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**FILM PLOTS: Scene-by-Scene Narrative Outlines
for Feature Film Study (1983)**

HITCHCOCK AND SELZNICK

THE RICH AND STRANGE COLLABORATION
OF ALFRED HITCHCOCK AND DAVID O. SELZNICK
IN HOLLYWOOD

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Weidenfeld & Nicolson
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with her Uncle Harold, an official at London's Old Bailey; over their lunches together, she later recalled, he told her the grisly details of one shocking crime after another. Hitchcock, whose appetite extended beyond food to murder stories, had hired Joan in 1935 as a fifteen-dollar-a-week secretary and quickly advanced her to continuity assistant, then script consultant. To some, he appeared smitten. But if Alma objected to his schoolboy infatuation with Joan Harrison, she concealed her feelings well.

From base camp at Manhattan's St. Regis Hotel, Hitchcock and company went sight-seeing and restaurant-hopping. Yet no activity overshadowed the purpose of the director's visit: he had come to America not for the ice cream (which he could spoon down in pints), but for the contacts. While abroad, he intended to discuss terms with all interested parties. Between indulgences at "21" and other New York restaurants, Hitchcock made time for Selznick International, RKO, and MGM. The press had conditioned studio representatives to expect a little British god. The director of *The 39 Steps* "uses his camera the way a painter uses his brush," *The New York Times* had noted, "stylizing his story and giving it values which the scenarists could hardly have suspected." The separation of genius from donkeywork must have annoyed cinematographer Bernard Knowles, screenwriter Charles Bennett, and producers Michael Balcon and Ivor Montague. By stepping aside, the mammoth Hitchcock could have revealed these and other collaborators clustered behind him, but he stood his ground. He would sell himself as *Variety* had billed him, "probably the best native director in England."

Selznick International and the other companies knew that Hitchcock had a small but loyal American audience. Along the Manhattan art-theater circuit, *The Man Who Knew Too Much* and *The 39 Steps* generated brisk business. Since revivals of the latter picture always cured box office doldrums, small exhibitors called it a mortgage lifter. But the American companies also knew that Hitchcock wanted something more than a cult following. During a Hollywood fishing expedition, Michael Balcon had landed American actors Robert Young and Sylvia Sydney for Hitchcock's *Secret Agent* and *Sabotage*. Though not stars, they were intended to enlarge his American audience; but neither brought Hitchcock wider notice across the Atlantic. *Secret Agent* and *Sabotage* were darker, more downbeat than the earlier Gaumont-Brit-

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SIGNING HITCHCOCK

While still under contract to Gaumont-British, Hitchcock sailed to America in August 1937. The rhythms of life aboard the *Queen Mary*—eating and sleeping, sleeping and eating—suited Hitchcock, a sybarite at heart. He defined happiness as "a clear horizon"; and for a week at sea, happiness was his. Joining Hitchcock at dinner each night were his nine-year-old daughter, Pat; his wife, Alma Reville; and his assistant, Joan Harrison. Alma, a head shorter than her husband and a third his weight, had met "Hitch" at Islington Studios, where she had worked as a film editor in the early 1920s. Their collaboration on several pictures had strengthened their mutual respect and led to a more personal relationship. They had married on December 2, 1926. Over the next decade, "Kitty" (as Hitchcock sometimes called Alma) had earned writing or supervisory credit on many of her husband's films. More than that of anyone else, Hitchcock trusted—and feared—Alma's opinion of his work. A new member of the Hitchcock entourage, Joan Harrison had studied literature at the university and criminal behavior

ish releases. They also betrayed the relative poverty of British film production in 1936. A prominent American critic found *Secret Agent* "marred by inept camera technique, film editing whose incorrectness hits one between the eyes, and strangely uneven sound recording which, at one point, simply causes the screen to go dead with an effect as though novocaine had just been administered to the ear-drums." *Variety* conceded that *Sabotage* improved matters but "just misses being great." Longing for American studios, American craftsmen, and American audiences, Hitchcock dangled his own line in the watering holes around Manhattan.

Hitchcock leaned toward Selznick International. *Little Lord Fauntleroy*, *The Garden of Allah*, and *A Star Is Born* could not have differed more from *The Man Who Knew Too Much* or *The 39 Steps*. They had neither the invention nor the speed, the rawness nor the sensibility of British Hitchcock. They also lacked the realism and the irony. They were nonetheless superior picturemaking. *Fauntleroy* had inaugurated Selznick International, against odds that the producer would have refused at the Santa Anita racetrack. Selznick poured his enormous creative energy into the fusty Victorian tale, promoted it aggressively, and won critical and popular success for his studio. A director raked for his "inexpert camera technique" and "incorrect" film editing must have admired the gloss. Yet more than craftsmanship drew Hitchcock to Selznick, for any major American studio could have given him technical support. Selznick offered Hitchcock an environment that fostered quality. The workplace should be called a factory, Hitchcock often grumbled, not a studio. Selznick International seemed both.

Hitchcock met the Selznick organization on the social and business fronts. Debonair Jock Whitney took the Hitchcocks to Saratoga for the races, and Kay Brown, the studio's quick-witted New York representative, met Hitchcock for lunch. Discover his salary demands and the status of his negotiations with MGM, Selznick directed Kay Brown, but offer Hitchcock nothing. The Englishman also dined with RKO's Lillie Messinger. Though she mentioned a couple of possible stories and Hitchcock indicated that he wished to make "a few pictures a year in Hollywood," RKO likewise offered the director nothing. Only MGM nibbled. Eager to staff its Denham studio near London with competent directors, Metro tentatively proposed \$165,000 for four pictures spread over two years, an arrangement that MGM's new British supervisor,



Hitchcock dictates script revisions to his wife, Alma Lucy Reville.

Michael Balcon, hoped his good friend would accept. Hitchcock stalled: MGM-Culver City appealed, MGM-Denham did not. Seeking a compromise without appearing anxious, he asked Selznick's representative to explore the possibility of offering him a tandem contract shared by MGM and Selznick International.

While Hitchcock returned to England to edit *Young and Innocent*, another of his man-on-the-run pictures, Selznick contemplated the future of Hitchcock with Selznick International. Like the previous generation's moguls, Selznick negotiated the way street fighters rumbled. For *Gone With the Wind*, he opened discussions on Leslie Howard by bluntly pointing out to agent Mike Levee that "Howard has been a box-office failure in all of his pictures in recent years without exception." Selznick wanted Oliver H. P. Garrett to script the film, yet invoked the writer's recently failed play in order to "buy him cheaply." Though not cattle, actors, writers, and directors were commodities; no producer wished to pay more than a fair market price. Selznick nevertheless considered bending on Hitchcock.

Like German director Fritz Lang, whom Selznick had brought to America several years before, Hitchcock was an original, someone capable of lending distinction to a company's releases; he was also a producer. Certainly Hitchcock remained eager. In the November 1937 *Film Weekly*, the director argued that motion picture production demanded "one man at the helm . . . the producer," generous, instinctive, perceptive; as an example, he named David Selznick. By late fall 1937, believing that Hitchcock had "a number of deals pending," Selznick appeared ready to offer the director not only a handsome per-picture fee but a guaranteed two-picture arrangement. At Thanksgiving, however, MGM suddenly withdrew from the Hitchcock sweepstakes. According to Louis Mayer's confidant Benjamin Thau, the studio did not want Hitchcock "under any circumstances or at any price"; furthermore, it regarded its own George Seitz as "a much better director than Hitchcock."

There are several possible reasons for the reversal. When a 1937 recession hurt the film business, even Mayer must have been haunted by memories of the Depression. HOLLYWOOD SITS ON A POWDER-KEG, read one headline on Halloween 1937. Hitchcock might have been swept away in a momentary wave of conservatism. The tottering relationship between Mayer and Michael Balcon may also explain the

change. Though Mayer demanded that Balcon complete a long internship in Culver City before sailing home to operate MGM abroad, he apparently never trusted the Englishman. Mayer closely supervised the stories, the budgets, and the schedules emanating from Denham. When he visited the studio in summer 1937, he publicly lectured Balcon on company policy. By terminating negotiations with a Balcon protégé, Mayer could further chasten his production supervisor. He would have considered the loss of Hitchcock small. The "best native director in England" resembled the "best native steak-and-kidney pie in America": Who cared? The comparison to George Seitz explains precisely how Metro—and perhaps much of Hollywood—perceived Hitchcock.

"Up the street," as Selznick, also located on Washington Boulevard, referred to Metro, filmmakers like George Seitz epitomized the MGM director. Accomplished yet pedestrian, Seitz made films the way Ford made cars. Screen goddesses Joan Crawford and Greta Garbo called Metro home, but the studio had earned its bread and butter through jungle adventures, sentimental family fare, and the robust comedies of Marie Dressler and Wallace Beery. Seitz could direct them all, with speed substituting for imagination. His record of five films in 1934, six in 1935, and five in 1936, so impressive to a company that relied on a steady flow of product to feed its distribution mechanism, shamed Hitchcock's, both in number and range of subject matter. Between 1929 and 1937, Hitchcock had averaged just over one film per year, the only successful ones thrillers. According to *The Saturday Evening Post*, "Hollywood regarded him [Hitchcock] as merely a good cops-and-robbers man." Yet rather than too slow or too narrow, Mayer may have found Hitchcock too venturesome. Hitchcock liked to experiment. He tended to cut against, rather than with, the grain of the narrative; and by suddenly altering point of view, revealing the storyteller's power, and thus forcing the audience to confront its own vulnerability, he elicited his most authentic thrills. British critics hailed the "psychological reactions of [his] leading characters" and called Hitchcock a genius. The notorious Erich von Stroheim may have been one artiste too many for MGM. Preferring Seitz's arithmetic to Hitchcock's algebra, Metro finally withdrew.

MGM's retreat concerned Selznick. Although he asked Daniel O'Shea to determine what American assignments Hitchcock might want, he also suspended all negotiations until he could see another

had slowed even this production, which also finished in ten weeks. And like *Young and Innocent*, Reissar said, *The Lady Vanishes* is taking "a very long time, because of all sorts of difficulties, which, I am assured, have nothing to do with the director."

A skeptical David Selznick found Hitchcock's schedules, "in terms of our production habits, quite long." MGM's major releases averaged eight weeks, its smaller ones less than a month; *David Copperfield*, *Anna Karenina*, and *A Star Is Born*—all Selznick productions, with the last photographed in time-consuming Technicolor—had each been completed in fewer than ten weeks. Bill Burnside's tart report, more impressionistic than Reissar's and equally secondhand, may have further troubled Selznick. "Being the only one at G-B [Gaumont-British] who knew anything about pictures," Burnside wrote, Hitchcock "was allowed to be his own boss and, consequently, took his time doing everything he wanted. Also, he is a fat man and a little lazy." The substance of Burnside's note influenced Selznick throughout his association with Hitchcock; producer and director differed about many things, but none more than money and time. Even if Hitchcock never learned of the report per se, the rumors of his foot-dragging followed him to America, where he heard and attempted to silence them. Many directors wished to be known for their thoroughness and discernment, few for their deliberateness. In Hollywood, as MGM's enthusiasm for George Seitz implied, haste made careers.

In spring 1938, with dimming prospects of an American deal, Hitchcock asked Myron Selznick personally to represent him. Although the two men had met briefly in England in 1924, the reticent Hitchcock and the aggressive Selznick—whom Niven Busch remembered as a "tough little slant-hatted, ready-fisted Jewish boy from the East Side"—could not have had much to say to each other. Within five years, Myron had become a Hollywood agent; within ten years, driven by a vendetta against the studios, he had become a Hollywood agent nonpareil. Myron Selznick's name gave the English filmmaker instant prestige. Selznick represented such prominent stars as Carole Lombard, Fredric March, Errol Flynn, and William Powell, as well as directors Frank Capra, Gregory La Cava, George Cukor, Ernst Lubitsch, Leo McCarey, and William Wellman. Several of them worked for Selznick International (in which Myron had a financial interest), but never to their disadvantage: David "never paid a nickel less for anyone he got,"

recalled Marcella Rabwin, who worked for Myron, then for David. He might even have paid a nickel more. As Hitchcock may have reasoned, Myron would provide not only an "in," but a lucrative "in." Stirring the pot, the director again announced that he "really was keen on going with David Selznick."

Perhaps encouraged by the Selznick agency, Hitchcock spoke in spring 1938 of the "many offers" he had fielded—and rejected—while awaiting something other than protests of interest from David Selznick. If they existed, the "many offers" must have resembled Fox's. Hitchcock wrote to his press representative Al Margolies in New York that after *The Lady Vanishes*, "it looks as though I shall do a picture for Bob Kane [and Twentieth Century-Fox] here. . . . I have made no plans beyond a possible Gaumont picture early next year." The sigh seems almost palpable. As the king of British directors, Hitchcock presided over an increasingly impoverished realm. In 1937, London's *Daily Herald* had reported that film producers' "squandermania" had weakened relations between motion picture companies and the banks, drying up production loans throughout the industry; according to the *Daily Film Renter*, the British film bubble had burst. With the warning flags aloft, Hitchcock yearned to come to America but feared that no one would invite him. Another transatlantic crossing seemed in order.

The three Hitchcocks sailed again for the States on June 1. Although spring 1938 had brought another recession to America and a news-worthy "economy wave" to Hollywood, Myron Selznick assured his client that he would return to England with a signed contract, probably from David Selznick. In later years, Hitchcock said, he made his first trip to Los Angeles "to consummate the Selznick deal." But Myron must have scoffed at either the money or the terms offered by his brother, for he continued to press both Samuel Goldwyn and RKO to take another look at Hitchcock. Like Selznick, Goldwyn pursued quality. "He didn't always know how to get the best," said Olivia de Havilland, who later worked for him, "but he was *interested* in the best." Showing its mettle in 1939, RKO hired theatrical director Orson Welles and thereafter gambled on *Citizen Kane*. In 1938, however, neither Goldwyn nor RKO chose to compete for Hitchcock's services. Without too much exaggeration, David Selznick wrote to Frank Capra that Myron could "not get bids for [Hitchcock] at the time I signed him."

After stops in Manhattan and Palm Beach, the Hitchcocks went west to tour southern California and finally meet David Selznick. Each man knew the other by his work and, to some extent, his personality. Hitchcock anticipated a mogul, Selznick a clever Englishman; neither foiled expectations. To Hitchcock, Selznick and his world must have seemed immense. Selznick International's leased forty-acre lot, small by industry standards, contained twelve massive soundstages. "I made *The Lady Vanishes* in a studio ninety feet long," Hitchcock told a reporter, "and I was forced to build sets in perspective." Not in America. Though Selznick himself stood a head higher than his English visitor, his height mattered less than his enthusiasm and drive. Nature gave him his energy, Benzadrine his endurance. Wondering whether the experimental drug could harm him, he wrote his physician to report that "I am practically living on the stuff and would prefer that I do not explode for a couple of years." He carried the pills in his trousers pockets and passed them around to production assistant Lydia Schiller, editor Hal Kern, and composer Max Steiner. Some refused, others needed them to keep pace with their boss.

"We weren't used to people like that in England," British actress Ann Todd later said of the producer. "He was so big, a big personality." When he built Tara for *Gone With the Wind*, his Southern technical advisor urged him to reduce its grand scale. But Selznick, as Wilbur Kurtz wrote in his journal, took "the larger view." He even expanded his name to suit his persona. Following the example of his father-in-law, Louis Mayer, who invented the middle initial *B* for himself, Selznick added an *O* after "David." Like Louis B. Mayer, Jack L. Warner, and Darryl F. Zanuck, David O. Selznick became a name to be reckoned with. His high-voltage extroversion may have overwhelmed the more sedate Hitchcock, but his vision of the pictures that a willing producer and an able director could make together must have impressed the Englishman.

"David, I have no cock," the director may have said to Selznick, as he had to actor Barry Foster during their first meeting. Since the early 1930s, Hitchcock had attempted to shock people, particularly actresses, in order to throw them off their guard; paradoxically, he relaxed them and put them in his power. "I have no 'cock'" would have left Selznick astonished, then baffled, at which time Hitchcock would have said, "Oh, what I mean is you call me 'Hitch.'" Easily moved to laughter,

Selznick may have found Hitchcock's practical jokes and blue humor amusing. But the director's cinematic imagination truly captivated him. "He was fascinated by Hitchcock's ideas," Irene recalled, ideas articulated with wit, succinctness, and authority. During this period, color photography interested Hitchcock; given Selznick's experience with Technicolor, the men undoubtedly discussed the subject. "To my mind," Hitchcock had said to a British reporter, "color should be used not just to give pictorial effect, but as a means of expression." Some examples: "the red funnels of a steamer against a gray dawn; the blink of traffic lights through a pea-soup fog; a drop of blood on a daisy petal."

A surprising number of Hollywood directors—Mervyn LeRoy and William Wyler, for instance—communicated poorly. Hitchcock did not. Using his pudgy fingers to draw a quick sketch or to reinforce a point, he spoke with verve and precision. Moreover, he conceptualized in pictures. "The visuals" were hardly *lingua franca* among American studio executives, but the industry's most distinguished producer quickly understood the implication of Hitchcock's ideas for the movies that he and the director might make. Despite the risks of employing Hitchcock, Selznick recognized that he shared the director's passion for originality, quality, perhaps even experimentation. Finally, his instincts about Hitchcock's abundant talent vanquished doubts about his speed and adaptability. Delighting Hitchcock, the brothers Selznick agreed to come to terms.

Hitchcock's July 14, 1938, contract with Selznick was relatively brief. The year before, RKO had required sixty-plus pages to sign Howard Hawks to a two-year employment agreement; Selznick International and Hitchcock required only eighteen. The contract granted the company Hitchcock's nonexclusive services as director (and to a limited extent as producer) for one film, with four one-year, one-picture options. In return, Hitchcock would earn \$50,000 for his first assignment (\$2,500 per six-day week), and 10 percent more with each of the first three options exercised. (Myron would of course claim 10 percent of all income.) Prior to the beginning of the principal period, without remuneration, he would "assist and collaborate in the writing and preparation of the treatment, adaptation, script, dialogue and continuity." Although Hitchcock and Selznick had discussed possible maiden

films, the contract named none. Across town, the Feldman-Blum agency urged its clients to have at least budgets, if not film titles, specified by their employment agreements. Money, William Dover told director George Stevens in 1940, "can have a considerable influence upon the calibre of the picture you will be able to turn out in association with [a] studio." At Selznick International, however, David Selznick's exclusive slate of "A" films shielded Hitchcock from assignment to inferior projects.

Hitchcock's employment agreement lacked what agent Charles Feldman regarded in 1940 as "the shocking and objectionable features of general studio contracts." For example, Selznick permitted Hitchcock to veto loanout offers involving projects or companies abhorrent to him. As an unusual provision, he also consented to pay the \$125 weekly salary of the director's assistant, Joan Harrison. Yet laid beside those of his American peers, with their fees, controls, guarantees, and contingent compensations, Hitchcock's contract paled. Under the terms of his 1937 RKO contract, for instance, Howard Hawks promised to direct up to three "Class 'A'" pictures each year for a \$130,000 annual salary; the studio also promised him a bonus for speed, a percentage of the profits based on his films' gross receipts, the right to prepare a rough cut, and (under certain conditions) a producer's screen credit either at the top or bottom of the main titles. George Stevens's one-year, two-picture employment agreement with Columbia in 1940 gave him not only \$200,000 but 15 percent of the profits, a figure comparable to Hawks's on Columbia's *Only Angels Have Wings* (1939).

Hitchcock and many other foreign directors approached Hollywood as suppliants. Without an American track record, an established immigrant director in the 1930s could not have expected (and in some instances would not have wanted) profit participation, something that Hitchcock fought for throughout his last Selznick years; neither could he have expected significant salary advances tied to options, nor the right to prepare a final cut of his work. (Selznick supervised post-production at his studio, so unlike Hawks's and Stevens's contracts, Hitchcock's excluded editing from the list of services to be rendered.) Hitchcock could not even have expected—though he originally asked for and very much desired—a two-picture guarantee. No American company except Selznick International had offered him acceptable terms for even a single picture. Perhaps more than any other element



In 1938 Hitchcock told a *New Yorker* reporter that the "increased pressure or more complicated methods in Hollywood" did not worry him—"as long as there's one mind in charge." The reporter was certain that Hitchcock meant his own.

of his contract, though, its limited, nonexclusive commitment disappointed Hitchcock. Theoretically, the contract permitted him to freelance for thirty-two weeks annually and thus expand his independence; yet in summer 1938, with Hollywood reticent to sign him and an "economy wave" still churning, Hitchcock feared *not* working for thirty-two weeks a year. Hitchcock had many anxieties—policemen, heights, confrontations—but the specter of financial insecurity perhaps disturbed him most of all. Unfortunately for the director, Selznick had the superior bargaining position.

One afternoon in that summer of 1938, while studio legal counsel Daniel O'Shea haggled with Myron Selznick over the fine points of the contract, a trolley from the Brown Derby restaurant rolled into David Selznick's office. The steaming pots, the cups and saucers, and the scones and crumpets arrived—but not the tea. Unperturbed, Hitchcock and David Selznick drank their hot water and amiably discussed *Rebecca* and *Titanic*, the two most likely Hitchcock assignments. For *Titanic*, Selznick half seriously proposed buying the *Leviathan*, an American merchant marine ship; Hitchcock could already envision a couple of scenes.

I wanted to go to a card table, where four men were playing poker: go close to the whiskey and soda . . . the level is changing in the glass, tilting, you see? Same effect! Mind you, we've already told the audience that the ship has been struck. Then you go and say, "Here are the innocent people, they don't know what's going on." We might go down to the kitchen and I'd see a chef is putting the final touches to a beautiful cake with a pastry bag. . . . And the audience would say, "Don't bother! Don't bother! It's never going to be eaten! The ship's going down!"

Given Selznick's enthusiasm for Hitchcock's fertile ideas, their initial meetings undoubtedly left them exhilarated. Hitchcock's July 1938 contract may have disappointed him in certain respects, but as he, Alma, and Pat later boarded the *Normandie* for England, the director must have been optimistic about an American future in Selznick's hands.

Autumn came, then passed. On seeing the laudatory reviews of *The Lady Vanishes* in January 1939, Selznick concluded that "Hitchcock's free time will be grabbed up quick." Zanuck and probably others would soon see *The Lady* and might well reconsider their coolness to Hitch-

cock as a Hollywood-based director; Daniel O'Shea believed that Hitchcock's burgeoning reputation along with "the publicity attendant upon his [March 1939] arrival [in America] will bring him further offers that may be better than ours and which the [Myron] Selznick office will feel in duty bound to give to him." (Though Hitchcock later charged that the Selznick brothers colluded to his financial disadvantage, Myron apparently exaggerated the interest of other American firms in Hitchcock in order to force David to pay more for him.) Selznick thus decided to offer Hitchcock a modified contract: Under its terms, the Englishman would direct two pictures—instead of one—the first year, with options altered accordingly. Examining this revised contract some time later, Hitchcock's business advisor called it "replete with provisions unfavorable to Hitchcock and advantageous to Selznick"; the director himself would later come to regard it as a collar that rubbed and choked. In March 1939, however, with no pending offers from Zanuck or his peers, Hitchcock eagerly signed the amended contract.

In place of the cul-de-sac that England had become, Selznick had offered Hitchcock the Yellow Brick Road. "When he starts work for David Selznick early next year," *Newsweek* wrote in October 1938, "Hitchcock will not be regimented by Hollywood's communal method of moviemaking. As in England, he will dominate every phase of the film's story and production; the finished job will reflect no personality other than his own." No innocent, Hitchcock understood the difference between newsmagazine puff and Hollywood reality. The producer-director relationship, as Hitchcock knew, invariably mixed friction with harmony, frustration with compromise, and struggle with achievement. MGM had strewn the Yellow Brick Road to Oz with ten writers, four directors, and a prolonged shooting schedule; thereafter, the finished job bore no one's "personality." The film capital's modus operandi, if not David Selznick himself, might very well chew up Alfred Hitchcock. Yet more than perhaps any other executive in the American motion picture industry, Selznick also had the financial resources and the artistic flair to raise Hitchcock to international importance. For the ruddy-faced Englishman, pleased with his Selznick contract and happily anticipating his years in Hollywood, the horizon appeared bright if not clear.

REBECCA

Rebecca

rose husband and the forbidding Mrs. Danvers, Rebecca's devoted housekeeper.

The second Mrs. de Winter feels ill at ease at Manderley. Her halfhearted attempts to assume her position in the house merely accent the differences between her and Manderley's former chatelaine, whose suite Danvers maintains as a shrine. A costume ball promises to cheer de Winter. Guided by the insidious Danvers, the new bride chooses a gown previously worn by her predecessor. When de Winter angers, she attributes his distress to his profound love of his first wife and momentarily considers Mrs. Danvers's suggestion that she throw herself from the second-story window into the stormy night below. Cries from outside divert her. A wind-tossed sea has produced the unexpected: the body of Rebecca, recovered from the boat in which she perished. De Winter finally confesses to his second wife that he in fact detested Rebecca, a wicked woman, and killed her, opening the sea cocks in her boat and sending her and the craft out to sink in the bay. Despite the attempt of Jack Favell, Rebecca's cousin and lover, to have de Winter convicted as Rebecca's murderer, a second inquest clears him. The distraught, avenging Mrs. Danvers burns down Manderley, yet its flames seem at last to release the de Winters from the ghost of the charming but deadly Rebecca.

Hitchcock, a voracious reader, skimmed the galley proofs of *Rebecca* while filming du Maurier's *Jamaica Inn* at Elstree Studios in spring 1938. Not yet under contract to Selznick, the director began negotiating for the screen rights, not only as an investment but as leverage in securing employment abroad: if the novel swept America, Hitchcock would control *Rebecca*'s future and possibly his own. For Selznick, who read a synopsis of the manuscript in late spring 1938, the story of the novel's awkward and shy heroine seemed ideal. Selznick's most impressive discoveries tended to be young women, including Ingrid Bergman, Vivien Leigh, and Joan Fontaine; furthermore, he had long been associated with the industry's premier "women's director," George Cukor. In certain respects a "women's producer," attuned to the sensibilities and psychology of the American female (at least as purveyed by the era's mass-circulation magazines), Selznick agreed with story editor Val Lewton that the second Mrs. de Winter "probably exemplifies the feeling that most young women have about themselves." On the commercial side, a couple's filmgoing decisions generally rested

Among the hundreds of manuscripts, galley proofs, and published novels that poured into the East Coast offices of Selznick International every month, Kay Brown read only a few that she could enthusiastically recommend. Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca* became one of them. *Rebecca* is "the most fascinating story I have read in ages," Brown wired Hollywood, a certain best-seller. In the novel, a plain and innocent young woman (the first-person narrator, whose name du Maurier never reveals) serves as paid companion to a crass American dowager visiting the Riviera. Gossip has it that the aristocratic Maxim de Winter has fled England to Monte Carlo in order to elude painful memories of his recently deceased, much-beloved wife, the fabulously beautiful Rebecca; yet almost inexplicably he proposes marriage to the unglamorous paid companion. Following a honeymoon in Venice, the newlyweds return to Manderley, de Winter's mansion. Here, the young bride confronts not only the memory of Rebecca—which seems to permeate the estate and to preoccupy and torment its owner—but also her mo-