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| Vertigo (1958) |
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| *Vertigo* is a psychological thriller directed and produced by Alfred Hitchcock, based on *D’entre les morts* [*The Living and the Dead*], a 1954 crime novel by Boileau-Narcejac. The film is known for its innovative use of cinematography, nuanced depiction of romantic obsession and the presence of numerous Freudian themes, most notably scopophilia and the uncanny. Set in San Francisco, acrophobic ex-detective John ‘Scottie’ Ferguson (James Stewart) is asked by former colleague Gavin Elster (Tom Helmore) to investigate his mentally unstable wife, Madeleine (Kim Novak). The two become romantically involved, as Scottie attempts to decipher Madeleine’s psychosis and amnesia. After what appears to be Madeleine’s suicide, Scottie obsessively follows another woman Judy Barton (also played by Novak) who bears an uncanny resemblance to Madeleine. The film concludes with the revelation that Madeleine’s suicide was a ruse for Elster to kill his real wife, whom Judy was impersonating. In keeping with the modernist fascination with the emotional impact of colour and light, contrasts in brightness are used to communicate the characters’ varying degrees of confusion. To emphasize the tenuous distinction between reality and fantasy, Hitchcock uses the ‘Dolly zoom,’ or ‘Vertigo Effect,’ which creates a Surrealistic perspective change through alterations in camera movement and focus. In 2012 *Sight and Sound’s* poll *Vertigo* replaced *Citizen Kane* as the best film of all time. |
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| Further reading:  (Auiler)  (Orr)  (Rennie)  (The British Film Institute)  (The British Film Institute)  (The British Film Institute)  (Wood) |