

DISABLED BY DESIRE: BODY DOUBLES IN “REAR WINDOW” (1942), *REAR WINDOW* (1954), AND *REAR WINDOW* (1998).

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In the coded world of the classical Hollywood cinema, the figure of the ‘disabled’ body is always a double body. Especially the disabled male body. Haunted by its uncanny partner, the ‘normal’ body, it is chained forever to its own doppelganger. Indeed, it is the very spectacle of the disabled body that creates the spectral ‘normal body’ in the first place, as negative space creates form. The latter cannot exist without the former.

The disabled body (as an abelist fantasy figure) is constructed by an act of semiotic dismemberment. It is marked as an assembly of parts, each of which is vulnerable to failure or amputation—an assembly being held together by fetish magic. This marking and fetishizing creates a fictional un-marked able body which passes as a seamless whole. In this manner, the figure of the disabled body gives local habitation and a name to a site of existential bondage. My belief in the existence of such a site is necessary to my belief that I live elsewhere, that I am unbound. It enables my fantasy that there is a category of Other People—a category to which I do not belong—who are chained to dying animals, whereas I float

free. It enables the fantasy that there is a posthuman escape from “the meat world,” as William Gibson has phrased it.¹ In short, if there were no disabled people, Hollywood would have to invent them (as, indeed, it has).

Most of the pioneering work on disability in the cinema has focused on the creation of stigmatizing stereotypes and the negative relation of these stereotypes to the actual life experiences of people who are especially challenged by disabilities. (*All of us have disabilities, but there is a difference in degree that is a difference in kind, socio-politically.*) For example, Martin Norden in his 1994 book, *The Cinema of Isolation*, distinguishes ten specific disabled character types that have evolved over the years in Hollywood films, from the Comic Misadventurer to the High-Tech Guru.² He demonstrates how these stereotypes “pander . . . to the needs of the able-bodied majority” by embodying otherwise formless fears (1,12).

In this essay, I am not primarily concerned with the way in which the reified disabled body embodies formless fears, but rather, how it can be made to embody form-

less *desires*. What I am after, however, is something rather different from what Leslie Fiedler meant when he noted that “all Freaks are perceived to one degree or another as erotic” (Fiedler 137). No authentic disabled bodies, erotic or otherwise, inhabit this essay, nor do they inhabit the Hollywood cinema, I would argue. There are only social/psychological constructs that feed upon themselves. In those constructs, “the loss of control [is] often represented as inherent in the experience of disability,” as Paul Longmore has observed (35). For Longmore, this means that disability is inevitably associated with sexual danger. The flip side of fear is desire, however; and the very Otherness invested in the figure of the disabled body makes it an especially convenient repository for disowned states of yearning. In his seminal 1988 essay “Vas,” Paul Smith, building on the work of Klaus Theweleit, argues that for many men, the most important of these disowned feelings is “the hysterical desire for somatic loss, the death of the body in an efflux of bodily substance” (1025).

In the pages that follow, I propose to analyze how this fear-as-desire has been built into the disabled bodies of three male protagonists: “Hal Jeffries” in Cornell Woolrich’s 1942 short story, “Rear Window”;³ “L.B. Jefferies” in Alfred Hitchcock’s 1954 film *Rear Window*, based on the Woolrich story; and “Jason Kemp” in the 1998 ABC TV remake of *Rear Window* starring actor Christopher Reeve. Each of these bifurcated bodies is doubled by other bodies (many of them female) within their respective texts. Taken together, they suggest another kind of disabled typology: the Liminal Man whose protective, spliced-together wholeness marks the fragile boundary where ‘normal’ and ‘not-normal’ come together.

1.0 REAR WINDOW (1942)

During his brief, unconsummated marriage to Gloria Blackton, author Cornell Woolrich kept a locked suitcase in their

bedroom. It contained a sailor suit that he surreptitiously donned at night, slipping out of his marital closet to cruise the docks in search of male sexual partners. The suitcase also contained a leather-bound diary in which he kept blow-by-blow records of his couplings. Despising his ‘perversion,’ increasingly paranoid that his double life



Cornell Woolrich

would be disclosed, Woolrich simultaneously made sure that it was disclosed, accidentally leaving the suitcase unlocked, accidentally forgetting to take the diary with him when he suddenly decided that he had had enough of Gloria (Nevins 76).

“Rear Window” (1942) is that locked/unlocked suitcase. Buried beneath a carefully constructed concrete floor of plausible deniability, the story riffs on the art of male-male cruising, the dance of the eyes that precedes the disclosure of the body, the disclosure of desire.⁴ Whether or not the reader catches on to the sexual game depends a lot on who the reader is. That is,

Woolrich cruises us in the same guarded way that his disabled protagonist, “Hal Jeffries” cruises his double, “Lars Thorwald.”

Jeffries lives in a house across the back yard from Thorwald’s apartment building. A broken leg has restricted Jeffries’ mobility, confining him to his rear bedroom where he watches his neighbors to pass the time. Jeffries sees Thorwald staring out his window as if he is afraid he is being watched. After using a spyglass to scrutinize Thorwald’s body language for some time, Jeffries concludes that Thorwald has murdered his wife and hidden her body. He becomes obsessed with finding the hidden body and establishing Thorwald’s guilt.

Jeffries’ temporary disability is an excuse for voyeurism, specifically his desire to look at the muscular, semi-clothed body of his ‘rear window neighbor’. The obsessive, ‘fixated’ nature of that desire is telegraphed clearly in Woolrich’s original working title, “Murder from a Fixed Viewpoint” [hereafter “Rear/Murder”]. In effect, Woolrich splits the body of his male protagonist into two mirror-image forms: the ‘normal’ body, from which Jeffries came and to which he will return, and a second, ‘abnormal’ body that he has acquired by accident. The normal body, without the cast on its leg, is free to perform but constrained by homosocial regulations from looking with desire. With the cast, the body is free

to desire but not free to perform. The function of the cast is thus expressive, disciplinary, and protective at once. The rigidity that discloses arousal creates both a bondage restraint and a closet in which to hide. In this manner, the figure of the disabled body enables disabling desire—the itch that can never be scratched. This semiotic exploitation of disability is characteristic, not only of Woolrich, of course, but of the postwar Hollywood cinema that his fictions fueled.⁵ In *film noir* in particular, the visible “cripple” invariably doubles the invisible “pervert.”⁶

Significantly, the leg cast that makes Jeffries a ‘cripple’ does not appear until the penultimate line in the story. The opening paragraphs disclose the fact of Jeffries’ immobility but not its cause or duration. This gap is the first of four mysteries that the narrative exists to explain:

- What is wrong with Hal Jeffries?
- Where is Anna Thorwald’s body?
- What is the meaning of Lars Thorwald’s gaze?
- What caused the ‘uncanny synchronization’ of two men that Jeffries saw from this window?

These questions are nested in each other like a set of Chinese Boxes. The answer to # 4 leads to the answers to #3 and #2 which, in turn, suggest the answer to #1 that lies hidden in the subtext. This *mise-en-abyme* technique permeates the story, as it will permeate Alfred Hitchcock’s 1954 film version in a slightly different way.

Woolrich calls attention to the mirror image doubling of Jeffries and Thorwald by making Jeffries almost paranoid in his insistence that he is very different from Thorwald.

Why is he so interested in other people’s windows, I wondered detachedly. And of course an effective



Reaching for a high note. Universal 2001.



brake to dwell on that thought too lingeringly clamped down almost at once: Look who's talking. What about yourself? An important difference escaped me. I wasn't worried about anything. He, presumably, was (10).

As Jeffries becomes increasingly frustrated by his inability to nail Thorwald, Woolrich makes the sexual nature of the doubling more and more explicit:

I, from my window, had to show them a body. Well, he'd have to show me first. . . .

Two minds with but one thought, turned inside-out in my case. How to keep it hidden, how to see it wasn't kept hidden. . . . The main stream of my thoughts pounded like a torrent against that one obstacle damming them up (23, 24).

Again, the trope of disability licenses desire. Anna Thorwald's absent disabled

female body doubles her husband's very present "sinewy" male body. Jeffries' desire to look *for* the former permits him to look *at* the latter with impunity, as if Thorwald were a hooker in a whorehouse window on the Hamburg docks. The problem, of course, is that Lars Thorwald is cruising, too.

In the dance of the eyes that constitutes gay cruising, the moment of disclosure is fraught with danger. As Woolrich knew quite well, the body, bearing its unmistakable rebus of desire, needs to be kept hidden until the coast is clear. The contrary refusal of the body to be hidden (i.e., the ineluctability of desire) appears in its most arcane form during an "uncanny" tableau that Jeffries witnesses from his window shortly after he begins to watch Thorwald's "naked back" with his spyglass. Thorwald's landlord is standing in the living room window of a remodeled apartment on the 6th

floor. Two floors directly below him, Thorwald stands in the living room window of his own apartment.

At one point an odd little bit of synchronization, completely accidental of course, cropped up. . . . Both parties moved onward simultaneously into the kitchen from there, and, passing the blind spot of the wall, appeared next at the kitchen windows. It was uncanny, they were almost like precision-strollers or puppets manipulated on one and the same string. It prob-



ably wouldn't have happened again just like that in another fifty years. Immediately afterwards they digressed, never to repeat themselves like that again. The thing was, something about it had disturbed me (24).

Jeffries tries to figure out what it is that is bothering him, but his one-track mind insists on returning to "the main problem at hand," the location of the missing body of the disabled woman. What he doesn't realize, of course, is that the answer to the second question (Where?) is hidden inside the answer to the first question (Why?), the

glitch in the doubling of Thorwald and the landlord.

Having lured Thorwald out of his apartment on a ruse, Jeffries sends his 'day houseman' Sam to mess up the place as if it had been searched. Jeffries hopes that Thorwald will react by disclosing the location of the body. The body that is disclosed is Jeffries' own, however. After Jeffries stupidly answers a telephone call without realizing who it is, Thorwald is able to locate his position. In a pivotal moment, Thorwald's cruising eyes suddenly reciprocate Jeffries' gaze: "I saw him give a glance out the window . . . dead-center at my bay window . . ." (29-30). At this second uncanny moment of synchronization connecting him to Thorwald along a horizontal axis, Jeffries suddenly realizes the 'hitch' in the first uncanny synchronization between Thorwald and the landlord: "The hitch had been vertical, not horizontal. There had been an upward 'jump.' Now I had it, now I knew "(31).

What Jeffries doesn't know is that his front door has just been opened. The sweaty, sinewy body of Lars Thorwald has climbed out of its cage and is about to penetrate the space of Jeffries' rear bedroom. Invisible in the dark like "a coiling cobra," pure mindless movement, Thorwald has become the very thing he has hidden: The Body (32). Jeffries is in danger of becoming

another Mrs. Thorwald. In response, he erects the same defense that has structured the entire story (*mise-en-abyme*). He creates a double—a second head to counter the power of the second body (Thorwald) that has suddenly appeared in his bedroom.

There was a bust of Rousseau or Montesquieu, I'd never been able to decide which, one of those gents with flowing manes, topping them. . . . [I] brought it down into my lap, pushing me down into the chair. . . . I tugged [the steamer rug] out from under [me] and mantled it around me

like an Indian brave's blanket. Then I squirmed far down in the chair, let my head and one shoulder dangle out over the arm, on the side next to the wall. I hoisted the bust to my other, upward shoulder, balanced it there precariously for a second head, blanket tucked around its ears. From the back, in the dark, it would look—I hoped (32).

At the sound of Thorwald's gunshot, Jeffries' bedroom explodes in light, and the plaster head shatters; Jeffries' human head, wrapped up like a wooden Indian, feels nothing. Ironically, it is in Jeffries' insistence on remaining intact (un-shattered) that he most resembles Anna Thorwald. 'Mantled' in a thoroughly secure casing of cement, she doesn't feel much either. The moral, of course, is simply that anxiety/excitement and depression are opposites. The price of protection is the diminution of emotional acuity. This existential connection is lost on Jeffries, however, and perhaps on Woolrich as well, who discloses the body hidden in the text window only after the orgasmic danger has passed.

Jeffries' friend, homicide detective Boyne, arrives just in time to shoot the fleeing Thorwald as he stands on the roof of his apartment building. Jeffries positions himself so he can get a good view of Thorwald's body as it falls to the ground and shatters. In the denouement, Jeffries explains to Boyne (and to us) that Anna Thorwald's body is cemented into the raised kitchen floor in the remodeled apartment directly above her own. Once he realized that it was an "upward jump" that had marred the otherwise perfect doubling of Thorwald and the landlord, Jeffries also realized that the kitchen floors of the two apartments (4 and 6) were not identical either. Boyne's men dig up the 5th

floor kitchen and find Anna Thorwald just where Jeffries said they would. As the police cart away both "the hot dead and the cold dead," Boyne reveals that the woman whom neighbors saw leave the Thorwalds' apartment for a trip was really a double, Thorwald's mistress posing as his wife (35).

Boyne leaves, and a new character suddenly appears in the story for the first time, only three lines before the end: "Doc Preston." Like the police, his function is to 'clean things up' by disclosing the answer to the one remaining unsolved mystery: what *is* wrong with Hal Jeffries? The answer (broken leg in cast) 'explains' Jeffries' fevered passivity. It explains why a man—and man who is *not* queer, a man who does *not* have a dirty mind—would sit in his darkened bedroom intently studying the body language and gaze of another man. In other words, Woolrich removes the hidden body from its protective shell (Anna's body from cement, Jeffries' body from its plaster cast) only to hang it up back up in the closet.

At the very end of the story, Doc Preston comments that Jeffries' "must be tired of sitting there all day doing nothing" (36). The line is ironic in more ways than one. It reminds us, among other things,



that in anal sex, which is what the Woolrich story is *not* about, the passive-receptive position is where the emotional action is. The Bottom is really the Top, the secret controller who keeps both hands free to drive the desiring machine. With this image in mind, let us segue to one of Woolrich's many partners in the art of disabling desire, Alfred Hitchcock.



The ice man critiques Miss Hearing Aid's "Hunger". Universal 2001.

2.0 REAR WINDOW (1954)

"He's scattered her all over town, leg in the East River. . . ."

Stella, *Rear Window* (1954)

When asked, director Alfred Hitchcock and his screenwriter John Michael Hayes generally gave the impression that Cornell Woolrich's story was merely the seed idea from which the film *Rear Window* (1954) grew.⁷ Most moviegoers have readily agreed. After all, there is no love story in Woolrich, no Thelma Ritter, and virtually no rear window neighbors other than the Thorwalds. Closer inspection, however, reveals that a surprising amount of Hitchcock's film is already present in the Woolrich story, often in striking specificity, including Thorwald's reciprocal gaze, for instance. (See Fawell 2-3, e.g.) More importantly, both the story and the film are designed using a *mise-en-abyme* technique in which textual objects double in miniature the structure of the text as a whole. Ultimately, it is this technique, and not merely Jeffries'/Jefferies' claustrophobic confinement, that makes both "Rear/Murder" and *Rear Window* feel so "uncanny"—the existential dread that comes when one realizes that security is a solipsistic illusion which is about to shatter into shards of mirrored glass.

In *Rear Window*, Hitchcock has buried

the homoerotic/desiring body of Woolrich's subtext under the smooth cement floor of Hayes' heterosexual dialog—buried it and then slowly dug it up again piece by bloody piece, using the piece-together technique of montage. Even more than in Woolrich's story, the missing body of Anna Thorwald is the missing body of the text (*mise-en-abyme*)—the thing that is said by not being said, the locked/unlocked suitcase. What is merely hidden in Woolrich (closeted but intact) has been disassembled and disbursed in Hitchcock, however. In "Rear/Murder," the technique of doubling split-projects desire in order to amplify it as well as to conceal it. In *Rear Window*, doubling amplifies the explosive danger of desire, fragmenting the male body into an array of female shards, each one of which mirrors a dismembered dimension of the imperiled whole (*mise-en-abyme*). Woolrich's story is a dream of the perfect dock-side 'cruise' in which the watcher gets in and gets out without losing his mind in his orgasm. Hitchcock's film is an anal-erotic wet dream of another, more haunting sort, a Kierkegaardian nightmare of ego dissolution in which the desiring body "threatens to transform . . . back into the horribly disorganized jumble of flesh, hair, skin, bones, intestines, and feelings" that constitutes both the beginning and end of its existence (Theweleit, 160).

In "Rear/Murder," Woolrich protects his protagonist from the reader's objectifying gaze, as well as from Thorwald's. He does not show us Jeffries' body until the very end of the story, and then only briefly. In *Rear Window*, Hitchcock not only shows us Jefferies' body, of course; he makes that body synonymous with the closed set in which it is situated. The first of the two pans that open the film begins with a shot of a black pussycat. The camera tracks past a bathroom window, in which we see a woman's head, and settles on Jefferies' sweaty, sleeping face [hereafter "Jeff" or "LBJ" in my text]. The second pan moves from his face to a thermometer (94 degrees) and then past the windows of three tenants whom we will come to know later as the Composer, the Dog Couple that Sleeps Head to Foot, and Miss Torso, whose head we saw in the bathroom window.⁸ The camera continues to circle left past the only chink in the set's architectural armor, a narrow alleyway through which we get a glimpse of a street and, across it, the window of the Albert Hotel bar. (Is a 'bar window' really an opening or just another iron-barred mirror?) A street cleaning truck crosses the gap as the camera continues its pan past a birdcage and back to LBJ's sleeping face. It tracks slowly down his torso and then down the full length of his rigidly extended left leg, lingering on the inscription written on the enormous white plaster cast that covers it ("Here lie the broken bones of L.B. Jefferies") as if the cast were a grave marker, which, in a sense, it is. The camera pulls back into a medium long shot, revealing that LBJ is sitting in a wheel chair. It then moves from his disabled body past a smashed flash camera to a sequence of photos, including: 1) a close-up of a racing car coming apart in mid-crash, a detached tire flying straight for the invisible cameraman; 2) an atom bomb explosion; 3) a negative of a picture of a woman's head (in which the black space defines the form); and 4) a positive print of the same negative in which the black space has become white flesh.

In semiotic terms, this extraordinary 1

minute 40 second establishing sequence, filmed without a word of dialog (though not without sound), is the picture in miniature. It not only tells us who this man is (an action photographer named L.B. Jefferies who has been disabled in a race track accident), it tells us what is really wrong with him, which is more than Woolrich ever does. If we read the opening sequence of images as a hieroglyphic, we will understand that Jeff embodies a fundamental conundrum: in trying to protect himself from injury—from exploding like a bomb or coming apart like a crashing car—he has walled himself up in a tomb. The entire rest of the film is mapped onto this existential body problem.

A Cubist working in the medium of time, Hitchcock has reconstructed the vulnerable male body along 'safer' lines, in effect.⁹ All lower orifices plastered up, his ass bound down to an iron-sided chair, Jeff's disabled body is a disassembled body being held together by decoupage and fetish magic. In the remainder of the film, Hitchcock will deconstruct his composition, taking apart what he has so carefully put together. The fragility of male ego boundaries that haunts all of Hitchcock's work is conveyed primarily by four *female* bodies in the text, each of which subtly doubles LBJ: Miss Torso, Miss Hearing Aid, Miss Lonelyhearts, and Mrs. Anna Thorwald.¹⁰ The four women, all 'crippled' in one way or another, form a kind of silent Greek Chorus, reminding Jeff (and us) what he/we would like to forget—that we not only eat and shit; we are shit, the food/feces of grave worms. (See Modleski 79-80.)

Hitchcock was a notorious neat-freak who was horrified by the uncontrolled act of vomiting, and even by the act of swallowing (Spoto 128, 412). Obsessed with scatological humor, his idea of a good practical joke involved handcuffing a man to a camera, secretly dosing him with laxatives, and then leaving him to shit in his pants all night (Spoto 124).¹¹ The son of a greengrocer, Hitch once told Francois Truffaut that he'd . . . like to try to do an anthology on



Caption: Miss Torso's rear window. Universal 2001

Mahon . . . [who] murdered a woman, cut the body up into pieces . . . carried them in a suitcase and threw them out of the window of a train between Eastbourne and London, but he had a problem with the head. He put the head into the fire and burned it, and the heat of the fire caused the eyes to open, that indicated to me, that whatever this murder may be, the murderer would have a problem with the head. . . .¹³

food, showing its arrival in the city, its distribution . . . how it's fixed up and absorbed. And, gradually, the end of the film would show the sewers, and the garbage being dumped out into the ocean. So there's a cycle, beginning with the gleaming fresh vegetables and ending with the mess that's poured into the sewers (320).

In a sense, *Rear Window* is that film. When we first see Anna Thorwald, she is being offered a tray full of food. When we last see her, in our mind's eye, she has become pieces of decomposing organic matter floating in the East River, as if she had disappeared up her own intestine and then been shitted all away—except for her head. In the penultimate version of the script (Hayes' "White Script"), that morsel turns up in her own icebox, the eater and the eaten at last reunited!¹²

When in the course of a 1974 copyright infringement lawsuit Hitchcock was asked to explain the unique ways in which he had changed the Cornell Woolrich story, he focused primarily on the dismemberment/decapitation motif.

I also included the essence of two famous English cases. One was the case of Dr. Crippen. . . . He was uncovered because he gave his wife's jewelry to his secretary. . . . There was also the case of Patrick

Hitchcock's version of the Mahon case foregrounds the Medusa-like staring head, a condensed image that fuses accusation/punishment with sexual arousal, as does the semiotic of LBJ's bound-but-erect body. There is another, even more disturbing element in the Mahon case that Hitchcock did not mention in his deposition: Mahon treated his lover's dead body as if it were food, boiling up pieces in a stewpot!¹⁴ The Crippen case also involved dismemberment, but what seemed to interest Hitchcock even more was a transvestite/homerothic element in the story. In an effort to elude detection, Crippen had his lover, Ethel, dress up as a boy. The masquerade fell apart, however, when people became disgusted by the older man's apparently perverse sexual attentions to the 'boy' and reported him to authorities (Truffaut 222-223.)¹⁵

Unlike *Psycho* and other Hitchcock films in which cross-dressing is overt, transvestitism in *Rear Window* is entirely metaphorical, accomplished by the doubling of LBJ's body with the anatomized/partitioned bodies of Miss Torso, Miss Hearing Aid, Miss Lonelyhearts, and Mrs. Anna Thorwald. Our first view of Miss Torso belies her nickname: she is simply a head, framed in a bathroom window. Our second view moves south. Wearing nothing but a

pair of skin-tight short-shorts, she stands with her naked back to the window and prepares to put on her bra. The camera zeros in as she bends over deeply, her head almost touching her toes, giving us a clear view of her parted ass cheeks. That 'moon' shot announces Hitchcock's film within the film: not rear WINDOW but REAR window.

As a dancer, Miss Torso is really all legs. LBJ's odd nickname for her in effect amputates those legs, and her arms and head as well, as if he were acting out a proleptic version of *Boxing Helena*.¹⁶ (See Conrad 77.) These onomastic amputations transform Miss T into a body double for Mrs. AT, a person who becomes a collection of headless body parts. *Torso* is synonymous with *trunk*, which also means *container* and *conduit*. LBJ thinks that Thorwald has put Mrs. T's torso/trunk in his trunk and made it disappear as if he were a "magician." Jeff is wrong, of course. There is no trunk in the man's trunk, only women's dresses. Another magician (Hitchcock) has simply removed the disassembled body from one text window and redistributed it piece by piece to many others, like Mahon throwing body parts out the train window.

In the Final White Script "ice box" ending (see above), the torso/trunk and the head are patched together, in a manner of speaking. Throughout the film, Miss Torso's body has been one of several loci of desire, expressed as hunger for food. She is constantly stuffing her face (a chicken leg here, a big carrot stick there) and constantly bending over, ass up, to peer into her icebox. If we juxtapose the two icebox images, we arrive back at Hitchcock's greengrocer-to-sewer cycle. Miss T eats food from the icebox; Mrs. T is food in the icebox, waiting to be eaten. Bending over at her icebox, Miss Torso maps the (hu)man body as desiring machine, a thing with only two orifices, the mouth and the anus. She is an ambulatory 'food chain'. The conjunction of hunger, orifice, and torso in her person connects Miss Torso, in turn, to another of LBJ's female body doubles, Miss Hearing Aid.

The woman who lives in the garden apartment below and to the left of LBJ's window view is usually referred to as "The Sculptress." However, in the theatrical trailer to *Rear Window* she is described as "Miss Hearing Aid, an artist of a very odd and strange art." The voiceover is accompanied by a shot of Miss Hearing Aid's unattractive face, peering through the hole in the middle of the torso-like clay figure she is sculpting. On the ground sits another, smaller sculpture, also pierced by a hole.¹⁷ Later in the film, an iceman arrives (perhaps to cool down the Medusa sitting in Lars Thorwald's refrigerator). We overhear as he looks at the big sculpture with the hole in it and asks, "What's that supposed to be, Ma'am?" "It's called 'hunger'," she says proudly. The line explicitly links her to the hungry Miss Torso and to the film's food/desire imagery in general. Just as her smaller sculpture mirrors the larger, her art mirrors the art of the film as a whole (*mise-en-abyme*). The disabled sculptress doubles the disabled photographer, who in turn doubles two other artists outside the frame—Hitchcock and John Michael Hayes, neither of whom had 'normal' male bodies.¹⁸ Hitchcock's strange Humpty-Dumpty form haunted him throughout his life. Once temporarily crippled by rheumatoid arthritis, Hayes could never count on his legs not to betray him.¹⁹

Ultimately disabled by his excess weight (desire made flesh), Hitchcock clearly had a distorted body image, a image that seems to have been built around a denial that he had orifices. "When I leave the bathroom, everything is so clean you'd never know anyone had been in there," he was fond of saying (Spoto 459). Although he obviously had had sex at least once (see Patricia Hitchcock), he told Francois Truffaut, "One thing for sure: I never have any erotic dreams!" (261). When pressed on body matters, Hitchcock tended to describe himself as a "mere torso":

A New York doctor once told me that I am an adrenal type. That apparently

means that I'm all body and only vestigial legs. But since I'm . . . [not a] dancer and my present interest in my body is almost altogether from the waist up, that didn't bother me much (Spoto 415).

Although Hitchcock may not have had either wet dreams or a nether orifice, his film *Rear Window* is full of both of them. In his analysis of the film's anal eroticism



Lisa fingers the ring. Universal 2001

(“*Rear Window's* Glasshole”), critic Lee Edelman tallies up a long list of asshole images that populate the film, the most important of which is the wedding-ring-as-sphincter.

The one asshole we do not see in the film is Jefferies' own. Hitchcock has made sure of this, and he is at pains for us to notice the set up. In the establishing sequence at the beginning of the film, the bottom buttons of Jeff's brown PJ top are left undone, and the fabric is pulled open in a V, disclosing that the white plaster cast comes all the way up to his waist. Jeff describes the cast as his “cocoon,” an image that suggests protection. The backside of protection is limitation, however—dis-ability. The cocoon creates the very kind of bathroom bondage situation that obviously tickled

Hitchcock's anal-sadistic imagination. [See above.] If the cast really wraps entirely around Jeff's pelvis, how will he urinate? How will he defecate?²⁰ Perhaps, like Hitchcock, he has mastered the trick of eating without excreting. Even so, he still has another body problem. The cast prevents him from having intercourse. He cannot even touch his penis with his own hands.²¹

Hitchcock makes sure that we are subliminally aware of this. Twice during the film, he has LBJ insert a long, thin wooden tool into the gap at his waist between the cast and his flesh and then push it down inside until he can scratch an itch that has been tormenting him. The first time he gets the itch, he is looking at Lars Thorwald. The second time, he talking with his old war buddy, Detective Tom Doyle. The second itch/scratch sequence is matched to the sound of an off-screen opera singer reaching a high note, a fairly transparent code for orgasm.

Much less obviously, it is “Doyle” who onomastically connects LBJ to the third of his female body doubles, Miss Lonelyhearts. An aging spinster, Miss L is so emotionally hungry that she eats dinner with imaginary people to whom she talks. She is buried alive inside her apartment. LBJ is implicated in both her solipsism and her desire. Unlike so many other of the rear window neighbors, Miss L is not an artist. She is, however, a work of art—*Miss Lonelyhearts* (1933).

In Nathanael West's black-comic novella, *Miss Lonelyhearts* is a male writer who pens a newspaper advice column under a transvestite byline. Disabled by his own lack of emotional armor, he internalizes the wounds of his anguished letter-writers, many of whom are horribly

maimed (e.g. “Desperate,” a sixteen-year old girl who worries that boys won’t like her because she was born without a nose.) One of these unfortunates comes to him in person, an impotent gas-meter-reader cursed with a bad leg and a hen-pecking wife. Seeing the ‘cripple’ as a grotesque collection of bodily fragments (“like one of those composite photographs used by screen magazines in guessing contests,” Lonelyhearts is at once repelled and attracted. (45).²² He holds the man’s sweaty hand under the table as they talk, as if trying to hold him together (47). After a bizarre encounter during which he grovels like a dog, a rolled newspaper in his mouth, as he tears open Lonelyhearts’ fly, the cripple becomes convinced that Lonelyhearts has raped his wife (48). At the end, he shoots Lonelyhearts to death as the columnist rushes to embrace him. Lonelyhearts’ body falls down the stairs, entangled inextricably with the body of the cripple, his *objet doppelgänger*.

Interestingly enough, the name of Lonelyhearts’ crippled double is “Doyle,” the same name as LBJ’s police detective friend. This transtextual conjunction fuses two apparently separate cinematic storyspaces: “(Tom) Doyle and the Cripple (LBJ)” in one window and “Miss Lonelyhearts and her Lover-Rapist” in the opposite window. Jeff’s apartment is thus transformed again into a hall of mirrors, setting up the film’s climax in which apparent opposites (LBJ and LT) come together in a final shattering embrace.²³

We witness a series of three assaults in sequence. The latter two acquire a ‘primal

scene’ aura by virtue of their parallelism with the first assault, which is clearly sexual. In the first, Miss Lonelyhearts brings home a young man who subsequently tries to rape her. In the second scene, Jeff is forced to watch helplessly as Lars returns and assaults Jeff’s girlfriend, “Lisa,” who has been searching Thorwald’s apartment for Anna’s missing wedding ring. Jeff’s anxiety (the other face of desire) is amplified a few minutes later when he is forced to change places with Lisa in Lars’ arms.



The male figure in Miss L’s text window—the lover who is also an attacker—is split into two figures in LBJ’s window, in effect: Tom Doyle and Lars Thorwald. Doyle and Jefferies are intimate war buddies, with Doyle performing the dominant protective role. Doyle loves LBJ but does not embrace him. In contrast, Thorwald embraces LBJ but does not love him. As in West’s *Miss Lonelyhearts*, an image of ‘normal’ brotherly love is superimposed over an image of illicit desire, a desire so forceful it threatens to annihilate its source.

Predictably, it is a female body that

discloses the nature of this deadly desire. As the police question Thorwald, Lisa stands with her back facing his rear window, that is, facing the gaze of LBJ's telephoto lens across the courtyard. She has put Anna Thorwald's missing wedding ring on the ring finger of her left hand, which she holds palm out, just below her waist, over her ass. Crossing over, the index finger of her right hand points at the impaled ring. Reading the strained body language, Thorwald's eyes decode the hieroglyphic of the hand gesture—a gesture that says, not “I want to get married,” as most critics have argued, but rather “I want to get fucked in the ass.”²⁴ Realizing that someone has been fucking him in the rear window for quite some time, Thorwald is more than willing to return the favor. His cruising eyes follow the wiggling finger to its target across the court, Jefferies. Thorwald reciprocates the gaze. It's a date!

Standing in the darkness of LBJ's room, Thorwald asks, rather politely under the circumstances, what *Jeff* desires: “What do you want from me?” This is the moment toward which Hitchcock has built the entire film, the moment in which uncontrollable desire is disclosed. The anal-sadistic nature of that desire is made clear in a 1963 interview with Peter Bogdanovich:

AH: It's the climax of peeping tomism, isn't it? What can [Stewart] say? He's caught.

PB: Caught with his pants down.

AH: Caught with his plaster down.

As Hitchcock's last interjection reveals, the plaster cast—indeed, the state of disability in general—is designed to function as a kind of anal plug. His plaster down, Jefferies is ready for his ‘little death.’

Not much for conversation, Jeff answers Thorwald's question (“What do you want?”) by discharging his camera's flashgun, covering his eyes as he does. This move is usually interpreted as a logical defense against Thorwald's coming assault, but metaphorically it is more complex. In the *noir* lighting, Thorwald's sapphire-blue

eyes glow like jewels in his head. In effect, Jeff's ‘flash’ mirrors Thorwald's piercing gaze, acknowledging in gesture what cannot be owned in words. With the flashgun substituting for his covered eyes, Jeff has become a monocular beast, no longer fully human. As he explodes in light, his eyehole is transformed into a pulsating red asshole, a nether mouth.

The entire film has been driven by anal-inflected masturbatory bondage rhythm in which both sexual tension and the constraints against release of tension are increased in parallel. That rhythm now intensifies, as Jeffries repeats the flashgun gesture several times, pleasurably delaying the inevitable moment of release.²⁵ Release always carries the fear of disintegration, however; and it is to that motif that Hitchcock returns as the two male bodies finally smash together. He films the entire sequence as a montage of fragmented anatomical close-ups, pieced together in the editing room.²⁶

Ultimately, LT knocks LBJ out of his protective chair (releasing him), turns him upside down, and stuffs him out the window. Jeff hangs on by his fingertips, delaying his fall, until Doyle, Lisa, and Stella arrive to get a good view of his backside, suspended in air. Then, he just has to let go.²⁷ He ends up with his head in Lisa's lap.

While Lisa tends to one head, Nurse Stella attends to another: Anna Thorwald's. Throughout the dialog script, Stella, LBJ's wry Dom Mom, has carried the motif of dismemberment—a motif that seems to be a comic sidebar but is really at the core of Hitchcock's dark double vision.²⁸ It Stella who gets us to imagine the gore on Lars Thorwald's bathroom walls, although those walls are as spotless as if Hitchcock himself had just left. As Jefferies is cutting up his breakfast bacon earlier in the film, it is Stella who wonders out loud “where he cut her up.” A woman of flesh and blood, Stella doubles all the other rear window women as a bearer of the ineluctable body, its products and its flow. “Do you want to have a look?” Doyle asks Stella, after he tells her

where the head is (in a hatbox). “No, I don’t want any part of it!” she replies vehemently, then does a comic double take, seeing in her mind’s eye the very thing that Hitchcock has made us see, the thing that is not there: Anna Thorwald’s dismembered body.

In the earlier White Script it is Jeff, not Stella, who is concerned about the missing head. When Doyle tells him it has been in Thorwald’s icebox all the time, he replies: “That reminds me—two heads are better than one.” The two heads reference splices Hitchcock’s parable back into Woolrich’s story in which Hal Jeffries’ transformation into a two-headed beast protects him from becoming a ‘beast with two backs’—which, ironically, is the very thing he desires. In the final pan shot down LBJ’s sleeping body, we see that he, too, has redoubled his protection against desire: *Both* of his legs are in thick plaster casts this time. He is ready to start the cycle all over again.

3.0 *REAR WINDOW* (1998)

In the work of Hitchcock and Woolrich, the figure of the disabled body double serves a sexual game. In Christopher Reeve’s 1998 ABC-TV remake of *Rear Window*, the stakes are much higher. The missing body in the text window is Reeve’s own.

In 1995, Reeve, Hollywood’s *Superman*, broke his neck in a riding accident that left him paralyzed from the shoulders down and unable to breathe without a ventilator. *Rear Window* has been re-crafted to fit his circumstances. Photographer “L.B. Jefferies” becomes architect “Jason Kemp,” injured in an auto accident that leaves him a quadriplegic. His New York brownstone is retrofitted as a computer-controlled ‘smart house’ which

he can command by sipping through a straw attached to his electric wheel chair. (The computer’s password—its name—is first *Achilles* then *Icarus*.) The love interest is a young female architect, “Claudia Henderson” (Daryl Hannah), who becomes Jason’s surrogate legs. The Thorwalds are replaced by the “Thorpes:” Ilene, a part-time dancer and full-time alcoholic, and her abusive husband Julian, a sculptor. The basic plot premise is the same as in Woolrich and Hitchcock: Trapped in his apartment by his disability, JK becomes a voyeur, observing JT fighting with his wife. When she disappears, he suspects murder



and becomes obsessed with “nailing” Julian. There is one major difference between the 1998 and 1954 and 1942 versions of *Rear Window*, however. In the Reeve film, the missing body is never found.

Throughout the film, mirror imagery adumbrates the uncanny doubling inherent in “Jason’s” quadriplegic body, a body that is continually haunted by Reeve’s quadriplegic body, which in turn is haunted by

the missing body of Superman. In Hitchcock's film, the fear of losing one's self is expressed as dismemberment, which also expresses the desire to lose one's self in *jouissance*. In Reeve's film, the fear is being buried alive inside the prison of one's own unresponsive flesh. Jefferies' plaster cocoon has become Jason's whited sepulcher.

Although she is not an invalid like Anna Thorwald, Ilene Thorpe subtly mirrors Jason. (He continually drinks water to soothe the pain in his throat; she drinks booze to soothe the pain in her mind.) The doubling of Jason and Julian is even more obvious. The violent JT acts out the rage, and the lust, that JK must repress. Both are structural artists who bend hard material to their will; Julian works in bronze, Jason in steel and concrete. Both have a body problem: Julian needs to hide a body; Jason needs to find the one he has lost. Like his mythological namesake, this Jason is on a quest.

What Jason sees in the Thorpes' window is a reverse mirror image of his own trajectory, his 'real body' having gone missing and been replaced by a dysfunctional double. Ilene begins the story as dysfunctional, unable to walk straight, spending most of her time lying inert in bed. She never leaves her apartment. Then one night, she is suddenly transformed into someone who is alive with libidinous energy. Except for the absence of a small facial mole, the new body is exactly the same as the old body. Yet Jason is convinced that this body—the fully *functional* Ilene—is an illusion, a double, and that the real body is an entombed corpse. In fact, he's so sure that he is willing to stake his life on it.

In one of the film's most original moves, we never really learn for sure whether he is right or not. At the climax, the police arrest Julian for assaulting Jason; and we assume that the story is over. The loose ends are not tied up in the coda, however. The libidinous blonde admits to being Ilene's near-twin sister, but neither she nor Julian will confess to Ilene's murder; and the missing body is still missing. Jason be-

lieves that Ilene has been buried inside a distinctive bronze sculpture that Julian completed, crated, and shipped off shortly after Ilene disappeared from view.²⁹ Argos-eyed Jason spots a distinctive mark on the crate that allows Claudia to track it to Vermont, but there the trail ends. Like Ilene's body, and Jason's body, the sculpture has gone missing. Then, at the very end of the film, it miraculously seems to reappear.

The office building that Jason and Claudia have been designing throughout the film is finally dedicated. Tarps are ceremoniously removed from three large lobby sculptures, one of which turns out to be Julian's missing piece. Jason himself had purchased it just before he was paralyzed in the car accident but then lost all memory of the event because of the trauma to his head. Julian's 'thing' is Jason's thing, too. He has thought he was looking through a window when he was really looking in a mirror.

Unfortunately, the police see nothing when they X-ray the sculpture, however. The tomb is empty. Jason has been deluded. Or perhaps not. As he kisses Claudia, Reeve's enduringly sensual face doing a snuggle on behalf of his absent body, 'Jason' is still full of faith. "Right now I can't, you know . . . but I'm going to be on my feet again in a few years." At this moment of intimacy, the camera moves through the rear window, and up into an art gallery across the way. A crate that has been sitting there in plain sight all along has finally been opened, revealing another sculpture by Julian Thorpe, a virtual double of the one in the lobby of Jason's building.³⁰ Surely, *that* is where the missing body has been hidden, and surely, in time, it will be found.

Despite this upbeat ending, or, rather, because of it, Reeve's version of *Rear Window* supports the inherently problematic concept of the 'normal' male body much more strongly than the other two versions do.³¹ Reeve tries to give his character some complexity and darkness. He makes Jason smug and bossy but lets us see beneath that smugness a man who has been strip-mined

of everything but desire. He is a libido without a habitation. Hal Jeffries and L.B. Jefferies use their disabilities as disguises, to cover themselves; Jason yearns only to be uncovered, discovered, disinterred.

The double nature of Jason, his visible vulnerability and his buried power, is suggested by the recurrent allusions to Achilles, whose armored warrior body and naked baby body are linked forever at the heel—and to the falling body of Icarus, submerged into the maternal sea. Ultimately, this *Rear Window* cares more about Daedalus than Icarus, however. Plugged into “Achilles,” Jason is transformed from a passive-dependent Clark Kent into a cyborg Superman.³² The climax, in which Jason foils Julian by making his ‘smart house’ work like a giant prosthesis, is an advertisement for Better Living through Technology. Like the Techno-Gurus and Techno-Marvels that Martin Norden discusses in his *Cinema of Isolation*, Jason ceases to be a victim only by virtue of becoming a machine (292-299).

“Perhaps not since the Middle Ages has the fantasy of leaving the body behind been so widely dispersed through the population, and never has it been so strongly linked with existing technologies,” Katherine Hayles reminds us (173). *Rear Window* uses Jason’s body—indeed, *Reeve’s* body—to canalize this fantasy: existential escape through technological will power. After all, there is money in transcendence. (“I have sold more books on physics than Madonna has on sex,” Stephen Hawking likes to say.)³³ Substituting control for desire, as all these *Rear Window* parables do in the end, the film ultimately buries a living actor inside the plaster cast of his own heroism . . . and, in the process, posits a posthuman future in which neither loss nor *jouissance* is real.

Notes

¹In his ground-breaking 1984 cyberpunk novel *Neuromancer*, Gibson describes the ‘disability’ of his cyborg-like protagonist who can no longer escape from his body by “jacking into” cyberspace: “In the bars he’d frequented as a cowboy hotshot, the elite stance involved a certain relaxed contempt for the flesh. The body was meat. Case fell into the prison of his own flesh” (6).

²Norden’s ten types are: The Comic Misadventurer, The Elderly Dupe, The Tragic Victim, The Sweet Innocent, The Obsessive Avenger, The Saintly Sage, The Noble Warrior, The Civilian Superstar, The High-Tech Guru, and The Techno-Marvel.

³The Woolrich story was submitted as “Murder from a Fixed Viewpoint” but published as “It Had to be Murder” (February 1942) in *Dime Detective* (Nevins 245). It was reprinted as “Rear Window” in the 1944 collection *After-Dinner Story* under Woolrich’s pseudonym, “William Irish” (Nevins 531, Curtis 22).

⁴“Rear Window” is itself a mirror-image double of an earlier Woolrich story, “Wake Up with Death” (1937), originally entitled simply “Binge.” A man named Don Stewart wakes up in a hotel room with a terrible hangover and no memory of the last 24 hours. Beside his bed is the dead body of a woman he has never seen before, a woman he may or may not have married during his binge. He gets an anonymous phone call from a man who insists that he saw Stewart murder the woman as he was watching Stewart’s window with binoculars from his own window in the opposite wing of the hotel. The caller wants money to keep Stewart’s secret hidden (Nevins 158). In this story, unlike “Rear Window,” it is the *watcher* who turns out to be guilty one, the pervert, the punk. In Woolrich’s stories in general and these stories in particular, the fear about being watched is clearly linked to its mirror image—the fear of being caught watching.

⁵At least 36 feature films have been

based on Woolrich works, most of them Hollywood *noirs* made during the 1940's. Woolrich's stories have also generated more than 118 radio and TV shows. (See Nevins, 557-594.)

⁶In traditional Hollywood iconography, the impairment of a man's leg or arm (via paralysis, amputation, etc.) functioned as a code for impotence, one 'member' substituting for another. After 1934, when Production Code Czar Joseph Breen began rigorously to police cinematic subtexts, however, cagey *auteurs* began to double the code against itself in order to smuggle in forbidden sexual content. The stiff, limping leg and its accompanying fetishes (the cane, e.g.) were positioned in montage to suggest perverse 'inversion'—impotence-with-women-as-sexual-potency-with-men. Cf. the penis-like sword/cane that George Macready ("Ballin Mundson") displays to young Glenn Ford ("Johnny Farrell") as he cruises him on the docks at the opening of the 1946 *film noir*, *Gilda*. ("...It looks like one thing, and right in front of your eyes it changes.")

⁷"I would say that [*Rear Window*] is twenty percent Cornell Woolrich and eighty percent Hitchcock," the director opined in a 1974 legal deposition. See DeRosa (219) and the deposition transcript published on DeRosa's *Writing with Hitchcock.com* Website: < <http://members.aol.com/vistavision/ontherecord.html>>.

⁸Miss Torso's hands and arms are also visible in the miniature frame-within-the-frame as she brushes her long blonde hair and arranges it in a tight chignon.

⁹A little later in the film, Hitchcock will appear for his patented cameo inside the composer's studio, winding up a clock as he advises him, *sotto voce*, what key to use for the new song he is trying to write. The composition of the song and the composition of *Rear Window* mirror each other, the former ending only when the latter does.

¹⁰LBJ's love interest "Lisa Freemont" also doubles him, especially during the scene in which Thorwald assaults her.

¹¹Hitchcock did something similar, if a

little less extreme, to Robert Donat and Madeline Carroll while filming *The 39 Steps* (1935). He handcuffed them together, as required by the script, then pretended to lose the key, leaving them that way all day. He was especially interested in how each would manage to go to the bathroom while chained to a body of the opposite sex (Spoto 163-64).

¹²Hitch apparently changed the ending a week before filming began. In the release print, the head ends up in a hatbox. (See Khron 143.) The Hayes White Script is quoted in an extended analysis of the film script's structure available online at the Dramatica Website. (See "Storytelling Output Report" in my Works Cited.)

¹³See DeRosa's Webpage "Hitchcock on the Record." Hitchcock gave Truffaut (222) an even more melodramatic version of the case, probably borrowed from Edgar Wallace's 1928 *The Trial of Patrick Mahon* (Famous Trials series). Interviewed in Laurent Bouzereau's recent video documentary film, *Rear Window Ethics: Remembering and Restoring a Classic*, Hitchcock's daughter retells the story of the Crippen and Mahon murders, citing them as a central source of her father's inspiration for *Rear Window*.

¹⁴See Eastbourne's "Murder on the Crumbles" Webpage.

¹⁵See also "Hitchcock's Favorite Crime" on the DeRosa Website.

¹⁶In the 1993 film, a successful surgeon expresses his obsessive love by imprisoning his beloved in his house, amputating her arms and legs, and then solicitously caring for her. It turns out she likes her new situation.

¹⁷The "theatrical trailer" included on the 2001 Universal *Collector's Edition* DVD was apparently produced for Paramount's 1962 re-release of *Rear Window*. The original trailer has been revised to include mention of Hitchcock's 1960 blockbuster, *Psycho*. Neither the phrase "Miss Hearing Aid" nor the shot of her looking through the hole appear in the release print of the film. Her disability is clearly indicated, however,

both by the amplifier she wears around her neck and the fact that the neighbor who owns the caged bird often has to say things twice in a loud voice before the sculptress responds.

¹⁸Of all the characters in the film, the facially ugly, dumpy Miss Hearing Aid looks the most like Alfred Hitchcock. In the opening shot of the trailer, a rear view of Hitch (or his body double) directing is followed by a shot of what 'Hitch' sees: Miss Hearing Aid.

¹⁹For screenwriter John Michael Hayes, Woolrich's seed story about a temporarily disabled man mirrored two traumas in his own life. The first was a near-fatal auto accident in which he watched helplessly as the unconscious body of his girlfriend, high-fashion model "Mel Lawrence," was thrown out onto the glass-strewn highway (DeRosa 21). The second was a sudden, crippling attack of rheumatoid arthritis that left him hospitalized and unable to walk for 18 months shortly after WWII and forced him to use a pair of canes even after he was released (DeRosa 72-73). His biographer, Steven DeRosa, says that Hayes was eventually "cured"; however, rheumatoid arthritis (if, indeed, that is what really disabled Hayes) is a chronic autoimmune disorder in which the body periodically attacks itself. Its symptoms may disappear, but the threat of renewed disability always remains.

²⁰John Fawell makes this point inadvertently when he writes, "Jeff—a voyeur paralyzed from the waste down" (sic) (11).

²¹Edelman's analysis runs along similar lines, although he tends to see Jeff's chair as a metaphorical toilet (78).

²²West also describes Doyle as "a partially destroyed insect," as if his body were being consumed. West's preoccupation with the vulnerability of the male body to maiming and fragmentation is one of the hallmarks of his work. See Lemuel Pitkin in *A Cool Million* (1934), a man who literally goes to pieces, e.g.

²³LBJ and LT are equivalent to the photographic negative and its paired positive

print that we see at the opening of the film. Hitchcock stirs the moral mix by giving the apparently negative figure (Thorwald) a white hat to wear.

²⁴See Edelman, 84-86.

²⁵See Edelman, 86-91.

²⁶Hitch told Truffaut that he first filmed a master shot, which was "weak," and then re-shot the entire sequence as a series of anatomical close-ups—"a close-up of a waving hand, a close-up of Stewart's face and another one of his legs" (265).

²⁷The sphinctral nature of Jeff's final release move is telegraphed in Stella's comment early in the film that "When General Motors has to go to the bathroom 10 times a day, the whole country's ready to let go."

²⁸In a recent filmed interview (*Screenwriter John Michael Hayes on Rear Window*), Hayes acknowledges that Hitch created the rear window neighbors (Miss Torso and the others)—characters that Hayes regards as merely unimportant "side bar stories" designed solely as "comic relief." For Stella as a Dominatrix, see Conrad, 202.

²⁹Early in the film, Jason describes himself as "damaged goods, contents broken during handling and shipping"—a line that implicitly equates his body with the shipping crate in Julian's apartment.

³⁰Like Ilene Thorpe and her look-alike sister, the two sculptures are similar enough to fool the eye without being identical in every detail. Ironically, although Jason prides himself on being the God of details, he has missed the obvious.

³¹As does Reeve's much-publicized crusade for a cure. Many disability rights activists see the media's celebration of Reeve's desire to recover his "lost body" as distracting attention from crucial issues of public access. Reeve insists that his paralysis is merely "a temporary setback" that can be overcome by a combination of will power and medical technology. Critics argue that this stance not only distances Reeve from other, less privileged people with disabilities; it also reinforces the old notion that disability is a solely a personal medical problem rather than a problem of

institutionalized prejudice and discrimination. (See Brown and Scarlet.)

³²At one point, Jason refers to his memory as a "hard drive," emphasizing his identification with his computer, Achilles.

³³The full quote, from the forward to *A Brief History of Time*, is, "As Nathan Myhrvold of Microsoft (a former post-doc of mine) remarked: I have sold more books on physics than Madonna has on sex (vii)."

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