they have almost destroyed an art form. I have always given great attention to the content of films because it seems to me to be more important than form. It is a question of rendering the idea that I had, the phrases that I want to speak to the public. But perhaps the path for doing so isn't unique: it depends on the conception which each of us has of directing. Godard adores improvising, while I like to know exactly what I am going to do when I arrive on the set. I change practically nothing of what I have in my head. But for the actors, I think they should have as much freedom as possible. Personally, I don't restrain them as much as certain filmmakers.

To direct an actor, I must above all make him understand the spirit of his role, the foundations of his character, even if that in fact doesn't enter directly into the events of the film. Sometimes that makes me angry. . . . I sweat bullets to do it, but in the end, I am very happy when I am directing. It isn't a second life for me: it is my life. A good director doesn't, as many do, have to show (I want to say this in jest) to an actor exactly how he should interpret his role. If he has to do that, then the work of an actor is nothing more than copying me. Imagine that: twenty little Fritz Langs running around on the screen! God save us! I simply want to help the actors discover by themselves the role they are interpreting. I try to explain to them what constitutes the personality of their character. I never insist on something that the actor cannot sense: one cannot force this. My only desire is to wake up what he carries in himself, to help extract from his unconscious and to create a character that he didn't know he had deep within him. There are good directors and bad . . . if we can also call someone a director who is a bad director. He would say to an actor, "You have read the scene, you know the role, now go to the door, play the scene and when you have finished, go through the other door." That man is not a director, but a cop who is directing traffic.

(3:35am. Still drinking. Herman Weinberg opens his briefcase and brings out some photos that he spreads around the middle of the table where Lang rests his hands.)

Did you know that I have a plan in hand for each of my films! (He looks at the first picture.) Ah, that's Brigitte Helm in *Metropolis*. God, she was beautiful! *Metropolis,* you know, was born from my first sight of the skyscrapers of New York in October 1924, and then I took myself to Hollywood where UFA sent me to study American production methods. It was terribly hot that season. . . . In any case, while visiting New York, I thought that it was the cross-

roads of multiple and confused human forces, blinded and knocking into one another, in an irresistible desire for exploitation, and living in perpetual anxiety. I spent an entire day walking the streets. The buildings seemed to be a vertical sail, scintillating and very light, a luxurious backdrop, suspended in the dark sky to dazzle, distract and hypnotize. At night, the city did not simply give the impression of living: it lived as illusions live. I knew I should make a film of all these impressions. When I returned to Berlin, in the middle of a crisis, Thea von Harbou began to write the script. We imagined, she and I, an idle class, living in a large city thanks to the subterranean work of thousands of men on the point of revolting, lead by a daughter of the people. To put down this rebellion, the head of the city demanded that its experts create a robot in the image of the daughter in question. But the robot Maria turned on her people and caused the workers to destroy the "machine" which was the heart of the city, which controlled it and gave it life. (He sighs softly and we watch.) I've often said I didn't like *Metropolis* because I can't accept the leitmotif of the message in the film. It is absurd to say that the heart is the intermediary between the hands and the brain, that is to say, the employer and the employee. The problem is social and not moral. Naturally, during the making of the film, I liked it, if not I wouldn't have continued to work. . . . But later, I began to understand what didn't work. . . . I thought, for example, that one of the faults was the way in which I showed the work of man and machine together. You remember the clocks and the man who worked in harmony with them? He should become, so to speak, part of the machine. Well, that seemed to be too symbolic, too simplistic in the evocation of what we call the evils of mechanization. As well, a few years ago, I had to revise my judgement again, at the spectacle of our astronauts walking around the earth. It was the experts, they were prisoners of their space capsule, nothing else—or almost, a part of the machine that carried them. . . .

(He looks at other pictures of *Metropolis:* the children of the workers fleeing the invading waves, the robot-woman, the revolt of the workers in the machine room. . . .) Well, there is the Shuftan Process, it was Eugen Shuftan who did it. . . . You asked me, Willy, which technical problems we had, well, this scene was filmed thanks to mirrors. (Lang shows a picture of the room with the machine and another of the immense stadium for the children of the ruling class.) Shuftan scratched the surface on certain parts of the mirror; he placed it across from the camera lens so that one part of the set, constructed by a human ladder, appeared in the mirror, which reflected a minia-