Through the Looking Glass: Reflexivity, Reciprocality, and Defenestration in Hitchcock's *Rear Window*[1]

Lawrence Howe

Lawrence Howe teaches American literature and culture at Roosevelt University. He is the author of ***Mark Twain and the Novel: the Double-Cross of Authority*** *(1998).*

Rear Window has long been recognized for its thematics of watching, connecting the voyeurism of L. B. "Jeff" Jefferies (James Stewart) with the spectator's curiosity about the lives of those one watches on the screen.[2] Examinations of the film's reflexive structure have contributed multiple strands to the interpretation of scopophilia in Hitchcock's film and in the experience of cinema. Feminist psychoanalytic readings of the gendered implications of the gaze have called attention to the ways in which Hitchcock's film screens and reinforces the power of the masculine spectator over the feminine spectacle.[3] More recently, analyses that place this film in its historical period have also detected interesting resonances with respect to the surveillance of McCarthyism.[4] All of this critical interest in

the thematics of watching has added a great deal to the appreciation and understanding of Hitchcock's film, and has influenced how we think about the gaze as both an exercise of power and an imposition on those whom it captures. But, too frequently, critics have tended to read the power of the gaze as a unidirectional phenomenon and thus have emphasized how the film positions us with respect to Jeff as a voyeur—one of a "race of Peeping Toms" as his nurse, Stella (Thelma Ritter), calls him. As much as the film invites us to do so, interpreting it exclusively through the viewer's identification with Jeff fails to recognize that the film's narrative logic also stresses the risk of being seen.

Jeff signals this risk when, fearing that the suspicious neighbor on whom he has been spying may have seen Stella and him, he nervously whispers to her to get back out of sight. She answers, "I'm not shy, I've been looked at before," to which he warns, "That's no ordinary look. That's the kind of look a man gives when he thinks that someone might be watching him." This brief exchange focuses attention on an important—though under-examined—conflict of the narrative, highlighting specifically the role that conditions Jeff's relationships with others, and the danger he attaches to the prospect of being seen, especially but not exclusively by Lars Thorwald (Raymond Burr). Jeff is a voyeur who privileges himself as a subject in opposition to those whom he watches as objects. Maintaining these categorical distinctions informs the identity that he has framed for himself. Although most of the people whom Jeff watches from the window of his apartment are oblivious to his gaze, Thorwald, it seems to Jeff, senses that he might be observed. Should he see Jeff watching him, Thorwald's reciprocal look would negate the power of Jeff's voyeurism by converting Jeff from subject to object. Thus Hitchcock's notably reflexive film is as much about scopophobia as it is about scopophilia.

In its tension between looking and being looked at, *Rear Window* structures its theme within the phenomenological dynamics that Sartre describes in the essay "The Look":

> [T]he problem of Others has generally been treated as if the primary relation by which the Other is discovered is object-ness; that is, as if the Other were first revealed—directly or indirectly—to our perception. But since this perception by its very nature *refers* to something other than to itself . . . not to an isolated entity located in principle outside my reach, its essence must be to refer to a primary relation between my consciousness and the Other's. This relation, in which the Other must be given to me directly as a subject although in connection with me, is the fundamental relation, the very type of my being-for-others. (Sartre 1956, 253)

The applicability of Sartre's thought to Hitchcock's film can be measured by the degree of correspondence between the surveillance conditions of Nazi

occupation that influenced Sartre's conception of the look and the state scrutiny of anti-communist McCarthyism that roiled Hollywood during the period in which Hitchcock was making *Rear Window*. Both led to alienating conditions that pit the individual against the state, which permeated individuals' relationships with each other. Within the film itself, we can readily observe that although Jeff implicitly acknowledges his understanding of the condition of "being-for-others," his fear of being seen by Thorwald indicates his uneasiness about the reciprocality it entails. The formation of his identity through the direction of his own gaze, while granting him power, obstructs his relationships with others—relationships that reciprocally acknowledge more than just his own desires, interests, and concerns—and entraps him in the isolated position that Sartre calls "being-for-oneself."

This essay examines the ways in which Hitchcock's film narrative screens the danger of personal isolation that stems from voyeuristic detachment, and how it violently resolves the obstacles to Jeff's developing identity, enabling him to move beyond the separation from others that he attempts to maintain. In particular, his relationship with Lisa Fremont (Grace Kelly), his girlfriend, is renegotiated and ultimately fulfilled by a reciprocal exchange of subject and object positions conceptually and spatially in the film's narrative. Although the film's framing technique functions to define the subjectivity of the gaze, the camera is freed at crucial moments from the dedicated perspective it attains by its nearly consistent positioning within Jeff's apartment. These crucial instances in which the camera travels outside of Jeff's apartment identify its point of view as spatially rather than characterologically defined throughout the film, which produces a counter-objectification that radically alters how we understand the dynamics of the gaze. The film's effect and meaning depend upon the narrative's reversing the direction of power that Jeff exerts, and thus leads the way to achieving the reciprocality involved in intersubjective relationships. In other words, in addition to critiquing the objectifying power of Jeff's voyeurism, the reciprocity of the look provides the opportunity for closure not just to the Thorwald murder mystery but also to the heterosexual romance between Jeff and Lisa that tips the narrative balance. Finally, the emphasis on the dynamics of the gaze will suggest a critique of the inherent limitations in the analyses of cinematic reflexivity.

My analysis will unfold in four sections. The first examines the foundation and implications of Jeff's voyeuristic identity; the second addresses Lisa's expectations of power from being looked at, and the strategies she adopts when this typical avenue of control is closed off by Jeff's dogged grasp on his subjectivity; the third analyzes the cinematic shifts that effect a break in the audience's identification with Jeff's subjectivity and the implications for Jeff's discovery of the fulfillment of reciprocality; and the last briefly considers the

implications of Jeff's diegetic transformation on the meaning of the film's reflexivity and what the spectator is to understand about one's own position with regard to watching.

1. Doing "something drastic"

Hitchcock announces the reflexive allegory that connects Jeff's rear window to the cinematic screen on which the film narrative is projected during the opening titles, when the three bamboo curtains on Jeff's apartment window rise as a visual echo of the rising curtain in a theater. The frame that this window presents to us is an appropriate establishing shot because nearly all of the images in *Rear Window*, especially our first sight of the people and objects we see, come to us through this frame or analogous ones. We glimpse the different stories in the apartments that surround the courtyard through the frames of their windows: the frustrated composer, the grim salesman and his invalid wife, the coquettish dancer, the desperate spinster, the intimate newlyweds—each inspire narratives that have been likened to the kinds of stories one finds in film, on television, or in tabloid journalism.[5] Our first look around the interior of Jeff's apartment gives us a complementary establishing shot. By comparison to the brief and distanced views of the pan around the courtyard, the long take and proximity of this interior *mise-en-scène* signal the pre-eminence of this character, a man trapped in a plaster cast from his waist to the toes of his left foot, and the story that will unfold within this apartment. The décor of his apartment includes a series of images juxtaposed to convey expository content, confirmed later by dialogue: from the broken camera juxtaposed to the action shot of a racing-car accident, we surmise not only the cause of Jeff's broken leg but also his profession as a photojournalist, which is confirmed by other action photographs of a fire and an atomic-bomb test. In drawing these inferences, we engage in the same process through which Jeff constructs the stories of his neighbors' lives.

As it completes the pan of Jeff's apartment, the camera rests on one pair of images—a framed negative of a cover model and its positive image on the magazine lying adjacent to the photo-negative—that comments more ironically. The framed negative is a provocative image both because of its visual counter-statement to the magazine cover and because it foretells the misgivings Jeff will later admit about fashion photography, professionally, and about glamorous women, personally. His resistance to romance defines his troubled relationship with Lisa, who makes her entrance in the fourth scene of the film. Her arrival is swathed in mystery as Hitchcock reveals her presence first as a shadow gradually looming over the sleeping Jefferies. When he detects her presence, the smile on his face converts what might be an ominous image to a more gratifying one, and then the continuity crosscut to a frontal close-

up of Lisa followed by a profile view of the slow-motion kiss between the couple fulfill that expectation. This lingering over the erotic moment frames the intimacy while still maintaining the audience's curiosity about the identity of Jeff's paramour. And the dialectical composition from shots of each participant to the synthesizing shot of the couple kissing is a consummating sequence with respect to the phenomenology of relationships in Jeff's life. Jeff insists on maintaining distance from the people in his world, establishing his position as subject to them as objects. He has characterized an entanglement like marriage as "something drastic" to which he fears his desolation in his current "swamp of boredom" is likely to drive him. When that happens, he predicts to Gunnison, his editor, "I won't be able to go anywhere." Lisa's arrival, and the kiss she delivers, then, is a *mise en abyme* that frames the central dramatic issue in Jeff's story: the shot sequence collapses the distance Jeff attempts to maintain, and thus signals the potential for intersubjectivity that he resists, even with a woman as desirable as Lisa.

Of course, at the moment of the kiss, Lisa is still unknown to us, and Hitchcock continues to tease us with her identity visually and nominally by suspending her introduction over a series of gestures by which she successively turns on the lights in the dim apartment, announcing the three parts of her name with each illumination and at an increasing distance from the camera: "Lisa"—lights a lamp in close proximity—"Carol"—lights another slightly farther away from the camera—"Fremont"—lighting the third and brightest of the lights as the camera pulls back to reveal her standing in a full shot, posed as a fashion model in high couture. A careful observation of this final pose will detect the director's careful blocking of the action, for Lisa's head is aligned with a framed picture on the wall, as if her own portrait were held in this frame. This is purposefully suggestive because it is precisely the framing of Lisa that attracts Jeff to her as an object of desire. But her attempt to draw him into the frame, to civilize him into a marriage within conventional society, is the consequential risk that he persistently avoids.

As he does frequently when he wants to deride someone's suggestion of marriage, Jeff asks them to imagine him in a position that he considers preposterous, such as when Lisa suggests he give up his itinerant profession and open up his own studio in Manhattan: "Can you see me driving down to the fashion salon wearing combat boots and a three-day beard? Wouldn't that make a hit?" She responds, "I can see you looking very handsome and successful in a dark-blue flannel suit."[6] By dismissing these images as "nonsense," Jeff is not simply upholding a professional identity, he's resisting the idea of being seen as Lisa would have him, and thus he rejects the condition that Sartre terms "being-for-another." Jeff insists on maintaining his privilege of framing the issue from his perspective. The longer the debate continues, the

more he resorts to verbs of visual perception. And where a deictic marker such as "Look" might be perfectly innocent in an ordinary conversation, it takes on added resonance in the context of Jeff's voyeurism and his anxieties about being seen. Where Lisa's implicit use of such a deictic through posing attempts to focus his attention on her, Jeff's deployment of the rhetorical marker deflects attention from him to the abstract hypothetical subject of the discussion.

His profession is an important constituent in his characterization because it authorizes him to exercise the gaze, to look at people without being looked back upon as an Other. Indeed, if he is looked at, it is simply as a photographer, as part of the image-making apparatus that defines the era that Benjamin termed the "age of mechanical reproduction." Jeff's profession accustoms him to placing the people and things he sees within frames that condition the meaning that attaches to those images. But Jeff scrupulously avoids being placed within the frames of social requirements himself. As he argues later, his photojournalistic career orients his life outside of conventional boundaries. He's an adventurer who lives on the move and amidst the least accommodating circumstances, whereas Lisa is only comfortable, he imagines, in the genteel environment of Park Avenue soirées.

This conflict between her desire for them to be together, either in his world or in hers, and his resistance to that confinement is accentuated because Jeff is trapped in the apartment, bound by the "plaster cocoon" on his broken leg and confined to a wheelchair, which makes him prey to Lisa. Indeed, the wheelchair is an ironic touch because the three stairs between the entry and the rest of the very small apartment make a wheelchair virtually irrelevant outside or in. So it serves simply to exacerbate his awareness of his lost freedom.[7] Lisa, too, understands the significance of the opportunity; she orchestrates a lavish seduction with a catered dinner from "21" in an attempt to convert what he calls a "run-of-the mill Wednesday" into "opening night on the last depressing week of L. B. Jefferies in a cast." With as much theatricality as she can muster, she hopes to convert this last week of his captivity into the beginning of a new chapter in their lives. But Jeff stubbornly refuses to capitulate and tenaciously adheres to his condition of being-for-oneself.

As a trapped voyeur aching for any diversion from his romantic dilemma, Jeff is left with little to do but to look out the window, not to admire the alterations in the light or the expanse of the cityscape but to watch the lives of his neighbors in the apartments that surround the courtyard. We see this from his first waking moments and also learn about the power of the gaze from his telephone conversation with his editor, which despite its seemingly innocuous banter establishes important thematic functions. While listening to Gunnison make light of Jeff's bad luck in missing out on a plum assignment, he notices a helicopter hovering over a rooftop so its crew can

ogle young women sunbathers, performing more obtrusively the voyeurism that he exercises from the discreet distance of his apartment. When Jeff points out that Gunnison's mistake about the date of his release from the cast instills doubts about how he ever became an editor, Gunnison jokes that he got ahead through "thrift, industry, and hard work, and catching the publisher with his secretary." This joke wryly adds voyeurism to the trinity of virtues that define the American ethos, thus further reinforcing the sense that one obtains power by intruding on people's privacy. As they crack wise about the euphemisms applied to modern marriage, which Jeff will echo later as a rebuff to Stella's critique of how modern courtship has become over-intellectualized, Jeff continues to scan the windows of his neighbors and draws inferences about the state of their miseries in loneliness or in marriage.

But all of this watching fails to divert him from his own problems because the stories he infers from his nearly obsessive observations of his neighbors' lives are variations on the theme of his own ambivalence about committing to marriage. Figures like Miss Torso and Miss Lonelyheart represent opposite poles of gaiety or despair in the single life, while, as divergent examples of coupling, the newlyweds in the apartment adjacent to Jeff's represent the enthralling novelty of marriage, and Thorwald and his invalid wife its burdensome drudgery. As he continues watching, the identifications multiply in conflicting ways. For example, Jeff is identified not only with Mrs. Thorwald in that both are invalids, but also with Thorwald who seeks to be rid of his wife just as Jeff looks to evade what he sees as the marriage trap.[8] These multiplied correspondences also parallel his equivocation toward Lisa, dramatized no more clearly than on the evening when she woos him only to be told that he does not share her vision of their future together. Having essentially ended their relationship, he then asks "When will I see you again?" In hoping to maintain the "status quo," Jeff's resistance creates dramatic irony because where narrative requires that conflict undergo accelerated tension and final resolution, Jeff, instead, hopes to stem change. Moreover, in addition to the irony, his question signals his penchant for seeing, his need to see people but only on his own unidirectional terms in which he is subject and they are objects.

To underscore this aspect of Jeff's identity, Hitchcock deploys a cinematic technique that he called "subjective treatment":

> Subjective treatment is the close-up of the person and what they see. You see I use it a lot. A tremendous lot of subjective treatment in film. . . . *Rear Window* is purely subjective treatment—what Jimmy Stewart sees all the time. And how he reacts to it. . . . As against the objective. You see, the objective is the stage. Is the theater. We are audience looking at the people on the stage. We aren't with them, we aren't getting any viewpoint you see. (Gottlieb 1995, 291)[9]

Although this is clearly an important technique both to the way in which the film's story unfolds visually and to the film's reflexivity, the emphasis that Hitchcock places on this technique is misleading. For a great deal of screen time is occupied with the unfolding events within Jeff's apartment during which the camera most often functions objectively to present the dynamics of Jeff's relationship with Lisa, not to mention the number of pans of the courtyard or apartment during which Jeff is asleep.[10] To be sure, Jeff's role as voyeur establishes him in the subject position as the prying observer who renders those whom he watches into objects. But this propensity to look is not exclusive to Jeff; thus, the gendered associations to the male-subject and female-object are complicated in *Rear Window*. Indeed, one neighbor, the sculptress, takes an interest in others, and Thorwald rudely dismisses her as a neighborhood busybody, reinforcing a conventional gender stereotype. Not only is Thorwald—a man—the primary object of Jeff's gaze, but the act of watching is more pervasively figured as passive, and female. Of those who are drawn into Jeff's voyeurism, the most avid watchers are Lisa and Stella, despite their initial resistance to and critique of scopophilic curiosity about the lives of others. Tom Doyle (Wendell Corey), a police detective—and the former pilot of the reconnaissance plane on which Jeff served during the war, thereby facilitating Jeff's voyeuristic compulsion for the purpose of national security—feels some duty to follow up on what they observe, but primarily to debunk their interpretations. Finally, he dismisses the voyeuristic inferences of Lisa and Jeff as frivolous womanly pastimes, at best, and intrusive violations of privacy, at worst, relying on "female intuition," a curse on the efficient use of a man's time and energy.

Moreover, in overstressing the connection of the subjective technique to Jeff, Hitchcock implicitly denies the pivotal moments in which the camera does not function as a subjective apparatus identified with Jeff. As has been widely noted, the opening pans of the courtyard and of Jeff's apartment occur while he is sleeping with his back to the window and thus do not represent his view.[11] Notably, during his vigilant night of watching Thorwald's apartment, Jeff has nodded off when the suspect and a woman are seen leaving the apartment before dawn, granting the audience access to information that contradicts Jeff's inferences about Thorwald's guilt. These rather subtle violations of subjective treatment create a space for alternative perspectives and different considerations not only about seeing but also about being seen.

2. A woman who knows what's "expected of her"

Despite Laura Mulvey's groundbreaking theory about the imposition of the male gaze on the female object, Lisa Fremont is a force to be reckoned with.[12] Jeff's behavior suggests as much. He cannot simply banish her from

his life, nor can he completely prevent her from continuing to exert her influence over him. Like Stella, she's been looked at before and is not afraid to be seen. In fact, she knows that she derives a considerable amount of power from being seen. But when her attempt to seduce Jeff with a lavish dinner and a glamorous display of Parisian couture fails, Lisa proves far more resourceful than Mulvey's characterization of her allows. As Jeff's attention wanders from her to what's going on in other apartments, she doesn't simply fold but, instead, becomes a partner, first, as an observer and interpreter of the clues they piece together from what's seen and not seen, and, later, as the kind of active investigator that Jeff cannot become. So the simple binary that posits Jeff as one who lives to look and Lisa as one who lives to be looked at doesn't adequately convey the complexity of her role and the evolving dynamics of their relationship within the unfolding narrative.

Even before she becomes involved in the Thorwald mystery, Lisa demonstrates her ability to assert her own independent judgment about the stories Jeff constructs. Early on, she counters Jeff's interpretation of Miss Torso, by which he misogynistically characterizes her as a wily predator looking to entrap a man foolish enough to be distracted by her erotic appeal. Lisa disagrees with this assessment because she understands that a woman who attracts the kind of attention Miss Torso does is "doing a woman's hardest job, juggling wolves." In the early hours of the next morning, Lisa's interpretation is confirmed. Although Jeff never admits it, during his stakeout of Thorwald's curious comings and goings, he sees Miss Torso return home and observes her forcefully repel her insistent escort at her apartment door.

But Lisa becomes involved in the Thorwald story reluctantly. The first shift that initiates her participation comes about after Jeff has remained preoccupied even while during an intimate embrace in front of his window. Lisa is clearly perplexed with Jeff's indifference to her and his fascination with Mrs. Thorwald's disappearance, and initially she chastises him for his voyeuristic obsession: "If you could only see yourself . . . sitting around looking out the window to kill time is one thing, but doing it the way you are with binoculars and wild opinions about every little thing you see is diseased." Her emphasis on his seeing himself, and her critique of how he appears to her calls to mind Jeff's aversion to being seen watching, but he's been only concerned about being seen by those whom he watches. Since Lisa barely registers to his attention, and his looking diverts him from her attempts to escalate the terms of their relationship, he has little regard for how she sees him. But instead of allowing her to follow through on her threat to leave if he doesn't forebear spying on his neighbors through binoculars, an activity that he would simply continue if he were serious about repelling her, he defends himself with the litany of circumstantial "evidence"

that inspires his suspicions, all of which Lisa refutes. Still, when her suggestion that "there's probably something more sinister going on" behind the drawn shades of the newlyweds' apartment draws Jeff's sardonic "no comment," Lisa's attitude pivots. The motivation for her riveted gaze is that she sees Thorwald herself, but nothing about his behavior is anymore incriminating than what Jeff had already mentioned and which she had already refuted. The juxtaposition of her shift to talk of the newlyweds whom Jeff sarcastically mocks, though, suggests that her joining with Jeff is a resourceful tack. In effect, she redirects her pursuit of Jeff on entirely new terms and asks him to "start from the beginning again. . . . Tell me everything you saw and what you think it means." So while Jeff turns his attention outside in order to avoid Lisa, she follows suit in order to engage with him in the voyeuristic enterprise, and later to become part of his field of vision. From this moment, Lisa embraces Jeff's interpretation and does the crucial detective legwork of ascertaining the suspect's name and address from the mailbox of their building. As they become more embroiled in the detective process, she even complements Jeff's suspicions with some inferences of her own about the likely behavior of a woman with respect to her favorite handbag and her jewelry. More importantly, the impasse between Jeff and Lisa no longer dominates the drama between them.

But her desire to keep this process going, and thus further reinforce her partnership with Jeff, leads to disappointment and embarrassment when Doyle reveals that Thorwald's behavior and his missing wife can be rationally explained, echoing Lisa's own earlier refutations. In a stunning turn, the policeman asserts the sanctity of privacy as he points out that his investigation has confirmed that early on the morning when Jeff insists that Mrs. Thorwald has disappeared, Lars Thorwald put his wife on a train to the country to facilitate her recovery from prolonged illness. Since the camera captured Thorwald and a woman leaving early one morning as Jeff dozed, the audience is led to believe that Doyle's got it right. Indeed, the subtle use of diegetic sound in *Rear Window* has already suggestively affirmed to us what Doyle reports: the faint sound of a distant train whistle can be heard at the moment when Mrs. Thorwald caught her husband in an embarrassing phone call, and then again when we witness Thorwald and, presumably, his wife take their leave, thereby linking with a sonic cue the troubled couple and Doyle's explanation of the train journey. This cluster of visual and auditory associations weakens the audience's commitment to Jeff's suspicions in anticipation of the film's strategy of distancing us from Jeff in the latter half of the narrative.

Compounding the humiliation of Doyle's discoveries, Jeff and Lisa are further embarrassed by witnessing the pathetic drama of Miss Lonelyheart's failed seduction of a younger man. When Jeff tries to qualify his violation of

"rear window ethics" by noting that his neighbors can do the same to him, Lisa reminds him again of how they would appear to others, as two ghouls despondent at learning that Mrs. Thorwald is alive. Lisa draws the blinds to afford them the privacy that will protect them from the neighbors' curiosity, and vows to prevent Jeff from gazing on his neighbors even if she has to "move into an apartment across the way and perform the dance of the seven veils every hour." Lisa's gesture and vow, of course, return Jeff's focus to her, as well as shutting out the neighbors' views of the private affair she hopes to consummate. After changing into the diaphanous nightgown she brought for the next phase of her seduction, she poses and asks, "Do you like it?" This performance replicates her demeanor from her first scene when she modeled the latest dress from Paris, as if nothing at all has happened since. Her engagement with the Thorwald mystery has been, it would seem, a mere interlude by which she could prevent Jeff from shunning her. With that mystery dispatched, she returns to plan A.

But no sooner does she steer Jeff's attention back to her than a scream from the courtyard and the discovery of the neighbors' dead dog cancels the mood into which the evening has veered. In the essay's next section, we'll look more closely at the scene that unfolds from this scream, but here it suffices to note that not only has Jeff and Lisa's empathy been challenged by the dogowner's mournful appeal, but Jeff's suspicion about Thorwald has also been revived. He observes that Thorwald alone didn't come to see what had happened, remaining instead in the darkness of his apartment indicated by the pulsating glow of his cigarette, which convinces them that Thorwald has killed the dog to deter his inquisitive digging in the garden. Curiously, though, the scene fades to black with the next one opening on the following day without any indication of what if anything has happened to Lisa's seduction. Instead, we see Jeff, Lisa (dressed differently), and Stella watching Thorwald, who is diligiently scrubbing his apartment. The revival of the mystery displaces yet again Lisa's primary objective. Encouraged by photographic evidence of a change in the flowerbed, they plot to draw their suspect away in order to gain the opportunity to find out what he has buried there. This development bears significantly on Lisa's identity because it provokes a third stage in her attempt to gain Jeff's attention, this time by being seen within the object space beyond the window. Yet as her strategy evolves, she is not simply an object to be watched, but one who looks back as well. When we first see her through the alley as she approaches Thorwald's apartment on the daring mission to provoke him with a note slipped under his door, she waves to Jeff signaling that she knows he's watching. Upon her return, she is invigorated with curiosity about how Thorwald reacted—that is, how he *looked* when he read the message that accelerates his desperation. But notably, Jeff at

this moment is not interested in Thorwald, but rather looks at her with profound admiration, perhaps even arousal. His resistance to her and to the domestic confinement she represented to him weakens considerably because he sees her now as an adventurous partner, one who can inhabit both the subject space of the apartment and the object space beyond.

Her first foray beyond the safety of Jeff's apartment is just a prelude for a much greater risk. When she and Stella find nothing in the flowerbed, Lisa climbs the fire escape to enter Thorwald's apartment to procure the wedding ring that she believes will incriminate the murderer. In her movement into Thorwald's space, Lisa approaches the role of the heroine in the horror movie, as analyzed by Linda Williams, or the "woman's film," whose "investigative gaze," as Mary Ann Doane argues, "can only be simultaneous with her own victimization" (1984, 72). But for all of the suspense, Lisa's experince escapes the pattern of either of those two genres. As Jeff watches anxiously, Lisa distances herself yet farther from the passive object of beauty she was thought to be by becoming an active investigator, performing the role that Jeff would like to fill but cannot. Where she began by scolding Jeff for his fascination with watching ghoulishly on the intimacy of others, and then joined in Jeff's distanced speculations about what may have occurred in the Thorwald home, she now eclipses Jeff by becoming an active, intrusive agent of scrutiny. Moreover, she finds the ring that will help lead to Thorwald's conviction while Jeff, impotently, observes Thorwald returning to catch Lisa in her intrusive act. Where Jeff had viewed marriage as a danger to his freedom, he now watches fitfully as Lisa fends off Thorwald until the police can arrive, and only then signaling to Jeff that she has the incriminating wedding ring safely slipped on her own finger. There's notable irony in this gesture, as has been repeatedly observed.[13] But beyond the obvious point that Lisa's desire for marriage is what has repelled Jeff, this wedding ring is the one formerly worn by Mrs. Thorwald, so Lisa's gesture symbolizes marriage to Jeff and Thorwald—to subject and object—and in doing so forges the link between them and, thus, to introduce the opportunity to reconfigure their binary positions. When the suspected murderer notices Lisa signaling her possession of the ring, he connects her to the prying eyes across the courtyard. As Thorwald looks back across the space to the apartment from which he's been observed, the direction of power begins to turn, and Jeff's privileged position as subject erodes as he now becomes the object of Thorwald's gaze.

3. Defenestration

Before we examine the escalating suspense and the violent climax of the narrative that follow from this returned gaze, we should first address the scene when the neighbor's dog is found. For this scene and the climax mark

significant departures from the subjective treatment that dominates the narrative. Up until this point in the film, the camera has been stationed within the apartment, whether its focus is trained on the neighbors beyond or the four characters who have occupied Jeff's apartment. But Hitchcock makes a significant decision to violate the consistency of the camera's position at two crucial moments.

In the first, when the scream of the dog's owner punctuates the evening's murmur, the neighbors turn to the drama unfolding in the center of the courtyard and on the fire-escape above. After Miss Lonelyhearts reveals that the dog's neck has been broken, the pet's owner vents her anger on the neighbors. Between sobs, she accuses one of them of heartless cruelty as her husband comforts her on the fire-escape:

> Which one of you did it? Which one of you killed my dog? You don't know the meaning of the word "neighbor." Neighbors like each other, speak to each other, care if anybody lives or dies. But none of you do. But I can't imagine any of you being so low that you'd kill a little helpless friendly dog? The only thing in this whole neighborhood who liked anybody. Did you kill him because he liked you? Just because he liked you?

Her critique of the social fabric echoes, yet in more direct terms, the observations made privately in Jeff's apartment by Stella, Lisa, and Doyle. American post-war urban society has grown impersonal and alienated, and the action of the film bears this out. Aside from a few fleeting moments of interaction between two characters in the courtyard prior to this, the neighbors have remained isolated from each other in their own residential cells. This is the first time when the entire neighborhood, or nearly so, has turned their attention outside of their apartments to confront each other. Their reactions range from the indifference of the party guests at the composer's studio to heartfelt pity registered on the faces of Miss Torso and Miss Lonelyhearts. And most importantly, we observe these reactions because the camera moves out of Jeff's apartment and takes up various positions around the courtyard, giving us striking new perspectives ranging from a long, wide-angle shot to others affording remarkable proximity to specific characters.

Nothing makes this clearer than when the camera lingers over medium-close shots of Miss Torso and Miss Lonelyhearts—notably from angles that could only be shot from the center of the courtyard grounds—whom prior to this we've only viewed from the subjective space of Jeff's apartment. In this montage of thirty-six shots during a span of one minute and forty seconds, we now come to see these characters as subjects through the intercutting of their gazes and the grieving neighbor. In effect, this sequence displaces the subjective treatment that Hitchcock identified as his *modus operandi* in connecting the audience with his protagonist, and attaches the camera

to characters who theretofore have been framed simply as the objects of Jeff's gaze. The construction of the montage enables us to sense both the pathos of the moment and the intersubjective identification with those who witness their neighbor's grief. The camera's varying distances and angles to the characters, and particularly its framing of the more well-known characters, complement the spectrum of emotional distances experienced among them. But what does it mean that at this moment we are no longer seeing things only as Jeff sees them? When we were aligned with him, we stood apart from and judged his neighbors, as he did. But by entering the space beyond his rear window, we've joined those whom Jeff had encouraged us to view as objects and see them now as a strained neighborhood of subjects. The emotional charge of this scene may distract us from recognizing how Hitchcock has shifted the point of view in this significant way. But even if we do notice the freeing of the camera from Jeff's subjective position, a clear explanation for the shift in point of view does not arrive until the climax of the narrative when the camera exercises the same diversity of perspectives.

Returning to the moment when Thorwald has redirected the power of the gaze by looking back, Jeff frantically scrambles to elude his object's knowing look. Like so many repeated elements in the film, Jeff's attempt to elude Thorwald's gaze repeats the earlier moment when he and Stella ducked out of sight. Although they escaped detection on that earlier occasion because the inquisitive dog digging in the flowerbed attracted Thorwald's greater concern, Jeff is not so fortunate in this later episode. Not only has Thorwald deduced that he's been detected by someone watching from across the courtyard when Lisa signals to Jeff that she has Mrs. Thorwald's wedding ring, but, because Lisa has instinctively cried out Jeff's name at least five times for help at the moment when Thorwald assaults her, the desperate man also has a clue to the watcher's identity. It's a simple matter for him to reverse Jeff's investigative process, to learn the name of his observer from his mailbox, then to intimidate him on the telephone, and finally enter Jeff's apartment. But unlike his alienated observer, Thorwald will not sit idly while a proxy invades Jeff's secured subject space; instead, he will conduct his business with Jeff face-to-face, as two subjects aware of each other *and* of their own positions as objects for the other.

As the suspense builds, Jeff frantically anticipates Thorwald's arrival but does little to protect himself. Surprisingly, the photographer who had assured his editor that the cast on his leg would not deter him from taking pictures "from a jeep or a water buffalo" now cannot drag himself up the three short stairs to bolt the door to the apartment; instead, he arms himself with the flash gun of his camera. Thorwald's intrusion into Jeff's apartment accelerates the tension still farther, completing the reversal of subject and object which

is emphasized by the lighting that exposes Thorwald's eyes while the rest of his face and form remain in darkness.[14] Now he exercises the look that renders Jeff his object, in an intimidating parallel to Lisa's first appearance as she closed in on Jeff affectionately. As the antagonists now face each other in the dark, the looming silhouette of Thorwald dwarfing Jeff in his wheelchair, Thorwald tries to initiate a negotiation, but Jeff remains silent in an attempt to maintain his separate status by not engaging with him. When he finally speaks and reveals that the police will be closing in soon, the villain reacts, moving menacingly closer to his tormentor. Jeff's only defense is to pop off flashbulbs both in the hope of slowing Thorwald's threatening progress and in a last-ditch attempt to re-establish the directional power of the look by incapacitating the gaze through which his oppressor has rendered him an object. When Jeff desperately turns to look across the courtyard and sees Lisa and Doyle leading a troop of policemen to Thorwald's apartment, he calls out for their help. But this distraction offers Thorwald the opportunity to cover the remaining distance between them. In the struggle that ensues, Thorwald doesn't merely strangle Jeff or batter him senseless; rather, he flings him from the wheelchair onto the bed and then finally over the window ledge.

In counterpoint to Jeff's failed attempt to blind his assailant, and thus remain in the subject role in the dynamically changing relationship, Thorwald asserts his subjective power by turning Jeff out of his privileged position as observer. This climactic gesture underscores the division of space through which Jeff has maintained his identity as subject in relation to all others as objects. Thorwald dislodges Jeff from the safety of his subject space and thrusts him into the object space that all others have occupied with respect to the voyeur throughout the film. While in a literal sense Jeff clings to the window ledge to avert a perilous fall, phenomenologically he clings to his fragile purchase on separate subjectivity. The combat sequence defines the object space as a heterotopia, as Michel Foucault defines it—an Other space that "exerts a sort of counteraction on the position that I occupy" (1998, 241).[15] In addition to the intersubjectivity achieved through the articulations of space, Hitchcock's camera emphasizes the transformation in Jeff's condition.

This final scene gives meaning to the earlier episode when, after discovery of the dead dog, the camera traveled freely around the courtyard. Here, too, Hitchcock has assembled a fifty-shot montage in under a minute and a half (with sped up action) in which, intercut with the close-up grappling between Thorwald and Jeff, we catch glimpses of neighbors running to their windows and balconies and into the courtyard to see what's going on. Amidst the combatants' grunting and gasping, we hear the neighbors' remarks that reveal their observations of the man who has observed them undetected throughout the story:

"Look, look over in that apartment. Two men fighting."

"He's throwing him out the window."

"Look at his leg."

"It's a plaster cast."

In this montage, we observe a similar range of reactions to those during the grieving neighbor's soliloquy; only this time, our perspective of Jeff dangling from the window-ledge oscillates from Thorwald's view inside the apartment to the perspective of the neighbors outside, as well as to Lisa and Doyle's posse who rush across the courtyard to Jeff's aid. We watch from the courtyard, approximately where the dog was discovered, as several policemen inside Jeff's apartment wrestle Thorwald away. And then the camera moves quickly to several locations—from above, from below, and at the point of impact on the patio (all in the duration of three seconds)—giving us multiple perspectives of Jeff losing his grip and falling through the arms of another pair of policemen, accompanied by a horrified scream from one of the onlookers, which echoes the earlier screams of Mrs. Thorwald and the dog's owner. The camera, once again, grants us a variety of perspectives; however, in contrast to the earlier scene, this time it establishes and reinforces Jeff's object status.

Jeff has anxiously longed for the day when he would leave the confinement of his apartment, but not in quite this way. Still, despite the danger to his limbs, he reaps the benefit of having joined the neighborhood, to be for once an object of their curiosity and concern, as they crane their necks around the rim of the terrace to look as Doyle, Stella, and Lisa attend to him. As Lisa cradles his head in her lap, Jeff finally expresses the feelings for her that he has previously withheld: "Oh, Lisa, sweetie, if anything had happened to you," and proclaiming "Gee, I'm proud of you," ignoring Lisa's solicitous demurral of attention: "Shut up. I'm all right. " This marks a distinct shift from her earlier frustration with his lack of attention to her as well as converting the hostile expression that he had disdainfully flung at her in their first argument ("Shut up!") into a genuine assertion of her affection for him. Having been leveraged out of his subjective protection, Jeff is now able and willing to enter a relationship on reciprocal terms, giving a literal twist to the metaphorical phrase "falling in love."

The division of space into phenomenological territories occupied by subject and object resonates with the mundane divisions of real property represented in the film as well. For as long as Jeff was ensconced in his *apart*ment, he remained apart from others, Lisa as well as his neighbors. Once he enters the *court*yard, through Thorwald's violent agency, he is finally able to engage in a courtship with Lisa. Hitchcock may not have considered the narrative developments in terms of these lexical correspondences, but the reso-

lution of the plot supports them as central to the narrative logic. At last, it would seem, Jeff has discovered what Stella alluded to when she advised, "people ought to . . . get outside their own house and look in for a change." Certainly, our view of the story from outside of Jeff's apartment has granted us a new perspective that explains the film's critique of voyeurism and its implications for reciprocal identity in the condition of being-for-others.

4. The fate of reflexivity

The ending, however, encourages us to see something else in the pairing of Jeff and Lisa. After the final pan of the courtyard, in which all of the unresolved relationships are fulfilled, we see Jeff asleep smiling, now with both legs in casts, and Lisa reading *Beyond the High Himalayas.*[16] Her clothing, too, indicates a shift away from the high-society couture to a more rugged and ready-for-anything ensemble of jeans and a tailored shirt.[17] This tableau suggests that Jeff's priorities have trumped hers, and that the negotiation of their relationship has proceeded on his terms. But upon noting that Jeff is asleep, Lisa exchanges the book for a copy of *Harper's Bazaar.* This tells us that not only has she maintained her stylish identity, but also her stealth in keeping the taboo reading out of sight yet close at hand indicates that Lisa has learned how to get what she wants from this relationship while allowing Jeff to think that he has done the same. As Modleski has noted, Lisa has the last look; moreover, as the composer's completed song plays over the final scene, we hear the singer's refrain of "Lisa" rhapsodizing the final satisfaction she has attained (1988, 85). Lisa has, then, fashioned a somewhat different identity for herself than the woman of glamour who submits to the power of the male gaze. Indeed, she has accomplished the remarkable feat of turning that power to her own project without being detected by one as suspicious and scrutinizing as the voyeur whom she loves.

Lisa's triumph illuminates the power not of the viewer or the director but of the glamorous movie star whose ability to engage the watcher seems to be hers alone. But where does this closure detailing Jeff's mature appreciation for intersubjectivity leave us with respect to the reflexive identification of him with the film spectator? Can the cinema audience participate in its voyeurism without succumbing to the isolation that Jeff's voyeurism figures for us? While he has Lisa to orchestrate his confrontation with the Other and Thorwald to leverage him from his subjective projection, Jeff too has a role in this conclusion. How else do we explain his failure to lock the apartment door than as a sign of his desire to be catapulted from his subjective complacency? Through our engagement with the film, we come to see that Jeff's brand of isolation is unsatisfying long before he does, and that all of his daredevil risk-taking as a photojournalist is compensation for his reluctance to

take an interpersonal risk. Hitchcock's camera enables us to see from a position beyond Jeff's limited stationary perspective in order to understand others and thus, by reflection, ourselves; whereas Jeff, in addition to limiting his point of view, more often than not turns away embarrassed at the moment when he's likely to confront something that he'd rather not. Notice the number of scenes in which Lisa and Jeff watch the same drama unfolding; invariably, her gaze remains attached to the action where his eyes wander away from a pathetic spectacle that makes him uncomfortable. And when he objects to Stella's and Lisa' plan to excavate the suspicious plot in the garden, Lisa advises him, "Jeff, if you're squeamish, just don't look." We might take more instruction from Lisa's scopic participation than from Jeff's detachment. Although she may object to Stella's linguistic bluntness, there's little that Lisa won't look at. Jeff's eagerness to look is limited by his desire to maintain a separate and undisclosed vantage point. And Hitchcock's mobile-camera montages enable us to gauge the difference between Jeff and the audience. As the camera travels into the courtyard well before Jeff does, the audience is granted a prospect of engaging with others in a way that satisfies and provides meaningful insight to the dangers of isolation.

But if the film suggests that the process of developing intersubjective connections stems from being both a subject and an object for another, doesn't the experience of film afford the audience the position of subject but without an object who looks back? Does moving the camera out of the restricted subject space suffice to give the audience the experience of intersubjectivity? Don't we require an agent to launch us from the similar position of subjective isolation? Because the audience's experience of the cinematic world is synesthetic and mediated rather than lived and direct, the camera is the primary apparatus to effect the audience's intersubjective connections; the director is the agent who controls that apparatus. It is not *a* camera but Hitchcock's camera that has taken us where Jeff only will go by Thorwald's force. The director's agency, his role as the one who returns our gaze, is registered in his cameo. Hitchcock's appearances in his own films became something of a game that he played with his audiences. But in this film, the cameo is worthy of our concern as something more than a gratuitous image. We see the director in the composer's apartment, winding a clock on the mantelpiece. This gesture is suggestive of his role as the director of the film apparatus, controlling its sequences and exposures of time.[18] In addition, he also turns and looks back at us during his conversation with the composer. The panes of the studio window maintain the separation of the two figures in adjacent but distinct frames giving us a clear look at the one individual in the film who knows that we are watching.[19] Our observation of him and his implicit awareness of us symbolically enact the phenom-

enological condition of being-for-others. Unlike Jeff who experiences anxiety when objectified by Thorwald's gaze, we have nothing to fear from Hitchcock's look: our need for each other is mutual. Having our look returned makes us aware of our own voyeurism. While this may introduce some discomfort, we still enjoy a satisfying measure of pleasure because Hitchcock's reciprocal glance is not simply his signature game but is a figurative acknowledgment of our presence for him.

Notes

[1] I would like to acknowledge the contributions of Mitch Breitwieser, with whom I first discussed some of the ideas that premise my argument; my Film History students at Roosevelt, some of whose observations have colored and informed my own; my colleague Janet Wondra, whose critique of an earlier draft of the essay was extremely useful in working out some of the argument's kinks; and finally, the anonymous readers for this journal whose precise observations were very helpful.

[2] Jean Douchet was the first to make this observation. Among others, Robert Stam has provided extended analysis of this aspect of *Rear Window*, complicating the identification of Jefferies to director and spectator.

[3] Laura Mulvey and Tania Modleski have propounded two influential articulations of this aspect of the film.

[4] While Stam makes a passing reference to McCarthyism, Robert J. Corber focuses intensely on the film's relation to the surveillance of the political era.

[5] George Toles compares these stories to tabloid journalism (2001,162). John Belton reads each of the different stories as a specific kind of film narrative from peep-show to musical to melodrama to noir (1991, 82). And in a note, he suggests that "the array of screens resembles a bank of television sets on display in the window of an electronics store, a display practice that persists from the 1950s to the present day" (n. 18). This last comparison bears some weight on my thesis in light of the reactions to the introduction of television. In 1925, in London, a schoolgirl reported the following after watching a demonstration of the new medium: "we all clapped politely because we were all rather frightened of television. I think the trouble was that we believed that, if they could make this film, they could see into our houses. We could see them; they could see us" ("Confounding Machines" 2005, 12). By 1954, of course, there was less fear of television from the general public. But those in the movie industry understood television as a distinct threat to their livelihood. Hitchcock's film manages to combine these anxieties in its theme.

[6] This exchange is accompanied by the opening strains of Bing Crosby's "To See You Is to Love You," which is most often noted as an ironic musical commentary on Miss Lonelyhearts' pantomimed encounter with an imaginary lover. The song's introduction to the speculative dialogue between Jeff and Lisa about how he'd look in her world is more subtle but just as pointed because of his resistance to being seen.

[7] The wheelchair also creates a relative position of subordination for Jeff. Everyone who visits the apartment looms over him—Lisa and Stella, Thorwald cer-

tainly, even the diminutive waiter from 21 who takes over the job of opening the wine bottle with which Jeff fumbles.

[8] Hitchcock himself noted this "symmetry. . . . On one side of the yard you have the Stewart-Kelly couple, with him immobilized by his leg in a cast, while she can move about freely. And on the other side there is a sick woman who's confined to her bed, while the husband comes and goes" (Truffaut 1983, 166). Belton's analysis of the spatial representations notes not only this parallel but also the proliferation of associations that "confounds any simple theory of projection that might reduce the relationship between the film's foreground and background to that of one-for-one allegory" (1991, 86).

[9] Hitchcock's recurrent verbal tic, "you see"—appearing three times in this very short comment—underscores his own commitment to the act of seeing central to his art.

[10] Stam points out the errors of Robin Wood and Donald Spoto who similarly overstate the use of subjective treatment, but he too fails to observe the two critical moments when the camera escapes the boundaries of Jeff's apartment (1992, 52). See Toles, who not only makes the point about the independence of the camera from Jefferies but also suggests that the film itself looks back at the audience, a point that I dispute but which has relevance to my conclusion (2001, 173).

[11] See, for example, Stam and Pearson (1983, 142), Corber (1991, 139-40), Stam (1992, 53), Mazella (1994, 70), Toles (2001, 173).

[12] To be sure, Modleski notes that Mulvey's reading of Lisa as a passive object to Jeff's active subject identity is mistaken in several respects, but Modleski doesn't account for the stages through which Lisa reframes Jeff's view of her. As important as her performance in the courtyard or in Thorwald's apartment is, these are tactics in a larger strategy to capture Jeff's attention by participating in his voyeurism, and thus demonstrating that she can be part of his world.

[13] Truffaut views Lisa's accomplishment as inspiring "Stewart [Jeff] to propose. After all, she's already got the ring" (1983, 223). Modleski, on the other hand, notes the symbolic marriage to Thorwald, suggesting a feminist critique of the dire consequences of marriage (1988, 82).

[14] Sartre's dramatic hypothetical scenario about the experience of being seen has relevance here: "But all of a sudden I hear footsteps in the hall. Someone is looking at me! What does this mean? It means that I am suddenly affected in my being and that essential modifications appear in my structure—modifications which I can apprehend and fix conceptually by means of the reflective *cogito*" (1956, 260). He imagines precisely the condition in which Jeff finds himself. Although there is no evidence that Hitchcock had read the French philosopher's work (the English translation appeared two years after *Rear Window*), Sartre's assertions here are uncannily close to the developments in Hitchcock's film:

> *Both* the obscurity of the dark corner and my possibility of hiding there are surpassed by the Other when, before I have been able to make a move to take refuge there, throws the light on the corner. This in the shock which seizes me when I apprehend the Other's look, this happens—that suddenly I experience a subtle

> alienation of all my possibilities, which are now associated with objects of the world, far from me in the midst of the world. (Sartre 1956, 264-65)

Similarly, Sartre's observation that looking through a keyhole undetected raises no self-consciousness and that one is merged with the act of looking and with the instrument (keyhole) that facilitates the act calls to mind the readiness with which Jeff gains greater visual advantage through his telephoto lens, which Stella refers to as his "portable keyhole."

[15] Of the variety of heterotopias that Foucault discusses in these lecture notes, the mirror is a particularly interesting one in light of *Rear Window's* use of vision and is part of what informs the reference to the looking glass in my title.

[16] Although many critics have noted the exchange of reading material, Toles in particular, none have, to my knowledge, noted the how the title of William O. Douglas's *Beyond the High Himalayas* (1952) injects a kind of comic absurdity with respect to Jeff's adventurism. Since they are the most remote and the highest mountain range, and thus no geographical challenge lies beyond them, this title, in effect, mocks Jeff's notion of himself as ever more adventurous, and allows us to read Hitchcock's final sympathy with Lisa. Since Edmund Hilary had scaled Everest in May of 1953, to great acclaim, an attentive audience in 1954 would have readily understood this subtle jab.

[17] This costuming decision correlates to Doane's observation about the limits on the female spectator and the tendency to view her "as the site of an oscillation between feminine position and a masculine position, invoking the metaphor of transvestite" (1999, 137).

[18] See Bertolini (2002, 240).

[19] The framing of Hitchcock's image in the studio window parallels a similar framing of his image in a photograph in *Dial M for Murder*, released in the same year as *Rear Window*. The photograph in the earlier film is from a college reunion and links the reluctant hit man, Charles Swann (Anthony Dawson), to Tony Wendice (Ray Milland). On the practical level, Hitchcock's appearing in the photograph may be due to the limited opportunities for a cameo in a film that takes place in the narrow space of a single apartment. There are a few street scenes outside the Wendices' London apartment as well as a dinner party at fashionable hotel, though the latter occurs much further into the film than where the director preferred to make his appearances. But insofar as the photograph is an important instrument for Tony to blackmail his ne'er-do-well schoolmate to murder Wendice's wife, Margot (Grace Kelly), and then later to re-frame the photograph as evidence of Margot's ostensible intent to murder Swann as a blackmailer, Hitchcock's appearance in that photograph is not at all incidental but, rather, included in a central piece of Tony's complex and flexible plot.

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