

Light Hair

The Aesthetics of The Lodger

Prefatory Note

*I confess it must seem a bit perverse to contribute this essay to Cinephile's issue on "New Queer Theory in Film." The text never mentions queerness at all and the film at its centre is far from new. But the essay speaks to my interest in queerness as a disturbance of the order of meaning—a disturbance experienced libidinally as a disorienting enjoyment. Rather than reading queerness, that is, as a sexual orientation, I understand orientations themselves as forms of defence against queerness. By seeming to provide an epistemological ground, orientations, as the word suggests, affirm a capacity to make sense of sexuality through taxonomies of dispositions. As a placeholder for the "nothing," the illegibility, that narrative logic overcomes, queerness, this essay implicitly suggests, both determines and resists that epistemology. As a figure for the negativity that disfigures every mode of signification, it inhabits cinema in two distinct ways: as the fetishization of the image and as the dissolution of that fetish in the recognition of the minimal difference—the flicker—that the image embodies and denies. Dissolving the substance of reality as it normatively appears, destroying the consensus by which social reality and meaning are assumed, queerness is never far from the criminals to whom Hitchcock keeps returning. Indeed, it is never far from Hitchcock, whose cinematic rhetoric abounds in such acts of radical disfiguration.¹ Against the recuperative deployment of aesthetic idealizations, Hitchcock confronts queer negativity as the obverse of the fetish, a negativity whose enjoyment threatens the face of cinema itself. That facelessness, I suggest in what follows, is what *The Lodger* invites us to face.*

1. For a brilliant reading of Hitchcock's films that also engages, though with a different focus, the intrusion of figure in the visual field, see D. A. Miller's two recent essays.

The human face is the sun toward which the camera of Western narrative cinema heliotropically turns. Emitting, by way of its eyes, a sort of solar emanation (a light it seems to radiate, not simply to reflect), the face in film, unlike the sun, compels *our* eyes to take it in as the template of familiarity, recognizability, and legible form, and thus as the figure for the illuminations that cinema itself intends. Almost redundant in close-up—recall Deleuze's formulation that the "close-up is by itself face" (88)—it figures the apprehensible form that the camera, precisely by searching out, constructs on behalf of the film: an ideal of totalization by which the anxiety of the camera's cuts and pans, of its erasures of what we can see, is allayed by the promise of coherence to come when those movements at last achieve proper focus in the light that shines forth both from and as the film's own form or face. All the more worthy of comment, then, that Hitchcock, with the opening shot of *The Lodger* (1927), his third finished work as a director, presents the luminosity of such a face in a close-up filmed while an off-screen assailant, like Othello, puts out its light.

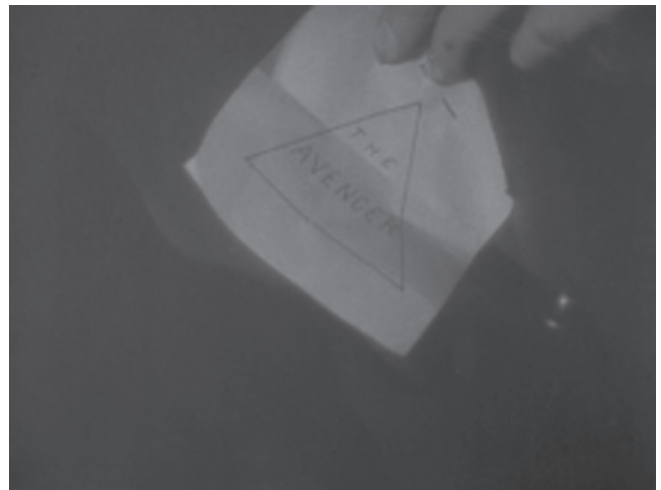


Though my metaphor comes from Shakespeare, *The Lodger* actively solicits it. As the viewer discovers retrospectively, this shot is framed by the narrative as a serial killer's repetition of his first homicidal act, the murder of a young woman at a Coming Out ball that constituted his own coming out in the guise of "The Avenger." That initial murder, shown later in a flashback that quotes this opening shot, depends upon, and follows from, a prior glimpse of the killer's hand as he switches off the lights in the ballroom and thereby plunges it into a darkness that conjoins the condition that enables his crime with its metaphorical effect: "Put out the light, and then put out the light" (*Othello* 5.2.7).



These related shots of the killer's victims at the moment of their deaths—the first introducing the spectacle of murder to the audience viewing the film, the second depicting its earlier eruption in the film's diegetic world—thus refer to each other for their meaning. By performing the repetition or serialization of an act that has taken place already, the murder depicted in the opening shot reveals itself as a figure and so as legible only in relation to something extrinsic to itself. In fact, all the killings in the film point back to, by

repeating, aspects of the first, thus turning *The Avenger's* proliferating crimes into so many forms of return. But the film invites us to read that first murder in figurative terms as well, depicting this initial killing too as an act of substitution imbued with a meaning borrowed, by way of transference, from something else. That something else, which the film never names, pertains to the offence, or the perceived offence, that the killer (who is never revealed in the film) purports to avenge by his crimes—crimes whose locations, the film makes clear, trace a formal pattern: a triangle. *The Avenger's* victims turn out thereby to be placeholders in more ways than one. They refer to a primal wrong on which *The Avenger* finds himself fixed (reenacting that wrong compulsively as if by repeating he could reverse it) and their death-sites plot out a figure on a map that signals the killer's "identity." For the triangle, of course, is the hallmark by which *The Avenger* signs his crimes as well as the structure of the romantic relations (among Daisy [June], Joe [Malcolm Keen], and the lodger [Ivor Novello]) that Hitchcock, pioneering his distinctive mirroring of criminal and erotic relations, juxtaposes with the series of murders.¹



Whether or not the killings "avenge" an erotic betrayal that triangulated an intimate relation, they identify their author as one who inscribes a triangle through those killings, reducing his victims to the fungible material of a repetition that is literally his signature. But no more than the killer is the film concerned with the specificity of these victims: the connection between the first shot of *The Lodger* and the shot of *The Avenger's* first victim makes clear that for all the

1. This might lead us to suspect that the "crime" the killer "avenges" with his own crime is an act of adultery that transformed his real or imagined intimacy with a blonde from the dyadic relation of a couple to the three-termed relation of a triangle like that in which Daisy gets involved. In that sense, *The Avenger* would ultimately be linked to Joe as well as to the lodger, both of whom will find themselves with losses to "avenge." The former's violent response to the loss of Daisy's affections would match the latter's determination to avenge the loss of his sister.

beauty of the images—or, indeed, as a *consequence* of that beauty—the faces these two shots linger on are construed, by *The Avenger* and by Hitchcock both, as utterly generic. They are faces stripped of identity to mark their identity as human faces—or to figure the human face as it is being stripped of its living identity. Contextually, moreover, in relation to each other, the shots sketch a narrative chiasmus: the light of the radiant face at the outset fades slowly into darkness while the onset of darkness at the Coming Out ball gives way to the radiance of the face. Thus whatever “face” denotes in the film, *The Lodger* grounds it in a logic of repetition, reversal, and substitution. Inextricable from the narrative movement that consists in bringing to light what was dark, the face itself comes to allegorize the recognition of pattern, the assurance of enlightenment, and the affirmation of the scopoc regime and its imaginary investments, even as *The Lodger* subjects the face to a violent derealization.

Both of these shots of the human face mobilize what Paul de Man describes as a logic of disfiguration, destroying the face as the naturalized site of meaning’s legibility precisely to the extent that such naturalization is seen as a rhetorical effect. Writing about Shelley’s “The Triumph of Life” in a text that informs my own, de Man observes that “figuration is the element in language that allows for the reiteration of meaning by substitution ... [T]he particular seduction of the figure is not necessarily that it creates an illusion of sensory pleasure, but that it creates an illusion of meaning” (“Shelley” 114-115). But as de Man goes on to demonstrate, the “figure for the figurality of all signification” (116) in Shelley’s poem (the poet calls it a “shape all light” (352)) evinces the dependence of figure as a mode of understanding or cognition on a “violent ... act of power achieved by the positional power of language considered by and in itself” (116).² Insofar as the epistemology of figure rests on “the senseless power of positional language” (117), its “authority of sense and meaning” (116) is only something “we impose” (116). If we normally read by investing figure with a delusory epistemological stability, de Man insists that “language performs the erasure of its own positions” (119), continuously bringing us face to face with the willful construction that generates the consistency, the face, of each posited figure. De Man calls this process “disfiguration” (119) and acknowledges, in a phrase that allows us to make the surprising return to Hitchcock, “the full power of this threat in all its negativity” (121). For the threat to the face of meaning in de Man finds its corollary in the shots of women’s faces as they face their own deaths in *The Lodger*.

Like an act of *The Avenger*, these arresting shots dim the lustre of the face by reducing it to a figure. In the pro-

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cess they inscribe its luminous presence with a simultaneous absence, insisting on the formal status of the face as a substitute, a sort of placeholder, whose fascinating radiance dissimulates its insistently rhetorical operation. Perhaps for just that reason *The Lodger* is the first of Hitchcock’s films to thematize the insistence of the fetish, initiating what subsequent works will confirm as a fixation on blonde-haired women, or rather, and more precisely, as a fixation on women’s blonde hair, the distinction between these formulations being that between the coherence of a totalized identity and the particularity of non-totalizable elements. On the narrative level, the film makes clear that these women are merely instances—and to that extent, disposable—of the figural possibility attached to them by way of their light-coloured hair. *The Avenger* may choose his victims, in part, for what the film calls their “golden curls,” but even that gold, the film suggests, is never the thing itself: it too, like the women defined by it, only constitutes a fetish that materializes a lack in the representational field, an absent referent that evokes the absence intrinsic to reference as such.³ Insofar as it figures, in its status as fetish, the very fetishization of figure, and thus the fetishization of the totalized meaning that the face as figure effects (and we can hardly forget that *figure* in French is the word for face itself), such golden hair marks the site at which Hitchcock, by way of a bedazzling image, images the recourse of cinema to just such images to bedazzle us, to blind us to cinema’s anxious relation to the imageless dazzle of light.

Even as the face gets reduced in these shots (by the killer and Hitchcock both) to a metonym for blonde hair, so the hair, in the visual system of *The Lodger*, proves a metonym as well. Consider what Hitchcock himself had to say about the shot with which he begins:

We opened with the head of a blond [sic] girl who is screaming. I remember the way I photographed it. I took a sheet of glass, placed the girl’s head on the glass and spread her hair around until it filled the frame. Then we lit the glass from behind so that one would be struck by her light hair. Then we cut to show an

2. See Forest Pyle for a remarkably perceptive reading of negativity in Keats and Shelley that is also indebted to the work of de Man.

3. For Freud’s analysis of the fetish as a displacement of the missing phallus, see Freud, “Fetishism,” 152-7.



electric sign advertising a musical play, *To-night, Golden Curls*. (Qtd. in Truffaut 44)

How, in this light, could we fail to observe that what Hitchcock calls the girl's "light hair" stands in for light as such? Made literally here to frame her face like a mass of effulgent rays, the hair, once back-lit through transparent glass, becomes a mere vehicle for the light passing through, emitting the fascination and hypnotic allure of a gem-like brilliance that seems to mimic the gleam of the eye observing it. As Lacan remarks while glossing his well-known story of the sardine can, "that which is light looks at me," to which he adds that the "gaze is always a play of light and opacity ... [T]he point of gaze always participates in the ambiguity of the jewel" (96). Exemplarily in this regard, the golden curls in *The Lodger* serve at once to veil and unveil such light, occasioning an oscillating movement we might describe as a cognitive glimmer that corresponds to the sensory glimmer associated with gold—a glimmer of recognition that acknowledges only by negation the negativity from which it emerges: the illegibility of light. Precisely to the degree that light itself blinds, so the film blinds itself and its viewers to the light about which we receive no enlightenment—the light that reveals such enlightenment as an allegorical displacement of light, which remains, as the *medium* of cinematic knowledge, impossible for film to shed light on.

I mean by this that the fetishized hair marks the narrativization of light, its figural enchainment to a story of illumination as the access to understanding. The film's "golden curls" bind light's fascination to a material specificity, thus making those curls the allegorical shadow by means of which light can be seen. In the absence of such narrativization, which permits its regulated veiling and unveiling, light, the medium of visibility never visible *as itself*, would be nothing but blinding effulgence, an illegible dazzle that, inherently shapeless, would vacate the universe of shape. By means of its fetishistic displacement, though, into what Hitchcock calls "light hair," light enters the realm of cognition not simply in the eroticized form



of blonde curls, but also, and more importantly, as the narrative-engendering movement of displacement, as the transference that is and that generates a sequence of events, a historical relation, a "becoming visible" that reads the form of filmic desire as the desire for form as such. Light acquires visibility, that is, as the narrative movement essential to cinema's illusion of kinesis as produced by the celluloid strip. Hence cinema, for the Hitchcock of *The Lodger*, allegorizes the light that eludes definition, comprehension, or cognition through narratives of cognitive illumination. This should recall de Man's declaration that "'Light' names the necessary phenomenality of any positing" ("Hegel" 113), a claim he makes in his discussion of Hegel's analysis of "Let there be light." The light produced by that utterance, as *The Lodger* and de Man both imply, marks the phenomenalization of the movement already performed by the utterance itself. Light, to rephrase de Man, thus "names" the phenomalization of naming as such, the thematic embodiment that undertakes to literalize its positing. "Let there be," de Man's act of pure positing, is itself already the light, the condition of becoming visible, that the narrative sequence reiterates by giving form (precisely as narrative) to this giving of form (as catachrestic naming). But that light as phenomenal appearing veils the positing it fleshes out, permitting us access to that positing only by the light of its allegorical shadow, only, that is, by enacting the narrative movement toward enlightenment that blinds us to the figurality of what we thereby (mis)take for light.

Tom Cohen's wide-ranging essay, "Political Thrillers: Hitchcock, de Man, and Secret Agency in the 'Aesthetic State,'" raises similar questions about Hitchcock's de Manian engagement with light, but it does so while privileging the allegorization that *The Lodger*, at least in my reading, both interrogates and performs. Cohen's essay brilliantly





traces Hitchcock's insistence on the trace, his exposure of the mnemotechnical substrate that undermines the mimetic valence of his cinematic texts. Referring to what William Rothman describes as the "bar series" in Hitchcock's *oeuvre*, by which Rothman means the patterned inscription of lines, often parallel and regularly spaced, created by the positioning of objects or images within the filmic frame, Cohen proposes that in Hitchcock's films "[l]ight, the aftereffect of a pulsion of shadows that demarcate, like measure or the bar-series, is stripped of its paternal and solar promise. It is the effect of a certain *techné*" (123-124). Later he adds that the bar-series is "a remnant of a marker that precedes light" (128-129). Such a reading, despite its positing of light as an aftereffect of "*techné*," which Cohen acutely links to the status of writing as non-immediacy, reproduces, nonetheless, the figural entanglement of light in the *story* of enlightenment, which is also to say, in the story of story, in the story of light as emergence or education, of light as the difference from the generative mark of the "*techné*" whose shadow "precedes" it. Though Cohen effects a compelling transvaluation of *techné* and light with this move, light remains the product of *techné* as it remains the product of Cohen's own masterful technical analysis. For Cohen illuminates the antimimetic imperative of Hitchcock's "*techné*" only through readings that treat Hitchcock's texts as *mimetic* allegorizations of this antimimetic force. Rather than *escaping* what he describes as light's "paternal and solar promise," his reading, though identifying light as secondary, implicitly repeats that promise. Out of darkness comes light; out of shadow, illumination: always the story of story's imperative as expressed in the ur-imperative that posits it: "let there be light." We apprehend this story of light by displacing light into story, by imposing the form that binds us to mimesis even as we try to escape it. "Let

there be," by calling forth something from nothing, initiates the event *of* event, of appearance or coming into being, whereby light, as the allegorical materialization of this very becoming visible, inheres in the temporal difference that is narrative's version of linguistic positing. Light, therefore, remains as inaccessible as pure difference and it names the negativity of a naming that seeks to master negativity.

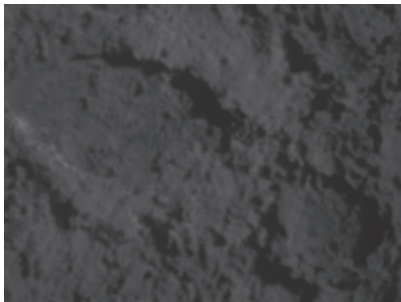
Could *The Lodger* better illuminate this structure inseparable from our delight in narrative than by associating its title character, and the burden of its own will-to-story, with a flicker, swaying, or change in the intensity of a light? If, just before he knocks on the door, the gaslight suddenly dims in the house at which the lodger will ask about rooms, it is not merely so Hitchcock can foreshadow his shadow-like entrance into the film, but also so Hitchcock can link, through metonymy, an insert shot of a gas lamp returning to its former degree of brightness with the following shot of the lodger removing the scarf that had covered his face. More than merely enabling, that is, the recognition of his face, light is that recognition itself. Its fluctuation, its flickering difference, is repeatedly allegorized in the narrative as the movement toward cognitive mastery, toward the dawning of an awareness, if only of the temporal difference that separates a now from a then.

Doesn't a version of that movement mark the film's most famous shot? When the people from whom the lodger rents rooms hear him pacing the floor above they turn their gaze to the ceiling and Hitchcock's camera follows suit. The film then cuts to the hanging light slowly swaying back and forth. Since this movement alone cannot convey its source in the lodger's footsteps, Hitchcock goes one step further. He shows the link between the swaying lamp and the weight of the lodger's steps by superimposing on the shot of the lamp (from the perspective of those looking

up) a glimpse of the lodger walking above, an effect he achieved by filming the lodger through a specially-made plate-glass floor. As in the opening shot, where the girl's light hair was spread out on glass and lit



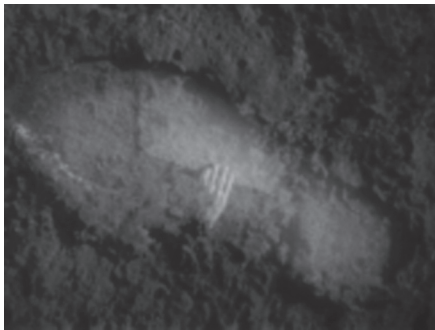
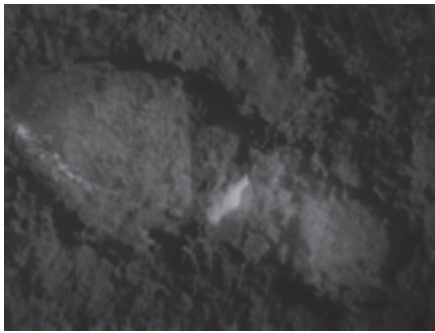
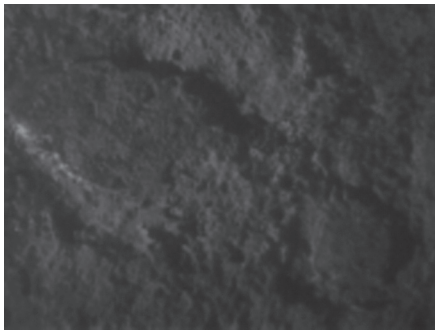
This constitutes, then, a foundational moment, a ground, of Hitchcock's art: the moment when the ground we stand on, the legibility of cinema as narrative, is exposed as the allegorization of light, as the displacement of light's illegibility into the temporal movement of (re)cognition.



from below, so here the same set of elements combine (human subject, plate of glass, and source of light) to enact the film's interest in narrative allegories that seem to yield cognitive transparency through light's transposition into knowledge. Graphically rendering an act of cognition, an inferential reading predicated on a logic of cause and effect (the lamp is swinging *because* the lodger, unseen, is pacing above), this sequence proposes that reading, like logic, effects its illuminations by means of a light that the film associates less with transparency than with the process of becoming transparent through narrative articulation. The narrativization by which the film seems to lead to a cognitive transparency is portrayed as no more than the allegorical elaboration of this swinging light—a light that here, as later in *Psycho* (Hitchcock 1960), figures cinema's disfigured face. This constitutes, then, a foundational moment, a ground, of Hitchcock's art: the moment when the ground we stand on, the legibility of cinema as narrative, is exposed as the allegorization of light, as the displacement of light's illegibility into the temporal movement of (re)cognition. Perhaps that explains why the lamp disappears in the final shot of this sequence. The light is supererogatory now, absorbed in the act of cognition that makes narrative itself the shedding of light.

But the film contains one crucial sequence where allegorization fails to conceal the blindness it strives to deny.⁴ Like the scene of the lodger's pacing the floor, this one too depicts the movement toward interpretation as understanding, but it exposes the seeming transparency that such a narrative of enlightenment produces as the effect of a (cinematic) projection. Entering a secluded London square on a typically foggy night, Joe, the stolid police detective assigned to catch The Avenger, catches, instead, the lodger about to kiss Daisy, Joe's fiancée. After making a scene that prompts Daisy to sever their engagement and leave with the lodger, Joe sinks down to the bench on which Daisy and the lodger had been embracing and leans forward with a heavy heart and wounded, downcast eyes. The film then cuts to Joe's point of view and directs our attention, inexplicably at first, to a dark patch of dirt at his feet. But such a description, however accurate, risks distorting the effect of this shot, which depends on the fact that we are not quite sure just what we are meant to see. Or rather, to put this another way, the shot entails our encounter with a seeming resistance to legibility. We may recognize, more or less quickly, the outline of a footprint at Joe's feet, but why this is worthy of notice surely leaves us at a loss. Joe and the lodger (among others, no doubt) have stood on the

4. As Paul de Man makes clear, the logic of allegory entails a narrative movement from ignorance to awareness, from an obstacle to its overcoming, whose paradigmatic expression might be found in the words of "Amazing Grace": "was blind but now I see." See "The Rhetoric of Temporality" 187-228.



spot Joe studies, so nothing should be less surprising than finding a footprint in the dirt. But the pairing of “footprint” and “detective” frames this nonetheless as a “clue.” And if the viewer is clueless about what it all means, Joe, we discover, is not. In reverse shot we now see his face brightly lit, though the diegetic source of light—the lamp beneath which he sits—ought to leave his face in the shadow that the brim of his hat would cast. Instead, his face now shines with light as if illuminated by what he has seen.

When the camera cuts back to the shot of the ground, two changes now take place. First, we see, superimposed on the footprint, a shot that repeats the moment when the lodger, displeased by the paintings of blonde-haired women on the walls of his rented rooms, suspiciously turned the pictures, and so the women’s faces, to the wall. In the frame of the footprint we watch his hand reversing a painting once more, supplanting a blonde-haired woman’s face with the picture frame’s imageless obverse. Second, this shot, which refuses us access to the fetishized “light hair,” seems, instead, to turn that hair’s lightness back into light

as such, for light now pools in the footprint, thereby giving it clearer shape. In this way the footprint’s empty frame emerges as an image of the emptying out or negation of the image—of the disfiguration that reads face as a figure, and thus threatens, like the killer, to destroy it.

If the light only gains visibility, though, insofar as it fills the footprint, which might function then as the print or photographic impression of light itself, then that footprint gains visibility here only as the detective makes it a screen for the images he rehearses in his mind. Though the film eventually disavows the recognition to which those images lead him—that the lodger himself is The Avenger and that Daisy will be his next victim—this cognitive movement produces the light that illuminates the pattern on the ground, thus grounding our own recognition of form (that of the newly-illuminated footprint as well as that made visible in the lodger’s incriminating activities) in the detective’s misrecognition.

Mistaking for transparent understanding what the film shows as literally a superimposition, Joe himself *posits* the meaning whose perception thereafter seems to enlighten him, enacting thereby an allegorical translation of “let there be” into light. In using the impression of the lodger’s foot as a screen onto which he then projects impressions of the lodger, Joe produces a quintessentially cinematic epistemology. If he seems to be viewing a film of sorts in the screen of the empty print, though, it is one that reduces the movements of film to discontinuous images, like the slides of a magic lantern show, and that thereby disfigures the naturalization to which classical editing aspires. Not that the images lack fluidity; they move across the footprint’s “ground” in a steady and stately flow. But each is isolated from its narrative context and adduced in relation to the others as a separate “clue” or piece of evidence. Thus the hand shown reversing the painting slides left and out of the footprint-as-screen while the lodger’s black bag, which doubles the one associated with The Avenger, slides into view from the right. After cutting to show us Joe’s face as he links these images in his mind, thus identifying what he sees as a cognitive montage that leads him to the moment of illumination when he posits, as if perceiving it, the

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lodger's identity as *The Avenger*, the camera returns to the footprint supporting his hallucinatory vision. A glimpse of the lodger embracing Daisy, here largely a mass of blonde hair, slides off to have its place taken by one last image: the swaying lamp used before to figure cognitive illumination.

Why should this lamp be the endpoint suggesting the lodger's culpability? The reductively naturalistic response, that its movement betrayed the lodger's anxiety as he nervously paced the floor, does not explain why it trumps the more incriminating bag or the more perverse, gesture of turning the paintings of blonde women toward the wall. But the lamp recalls the earlier elaboration of transparency and superimposition, suggesting, in this scene's meditation on projection and narrative construction, the understanding or enlightenment that flashes up when opacity gives way to legibility and the formlessness (mis)construed as light's antithesis takes form. The lamp, in this case, would epitomize the temporal sequence of filmic images as the formal displacement (through allegorization) of light's blinding illegibility. That condition of illegibility is transposed onto the dirt before it gets sublimated into meaning through the projection of image and form. We barely even notice, therefore, that the appearance in the footprint of the swaying light as the figure of illumination coincides with the disappearance of light from the shape of the footprint itself, a shape whose form is now swallowed up by the darkness from which it emerged.

Light as the disfiguration of form, the illegibility of light itself, is the horror, I want to argue, against which Hitchcock's films defend. Often, as in *The Lodger*, they do so by displacing the force of "let there be," the quintessential act of positing, onto the phenomenality of light as fetishized in "light hair." If the fetish as such gives presence

and form to what, in the absence of fetishization, signals a radical loss, then this primal narrative of Hitchcockian fetish in the form of "golden curls" announces, like *The Avenger's* triangle, Hitchcock's investment in the production of form through acts of positional violence. It reveals, that is, his commitment to seeing the flicker of light at the heart of the "flickers" as generating cinematic narrative as an allegorization that imposes form on the flicker that thereby flickers into meaning. The violence inherent in this positing of form as the figure of flickering light would at once repeat and defend against the violence of light as formlessness, as the disfiguration of figure. In this way the narrative allegory retains the negativity of the flicker, which it positivizes as enlightenment, cognitive mastery, or comprehension. That flicker, that differential relation in time at the core of the filmic event, becomes the basis for the bringing to light of form, paradigmatically as a face, that gives light a negative visibility in the shadows it imprints. Hitchcock may often discuss the MacGuffins with which he fills his plots, but *The Lodger* suggests that those plots

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are in some sense always MacGuffins themselves, snares by which Hitchcock blinds our eyes to the blinding horror of light, to the shapeless effulgence his camera would bind to the visible form of a face.

His films may rhetorically disfigure that face by seeming to bring us face to face with the light that effaces enlightenment, by reducing each image of “golden curls” to nothing but the sign or inscription of itself produced by a flicker of light, but Hitchcock, as the end of *The Lodger* makes clear, restores nonetheless the redemptive glow of the face that figures his film. For his cinema “knows” that knowing remains the effect of allegorical narrative and every attempt to face the light as a formlessness untethered to figure imposes on it another figure of cognitive illumination. The erasure or undoing of figure, after all, becomes one more narrative allegory reaffirming the legibility of allegory as figure. The metonymy that *The Lodger* adduces in the form of “golden curls,” or better, in the form of what Hitchcock himself identified as “light hair,” thus partakes of a fetishization essential to his cinema: the fetishization that postivizes a differential flickering by making it a sign—like the sign announcing “To-Night, Golden Curls” that blinks on and off at the end of *The Lodger*, reaffirming the substitutive relations among light, light hair, and signification. In this way Hitchcock’s film makes visible the negativity of light itself—a negativity *The Lodger* tries to negate by bringing it to light in scenes of enlightenment that leave us in the dark. That darkness, which serves as our only defense against the formlessness of light, is the darkness of allegory’s “dark conceite” (407), as Spenser famously called it, whereby Hitchcock posits, in the form of light hair, the equation of light and form in order to give us, in form as such, the only light we can face.

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