



Newsletter of the Film/Alfred Hitchcock Special Interest Group

The MacGuffin

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EDITORIAL

First, a huge apology. Squeezed out of this issue is the 'Letters' section. It will return with a vengeance next time. Among those who sent enthusiastic letters about our **Spellbound** issue were Ronald Conway, Leslie Shepard, John Kuhns, Tim Costello, 'Huntley Haverstock' (!), and Philip Kemp. I thank all these people, and will run some of your letters in the next issue.

For now, I'll just say that I was particularly gratified to get Ron Conway's letter - not just because Ron is a respected 'MacGuffin' contributor of old, but also because he's a professional psychologist. Which brings me to my next point about the **Spellbound** issue. Somehow, in researching the article on Hitchcock's film, I neglected to look at a significant essay which Royal S. Brown wrote for the 'Film/Psychology Review', Winter-Spring 1980. (Brown's book, 'Overtones and Undertones: Reading Film Music', has just been published.) The essay is called "Hitchcock's **Spellbound**: Jung Versus Freud", and it anticipates some of the points made in 'MacGuffin' 15. For example, it notes how Dr Murchison (Leo G. Carroll) 'corresponds strongly' to the mythical figure 'of the "sick king"' (p. 38). On the other hand, I have to say that I found the essay generally unsatisfying and rather muddle-headed.

The 'MacGuffin' article raised the matter of the psychological 'bisexuality' of Hitchcock's films - and their director's fascination with things becoming their 'opposites'. Well, I see that Donald Spoto's 'The Life of Alfred Hitchcock' (1983) quotes an unnamed actress on how Hitchcock always told his actors that they really had to be part masculine and part feminine in order to get inside any other character (p. 86). And, watching Hitchcock's **Sabotage** (1936) the other day, I was struck by the scene in the aquarium where a young man tells his girlfriend about the female turtle: 'After laying a million eggs, she changes her sex.'

Sorry, but a page of footnotes from the **Spellbound** article is again held over. On a lighter matter, I was wrong last time to say that the phrase 'mogo on the gogo', heard in **Spellbound**, came from a Marx Brothers film. In fact, it came from the W. C. Fields film **The Bank Dick** (1940). There'll be a bumper 'Bloopers' section in the next 'MacGuffin' ...

The main article this time is on the many 'sources' of Hitchcock's fine wartime comedy-thriller **Foreign Correspondent** (1940). I offer it to Australian readers, at least, as a contribution to the recent debate on alleged 'plagiarism' by an author named Helen Darville. For, when Hitchcock 'plagiarised', he did it in spades - and in style!

Last item, but one, and certainly not least. There are a couple of excellent 'guest articles' this time. Adrian Martin writes on some recent Hitchcock-derivative videos. And Jenny Hammerton, an MA - Film Archiving graduate from Manchester, provides some tantalising information about what may have happened to Hitchcock's 'lost' film, **The Mountain Eagle** (1926). Thanks, too, to the four experts whose 'best films of 1994' are listed inside.

Finally, some gloom. A recent huge increase in bank charges on 'foreign' cheques may necessitate an almost equally hefty rise in 'MacGuffin' overseas-subscription rates. See next issue. Meanwhile, a 'MacGuffin' subscription within Australia becomes \$16 for four issues - effective immediately - to cover increased production costs.

To everyone, good viewing!

Best Films of 1994

This year, we've lists from four top Aussie film critics. The most-mentioned film (three times) is Robert Altman's sardonic LA comedy **Short Cuts**.

Two of the lists are uncomplicated, inasmuch as they stick to the year's new features released in cinemas. Let's start with those. Tom Ryan teaches film at Swinburne University, Melbourne, and reviews movies for 'The Sunday Age'. Evan Williams is based in Sydney, where he's a film reviewer for 'The Weekend Australian' and writes on film for 'Quadrant'.

Tom's list

Evan's list

- Trois Couleurs: Rouge (Kieslowski, France)
- Trois Couleurs: Bleu (Kieslowski, France)
- Schindler's List (Spielberg, USA)
- Un Couer En Hiver (Sautet, France)
- Natural Born Killers (Stone, USA)
- Geronimo (Hill, USA)
- Four Weddings and a Funeral (Newell, UK)
- No Worries (Elfick, Australia)
- Once Were Warriors (Tamahori, New Zealand)
- Pulp Fiction (Tarantino, USA)

- Trois Couleurs: Rouge
- Schindler's List
- Short Cuts (Altman)
- Once Were Warriors
- Fearless (Weir)
- China Moon (Bailey)
- Trois Couleurs: Bleu
- To Live (Yimou)
- Bad Boy Bubby (De Heer)
- Trois Couleurs: Blanc

Next, Tina Kaufman is another Sydneysider, and former editor of 'Filmnews'. Tina will be writing a regular column for 'The MacGuffin', starting next issue. She makes it her business to see - and be knowledgeable about - all kinds of movies, both new and old, both mainstream and outhouse.

Tina's list: Short Cuts (Altman); Carlito's Way (De Palma); The Last Seduction (John Dahl); Flesh and Bone (Steve Kloves); The Ashes of Time, Chungking Express (Wong Kar Wei); Le Samourai (Melville); Dishonoured (Sternberg); Paris Nous Appartient (Rivette); My Night With Maud (Rohmer); London (Patrick Keiller); Only the Brave (Anna Kokkinos); The Puppetmaster (Hou Hsiao-hsien); There Was a Father, Late Spring, Early Spring (Ozu).

Lastly, Adrian Martin wrote the book 'Phantasms' (reviewed in 'MacGuffin' 13) and reviews films for the Melbourne 'Age'. His article on **Lifepod**, et al., appears elsewhere in this 'MacGuffin'. Like Tina Kaufman, Adrian sees most everything that's going!

Adrian's List: 1. Masterpiece: Les Baisers de Secours/Emergency Kisses (Philippe Garrel, 1989); 2. Revelations: L'Ange (Patrick Bokanowski, 1983), The Loveless (Kathryn Bigelow/Monty Montgomery, 1983), Mexico/Mexico crossed-out (Mike Hoolboom/Steve Sanguedolce, 1993), Where is My Friend's Home? (Abbas Kiarostami, 1987), Husbands (John Cassavetes, 1970), Arizona Dream (Emir Kusturica, 1993), Another Girl, Another Planet (Michael Almereyda, 1992), I Hired a Contract Killer (Aki Kaurismaki, 1990); 3. 1994 Releases: A Perfect World (Clint Eastwood), Carlito's Way (Brian De Palma), Fearless (Peter Weir), Short Cuts (Robert Altman), Pulp Fiction (Quentin Tarantino), The Joy Luck Club (Wayne Wang), Body Snatchers (Abel Ferrara); 4. Classics: Force of Evil (Abraham Polonsky, 1948), A Canterbury Tale (Michael Powell, 1944), Anatomy of a Murder (Otto Preminger, 1959).

'The subtitled highlight of 1994', writes Tom Ryan, 'was without doubt Polish filmmaker Krzysztof Kieslowski's superb **Three Colours** trilogy, shot in French. It is made up of three separately-made films which, taken as one, amount to a majestic masterpiece of contrasting moods and visual styles that merge into one as their characters come together in ways that could never have been anticipated.'

Readers' comments, anyone?

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Coming attractions: "Engendering the Truth About **Vertigo**"; reviews of **The Manman** and **The Trouble With Barry**; "Hay-on-Wye and the Major Armstrong Case"; book reviews; Table of Contents for issues 13-16.

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Missing, Believed Lost: Hitchcock's 'The Mountain Eagle'¹

THE MOUNTAIN EAGLE. (U.S. title **Fear O'God**). Gainsborough-Emelka. British, 1926.

Produced by Michael Balcon. Directed by Alfred Hitchcock. Screenplay by Eliot Stannard. Photographed by Baron Ventigmilia. Length 7,503 ft. Released May 23rd, 1927. Distributors W. and F. Made at Emelka Studios, Munich, and in the Austrian Tyrol.

Cast:

Pettigrew	...	...	...	...	...	Bernard Goetzke
Beatrice	...	...	...	...	...	Nita Naldi
Fearogod	...	...	...	...	...	Malcolm Keen
Edward	...	...	...	...	...	John Hamilton

Story: Beatrice, a school teacher in a small mountain village (set in Kentucky, presumably), incurs the enmity of Pettigrew, local J.P. and owner of the village stores, because he believes that she encourages the attentions of his son Edward, a cripple, who takes evening classes. At first antagonistic towards her, Pettigrew later becomes enamoured of her. When she rebuffs him he is furious and proclaims her a wanton. The angered villagers drive her into the hills, but she is saved from their fury by Fearogod, a mysterious stranger who lives a solitary life in a mountain cabin to which he takes her.

To stop any scandal Fearogod takes Beatrice to Pettigrew and makes him marry them, telling her he will give her a divorce whenever she wants it. She is, however, content. Pettigrew is vastly angry with the turn of events, and begins a feud. When his crippled son suddenly disappears from the village he has Fearogod arrested for his murder and in spite of no body being found Fearogod, the hermit, is tried, found guilty, and imprisoned. After a year in gaol he escapes and seeks shelter in the mountains with his wife and baby. When the child becomes ill Fearogod goes to the village for a doctor. He meets Pettigrew and a fight occurs - but the sudden return of Pettigrew's son puts everything in order and all ends happily. The mountain feud is over.

- Peter Noble, 'An index to the creative work of Alfred Hitchcock' (1949)

Introduction

How does one begin to write about a film which to all intents and purposes no longer exists? **The Mountain Eagle** was the second film to be directed by Alfred Hitchcock, and there is no confirmed copy of it still in existence. Nor is there much written material about the film because it seems likely that no-one has actually seen it for more than sixty years. These facts must greatly irk many Hitchcock aficionados, yet until recently you seldom heard that the film is unavailable because it is 'lost'...

Wanting to find out as much as possible about the 'lost Hitchcock', I used research methods that soon felt like a private detective's. I searched trade papers of the day for 'clues'. Leads as to why this particular film should have failed to survive when Hitchcock's first film, **The Pleasure Garden** (1925), still exists, slowly began to surface. I also heard whispers about someone in Europe who may perhaps have a print, and rumours about someone else who may hold 'extracts' on tape. Tantalising and fleetingly promising moments in the search for a missing film! However, like most good detective stories, this one should begin at the beginning.

'The Mountain Eagle'

There was a great deal of 'good press' for Hitchcock in the mid-to-late 1920s. The director had gained a reputation for artistic skill even before any of his films was tested at the box office. In particular, early praise was heaped on him in the article "Alfred the Great" by Cedric Belfrage in 'Picturegoer', March 1926. The article is full-page and includes a photograph of the man himself. Hitchcock is lauded as 'The world's youngest director' and much is made of his 'complete grasp of all the different branches of film technique' despite his tender years. Belfrage paints a picture of the young Hitchcock as a 'screen personality' who has worked his way up from 'the bottom rung' and who 'achieves his aim purely by

his own industry and expertise'. Robert E. Kapsis ('Hitchcock: The Making of a Reputation', 1992) claims that this piece was written by Belfrage as a response to distributor [C.M.] Woolf's decision to shelve **The Pleasure Garden** because, although the film had been well received by the British trade press, Woolf thought it too arty for British audiences.

Like that film, **The Mountain Eagle** was made at the Emelka studios in Munich and also on location in the Tyrol. Michael Balcon, founder-head of the Gainsborough Company, had set up a number of co-production deals in Germany. Emelka, founded by the celebrated Ostermayr brothers, would provide production personnel, and W & F Film Service would handle distribution in the English-speaking market.

The film was designed to appeal to an American audience. Its story is said to be set in Kentucky [though the 'Bioscope' review of October 7, 1926, remarks that 'the village is obviously continental!'], and the female lead was a Hollywood star, Nita Naldi. It seems that Hitchcock was not particularly impressed by the casting of Ms Naldi. To Francois Truffaut, he said:

The producers were always trying to break into the American market, so they wanted another film star. And so, for the part of the village schoolmistress, they sent me Nita Naldi, the successor to Theda Bara. She had fingernails out to there. Ridiculous!

A reviewer in 'Kinematograph Weekly' wrote that 'Nita Naldi is quite good, but not very sympathetic as Beatrice'. Other actors in the film, Bernhard Götzke [who had played Death in Fritz Lang's 1921 **Der Mude Tod**] and Malcolm Keen [Philip in Hitchcock's 1929 **The Manxman**], were praised - the former in particular for conveying trains of thought in his 'expressions'.

Eliot Stannard, the scriptwriter who had worked on **The Pleasure Garden**, also wrote the script for **The Mountain Eagle**. He developed it from a plot outline by Balcon's lieutenant, Charles Lapworth, concerning a feud between two men in a Kentucky village. It was this story that the trade reviewers saw fit to disparage. 'Rather wandering and not too convincing' was a typical description, in 'Kinematograph Weekly'. At the same time, Hitchcock's promise as a director was admitted: 'Alfred Hitchcock's direction is, as usual, thoroughly imaginative, but in this case he has rather over-stressed the slow tempo ...'.

In sum, W & F, the distribution company handling Hitchcock's first three films, **The Pleasure Garden**, **The Mountain Eagle**, and **The Lodger** (1926), had something of a problem on their hands. Here was a director who had been praised as 'a first rate director and a man of ideas' and whose first film had prompted the response, 'this promises well for further British efforts', and now he had made a turkey. How was the film to be sold?

Trade shows

The trade shows for **The Mountain Eagle** began on October 1, 1926. Interestingly, the trade shows for Hitchcock's third film, **The Lodger**, had begun **before** this, on September 14, 1926. The most probable explanation is that the distributor had realised that **The Lodger** was a stronger film, and was trying to sell **The Mountain Eagle** on the back of **The Lodger**. Ivor Montagu saw Balcon's hand in this: 'Mick had been holding them [**The Pleasure Garden** and **The Mountain Eagle**] up because he had thought it important that Hitch's first picture be a winner'.

Of course, though **The Lodger** was extremely well received by the trade press, we know that it itself had been extensively re-edited by Montagu after W & F decided it was 'too highbrow'. But there seems to be no information as to whether the same treatment was performed on **The Pleasure Garden** and **The Mountain Eagle**.

Release

According to the trade press, the release date for **The Mountain Eagle** was to be May 23, 1927. I can find absolutely no evidence that the film was actually released in Britain. However, from material held by the Deutsches Institut für Filmkunde, it appears that the film **did** have a release in Germany, under the title **Der Bergadler**. Reviews there were generally similar in tone to those of the British trade press,

although more critical of Hitchcock's direction. The 'Reichsfilmbblatt' review speaks of the 'sometimes arduously constructed script' and criticises the 'dragging, too broadly delineated directing'. But 'Kinematograph' praises the film: 'The talented young English director Alfred Hitchcock has delivered another example of his extraordinary talent'. From information held by The Library of Congress, it seems that the film was also released in the US (where it was called **Fear O'God**), as the title appears on a poster held in the Library's Prints and Photographs Division. [Peter Noble mentions how certain reference books list the film under its American name: e.g. 'The World Film Encyclopaedia', edited by Clarence Winchester, published in London, 1933. Also, some editions of Truffaut's 'Hitchcock' cite an American distributor: Artlee Indep. Dist.]

In the 'Kinematograph Weekly' of the very week **The Mountain Eagle** was to have been released, there is a full-page colour advertisement for Hitchcock's fourth film, **Downhill** (1927). The issue carries trade-show dates and good reviews for the latter film. With **The Lodger** a success amongst critics and public alike, and a new Hitchcock that looked like it would do well about to be launched, perhaps W & F stuck to their guns and 'shelved' **The Mountain Eagle** to save themselves from losses at the box office and to protect the reputation of their up-and-coming young director, Hitchcock?

Donald Spoto ('The Life of Alfred Hitchcock', 1983) gives no sources for his comments about reactions of audiences to **The Mountain Eagle**:

No one was really terribly surprised that the London moviegoing public responded with less than wild enthusiasm for a melodrama about Kentucky hillbillies. The film disappeared quickly from the urban circuit. Not long afterward, the negative and all existing copies disappeared altogether, and since then not a single print is known to have survived (a fact that Hitchcock always insisted was entirely as it should be).

Where is 'The Mountain Eagle' now?

Without information as to how many prints of **The Mountain Eagle** were released and in which countries, it is really a question of pot luck as to where to start looking for any surviving material. As a research exercise, I wrote to sixteen archives around the world, asking if they had any information on this particular title. The archives were selected on the basis of the size of their feature film collections: I chose archives that had large holdings of feature films and were members of FIAF - the International Federation of Film Archives.

I received replies from nine archives [including Australia's National Film and Sound Archive, and three archives in the US]. Their letters confirmed my worst expectations that in all probability nothing would be found. These archives may have already checked their collections for 'lost' British films in response to a project instigated by David Meeker, Keeper of Feature Films at the National Film and Television Archive in London, in 1992. This project set out to identify the 100 'Most Wanted' British films that had seemingly vanished for good.

'Missing, Believed Lost' - the Great British Film Search

In other words, the 'Missing, Believed Lost' project was an attempt to identify key films that were considered particularly important to try and find. One hundred titles were selected and an attractive, glossy coffee-table book was produced with photographs and information about each film. The book was intended as a conscience-jogger for collectors who may have valuable heritage films in their vaults, and as a source of information for overseas archives in the hope that they might search through their foreign material for any of the listed titles. The book was also designed to raise awareness of the simple fact that films are missing - collectors may not know that a particular film is being looked for. [The book is still available, edited by Allen Eyles and David Meeker, from BFI Publishing, at a cost of £14.95. Films sought range from Michael Powell's twelve 'quota quickies' to Errol Flynn's first film appearance in Britain and three early Bernard Vorhaus features.]

The good news is that several films featured in the chosen 100 have already been located. [Among them is **Belladonna**, the Gaumont-British drama of 1934, starring Conrad Veidt and based on the novel by Robert

Hichens who also wrote 'The Paradine Case'. It was discovered at the film archive in Prague.] The project has been deemed a great success.

What about 'The Mountain Eagle'?

In much of the publicity surrounding the 'Missing, Believed Lost' project, the lost Hitchcock received the most attention. In his foreword to the book of the project, John Paul Getty asks, 'Are we never going to see Alfred Hitchcock's **The Mountain Eagle**?' How that cry must wake some Hitchcock fans in the night!

In my discussions with David Meeker, I tried to find out the chances of the film's being found. At the risk of breaking the Official Secrets Act, I offer this summary of the situation. 'Somewhere in Europe', said David, 'is an extremely rich man who owns a huge collection of VHS tapes and who has access to Eastern European collections'. [Until recently, it was illegal to be a film collector in Eastern Europe. However, film buffs being the kind of people they are, this activity still went on in an underground way! Once obtained, these films would have been jealously guarded and well looked after. Several exciting finds in the past few years have come from these sources.] It is said that this man has an **extract** of **The Mountain Eagle** on tape, though so far he hasn't let David see it. But as he has previously provided tapes of other rare items, and he isn't a possessive collector, a glimmer of hope remains that it could yet turn up. On the other hand, he is apparently rather disorganised, and may have lost it!

Nor do I know if this 'extremely rich man' is the same person as the 'man in Vienna' mentioned to me by Charles Barr, of the University of East Anglia, as a potential source of film material, so the plot thickens. [One such collector in Vienna runs a full-time cinema in order to show his films to the public. It's said that he has an enormously varied collection, except for films by Godard - whose work he abhors!] A dampener, though, is David Meeker's caution about the 'extract' story: 'It may be a myth'.

Loss and destruction of films

Certainly, David very much doubts that a British print of **The Mountain Eagle** exists. He observes: 'Chances are that there were only half a dozen copies'. Once the film had served its time on the circuit (if, in fact, it was ever released), there would have been little reason for keeping it, especially after sound films took over. Prints were often destroyed by distributors as a precaution against piracy, and scrap merchants might buy film by weight in order to extract its silver content. As **The Mountain Eagle** appeared to be an unsuccessful film in Britain, very probably its negative and prints were 'junked' in the late '20s or early '30s - without even one escaping to lie hidden in a dusty corner of a projection box or to enter someone's collection. There is even some suspicion that it may have been deliberately destroyed because Hitchcock thought it 'a very bad movie'.

A catch-phrase amongst film archivists is that 'Nitrate Won't Wait', and **The Mountain Eagle**, if it is out there somewhere, is slowly decomposing and becoming increasingly susceptible to spontaneous combustion. Films are 'lost' for many reasons. During the silent era, some companies would physically axe film in two to prevent possible piracy of images; unwanted nitrate stock might be set alight to provide fires for film special effects; and film was even used as land fill. BUT! Some film is not lost forever, and there will be more finds over the years [even, we can hope, as spectacular as the one not so long ago at Dawson City in the frozen reaches of Canada, where 510 reels of early silent film were dug up on the site of a disused open-air swimming pool].

How could we find 'The Mountain Eagle'?

It seems to me that the only plausible way of searching for **The Mountain Eagle** is for a kindly benefactor to fund someone to trawl through the still extensive shelves of 'unidentified foreign feature' materials in some overseas archives. With copies of the half-dozen surviving stills from the production, a picture book of the Tyrol, and a little bit of luck, it may yet (I tell myself) still be found!

[Footnote. Let's not forget that a copy of the original scenario does still exist. At least, Truffaut

had one when he interviewed Hitchcock. Presumably, it's now in the Alfred Hitchcock Collection housed by the Margaret Herrick Library of the American Film Institute, or perhaps in the Cinémaèque Francaise in Paris. Sad to report, neither body replied to the author of the present article when she wrote to them recently. Perhaps an approach by the American-based, and academically-backed, 'Hitchcock Annual' is now in order, with a view to possible publication of the scenario in that journal. 'The MacGuffin' will report developments.]

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Editor's note

1. This article is based on work done by Jenny Hammerton for her MA in Film Archiving at the University of East Anglia. A small amount of additional, or alternative, material has been interpolated, much of it taken from Jenny's own MA dissertation.

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NEWS

(Readers are urged to send in reports and cuttings for this feature. Both general interest and Hitchcock-specific items are sought.)

Back to Quebec

Of particular interest to Hitchcock fans at this year's Cannes Film Festival was the screening in competition of first-time director Robert Lepage's **Le Confessionnal**, set in Quebec. According to Evan Williams, the Canadian-British-French co-production was well-received by critics and film industry buyers, and is notable for its re-creation of the original setting of Hitchcock's **I Confess** (1953).

Its theme is the familiar Hitchcockian one of a search for identity. The year is 1952, and Hitchcock is in Quebec City shooting his film in churches, court-houses, and other public buildings. Meanwhile, sixteen-year-old Rachel has her own real-life drama. She works in the presbytery of her local church - the very one where Hitchcock is filming - and is pregnant. Ashamed, she unburdens her soul to a young priest in the confessional.

There's a parallel story, set in 1989. After three years in China, Pierre Lamontagne (Lothaire Bluteau) has returned to Quebec for his father's funeral. He meets Marc (Patrick Goyette), mysteriously troubled about who he is. As it happens, the two men are brothers, though they don't find this out until a search for Marc's father has led them to the locations of **I Confess** and the Quebec of the 1950s. Past and present converge. A senior civil servant seems to hold the key to both stories ...

A fascinating aspect of **Le Confessionnal** is that 'Hitchcock' actually appears in it - played by Ron Burrage, a well-known Hitch look-alike, who has doubled for the director in commercials and documentaries and who even shares his birthday (August 13)!

But even more uncanny is the way the production and shooting of Lepage's film dissolved away so many barriers thrown up by passing time. Warners allowed the inclusion of four minutes of original footage from **I Confess**. Much of the recent (mid-1994) filming was done in and around the Church of Saint-Zephirin de Stadacona, where Hitchcock and his crew had also worked. The first assistant director on **Le Confessionnal** recalls: 'As soon as we went in, we knew that this was the one. The confessional, the altar ... everything had remained as it was.'

The production team itself was based at the Chateau Frontenac, the hotel used by Hitchcock's crew, who also filmed there (the film's climax). Lepage did research and claims to have accurately re-created moments in **I Confess**'s production, such as auditions for local schoolgirls in one of the Chateau Frontenac's rooms.

Publicity for the theremin

Composer Miklos Rozsa (1907-1995) made fine use of the electronic instrument called the theremin in his scores for Billy Wilder's **The Lost Weekend** (1945) and Hitchcock's **Spellbound** (1945).

Now interest in that little-known instrument is about to be revived with the release of a documentary film about its inventor, Leon Theremin. The film is called **Theremin: An Electronic Odyssey**, and is directed by Stephen M. Martin.

Meanwhile, don't bother looking just yet in your Chambers Dictionary for 'theremin'. It isn't there - though a similar instrument, the martenot, **is** listed. On the other hand, we can report that Chambers will probably include 'theremin' in their next edition, and are considering such other interesting new inclusions as 'Hitchcockian' and 'MacGuffin' ...

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Hitchcockiana: a homage ('The Good Son', 1993), a sequel ('The Birds II: Land's End, 1994)
and a remake ('LifePod', 1993)

It will be news to no-one that the contemporary thriller genre is massively influenced by the legacy of Alfred Hitchcock. Purely on the level of verbal and written discourse, it would seem that the word 'Hitchcockian' has become the most abused, and least discriminately applied, adjective in the sorry annals of film publicity and reviewing hype: every second psychological thriller in the video shop claims on its cover to be Hitchcockian, if not 'more Hitchcockian than Hitchcock'!

Yet the almost surreal indefiniteness that the term Hitchcockian has reached finds a true mirror image in many of the films actually being produced today. Often, it is as if these movies were the product of some swirling, feverish dream, where various themes, motifs and devices from the Hitchcock canon float and combine in a disembodied, sometimes quite incoherent fashion. We may or may not choose to consider this a 'postmodern' phenomenon - there are indeed some very knowing postmoderns, particularly in the American independent scene, who raid Hitchcock for their preferred 'quotations'.

But generally, I would propose that this slightly deranged, all-pervasive air of 'mannerist' homage to Hitchcock is not necessarily such an intellectual or self-conscious gesture. Such a routine level of quotation or 'intertextuality' reflects a moment in the history of film culture when many aspiring creators are natural born movie-nuts. For them, coming up with a good idea for a new film is a process of welding together, in a fairly spontaneous act of 'automatic writing', a large number of beloved memories, choice moments and prime influences from previous classics of the medium. This is how I believe Brian De Palma goes about inventing his scripts; it is probably also the method of Quentin Tarantino, despite all the post facto movie-nut explication of which this director is boundlessly capable.

To gauge the extent of Hitch's influence on current thrillers, one need only take a random example: mine is Joseph Ruben's **The Good Son** (1993), from a script by novelist Ian McEwan (**The Comfort of Strangers**). Ruben, like Curtis Hanson (**The Bedroom Window**, 1987) is currently identified in the industry as a popular director of thrillers; his recent films have included **The Stepfather** (1987) and **Sleeping with the Enemy** (1991). Where McEwan's sources (or influences) are probably Pinter and Polanski, Ruben immediately turns the material into a shameless, and sometimes pointless, Hitchcockian homage. The bayside setting recalls **The Birds**; the house in which the central action occurs looks in certain shots like the Bates mansion from **Psycho**; the final cliff-side clinch evokes the denouement of **North by Northwest**; Elmer Bernstein's music often dips into a Bernard Herrmann pastiche; and stylistically, there are pop-out overhead angles and bravura tracking dolly shots mimicking well-known moments from many a Hitchcock classic.

As to the essential intrigue, it is easily recognisable as the **Strangers on a Train** template, tracing the relationship between two characters (here, two boys) where one relatively 'normal' person becomes implicated (and also, perhaps, psychologically and morally complicit) in the evil crimes of another. This is one of the four most prevalent Hitchcockian models ruling current horror-thriller cinema - the others being the **Rear Window** voyeur story (as reprised, for instance, in De Palma's **Body Double**, 1984), the **Vertigo** story of obsessed love (see De Palma's **Obsession**, 1976), and the **Psycho** story of schizo

identity (see, in particular, Bigas Luna's **Anguish**, 1987, and most of Dario Argento's films). Other Hitchcock films come around less often: the Devlin-Alicia relationship from **Notorious** is borrowed for the excellent action film **Code Name: Alexa** (1992), and elements of **Shadow of a Doubt** are clearly reworked in Lynch's **Blue Velvet** (1986).

The Good Son, however, unambiguously belongs with other **Strangers on a Train** homages such as Hanson's **Bad Influence** (1990), Martin Campbell's weird **Criminal Law** (1989) and the Linda Gray telemovie **Accidental Meeting** (1993). In most of these, the 'pure' Hitchcock influence arrives freighted with a certain 'supplement' - which is precisely the interpretations that have been added to the original by the annals of film criticism, or at least those interpretations which have themselves become 'canonical' through repetition and popularisation. I am thinking particularly of the famous 'transference of guilt' theme first attributed to Hitchcock's films by Claude Chabrol and Eric Rohmer in the 1950s - referring to a certain strange twist of complicity, often coming at the very end of a story, which spreads the aura of evil associated with the just-vanquished villain to other hitherto 'innocent' characters. **The Good Son**, like Tim Hunter's **Paint it Black** (1989) and several of Chabrol's own films, reaches for this final, supposedly 'Hitchcockian' frisson, any way it can - even if the gesture makes precious little dramatic or thematic sense.

* * *

It is a brave filmmaker who takes on the challenge of creating a sequel to a Hitchcock classic; perhaps only Richard Franklin's ingenious **Psycho II** (1983) has satisfied most Hitch buffs. Whoever perpetrated **The Birds II: Land's End** (1994) did not, finally, even want their name on the credits, turning that honour over to the infamous pseudonym 'Alan Smithee'. (I suspect it was directed by its writers, Ken and Jim Wheat, who have together made several horror-thrillers including **Lies**, 1983.)

Hitchcock's **The Birds** (1963) was and remains a unique film, straddling several genres: supernatural fantasy, suspense thriller, romantic melodrama. Its style was chillingly minimal (with Herrmann credited as consultant, only, for Remi Gassman and Oskar Sala's simulated bird noises, not a conventional musical score), and its precise meaning was open, elusive. The birds, attacking in a vast, anonymous mass, could be responding to any number of human conditions, such as environmental crime or interpersonal malaise. They might be seeking revenge, or simply giving advance notice of the apocalypse.

In **The Birds II** these ambiguities are no longer very tantalising. Every interpretative option is ploddingly spelt out: a wise old lighthouse-keeper (Jan Rubes) collects birds murdered by pollution and warns of 'the revenge of nature'; the domestic argument of a couple (Brad Johnson and Chelsea Field) calls up a horde of angry seagulls. Compared to Hitchcock's terrifying attack scenes set in a children's playground, a house and a town square, the moments of violence here look cheap and uninventive.

Although the setting has been changed from Bodega Bay to Land's End, this version strives to recreate many physical details of the original, right down to the domestic fittings. Tippi Hedren makes a pallid return appearance, but at least this time she is spared grievous bodily harm. There are very few contemporary touches: a malaise-ridden family reminiscent of the 'yuppies in peril' common to many recent thrillers; a squad of grotesque, shotgun-toting, law enforcing rednecks straight out of a **Porcky's** movie; and split-seconds of gruesome gore reminding us that Hitchcock's masterly film was, with **Psycho** (1960), one of the first 'slasher' movies.

* * *

If **The Birds II** seems to be the end result of influences deriving not only from Hitchcock but also a whole line of intervening movies including John Carpenter's **Halloween** (1978) and the **Friday the 13th** series (1980-89), Ron Silver's Canadian, sci-fi telemovie **Lifepod** (1993) activates a different but overlapping modern mini-tradition. A group of people, of diverse ideologies and stations, trapped together in an enclosed space, playing out a drama of shifting allegiances, suspicion and betrayal ... how could a modern filmmaker not take stock of Ridley Scott's **Alien** (1979), Carpenter's **The Thing** (1982) or indeed Tarantino's **Reservoir Dogs** (1992) in any attempt to remake Hitchcock's **Lifboat** (1944)?

Remakes always put into startling relief not only changes in film style and narrative mode, but also broad political, historical and cultural changes. **Lifboat** is a World War II story from the American

side, virtually a 'propaganda film'; it is at the very least a highly didactic one, whose final question, as another pitiful German seaman washes up into the boat, is 'what are you gonna do with people like that?' **Lifepod** belongs to another era, or perhaps two, postdating **Lifeboat**. Firstly, it has the mechanics not of a World War, but a Cold War intrigue: there is a saboteur in the midst, and (as the dialogue makes relentlessly clear) every single character has a reason to be this saboteur - a reason to either blow up the State, or to surreptitiously reinforce it by attacking it. Secondly, it is (like so many action films these days) vaguely an allegory of the Vietnam war, or perhaps of any big bad national power brutishly intervening in the affairs of smaller territories - like a typical **Star Trek** TV episode or movie, its 'backstory' pits the struggling colonists of Venus against the fascist imperialists of 'EarthCorp'.

Many of **Lifepod**'s transformations of **Lifeboat**'s original elements are ingenious as well as telling. In Hitchcock's film the 'oppressed' character-type - slightly ennobled but mainly patronised and marginalised - is a black man. This won't do in 1993; today's black actor takes roughly the part played by William Bendix in the original (the white guy who has his gangrenous leg removed); while the oppressed character becomes a 'little person' whose disability has rendered him a kind of worker-ant slave-labourer of the future (who has replaced one of his arms with a power tool in order to be more effective at his job).

The women's roles have been altered, too. There's an eager journalist with a video camera, matching Tullulah Bankhead with her movie camera in the original, and she develops a relationship with a man from the 'lower classes' (here he is a State-persecuted rebel). But this modern character does not have to suffer the same necessary moral 'degradation' (she gets to keep her camera), nor is her determination to 'get a good story' in the midst of catastrophe made into much of an ethical issue.

It is curious to note, in passing, the way in which contemporary cinema 'hives off' into separate genres the elements that Hitchcock, in his time, was adept at mixing into the one film. As many recent commentators have noted, there are strong and highly significant aspects of both romance and romantic comedy in Hitchcock's art. This is true, in a low-key way, of **Lifeboat**: Bankhead's entire trajectory (the gradual stripping of her material possessions, her eventual avowal of her lowly class origins) is very like what Claudette Colbert went through beside Clark Gable in Capra's **It Happened One Night** (1934). But today it is only the likes of Kathleen Turner in **Romancing the Stone** (1984) who undergoes such a sentimental education; and it is only in the recent tradition begun by the TV series 'Moonlighting' that the love-hate, male-female relations evident in **The 39 Steps** or **North by Northwest** get anywhere near the thrills and spills of an action plot.

The statement that **Lifeboat** is a quite minor Hitchcock film is, I presume, uncontroversial. Pauline Kael's capsule review in '5001 Nights at the Movies' refers to it as 'ham-handed', and few have persuasively contested that view. Hitchcock may have regarded it primarily as a technical challenge, an exercise of sorts - how do you take a story set in one tiny, confined space and make it both visually varied and dramatically engaging? He was still boasting about his achievement in this regard in 1974, to Andy Warhol in 'Interview': 'You know, I had about three boats [of differing sizes] made for that **Lifeboat**'. The 'spatiality' of the film indeed makes for an interesting study: Hitchcock works so much on the principle of separating the characters and then 'focalising' in turn on their various interactions that the film even misses out, finally, on any real or driving sense of claustrophobia. Overall, **Lifeboat** has some nice moments of comic and/or tense interaction, and one certified moment of inadvertent surrealism, when everyone gangs up on Willy (Walter Slezak), and the assembled huddle, shot from the back, hides from us their act of murder.

The remake is not as adventurous in its formal principles. The setting, while still claustrophobic, is spread out over several chambers of a spaceship. Narrational voice-over from the journalist character lends a certain reflective distance to events. Where every visual and narrative detail in Hitchcock's film is crystal-clear, Silver (an accomplished actor here making his directorial debut) adopts the modern style once described so well by J. Hoberman apropos James Cameron's **Aliens** (1986): the atmosphere resembles a chaotic light-show in an otherwise blacked-out auditorium, where bloodcurdling cries and barely legible movements of frantic bodies add to the general sensation of rampant confusion. And although the script of **Lifepod** also has its 'ham-handed' passages - particularly those which laboriously spell out the 'whodunit' intrigue and its ramifications - the film as a whole is as captivating and enjoyable as a superior episode of 'Star Trek: The Next Generation' (and, coming from me, that is a high compliment).

A final note for Hitchcockian detectives. The screenwriting credits for both **Lifeboat** and **Lifepod** are rather mysterious. The opening credit of **Lifeboat** tells us it is 'by John Steinbeck', while the actual screenplay is credited to Jo Swerling. We can assume that Steinbeck supplied the basic story line, perhaps in the form of a 'treatment' commissioned by Zanuck at 20th Century Fox. Yet the script credits for **Lifepod** - which essentially go to Pen Densham, director of the excellent horror movie **The Kiss** (1988) - mention neither Steinbeck nor Swerling, but instead claim inspiration in 'a short story by Alfred Hitchcock and Harry Sylvester'! As they say in the USA: go figure.¹

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Editor's note

1. To help you figure ... Steinbeck's original treatment for **Lifeboat** was written as a virtual novella of some 40,000 words. It came about in almost exactly the way Adrian Martin's article suggests: in late 1942, the Merchant Marine asked Hollywood to make a propaganda piece on the vital convoys plying the North Atlantic in the face of German U-boat attacks. Hollywood contacted Darryl Zanuck, producer of Steinbeck's/John Ford's 1940 **The Grapes of Wrath**, who in turn asked Steinbeck to do a screenplay. Steinbeck's treatment has never been published in its entirety - see "Steinbeck's **Lifeboat** sunk" in 'MacGuffin' 1. But a copy of the typescript, dated March 26, 1943, is held in the Fox archives, and excerpts from it were included in Professor Robert E. Mossberger's substantial article, "Adrift in Steinbeck's **Lifeboat**", published in 'Film/Literature Quarterly', Fall 1976, pp. 325-38. For further information and a bibliography, see Joseph R. Millichamp, 'Steinbeck and Film' (1983).

'How about I pump Hitler?': Hitchcock's 'Foreign Correspondent' (1940) and its Sources

The idea behind all my instructions had been, in brief, this: that I had not been sent to China to write about politics or the Chinese Revolution, but to engage in some kind of personal enterprise, capers or high jinks, that would carry on the tradition of romantic adventure (the 'Richard Harding Davis Tradition', it was called) to which my various employers insisted on assigning me.

- Vincent Sheean, 'Personal History' (1935), Chapter 6

The melodramatic incidents were characteristic of the Hollywood technique of the time, which could not be reconciled with the mood of the mass scenes.

- John Howard Lawson, 'Film: The Creative Process' (1964), p. 126 - explaining why his screenplay for **Blockade** (1938) failed as propaganda

The spy thriller has been, for most of its history, a British genre, indeed a major cultural export.

- Michael Denning, 'Cover Stories: Narrative and ideology in the British spy thriller' (1987), p. 6

According to 'Sapper'

Foreign Correspondent has never been released on video in Australia. Here, then, for some of our readers, is a thumbnail description of it: a hugely enjoyable comedy-thriller, about the adventures of a naïve newspaperman, Johnny Jones (Joel McCrae), when he's sent to Europe in 1939 ...

Something striking about this, Hitchcock's second American film, was its inclusion of a torture scene - a new departure for him yet long a specialty of popular English author H. C. McNeile (1888-1937), otherwise known as 'Sapper'. Two decades earlier, Sapper had caused a sensation when, in both the novel and the play of 'Bulldog Drummond', he'd dwelt on the cries of an old man under torture.¹ He'd then gone on to repeat the dose in several more best-selling Drummond books. So why did Hitchcock wait so long to film **his** torture scene? The answer probably has to do with the conservative nature of the British film industry. Though Hitchcock was careful to give the scene a timely point, it's unlikely that he could

have shot it at all back in Britain - whose cinema had never developed an equivalent of the tough American gangster and prison movies.

On the other hand, British popular fiction of the '20s and '30s **had** been suitably accommodating. There, Sapper pioneered the depiction of an easy sadism, which evidently caught a post-War mood. That mood, in turn, seems to have sprung from lassitude, or boredom.² In McNeile's case, in 1919 he had found himself looking around for a job after being demobilised from the Royal Engineers, where he'd been a lieutenant-colonel.

And, undeniably, the various Bulldog Drummond books that now flowed from McNeile's pen were nothing if not action-packed, with their hero an ex-Army captain, robust and square-jawed, and their arch-villain, Carl Peterson, a master of disguise given to ingenious scheming on a grand scale. You can easily spot several key elements of **Foreign Correspondent** in these books. As noted, the kidnapping and torture of the film's elderly Dutch statesman called Van Meer (Albert Basserman) has a precedent in 'Bulldog Drummond' itself (where the victim is an American millionaire, Hiram Potts); further, we'll see below that the substitution of Van Meer by his 'double' is prefigured in a couple of the novels; and the film's device of 'splitting' its villain into the gentlemanly Stephen Fisher (Herbert Marshall) and his brutal henchman, Krug, has several counterparts (e.g. once again in 'Bulldog Drummond', where Peterson's chief thug is a certain Henry Lakington). To give a taste of Sapper's prose, here's a passage in which Drummond comes upon his opponents as they use a thumbscrew to torture Hiram Potts for his signature:

The American gave a strangled cry of terror, and then the unexpected happened. There was a crash as a pane of glass splintered and fell to the floor close beside Lakington; and with an oath he sprang aside and looked up.

'Peep-bo,' came a well-known voice from the skylight.

'Clip him one over the jaw, Potts, my boy, but don't you sign.' (Chapter 7)

Hitchcock's film has a comparable moment to this when the hero's jolly friend Scott Ffolliott (George Sanders)³ barges into an upstairs room of a London restaurant, off Tottenham Court Road, and there finds Van Meer being tortured. Though soon taken prisoner himself, and forced to watch at gunpoint the old man's ordeal, he pluckily urges him not to talk. Whereupon a scuffle ensues, allowing Ffolliott to dive out the window to seek help. Quickly he directs Johnny Jones and his colleague Stebbins (Robert Benchley) back upstairs, where Van Meer is safe though the crooks have fled.

Now, in 1932, Charles Bennett, who would be **Foreign Correspondent's** main scriptwriter, had researched the various Bulldog Drummond books before writing for Hitchcock an original treatment called 'Bulldog Drummond's Baby', the basis of **The Man Who Knew Too Much** (1934).⁴ Among the books Bennett read was certainly 'The Third Round' (1924), so-called because it represents the pugilistic Drummond's third engagement with Peterson. The novel is itself derivative in some respects of the two earlier books, but what matters for us is that its plot involves a band of crooked merchants who hire Peterson to kidnap a Professor Goodman, who has invented a formula for making cheap industrial diamonds. Afterwards, Peterson and his brutal offsider called Freyde⁵ torture the professor in order to try and get the formula. But they've reckoned without Drummond. The latter and his men succeed in rescuing Goodman. A showdown of sorts follows - at sea - though this is soon aborted after Peterson blows up his yacht and is presumed drowned.

In 'Bulldog Drummond', Peterson had concealed a kidnapping by employing a 'double' to masquerade as the victim after the event. This ruse is given various twists in 'The Third Round'. First, the crooks conceal Goodman's kidnapping by faking his death in a laboratory accident and substituting another man's body. Later, because Peterson had initially got close to Goodman by disguising himself as the latter's colleague, Professor Scheidstrun, Peterson decides he had better bribe the **real** Scheidstrun to attend Goodman's funeral service. Hence this incident:

He [Scheidstrun] stepped out at the church door and paid his fare. A celebrated Scotch chemist whom he knew, and who was entering the church at the same moment, stopped and spoke a few words with him ... Then the Scotchman moved away, and the Professor was about to enter the church when someone touched him on the arm.

He turned to find a young man [Drummond's pal, Algy], wearing an eye-glass, whom he had never seen before in his life.

'Afternoon, Professor,' said the young man.

The Professor grunted. Who on earth was this? Some relative presumably of the dead man.

'You don't seem to remember me,' went on the young man slowly. (Chapter 6)

Needless to say, the person Algy had met earlier had been the **false** Professor Scheidstrun, i.e. Peterson in disguise - and thus the above episode anticipates a famous misrecognition scene in **Foreign Correspondent**, where it's set on the steps of the Amsterdam town hall moments before Van Meer's double is shot. That's to say, Hitchcock's film ingeniously combines two separate incidents from 'The Third Round' (the scene outside the church, the laboratory 'accident') into one.⁶

The novel's church episode is quickly followed by Drummond's discovery that Goodman wasn't killed at all, and is still alive: he's being held prisoner by Peterson, now posing as a country squire called William Robinson, at his house in the New Forest, Hampshire. The novel gives a vivid description of 'Robinson' and Goodman dozing in chairs before an industrial-type furnace as they tend the making of one of Goodman's artificial diamonds (Chapter 9). The glowing furnace casts a circle of light in which the two men sit, and beyond that is darkness. It's a description which prefigures both the chiaroscuro - suitably Dutch! - of the scene in **Foreign Correspondent** where Van Meer is imprisoned in an old windmill,⁷ and the visual effect employed during the torture-scene in London, where the crooks train lights on Van Meer to encourage him to talk, and where the background in contrast is pitch-black.

Further, there's a moment in the novel when the dozing Scheidstrun nearly gives Drummond away by waking with a start and then mumbling that he thought he'd seen someone at the door. Peterson investigates, supposes he detects some movement or other, but finds the passage empty and resumes his seat. This seems to anticipate the couple of times in **Foreign Correspondent**'s windmill scene when Jones is nearly caught: for instance, when Van Meer sees a movement behind his captors, who investigate, then conclude that it must have been a bird. (It's said that Hitchcock, to lend atmosphere, had 300 linnets flying around - though no doubt the figure was greatly exaggerated by a publicist!)⁸

I must mention one more Sapper novel. Specifically, I want to invoke the memorable climax of 'The Final Count' (1926), in which Peterson sets out in his giant airship, the 'Megalithic', intending to first poison the invited dignitaries on board and then commit suicide. The evening is calm, and the mood inside the dirigible is festive. Someone remarks on how masses of flowers give the interior a heavy, oriental scent. Drummond, who's one of the guests, likens it to being in a coffin ... Suddenly he realises what's afoot, though he's too late to save one individual, a red-faced man. When Drummond yells out, 'Don't drink. For God's sake - don't drink. It's death', the man merely protests at what he calls 'this damned foolery'. He drains his glass - and falls dead. (Chapter 12)

To an extent, this episode is clearly the forerunner of **Foreign Correspondent**'s own climax, set on a transatlantic clipper. We can't be sure about the **exact** degree of influence, for reasons that will emerge. But certainly the scene in the film begins in a comparable fashion to Sapper's, with the passengers on the clipper carrying on their own desultory conversation and one of them even remarking that it would be pleasant to be able to just keep on flying 'for a long time'. Then, suddenly, the clipper finds itself being shot at by a German warship. Told to put on a life-jacket, a woman passenger protests, 'I never heard of anything so stupid'. Next instant, she's shot dead.

Altogether, in matters of tone, characters, and plot, I see **Foreign Correspondent** as being second only to **The Man Who Knew Too Much** as Hitchcock's film most like the Bulldog Drummond stories - and even then, the British film couldn't include Sapper's more 'sadistic' touches. Hence there's not much to choose, finally, between the two films considered as representing the Bulldog Drummond **spirit**. At times, both come close.

Invoking Richard Harding Davis

Yet the Drummond books were just one of many salient influences on the making of **Foreign Correspondent**,

as this article is intended to show. Donald Spoto's 'The Life of Alfred Hitchcock' (1983) doesn't note the Drummond link with Hitchcock's film, but it does refer to how Charles Bennett and Joan Harrison re-read John Buchan's 'The Thirty-Nine Steps' (1915) in order to base various chase scenes on what they found there. I'll come to Buchan shortly. Meanwhile, we should be aware that behind both Buchan **and** Sapper were certain literary forebears who had repeatedly depicted Germany as 'the enemy': in particular, the major English spy-novelists William Le Queux, E. Phillips Oppenheim and Erskine Childers. It's clear that Hitchcock knew these authors' work.

Other influences included a number of films and plays that Hitchcock had seen and now remembered - or assigned Bennett and Harrison to research - some of them, ironically, German, or the work of German emigrés. Also, there were the various real-life events and individuals that had recently occupied the stage in Europe and America, including some that remained 'current'. However, at this point let's be clear about a particular thing: though **Foreign Correspondent** is nominally based on Vincent Sheean's 'A Personal History', that non-fiction book - good reading though it remains - contributed next to nothing to Hitchcock's film.

In fact, just about the sole passage in the book that bears on the film is the one I've quoted at the head of this article, invoking Richard Harding Davis (1864-1916). The film begins with a scene in which Johnny Jones's editor at the New York 'Globe', Mr Powers, dispatches the hotheaded ex-crime-reporter to Europe under the name of 'Huntley Haverstock' - after first seeming to toy with the idea of calling him Richard Harding Davis. As Mr Powers notes, Davis had been 'one of our greatest war correspondents forty years ago'. More than that, though, Davis also wrote popular travel books, including 'Our English Cousins' (1894), and many excellent short stories and novels, among them 'In the Fog' (1901), which Graham Greene's brother, Hugh, calls 'one of the very best accounts of foggy Victorian London'.⁹ Thus the film's reference to Davis is apt. It sounds a purposeful, cosmopolitan note, which the film will be at pains to reinforce: e.g. by sending off Jones to England on the 'Queen Mary' (accompanied, it's true, by the somewhat mocking strains of 'Rule Britannia'), then later having him travel on 'The Mohican' ... Moreover, by casting Jones in the alleged Richard Harding Davis mould of 'romantic adventurer' (which, in Vincent Sheean's case, he tells us, 'corresponded to no reality whatever'),¹⁰ the filmmakers could structure **Foreign Correspondent** on the lines of that essentially **English** form, the spy thriller. As usual, Hitchcock managed to have it all ways.

A deep debt to Erskine Childers

Pioneering the English thriller tradition, notes Michael Denning, were 'the stories of William Le Queux (beginning in 1891), E. Phillips Oppenheim (beginning in 1887), and the king of them all, Edgar Wallace (beginning in 1905), which were aimed at an adult male audience'.¹¹ But the first, and one of the best, of the modern English spy novels - an allied genre - was almost certainly 'The Riddle of the Sands' (1903) by Erskine Childers. With its tale of two amateur English yachtsmen in the North Sea who discover plans for a German invasion of their country, it remains eminently readable - and watchable (it was filmed in England in 1978). To my point here, it provided **Foreign Correspondent** with another of its major inspirations, not least the main characters.

In 'Hitchcock as Activist' (1982), Sam Simone suggests that **Foreign Correspondent**'s villain, Stephen Fisher, resembles 'the English writer Houston Stuart Chamberlain, who in the late 1800s left England to become a citizen of Germany and married a German woman'.¹² (Here, Simone might have added, but didn't, that the German woman was Wagner's daughter, Eva!) Well, he's probably right. Chamberlain, the son of a British admiral, wrote a number of pro-Teutonic books, such as 'Foundations of the Nineteenth Century' (1899), that eventually helped gain him an audience with Hitler, whom he admired. But what Simone misses is how public controversy about this renegade English aristocrat may well have given Erskine Childers (1870-1922) the idea for his villain in 'The Riddle of the Sands', Herr Dollmann - a disgraced officer in Her Majesty's Navy who goes over to the Germans, taking his trusting English daughter, Clara, with him. In turn, I think it just about incontrovertible that Fisher in **Foreign Correspondent**, and Fisher's daughter Carol (Laraine Day), are based on Dollmann and Clara.

Further, there are similarities between Jones and ffolliott in **Foreign Correspondent** and the two young Englishmen, Davies and Carruthers, in 'The Riddle of the Sands'. Davies is a homespun sailing enthusiast who soon falls in love with Clara, while Carruthers is his dandified pal whom he summons from a boring

desk job in London to join him on the yacht. (In **Foreign Correspondent**, the initially raw and out-of-his-depth Jones quickly falls in love with Carol; later, in Amsterdam, she introduces him in dramatic circumstances to her playboy friend from London, Scott Ffolliott, who drives fast cars and who seems to welcome the new diversion from his normally routine journalist's job.) After the two young men's suspicions about Dollmann are aroused, their task of investigating him - and his offsider Von Brüning - are complicated by their not wanting to alarm Clara. More than once, Dollmann tries to arrange their deaths on the treacherous Frisian sands, though each time afterwards he assumes a nonchalant, blameless manner. And, towards the end, both youths must perform individual feats of heroism (e.g. Carruthers has to strike overland, disguised as a rough German seaman). In all of this, we can glimpse parallels with **Foreign Correspondent**. I've already described the film's Tottenham Court Road scene, where Ffolliott 'goes it alone' for a time; I'll mention further relevant scenes shortly.

Concerning Clara, Childers regretted that he had seen fit to 'spatchcock a girl' into the story, where she proved 'a horrible nuisance'.¹³ He explained that he had only done it at the insistence of his publisher! Happily, Hitchcock and his scriptwriters more than got over any similar 'problem' by making Carol Fisher a typically spirited Hitchcock heroine (just watch her first scene, at the Savoy Hotel) and by giving her a learning curve to match Jones's. In Hitchcock, such a curve involves not just sexual experience, but also a degree of opening up to the world at large, typically represented by old people (here, mainly Van Meer). It's a trope that, once you've spotted it, immediately puts Hitchcock's material ahead of anything by Sapper! And, probably, by Childers. For me, it's another reason for likening Hitchcock's films, in the last analysis, to the all-embracing philosophy of Schopenhauer.

Mind you, Childers's depiction of Clara's relation to her father, both before and after she grasps his treachery, is in the event managed well. And not only does Hitchcock's film copy it in essence, but it's surely significant that his **Notorious** (1946) includes similar material - albeit the psycho-sexual content there is more overt. (In saying this, I don't believe I'm contradicting anything I claimed above.)

Now, what is the clearest case of **Foreign Correspondent**'s borrowing from the Childers novel occurs when the clipper carrying the principal characters towards America is shot down in the sea. In both novel and film, the traitor makes his apologies to his daughter for his past actions, then quietly slips away and deliberately drowns himself. The episode in Chapter 28 of the novel concludes: 'We cruised about for a time, but never found him.'

Naturally, John Buchan

'The Thirty-Nine Steps' by John Buchan (1875-1940) is yet another of these English novels that climaxes in, or beside, the sea. In its exciting last chapter, the gang of Germans whose leader in disguise is tracked down and their yacht seized. Yet overall, in spite of Donald Spence's claims, there's little that bears directly on **Foreign Correspondent**: a secret aerodrome near an old mill (barely mentioned), and that's about it.

More pertinent for us are the generic similarities of all these books by Sapper, Childers and Buchan. For instance, Michael Denning notes how they all concern amateur agents combating villains who are professionals (whether largely self-employed, like Carl Peterson, or working for the German government, like Herr Dollmann). Typical too is how they begin with a man bored.¹⁴ Thus the hero of 'The Thirty-Nine Steps', Richard Hannay, starts by telling us: 'I returned from the City about three o'clock on that May afternoon pretty well disgusted with life.'

When Jones is sent for by Mr Powers at the start of **Foreign Correspondent**, the camera discovers him at his desk making elaborate paper cut-outs. From this 'unprofessional' conduct on Jones's part we guess that soon he'll jump at the chance of action. His own words will confirm it: 'Give me an expense account and I'll cover anything.' Moreover, like his predecessors in English fiction, he'll be rewarded in another way, when his adventures restore his sense of self-respect.

It takes time, though. In Europe, he's got a lot to learn. Both literally and figuratively, in these early scenes he's always backing into trouble and having to do double-takes - as when in the windmill he backs through a door and in the room behind him discovers Van Meer, whom he'd supposedly seen killed in Amsterdam. (A related motif is the one whereby he's repeatedly losing his bowler hat, something that

runs through the film until he finally settles for wearing his tried-and-true American fedora.) In this respect, the Buchan novel that most comes to mind is 'Mr Standfast' (1919), whose German villain poses as an academic pacifist and calls himself Moxon Ivery. Not till halfway through the novel (Chapter Ten) does Richard Hannay understand how Ivery 'had played with me ... since the first day ... The only meagre consolation was that [Ivery's] gang had thought me dangerous enough to attempt to murder me ...'.¹⁵ You think of how, in **Foreign Correspondent**, Stephen Fisher, head of the so-called Universal Peace Party, had been present in Mr Powers's office when Jones was 're-born' as 'Huntley Haverstock' - and how, in Europe, Fisher's men try more than once to kill Jones/'Haverstock'. (Fisher himself repeatedly, and nonchalantly, pretends to be blameless.)

In particular, there's a resemblance between an incident in the novel's Chapter Five, set aboard a ship plying along the Scottish coast, and the scene in Hitchcock's film where Fisher's hired assassin, Mr Rowley (Edmund Gwenn), tries to kill Jones in a London street. In the novel, Hannay is standing in the bows of the ship near the rail, holding onto a rope because of the worsening weather, when suddenly a shipboard acquaintance called Gresson cannons into him, sending him over the side.¹⁶ Hannay manages to grab the ship's anchor and regain the deck, where he hears Gresson call out to him in mock concern. The truth is, Gresson is working for Ivery ... In Rowley's case, he pushes Jones into the path of a truck, which manages to swerve. Rowley then has to pretend that he pushed Johnny to **save** him from the truck.

Here seems to be the place to mention how Buchan in his best novels typically shows a keen weather-eye. Indeed, Buchan-authority Howard Swiggett referred at times to his subject's 'divine glimpses of weather',¹⁷ clearly a matter that isn't given great attention in your average thriller. But **Foreign Correspondent** isn't that, and at the least it reveals a scrupulous regard on Hitchcock's part for weather matters. From the sunny interior of Mr Powers's office high up in the 'Globe' building, to rainy Amsterdam, to the gritty streets of London, and finally a turbulent Atlantic, Hitchcock obviously strove to create a convincing physical texture - matched, as we'll see, by his attention to matters of precise lighting and cinematography.

A possible nod to 'Dornford Yates' - and to Keats's 'To a Nightingale'

Hitchcock may have got Rowley's name from the 'Chandos' series of thrillers by C. W. Mercer (1885-1960), writing as 'Dornford Yates', where it's the name of a loyal man-servant who participates in all of Chandos and company's adventures. Further, I suspect that the detectable influence of Yates on **Foreign Correspondent** would have been greater if several hundred feet of location footage hadn't been lost when a ship bringing it from Europe was torpedoed in the Atlantic.¹⁸ For, surely, what went to the bottom was largely footage intended by Hitchcock to accompany a car chase through Holland, the sort of chase Yates helped pioneer in fiction with stories like 'How a Telegram Came for Jill' (1922). In the released version of the film, there seems a sharp jump just before ffolliott's car, pursuing the killer of 'Van Meer', arrives at an open road where we see several windmills. That is, instead of a protracted and exciting chase like the ones Hitchcock filmed elsewhere (in **Young and Innocent**, say, or **Tom Curtain**) - or the sort of thing that prompted Ian Fleming to praise Yates for his masterly handling of 'a half-dozen pages of hot-pursuit prose' -¹⁹ we get largely just the **suggestion** of time passing with the inclusion of one or two diverting gags: most notably, the sight-gag involving the old fellow who wants to cross the road with his jug of milk.

(But that sight-gag is a beauty. True, it may derive some of its generic inspiration from Yates's business with a hen in the above-named story. But note also the variations in the old man's three attempts to cross, and the cut to a closer shot for the middle attempt, in which he **exaggerates** the bend of his knee as he steps from the kerb.)

I've already mentioned **Foreign Correspondent**'s clipper scene more than once. There will be further such references. For instance, when Carol Fisher says, 'It would be nice if we could just keep flying for a long time', she may be unwittingly invoking a now almost forgotten play of the '20s, 'Outward Bound' by Sutton Vane - a play whose characters meet on a liner where they discover that they're all dead and bound for purgatory. That play is referred to in Chapter 11 of Sapper's 'The Final Count' as 'strange and wonderful ... no break - you just go on', and it was filmed by Hollywood in 1930, when it starred Leslie Howard.

But isn't there also a Keatsian strain hereabouts? Certainly such a strain surfaces in some later Hitchcock films (e.g. **Suspicion**, **Vertigo**). At this point, I'm reminded not just of the funerary references at the climax of 'The Final Count', but also of how in Buchan's 'Mr Standfast' (Chapter Eighteen), when Hannay's girlfriend Mary awaits him, as she thinks, at an Italian inn in the small hours of the night, she distracts herself by reciting Keat's 'Nightingale' - in effect, invoking the same lines Hitchcock seems to have often remembered, about being 'half in love with easeful Death' and ceasing 'upon the midnight with no pain'. (Mary will find that the person who sent her the assignation note wasn't Hannay at all but Moxon Ivery - to whom she had earlier feigned a connubial interest. Clearly this is **Notorious** territory again. But the essential point for us is the implied alliance of love and death ...) Specifically, in the case of **Foreign Correspondent**, we may catch a note of mock-Nirvana, so typical of some Hitchcock climaxes. And perhaps we may infer that Hitchcock was determined, on this occasion at least, that we should **not** be spared further pain ...²⁰

Working for Walter Wanger

After the success of **Rebecca** (1940), David Selznick chose to hire out its director's services, and thus Hitchcock found himself employed by another independent producer, Walter Wanger. Wanger's interest in topical politics had already led him to take up such projects as **Gabriel Over the White House** (1933), **The President Vanishes** (1934), and **Blockade** (1938); he also produced such classic films as Lang's **You Only Live Once** (1937) and Ford's **Stagecoach** (1939). Hitchcock seems to have dutifully looked at several of these. Now, I could only speculate at the possible influence on his own project of **The President Vanishes** (directed by William Wellman, from a non-Nero Wolfe novel by Rex Stout), as I've never seen it, but certainly its synopsis sounds familiar: something about the US president dropping out of sight for a few days, pretending to have been kidnapped by some fascist businessmen, so that his country won't be drawn into a European war. On the other hand, in the case of Frank Borzage's **History is Made at Night**, which that director filmed for Wanger in 1937, we're on surer ground.

Borzage's comedy-drama, with its delirious title ('the most romantic in the history of cinema' - Andrew Sarris), climaxes at sea, in a liner's head-on collision with an iceberg. Borzage shot this event entirely from on board the ship. Such a (necessarily) confronting manner of filming had already impressed Hitchcock, who in 1936 wrote an article for 'The Picturegoer' in which he referred to the use of subjective camera to involve an audience - and cited the case of Howard Hughes's **Hell's Angels** (1930) which put the viewer right in the pilot's seat during a crash.²¹ Well, **Foreign Correspondent** itself is often praised for its head-on filming at the moment when the clipper crashes at sea. But what really nails the direct connection between Borzage's film and Hitchcock's is a matter of shared word-play. In **History is Made at Night**, a head-chef (Leo Carillo), who has an accent, both mis-quotes and mis-pronounces a line from Kipling. 'The female of the spices is more dead than the male', he tells his headwaiter friend (Charles Boyer). He means that women can bring you undone! In **Foreign Correspondent**, a journalist covering the reception for Van Meer at the London Savoy has similar thoughts. As Carol Fisher begins to defend the work for peace of 'well-meaning amateurs', one of Jones's companions at the press table looks bored and mutters, 'The female of the speeches is deadlier than the male!' (**Kipling** wrote, 'For the female of the species is more deadly than the male' - and we can be grateful that Sapper, at least, got it right in the title of his most elegant Bulldog Drummond book, 'The Female of the Species', 1928!) But Jones shushes his colleague and starts to pay rapt attention to Carol.

Another Wanger film of this period was Tay Garnett's comedy-adventure, **Trade Winds** (1939). Here already, as its credits show, were assembled some of the technical talents of **Foreign Correspondent**: cinematographer Rudolph Maté, composer Alfred Newman. And once again Hitchcock's film would re-work elements of the earlier movie. For instance, foreshadowing its own 'travelogue' plot, **Trade Winds** begins with the image of a revolving globe - as **Foreign Correspondent** starts with a close-up (behind the credits) of a turning globe, then pulls back to reveal that what we've been looking at is actually the top of the 'Globe' building in New York.

Moments later, in Hitchcock's film, we come upon Jones hard at play in his office! His idleness is explained by the fact that he's about to be fired for having slugged a policeman, albeit this was 'in the line of duty'. Jones's counterpart in **Trade Winds** is the police detective (Frederic March) whom we first meet 'in conference', i.e. womanising, in his office. The reason he's not out on a case is that he has just been fired for getting too intimate with the sheriff's daughter.

And again, in **Foreign Correspondent**, it looks for a moment that Jones won't be given the overseas job that Mr Powers has in mind for him, because a more intellectual colleague - whose tome 'The Twilight of Feudalism' got good reviews - offers himself instead. In **Trade Winds**, when the Police Commissioner (Thomas Mitchell) is casting about for someone to track down a murder suspect (Joan Bennett), a particularly staid cop (Ralph Bellamy) offers to do it - but finds himself passed up in favour of Frederic March.

I mentioned Wanger's Spanish Civil War movie, **Blockade**, above. It was directed by German emigré William Dieterle, and starred Henry Fonda and Madeleine Carroll. Hitchcock, though, may possibly have seen in it mainly an object-lesson in how **not** to try and impart a message concerning current events. As John Howard Lawson indicates, the film's melodrama wasn't so much put at the service of the message as made to compete with it. Accordingly, you'll find in **Foreign Correspondent** no general denunciation of Hitler and the Axis powers, just the emotive orchestration of particular events and characters, and an overall design. (To see things in terms of one essential and undivided process was Schopenhauer's powerful lesson. For both him and Hitchcock, Cartesian 'dualism' was alienating ...) ²²

By emotive events and characters, I mean everything from the pain we watch being inflicted on the gentle Van Meer to the fanaticism of Fisher (something which aligns him with bully-boy Krug and alienates him from Carol). As for 'messages', at the most you have Van Meer's fierce denunciation, under torture, of 'beasts like you' who 'will never conquer them ... the little people everywhere who give crumbs to birds' - and Jones's final exhortation to America to 'keep those lights burning'. But now note: that last scene is set in a broadcasting studio, and therefore permissibly uses a radio journalist's rhetoric. Crucially, contemporary audiences would have recognised how the scene invokes no less a person than CBS war correspondent Ed Murrow (1908-65), who, throughout the War, broadcast dramatic and accurate reports of events in Europe, including the Battle of Britain (which was still being fought at the very moment of **Foreign Correspondent's** release). ²³ In other words, Murrow was the living embodiment of the Richard Harding Davis tradition.

By contrast, how extreme had been the licence taken at the end of **Blockade** when Henry Fonda, playing a Spanish peasant, had stepped still further out of his credible character and addressed the audience directly to ask: 'Where is the conscience of the world?'

The William Dieterle connection

In short, good intentions aren't always enough. Still, Hitchcock had extrinsic reasons for watching **Blockade**, despite its flaws. It co-starred Madeleine Carroll, whom he had directed in two of his British pictures (**The 39 Steps**, **Secret Agent**). In addition, it represented Dieterle's first film after his Academy Award-winning **The Life of Emile Zola** (1937), for Warners. Let's note here, too, how when Dieterle went on soon afterwards to make **The Hunchback of Notre Dame** (1939) for RKO, that film's two leads were Charles Laughton and Maureen O'Hara, both of whom, like Hitchcock, were newly arrived in Hollywood from England - where they had just starred together in Hitchcock's **Jamaica Inn**.

Now, in 'MacGuffin' 11, I illustrated at some length Hitchcock's interest in the work of various German emigrés - not just Dieterle - who had come to Hollywood. (He himself, of course, had worked in Germany for a year in 1925.) At one point, I showed how an 'umbrellas' scene in **The Life of Emile Zola** was the forerunner of a similar scene in **Foreign Correspondent**. This particular link between the two films is one I must now insist on, notwithstanding that Hitchcock's film employed the gifted William Cameron Menzies for 'special production effects', and that it's true Menzies had just come from working on Sam Wood's **Our Town** (1940) which has a funeral scene with black umbrellas. ²⁴ For the fact is that **Dieterle's** umbrellas scene, in both its elaborateness and its emphasis on the crowd as a near-abstract force, is far closer to Hitchcock's depiction of a whole sea of umbrellas (through which the killer of 'Van Meer' escapes) than is **Our Town's** quite modest and deliberately stagy hillside scene, representing Emily Webb's funeral ...

That brings me to **The Hunchback of Notre Dame**. It's a splendid film, and full of distinctive Dieterle content and emphases. For instance, it climaxes in one of the director's characteristic 'mob' scenes, in which the followers of the King of the Gypsies (Thomas Mitchell) use force to try and break the power of the corrupt nobles. At other times, the populace are shown as capable of combining peacefully to further

their own interests, particularly by means of the new invention called the printing press. But the film's biggest and most important 'prop' is Notre Dame Cathedral itself, referred to as a place of sanctuary. Here, Quasimodo (Laughton), the hunchback bell-ringer, makes his home. Though he's both deformed and deaf, he has the true understanding and gentle heart of a child. To Esmeralda (O'Hara), whom he rescues from the evil Frollo (Cedric Hardwicke), who is in league with the nobles, he gives a present of a bird in a wooden cage.

The symbolism here may remind you at once of, say, the depiction of Frankenstein's monster in James Whale's 1931 film, and of the blind but wise anchorites in, respectively, Whale's **The Bride of Frankenstein** (1935) and Hitchcock's **Saboteur** (1942), both of whom shelter fugitives from injustice. But in view of Quasimodo's association with birds, and his description of the Paris populace (whom he can see from his bell-tower) as 'little people', the question I want to ask is: was it effectively Quasimodo who provided Hitchcock with the idea for giving these attributes/phrases to the gentle Van Meer in **Foreign Correspondent**? And, beyond that, was it the Notre Dame scenes in Dieterle's film that helped inspire Hitchcock's windmill and Westminster Cathedral scenes?

I think there's compelling evidence for answering 'yes' to both questions, especially when you know that London's Westminster Cathedral is, for that city's Catholics, the counterpart of Notre Dame. A 1940s book on London quotes a description of Westminster as "'beyond all doubt the finest church that has been built for centuries'" (the book dates it from 1895).²⁵ Moreover, a notable feature of Westminster is its campanile (bell-tower), 284 feet high. 'Visitors may ascend to the top by means of the highest passenger-lift in London.' It's from here that, in **Foreign Correspondent**, the treacherous Rowley plummets - just as, in Dieterle's film, Frollo is thrown by Quasimodo from the bell-tower of Notre Dame.

In both films, for their respective cathedral scenes, Alfred Newman was called on to provide suitable choral music. (In **Foreign Correspondent**, when Jones and Rowley arrive at Westminster, there's a requiem mass in progress. That's why they decide against going right inside, and take the lift up the tower instead.) Of course, both directors' films are also notable for some striking visual effects. In Dieterle's case, he staged an elaborate climax whose action occurs both in the bell-tower (where Quasimodo and Frollo struggle) and on the ground outside (where the mob are ramming the cathedral door). In this, there's an exact parallel with the climax of **Frankenstein** - except that the building there is an old windmill. In turn, curiously enough, that windmill is the prototype of the one in **Foreign Correspondent** ...

Sorting all this out, what I'm saying is simply that I believe **Foreign Correspondent** artfully amalgamates various effects that Hitchcock had admired in Whales's and Dieterle's films - but that this wasn't fortuitous. Clearly, Dieterle's film itself was drawing on the earlier film, at some level. As for my claim that **Frankenstein**'s windmill is the prototype of the one in **Foreign Correspondent**: just look at the actual mill machinery, with its cogs and wheels, in both films! One is a replica of the other.²⁶ (By contrast, the mills in a couple of earlier Hitchcock films - **The Manxman** and **Young and Innocent** - are nothing like the one in **Foreign Correspondent**.)

Other films, other influences

Speaking of the windmill in Hitchcock's film ... a notable feature of its design is its tallness, its verticality, in contrast to the flat Dutch countryside around it. Apart from other factors, such as fidelity to a real Dutch landscape, what we may detect working here are further 'Germanic' principles of art design (an emphasis on angles, etc.).

Up to a point, Leslie Halliwell is helpful about such matters. For instance, his 'Filmgoer's Companion' notes of **Frankenstein** how several of its elements were borrowed from the 1922 German film **The Golem**. The latter was directed by Paul Wegener, a former actor who had worked in Max Reinhardt's company with Albert Basserman (see below). It was co-scripted by Henryk Galeen, a Dutchman working in Germany. On the other hand, Halliwell doesn't mention an earlier film of the same title and made by the same team (1915), nor a German serial version of a similar story, **Homunculus** (1916).²⁷

Again, Halliwell's splendidly entertaining essay on **Foreign Correspondent**, in 'Halliwell's Harvest' (1986), suggests an actual German source for Hitchcock's mill, with its interior 'all creaking cog-wheels'

and shafts of sunlight and shadowed groupings spied on through frames of wooden beams'. That source is G. W. Pabst's **Die Dreigroschenoper/The Threepenny Opera** (1931).²⁸ Unfortunately, Halliwell doesn't so much as raise the possibility of **Frankenstein's** influence (let alone contributions from authors like Buchan and Sapper).

Still on matters Teutonic, here are a couple of dates. On April 9, 1940, Germany invaded Denmark. On May 10, it was Holland's turn. And now I want to speculate about why **Foreign Correspondent** gives its villain, Stephen Fisher, a Great Dane as a companion. In the first place, perhaps that particular breed of dog suggested itself to Hitchcock because a Great Dane accompanies the grandfather (C. Aubrey Smith) in John Cromwell's **Little Lord Fauntleroy** (1936), made for Selznick. Anyway, the choice was a master-touch on Hitchcock's part. Not only does it underline Fisher's aristocratic status (with his forebears to be found in books by Childers and Buchan), but it hints at his true allegiance: despite its name, the Great Dane is German, and was once used in that country as a boarhound. Perhaps, too, such a dog constitutes in the film a subtle reminder of Germany's recent invasion of Denmark.

Above, I mentioned Holland's flatness. When the Germans invaded **that** particular country, their advance was helped by the geography. Their troops and tanks surged ahead with little hindrance, their planes availed themselves of impromptu airfields. And, doubtless, that same geography was what gave Hitchcock his idea of staging a cross-country chase in Holland (albeit curtailed, for reasons I've suggested), and of having the crooks establish a private airfield there. Further, perhaps he knew that audiences would readily understand the factors involved, and therefore wouldn't be troubled about credibility ...

Now a note on **Foreign Correspondent's** actors. When you investigate the casting of Joel McCrae as its amiable lead - of course, Hitchcock had originally wanted Gary Cooper - you find that his most recent role had been as a young would-be diplomat in Lloyd Bacon's **Espionage Agent** (1939), for Warners. There, his character falls in love with a German spy (Brenda Marshall) - who works for something called the World Peace Organisation in Switzerland. (As a likely source for the Universal Peace Party of **Foreign Correspondent**, this must nonetheless be considered with Moxon Ivery's cover as an academic pacifist in 'Mr Standfast', plus another possible source I'll mention shortly.) Halliwell's 'Film Guide', after noting the film's anti-isolationist message directed at its American audience, describes **Espionage Agent** as 'a rather sketchy cross between **Foreign Correspondent** and **Confessions of a Nazi Spy** [1939]'. That about matches my own memories of it, from years ago.

I've still fainter memories of the Dr Kildare films, but that popular MGM series is where Laraine Day made her name, beginning with **Calling Dr Kildare** (1939). She played Nurse Mary Lamont, the girlfriend of Kildare (Lew Ayres). Such a capable character would seem a most suitable predecessor of Carol Fisher in **Foreign Correspondent**.

As I've already noted, Albert Basserman had been a distinguished German stage - and screen - actor. In 1940, though, he was newly arrived in Hollywood. William Dieterle got to direct him first, in the Warners biopic **Dr Ehrlich's Magic Bullet**. Then came Hitchcock's turn, to his film's great good fortune. Impeccably, Basserman's Van Meer gives us the character's tired, tough decency, that of a statesman rendered helpless - like Holland itself - by the forces of evil and his own painfully obvious frailty and isolation. (For an instructive comparison-contrast, see Robert Siodmak's 1931 **Voruntersuchung/ Interrogation**, where Basserman plays the story's investigating officer, Judge Bienert, a bustling, vigorous character - initially, at least - who wears a three-piece suit complete with tie and winged collar, and has fashionably waved hair.)²⁹

It's interesting to note how expressive are the eyes of both Van Meer and Fisher. Van Meer's are typically wide open, his gaze at once inward and straight ahead; even when he's drugged and being threatened with torture, his eyes show that he's aware but still defiant. In Fisher's case, his beady eyes are piercing and intelligent, yet nearly always darting about. This trait is initially used for comic effect when, in Powers's office, Fisher jokes about the 'christening' of 'Huntley Haverstock' - and rolls his eyes. But later his unsteady gaze carries a more sinister suggestion, of slyness or, at the least, of his seeking to avoid being trapped. This was English actor Herbert Marshall's third appearance in a Hitchcock film, and excellent.

A broader comic effect is achieved with darting eyes by some of the other characters, in particular by the actor playing 'the laughing Latvian', as Jones calls him. This little man might almost be a harmless

version of Peter Lorre in **Secret Agent** (1936), i.e. the character known there as 'The Hairless Mexican' (where, despite his frequent grinning, he's both lecherous and deadly). Jones first meets him in London during the reception at the Savoy. That scene is making a serious point in the film, to the effect that the soon-to-be Allies are a heterogeneous group, far from united for the struggle ahead (cf **Saboteur**, **Lifeboat**, **Tom Curtain**). But it's treated by the filmmakers with an eye to comedy, as when Jones, who's pursuing Carol, palms off the Latvian onto a Scotsman by requesting information about the origins of the kilt. In fact, there are several times in the Latvian's scenes when you think, too, of the Marx Brothers - and not just of Harpo, either. For instance, a memorable scene in Amsterdam's Hotel Europe, in which hotel staff and a couple of bogus policemen all crowd into Jones's room, is surely paying homage to the stateroom episode in Sam Wood's **A Night at the Opera** (1935).

As we're back (it seems) in bustling Amsterdam, I'll note one or two more sources for the assassination scene. Because that scene is set on a flight of steps, and because we're shown the face of 'Van Meer' in bloodied close-up, Halliwell suggests Eisenstein's **The Battleship Potemkin** (1925) may have been an influence.³⁰ Less speculative, because we've Hitchcock's own word on this, is the actual 'look' of the scene. It's shot in the rain, remember. Hitchcock once said that what he was after here, photographically, was a 'rather wishy-washy newsreel quality'.³¹ His thinking is logical, given that the assassination would, in theory, soon be featuring on newspaper front-pages and the like. Moreover, this particular effect is just one of many in the film, all contributing to the 'design' I spoke of before. In this case, notice the significant contrast with the 'Cambridge Arms' scene, in which a moving camera catches a couple wheeling a pram past ivied walls. And now a question or two. Surely that pram isn't another **Potemkin** borrowing? Or is it? (Here, too, Hitchcock's embraceive thinking, his truly broad sense of time-space, would merely be like Kant's and Schopenhauer's ...)

Hitchcock was a British filmmaker

After Hitchcock arrived in America, his outlook became suitably more cosmopolitan - and, in a technical sense, pessimistic. In short, Schopenhauerian! To say that, though, is merely to note how the potential that in his case was always there fulfilled itself. Hitchcock was always a Romantic-eclectic filmmaker, something else that the present article is about. Yet his British roots now only thrust themselves deeper. I began this article by mentioning how, in making **Foreign Correspondent**, he seized the opportunity to 'quote' a particular passage from Sapper, one he'd effectively had to repress. But naturally his memory of British films was also still active.

Foreign Correspondent seems to refer back to at least two British movies, apart from Hitchcock's own. Albert de Courville's **Seven Sinners** (1936) was scripted by Frank Launder and Sidney Gilliat just before they wrote the script for **The Lady Vanishes** (1938). Fast-moving and fun, it includes a train crash filmed from the driver's cabin (though that had already been done, I fancy, in Lang's 1928 **Spione/Spies**).³² Also, it's another work whose villain uses a peace organisation - this time called The Pilgrims of Peace - as cover.

Then there's Robert Stevenson's **Non Stop New York** (1937), whose last half-hour takes place aboard a transatlantic airliner. Several members of the cast came straight from Hitchcock's **Sabotage** (e.g. John Loder, Desmond Tester, William Dewhurst, Peter Bull). Set in 1940, the film has an element of science fiction about it: a notable suspense scene involves the villain's attempt to push an unwary victim from the plane's 'observation platform'! Not only is he unsuccessful, but he later falls to his own death when his parachute fails to open ...

Another of the film's anticipations of **Foreign Correspondent** - the footage looks practically identical - occurs when the airliner nearly crashes at sea and we're shown the water skimming under the pilot's window. Still, if Hitchcock's film did in fact borrow from both of these earlier films, that was no more than its due. Both of the British pictures were made for Gaumont, and both reprise memories of the villain with the top joint of his little finger missing from **The 39 Steps** (1935), another Gaumont picture. The villain in **Seven Sinners** has a distinctive way of holding his cigar; the villain in **Non Stop New York** betrays himself when someone recognises his peculiar, one-handed manner of striking a match.

Adenoid Hynkel = Adolf Hitler ≠ Alfred Hitchcock

Halliwell's 'Film Guide' says of Charles Chaplin's anti-Hitler film, **The Great Dictator** (1940), that its 'final speech to the world is a grave mistake'. Halliwell awards it a mere two stars, while giving Mitchell Leisen's comedy-melodrama, **Arise My Love** (1940), which ends with a plea against American isolationism, three stars; to **Foreign Correspondent**, Halliwell awards his four-star accolade.

Well, I'm one of those who still find much to admire in Chaplin's film, and not least its final speech. Chaplin delivers it superbly - the version we hear in Richard Attenborough's **Chaplin** (1992) is a travesty. Also, I think its sentiment that the kingdom of God is within us is essentially true (but see 'MacGuffin' 8 on the 'transcendental pretence').

So how do I rate the closing scene of **The Great Dictator** against the corresponding scene in **Foreign Correspondent**? Before answering that, let me note that Chaplin's 'Autobiography' reveals him to have been a Schopenhauerian - of sorts! (He admits to never having read Schopenhauer 'thoroughly'.)³³ Of these two acclaimed British filmmakers, then, I would suggest that one is a **theoretical** Schopenhauerian, the other a Schopenhauerian **in practice** (if unknowingly so?).

Chaplin's film doesn't acknowledge - or otherwise heed - the limits of its own subjectivity. What a pity, for example, that the 'kingdom of God' reference proceeds to specify the exact chapter in Luke's gospel that is its 'authority' - you wonder how non-Christian viewers feel at this point.³⁴ And isn't there also a trace of fanaticism here, apart from just a detestation of Hitler?

Now, I'm aware that the end of **Foreign Correspondent** was added at the last minute, and that Donald Spoto thinks it 'dramatically unjustified, out of character and out of line with everything that has preceded'.³⁵ That's not how I see it, for reasons I've already partly given. In addition, I can't forget that bombs were actually falling in London as Johnny Jones was speaking - and not just on the screen. Further, I feel the power of the speech's urgent, 'populist' language ('Hang on to your lights, America') contributed to order by Ben Hecht. Perhaps above all, I would note the business-like way the message is delivered: there's no energy wasted on denouncing Hitler. That had effectively been done earlier by Van Meer when, under torture, he'd spoken rather wildly of 'beasts like you [who] will devour each other'.

By contrast, the little barber's final speech in **The Great Dictator** always ran the risk of alienating some of its audience, of seeming too dreamy, too inward. And it's 'broken-backed' (as an ex-colleague of mine might have said). It must first work to denounce the Nazi 'brutes' who 'treat you like cattle' before it can start to exhort the viewer to 'do away with national barriers' and fight for 'all men's happiness' - which are worthy ideals, doubtless, but in the then-prevailing world circumstances confusing and/or impractical.

There's even ammunition here for those who would accuse Chaplin of being a communist. Horror! That quite apart, I can't ignore the underlying simple-mindedness that seems to inform the film. (Never was Chaplin further from Dickens, with whom he is sometimes compared: another simplistic notion, I'd say.) So here's the analogy I suggest. It's well-known that Hitler's Minister for Propaganda, Dr Goebbels, differed from the Führer in the matter of their respective attitudes to populist movies. Where Hitler wanted Nazi films to carry overtly political messages (as in the crudely 'instructive' 1940 feature, **Der Ewige Jude/The Eternal Jew**, which flopped at the box office), Goebbels showed that he truly understood the power of entertainment as a propaganda tool. As Dr Hans Feld has put it, the Borgia-like Goebbels used populist films as the chalice for his poisoned pill.³⁶ Further, we know that when Goebbels saw **Foreign Correspondent**, he expressed his great admiration of it ...³⁷

Accordingly, in this matter, I'd put Hitler and Chaplin in one camp, Goebbels and Hitchcock in the other. Call it a matter of 'realpolitik'. And now let's look some more at **Foreign Correspondent**. In effect, the scene at the London Savoy makes a joke of the untimeliness of Chaplin's call for world unity. The most that can be asked is that the Allies acknowledge their common cause. The scene's dialogue mentions Poland, Ireland, Istanbul, Honolulu, Latvia, Scotland, and finally Greece - as well as such languages as French, German, and 'pig Latin' - but the only thing that works as a 'universal language' is ... alcohol. As I showed in 'MacGuffin' 8, an identical 'Tower of Babel' theme runs through **Tom Curtain** (1966), which is set in (a pre-1989) Germany.

Moreover, it's precisely through matters of language that **Foreign Correspondent** exerts much of its near-subliminal appeal to matters of common interest and national pride. Here are two typical instances. When the bogus policemen come to Jones's room at the Hotel Europe with their demand that he accompany them to police headquarters - shades of **The 39 Steps** - they assure him that 'We all speak English'. Astonished, Jones exclaims, 'You **all** speak English? That's more than I can say for **my** country.' A few scenes later, we hear Fisher compliment Krug, of all people, on the 'great delicacy' with which he uses the English language ...

Foreshadowings

Having noted parallels with films that came out in the same year as **Foreign Correspondent** (Chaplin's **The Great Dictator**, Leisen's **Arise My Love**), I should probably discuss the several films that came out after it and appear to have been influenced by it in their turn. Hitchcock's film **as** source. But this time I must resort to a mere token gesture: see 'Odd Spot' in this issue.

Yet, having just mentioned the scene in Fisher's study between him and Krug, I'd like to remark on one particular Hitchcock technique which I'll call 'literal foreshadowing', and which may serve to underline the director's empathy with the needs of his audience, which is what we've been discussing.

The truth is, I can remember only one other film that has used this technique in the way I'll now describe. I'm thinking of David Lean's **Great Expectations** (1946). For the first third of the film, we get to know the boy called Pip who lives with his grown-up sister and her husband, the blacksmith Joe Gargery (Bernard Miles), in their house on Romney Marsh. But then the film leaps forward a few years. Showing true sensitivity, Lean prepares us for the change in Pip - now a strapping young man who works as Joe's apprentice in the forge - by filming his shadow on the forge wall. The effect is even more appropriate because the suggestion of a 'doppelgänger' is suitably Dickensian and fits the emphasis on Pip's self-doubts and self-alienation that will figure at the centre of the story.

What Hitchcock does is similar. All of a sudden, we learn that Fisher isn't who we took him for. The film cuts to his shadow on the study wall at the precise moment we hear him ask Krug to leave - because Jones, in the next room, has rumbled the Van Meer business. To drive home the revelation of Fisher's perfidy, the camera next promptly swivels to his face: in effect, giving us a reaction-shot to go with his own announcement (a foretaste of the technique of **Rope**). But you could also say that the shadow represents our glimpse of the real, sinister Fisher, and that the reaction-shot is less of Fisher than of **us**, who are now, like him, 'in the know'.

'Home of the Brave, Land of the Free'

The film ends with 'The Star-Spangled Banner' on the soundtrack, and an image of the American eagle - Walter Wanger's trademark, no less - on the screen. You think forward to **North by Northwest** (1959), and what Hitchcock, Saul Bass and Bernard Herrmann did there with the up-front Metro logo. Instead of the tired, familiar shot of the roaring lion, Bass provided a stylised, white-on-green image that was truly sinister, and Herrmann began with a musical rumble that was at once a lion's growl and a leitmotiv of the soundtrack proper. In the hands of Hitchcock and his talented collaborators, as the exemplary **Foreign Correspondent** shows, almost everything could be grist to the director's mill.

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Notes

1. The stage version had starred Gerald du Maurier as Drummond. He and Hitchcock later struck up a friendship.
2. Something similar seems to have been reflected in post-War German cinema (e.g. Fritz Lang's 1922 **Dr Mabuse der Spieler**). For the psychology of boredom, see my article on **Spellbound** in 'MacGuffin' 15. For boredom as a motif in the thriller, see the present article.

3. Ffolliott's name may be a dig at the poet e. e. cummings (1894--1962) who insisted on writing his name in lower-case. It may also refer to the name of a character, Robert Ffolliott, in the celebrated melodrama 'The Shaughran' (1874) by Dion Boucicault. And, for the record, the 1995 Melbourne telephone directory lists several surnames commencing with 'Ff', though not 'ff' (and there's no 'Ffolliott' or 'ffolliott')!
4. See interview with Charles Bennett in Pat McGilligan (ed.), 'Backstory: Interviews with Screenwriters of Hollywood's Golden Age' (1986), p. 25. The name of Bennett's treatment for Hitchcock alludes to a passing reference at the start of the sixth Bulldog Drummond book, 'Temple Tower' (1929), where Drummond's wife is said to use his face 'only ... to amuse the baby!' Bennett may further have looked at several Bulldog Drummond films. Of these, the first and most faithful adaptation, according to William K. Everson ('The Detective in Film', 1972, p. 62) was **Bulldog Drummond** (1922), starring Carlyle Blackwell; the best of them was **Bulldog Drummond** (1929), starring Ronald Colman. Hitchcock's own film **Number Seventeen** (1932) makes fun of several Drummond-type conventions (e.g. the disappearing body).
5. Henry Lakington had perished in a bath of acid at the end of 'Bulldog Drummond'.
6. No doubt, Sapper's use of doubles as a plot-device was indebted to earlier notable instances: e.g. Anthony Hope's 'The Prisoner of Zenda' (1894). Cf, too, E. Phillips Oppenheim's 'The Great Impersonation' (1919) as drawing on that same tradition.
7. Otis Ferguson's 1940 review of **Foreign Correspondent** praises its accumulation of technical detail, 'like [that of] a Dutch painter'. Quoted in Jane E. Sloan, 'Alfred Hitchcock: a filmography and bibliography' (1995), p. 358 (item 136).
8. This figure was quoted by presenter Bill Collins when he hosted a screening of **Foreign Correspondent** on Australian TV.
9. Hugh Greene, "Introduction", 'Victorian Villainies' (1991), p. 9. According to Greene, Richard Harding Davis 'was a very arrogant man, rather like some of the American correspondents I have met in other wars, and seems to have been universally disliked by his contemporaries. But he could write.'
10. Sheean, Chapter 6.
11. Denning, p. 18.
12. Sam P. Simone, 'Hitchcock as Activist: Politics and the War Films' (1982), p. 47.
13. Quoted by Geoffrey Household, "Foreword", in Erskine Childers, 'The Riddle of the Sands: A Record of Secret Service' (Penguin Books edition, 1978), p. 12.
14. Denning, p. 51, cites some remarks of Graham Greene on John Buchan in order to note how the hero in these various stories 'is an amateur spy because the adventure breaks in on everyday life, "the dismal but dignified routine of office, club, and chambers"'.

15. The title of Buchan's novel is only the most immediately obvious of the book's many references to 'The Pilgrim's Progress' (1678, 1684) by John Bunyan. (Mr Standfast's story is told at the end of the Second Part of Bunyan's book, and concerns his imminent death, 'for his Master was not willing that he should be so far from him any longer'.) Indirectly, i.e. via Buchan, Hitchcock's thrillers may be considered beholden to Bunyan, not least in their essentially picaresque structure.
16. Gresson attaches himself to Hannay, both aboard ship and ashore, exactly as Manfred attaches himself to Armstrong in Hitchcock's **Torn Curtain** (1966) ...
17. Quoted in Richard Osborne, 'Clubland Heroes' (1983), p. 24.
18. Again I owe this information to Bill Collins. Cf note 8 above.
19. Cited by Jack Adrian, "Introduction", in Dornford Yates, 'The Best of Berry' (Dent, 1989), pp. xvi-xvii.

20. For a woman's readiness to brave death, in the self-forgetfulness of love, cf my comments in 'MacGuffin' 15 on the confrontation of Constance Petersen (Ingrid Bergman) with Dr Murchison (Leo G. Carroll) near the end of **Spellbound**. As for Keats's poetic notions, I know of no concept that better expresses what I take to be Hitchcock's own understanding than that of 'negative capability', by which Keats meant an artist's capacity to totally empathise with his/her characters. At times, though, Keats himself drew back from what he may have seen as too 'feminine' a surrender. According to Douglas Bush, 'As artist [Keats] fluctuates - and is aware of his fluctuations - between belief in the poetic efficacy of a wise passiveness, and belief in the active pursuit of rational knowledge and philosophy' - quoted in Margaret Drabble (ed.), 'The Oxford Companion to English Literature' (1985), p. 689. This is the stuff of Hitchcock's **Vertigo** - and of Schopenhauer's pessimism. Hence, further, the **mock-Nirvana** of several Hitchcock climaxes.
21. Alfred Hitchcock, "Why thrillers thrive", 'The Picturegoer' (January 18, 1936), p. 15. Cited in Sloan, p. 353 (item 109).
22. Hitchcock's distaste for (Cartesian) logic, and its typical reductionism, was very apparent in a memorable interview he gave Oriana Fallaci in May, 1963. 'There's nothing more stupid than logic', he told her. 'Logic is the result of reasoning, reasoning is the result of experience, and who's to say whether our experiences are the right ones? My dog doesn't understand music, Bach bores him to death. Does that mean my dog is illogical? It only means that his experiences are different from Bach's. I don't attach any importance to logic. None of my films is based on logic. Give me a bomb: and Descartes can go boil his head. There's nothing like a good bomb for creating suspense.' (Oriana Fallaci, 'Limelighters', 1967, p. 93.) On the other hand, both Bach and Hitchcock's dog share in common (Schopenhauer's) 'Will', if only we could see it. Cf note 20, above, on Schopenhauer's (and Hitchcock's) pessimism. What I'm also saying, paraphrasing Hitchcock, is that there's nothing like a good **melodrama** to assault our blinkered state - for a while ...
23. Cf entry on 'Morrow, Edward Roscoe', in 'The New Illustrated Columbia Encyclopedia' (1979), Vol. 15, p. 4629. Incidentally, it's interesting to note that Johnny Jones's phrase about 'lights going out in Europe' was used at the 1940 Republican Convention ...
24. An entry on William Cameron Menzies in 'The Art of Hollywood: Fifty Years of Art Direction', a booklet accompanying an exhibition of that title arranged by Thames Television in 1979, implies the **Our Town-Foreign Correspondent** connection. See pp. 95-6.
25. Original source not identified. Quoted in Harold Wheeler (general editor) and B. Webster Smith (editor of revised edition), 'The Wonderful Story of London' (c. 1948), p. 265 (caption).
26. Note, too, that when Johnny Jones later finds a wooden cart in the windmill's garage - where he'd hoped to find the crooks' getaway car - it looks very much like one of the wooden carts we see used by the peasants in **The Bride of Frankenstein**.
27. I've taken this information from Manvell & Fraenkel, 'The German Cinema' (1971), p. 8.
28. Leslie Halliwell, 'Halliwell's Harvest' (1986), p. 59. I've not seen **Die Dreigroschenoper**, but certainly the still from that film printed in Manvell & Fraenkel, op. cit., showing a heavily-timbered staircase in a mill or warehouse, bears out Halliwell's claim. Incidentally, another noteworthy ingredient in **Foreign Correspondent**'s windmill scene, besides the visual matters so well described by Halliwell, is Alfred Newman's music: e.g. its use of sensuous harp-notes to accompany the sunlight passages, and harsh muted-brass at moments of danger.
29. Siodmak's engrossing film has a scene set in the Judge's office where he questions a murder suspect, a friend of his son. At one point, the Judge leans forward, allowing the light from the interrogation-lamp to fall on him, too. The symbolism here - the Judge unconsciously fears that his son may be the real culprit, thereby implicating the Judge himself - prefigures a similar symbolic moment in Siodmak's **The File on Thelma Jordan** (1949), which Hitchcock then copied in **Strangers on a Train** (1951). See 'MacGuffin' 11, p. 8.
30. 'Halliwell's Harvest', p. 58. Of course, photographically, the dead man's bloodied face was probably

based on photographs in textbooks of forensic medicine - something I realised one day when I was browsing in the Law Library at Monash University!

- 31. Interview with Hitchcock, in Towers & Mitchell, 'The March of the Movies' (c. 1947), p. 34.
- 32. Spectacular train crashes and similar disasters had a long tradition in the nineteenth-century novel, stage melodrama, and the silent film ...
- 33. Charles Chaplin, 'My Autobiography' (1966), pp. 134-5. Chaplin's film **Monsieur Verdoux** (1947) has its prostitute character read Schopenhauer - she finds him just 'so-so' - in what I take to be a mark of the film's (half-serious) 'it's all one' philosophy ...
- 34. Chaplin himself professed to be a Jewish atheist - and in 1922 had become very excited about wanting to play Jesus of Nazareth in a film ('I look the part'). This anecdote is told in Colleen Moore's autobiography, 'Silent Star', and recounted in Halliwell's 'Filmgoer's Companion'.
- 35. Donald Spoto, 'The Life of Alfred Hitchcock' (1983), p. 234.
- 36. Quoted in the BBC-TV programme, 'Goebbels, Master of Propaganda', shown in Australia in 1993.
- 37. In Truffaut's 'Hitchcock', Hitchcock speculates that Goebbels had obtained a print of the film through neutral Switzerland.

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ODD SPOT: CAMERAS SHOOT PEOPLE, DON'T THEY?

The idea of an assassin's gun concealed in a camera was apparently an original one when in 1940 Hitchcock's **Foreign Correspondent** used it as the basis of a memorable scene set on the rain-swept steps of the Amsterdam town hall.

Too good an idea not to imitate, in fact. The 1941 Marx Brothers film **The Big Store** hasn't one, but two, assassins in raincoats - one of whom tries to rub out hero Tony Martin with a gun hidden in a camera. He doesn't succeed, though.

Real life did it better. That same year, German intriguers were active in Iran (until British and Russian troops occupied the country in August). In Iran's capital, Tehran, an official was assassinated, the killer using precisely the method 'pioneered' in Hitchcock's film ...

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