Montage is usually conceived as a way of producing from fragments of the real—pieces of film, discontinuous individual shots—an effect of "cinematic space," i.e., a specific cinematic reality. That is to say, it is universally acknowledged that "cinematic space" is never a simple repetition or imitation of external, "effective" reality, but an effect of montage. What is often overlooked, however, is the way this transformation of fragments of the real into cinematic reality produces, through a kind of structural necessity, a certain leftover, a surplus that is radically heterogeneous to cinematic reality but nonetheless implied by it, part of it. That this surplus of the real is, in the last resort, precisely the gaze qua object, is best exemplified by the work of Hitchcock.

We have already pointed out that the fundamental constituent of the Hitchcockian universe is the so-called "spot": the stain upon which reality revolves, passes over into the real, the mysterious detail that "sticks out," that does not "fit" into the symbolic network of reality and that, as such, indicates that "something is amiss." The fact that this spot ultimately coincides with the threatening gaze of the other is confirmed in an almost too obvious way by the famous tennis court scene from *Strangers on a Train*, in which Guy watches the crowd watching the game. The camera first gives us a long shot of the crowd; all heads turn alternately left and right, following the path of the ball, all except one, which stares with a fixed gaze into the camera, i.e., at Guy. The camera then quickly approaches this motionless head. It is Bruno, linked to Guy by a murderous pact. Here we have in pure, distilled form the stiff, motionless gaze, sticking out like a strange body and thus disturbing the harmony of the image by introducing a threatening dimension.

The function of the famous Hitchcockian "tracking shot" is precisely to produce a spot: in the tracking shot, the camera moves from an establishing shot to a close-up of a detail that remains a blurred spot, the true form of which is accessible only to an anamorphic "view from aside." The shot slowly isolates from its surroundings the element that cannot be integrated into the symbolic reality, that must remain a strange body if the depicted reality is to retain its consistency. But what interests us here is the fact that under certain conditions, montage does intervene in the tracking shot, i.e., the continuous approach of the camera is interrupted by cuts.
What, more precisely, are these conditions? Briefly, the tracking shot must be interrupted when it is "subjective," when the camera shows us the subjective view of a person approaching the object-spot. That is to say, whenever, in a Hitchcock film, a hero, a person around whom the scene is structured, approaches an object, a thing, another person, anything that can become "uncanny" (unheimlich) in the Freudian sense, Hitchcock as a rule alternates the "objective" shot of this person in motion, his/her approach toward the uncanny Thing, with a subjective shot of what this person sees, i.e., with a subjective view of the Thing. This is, so to speak, the elementary procedure, the zero degree of Hitchcockian montage.

Let us take a few examples. When, toward the end of Psycho, Lilah climbs up the rise to the mysterious old house, the presumed home of "Norman's mother," Hitchcock alternates the objective shot of Lilah climbing with her subjective view of the old house. He does the same in The Birds, in the famous scene analyzed in detail by Raymond Bellour, when Melanie, after crossing the bay in a small rented boat, approaches the house where Mitch's mother and sister live. Again, he alternates an objective shot of the uneasy Melanie, aware of intruding on the privacy of a home, with her subjective view of the mysteriously silent house. Of innumerable other examples, let us mention merely a short, trivial scene between Marion and a car dealer in Psycho. Here, Hitchcock uses his montage procedure several times (when Marion approaches the car dealer; when, toward the end of the scene, a policeman approaches who has already stopped her on the highway the same morning, etc.). By means of this purely formal procedure, an entirely trivial, everyday incident is given an uneasy, threatening dimension that cannot be sufficiently explained by its diegetic contents (i.e., by the fact that Marion is buying a new car with stolen money and thus fears exposure). Hitchcockian montage elevates an everyday, trivial object into a sublime Thing. By purely formal manipulation, it succeeds in bestowing on an ordinary object the aura of anxiety and uneasiness.

In Hitchcockian montage, two kinds of shots are thus permitted and two forbidden. Permitted are the objective shot of the person approaching a Thing and the subjective shot presenting the Thing as the person sees it. Forbidden are the objective shot of the Thing, of the "uncanny" object, and—above all—the subjective shot of the approaching person from the perspective of the "uncanny" object itself. Let us refer again to the above-mentioned scene from Psycho depicting Lilah approaching the house on the top of the hill. It is crucial that Hitchcock shows the threatening Thing (the house) exclusively from the point of view of Lilah. If he were to have added a "neutral" objective shot of the house, the whole mysterious effect would have been lost. We (the spectators) would have to endure a radical desublimation;
we would suddenly become aware that there is nothing "uncanny" in the house as such, that the house is—like the "black house" in the Patricia Highsmith short story—just an ordinary old house. The effect of uneasiness would be radically "psychologized"; we would say to ourselves, "This is just an ordinary house; all the mystery and anxiety attached to it are just an effect of the heroine's psychic turmoil!"

The effect of "uncanniness" would also be lost if Hitchcock had immediately added a shot "subjectifying" the Thing, i.e., a subjective shot from inside the house. Let us imagine that as Lilah approached the house, there had been a trembling shot showing Lilah through the curtains of the house window, accompanied by the sound of hollow breathing, thus indicating that somebody was watching her from inside the house. Such a procedure (used regularly in standard thrillers) would, of course, intensify the strain. We would say to ourselves, "This is terrible! There is somebody in the house (Norman's mother?) watching Lilah; she is in mortal danger without knowing it!" But such a subjectification would again suspend the status of the gaze qua object, reducing it to the subjective point of view of another diegetic personality. Sergei Eisenstein himself once risked such a direct subjectification, in a scene from The Old and the New, a film that celebrated the successes of the collectivization of Soviet agriculture in the late '20s. It is a somewhat Lysenkoist scene demonstrating the way nature finds pleasure in subordinating itself to the new rules of collective farming, the way even cows and bulls mate more ardently once they are included in kolkhozes. In a quick tracking shot, the camera approaches a cow from behind, and in the next shot it becomes clear that this view of the camera was the view of a bull mounting a cow. Needless to say, the effect of this scene is so obscenely vulgar that it is almost nauseating. What we have here is a kind of Stalinist pornography.

It would be wiser, then, to turn away from this Stalinist obscenity to the Hollywood decency of Hitchcock. Let us return to the scene from Psycho in which Lilah approaches the house where "Norman's mother" presumably lives. In what does its "uncanny" dimension consist? Could we not best describe the effect of this scene by paraphrasing the words of Lacan: in a way, it is already the house that gazes at Lilah? Lilah sees the house, but nonetheless she cannot see it at the point from which it gazes back at her. Here the situation is the same as that which Lacan recollects from his youth and reports in Seminar XI: as a student on holiday, he joined a fishing expedition. Among the fishermen on the boat, there was a certain Petit-Jean who, pointing out an empty sardine can glittering in the sun, asked Lacan: "You see the can? Do you see it? Well, it doesn't see you!" Lacan's comment: "If what Petit-Jean said to me, namely that the can did not see me, had any meaning, it was because in a sense, it was looking at me, all the same." It was looking at him because, as Lacan explains,
using a key notion of the Hitchcockian universe, "I functioned somewhat like a spot in the picture." Among these uneducated fishermen earning their living with great difficulty, he was effectively out of place, "the man who knew too much."

The Death Drive

The examples we have analyzed thus far were purposely elementary; let us conclude then with an analysis of a scene in which the Hitchcockian montage is part of a more complex whole. The scene from Sabotage in which Sylvia Sidney kills Oscar Homolka. The two characters are dining together at home; Sylvia is still in a state of shock, having learned recently that Oscar, her husband, is a "saboteur" guilty of the death of her younger brother who was blown up by a bomb on a bus. When Sylvia brings the vegetable platter to the table, the knife on the platter acts as a magnet. It is almost as if her hand, against her will, were compelled to grab it, yet she cannot resolve herself finally to do so. Oscar, who up till now has pursued banal, everyday table conversation, perceives that she is spellbound by the knife and what this augurs for him. He stands up and walks round the table toward her. When they are face to face, he reaches for the knife but, unable to complete the gesture, lets her grab it. The camera then moves in closer, showing only their faces and shoulders, so that it is not clear what is happening with their hands. Suddenly Oscar utters a short cry and falls down, without our knowing whether she stabbed him or he, in a suicidal gesture, impaled himself on the blade.

The first thing that deserves notice is the way the act of murder results from the encounter of two thwarted threatening gestures. Both Sylvia's move forward with the knife and Oscar's move toward it correspond to the Lacanian definition of the threatening gesture: it is not an interrupted gesture, i.e., a gesture that is intended to be carried out, to be completed, but is thwarted by an external obstacle. It is, on the contrary, something that was already begun in order not to be accomplished, not to be brought to its conclusion. The very structure of the threatening gesture is thus that of a theatrical, hysterical act, a split, self-hindered gesture: a gesture that cannot be accomplished not because of some external obstacle but because it is in itself the expression of a contradictory, self-conflicting desire—in this case, Sylvia's desire to stab Oscar and at the same time the prohibition that blocks the realization of this desire. Oscar's move (when, after becoming aware of her intention, he stands up and comes forward to meet her) is again contradictory, split into his "self-preserving" desire to snatch the knife from her and master her, and his "masochistic" desire to offer himself to the stab of the knife, a desire conditioned by his morbid feeling of guilt. The successful act (the stabbing of Oscar) results thus from the encounter of
3. We must be attentive to the diversity of the ways this motif of the "uncanny" detail is at work in Hitchcock's films. Note just five of its variations:

- **Rope**: here, we have the spot first (the traumatic act of murder) and then the idyllic everyday situation (the party) constructed to conceal it.
- **The Man Who Knew Too Much**: in a short scene in which the hero (James Stewart) makes his way to the taxidermist Ambrose Chappell, the street the hero traverses is depicted as charged with a sinister atmosphere; but in fact things are precisely what they seem to be (the street is just an ordinary suburban London street, etc.), so that the only "stain" in the picture is the hero himself, his suspicious gaze that sees threats everywhere.
- **The Trouble with Harry**: a "stain" (a body) smears the idyllic Vermont countryside, but instead of provoking traumatic reactions, people who stumble upon it merely treat it as a minor inconvenience and pursue their daily affairs.
- **Shadow of a Doubt**: the "stain" here is uncle Charlie, the film's central character, a pathological murderer who rejoins his sister's family in a small American town. In the eyes of the townsfolk, he is a friendly, rich benefactor; it is only his niece Charlie who "knows too much" and sees him as he is—why? The answer is found in the identity of their names: the two of them constitute two parts of the same personality (like Marion and Norman in *Psycho*, where the identity is indicated by the fact that the two names reflect each other in an inverted form).
- And finally **The Birds**, where—in what is surely Hitchcock's final irony—the "unnatural" element that disturbs everyday life is the birds, i.e., *nature itself*.

7. The anal level is the locus of metaphor—"one object for another, give the faces in place of the phallus" (Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, p. 104).
8. See note 23 to chapter 2, above.
9. This scene, creating as it does a phantasmatic effect, also illustrates the thesis that the subject is not necessarily inscribed in the phantasmatic scene as observer, but can also be one of the objects observed. The birds' subjective view of the town creates a menacing effect, even though our view—the camera's view—is that of the birds and not that of their prey, because we are inscribed in the scene as inhabitants of the town, i.e., we identify with the menaced inhabitants.
14. Here it is crucial to grasp the logic of the connection between the woman's perspective and the figure of the resigned, impotent Master. Lacan's answer to Freud's famous question "Was will das Weib? What does the (hysterical) woman want?" is: *a Master, but one whom she could dominate*. The perfect figuration of this hysterical fantasy is Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* where, at the end of the novel, the heroine is happily married to the blinded, helpless fatherlike figure (*Rebecca*, of course, belongs to the same tradition).
17. It is against the background of this problem that we could perhaps locate the lesson to be drawn from Stanley Cavell's *Pursuits of Happiness: The Hollywood Comedies of Remarriage* (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1981), namely a version of the Hegelian theory of repetition in history: the only proper marriage is the second one. First we marry the other qua our narcissistic complement; it is only when his/her delusive charm fades that we can engage in marriage as an attachment to the other beyond his/her imaginary properties.