

line, "Television has brought murder back into the home, where it belongs."

J.G.: Yeah, you have all these guys talking about their rockets, and then you have all these women who can't make coffee, but by the end the tables turn: the coffee turns into poison. Truffaut talked about how Hitchcock's films always portrayed murder as an act of love, and vice versa. For me, that's the crux of *Double Take*—these contradictions, one act masquerading as its opposite. At the end of the film, the Folgers commercial is subverted in such a way that its message, "Tastes good as fresh-perked", becomes coded as part of a murder plot.

Adapted from: Provan, A., "If you see yourself, kill him: Johan Grimontprez & Tom McCarthy interviewed by Alexander Provan", in *Bidouin Magazine*, no. 18 (July 2009), 32–9.

Parable of the Palace

Jorge Luis Borges

1956

That day the Yellow Emperor showed his palace to the poet. Little by little, step by step, they left behind, in long procession, the first westward-facing terraces which, like the jagged hemicycles of an almost unbounded amphitheater, stepped down into a paradise, a garden whose metal mirrors and intertwined hedges of juniper were a prefiguration of the labyrinth. Cheerfully they lost themselves in it—at first as though condescending to a game, but then not without some uneasiness, because its straight *allées* suffered from a very gentle but continuous curvature, so that secretly the avenues were circles. Around midnight, observation of the planets and the opportune sacrifice of a tortoise allowed them to escape the bonds of that region that seemed enchanted, though not to free themselves from that sense of being lost that accompanied them to the end. They wandered next through antechambers and courtyards and libraries, and then through a hexagonal room with a water clock, and one morning, from a tower, they made out a man of stone, whom later they lost sight of forever. In canoes hewn from sandalwood, they crossed many gleaming rivers—or perhaps a single river many times. The imperial entourage would pass and people would fall to their knees and bow their heads to the ground, but one day the courtiers came

to an island where one man did not do this, for he had never seen the Celestial Son before, and the executioner had to decapitate him. The eyes of the emperor and poet looked with indifference on black tresses and black dances and golden masks; the real merged and mingled with the dreamed—or the real, rather, was one of the shapes the dream took. It seemed impossible that the earth should be anything but gardens, fountains, architectures, and forms of splendour. Every hundred steps a tower cut the air; to the eye, their colour was identical, but the first of them was yellow and the last was scarlet; that was how delicate the gradations were and how long the series. It was at the foot of the penultimate tower that the poet (who had appeared untouched by the spectacles which all the others had so greatly marvelled at) recited the brief composition that we link indissolubly to his name today, the words which, as the most elegant historians never cease repeating, garnered the poet immortality and death. The text has been lost; there are those who believe that it consisted of but a single line; others, of a single word. What we do know—however incredible it may be—is that within the poem lay the entire enormous palace, whole and to the least detail, with every venerable porcelain it contained and every scene on every porcelain, all the lights and shadows of its twilights, and every forlorn or happy moment of the glorious dynasties of mortals, gods, and dragons that had lived within it through all its endless past. Everyone fell silent; then the emperor spoke. “You have stolen my palace!” he cried, and the executioner’s iron scythe mowed down the poet’s life. Others tell the story differently. The world cannot contain two things that are identical; no sooner, they say, had the poet uttered his poem than the palace disappeared, as though in a puff of smoke, wiped from the face of the earth by the final syllable. Such legends, of course, are simply literary fictions. The poet was the emperor’s slave and died a slave; his composition fell into oblivion because it merited oblivion, and his descendants still seek, though they shall never find, the word for the universe.

Borges, J.L., “Parable of the Palace”, in *Collected Fictions*, trans. A. Hurley (London: Penguin, 1999), 317–18.

If You Meet Your Double, You Should Kill Him

Johan Grimonprez on *Double Take* by
Mark Peranson

Spring 2009

Mark Peranson: *As a media artist who turns media into art, and makes art about media, your career is a double take—jumping from the cinema to the art gallery and back. Your films also inspire double takes in the viewer. dial H-I-S-T-O-R-Y (1997) shows how terrorists use the media, and vice versa, fostering a state of panic and paranoia within people; in Double Take (2009) the same psychological relationship is transferred, then doubled to the US and USSR during the Cold War, to Alfred Hitchcock and popular culture. Why Alfred Hitchcock?*

Johan Grimonprez: Just as from a contemporary perspective there is no one “history”, so too are there a multitude of Hitchcocks. So I was interested in making a film about Hitchcock that was not “about” Hitchcock per se, but where he is used as a mirror, both of himself, and for a period of history. For what was the Cold War if not one long, painful MacGuffin?¹

1 MacGuffin: “an object, event, or character in a film or story that serves to set and keep the plot in motion despite usually lacking intrinsic importance” (Merriam Webster Dictionary. Accessed 20 December 2010: www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/macguffin)