

To Be or Not to Be (1942) Lubitsch

P Michell, 2014

Introduction:

"Imagine if a comedy about al-Qaeda terrorists attacking the World Trade Center had gone into production in the summer of 2001 and been released shortly after 9/11. That would be the modern day equivalent of Lubitsch shooting *To Be or Not to Be* in Hollywood in late 1941 for a premiere of March 6, 1942."

(source – Deep Focus Review. See below)

A sophisticated comedy the likes of which and sadly, the ability to make is now a rarity and an example of the greatest of American Cinema.

From 'Rotten Tomatoes' - "A complex and timely satire with as much darkness as slapstick, it delicately balances humor and ethics."

Due to its subject matter it was a little too dark matter on release. Coupled with the death of Carol Lombard. Making fun of Nazis was not palatable!

Perfect example where writing, music, cinematography, direction and acting are combined into a flawless unit. Lubitsch says that "there are a thousand ways to point a camera, but really only one."

Tribute by Mel Brooks (producer and actor) in 1983. Worth seeing that too. Has musical numbers and gay references.

Creative Talent:

Screen play by Edwin Justus Mayer; from an original story by Ernst Lubitsch and Melchior Lengyel
produced and directed by Ernst Lubitsch

presented by Alexander Korda

Maria Tura Carole Lombard

Joseph Tura Jack Benny

Lieut. Stanislav Sobinski Robert Stack

Greenberg Felix Bressart

Rawitch Lionel Atwill

Professor Siletsky Stanley Ridges

Colonel Ehrhardt Sig Rumann

Bronski Tom Dugan

Producer Dobosh Charles Halton

Actor-Adjutant George Lynn

Captain Schultz Henry Victor

Anna Maude Eburne

Makeup Man Armand Wright

Stage Manager Erno Verebes

General Armstrong Halliwell Hobbes

Major Cunningham Miles Mander

Summary:

During the war Lubitsch directed perhaps his most beloved comedy--controversial to say the least, dark in a tongue-in-cheek sort of way--but certainly a razor-sharp tour de force in smart, precise dialog, staging and story. Produced by his own company, Romaine Film Corp. It was a biting satire of Nazi tyranny that also poked fun at Lubitsch's own theater roots with the problems and bickering--but also the triumph--of a somewhat raggedy acting troupe in Warsaw during the Nazi occupation. [Jack Benny](#)'s perfect deadpan humor worked well with the zany vivaciousness of [Carole Lombard](#), and a cast of veteran character actors from both Hollywood and Lubitsch's native Germany provided all the chemistry needed to make this a classic comedy, as well as a fierce statement against the perpetrators of war. The most poignant scene was profoundly so, with [Felix Bressart](#)--another of Reinhardt's students--as the only Jewish bit player in the company. His supreme hope is a chance to someday play Shylock. He gets his chance as part of a ruse in front of [Adolf Hitler](#)'s SS bodyguards. The famous soliloquy was a bold declaration to the world of the Axis' brutal inhumanity to man, as in its treatment of and plans for the Jewry of Europe.

Producer / Director - **Ernst Lubitsch** (1892 – 1947)
Joined Max Reinhardt theatre company in 1911.

Monumental influence on cinema. 76 films.

From Ernst Lubitsch's experiences in Sophien Gymnasium (high school) theater, he decided to leave school at the age of 16 and pursue a career on the stage. He had to compromise with his father and keep the account books for the family tailor business while he acted in cabarets and music halls at night. In 1911 he joined the Deutsches Theater of famous director/producer/impresario [Max Reinhardt](#), and was able to move up to leading acting roles in a short time. He took an extra job as a handyman while learning silent film acting at Berlin's Bioscope film studios. The next year he launched his own film career by appearing in a series of comedies showcasing traditional ethnic Jewish slice-of-life fare. Finding great success in these character roles, Lubitsch turned to broader comedy, then beginning in 1914 started writing and directing his own films.

His breakthrough film came in 1918 with [Die Augen der Mumie Ma](#) (1918) ("The Eyes of the Mummy"), a tragedy starring future Hollywood star [Pola Negri](#). Also that year he made [Carmen](#) (1918), again with Negri, a film that was commercially successful on the international level. His work already showed his genius for catching the eye as well as the ear in not only comedy but historical drama. The year 1919 found Lubitsch directing seven films, the two standouts being his lavish [Madame DuBarry](#) (1919) with two of his favorite actors--Negri (yet again) and [Emil Jannings](#). His other standout was the witty parody of the American upper crust, [My Lady Margarine](#) (1919) ("The Oyster Princess"). This film was a perfect example of what became known as the Lubitsch style, or the "Lubitsch Touch", as it became known--sophisticated humor combined with inspired staging that economically presented a visual synopsis of storyline, scenes and characters.

His success in Europe brought him to the shores of America to promote [The Loves of Pharaoh](#) (1922) ("The Loves of Pharaoh") and he became acquainted with the thriving US film industry. He soon returned to Europe, but came back to the US for good to direct new friend and influential star [Mary Pickford](#) in his first American hit, [Rosita](#) (1923). [The Marriage Circle](#) (1924) began Lubitsch's unprecedented run of sophisticated films that mirrored the American scene (though always relocated to foreign or imaginary lands) and all its skewed panorama of the human condition. There was a smooth transition between his silent films for Warner Bros. and the sound movies--usually at Paramount--now embellished with the flow of speech of Hollywood's greats lending personal nuances to continually heighten the popularity at the box office and the fame of Lubitsch's first-rate versatility in crafting a smart film. There was a mix of pioneering musical films and some drama also through the 1930s. One of those films resulted in Paramount making him its production chief in 1935, so he could produce his own films and supervise production of others. In 1938 he signed a three-year contract with Twentieth Century-Fox.

Certainly two of his most beloved films near the end of his career dealt with the political landscape of the World War II era. He moved to MGM, where he directed [Greta Garbo](#) and [Melvyn Douglas](#) in [Ninotchka](#) (1939), a fast-paced comedy of "decadent" Westerners meeting Soviet "comrades" who were seeking more of life than the mother country could--or would--offer. During the war he directed perhaps his most beloved comedy--controversial to say the least, dark in a tongue-in-cheek sort of way--but certainly a razor-sharp tour de force in smart, precise dialog, staging and story: [To Be or Not to Be](#) (1942), produced by his own company, Romaine Film Corp.

Trivia:

Discovered actress/singer [Jeanette MacDonald](#) in New York (1929).

Gave the film industry "The Lubitsch Touch" due to his sophisticated wit and style.

Brought together [Maurice Chevalier](#) and [Jeanette MacDonald](#), one of Hollywood's greatest screen pairings.

Was known for always playing practical jokes on his film sets.

The term "MOS" is used, on a slate, when a scene is filmed without sync sound (or any sound). This directive is widely thought to be a homage to Lubitsch who would say, in his thick Berlin accent, that he wished to shoot some footage "mitout sound." "Mit" means "with" in German...ergo...without sound..."mitout sound"- "M-O-S."

Quotes:

I let the audience use their imaginations. Can I help it if they misconstrue my suggestions?

I've been to Paris, France, and I've been to Paris, Paramount ... Paris Paramount is better.

Nobody should try to play comedy unless they have a circus going on inside.

Any good movie is filled with secrets. If a director doesn't leave anything unsaid, it's a lousy picture. If a picture's unsaid, it's a lousy picture. If a picture is good, it's mysterious, with things unsaid.

Practical Joke on Alexander Korda (see below for mini biog):

In Hollywood Lubitsch and writer friend Heinrich Franekel came upon Korda's house. Knocking, they found the door open and nobody home. Mischievously Lubitsch decided to fake a burglary. Ashtrays, books, anything movable was stuffed under the couch. The carpet was yanked up and furniture shoved around after which Lubitsch and Fraenkel quickly left.

When they arrived back at Lubitsch's house, they enlisted an actress to call Korda, who had arrived home by then. Pretending to be a reporter from the Los Angeles Times, she told Korda that a burglary had just been reported at that address. An appalled Korda confirmed that, yes, he had been robbed. The reporter asked him for a recapitulation of his careers, and a list of things that had been stolen.

Five minutes later, another Lubitsch friend called, and then another, each one pretending to be a reporter, each asking exactly the same questions: his previous careers, how he liked Hollywood, whether American women were prettier than European women, and, by the way, what had been stolen?

By the third call Korda's dramatic imagination had kicked in, and was reporting that his wife's pearl necklace had been stolen, even though Lubitsch and Fraenkel had never come near it. Lubitsch snatched the telephone, barked "Man just have a peep under the sofa," in rough Berlin slang and hung up.

From ... Ernst Lubitsch: Laughter in Paradise by Scott Eyman (p 289/90)

Edward Justus Mayer (1896-1960). American. – Original Story/ screenplay (actually with Lubitsch) screenplay for 49 films.

Melchior Lengyel (1880-1974). Hungarian. Prolific writer and journalist. Great friends with Lubitsch. He produced Eugene O'Neil plays in Germany. Moved to England in 1933, then followed Lubitsch to Hollywood in 1935. Apart from writing *Ninotchka* – original story & screenplay (1939) also co-directed with George Cukor *Antonia* (1935). Wrote libretto for Bartok's *Miraculous Mandarin* – premiered in Cologne 1926. Originally a pantomime ballet – became popular as a concert suite using about 2/3 of the score

Rudolph Mate – cinematographer – (1898-1964). Polish. One of the most prestigious of Hollywood cinematographers – worked with Dreyer, Pommer, Alexander Korda. Became principal for Dreyer's *Passion of Joan of Arc* (1928). Moved to Hollywood in 1935. 72 films.

Alexander Korda (1893-1956)

Older brother of [Vincent Korda](#) and [Zoltan Korda](#).

One of a large group of Hungarian refugees who found refuge in England in the 1930s, Sir [Alexander Korda](#) was the first British film producer to receive a knighthood. He was a major, if controversial, figure and acted as a guiding force behind the British film industry of the 1930s and continued to influence British films until his death in 1956. He learned his trade by working in studios in Austria, Germany and America and was a crafty and flamboyant businessman. He started his production company, [London Films](#), in 1933 and one of its first films [The Private Life of Henry VIII](#). (1933), received an Oscar nomination as best picture and won the Best Actor Oscar for its star, [Charles Laughton](#). Helped by his brothers [Zoltan Korda](#) (director) and [Vincent Korda](#) (art director) and other expatriate Hungarians, London Films produced some of Britain's finest films (even if they weren't all commercial successes). Korda's willingness to experiment and be daring allowed the flowering of such talents as [Michael Powell](#) and [Emeric Pressburger](#) and gave early breaks to people such as [Laurence Olivier](#), [David Lean](#) and [Carol Reed](#). Korda sold his library to television in the 1950s, thus allowing London Films' famous logo of Big Ben to become familiar to a new generation of film enthusiasts.

Quotes:

Anyone who gets a raw deal in a film studio is no more deserving of pity than someone who gets beaten up in a brothel. A gentleman has no business in either place.

It's not enough to be Hungarian; you must have talent too.

The art of filmmaking is to come to the brink of bankruptcy and stare it in the face.

Werner R Heymann – composer – 113 films!

Werner Richard Heyman was active as a classical composer in Berlin from 1912. By the end of the decade, he also wrote songs for cabaret and served as musical director for [Max Reinhardt](#) from 1918 to 1919. In films with Ufa from 1923, he initially worked as assistant to the head of the music department [Erno Rapee](#), before replacing the latter in 1926. Heyman remained under contract until 1933 as musical director and composer, scoring several classic films for [F.W. Murnau](#) and [Fritz Lang](#). He also established himself as among the foremost writers of songs for film operetta.

Forced to flee from Nazi persecution because of his Jewish background, he made his way to Hollywood via Paris and London. There, he was noted particularly for scoring two of [Ernst Lubitsch](#)'s best films: [Ninotchka](#) (1939) and [To Be or Not to Be](#) (1942). Heyman returned to Germany in 1951, where he resumed writing film

scores and songs for the theatre until his death in 1961.

Trivia :

Chocolat (2000) uses some of Heymann's score.

Miklos Rosza (Ben Hur, Spellbound, Lost Weekend, etc) also added some (uncredited) music.

Carol Lombard (1908-1942):

Miriam Hopkins was to star as a comeback but Jack Benny and her did not get on. Lombard offered and as a result (the film was made at Untied Artists)... she could say she worked for every studio in Hollywood.

Original name – Jane Peters. Famous for her zany, energetic roles in screwball comedies of the 1930s. Highest paid star in 1930s.

Despite death in a plane crash (with her mother) after making this film Lombard was in 79 films including Nothing Sacred (1937) and My Man Godfrey (1936).

Married to William Powell then Clark Gable.

Trivia:

A 1926 auto accident badly cut her face. Advanced plastic surgery and adroit use of make-up covered the scars. However, at the time the belief was that use of anesthetic during the operation would leave worse scars, so she endured the reconstructive surgery without an anesthetic.

She was offered the lead role in a proposed melodrama, "Smiler with a Knife," to be directed by a newcomer at RKO named [Orson Welles](#). She turned it down, opting to return to screwball comedy in [Mr. & Mrs. Smith](#) (1941). Welles refused to make Smiler without her; instead, he began work on [Citizen Kane](#) (1941).

Gable and Lombard first met in late 1924 while working as extras on the set of [Ben-Hur: A Tale of the Christ](#) (1925). They would make three films together as extras, Ben-Hur, [The Johnstown Flood](#) (1926) and [The Plastic Age](#) (1925) and star together in [No Man of Her Own](#) (1932), but not become romantically attached until 1936.

Quote:

I think marriage is dangerous. The idea of two people trying to possess each other is wrong. I don't think the flare of love lasts. Your mind rather than your emotions must answer for the success of matrimony. It must be friendship -- a calm companionship which can last through the years.

Jack Benny (1894-1974)

Famous for his violin antics on his very popular TV show.

Most people remember him from TV work (1950-1965) which had morphed from his various radio programs (1932-1955) . However he was quite a movie star in 1930s and 1940s movies.

The son of a saloonkeeper, Jack Benny (born Benny Kubelsky) began to study the violin at the age six, and his "ineptness" at it later become his trademark (in reality, he was a very accomplished player). When given the opportunity to play in live theatre professionally, Benny quit school and joined vaudeville. In the same theatre that Benny was working with were the very young [The Marx Brothers](#). Their mother, [Minnie Marx](#), wanted Benny to go on the road with them. However, this plan was foiled by his parents who would not let their 17-year-old son on the road.

Felix Bressart. Sadly died in 1949. Began in US in *Ninotchka* (1939). films. Plays the Jewish actor who wants to play Shylock with the speech. Unforgettable character. During his film careers trained as a doctor and practiced medicine as well as his cinema career! 66 films.

Sig Ruman – Col Ehrhardt – ‘Concentration Camp Ehrhardt’. Was the famous Gottlieb (NYC Opera owner) in *Marx Bros Night at the Opera* (1935). Played Sgt Schulz in *Stalag 17* (1953) – upon which *Sgt Schlutz of Hogan’s Heroes* is based. *Ma and Pa Kettle on Vacation* (1953). Prolific worker - 128 films.

Tom Dugan – famously plays Hitler. Irish actor. 273 films!

The film has marvellous witty dialogue such as:

Josef Tura: [*disguised as Colonel Ehrhardt*] I can't tell you how delighted we are to have you here.

Professor Alexander Siletsky: May I say, my dear Colonel, that it's good to breathe the air of the Gestapo again. You know, you're quite famous in London, Colonel. They call you Concentration Camp Ehrhardt.

Josef Tura: Ha ha. Yes, yes... we do the concentrating and the Poles do the camping.

also

Josef Tura: [*disguised as Professor Siletsky - speaking about Maria Tura*] Her husband is that great, great Polish actor, Josef Tura. You've probably heard of him.

Colonel Ehrhardt: Oh, yes. As a matter of fact I saw him on the stage when I was in Warsaw once before the war.

Josef Tura: Really?

Colonel Ehrhardt: What he did to Shakespeare we are doing now to Poland.

Also

(a man walks out whilst he's doing is ‘Shakespeare Scenes’.

Josef Tura: Someone walked out on me. Tell me, Maria, am I losing my grip?

Maria Tura: Oh, of course not, darling. I'm so sorry.

Josef Tura: But he walked out on me.

Maria Tura: Maybe he didn't feel well. Maybe he had to leave. Maybe he had a sudden heart attack.

Josef Tura: I hope so.

Maria Tura: If he stayed he might have died.

Josef Tura: Maybe he's dead already! Oh, darling, you're so comforting.

Etc ...

Further Reading:

Lubistch's influences on cinema.

<http://sensesofcinema.com/2012/feature-articles/ernst-lubitsch-and-nancy-meyers-a-study-on-movie-love-in-the-classic-and-post-modernist-traditions/>

Web site on Lubtisch.

<http://www.lubitsch.com/index.html>

Reviews:

One of the great romantic/satirical comedies of all time

20 November 2005 | by [Michael Open](#)

There is a famous review of this film by the late Sunday Times critic, Dilys Powell which begins 'Is the joke funny?'... what Miss Powell was getting at was that, given the horror of the Holocaust, it is appropriate to laugh at the Nazis. The answer is, ultimately, irrelevant to the viewing of this modest masterpiece.

Lubitsch was, by this time, coming to the end of an exquisite career that defined the nature of sophistication in 'light' cinema. 'To Be or Not To Be' skips lightly over all of the minefield of a subject like this and it is difficult or impossible to think of any other filmmaker who might have managed it (if you look at Mel Brooks' limp remake, you can see why).

In 1996, I presented a massive season of 'the greatest' films in Belfast for the centenary of cinema - 250 titles in 9 months. Of all of them, this was the film which got the greatest ovation - about 5 minutes with a nearly full house standing and applauding! They may have applauded for many reasons, but here are certainly some of them...

The very complicated narrative is presented virtually flawlessly and the comedy is never allowed to hold up the narrative. The principle actors - Carole Lombard (breathtakingly beautiful) and Jack Benny in particular, but many of the supporting cast as well - throw themselves into the affair with a gusto that is completely infectious. Apart from the satirical aspect of the story and the way in which Hitler and the Nazis are mercilessly ridiculed for their authoritarianism and the fear which is their only motivator, the film pokes gentle fun at the vanity of actors in a warm and happy manner. Finally, and most important, is the notion of farce. Farce rarely works in the cinema, but here it does, and in the grand manner - just look at how many times the situation regarding Professor Siletsky changes profoundly during the film - it is dizzying - yet the characters manage to come up with (often self-defeating or inappropriate) schemes on every occasion.

This is a wonderful work that, I have no hesitation in saying, is absolutely vital for anyone who wants to really understand the glory of the cinema. But to answer Dilys Powell's question... yes, the joke is deliriously funny.

To Be or Not to Be

BY [ED GONZALEZ](#) ON FEBRUARY 23, 2005

I imagine that it's impossible to fully understand the critical and public lambasting Ernst Lubitsch's *To Be or Not to Be* received after its release unless you lived

through WWII. Movies were still relatively new back then and audiences were unaccustomed to them sorting through the political rubble of people's lives, especially in ways that fashioned comedy out of seemingly unfathomable tragedy. More than 60 years later, *To Be or Not to Be* is considered one of the greatest comedies in the history of cinema (compare Bosley Crowther's review of the film in *The New York Times* with Charles Taylor's *Salon* piece, published more than a half century later, to see how the tide has changed), poetic justice that befits the title of the film, a reference to a famous line from Shakespeare's *Hamlet* that takes on multi-layered levels of existential meaning throughout the film.

Perhaps unjustly, *To Be or Not to Be*'s wit continues to be overshadowed by its touchy plot, which concerns a theatrical troupe in Warsaw attempting to outwit the Nazis during the war. Despite its masterful opening sequence, about the confusion an actor dressed as Adolf Hitler causes a small Polish community, the film takes a while to kick into high gear. Save for the setup of the crucial "to be or not to be" motif and a memorable joke here and there (Jack Benny's Joseph Tura telling the Jewy Mr. Greenberg "How dare you call me a ham?" and Carol Lombard's Maria Tura complimenting Robert Stack's flyboy for his ability to "drop three tons of dynamite in two minutes"), I never remembered the film being so uneven. *To Be or Not to Be*'s second half, though, is perfect, for lack of a better word—a deft mix of acute social and political observation in the guise of an elaborate stand-up routine.

There is a joke about men buying big cars in order to make up for their shortcomings—a similar unconscious ritual of shame and self-validation seems to motivate the constant barrage of "Heil, Hitler!" salutes throughout *To Be or Not to Be*. It's shocking to think that people at one time actually misconstrued the film's humor as anti-Polish considering its obvious ridicule of the spectacle of Hitler's aestheticized political agenda. *To Be or Not to Be* is largely about the interplay between art and reality and it uses modes of performance to challenge the stiffness and authority of a preposterous political regime. That the film's comedy is as rigorous as the behavior of the Nazis in the film only makes sense—like they say, you have to fight fire with fire, or in this case, artifice with artifice.

Lubitsch and his screenwriter Edwin Justus Meyer understood the political and emotional resonance of the famous soliloquy from *Hamlet*. Just as Shakespeare gave Hamlet's contemplation of suicide a political context, Lubitsch similarly offers the actors in his film an existential challenge: Frustrated by their inability to act (shortly before the Nazis invade Warsaw, their anti-Hitler play *Gestapo* is shut down), the actors take arms against a sea of troubles in order to live the life of the theater vicariously through their mockery of the Nazi movement that seeks to destroy them. Many of the film's pleasures, then, derive from watching these characters successfully use the tools of the stage (improvisation, sense memory, prosthetics) to successfully subvert the Nazis.

Why are the actors in the film so good at understanding and predicting human behavior? Perhaps it's because these rebels, namely Benny's ham, are in touch with

their insecurities in ways that elude the Nazi buffoons they target. Jack is forced to frequently look like the fool throughout the film, a role (and weakness) he accepts and sorts through, something that can't be said about Sig Ruman's Col.

"Concentration Camp" Ehrhardt, who repeatedly shifts the blame for everything he does to one of his lackeys. Maybe that's what pissed so many people off about *To Be or Not to Be*: Though it's impossible to imagine governments using actors as spies (at least not in the way the film employs them), it really does seem that the makers of the film understood the psychosis that motivated Hitler's regime in ways that the Allies did not.

I won't try to define the fabled "Lubitsch Touch" because I maintain that it's an emotional and sensual sensation that's best experienced and left undefined (in honor of its mystery, even if the term was really just a product of marketing hype), but I have to say that *To Be or Not to Be* very much exhibits the German-born director's signature aesthetic and spiritual approach, despite what has been written to the contrary: If there is a difference between *To Be or Not to Be* and *The Shop Around the Corner* it is only that Lubitsch forgot to cut his nails before making the former.

Slantmagazine.com

Brian Eggert

19 Feb 2013 – Deep Focus Review – The Definitives

To set the stage, in the last months of 1941, the world's political climate was unfathomably grim. Hitler's forces invaded Moscow in October of that year, and the battle continued until the following January when Stalin's counteroffensive drove back the assault. Hundreds of thousands died in the fight. On November 13, the torpedoing of Britain's long-serving HMS *Ark Royal* by a German submarine led to an investigation of its Captain's negligence for letting the ship sink. America was effectively brought into World War II when the Imperial Japanese Navy surprise attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7, killing thousands. In January of 1942, Hitler's "man with the iron heart" Reinhard Heydrich spoke at the Wannsee Conference and detailed plans for the Third Reich's final solution to the Jewish Question; upward of six million Jews lost their lives after they were deported to camps like Auschwitz in Poland. Fascism had spread throughout Europe and Allied forces had not yet organized to elicit much hope of stopping them. Nevertheless, it was during this time of foreboding that Berlin-born Jewish filmmaker Ernst Lubitsch decided to make a comedy about a troupe of mostly Jewish actors in occupied Warsaw, who masquerade as the Gestapo to protect the Polish Underground.

Imagine if a comedy about al-Qaeda terrorists attacking the World Trade Center had gone into production in the summer of 2001 and been released shortly after 9/11. That would be the modern day equivalent of Lubitsch shooting *To Be or Not to Be* in

Hollywood in late 1941 for a premiere of March 6, 1942. When it was released, many believed the film broached its subject far too soon to be deemed in good taste; Lubitsch was accused of treating taboo material as though it was primed for a farce, complete with slapstick and witticisms about the savagery of Nazis. After all, at that point in history it looked as though Hitler might actually win, and therefore it was no laughing matter. And yet, as Jewish artists, Lubitsch and scriptwriter Edwin Justus Mayer knew their subject all too well, enough to suggest that they did not raise this unthinkable subject naively or without reflection. If there's one thing Lubitsch took seriously, it's comedy. In his many attributed romantic comedies, such as *Trouble in Paradise* (1932) or *Design for Living* (1933), he used comedy to emphasize the truth about relationships, infidelity, and sex. In *To Be or Not to Be*, he emphasizes a profound truth indeed—that Nazis were not the superhuman monsters that so many cinematic representations made them out to be. Rather, they were preposterously cruel and deluded human beings, and whoever chose to follow ridiculous figures such as Hitler were equally incompetent. Lubitsch also demonstrated how vulnerable the Nazis could be, an important message to incite U.S. involvement in World War II.

Nothing is what it seems in the film, which opens in 1939 as Hitler appears in Warsaw all alone, walking down the street, much to the shock of Polish onlookers. You see, this is actually Bronski (Tom Dugan), a Polish actor determined to prove his Hitler costume and false mustache look authentic. On the stage at the nearby Polski Theater, rehearsals are underway for a new anti-Nazi play, a farce depicting Nazis as the sorts who buy the loyalty of a child by supplying him with a toy tank. The play's director argues the performances are too broad and unbelievable, and that Bronki looks unconvincing as Hitler. "To me, he's just a man with a little mustache," the director explains. The crew responds, "But so is Hitler!" Production halts when an official bans their play in fear of upsetting Germany. Instead, the company replaces their anti-Nazi play with *Hamlet*, starring "that great, great Polish actor" Joseph Tura (Jack Benny) and his elegant wife Maria (Carole Lombard), both local celebrities. Taken by the affections of a young pilot, Lieutenant Sobinski (Robert Stack), Maria asks her admirer to meet her backstage during her husband's performance of *Hamlet's* soliloquy. Once "To be or not to be" begins, Sobinski shuffles out to visit Maria in her dressing room, while onstage, Joseph, none the wiser to his wife's rendezvous, believes the pilot has left because of his performance.

Before long, the Nazis have crossed over Polish borders without even declaring war, Joseph's jealousy over his wife's admirer reaches its peak, and Sobinski leaves to connect with the Polish Squadron of the Royal Air Force (RAF). While on base, Sobinski meets Professor Siletsky (Stanley Ridges), who claims to be a member of the Polish resistance. Talking to some of the Polish pilots, the Professor gathers lists of the pilots' families in hiding with the Underground and promises to make sure they're safe, except Sobinski suspects the Professor is a spy when he says he's never heard of the famous Maria Tura. What good Pole hasn't? But by the time Sobinski reports his suspicions to his superiors, the Professor has already left for Warsaw with the report of Polish names and locations for his connections in the Gestapo. If

they get in the Gestapo's hands, the Polish families in hiding are dead. Sobinski follows and contacts the Underground with Maria's help, and together they devise a scheme to get the report away from the Professor. Maria agrees to seduce the Professor at his hotel room inside a Nazi fortress, but before she can, he's called away to Gestapo Headquarters to meet the dreaded Col. Ehrhardt. However, the Professor is intercepted and directed to the Polski Theater, which has been made up to look like Gestapo headquarters. There, Joseph, begrudgingly helping his wife's admirer Sobinski, impersonates Ehrhardt and spreads his performance too thin. The Professor sees through the charade and tries to escape, but he's killed onstage by Sobinski.

Trapped at the hotel, Maria is rescued by her husband, who now dons a false beard and glasses to appear as the Professor. Maria destroys the report on the Polish Underground, but Joseph-as-Professor Siletsky is asked to meet the real Col. Ehrhardt (Sig Rugman) at Gestapo Headquarters. Their meeting goes well until the corpse of the real Professor is found. Ehrhardt and his ever-blamed Capt. Schultz (Henry Victor) decide to make the suspected fake Professor, Joseph, sweat a little and leave him in a room with the real Professor's dead body. Joseph thinks fast and shaves the dead Professor's beard, and then applies a spare false one. His own ruse would have been a success too, except his troupe, having heard the Gestapo found the real Professor's body, comes to the rescue disguised as Gestapo officers and drags Joseph away much to the bafflement of Ehrhardt, who has just been convinced that Joseph's Professor was the real one. At risk if ever Ehrhardt puts their scheme together, the troupe must escape the theater, which is set to receive a welcoming party for Hitler himself. They work out another complex plot where they all dress as Gestapo officers. Bronski is among them, again dressed up as Hitler, minus the mustache; no one notices Bronski is Hitler until he puts on the little cube of hair under his nose. Greenberg (Felix Bressart), one of the troupe who had long wanted to play Shylock, creates a distraction by performing Shylock's "Hath not a Jew eyes?" speech from *The Merchant of Venice* while facing a band of Nazi soldiers.

Pretending to cart Greenberg off, the troupe, dressed as Gestapo, escapes the Nazi celebration and stops to gather Maria at her apartment. Ehrhardt has arrived just before them and, with the Professor gone, takes it upon himself to recruit Maria as a Nazi spy in a sloppy seduction. Just then, Bronski, still in his Hitler getup, breaks in on Ehrhardt attempting to entice an unwilling Maria. Ehrhardt believes he has insulted his Führer's honor and decides to take his own life. Lubitsch shows us only the door to Maria's room. We hear a gunshot, a pause, and then Ehrhardt shouts "Schultz!"—which the Colonel has done throughout the film whenever he makes a mistake. Meanwhile, the troupe hops a plane to England and escapes as heroes. Resuming acting duties, they make a splash on the London stage playing *Hamlet* once more. During Joseph's performance of Hamlet's soliloquy, he keeps an eye on Sobinski this time, and the young pilot remains in his seat. A row back, however, another young gentleman gets up when he hears "To be or not to be" and, no doubt, makes his way to Maria's dressing room.

Note how this complete plot description reads more like an involved spy-thriller than a comedy. One can even see how modern filmmakers might have been inspired by the film: Quentin Tarantino when he made *Inglourious Basterds* or Paul Verhoeven when he made *Black Book*. The plot involves disguises, a Mata Hari, elaborate trickery, great danger in the risk of exposure, and several deaths. For *To Be or Not to Be*, Lubitsch, writing in *The New York Times* just after the film's release, said he wanted to avoid the two comedic formulas: "Drama with comedy relief and comedy with dramatic relief. I had made up my mind to make a picture with no attempt to relieve anybody from anything at any time." This is evident in his technical approach as well. Lubitsch's usually airy style is similarly blended with other styles to meet the film's unique demands. When Lubitsch first follows Sobinski into the RAF, the almost documentary training sequence that follows looks like a montage from a war movie. During the Professor's escape and death sequence, he runs frantically into the Polski Theater, crawling between seats as the spotlight searches like it might during a prison break, or more aptly a concentration camp. As his pursuers close in, he dashes for the stage and freezes when the spotlight catches him, like some pitch-perfect shot out of an Alfred Hitchcock thriller. When he's finally shot dead, it happens behind the curtain, which then rises on his poetic collapse. These sequences and plot elements are far too brave, sophisticatedly filmed, and intricately conceived to waive the film off as a comic trifle.

Still, as Greenberg mentions, "A laugh is nothing to be sneezed at." Not just because his subject demands it, Lubitsch elevates his film's farcical qualities to high comedy through his omnipresent "Lubitsch Touch"—an oft-pondered term created to transform the filmmaker into a brand name, no different than Hitchcock's posturing label as "Master of Suspense". Hitchcock's status as Master is just that: an unconditional rank of prominence. But Lubitsch's Touch remains an ambiguous idea, yet more than just the hint of sophistication and class he brings to every project. We see it when, amid the Nazi suspense, the director doesn't forget to acknowledge Joseph's petty actor's ego or jealousy toward his wife. Or when Lubitsch manages to simplify *To Be or Not to Be*'s several ongoing plot elements into a single moment, when Bronski's Hitler interrupts Ehrhardt's advances on Maria. Traces of his personal style are heard in the endless wit, they are arranged within hilarious and multilayered situations, and they're seen in the poignant gag where Bronski goes unnoticed until he dons Hitler's mustache. The Lubitsch Touch concealed sex but skillfully kept the topic in the forefront; it treated human flaws gracefully; it economized complicated plotlines into simple matters and often crystallized whole films into a single moment. More important than any of these qualities was Lubitsch's ability to impart his audience with a sense of knowingness toward jokes that fluctuate between mere delicate hints and rousing, hilarious blowouts, and we never once feel guilty for laughing.

Many Lubitsch pictures were based on obscure European plays or stories, but *To Be or Not to Be* was an original idea developed by Lubitsch and Hungarian writer Melchior Lengyel, who also helped develop the idea behind the director's *Ninotchka* (1939). Their proposed outline contained all the overlapping strains of espionage

and farcical comedy, and screenwriter Edwin Justus Mayer, a black comedy intellectual and frequent financial failure, brought their scenario to life. Alexander Korda produced the picture under the United Artists label and chose to make the film in America instead of his home in England, as with many of his wartime productions including *That Hamilton Woman* (1941) and *Jungle Book* (1942). Korda was believed to be a British agent at the time, and if this is true, his Hollywood ties must have afforded him some important information; after the war ended, he was mysteriously knighted for his contributions to the war effort. Alexander's younger brother Vincent designed *To Be or Not to Be's* sets, including bombed Warsaw streets, the Polski Theater, and both the staged and "real" versions of Gestapo headquarters. Vincent's version of Gestapo HQ is perhaps the era's best; he avoids the bare, utilitarian offices seen in so many WWII films or even on the Polski stage. Rather, he emphasizes the theatricality of the Nazis through ornate decorations and paintings, which was so much more accurate both historically and thematically for the film.

Lubitsch shot with near complete creative control, as usual, answerable only to the sensor boards and his friend Alexander Korda. The director cast several actors from his regular troupe, among them Bressart, Rugman, and Charles Halton. His initial choice for Maria Tura was Miriam Hopkins, star of *Trouble in Paradise* and *Design for Living*, but she demanded the role be expanded and the director refused, so she turned down the part. Carole Lombard was cast in her place and it would be her last screen appearance; she died in a plane crash in January 1942 while returning from a WWII bond-selling tour with her mother. Jack Benny had been a major star on radio and later television, noted for his comic use of pauses and signature meanness, but he never broke out into film in a big way. *To Be or Not to Be* would be his most significant role. Behind the camera was Rudolph Maté, who photographed Laurel and Hardy's *Our Relation* (1936) and Hitchcock's *Foreign Correspondent* (1940), two films that when combined prepared Maté to make this WWII spy comedy. Prior to shooting a scene, Lubitsch famously acted out every part for his cast, his performances absurdly bad; he was not a skilled actor, despite his origins on the stage and in a series of comedic short films. Actors used Lubitsch's rendition to gauge how much more restrained their performance should be in comparison. Lubitsch's sense of joy toward comedy prevailed behind the camera as well. In one behind-the-scenes story, Benny recalled seeing Lubitsch with a handkerchief stuffed in his mouth to muffle his own laughing—jokes he had helped write and probably had seen rehearsed a number of times still cracked him up.

Critics and many moviegoers weren't amused, and described the film as "callous" and "inexcusable" in their assessments. Several reviewers pointed out their anger over specific lines of dialogue. One crack was made by Joseph as he impersonates Col. Ehrhardt for the Professor, saying, "We do the concentrating and the Poles do the camping." Another, spoken by Ehrhardt as he quips about Joseph Tura's acting, goes: "What he did to Shakespeare, we are doing now to Poland." Even Lubitsch's friends encouraged him to remove that line from the finished film, but that would have meant removing the film's edge. These remain two of the most hilariously

unrepentant lines in comedy history. Representative of most appraisals of the period is C.A. Lejeune's write-up in *The Observer*, which states "To my mind, a farce set against the agonies of bombed Warsaw is in the poorest of tastes, especially as the film makes no attempt to ignore them." Lejeune's statement forces one to wonder if she felt such atrocities *should* be ignored. A case could certainly be made that the world's late-to-respond position on Hitler resulted in more tragedy than was necessary. At any rate, Lejeune's remarks also question if the healing power of laughter is enough to mend what were then the open wounds of Auschwitz. Lubitsch refuses to disguise the ugly truth of the situation, and only a few critics recognized how rare this was. Though Werner R. Heymann's score was nominated for an Academy Award, it would take over twenty years for the film to be reconsidered and appreciated as the masterpiece it is. Time alone healed the Holocaust's wounds into ugly scars and allowed *To Be or Not to Be's* reassessment among critics and film historians. Once the picture was revisited, film historians began to look back on Lubitsch's career and see the genius and nerve within this film. In 1982, Mel Brooks starred in an unfortunate and overwrought remake of *To Be or Not to Be*, while Lubitsch's film was more recently acknowledge on AFI's "100 Years... 100 Laughs" list.

Today, to truly grasp how heroic and uncommon a picture Lubitsch made, the film must be regarded through the prism of history, particularly in its representation of Nazis. Lubitsch and Mayer knew exactly what was going on in Europe, and as such they depict Nazis as ludicrous by refusing to represent them in an intimidating light or dwell on their atrocities. Of his film, Lubitsch said, "No actual torture chamber is photographed, no flogging is shown, no close-up of excited Nazis using whips and rolling their eyes in lust. My Nazis are different: they passed that stage long ago. Brutality, floggings and torture have become their daily routine." The director needs not remind us through demonstration how vile and dangerous the Nazis were; this we know already. Rather, he puts a human face on Nazis, showing them not as the inhuman monsters Hollywood usually showed them to be, but by classifying them in a more realistic way. Lubitsch's Nazis are weak-minded and buffoonish *people*, ever frightened of their overseer, and prone to interrupting conversational lulls with an enthusiastic-if-discomfited "Heil Hitler!" Lubitsch reminds us that these men are not monsters and we should not think of them as such; doing so only gives them power. By portraying them as incompetent humans, Lubitsch strikes a much more severe blow to the Nazi philosophy.

Consider Col. Ehrhardt, portrayed by Rugman as a nervous, bug-eyed, walrus-mustached nincompoop. Before he appears onscreen, references to the Colonel have built him up into an incredible monster. When we finally meet him, of course, we discover Ehrhardt to be bungling and idiotic. What does it say about the superior who promoted such a man, or those who blindly follow his orders? In a way, Ehrhardt is terrifying because he *is* a man of power—a glorious simpleton capable of sending someone to their death. We should be frightened of him not in the way we would be frightened of a criminal mastermind, but in the way one might fear an angry child with a loaded gun. That Lubitsch is able to turn such a character into a

source of laughs is part of his brilliance. When Joseph performs as Ehrhardt for the Professor, it becomes riotous when he's suddenly incapable of improvisation. The Professor quips that in London they call the Colonel "Concentration Camp Ehrhardt", and Joseph can only respond, again and again, "So they call me Concentration Camp Ehrhardt, eh?" When we finally meet the real Ehrhardt, how hilarious it is to discover he's even more absurd than Joseph's depiction of him. Acting as the Professor now, Joseph tells Ehrhardt what they call him in London, and in similar breaks in the conversation, the real Ehrhardt falls back on "So they call me Concentration Camp Ehrhardt, eh?"

Within Lubitsch's career, the film stands out as something altogether unique. Surely *To Be or Not to Be* contains familiar Lubitsch comic devices, such as his prevalent use of love triangles, here seen between Joseph, Maria, and Sobinski. And in many ways *Ninotchka* anticipates this film politically, being about Greta Garbo's Communist character having a romantic awakening in Paris. Here, even despite his frequently humanist efforts, Lubitsch's use of suspense and poetic nods to Shakespeare is distinct in his career, with an immediate sense of humanity pouring out of this film like it never had in Lubitsch's work before. The viewer can feel the filmmaker's passion within the picture's message, particularly during the scene where Greenberg finally gets to play Shylock, and Bressart all but addresses the audience directly in defense of Jewish rights. The scene cannot help but recall a similar speech given at the end of Charlie Chaplin's *The Great Dictator*, another Nazi satire released the year before. Hitler's crimes against humanity had inspired cinema's comedians to fight back with their unique arsenal: humor. It's strange but true that the humor proves a more effective weapon within the film than tragedy alone. You can feel Lubitsch and Mayer just sharpening their comic smarts throughout the picture for every jab against the Nazis, each blow deeper than the last.

Throughout *To Be or Not to Be*, Lubitsch orchestrates a comic work of art whose central theme of acting offers perhaps the most accurate assessment of and staggering blow against the Nazi movement ever put to film. In performing like Nazis, the actors of the Polski Theater must adopt an embellished theatrical style to fool the enemy; and yet, Ehrhardt is even more over-the-top because he pretends his authority is genuine, even while he hysterically cowers at the thought of Hitler. By pairing stage actors against Nazis who play the part of monsters, and then suggesting these actors must behave in farcical ways to pass as Nazis and survive, Lubitsch plays with notions of reality and theater, and by the end of his film resolves that the Nazis too are simply actors on a stage. This interplay of reality and theatricality aligns his film's absurdist Nazi behavior with real life, whereas the stage performances of the Polski troupe are knowingly artificial; still, they're both gross exaggerations and silly for the viewer, which thereupon delivers a staggeringly refined insult to Nazis. By implying Nazis are just actors on the world stage, Lubitsch discredits their most effective and intimidating weapon, their theatricality, and strikes a staggering blow through the art of cinema. Making *To Be or Not to Be* when he did, the way he did, was a daring and courageous move, and

the film has survived the test of time to validate Lubitsch's risk. Whether viewed in an historical context or merely for laughs, Ernst Lubitsch made an exceptional and layered comedy, timeless in its commentary, elegance, and sophistication.

Recommended reading:

For images aligned RIGHT use: class="p2" For images aligned LEFT use: class="p3"
Barnes, Peter. *To Be or Not to Be*. (BFI Modern Classics). London: British Film Institute, 2002.

Eyman, Scott. *Ernst Lubitsch: Laughter in Paradise*. New York: Simon & Schuster, c1993.

<http://www.deepfocusreview.com/reviews/tobeornottobe.asp>

Ernst Lubitsch and Nancy Meyers: A Study on Movie Love in the Classic and Post-Modernist Traditions

Robert Alpert March 2012 Feature Articles Issue 62

<http://sensesofcinema.com/2012/feature-articles/ernst-lubitsch-and-nancy-meyers-a-study-on-movie-love-in-the-classic-and-post-modernist-traditions/>

While from different eras, Ernst Lubitsch and Nancy Meyers bear much in common, including their obsession with sets and a focus on metaphors which define character relationships. Nevertheless, their films also reflect their different historical moments, with Lubitsch the classicist to Meyers the post-modernist. Thus, where Lubitsch's films are theatrical and self-contained, Meyers' films are cinematic and self-reflexive. As such, their portrayals of female-male relationships sharply differ. Lubitsch accepts the limitations of the erotic and the institution of marriage, and hence his characters find closure and satisfaction. In contrast, Meyers, a female director in a male culture, remains equivocal as to the role of the erotic and has no faith in social institutions. Her characters remain adrift.

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Beginning in 1980, Meyers co-wrote eight screenplays, oftentimes with her then husband, Charles Shyer, and has since directed five movies: *The Parent Trap* (1998), *What Women Want* (2000), *Something's Gotta Give* (2003), *The Holiday* (2006), and *It's Complicated* (2009). She co-wrote with Shyer the *Parent Trap* and was the sole screenwriter on *Something's Gotta Give*, *The Holiday*, and *It's Complicated*. For Meyers a movie's screenplay

establishes the essential elements of a movie, and she directs only to protect what she has written. (1) Moreover, each of her movies explores the same theme: the relationship between women and men – the possibility of romance and eroticism in a careerist world. That same theme is also the focus of the classic, Hollywood director Ernst Lubitsch, though he substitutes money for careerism. Beginning his directorial career in Germany, Lubitsch emigrated to Hollywood where he first directed the silent film *Rosita* (1923) and continued directing through the early sound era, including *Trouble in Paradise* (1932), *The Merry Widow* (1934), *Ninotchka* (1939), and *Heaven Can Wait* (1943). Lubitsch directed sixteen sound films, and, while not a screenwriter, worked closely throughout his career with the same screenwriters, including Ernest Vajda, Charles Brackett, Billy Wilder and especially Samson Raphaelson. Like Meyers, he viewed screenwriting as the most important aspect of moviemaking. (2) Both also understood the importance of producing to further assure that their movies appeared on the screen as written. Thus, Meyers has produced nearly all of the movies which she has directed, while Lubitsch produced many of his movies and for about one year was production head at Paramount.

Meyers has made explicit her appreciation for and debt to Lubitsch. In *Irreconcilable Differences* (1984), which Meyers co-wrote with Shyer, Ryan O’Neal plays film professor Albert Brodsky who received his doctorate in film from NYU with a thesis on the “themeological analysis of the sexual overtones of the early films of Ernst Lubitsch.” Hitchhiking a ride with Lucy Van Patten (Shelley Long) on his way to California, where he is to teach at UCLA, he describes as an example of “the Lubitsch touch” a scene from *The Merry Widow*. The overweight King Achmed (George Barbier) leaves his bed chamber for a cabinet meeting and finds himself struggling to put on a sword belt far too small, thereby realizing that his wife, the queen (Una Merkel), is having an affair with Captain Danilo (Maurice Chevalier). Meyers also later makes express her debt to Lubitsch when in *The Holiday* Eli Wallach, who plays a celebrated, old-school screenwriter named Arthur Abbott, describes how film characters “meet cute” in classic Hollywood movies. As he describes it, a man and a woman meet and fall in love in a department store where the man wants only the pants and the woman wants only the tops to a pair of pajamas. This “meet cute” scene is the opening scene to Lubitsch’s *Bluebeard’s Eight Wife* (1938).

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Lubitsch came to Hollywood in 1922 at the request of Mary Pickford, who soon despaired when he ignored her stardom in *Rosita*. “A director of doors,” she lamented. (3) Focused upon the relationship between his characters, not the stardom of any one, Lubitsch is well known for depicting the doors to his sets as visual metaphors for the developing relationships between his characters. Thus, for example, the growing love interest between and later difficulties encountered by Count Alfred (Maurice Chevalier) and Queen Louise (Jeanette MacDonald) in *The Love Parade* (1929) is expressed through a series of episodes in which overly large doors metaphorically convey significance. There is the door separating the libertine Count Alfred from Queen Louise’s council room of comically stern ministers, Queen Louise’s boudoir door which separates Louise and Alfred from the prying eyes of her court as well as the commoners of her kingdom, and the door to Alfred’s bedroom which he locks as their relationship deteriorates. Likewise, the failed romance between Gaston (Herbert Marshall) and Mariette (Kay Francis) in *Trouble in Paradise* turns on our unexpected discovery of a third door to the upstairs area of Mariette’s palatial home. Maintaining the discretion required of a secretary to his wealthy employer, Gaston is careful to lock at night the door to his secretarial room. It is only when Mariette begins to question Gaston’s motives as a lover and thinks of him as simply a jewel thief out to steal from her that Lubitsch reveals a third door leading directly to Gaston’s secretarial bedroom. Mariette chooses to enter that door, no longer maintaining any pretence that she is a lady, and thereby initiates a series of events resulting in Gaston’s deserting her for his fellow thief and lover, Lily (Miriam Hopkins).

For Lubitsch doors define the configuration of his sets and hence the privacy (or the lack of privacy) which his characters enjoy or to which they are condemned. The many doors off the central, public area of the leather goods shop in *Shop around the Corner* (1940) both isolate and encourage relationships between characters. The door leading to the shop owner’s spacious, nearly empty office isolates its inhabitant, Mr. Matuschek (Frank Morgan), and thereby foreshadows his later separation from his wife who is having an affair with one of his shop employees, Mr. Vadas (Joseph Schildkraut). In contrast, another door leads to the storeroom which is overstocked with boxes of luggage and other leather goods and where the principal characters, Klara Novak (Margaret Sullavan) and Alfred Kralik (James Stewart), can banter with one another, each unaware of the other’s secret life. That common storeroom foreshadows their later falling in love with one another upon learning of the secret lives which they unknowingly

share. Likewise, the opening of the many interior doors to the royal suite in *Ninotchka* results in a vast, interior space, which makes plain that Leon (Melvyn Douglas) and Ninotchka (Greta Garbo) have become liberated from the limitations of their political leanings as royalist and communist, culminating in Ninotchka's speech to the masses in this most capitalistic of open spaces: "Comrades!...The revolution is on the march. I know. Bombs will fall, civilization will crumble. But not yet, please. Wait. What's the hurry? Give us our moment. Let's be happy."

Sets are equally important for Meyers. They differ entirely, however, in their particulars. Lubitsch frequently placed his stories in either mythical places like Marshovia (*The Merry Widow*) and Flaussenenthurm (*The Smiling Lieutenant*) or European cities, such as Warsaw (*To Be or Not to Be*) and Budapest (*Shop Around the Corner*). In contrast, Meyers, who was born in the United States, places her characters in the vineyards of Napa Valley (*The Parent Trap*), the offices of Madison Avenue (*What Women Want*), the country homes of East Hampton (*Something's Gotta Give*), and the palatial estates of Hollywood (*The Holiday*). For a narrative frequently focused upon the ornate style of European royalty, she substitutes the *Architectural Digest* look of the American nouveau riche. She, like Lubitsch, places her characters in stylized sets so that our focus is on character relationships, not the particulars of the backdrop or the economics of the back-story, howsoever important a role economics may, in fact, implicitly play.

For Meyers food functions as the central metaphor for her narratives and their characters. *Something's Gotta Give* opens with a series of shots of strikingly beautiful women in their 20s about whom Harry Sanborn (Jack Nicholson) rhapsodizes that they represent the "sweet, uncomplicated satisfaction of the younger woman" – "it's magic time". Harry is a serial-dater of women under the age of 30, and he is then dating and about to sleep with Marin (Amanda Peet), the daughter of the famous playwright Erica Barry (Diane Keaton). These women, who "can render a man absolutely helpless," resemble fashion models whose appearance is the result of food deprivation, that is, anorexia. Meyers soon makes plain her view that Harry's attraction to these women is unnatural. Her "meet cute" scene between Harry and Erica occurs at the refrigerator in Erica's East Hampton home. Harry is looking for a snack dressed only in his underwear and an unbuttoned shirt and must defend himself against Erica's claim that he is a burglar, an indirect, if ironic, reference to Harry's cradle-snatching affairs with younger women, such as Erica's daughter. Tellingly, as they banter

back and forth, Harry comes to acknowledge that Erica's reaction in confronting him at the refrigerator with a knife evidences how she is "very strong", "very macho", a term which Harry would never apply to the younger women whom he dates. For Meyers the highest compliment a man can give to a woman is that she is a man's equivalent.

Moreover, food and sexual desire are inextricably, intimately intertwined for Meyers. Thus, the growing attraction between Erica and Harry, both highly successful careerists, is conveyed by Harry's encounter of Erica naked while he is trying to find the kitchen in her palatial East Hampton home. Never having seen a woman his own age naked, Harry is literally startled at encountering his own aging in the form of a naked woman. Likewise, Erica's obsessive wearing of turtlenecks to cover her entire body reflects her effort at avoiding an acknowledgement of aging. As Harry confesses to Erica following that encounter and during their first walk together: "Truth is that it goes fast", like the "blink of an eye". The most poignant, confessional scene between Erica and Harry soon follows, taking place in Erica's East Hampton kitchen. Both yearn for a midnight snack of pancakes. Harry observes that Erica is a "tower of strength", "formidable", and that with her defenses down she has that "killer combo"; Erica, in turn, confesses that Harry is the only person who has understood her. In contrast to the stereotypical scene of a romantic seduction followed by sex, theirs consists of sex followed by a candlelight dinner. Their romantic attachment to one another as soulmates culminates in Paris where their commitment is sealed with a dinner of roast chicken.

The metaphoric significance of food is equally important in Meyers' *It's Complicated*, whose main character, Jane Adler (Meryl Streep), owns a bakery-restaurant. The developing sexual affair between her and her ex-husband, Jake Adler (Alec Baldwin), is paralleled by the ever-growing demands he places upon her to feed him his favourite meals. Their extra-marital affair begins at a NYC hotel bar, where they drink and eat too much, ending up in bed together. They continue to pursue their affair when Jake shows up at Jane's house where she is in the midst of planning with her architect, Adam Schaffer (Steve Martin), the new kitchen for the house she purchased when she divorced Jake. Symbolically their affair fails when Jane prepares Jake's favorite meal of roast chicken, mashed potatoes, string beans and chocolate cake, and Jake does not show up as a result of the demands of his new, much younger wife, Agness (Lake Bell). In contrast to Jane, Agness, also a driven careerist, is not only unable to cook but, in fact, breaks

things in the kitchen and allows her five year old son Pedro (Emjay Anthony) to dictate the family's eating habits.

Moreover, Meyers simultaneously conveys in *It's Complicated* what follows when that appetite for food – and the eroticism which it represents – is missing. As Jane's affair with Jake deteriorates, her relationship with Adam advances, evidenced by an evening during which they savour together chocolate cake and chocolate croissants. There is, however, clearly an absence of eroticism to this relationship. Like Harry Sanborn in *Something's Gotta Give*, Adam “gets to be the girl” in the relationship, evidenced by his admission at his having cried for hours when he learned that his wife had left him for his ex-best friend. Adam, however, wholly lacks Jake's appetite. While Adam inquires at film's end whether Jane has any more of those “amazing chocolate croissants”, Adam lacks the corpulence of Jake, whose insatiable – frequently egotistical – hunger for food drives him to experience the sensual delight of bedding Jane and vice versa. In contrast, Adam is the reasonable and sexually neuter adult. “So this is how adults talk to one another?” Jane comments when Adam suggests that they defer seeing one another until Jane has resolved her relationship with Jake. That adulthood evinces a lack of a genuinely erotic appetite. Nevertheless, Jane chooses Adam, because she wishes neither to upset the expectations of her grown children, who are horrified at the prospect of their parents re-uniting after so many years, nor to leave permanently her comfort zone, notwithstanding her persuasive effort at convincing her psychiatrist of her need to do so. As Jake grows ever more passionate and in love, Jane looks at herself in the mirror and sadly asks, “Is that what I look like?” The dissatisfying ending of *It's Complicated* results from the triumph of the rational adult (Adam, who prefers fine food) over the child (Jake, who savors the taste of an “insane amount” of leftovers). Sadly, the last shot of Jane and Jake shows them together as two children on a swing.

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The films of Lubitsch and Meyers rely upon the same narrative tension. In particular, both directors place their characters in the dilemma of choosing between the uncertainty of excitement and the comfort of stasis. Just as Lubitsch's *Trouble in Paradise* is about the temptation of Gaston to leave the excitement of thievery offered by his beloved Lily for the security as gigolo to Mariette, Meyer's *The Holiday* is about whether Amanda Woods (Cameron Diaz) is prepared to put aside the excitement of running her own

Hollywood business for the trans-Atlantic love affair and marriage with Graham (Jude Law). Lubitsch and Meyers also both acknowledge the infirmities of their characters who choose between these options. While opting in *Heaven Can Wait* for the child-like imagination of the philandering Henry Van Cleve (Don Ameche) over his staid cousin Albert Van Cleve (Allyn Joslyn), Lubitsch leaves no doubt as to Henry's occasional infidelities and infantileness. Likewise, while Meyers' *What Women Want* mocks the sexist escapades and criticizes the competitive thievery of Nick Marshall (Mel Gibson), Meyers also does not fully endorse the imaginative, if competitive, drive of Darcy Maguire (Helen Hunt). Darcy's successful Nike slogan for women – “no games, just sports” – implies a neutering of the relationship between men and women. The advertising image for this slogan consists of a woman running alone, underscoring that running is a solitary sport.

Lubitsch and Meyers differ, however, in the resolution of their narratives. Lubitsch's *Trouble in Paradise* and *Heaven Can Wait* provide a sense of closure. Gaston and Lily are last seen together in a two-shot in a cab, and Henry is last seen going “up” to join his wife in heaven. In contrast, *The Holiday* and *What Women Want* end ambiguously. The joyous New Year's Eve party which ends *The Holiday* leaves unresolved the geographic conflict between Amanda's career in Hollywood and the family offered by Graham in England. While Darcy's initial instinct following Nick's admission that he has stolen all of her ideas is “I think you're fired”, her acceptance of Nick's betrayal – what kind of “rescuing knight” would she be if she let him walk out? – is more a tacked on “happy ending” than a resolution of the romantic and sexual tension between the two. Darcy's final embrace of Nick, who is no longer empowered to know “what women want,” conveys more of a resignation to her situation than a triumph of equals romantically, let alone erotically, in love.

This difference in narrative resolution is surely attributable to the respective backgrounds of Lubitsch and Meyers. Born a German Jew in 1892, Lubitsch rebelled against his lower middle class upbringing by becoming a theatrical actor at the age of 19 under the direction of Max Reinhardt. Lubitsch, as a film director of German silents, quickly gravitated towards theatrical spectacles, such as *Madam DuBarry* (1919) and *Anna Boleyn* (1920), which focused on the sexual intrigue between characters. His sound films maintained that theatrical conceit in which his characters are players with timed entrances and exits, making manifest how “all the world's a stage”

and each of us players destined to pass away.

Lubitsch's *To Be or Not to Be* (1942) is the most literal enactment of that viewpoint. It consists of a series of theatrical, Pirandellian performances in which events are continually replayed, thereby conveying the limitations of each performance. For example, a minor actor named Bronski (Tom Dugan) portrays Adolf Hitler on a theatrical set which reproduces the streets of Warsaw prior to the Nazi invasion; later he reenacts that same role and thereby saves the acting troupe from the "real" Nazis then occupying Warsaw. Likewise, Colonel Ehrhardt (Sig Ruman) plays the "real" "Concentration Camp Ehrhardt" to Joseph Tura (Jack Benny), the lead actor of the Polish acting troupe; later Tura re-plays the role of "Concentration Camp Ehrhardt" to the Polish patriot but, in fact, Nazi spy, Professor Siletsky (Stanley Ridges), with Siletsky unmasking Tura by mocking the feigned infidelity of Tura's actress wife, Maria Tura (Carole Lombard). That Professor Siletsky is soon thereafter killed on a theatrical stage – his death melodramatically underscored by the rise of a stage curtain – highlights how for Lubitsch theatre and life are equivalent insofar as the former acts as a metaphor for the latter.

Lubitsch acknowledges through his theatrical conceits the limitations of life, and his characters accept these limitations as the prerequisite for a satisfied life. Captain Danilo in Lubitsch's *The Merry Widow* is the favourite to all of the women of Marshovia and Maxim's. Nevertheless and notwithstanding his unbridled eroticism, he comes to choose Sonia, "the merry widow", an oxymoronic term connoting the connection between sex and death. That the erotic attraction between these two characters is renewed each time the Merry Widow Waltz is played is placed in context by the visuals which convey limitation. The swirl of the dancing couples at the Marshovian ball, with their effortless movement and their visual evocation of phallic ejaculation, is belied by the mirrors which contain these couples as they move downward through the screen shot. While achieving a romantic satisfaction, Lubitsch's characters also encounter a closure in the film's final shot. Sonia and Captain Danilo's marriage ceremony is performed in a prison cell. Danilo undoubtedly speaks for Lubitsch, who divorced in the early 1930s as a result of an affair between his wife and a friend (who was also Lubitsch's screenwriter), when he twice utters the line that "any man who could waltz through life with hundreds of women and is willing to walk through life with one should be –" and comes to substitute at film's end the word "married" for "hanged". There is both an unease and acceptance at this

inevitable connection between the erotic and death. There is a dark humour to the moment in *The Love Parade* when Queen Louise, whom everyone wants to see married, comments in response to one of her ladies in waiting telling her that she has dreamed that Queen Louise has married, “You call that a lovely dream?”

For all of the comedic, lightly musical atmosphere of Lubitsch’s films, there is an underlying darkness to them. The satisfaction of his happy endings is achieved only by his characters’ acceptance of limitations. The conflict between “cash” and jewelry in *Trouble in Paradise* – Mariette’s hundreds of thousands of francs, which Lily and Gaston intend to rob, and Mariette’s seed pearl necklace, for which Lily yearns – represents the divide between the demands of the everyday, on the one hand, and the romantic, aspirational passions of his characters, on the other. That the final shot shows Lily and Gaston alone in a darkened cab with both cash and jewelry underscores how for Lubitsch both are required in order to find satisfaction in life. The final shot of *Design for Living* (1933) likewise shows Tom Chambers (Fredric March), Gilda Farrell (Miriam Hopkins) and George Curtis (Gary Cooper) enclosed within the confines of a cab, thereby evoking the triumph of an erotic *ménage à trois* – but at the expense of lives now relegated to a Bohemian lifestyle in which, as George observed, he lives on “nothing”.

Thus, notwithstanding the seeming frivolity of Lubitsch’s films, there is always a sense of continuously diminishing opportunities. Clocks, which evoke the passage of time and its limitation, figure prominently in Lubitsch’s movies. Mariette’s seduction of Gaston in *Trouble in Paradise* is enacted through a montage of clocks whose sounds mark that seduction over the course of an evening, and Ninotchka and Leon meet on a traffic island with a large clock visually dominating their space. Mariette may tease Gaston by provocatively commenting that “we have months, years,” but the shadows of their bodies simultaneously cast upon a bed belie that egotistical view of life as limitless. Henry Von Cleve of *Heaven Can Wait* possesses an imagination which knows no bounds. He becomes a book clerk in wooing Martha but could have become a waiter had she walked into a restaurant, a fireman had she walked into a burning building or an elevator operator had she walked into an elevator. Yet for all his imaginative powers and the wealth made over several generations which enables Henry to enjoy his freedom, what is *Heaven Can Wait* but a reenactment of Henry’s birthdays marking the passage of time and the significant events to Henry’s life, following each of which a family member departs from Henry’s life? (4) At

the moment of Henry's death we hear the playing of the Merry Widow Waltz from behind the closed door to Henry's bedroom. Henry, among the most erotically charged and romantically in love characters depicted by Lubitsch, is simply the last of the family members to depart from this earth.

Paradoxically, the saving grace for Lubitsch is that life ultimately provides closure and thereby a sense of satisfaction to his inevitably departing characters, including Henry. While occasionally straying by buying a \$500 necklace for another woman, Henry remains happily married to Martha for whom he purchases a \$10,000 necklace. Dr. Bertier (Maurice Chevalier) in *One Hour With You* (1932) can declare that "I am married and I like it", be seduced by Mitzi (Genevieve Tobin) but choose, together with his wife, to remain committed to their marriage, understanding the folly of Mitzi's husband's claim that "nobody is responsible for their actions". While Lubitsch in *The Smiling Lieutenant* (1931) has Niki (Maurice Chevalier) mock the notion of growing old together – "Just imagine the same woman fifteen years younger, twenty pounds lighter, same girl" – years later Lubitsch expresses great sadness in *Shop Around the Corner* at Mr. Matuschek's wife's affair with Mr. Vadas, evidence that she didn't want to grow old with Mr. Matuschek. Lubitsch makes palpable the eroticism of marriage by the acuteness of the temptation of extra-marital affairs and the conscious commitment to a marriage between two imperfect persons.

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Meyers grew up in an entirely different era than Lubitsch. Born an American Jew in Philadelphia in 1949 and raised by upper middle class parents, Meyers moved shortly following college to Hollywood where she gravitated toward screenwriting. By 1980 she had co-written and co-produced her first film, *Private Benjamin*, a commercially successful film about a "Jewish American princess" who joins the U.S. Army when her husband dies on their wedding night and who in the film's final shot walks off, deserting her French lover with no sense of a future direction. In contrast to Lubitsch, Meyers takes for granted the material goods ("cash") of American culture and is more steeped in the world of film than in the conventions of the stage. Meyers self-referentially refers to the illusions of film, thereby always questioning her characters' choices. Thus, her narrative resolutions are never satisfying other than in the seeming perfection of the materials goods with which she surrounds her characters. Her women and men are never at peace even at their most romantically satisfied moments. She brackets those

moments as cinematic illusions. Having divorced her co-screenwriter husband of many years and now alone in a male, careerist culture, Meyers lacks any faith in the eroticism of marriage and instead creates through her career as screenwriter and director a world of romance without consequence.

The Holiday makes most explicit this bracketing. The film opens on a romantic scene of a young couple kissing and seemingly in love, the swelling music heightening that effect. However, the camera pulls back to reveal that Miles (Jack Black) is laying in the soundtrack to this shot to create its effect. On its surface *The Holiday* is a movie about two disillusioned women – one woman (Amanda Woods played by Cameron Diaz) who has been unable to cry since she was a teenager when her parents unexpectedly separated and another (Iris Simpkins played by Kate Winslet) who is unable to stop crying because she has been hopelessly in love with a co-worker who has taken advantage of her love for his own benefit – and how both women supposedly find love by leaving their comfort zones. Yet the movie is, in fact, an exploration of the illusions of romance which movies create for us. At a local video store Miles imitates the sound tracks to such movies as *Chariots of Fire* (1981), *Driving Miss Daisy* (1989), *Gone with the Wind* (1939), *Jaws* (1975), and *The Graduate* (1967) and thereby demonstrates for Iris how movie sounds evoke feelings in us which are not grounded in a reality other than that created by the movies themselves.

Meyers' cynically critical view at the effect of such movie sounds upon her audience – and herself – is evident when she shows Dustin Hoffman, the star of *The Graduate*, listening in on Miles' conversation in a nearby aisle. Likewise, when Amanda at last cries and hence expresses her love for Iris' brother Graham (Jude Law), Meyers makes us aware of her own movie trickery. She has the voice for Amanda's movie trailers announce "welcome back, Amanda Woods" and then accompanies Amanda's race through the snow in order to rejoin Graham with *Chariots of Fire* music in the background. Meyers continually places brackets around our feelings. Iris' house, where Amanda falls in love with Graham, consists of a fairytale-like "Rosehill Cottage" located in the town of Surrey, where we later learn Cary Grant was born. And what are we to think when Graham's so-cute daughter comments that Amanda "looks like my Barbie"?

Underlying Meyers' search for an enduring relationship between her women and men is an awareness that her feelings have been formed by the very medium in which she works. Her commercial success as a director depends

on her creating the illusion of eternal romance. However, in that act of creation she erases her own feelings formed through the mundane and pain of daily living. Her movie characters reflect that. The love making between Amanda and Graham is physical, without any sense of erotic attraction. The attraction between Iris and Miles is romantic, not a marital commitment to growing old together. Iris acknowledges to Arthur Abbott that she likes “corny”, is “looking for corny” and confesses that “it’s all those movies.” Meyers opts for sentiment over eros.

Something’s Gotta Give seemingly celebrates a sexual relationship between two, mature adults who choose to marry. Yet *Something’s Gotta Give* is equivocal about that relationship. Death, which for Lubitsch is inextricably intertwined with sex, functions only as a comic plot device for Meyers. Jake suffers a heart attack while making love to Erica’s daughter in order that he and Erica can be together in Erica’s East Hampton home. Their physically exhilarating pleasure of sex in bed eventually gives way to the overly romantic, studio-like shot in Paris with snow lightly falling. Moreover, the movie closes with the too perfect coda of Erica and Harry having dinner together with Erica’s daughter, son-in-law and grandchild. The erotic attraction between these two, mature adults is neutered by the presence of the younger generations and the resulting look of self-satisfied glee on Harry’s face. Meyers’ lead character in *Something’s Gotta Give* can no more escape the entrapment of her creative self than can the lead character in *The Holiday*. Amanda Woods, a successful producer of movie trailers, falls for Graham only when she is able to cry, complete with movie trailer voiceover; likewise the playwright Erica Barry only finds her voice by crying from a supposedly broken heart, which then inspires her to write her successful Broadway play based on her affair with Harry entitled *A Woman to Love*. Everything is material for the creative, cinematic production; there is no sense of privacy, only ego. Lubitsch replays scenes to lend credibility to the underlying truth of his characters’ emotions. Toward the conclusion of *Trouble in Paradise* the emotional pain experienced by Gaston, Mariette and Lily, as each separately loses a loved one, is conveyed through a series of parallel, confrontational scenes between pairs of characters in which Lubitsch continuously shifts our focus from one character to the another. Meyers, however, evokes circularity in which fiction and life are equivalent in that the former becomes a substitute for the latter. Snow falls on the theatrical stage of Erica’s play then in rehearsal; the falling snow in Paris as Erica and Harry re-affirm their love for one another is no less a romantic conceit.

Where Lubitsch's characters choose, Meyers' characters equivocate. In *Cluny Brown* (1946) Cluny Brown (Jennifer Jones) utters, child-like, that plumbing, a metaphor for sexual engagement, is "great fun" and refuses to accept the resulting social disapproval. Adam Belinski (Charles Boyer) responds by offering to build her a home with the most magnificent plumbing. "What's anyone's place?" he asks, celebrating the imaginative power to choose, notwithstanding social conventions to the contrary. In contrast, Meyers' Jane and Jake, who enliven each other's lives and have "fun", remain uncertain about the value of such "fun" and eventually separate because of those conventions which define a divorced couple. Jane comments to Jake that they are "not supposed to have fun like that," and Jake later responds to Jane's question about whether their affair "felt right" with "it was complicated." For Meyers that perceived messiness to life forecloses her characters from finding satisfaction.

Meyers provides no alternative to the careerism of her characters and the conventions which entrap them. Because of her self-consciousness, even her "happy endings" leave her characters adrift with ungrounded, romantic illusions. Lizzie (Natasha Richardson) and Nick (Dennis Quaid) in *The Parent Trap* may assure us that they "expect to live happily ever after," but the swelling music and the broad smiles on the faces of their twin daughters (Lindsay Lohan) renders that "happy ending" more fairytale than a marriage with a genuinely erotic consummation. In contrast, in Lubitsch's *Design for Living* it is the comic character, Max Plunkett (Edward Horton), who reprimands the child-like trio of Gilda, Tommy and George that "immorality may be fun but it isn't fun enough to take the place of 100% virtue and three square meals a day." As such, it is plain where Lubitsch's sympathies lie. Lubitsch rejects adulthood in the form of the chemist Mr. Wilson (Richard Haydn), who intends to remain for the rest of his life in the house annexed to his shop, and Henry Von Cleve's cousin Albert, who describes himself as a well made jacket. For Lubitsch neither unbridled careerism nor unrestrained imagination alone suffice. As a consequence, his endings find a balance in which the pairings of his characters, frequently in the form of marriage, satisfy.

As a careerist alone in a field dominated by men with the resulting bias against her, Meyers seems condemned to create narratives with dissatisfying endings. Indeed, Meyers is well aware of how Hollywood has limited her options and affected her movies. Lucy Brodsky in *Irreconcilable Differences*

observes that, because she is a woman, she has received no credit for writing with her then husband, Albert Brodsky, the screenplay for the critically and commercially successful movie “American Romance”. Albert responds by attacking her for being a “feminist”, as though that term were a curse. Darcy in *What Women Want* becomes separated from her ex-husband when she outperforms him at her former advertising agency, underscoring, as she points out, that the price a woman pays for success is that you “don’t get love”. Harry and Erica’s first dinner together in *Something’s Gotta Give* turns into a discussion about the different social expectations of women and men, particularly as they age. Diane Sawyer remains for Harry “the greatest pair of legs”, while Diane Sawyer is for Erica the consummate professional reporter. Amanda’s careerist drive in *The Holiday* to grow her own movie trailer company dooms her ability to find satisfaction in her relationships with men. As she tells her then boyfriend Ethan (Ed Burns), she has no time for sex and is glad that they kept separate homes and never married. In the context of a contemporary culture in which work, romance and the erotic are compartmentalized and a woman at best “gets to be the boy,” Meyers’ movie characters are left with only an idealized, romantic love, a sense of surprise at their failed marriages, because this “wasn’t supposed to happen to us”, and a collection of well crafted objects – BMWs, palatial homes, contemporary art. Not surprisingly, Meyers lacks any faith in the significance, let alone permanence, of the erotic and hence any faith in marriage.

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Lubitsch’s movies frequently take place in Paris. *The Love Parade* opens in Paris; the romantic entanglements in *Trouble in Paradise* occur in Paris; the Bohemian characters in *Design for Living* reside in a Parisian atelier; Captain Danilo takes refuge in the Paris of Maxim’s; Ninotchka and Leon fall in love in Paris; and Henry Von Cleve is educated into adulthood by a French maid. Paris for Lubitsch is a place of both romance and mechanical engineering, where the Eiffel Tower, a phallic metaphor, is unique because of its 54 degree angle and its marvels from a “technical standpoint”. Meyers is American by birth, and her movies are located in California, New York and London. Nevertheless, she, too, aspires to the romance of Paris. Meyers, however, perceives Paris as, at best, as a wintery, romantic playground (*Something’s Gotta Give*) and, at worst, as a playground for male philandering under the guise of a story about a prince charming (*Private Benjamin*). Jane Adler’s apprenticeship in Paris, where she learned to make

croque monsieur, is a thing of the past, like her former marriage with Jake, and she declines to grow old with him, notwithstanding his proposal. Thus, Meyers implicitly criticizes Jake's comment to Jane that their affair is "very French of us". Ever the classical director, Lubitsch is satisfied with his place in life, notwithstanding the limitations, both commercial and physical, which life imposes; ever the post-modernist, Meyers remains dissatisfied, notwithstanding the freedom and material goods from which she benefits. In contrast to Meyers' Darcy Maguire, who wins the women's Nike account with the slogan "no games, just sports" as a result of a presentation about how the road doesn't notice how old you are, how you look or who makes more money, Lubitsch would surely conclude that love for one's *besmert*, one's soulmate, is never neutral, always messy, and that the erotic demands "just games, no sports."

Endnotes

- 1 "While there is no doubting Meyers' directing ability, her passion lies in writing. 'Directing is really a way of protecting the writing,' she told Sheri Linden of the *Hollywood Reporter*. 'The reason I direct movies is so that what I've written can get on the screen. I don't feel driven to direct; I feel driven to write. And then, because I write, I'm driven to direct.'" *Encyclopedia of World Biography, Nancy Meyers*, <http://www.notablebiographies.com/newsmakers2/2006-Le-Ra/Meyers-Nancy.html>. Retrieved on December 31, 2011. ↑
- 2 Lubitsch's working habits are described in An Interview with Samson Raphaelson in Weinberg, Herman G., *The Lubitsch Touch: A Critical Study* (New York, E.P. Dutton & Co., 1968), 204 ("Seventy five percent of his work was done when the script was done."). Ernst Lubitsch himself boasted on how he changed nothing once film shooting began. Creelman, Irene, August 27, 1937 *The New York Sun*. ↑
- 3 *Ibid.*, 49. ↑
Paul, William, *Ernst Lubitsch's American Comedy* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1983), 291-2. ↑