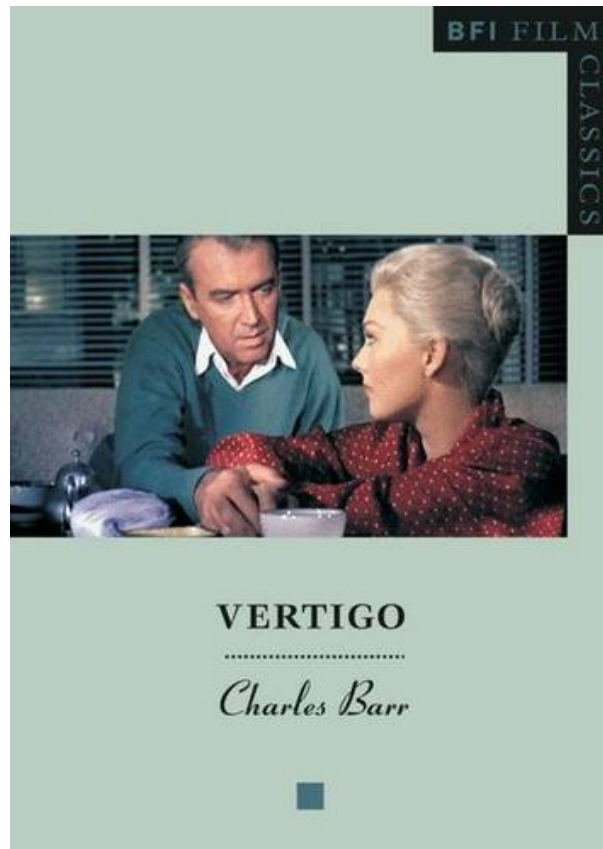
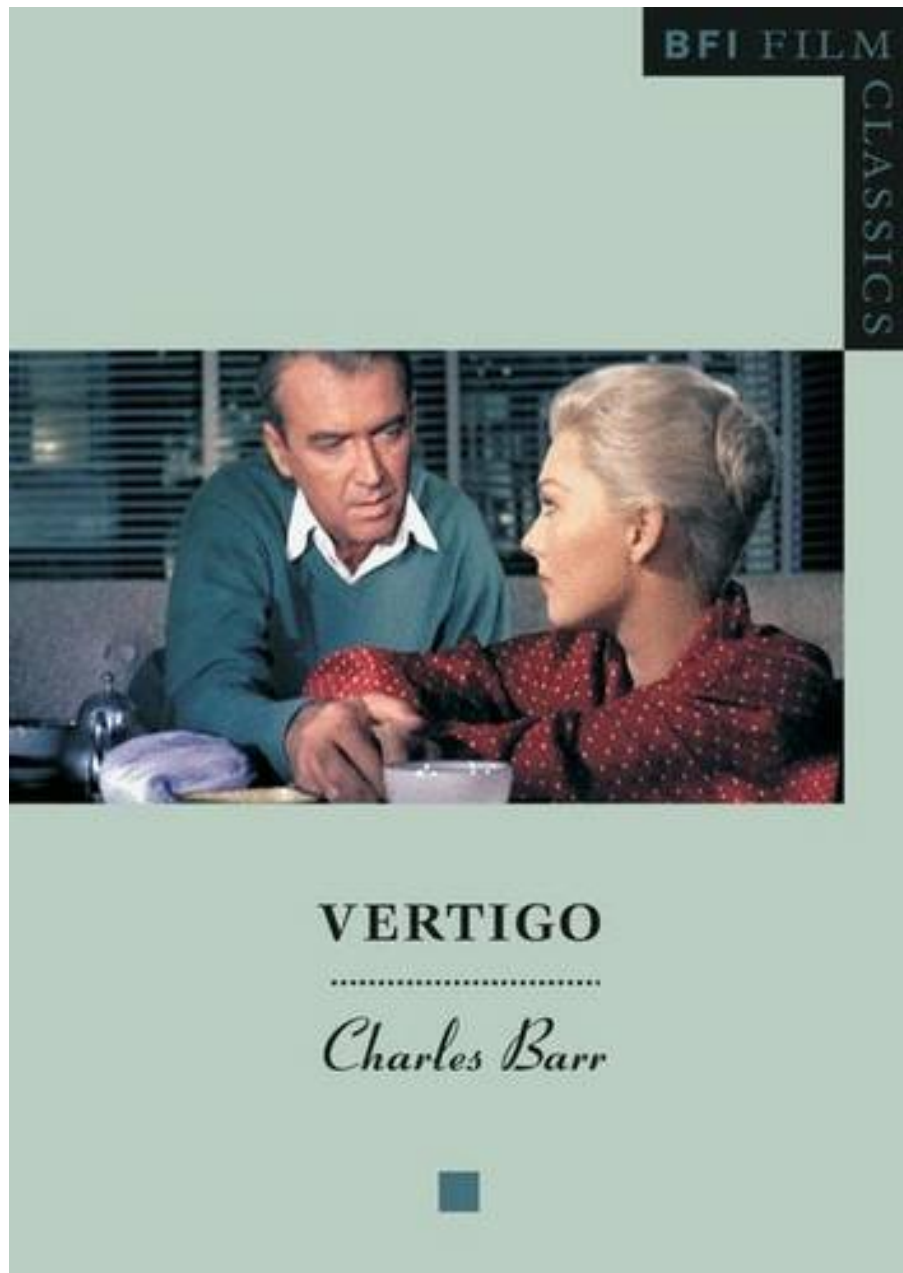


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About the Author

Charles Barr is Professor of Film at the University of East Anglia. He is the author of *Ealing Studios* (rev. edn, 1999) and *English Hitchcock* (1999). He was researcher and co-writer of Stephen Frears's film *Typically British: A Personal History of British Cinema* (1995).

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The author documents the crucial role of screenwriters Alec Coppel and Samuel Taylor and, by a combination of textual and contextual analysis, explores the reasons why Vertigo has come to exert such a continuing fascination both on audiences and on a wide range of critics and theorists.

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Experience Vertigo at New Heights!

By Dash Manchette

Although I have always enjoyed the movie Vertigo, it was never on my list of favorite Hitchcock movies, preferring North By Northwest and Rear Window even more. Charles Barr's book VERTIGO may not have changed my opinion but it certainly allows me to understand why someone else would disagree with my personal ranking. The book explores Vertigo on several different levels allowing for a richer appreciation of the movie.

As Barr notes, Vertigo is unlike many other Hitchcock movies in that it is more about the relationship of the characters played by Jimmy Stewart and Kim Novak than it is about the criminal plot. In fact, again unusual for Hitchcock movies, the plot twist, the scheme by which murder has been committed, is revealed not at the end of the movie but rather about two-thirds of the way into it. This allows the remaining forty or so minutes to focus on the interactions between the characters. That Novak is playing a dual role and all the characters are working with different levels of knowledge at different times makes this all the more interesting.

One part of VERTIGO that I find fascinating is the theory that Jimmy Stewart actually dies at the beginning of the film after hanging from the rooftop. The viewer never sees him rescued and therefore, so the thought

goes, everything that follows (basically the whole movie) takes place in his head while hanging, falling and dying.

Usually I do not go for such metaphysical theories unless there is a solid basis of support. Here there is. Barr introduces the reader to the author Ambrose Bierce who wrote a story using the same plot device. Clues of Bierce's presence are placed throughout the movie and one of the screenwriters made an elliptical, though nonetheless explicit, reference to Bierce with respect to the story. Although this theory of Stewart's death at the beginning of *Vertigo* may be a minority opinion, it is nonetheless valid and quite interesting.

Film criticism being what it is, Barr throws in a number of phrases that come off as hoity-toity. But I never had the feeling that he was speaking down to the reader. The British Film Institute guides are usually fairly well written and informative and *VERTIGO* is no exception.

7 of 7 people found the following review helpful.

Vertigo

By Dorothy Mullen

This is one of a series on classic movies put out by the British Film Institute, and I guess Alfred Hitchcock qualifies because he began as an English director, even though *Vertigo* was made in Hollywood...Anyway, like all of the BFI series I have read, this one is a little gem (almost as good as Camille Paglia's essay on *The Birds*). If you are a Hitchcock fan -- if you love movies, especially suspense thrillers -- if you think *Vertigo* is one of the best movies ever made (like me), you will devour this little book the way a chocolate lover gobbles up a box of Godiva truffles. Everything you ever wanted to know and more about *Vertigo*. Well, almost. My only complaint is that it isn't long enough.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

A Must Have For Those Obsessed With Hitchcock's "*Vertigo*."

By George Finkle

This small book is packed with facts and details about "*Vertigo*." The writing is a bit academic. It almost reads like a dissertation. Even so, it provides very thought provoking details about the making of *Vertigo*. Watch the movie first, then read the book. Then, watch the movie again and again. The book is a great reference tool.

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