

The Postcolonial Constellation: Contemporary Art in a State of Permanent Transition (*excerpt*)

Okwui Enwezor, *Research in African Literatures* Vol. 32 No. 4, 2003

The Proper task of a history of thought is: to define the conditions in which human beings 'problematize' what they are, what they do, and the world in which they live. – Michel Foucault (History of Sexuality 2: 10)

This flood of convergences, publishing itself in the guise of the commonplace. No longer is the latter an accepted generality, suitable and dull – no longer is it deceptively obvious, exploiting common sense – it is, rather, all that is relentlessly and endlessly reiterated by these encounters. – Édouard Glissant (Poetics of Relation 45)

It is a commonplace of the current historical thinking about globalization to say: There are no vantage points from which to observe any culture since the very processes of globalization have effectively abolished the temporal and spatial distance that previously separated cultures.¹

Another way this thinking has been expressed is in the idea of globalization as the mode and ultimate structure of singularization, standardization, and homogenization of culture in service of instruments of advanced capitalism and neoliberalism. After such totalization, what remains of the critical forces of production that throughout the modern era have placed a strong check on the submergence of all subjective protocols to the orders of a singular organizing ideology, be it the state or the market? What may immediately follow this spatial and temporal reordering is to ask: If globalization has established, categorically, the proximity of cultures, can the same be said about globalization and art? Here, what marks the critical division between culture and art is that for centuries art as such has waged a fierce battle of independence from all cultural, social, economic, and political influences.

Unlike the apotropaic device of containment and desublimation through which the modern Western imagination perceived other cultures, so as to feed off their strange aura and hence displace their power, the nearness today of those cultures formerly separated by their distance to the objectifying conditions of modernist history calls for new critical appraisals of our contemporary present and its relationship to artistic production. I start with these observations in order to place in proper context the current conditions of production, dissemination, and reception of contemporary art. Contemporary art today is refracted, not just from the specific site of culture and history but in a more critical sense, from the standpoint of a complex geopolitical configuration that defines all systems of production and relations of exchange as a

consequence of globalization after imperialism. It is this geopolitical configuration and its postimperial transformations that situate what I call here “the postcolonial constellation.”

The changes wrought by transitions to new forms of governmentality and institutions, new domains of living and belonging as people and citizens, cultures, and communities, define the postcolonial matrix that shapes the ethics of subjectivity and creativity today. Whereas classical European thought formulated the realm of subjectivity and creativity as two domains of activity each informed by its own internal cohesion, without an outside, such thought today is consistently questioned by the constant tessellation of the outside and inside, each folding into and opening out to complex communicative tremors and upheavals. Perhaps, then, bringing contemporary art into the context of the geopolitical framework that define global relations – between the so-called local and the global, center and margin, nation-state and the individual, transnational and diasporic communities, audiences and institutions – offers a perspicacious view of the postcolonial constellation. The constellation, however, is not made up solely of the dichotomies named above, but can be understood as a set of arrangements of deeply entangled relations and forces that are founded by discourses of power. Such discourses of power are geopolitical in nature and by extension can be civilizational in their reliance on binary oppositions between cultures, which in a sense are inimical to any transcultural understanding of the present context of cultural production. Geopolitical power arrangements are defined along much the same *ligne Maginot* in the artistic context. With a terrible tear at its core, evidence of such a *ligne Maginot* in the artistic context lends contact between different artistic cultures an air of civilizational distinctions predicated on the tension between the developed and underdeveloped, reactionary and progressive, regressive and advanced, avant-garde and outmoded. Such a discourse, however, is a heritage of classical modernity, which, through these distinctions, furnishes the dialectical and ideological agenda for competition and hegemony often found in the spaces of art and culture.

What follows is a response to my initial assertions that the current artistic context is constellated around the norms of the postcolonial based on the discontinuous, aleatory forms, creolization, hybridization, etc. with a specific cosmopolitan accent. From the outset, the assertions are not relativistic, even if they attempt to displace certain stubborn values that have structured the discourse of Western modernism and determined its power over other modernisms. Édouard Glissant, whose classic work *Caribbean Discourse* made us aware of the tremor at the roots² of the postcolonial order, interprets current understanding of global modernity as essentially the phenomenon of creolization of cultures, wherefore he permits us to see in global processes of movement, resettlement,

recalibration, changes and shifts, modalities of cultural transformations that by necessity can neither be wholly universal nor essentially particular. Contemporary culture as such, for Glissant, is cross-cultural, reconstituting itself as a “flood of convergences publishing itself in the guise of the commonplace.” In this statement, there is an intimation that instructs our notion of the modern world, one that carries the echo and the guise of the commonplace, the social universe that produces the content of all modern subjectivities – that is all subjectivities that emerge directly from the convergences and proximities wrought by imperialism and that today direct us to the postcolonial. The current history of modern art sits at the intersection between imperial and postcolonial discourses. Therefore, any critical interest displayed towards exhibition systems that takes as its field of study modern or contemporary art necessarily refers us to the foundational base of modern art history and its roots in imperial discourse, on the one hand, and, on the other, the pressures that postcolonial discourse exerts on its narratives today.

From its inception, the history of modern art has been inextricably bound to the history of its exhibitions both in its commodity function through collectors in the economic sphere and in its iconoclasm evidenced by the assaults on formalism by the historical avant-garde. Both the commodity function of modern art and the avant-garde legacy have played strong legitimizing roles through exhibitions. In fact, it could be said that no significant change in the direction of modern art occurred outside the framework of the public controversies generated by its exhibitions.”³ To phrase it differently, fundamental to the historical understanding of modern art is the important role played through the forum and medium of exhibitions in explicating the trajectory taken by artists, their supporters, critics, and the public in identifying the great shifts that have marked all encounters with modern art and advanced its claim for enlightened singularity among other cultural avatars. For contemporary art, this history is no less true, and the recent phenomenon of the curator in shaping this history has been remarkable. There have occurred, however, a number of remarkable mutations in the growing discourse of exhibitions and in the public representations of art as something wholly autonomous and separate from the sphere of other cultural activities that must be studied very carefully.

Exhibitions have evolved from the presentation of singular perspectives of certain types of artistic development to the frightening *Gesamtkunstwerk* evident in mega-exhibitions globally that seem to have overtaken the entire field of contemporary artistic production. If we are to judge correctly the proper role of the curator in this state of affairs, then the exhibition as form, genre, or medium, and as a communicative, dialogical forum of conversations between heterogeneous actors, publics, and objects needs further probing.

Art and Sociopolitical Intervention

WochenKlausur, Surface Tension: Problematics of Site, 2003

The artist group WochenKlausur has been conducting social interventions since 1993. The concept of intervention, whose usage in art has undergone an inflationary trend in recent years, is often used for any form of change. In contrast, WochenKlausur, at the invitation of art institutions, develops and realizes proposals – small-scale but very concrete – for improving sociopolitical deficits. In the context of many twentieth-century artists who understood how to actively take part in the shaping of society, WochenKlausur sees art as an opportunity for achieving long-term improvements in human coexistence. Artists' competence in finding creative solutions, traditionally utilized in shaping materials, can just as well be applied in all areas of society: in ecology, education and city planning. There are problems everywhere that cannot be solved using conventional approaches and are thus suitable subjects for artistic projects. Theoretically, there is no difference between artists who do their best to paint pictures and those who do their best to solve social problems with clearly fixed boundaries. The individually selected task, like the painter's self-defined objective, must only be precisely articulated. Interventionist art can only be effective when the problem to be solved is clearly stated.

The demand has been coming up again and again for a long time now: Art should no longer be venerated in specially designed spaces. Art should not form a parallel quasi-world. Art should not act as if it could exist of itself and for itself. Art should deal with reality, grapple with political circumstances, and work out proposals for improving human coexistence. Unconventional ideas, innovative spirit and energy, which for centuries were wrapped up in formal glass bead games, could thus contribute to the solution of real problems.

Now, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, the demands are slowly starting to take effect. The formal-aesthetic discussion has run its course. Its myriad self-referential somersaults have become inflationary, and the worship of virtuosi has given way to other qualities. In the process, a fundamental discussion of the functions of art has arisen: Who does what in art, and why?

Art can perform many functions. For pages and pages, the various functions could be listed like a catalogue of stylistic 'isms': Art can represent its commissioners and producers; it can be a definer and caretaker of identity; it can affect snobby allures and satiate the bourgeois hunger for knowledge and possession. Art can fatten up the leisure time of the bored masses; it can serve as an object of financial speculation; it can transmit feelings and cause one's heart to vibrate. Furthermore,

the many functions are also enmeshed in one another. Abstract Expressionism served Cold War Americans as a political instrument of culturalization just as much as it served the spiritual need for expression of the young painters that created it.

One of the functions of art has always been the transformation of living conditions. Since the advent of Modernism, with its rejection of religiously founded authority, art has been an especially fertile domain for querying irrational taboos and inherited value standards and for correcting social imbalances. This function was first put into practice by the Russian Constructivists. Simultaneously with the 1917 change of regime in Russia, an art was introduced which for the first time sought to directly influence the people's consciousness and living conditions through agitation and activism. Thus a new chapter was opened in the history of art.

In Germany the Bauhaus cultivated these developments. Science, architecture, technology, and the visual arts were all working towards one another so as the shape as many aspects of life as possible. Books and posters, vehicles, landscapes and clothing took on new forms corresponding to function and ideology in order to establish the new philosophies of life with a certitude nearing self-evidence. Every formal renewal of the world – so thought the artists of that time – would also have to bring about a corresponding change of attitude.

For many decades it seemed that society could actually be manipulated through alteration of the visual surroundings and of habits of seeing and hearing. This view still had its supporters as recently as the sixties, and the question of whether that era's youth revolt was even triggered by rock and pop music, or if conversely the music was merely a part of the release of long-accumulated dissatisfaction, is a source of material for sociology seminars up to the present day. Looking back, the idea of 'altering social relationships by altering form' appears a little naïve. Of course attitudes and habits, thinking patterns and value standards can be marginally influenced through forms. The whole advertising field is sustained by this thesis. But people's ideological principles, their world views can not really be changed through colours, sounds and forms. Clothes, one could say, only make the man in romantic novels. [...]

In contrast to seventies thinking, today's activists are no longer concerned with changing the world in its entirety. It is no longer a matter of mercilessly implementing an ideological line, as it was with Beuys' idea of transforming a whole society into Social Sculpture, or as it was in the thinking of Russian Constructivists, the Futurists and many other manifesto writers of the modern. At the end of the century, activist art no longer overestimates its capabilities but it does not underestimate them either. It makes modest contributions. It would be wrong, in a society in

which every discussion of basic principles has been lost, to expect that something like art can make decisive changes. [...]

Social renewal is a function of art after the art of treating surfaces. It makes more sense to improve the carrying structure before improving the surface. This art's big chance lies in its ability to offer the community something that also achieves an effect. The motives for concrete intervention based in art should not be confused with an excess for moralistic fervour. As a potential basis for action, art has political capital at its disposal that should not be underestimated. The use of this potential to manipulate social circumstances is a practice of art just as valid as the manipulation of traditional materials. The group WochenKlausur takes this function of art and its historic precursors as its point of departure. WochenKlausur sets precise tasks for itself and, in intensive actions that are limited in time, attempts to work out solutions to the problems it has recognized. [...]

Looking Awry (*excerpt*)

Slavoj Žižek, *October*, 1991

Montage is usually conceptualized as a way of producing from fragments of the real – pieces of film, discontinuous individual shots – an effect of “cinematic space,” i.e., a specific cinematic reality. That is to say, it is universally acknowledged that “cinematic space” is never a simple repetition or imitation of external, “effective” reality, but an effect of montage. What is usually overlooked, however, is the way this transformation of fragments of the real into cinematic reality produces, through a kind of structural necessity, a certain leftover, a surplus that is radically heterogeneous to the cinematic reality but nonetheless implied by it, part of it.⁴ That the surplus of the real is, in the last resort, precisely the gaze qua object is best exemplified by the work of Alfred Hitchcock.

Pascal Bonitzer has already pointed out that the fundamental constituent of the Hitchcockian universe is the so-called “spot”: the stain upon which reality revolves, passes over into the real, the mysterious detail which “sticks out,” which does not “fit” into the symbolic network of reality, and which, as such, indicates that “something is amiss” (the most notorious example is the windmill turning in the wrong direction in *Foreign Correspondent*,” denaturing” the idyllic image of the Dutch countryside). The fact that this spot ultimately coincides with the threatening gaze of the other is confirmed in an almost too obvious way by the famous tennis-court scene from *Strangers on a Train*, in which Guy watches the crowd watching the match. The camera first gives us a long shot of the crowd; all the heads turn alternatively left and right, following the path of the ball, all except one, which stares with a fixed gaze into the camera, i.e., at Guy. The camera then approaches this motionless head quickly. It is Bruno, linked with Guy by a murderous pact. Here we have in a pure, as it were, distilled form the stiff, motionless gaze, sticking out like a strange body and thus disturbing the harmony of the image by introducing a threatening dimension.

The function of the famous Hitchcockian tracking or traveling shot is precisely to produce a spot. In the tracking shot, the camera moves from an establishing shot to a close-up of a detail which must remain a blurred spot, the true form of which is accessible only to the anamorphic “view from aside.” The shot slowly isolates from its surroundings the element which cannot be integrated into symbolic reality, which must remain a strange body if the depicted reality is to retain its consistency.⁵ But what interests us here is the fact that under certain conditions montage intervenes in the tracking shot; i.e., the continuous approach of the camera is interrupted by cuts. What are these conditions? Briefly, the tracking shot must be interrupted when it is “subjective,” when the camera shows us the subjective view of a person approaching the

object-spot. That is to say, whenever, in a Hitchcock film, a hero, a person around whom the scene is structured, approaches an object, a thing, another person, anything that can become uncanny in the Freudian sense, Hitchcock usually alternates the “objective” shot of this person in motion, his or her walking toward the uncanny Thing, with the subjective shot of what this person sees, i.e., with the subjective view of the Thing. This is, so to speak, the elementary procedure, the zero-degree of Hitchcockian montage.

Let us take a few examples. When, toward the end of *Psycho*, Lilah climbs the hill to the mysterious old house, the presumed home of “Norman’s mother,” Hitchcock alternates the objective shot of Lilah climbing with her subjective view of the old house. He does the same in *The Birds*, in the famous scene analyzed in detail by Raymond Bellour, when Melanie, after crossing the bay in a small rented boat, approaches the house where Mitch’s mother and sister live. Again, Hitchcock alternates the objective shot of the uneasy Melanie, aware of intruding on the privacy of a home, with her subjective view of the mysteriously silent house.⁶ Of the innumerable other examples we might cite, let us mention just a short, trivial scene from *Psycho* between Marion and a car dealer. Here, Hitchcock uses his montage procedure several times (when Marion approaches the car dealer; when, toward the end of the scene, a policeman approaches who has already stopped her on the highway the same morning, etc.). By means of this purely formal procedure, an entirely trivial, everyday incident is given an uneasy, threatening dimension that cannot be sufficiently accounted for by its diegetic content (i.e., by the fact that Marion is buying a new car with stolen money and thus fears being exposed). The Hitchcockian montage elevates an everyday, trivial object into a sublime Thing. By purely formal manipulation, it succeeds in bestowing on an ordinary object the aura of anxiety and uneasiness.⁷

In Hitchcockian montage, two kinds of shots are thus permitted and two forbidden. Permitted are the objective shot of the person approaching a Thing and the subjective shot presenting the Thing the way the person sees it. Forbidden are, inversely, the objective shot of the Thing, of the “uncanny” object, and – above all – the subjective shot of the approaching person from the perspective of the “uncanny” object itself. Let us refer again to the above-mentioned scene from *Psycho* depicting Lilah approaching the house on the top of the hill. It is crucial that Hitchcock shows the threatening Thing (the house) exclusively from the point of view of Lilah. If he were to have added a “neutral,” objective shot of the house, the whole mysterious effect would have been lost. We (the spectators) would have to endure a radical desublimation. Suddenly we would become aware that there is nothing uncanny in the house as such, that the house is – like the “black house” from Patricia Highsmith’s short story – just an ordinary old house. That is, the effect of uneasiness would

be radically “psychologized,” we would say to ourselves, “This is just an ordinary house, all the mystery and anxiety attached to it is just an effect of the heroine’s psychic turmoil!”

The effect of uncanniness would also be lost if Hitchcock had immediately added a shot “subjectifying” the Thing, i.e., a subjective shot from inside the house. Let us imagine that, as Lilah approached the house, there had been a trembling shot showing Lilah through the window curtains, accompanied by the sound of hollow breathing, indicating thus that somebody from the house was watching her. Such a procedure (used regularly in standard thrillers) would, of course, intensify the strain. We would say to ourselves, “This is terrible! There is somebody in the house (Norman’s mother?) watching Lilah, she is in mortal danger without knowing it!” But such a subjectivization would again suspend the status of the gaze qua object, reducing it to a subjective point-of-view of another diegetic personality. Sergei Eisenstein himself once risked such a direct subjectivization in a scene from *The Old and the New* (1929), a film celebrating the successes of the collectivization of Soviet agriculture in the late ’20s. It is a somewhat Lysenkist scene demonstrating how nature itself finds pleasure in subordinating itself to the new rules of collective farming, how, for example, even cows and bulls mate more ardently once they are included into *kolkhozes*. In a quick tracking shot, the camera approaches a cow from behind, and in the next shot it becomes clear that this view of the camera is that of a bull mounting a cow. Needless to say, the effect of this scene is so obscene that it is almost nauseating. What we have here is really a kind of Stalinist pornography.

So it would therefore be wise to return to the Hollywood decency of Hitchcock; let us again take the scene from *Psycho* in which Lilah approaches the house where “Norman’s mother” presumably lives. In what does its uncanny dimension consist? Could we not best describe the effect brought about by this scene precisely by rephrasing the words of Lacan and say that, in a way, *it is already the house which gazes at Lilah*? Lilah sees the house, but nonetheless she cannot see it at the point from which it gazes back at her. Here the situation is the same as that in Lacan’s recollection from his youth reported in chapter VIII of Seminar XI. As a student on holiday Lacan joined a fishing expedition. Among the fishermen on the boat, there was a certain Petit-Jean, who pointed out an empty sardine can glittering in the sun, tossed around by the waves, and said to him, “You see that can? Do you see it? Well, it doesn’t see you!” Lacan’s comment: “If what Petit-Jean said to me, namely that the can did not see me, had any meaning, it was because, in a sense, it was looking at me, just the same.”⁸ It was gazing at him because, as Lacan explains, using a key notion of the Hitchcockian universe, “I was rather out of place in the picture.” Among these uneducated fishermen, he was, effectively, “the man who knew too much.”

McGuinness Push for Park is a Step Too Far

Fintan O'Toole, the Irish Times, Tue 20 Sept 2011

Should we appoint a head of State who could be liable to arrest for war crimes under international law?

Accepting something is not the same as welcoming it. Resignation is not enthusiasm. Setting aside the past for the sake of the future is not amnesia. Sinn Féin's nomination of Martin McGuinness for the presidency suggests that it does not understand these distinctions.

Very few people would argue with the proposition that Martin McGuinness has been a crucial figure in the peace process. His personal transformation from diehard IRA leader to deputy first minister at ease with the Democratic Unionists is a remarkable story, requiring courage, skill and imagination.

That process, though, was one of getting the IRA out of a cesspit it had dug for itself. It has required of other people that they go along with a carefully poised act of moral evasion, an Irish version of “don't ask, don't tell”. The price of peace has been hypocrisy: keeping quiet when Sinn Féin (rightly) demands accountability for Bloody Sunday or the Ballymurphy massacre but not for Teebane Cross or Kingsmills, or contrasts its own moral purity to the deviousness of other parties.

It now seems, however, that this tacit arrangement has worked too well. Sinn Féin has taken uneasy resignation for complete compliance. It has decided to turn a quietly agreed reticence (don't talk about the war) into an explicit endorsement (the war was legitimate). It has posed a question that goes far beyond McGuinness's personal qualities. The question, to put it starkly, is whether we should have a head of State who would, in principle, be liable to arrest for war crimes under international law.

The IRA's “armed struggle” was what the fourth Geneva Convention defines as an “armed conflict not of an international character”. Under the convention, the parties to such a conflict are bound to respect certain standards in their treatment of “persons taking no active part in the hostilities”, including former or non-active members of opposing forces. Such people must not be subjected to violence, “in particular murder of all kinds, mutilation, cruel treatment and torture; taking of hostages; outrages upon personal dignity, in particular, humiliating and degrading treatment; the passing of sentences and the carrying out of executions without previous judgment pronounced by a regularly constituted court affording all the judicial guarantees which are recognised as indispensable by civilized peoples”.

It should go without saying that the IRA, partly under the leadership of Martin McGuinness, consistently breached every one of these provisions.

But apparently, it does not, so let's put it on record again. The IRA killed 644 civilians, by far the largest category of its victims (by contrast, and contradicting its self-image as defender of the Catholic community, it killed just 28 loyalist paramilitaries). It incinerated, for example, the members of the Irish Collie Club at the La Mon Hotel. It killed children, including Nicholas Knatchbull, Jonathan Ball, Tim Parry and Paul Maxwell. It practised kidnapping, torture, and acts of naked sadism, such as forcing Patsy Gillespie to drive a van loaded with explosives at an army checkpoint. (Widespread revulsion did not stop the IRA from trying this tactic again.) It held kangaroo courts and imposed arbitrary sentences that included mutilation through so-called “knee-capping”. All of these are war crimes for which there is no statute of limitations. I don't know what personal role McGuinness may have played in any incident. However, what is clear is that he was, for almost the entire period of the conflict, in a position of authority within the IRA. Legally and morally, this makes him responsible.

He actively denied this responsibility. His line was consistent – where civilians were killed by the IRA, it was the fault of the British. For example, on August 31st, 1988, an IRA booby-trap bomb in Derry killed two civilians, Seán Dalton and Sheila Lewis. McGuinness's reaction was that, while the IRA should try not to inflict civilian casualties, “sadly ... civilians will continue to suffer and die as long as Britain refuses to accept its fundamental responsibility for what is happening in our country.” He continued to portray himself and his comrades, not as perpetrators, but as victims of the conflict: “We are not the cause of this conflict; we are the victims of it. We are the product of decades of British tyranny and misrule.”

The IRA never stepped back from this line. Its parting statement in 2005 reiterated that “the armed struggle was entirely legitimate”. Entirely means the civilians, the children, the tortures, the mutilations – the lot. I would like to think McGuinness is haunted by some of the obscenities to which he was a party. But shouldn't that private grief manifest itself in a certain tact, a reticence about pushing things too far? Shouldn't he feel extraordinarily blessed to have been allowed to escape the consequences of the deeds he has been party to? Shouldn't gratitude for that blessing make him think twice about the hubris of putting himself forward as the leading citizen of this State, the embodiment of its better values?

‘For now we see through a glass darkly’, is a participatory discussion at the Office of Non-Compliance, taking place at 2pm on 29 October 2011, that will investigate the perception of the marginal or radical as it enters the mainstream. Seán O Sullivan, Rosie Lynch, and Curt Riegelnegg will each give a ten-minute presentation on a selected text. Dublin Contemporary Lead Co-Curator Jota Castro has been invited to give the fourth presentation. Discussion will then open up to the entire Office.’

Endnotes for Okwui Enwezor's *The Postcolonial Constellation: Contemporary Art in a State of Permanent Transition* (excerpt)

¹ Fernand Braudel's discussion of the structural transformation of the flow of capital and culture by distinct temporal manifestations, i.e., the paradigmatic and diagnostic attribute of historical events in relation to their duration. Such flow and unfolding Braudel calls “temporalities of long and very long duration, slowly evolving and less slowly evolving situations, rapid and virtually instantaneous deviations [...]” (quoted in Enwezor's essay “The Black Box” 44).

² See Glissant. Much like Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari with their idea of the rhizome, Glissant employs the prodigious spread of the mangrove forest to describe the processes of multiplications and mutations that for him describe the tremor of creolization as a force of historical changes and ruptures brought about by changes in the imperial order.

³ Admittedly, the advent of mass culture has all but made mute the ability of exhibitions to be truly seminal in a wider cultural sense in the manner in which the salons of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were, or the Armory Show of 1917 in New York. Much of what is known and important about Dada was through its many exhibitions and happenings that helped define it as a new artistic movement. Today the mini-scandals of the art world, such as the lawsuit brought against the Contemporary Art Center of Cincinnati upon its exhibition of Robert Mapplethorpe's homoerotic photographs or the controversy surrounding Chris Ofili's painting of a Madonna with elephant dung used as one of its breasts in Brooklyn Museum's exhibition *Sensation*, show the degree to which exhibitions of art remain culturally significant in the narratives of art historical writing.

Endnotes for Slavoj Žižek's *Looking Awry* (excerpt)

⁴ This problematic was first articulated by Noël Burch in his theory of *hors-champ*, i.e., of a specific exterior implied, constituted by the very interplay of the *champ* and see Noël Burch, *Theory of Film Practice*, London, Praeger, 1973.

⁵ See Slavoj Žižek, “Hitchcock,” *October*, no. 38 (Fall 1986), pp. 99–111.

⁶ It is by no means a pure coincidence that, in both cases, the object approached by the hero is a *house*. For *Notorious*, Pascal Bonitzer developed a detailed theory of the house as a place of an incestuous secret in Hitchcock's work; see Pascal Bonitzer, *Le champ aveugle*, Paris, Gallimard, 1982.

⁷ In his ironic, amiably sadistic teasing of the spectator, Hitchcock takes into account precisely this gap between the formal procedure and the content it is applied to, i.e., the fact that anxiety results from a purely formal procedure. First, by means of formal manipulation, Hitchcock bestows upon an everyday, trivial object the aura of mystery and anxiety. Afterwards, it becomes clear that this object effectively is just an everyday object. The best-known case is to be found in the second version of *The Man Who Knew Too Much*: On a suburban London Street, James Stewart approaches a stranger. As they silently exchange glances, an atmosphere of tension and anxiety is created. It seems that the stranger is threatening Stewart, but soon afterwards we discover that Stewart's suspicion was entirely unfounded. The stranger was just an accidental passer-by.

⁸ Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, London, Hogarth Press, 1977, p. 95.