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## REFERENCES

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- 1 Alfred Hitchcock was not just a film director. He was the *auteur par excellence*, a unique artist with a distinct voice and a distinct brand, whose life and work has fascinated scholars and audiences alike. The countless essays, books, and anthologies written about him and his work attest to just that. His influence is lasting, as his films consistently inform the curriculum of many film programs, and his name has become synonymous with suspense. As the legendary film producer David O. Selznick admitted, "Hitchcock has practically come into the language as not merely a name but an adjective" (5). With such a legacy it's not surprising that film scholars continue to expand on the already vast research, adding different perspectives and analyses.

Jan Olsson's book *Hitchcock à la Carte* is part of this great effort offering a unique perspective on the subject, as it focuses on Hitchcock's television work that has not received as much scholarly attention as his film one. Olsson proposes to examine the relationship between Hitchcock's television work, *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* (1955-1962) and *The Alfred Hitchcock Hour* (1962-1965), and the particular brand of himself as an artist that Hitchcock promoted. These ten "television" years are crucial since Hitchcock fronted the franchise, becoming a star himself as a result. As Olsson writes, "television turned Hitchcock into a star, and the trappings of television marketing shaped his public performance all the way to his last film" (2). Hitchcock gained immense visibility in these years, his iconic greeting at the beginning of each show ("Good Evening") becoming a cultural phenomenon. His

efforts to establish his star persona, which really begin in the 1930s when he moved from the UK to Hollywood, were achieved here. He performed "Hitchcock" and in this brand-building endeavour he became a sensation.

So what was this brand that Hitchcock crafted and promoted with such mastery? Olsson argues throughout the book that Hitchcock's brand was tied up to his eating habits and overweight body. As Hitchcock teased, "An artistic murder invariably leaves one with a good appetite" (97). Food would become a recurring theme in his work (both film and television), and his weight would become his trademark as he paraded and insulted it across the media.

Olsson notes that from the 1930s when Hitchcock arrived in the US, he made it his mission "to entertain journalists while eating and turn his culinary propensities into a prime selling point for his creative persona" (13). Both his gastronomic adventures and his voluminous body would become the centre of his press duties. He would meet with journalists at restaurants, eating his favourite meal-steak followed by ice cream. And to the question how would you choose to be murdered he would reply: "Well, there are many nice ways: Eating is a good one" (98). He played up his physique and his appetite and the press would become mesmerized by both his voracious appetite and sizeable ego. Later on even his diets would become a matter of publicity-only proteins, no starches. Olsson rightly concludes that, "this modus operandi was obviously slyly calculated for marketing and for building a brand around an aberrant body that inspired an endless string of corporeal wit" (22).

Olsson's study of the relationship between Hitchcock and the press is meticulous, as he thoroughly researches the media content of the time, noting countless instances where Hitchcock's dietary habits and weight were used for promotion. For instance, he includes a delightful Hedda Hopper report from the *LA Times* of a behind the scenes moment from the movie *Sabotage* (1936): "Alfred Hitchcock loves to watch surprise on other people's faces. Well, the expression on his was funny when the chair on the set collapsed beneath his weight. He huffed, and finally, getting to his feet, yelled: 'Sabotage'" (23). For Olsson in the marketing of his work "Hitchcock served up his own body...formed into a discursive package, as an open-ended project elaborated on by commentators, himself included, for decades, and most prominently in the television show" (37). Hitchcock's body would be paraded as grotesque and ridiculous, his weight always the butt of the joke at an age when puritan ideals of self-discipline had elevated dieting to the be-all and end-all of modern life.

In the main part of his book Olsson studies in good detail the two television shows and their marketing, offering an overview of the main themes of food and macabre humour that Hitchcock excelled in. This is a thorough analysis, as Olsson looks at the episodes themselves, the interviews, the media promotion, the photo essays, and exposés.

Although the episodes would have different directors, writers and performers, Hitchcock's appearance in the beginning and end of each episode would anchor the television programs and would receive the most attention. During this hostile period for canned television his hosting would receive immense critical praise and this allowed Hitchcock to continue building and establishing his brand.

Although the day to day production of the television show was the charge of others, Olsson notes how Hitchcock's authority shines through, "if nothing else, Hitchcock's on-screen appearance stretched the Hitchcockian creative presence and voice beyond the prologue to encompass, infiltrate, and color all aspects of the show, perhaps even shifting the distinction between paratext and text proper" (p. 143). For instance, many of his film stars would appear in television episodes as well, such as Jean Fontaine, Vera Miles, and Peter Lorre. Hitchcock claimed "Because there is no time to really develop character in a half hour, casting becomes the substitute for character" (p. 159). He would then trust the audience to make these necessary connections, understand his intertextual games, and consequently see the episodes as an extension of his work.

In Olsson's study two things emerge as crucial in the performance of the Hitchcock persona in the television episodes. First, his supposed conflict with the sponsors of his programs. The television sponsors were often made fun of, with Hitchcock "posing as the suffering artist in cahoots with his fellow victims, the audience" (78). In this way Hitchcock would be seen as the mistreated artist, his prestige used and abused by the powers of the television industry. Second, his performed Englishness. Hitchcock would often exaggerate his status as an outlander, and would often compare his two countries. He would argue that British murder was domestic, served in the privacy of the home and garnished with politeness, whereas US murder was unoriginal and lacked charm. Or, he would note how divorce in the US was easy but in the UK difficult, and as a result the unhappily married Brits would consider murder a viable option. So the domestic space would become murder-central in the episodes, "the prime source of inspiration for a Hollywood television series produced by an expatriate Londoner turned American" (82). And Hitchcock as the host would perform this Englishness by dressing up as a gentleman, a dandy really, neat and proper—a visual contrast to his unruly, overweight body. Therefore, his brand was reinforced this way, his artistic status solidified through his fight with the sponsors, and his distinctiveness emphasised by his nationality.

Hitchcock would become a logo attached to his work. For Olsson this is also the function of both the Hitchcock cameos at the beginning of all his films, and the surrogates or proxies he used throughout his work. Olsson finds that "In this sense Hitchcock is both a recognizable marketing body or logo attached to the work and a figurative anchor for its many processes of meaning. In the meaning game he can be actually

spotted; inferred; or merely posited figuratively, thematically, or narratively" (119). In his cameos especially, Hitchcock never speaks—it is only his bodily presence. His authority over the text would be absolute, his body becoming his artistic signature. That he is the "presiding spirit" of his films would be then reinforced by the use of surrogates, for example, Charles Laughton in *Jamaica Inn* (1939) or Cary Grant in *Notorious* (1946).

There are also two very good interludes in Olsson's book, which provide detailed analyses of two *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* episodes, further linking Hitchcock's marketing to the narratives he favoured. For example, in the episode "Speciality of the House" (1959) an English food connoisseur gains entry to the exclusive kitchen of Spirro's only to find himself dead, marinated, and served as lamb armistan. For Olsson this brand of humour, food, and crime would become the core brand traits, promoted both in and out of Hitchcock's work.

Olsson carefully (co-)credits Hitchcock's writer Jimmy Allardice with the success of this effort, since he was chiefly responsible for writing Hitchcock's prologues and epilogues in the shows. Allardice himself noted, "With a comic like Hitch...I have three things to bounce the humor from—his disdain for the commercials, his weight, and his sense of the macabre" (74-5). And this credit is definitely important, as the focus on Hitchcock as persona and auteur often disregards the valuable contributions of his collaborators. In this true partnership between Hitchcock and Allardice, Olsson notes the "low key absurdist wit...delivered in a wily, mischievous British drawl" (77). In many ways Allardice crafted the Hitchcock persona, and Hitchcock performed it. For instance, he wrote for Hitchcock this memorable quote during the promotion of *Psycho* (1960): "Surely you do not have your meat course after your dessert at dinner. You will therefore understand why we are so insistent that you enjoy *Psycho* from start to finish, exactly as we intended that it be served" (187).

Olsson also considers in good detail the role of Hitchcock's daughter, Pat. Pat Hitchcock began her career as an actress in his films - *Stage Fright* (1950), *Strangers on a Train* (1951), and *Psycho*. Olsson suggests that she too functioned as a surrogate for Hitchcock in the films and episodes—perhaps the most obvious and proximate. For Olsson the public side of their relationship is certainly complex, as Hitchcock seemed to treat her in a particularly nasty way. In one episode of *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* (in the only romantic role he allowed her), her fiancé is murdered by a young man who is in love with her, just one day after their engagement. This has been interpreted as the father/auteur punishing her, because Pat became an actress, because she got married and left their home, because she became a sexually active woman. Olsson also notes the infamous behind the scenes story from *Strangers on a Train*, when Pat and her escort boarded the Ferris wheel for a ride, and Hitchcock ordered the ride to stop with them midair, and turned off the lights. He apparently left them there for two hours.

Despite all that, Pat Hitchcock was the editor of the *Alfred Hitchcock Mystery Magazine*, and in charge of his fan club—and of course after his death she would become the custodian of his legacy: “Unwavering in her loyalty to the brand, she never steered from the course of promoting the notion of the Hitchcockian that she also embodied in chubby allegiance with the Hitchcock figures and their swath of bizarre practices” (139). She would also author a book on her mother’s contributions to Hitchcock’s work, and Olsson is quick to note that her book ends with a chapter on food and Alma Hitchcock’s recipes.

Olsson’s study succeeds in noting the many different connections between Hitchcock’s brand image and television work. All discussion about the franchise (from its marketing to its inevitable demise) revolves around Hitchcock’s brand image and successfully attempts to make sense of the media content of the time in relation to Hitchcock’s work and brand building efforts. Olsson understands Hitchcock as a “Salvador Dali” or an “Andy Warho,” an artistic identity that goes “beyond the oeuvre; it is a convoluted bricolage of art, commerce, marketing, and celebrity indicative of twentieth-century media culture at large” (210). Perhaps the most telling story of how Hitchcock’s art was tied up to his particular brand of food and weight comes from the speech François Truffaut gave at the AFI dinner of 1979 and from which Olsson includes this: “When I begun to direct films, I thought Monsieur Hitchcock was fantastique, maybe because he weighted more than 200lbs. Therefore I tried to eat more and more. I gained 20lbs, but it obviously didn’t work. I knew I had to find other ways to touch the proportions of his genius, so I asked Monsieur Hitchcock to give me an interview of 50 hours and to reveal all his secrets. The reason was a book, actually it was like a cookbook, full of recipes for making film” (207-8). It seems that Hitchcock’s brand of overweight artistic genius was indeed successfully established both in the industry and in history.

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