

FRAMEWORK

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WARREN SONBERT
Selected Writings

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Figure 1. A youthful Warren Sonbert during the time he was a film production student at New York University.

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on a pragmatic and on a personal level). Yellow key ~~is~~ pushed down the grate - throughout the work it isn't red (color of blood, ~~death~~, lust, passion, excitement, irresponsibility' fire, heat - all the things that Marnie is not) that is linked with Marnie but yellows and browns and greens - tasteful, muted, unassertive - colors that Mark also shares and cultivates. Her remarks to Forio: "Bite me" and the stableman's "Spoiled Baby" ~~on Forio~~ (something Marnie obviously was not) coming in such close contact with the first of a series of elusive mother figures (the woman at the inn desk) - to balance the father figures that also balance Mark & Marnie. (Almost a Marnie lookalike, almost a fantasy projection of an ideal world for Marnie's future: a 50ish Marnie overseeing only limitless stables of horses) sets in motion ~~is~~ the infamous false backdrop rocking horse rear projection fantasy escape ride for Marnie (horses - traditionally the father in Freudian interpretation of dreams) : False background, false pleasures, false escape. Cut to another image of blockage & escape: from above the cab proceeding down the Baltimore street. Red brick houses making ~~another~~ ^{more} converging lines of cul de sac with a ship as the dead end in the background - a ship takes you away (the later south seas honeymoon is suggested here - as well as the "Aloha" pillow of Marnie's dream (or reality) of the night of her initiation into murder. ~~By~~ ^{By} ~~Naturally~~ ^{Naturally} a yellow cab & children at play (here Sirk's children invariably growing up to repeat the mistakes (and here crimes) of their parents: their chant of "Doctor, Nurse & Alligator Purse" will have their obvious correlatives in the core of the work to follow. The little girl & Marnie alternate points of view. Red gladioli suffusions are due to this bout of jealousy with Jessie. The mother makes a crack about "Blonde" equating it with evil ^{from Lila} - a color that is almost never absent from any frame of this film. And indeed this subtle yet debilitating contagion that pervades the film's moral climate reaches its apex with the entrance and actions of Lil - Marnie's doppelganger - . Marnie is framed standing against the staircase (quest ahead) Jessie is framed sitting against a lower area of the same staircase (her trials - since she's younger - will be perhaps more arduous - who's to say that the spoiled Jessie won't have similar or more excruciating torments/fuck ups from her upbringing) while behind Mrs. Edgar teacups & fragile Dresden china loom (linking up with Mr. Rutland's teacups) The overbearing mother & the underachieving father. Both houses (only two in the film) ~~are~~ ^{are} ~~fragilely~~ ^{fragilely} built over thin ice (could break away at any moment) in the emphasis on china, of staircases (trials to overcome) and guilty secrets hidden away contained within the sphere of everyday normalcy (Lil's later snoopings & prying). Mrs. Edgar's leg is ~~also~~ ^{also} ~~broken~~ ^{broken} - she hasn't a leg to stand on in her false assumption of false guilt (like the heroine of "Suspicion" assuming bad faith martyrdom). This infirmity of mind & body smacks the face of her begrudged-birth bastard daughter as nutcrackers, needles & nuts spew all over the ~~same~~ place in a frenzy of sexually hostile ~~symbols~~ ^{symbols} as the yellow refrigerator looks on. Onto the first shadow of the dream - window tapping sequence - window is an escape but there's also a brick wall directly opposite. Mother at the top of stairs is ~~also~~ ^{also} in shadows and an ominously walkdown (Herrmann's almost goeey score finally lets up and the silence is at last really threatening) slow FO down the stairs (that walk is more tapping) (the cane a transference for the later murderous phallic poker). FI on train R to L (psychological regression that R to L in the heroine's odyssey) which cuts in further emphasis to a yellow cab at curb going R to L to deposit a newspaper clutching Marnie (The headline reads: "Crash kills 118" and even though she's smiling this is not an auspicious sign - did you know that Mrs. Edgar's address on that dream street in Baltimore - prominently displayed ~~but~~ in the background of the final cathartic sequence is 118? Not a casual offhand # "like 27 or 3, huh? & More on 8 later). In the Rutland offices - distinguished by brick, converging columns, a bridge in background of its exteriors - Susan, the affable Rutland secretary - bright & cheery, but already hence "tamed" and therefore of absolutely no interest to the huntsman Mark (he doesn't ride to the hounds, makes fun of such but is ~~after~~ ^{after} more challenging prey) is set in sharp contradistinction to Marnie's mysterious aloofness (much like Scottie Ferguson's fascination with Madeline in "Vertigo"). Similarly Marnie piques Mark's interest. Mark's green safe/vault, the green walls and brown furniture combine with Mark's flirtatious appraisals and Marnie's neurotic coy avoidance glances to exude a palpable sexual tension. Marnie later eyes the safe, Mark in background eyes Marnie - Mark observes before he trains his animals. Keys are for insertion - Marnie taking back with her aggression the sexuality circumstances have denied her: Money & Power and aggressive control are the makeup of a man's world (a theme of "Vertigo" too) and Marnie's thefts are also her ~~traces~~ ^{traces} of male power. Lil closes door on Marnie's observations - like Strut - Lil is both a halt to Marnie's actions and a spur to her catharsis. Predatory behavior & clinical observance before action: Mark & Marnie. Man flirts & more red suffusions (red on white) another trip to bathroom - another washing away of sins - here with soap. White-color of death in ~~arms~~ ^{arms}: THE REMOVAL OF COLORS

"Warren Sonbert on *Marnie*"

More washing away of past sins with the storm outside the Rutland offices - ~~now single ear~~
~~integrated~~ ~~pening~~ ~~101~~. A lamp prominent in foreground dividing but balancing Mark & Marnie. A healthy attitude - Mark's ~~destroying~~ ~~of his~~ 1st wife's Pre-Columbian art collection: (connected to Marnie's animalistic primitivism - shedding her shoes before jumping on Forio later on). But then there is a mystery ~~there~~, about Mark's 1st wife, about her "death" - "So young" - someone (~~George?~~) says. Unanswered, but perhaps of equal devastating import to Mark's current condition as the film's conveniently put together puzzle of Marnie's destructive incident ~~of~~ her youth. This opens up ~~an~~ endless can~~o~~ worms. What lurks behind everyone's behavioral patterns. Did Mrs. Edgar become a prostitute because of economic factors or was her personality drawn to it or a combination of both. And surely Strut's homelife - judging by the arch, removed presence of his middle-aged wife - can't solely explain his brutality and venality. What is it about Lil that causes her both to be a champion of her sister's memory & place in Mark's affections (a la Mrs. Danvers in "Rebecca") but in love herself with Mark and caustically out to get Marnie anyway she can? And why is Mr. Rutland so removed from society and so complacent about it? Will each of the children playing in the street on both trips to Baltimore themselves be twisted, half-formed, neurotized in the process of attaining adulthood. One of the film's mysteries is somewhat solved but not in any instance are all the others. Mark at least makes the showy gesture of discounting his past - moving on without the human's usual tenacious hold on memory & guilt. The office's red carpet links with the Rutland home's red carpet with further links with Mrs. Edgar's red carpet ~~of~~ later on the blood-splattered poker will find its ultimate rest. A tilted CU for Mark comforting Marnie, a CU for their 1st kiss - ~~not~~ set right, and a 3rd tilted CU in opp. dir. of the first to balance the kiss and its opposite effect. Mark & Marnie take their 1st of many car rides: all of which ~~accumulate~~ ~~to~~ information being given or confessions - some true / some ~~partly true~~ - being rendered. These are modern-day odysseys of the soul in the American suburban landscapes. Invariably streaks of brown-yellow-green (the onset of fall) will be the backgrounds for Mark & Marnie - complemented by the colors of their clothes. At the race track it just isn't the man's pressure of the past that this time causes the red suffusions: his entrance coincides with a glimpse of Table #8 card placed on Marnie's lower R. #8 is also the number of the race horse that Marnie refuses to bet on. #8 her home address in Baltimore (plus 1 & 1 - Marnie & Mom) it all adds up. A salt & pepper duality. And the horse's name is appropriately annotated "Telepathy" - certainly part of Mark's hold on Marnie. He's the only male who has so far been able to outfox this vixen. Again red on white, is the jockey's attire Mark's recessive father is seen descending the staircase at our 1st glimpse ~~of~~ the Rutland home (balancing our previous sight of Marnie's mother descending - both from ~~her~~ POV - but in opposing directions). Mark's home is full of pictures of horses, and silver and bronze sculptures of horses, in fact ~~the~~ only art work that seems to be present. If Marnie is looking for father figures (Forio even gets delivered eventually) she can certainly find ~~them~~ here. And her reactions upon entering are not of forboding or mistrust or dread (at least not until after the honeymoon) but of welcoming interest. And Mr. Rutland is even wearing Marnie's colors - yellow vest & green tie - school colors, team colors, colors the signal that I'm on your side (in contrast Lil wears turquoise, ruby red, - the mischievous & the challenging). Marnie will find sympathy & aid in Mr. Rutland & Mark, antipathy & hostility from Lil & Strut - but the latter's actions and presences will also serve as kicks in the butt for reassessment and reevaluation. Lil calls Mark "sheiky" ~~is~~ just like Marnie, but also soon enough like Lil with her snoopings & prying. Again the prominent tea cups plus ~~tea~~ ceremony link up with Mrs. Edear's home backgrounds. 1) LS from above, the walk by the couple to the stables. (Vertigo's stables are invoked). 2) In the stables horses on side foreground, couple in background. 3) CU kiss disquieting because of the abrupt focal length change from the previous images. The robbery: Another hiding scene in the secret recesses of the bathroom - in fact the film's longest take. -Marnie's waiting. Unclean bodily functions -later on Mark will refer to Marnie's lies as "Mt. Everest~~s~~of manure" thus linking up the visual themes of horses & bathrooms/toilets. And now again the bag & key and the thrust forward assuming aggressive masculine stance for the robbery. Now a lengthily held symmetrically balanced LS camera below eye level but looking across rather than up - a position not assumed by any other shot in the film - 2 women engaged in separate but similar actions. The washerwoman at her work and Marnie robbing the safe. Yes but both are "cleaning up". Hitchcock's visual puns provide some relief from the predominant minor key tonality of the work. Marnie ~~is~~ removes her ~~shoes~~ ~~for~~ flight (linking up with her similar gesture later ~~on~~ ~~Forio~~). And indeed the first cut away from the robbery already has her on her horse. Theft & riding are coequal releases for her. Mark greets her soon afterwards with "I should beat the hell out of you" - good animal training tactics. If not the most edifying in regards to humans. In this initial revelation of Marnie's mendacities Hitchcock keeps the couple in strictly separate frames though the bedroom at the inn is certainly small enough to contain them within the same cinematic space but it's at this point in their relationship that they are spiritually

farthest apart. Mark calls Marnie "a habitual liar" in their next car ride - though Mark eventually himself lies to Lil, Strut, Cousin Bob, his father and on and on. At the Howard Johnson's Marnie would once more like to "freshen up" at the rest room. Escape comes for her in bathrooms & horses - on board ship a big fuss is made about her ~~hiding~~ retreating in there. Mark asks "Are you cold Margaret?" "Marnie". The confusion of names finally reveals the truth: her real name and the fact that she is cold - frigid. Outside the house before leaving on her honeymoon MR. Rutland suggests going back for "another piece of cake". In the previous image of Mr. Rutland that we saw - before Mark & Marnie's kiss at the stables - with Lil in the foreground, Mr. Rutland reaches for another piece of cake too. There's a tie-in here between two self-indulgences. Mr. Rutland's unselfreflective selfishness & complacency & almost as if in balanced overcompensation Mrs. Edgar's self-sacrificial burdens of guilt. Mark's father again blithely unaware & withdrawn, Marnie's mother oppressive and all too aware. On the steps Mark suggests bringing Lil back a "Noble savage" - an attempt to balance some of Lil's overly sophisticated outlook (degenerate, overrefined - lolling about on couches, going out to lunches, endless shopping) with some of Marnie's animalistic primitivism (but here again overbalanced - Marnie is nothing if not an overachiever - happy to work late, after hours, boundless energy that can only find an outlet, an escape from self in keeping busy - even down to non-stop robberies, "absconding with the family silver" as Mark gamely puts it. Cousin Bob info to Lil sets her up as another thief - going through drawers and ferreting out secrets - in Hitch's Jesuit-trained mentality such behavior isn't too far from the taints of Marnie's pilferings - more so as Marnie is more actively psychotic. The cruise becomes another flight. The yellow walls & green chairs so compliment the films other interiors that Mark & Marnie might seem to have designed their suite to feel more than at home. Marnie emerges in a muted green nightgown/robe by Edith Head that resembles a formidable coat of armor as Mark makes a crack about bathrooms being the real "battleground" of a marriage. Mark's attempts at affection result in Marnie's caged, animalistic clutchings of the green couch like a trapped prey - just as later on her cat burglar outfit & ^{the look of Marnie's first frame - only 101} Struts' intrusion reinforce the nonhuman aspect. This next vain stab at flight, escape (the cruise) displays in profusion yellow flowers, a yellow headband, even yellow drinks (screwdrivers- sex & safe-breaking tools). Before the love? sex? rape? scene there are 2 shots from above & below the couple right after the tearing of the nightgown. This is balanced by a porthole directly behind Marnie's head eye level. Her lowering down with Marnie's vacant eyes staring and the FO VI on the grey porthole sets in motion some more questions about the scene. Sex or no? Rape or no? Climax or no? But the visual emphasis on a grey porthole both before & afterwards surely posits an unsatisfied vagina. The lack of emphasis on anyone else on board during Mark's frantic search through the ship's corridors links up with the other transportatic scene of the opening train station and that these are solitary quests by the hero & heroine. Again the profusion of water - pool & ocean, and the vainly attempted drowning reinforce the continual motif of washing away those sins. When Marnie says goodbye to Mark back at the homestead there's both a rolling expanse of hills in the background as well as a fence - one more visual emphasis on closure & flight (this links up with the Balt-more household's window & brickwall, or ship and street, and so on. Mark brings home Forio: a slanted shot of two women (Lil & Marnie) at the windows of their rooms both parting the curtains at the same time. This recalls a similar moment of similar import in "Rear Window" with Lisa (Grace Kelly), the heroine and ~~as well~~ Miss Lonelyhearts (when the former proudly holds up Mrs. Thorwald's wedding ring - unaware of the approaching murderer and right before Miss Lonelyhearts contemplates drinking a potion of sleeping pills). These juxtapositions of two previously thought of very different kinds of women now suggest the opposite: in "Rear Window" Lisa could very well wind up a lonely, unwanted unattached woman just as the spinster (as she eventually does) has the potential to enter into a mutual satisfying relationship with another being. Here in "Marnie" I think Hitchcock has already demonstrated the doppleganger links between Lil & Marnie. Lil certainly has the potential to become an active thief & liar (she even swears this kind of allegiance to Mark) while Marnie, if her anxieties are solved and her soul saved, could learn attachment and trust for a fellow sympathetic creature ("Getting a jaguarandi to trust you is a great deal" remarks Mark earlier). After Marnie's leap & shoe removal to mount the horse, Lil & Mark in the same frame have a dialogue. There is only a cut away to Mark solely filling his own cinematic space after Lil's remark about a "Mother in Baltimore". Mark's moment of revelation and intellectual isolation deserves the cut, the change of spatial venue. A reason to cut, to make a change. This moment of "truth" is not cinematically slighted. Another revelation follows - but as it turns out a false one - Mark on the phone in his upstairs study questioning a detective about Marnie's past and getting the info about Mrs. Edgar's police record. Again the camera shifts overhead for the news item that literally throws a new slant on the proceedings. The scene even ends with a closed door in his study from Mark's POV emphasizing that these secrets may not yet be truly answered unbeknownst to Mark. The "Aloha" pillow dream follows with a pan back to reality of Marnie's Rutland mansion bedroom with its yellow flowers. The man's hand at the window "I can't bear to be touched".

The "I'm sick? Take a look at yourself, daddy dear" scene follows. Mark's admits, somewhat smugly, his lack of perfection. This ends with Marnie's screams of "Someone help me" which is followed by the slow crane down of the entering party guests which only cuts when Strut's arrival fills the frame. Strut is the help, ~~about~~ ^{absent} indirectly, that will lead to the final catharsis. Not only that: Lil greets him conspicuously dressed in red - what a double whammy. Marnie in white as rebuttal. After her cat burglar getup pacings ~~like the trapped prey various clutchings of the couch~~, her sympathy and identification with the trapped vixen during the hunt pushes her literally (and the camera as well) over the brink. The rocking horse escapes, her toy world no longer satisfy. Neither does the subsequent robbery - not a stranger's safe but her husband's the MALE. During the hunt Lil pursues her in her active doppelganger role, and after the accident three women struggle with a gun, torso shot with Marnie & Lil balanced on L & R while a mother surrogate figure & provider of the gun is in the middle. The two halves of the ego must destroy the id (and again this woman - the first & last we see-her-recall not only Mrs. Edgar, Marnie's mother, but as well that perfect ideal of Marnie in the future, glimpsed earlier in the film as the mistress of the inn of Forio's stables. Doppelganger halves struggling with gun with mother between them. But all that gets shot and from Marnie's POV like the safe vault in the next ~~scene~~ ^{two} escapes that ^{eye blown} must be destroyed, relinquished - is Forio. Strut's line of "Wait till you've been victimized" is visually answered by the distraught mindless entrance of Marnie in her ^{she} riding togs listlessly coming into the Rutland hallway - the only victim now seems ^{accused to} to be herself. The god's eye view of her, the god our father, finds a paternalistic crushing weight that is old testament all destroying. Strutt - the mean dark side of Mark's weak father. In Mark's office with Strutt horses, statues & paintings of all types & sizes accumulate with oppressive, magnifying strength. The spiral coil at the staircase's bottom compliments Marnie's often spiral coil hairstyle - esp. emphasized with her talk on the phone to her mother. And her descent down the staircase to visually encounter it seems like some kind of Job-like accumulative mass of pain in mockery. The zooming in & out of the money in the safe is an obvious enough metaphor of sexual thrust ^{as the green & browns seem to relate to the female's aggressive rape} of male power & control. There are 3 shots of Mark's crotch approaching Marnie with his outstretched hand. Does vault relate too to her vaulting with the horse. His fly to her fly through the air? Surely their intertwined boots & shoes given a prominent shot in CU is like another rape but this time hers over his money. These tensions are not resolved quite. Back to Baltimore - the ship being there still suggests stasis of the situation. Rain again but now the final washing away of the sins. The red bricks ~~of the buildings~~ recall Forio's final collision with the wall. Marnie immediately plunges upon entering onto that staircase that provided the background for both her & Jessie earlier in the film (and links up too with the Rutland staircase seen a scene before) - final mounting up for answers. Like "Psycho" only the mother knows the whole story. In the recounting, the sailor (linking up with outside ship - a constant reminder, of millstone of guilt around mother's neck) provides little Marnie with the same gestures of comfort that Mark ~~provides~~ ^{provides} for the nightmare awakening adult Marnie. ~~White is death in Japan. The removal of color.~~ The opening of the flashback is a simlta-eous zoom in and pan back (like the Vertigo technique). A queasy repulsion/attraction like the thrusts to the safe. The sailor's emergence is a fragmented pan (the only instance of this technique in the film) giving the character special prominence. The potency of the phallic poker ^{recalls} the nutcrackers & needles of the smack seen ~~(as well as the physical blows)~~ of Mrs. Edgar's outrage towards Marnie ^{of any kind of sexuality}. "There now" comfort statement ^{same} as Marnie's towards Forio - the ironic exorcism. The mother takes on her daughter's guilt which causes the future aberrations in the really guilty party - shades of "Under Capricorn" territory here - which in turn makes everybody cummulative miserable because of the underlying mendacity - as opposed to having it out. This transfer of guilt motif taints all. The teacups in background during Mrs. Edgar's confession mutely underline family fragility once more. The final images of mother & daughter contain a phallic tilted fountain pen in background. A slash, a separation but also what joins them in guilt - either sexuality or the denial of ~~sex~~. Outside a blond girl in yellow is the foreground figure in a pack of surprisingly startled onlookers at the couple's emergence - almost as if they too are disturbed by the ugly possibility of copulation in the form of relationships rearing its head in our repressive upbringing situation (after all children are usually denied any healthy exposure to such - just like unclean bathroom functions & equated with that - and again perhaps resulting in their future adulthoods with similar sexual & behavioral

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aberrations along Marnie's lines or any other's. FO from above as the car (once more) containing Mark & Marnie starts to turn a corner but does not quite complete its action before the end. A gesture towards healing and unity but not strongly enough affirmed to insure a happy ending (again a la Sirk), that all the problems have been worked out or that there's any such thing as an easily resolvable resolution.