HUMANITIES INSTITUTE
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The Thousand Eyes of Dr. Mabuse 1960

Fritz Lang (1890-1976)

OVERVIEW

Television was an amazing novelty from the future when it was featured in a scene in 1927's *Metropolis*. The master of the city kept check of the machine room from a TV screen in his headquarters. The future became now when Fritz Lang made television the centerpiece of his final film—*The Thousand Eyes of Dr. Mabuse* (1960). Most of its action takes place in a Berlin hotel designed for surveillance and bugged with cameras—hence the thousand eyes. An American businessman is in town to sign a deal for nuclear missiles. He becomes the target of Mabuse who orchestrates a conspiracy for the missiles from a control room with CCTV screens.

Dr. Mabuse. The film was the third appearance of the arch-villain. His cinematic premiere had been in one of Lang's early films, *Dr. Mabuse the Gambler* (1922) in which Mabuse dominated others with his powerful gaze. The director revisited the character in 1931 in *The Testament of Dr. Mabuse.* This time the doctor was represented by an omniscient voice. *The Testament* was to be Lang's last film in Germany until 1959 when he directed his two-part Indian epic. It was the last stage of a career that started in the Weimar Republic and developed during his self-imposed exile in Hollywood. In four decades, he contributed to diverse genres such as western, epic fantasy, war drama, and thriller. He directed a progenitor of science fiction and was a leading inspiration to film noir.

The Indian Tomb, Tiger of Eschnapur and *The Thousand Eyes of Dr. Mabuse* were the product of his return to a prosperous West Germany. The New German cinema would come to fruition within a couple of years, French New Wave was influential, and spectacular Hollywood films were hugely successful—e.g. *Spartacus* (1960) and *Ben-Hur* (1959).

Like the previous *The Testament*, the film was based on characters created by author Norbert Jacques. The script was inspired by a book in Esperanto, Jan Fethke's (as Jean Forge) *Mr. Tot Buys a Thousand Eyes* (1931). The film paved the way for other Mabuse films in the early 1960s. These were inspired by Edgar Wallace's crime novels and became part of the thriller sub-genre that came to be known as the krimi.

Mid-Century Setting. Lang had shot his previous Indian epics in color and the result was stunningly beautiful compositions. For the black and white Mabuse film, he teamed up with cinematographer Karl Löb whose cinematography would define 1960s krimis. The film's production designer Erich Kettelhut had worked with Lang for *Metropolis*. In *The Thousand Eyes*, the hotel which brings together diverse characters is elaborately decorated with mid-century modern furniture. Characters' personal spaces are customized to reflect their parts. The wealthy American's suite is uniquely decorated with a bonsai tree, oriental vases and wall art. His love interest (an accomplice of Mabuse) is staying in a feminine room with upholstered walls and furry rugs. The enigmatic Mabuse's (posing as a fortune teller) office located somewhere else has an eclectic decoration with a grandfather clock, carved chairs and neon signs of zodiac star constellations on the walls.

The Three Actors. The leading actors were Wolfgang Preiss (Dr. Mabuse), Peter Van Eyck (the American tycoon) and Gert Fröbe (Inspector Kras). The three would later come together again as German officers in the ensemble cast of 1962's *the Longest Day.* In the war drama about the Normandy landings, they respectively had the parts of a general, colonel and sergeant. Preiss had played Erich von Stauffenberg in the July Plot story *the Plot to Assassinate Hitler* (1955). In his prolific career he was often cast as military men—three times as a field marshal, portraying Rommel, Kesselring and von Rundstedt.

Van Eyck was another distinguished actor who was no stranger to playing officers. He was cast as a German in 1940s Hollywood films and few times as Americans after his return to Germany. Gert Fröbe would rise to fame playing James Bond's nemesis in *Goldfinger* (1964). While Auric Goldfinger is a criminal mastermind in league with Mabuse, another Bond adversary, the titular character of *Dr. No* (1962) shares more resemblance with their mutual interest in rocketry. The reclusive Dr. No's plan to launch nuclear rockets from his base in a Caribbean island would be thwarted at the last moment. Mabuse on the other hand, never got that far. Of the two doctors, No is more directly a product of the Cold War—the Cuban Missile Crises was only couple of years away, a full-throttle arms race was underway and the threat of nuclear apocalypse loomed.

Surveillance. The Cold War paranoia forms the backdrop of *The Thousand Eyes'* theme of technological surveillance—which places it in a lineage that includes many films in various genres such as *the Conversation* (1974), *Sliver* (1993), *Enemy of the State* (1998), *Minority Report* (2002), *The Lives of Others* (2006), and *Vacancy* (2007).

Hotel Luxor and the Nazi Past. Back to the Hotel Luxor. As far-fetched as it may sound, the idea of entirely wiretapping a hotel had a counterpart in recent history. SS bigwig Reinhard Heydrich's (his assassination was the subject of Lang's *Hangmen Also Die!*) SD intelligence agency had operated a high-end brothel in order to collect information about its prominent patrons—which was wildly fictionalized by Tinto Brass in his controversial *Salon Kitty* (1976), a precursor to the Nazisploitation film cycle.

The question posed at the beginning of Lang's *Spies* was "who is behind all this?". Similarly, the first Dr. Mabuse film was centered on the supervillain as the originator of the story. With *The Thousand Eyes,* the question is not about a person, but a place. A police chief asks it, as he orders his underlings to find out "what's going on at Hotel Luxor?".

Another famous hotel, the Overlook of Kubrick's *Shining* had its caretaker tormented by apparitions in its halls and ballroom. Entangled in a perpetual present, Jack Nickolson's character would eventually slip into psychosis. Fredric Jameson suggests that the Overlook is indeed haunted, not by ghosts but by history—more specifically by a unique decade, the Roaring Twenties (Jameson, 98). Similarly, a character in *The Thousand Eyes* points out that the Hotel Luxor is doomed because of its past—it originally started as a Nazi project. Its cornerstone was constructed in May 1944 when Nazi Germany had not yet lost the war and its atrocities were far from being over. For that particular month, the outlook was grim—thousand bomber raids on Berlin, German submarines sunk almost daily and Normandy landings just around the corner (Wikipedia Cotributors). Presumably the hotel was completed and began service following the war. Gestapo's project to create a site for surveillance had persevered and even upgraded with the new technology in the post-Nazi era.

A year before the premiere of *The Thousand Eyes*, Theodor W. Adorno delivered a lecture that was published as "the Meaning of Working Through the Past". He warned against "forgetfulness" and urged coming to terms with a dark past by understanding the causes of what happened (Adorno, 100). In a similar vein, Lang is calling his contemporaries to look beyond the paranoia of the Cold War and reflect on the legacy of recent history. *The Thousand Eyes* is a complex film that invites thinking about a dark past, its spillover to the present and the future imperiled by technology.

CHARACTERS

Dr. Mabuse / Peter Cornelius / Dr. Jordan. "Psychiatrist" Jordan was so impressed by Mabuse's career as a criminal that he assumed his identity. In order to revive Mabuse's goal of creating chaos, Jordan seeks getting hold of nuclear weapons and using them. His Cornelius persona is a manipulating psychic who pretends to be blind—and Irish, as Cornelius claims that he owes his clairvoyance to his roots in Ireland where "the elementary power of nature" is paramount.

Inspector Kras. Kras reprises Otto Wernicke's Lohmann character from *M* and *The Testament of Dr. Mabuse*. The inspector is seen reading *the Psychology of Crime* and Ed McBain thrillers while smoking his fat pipe. He is intelligent and shrewd but wastes time with things like suspects' tax returns and employment history. Consequently, the solution of the mystery is hardly his achievement. Insurance salesman / Interpol agent Mistelzweig is always one step ahead of Kras.

Henry B. Travers. The tycoon is an arms dealer and government contractor who is visiting Germany to buy nuclear ballistic missiles. Mabuse engineers a scheme to take possession of his arsenal and uses Melin as bait.

Marion Menil. She starts out as an accomplice of Mabuse and a willing participant in the conspiracy. Her assignment is to get the rich American to marry her. She was hypnotized for the task but eventually her love prevailed and she deserted the crime ring.

Hieronymous B. Mistelzweig. The insurance agent is a busybody who pops up in unexpected places. He is in fact an Interpol agent in disguise, assigned to investigate the murders associated with the Hotel Luxor. As a detective, his achievements surpass the Berlin police: Mistelzweig detects that the hotel has a secret basement and Cornelius fakes blindness. At the end, he prevents Mabuse/Jordan from escaping and saves Travers and Menil entrapped in the control room.

"Clubfoot" Roberto Menil. A crook in Mabuse's gang who plays the part of Marion Menil's husband and Mabuse's decoy. The latter stages his mock killing by Travers in order to disorient the American and suck him deeper into his scheme. As soon as he has no more use of Roberto, Mabuse gets him killed.

No. 12. Mabuse's assassin murders the reporter as well as fellow gang members the driver and the "clubfoot". Whereas he uses the fancy needle gun for the assassinations, during the getaway attempt he has a machine gun blazing. He goes down the bridge together with Mabuse. As the henchman who stays loyal to the end, he is in the same league with *The Testament*'s Hardy and *Gambler*'s Georg. No.12 was played by Howard Vernon, cult actor of Jess Franco films.

Berliners. A recurrent trope in Lang's earlier films was the choreographed crowd, typically appearing as an angry and potentially menacing mob. *Metropolis, Gambler* and *M* had featured such large groups. Crowds were less frequent in his Hollywood period with some exceptions—e.g. *Fury* and *Hangmen Also Die!*. A crowd of Berliners has the spotlight in one of the few exterior scenes in *The Thousand Eyes*. As Marion Menil attempts suicide in front of Travers' suite, people gather on the pavement and at the windows of surrounding buildings. A woman cries she can't look at the sight but just a moment later grabs the opera glasses of the man next to him. When Menil safely goes inside, a man pats his belly and says he is relieved because it would ruin his appetite if she had fallen down. The onlookers are enthralled by the spectacle and they watch the incident unfold as if it was horror film.

SYNOPSIS

A mysterious high-tech assassination recalls the crimes of Dr. Mabuse, an evil genius who, decades ago, attempted to "shock the world with terrorist acts and undermine governments to establish a fantastic reign of crime". Threads lead the police inspector Kras to focus on Hotel Luxor, where, an American businessman names Travers happens to stay. Travers strikes a romance with the suicidal Marion Meril, who is shadowed by her enigmatic psychiatrist Dr. Jordan. Among the guests of the hotel is a nosy insurance agent named Mistelzweig—he informs Kras that Luxor was initially conceived as a surveillance project of the Gestapo. Both Kras and Travers get to hear the premonitions of the blind psychic Cornelius. Meanwhile, certain hitmen continue to carry out surveillance and assassination operations as per the orders issued from a control room, where an individual also carefully monitors the rooms of the hotel via video.

Travers proposes to Meril and offers to help her solve the problem of her abusive husband. He intervenes when the man attacks Meril and kills him—not knowing that the whole scene was staged by the master-criminal who is still unidentified. The jealous husband—another goon of the gang—is murdered and the crime scene points once again to the guests of Luxor.

Meril confesses to her role in the conspiracy—everything, including the suicide attempt was stage managed by Mabuse, who is after Travers' assets. The couple is seized by Mabuse's minions. A hidden door in the elevator opens to Mabuse's control room with the television screens monitoring the entire hotel. Travers tries to fight the captors but is subdued and Menil accidentally gets shot. As she lies bleeding, Jordan arrives. He introduces himself as none other than Doctor Mabuse—or more accurately the person who has assumed the identity of the arch-villain from decades ago. He nearly evades the police but his car falls to the river during the chase. Mistezweig is revealed to be an Interpol agent; he rescues the couple trapped in the hotel's basement.

SCENES

An Assassination. A man drives his coupe unaware that he is being stalked by another car. At stoplights, the shady figure in the back seat of the black Mercedes pulls up a futuristic looking rifle and snipes the man with a silent shot. A traffic policeman notices the dead man only after all the cars drive away.

A Clairvoyant. Concurrent to the assassination, Inspector Kras receives a phone call from Peter Cornelius, a blind clairvoyant whose previous tips have been helpful to the police. This time he is calling to warn Kras about his premonition. He relates a hazy account of the drive-by shooting and urges the inspector to take action. It's too late, as the assassin "No. 12" is already dutifully reporting the successful completion of the mission over the car phone—to a mysterious "Doctor". No one in the crime ring has seen him in person and the driver is a tad too inquisitive. The hitman warns him that asking too many questions about their boss could prove fatal.

An Unusual Weapon. Not before long, Kras is informed about the man found dead at the traffic lights. The victim is a well known television reporter named Barter. Initially no foul play is suspected as there are no visible wounds on the body. However, autopsy reveals that a steel needle was stuck in his brain. The piece matches the armament of an experimental weapon developed by the US army. Its blueprints were stolen by a soldier stationed in Germany. He was later found murdered and the police have no clues about whoever may be in possession of the weapon.

Dr. Mabuse. The reporter had been working on a sensational story but its details are unknown. His home has been ransacked and all of his notes have vanished. At the meeting of the police chiefs—Lang's homage to *M* in which seniors officials gathered amid thick cigarette smoke to discuss the murders—one of them mentions that the assassination appears to be the copycat of a murder case he had worked on many years ago as a young detective.





The officer recounts the story of Dr. Mabuse, "an evil genius" who attempted to "shock the world with terrorist acts and undermine governments to establish a fantastic reign of crime". The other participants are curious why they have never even heard of the name. He vaguely responds that the investigation had coincided with the rise of Nazism. He assures them that the two incidents are merely similar—Mabuse died in a mental asylum in 1932 and he personally saw the corpse. A zooming shot of Mabuse's gravestone solidifies his assertion. Whereas 1922's Dr. Mabuse was an expert in telepathy and hypnosis, his namesake in 1960 mainly relies on CCTV and wiretapping.

The Hotel Luxor. So much for closure though—next scene shows an ordinary looking van cruising surreptitiously while loudspeakers in the back broadcast a voice that purports to belong to Dr. Mabuse. He is addressing two technicians that attentively decode his message in the communications vehicle. At the other end of the line, "Dr. Mabuse" is calling them from a control room with high-tech electronic equipment—initially, only his shoes are seen and he is suggested to be a clubfoot.

Following Mabuse's instructions, the covert vehicle proceeds to surveil an American tourist staying at the Hotel Luxor. Threads converge as police also focus their attentions on the same hotel because the dead reporter was known to have frequented the Luxor. His murder was the last of a series of unsolved homicide cases somehow connected with the hotel. In separate instances, an arms dealer, a bank executive and a corporate attorney were killed shortly after their stays. The police commissioner informs his colleagues that an undercover Interpol agent who was assigned to the investigation had recently moved there. Inspector Kras also focuses his attention on the goings on at the Hotel Luxor.

A Guest Attempts Suicide. Concurrently, an excited crowd has assembled in front of the hotel to watch a suicide attempt in progress. A woman standing on a window's ledge refuses the manager's pleas to step inside. A crowd of Berliners gathers to watch Menil's suicide attempt. The onlookers are enthralled by the spectacle.





The woman happens to be right outside the suite of Henry B. Travers, the American businessman that Mabuse was prying on. Travers opens the window and smoothly talks the despondent woman out of jumping down. He persuades her to step inside the suite where he tries to calm her down. Just as she requests that her psychiatrist Dr. Jordan to be informed, he shows up at the suite. Jordan explains that a nurse had recognized the name of his patient Marion Menil while listening to the radio's news broadcast. He praises Travers' tactful handling of the situation and Menil is taken to her own room to rest. In a quintessential Lang shot, Travers talks with Jordan the psychiatrist, while the American businessman's secretary looks on.

Travers. Travers is a military contractor of the US government who uses an alias to keep a low profile. He is in Europe to purchase ballistic missiles from Germany and is negotiating a deal with Taran Nuclear Works in London. The feat of "the multimillionaire American" makes it to the headlines and his identity gets exposed, but that doesn't bother Travers—he is obviously enchanted with Menil who now takes up most of his attention. Details such as the Mid-century modern décor of Travers' suite point to Lang's care of set design and recall his early films



Three Suspects. The hotel manager informs the police that Menil attempted suicide a couple of hours after she received a threatening telegram from her husband. To complicate things, Kras is tipped by a bartender that the deceased reporter was acquainted with her. He pays her a visit but an agitated Menil evades his questions.

Mr. Know it All. Hotel Luxor's lobby is an important meeting point. At the bar, Kras meets a nosy figure who is always on the scene at critical moments. Hieronymous B. Mistelzweig introduces himself as an insurance agent staying at the hotel. The chatty Mistelzweig is a horoscope buff and mentions that the hotel's stars make him uneasy. It has a troubled "birth" chart—its cornerstone was laid in May 1944 when Nazi Germany was not yet defeated. The hotel was a project of the Gestapo which had conceived it as a surveillance site.



Psychic's Premonition come True. Meanwhile, Travers has a seemingly chance encounter with Cornelius after his driver almost hits him as the seer crosses the street with his service dog. Subsequently they have a little chat in the car. Cornelius illustrates his visionary powers by mentioning something no one except for Travers could know—a minor injury that occurred in the suite that morning. He also remarks that Travers' current business negotiation—the acquisition of Taran—is not meant to have a positive conclusion. When Travers doesn't look too impressed, Cornelius gives a starling demonstration of his prowess by alerting the driver about a truck that comes out of nowhere and almost crashes with their car.

Inspector Kras' Ruse. Kras thinks he has a promising lead: The driver of Mabuse's hit squad is no longer just curious; he is afraid and wants out of the crime ring. He has approached the police but not yet come forward. The inspector devises a ploy to test the reactions of the main suspects in the murder of the reporter —he has singled out Menil, Cornelius and Mistelzweig. To each one, he mentions a "strange phone call" that he has received. According to Kras' ruse, the hint of the driver's desertion would lead the true culprit to panic. The trick not only fails, but it gets the driver murdered by Mabuse's henchman No.12. Kras himself becomes a target and barely survives an assassination attempt as a bomb placed in his office kills his assistant.



Peeping Toms. Meanwhile, the romance between Travers and Menil thickens. She divulges her fear and hatred of her abusive husband. She says that his extreme jealousy arises from having a clubfoot. They dance in the hotel's casino under the watchful eyes of Mistelzweig—but he is not the only one spying on them. Someone monitors their every movement and eavesdrops on their conversations by way of hidden cameras and microphones.



At the Hotel Luxor, there is more to surveillance than closed circuit television. The slimy hotel detective approaches Travers to share a secret in exchange for his generosity. Together they go to the room next to Menil's and Detective Berg points to a one-way mirror that offers a full view of her room. Travers stands transfixed, gazing at Menil getting dressed—*The Thousand Eyes* shares more than a year with Hitchcock's *Psycho* and Powell's *Peeping Tom*. Voyeurism is a central theme in all three) As Travers peeps into her room, someone else watches both rooms from the four video monitors in a control room. After a while Travers composes himself and tells the detective to reserve the room for him "so that no one else can misuse it".

Nuclear Deal Imperiled. A telegram informs Travers about a major explosion at the Taran reactor. The nuclear disaster has rendered the acquisition void and he cancels his trip to London, deciding to prolong his stay at the Luxor and concentrate on Menil. On the other hand, he takes note of the accuracy of Cornelius' earlier premonition about the ill-fated deal.



Séance. Cornelius invites Kras to a séance—another one of Lang's homages; it recalls the scene he directed 38 years ago in *Dr. Mabuse the Gambler*. The séance turns out to be eventful, although it makes little contribution to the investigation. Sitting with his back to the window, the inspector is saved from a sniper's shot by Cornelius' timely warning. The shooter on some rooftop across the street can't be found. On the other hand, the perceptive Mistelzweig realizes that Cornelius is wearing white lenses to feign blindness, but for the time being he keeps this discovery to himself.



Menil's Husband Appears. Travers proposes to Menil. In return, she challenges his resolution by revealing a secret. After putting up with her husband Roberto's abuses for a long time, Menil says that she tried to

poison him. The attempt failed and she escaped, ending up in the hotel. The story doesn't deter Travers and he is about to reiterate his proposal—just then the phone rings and Dr. Jordan alerts Menil that her vindictive husband is on his way to the hotel. Promising to return soon, she goes to her room to deal with the problem. After some hesitation, Travers follows her and takes position in the room with the one-way mirror to see how things will turn out.

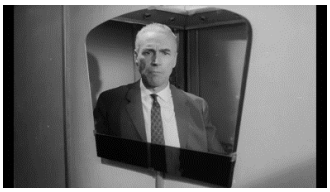
There is a surprise when the husband arrives. His clubfoot identifies him as the person issuing orders early on as Mabuse. Travers continues watching and Roberto turns violent. When he attacks Menil with a knife, Travers charges through the mirror, grabs a pistol that Menil tosses his way and shoots the frenzied man. As Roberto lies dead, Menil calls her psychiatrist to come over to help. As was the case in the previous instance, Dr. Jordan turns up right away. He has the corpse taken to an ambulance under the pretense of an emergency. He lets Menil know that he will cover up the killing by reporting that the man died on his way to the hospital. With the main obstacle out of their way, the couple prepares to leave the country.

Layers of Deception. The whole scene with the killing of the jealous husband was staged to dupe Travers. The gun fired blanks and Roberto—an underling and decoy of Mabuse—had simply played dead. In the ambulance a surprise awaits him and No.12 shoots him with the air gun, this time killing him for real. A few hours later, a patrolman arriving to the scene of a fire reports finding Roberto's body in a nearly burnt out dwelling. The ballistic experts inform Kras that the steel needles which killed Menil's husband and the reporter Barter are identical. This finding points to her involvement with the crimes. Kras is also tipped about her departure plan with Travers and hastily leads officers to the Hotel Luxor.



Meanwhile, Travers has suspicions of his own, especially about the psychiatrist materializing so swiftly. As they are about to leave the room, he questions Menil. She confesses to her role in the conspiracy—everything, including the suicide attempt was stage managed by Mabuse. This is one of many self-references in Lang's final film, recalling *Spies* with an incident staged at a hotel.

Mabuse planned for them to get married so that he could gain access to Travers' assets. She persuades him that her love is for real and they need to run away before Mabuse's henchmen get to them. "They observe everything" she screams, pointing to the cameras and microphones in the suite.



Face-off. Before they can get off the elevator, the couple is seized by the hotel's detective and engineer who turn out to be Mabuse's minions. A hidden door in the elevator opens to Mabuse's control room with the television screens monitoring the entire hotel. Travers tries to fight the captors but is subdued and Menil accidentally gets shot. As she lies bleeding, Jordan arrives. He introduces himself as none other than Doctor Mabuse—or more accurately the person who has assumed the identity of the arch-villain from decades ago. Thanks to the screens he notices the police surrounding the building and heads out, locking the door behind him. Dr. Mabuse has now dropped the psychiatrist persona and prepares for the final showdown.



Mistelzweig is in the lobby observing the elevator's control panel. He is intrigued by the car arriving vacant from Travers' floor and Jordan vanishing after entering it in the ground floor. Jordan almost manages to sneak out quietly but Mistelzweig spots him and alerts the police. Mabuse makes it to the hit squad's car waiting for him outside and drives away. A high speed chase ensues with Kras in pursuit. Mabuse drives while his crony No.12 sprays the tailing police with a machine gun—Dr. Mabuse always has one fiercely loyal henchman and this time it is No. 12 who is seen using the experimental needle rifle in this scene. No. 12 is played by Howard Vernon, the cult actor of Jesús Franco films;

The chase comes to end at police's roadblock on a bridge, as a hail of bullets causes the car to roll over and fall to the river. Back at the hotel, Mistelzweig rescues the couple entrapped in the basement and the film concludes with Travers kissing Menil at the hospital.

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Dr. Mabuse/Peter Cornelius/Dr. Jordan–**Unconscientious** (Wrackful)**; Closed** (Out of Touch, Blanched)
Henry B. Travers – **Disagreeable** (Peeping)

DR. MABUSE / PETER CORNELİUS / DR. JORDAN (Unconscientious, Closed)

Mabuse's two personas—the scientist and the psychic—function as a team. As the chief of the crime ring, Jordan makes sure that Cornelius' premonitions actually take place. The fortune teller's function seems to be manipulating and confusing the victims as well as the police.

Mabuse/Jordan becomes the dangerous criminal that he is as a consequence of his discovery of two distinct master plans: the original Mabuse's notes and the hotel's designs. Without both of these, it is dubious whether he could have made as much impact.

Illustrative moments

Out of Touch (Closed) Cornelius flashes his white eyes to impress others and enhance his credibility as a psychic. This trick seems to work, until the insurance salesman / Interpol agent Mistelzweig mocks the prop, saying that the white eye lenses look like they belong to "an American horror movie". In his attempt to imitate a criminal from decades ago, the new Mabuse sometimes looks rather out of touch with the times.

Wrackful (Unconscientious) The financial system was within the scope of the original Mabuse's interests as he would look for ways to manipulate or cripple it. He was a survivor who thrived in the modern world. His imitator cares little about business or even surviving—he seeks total destruction. As he holds Travers and Menil captive in the basement, Mabuse/Jordan has them listen to his game plan: Travers would be killed after marrying Menil, she would inherit his assets and make them fair game. As helpless as he is, the industrialist looks almost amused that Mabuse naïvely believes that he can attain corporate control so easily. The evil doctor is only interested in his rockets though. He simply wants to "push that button" and unleash nuclear holocaust right away.

Blanched (Closed) As powerful a character Mabuse may appear, he has his moments of weakness in all three of the films. In *Gambler* that comes at the end. As he is hopelessly entrapped in the cellar, he wildly throws around counterfeit money. In *The Testament*, he looks feeble in his pajamas doing nothing but scribbling his will in an asylum cell. In *The Thousand Eyes*, there is a comparable scene towards the end, with him (as Dr. Jordan) in the elevator heading for the hotel's door to escape. The police are looking for him in the lobby and he quickly changes his appearance as a last resort to evade them. He removes the hairpiece, goatee and bits of fake skin, while anxiously checking his pale face in the mirror. It evokes *Metropolis*' ending when the master of the city shows up with his hair having turned grey. Freder's premature aging was a result of his own actions almost costing him his son's life. In this instance, it implies that the new Mabuse is losing his composure.

HENRY B. TRAVERS (Disagreeable)
Travers is a realist and a pragmatic businessman. He is a positive character but has his darker moments—e.g. his cold reaction to the nuclear disaster.

Illustrative moment

Peeping. *The Thousand Eyes* shares more than a year with Hitchcock's *Psycho* and Powell's *Peeping Tom*. Voyeurism is a central theme in all three. The uniqueness of Lang's approach is in the way that the voyeur himself is the subject of a gaze.

The hotel detective lets Travers have a good look at Menil's room while she is getting dressed and putting on make up. He continues observing as she receives his gift of roses and looks gratified. However, he is not the only one watching, as Mabuse/Jordan is keeping an eye on both rooms from his secret lair. Everything Travers sees is stage managed to deceive and condition him. Just like the suicide attempt and the abusive husband story, the director of the scene is Mabuse/Jordan in the control room.

THEMES

Society – (Corporations, Technology of the Future, Television)
Politics – (Nuclear Power, Nuclear Weapons, History, Surveillance: Past and Present)
Quest – (Self-reflection)

SOCIETY

Corporations. "Just a question of principle: When you take over the entire stock holdings of Taran Nuclear Works… is this happening under the auspices of the United States government or are you signing as a private citizen?". When Travers' German counterpart asks where the American businessman stands vis-à-vis the state, he dismisses the question as irrelevant. The distinction between public and private hardly matters, since he "will test the rockets in military facilities in US under the control of the government". The tycoon is a figure from a new age that will see corporations getting increasingly powerful. The trans-national nature of the business is underscored with the deal extending beyond Germany, The industrialist intends to acquire rockets from German manufacturers but the nuclear reactor of Taran Corp. happens to be in United Kingdom.

Technology of the Future? "An incredible weapon gentleman, it's a new infantry weapon tested at Fort Benning in the USA". The police commissioner introduces the supposedly state-of-the-art weapon to his colleagues. The air gun that silently fires "needles made from finest iridium steel" is presented as a technological novelty of *The Thousand Eyes*. As much as the gun looks unusual, it is hardly an innovation that belongs to the atomic age. Even No. 12 who is seen flaunting it twice has reverted to using an assault rifle in the whirling finale with the car chase. A similar novelty is the door of the secret surveillance room. The girthy vault door makes a superficial sonic sound as one would expect to hear in a B-movie. In both instances, the technologies—an high-pressure rifle firing needles and a thick metal door that opens with a remote device—are retro-futuristic since they evoke the earlier phase of the industrial revolution.

Television. The hotel's casino sequence at one point shows Traver and Menil dining, and then the camera slowly zooms out. Gradually it reveals a television screen that displays the same scene. They are being watched at the control room. The older technology of cinema briefly coexists in the same frame with the new one, television. According to Jonathan Crary, this is the announcement of a new era "where cinema is supplanted or infiltrated in various ways by television (Crary, 274).

POLITICS

Nuclear Power. Then comes the news of an explosion at Taran's reactor in the UK (perhaps it wasn't deemed a good idea to have Germany as the location of the nuclear disaster). Lives are lost and a residential area within a ten-mile radius is evacuated (not clear if it was sabotage). With the news of the accident at the reactor, Travers merely cancels his check and his visit to London, sending his secretary alone to assess the new situation. The episode is a timely warning against environmental crises and recklessness of corporations.

Nuclear Weapons. Howard Vernon, the actor cast as the hitman No. 12 had a major part in Godard's *Alphaville*, In this film, his character was an evil scientist named von Braun—an obvious reference to

Wernher von Braun, the architect of Nazi Germany's rocket programs. *The Thousand Eyes* stops short of alluding to this important figure—which is interesting since von Braun had resumed his work on rocketry in the USA following the end of World War II and came to be a leading figure in the Apollo 11 space program. In any case, the missiles are casually referred to like any commodity—the weapon that gets more attention is the needle gun.

History. In the meeting of police chiefs, only one participant remembers Dr. Mabuse the criminal from the early 1930s. He explains others' apparent amnesia because "Hitler appeared on the scene, and the whole Nazi nightmare…". His sentence remains incomplete. Was it because the investigation was covered up—or a much more formidable criminal took to the stage? Golding argues that not only is the hotel rooted in a Nazi past, the new Mabuse sounds like an heir to not only Mabuse but Adolf Hitler (Crary, 471).

Surveillance, Past and Present. All the rooms and hallways of the Hotel Luxor are bugged with miniature cameras and microphones. The closed circuit television system is controlled in the secret basement where Mabuse/Jordan gathers information about the guests. When he changes hats and becomes Cornelius the seer, he shocks the same individuals with knowledge of their secrets and manipulates them.

When Mistelzweig relates the history of the hotel to Inspector Kras, he mentions that it was built exactly for the purpose of surveillance as a project of the Gestapo. He doesn't talk about the technology in the original plans. That is clarified in a later scene when the hotel's engineer—in fact an operative of Mabuse—brags about "switching the Gestapo plans to television". What began as an eavesdropping project was modified in post-war Germany into visual surveillance. Is the Hotel Luxor a memento from a bygone epoch? An isolated instance? As Tom Golding points out, *The Thousand Eyes* points to historical continuity (Golding, 473).

QUEST

Self-reflection. *The Thousand Eyes* makes references to several scenes and characters from Lang's other films. The industrialist charmed by a woman under the spell of Mabuse was a part of the plot of *Gambler.* Carozza the dancer manipulated wealthy playboy Edgar Hull, but unlike Menil, she would drag him to his death. This film also had a séance scene that was disrupted because of a skeptic (a deceiver in *The Thousand Eyes*). In *the Woman in the Window,* a middle aged Professor's fascination with a younger woman gets him into trouble. He ends up killing her husband by a weapon provided by her—similar to Menil tossing Travers a gun to kill Roberto. The drive-by shooting at the traffic lights is a homage to *M*, as is the scene with senior police officials holding a meeting amid thick cigarette smoke.

Marking the end of his career, *The Thousand Eyes* is rich with references to Lang's previous works, but it is more than one big collage. Joe McElhaney considers this final film to come on top of a list of his later films that "distil the very essence of Lang's cinema" (Golding, 43). It is the director reflecting on his own corpus, parts of which "are threatened to become clichés" (McElhaney, 42).

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