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‘Trailing Off’ references the way that the film trailer was originally intended; To be shown at the end of the feature length. This practice was short lived as patrons tended to leave the theatre when the credit’s rolled.

Trailing Off performs the trailer as an offering. Exploring unpaid labour and self promotion in relation to the film trailer and to artists living and working in London.

Trailing Off will take place on the 21st of October 2016 at the Institute of Contemporary Art, London in cinema 1, screening film trailers and featuring a live trailer.
The Universe proceeds at an equal rate, out of a Future, through a Present and into a Past, 'Eric Rohmer.

Hierarchal structures are dismantled to examine themes of power, gender and success. There is a possibility that the images could return to their original state, cycling over and over again, or perhaps not. 'C' brings us, almost, back to the beginning again.
Voiceover

Character: The Imperial Negotiator

………………………………………………………………………………

(Approx.. 00:57 secs)

Fade into the world premier and the debut of the understudy. The extras quick-change, forming rows from left to right in order of height, and then shifting to clusters of narrative, set against the backdrop of stock shots. Characters with fake titles descend the staircases, clutching their critical accolades. They move through the curtain call towards the money shot.

thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you

13 Principles form a tableau in the center, like an interlude to the action shouting ‘coming soon! ’ walk-on’s are presented with flowers in the midst of the golden hour which is replayed over and over again. They re form into lines as the prequel unfolds, creating a blackout.
Cast

The Daughter       Inês Pinheiro
Her Sister         Steff D’arcy
A cousin of The Empress       Jermaine Ampomah
Contessa       Phoebe Naughton
Heroine       Lily Patten
An acquaintance of the Duchess       Hannah Burton
The Companion of the Marquess       Kristian Vistrup Madsen
Starlet’s       Edward Curtis
                Jim Bicknell- Knight
                Orl Benn
The Imperial Negotiator       Mark Lewis

Crew

Directed by      Saskia Dixie
Co- Produced by      Roxanne Farahmand
in partnership with Dixieland 2.0
Edited by       Cade Featherstone
Director of Photography        Maxwell Tomlinson
Choreography        Oliver Wraith
Set Design       Danny Hyland
Assistant to the Set Designer       Maria Killick
Costume       Charlotte Roberts
Wardrobe Assistants       Aidan Zamiri
                Georgia Medley
                Gabriel Harvey
Makeup       Jessica Taylor
Makeup Assistants  Ibi Molnar  
Molly Nicholas 
Elena B  

Hair  Shiori Takahashi  

Hair Assistants  Kana Hosomi  
Waka Adachi  

Lighting Technicians  Rory Cole  
Andrew Moores  

On set Assistance  Rebecca Murray  

Catering  James Kirkpatrick  

With Special Thanks to OneRedEye Studio
Tea for breathing

Lungwort/lobaria pulmonaria
Marigold/calendula
Sage/salvia
Camomile/chamomilla

Brew for 4 - 6 minutes
I can’t tell whether it’s a police helicopter or a media one.  
My knowledge of German aircraft and the particularities of their design is sadly lacking.

It sounds like the dry hum of a house fly hovering sort of right there, you know?  
It looks like a fly.  
It irritates me like a fly.

I wonder if from its P.O.V. we are a swarm, or maybe an infection.  
A cluster of white blisters on a massive grotty face.

Beneath the surface there is a necrotic upside down world à la Stranger Things, with floating little scabby bits and oily pools. You have to dive headfirst to get through the creases in the dirt. I will not be doing this as I have a fear of going headfirst into anything. I’m tentative. I dip my toe.

I’m really trying to feel radical while wearing a big nappy and boiler suit but the novelty is wearing off now, and the sweat and dust is making my thighs chafe painfully. I didn’t think it would be like this. Where the fuck are the police?

Maybe the fly knows  
maybe it knows what is coming.  
It can probably tell the future.

I need another wee

HEY! There is a big rain cloud I don’t like the look of…

She is clambering up the big metal skeleton.  
Some people are so fearless.  
There are bodies so high up that when I look to them to world spins and I have to hold the safety rail.

It’s going to rain soon

A man has lost his kids somewhere on the machine.

I’m scared its going to rain and will make the metal slippery and someone will fall hundreds of feet to the ground and break all their bones and it will make a horrible crunch.

Then the flies will swarm
Brown Queers developed out of a need to create a social document of current modes of identity through multiple personas and styles. The protagonists of Brown Queers explore such modes through their conscious decision to be gender fluid and non-binary. For the past eight months, I have been following Krishna Istha, Katy Jalili and Natasha Lall, all individuals who identify as queer and brown. Beyond this, complexities related to nationality, race, gender and sexuality play out through their bodies and in the different contexts in which they live and work: the film thus acts as a record of these individuals in contemporary Britain. Brown Queers poses questions that come out of the layered states of being that embody fluidity, “browness” and “queerness”.

I have authored the work, but it is very much a conversation about presenting and framing the individual. During shoots, an idea is posed and the result is a docu-fiction, located between the verité of Jean Rouch’s Chronique d’un été [Chronicle of a Summer] (1961) and the illusion of realism in highly stylised films such as Lachapelle’s Rize (2005). Thus far, locations have been varied, following each subject at home, in tattoo parlours, in clubs or performing on stage. The plan is to “voice” thoughts so that their bodies speak, rather than via direct conversation to camera, in order to offer a multiplicity of voices, a plural body, where three individuals contribute to a wider monologue that speaks for many experiencing the unknown territory of identity as identities.

Just as Rouch and sociologist Edgar Morin question whether or not it is possible to act sincerely in front of a camera. I wish to complicate the framing of the individual through thought, as monologues toy with the conscious fictionalising of self through costume, make-up and the body politic.

The sequence in the teaser trailer was shot at Central London bar Sketch, a space very much part of the establishment and thus embodying privilege. I wanted the brown queers to be visible within the stylised pink décor, thereby intentionally playing with the stereotypically gendered colour scheme for girls or women. Under the guidance of expert trans hair and make-up beauty stylist Umber Ghauri, Krishna, Katy and Natasha transform into their chosen identities against the tableaux-vivant of Sketch’s main dining room.

As a person of colour and a queer filmmaker, the significance of this project is key to my work both personally and politically. I am shooting a comprehensive pilot (short film) that the BFI are interested in including in their upcoming South Asian Britain season in September 2016. If the film is shown here, I want it to come up against the institutional framing of Asians that so often entrenches their contribution to society within stereotype and well-established tropes. The long-term plans for the project might include a feature-length film.

Michelle Williams Gamaker (U.K, 1979) is an international moving image artist and researcher integrating performance through documentary and fiction modes to focus on the experience of individuals who either by their own will or not have been exiled or marginalised in society. Her current projects are The Fruit is There to be Eaten, a post-colonial, post-romantic exploration of British directors Powell & Pressburger's female protagonists from Black Narcissus (1947) and the docu-fiction Brown Queers, which explores the multiplicities of identity for Queer people of colour who don’t wish to conform to sexuality, gender, race or class binaries. Her feature film Violet Culbo is in development with Film London (FLAMIN) and The Cross-Channel film Lab, an Anglo-European initiative.
Sequel to Alfred Hitchcock’s Frenzy (set in London).

(Girl) gets a bad taste in her mouth so sticks out her tongue to catch water on it, its a very likeable action. I can see why she was cast, we can all see why. She’s twirling, twirling for me and you and she’s feeling it! Its like this scene is never going to end spinning spinning spinning and just when you think she must be getting nauseous now, you realise that the exterior is melting, rushing verdant from below! So reciprocal to her warm gestures!

Nature, vivacity, and life!

Springtime, freshness, and hope!

Youth and inexperience!

And i’m really starting to get sick of her. And of the colour green. And my throats a little dry, little tickle, not nice, repressing a cough, getting really warm actually. You can hear them, gurgling pangs, you know when you’ve got an ache so bad you can hear it? In my legs they are. In my little legsies. The plentitude of the music is kind of enough to drown it out, still can feel your arm though, but only because mine’s a bit achy now. Have been tensing it tight too long. What you kind of just do when in a public row, even though we have definitely touched before. Now I’m stuck in this ‘rested’ flex because if I slip down you will feel it and stop watching the film. I envy the back of that head two rows in front, I see your neck, loose as anything slipping down into your coke with ice. Drop my warm cheeks into my collar bone, three folds assembling under my chin, hot flesh, layered. And I see your neck loose as anything…an elongated sucking mouthpart that is typically tubular - flexible, (in some worms) an extensible tubular sucking organ….And I see your neck, loose as anything. Anagrams for this scene or scenario - Just and because we find a heterosexual couple on a date in the cinema) also known as

S U S P E C T L E I S U R E.


GREEN TIME, basically: It was dead today, so my supervisor gave me some green time, Unpaid, BUT unexpected leisure time. Not suspect leisure, approved cinema time you might say, coffee with a friend time. A really long cigarette break you take without a lighter and no the guy you’ve just borrowed a light from has gone now and who knows when the next one will come again so you relight a new one off of your old one and keep doing this cyclically till you come to the end of your really long cigarette break that you are taking- even though your throat is burning and your tongue feels furry and if your mother saw you she’d curse you. You come to the near end of one and start another. Like Buddy Ebsen the original Tin Man, who nearly died from inhaling the aluminium dust makeup. Jack Haley took his place onward t’ward the emerald city set, aluminium paste to his skin, just itch inducing. No one dies from an itch.  Like, Sipping water from a vintage pewter metalware, or the day before a burst of flu. full bodied, deep boned vibratory aches. An itchy tongue, I can get over, no one dies from an itch.

Home remedies when suffering from an itchy tongue, Or burning mouth syndrome, an itchy tongue is one of the accompanying symptoms. What you should not do is scratch, scratching an itchy tongue can only provide temporary relief. You scratch my tongue, I’ll scratch yours. And it is true that the green skin of the Wicked Witch of the West was a copper based make-up that could be fatal if ingested, leading Hamilton to subsist on a mostly liquid diet while on set. Her face retained a green tinge weeks after shooting concluded. And its true that If you drink a can of coke whilst coming to the end of a session of vomiting at least your bile will taste nice.
The Ah Bisto! moment of rendering the invisible visible.

The smell of the slop bucket, the grip of the farmhand, the popcorn spilling from the bucket into the pig pen.
Someone To Watch Over Me, 2016

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x6D8PAGeIN8 dorothy to technicolor
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Opoh-S8A83E one kid colour
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3P8q_dCU3RI to colour illusion
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xcAA_c-1X7U click heels together
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3rd8q-9z5g houdini escape
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Xni7kvDfDg popcorn making
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r6cF5lyqEo dorothy pig pen
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=je6s6FTAnIU pig eating slop
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IEk9NteCwE4 dorothy falling again
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B2jJyafvgc popcorn cauldron
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uvVpapcCtQ scarface school play
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zd2smfRsaShg school play oz song
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H2p7pslV5ZOE chewing gum trick
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=COIRwZ0EUr0 chewing gum 2 yo
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Bm3UwFm5Gc amy winehouse sleeping
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z0UEuuYuND0 david b sleeping
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jaxZq8z_bQ david b sleeping more
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QFvVg_vxSmo dorothy cyclone
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=72R0n5vhFIE cyclone test
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uJF6Xv1mkOQ cyclone reenactment
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ahpWNZhalFU judy garland sleep song
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SiJbhoA8zw poppies sleep
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s0_UreaQ3Y88 tilda in box
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KbNDx2pdew houdini
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zfjohrY6KO4 kid doing straitjacket
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cmsa5c8hjnJ kids chew gum
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=57hJn-nkKSA john smith
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MrDuqik4ZDA willy wonka
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gN4ktADWK28 charlie choc
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R65P3km4Uw balloon pop
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6bFTVi0hHs chewing gum song
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Bm3UwFm5Gc amy winehouse sleeping
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dYILHu10O4Q miranda sings gum
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LPAXKZUT358 houdini seance
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7uecPHptgLQ fortune fish again
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xcAA_c-1X7U click heels together
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FrQPs8illY amy facewarp
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z4n2TsvMASy fresco ruined
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XuPuVEpjtjc fresco report
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7p8H0vUxU8 miranda sings ouija
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LPAXKZU358 houdini seance again
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SkQpdf8IP4 marilyn reenactment II
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3U1yLSgyGM marilyn reenactment III
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sh_D9WW_DbYQ kid chewing gum
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rggZ5ZBcxv8 girl chewing gum
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Bm3UwFm5Gc amy winehouse sleeping
Just remember the three-second-rule:
You can always pick it up and eat it off the ground.
In early 1964, prior to the US release of Alfred Hitchcock’s *Marnie*, Universal Pictures was in a quandary. While they had a film that, on paper, promised success given its star performers and director, they felt nervous about how local audiences might receive their product. Given that it is a film mixing cod-Freudian melodrama, adult themes and several indulgent subplots, their twitchiness seemed justified. The decision was taken that the marketing of the film would be to play to its strengths: in spite of its source material and its leading man, this was an American film that needed a traditional, no-nonsense approach to selling.

But while London-born Hitchcock had cut his teeth in British silent film and in the post-war period worked as a narrative filmmaker squarely in the Griersonian tradition of stylised social realist documentary, it was his cinematic preoccupations – indeed those obsessions *Cahiers du Cinema* used to label him as an *auteur* labouring under the Hollywood yoke – that had increasingly come to dominate his work on the sunnier side of the Atlantic.¹

This cultural collision came to bear with *Marnie* just as Hitchcock was at the height of his powers. The film came on the back of a massively successful decade-long run that had taken in *Rear Window* (1954), *The Trouble with Harry* (1955), *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1956), *The Wrong Man* (1956), *Vertigo* (1958), *North by Northwest* (1959), *Psycho* (1960) and *The Birds* (1963). But while Hitchcock had reached a position of near infallibility in the eyes of the executives, 1964 marked for Hitchcock a perfect storm of artistic freedom and personal expression. The result was the excessive style evident in *Marnie* – and a confused marketing campaign that betrayed its producers’ befuddlement at quite how to categorise the film. This is apparent nowhere more so than in its trailer, produced in response to Hitchcock’s

¹ This canonisation did not seem to sit well with everyone. An *Evening News* critic of the time asked: ‘Has high-brow praise in *Les Cahier du Cinéma* [sic] gone to his head?’ (in Moral, 2006, 164)
treatment of the Winston Graham novel of the same name and designed to paper over the cracks of the studio’s concerns.²

The film tells the story of Marnie (Tippi Hedren), a secretary and small-time thief whose *modus operandi* is to change her identity after each robbery. While on the run she meets Mark Rutland (Sean Connery), a new employer who recognises her from a previous crime but doesn’t reveal himself or turn her in, preferring to take her back to Philadelphia, blackmailing her into marriage in return for his silence. On their honeymoon cruise Marnie refuses to make love to Mark; he rapes her. After he thwarts a suicide attempt, Mark discovers that Marnie suffers from debilitating neurosis, her kleptomania a form of compensation for her sexual difficulties. When Mark learns that she has lied in claiming to be an orphan, he hires a detective, who locates the girl’s mother in Baltimore. Determined to discover the key to her deep-seated trauma, he forces his wife to accompany him to her home town, where he will try to pry from her mother the secret of her childhood. (Scott & Truffaut, 1985, 302)

The trailer for *Marnie* begins with a shot of Hitchcock squatting atop a camera crane. It is immediately apparent that the studio has decided to use their publicity-friendly helmer as the *de facto* narrator of the clip following similarly successful methods employed in the marketing of *Psycho* and *The Birds*. As the crane descends, Bernard Herrmann’s lush instrumentation accompanies Hitchcock’s straight-to-camera introduction, his British accent clipped at the edges by two decades of Californian sun.

“How do you do?” he asks, “*I am Alfred Hitchcock and I’d like to tell you about my latest motion picture, Marnie, which will be coming to this theatre soon.*” Then, flush with self-confidence and unapologetic to the point of tactlessness, without skipping a beat he continues: “*Marnie is a very difficult film to classify. It is not Psycho. Nor do we have a horde of birds flapping about pecking at people willy-nilly.*” In just two sentences, Hitchcock has succeeded in debunking his own body of

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² Posters used a similar marketing approach, some carrying the somewhat befuddling description of “Suspenseful Sex Mystery”, perhaps hoping to catch three different locked-down audiences.
work by reducing two of his previous films to mere fluff, and making a mockery of
film publicity by wantonly making the very trailer in which he appears instantly
redundant.

And then: “We do have two very interesting human specimens: a man and a
woman. One might call Marnie a ‘sex-mystery’. That is, if one used such words. But
it is more than that. Perhaps the best way to tell you about the picture is to show
you a few scenes.” The planting of the term ‘sex-mystery’ in the minds of 1960s
audiences cannot be underestimated, painting the scenes that follow with the brush
of a genre not yet imagined – and attempting to apply a new taxonomy to a well-worn
marketing product. By reclassifying, Hitchcock declassifies.

“This is Mark, coming down the stairs of his family home outside
Philadelphia,” Hitchcock continues somewhat unhelpfully over images of what he
describes: Sean Connery descending a staircase. “He is a thoughtful man, dark and
brooding,” the director explains, as Connery looks at the camera in his churlish,
insoicant way: it is footage shot explicitly for the trailer. “He is, in a sense, a
hunter,” Hitchcock says as Connery seems to half-nod, earning every nickel of his
hefty wage as something to be looked at, a tool for selling, a USP.

“And this is what he is hunting.” Cue a pair of similarly commodified legs, the
kind of legs Hitchcock made his province, in a grey pencil skirt descending a more
humble staircase. “Marnie – seeing her in her mother’s modest house, one wonders
how two such different people could cross paths.” Tippi Hedren is revealed,
Hitchcock’s objectified ‘this’, similarly breaking the fourth wall with arms folded, an
air of dilettantish defiance in her crossed arms and self-satisfied smile. “It was
certainly not Marnie’s idea.”

We cut to Marnie in less glamorous guise stealing wads of cash from an office
safe. “Marnie was going about her own business like any normal girl,” Hitchcock
smirks, now painfully wry and self-deprecating in the endless understanding of his
Then back to Sean Connery’s patriarchal Mark Rutland, glowering at Marnie from behind his desk, a storm crashing behind his expensive drapes. “Suddenly into this colourful life comes Mark.” Followed by Marnie’s irrational reaction to a little bit of lightning, and the natural conclusion of the man who must possess his female partner: “At first, he didn’t know what to make of Marnie.”

Marnie screams, a Hitchcockian blonde gleefully in peril and torment. “She does seem a rather excitable type. What would account for this strange behaviour?” And Hitchcock reveals, no doubt with every intention, that his leading man’s misogyny is very much a projection of his own. Given that his attraction to the source material was its psycho-sexual complexity, it is an admission made once more with the cover of crude wit: “Has she just realised that she forgot her umbrella?”

The lightning flashes red now, a moment of potentially alienating and excessive style usually not included in a trailer.

“The colours! Stop the colours!” Marnie wails. Is she in character, speaking to the voices in her head? Or is she despairing at Hitchcock’s inner lighting designer: this is much more mise-en-scène than the average girl can take, particularly one contracted to work with a master of montage.

Mark: “What colours?”

The voice of Hitchcock returns like that of a clinical psychologist changing tack in an unproductive therapy session – “Marnie’s trouble goes deeper than that.” – before an entire tree crashes through an Georgian windowpane, sending wood, fake glass and suspension of disbelief scattering across the Persian rug. “Far deeper.”

The inevitable sophomoric relationship with sex – one that Hitchcock usually kept to visual arrangements, perhaps most notably in North by Northwest’s final shot of a phallic train entering a tunnel – is here expressed orally: “And this is the problem which Mark must probe.”

“But first,” the director continues as Mark kisses Marnie’s forehead, “something must be done to calm this girl.” Sean’s lips move down Tippi’s face,
searching for saliva. Robert Burks’s camera is in extreme close-up. “Our hero applies mouth-to-mouth resuscitation.”

Then, just as their lips meet, Hitchcock pulls his thoughts out of his pants and inside his jacket. Is he reaching for an imaginary gun? If nothing else, he is a director who understands his market. “But that may give you the impression that this picture is all sex and no mystery. Not so at all.”

The scene cuts to a racetrack, where a man has recognised the shapeshifting criminal Marnie and threatens her with discovery. “Here, for example, Marnie is speaking to... uh... I’m not sure who, actually. But he is a man from her past, a past she seems to be denying.”

Enough of that. Marnie and Mark are kissing once more. Hitchcock: “Oh dear, they’re at it again. Let me assure you that this is all in the spirit of investigation.” The scene now cuts to Marnie and Mark, driving. “And this? Here is further proof that Marnie is a talking picture.” Is Hitchcock giving a nod to his days in the silent screen, or is he hinting that his knuckle-dragging audience is dumb enough to be warned off the film for fear that it is all style and no substance? It is a moment of astonishingly adroit condescension.

Marnie: “You don’t love me. I’m just something you’ve caught. You think I’m some kind of animal you’ve trapped.”

Mark (Connery with the Moneypenny face): “That’s right, you are. And I’ve caught something really wild this time, haven’t I? I’ve tracked you and caught you and by God I’m going to keep you.”

Hitchcock returns, half embarrassed – “That should be quite enough. If you wish to hear more you will have to buy a ticket.” – and over the notorious rape scene exclaims: “As for which one is a wild animal, there are times when I’m not sure.”

As Mark rips off Marnie’s clothes, Hitchcock remarks: “I don’t think that was necessary,” as though his own characters are out of his control and that marital assault is somehow different from other types. Clearly, the director found this moment indispensable to the trailer. “Actually, I think I should withhold comment,
since I’m not certain I understand this scene. I shall leave the explanation to your own vivid imagination,” Hitchcock says, once more projecting his perversions onto the collusive gaze of the audience. “It would appear that Mark has a single solution for all problems,” he goes on. “This is not so. Mark is a complex man, dark and forbidding. He can also be kind and considerate. And he is also a troubled man.”

Now Marnie, some kind of hysterical impediment to the ‘troubles’ plaguing her husband, is on horseback and galloping towards a wall. She is hurtling to disaster. “Troubled because he cannot seem to unravel the mystery of the girl called… Marnie.”

As Marnie and the horse seem to crash into the wall, the screen explodes in a series of animated titles:

\[\text{IS Alfred Hitchcock’s MARNIE}\]

\[\text{............... A SEX STORY...?}\]
\[\text{............... A MYSTERY...?}\]
\[\text{............... A DETECTIVE STORY...?}\]
\[\text{............... A ROMANCE...?}\]
\[\text{............... A STORY OF A THIEF...?}\]
\[\text{............... A LOVE STORY...?}\]

\[\text{...YES}\]
\[\text{AND MORE!}\]

The trailer is in many ways the embodiment of Hitchcock’s career-long attempts at both audience manipulation and stylised intrusion. But in this case it is unlike modern trailers. These do anything but reveal the artifice, and are guilty of providing a deceptive portrayal of their products or offering too much narrative information.
The *Marnie* trailer, offering neither, is uniquely accurate insofar as the film’s theme, tone and style are concerned.

This is because the ambiguity of the trailer’s presentation – embodied best in its claim to containing at least six different genres – is analogous to the ambiguity with which Hitchcock approaches his subject matter. But it also where the excess of *Marnie* emerges, and where ambiguity becomes a formal component of its structure. For example, in *Marnie*, the shop-soiled Hitchcock devices recur: the icy blonde, the suggestion of incest and a playing out of the dynamics of sexual power, the protagonist on the run from the law, and simple psychology to explain aberrant behaviour. But as used in *Marnie* these are not all they appear, and the trailer, told through the prism of Hitchcock’s narcissism, hints as much.

So if its trailer is thus a by-product of personal involvement in narrative and a rupture in cinematic realism, then *Marnie* is an overflowing of excess and calls upon one of the more playful aspects of his work: the McGuffin. According to Hitchcock, the McGuffin is a tool of distraction, a plot device that does not move the story forward in any way but keeps both characters and viewers occupied. (Scott & Truffaut, 1986, 182) Several Hitchcock films contain a McGuffin, but in many ways the McGuffin here becomes the centre of the ambiguous meaning of the film. In just under five minutes, the trailer offers the full range of Hitchcockian tropes that before *Marnie* were scattered variously through his oeuvre but here exist in their entirety. Marnie’s McGuffin has the role of distilling the film into a patchwork of half-baked ideas and themes that exist merely to support the Hitchcockian universe.

And in spite of the claim of what *Marnie* ‘is’ in its trailer, it is not a sex mystery (there is little sex and no mystery). The classical act one set-up framing a question in the viewer’s mind – Roland Barthes’s hermeneutic code (1975) – is never answered because the problem itself is never posed. All of this is in line with Hitchcock’s employment of *Marnie* for his own ends, and perhaps why in the trailer he describes his protagonists as “very interesting human specimens”.

22
Hitchcock’s red fade, shown in the trailer to be somehow beyond his own comprehension, draws our attention to both the putative cinematic author and the cinematic medium, because we know the diegetic world has not suddenly turned red – we are at the mercy of Hitchcock’s manipulation of celluloid. Hitchcock actively pulls us away from the diegesis to turn our attention to the material support and, consequently, to him. At these moments any cinematic plausibility is lost because the film draws attention to technique, and acts in opposition to the dream-selling role of trailers. They are moments of pure, disuniting style and excess.\textsuperscript{3} The repetition of the same device throughout the film also draws on Kristin Thompson’s hallmarks for the evidence of excess:

\textit{...the device may far outweigh its original motivation and take on an importance greater than its narrative or compositional function would seem to warrant. (517)\textsuperscript{2}}

Such devices did not go unnoticed or unpunished. Contemporaneous critics attacked the film for its unrealistic décor, tacky special effects and odd camera angles. (Moral, 2006, 165) The aforementioned storm exemplifies this criticism, which questioned why the scene was played without a modicum of plausibility. The lightning of the storm flashes, for no apparent reason, in the same red as earlier used in the dissolves, and in spite of the damage caused by the tree the event is, plot-wise, entirely without consequence or repercussion.

This kind of action is in the tradition of Douglas Sirk and Hollywood melodrama, but it is also a Hitchcockian wink at pure formalism: style for style’s

\textsuperscript{3} The prominence of Hitchcockian excess in \textit{Marnie} seems to have been enough to influence other directors, including Martin Scorsese, who employed the technique in his 1991 remake of \textit{Cape Fear}, a similarly florid and stylised melodrama. Long-time Hitchcock collaborator Bernard Herrmann scored both films.
sake. This means the trailer is not so much serving the marketing of the film (an explanation of what it is about), but instead trumpets Hitchcock’s expressionistic treatment. (Wood, 2002, 211) Principally a filmmaker of the 1920s neo-Expressionist tradition, here Hitchcock indulges his tastes to eschew the rigours of the ‘invisible’ diegesis to draw attention to style and technique and to remind us that we are watching a film, something that seems counter-intuitive to the purpose of a trailer.

At this point in his career Hitchcock is no longer burdened by a need to satisfy the imperative of studio-system filmmaking, one that demands narrative dogmatism and undiscerning response. Upon its release, Marnie was, for the most part, poorly received. A 1964 review by Eugene Archer in The New York Times described the film as:

‘[T]he master’s most disappointing film in years (...) A strong suspicion arises that Mr. Hitchcock is taking himself too seriously – perhaps the result of listening to too many esoteric admirers. Granted that it’s still Hitchcock – and that’s a lot – dispensing with the best in acting, writing and even technique is sheer indulgence. When a director decides he’s so gifted that all he needs is himself, he’d better watch out.’ (in Moral, 2006, 166)

Archer criticises Hitchcock for placing himself and his reputation before the needs the film, namely the supposed duty on the part of the filmmaker to care about his audience and tell a good story. Rather than critiquing the film on its merits or demerits, Archer objects to the film precisely because of his perception that Hitchcock presence should be enough reason for it to be viewed, a fact borne out by the presentation of this and his earlier trailers. But as later, more favourable reviews show, a shift begins to occur in the perception of Hitchcock and the reinterpretation of his canon, in which his recurring themes, ideas, motifs and preoccupations come to form the hallmarks of his singularity of vision and his ‘art’. The role of the trailer changes concomitantly: designed as a film package, it becomes an epigraph.
Decades later, reviewer Jonathan McCalmont describes the film as ‘wonderful’ and focuses on its multi-layered, unashamedly frank approach to psychoanalysis. He writes:

[Marnie] is not only a fascinating character study, but also a meditation upon the moral status of psychoanalysis as an activity. So while Marnie is a film that openly accepts a Freudian vision of psychological dysfunction, it is also a film that knows that not everyone is so easily read. (2009, 2)

McCalmont’s serious appraisal of the film’s themes and the styles it uses to evoke these are a far cry from the film’s first reception. I would argue that this is not merely down to a changing cultural perspective, or an empty nostalgia for the hidden gems to be found in ‘older films’. Rather, this reappraisal of mainstream cultural artifacts amounts to a legitimisation of Hitchcock within academic discourse and, consequently, that the film can be read as both an entertainment and a drama dealing with dark themes in ambiguous ways. This might go some way to explaining how (and why) Hitchcock wilfully committed the greatest *faux pas* of any trailer: deliberately making it unclear to audiences what the film was about.

Perhaps most tellingly, Marnie was a commercial failure as well. Was this a result of the studio failing to support it, or confusing audiences with a marketing campaign that promised everything and delivered nothing? It is hard to say, but only four films followed for Hitchcock, each as undistinguished as the next. Marnie turned out to be the *ne plus ultra* of a cinema career that ultimately paid the price of stylistic catharsis.

*Marnie* may be a triumph of self-expression and style as narrative signature. Its plot makes little sense and its moments of melodrama prevision the tsunami of daytime television that would follow. It is therefore, in the absence of formal explanation, something of an oddity – an outlier even in the varied output of a brilliant narcissist for whom actors should be treated like ‘cattle’. Perhaps Hitchcock
never really wanted us to know who or what *Marnie* was, and the mystifying trailer seems to confirm as much. In many ways, Hitchcock’s obscurantism is his way of telling us that it is all of cinema – along with its murky marketing methods – that is the real McGuffin, the three-card trick convincing us not just to believe in what we’re seeing, but to pay for it as well.

**References**


