

Falling from Love

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In *Vertigo*¹, Alfred Hitchcock's masterpiece, the question of truth and its variations permeate each character, predetermining the story's outcome.

Scottie resigns from the police force after an accident that leaves him with the 'symptom' of vertigo. He is then hired by an old friend to follow his wife, Madeleine, whose strange behaviour raises fears of a potential suicide attempt. Scottie shadows her, and after saving her from drowning ends up falling in love with her. However, due to his fear of heights, he ultimately fails to prevent her from killing herself, by leaping from a church bell tower.

But what is the truth for each subject in the film?

Madeleine's character serves as the embodiment of a false, fabricated truth—the result of an elaborated scheme by Scottie's old friend, who seeks to murder his real wife by using her (Madeleine) as bait. Scottie falls in love at the very moment he saves her from a staged drowning, where the fantasy of "saving a woman" emerges. Their declarations of love are inextricably linked to death and knowledge: "I am responsible for you, I need to know," he tells her. Truth is always subjective; it depends on narration and on the meaning assigned to events, as Patricia Bosquin-Caroz emphasizes in the argument: "Truth is a lie because it depends on narration, on construction, on the meaning we give to events."²

While mourning for his loss, Scottie accidentally meets Judy, who is in fact the woman who had been impersonating Madeleine—and who was never killed. She tries to win him over with the truth of her love and, in her anguish, allows herself to be transformed so as to become once again the longed-for object of Scottie's desire. For he desires her only through the image of duplication—that is, as a replica of Madeleine.

Where does the revelation of the truth lead Scottie?

"Truth emerges from a misunderstanding, a lapsus, a bungled act, something that trips up and reveals a truth from behind, another meaning."³ When Judy puts on the necklace—an object that carries the truth—Scottie realizes that she was the one who had been deceiving him all along. The

¹ Hitchcock, A. (Director). (1958). *Vertigo* [Film]. Paramount Pictures.

² Bosquin-Caroz, P., "VARITY. Variations of Truth in Psychoanalysis". Presentation of the NLS Congress Theme 2026. Available at: <https://www.amp-nls.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/ARGUMENT-NLS-CONGRESS-2026-PBC.pdf>.

³ *Ibid.*

revelation that it was the real wife of his old friend who was thrown dead from the bell tower tears apart the veil of fantasy and confronts him with an unbearable Real; instantly, his love turns into its opposite—hatred—with devastating consequences. As Jacques-Alain Miller states: “First and foremost, truth breaks free from any chain or leash. It throws you in panic and has to be silenced. Only then does one discover that, in unleashing you against it, you had been held on a leash by truth.”⁴ Scottie is released from the symptom of vertigo, from the burden of death and from his partner. Watching her fall—this time for real—into the void, he himself is confronted with the void, that is, with his own castration.

⁴ Miller, J.-A., “The Logical and the Oracular,” *The Lacanian Review* 1, 2016, p. 41.