conventional sense, that Ziegler could insert for a change of pace. Every move, every jump from reel to reel had to be planned so that the action would not drag on the screen. All of Ziegler's work, which usually takes place after a film is shot, had to take place while the action was going on.

All told we had 10,000 feet of film, shot without cuts, and from beginning to end like a stage play. And I think that in editing *Rope* this way we achieved suspense and an air of mystery without transoms opening, creaky doors, clutching fingers, or a house filled with eerie shadows.

Technicolor helped but it wasn't the star of the picture. *Rope,* incidentally, is the first time I've ever directed a Technicolor picture. I never wanted to make a Technicolor picture merely for the sake of using color. I waited until I could find a story in which color could play a dramatic role, and still be muted to a low key. In *Rope,* sets and costumes are neutralized so that there are no glaring contrasts. The key role played by color in this film is in the background. I insisted that color be used purely as the eye received it. After all, technique is merely a means to an end and the audience must never be aware that the camera, the director, or the photographer is performing miracles. Everything must flow smoothly and naturally.

Rope is a picture in which material has been created definitely for camera movements. Scenes were planned for visual strength, which in turn was blended with movement. The continuous flow of action meant that the eye was occupied constantly. And the elimination of the conventional shifting camera excites the audience by making the picture flow smoother and faster.

All of us had a lot of fun with *Rope,* particularly the publicity people. One press agent suggested that we have a world premiere in the Philippines because hemp comes from there. Another wanted us to hang it on New York's Strand Theatre.

I thought it best to let the boys have their fun. Their work was just beginning; mine was done. You see, I had come to the end of *my Rope.*

On Style

An Interview with Cinema

HITCHCOCK: What is *Cinema?*

INTERVIEWER: *Cinema* is distributed nationally in the United States, a magazine for what we think of as the "intelligent motion picturegoer." Our premise . . .

H: Are there intelligent picturegoers?

I: We presume so . . . Our premise is that there are intelligent motion picturegoers who look to directors as the creators of motion pictures. Now what I'd like to talk to you about is film style. You stated recently that the two things common to all your films are style and suspense, whereas otherwise they are all quite different. I presume your films are all pre-designed by an art director. Do you do the drawings yourself?

H: Well, art director is not a correct term. You see an art director, as we know it in the studios, is a man who designs a set. The art director seems to leave the set before it's dressed and a new man comes on the set called the set dresser. Now there is another function which goes a little further beyond the art director and it is almost in a different realm. That is the production designer. Now a production designer is a man *usually* who designs angles and sometimes production ideas. Treatment of action. There used to be a man . . . is he still alive? William Cameron Menzies. No, he's not. Well, I had William Cameron Menzies on a picture called *Foreign Correspondent* and he would take a sequence, you see, and by a

series of sketches indicate camera set-ups. Now this is, in a way, nothing to do with art direction. The art direction is set designing. Production design is definitely taking a sequence and laying it out in sketches. Now to give you an example, where I do a lot of my own production design (in fact, I do most of it today) . . . would be a sequence like the airplane chasing Cary Grant in *North by Northwest*. You remember that sequence? Well this has very careful design because I designed it purely to avoid the cliché. Now in movies, or in films if we want to call them by a more dignified name, or motion pictures to go a little further: the cliché of the man being put on the spot is usually a place of assignation and it takes the form of a figure under a street lamp at the corner of the street with the rain-washed cobbles shining in the night . . . maybe a cut to a blind being pulled aside, and a face looking out.

I: A cut to?

H: A shot of it . . . a shot of it. Every time I use the word cut . . . I mean a shot, a separate piece of film. And another piece of film that would be a cut would be a black cat slinking along the wall . . . Anyway this is the cliché atmosphere in which you put a man who has been deliberately placed in danger. Somebody is going to come along and bump him off. In the gangster films they went by a black limousine that went da da da da da da with a gun and the guy fell down. Well of course, this is such a cliché thing, you see, that one has to fight shy of it and run as far away from it as one possibly can because it's all predictable. The audience has seen it so many times, students of the cinema are so familiar with it. Now I decide to do something quite different and I say to myself, What shall I do? Well, let's have it with nothing so that the audience will have no conception as to how this man is going to be bumped off or shot. So therefore, I take the loneliest, emptiest spot I can so that there is no place to run for cover, no place to hide, and no place for the enemy to hide, if we can call him that, you see. Now we get him off the bus and we stand him, a little tiny figure, showing, establishing very clearly the complete wasteland everywhere.

I: Would this be an establishing shot?

H: It could be. It does two functions: It sets up the man being placed in position, and it sets up the nature of the surroundings so that the mind of the audience says, "Well. This is a strange place to put a man." Now we go down and we go close on him, and this is where design comes in. And he looks around him and cars go by.

So now we start a train of thought in the audience. "Ah, he's going to be shot at from a car." And even deliberately, with tongue in cheek, I let a black limousine go by. And I let it go right by, you see. Now, the car. We've dispensed with the menace of possible cars or automobiles, we'll say. Now a jalopy comes from another direction, stops across the roadway, deposits a man, the jalopy turns and goes back. Now he's left alone with the man. This is the second phase of the design. Is this going to be the man? Well, they stand looking at each other across the roadway. Grant, our hero, decides to investigate . . . and casually walks across and talks to the man . . . and obviously nothing is going to emerge from this man, or you feel that, until his bus begins to appear. Now the local bus comes and *just* as it pulls up—and this is a matter of timing—just before it gets to the stop, the man says to Grant, "That's funny." And Grant says, "What's funny?" He says "There's a plane, a crop-dusting plane over there dusting a place where there are no crops." Before this can be gone into in any way at all he's on the bus and gone. So now you've got the third phase. The audience says . . . "Ah, the airplane." Now, what's gonna be strange about the airplane, and you soon know. And from that point on you have a man trying to find cover. There is no cover until he gets into the cornfield. Now, you do in the design a very important thing. You smoke him out with the very instrument that you're using, a crop duster. Theory being, don't have a crop duster without your using it, otherwise you could have any airplane. So the dusting of the crop, the dust rather from the crop duster, smokes him out of the cornfield and he dashes in front of the truck desperately and the plane makes a last dive, mistimes it. Or the truck does come to a stop by his frantic waving and out goes the whole lot. So you see, this is the design. This sequence is very carefully designed step by step both visually and to some extent in its menace . . . the menace of its content. So that's production design, exemplified in terms of its function. What does it do?

I: Selection primarily of the framing of the shot.

H: Of the images and what they do.

I: What about the direction of the subject movement within the frame?

H: That's axiomatic, you see. The action itself is self-evident. For example, as many variations as one can get of a plane attacking a man. Even to the point where the man is running toward the

camera, and you go with him and the plane comes down over the top of him into the camera practically. This is giving the audience the sensation of having the plane dive at them. So here we come again, now this brings you into the manner of style. You see. They'll say "Well, only Hitchcock could have thought a thing like that out." So style . . .

I: The entire situation determined it more than an individual cut or . . .

H: Oh, well a cut is nothing. One cut of film is like a piece of mosaic. To me, pure film, pure cinema is pieces of film assembled. Any individual piece is nothing. But a combination of them creates an idea.

I: Is this what is referred to historically as montage?

H: Montage, you can call it that. But there are many kinds of montage. For example, there was a lot of it, more of it in *Psycho* than many pictures I've ever made. *Psycho* is probably one of the most cinematic pictures I've ever made. Because there you had montage in the bathtub killing where the whole thing is purely an illusion. No knife ever touched any woman's body in that scene. Ever. But the rapidity of the shots, it took a week to shoot. The little pieces of film were probably not more than four or five inches long. They were on the screen for a fraction of a second.

I: How long was the entire scene?

H: I would say about a minute and a half, that's all.

I: Would this be speeding up action or slowing it down . . .

H: No . . . no . . . No, this is the action told in terms of pieces of film. Expressing violence by the juxtapositions of the angles, and the pieces of film assembled. In actual practice—this has nothing to do with the final result—but in the course of handling a nude girl, I actually used a nude girl. But I shot her in slow motion, and turned the camera slow as well, so that when it's projected at normal speed this slow motion is speeded up. I made her work very slowly because I wanted the breast, the bare breast to be conveniently covered with the struggling arm at the right moment. Doing it with rapidity, you could never time it right. But having her do it in slow motion, and turning the camera in slow motion, when it went through at the normal speed the arm came up quickly. And the timing was worked out that way. But that's nothing to do with the technique, that was only a means of achieving that covering up, you see.

I: More technical than style.

H: Yes, that was a technical thing. Now let's go back to talk further in terms of style, in the use of film and the juxtaposition of pieces of film. We have two kinds. We can have the pieces of film that are put together to create an idea, or the pieces of film that are put together to create an emotion. Now the bathtub scene was an emotional putting together of film . . . an expression of extreme violence. Now also in *Psycho* you had a scene where the detective was coming up the stairs. Now the audience knew that there was a menace around. A monster. So he came up the stairs and when he got to the top of the stairs, I took the camera very high, extremely high. So that he was a small figure. And the figure of the woman came out, very small, dashed at him with a knife. And the knife went out, and we're still very high, and as the knife started to come down, I cut to a big head of the man. And the knife went right across the face, and he fell back from that point on. Now the reason for going high—and here we're talking about the juxtaposition of size of image. So the big head came as a shock to the audience, and to the man himself. His surprise was expressed by the *size* of the image. But you couldn't get the emphasis of that size unless you had prepared for it by going high. In music going high would be like the tremolo of the violins and suddenly the brass goes GRRR! as it comes out with the big head expressing his shock. Now that's juxtaposition of pieces of the film to create emotion. Now we have the other type of pieces of film *which create ideas*: *Rear Window*, a very cinematic picture. But a static figure—in one position, in one room, for the whole picture. And yet this is pure cinema. I'll tell you why. Mr. Stewart is sitting looking out of the window. He observes. We register his observations on his face. We are using the visual image now. We are using the mobility of the face, the expression, as our content of the piece of film. Let's give an example of how this can vary, this technique, with whatever he is looking at: Mr. Stewart looks out. Close-up. Cut to what he sees. Let's assume it's a woman holding a baby in her arms. Cut back to him. He smiles. Mr. Stewart likes babies. He's a nice gentleman. Take out only the middle piece of film, the viewpoint. Leave the close-ups in—the look and the smile. Put a nude girl in the middle instead of the baby. Now he's a dirty old man. By the changing of one piece of film only, you change the whole idea. It's a different idea. One was a benevolent gentleman, his character

changed even with that. So this is what I mean by pure cinema. It doesn't relate to what a lot of movies are, which I call photographs of people talking. That's a different thing entirely. I'll tell you another interesting thing in the manner of style or the use of cuts . . . creative imagery . . . and what you convey to an audience by the cuts. One of the people working on the picture asked me could they lay out the sequence of the detective going up the stairs. I said, sure if you want to have a go, lay it out in a series of sketches. I happened to be home sick that day, so I said to the assistant, I said you've got the sketches, it's a hand going up the rail, it's the feet on the tread going up, it's a close-up of the man going up, and now you get feet again and these different things, and I let them shoot them. Then when the cutter put the shots together for me, I realized they couldn't be used. The whole thing was wrong. The reason it was wrong is because these cuts belonged to a furtive individual of a menacing nature. But the detective was an innocent party, therefore you wanted an innocent shot. And I threw the whole thing out. It was a wrong use of the montage. Of this type of montage. So I'm illustrating all of these to show what style is, and how you use it and for what purpose. Every piece of film that you put in the picture should have a purpose. You cannot put it together indiscriminately. It's like notes of music. They must make their point.

I: Can we get an example, say from *The Birds,* of this type of thing?

H: Yes, well, you get a different thing in *The Birds.* In *The Birds* you get a sequence, the main sequence . . . of course, you get the girl in the attic, there is a clear montage. That's the same as the scene in *Psycho* with the girl in the bathtub, the attack . . . by a series of pieces of film assembled together of all facets of the scene. Now the reaction of the people where the birds are attacking the house, and you don't see them, *there* is a matter of shots assembled together to create a panic of people who are running from what? I don't know. I can't see anything. Now I gave two kinds of shots. I gave the mother and child a dotty movement. Can't find cover. They end up in a corner. The girl retreats from nothing. So her image was an emptiness in the foreground, symbolizing nothing. And she backs up against the sofa, and starts to climb the wall, rolls around the lamp. I build her up as she goes along. Well these

images are angles chosen to express the fear of the unknown. They're not shot just without any thinking about what the intention is, you see.

I: In seeing the film I was trying to be conscious of this and it got very hard because I got involved in the story, but there was one sequence—I guess you would term it cross cutting—after Tippi Hedren has crossed the bay, and deposited the present of the birds and starts back. Then there is the sequence of her rowing across, and the car, and back and forth . . .

H: That's right, well that's her viewpoint.

I: That's her viewpoint. Now would this be termed cross cutting?

H: Ah, no, no, that's subjective treatment. Subjective treatment is the close-up of the person and what they see. You see I use it a lot. A tremendous lot of subjective treatment in film. I put the camera, as it were, I make the person in close-up and what they see. *Rear Window* is purely subjective treatment—what Jimmy Stewart sees all the time. And how he reacts to it.

I: Could we say that a strong point in your style would be this subjective treatment?

H: Subjective treatment. As against the objective. You see, the objective is the stage. Is the theater. We are audience looking at the people on the stage. We aren't with them, we aren't getting any viewpoint you see.

I: So, with this you're getting the camera within the mind of the viewer.

H: You know the young film director always says, oh, let's do a scene where the audience is the camera. That's the prime cliché of *all* clichés. Bob Montgomery did one called *Lady in the Lake.* It's quite unnecessary. You might just as well do a close-up of who it is. You know, it's a trick and there's nothing to it. You'd much better have a close-up and then what they see. Move with them—do anything you like—make them go through any experience—anything.

I: But Chabrol and Truffaut have in a sense imitated this style of yours, or learned from it.

H: Yes, they have. But after all, the greatest example of that which has been traditional, I think, in movies is the experience of a person on a roller coaster. You know when they brought that out with Cinerama, people said "Oh, my God, isn't Cinerama

wonderful? Nothing, of course, nothing like it at all!" That old roller coaster angle has been shot ever since silent films—way, way, back. I remember when they made a film years ago called *A Ride on a Runaway Train* and they put the camera up front and looked the world in the face. I can go back as far as 1912, maybe earlier, maybe 1910, when they used to have a thing in London called "Hale's Tours." And the audience paid their money and they went into a long car, like a pullman car, with rows of seats and a screen at the end. So you sat there, and all they did, they back-projected a film taken on the front of a train in Switzerland. Going through the Alps and so forth, and you sat there, and you were taken for a ride on a train. This is the same thing. This is purely subjective treatment.

I: Well, that would then be one major aspect of your style. We are also defining pretty well what is pure cinema here. What would be another aspect?

H: Let me say this to you. I put first and foremost cinematic style before content. Most people, reviewers, you know, they review pictures purely in terms of content. I don't care what the film is about. I don't even know who was in that airplane attacking Cary Grant. I don't care. So long as that audience goes through that emotion! Content is quite secondary to me.

I: Now is this a philosophical viewpoint? . . . Or is this something that just happened, like the man who makes cartoons likes to make people laugh?

H: Well, I believe this. I believe we still have in our hands the most powerful instrument, cinema, that's been known. I know of no other medium where on a given night in Japan, in Germany, in Paris, and in London and in New York, the different audiences of different nationalities can be shocked at the same moment at the same thing on that screen. I don't know of any other medium. The theater? How far does that get? It never gets to Japan. Well, by God, you go outside of a movie on The Ginza, and you will see a great big head of Hitchcock up there. Because they think so much of the director with oriental eyes! Really! Yes! But this is my point when you say what do I enjoy? I enjoy the fact that we can cause, internationally, audiences to emote. And I think this is our job.

I: As an entertainer? As a creator?

H: As an entertainer. As a creator. What is art? Art is an experience, isn't it? You know? Now the art of the talking picture, I think, belongs to the theater. You see, the only thing wrong with silent pictures was that sound never came out of the mouths. But unfortunately, the moment sound arrived, all these horrible commercial people rushed to the theater, and borrowed from the theater. And they are still doing it today. I've done it myself! They say "Will you make a film of *Dial M For Murder*"? I say O.K., all right. But I refuse to open it up like they do in the movies. I said it's nonsense. What do you do? When you take a stage play, I said? What do you call opening it up? The taxi arrives, we have a long shot of the street. The taxi stops at the front door of the apartment house. The characters get out, cross the sidewalk, go into the lobby, get into an elevator, go upstairs, walk along the corridor, open the door, and they go into a room. And there they are, on the stage again. So, you might just as well dispense with all that, and be honest and say it's a photographed stage play and all we can do is to take the audience out of the orchestra and put them on the stage with players.

I: You didn't do this completely though. In *Dial M*?

H: Yes, and I'll tell you why. Because I've seen so many stage plays go wrong through opening up, loosening it, when the very essence is the fact that the writer conceived it within a small compass.

I: But you would still treat it cinematically?

H: Within its area. If I can. As much as I can.

I: Do you design each production? Design each film in advance completely? With drawings, and . . .

H: Yes, *Psycho*, yes, to some extent with drawings, but you see *Psycho* was designed, first of all to lead an audience completely up the garden path. They thought the story was about a girl who stole $40,000. That was deliberate. And suddenly out of the blue, she is stabbed to death. Now, a lot of people complained about the excessive violence. This was purposely done, because as the film then proceeded, I reduced the violence while I was transferring it to the mind of the audience. By that first impact, so the design of the film was very clearly laid out. So that that audience, by the time we got toward the end when the girl was going over the house, wandering, they didn't particularly care who she was . . . They will yell LOOK OUT! when a burglar is going around the house. They will

still have the same fear of being caught or being attacked or what have you. So, I was transferring by establishing the violence strong in the beginning and then got less and less violent as the film went on, thus letting their minds carry. That's what the pattern of the film was. The pattern of *The Birds* was deliberately to go slow. And with an unimportant kind of relationship.

I: This has been highly criticized by some critics.

H: I deliberately made it slow.

I: You deliberately made it slow?

H: Oh, no question about it.

I: But it was still—to me, interesting.

H: But the point is, that's where the critics were wrong, you see, because the effect on an audience isn't there unless I've made them wait deliberately and gone slow.

I: This is timing?

H: This is truer timing. Well, it's just like designing composition in a painting. Or balance of colors. There is nothing accidental, there should never be anything accidental about these things. You've got to be very clear in what you are doing and why you're doing it. You know, for example, I think it was the *New Yorker* once—they don't review pictures. They don't review them, they make jokes about pictures anyway. They always have a man who's supposed not to like the movies—But they had the ridiculous effrontery to say a picture like *North by Northwest* was unconsciously funny. You know. They really did. Or, Hitchcock is doing a parody of himself. Of course, I'm doing it with the tongue in cheek. *Psycho* was the biggest joke to me. I couldn't make *Psycho* without my tongue in my cheek. If I'd been doing *Psycho* seriously, then it would have been a case history told in a documentary manner. It certainly wouldn't have been told in terms of mystery and oooooh, look out audience, here comes the bogey man! This is like telling a story to a little boy. I'ts like telling a fairy story. You tell it in hushed tones: "Ssh! and then the woman went up the stairs!" That's all I'm doing. And you've got to have a sense of humor to do this.

I: In *The Birds* then, there is really no—what you would call theme or message?

H: All you can say about *The Birds* is nature can be awful rough on you. If you play around with it. Look what uranium has done. Man dug that out of the ground. *The Birds* expresses nature and what it can do, and the dangers of nature, because there is no doubt

if the birds did decide, you know, with the millions that there are, to go for everybody's eyes, then we'd have H. G. Wells' Kingdom of the Blind on our hands.

I: I think you took advantage of a natural human trait though, that when, say uranium, or the Bund movement in the '30s, or the plague in the medieval times starts to descend upon a given group of people, they don't want to believe it. They fight against it.

H: Well, or they're helpless with it. You see, the idea of the people in the house, when the birds are attacking and not knowing what to do . . . I only had the shutter blow open and the young man try to close the shutter, to tell the audience what it was really like outside. Otherwise, I was asking too much of their imagination. So, I gave them a little sample: White shadows go for his hand . . . bloody it up. I'm saying "Audience, that's what it's really like outside." Only by the millions, not just two, as I've just shown. Now the helplessness of the people is no different in that sequence than people in an air raid with nowhere to go. Now, that's where the idea came from. I've been in raids . . . in London and the bombs are falling, and the guns are going like hell all over the place. You don't know where to go. Where can you go? Can't go down to the basement. That's kind of sissy, you know.

I: I see . . . So you're just caught.

H: You're caught! You're trapped!

I: In regard to the use of talent: Do you have any special attitude towards talent? . . . They do not dominate, in any way, your film. You are in complete control?

H: Well, first and foremost, what I look for in talent, especially when we are in the area of the purely cinematic, is the mobility of the face. In other words, expression. The register of expression. Especially in subjective treatment it's a very vital thing you see . . . The reaction . . .

I: Now let me tie this together. You are selecting talent so that they will work with one of your basic stylistic manners, that is the subjective treatment.

H: Yes. Well, you take, for example, the work that I gave to Tippi Hedren in *The Birds*, you see. Her face was used entirely to register impressions. Because the story was being told from her point of view. In other words, when after the 2,000 finches have come into the room, the mother is beginning to crack, she's not the strong woman we thought she was, and it's the girl who watches

her. The girl's expressions. You see her watching this woman and finally she says "I think I'd better stay the night, don't you?" She didn't say a word until she spoke. But she was taking all that in. Visually.

I: You got the story visually.

H: Yes, and I believe that one should at all cost try and use that face in the visual, as much as possible.

I: It's part of the subjective.

H: Yes, definitely. It's part of imagery. It's part of what our medium is. The visual image registering thought, mind . . . whatever you like to call it.

I: Do you have any attitude toward the more beautiful woman in a situation like that? Is this a more believable thing for people, or less believable—

H: Well, to me the contrast is important. In other words, Cary Grant standing in that wasteland in a business suit was more important than in a tweed jacket and slacks. See, there is a certain amount of value to be got from what one might term visual incongruity. I think, for example, the girl getting into a boat with two birds in a cage, wearing a mink coat in an outboard, is kind of ridiculous, you see. But that again is counterpointing. A visual counterpoint to what would normally happen.

I: Now I've read several criticisms of Miss Hedren's lack of mobility in the face.

H: Oh, they are wrong. They are wrong. I controlled every movement on that face.

I: Her reactions were subtle though and they were not cliché.

H: They were subtle and that was the thing that pleased me about the girl. You know, she never acted before.

I: Is this a help in this case?

H: Of course it is. She had nothing to unlearn. Better than when you have a girl who is mugging all over the place and you say "Please don't mug." I need that face to register an expression, but I only want the one.

I: Unlearned. As opposed to theatrical learning? Theatrical acting?

H: Well overacting—call it what you like. Hedren was doing purely cinematic acting of very fine shadings all of the time. Oh, I held those down. She wasn't allowed to do anything beyond what I gave her.

I: So, this was your control, not a lack, say, on her part.

H: No, my control entirely.

I: And, this is the case with every actor or actress that you use?

H: As far as possible—Yes. I say "Too much, too much." Because the image is too big. It's enormous on the screen there. And don't forget that you've got to keep it down so that you get a range. It's like the timbre of the voice. If the voice is too high, when you want it to go high, there is nowhere to go. And it's just the same way to keep the expression to a minimum.

I: And you are attempting though to shock more with the camera—with the use of the camera, rather than with the use of the person's face registering . . .

H: Well, that belongs, quite obviously, when the girl has birds flung at her, you know.

I: You get that reaction but it's a sequence more than letting her just carry it . . .

H: Yes. Yes. Oh, yes, sure.

I: . . . as she might have to on a stage.

H: Oh, no. Oh, no. No, no, no, that comes under the heading of the theater. You see there is so much theater that's crept into films, that, you know, films are reviewed on the basis of their content and not on their style.

I: Yes. Now this is a point I'm interested in. Content and style.

H: Well, let me say this as a maker of films. Maybe it's a conceit on my part. I think content belongs to the original story of the writer, whoever wrote the book, that you are adapting. That's his department.

I: That's an interesting statement. You don't feel then that the director, as such, is responsible for content, as you would select any different . . .

H: Well look, I make a film—*Dial M for Murder*—and what have I really had to do with that? Nothing. It was a stage play, written for the stage, written by an author. All I had to do there was to go in and photograph it.

I: But the success or the failure on the screen is going to be dependent upon you—not upon the writer. But . . .

H: No.

I: . . . You don't believe that?

H: No, because if that original material hadn't been there, I might . . . I could have done all kinds of things with it. It wouldn't have helped.

I: But a bad director could have ruined it.

H: Ah! Maybe! Yes, but you see, but my craft is that I handle the camera. It's second nature. It is no effort for me.

I: You see *Cinema* has taken the position, frankly, that the director is the responsible person despite the material . . .

H: Right. Well, let me give you an example.

I: . . . because he can so easily destroy it.

H: That is true. Oh, yes. Oh, yes. That is true.

I: And the excitement is going to come primarily from the visual . . . the "visual writing" rather than the paragraph writer.

H: That is true. But you see you take a film like *North by Northwest*. That's true Hitchcock. Because he wrote it. With Ernie Lehman. Ernie Lehman and I sat in the room. Ernie Lehman got noted for writing fantasy melodrama.

I: That's what you would term . . .

H: Oh sure. Cinematic nonsense if you like.

I: Now isn't it true that Truffaut is writing all of his own material—if I'm not mistaken?

H: Well, it's hard to say. You see Truffaut did *The 400 Blows*, which was biographical . . . autobiographical you know. Now I don't know how Truffaut is getting on. I saw *Jules and Jim*. Now I said "Truffaut, why did I feel that the film could have ended and then it restarted, and so forth." He said "Well, I was following a novel." I said "Truffaut, I don't think you should do that, you know, why should you follow a novel?"

I: Did you see *Jules and Jim*? Did you like that?

H: Yes. A lot of the things I liked in it very much, but I did feel that it lacked the shape. Construction to me, it's like music. You start with your allegro, your andante, and you build up. Don't forget even a symphony breaks itself into movements, but a motion picture doesn't. The nearest form to it is the short story. You've got to take it in at one sitting. A play you break into three acts. A book you pick up and put down again. A short story, you read through from beginning to end. That's why the motion picture is the nearest in its shape to the short story.

I: What was Truffaut's response to you?

H: Well, he agreed. But he said he had a reason for it. He was following a novel. I mean he even went so far as to make the photography look like period photography. And I'm not sure whether that's valid . . . any more than if they make a film called *Ivanhoe* and the castles are 20th-century ruins. And it ought not to be. Peo-

ple forget this. You see a costume picture or a picture laid in a period and it happens to be, we'll say medieval Germany or Tudor England, they go to the ruins that exist today. The settings ought to look brand new, you know. And sometimes, I feel sure that the pictures that were made in Rome, of the period—the "Ben Hur" period. The only reason they look new is because they aren't existing any more and had to be built anew. But I wouldn't be surprised if those cities did exist they wouldn't go to the Forum and fix it up a bit.

I: To go back a bit, content to you then is not necessarily a message, but a story line.

H: A story line—yes.

I: That is the thing that counts. And telling that story. Not necessarily that it conveys a political . . .

H: No.

I: . . . or a religious . . .

H: No.

I: . . . or any kind of message.

H: I don't interest myself in that. I only interest myself in the manner and style of telling the story. But as for the story itself, I don't care whether it's good or bad, you know. If it serves my purpose.

I: Would you say that Truffaut has that same opinion?

H: I don't know—I don't know whether we ever discussed it. You know he's doing a book on me.

I: I know about that. I understand you spent a couple of weeks with him.

H: Oh, we were in that room there—twenty-six hours the talk we had.

I: Twenty-six hours! What did you discuss?

H: Everything. He went through every film I'd ever made.

I: Film by film? That's got to be pretty fascinating.

H: Yes, picked out certain things, you know.

I: I'd like to ask a question here about believability, reality in your films. You are constantly trying to destroy the audience's confidence in what they think is going to happen.

H: I'm having a fight with them all of the time.

I: Yet you've got to maintain a reality, a believability at all times.

H: Oh, at all times. As authentic as you can possibly be, because you're dealing with fantasy. When you tell that little boy the story

on your knee, whether it's Red Riding Hood, you've got to make it sound real.

I: Now, this would then be a part of your style, your effort in this area. Is it detail?

H: Oh—the utmost—When I went to Bodega Bay, to shoot *The Birds*, I had *every* school child photographed in the area and *every* living person photographed, so that there would be no mistake in the wardrobe. And had the characters photographed. And went to the place, the location before writing any script.

I: Was the area—the bay and the road around it . . . to that house . . .

H: Exactly the same—that house was a derelict farm.

I: Did that give you the idea for—

H: Oh yes, of course, the whole thing was based on the geography. That house was a derelict farm, we built it up again.

I: Let me get that on tape—The geography gave you the idea of her crossing in the boat while he's racing in the car. And of course that built up to the sequence where the birds gather . . . and you had the audience completely off balance by that time.

H: Yes, that's right—that's right.

I: They were involved in her subjective relationship with him.

H: In light and very inconsequential comedy—making nothing much of it. Then BOOM!

I: Now there have been a great many things said about symbolism within your films. One interview discussed Tippi Hedren as symbolical of . . .

H: Well, she represents complacency—Smug complacency, and too many people are complacent today. You know they're smug and they don't realize what catastrophe . . .

I: That is a symbol as such—the personality of Tippi. Now there was also a comparison of her buying birds in a bird shop. Love birds caged up and then having her caged in the telephone booth again. So it is definitely in your mind . . . intended as symbolism . . .

H: Oh, definitely—the telephone booth was the bird surrounded by humans. The roles were reversed.

I: A complete reversal of the roles. Now, in the sequence, when they finally come upon the man at the farm—that is the man that the birds have killed. Just discussing the technical process there, what did the camera do to give us the . . .

H: It jumped in—it was a staccato movement, you see.

I: Ah, yes, and very quick so you didn't really know whether you saw it all or not.

H: Well, I did it for several reasons. I wanted a change from the zooming in, but I wanted to be prepared for censorship problems. If I ran into censorship anywhere—you, like so, you can tape it out you see. And another item interesting about that moment, I never show the woman's reaction to it. I cut to the shoulder.

I: Her shoulder?

H: Going out behind the door. I never show her face. I knew I couldn't. I knew very well I could never get an expression strong enough.

I: So you let it stay in the audience's mind.

H: Then I come down the corridor in silhouette. Not until she got to the man—she was inarticulate—couldn't express it. And then I made the truck carry on for her. The whizzing truck and the cloud of dust.

I: This is a visual thing again. We've got no dialogue here really.

H: No, and the speed of that truck expresses the anguish of the woman, and the dust that it creates. Because when I drove the truck in, I had made it go much slower and no dust—we watered it down. I watered all the road down when the truck went in.

I: I can see here now where you are designing these things in advance, you can premeditate these things. Do you use any improvisation in your actors at all?

H: No, not much.

I: You let them give you a picture as such . . .

H: No, you know, if we are doing a dialogue scene or a conversation scene, I let the actors see how . . . I may ask them, Does he feel comfortable here? What do you like to do? You know. But I mustn't—I don't let them get out of hand, you know. I do it as a kindness toward them.

I: I've heard a lot of comments about your comments about actors.

H: Actors are cattle. Children. They are. They're all right, I get along all right with them.

I: Well, they seem to have a great respect for you.

H: Well, I don't direct them on the stage. I don't believe in that, you know. I discuss the thing in the dressing room. They're artists . . . they can go in and do their scene . . . I more or less tell them what points they're making, storywise or cinematically.

I: Much as we are discussing here, so that they know what it is that . . .

H: They know what part of the film this little piece is going to be. I don't care . . . to tell them the whole thing . . . why they are doing this and what contribution it makes toward the whole.

I: Have you ever had to fire an actor because he or she wouldn't cooperate?

H: Well—Oh yes, I wouldn't tolerate for a minute anything like that. As a matter of fact, I ran into it once with an actor when I wanted him to look up. He said, well I don't know whether I would. I said, well you've got to look up—I need the look. 'Cause I want to show what you see.

I: Are most actresses and actors aware of how much control a camera has over their total effect?

H: I make them aware of it—Yeah—sure.

I: Because in discussing it with talent, they don't seem to be aware of . . .

H: They don't. In the most they don't. They just perform.

I: The way that you move the camera could completely destroy . . .

H: They're not conscious even of the size of the image . . .

I: They are not.

H: No. They just do their stuff and go home at 6 o'clock.

I: Well, let's see here. How are we on time?

H: What time do you have now?

I: About five after four.

H: Oh, you're right, then I must stop! I've got a four o'clock game of chess!

Hitchcock Talks About Lights, Camera, Action

An Interview with Herb A. Lightman

What factors are involved in your decision to employ a specific style of photography to realize a particular script in visual terms? For example, what led you to adopt the "reflected light" approach to filming Torn Curtain?

Away from here one often hears complaints about what is called "Hollywood Gloss." When we were preparing to film *Torn Curtain*, I began casting about for a photographic style that would help us tell the story in a more realistic, not so "glossy" way. Actually, I've felt for a long time that our color films were being photographed in almost the same manner as black-and-white films. I believe there is a hangover from one to the other, especially when it comes to separating the image from the background.

What do you believe are the reasons for this?

To answer that, one must delve a bit into the history of lighting for the cinema. Back in 1919 and 1920, or even further back than that, long before incandescent lights ever came, we used to light from the floor with Klieg arc lights and our general lighting came from banks of mercury vapor lamps. We used in Europe a particular lamp called a "swan neck" which had a diagonal bank of lamps mounted atop a vertical bank. When incandescent light was introduced, the lamp units were used, at first, on the floor, and then almost all lighting left the floor and went up on the rail everywhere.