Alfred Hitchcock’s *Rear Window* (1954) is one of a series of the director’s “single set” films. Action takes place almost entirely inside the studio apartment of Jeff Jefferies (James Stewart), invalided action photographer living in Greenwich Village. The set was reconstructed from a site scouted in New York and given a fictional address as per Hollywood code. Jefferies’ rear window overlooks an urban courtyard housing many artists: a composer, sculptor, dancer, and singer (whom we hear but don’t see). There’s also a “Miss Lonelyhearts,” a childless couple who dote on their pet dog, some newlyweds, and two roomates who like to sunbathe on the roof — who all keep Jeff entertained while he convalesces.

Privacy is not an issue. A heat wave has forced residents to throw open their windows and curtains; all share some newlyweds, and two roomates who like to sunbathe on the roof — who all keep Jeff entertained while he convalesces.

Jeff, whose nickname duplicates his last name, a kind of Jefferies2, is in his singularity a √-1, a tracking close-up shot across a table with photographs and Jeff’s damaged camera. This container, which like the four sides of a drawing could be a diagram or just the sides of the screen.

Rear Window subtly reverses the obvious “naturalism” of the relationship between Jeff’s studio and the urban courtyard. The subtle metonymy of the opening leaves it open whether Jeff has been injured or actually died from his accident. His cast reads “Here lie the bones of L. B. Jefferies”? In contrast the courtyard becomes a giant body whose parts represent body parts: heart, ears, hands (sculptor), legs (dancer), genitals (married couple), head (composer), voice (offstage soprano who practices octave-long scales).

STUDIO <-> COURTYARD

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Jeff as dreaming metonymy (subject)

courtyard

Jeff as dreaming metonymy (object)

A<br>
<sup>W</sup>
broken camera

iced camera peers out the window and slow-pans the urban courtyard. We are in an expository space where Jeff will observe the action on the outside, in the courtyard and apartments opposite, using their natural “fourth walls” just as a film set constructs three-walled rooms leaving space open for cameras and lights. The wall of residences constitutes a kind of crossword puzzle; each resident seems to lack something, a husband, a wife, a boyfriend, a lucky break, children; and the sculptress is partly deaf. Only the newly-weds to the left of Jeff’s window seem content; they close their shades for privacy but this is a sign that they have everything they need on the inside.

The lively courtyard has an element of death (Ad), theThorwald apartment. Jeff as disabled (dead?) endures the stage “between the two deaths” as a disembodied gaze, a vengeful eye that employs optical interventions to the anthology of Dead of Night, Beyond the High Himalayas by Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, William O. Douglas, who had written famous decisions on questions of privacy. As in the anthology of *Dead of Night*, we never know whether to count or not to count this final container, which like the four sides of a drawing could be a diagram or just the sides of the page: Möbius!

**Room Chiaroscuro.** At the film’s opening, the camera focuses on Jefferies’ three-part rear window; the comparison to a film screen is clear. The curtains open in sequence and the camera peers out the window and slow-pan the urban courtyard. We are in an expository space where Jeff will observe the action on the outside, in the courtyard and apartments opposite, using their natural “fourth walls” just as a film set constructs three-walled rooms leaving space open for cameras and lights. The wall of residences constitutes a kind of crossword puzzle; each resident seems to lack something, a husband, a wife, a boyfriend, a lucky break, children; and the sculptress is partly deaf. Only the newly-weds to the left of Jeff’s window seem content; they close their shades for privacy but this is a sign that they have everything they need on the inside.

If the studio is akin to the “frontal chiaroscuro” that shows a frame inside a frame, the courtyard’s spherical quality allows for a type-2 “orthogonal chiaroscuro.” Rotation is implied in the three buildings that form the courtyard opposite Jeff’s building. With a natural extimité in this commonplace urban form, Hitchcock sets up a social extimité in the case of the odd couple, the Thorwalds. Jeff watches Anna Thorwald badger her husband. She’s suspicious of his phone calls to long-distance numbers. After a night of fitful sleep, she’s mysteriously disappeared. Jeff suspects foul play, and the inside of the murder becomes a matter of external observation. The inside of Thorwald’s jewelry display case (he’s a traveling salesman), the inside of a clothes trunk, the inside of Anna’s purse — all these interiors become parts of a web of clues that Jeff and Lisa attempt to assemble.

Chiaroscuro is not just a visual technique that determines the set construction and unfolding of the story, it’s a model for how the film works. The film divides into two parts, each controlled by its relevant form of chiaroscuro. The frame-within-the-frame of Chiaroscuro, holds until the point where Thorwald realizes how he has been discovered. Eluding the police, he locates Jeff, who has been a gaze from Thorwald’s point of view. Thorwald then rotates the logic of the film by walking around the block into Jeff’s building, entering, and attacking Jeff. Jeff, whose nickname duplicates his last name, a kind of Jefferies2, is in his singularity a √-1, because of his original metonymic singularity. As an action photographer, he “should not be at home.” He is now in the position of the Homeric Nobody, Odysseus, who must blind the cyclops and still buy for the time to escape. His -i (no put intended) status is maintained by shooting off flashbulbs from his camera. He runs out of time, and Thorwald shoves him out his window, an extreme version of the “reverse angle shot.”

When we see chiaroscuro, at work, we are reminded of the metonymical opening of the film: a tracking close-up shot across a table with photographs and Jeff’s damaged camera. This discarded memory couples with the slow pan to Jeff’s cast, upon which is written “Here lie the bones of L. B. Jefferies, R.I.P.” The cast, a substitute tombstone, a case of antinomias (“Stalin”) renaming Jefferies after his accident, <>. Did Jeff survive the crash? Is Lisa real or a dream maintained by the momentum of life that rushed back to his apartment? Why doesn’t he marry Lisa? Is it because she’s not fit for jungle life or because he is in fact dead? Is Stella a therapist or is she an undertaker preparing a body? This seems to be a long-shot speculation, not worth the trouble because we enjoy the suspense of the mystery story and need a more ordinary set of assumptions. But the clues are set within the traditions of the death drive and the theme of “between the two deaths,” metonymies — holes in front — joined with the metonymy of the end, his fall out the window. Finnegan fallsagain, and the hole in back is a simulated marriage with Lisa, reading a book-within-a-book (literally!), a fashion magazine concealed by the window; the comparison to a film screen is clear. The curtains open in sequence and the camera peers out the window and slow-pan the urban courtyard. We are in an expository space where Jeff will observe the action on the outside, in the courtyard and apartments opposite, using their natural “fourth walls” just as a film set constructs three-walled rooms leaving space open for cameras and lights. The wall of residences constitutes a kind of crossword puzzle; each resident seems to lack something, a husband, a wife, a boyfriend, a lucky break, children; and the sculptress is partly deaf. Only the newly-weds to the left of Jeff’s window seem content; they close their shades for privacy but this is a sign that they have everything they need on the inside.

The main story proceeds in a linear way from Jeff’s crash, through a series of optical interventions leading to Lisa’s invasion of Thorwald’s apartment. Discovery of the ring initiates the “orthogonal chiaroscuro” and Thorwald’s revenge.
The three-paneled window is a coupling of the visual screen and the standard three-part film narrative (with two plot points). The single set film intensifies the relation of the film to the dream and the dream to the death narrative, whether or not we take seriously the possibility that Jeff has actually died in the accident depicted at the beginning of the film.

Lisa becomes Jeff's surrogate once she sees that Thorwald is tying up a large trunk. Jeff, far from being the embodiment of the Foucauldian male gaze, is feminized when he convinces Lisa and Stella about Thorwald's guilt. Jeff's immobility turns him into a visual mechanism, complete with a dolly, his wheelchair. In the discourse of analysis, he is in the position of TRUTH, and alternates from a position as observer to that of expositor.

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The Discourse of Analysis. Probably more than any other film, Rear Window depends on its status as a form of discourse. The subject, a candidate for the genre of narrative known as the death narrative, oscillates from the position of a viewer (other) to that of a master of exposition, where the set of signifiers, $S_2$, occupies the position of truth. This set can be regarded as the collection of clues that add up to Thorwald's guilt, the composition of apartments and their occupants that are reconciled at the end, or the final, second "death" of Jeff, as he enters into a convalescence with two broken legs and Lisa as a permanent companion. The master signifier of the circular process is the wedding ring, the counterpart to the circular lens of Jeff's surveillance and signifier of the $\sqrt{-1}$ of the name. A wedding ring without a wife is equivalent to Jeff's mirror-name, Jeff(ery) Jefferies. "Jeff" repeats the name of the father, i.e. the child is "nobody new."