in such a manner as to cast light upon characters' knowledge, motives, or past, which are visually inaccessible as such. The settings in this film thus do not merely contain the action, bound it, and give it gravity, they are active themselves.

### On Display

Gavin and Madeleine Elster reside at the Brocklebank, 1000 Mason Street, on Nob Hill. Just a tiny comment about Madeleine's exit from this elegant building on the first morning when Scottie tails her (curling his way down to the florist, Podesta Baldocchi, and elsewhere). We will learn from the story that in her movement this morning, she is 'taking him for a ride,' as the saying goes; leading him on;





(12) *The courtyard of the Brocklebank, corner of Mason and Sacramento Streets, Nob Hill. Photograph by the author.*

directing him, consciously and with intent. But at the moment she drives out, Hitchcock actually *shows* this intent explicitly, as we shall see. The Brocklebank courtyard is exited by way of a drive between two lamp-crowned stone pillars at the precise northeast corner of Sacramento and Mason Streets. Driving away, one has at least three possible choices, two of which are considerably the more direct. Madeleine could head more or less straight forward, and follow Sacramento street westward toward, or past, Cushman. Or she could swing a very hard right (a sharp turn but a much shorter distance) and drive down Mason Street in the general northerly direction of Telegraph Hill. (She cannot do a hard left and proceed down Sacramento Street to Powell because Sacramento is one-way uphill.) The third choice – the one she makes – is to veer left onto Mason Street and drive *past Scottie in his parked car across the road* (directly in front of the Pacific Union Club, a bastion of old San Francisco money [such as Gavin Elster wishes he had, but also such as the man who collected, abused, and

dismissed Carlotta Valdes actually did have]) until she gets to the corner of California Street (where there is some construction in progress) and can turn left and descend the hill.

Her actual navigation is hardly diegetically pertinent as she heads toward the florist, because she does not take an actually direct route (as can be seen with a careful study of Kraft and Leventhal's *Footsteps in the Fog* [2002], which outlines her moves shot by shot). So to get from her apartment to the florist, any of these three vehicular moves would have sufficed for the cinematography; yet she chooses to give Scottie a very good look at her in the driver's seat, and to do this, she takes what is in some ways the least direct path away from home.

Hitchcock isn't merely putting Madeleine into a car on a street and having her drive. At this juncture, he is thinking through very carefully where she is, where Scottie is, what options are open to her and what she would be signaling – to us and to him – by choosing each of them. Further, for Hitchcock, Madeleine is not driving in San Francisco. She is driving in the 'San Francisco' of his screen, which is a perduringly rectangular space no matter where anyone wants to go. The camera, whose position she must pass for the diegesis to continue, is a fixture of the cinematic city. Scottie, by the way, while he is parked very conveniently for having an unobtrusive gawk at the Brocklebank and any beautiful woman who steps out of it, could also have parked on Sacramento Street heading west (that is, left of the frame in image 13) or Mason Street heading north. He'd have had to strain his neck, but he does already (it would be improper, and very blatant, of him to park inside the Brocklebank courtyard.) He has 'chosen a spot' (Hitchcock has chosen a spot for him) that makes his easiest move a simple pulling out into traffic and heading straight ahead down Mason Street. He has, in effect, shown her the way he hopes she will go; and she has shown him that she knows he has shown her and is willing to comply. It's perfectly coy, an act of seduction – *on both sides* – from the very start. (This is not difficult to understand from Scottie's point of view, since we shared it the night before when he saw her for the first time at Ernie's: a vision that compelled adoration and attachment, under any circumstance.)

### Giving the Finger

To conclude these brief intrusions, a remark about what happens in Gallery 6 of the Palace of the Legion of Honor, as Scottie finds Madeleine on a bench there gazing at the portrait of Carlotta.<sup>3</sup> Having entered the room, he 'hides' by proceeding along the right-hand wall (rather than moving behind her, seated tranquilly as she appears to be). Since it is Hitchcock's desire even as much as showing us Madeleine and the canvas she is looking at to indicate Scottie and the intensity of his regard for Madeleine, there is a shot showing him moving along that wall; therefore we have an excellent and unavoidable opportunity of seeing the two paintings that are behind his back (and hanging today next door in Gallery 7). One is the *Portrait of a Gentleman* (1710; gifted to the museum in 1929) by Nicolas de Largillière (1656-1746). With an expression of dismay or irritation, as though we have interrupted his solitary pleasure with our gaze, and a sumptuous white periwig puffed up like a geyser and then cascading over his shoulders like a resting sheep, he clasps a red velvet cloak with one hand and with the other – opened and pudgy, the fingers delicate and small – points leftward (without enthusiasm) as though saying, 'Nota bene'.



(13) *View looking northward down Mason Street. Scottie is parked, as it were, behind the back of the photographer who took this shot. If her purpose were only to descend Nob Hill, Madeleine did not have to drive past him, or make it easy for him to follow her. Photograph by the author.*



(14) Nicolas de Largillière, *Portrait of a Gentleman* (1710)

The pointing gesture was somewhat typical of Largillière's portraiture, if not also of early eighteenth-century decorative style more generally. Adjacent to this canvas is *Architecture* (1752-3) by Charles-André (Carle) Vanloo (1705-1765), from *Allegories of the Arts*, showing three little boys ogling an architect's drawing of the front façade of the Palais de Belleville. The Vanloo allegories, painted for Madame de Pompadour to decorate the Salon de Compagnie at her Château de Bellevue (near Meudon), were popular, and often replicated, images, *Architecture* appearing, for example, on a 1757-8 Noël Hardivilliers snuffbox, a 1756 Étienne Fessard engraving, a painted version in which the drawing on display is of the Château d'Orly, and so on (Rosenberg and Stewart, 1987: 292-306). The eldest of the three boys, dressed in vivid royal blue, is at left (the children wear 'costumes of the most extravagant fancy, some in Louis XIV coats trimmed with ribbon, others in Renaissance costume with slashed velvet sleeves, lace ruffs, and feathered caps' [306]), and with a gesture not dissimilar to Largillière's Gentleman's, points to the drawing intently while his two mates stare, both at him and at it, in rapture. The *Allegories* contain four such paintings, with the same boys ('Their physical features are not sufficiently varied and seem to have come from the same model' [cited in Rosenberg and Stewart, 1987: 305]), one showing *Painting*, one *Sculpture*, one *Music*, and this fourth. All four are in the Legion's collection, but *Architecture* is the one we see in *Vertigo*. The little boy points to the rendering of the Palais, and next to the canvas the older Gentleman points away, toward screen left. If we gaze off in the direction he is indicating, we find, first, Madeleine, and then the image that has attracted her gaze.



(16) Charles-André (Carle) Vanloo, *Architecture* (1752-3) from *Allegories of the Arts*

Here, then, is the same intensive use of cinematic setting for expressive purposes. But Hitchcock makes an elegant flourish, actually portraying characters making flourishes. 'I am pointing with my settings,' is his tacit claim; but here, openly and beautifully, he points to pointing just at the moment when Scottie, watching Madeleine, will point with his attention to the pointers of her hair and the bouquet she bought (both also to be found in the painting). His gaze is pointing at her; her gaze is pointing at Carlotta; Carlotta's gaze is pointing across the room at the two canvases on the wall, in which characters ostensibly and articulately point. If we follow all these pointings around and around (mimicking the transit of a movie camera), they of course make us spin, until we are inside the vortex that was offered to our (then) disinterested gaze as the opening credits crawled.

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<sup>1</sup> The transparency plates of Telegraph Hill used for rear projection in this scene, shot at 18 frames per second, were photographed Thursday, February 28, 1957 between 4:28 and 4:31 p.m., and March 1 and 2 (Script supervisor notes). As to the nocturnal scene shown in Image 5, since there is no action or movement seen through Scottie's window behind him one might have assumed that the production would have used a 'stereo' (a rear-projected still transparency image) rather than a 'plate' (a rear-projected film strip), but the Special Effects Photography Department at Paramount was at the time as conservative and meticulous in technique as Hitchcock's own team; and since they were producing plates for daytime backgrounds around the same location at any rate, there was no inconvenience in shooting nighttime shots as well. The sense of tranquility achieved in this plate is thus a 'naturalised' or actual one, showing several seconds of undisturbed urban continuity.

<sup>2</sup> For researching this detail, and for considerable generosity in showing me the delights of San Francisco, I am deeply indebted to Doug and Catherine McFarland.

<sup>3</sup> Painted, he told me in a 1995 interview, by Henry Bumstead. The publicity program for '*Vertigo* at the Legion of Honor,' a special fiftieth anniversary screening on July 10, 2008 (supplied to me graciously by Melissa E. Buron) specifies that the painting was made by John Ferren (who did the dream sequence). At this writing, the actual painting cannot be located, but there is substantial reason to believe it was painted in Italy, not America.