

Embodied Knowledge and Impenetrable Subjectivities: Lowndes's and Hitchcock's, *The Lodger*

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Abstract | This essay traces issues of embodiment through Marie Belloc Lowndes's 1913 novel *The Lodger*, to the 1927 film adaptation of that novel, *The Lodger: A Story of the London Fog*, directed by Alfred Hitchcock. Despite the fact that Hitchcock's adaptation departs from Lowndes's novel in important ways, it is a work which builds upon and recontextualizes, rather than reconstructs, its source text. Further, among Hitchcock's filmography, relatively little attention has been paid to *The Lodger*, and even less attention has been paid to its relationship to its source text. By focusing closely on the treatment of embodiment in both works, this essay demonstrates that the human body becomes a site of inscription and aesthetic production in ways that reflect the respective mediums of novel and film. In Lowndes's novel, much of the narrative is conveyed through the embodied experiences of the protagonist, Mrs. Bunting, and the novel's villain uses the bodies of his victims to inscribe his beliefs into culture. In Hitchcock's film, the audience's inability to access the protagonist's innermost thoughts, even as the protagonist behaves in increasingly suspicious ways, highlights the limits of visual representation.

Keywords | Embodiment, Marie Belloc Lowndes, Alfred Hitchcock, *The Lodger*, Adaptation Studies, Film Studies

The Lodger: A Story of the London Fog (1927), based on Marie Belloc Lowndes's 1913 novel *The Lodger*, is Alfred Hitchcock's third film as lead director. As Maurice Yacowar points out, it is also Hitchcock's first work in the "suspense genre for which he became famous" (20), and Hitchcock himself referred to *The Lodger* as "the first true 'Hitchcock Movie'" (Truffaut and Scott 43). If, however, *The Lodger* may be seen as a film which inaugurates Hitchcock's authorship, it must be noted that that authorship is, from its inception, rooted in the practice of adaptation. It is only fairly recently, with texts like *Hitchcock at the Source: The Auteur as Adaptor* (Palmer and Boyd) and *Hitchcock & Adaptation: On the Page and Screen* (Osteen), that Hitchcock's films have received attention as adaptations. *The Lodger* is no exception in this regard; not only has the relationship between *The Lodger* and its source text been left largely unexplored, but the film itself has received little critical attention compared with other Hitchcock films.

Before beginning an analysis of both the works, it is helpful to clarify some of the terms this paper relies on, specifically in relation to adaptation studies and embodiment. This essay investigates the relationship between Lowndes's novel and Hitchcock's film by focusing closely on the treatment of embodiment in both works, and does not consider one work as maintaining authoritative privilege over the other, but instead recognizes that readings of both works contextualize and recontextualize each other. This perspective, in which both source text and adaptation are treated as mutually influential, is opposed to analyses which would treat one work as having established a standard of authorial intent, originality, or artistic merit which the other work is then evaluated against. One example of such analyses is often referred to as "fidelity criticism,"¹ in which adaptations are evaluated based on how faithful they are to their source text. With respect to Hitchcock films, however, it is far more common to come across analyses which diminish or ignore the influence of the source texts upon which those films are based in favor of elevating Hitchcock's status as a director. For example, in Robin Wood's 1965 book, *Hitchcock's Films*, Wood's argument for treating Hitchcock films to a book-length critique relies, in part, on his insistence that "Hitchcock is no more limited by his source texts than Shakespeare was by his" (18). Here, Wood not only alludes to Hitchcock's superior artistic merit by comparing him to Shakespeare, but describes the

¹There is some debate as to the actual prevalence of fidelity criticism. In Kamilla Elliott's 2020 book, *Theorizing Adaptation*, Elliott argues that the supposed predominance of "fidelity criticism" within adaptation studies is a myth, and that relatively few critics throughout history have evaluated adaptations based on their faithfulness to their source texts. Elliott writes, "My history of theorizing adaptation does more than (yet again) refute the fidelity myth: it explicates its persistence in histories of field theorization, arguing that the myth of fidelity criticism is the product of humanities theorization's centuries-long preference for difference and abiding hostility to similarity." (18).

potential influence of Hitchcock's source texts as that of *limitation*.² The flaws of such critiques are clear—in judging one work as inferior to another, the relationship between both works is obscured and adaptation is seen as a one-way process in which an unremarkable text is transformed into a Hitchcock film.

This paper's understanding of adaptation is based, in part, on definitions provided by Linda Hutcheon and Siobhan O'Flynn, who state, "seen as a *formal entity or product*, an adaptation is an announced and extensive transposition of a particular work or works" and "as a *process of creation*, the act of adaptation always involves both (re-)interpretation and then (re-)creation" (7–8; italics in original). Adaptations are not complete products which, having subsumed or transmuted the contents of their source materials, obviate any analysis of those source materials. Rather, adaptations are the results of processes in which, as Robert Stam writes, "[t]he source text forms a dense informational network, a series of verbal cues that the adapting film text can then take up, amplify, ignore, subvert, or transform" (68). Stam refers to the relationship between works as "intertextual dialogism," and in this conceptualization both source text and adaptation act as parts of an ongoing dialogue. Rather than answering how, exactly, Lowndes's novel served as the source material for "the first true Hitchcock movie" (thus implicitly establishing the Hitchcock film as a standard of artistic value), this paper explores the relationship between both the works with a focus on the ways that embodied experiences and roles outline changes and similarities in both the novel and the film.

In order to examine presentations of embodiment in Lowndes's novel and in Hitchcock's film, this paper relies, in part, on the conception of embodiment developed by Carrie Noland. Noland suggests that culture is inscribed into embodied experience in the form of embodied gestures like a manner of walking, moving, or sitting. These are gestures that we are often unaware of. In contrast, Noland uses the term "*kinesthesia*" to refer to a developed awareness of the ways one's embodied experiences are informed by culture. For Noland, kinesthesia is "sensory stimulation produced *for* the self," which "opens up a field of reflexivity in which the subject becomes an object (as body) of her own awareness" (10). Through kinesthetic awareness, one becomes aware of oneself as capable of producing significations through gesture. The body, then, is seen as both object and subject, that which inscribes and is inscribed upon.

With Noland's conceptualization of embodied experiences, differences deriving from medium-specific aspects of Lowndes's novel and Hitchcock's film become clearer, as do the ways that embodied experiences in each work signify. Lowndes's novel, for example, is largely presented through the embodied thoughts and experiences of its protagonist, Mrs. Bunting, whose proprioceptive experiences alert both herself and the reader to the fact that her gentleman lodger may be a dangerous murderer. It would be difficult, if not impossible, for a film adaptation to represent such proprioceptive experiences, and Hitchcock's film makes no attempt to do so. Rather, in Hitchcock's

²Thomas Leitch discusses similarly imbalanced critiques in reference to courses covering Shakespeare on film, which are "often courses *in Shakespeare through film*" (*Film Adaptation and Its Discontents*, chapter 1, paragraph 8, emphasis added). Leitch then notes, "even potential methodological inversions of Shakespeare on Film—Hitchcock's Literary Sources, for example—would have enshrined Hitchcock the auteur, film studies' version of the literary classic, in place of Shakespeare as the locus of meaning and value" (chapter 1, paragraph 9).

film, the audience is continually confronted with the impenetrable subjectivity of the characters on screen, and with the fact that we cannot know exactly what the film's protagonist, known in the film only as the Lodger, is thinking. Thus, while issues of embodiment in Lowndes's novel elucidate the ways that Mrs. Bunting navigates her relationship with her lodger, in Hitchcock's film issues of embodiment highlight the differing significations produced by the body on screen.

Discussions of embodiment in this paper also rely on discussions of the status of the body on screen which can be found in some of the earliest writing on film and adaptation. For example, in George Bluestone's seminal 1957 book, *Novels into Film*, he writes, "The face becomes another kind of object in space, a terrain on which may be enacted dramas broad as battles, and sometimes more intense. Physiognomy preempts the domain of nonverbal experience" (27). Facial expressions allow for some insight into a character's innermost subjective thoughts. However, such visual expressions can never convey the same range of information conveyed by the internal monologue in prose. Additionally, the human body on screen is never only a representation of human subjectivity, but also an object which signifies in relation to other objects.³ Hitchcock's adaptation also draws attention to embodied roles, such as the roles of hero or villain, and the ways that such roles are often at odds with what we perceive to be a character's true intentions. In Hitchcock's film, the conflict between the Lodger's gestures and his supposed internal subjective feelings is never fully resolved, meaning that the audience's understanding of the characters on screen is fundamentally limited.

By focusing on issues of embodiment, this paper demonstrates that presentations of embodied experiences in Lowndes's novel are recreated and incorporated in Hitchcock's film in ways that reflect on the means of representation in film. Thus, such issues of embodiment can help us to better understand the processes involved in adapting Lowndes's novel to film. If, as William Rothman states in *Hitchcock: The Murderous Gaze*, Hitchcock's viewpoint as a director is "at once a philosophical one on the conditions of human existence and a critical one on the powers and limits of the medium and the art of film" (7); *The Lodger* is a film which meditates on the limitations of its medium. That *The Lodger* is a silent film, constrained to expressing dialogue through sparsely inserted intertitles, only adds to the challenges in adapting Lowndes's novel. Both Lowndes's novel and Hitchcock's film share concerns over issues of guilt, cultural and gendered roles, and violence, yet both works present these issues through presentations of embodied experiences in ways that are specific to their respective mediums.

Before discussing the ways that embodied experiences are presented in each work, it is important to briefly describe the broader similarities and differences found in the source text and adaptation. Although Hitchcock's film maintains the narrative premise of Lowndes's novel, important characterizations and major plot points are changed. In both Lowndes's novel and in Hitchcock's film, a gentleman comes to stay at the lodging house of the impoverished Mr. and Mrs. Bunting. Both works feature a fictional serial killer known as the Avenger, and in both works the Buntings slowly begin

³As is discussed later in the paper, this is illustrated in an early scene in *The Lodger* in which Mr. Bunting's fall from a ladder (16:00) becomes an environmental cue among other environmental cues which characterize the Lodger's arrival to the Bunting's home as bringing danger or bad luck.

to suspect that their lodger may be the person responsible for The Avenger murders. While Lowndes's novel is focused on the subjective experiences of Mrs. Bunting, Hitchcock's film lingers on the impenetrability of the Lodger's subjectivity and encourages the audience to fixate on behaviors which align him more and more closely with the Avenger. The tension surrounding the Lodger's culpability is further heightened by his romance with the Buntings' daughter, Daisy—a romance which is only hinted at in Lowndes's novel—and by the fact that the “real” Avenger never appears on screen. If Lowndes challenges her audience with a protagonist who sympathizes with and protects a likely murderer, Hitchcock problematizes the audience's identification with a protagonist who acts and presents himself in ways that invite comparisons to the film's villain.

While both the novel and the film conclude with the Avenger being brought to justice, both works also leave certain troubling aspects of the protagonists' relationship to the Avenger unresolved. In Lowndes's novel, for example, Mrs. Bunting continues to care for and shelter Mr. Sleuth even after she is certain of his guilt, and laments, “If only I could put out a bit of supper for him somewhere where he would get it” (215). Although Mrs. Bunting is horrified by Mr. Sleuth's actions, she never condemns Mr. Sleuth or questions her relationship with him, and the novel ends with a strangely upbeat tone in which Mr. and Mrs. Bunting continue to lie to detective Joe Chandler in order to hide their knowledge about Mr. Sleuth. Additionally, there are hints that Mrs. Bunting does not wholly condemn the motives behind Mr. Sleuth's crimes, such as her shared attitudes against alcohol consumption and her feeling that women should not enter public houses alone. In Hitchcock's film, the Lodger is shown dressing and behaving like the Avenger, and his romance with Daisy is characterized by the Lodger's fixation with blonde hair (a fixation shared with the Avenger, who only kills blonde women) and gestures which indicate violence. At one point in the film, the Lodger uses a knife to brush a bit of dirt off of Daisy's stomach (24:25), at another he holds a fire poker pointed towards Daisy's head (26:44). In both works, then, the influence of the villain's violence towards women lingers beyond the closing of both narratives. In Lowndes's novel, Mrs. Bunting indirectly abides Mr. Sleuth's murder of young women by refusing to share her knowledge with the police, and in Hitchcock's film, the Lodger exhibits many of the gestures and mannerisms of a villain. Further, in both works, tensions concerning the protagonist's relationship with the Avenger are raised through bodily reactions.

The Buntings' embodied experiences are emphasized from the beginning of Lowndes's novel. It is immediately made clear that the Buntings are living in poverty, having sold off nearly all their valuable possessions, and the prices of everyday items, such as tobacco, food, and newspapers are described in detail. For the Buntings, tobacco and newspapers are an unaffordable luxury, and Lowndes carefully describes the embodied experience of their lack:

As the shouts came through the closed windows and the thick damask curtains, Bunting felt a sudden sense of mind hunger fall upon him. It was a shame—a damned shame—that he shouldn't know what was happening in the world outside! Only criminals are kept from hearing the news of what is going on beyond their prison walls. (5)

Lowndes's term "mind hunger" suggests that information is a luxury only in the strictest sense, and that its deprivation imprisons the Buntings within the walls of their own home. Later, when Bunting gives in to his desires and buys a paper, it is again spoken of in terms of embodied experience: "Thanks to that penny he had just spent so recklessly he would pass a happy hour, taken, for once, out of his anxious, despondent, miserable self" (7). The paper offers him a brief escape from the limits of his immediate material reality.

If the Buntings are all but imprisoned by their destitute financial state, the Avenger appears to enjoy a kind of uncanny freedom. In Lowndes's novel *The Lodger*, also known as Mr. Sleuth, is in fact the Avenger, and we learn that he is very particular regarding his own habits of consumption. He abstains from alcohol, as do the Buntings, but he also abstains from "flesh meat" (18) and "[does] not often care to look at the public prints" (184). Considering that Mr. Sleuth readily pays one month's rent in advance, however, even these self-restrictions describe the luxury of one who can afford to choose what not to eat and what not to read. Moreover, in creating the Avenger avatar and perpetrating the serial murders of young women, Mr. Sleuth serves as the architect of the news stories which Mr. Bunting and so many others like him use to distract themselves from their daily lives. If Mr. Bunting is momentarily freed by the indulgences offered by the newspaper stories of the Avenger, Mr. Sleuth is the master and originator of the domain of the Avenger murders, and while he is hidden within the Bunting's own home, Mr. Sleuth remains unthreatened by the highest legal authorities. Only Mr. Sleuth's own paranoia, as well as his growing intimacy with Mrs. Bunting, threaten to stop Mr. Sleuth from continuing his "great avenging work" (211).

In addition to describing Mr. Bunting's desire to read the papers as a "mind hunger," Lowndes describes Mrs. Bunting as experiencing bodily reactions to knowledge. Elyssa Warkentin points to Mrs. Bunting's body as a particularly female source of information, citing several instances in which Mrs. Bunting's embodied experiences alert her to new pieces of information before she has consciously acknowledged their relevance. Warkentin writes, "Throughout the novel, Mrs. Bunting accesses a form of embodied information about her lodger. As we have seen, Lowndes employs a metaphor of illness to describe her relationship with the lodger, and Mrs. Bunting's physical reactions always speak the truth" (par. 24). Here, Warkentin refers to several passages in the novel in which Mrs. Bunting experiences physical reactions to information which connect Mr. Sleuth to the Avenger murders, such as a "fluttering" (39) sensation upon hearing that the Avenger carries a bag like that of Mr. Sleuth's, or when, upon reading a public flyer asking if the reader knows the Avenger, Mrs. Bunting turns "sick and faint" (161). The significance of Mrs. Bunting's physical reactions is further illustrated by a scene in which Mrs. Bunting accidentally knocks something over inside of Mr. Sleuth's cupboard. When a "dark-coloured liquid" seeps out of the cupboard door, Mrs. Bunting grows "chalky white," presumably thinking that the red substance is blood, before she admonishes herself: "It was only a bottle of red ink she had upset—that was all! How could she have thought it was anything else" (77). Later, however, Mrs. Bunting's physical response to the incident makes it clear that not even she wholly believes that the red substance had been ink:

Yet under that still, almost sullen, manner, how fierce was the storm of dread, of sombre anguish, and, yes, of sick suspense, which shook her soul, and which so

far affected her poor, ailing body that often she felt as if she could not force herself to accomplish her simple round of daily work. (80)

Ultimately, Mrs. Bunting values first-hand experience above all other forms of knowledge. From the beginning of the novel, Mrs. Bunting harshly judges her husband's habit of reading newspapers: "There he was, doing nothing—in fact, doing worse than nothing—wasting his time reading all about those horrid crimes" (31). However, as Mrs. Bunting becomes more and more certain of Mr. Sleuth's guilt, she not only begins to investigate her Lodger's activities, but also begins reading the papers herself, hoping to prove her suspicions wrong. While Mr. Bunting reads the paper to escape his embodied experience, Mrs. Bunting uses the newspaper to confirm her assessments of her sensate experiences of her immediate material reality.

Commenting on Mrs. Bunting's investigative efforts, Warkentin asserts, "[in Lowndes's novel women] are not victims—or at least, they are not solely victims—but are competent wielders of power and active collectors of information" (par. 26). It must be noted, however, that Mrs. Bunting never uses the information she gathers about her lodger to prevent his violence towards women, and even when she is certain that Mr. Sleuth is responsible for the Avenger murders, she treats him with kindness and sympathy. Mrs. Bunting's concern for Mr. Sleuth is clearly demonstrated when she warns him of the heightened police presence in their neighborhood: "Oh, I wasn't thinking of revellers [*sic*], sir; I was thinking'—she hesitated, then, with a gasping effort Mrs. Bunting brought out the words, 'of the police'" (169). At the end of the novel, when Mr. Sleuth has disappeared into the city of London to escape the attention of the authorities, Mrs. Bunting laments, "If only I could put out a bit of supper for him somewhere where he would get it" (216). Despite Mr. Sleuth's belief that Mrs. Bunting has betrayed him and led him to be captured by the authorities, Mrs. Bunting never violates his trust.

Although Mrs. Bunting maintains a sympathetic alliance with Mr. Sleuth throughout the novel, Mrs. Bunting's reliance on embodied knowledge is continually contrasted to the attitudes and behaviors of Mr. Sleuth. While Mrs. Bunting is portrayed as obtaining and processing knowledge primarily through her body, via sensate reactions to her immediate environment, Mr. Sleuth obtains information through a more abstract form, through text, and he inscribes his readings of the Bible into broader society through his violence against women. This is hinted at early in the novel, when Mrs. Bunting overhears Mr. Sleuth reading a Bible verse: "A strange woman is a narrow gate. She also lieth in wait as for a prey, and increaseth the transgressors among men [...] Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death" (26). From this passage, we may infer that Mr. Sleuth views his victims as the type of "strange woman" who "increaseth the transgressors among men." In one sense, since some of Sleuth's victims are women who were last seen intoxicated at public houses, we might read "strange women" as referring to women who go out alone at night to drink alcohol. This is supported by the fact that Mr. Sleuth has very strong opinions against the consumption of alcohol: "He was queer about the drink—one might say almost crazy on the subject" (76). However, the full passage of this Bible verse, as found in the *King James Version*, for example, makes it clear that this verse also refers to women who engage in prostitution. Thus, issues of morality are conflated with male desire and the female body. The subtext, here, implies that Mr. Sleuth sought the attention of such "strange women"

at local pubs in order to “avenge” their moral transgressions. The female body becomes a site of moral contest, and with the murder of his victims, Mr. Sleuth denies them embodied agency and intends for their bodies to be read as a warning against transgressing his own strict moral code. The status of the female victim's body as something to be “read” is further reinforced by the “three-cornered pieces of grey paper” (30) found pinned to the victims' skirts and on which are written (in red ink) the words “The Avenger.” Mrs. Bunting notes that “Certain pages of Cruden's Concordance were covered with notes written in Mr. Sleuth's peculiar upright handwriting” (77), and the bodies of female victims are given similar annotations in the form of a hand-written calling card denoting the intent behind Mr. Sleuth's violence.

The passage concerning “strange women” also compares the female body to the structure of the home. Accordingly, Mrs. Bunting's management of her household is of key importance to Mr. Sleuth, and for both Mr. Sleuth and Mrs. Bunting the unscrupulous admission of guests is a grave error. While Mr. Sleuth forms his moral judgements from his understanding of biblical scripture, Mrs. Bunting's sensate experiences lead her to form similar ideas about her own role in the maintenance of her home. As Mrs. Bunting's suspicions about her lodger are confirmed, she is still primarily concerned with the potential intrusion of outsiders:

To her sharpened, suffering senses her house had become a citadel which must be defended; aye, even if the besiegers were a mighty horde with right on their side. And she was always expecting that first single spy who would herald the battalion against whom her only weapon would be her woman's wit and cunning. (81)

Crucially, Mrs. Bunting arrives at this determination through her “sharpened, suffering senses,” and she is certain that her only defense against such intrusions is “her woman's wit and cunning.” Of this passage, Ellen Turner writes, “Despite her horror at the realisation that her lodger is liable to be a serial killer, Mrs. Bunting's abhorrence is outweighed by her compulsion to guard her house-guest against the force of the law” (60). However, more than only portraying Mrs. Bunting as being opposed to legal authorities, this passage also draws comparisons between Mrs. Bunting's sense of duty to protect her home and Mr. Sleuth's apparent belief that the home of a strange woman “is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death” (26). While Mrs. Bunting recognizes “something very awful” (Lowndes 26) in the passage quoted by Mr. Sleuth, Mrs. Bunting nonetheless embodies the basic tenets of Sleuth's beliefs—she abstains from alcohol (88), she takes great care in maintaining the social respectability and general upkeep of her home (12), and Mrs. Bunting also holds a negative view of women entering pubs (88).⁴

Of course, Mrs. Bunting's feeling that it is her duty to protect her home from the intrusion of legal authority does not indicate that she condones all of Mr. Sleuth's misogynistic beliefs. Nor are Mrs. Bunting's attitudes towards Mr. Sleuth at all simplistic. Mrs. Bunting views Mr. Sleuth favorably in part because he is a gentleman,

⁴When Mr. Bunting says that “Hanging'd be too good for [the Avenger],” Mrs. Bunting insists that the Avenger, likely being “a madman,” does not bear responsibility for his actions, and further states, “Not but what it's a good thing if these murders have emptied the public-houses of women for a bit” (88).

“belonging by birth to the class with whom her former employment had brought her in contact” (11). It is also explained that Mrs. Bunting “had had some sinister experiences with men and women—especially women—drawn from that nameless, mysterious class made up of the human flotsam and jetsam which drifts about every great city” (11). Early on, then, it is suggested that Mrs. Bunting’s favorable experiences with her former employers, along with her unfavorable experiences with the poor living in her neighborhood, have led her to form certain preconceptions about the upper and lower classes. For the Buntings, Mr. Sleuth is the first lodger in a long time whom “they could think of taking into their respectable house” (12), and when Mrs. Bunting learns that Mr. Sleuth intends to pay a month in advance, she “felt sick with relief” (16). Mrs. Bunting’s protective behaviors towards Mr. Sleuth are clearly motivated by Mr. Sleuth’s social standing and the financial security he provides, in addition to the social and legal perils which Mrs. Bunting associates with the intrusion of legal authorities into her home.

In addition to explicating the relationship between Mrs. Bunting and Mr. Sleuth, the Bible passages about “strange” women also link Mr. Sleuth’s fundamentalist, Christian views to the more widespread views exhibited by Mr. and Mrs. Bunting (for example, their abstaining from alcohol and Mrs. Bunting’s disdain for women who drink or go to pubs) and, thus, by society at large. In both Hitchcock’s film and in Lowndes’s novel, the motives associated with the Avenger’s violence overlap with beliefs espoused by characters who are more representative of the public sphere. That Mr. Sleuth and Mrs. Bunting share similar values is hinted at when Mrs. Bunting assures Mr. Sleuth that both she and Mr. Bunting abstain from alcohol. Then, upon learning that Mr. Sleuth “had a queer kind of fear and dislike of women,” Lowndes notes that “Mrs. Bunting had no very great opinion of her sister woman, so that didn’t put her out” (34). Further, Lowndes later connects the passage concerning strange women to a public consciousness of famous incidents in which guests have been murdered by their (often female) hosts. Mrs. Bunting and Daisy listen with fascination as their family friend, detective Joe Chandler, recounts several such stories:

One woman, whom all the people round her believed to be a kind, respectable soul, had poisoned no fewer than fifteen people in order to get their insurance money. Then there had been the terrible tale of an apparently respectable, contented innkeeper and his wife, who, living at the entrance to a wood, killed all those humble travellers [*sic*] who took shelter under their roof, simply for their clothes, and any valuables they possessed. (105)

Here, Mr. Sleuth’s fanatical disdain for what he believes to be immoral women is linked to a broader, societal fascination with the recorded history of such crimes. Although Mr. Sleuth is later described as “A religious maniac” (215), Mr. Sleuth’s greatest fears and concerns are reflected in society at large.

If the passage concerning “strange” women marks women’s bodies as sites of moral contest, describing sexual relations with certain bodies as leading one to “the chambers of death” (26), then Mr. Sleuth avenges the injustices these bodies threaten. Mr. Sleuth believes himself to be “an absolutely sane man with a great avenging work to do in the world” (211). He approaches the Bible from a fundamentalist perspective, and his application of the Bible’s teachings is absent of metaphor. When Mrs. Bunting accidentally knocks over Mr. Sleuth’s bottle of red ink in his cupboard, it is even

suggested that Mr. Sleuth may use the blood of his victims to write his notes, as well as the Avenger calling cards. We also learn that Mr. Sleuth conducts experiments in one of the Buntings' rooms: "I am a man of science. I make, that is, all sorts of experiments, and I often require the—ah, well, the presence of great heat" (15). We do not learn much about his experiments, except that they leave a "strong, acrid smell" (116), and they suggest that Mr. Sleuth hopes to gain some knowledge through the bodies of his victims.

Mr. Sleuth's attitude towards the bodies of his victims marks a fundamental difference in Mr. Sleuth's and Mrs. Bunting's modes of embodiment. Mrs. Bunting practices a kind of embodied hermeneutics in which her understanding of the world derives in large part from her own bodily reactions to the information she receives. Mrs. Bunting feels a "fluttering" sensation in part of the novel, and feels "sick and faint" in another, and in both instances these sensations mark her implicit understanding that her lodger, Mr. Sleuth, is the person who has committed such horrible acts of violence against young women. If Mrs. Bunting reads the world largely through her bodily reactions to events and knowledge as they unfold, Mr. Sleuth behaves in an inverse manner, inscribing his beliefs into culture through the bodies of the women he murders. If Mrs. Bunting's sensate, embodied experiences inform her understanding of the world, Mr. Sleuth attempts to impose his own understanding of the world by depriving his victims of embodied agency.

In comparing issues of embodiment in Lowndes's novel to those presented in Hitchcock's film, the inherent constraints of the respective mediums of novel and film must, of course, be re-emphasized. As far back as 1957, George Bluestone noted that in novels, words are "filtered through the screen of conceptual apprehension," while "the moving picture comes to us directly through perception" (20). The contrast between prose in novels, which is often used to explicate a character's conscious or even subconscious thoughts, and a silent film like *The Lodger*, which tells its story almost entirely through the interaction between the camera, the environment, and the bodies on screen, is crucial. It should also be noted that *The Lodger*, perhaps more than any other Hitchcock film, shows the influence that German filmmakers of the 1920s had on the young director. Only a few years before the release of the *The Lodger: A Story of the London Fog*, Hitchcock had briefly worked on a film in Germany, and the work of the German expressionists had so strongly influenced him that he later remarked, "My models were forever after the German filmmakers of 1924 and 1925. They were trying very hard to express ideas in purely visual terms" (Spoto 68). The desire to "express ideas in purely visual terms" is fully evident in comparing Lowndes's *The Lodger*, which richly details Mrs. Bunting's innermost thoughts and feelings through its third-person narrator, to Hitchcock's adaptation.

Although Lowndes's novel takes the Jack the Ripper murders of 1888⁵ as its implicit subject matter, much of the novel ruminates on the Buntings' concerns over their social and financial standing. Lowndes's narrative does not focus on the Avenger murders themselves, but instead on Mrs. Bunting's ability to manage her relationship

⁵Jack the Ripper, whose identity has never been confirmed, is believed to have killed at least five women in Whitechapel, London, in 1888. Judith Walkowitz's essay, "Jack the Ripper and the Myth of Male Violence," provides an excellent account of the ways that the news media and the London public of the time responded to these acts of violence.

with her gentleman, serial-murderer lodger while also protecting her home and her family from the intrusion of the legal and public spheres. That Hitchcock's adaptation focuses on the Lodger rather than on Mrs. Bunting may be symptomatic of the inherent constraints of silent film, insofar as a purely visual portrayal of Mrs. Bunting's experiences couldn't hope to reach the depth of characterization achieved in Lowndes's novel. However, Hitchcock's adaptation does not attempt to mitigate the constraints of silent film, but rather emphasizes the audience's inability to access the subjectivities of the characters on screen, and continually confronts the viewer with the limitations of their understanding. This is clearly demonstrated from the opening of the film, which presents the audience with a first-hand perspective of an Avenger murder.

In the opening shot of Hitchcock's *The Lodger*, the camera closely frames a woman's screaming face, her eyes and mouth open in terror, as she is attacked by whatever occupies the space behind the camera (2:01). Being made to share the Avenger's perspective, the audience is immediately implicated in the violence on screen, and the intertitle which follows this murder, an advertisement reading, "TO-NIGHT GOLDEN CURLS" (2:13) suggests that there is something sexually alluring in the spectacle of violence, and that this allure is shared by the general public. While the "GOLDEN CURLS" intertitle refers to a burlesque show in the film that features young women performing in blonde wigs, we only see the members of this burlesque show once (8:02), and the burlesque show itself has little relevance to the plot. Rather than referring only to a burlesque show, the "GOLDEN CURLS" intertitle indicates both the cinematized violence of the Avenger murders and a public desire for young, blonde women. The public's appetite for violence is highlighted by intertitles which describe news of the latest murder in titillating language, with one intertitle reading, "MURDER, WET FROM THE PRESS" (5:57), and another reading, "MURDER, HOT OVER THE AERIAL" (7:30). Using similarly titillating language, the "TO-NIGHT GOLDEN CURLS" advertisement promises both violence and the appearance of another young, blonde woman.

The Lodger's opening shot establishes the visual language of murder used throughout the film, in which a blonde woman's face fills the frame of the screen with her eyes upturned and her eyes and mouth wide open. The Avenger is, of course, the implicit author of this series of images, and throughout the film the Avenger maintains his privileged relationship to the camera, always remaining just beyond the frame of the screen but briefly coopting the camera to reiterate this visual language of murder. Of equal importance, however, is that this shot highlights the impenetrability of the victim's subjective experiences: As closely as we see the victim's face and as clearly as we may read her terrified expression, we cannot know what she sees, and thus we cannot know the Avenger's identity. The tension between what the audience is shown and what they cannot know is further exacerbated by the fact that the Avenger never appears on screen and is never portrayed by an actor, meaning that viewers are encouraged to scrutinize the embodied behaviors of the characters who *do* appear on screen.

Unlike in Lowndes's novel, in which the Avenger's motives are explicated through the character of Mr. Sleuth, Hitchcock's Avenger remains an abstract entity that is only identifiable through the triangular calling card and instances of sexualized violence towards blonde women. Because the Avenger lacks a singular embodied

identity, any character on screen has the potential to reveal themselves as the Avenger. In another sense, the lack of a single identity results in the Avenger as being read as *disembodied*, as they are always behind the camera and only ever revealed in the form of a certain relationship between the camera and blonde women on screen. In Lowndes's novel, Mr. Sleuth's murder of young women marks his victims' bodies as being legible, as objects—no longer subjects—which are intended to be read as a warning against violating Sleuth's fanatical Christian beliefs. In Hitchcock's film, however, the Avenger murders denote issues of representation and embodiment in film. Not only does the Avenger lack an individual embodied form, giving him a kind of ghostly, almost nonhuman presence within the film which threatens to intrude onto the screen at any moment, but the Avenger's murders co-opt the bodies of his victims to create a type of directorial authorship. The Avenger's violence always result in his victims assuming the same pose, and the camera always captures the victims' expressions of fear in the same manner, almost as though the act of murder were a pretense for eliciting just these gestures. In a manner like that of a director, the Avenger forces the young blonde women he targets to embody the roles of victim, and this embodied role is inscribed on screen through the cooperation of the camera.

To better understand the film's disembodied villain, viewers are left to analyze the visual designs of the Avenger murders and the triangular calling card, and to scrutinize the behavior of the film's protagonist, known only as the Lodger, and Daisy. Thus, when the Lodger first appears in the film and perfectly matches a witness's description of the Avenger, the audience is already primed to question every aspect of the mysterious figure's appearance and behavior. From the moment the Lodger approaches the Buntings' home, a number of environmental cues and embodied gestures suggest that the Lodger is to be mistrusted. First, the lamp in the Buntings' hallway grows dim and we see the unlucky number 13 on the door. When Mrs. Bunting opens the door to reveal the Buntings' new guest, the Lodger's appearance, as William Rothman writes, is "so much the picture of mystery that the effect is comic" (16). The Lodger's face is covered with a scarf, his arm crossed anxiously over his chest, and upon seeing Mrs. Bunting the Lodger's eyes widen in alarm (15:07). Then, as the Lodger steps into the home, Mr. Bunting (who is reaching precariously for a bottle on a shelf) falls to the floor, a cuckoo clock strikes the half hour, and Daisy, upon seeing her father, begins to laugh (16:00). This sequence establishes the seemingly opposed characterizations of the Lodger that will run throughout the film: either the Lodger is a deeply sensitive, eccentric man whose furtive mannerisms and paranoia happen to give him the appearance of the film's villain, or he is, in fact, the Avenger.⁶ Further, in this sequence, the vivified local environment acts in concert with the embodied movements of actors on screen to alert viewers to potential danger. Although the gas lamp grows dim to emphasize the Buntings' poor financial state (14:17), suggesting that they can scarce afford gas for the lamps, it also likens the Lodger's presence to an impending darkness. In one sense, the chime of the cuckoo clock is banal, but in another sense, it punctuates Mr. Bunting's fall

⁶The feelings of contemporary audiences towards the Lodger would have been further complicated by the fact that the actor who portrays the Lodger, Ivor Novello, was "a matinee idol of the stage, the romantic lead in a series of popular operettas in which no psychopathic murderers walked the boards" (Rothman 15). In fact, Hitchcock's plans to end the film with the Lodger's "innocence or guilt never clearly resolved" were changed due to Ivor Novello's "enormous popularity" (Spoto 85).

and highlights the uncanny synchronicity of the sequence of events. Even Mr. Bunting's fall, precipitated by the Lodger taking a step into the hallway, marks a destabilization of the Buntings' environment, and here Mr. Bunting's body signifies less as a site of individual subjectivity than as an object acting in relation to other objects. While we may interpret Mr. Bunting reaching for a bottle of alcohol as raising issues of consumption and abstinence also present in Lowndes's novel, his fall signifies as a visual indication of potential catastrophe relating to the Lodger's arrival to the Bunting's household, rather than to Mr. Bunting's personal misfortunes.

The task viewers are charged with—determining the Lodger's guilt—is continually frustrated by characters who embody or identify with the roles of villain or victim, and by environmental cues that can only be understood as nondiegetic red herrings or as uncanny premonitions. The inscrutable nature of the characters on screen is particularly evident in the Lodger's romance with Daisy, which is continually tinged with expressions of violence. In one such scene, Daisy has brought breakfast to the Lodger's room, and while Daisy isn't looking, the camera focuses on the Lodger's hand, which grips a knife. As the Lodger brings the knife towards Daisy, we are briefly allowed to imagine that he will attack her before the Lodger uses the knife to flick away a speck on Daisy's dress (24:22). Here, the camera's focus on the Lodger's oddly intent expression highlights the impenetrability of the character's subjective experiences.⁷ As Rothman notes, such a shot “announces that we have come to a limit of our access to the world of the film” (22). Just as the shot which opens the film confronts the viewer with the impossibility of knowing what the Avenger's victim knows, the shot of the Lodger's expression as he points a knife towards Daisy's abdomen only allows for speculation.

In their next scene together, Daisy and the Lodger play chess in front of the fireplace in the Lodger's room. When Daisy knocks over several of her chess pieces, the Lodger bends down to help her pick them up but is distracted by a fire poker, which he points towards Daisy. Once again, the Lodger acts *as though* he were about to embody the role of the Avenger, and before we can see what the Lodger intends to do with the fire poker the camera cuts to a shot of detective Joe arriving to the Bunting's home downstairs. The next shot shows the Lodger innocently stoking the fire, then staring at Daisy and remarking, “beautiful golden hair” (27:55). Along with the breakfast scene, the scene with the fire poker establishes a pattern in which the Lodger's attraction to Daisy is expressed alongside violent gestures. The Lodger's unusual fixation with Daisy's blonde hair also marks him as an Avenger-like figure, and suggests that his attraction to Daisy may derive in part from the fact that Daisy, as a young, blonde woman, perfectly fits the profile of an Avenger victim.

In the final third of Hitchcock's *The Lodger*, a flashback reveals that the Lodger's sister was murdered by the Avenger at his sister's coming out ball, thus providing the audience a chance to recontextualize the Lodger's suspicious behaviors. The Lodger tells Daisy that his mother, on her death bed, urged him “not [to] rest until the Avenger has

⁷Thomas Leitch describes the intense yet obscure depiction of subjectivity in Hitchcock films as “ironic detachment” (“Hitchcock from Stage to Page” 30). Regarding Hitchcock's 1958 film, *Vertigo*, Leitch writes, “The challenge of reading Scottie's growing obsession with Madeleine through representational codes which, like Madeleine's actions, seem more transparent than they are make the film's presentation both intensely subjective and critically detached” (25–26).

been brought to justice" (1:19:30). Thus, the Lodger's furtive behaviors, his apparent knowledge of the Avenger's movements and the dates of the Avenger's next attacks, may be attributed to his mission to take revenge for his sister's death. Even the Lodger's act of dressing like the Avenger might be rationalized as an attempt to understand the Avenger's logic. Finally, the audience may take the film's ending, in which the Lodger and Daisy are shown embracing in a palatial home across the Thames, as conclusive proof of the Lodger's innocence.

Despite the Lodger's explanatory flashback, however, and despite the announcement that the "real Avenger" has been caught, certain aspects of the Lodger's behavior remain unresolved. The best example of this behavior is found in the scene in which the Lodger attempts to enter the bathroom while Daisy is bathing. The camera shows Daisy singing and wiggling her feet as she bathes, making it clear that the Lodger must be able to hear her and is thus aware of her presence, and then cuts to the Lodger approaching the bathroom door (56:10). This sequence is shot using the visual language of the Avenger murders, with the camera taking the Lodger's perspective as his hand, isolated in the frame, tries to open the door. The Lodger, then, is momentarily presented as an Avenger-like figure, with his hand moving surreptitiously towards the handle of the door, and being filmed in a manner that has, so far, been associated with the Avenger. Although the Lodger's attempt to intrude into Daisy's bath is in no way commensurate with the Avenger's murders, it nonetheless reveals a predatory aspect of the Lodger's character that is hardly subsumed by the film's romantic ending.

Upon close inspection, even the Lodger's flashback fails to clear the Lodger of guilt. If we take the flashback as a cinematization of the Lodger's account, it must be noted that the Lodger omits his actions during and immediately after his sister's murder, with a shot cutting from the Lodger and his sister dancing in the hall, then to a disembodied hand switching off the lights, and back to the Lodger's sister, who performs the familiar pose and gestures of an Avenger victim. David Bordwell notes that "the *range of knowledge* in the flashback portion is not identical with that of the character doing the remembering" (25, italics in original), and here we are shown more *and less* than the Lodger knows. The camera captures the Lodger and his sister at a close distance before panning back to reveal its position outside a window, as though to indicate the presence of an unseen voyeur, and in depicting the death of the Lodger's sister the camera once again produces the visual motif of the blonde victim that is developed throughout the film. Not only does the flashback fail to provide the Lodger with an alibi for his sister's murder, but it further confuses the Lodger's relationship to the Avenger. For example, if the camera portrays the Lodger's recollection of events, why does the camera closely frame his sister's face at the time of her murder? The flashback presents itself as a rare view of the Lodger's subjectivity, but instead offers an account littered with conspicuous omissions and odd editing choices.

The Lodger, then, remains an ultimately inscrutable character whose attraction towards Daisy is irrevocably linked to an Avenger-like obsession with blonde hair, and is frequently expressed in conjunction with the violent gestures of a villain. Yet, the film also encourages the audience to view the Lodger as a heroic figure, as a vigilante investigator of the Avenger who seeks justice for his sister's death, and whose romance with Daisy culminates in an apparently happy marriage. In reading *The Lodger: A Story*

of the London Fog as relying on the themes of the Persephone myth, Lesley Brill insists that the Lodger's status as the hero of the film is necessary to understand the film as a whole. For Brill, Daisy fulfills the role of Persephone, while the Avenger corresponds to Hades. In this reading, the threat of Daisy being attacked by the Avenger also signifies as Persephone being caught by Hades and being transported to the underworld. It is the Lodger's task to rescue Daisy from the underworld, represented in the film by the dark and foggy streets of London. However, scenes which emphasize the ambiguity of embodied roles, the impenetrability of the characters on the screen, and the tendency of sexualized violence to pervade romantic relationships bar the audience from perceiving the Lodger as being *only* misunderstood. As Richard Allen suggests, "the Lodger is alluring in virtue of his possession of these concealed predatory desires, desires that are romantic precisely to the extent that they remain contained and concealed within the mask of respectability" (25). Most importantly, associations between the Lodger and the Avenger are central to not only the development of these characters but to the ways that the Avenger and the visual motif of the blonde victim signify throughout the film.

As in Lowndes's novel, the significations associated with the Avenger and the Avenger's victims are reflected in depictions of the public sphere as well as in the protagonists themselves. This is made clear throughout the Lodger's and Daisy's romance, but it is also evident in the "TO-NIGHT GOLDEN CURLS" intertitles which link the sexual allure of young, blonde women to the spectacle of violence. Daisy herself works as a model, and several scenes portray young models using makeup, dress, hair dye, and certain mannerisms to produce the image of the sexualized blonde, just as certain configurations of the camera and the victim's embodied gesture work to produce the visual motif of the Avenger victim. Further, Daisy not only plays the role of a blonde model, but also embodies the role of a blonde victim in a scene halfway through the film. In this scene, Detective Joe is discussing the latest Avenger murder with Mr. and Mrs. Bunting, when they hear a scream from upstairs. The camera cuts to a shot of Daisy reproducing the pose of the Avenger victim, with her eyes upturned and her mouth opened wide in a silent scream (42:01). When Joe and Mr. and Mrs. Bunting rush upstairs, they find Daisy and the Lodger embracing one another and smiling. Daisy explains that she was "silly enough to be scared by a mouse" (42:50). However, it is Daisy's ambiguously affectionate attitude towards both the Lodger and Joe, and the ways that she seems to intentionally set both characters in conflict against one another, that is of particular note. Moments after embracing the Lodger, Daisy allows Joe to apologize to her for losing his temper and even allows Joe to embrace her and kiss her. Here, Daisy appears to employ differing embodied roles—such as the role of an Avenger victim, or the role of a misunderstood, injured lover—in order to encourage the Lodger and Joe to embody the roles she wishes them to play.

Daisy's self-aware embodied agency is also depicted in the bath scene, in which the camera shows Daisy wiggling her feet in the water from a first-person perspective (56:29). This shot is particularly intriguing because it is shot from Daisy's point of view. This is one of the few shots in the film in which the camera identifies with a female character, and it is one of the only shots, excepting the shots of the Avenger murders, which takes a first-person perspective. In relation to embodiment, this shot presents the inverse configuration of the shots depicting the Avenger murders: Rather than showing a woman who is made to perform the gestures and expressions of a blonde victim, here

Daisy is shown performing a kind of kinesthesia. To again quote Noland, Daisy expresses a form of “sensory stimulation produced *for* the self.” Although these shots convey an innocent, playful aspect of Daisy's character, they also portray Daisy enjoying her own embodied subjectivity, and in this sense, Daisy seems to embody Noland's description in which the “subject becomes an object (as body) of her own awareness” (10). The trope of the victimized/sexualized blonde, then, is not entirely an aspect of culture that is imposed (or inscribed) upon the bodies of women, but, rather, a mode of embodiment through which Daisy, at least, exerts a sense of embodied agency.

The broad cultural appeal of both the sexualized blonde and the news of the latest Avenger murders is made clear throughout the film. After the Avenger murder which opens the film, Hitchcock depicts the processes by which that murder is commodified and narrativized for an eager, innumerable public. Seeing Daisy take interest in the news of the latest Avenger murder, Joe remarks, “I'm keen on golden hair myself, same as the Avenger is” (12:45). Further, the Bunting's home is filled with portraits of young, blonde women, which are dispersed throughout the home after the Lodger asks for them to be removed from his room. If the Lodger exhibits a particularly acute fixation with blonde women, it is a preference shared to a lesser degree amongst the general public, including Mr. and Mrs. Bunting.

Unlike in Lowndes's novel, however, the Avenger's goals remain abstract. Rothman writes, “I take it that he calls himself ‘the Avenger’ because he sees himself as exacting retribution in a world where women dominate men” (19). In the absence of any narrative exposition of the Avenger's motives, however, the Avenger and the Avenger's triangular calling card are characterized primarily by their opposition to and their appropriation of the “GOLDEN CURLS” trope and the image of the sexualized blonde. As established in the film's opening shot, the Avenger always remains beyond the frame, an entity that is only ever fully perceived by the Avenger victims. Thus, the Avenger denotes a particular relationship between the camera, the audience, and the characters on screen. In using the close-up shot of a woman's face to denote the Avenger's activities, the Avenger murders emphasize the impenetrability of the victims' subjective experiences, and highlight the ways in which blonde women in the film are made to embody and reproduce the gestures and expressions of the blonde victims. This forcible loss of embodied agency is contrasted to the freedom and agency achieved by the disembodied Avenger, who appears to maintain a unique relationship to the camera. It is the Avenger's disembodied status that lends him such a powerful presence over the movie, but this presence is unique to the medium of film, and is achieved through careful configurations of camera, subject, and environment. Perhaps, just as the Lodger is unable to tolerate the portraits of blonde women in his room, the film's villain seeks to avenge the tantalizing exhibition of the sexualized blonde. Then, however, one must question why the Avenger murders culminate in the most repeated and emotive imagery in the film, in which the blonde victim's expression of fear is captured in extreme close-up. Although we cannot be certain as to what is being avenged, the Avenger murders themselves subvert the “GOLDEN CURLS” motif in order to produce a visual trope of sexualized violence.

Conclusion

Of the many differences between Lowndes's novel and Hitchcock's film, no change to the plot is more profound than the decision to portray the Lodger and the Avenger as disparate characters and to leave the Avenger as an unidentified, yet imminently threatening presence which hangs over the characters on screen. In Lowndes's novel, Mr. Sleuth, on an outing with Mrs. Bunting, sees the Commissioner of Police and wrongly assumes that Mrs. Bunting has tricked him into being caught (209). Mr. Sleuth then flees from the building, and the Buntings never hear of him again. In Hitchcock's film, an intertitle reading, "The real Avenger was taken red-handed ten minutes ago" (1:23:33) officially clears the Lodger of guilt. There is a brief chase scene in which the Lodger is chased by an angry mob, culminating in the Lodger being beaten as he hangs onto a fence (1:24:40). Finally, the film ends with a scene of Mr. and Mrs. Bunting visiting the Lodger and Daisy in their new home across the Thames (1:28:20), and the film closes on a shot of the Lodger and Daisy embracing in front of a large window (1:29:35). The "TO-NIGHT GOLDEN CURLS" sign which flashes behind the embracing couple serves as a potential joke about the consummation of Daisy and the Lodger's marriage, but also as a hint as to the pervading threat of sexualized violence which the Avenger posed.

In both works, issues of embodiment are central to understanding the ways that the characters view themselves and their relationship to the world. Hitchcock recontextualizes issues of embodiment presented in Lowndes's novel, figuring the Avenger as a disembodied, immaterial entity that remains beyond the frame of the screen. While in Lowndes's novel, Mr. Sleuth's activities are linked to a hermeneutics of the body, Hitchcock links the Avenger murders to the cinematization of violence, and figures the subjective experiences of the characters on screen as being fundamentally impenetrable. A close reading of issues of embodiment in both works reveals that Hitchcock's adaptation does not merely transform or absorb issues presented in Lowndes's novel, but rather reconsiders issues of guilt, gendered roles, violence, and agency through the medium of the silent film.



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