

Too Big and Too Close: Alfred Hitchcock and Fritz Lang

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In 1925, a young British set designer, taking on an assignment in Berlin for a bounder—a little too fond of drink and women—called Graham Cutts, watches German directors at work at the Ufa Studios in Neubabelsberg. The director whom he observes most closely is F.W. Murnau, just completing the film that was to make him world-famous, *The Last Laugh*. The Englishman is especially impressed by a scene in which an entire train station, busy with morning commuters is suggested by painted perspectives, lighting, and a “real” train carriage in the farthest distance of the shot. The “German influence” on Alfred Hitchcock, often talked about by himself and almost as often referred to in the literature, is usually said to have been as profound as it was made up of distinct elements.¹ Among them was the German studio style (i.e., filming in totally controlled environments, surrounded by highly trained professionals), an emphasis on wholly visual storytelling (“no intertitles”), and a mastery of complex camera movements (those, for instance devised by Karl Freund for Murnau’s film, and generically referred to as the German’s “unchained” camera).² Complex camera movements famously recur in many of Hitchcock’s films throughout his long career, whether in *The Lodger*, *Murder!*, *Notorious*, *Psycho*, or *Frenzy*.³

Late in 1925, only months after his initial visit to Berlin, Hitchcock returned to Germany, this time as the director of an Anglo-German production, working for the München Lichtbild Kompanie, better known by its acronym Emelka. This production, *The Pleasure Garden* (1925), involved location shooting mostly in northern Italy, about which Hitchcock himself has left a number of hilarious and self-deprecating accounts, mostly revolving around his sexual innocence and anatomical ignorance, that can scarcely be taken at face value. The film’s other claim to anecdotal status is that its producer, Michael Balcon, is famously quoted as having appreciated just how “American” the movie felt, implicitly predicting, it is suggested, the turn Hitch’s career would later take.

Lang and Hitchcock in the 1920s

There has been some speculation about the contacts between Hitchcock and the other Olympian figure of Ufa in the 1920s, Fritz Lang. If Hitchcock's testimony to François Truffaut is to be believed, he admired Lang. Especially to his French critics, the director often acknowledged that Lang was someone from whom he could and did learn. Lang was born in 1890, Hitchcock in 1899: there was thus a difference in age of about ten years—a lot for Hitch, then in his twenties. But what, if anything, did Hitchcock "learn" from Lang? He is said to have visited the set of *Metropolis* (started that same year, 1925, when Hitchcock was assistant to Cutts on *The Blackguard*).⁴ In this respect, however, he was no different from literally hundreds of official or semi-official visitors to the *Metropolis* set during 1925/1926, so that it is unlikely that Lang would have taken notice of the young Englishman, nor was Hitchcock at that time (or after) interested in such futuristic films as *Metropolis* was then billed. It is safer to assume that, back in London, and probably rather later, Hitchcock saw *Der Müde Tod* (*Destiny*) at one of the London Film Society screenings in 1926 or 1927. As with Luis Buñuel, the impression the film made on Hitchcock was lasting. The famous shot of Ivor Novello endlessly descending the "down" escalator of a London underground station in *Downhill* (1927) immediately recalls the Lang heroine endlessly ascending the stairs that suddenly open up in the wall around Death's domain. At that time, Hitchcock may also have seen *Dr. Mabuse* (1921), much admired by just about every European filmmaker of note in the early 1920s. Yet the film that the director himself later called "the first true Hitchcock film," *The Lodger* (1926), while certainly showing "German" influence (we know that Hitchcock had seen Paul Leni's *Waxworks* [1921] before he made *The Lodger*) does not seem indebted to Lang, except perhaps in one scene or trick-effect: the superimposition of faces in the opening sequence of *The Lodger*, where the general public receive news of another murder over the radio, is a direct citation from *Dr. Mabuse*. What is typically Hitchcockian about *The Lodger* is the combination of London-fog Gothic with a whole array of tongue-in-cheek visual, verbal, and practical jokes, such as the famous rear-windows of the newspaper delivery van, looking like the eyes of the masked Avenger; the verbal jokes in the intertitles like "wet off the press, hot off the wire"; or those Edwardian *diableries* where cheeky young men hide their faces behind cloaks to frighten the girls.⁵ These generic idioms, as well as Hitchcock's typical penchant for mock-serious banter, are pretty far removed from the Langian atmosphere of heart-pounding breathlessness, malevolent claustrophobia, and ominous foreboding.

However, *The Lodger* and *Blackmail* do share with Lang's German films a fascination with interlocking and routine processes: the mechanics of crime, of the investigation of crime, and of the wheels-within-wheels machinery of urban life. In *The Lodger*, the scenes of the newspaper presses, the delivery vans, or the transmission of messages via modern technology and gadgetry could be said to "hark back" to *Dr. Mabuse* and "anticipate" *Spione* (*Spies*, 1928), if these terms were not themselves almost as slippery as those of "influence," "homage," or "pastiche." Rather, the fact is that, alongside his passion for processes and the procedural, Hitchcock was just as interested in extreme psychological states as was Lang, who had a lifelong fascina-

tion with the so-called “criminal mind.” This shared interest points to a convergence at a different layer of their respective creative personalities than suggested by either direct influence or discipleship. This convergence is a philosophical one, at the core of their aesthetics as much as their ethics, and ultimately the reason for comparing them at all: their shared conviction that truth is a function of falsehood, rather than its opposite, and that even for falsehood, there is ultimately neither “ground” nor “beyond” from which to judge it.

Before elaborating on this, a few less philosophical but no less pivotal points of contact, as well as divergence, should be mentioned. One relates to their modernist stance on myth and archetype. Both directors participated in the rediscovery of the presence of mythic patterns in human experience which we find in many of the great novelists and artists of the early twentieth century (Joseph Conrad, James Joyce, T.S. Eliot, Thomas Mann, and Franz Kafka, for instance). They also appreciated just how important archetypes were in establishing the cinema not only as a popular art, but as a permanent art. The tension between modernist and popular with respect to myth can nonetheless be seen in the ambiguity that both directors displayed about so-called “fairy-tales,” such as *Der Müde Tod*, which Lang in later years tended to dismiss in favor of the kind of expressive realism he took to such perfection in *M* or *Das Testament des Dr. Mabuse* (*The Last Will of Dr. Mabuse*). Hitchcock, for his part, claims in the conversations with Truffaut to have been attracted to German Expressionist cinema because of its closeness to the world of the Brothers Grimm fairy tales. But in the same Truffaut interview, even while discussing the “fablelike quality” of *Rebecca*, he downplays the fairy tale elements in his work in general.⁶ Yet, as Peter Wollen among others has shown, several of Hitchcock’s films (e.g., *North by Northwest*, *Psycho*), reveal a Proppian folk-tale structure,⁷ while even Lang’s most folk-tale inspired films, such as *Das wandernde Bild* (*The Wandering Image*), *Der Müde Tod*, or *Das Indische Grabmal* (*The Hindu Tomb*), display a complexity of plotting strategies and a layering of instances of narrative authority that Hitchcock sought to achieve by quite other means, such as his sudden shifts in point of view and narrative perspective, fully established as early as *Blackmail*, where within the space of four or five minutes of screen time, he can make the audience share the moral points of view of the heroine, the detective, the blackmailer, and finally the relieved but secretly guilty couple. While Lang in his later work gravitated to mythic narratives inspired perhaps by Euripidean tragedy (“hate, murder, and revenge,” from *Die Nibelungen* to *Rancho Notorious*), Hitchcock increasingly relied on the mythic resonances of romance.⁸

Another point of contact is the fact that their deeper understanding of cinema was formed in the “silent” period, and that their work retained features of early cinema throughout. Especially evident is the D.W. Griffith legacy of how to link different action-spaces by bold narrative ellipses, showing a close understanding and appreciation of the American cinema, at a time when Europe still lagged behind.⁹ Together with the use of the dissolve and certain other peculiarities of editing, this use of space is part of a formal vocabulary established in the late 1910s and perfected in the early 1920s. More generally, by retaining the visual syntax of the silent films throughout their careers, both directors, paradoxically, seemed to become more modern and more daring, the longer they stuck to the silent cinema’s essential elements.

Their adherence, for instance, to the so-called “cinema of non-continuity”¹⁰ (to distinguish it from the classical continuity cinema on the one hand, and the Russian montage cinema on the other) greatly contributed to Lang and Hitchcock making the transition to sound in such a brilliantly innovative, distinctive manner, in films like *M*, *Das Testament des Dr. Mabuse*, *Blackmail*, and *Murder!* (the last of which Hitchcock also directed in a German-language version, titled *Mary*).¹¹ The leitmotif use of sound and the emphasis on non-synchronized counterpoint, indeed the almost “material” way of treating sound as a physically separate element, forever seeking and failing to find its proper moral or psychic “embodiment” in the image, is a legacy from early cinema. Working with image, script, intertitles, and the visualization of sound effects, the directors intuitively but creatively applied montage principles to synch sound as well, making them avant-gardists of the talkies well into the 1940s.

Parallels and Non-Convergent Similarities: Hitchcock and Lang in Hollywood

Both Lang and Hitchcock found themselves in Hollywood by the late 1930s, Lang arriving in 1934, Hitchcock in 1939. Each was in fact a “trophy” of David O. Selznick’s European shopping trips,¹² and each had a long-time acquaintance of Eric Pommer, with whom Lang had been working since 1918, and to whose indefatigable co-production efforts Hitchcock indirectly owed his stay at Ufa in 1925, and for whose Mayflower Company he (rather unhappily) directed *Jamaica Inn* in 1939, his last picture in Britain for some thirty years. But despite these common producers (to whom one should add Walter Wanger), there seems to have been little actual contact, and I have found no reference to the two directors having met either professionally or socially in all these years of being in Hollywood.¹³

There is, however, evidence of jealousy and rivalry, at least on the part of Lang: “Fritz hated Hitchcock because he felt that Hitchcock had usurped his title as king of suspense” is what Gene Fowler, Jr., a close friend of Lang’s during three decades, told Patrick McGilligan.¹⁴ It must have been galling for Lang to observe the younger director on his seemingly unstoppable rise during the 1940s and 1950s, while he, Lang, was noting with increasing frustration his own seemingly irreversible downward slide after the false dawn of *Scarlet Street* and the subsequent debacle of Diana Productions. The two directors’ salaries in the 1940s reflected their respective status. Hitchcock, for a time a contract director at Warner Brothers, was making \$250,000 per film, whereas the most Fritz Lang was ever paid for directing a picture in Hollywood was \$100,000, the salary he paid himself as one of the stock-holders of Diana Productions, for *Secret Beyond the Door*, a commercial fiasco.¹⁵ Lang’s usual director’s fee was \$50,000, a pittance by Hollywood standards and embarrassingly little compared to that of even most of the leading actors in his films. So the question of whether Lang and Hitchcock ever stood in a relation of master and disciple to each other must, in light of Lang’s subjective feelings and Hollywood’s “objective” salary-equals-status scale, be answered negatively. On a more metaphorical level, however, one might argue that Hitchcock may have been, in the eyes of Lang, the sorcerer’s apprentice, haunting and surpassing with his skill, wealth, and power the one who thought of himself as the master-magician.

This curious relation of haunting and echoing, surpassing and competing, mirroring and inverting can be given some substance, if one looks at a few of the films the two directors made during the 1940s and 1950s. Certain parallel concerns and complementary themes do emerge, or rather one can conjugate their films across certain shared (or transferred) generic preoccupations. For example, there is the Hitchcockian theme of “the wrong man” which one can find also in Lang’s *Fury*, *You Only Live Once*, and *Beyond a Reasonable Doubt*, the last with the Hitchcockian but also typically Langian twist that the wrong man was the right man all along.¹⁶ In Lang, however, this constellation goes back to one of his earliest films, *Kämpfende Herzen* (*Four Around a Woman*), made in 1921, in which a jealous husband lays all the clues himself that indict his wife of adultery, effectively engineering and initiating the very adultery he was so fearful of finding out.¹⁷ The similar, though inverted logic of *Beyond a Reasonable Doubt*, where Dana Andrews makes sure someone “witnesses” the clues to a murder, in order to detract from the fact that he did in fact commit it, is itself reminiscent of a late Hitchcock variation on the “wrong man” theme, where Richard Blaney, in *Frenzy*, suspected of being the necktie murderer, turns out to be, if not the right man then almost as culpable, when he brutally batters the dead woman’s body with an iron bar, “mistaking” it for the sleeping Rusk, the “real” murderer.

Both directors in the 1940s made anti-Nazi films: Hitchcock features Nazis as the villains in *The Lady Vanishes* and *Foreign Correspondent*, as well as *Saboteur* and *Notorious*, while Lang’s outstanding examples among his anti-Nazi films are *Hangmen also Die*, *Man Hunt*, and *Ministry of Fear* (the last two set mostly in London). The reviewer for *The Nation* wrote a comment about *Man Hunt* that must have been balm for Lang’s wounded pride: “The director, Fritz Lang, seems able to give a few lessons in the technique of suspense even to Alfred Hitchcock, and he has created out of a maze of improbabilities, inaccuracies, and poor performances a really exciting picture.”¹⁸

Ministry of Fear, on the other hand, could almost be seen as a spoof of British Hitchcock. Based on a Graham Greene novel, it might even have started out as Greene spoofing the John Buchan of *The 39 Steps*. In the film version of *The Ministry of Fear*, a typically *noirish* atmosphere and a self-consciously “Expressionist” lighting style were presumed to compensate for the improbabilities of the plotline. As McGilligan writes,

Seton Miller [the writer of the screenplay and also the film’s producer] had finessed a breezy adaptation of the Graham Greene novel, treating the story as Hitchcock might have—glossing over the puzzling clues that didn’t quite add up, the alarming leaps in continuity, the superficial characterizations. Everything was sacrificed to the style and momentum of a slick Hollywood thriller. Graham Greene detested the resulting film. So did Fritz Lang. It was his compulsory imitation of Hitchcock.¹⁹

Similarly, both directors made memorable melodramas in the female paranoia sub-genre: *Rebecca* (1940) by Hitchcock and *Secret Beyond the Door* (1947) by Lang. There, “homage” and “influence” might indeed be the appropriate words, though one-upmanship also comes to mind. In the Bogdanovich-Lang interview book, for instance, Lang says how tremendously impressed he was by *Rebecca*:

You remember that wonderful scene where Judith Anderson talks about Rebecca and shows Joan Fontaine the clothes and fur coats and everything? When I saw this picture (and I'm a very good audience), Rebecca was *there*, I saw her. It was a combination of brilliant direction, brilliant writing, and wonderful acting. And—talking about stealing—I had the feeling that maybe I could do something similar in *Secret Beyond the Door*.²⁰

In the same book, Lang claims that he did not mind directors “stealing” from him, because he saw it as “the sincerest form of flattery,” though this noble sentiment is contradicted by the fact that Lang never forgave Losey for remaking *M*—just as in turn Jean Renoir never forgave Lang for remaking *La Chienne* (*Scarlet Street*, 1945) and *La Bête Humaine* (*Human Desire*, 1954).

More recently, the suggestion has been made that the two directors had a contrasting investment in what are now referred to as “Cold War movies”: *North by Northwest* (1959), *Torn Curtain* (1966), and *Topaz* (1969) have usually been seen as typically anti-communist in both subject and treatment, while *The Big Heat* (1953), *Beyond a Reasonable Doubt*, and *The Thousand Eyes of Dr. Mabuse* (1960) could be read as “liberal” films in an illiberal decade.²¹ This raises the question of just how political these two directors were. In practical terms, as the Lang papers have shown, Lang in Hollywood was an anti-fascist, left-wing liberal, who gave generously to support refugees, and who was not afraid of signing protest statements that could have given him trouble with the studios.²² Hitchcock, as far as I am aware, kept his political views to himself during the 1940s. Arguing from the films, Pascal Bonitzer has made a case that Lang and Hitchcock are “political” filmmakers, in the sense that both were as suspicious of the masks of decorum and rectitude put on by dictatorships as they were wary of the “carnavalesque” rebel element in crowds, mobs, and onlookers. *Metropolis* and *The Lodger*, *Fury* and *Sabotage*, *While the City Sleeps*, and *The Wrong Man* are all distrustful of the energy and effervescence of the community when on the move.²³ This would bring us closer to the theme of falsehood and faking as ambiguous indexes of truth, already mentioned above, and so prominent in films otherwise as different as *Fury* is from *North by Northwest*. Pushing the idea of a competitive transfer of genre and motif, it would be intriguing to pursue other non-convergent parallels, such as seeing *While the City Sleeps* (1956), with its opening scream and its scrawled lipstick message “Ask Mother,” as Lang’s *Psycho* (1960), the underrated *House by the River* (1950) as Lang’s *Vertigo* (1958), and *The Blue Gardenia* (1953) as Lang’s *Rear Window* (1954), a pairing relevant for other reasons besides the fact that the villain in each is played by Raymond Burr.²⁴

To balance these potentially parallel tracks, one should, however, also point out some contrasts or inversions. The centrality of the Mabuse figure in Lang is not matched by Hitchcock.²⁵ The man with the missing finger in *The 39 Steps* can be seen as a Mabuse figure, and so too Gavin Elster in *Vertigo*, but these figures pale in comparison to the metaphysical ambitions of Lang’s “disguise artist” Mabuse, and the films do not give them nearly Mabuse’s narrative prominence. Hitchcock’s stories, unlike Lang’s, are freighted towards understanding the ordinary hero in extraordinary circumstances. And Hitchcock’s focus on female characters is a strategy rarely and

not always successfully deployed by Lang; therefore he did not share with Hitchcock a reputation as a master of one of Hollywood's most important genres, the woman's picture. What the thriller was for Hitchcock, *film noir* became for Lang: a genre he could give his own distinctive stamp. Hitchcock felt comfortable with comedy, which cannot be said of Lang. Hitchcock was a showman, Lang was pathologically secretive, and more a schemer behind the scenes than a manipulator up front, as Hitchcock was in his personal appearances. Hitchcock used stars and made actors into stars, while Lang always remained uncomfortable with the Hollywood star system, and often used (had to use?) uncharismatic or even wooden actors.

Europe-Hollywood-Europe: Crossover Populists or Disguise Artists?

Both directors were profoundly European and, I would argue, accented their European-ness by their move to Hollywood, insofar as it permeated their take on make-believe, showmanship, and the realm of appearance and spectacle. This manifests itself, again rather paradoxically, in their attitude to popular entertainment and mass taste. When working in their respective native film industries, they were committed to popular culture and mass-audiences in ways that were unusual for flagship auteur-directors of a national cinema. In other words, they had "taken seriously" the importance even for Europe of popular culture in the twentieth century, at a time when being on the side of the popular still meant taking risks. Consider Lang, in the 1920s lambasted by the critics for lack of originality, charged with employing the most hide-bound dramatic clichés, using folk tales and pulp material, cutting ideas for stories out of the newspapers, and generally pandering to comic book tastes. And recall the reviews Hitchcock received in Britain from establishment magazines such as *Sight and Sound* in the 1940s and 1950s, after he had left for the United States. The notoriously dismissive notice on *Vertigo* by Penelope Huston was indicative of a wider attitude to American Hitchcock. It was against this dismissal that Robin Wood wrote his original book on Hitchcock, explicitly claiming for the director "serious artist status" by arguing, with references to Shakespeare and Mozart, that he is a universal artist who can address a popular and a sophisticated audience.²⁶

But might even Lang have been tongue in cheek or played on a double register when it came to presenting himself as both serious artist and popular entertainer? The German Lang did try to hold on to the label "artist" when he let himself be seen in public or had society columnists take pictures of his domestic environment, but he relied on Thea von Harbou, notorious novelist of potboilers, to come up with the good scripts. The American Lang reputedly became enamored with things American, such as cowboy shirts and square dancing, crime fiction, comics, and city grit. But he also had T.W. Adorno and his wife Gretel over for dinner, and maintained more than a professional relation with Bertolt Brecht and Hanns Eisler. Likewise, Hitchcock was a serious collector of art and knew about modern dance. They were crossovers, before the term existed, in their embrace of the popular in their work, coupled with their awareness of and active interest in modernism. This, I believe, gives an added dimension to their critique of appearances, their sometimes sadistic pleasure in always pointing out the false bottoms of their story situations. At the same time, as artists masquerading as entertainers, they both gave perfect impersonations of

the bourgeois as gentleman, perhaps the better to put others off the scent as to their subversive conformism and their hyper-orderly subversiveness.

The same crossover paradox holds for their relation to the cultural status of their story-material. Even as they appeared to become more indiscriminate in their use of pulp material, with Lang remaking *The Indian Tomb* and reviving *Dr. Mabuse*, and Hitchcock seemingly abandoning the sophistication of the Cary Grant movies for the B-movie trappings of *Psycho* and gothic horror of *The Birds*, both found defenders who passionately argued for the seriousness of purpose and the respect each director had for his lowly material. And it is this reevaluation of their work in the 1960s that makes relevant the choice of comparing the two in the first place, by claiming a philosophical dimension. This radical reevaluation, as we know, did not happen in the United States, nor in their home countries, but in France.²⁷

Hitchcock and Lang in France in the 1950s and 1960s

While both directors, after the war and well into the 1960s, had critics who complained that their American work was not as good as their former European films, their work began a dramatic new life when French admirers claimed the exact opposite, namely that their American work was superior to what they had done in Europe.²⁸ This reevaluation was, of course, part of the more general reevaluation of the American cinema, thanks to André Bazin and the *Cahiers du Cinéma* critics, but perhaps none benefitted more from this change in attitude than Lang and Hitchcock. Both directors became not just canonized but paradigmatic: they helped define what was specific about cinema, and the term that came to signify them was "pure cinema." By adopting what the French meant by this idea, Hitchcock himself began to subtly rewrite his own filmmaking biography, giving substantial tribute to the German cinema of the 1920s in forming his own notion of pure cinema. What do we understand by pure cinema, in relation to Hitchcock?

The French Hitchcock, besides insistently dealing with themes such as guilt and grace, is above all a filmmaker concerned with the primacy of vision and the deceptiveness of appearances. The reflexivity with which he endows all his films, according to this view, indicates a deep commitment to the expressive as well as semantic possibilities of the medium, to such an extent that the films ultimately had one topic only: the cinema itself. French Hitchcock, in other words, was less the universalist he later became for *Movie* and Robin Wood than the high modernist of cinematic specificity.²⁹

Lang, too, in the 1950s remained not only a German director with an American passport. Thanks in part to a seminal article on his style by Lotte Eisner that appeared in Paris in 1947,³⁰ his reputation began to undergo a sea-change, and he became for all intents and purposes a French director. Not in the sense that he "returned" to France from Hollywood like Jean Renoir or Max Ophuls; rather, the reputation his films acquired in Parisian cinéophile circles made his work, just like Hitchcock's, the very touchstone of a certain idea of what was cinema. Eric Rohmer, Alexandre Astruc, Jacques Rivette, Jean-Luc Godard, and François Truffaut were Lang's admirers among the filmmakers, and their respect was echoed in important articles by Jean Douchet, Philippe Demonsablon, Michel Mourlet, and Gérard Legrand in the otherwise rival

journals *Cahiers du Cinéma*, *Positif*, and *Présence du Cinéma* on Lang as the master of *mise-en-scène* and of “pure cinema.”³¹

For Raymond Bellour, Noël Burch, and Thierry Kuntzel, writing in late 1960s and 1970s, Lang’s work became exemplary not so much because it illustrated certain problems in film theory but because it helped define the agenda of what these problems were: questions of cinematic space, of figuration, of off-screen space and the cinematic imaginary, the relation of image to narrative, the importance of point-of-view.³² To Burch, for instance, Lang was an avant-garde director, whose work exhibits strategies of formal permutation in the treatment of space, narrative, and editing that, given other circumstances, might have taken the cinema in completely different directions: away from novelistic forms of story-telling, or illusionistic representation of action, to “abstract cinema.”³³ One of the strongest claims for Lang’s preeminence in this vein came from Bellour: “For today, with Fritz Lang entering legend in France, far from America which never really fathomed him, and from his native Germany which was unable to reclaim him, the audiences flocking to the Cinémathèque are coming more or less consciously to admire the man who, in his work, has envisaged film as the ultimate metaphor.”³⁴

In the works of Lang and Hitchcock, then, a key axiom of French auteurism could thus become manifest. The idea of the “ultimate metaphor” also implied that the more trashy the material, the more the film was the triumph of form over content, a tension that embodied the victory of the auteur over the studio system and of the artist over the world of matter. Sometimes the contrast was pushed to the point where incommensurability between form and content became the constitutive paradox underpinning and holding in place this idea of pure cinema. The elevation of the two directors as not only pantheon directors but as creators totally in control of their creations made them celebrated as implacable perfectionists. In the French context of the late 1950s, such perfectionism was no doubt also a projection, based on a transference relationship with the idol, nurtured initially by critics about to turn directors themselves. They were therefore vitally interested in what it means to have control, to take control, and to keep control in a business in which the director’s decisions and intentions usually extend only to a small part of the production process in the machinery that is the film industry. The *auteur* theory in this respect is a control-freak theory, and both Lang and Hitchcock perfectly fit this description.

Hitchcock and Lang: Their Reputation Since

This extraordinary reputation of both directors underwent another change in the 1980s, when Hitchcock was, as it were, adopted by Anglo-American film studies. Thanks partly to the rise of psychoanalytic film theory, Hitchcock’s extraordinarily complex female heroines and tortured relation to his (blond) stars, feminist film theory began to focus strongly on Hitchcock. From Laura Mulvey’s “Visual Pleasure” article in 1975 to Raymond Bellour’s Hitchcock essays in *Camera Obscura* in the early 1980s, from Stephen Heath’s long piece on “Narrative Space” in *Screen* to Mary Ann Doane’s Hitchcock chapter in *The Desire to Desire* and Tania Modleski’s *The Women Who Knew Too Much*, Hitchcock rapidly became the very epitome of Hollywood and his films the paradigmatic examples of “the regime of the look.”³⁵ Given the stress on

sight and vision, and the notion that voyeurism/fetishism (the relation of seeing/seen) were the constitutive elements of filmic identification and subject positioning, French Hitchcock's modernism of "pure cinema" became "gendered" and deconstructed accordingly. Anglo-American Hitchcock was recast across the ideological critique of the dominant codes of classical Hollywood, with his work paradoxically both exposed and valorized by the anti-patriarchal agenda that took this post-auteur Hollywood as its object of study.

Not so in the case of Lang. Although Jean Douchet and Bellour here fulfilled crucial mediating roles, because they wrote acutely and with great intellectual force on both Lang and Hitchcock, the Lang reinterpretations of the 1980s, such as they were, took place predominantly around the revival of "film noir," notably in *Women in Film Noir*, edited in 1978 by Ann Kaplan (who was to go on to edit a source-book on Lang in 1981).³⁶ Another study, edited by Stephen Jenkins, *The Image and the Look*, as well as a book in French by the Scotsman Reynold Humphries, *Fritz Lang, Cinéaste américain*, relied heavily on the French Lang of "pure cinema" and vision.³⁷ However, they attempted to deconstruct this "Lang-auteur" effect by demonstrating that the repressed term in Lang's American films concerned the position of women. Notably in the films noir (e.g., *The Blue Gardenia*, *The Big Heat*, *The Woman in the Window*, *Scarlet Street*), the woman's shifting place in the social symbolic of patriarchy in Lang's films was at once the narrative motor and the reason for the impossible resolution. It explained that sense of the anti-climactic, unresolved, derisively ironic tone so often hovering around the endings of Lang's American films. Yet these books, however acute in their detailed readings, seemed at the conceptual level mainly to amplify, but not substantially modify, the feminist discussions that had earlier focussed on Hitchcock, and continued to do so throughout the 1980s. Also, for many years—possibly until the biography by Patrick McGilligan at the end of the 1990s—no Lang scholarship of a more historical, empirical, or philological kind emerged that could be compared to the scholarly work on all aspects of Hitchcock's life, films, contributors, sources, and influences, which properly got under way after his death in 1980.³⁸ Obviously, there are few Lang films as popular as *North by Northwest*, *Psycho*, or *The Birds*, and the Anglo-American neglect of Lang may have to do with his inevitable identification as the most prominent and problematic exponent of Weimar cinema, but the discrepancy of scholarly attention up to the end of the century was nonetheless striking.³⁹

Another reason why the Lang reception in Anglo-American film studies may have differed from that in France was that whereas Hitchcock had found his Truffaut, whose sympathetic eye and ear gave the director a chance to fashion himself in the image of his admirers, Lang only found Peter Bogdanovich, whom he finally did not trust as a filmmaker, so that he used him as he had tried to use all his interviewees before and after: as a reluctant messenger of his own preferred self-presentation. This was also the dilemma facing Lotte Eisner, who felt too close, and also too loyal, to make her questions to Lang more probing, and whose sensibility in the end was not "technical" enough to elicit the sort of close analysis that Truffaut elicited from Hitchcock, and which appears in the Bogdanovich book only in brief flashes, such as the one cited above about *Rebecca*. In France, it is true, Lang also found Jean-Luc Godard, who scripted a beautiful part for him in *Le Mepris* (*Contempt*) and mock-interviewed him in a television feature called *The Baby and the Dinosaur*. Tom Gunning's critical and

sympathetic study of Lang constitutes something of a summa of all these books and articles that place Lang's work at the heart of the twentieth century. While Gunning thus gives Lang his due as *the* philosopher-artist-allegorist of modernity, alongside Walter Benjamin or Bertolt Brecht, the writer who perhaps could best do justice to both Lang and Hitchcock from a similarly broad cultural perspective, and with an equally acute, cinematically literate intelligence, is Raymond Bellour. His many articles on both directors tantalizingly promise such an analysis, and he even occasionally hints at the need for (and his temptation to embark on) it.⁴⁰ In the meantime, we must content ourselves with the biographical detective work of Patrick McGilligan, so far the only professional biographer in the United States to have undertaken extensive empirical and critical research on both Lang and Hitchcock.

Sphinx and Satyrs from Slovenia: Ljubljana Hitchcock and Ljutomer Lang

There is another parallel, hitherto not commented on to my knowledge, which involves the reevaluation of both Hitchcock and Lang in the 1990s. This time it stands under the sign of Slovenia and its capital. The Ljubljana Hitchcock, by which I mean the post-feminist, New-Lacanian readings of Slavoj Žižek, Mladen Dolar, Alenka Zupančič, and Miran Bozovič, is the better known.⁴¹ What is less well-known is that there exists also a Ljubljana (or more precisely, Ljutomer) Lang. As early as 1984, two Slovene art historians and cinema scholars, Jure Mikuz and Zdenko Vrdlovec, published documents relating to Fritz Lang's 1915 convalescence during the First World War in a rural villa in Ljutomer, Slovenia, as the guests of a Dr. Karol Grossmann.⁴² There, Lang was keeping himself busy as a sculptor, making terracotta objects, garden ornaments, and pottery figures decorated with human or humanoid heads like gargoyles and satyrs, among them also self-portraits.⁴³ These fantastic, distorted, and none-too-obliquely phallic figures that Lang produced between 1915 and 1916 in Ljutomer prior to any filmmaking, and now permanently on show at the Slovene national cinematheque in Ljubljana, are not as unconnected with the Ljubljana Hitchcock as they might at first seem.

In *Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Lacan but Were Afraid to Ask Hitchcock*, Žižek has given us the fullest version of the Ljubljana Hitchcock, but already in *The Sublime Object of Ideology* and *Looking Awry* there is a drastic re-casting of the feminist Hitchcock, recoding and thus returning to sender the accusations of Hitchcock's cinema as "phallic."⁴⁴ Translating the complaint literally into "that which sticks out," Žižek argued that despite all the Proppian, Greimasian, and other "structuralist" accounts of Hitchcock's films, they are actually quintessentially post-structuralist. What makes them special and unique is that their structures hinge on a contingent, material detail, an object that functions like a blot, stain, or blur, sometimes, though not always the one which Hitchcock himself has called the MacGuffin.

Generally speaking, therefore, objects in Hitchcock relate, on the one hand, to the nature of the enigma that triggers the narrative and keeps it going, and on the other to what defines the relationship between the heroes' drives and their place in the social order. Objects, in other words, condense the subject's rebellion against the social order, as well as his or her impossible reconciliation with it, as manifest in

the formation of the couple and the (impossible) heterosexual love relationship, both central to the ideological function of the American cinema, if one follows the psycho-analytic paradigm.

According to Žižek, one can go further and divide these objects into three kinds. First, there is the MacGuffin, the “pure” or “empty” signifier, the formal rupture, merely signifying in the most general and abstract manner that something is at stake, and thus that something needs to get the story rolling. It can be the secret clause in a contract, a reel of microfilm, a tune or a mathematical equation that needs to be memorized. It can also be a verbal-visual pun, endlessly passed back and forth, such as the “cross,” “criss-cross” or “double-cross” that migrates between Bruno and Guy Haynes in *Strangers on a Train* from the moment Bruno crosses his legs and the tip of his shoe touches that of Guy. Secondly, there is the small but crucial object, what one might call the “giveaway object,” that embroils the characters in each other’s fantasies and puts them at the mercy of a corrupt or powerless paternal authority. This giveaway object is an object of circulation or exchange, disseminating too much knowledge that must be contained, retrieved, or returned: a key (in *Notorious*), a cigarette lighter (in *Strangers*), a wedding ring (in *Shadow of a Doubt*), a tie-pin (in *Frenzy*). Finally, there are the massively mysterious objects, grotesquely disproportionate representations of unattainable fusion and hence annihilation. These are female objects, or rather, female presences at once too close and too far, like the Egyptian goddess in the British Museum in *Blackmail*, the birds in *The Birds*, the giant human Statue of Liberty (in *Saboteur*), the Mount Rushmore Presidents’ faces (in *North by Northwest*), and the tanker at the end of the Baltimore street (in *Marnie*). Three kinds of narrative correspond to the objects: first there are the romance (or fairy tale) plots of heterosexual initiation (the reluctant, screwball couples, often shackled to each other, as in *The 39 Steps*, *Saboteur*, *Mr. and Mrs. Smith*). Then, there are the paranoia narratives, told from the perspective of the passionate female, caught between two differently unreliable, differently untrustworthy males, from *The Lodger*, *Blackmail*, and *Sabotage to Suspicion*, *Notorious*, and *North by Northwest*. And third, there are the narratives centered on an obsessive, ultimately murderous male, blocked by a maternal superego: Uncle Charlie in *Shadow of a Doubt*, Bruno in *Strangers*, Norman in *Psycho*, Jeff in *Rear Window*, Scottie in *Vertigo*, Rusk in *Frenzy*.

If I am summarizing Žižek’s Hitchcockian schemas so extensively, it is for several reasons. On the one hand, Žižek’s repositioning of Hitchcock as a postmodernist adopts a typically 1990s perspective on the debates in film studies between classical, auteurist, and postclassical/postmodern cinema, summed up by Žižek as “conflict and resolution,” “excess and subversion,” and “the authorless, impersonal yet highly self-referential text” respectively. But the twist is Žižek’s claim that Hitchcock has since his death in 1980 increasingly functioned not as an object of study for, but as a mirror to film studies and its contemporary obsessions. Commenting, by self-referentially double-backing on his own contributions to the unabatedly thriving Hitchcock industry in academia, he diagnoses the logic behind the various hermeneutic moves and shifts in reputation I have charted above as the blatant effects of transference. This transference has made of Hitchcock himself a monstrous figure, at once too close and too far, a (maternal) superego blur as much as a super-male godlike “subject supposed to know.”⁴⁵

In other words, according to this model, Hitchcock occupies the place not so much of the author analyzed as of the (psycho)analyst, listening impassively to the interpretative talking cure. His famous silhouette getting to look more and more like those giant faces just mentioned, he is always already there: in place and in control when the interpreting critic arrives with yet another definitive or diabolically clever reading (especially those of Žižek and his Ljubljana colleagues). The various stages of Hitchcock's reception from the 1950s to the 1990s and beyond thus chart only partly the inner, autonomous dynamic of film studies, as scholars refine, redefine, or overturn the reigning critical paradigms. What drives the Hitchcock hermeneutic mills would be an impulse altogether more philosophically serious, namely the desire to overcome, across transference and mirror doubling, the deadlocks of ontological groundlessness: from "pure cinema" to "pure deconstruction"—and beyond.⁴⁶

Too Close and Too Big: The Close-Up as Blot and Blur

Do Žižek's Möbius-strip contortions perhaps allow us to spin another turn also on the question why it was Hitchcock and not Lang who was afforded this extraordinary Sphinx-like status? In the face of what Žižek calls the "unrestrained madness" of interpretation that has enveloped Hitchcock, why did Lang, despite the revival of *film noir* as everyone's favourite genre, not encourage the same transference relationship for the film studies community that Hitchcock still does and that Lang briefly did for the French *Cahiers* critics of the 1960s? Or to reverse the question, what would it mean to give Lang the sort of reading that Žižek provides for Hitchcock, which is at once critical-hermeneutic, historical-symptomatic, and meta-critical philosophical? Having undertaken something along these lines for Lang's German period elsewhere,⁴⁷ here I merely want to venture some further suggestions, beginning with the pragmatic question: what would correspond in Lang to Žižek's *sinthome*, that is, the peculiar relation of object-subject in the field of vision? What would be the Langian blur or anamorphic stain, that bit of the non-symbolizable real, on which the authorial coherence of the themes, in both their repetitions and variations, finally rests, according to Žižek and the New Lacanians? These questions are interesting not only because of the discovery of Lang's Ljutomer sculptures with their bits "sticking out." Given how elaborate, geometrical, and ruled by infinitely intricate symmetries the work of Lang is, such an over-elaboration of "structure" as one finds in his films would have to, if we follow Žižek directly, imply, or at any rate "hinge on," a series of *sinthomes*, elements that in their facticity or contingency, their there-ness and thing-ness, defy all attempts to integrate them into the circuits of symbolic exchange: in other words, they, too, must "stick out."

In Lang, just as in Hitchcock, there are plenty of magical objects that have to be lost and found, that are telltale signs of obsession or betrayal (the hand-stitched cross that betrays Siegfried in *Siegfried's Tod*, the arrow-shaped hatpin of Joan Bennett in *Man Hunt*, or the broach owned by Arthur Kennedy's murdered wife and then spotted by him on Marlene Dietrich in *Rancho Notorious*). But the element of possible anamorphosis (both literal and metaphorical) that I want to focus on in Lang is his use of the close-up, not least because it is another stylistic feature from silent cinema, retained and creatively deployed by Lang and Hitchcock throughout their careers. The close-

up as a distinctive filmic technique has, of course, been exhaustively analyzed by critics and scholars such as Pascal Bonitzer, James Naremore, Jacques Aumont, and Philippe Dubois. Barry Salt, Tom Gunning, Dominique Nasta, and Yuri Tsivian among others have studied it from a historical perspective, examining such things as how the autonomous insert shot of early cinema became integrated and narrativized, how close-ups function in juxtaposition with the Kuleshov effect or when set in a series, as in German cross-section films or Russian montage films, and so on. From a more aesthetic vantage point (regarding questions of scale, space, point of view), the close-up has been commented on by just about every film theorist from Rudolf Arnheim and Siegfried Kracauer onwards, with writers from Bela Balázs to Gilles Deleuze analyzing in particular the notion of the “faciality” of close-ups, whether depicting an actual face or not.

What is a close-up: a metaphor, a metonymy, or a figure of absence? If there has been no shortage of discussions around the close-up in classical Hollywood, theorists are far from unanimous. In the three options just given, the close-up is seen in semiotic-semantic terms, oscillating between being a supplement of sense, a clarification of sense, or causing a lack of sense, insofar as, in its insert mode, the close-up destroys meaning and context, as it ruptures space, time, and narrative.⁴⁸ Instead of choosing between these several possibilities, I want to invoke the definitions given by Pascal Bonitzer. He once aptly described certain close-ups as the “fainting-fits” of representation (in Griffith), and on another occasion, argued that the close-up is both a revolutionary and a terrorist in the field of cinema: a revolutionary, in that a close-up reverses the hierarchies, and is opposed to realism, to good sense, to democracy and the classical; and a terrorist, because of its violence, and because it marks the highest point of ambivalence between beauty and horror, attraction and repulsion.⁴⁹

Again, I cannot even begin to review these arguments in detail, or test how they refer to Lang and Hitchcock,⁵⁰ except to underline a distinction that I extrapolate from Bonitzer and the others mentioned, a distinction between the close-up as a formal, analytical figure (insert shot) provoking a detachment from the surrounding space and externalizing the point of view, and the close-up as a potentially anamorphic figure (the extreme close-up when faces or part-objects are depicted), provoking an uncanny effect, because of the ambiguous location of the implied gaze, often not marked as external and sometimes clearly “impossible” if meant to be internal.

My contention, however, would be that by comparing the close-ups in Hitchcock and in Lang, now on the basis of Žižek’s Hitchcockian taxonomies, the result might blur the distinction just made. On the other hand, it would bring Lang closer to the Ljubljana Hitchcock, because it redefines for Lang two other features noted by Žižek’s classification of objects in Hitchcock. One would be that instead of having the MacGuffin as an empty signifier circulate through and drive the narrative, as in Hitchcock, a Lang film in its entirety might be built as a MacGuffin, in the sense of a construction doubly slung across a chasm and a void. Another point would be that next to oversized statues such as giant nostrils carved into rock or impassively looking Buddhas (of which similar versions can be found in Lang, e.g., in *Die Spinnen* [*The Spiders*], *Moonfleet*, *Das Indische Grabmal*), or the giveaway objects, such as keys and lighter serving as the lure, the passage to the non-symbolizable real (also present in Lang, as we have seen, as symbolic tokens), there are the extreme close-ups that

chiefly represent the empty signifiers and disproportions of scale and size, traversing a Lang film in the way that objects do in a Hitchcock film. In other words, in Lang, the close-ups should be added to the list and types of objects, rather than shots, because they are often handled like material presences that function not as views, but intransitively, as objects.

This is especially evident in those close-ups that, because of non-continuity structuring the visual field, seem more like insert shots. Rather than conforming to the plot-motivated, smoothly integrated close-ups aligned along the axis of a point-of-view shot or a glance-object shot, such an isolation of details as we find it so frequently in Lang is reminiscent of early cinema. Examples of carefully staged, ambiguous non-continuity include the famous shots of hands entering the frame, first analyzed by Jacques Rivette in the early 1960s.⁵¹ Note the oddly angled framing of the desk-top, the hand, and the revolver in the opening scene of *The Big Heat*, a shot either perceived as enigmatic, rebus-like, or as materially opaque to the point of illegibility. What in any case becomes evident is that if it is a point-of-view shot, it is from the point of view of a dead man. Consider also the shot of Peter Lorre in *M*, looking in the mirror and distorting his face into a grimace. As the camera closes in, one loses the sense of orientation, feeling a sort of nausea as the distorted features look at us with the same disgust that the child-murderer looks at himself. Other examples can be found in *Fury* and *You Only Live Once*, where a pointed gun or the smoke from a gunshot pointed at the camera not only threatens the spectator but the coherence of the filmic space and the reality-status of the sequences that follow. One can usefully compare this to the climactic shot in *Spellbound* when Leo G. Carroll aims his revolver at Ingrid Bergman, and then at the screen. This apparent point-of-view shot, followed by a blank frame, is so disorienting because it is a shot-in-the-eye shot, creating the impossible spectatorial vantage point. Hitchcock may well have remembered several films from the earliest period of cinema, for instance, as they occur in Williamson's *The Big Swallow* (1901), Edwin Porter's *The Great Train Robbery* (1902), or D.W. Griffith's *An Unseen Enemy* (1912): famous insert shots, from ambiguous or impossible points of view, "bending" cinematic space, or creating an "anamorphosis in time" as one is trying to "place" such shots in their logical sequence.

Perhaps the most perceptive comment made on the typical Lang close-up, however, does not come from a French critic-turned-director, such as Godard, Rohmer, Rivette, or Bonitzer, but from a novelist, speaking through one of his characters. Franz Pökler, the Fritz Lang fan in Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow*, is clearly drawn to the dynamic of fragment and flow, the violence and terror of the close-up that lies at the heart of several of Lang's German films. A scientist who during the last years of the Nazi Regime worked on Hitler's secret weapon, the V-2 rocket system, Pökler is being debriefed by his American captors shortly after the collapse in April 1945, when he begins to ruminate, recalling the Weimar years "through inflation and depression." The "*Zeitgeist* . . . came to have a human face attached to it, *natürlich* that of the actor Rudolf Klein-Rogge whom Pökler idolized and wanted to be like." Rudolf Klein-Rogge, it will be remembered, was Lang's *Dr. Mabuse*, his Attila the Hun in *Die Nibelungen*, Rotwang the scientist in *Metropolis*, and Haghi the master spy in *Spione*.

The most intriguing part of Pökler's testimony is not his identification with Klein-Rogge as such, but the way Pökler's comments evoke the extraordinary climate of

violence that emanates from Lang's films, when there is in fact surprisingly little violence shown, at any rate in the German films. In the combination of close-up and face, of close-up *as* face, and the face as uncanny and violent, Pynchon's hero accurately grasps the disorienting, anamorphic quality of these moments in Lang, for instance when watching *Die Nibelungen*:

Pökler kept falling asleep, waking to images that for half a minute he could make no sense of at all—a close-up of a face? a forest? the scales of a dragon? a battle scene? Often enough it resolved into the features of Rudolf Klein-Rogge, ancient oriental thanatomanic Attila, head shaved except for a top-knot, bead-strung, raving with grandiloquent gestures and those enormous bleak eyes. . . . Pökler would nod back into sleep with bursts of destroying beauty there for his dreams to work on, speaking barbaric gutturals for the silent mouths.⁵³

In his somnambulist, mesmerized state, Pökler comes to instructive conjectures. Estranged through magnification or an unusual angle that makes him lose the coordinates of size, scale, and perspective, the close-ups unsettle Pökler because they locate his eye at once too close and too far away, leaving his mind without appropriate cognitive mapping. They become materialized, illegible without being incomprehensible, until he manages to refamiliarize them thanks to the paternal—or as both Balázs and Žižek might argue, monstrous maternal—face of Rudolf Klein-Rogge, to which he responds mimetically, uttering gutturals like a baby. The impression of simultaneous violence and vulnerability comes from the nakedness with which the framing and editing exposes the act of representation as an interference, an incision similar to a surgical operation.⁵⁴ It is as if Lang's cinema was a constant reminder of the violence of exposure done to things made visible when representing them, to which objects respond by "looking at us," that is to say, by becoming faces, even if we cannot locate them as bodies in space. Rarely attributable to a character's point of view in the fiction, they install another look altogether. On the level of narration, these grimace shots suggest that only an externalized, non-psychological *mise-en-scène* can contain the fantastic world that, seen by the camera, exists right next to that of human perception, always ready to disown it.⁵⁵

Beyond Distance and Proximity

What Pökler perceives in Lang's close-ups, then, is a hesitation between registers, chiefly those of distance and proximity. He "fantasizes" not only because he is either too close or too far, but because he is both at the same time. This inscription not only of multiple points of view and planes of vision, as in Cubism, but of multiple relations of scale on the same surface or three-dimensional object may have been what Ljubljana or Ljutomer brought to Lang as he was sculpting his figures in clay to wile away his days of convalescence. These anamorphic depiction of faces, which one hesitates to call distortions, one literally encounters in *Die Nibelungen*, first in Alberich's underground caves, and then at the court of the Huns, as well as in *Dr. Mabuse's* masks and Cara Carozza's stage props, and also later, in *Metropolis*, at the Yoshiwara night club, and in the Cathedral "Dance of Death" figures. In each case,

the faces introduce an oblique angle, a gothic perspective, and an uncanny point of view. Resisting the wish to be either contemplated or scrutinized, the look they return is one that changes the space their gaze encompasses, because it forces the mind to construct a different field of vision altogether, without quite knowing whether to include or exclude the viewing subject.

Thus, it does not matter if such shots are theorized as the “absent one” of Lacan’s Gaze, or thought of more generally as momentarily suspending our habitual perceptual and cognitive adjustments when “perceiving” size, scale, volume, and their relations to each other. What is crucial is that the close-up in Lang’s *mise-en-scène* does not simply regulate or conflate distance and proximity: it introduces a “beyond distance and proximity.” In effect, it asks: who looks, and what looks back when one looks, and what happens in the gap of those moments of not knowing whether the look is a look or a blind look that sees through me?

Lang’s editing and framing, in other words, become identified with a non-returnable look, the equivalent of the blank stare, but now not the blank stare *in* the film, as much as the blank stare *of* the film. This would ratchet up by one more notch the more familiar effects of retrospective revision of perception and understanding, through re-framing of a fragment or a partial view, so familiar in the directors’ *mise-en-scène*, introducing another of those anamorphic (cognitive) moments common to both. In Lang’s *You Only Live Once*, for instance, there is a scene where we wait for the verdict of Henry Fonda’s trial, and Lang cuts to the newspaper office, where the banner headline reads “Eddy Taylor Freed.” The camera then tracks back to reveal two further banner headlines: “Eddy Taylor: Hung Jury,” and “Eddy Taylor Found Guilty.” As we are regretfully revising our relief and rectifying our initial mistake, the camera inexorably tracks forward until it frames “Eddy Taylor Found Guilty” and our hopes seem cruelly, even sadistically dashed. In Hitchcock, one thinks of the United Nation scene in *North by Northwest* where the real Mr. Townsend seems to register shock upon seeing the photo that Roger Thornhill shows him, until we realize the real cause of his astonished expression: a knife in his back. Such an effect of reframing can also be aural. An example in late Hitchcock would be the trial of Richard Blaney in *Frenzy*, where a policeman on guard obligingly opens the swing doors of the courtroom, so that we, the absent audience, can hear the judge’s summing up, only for the policeman to suddenly let go of the doors again, leaving us with the anxiety of probably missing the verdict.⁵⁶ Both directors are masters of these and other such effects, which can be aligned with what Žižek calls “the retroactive conversion of contingency into necessity,”⁵⁷ except that in Lang, even the dreaded satisfaction afforded by “necessity” is ultimately withheld. This, I would argue, has wider implications.

While the Hitchcock vision system, as has been claimed time and again, revolves around the point-of-view shot (or as here, the point of audition), sometimes initiated or concluded by a direct look into the camera, the moments in Lang that unsettle vision are those of the watcher watched. Thus, a shot is made uncanny by one’s realization—often too late, one is tempted to add—that what one is looking at is also being seen by someone else, or has already been seen by someone else. This sense of being ambushed by another look is profoundly disturbing and disruptive. Because of an uncanniness rarely acknowledged by the film’s action, its effect is somewhat different from the more ironic *mise-en-scène* of apparently similar scenes

of the watcher watched in Hitchcock, where the viewer is often compensated with a humorous or erotic pay-off. Such is the case in the scene in *The Birds* when Melanie in the motorboat has to duck in order to avoid being seen spying on Mitch, as Mitch focuses his binoculars on her, or the shot of Thornhill's car leaving the Townsend residence without having convinced the police, taken from one of the villain's point of view, masquerading as the gardener, giving us the security of knowing that our hero was right after all.⁵⁸

However, the Langian "watcher watched," for instance in *Dr. Mabuse* or *Spione*, does seem to be related to two prominent and frequently cited features of Hitchcock's *mise-en-scène*: the elaborate tracking shots in or out (as in *Frenzy*), and especially the long crane shots up or down. In *Notorious*, the camera is gradually closing in on Alicia's hand clutching the key to the wine-cellar. There is the scene in *Shadow of a Doubt*, when the camera focuses on the young Charlie's hand on the banister as she descends the stairs, or the scene where the camera suddenly cranes up into the ceiling of the public library, at the point that Charlie the niece finally has proof positive before her eyes about Charlie the uncle's identity as the serial murderer of merry widows. Equally well-known are the sudden high-angle shots in *Vertigo*, and especially the Arbogast murder on the staircase in *Psycho*. Analyzing the latter, Žižek has drawn attention to these high-angle, God's eye point-of-view shots as at once confirming the impossibility of viewer identification with either the detective or the killer, taking us "behind" all possible human perception and vision, rather than "beyond," as I argued for Lang. By placing us in the gap "between" any human field of vision, it generates an anxiety that hints at the unbearable experience of the absolute point of view. Gradually detaching what starts as a character's subjective point of view from any diegetically plausible perspective while refusing to cut, Hitchcock's camera makes us aware of an all-seeing and—in relation to any subjectivity—blind gaze, of which a character's inquisitive look or even punishingly aggressive point of view are merely the inadequate impersonations and mockingly ironic or murderously hysterical stand-ins.

While these scenes in Hitchcock are relatively rare and flamboyantly executed, they are more subdued and often barely perceptible in Lang, but once one becomes aware, all the more devastating. *Beyond a Reasonable Doubt*, *While the City Sleeps*, and even *Clash by Night* have several such moments, which to the inattentive eye could be mere glitches in the continuity. By contrast, the scenes of watchers watched, and the retrospective revision of our trust (or suspicion!), when the camera reframes a scene and with it reverses the very ontology of the frame we have been taken as reality are irretrievably disconcerting. The shock of such forced attribution of retroactive causality constitutes the peculiar fascination of Lang's cinema, but it also accounts for its air of remoteness and even of calculated coldness. While we think we are stealing a (forbidden) glance at something, or being admitted to a world normally closed to us, Lang suddenly lets us know that this world only exists for our benefit, that it is only staged for our eyes. This effect, so similar to that in Hitchcock and yet so different, is finally less voyeuristic than feminist theory has led us to believe. True, it can be discussed under the heading of the possibly sadistic director-spectator relationship deployed by Hitchcock and Lang, never letting us forget that we are watching a film, rubbing our noses in our voyeuristic pleasures, and making us pay for them.

But one could argue that it forces a cognitive readjustment, producing especially in Lang a queasy feeling of having been “had.” Perhaps this is the key reason why the Lang interpretation frenzy has not taken off, in the way Žižek symptomatizes the academic Hitchcock industry. Lang’s *mise-en-scène* (and thus morality) precludes the narcissistic doubling of spectatorial pleasure, whereby Hitchcock, transferenceal Big Other and Lacanian “subject supposed to know” gives the spectator the illusion of collusion, of “being in the know.”⁵⁹

Vision and the Gaze: Beyond Reasonable Doubt

On the other hand, one might go back to the French “pure cinema” position, arguing that both Lang and Hitchcock have an allegorical relation to the spectator, and that this relationship is ultimately not “voyeuristic,” and not even visual in the way film theory traditionally understands this reflexivity or the foregrounding of the viewing situation and the cinematic apparatus.⁶⁰ Lang’s compositions and narrative concatenations of seemingly disparate, ambiguously coded shots bring the cinematic image up against its own limits, even where it does not posit the “impossible” point of view. Beyond distance and proximity becomes in fact a matter of “beyond” itself, as belonging neither to the possible relations of the self in narrative space, nor to a specific temporal relation of before and after.⁶¹

But what could lie beyond vision in this sense? Not pure cinema, but pure contingency (“blind chance”), for instance. Both directors have often been accused of relying too heavily on implausibilities, such as one finds in trashy literature. Lang, as we saw, was given a back-handed compliment for making one forget the “maze of improbabilities” in *Man Hunt*, and Truffaut chides Hitchcock for not having noticed what an improbable coincidence he built into *I Confess*, by making the priest be black-mailed by exactly the same man whom his sacristan kills, after robbing him.⁶² It would seem that one reason Lang and Hitchcock liked to work with coincidences is that it allowed them right away to move to the allegorical level of their films. In this respect, *I Confess* could be regarded as the most Langian film in the Hitchcock *oeuvre*, perhaps because nearly every shot has this uncanny moment I just described, as if the image had already been seen by someone else, an effect helped by the fact that for much of the time, the setting is a church. The diegetic assumption constantly present is that “God” sees it all, folded, however, into the malevolently prying but also anxious spying look of O.E. Hasse, the sacristan and villain, fearful of his detection.

From this, one could once more conclude that the emphasis on vision drawing attention to itself is central. But alongside the deceptiveness of appearances, the wrong man, guilt, and the Law’s impersonations, there is always another reality, which may be no reality at all. Although blind chance is always open to the Pascalian wager and leap of faith (as Chabrol and Rohmer have argued for Hitchcock),⁶³ it could, in the more agnostic Lang, also amount to a fairly radical epistemological (if not ontological) skepticism, and imply another turn of the screw applied to the deconstruction of ocular perception and the specular-ocular paradigm, more radical than the ideological critiques of illusionism or of the construction of sexual difference have maintained. Common to these two directors is their insistence that to see is not to know, nor is to be visible equal to being powerful. The powerful neither hide nor show themselves:

they hide in the light, and thus they have to be combated by a similarly perverse exhibitionist strategy. Roger Thornhill at the auction, Hannay at the speaker's lectern in *The 39 Steps*, Devlin in *Notorious*, leading Alicia away at the end. As Žižek has argued, all of them expose themselves in order to get away, and they impersonate the enemy as camouflage. Similarly, *Dr. Mabuse* in Lang was also a figure of over-exposure: for instance, in the scene where the informer is shot, Mabuse draws attention to him by a ruse. *Man Hunt* plays a similar game with Joan Bennett's silver arrow, pinned to her beret, and in *While the City Sleeps*, the structural reversal is that the hunter offers himself to the hunted first as bait. Light, sight, and vision are thus, in another sense, merely the deceptive decoys of this other "ontology."⁶⁴

What this suggests is that beyond appearances does not lie the "thing itself," but in the first instance, there lurks what the Lacanians have called the Gaze, fulfilling this double role of both protecting/constituting and exposing/deconstructing the subject. But since the "beyond/behind/inside" signified by the Gaze cannot be identified with the camera, the Gaze can also be related to a more properly metaphysical void, the blind spot around which any "system" turns, be it that of the subject (and gender) or of the social (and power). In this respect, it would be *Beyond a Reasonable Doubt* that is Lang's *Psycho* (as two films of radical ontological doubt), rather than *While the City Sleeps*, which seems to have a superficial likeness to *Psycho* because of an almost identical shot of a the female mouth/eye contorted by a scream. In the latter case, we are in the realm of vision/gaze, sexuality/death; in the former, ontological case, a more philosophical groundlessness is being addressed.

The "Machinery of Fate" for which Lang is so famed is thus in one sense no more than the name for the retrospective effect of revising a false assumption, of being misled by a scene of foreshadowing, or of discovering that the planted clue turns out to have a double reference even underneath the false bottom. In another sense the machinery announces, after the regime of the look, the episteme of surveillance, which Lang was one of the first to extend, beyond voyeurism and exhibitionism, into the realm of impersonal ubiquity (as in, for example, *Die 1000 Augen des Dr. Mabuse* [*The Thousand Eyes of Dr. Mabuse*]). But Hitchcock, too, if we follow Žižek, takes vision to the point where it looks as if "there is nothing there." He quotes Raymond Durnat's possibly disparaging remark about Hitchcock's films being a fleet of submarines, "all periscopes without hulls,"⁶⁵ and turns it into a compliment, because it points to the peculiar agencies that barely surface among those free-floating mechanical eyes. Post-panopticism could be the name for this new formation, after both modernism and postmodernism, building yet another slim bridge between Hitchcock's look/gaze, and Lang's blind Mabuse with the thousand eyes. When reality can no longer be retrieved by an ideological critique of illusionism, the options that remain for going beyond "beyond" are not that many. They lead in the direction of either philosophical skepticism or the Moebius-strip metaphysics of the Lacanian subject, strung out between the look and the Gaze, the latter now either the deferred hope of symbolizing that which cannot be symbolized, or firmly identified with the all-seeing blind eye of surveillance, which, rather like the Lacanian "real," does not belong to the order of the visual at all.

Beyond "Beyond": Metaphysical Laughter and Olympian Irony

After vision and its vicissitudes, what knowledge, in Hitchcock's and Lang's view, does the cinema have to offer? I have suggested that in their films it is skepticism and radical doubt that underpins as well as undermines their respective positions of "mastery": master manipulator, master of suspense, master of impersonation and disguise, but also master of the ironic gaze and the cold eye. Their work could stand under the overlapping and superimposed title of two of their films, *Shadow of a Doubt* and *Beyond a Reasonable Doubt*: a cinema "Beyond the Shadow of Radical Doubt," which would add the possibility of another kind of mastery—mastery of the double negative.

This is also why a philosophy of film, coming after our all but abandoned theories of cinema, would need both Lang and Hitchcock, to think itself out of a blind corner and lift itself up by its own conceptual bootstraps. We need the absolute irruption that Lang represents with his *mise-en-scène* of moments that, briefly, unhinge even the obverse of vision and open up such cognitive gaps as can take the spectator to the brink of the abyss. Such bleakness, however, needs in turn to be mitigated by Hitchcock's offers of complicity, extended to the audience, that allow it to find its way back to the consolations of "romance," the age-old self-therapy of the community. But we also need Hitchcock's eagerness to shock, his willingness to rupture the social fabric with often gross effects that speak as much of lust as of bodily disgust, to be tempered by Lang's incomparably chaste demonstration of the violence and vulnerability inherent in all acts of representation, putting cinema, in the face of doubt, nevertheless in the service of life. And after a life spent living, thinking, and breathing cinema, Hitchcock's metaphysical laughter and self-canceling irony can be heard loud and clear in his famous, probably apocryphal sentence "Ingrid, it's only a movie."

For Lang, such wisdom of Olympian irony came late, and in a role made poignant by the fact that he was merely playing at being the director. And yet, Godard's *Le Mepris* gave Lang one of the best lines of his life, and certainly the best epitaph for trying to think beyond skepticism and radical (as opposed to reasonable) doubt, when he quotes Friedrich Hölderlin's enigmatic, but also heroic self-therapy: "It is the distance of the Gods which proves that help is close at hand." I can think of no better definition of the metaphysics of the close-up, as I have tried to sketch it here for Hitchcock and Lang, to help us keep our love of cinema as a faith in life.

Notes

- 1 For an excellent discussion of Hitchcock and German filmmaking, particularly Expressionism, see Sidney Gottlieb, "Early Hitchcock: The German Influence," *Hitchcock Annual* (1999-2000): 100-30.
- 2 Cf. the camera descending the elevator in the opening scene of *The Last Laugh*.
- 3 Particularly famous is the tracking in and out of the apartment in *Frenzy* before and after the murder.

- 4 According to Patrick McGilligan, Hitchcock also admired the sets of *Die Nibelungen* when Lang was away and tore down part of the set to film *The Blackguard*. See *Alfred Hitchcock: A Life in Darkness and Light* (New York: HarperCollins, 2003), 63.
- 5 The prospect of dirty old men frightening young girls is perhaps another Edwardian element in Hitchcock, and also a possible connection to Lang. This motif is archetypally embodied in the mesmerizing, manipulative, and sinister lust of Dr. Caligari, in the way this charlatan lecher lures the heroine Jane into his fairground tent, and then has her abducted by his medium Cesare. A tantalizing case for Hitchcock having been influenced by *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* is made by Bettina Rosenblatt in "Doubles and Doubts in Hitchcock: The German Connection," in *Hitchcock: Past and Future*, ed. Richard Allen and Sam Ishii-Gonzalès (New York: Routledge, 2004), 37-63. Given Lang's purported role in setting up and almost directing *Caligari*, there would thus be another connection between the two men, however tenuous.
- 6 François Truffaut, *Hitchcock*, with the collaboration of Helen G. Scott, rev. ed. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984), 131.
- 7 See Peter Wollen, "North by Northwest: A Morphological Analysis" and "Hybrid Plots in *Psycho*," in *Readings and Writings* (London: Verso, 1982), 18-39.
- 8 Hitchcock's pervasive use of the archetypal/mythical structure of the romance genre is fully argued in Lesley Brill, *The Hitchcock Romance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988).
- 9 For an elaboration on this point, see Thomas Elsaesser and Adam Barker, "Introduction," in Thomas Elsaesser, ed., *Early Cinema: Space—Frame—Narrative* (London: BFI, 1989), 306-13.
- 10 See Tom Gunning, "Continuity, Non-continuity, Discontinuity: A Theory of Genres in Early Cinema," in *Early Cinema: Space-Frame-Narrative*, 86-94.
- 11 A recent screening at the Gradisca Spring School 2003 suggests that a detailed analysis and comparison of *Murder!* and *Mary*, which differ significantly, would add greatly to our knowledge of Hitchcock and sound, and highlight the different audience expectations inscribed in the two versions.
- 12 Hitchcock was courted by Myron Selznick as early as 1931. See Patrick McGilligan, "Hitchcock Dreams of America," *Hitchcock Annual* (2002-03): 1-31.
- 13 It is possible that Hitchcock met Lang at the dinner that Cukor arranged when hosting Luis Buñuel. We know that Lang left the dinner early, so that is why he is not in the photograph of the event. Did Hitchcock arrive late? Why did Lang leave early? If they did meet, this was surely the place. For a brief discussion of this dinner, see McGilligan, *Alfred Hitchcock*, 714-15.
- 14 Patrick McGilligan, *Fritz Lang: The Nature of the Beast* (London: Faber, 1997), 353.
- 15 McGilligan, *Fritz Lang*, 357.
- 16 Sid Gottlieb has noted that Hitchcock considered the property *Beyond a Reasonable Doubt* before it went to Lang. See "Unknown Hitchcock: The Unrealized Projects," in *Hitchcock: Past and Future*, 90. Hitchcock was also interested in *Ministry of Fear*, but Graham Greene was not interested in him; he favored Lang over Hitchcock as we know, but then detested Lang's film for the same reason he disliked Hitchcock.
- 17 For a detailed analysis of *Kämpfende Herzen*, see my chapter in *Filmgeschichte und Frühes Kino* (Munich: edition text + kritik, 2002), 234-60.
- 18 Quoted in McGilligan, *Fritz Lang*, 281.

- 19 McGilligan, *Fritz Lang*, 306.
- 20 Quoted in McGilligan, *Fritz Lang*, 353. More recently, Tom Gunning has discussed the *Rebecca/Secret Beyond the Door* relationship in the context of a broader claim that by this stage, Lang was indeed copying or shadowing Hitchcock on a regular basis. See *The Films of Fritz Lang: Allegories of Vision and Modernity*, 343-48.
- 21 Walter Metz, "Authorship, Canonicity, and Historicizing Film Studies," presented at the "Revisiting Lang" panel, Society for Cinema Studies Conference, San Diego, 1998.
- 22 See the Fritz Lang catalogue, published by the Kinemathek Berlin, on occasion of the Berlin Film Festival 2001 Lang Retrospective.
- 23 Pascal Bonitzer, "Le gros plan obscene," in Philippe Dubois, ed., "Gros plan," *Revue belge du cinéma* 10 (Winter 1984/85).
- 24 These examples were first suggested and elaborated by Walter Metz (see note 20 above).
- 25 Still, it is worth noting that Jean-Luc Godard associates Mabuse and Hitchcock at one point in *Histoire(s) du Cinéma* by linking Hitchcock's "mastery of the universe" to a shot from *The Testament of Dr. Mabuse*.
- 26 Robin Wood, *Hitchcock's Films Revisited* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989).
- 27 On the history of Hitchcock's reputation, especially in England and the United States, see Robert Kapsis, *Hitchcock: The Making of a Reputation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).
- 28 For Hitchcock this was initiated by Claude Chabrol and Eric Rohmer, and then consolidated by Truffaut. For Lang, the key articles were those written by Michel Mourlet and again, Rohmer.
- 29 For a recent evaluation of Hitchcock's reputation in France, see James M. Vest, *Hitchcock in France: The Forging of an Auteur* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003).
- 30 Lotte Eisner, "Notes sur le style de Fritz Lang," *La Revue de cinéma* no. 5 (February 1947): 22-24.
- 31 Michel Mourlet wrote in 1959: "[In Lang] Expressionism was cast into a Euclidian mould which transformed its meaning. . . . So a liturgy was created, based on a purely formal hieratism. Already the principal feature of Lang's later attitude to actors is prefigured in this liturgy, where they are its servants: in other words, turning them into a completely neutralized vehicle for *mise-en-scène* considered as pure movement, whereas the reverse is generally true of other filmmakers, for whom *mise-en-scène* is a means to glorify the actors rather as the flow of an imponderable current lights up electric bulbs. Hence Lang's predilection for actors who are more negative than positive, and whose reticence, diffidence or passivity more readily suffers the annihilation imposed on them." See "Fritz's Lang's Trajectory," trans. Tom Milne, in Stephen Jenkins, ed., *Fritz Lang: The Image and the Look* (London: BFI, 1981), 13.
- 32 Raymond Bellour, "On Fritz Lang," *Sub-Stance* 9 (1974), 25-35; Noël Burch, "Notes on Fritz Lang's First Mabuse," *Ciné-tracts* 13 (spring 1981); Thierry Kuntzel, "Le travail du film: M de Fritz Lang," *Communications* 19 (1972): 25-39.
- 33 Noël Burch, "Fritz Lang: German Period," in Richard Roud, ed., *Cinema: A Critical Dictionary*, vol. 2 (New York: Viking Press, 1980), 583-99.
- 34 Raymond Bellour, "On Fritz Lang," in *Fritz Lang: The Image and the Look*, 29.
- 35 Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," *Screen* 16, no. 3 (1975): 6-18; Stephen Heath, "Narrative Space," *Screen* 17, no. 3 (autumn 1976): 68-112; Raymond

- Bellour, "Hitchcock, the Enunciator," *Camera Obscura* 1 (Fall 1977): 66-91, and "Psychosis, Neurosis, Perversion," *Camera Obscura* 3-4 (1979): 104-34; Mary Ann Doane, *The Desire to Desire* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987); Tania Modleski, *The Women Who Knew Too Much: Hitchcock and Feminist Theory* (New York: Methuen, 1988).
- 36 E. Ann Kaplan, ed., *Women in Film Noir* (London: BFI, 1978); and E. Ann Kaplan, ed., *Fritz Lang: A Guide to Resources* (Englewood Cliffs: G.K. Hall, 1981).
- 37 Jenkins, *The Image and The Look*; Reynold Humphries, *Fritz Lang, Cinéaste américain* (Paris: Albatros, 1982; trans. by Humphries as *Fritz Lang: Genre and Representation in His American Films* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989).
- 38 For a more extended assessment of McGilligan's book in the context of Lang criticism, see my review essay, "Fritz Lang: Traps for the Mind and Eye," *Sight and Sound* (July-August 1997).
- 39 Recently there has been a revival of interest in Lang, initiated in part by the Fritz Lang retrospective in 2000, organized through the British Film Institute, which commissioned Tom Gunning's monograph on Lang, and two BFI Film Classics volumes: Anton Kaes, *M* (London: BFI, 1999) and my study of *Metropolis* (London: BFI, 2000). For reasons argued in the present essay, however, it remains to be seen whether this will give the broader agenda of film studies a new direction, in the way Hitchcock did and still does.
- 40 Most recently, see Raymond Bellour, "Pourquoi Lang pourrait devenir préférable à Hitchcock," *Trafic* 41 (2002): 163-72.
- 41 Slavoj Žižek, ed., *Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Lacan but Were Afraid to Ask Hitchcock* (London: Verso, 1992).
- 42 Jure Mikuz and Zdenko Vrdovec, *Fritz Lang* (Ljubljana: Kinoteka Slovenska, 1990).
- 43 For illustrations of these figures, see Heide Schönemann, *Fritz Lang Filmbilder Vorbilder* (Berlin: Edition Hentrich, 1992).
- 44 Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (New York: Verso, 1997); and *Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan through Popular Culture* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992).
- 45 Slavoj Žižek, "Introduction: Alfred Hitchcock, or, the Form and its Historical Mediation," in *Everything You Wanted to Know About Lacan*, 10.
- 46 The topic of Hitchcock and deconstruction has in the meantime received its own book-length study: see Christopher Morris, *The Hanging Figure: On Suspense and the Films of Alfred Hitchcock* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002).
- 47 I have tried to look at the German Lang within broadly such a perspective in my chapter on Lang in *Weimar Cinema and After: Germany's Historical Imaginary* (London: Routledge 2000).
- 48 The *Revue Belge du cinéma* devoted an entire issue to the close-up, as did *Iris*, with a special number on "The Kuleshov Effect."
- 49 See Bonitzer, "Le gros plan obscene."
- 50 For an illuminating essay on Hitchcock in this respect, see Joe McElhaney, "The Object and the Face: *Notorious*, Bergman and the Close-Up," in *Hitchcock: Past and Future*, 64-84.
- 51 Eric Rohmer, "La Main," *Cahiers du Cinéma* 99 (September 1959). Recently, Sabrina Barton has written on "Hitchcock and Hands," *Hitchcock Annual* (2000-01): 47-72, briefly mentioning Lang.
- 52 Thomas Pynchon, *Gravity's Rainbow* (New York: Bantam Books, 1972), 674.
- 53 Pynchon, *Gravity's Rainbow*, 674.

- 54 Brigitte Peucker discusses the close-up and the cut in terms of violence in "The Cut of Representation: Painting and Sculpture in Hitchcock," in Richard Allen and Sam Ishii-Gonzalès, eds., *Alfred Hitchcock: Centenary Essays* (New York: BFI, 1999), 141-58.
- 55 Lang's care for the specificity of his social world in *Dr. Mabuse* is matched by his attention to detail, the carefully chosen decor in each of the settings. Close-ups highlight the planting/ discovering/misplacing of clues: letters, notes, handkerchiefs, attaché cases, keys wrapped in balls of wool: a world of objects full of hidden significance, with close-ups making them not better identifiable but more mysterious.
- 56 Hitchcock is here quoting himself, since an even more striking example of this effect occurs in the courtroom scene in *Murder!* What is remarkable about it turning up in *Frenzy* is that such a trick, typical of the early sound period, should be invoked nostalgically almost forty years later, proving once more how attached Hitchcock was to the cinema of the early period.
- 57 Žižek, "In His Bold Gaze My Ruin is Writ Large," in *Everything You Wanted to Know about Lacan*, 224. This is his gloss on Freud's concept of *Nachträglichkeit*, or "deferred action."
- 58 Sid Gottlieb has coined the term "perspectival chain" to describe Hitchcock's recurrent presentation of "a series of observers watching observers finally watching someone who cannot return this compounded gaze." See "Kissing and Telling in Hitchcock's *Easy Virtue*," *Hitchcock Annual* (1992): 25.
- 59 Richard Allen, in a letter to the author, points out that this is indeed a difference between Lang and Hitchcock. He suggests that "I don't think 'being had' is characteristic of Hitchcock (he regretted 'having had' the spectator in *Sabotage*). The difference is that Hitchcock characteristically lets the spectator in on the superiority he has over the character (the play of subjective and objective). For example, in *Psycho* for a while we know but Marion doesn't that she is being watched by the cop. Hitchcock doesn't laud it over the audience because he also in some sense thinks of himself as an audience member." See also Susan Smith's analysis of *Sabotage* in *Hitchcock: Suspense, Humour and Tone* (London: BFI, 2000), 1-15.
- 60 For a similar point, see Žižek, "In his Bold Gaze My Ruin is Writ Large," 218, 242.
- 61 The most notable complement of the extreme close-up in Lang is the dissolve, which also often makes his image illegible as well as impossible to place in its temporal sequence.
- 62 Truffaut, *Hitchcock*, 203.
- 63 Claude Chabrol and Eric Rohmer, *Hitchcock: The First Forty-Four Films*, trans. Stanley Hochman (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1979).
- 64 If this suggests that vision is not necessarily what is at stake in such forms of allegorizing self-reference, one needs to remember that vision is also not *not* what is at issue: the aggression towards vision in two of Lang's early admirers, Buñuel and Hitchcock is well-known. Their own poke in the eye, so to speak, might have originated in Lang's *Die Nibelungen* (Siegfried's sword gouging the Dragon's eye). The motif is elaborately staged in *Un Chien Andalou*, which is itself parodied by the fried-egg of *To Catch a Thief*, before descending into the metaphysical horror of Janet Leigh's eye metaphorically draining into the bathtub plug-hole of *Psycho*.
- 65 Quoted in Žižek, "In My Bold Gaze My Ruin is Writ Large," 257.

