

# Remaking *The 39 Steps*

Hitchcock's Screenwriting and Identification

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This thesis is presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

## Certificate of Original Authorship

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

Signature of Student:

Date: 18<sup>th</sup> May 2018

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## Abstract

This research analyses Hitchcock's *The 39 Steps* (1935) and his two remakes (i.e. *Saboteur*, 1942, and *North by Northwest*, 1959) as exemplars for my screenplay, 'The Southern Cross Conspiracy'. A research-led practice methodology is applied to investigate relevant screenwriting techniques that are used in the screenplay to develop an emotional journey synonymous with *The 39 Steps*. The thesis is divided into three parts: theoretical, empirical, and practice. Part One applies a cognitive approach to explain how a spectator logically constructs particular character-types from *The 39 Steps* and its two remakes leading to identification and emotion. Murray Smith's "structure of sympathy" (i.e. recognition, alignment and allegiance) is extended explaining the global appeal of Hitchcock's films. To understand the process used in each film's development, Part Two examines the practice of screenwriting from a historical perspective by applying genetic criticism to screenplays and other notations (drawn from archives at British Film Institute, London, and Meredith Herrick Library, Los Angeles) produced during the writing of *The 39 Steps*, *Saboteur* and *North by Northwest*. The aim of understanding these processes presented in the first two parts is to guide my pursuit of writing a remake of *The 39 Steps* so that my screenplay can potentially elicit similar emotions. Part Three acts as a proof of concept by applying the findings from Parts One and Two to remake *The 39 Steps* as a period drama set in 1950s Australia during the British nuclear testing programme. Two processes emerged from this research: a process of 'fiction identification' located at the points of character conflict (internal and external) in Hitchcock's films; and a 'writer-director approach' to screenwriting.