

The Divine Clockmaker: Christian Principles of Time and Order  
in Alfred Hitchcock's Films

by

Matthew Dwight Moore

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The Divine Clockmaker: Christian Principles of Time and Order

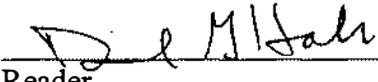
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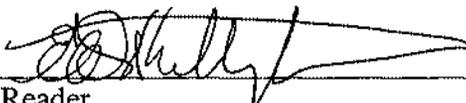
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## Foreward

As of the writing of this thesis, no scholarship has analyzed the Christian themes, symbology, and cosmological references of Alfred Hitchcock's films in detail. The most comprehensive work on his Christian themes, Hitchcock: The First Forty-Four Films, by Eric Rohmer and Claude Chabrol, was written over forty years ago and was not translated into English until 1979; it does not even deal with the last twenty years of his film career. Even the most outstanding Hitchcock scholars deal only superficially or tangentially with the wealth of religious elements in his work. Robin Wood, Donald Spoto, Lesley Brill, and most other prominent film scholars write intelligently and creatively about these issues, but tend to include them in other, presumably more inclusive discourses such as psychoanalysis, gender studies, or post-Marxism. In constructing an extended, detailed analysis of three of his favorite and most successful films, I am claiming that his Christian worldview is the more inclusive interpretation and demands to be treated this way. Perhaps this thesis will inspire others, for the first time, to accept this approach as a legitimate paradigm with which to responsibly analyze Alfred Hitchcock's work.

## A Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my father who, from all that I know about him, would have been exceedingly supportive of my efforts, critical where necessary, and loving always. This is also dedicated to my mother, who fueled my obsession with learning and introduced me to the world of film. My wife's patience, interest, and kindness have been indispensable to finishing this work. I thank them all.

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## Abstract

Alfred Hitchcock displayed in his personal, artistic, and professional life an underlying assumption that time is closely associated with law and order; this assumption is manifest in his feature films. The belief in a rational universal system, fostered during his formative years, presupposes an intelligent Creator and an orderly design. The related themes of saving time, keeping time, doing time, and being on time assume a Christian morality based on individual responsibility, the possibility of redemption, and the importance of reinforcing faith with action. Consequently, time serves as a metaphor for law and order in Hitchcock's films. The innumerable references to lateness, clocks, and schedules throughout his corpus reflect the significance and ubiquity of his divinely ordered Christian cosmology. This religious paradigm is apparent in most of his major American films, such as Shadow of a Doubt, Rear Window, and North by Northwest.

## Chapter One

### The Director Who Knew Too Much

#### Keeping Time

Alfred Hitchcock directed approximately one hundred hours of what he termed "pure cinema" over the course of a career that spanned fifty years. As an auteur operating within the studio system, he developed an assiduous work ethic, making his production shoots an exercise in mass production efficiency and enabling him to accomplish such a bounteous output of terror. As the popularly proclaimed "Master of Suspense," he, arguably better than any other director, knew the importance of pacing and timing; both are integral to the success of comedy and suspense--the tools of his trade. He experimented with narrative length; his shortest film, Bon Voyage (1944), runs approximately twenty minutes, while his longest film, North by Northwest (1959), runs approximately two hours and twenty minutes. He often managed to take time out of his intense schedule for carousing and vacationing; for example, he and his wife, Alma, revisited their honeymoon site, St. Moritz, annually. From an early age, as Hitchcock biographer Donald Spoto points out, Hitchcock's favorite pastime was memorizing train schedules (Dark 20). What do all of these elements have in common? Time. As a professional, as an artist, and as a family man, the regulation of time was of prime importance to Alfred Hitchcock.

Alfred Hitchcock was also raised as a Christian. As Eric Rohmer and Claude Chabrol suggest, Hitchcock's work inherently contributed to Christian art of the

twentieth-century. His corpus demonstrates concerns over the nature of good and evil, faith and belief, damnation and redemption, guilt and innocence, and countless other central themes that develop specifically out of his religious heritage. In Christian cosmology, these themes are predicated on the premise that the world, though sinful, was created as an orderly system or, at least, by an orderly God. I am not arguing that Hitchcock shared the assumption of William Paley, the nineteenth-century proponent of natural theology, that recognizing the existence of a natural order would lead one to assume that its creator was orderly; however, Hitchcock was personally and artistically infatuated with order and time and this infatuation is tempered by Christian principles acquired in his formative years. Hitchcock himself said, "I had a strict, religious upbringing . . . I don't think I can be labeled a Catholic artist, but it may be that one's early upbringing influences a man's life and guides his interests" (quoted in Spoto, Dark 15).

Though this obsession with time and order is often attributed to his Englishness or his idiosyncratic character, I am attributing this predominantly to his worldview, which was fundamentally shaped by both Christian orthodoxy and modernity. The central metaphor that God, the divine clock-maker, created an ordered world is mirrored by Hitchcock's cameo appearance in Rear Window in which he is seen winding a clock. That clock metaphor, I propose, is not irrelevant, but rather, supremely significant. His view of time is based on a specifically Christian interpretation of order. Unlike the deist de-Christianized worldview in which the Supreme Being is remote and impersonal, the perspectives that inform Hitchcock's

work demonstrate a cosmos that is constructed on the principle that Christ represents the incarnation of God and the fulfillment of God's ancient promise of salvation.

What I will demonstrate is that Hitchcock's use and manipulation of conceptual time is intimately connected with Christian principles of law and order.

Any brief survey of Hitchcock's films reveals the significance of time and order. In Rope (1948), the accelerating pace of the metronome agitates Philip's guilty conscience. In Dial M for Murder (1954), Tony's watch stops at a crucial moment pertaining to the murder of his wife. Even in Bon Voyage, even the watch helps determine the narrative resolution. Arguably, the link between time and the spiritual connotations of law and order are present in every one of Hitchcock's films. For example, in The 39 Steps (1935), Strangers on a Train (1951), Vertigo (1958), and The Birds (1963), time is fundamentally linked with order and disorder. To be sure, time serves an undeniable expository function in all narrative films. Hitchcock's films, not unlike traditional Christian morality plays, explain that the created order has become disjointed and needs to be corrected, and this responsibility falls not only to the religious or civic institutions, but also to the individual residents of that creation. This is a central theme in orthodox Christian theology represented in such essential texts as the catechismal writings of the Roman Catholic Church and the confessional statements of most Protestant denominations.

## Salvific Order

In The 39 Steps, many elements depend on Hannay's timing. Both his life and the national security of Great Britain hang in the balance as he races to Scotland and then chases the 39 Steps to London. The film's several chase scenes rely on Hannay's speed and cunning to perpetuate the suspense. He outruns his pursuers at a London train station, on the northbound train itself, in the open countryside of Scotland, on his way to Professor Jordan's home, on the sheep-laden moors, and even through a parade. What begins as Hannay running for his life becomes a race against the clock. For example, he is infuriated with Pamela for letting the agents get a half a day head start on them. Getting to London does not matter nearly as much as getting to London on time--that is, on a time schedule that will ensure synchronicity with the plans of the 39 Steps. Lateness will literally mean death and destruction or, in other words, the further breakdown of law and order.

The notion that this law and order can and should be reinstated contains a basic narrative purpose: it keeps the plot moving. But it also represents an underlying agenda that order can be resurrected by a careful and responsible observance of schedule. The moral responsibility that, in The 39 Steps, is foisted on Hannay without his consent, is closely associated with the moral responsibility that each individual inherits in the fallen, sinful world assumed by orthodox Christian theology. In Hitchcock's filmic repertoire, worldly institutions, often symbolized by law enforcement authorities, cannot be solely entrusted with this duty. The individual is responsible for himself or herself--and often for others. Hannay possesses a freewill

that presupposes autonomous agency, and his salvation is dependent on proclaiming the truth at the correct time. Furthermore, his salvation becomes synonymous with the salvation of national order and security. Preserving himself means preserving the orderly system.

The related themes of time and order in Strangers on Train evoke a similar view of Hitchcock's moral universe. Guy, like Hannay, has to confess; but confessions rarely set one free in Hitchcock's artistic world.<sup>1</sup> Here is a rather helpful example of Hitchcock's metaphor. Ultimately, what Guy wants is to be alleviated of Bruno's menace. How is he to accomplish this? Simply professing his innocence will not suffice. He must prove his own innocence by subversion--sneaking past the detectives at the tennis match--and by producing some convincing exculpatory evidence. In other words, like so many other Hitchcock protagonists, he has to take matters into his own hands. Relying on the authorities' construction of the timeline on the night of the crime does not save him; the detectives demonstrate that he could have committed Miriam's murder and still made the train schedule. In order to correct matters, he must dictate his own future timeline--one he needs to adhere to for his own preservation.<sup>2</sup> Guy has to beat the clock, as it were.

In Hitchcock's world, autonomous agents are not justified by faith alone, but they must perform the correct actions or deeds to foster their own redemption. The transfer of guilt theme, so common in Hitchcock's work, is here sealed by Bruno's phrase "criss-cross." The term originally developed as the Christian performative, "Christ-cross," demonstrated by gesturing the sign of the Cross for security. This enhances

the religious undertones of the guilt theme. Again, as in The 39 Steps, the contrivance of a time-dependent chase serves a basic narrative function: it keeps the audience interested and propels the plot. In Strangers on a Train, it also symbolizes the connection between timeliness and salvific order. The tennis match, that under normal circumstances would appear relatively serious, represents a temporary obstacle to his infinitely more significant albeit surreptitious schedule. The immediacy of his need to beat Bruno to Metcalf--represented by several shots of time-keeping devices and increasingly shorter cross-cutting through the tennis match scene--reflects the immediacy of saving one's soul as well as saving the free world. As in The 39 Steps, Bruno represents a threat to national security that has infiltrated the most elite circles--in this case, United States Congressmen. The observation that the subtext of the homosexual threat represented by Bruno works in tandem as a threat to inherited notions of order and symmetry--that is, to national security and social mores--seems to enhance Bruno's destabilizing effects (Corber 69-82). Order must be restored and time must be obeyed. Guy's need to redeem himself is also a duty to rescue order from chaos.

Vertigo represents a variation on the same theme. The film contains the usual seemingly insignificant references to time, such as when Elster offers John a drink, he responds by glancing at his wristwatch and commenting on how early in the day it is. Time is not an insignificant theme in Vertigo, nor is it without spiritual connotations. With Vertigo, we are offered a cosmology in which history permeates the present. Yet, time is linked with a moral order. For example, the countless and almost

subliminal reminders of the heritage of Christian morality abound in the vistas of San Francisco and its surrounding environs. The name "San Francisco" obviously refers to Saint Francis, certainly one of the most famous Catholic moralists. Moreover, the church across from McKittrick's, Carlotta's grave in the churchyard, the crosses on the graves, the restored San Juan Bautista mission, the spire clearly visible in Midge's window, and the telephone pole that is cropped to resemble a cross outside John's apartment during John and Madeline's second meeting all serve as reminders of Christian history.

Interestingly, the most political signifiers are found in the most natural setting. In Sequoia National Forest John and Madeline look at time through a cross section cut through a once-living organism, a tree. "Sequoia," John explains, means "always." What are found in the rings are reminders of political history, such as the battle of Hastings in 1066 and the signing of the Declaration of Independence in 1776. Both the religious and political symbols serve as reminders of law and order in history; they both help us to orient ourselves within a more transcendent reality.

After the officer plummets to his death at the outset of the film, John is troubled by guilt. After Madeline's death, John is also tormented by guilt. This time, however, the guilt is derived from his lateness. Presumably, he seems to think, if he had caught her before she ran into the church, he could have saved her. This notion is reinforced by the court's harsh criticism of his sin of omission. Guilt--that is, the perception of one's own moral transgression--and time are interconnected. According to the doctrine of original sin, human beings are born into a state of sin--and therefore guilt--as a result

of the fall by Adam and Eve. John is paralyzed by his guilt over the fall of both the officer and Madeline.

By the end of the film however, John has become convinced that he must be liberated from the past and his inherited responsibility. He reconstructs Madeline's persona and the events of the crime in order to be liberated. At the end of Vertigo, John, in the church bell tower, exclaims "too late." The lateness to which he refers analogizes the disordering of his orderly view of the world. It is significant that a nun, first seen as a ghostly figure, arrives too late to save Madeline and is, quite probably, the figure that literally frightens her to death. In other words, the responsibility for Madeline that John inherited (to which he refers by invoking a Chinese proverb that saving one's life results in responsibility) has been challenged. For what or whom is he really morally responsible? This spiritual crisis is perhaps the source of his most profound anxiety, and this anxiety is based on the view of time that Hitchcock constructs.

Throughout The Birds, again, are found the apparently ordinary references to time, but these are not entirely ordinary. For example, Mitch's neighbor at his San Francisco apartment tells Melanie that Mitch has gone away for a few days; implicit in his comment is the assumption that, if she leaves the two birds by his door over the weekend, they may die. It would be irresponsible of her to leave them and, in a small way, her action would disrupt the natural order--at least for the birds. Her moral obligation is intimately connected with time. Interestingly, The Birds begins with lateness and ends with eschatology. Melanie's order is late, she is told at the pet store.

It is while she is contemplating this lateness that she meets Mitch, whom she spontaneously visits the next day; her visit to Bodega Bay is coincident with the revolt of the birds, which apparently leads to the end of human civilization.

Does it logically follow that the "end of the world," as the drunken prophet in the Bodega Bay diner calls it, will occur because Melanie's order was late? This is a difficult claim to make. Undeniably a connection exists. Melanie is that connection, a socialite infamous for her destabilizing influence. It is significant that Mitch's profession is the law, a rather obvious reference to human moral order. The amount of lawyers present in Hitchcock's oeuvre is noteworthy, especially in relation to the connection between time and law and order; lawyers figure prominently in North by Northwest, The Wrong Man, Strangers on a Train, and The Paradine Case, as well as many others. Mitch's legal-mindedness and rationality are demonstrated by his interrogation and verbal lawyer-like jibes towards Melanie in the pet shop and as she prepares to leave his home after dinner. It takes two hours to reach his home in Bodega Bay, Melanie is told by his neighbor early in the film; although they are separated by distance, their separation is described in chronological terms.

Perhaps more disturbing than any violent bird attacks in the narrative is what they represent to the established order. Apparently, the only effective way to combat the birds' onslaughts, which can seemingly occur at any and all times, is to organize. The construction of order is humanity's defense against the end-times. Futile though it may ultimately be in The Birds, human solidarity and practical action, such as Mitch's

barricading of his house, seems humanity's best hope in a crumbling, apocalyptic world. As Donald Spoto observes:

Order was an important value in Cockney life and in the Hitchcock home, and death and war and financial uncertainty were breaking down that sense of order and replacing it with the sense of chaos and the omnipresent possibility of disaster. This became, with the years, an attitude toward life, and it is perhaps the single most obvious situation in Hitchcock's films--the sudden disruption of chaos and disorder into a life of apparent security, and the psychological and emotional reactions this eruption evokes. (Dark 38)

It is relevant that Hitchcock lived through a Europe destroyed by the Great War. His hometown of London was savagely bombed in the first several years of World War II. This represents another deadly threat from the sky that could descend at any time. It is important to keep in mind the apocalyptic idiom common to many modernist artists of this period, expressed in works such as T. S. Eliot's "The Waste Land" and William Butler Yeats' "The Second Coming." Many of them describe the breakdown of law and order in terms of the time-history metaphor. Christian eschatology is normally associated with a final separation of the guilty and innocent. Judgment day is only horrifying to those who have rebelled against God's order because it will bring everlasting damnation to them. The birds herald the end of human mastery of time and order.

Hitchcock's moral universe is predicated on an orderly system, human responsibility, the possibility for redemption, reinforcing faith with good works, and inherited guilt. In his corpus, such notions are manifested by the symbolic role of time. Saving time and keeping time therefore represent more than just observing a social nicety. They represent the maintenance of moral order, synonymous with cosmic order. Consequently, lateness represents more than just a faux pas. It represents a supreme transgression. Often, it is causally associated with the threat of death and destruction. Nowhere in Hitchcock's work is this principle more poignant than in Shadow of a Doubt, Rear Window, and North by Northwest. In all three films, timeliness and lateness reflect the ideological presuppositions of their creator, Alfred Hitchcock. These films are the focus of the rest of this thesis.

## Chapter Two

### Out of Time in Shadow of a Doubt

#### The Moral Imperative

The backdrop of Shadow of a Doubt is World War II. Identified by Allied propaganda as a war of good against evil, this set of moral binary oppositions permeated the popular culture of the period. The plethora of posters, songs, and films of the early 1940s implied the moral conditions for going to war and fighting for democratic ideals. This is evident in perhaps the most popular film of the period, Curtiz's Casablanca (1943), which highlights the moral significance of Rick's heroic shift away from neutrality at the conclusion of the film. Indeed, after war was declared on December 8, 1941, America was involved in fighting "the good war." Such was America's zeitgeist.

After his semi-permanent exile to America in 1938, Alfred Hitchcock had felt, as had many European émigrés, a sense of responsibility to urge America to go to war against the Axis powers. Hitchcock, along with numerous Hollywood directors in the late 1930s and early 1940s, communicated these political convictions through the powerful medium of popular film.<sup>3</sup> Foreign Correspondent (produced and released in 1940) is his most overtly political of the period, demonstrating the immediacy of the fascist threat in Europe from the ostensibly neutral perspective of a reporter. Saboteur (produced and released in 1942) and Lifeboat (released in 1943) both dealt with the ingenuity, tenacity, and danger of the enemy's threat; among the other similarities,

thematically, is the need for acceptance of differences in forging a coalition capable of democratic victory.

He even directed two short propaganda films in 1944 celebrating the French Resistance, Bon Voyage and Aventure Malgache. They were shot in five weeks and were not released; the distributor apparently did not find them lucrative and did not release them. Many decades later, they were discovered and made available on videotape. Hitchcock undertook other artistic endeavors to promote the war cause however, such as directing a "Buy War Bonds" commercial for David O. Selznick. (Taylor 186). Though Hitchcock is typically considered an apolitical director, these films, in addition to the anti-Communist Torn Curtain (1966) and Topaz (1968), demonstrate a particular political energy. There are any number of reasons why he chose such works, but it may not be apparent that the motivation for filming these "political" films may also stem from the religious cosmology based in identifying good and evil, which he acquired during his formative years.

Although Donald Spoto claims, quite weakly, that he "played no substantial role in the war effort," he does suggest an important motivating factor for Hitchcock's psyche--guilt (Dark 266). Hitchcock had not been present at the death of his father, mother, or brother.<sup>4</sup> He had not served in either of the two world wars. He had indulged in numerous vices that would have been considered naughty by the strict standards of his Jesuit upbringing: overeating, excessive drinking, ribald humor, and gruesome practical joking, not to mention relishing a special iconic status in popular culture based largely on scaring people half to death. He maintained a regular but

marginal association with the Catholic Church, arguably for the sake of his daughter, and apparently rejected the Catholicism that had been foisted on him from an early age; however, he never fully abandoned the influence of the Christian worldview. It became largely secularized and is reflected throughout his work. As America mobilized for war in early 1942, his personal guilt likely affected the production of his favorite film, Shadow of a Doubt, making the work an amazing example of his perspective of the world, especially as it relates to time, order, and morality.

For Hitchcock, this was an unusually difficult time. The imperious and micromanaging David O. Selznick, the producer to whom he had been contractually yoked, proved to be a manic-depressive antithesis to Hitchcock's rational and methodical approach to directing; consequently, Hitchcock's working relationship with him through the decade was miserable. Hitchcock's business manager said that the infamous contract was "replete with provisions unfavorable to Hitchcock and advantageous to Selznick" (quoted in Leff 35). Just before Shadow of a Doubt began production in the spring of 1942, screenwriter Thornton Wilder, the Pulitzer prize-winning playwright, joined the army and was sent away from his work on the script. In addition, Hitchcock received crushing news that his mother was dying in her home in England. She had been diagnosed with life-threatening kidney and intestinal ailments. She died on September 26 that year of pyelonephritis, an abdominal fistula, and intestinal perforation (Spoto, Dark 260). By the spring of 1942, the German and Italian armed forces had advanced to claim the majority of the European continent. Travel to England was extremely treacherous and difficult to schedule at the time, so

Hitchcock threw himself, reluctantly, into his work. Understandably, sacrificial responsibility was an overwhelming force for him at the time, as it was with America. Consequently, Shadow of a Doubt is tinged with the religious significance of pain and disappointment.

The protagonist of Shadow of a Doubt, Charlie, is a bright high school graduate who is especially fond of her Uncle Charlie. The identical spelling of both characters' names (instead of masculine "Charley" and feminine "Charlie") links them in a way that is invisible to the audience but clear to those with access to the original screenplay. Facsimiles of Wilder's original screenplay notes are printed in Dan Aulier's Hitchcock's Notebooks and demonstrate this subtle but significant difference. Charlie comes to suspect that her dashing, worldly uncle has murdered several women and is hiding from the law in her hometown. Teresa Wright was cast for the lead role of Charlie. Wright also starred in two films that won the Academy Award for Best Picture in the next few years: Mrs. Miniver (1942) and The Best Years of Our Lives (1946). Both films associate her directly with the personal sacrifices involved in fighting "the good war." The moral imperative understood among the Allies in World War II but only obliquely implied in Shadow of a Doubt is suggested very early in the film. The Newton family of Santa Rosa, California represents a middle-class, nuclear family. Charlie, the eldest daughter and recent graduate, detects that the family is in desperate need of salvation. She assumes responsibility for saving her family and looks for a savior.

The exact nature of the imminent danger is uncertain. Her father even questions her identification of the problem. The vagueness of the threat may represent a form of the threat that is only slightly secularized. "I'm talking about souls," Charlie explains to her father, who still does not seem to understand (let alone seem inclined to confront) the peril facing his family, which, by all superficial standards would not appear to be in need of saving. Mr. Newton does not detect this original threat and appears equally oblivious to the threat from the murderer living in his own house. Mrs. Newton remains oblivious to Uncle Charlie's threat even after Charlie almost dies in the garage; perhaps this is due to concern over being late for the lecture. What is the real threat that Charlie perceives? Scholar Elsie Michie suggests that the threat Charlie perceives is gendered by a specific historical context of patriarchal power. Charlie, like her mother, may be doomed to endless drudgery and cut off from professional fulfillment in a traditional middle class marriage of her own (29-49). Other analyses focusing on the religious influences provide even more inclusive interpretations.

This is where identifying Hitchcock's cosmological presuppositions seem especially beneficial. The moral environment established in the opening shots presupposes a world determined by both order and chaos. The first shot of Ann Newton, Charlie's sister, shows her eating an apple. The apple, according to the Judeo-Christian heritage, suggests the central doctrine of original sin. Ann clearly does not represent Eve, but her symbolic function is to introduce the Christian iconography in a subtle and innocuous manner. Without being born into a state of sin

and potential damnation, Christ's act of sacrificial salvation is meaningless at best. Also in the opening shots of the Newton family house, Ann is seen reading Ivanhoe. The eponymous protagonist of Walter Scott's Romantic novel par excellence is a Crusader demonstrating courage, faithfulness, and chivalry. Ivanhoe expresses the epitome of the moral imperative. The Crusades were represented in eleventh-century Christian propaganda as a cosmic fight of good against evil, not unlike the conflict between liberating armies of the Allies and the tyranny of fascism in the early 1940s. Original sin and Christian responsibility and are thus subtly introduced through the seemingly perfunctory opening shots of the precocious daughter in the film.

Once the family comes together (father, mother, Ann, and Roger), the entire household rings with disorder. Overlapping dialogue, the type which was pioneered by Orson Welles in Citizen Kane the previous year, creates a cacophony of splintered conversations. Perhaps it is this disorder, symbolizing a greater spiritual disorder, from which Charlie believes the family should be saved. She mentally searches for a savior, admitting it would take "a miracle" to save them.<sup>5</sup> It is conceded that she is not only highly intelligent--the top of her graduating class--but highly perceptive, even supernaturally so. Charlie apparently sensed Uncle Charlie's desire to visit from 3,000 miles away and mentally "heard" the Merry Window Waltz at the dinner table. The supernatural overtones of Charlie's perception can not be easily dismissed within the logic of the film. In a moment of epiphany, she comes to believe her namesake to be that savior. Uncle Ch-arlie and Jesus Ch-rist are thus further linked. Charlie believes

that order may be restored and, because she has perceived the threat and identified the means to confront it, she must take action. It is the responsible thing to do.

The spiritually tinged motivation to save others is found everywhere in Christendom, from Jesuit missionary projects to World War II. Mrs. Newton declares that helping the government census workers is the responsibility of the citizens. "It's our duty," she proclaims. "It's something the government wants." This impulse to do good for others is typically inculcated in cultures that identify themselves as Christian. It is clear from the number of citizens who attend church that some motivation propels the citizens of Santa Rosa to participate in correct behavior.

The crusading moral imperative fueling America's involvement in World War II is demonstrated by the near-absence of young men in the film. The only young man who is ostensibly the same age as Charlie is only referred to, is never seen, and is rejected outright by Charlie. It is conceivable that her rebuff, mediated by her friend Catherine, was due to the fact that he was not in fact serving in the military overseas. This reason is speculative, but serves as a probable explanation of Charlie's reaction. The next oldest eligible men were the servicemen seen in the Til Two Bar, enjoying some drinks while taking time off from their duty to the Armed Forces. Graham, perhaps a little older still, is also respecting his moral duty by hunting down a mass murderer for the government. Charlie has few romantic prospects specifically because of this environment of moral responsibility.

## Community Clockwork

Not coincidentally, the Newton family shares their surname with Sir Isaac Newton, the famed Christian scientist and the progenitor of natural theology. Such a cosmology, as described earlier, rests squarely on the divine clock-maker presupposition: if one finds a watch, it must be concluded that a clock-maker made it. If time is ordered then the universe is orderly. If the universe is orderly, then an orderly entity created it. Isaac Newton, known for reconciling the religious and scientific oppositions raging among late seventeenth-century intelligentsia, explained the universal order in clear, rational, and understandable principles. The Newton family members--clearly intelligent, moral people--observe the conventions of orderliness and timeliness; it is fitting that Mr. Newton receives a wristwatch as a present. He displays it proudly and comments on it. The clockwork universe explained in natural theology and popularized by Newton is thus introduced in a subtle albeit significant manner.

In discerning the moral environment of the film, it is also important to notice the history of Christian hegemony in Californian communities. Except for the opening scene of *Uncle Charlie*, the film takes place entirely in Santa Rosa, California. There seems to be significance in the name, for Uncle Charlie mentions it twice. "Santa Rosa. Santa Rosa, California," he tells the telegraph operator. Saint Rose was the first person from the Americas--indeed from the Western hemisphere--to be canonized (McBrien 342-3). Like San Juan Bautista in *Vertigo*, San Francisco in *The Birds*, and Los Angeles in *Psycho*, these toponyms remind us of the presence of Christian

settlement in America centuries earlier. Uncle Charlie also mentions his childhood home: Saint Paul, Minnesota. He later quotes Saint Paul by saying "Take a little wine for thy stomach's sake." The passage, taken from 1 Timothy 5.23, is significant because it marks the second time he invokes not only the name but the title of Saint Paul. Paul, of course, was perhaps the single most influential propagator of the Christian message, with the exception of the writers of the Gospels. His evangelism, a history of Christian expansionism, and Christian hagiography are all suggested by such references in the film.

Since names seem significant, Mr. Newton's Christian name, Joseph, seems to have been chosen intentionally as well. He shares his name with the father of the Holy Family. As benign and loving head of the family, he represents the patriarchal hegemony that so dominated the major institutions of the 1940s. The family under his leadership uses his bank and goes to church on Sunday. The community of Santa Rosa seems to attend church without question. Outsiders, for example, the agents and Uncle Charlie, are shown clearly not attending church on Sunday, accentuating the compliance of those who do attend. For a film that initially appears to be about a family and a murderer, it contains numerous unmistakable references to a Christian worldview.

Peter Conrad, like many scholars whose work reflects certain tacit agnostic or atheistic positions, chooses to view Hitchcock's worldview as a harsh indictment of God at best and a proclamation that God does not exist at worst. From Strangers on a Train, he confusedly takes Guy's immoral and nihilistic antagonism as evidence of

Hitchcock's personal views. Conrad argues, "Hitchcock inserted a barbed comment on a deity who enjoys the pointless, sportive fracas of nature" (43). Conrad then proceeds to discount constructive views of Christianity represented in his films. He even attempts to discount Hitchcock's own published words on the subject, endangering Conrad's credibility. Robin Wood writes, "His Catholicism is in reality the lingering on in his work of the darker aspects of Catholic mythology: Hell without Heaven" (198). Again, this view seems to ignore Hitchcock's own view that God exists whether or not we choose to believe. Divine justice will occur whether or not we believe it.

Shadow of a Doubt represents a world clearly associated with a moral universe of law and order. Santa Rosa is an ordered idyllic community par excellence. The worldly institutions that permeate the town are structured on the presupposition of orderliness. The Church, as an institution, derives its moral authority from the faith that the transcendent and orderly God has invested it with a spiritual mandate of salvation and integrity. The bank, as an institution, is based on consumer confidence. The motto "in God we trust" may be axiomatic but the value of currency is derived from the commonly held belief that it indeed has value; it is important to note the several war bond advertisements at Mr. Newton's bank. Patriotism, the belief that America was fighting a "good war," and the stability of national security are neither discussed nor challenged--they are assumed. The social structure maintains an aura of permanence, reflecting the particularly WASP-ish Great Chain of Being paradigm; men and women, young and old, rich and poor, white and black, outsiders and

residents all have their preordained social places. All of these ideological state apparatuses reinforce each other's orderliness at a time when the modern world faced its greatest moral catastrophe in World War II.

Emblematic of this conflation of institutions is the clock tower in the center of town. The Bank of America building is seen in the background of several shots throughout the film and the clock tower juts above the Bank of America sign atop the structure. Like the Angelus of Roman Catholic tradition, the bell tolls to help regulate the behaviors of the community residents. In many small towns in early modern Europe, the Angelus clock tower would signify when to say the prayer in memory of Jesus Christ's assumption of his human form. It would typically be rung once in the morning, once at noon and once in the evening.<sup>6</sup> In Santa Rosa, the bell has been modified from regulating community behavior for spiritual reasons to regulating behavior for other reasons less unified in purpose. It is significant that this regulatory machine is structurally attached to that most prominent economic institution--the bank.

Scattered along the interior walls of the bank are posters promoting war bonds. As Uncle Charlie visits Mr. Newton at the bank, this propaganda is seen in the background, suggesting the association between purchasing and patriotism. To reinforce this, the flag is visible near the roof of the bank. The message seems to imply that, in order to support the soldiers who are fighting for freedom, it is important to invest in the capitalist economy. Uncle Charlie evidently does not invest in any, which potentially characterizes him as somewhat less than a patriotic

American. The economy, the government, the church, and the family all run like clockwork, regulated by time and time-keeping devices. The threat of disorder that Charlie discerns in her own family is a microcosm of the global disorder facing the external world.

### Citizens on Patrol

Uncle Charlie does manage to embarrass his brother-in-law among his boss and co-workers at the Bank of America. Making a bad joke about smuggling and hinting that Mr. Newton would someday have his boss's job, he seems to make everyone present uncomfortable. Charlie scolds him. "Uncle Charlie, everyone can hear you!" she exclaims in surprise, shifting her previous tone when she proudly declaimed, "I want everyone to see you!" on the way to the bank. Seeing and hearing, as well as overseeing and overhearing, figure strongly in Hitchcock's collection of themes. Perhaps inherited from his working class London neighborhood, Catholic school, or simply cultivated as an adult for other reasons, the relationship between surveillance and appropriateness in his films seems to be an especially salient theme. Rear Window, for example, further associates time and rational morality with watching. Agent Graham says of the world, "Sometimes it needs a lot of watching. It seems to go crazy every now and then."

In Santa Rosa, the motivation for such community surveillance is to maintain propriety and, by extension, law and order. Consequently, Charlie's indiscretions become supreme transgressions. From Mrs. Newton, who offers gentle admonitions,

to Catherine, who stares disapprovingly, the citizens of Santa Rosa are all citizens on patrol. It is important to note the negative effect that Uncle Charlie has on his niece by the way this is exhibited to the community standards of propriety. Charlie lies to Catherine that she is ill and cannot go to the movies with her. Fifteen seconds later in the film, Catherine discovers her strolling with Uncle Charlie. Charlie is caught in a blatant lie and, seconds later, has a good laugh about it with her uncle.

Subsequently, Charlie lies to her family about Uncle Charlie, to Graham about what she knows, and, presumably, to her community about Uncle Charlie's evil. She and the Church share complicity in promulgating the ultimate lie that Uncle Charlie was a decent person. "The beauty of their hearts lives on," a speaker at Uncle Charlie's funeral service says about him. This lying is clearly done for the sake of her family and community. The law enforcement agents, representing the institution of the government, also share the responsibility for this cover-up. Ultimately, Charlie becomes a liar for the sake of others. For one who believes in the importance of morality, this is a sacrifice.

The traffic officer, a professional citizen on patrol, is perhaps the most significant figurehead of this time metaphor. Employed to regulate order, the officer makes four symbolically important appearances in the film. Framed in the first three appearances with the Bank of America clock tower visible in the background, he obviously represents the maintenance of law and order. As the first citizen seen in Santa Rosa, his appearance mediates the viewer's entry into this community. The low-angle shot framing him with the clock tower accentuates his significance in the community. He

is vigilant and powerful, though ineffective at detecting Uncle Charlie's true identity. Without the traffic officer, perhaps fatal accidents will occur. To reinforce this danger, Mr. Newton jumps to the conclusion that Aunt Sarah, having recently obtained her driver's license, has gotten into an accident. For Hitchcock, who rarely drove (except to church on Sundays), the fear of a horrible automobile accident may have been very real indeed.

For Charlie, three notable transgressions reveal a sinister and diabolical netherworld that subverts Santa Rosa's (and the universe's) order. Her visit to the library, the bar, and the train are all oriented in a time-order metaphor. In his article "All in the Family: Alfred Hitchcock's Shadow of a Doubt," James McLaughlin also deals with the association between time and law and order. While we agree on many points, he places this association in a context of Charlie's sexuality when it may more effectively be placed within Hitchcock's spiritual paradigm. Characteristically, McLaughlin states "One significant feature of the Law and Order that Charlie's phallicness threatens in the order of Time . . . Sleep puts to sleep the time machine" (150) Charlie's "sins" are contextualized not only in terms of the community, but in terms of time as well.

Charlie, believing that she should learn something about Uncle Charlie by reading it in the newspaper, goes to the library. It is late. On her way there, the traffic officer stops her from crossing the street when she should not have. He makes her go back to the curb to wait for his signal, along with everyone else. Furthermore, when she is finally signaled across, he grabs her and scolds her for her impatience. Why? In the

film's narrative, it is associated with the danger of injury or death. But symbolically, in an orderly society, not conforming one's schedule to that of the authorities can lead to a breakdown of the system. The officer's reprimand links this violation of schedule with immorality.

As she speeds to the library, she notices that she is too late and the library is closing. It is 9:00 at night. She pleads to be let in, to have some authority allow her transgression. While knocking on the front door, she receives disapproving looks from citizens passing by, reminding us of the social pressures that reinforce the orderly system. It is easy to see the librarian, who explains, "If I make one exception, I'll have to make a thousand" as a prickly stereotype. However, in this universal context, her symbolic function in the narrative is entirely consistent. It is her moral responsibility to keep to the preordained schedule. "You have all day," the librarian tells Charlie, visibly upset that she has violated her own duty. As a result of being given a reprieve of "just three minutes," Charlie finds the newspaper and learns about her uncle's supreme transgression--murder. These extra three minutes have entirely changed Charlie's view of the world and its established order.

After Charlie becomes upset at the murderous dinner talk between Herb and her father and leaves, Uncle Charlie, who has followed her, persuades her to visit a bar. On their way there, Charlie runs into the ubiquitous traffic officer again who, almost benevolently, warns that he may have to give her "a ticket for speeding." Uncle Charlie replies that they "don't want to break the law." It is after hours in her world, but Uncle Charlie exposes her to a place that stays open late. The Til Two Bar, as

advertised by clocks on the doors, represents a foreign world to Charlie, who is not used to the morally questionable activity that transpires there. The implication of moral degeneracy, indicated by the rowdy and perhaps drunken servicemen carousing with ladies, is directly associated with time. Louise, the bedraggled waitress, states that she has worked at the dive for "two weeks" and apologizes for her tardiness. "Sorry I was so long." Moreover, she admits that she "never" would have expected to see Charlie at such a place. It is within this context that Charlie hears her uncle's anti-sermon about his horrifying moral universe. Consequently, her life is changed forever. Like her uncle, Charlie has been transported out of time, and therefore, out of the established order.

The brief, final scene of his procession and funeral is permeated with a communal order. The procession snakes its way through a docile, orderly community in the shadow of the clock tower, the church minister ameliorates the mourning congregation with platitudes, and Graham patronizes Charlie's intelligence by telling her, in essence, everything will be fine. After the disorder of Uncle Charlie's accidental death, the community intuitively attempts to restore order. For the residents of Santa Rosa, this means a life of going to church, supporting the economy, and observing the laws--all with divinely inspired regulation.

### Missing the Train

As the Newton family prepares to send off Uncle Charlie at the train station, they are reminded of the lateness threat. Herb's warning "Here comes the train" implies

"Don't be late or you'll miss it." What Herb does not know is that, if Uncle Charlie is indeed late, the avuncular menace will continue in Santa Rosa. Uncle Charlie lures Charlie onto the train in order to kill her. She is not able to leave the train before it starts. Again, lateness is associated with death and disorder. "Not yet, Charlie," Uncle Charlie says, clearly threatening to kill her as she tries to get off the accelerating train. As a result, Charlie struggles and indirectly brings about the horrific death of her uncle. Violating the orderly standards of time, once again, is linked with death, disorder, or disillusionment. Hitchcock's cameo on the train (one of several spread across his oeuvre) shows him playing cards with a physician. The train that brings Uncle Charlie's menace to Santa Rosa also conveys the director. In a supernatural stroke of luck or a masterful demonstration of expert cheating, Hitchcock is holding all the cards of one suit. The director, through his special powers, has allowed evil to come to town.

Interestingly, Herb is also associated with time. It is noted that he comes earlier and earlier to the Newton's, often infringing on their dinner. He seems not to observe this mild infraction on their private time. Of all the characters, Herb is the one who actually saves Charlie from asphyxiation, though he is given little credit for this feat. It must be remembered that the observation about the oncoming train is uttered by Charlie's real-life savior, Herb. It is vital--supremely significant even--to listen to his warning. By comparison, agent Graham, Charlie's would-be savior, is impossible to contact when she needs him most. After Uncle Charlie's almost successful attempt at murdering her while the others are at the lecture, Charlie tries to contact Graham by

phone numerous times. None of the attempts are successful. Graham's absence leaves Charlie to fend for herself against a mass murderer. Herb, seemingly by serendipity, is the one who saves her life.

The agents have been associated with time as well. In an earlier scene, posing as census workers, Graham and Saunders had arrived early at the Newton house, causing a great deal of turmoil for Mrs. Newton, who was unprepared for their visit. She had gone to lengths to remind Charlie not to be late for their 4:00 arrival, only to be frustrated when the agents violate their own schedule. Charlie lashes out at their intrusive attempts on their privacy, perhaps justified, in part, by their seemingly careless earliness. "When someone asks for privacy, they should have it." When Saunders wants to take a photograph of Mrs. Newton breaking an egg for a cake, she sternly informs him that one can not make a proper cake out of sequence. Their presence has caused a great deal of disorder in their household.

As Charlie shows Graham the upstairs, the grandfather clock is seen prominently between them. In a medium shot, they stand on either sides of the frame, allowing the clock to mediate their conversation. Soon, Graham asks her on a date. They agree to meet at half past six that evening. They walk around the town and seem to have a good time. With her powers of perception, Charlie sees through his deception and is angered. They argue. When he rises to explain, the Bank of America clock tower appears, framed over his shoulder, visually re-establishing him with the conflation of institutions for which Charlie feels moral responsibility. Graham may have lied, this seems to suggest, but he did it for the good of the community.

The agents try to force a timeline on Charlie. After lying to her about their mission, they all but blackmail her into helping them. Saunders offer to postpone Uncle Charlie's arrest until Charlie can get him out of town. They give her a couple of hours. Uncle Charlie also manipulates her timeline, waffling about staying or going. "When are you leaving?" Charlie asks him forcibly. The emphasis is not on whether or not he will in fact leave, but on what time he will leave. Both parties pressure her to conform to their schedule. It is the vocabulary of order. This identification between scheduling and death is evident even in the newspaper article exposing the Merry Widow Murderer. In the paper, Uncle Charlie's most recent victim is identified first by the date of her death--not her name. The article reads, "His latest victim, on January 12<sup>th</sup>, in Gloucester, Mass., was Mrs. Bruce Matthewson."

This identification by time runs throughout the film. In the film's opening scene, Uncle Charlie is seen in bed resting in the middle of the day. Later, in Santa Rosa, he gets up late and has breakfast in bed at 10:30. Mrs. Newton notes how he must be the only one in her community to sleep in so late. Sloth is one of the seven deadly sins of traditional Christendom. Santa Rosa represents an industrious society that eschews laziness. Mr. Newton, in his first conversation with Charlie, notes how work is one of the attributes of their community. Uncle Charlie has a schedule and agenda of his own, but he appears to others as one on a permanent vacation. Idle hands, it would seem, are the Devil's playground.

In many ways, Charlie is linked with her uncle. She is linked by name, by blood, and by brain. She begins to lie like Uncle Charlie. This link is demonstrated, less

obviously, by Charlie's sleeping time as well. The opening shot of her frames her on her bed in the exact posture as seen in her uncle's opening shot. After she reads in the newspaper of Uncle Charlie's latest murder, she sleeps in most of the next day, not unlike her uncle the previous day. While she sleeps, the diegetic bell from the clock tower tolls, aurally linking her with the community. This violation of the workaday world's schedule veers dangerously towards the sin of sloth.

She is also linked with him through the state of simultaneity. They apparently have been able to share thoughts over thousands of miles at the very same time. Charlie suggests that this may be due to telepathy, but what seems to be as remarkable is that the message was received instantly. What is most disillusioning for Charlie is that, by the end of the film, she realizes with whom or what she has really been intimately communicating. She has become complicit with his sins, and it has eternally made her an outsider in her own community. The verse from 1 Timothy 5.22, which precedes the one Uncle Charlie quotes at the Newton dinner table, warns, "Do not share in the sins of others. Keep yourself pure." The verse following Uncle Charlie's quotation states, "The sins of some men are obvious, reaching the place of judgment ahead of them; the sins of others trail behind them. In the same way, good deeds are obvious, and even those that are not cannot be hidden." This seems to ultimately temper Uncle Charlie's deeds with a sense of cosmic justice. Charlie has shared in the sins of Uncle Charlie and has become like him. It is significant that she rides the fateful train out of town along with her namesake. Metaphorically, she cannot go back. Her innocent life in Santa Rosa, like Eden after the fall of Adam and Eve, is forever barred to her.

## Uncle Charlie, Antichrist

Much has been made about Uncle Charlie's diabolical nature by other scholars. For example, Uncle Charlie is seen as a vampire by David Sterritt, a devil with a sexual pathology by Robin Wood, and an enforcer of patriarchal values by Diane Carson. He is clearly an antagonist, albeit a suave and charismatic one. To be sure, he is associated with both the Devil and Dracula. Uncle Charlie eludes his pursuers in Philadelphia by seemingly and supernaturally flying up a building. He comes to town amidst a thick cloud of black smoke, carrying souvenirs of his sins. By the end of the film, Charlie comes to doubt that he indeed is the savior she summoned. The doubt suggested by the film's title refers to doubting her savior, who turns out to be demonic. He brings Charlie nightmares. Ann has presumably read Dracula and is asked to tell the story. In the novel, published in 1897, Count Dracula represents a Victorian perversion or inversion of Christ. He drinks the blood of others, rather than having others drink his blood. His libidinous activity mocks Jesus's asceticism. His immortality is to be lived out on Earth at the expense of others. Uncle Charlie is indeed an evil character. His skills include manipulation, seduction, and charisma. What is perhaps more intriguing is his identification as the antichrist.

Uncle Charlie proclaims his selfish personal philosophy throughout. "What's the use of looking backward?" he says. "What's the use of looking ahead? Today's the thing." This is illustrated specifically with the vocabulary of time. The eternal present that he so admires creates the ideal state for an opportunist. He is free to go with

Charlie on the town, to engage in business, or to leave at a moment's notice. He consequently exists in a perpetual state of anomie, free and unencumbered by moral responsibility. His duty seems to be to his own gratification. Perhaps perversely, he declares, "Heaven takes care of fools and scoundrels," shrugging off any anxiety over future events. What would be lauded as a *carpe diem* attitude by the Dionysians of the 1960s is identified in the 1940s as deviance in the atmosphere comprised of adult laborers driven by moral responsibilities to fight against evil. In other words, his cavalier perspective would be considered immoral in the American heartland. Self-sacrifice is morally superior to self-aggrandizement, especially according to the prevalent zeitgeist of wartime Santa Rosa.

Uncle Charlie, the experienced traveler-businessman, explains the facts of life to Charlie as he understands them. "The world's a hell. What does it matter what happens in it?" Uncle Charlie's logic would appear to be built on the following premises. The world we live in is filled with hellish horror and misery. Because the world is this way, we should question a morality that keeps us from gratification. What relevance do any of our actions have if we are subjected to such conditions? A world devoid of moral consequences creates a world without religion, which would seem to please Uncle Charlie. Instead of adhering to a traditional system of ethics, he lives by a perverted moral code--a perversion of *Ivanhoe's* Christian chivalry.

Murdering rich widows becomes his one passion in life. This type of impulsive euthanasia, which figures prominently in Siodmak's *The Spiral Staircase* (1945) and Hitchcock's *Rope* (1948), is neither truly Nietzschean nor utilitarian, but it is

reminiscent of the genocidal justifications given for the Nazi programs of ethnic cleansing. To eliminate a people because they are inferior or represent a threat to one's way of life is genocide. To eliminate women because they inherit wealth and do not respect the work that went into earning it is psychopathic. Although the extent of Himmler's "Final Solution" was not publicly known in 1942, the published objectives of the Nazi regime were. Uncle Charlie's evil crusade to rid the world of these people seems the extent of misogyny, but it appears tame by comparison to the more nefarious developments in Europe. This moral ambiguity ("What does it matter?") mixed with a morbid sense of purpose--to kill widows--creates a paradoxical combination of motivating factors not foreign to the logic of the Holocaust. As early as Mein Kampf (1925), the Nazi project characterized their enemies, namely Jews, as vermin or animals. Uncle Charlie likewise dehumanizes his victims. "They're people, aren't they?" Charlie asks, shocked and outraged. "They're human beings!" To which Uncle Charlie asks, rather rhetorically, "Are they?" Whether a Nazi ideologue or demonic entity, he is certainly, in any event, the closest thing to the Devil to live in Santa Rosa.

His status as the antichrist is further portrayed by his perversion of one of the central Christian sacraments: marriage. He has apparently killed many single women in an act of twisted justice. Lars Thorwald, in Rear Window, presumably kills his wife because she made his life miserable. Marital frustration-turned-murder is the source of morbid jokes and crime dramas, but Uncle Charlie kills for a purpose. In a cruel mockery of the marriage sacrament, he consummates the bond by killing his

mate. Throughout the film, he is identified by sexuality. He is handsome and experienced, Charlie and Catherine are clearly attracted to him, and he flirts with Mrs. Green at the bank. Perhaps more disturbing are the incestuous undertones of his relationship to Charlie and Ann. Charlie's attraction to her uncle has already been noted, but Ann's sudden plea to her mother before dinner suggests inappropriate relations. Ann, uncharacteristically upset, secretly asks to sit away from Uncle Charlie. The typically rational Ann appears somehow disturbed. Other than this explanation, Ann's behavior makes no sense. He represents a sexual threat to the young women of the Newton family though this is never communicated verbally. In essence, the young women have had relations with the Devil.

As Charlie returns from church, Uncle Charlie mocks such religiosity, joking that the show's been running so long he assumed the attendance had slipped. He does not attend church, further identifying him not only as an outsider but as the Devil. The ultimate irony of his animus for God is that, in the final scene, his corpse is ostensibly brought into the church for the funeral service. Pious platitudes are spoken about his goodness inside while Charlie, now standing outside, mentions to Graham that "he hated the whole world." The memory of his evil will indeed live on in Charlie's nightmares. It is uncertain for how long.

### Chapter Three:

#### Doing Time in Rear Window

##### The Clock and the Clockmaker

From the end of 1950 until the spring of 1952, Hitchcock suffered from serious artistic inactivity. Until that time, he had filmed no less than thirty-seven feature films (several of which were critical and box office successes) and he hit something of a mid-life crisis. No project seemed to interest him enough to put his full creative energies behind it. He had arrived at a personal and professional crisis. Suddenly, with his wife Alma's help, he finally regained his interest with I Confess (produced in 1952) and Dial M for Murder (produced in 1953). It was with Rear Window (produced in 1953 and 1954) that he commenced his last string of successes: seven films that remain among the most fruitful of his career. He became so obsessed with the possibilities of Rear Window that he often discussed it intensely with Grace Kelly while filming her in Dial M for Murder. According to her, "the only reason he could remain calm was because he was already preparing his next picture, Rear Window." (Spoto, Dark 344). This thirty-ninth film certainly represents the culmination of great premeditation.

Set in a Greenwich Village apartment, Rear Window portrays a convalescing photojournalist who spies on his neighbors through his courtyard window and suspects that one of them has murdered his wife. James Stewart stars as the photojournalist L. B. Jeffries, known throughout the film simply as Jeff. Hitchcock

interviewed writer John Michael Hayes to ask for Hayes to write a treatment for the film. As a serviceman drafted in 1942, Hayes had become a projectionist for his unit. The only feature film his unit owned at the time was Shadow of a Doubt. By his own recollection, Hayes estimated that he showed the film three times a night for a whole month, bringing his total screenings to somewhere around ninety. Intimately aware of every nuance, he shared his excitement for the film during his first visit with Hitchcock in May of 1953. Three days later, Hayes received the offer to write Rear Window.

It some ways, Rear Window serves as a thematic reference to Shadow of a Doubt. In educating young Charlie about the world, Uncle Charlie says, "Do you know that if you ripped the fronts off houses you'd find swine?" Through the medium of film, Rear Window offers us a glimpse into a community that has had its walls ripped off. In a way, it represents another view of America under threat from evil infiltration. In the film, as in Shadow of a Doubt, we see just how insidious the threat is--it is literally in our backyard.

Near the beginning of Rear Window, Hitchcock makes one of his characteristic cameo appearances. He is seen winding the clock of the musician-neighbor. The significance of this appearance typifies his obsession with time and law and order. It is entirely possible to over-examine the significance of his appearances, yet this cameo seems to be invested with more thematic symbolism than many of his others. For example, scholar David Sterritt proposes that Hitchcock enters into his created *mise-en-scene* both through his own physical presence and through surrogates who

serve as replacements for his persona (11-15). Personally, I feel that many of these types of observations, though admittedly creative, may be missing the greater significance of the cameos within the films' contexts. Hitchcock's physical presence, in essence, reminds us of time's omnipresence; it makes the viewer aware that he or she is experiencing a film. But he also reminds the viewer of the designed nature of creation. According to some natural theology proponents, the divine clockmaker occasionally invades human history in order to readjust the world--exactly like resetting a slowing clock. Hitchcock's control of Rear Window's diegesis, from his cameo at the outset to the deus ex machina at the conclusion, is a reference to this divine intervention.

In 1959, Hitchcock wrote an article for Norman Vincent Peale's Christian magazine, Guideposts. Entitled "Would You Like to Know Your Future?" the article discusses his inclination as a director to play God and to design the entire mise-en-scene to his exact specifications. In a wink at Augustinian Platonism, he admits his divine powers only represent a microcosmic form of the real omnipotence and omniscience of God Almighty:

In the film story [of The Lodger in 1926], the synthetic future was certain. I controlled it. When I completed the movie, I was arrogantly certain of its real future too. I was sure that everyone would love it. When they didn't, I walked about in desperation, praying for another chance. There it was: I had been grasping at the real future, wanting it in my own hand. It was almost as

if God deliberately delayed success to show me that my efforts  
at controlling the future was not in His scheme of things.

(quoted in Gottlieb 139-40)

At the end of the article, he writes that "the best thing about the future is that it comes one day at a time. And I thank God daily that tomorrow does not belong to any man. It belongs to God" (quoted in Gottlieb 141). If we assume that Hitchcock represents God, what statement is he making? Hitchcock was an artist-creator. God created the world; Hitchcock created the world of Rear Window.

The construction of the Rear Window sets provides an example of creation. The intricate and mammoth structures, costing around \$200,000 and boasting thirty-one apartments, were constructed in just over four weeks (Curtis 21-56). Hitchcock was greatly involved in its design. Such efficient enterprise as typified by pre-production design demonstrates an orderly, knowing, and motivated creator. In Rear Window, the connections between time and moral order are associated with Christian concepts of creation, penitence, and witnessing. Hitchcock's role as an efficient and rational director suggests the intricate order of creation. God is in the details, as it were. His precise vision for all artistic details of the film, his manipulation of film speed, and his use of binary oppositions remind us that Hitchcock mirrors the Christian God of Creation. "I was feeling very creative at the time," he said of the film (quoted in Spoto, Art 214). As a director, his clear vision and elucidation of that vision are famous. Subtle albeit strongly held preferences pertaining to mise-en-scene elements were adhered to. Script, costuming, makeup, lighting, props, and the previously

mentioned sets all reflected the orderly vision of Alfred Hitchcock's mind. The fact that the entire creation was brought together with characteristically streamlined efficiency--reminiscent of the six days of creation--enhances the connection between timeliness and order.

In two different shots, he manipulates the film's speed. With the "surprise kiss" between Jeff and Lisa, Hitchcock shoots Grace Kelly's profile objectively while she slowly drifts towards James Stewart's face. In the final confrontation between Thorwald and Jefferies, the detectives' rush to save Jeffries is sped up. Both shots have their aesthetic purposes, but their symbolic function is to remind the audience that these images are manipulated by their creator; with this they suggest the same principle that his cameo suggests. Hitchcock's previous experiments in conflating diegetic and real time can be seen in Rope (1948) and Dial M for Murder (1953). Both films retain the verisimilitude of a stage play, which presents a convincing albeit artificial version of real life. In Rear Window, Hitchcock actively manipulates time, perhaps to suggest, through his direction, that there is a transcendent nature beyond our experience of time. Similarly, he visually draws attention to the artifice of the mise-en-scene in numerous films through the use (or overuse) of special effects shooting and rear projection, most arrestingly used in The Birds (1963) and Marnie (1964).

The use of symmetry is also essential to an orderly cosmic system. Binary oppositions such as up and down, male and female, and good and bad fill the universe and Jeffries' vision of his Greenwich Village courtyard home. As Hitchcock told

Truffaut, "The symmetry is the same as in Shadow of a Doubt. On one side of the yard you have the Stewart-Kelly couple, with him immobilized by his leg in a cast, while she can move about freely. And on the other side there is a sick woman who's confined to her bed, while the husband comes and goes" (quoted in Truffaut 216). Symmetry, timing, and order are regulated, with great efficiency and foresight, by the creator of the rational system. Scholar John Belton notices that the film, "as a testament film, is about the consequences of looking," and also writes that it observes the principles of "economy, regularity, symmetry, and order" (12). The characters of the film are not autonomous agents, but operate as creations of a greater cosmic order and, in that operation, they testify to its existence.

### Watching the Clock

Jeff seems keenly aware of time while serving his sentence of convalescence. He bemoans that he has spent "six weeks sitting in a two-room apartment with nothing to do but look out the window." Viewing the apartment in which Jeff temporarily resides as a metaphorical prison cell strengthens the connection between time and morality. He is doing time. The original purpose of the Quaker penitentiary was predicated on the belief that fostering guilt would lead to the acquisition of individual accountability. The best way to foster this guilt, according to Christian theory popularized in colonial America, is to isolate perpetrators for as long as they need to become penitent. Jeff, like a prisoner, needs to learn to be responsible to Lisa and his community. The language Jeffries and Lisa use in their first argument scene--and

elsewhere in the film--is peppered with references to time. For example, Jeff and Lisa's dialogue uses phrases such as "Wait a minute," "Couldn't we have a status quo," "When am I going to see you again," and, "Not for a long time--at least not until tomorrow night," just to name a few.

In case we do not recognize the significance of doing time, several narrative elements assist us. In her first scene of the film, Stella imagines a judge sentencing Jeff to "three years in Dannemora." The marriage-as-incarceration motif is perhaps most blatant in The 39 Steps, in which the lead couple are literally handcuffed together, and Mr. and Mrs. Smith (1941), in which the lead couple discovers that their once-legally-binding marriage is no longer valid. Also, during his early morning vigil, Jeff sees the couple who have been sleeping on their fire escape across the courtyard awakened by a sudden drizzle. In their scramble to get inside, they mistakenly drop their alarm clock, which falls to the earth, goes off on impact, and rings until its energy is exhausted. During the same period, Jeff records Thorwald's actions by specific times. Close up shots show Jeff's watch at 1:55 when Thorwald leaves in the rain and 2:34 when he comes back. The double meaning of the word "watch" is significant here. He is watching the time by looking at his watch. Whereas he originally watched the clock to pass the time on his sentence, he now watches Thorwald, another person who will soon become a prisoner.

This connection between surveillance and moral order is perhaps most powerfully demonstrated when Thorwald glares back at the one who has been spying on him. Thorwald's subjective gaze into the camera is charged with the unsettling power of

disorder. The object of surveillance suddenly becomes its practitioner. Doing time and watching have become interconnected. At this point, Thorwald's name seems especially significant. Thor is the god of thunder and war according to Norse mythology. He killed giants and invoked divine justice with his magic hammer. Thorwald's gaze is imbued with a power that will soon bring great suffering to Jeff.

In 1954, Cold War paranoia still raged. The Hollywood blacklisting scandals--many times only tangentially related to Communist associations--reflected the pressure political and governmental institutions exerted on the film industry. For example, one of Hitchcock's favorite actresses, Ingrid Bergman, left the country in exile due to her questionable behavior during this period. The emphasis on targeting morally or ideologically suspect behavior fueled concomitant McCarthyite witch-hunts. If viewed in this suggestive manner, Rear Window is about claiming criminal behavior in others without material evidence; it is about constructing blame based on an informer's instinct. Jeff's sacrificial triumph of informing echoes the sacrificial triumph of informing seen in the Academy Award-winning Best Picture of that same year, On the Waterfront. As a reference to the American moral imperative during the Red Scare, Jeff's actions represent an attempt to induce justice in a community whose loyalties have been obscured. The clock needs to be watched.

### The Nature of the Orrery

If we have seen that, in the Santa Rosa of Shadow of a Doubt, ideological state apparatuses are used to regulate an orderly community, in the Greenwich Village of

Rear Window, minding one's business is equally important to a regulated society. Yet this assertion is arguable. It is possible that, to Hitchcock, the degraded bar subculture in Shadow of a Doubt and Rear Window and diabolical figures such as Uncle Charlie and Lars Thorwald also have their place in the cosmology. It is important to remember that Hitchcock regularly and shamelessly indulged in alcohol and nasty practical jokes; occasionally, he treated actresses such as Ingrid Bergman, Grace Kelly, and Tippi Hedren more violently than Thorwald. Perhaps his work would suggest a type of Zoroastrian worldview in which good and evil clash throughout the mundane world and good will eventually achieve victory. This view, which recognizes that evil has a place in the cosmic struggle, was eventually adopted the orthodox Christianity. Of course, this view is far too simplistic for Hitchcock, who perpetually muddies the proverbial waters when it comes to identifying any of his characters as indisputable representatives for either side.

Whether evil indeed has a recognized place in the community or should be located outside it, the world of Rear Window is orderly and functions largely because of a community ethos based on not intruding on others. Again, this is not as simplistic as it would appear. The various subplots occurring in the apartments adjacent to Jeff's courtyard work like an orrery. An orrery is a constructive metaphor for understanding the way this community operates and is represented. Literally driven by clockwork, each planet in an orrery moves in different orbital paths representing its relative place and movement over time. However, each orbital is kept permanently separate by the structure of the machine. Otherwise, if allowed to guide themselves, the various

components would grind into each other and the machine would quickly be destroyed. With this device, the clock is transformed into a more tangible model for understanding the cosmos.

This model for the cosmology represented in Rear Window works surprisingly well. Each individual or family around the courtyard is ostensibly independent, but is fundamentally linked to each other. The framework that structures their social relations is invisible, inherent, and indispensable. Not unlike the deist principles proposed by social contract theoreticians such as Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau, this neighborhood is only vital because of their tacit participation in a social contract with each other. It is a robust and active community even though a heat wave has made activities recently uncomfortable. Unlike Santa Rosa in 1942, Greenwich Village in 1954 functions effectively because of an ethos that assumes that people should care about each other, but ultimately mind their own business unless there is great need to act otherwise. Respecting privacy is appropriate. The dog owner harshly criticizes that ethos after her dog is found dead. In her poignant diatribe about proper neighborly attitudes, she yells that neighbors care about each other. Hitchcock himself noted to Truffaut that this is the one of a very few shots of the film filmed from a point of view outside of Jeff's apartment. "By simply taking the camera outside of [Jeff's] apartment, the whole scene becomes objective" (217). Again, Hitchcock emphasizes this point by the way he films it.

In an orrery, the bodies that are represented are arranged in a particular order-- each rotating in different concentric paths. Understanding order and design has been

one of the major preoccupations of the Enlightenment. Living in the Manhattan of the early 1950s would help one clearly understand how separate the separate social circles were. One of the central conflicts of Rear Window is the lifestyle clash between Jeff and Lisa. She is a representative of haute couture and he is a rugged individualist. Elise Lemire has argued effectively that Lisa is patterned after supermodel-entrepreneur Anita Colby--a double threat because she was not only a highly marketable model but one who capitalized on that marketability by investing in the corporate world at a time when this would have been quite unusual for a female model. Jeff admits that he is unable to operate in these circles. Socially, their worlds are separate.

To some degree, the separateness is a reflection of the culturally determined binary oppositions of male and female relationships as well. Conflicts between Jeff and Lisa, Mr. and Mrs. Thorwald, Miss Torso and her male admirers, and the Newlyweds next door accentuate the film's separations. This is the era of the disillusioned middle-class housewife represented in Betty Friedan's The Feminine Mystique. Perhaps as a way of combating this life of disillusionment, the nagging wife archetype appears throughout the film. "If I knew you quit your job we wouldn't have gotten married," argues the once-happy Mrs. Newlywed. Lisa, trying to become Jeff's wife, repeatedly pesters him into marrying her. Mrs. Thorwald, identified by her nagging, arguably pays the ultimate price for communicating her frustrations to her male counterpart.

Jeff seems to feel that marriage itself is paying the ultimate price for happiness. Hitchcock, through his visual associations made between marriage relationships and

the courtyard's panopticon, achieves great richness from the marriage-as-prison simile. Underlying these nuptial or prenuptial tensions is a deeper crisis in 1950s masculinity. The two major typologies available to most middle-class men were having a monogamous relationship culminating in heterosexual marriage (as in 1955's Best Picture Oscar recipient, Marty) or following the life of the playboy ethic (as in 1959's Pillow Talk). Hollywood and Madison Avenue circles of the 1950s were hardly intolerant of divorce, homosexuality, or polygamous relationships, but mainstream America certainly was.

The emergence of Playboy magazine in 1953 popularized the lifestyle of a swinging, sexually-active single man. "In short," Elise Lemire writes, "Playboy's debut in 1953 marks the first time that there was an attempt to give single men status. When Jeff says to Stella that he'll 'probably get married one of these days,' we know that, in the meantime, he will continue to enjoy looking at Miss Torso and other scantily clad women" (74). In Rear Window, Jeff is provoked into deciding which identity to choose: the married man or eligible bachelor. Before Lisa begins playing along with his investigation of Mrs. Thorwald's murder, his dialogue with Lisa is sardonic and tempered by a harshness that this tension of masculinity would explain. In his whole community, perhaps only the owners of the dog are happy--although they are almost never seen speaking to each other. The two genders represented repeatedly suffer from miscommunication and concomitant tension.

The Darwinian distinction between a created design and naturally occurring patterns has been one of modernism's prime challenges to the concept of divinely

inspired order. Strangely, Darwin's concepts had been popularly appropriated by the early twentieth-century to justify racism and even the genocide of the European fascist dictatorships of the 1930s and 40s. As ethnically diverse as the Lower West Side was in the mid-1950s, New York City was still organized by de facto racial segregation. Black Americans in Manhattan lived mainly in Harlem, which by that time had begun its slow and grim decline. Ralph Ellison's racially-conscious vision of New York in Invisible Man (1952) is not represented in Rear Window. In fact, no blacks appear in the film.

It is plausible, however, that Detective Doyle's babysitter, heard only briefly over the phone, is black. Her verbal drawl and diction seem to suggest a black dialect of that time. "Do he have your number?" she asks Jeff. If this is true, it represents another version of the state of the civil rights movement in the era of Brown vs. the Topeka Board of Education in 1954. Instead of a body of people who had no voice, the babysitter is a voice with no body. In either case, blacks in films of this era had not only been spatially separated from other Americans but symbolically from their own expression within mainstream popular culture. What the Civil Rights movement seemed to represent to America is that such separations between the races were culturally determined and not divinely determined.

Similarly, the relationship between communication and community is exhibited through the democratizing technology of the telephone. Several phone conversations take place throughout the film, starting with Jeff's conversation with his boss, Gunnison. Hitchcock originally shot an entire scene with his boss, intending to be

cross cut it into the opening sequence of the phone conversation, but ultimately used only Gunnison's voice, presumably to further enhance the singular point of view. Conversations with numerous characters are mediated by the phone: the "black" babysitter, Doyle's wife, and even Lisa and Thorwald. Their disembodied voices represent a fundamental and symbolic separation between them. Many of the phone conversations, though sometimes heated, are muted, even to the point of whispering, in comparison to the piercing of Anna's scream, the dog's owner's wailing, and Jeff's shouts for help. This muting was explored even more dramatically in Hitchcock's previous film, Dial M for Murder, during which Margot is unable to cry for help to her husband over the phone while being strangled. "Real" voices, that is, voices heard coming from Jeff's neighborhood courtyard without the aid of technology, are more powerful because they emerge from the community. In fact, all the sounds and music in the film are diegetic, with the possible exception of the opening and closing credits. In Rear Window, speaking and listening are important, but watching is even more so.

### Witnessing and Eternal Vigilance

From Laura Mulvey to Francois Truffaut, many have argued that the film is really about voyeurism. David Sterritt offers an intriguing observation about Hitchcock's Blackmail (1929) that can be appropriated to explain the deistic power of the gaze in Rear Window. "A huge, impassive face carved in stone . . . evokes the God whose presence might be literally felt if this indeed were a church" (46). Indeed, the gaze takes on a near-totemic significance. Jeff's naming of his neighbors gives him an

Adamic symbolism as well. He bestows names on them such as Miss Loney Hearts and Miss Torso. The danger of playing God implied by the reference to Nathanael West's novella, Miss Lonelyhearts (1933), cannot be ignored either. In the novel, an advice columnist who becomes involved in the life of a letter writer is killed. Nevertheless, looking is not just looking in Rear Window.

Hitchcock himself said that Jeff is "a real Peeping Tom" (quoted in Truffaut 216). But attributing Jeff's voyeurism to scopophilia does not completely explain the significance of looking in the film. For example, it is almost never argued that Rear Window is about the political, legal, or metaphysical connotations of witnessing. After the Rosenbergs, perhaps the most sensationalized espionage case of this early Cold War period was the Alger Hiss-Whittaker Chambers affair. Both men had risen to highly influential positions in American life. Alger Hiss was a key legal figure in creating the United Nations and as law clerk for Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes. Whittaker Chambers rose to publishing prominence as a senior editor of Time magazine. Both were accused of having spied for the Communist Party at a time when these charges were especially serious. After the ordeal was essentially over in 1952, Chambers's account, entitled simply Witness, was published. The double meaning of the term "witness" is perhaps fitting in examining the relationship between observation and redemption in Rear Window. Essentially, three types of witnessing occur in the film--voyeuristic, investigative, and professional. The psychological causes and effects of the first type, although fascinating, have already been discussed by numerous Hitchcock scholars. The investigative and professional

forms of witnessing have been discussed much less intensely and therefore provide less accepted approaches to the film. Both, however, demonstrate the Christian undertones of the relationship between seeing and doing.

In the early 1950s, the increased accessibility and popularity of television made Americans a nation of observers. This phenomenon influenced the resurgence of the movie theater spectacle, complete with new gimmicks or innovations such as widescreen films, luxury theaters, Cinemascope, VistaVision, 3D, extravagant classical epics, and media blitzes. An emphasis on images as evidence has only increased, through ever-more-graphic press coverage of world events from Vietnam to Iraq. From the Zapruder film of Kennedy's assassination to the Rodney King beating, witnessing violence has become a standard for determining the reality of events, influencing both crime investigations and foreign policy. In "Eternal Vigilance in *Rear Window*" Armond White argues that evidentiary standards have changed and the suspense films of Alfred Hitchcock's imitators, most notably Brian DePalma, illustrate that this skepticism in audiences of the 1960s and 1970s has changed investigative standards in such films. In this sense, *Rear Window* captures a period before realism and documentary techniques were popularly accepted as standards of media credibility in mainstream American culture.

In *Rear Window*, the crux of the investigation narrative is the paucity of material evidence. One of the most significant factors at work in the investigation is faith. Without having witnessed what he believes to be the murder of Anna Thorwald, Jeff must rely on his faith or instinct. Lisa's version of faith is skeptically referred to as

"woman's intuition" by Tom Doyle. Within the Christian-oriented cosmology, watching mandates moral responsibility. According to the adage, the price of liberty is eternal vigilance. Vigilance and vigilantism are some of the under-examined leitmotifs of the film. Jeffries and Lisa debate the "rear window ethics" of the situation but eventually become convinced of the accuracy of their own hypothesis--a hypothesis based entirely on what has been observed.

Once convinced, time again becomes a key narrative and symbolic element for Jeff and Lisa. They must take matters into their own hands to solve the crime before the evidence has disappeared; it is a race against the clock the likes of which populate all of Hitchcock's major thrillers. The lack of material evidence raises a key ontological question. If she is dead, where is Mrs. Thorwald's corpse? Interestingly, the same type of question is perhaps the most foundational question in Christology. If Jesus Christ was indeed crucified to death, where was his corpse on the third day of his interment? The implications for timely, responsible action derive from the witnessing of an arguably unjustified death.<sup>7</sup>

One can even argue that during the postwar period, the existence of the European genocide or proof of Communist espionage also hinged on the observance of evidential images paired with belief in the accuracy of those images. Evidently, Doyle and Jeff served together in World War II, loosely linking a morally justified war against tyranny and genocide with professional life a decade later. Jeff became a photojournalist and Doyle a detective. In mainstream America, World War II was considered a war that would combat evil, eliminate genocide, and liberate innocents. I

Confess (1953), To Catch a Thief (1955), and The Man Who Knew Too Much (1956)

also identify the protagonists as war veterans. Concerning James Stewart's responsibility and killing of Europeans in the good war, scholar Amy Lawrence notices some very disturbing connotations. She writes:

As a combat veteran, Stewart was trapped by a contradiction which, in the wake of the officially sanctioned postwar euphoria, produced psychological turmoil veterans were left to negotiate alone. Consequently, nearly all of Stewart's postwar roles are haunted by an undercurrent of confusion, guilt, and shame that is historically specific but can never be articulated (70).

Both lead males are veterans but it is the one who is a professional watcher--not the professional detective--who correctly solves the murder case.

According to postwar American jurisprudence, Jeff would have technically been considered an autopic witness--one who witnessed the circumstantial evidence suggesting Anna's murder--and her body would be considered a corpus delicti--a missing body. In other words, in the absence of a corpse or confession, suspects are rarely convicted of murder. In order to prosecute, one or both must be obtained by law enforcement. In terms of investigation, the film ends with the acquisition of both the body (or at least part of it) and a confession by the perpetrator. However, the film begins with Jeff's faith. This is not an orthodox religious faith by any means, but faith in what was considered to be, in colonial America, providential symbology, which has been transcribed into legalese. Both the legal and spiritual connotations of the

term "confession" abound. Thorwald confesses at the end of the film. Jeff's faith has therefore been ultimately justified, although every one of his closest supporters doubted him at some point. In regards to the skeptical attitude represented by audiences of Rear Window's imitators, scholar Armond White writes, "A faithless age needs the evidence" (139). Put simply, faith was important in Hitchcock's version of the early Cold War milieu but by the 1970s, material evidence was required to support faith as an existential standard among audiences.

Jeff's conscience demands that he act on what he has seen--in other words, to go to the authorities. When he is repeatedly ridiculed or chastised outright by Doyle, the representative of law and order, Jeff takes matters into his own hands and becomes somewhat of a vigilante. This is a key point in the moral universe that Hitchcock presents in Rear Window. His vigilance has led him to become a vigilante. It is only when Jeff ceases to trust in the higher order of law that he takes action (through Lisa and Stella) faces his own potential annihilation. Thorwald, perhaps serving as some avenging angel, strikes back at Jeff's humanistic insolence. What is ironic is that Jeff is evidently correct about the facts of the case; perhaps this truth is what ultimately saves him from destruction. Jeff has become a witness, not to the killing and resurrection of Jesus Christ, but to the killing of Anna and, by the end of the film, seeing justice done.

It can reasonably be assumed that Jeff will be subpoenaed to testify to what he has seen. Giving his testimony, as a witness, also has spiritual overtones. To state the truth as one sees it before an individual or one's community is analogous to the role of

Christian confession. This secular form of Christian symbology transcribed into modern jurisprudence dominated Hitchcock's films of the 1950s, most notably, I Confess (1953), Dial M for Murder (1954) and The Wrong Man (1956), all of which rely on both the spiritual and legal connotations of witnessing, persecution, testimony, trial, and conviction. John Belton notices that:

[Rear Window is] a very Catholic film. In projecting his desires, the hero becomes responsible for their acting-out by another. In the contemplation of evil, he becomes guilty of evil, even though he himself does not commit it. For Catholics like Hitchcock, the sin of omission--an immoral thought or desire that is repressed--is equal in the eyes of the Church to the sin of commission--an acting out of that illicit thought or desire. (9)

Belton, like many Hitchcock scholars, cannot seem to help himself from relating this sense of Catholic responsibility to Freudian psychoanalysis. Though I agree with him in spirit, I believe that responsible biographical criticism of Alfred Hitchcock and his work demands that Jeff's "sin of omission" derives mainly from Hitchcock's sense of Christian responsibility and does not necessarily need to be solely linked (as is often the case) with the familiar psychoanalytic interpretation.

Jeff is a professional photographer--a watcher. He earns an income witnessing things and replicating those observations for publication. Photojournalists like him helped influence public opinion in domestic and foreign affairs. Based loosely on Robert Capa, one of the most influential news photographers of the 1940s, Jeff's

character is an experienced professional witness of world events. His jaded barbs and crotchety cynicism remove him from the innocence and naivete that seem stereotypical of mainstream Christianity. He is worldly and, being part of a fallen world filled with wars and devastation, has become a conduit to activate political and social change. Jeff is a precursor to the journalist antihero figure that later proliferated in such popular post-Watergate and post-Vietnam films such as The Conversation (1974), All the President's Men (1976), and The China Syndrome (1979).

One of the most outspoken champions of the constitutional freedom of expression and ordered liberty during this period was Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas. Douglas's influence in Rear Window is intriguing to say the least. Initially observed by Elise Lemire, the reference to Douglas provides some references to jurisprudence, spying, orientalism, and foreign affairs that seem perhaps so subtle or tangential they have not been previously discussed at length by Hitchcock scholars.<sup>8</sup> The final shot of Rear Window ends with Lisa replacing Douglas's latest travel book, Beyond the High Himalayas, with a copy of the popular fashion magazine Harper's Bazaar. The magazine's most obvious reference is to haute couture. The title word "bazaar" actually reinforces another form of exoticism. Originating in Persia, the bazaar was a public market common in most Central Asian and Middle Eastern cultures. The term here is appropriated to denote the availability of other exoticized commodities such as fashion and beauty.

In the previous few years, Douglas had written a handful of similar travel literature with orientalist overtones: Of Men and Mountains (1950), Strange Lands and

Friendly People (1951), Beyond the High Himalayas (1952), and North from Malaya (1953). Douglas's books belong to a genre fairly popular in that postwar period.

Popular titles of the period include Thor Heyerdahl's Kon Tiki (1950) and Heinrich Harrer's Seven Years in Tibet (1953). Even the title of Douglas's biography indicates his lifelong interest in world travel, as seen in James Simon's Independent Journey: The Life of William O. Douglas. Hitchcock, a lifelong fanatic of geography, travel, and escapist literature, must have gained some pleasure with this final reference to the genre. Hitchcock's love of travel was legendary among his acquaintances. Typical of his scheduling orderliness, he and Alma revisited their honeymoon site, Saint Moritz, annually.

The presence of Douglas's book suggests more political undertones. Despite the pervasive atmosphere at the height of the Red Scare, Douglas represented an unpopular position on the emotionally charged and highly publicized Rosenberg spy case in 1953. After several legal battles and President Eisenhower's denial of clemency, the Supreme Court decided to vacate a stay of execution granted by Justice Douglas. In a nearly unprecedented assembly during their hiatus, the Court met especially to deal with the Rosenberg controversy. Douglas dissented from the Court's June 18, 1953 decision and consequently faced impeachment charges, which did not ultimately lead to his removal. Julius and Ethel Rosenberg were executed the day after the decision (Radosh and Milton 402-12). Anna's murder links her to Ethel Rosenberg's execution because both demonstrate the extreme abuse of a woman who is generally perceived by the public as culpable but not deserving death. Ethel was

electrocuted and Anna was killed and then dismembered. Less than three months later, John Michael Hayes finished writing the first draft of Rear Window's script. According to Steven DeRosa's research, the completed treatment is dated September 11, 1953 (29). One would assume any who followed the news at that time would still be affected by the Rosenberg trial that summer. Interestingly enough, many of the themes of the Rosenberg case were echoed in Rear Window.

The association between perceiving injustice and acting responsibly appears even in the text of the dust jacket of the original hardbound edition of Beyond the High Himalayas:

The threat of Communism, Justice Douglas discovered, hangs over Central Asia and threatens soon to engulf the entire Buddhist world and with it an enormous part of the earth's population. America, he points out, has a real fight on its hands if it hopes to save these backward and oppressed people from becoming the tools of Communism; but it is, he insists, a fight that America must win and win quickly--or else all Asia will soon become a part of the Soviet sphere. (Douglas)

The editorial statement seems a bit dogmatic today in the post-Cold War world, but is important to understanding the political environment on the early 1950s. The orientalist tone seems to have been appropriated in order to make readers feel a sense of urgency if not responsibility over the spread of Communism over "these backward and oppressed people."

The publishers of Douglas's book sensed a significant threat of communist expansion in the 1950s, though miscalculated the severity of the threat from a unified Sino-Soviet alliance. The statement that "America must win [the Cold War] and win quickly" demonstrates the new moral imperative of this period. The original cover shows the Supreme Court Justice standing in front of a signpost--at some undisclosed location in Central Asia--that indicates that from that spot, it is 190 miles to China, 600 miles to Russia, and 200 miles to Tibet. The two most powerful Communist nations in Asia suffered a permanent diplomatic split a few years later in 1958, though the extent of this was not commonly known in the West at the time; the popular ignorance of this split encouraged many in America to conflate the various communist expansions in the world into one aggregate threat. This threatening conglomeration was met by American containment policies throughout the Third World, especially in Southeast Asia in the 1950s and 1960s. Jeff's boss, Gunnison, in conversation with Jeff at the beginning of Rear Window, suggests that the next political hotspot will be in Asia. For American foreign policy, Asia has remained an indisputable geopolitical hotspot ever since the Second World War.

Among others, it is the photojournalists, according to Douglas's position, who help watch that the world does not become hostile to liberty. As Graham suggests to Charlie at the end of Shadow of a Doubt, every once in a while "the world goes crazy," and it needs to be watched from time to time. In other words, the disordered world needs to be watched by responsible ethical people. In Rear Window, the moral imperative is manifested by observing one's sentence and acting on one's faith. Like

Santa Rosa, Jeffries' Greenwich Village neighborhood is built on an assumed code of responsibility. In Rear Window, by witnessing and being eternally vigilant, order and discipline are maintained. Order, in a world of confusion and devastation, is the manifestation of the divine.

## Chapter Four

### Being on Time in North by Northwest

#### Efficiency and Coordination

In North by Northwest (1959), being on time represents the maintenance of law and order. The film provides numerous examples of the efficiency and coordination of bureaucratic institutions, the relationship between advertising and ideology, and the spiritual significance of direction and improvisation. Cary Grant plays Roger Thornhill, a New York advertising executive who is mistaken for an American spy during the Cold War. After he is framed for the assassination of a United Nations delegate, the police pursue him as he pursues the enemy agents across the Northeast. He eventually assumes the false identity that has been foisted on him, and en route, he falls in love with Eve, another secret agent.

Efficiency is crucial to the successful regulation of any bureaucracy. This manipulation of time in Western business, government, and other institutions developed from a specific religious ethic promulgated throughout Post-Reformation Christendom. Max Weber, in The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, astutely links the obsession with orderliness with Christian labor:

[When] asceticism was carried out of the monastic cells into everyday life, and began to dominate worldly morality, it did its part in building the tremendous cosmos of the modern economic order. This order is now bound to the technical and economic

conditions of machine production which to-day determine the lives of all the individuals who are born into this mechanism, not only those directly concerned with economic acquisition, with irresistible force. (181)

It is intriguing that Weber uses a seminally Christian model to begin this passage. Hitchcock was educated in Church at Saint Francis parish, and later, at Saint Ignatius College. It was a religious education that, even by standards of the time, was rooted in orderliness and timeliness. His leisure time was strictly determined by his father, and his academic time, of course, was determined by his schoolmasters. By all accounts he was a solitary, ascetic young man, and as an adult, extraordinarily disciplined in terms of film production and adherence to professional schedules. The back cover of Hitchcock's authorized biography by John Russell Taylor even claims that he observed celibacy for forty years--a feat that, if true, is perhaps more befitting a monk than a happily married family man.

Weber's determinism seems critical of the type of ideological state apparatuses that permeate the mass culture of North by Northwest, the Greenwich Village of Rear Window, and the Santa Rosa of Shadow of a Doubt. Weber indicates that this ethos is inherited by a productive culture unconsciously. Numerous Marxists and post-Marxists have been just as critical of manipulation by the Church or government. Religiously-tinged discipline is found in Hitchcock's scheduling regularity. It was noted that, "every Sunday he would be at Mass" (Spoto, Dark 116). Hitchcock, as an adult artist émigré removed in time and space from his upbringing, was capable of

self-reflexively working out the Christian mentality he acquired during his upbringing through his art. He acknowledged the strong influence of discipline and order cultivated during his childhood. This sense of order and time, so foundational to a productive society, was largely acquired during his early years while his Christian lifestyle was most intense. He inherited the productive impulse without necessarily retaining the strict observance of Christian behavior.

Weber's analysis of how the spiritual undertones of a capitalist culture promotes individual productivity seem especially cogent when applied to Hitchcock and his work. Notice the similarity between Weber's insights and Hitchcock's description of his own *modus operandi*:

I'm full of fears and I do my best to avoid difficulties and any kind of complications. I like everything around me to be clear as crystal and completely calm. I don't want clouds overhead. I get a feeling of inner peace from a well-organized desk. When I take a bath, I put everything neatly back in place. You wouldn't even know I'd been in the bathroom. My passion for orderliness goes hand in hand with a strong revulsion towards complications. (quoted in Truffaut 260)

This "passion for orderliness," largely acquired in a capitalistic Catholic environment during the chaos of the Great War, provides us with insight to his works, especially North by Northwest. As perhaps an indication of the significance of the theme of timeliness, Alfred Hitchcock misses the bus, literally, in his cameo appearance. This

cameo reiterates the theme suggested by his clock-winding cameo in Rear Window. He is late. Those aware of Hitchcock's position on this subject automatically know that the film is about time and order and is influenced by an orthodox Christian cosmology.

Thematically, North by Northwest is every bit as much about bureaucratic efficiency and related cosmological assumptions as it is about the romantic typology as explained by Brill or sexual-political deviance as explained by Corber.

Bureaucracies permeate the film. Notice, for example, the many references to political bureaucratic regulation: Congress, the UN, FBI, CIA, ONI, Gestapo, and the other institutions in "the same alphabet soup." These institutions clearly represent the presence of law and order. All such institutions work best when they regulate their vast amount of data and schedules with rationality. Though such institutions are often stereotyped by their inefficiency and red tape, their survival has largely been predicated on successful organization of time and information. The violation of such organizations, symbolized by being late, may result in chaos.

Robert Corber's creative perspective on the crisis of chaos established in the opening scenes of North by Northwest suggests that Roger Thornhill is susceptible to manipulation by enemy agents because his identity is not clearly defined. Corber believes that Thornhill's crisis is a crisis of stability and order. While Corber positions this chaos in terms of the American government's propaganda against homosexuality (which is a bit of a stretch), it is instead due more to the crisis of individual responsibility and efficiency in a bureaucratic world. This is where an analysis like

Weber's is especially helpful. The impulse to be responsible and productive is inculcated in those born into this system (and certainly those who work professionally in it) and remains in the business world as a standard analogous to Christian moral discipline. This timeliness analogue in Western secular business is largely born from that historical and ideological heritage.

In North by Northwest, being on time represents the maintenance of law and order. Faithfully observing a schedule becomes the primary concern of the characters. The film is filled with references to times and locations--coordinates, as it were. Addresses, room numbers, destinations, appointments, timelines, itineraries, and other numbers fill the schedules of the busy and efficient characters portrayed in the film. Even a superficial viewing of the film reveals numerous subtle indications of time and speed: The Twentieth Century Limited, Mount Rushmore, Rapid City, Central Time, and rush hour, not to mention the ubiquitous dialogical concerns over timeliness. "Roger, will you be home for dinner?" Thornhill's mother asks while he is pursued by murderers.

This is a world filled with clocks and schedules and the millions of people who observe them. For instance, the establishing shots depict the busy New York City multitudes following conventions of time. The opening scene during the credit sequence seems reminiscent of the opening shots of Charlie Chaplin's socialist satire, Modern Times (1936), in which the busy workers are visually identified as herds of sheep; it is possible that the opening shots of North by Northwest set up a similar satirical tone. The buses, taxis, cars, and crosswalks all run on the efficient regulation

of time and space; the belief in a rational mathematical or geometric design underlies them all. This geometry, which is repeated throughout, is first indicated by the title sequence showing regular angles and a consistent set of intersecting lines. This abstraction transforms into the orthogonal lines of a city building. These buildings represent the attempt to create order or, in the case of Vandamm's Rapid City structure, to build onto the natural order.

Specific representations of time throughout the film in dialogic, diegetic, and filmic terms are omnipresent. As with most, if not all of his films, the references are too numerous to mention. A few of the most outstanding follow. In terms of the mise-en-scene, in the initial kidnapping scene, the watch of one of the kidnapers is clearly in view as the other's gun is pointed at Thornhill's heart, linking the efficiency of time with the efficiency of death. At the train station in Chicago, the train worker convinces the authorities that he was mugged, though he is still clearly sporting a respectable watch. It is not difficult to notice the watch, since all of his clothes were ostensibly taken by Thornhill.

At the same station, the clock is seen in the background over Thornhill's shoulder while obtaining directions from Eve. The presence of the clock, though it is subtle to the point of being missed entirely at the conscious level, serves several functions. It provides the audience with information that will later become useful; she received her instructions from "Kaplan" at around 9:15, although he checked out of his hotel at 7:10. It also serves to link Thornhill visually with time, which is vital both to his life and vocation. It also reminds us of the almost imperceptible sense of orderliness that

keeps the rest of the world from devolving into chaos. Later in the hospital, Thornhill is seen shirtless wearing only a towel and his watch. Again, this serves many purposes, not the least of which is to remind us of the urgency of time and his intimate consciousness of being timely. After all, important government secrets, not to mention his new love interest, will quickly be leaving for good.

As in Rear Window, Hitchcock manipulates the film speed not only to achieve a dramatic effect, but to associate time with a cosmological design. The car Thornhill is driving while drunk speeds by a police car in fast motion, causing the authorities to take him into custody, but not before he crashes and almost kills an innocent cyclist. The fast motion serves to create the appearance of being out of control. His reckless driving results in destruction and the potential for greater destruction. According to the analogy, when order is violated, chaos often ensues.

Running throughout the film are innumerable references to efficiency and inefficiency. For example, the specific instances of lateness in the dialogue and the narrative reinforce this theme. One of the first lines of the film (appearing just after Hitchcock's cameo featuring lateness) indicates Thornhill's lateness for his meeting with business associates. His mother, a few minutes later, bemoans that she "will be late for the bridge club." The Professor, meeting Thornhill at the airport, admits "I thought I'd never make it." Lateness is a supreme transgression in a world built on the strict observance of order.

If lateness is a transgression, then stopping is certainly a threat possibly leading to doom. The train in which Roger and Eve are riding makes an "unscheduled stop" that

allows the authorities to board in pursuit. Having eluded the authorities, Thornhill makes his rendezvous with destiny the next day at "Prairie Stop." The stop is almost his final stop. The propellers of the crop-duster sent to kill him seem to vaguely suggest the hands of a clock-turned-deadly-machine, not to maintain order, but to create death. While escaping from the hospital, Thornhill is stopped by a patient who twice orders him to stop. Had he lingered, Eve and the state secrets may have left with Vandamm. Even at Vandamm's, the housekeeper keeps Thornhill "pinned down for five minutes" with a gun. When Thornhill tries to escape from her, she shoots at him three times. In that scene, the time until Eve's doom, and the violation against American security, is measured out in luggage. By this time, Eve knows that when the luggage is gone, she will be as well. This objectified gauging of the time left echoes how Alicia's impending doom is measured by the number of champagne bottles left at the party in Notorious (1946).

Such examples further link stopping or ending time with the potential for annihilation. For a director raised to believe in and fear the end-times, this metaphor seems rather fundamental. Thornhill's most aggressive verbal threat specifically relates to his knowledge of Vandamm's itinerary, but is tempered with spiritual overtones. "Suppose I tell you," Thornhill asks, "I not only know the exact time you're leaving the country tonight, but the latitude and longitude of your rendezvous and your ultimate destination?" What is Vandamm's ultimate destination going to be? There is the literal (some Communist nation, perhaps), the legal (imprisonment or execution), or the spiritual (eternal damnation in hell). It is not clear which one is

intended, though the final "ultimate destination" explanation may be indicated by the Christian ideology present in the film.

True to the Adamic typology, Eve is a femme fatale--a temptress, nearly bringing the male protagonist to his destruction. At the beginning of the film, Thornhill continues to try to get back to "the Garden"--The Winter Garden Theater. Vandamm's very name suggests eternal punishment in the form of damnation. Vandamm's housekeeper says "God bless you" to him. Earlier, the Professor says, "blessings on you both" to Thornhill concerning his interest in Eve. Thornhill's "death" in the hospital is intended to last for a duration of three days, though he escapes this destiny to save Eve and the free world from a doom that they do not fully understand. Reminiscent of Jesus during the crucifixion, Thornhill is pierced in his side in an act of self-sacrifice. Furthermore, Thornhill's stigmata-like bloody hands lead him to the inspiration to save Eve. Contextualized in this way, Vandamm's "ultimate destination" may indeed refer to hell, but at least indicates an underlying Christian cosmology of order and disorder.

As a theme, the coordination of schedules and information, which is integral to the regulation of bureaucratic institutions, is emulated by the physical coordination of the body. For instance, Thornhill's physical presence represents coordination in a tangible way. He runs for his life in the cornfield, climbs Vandamm's treacherous property (not to mention Mount Rushmore), and survives alcohol poisoning, an exploding oil truck, an automobile accident, and a plane crash. He is hit by a truck, forced into a collapsible bed, punched in the face, man-handled, stepped on, and wounded after

being shot. All of this is portrayed by Cary Grant, who, at fifty-five years old, acts with especially superb physical dexterity and aplomb--with coordination, in short. The focus on physical violence punishing the protagonist's body seems to draw attention to the sacrificial figure so central to Christian iconography. A visit to Hitchcock's boyhood church would remind one of the role the spectacle of violence plays in Christian ideology. Scholar Richard Millington also notices Grant's physicality. "To have a body," he writes, "is to be a target." He goes on to notice, "With his 'incarnation,' Thornhill has discovered that he, in the most visceral way, has something to protect" (144). His body, in which his being is located, is evidently something worthy of protection.

### The Banality of Evil

Hannah Arendt, in her classic 1963 work, Eichmann in Jerusalem, coined the phrase "the banality of evil." This term referred to how culpability for the genocide of millions of people was diffused throughout the Nazi bureaucracy. Nazi civil servants, such as Adolf Eichmann, worked efficiently on the Final Solution, though very few--perhaps only a handful of elite leaders--had any clear overview of the plan.

Eichmann, a petty man working with simple efficiency in his bureaucratic institution, was not a grotesque monster to be demonized, but a cog in a vast machine that creates annihilation. He is an example of how evil is not always manifested in a monstrous personality (as opposed to Hitler), but in one's earnest complicity in a process or institution that is ultimately destructive and therefore evil.

The backdrop in North by Northwest is the pedestrian, sometimes mindless, workaday world of millions of Americans. For instance, the first several shots of the film depict the multitudes of busy Manhattan workers following the conventions of time in the heart of Manhattan. The buildings represent the attempt of modern civilization to create order out of chaos. According to the film, this order is built not on goodness, nor even on evil, but on manipulation. Roger Thornhill is an advertising executive. This form of "organization man" is a twentieth-century version of the P.T. Barnum type. Like Barnum, Thornhill is a promoter and re-inventor of the exotic. At the outset of the film, Thornhill is an ordinary albeit financially secure worker. He is one of the nameless, faceless masses that contribute to the financial and democratic institutions that constitute American civilization. By the end of the film, he, like Barnum, has become famous, a showman, and a self-promoter, known by millions through the mass media.

There are numerous appearances of the newspaper throughout the film. The most obvious is Thornhill's picture in the newspaper (knife in hand) just after Townsend's assassination. Not insignificantly, the audience sees this headline in the possession of the American agents' think tank in Washington. They are the ones responsible for the manipulation of George Kaplan and especially for keeping him inconspicuous. The Professor later refers to the newspaper, perhaps ironically, as "the authority of the printed word." Put simply, the masses will typically believe what institutions such as the news media tell them, and the media (at least in this case) believe what they want to believe. The system works by means of manipulation of facts.

As Christopher Lasch notes in The Culture of Narcissism (1979), a significant disparity between accuracy and credibility exists. "Truth has given way to credibility," he writes, "facts to statements that sound authoritative without conveying any authoritative information" (74). The political connotation of this manipulation by the American agents is typified by the headline of the Washington Evening Star. On the left side of the damning photograph of Thornhill is the headline "Nixon Promises West Will Remain in Berlin." The headline indubitably refers to Richard Nixon, Eisenhower's Vice President at the time (November 1958), and the American moral and material support of the bastion of West Berlin before the construction of the Berlin Wall. This sets Townsend's assassination, which occurs inside the United Nations General Assembly Building, of all places, squarely in an international geopolitical context, where identity is determined by alliance with the first, second, or third world. The manipulation of West Berlin by the democratic NATO and East Berlin by the communist Eastern Bloc, in addition to the agents' manipulation of Kaplan's identity, reflect the true nature of world order.

The success of democracy in the early American democratic and Christian heritage depended on the construction of a viable public education system. Jacksonian populism, unlike Hamiltonian elitism, inspired privileged and underprivileged individuals alike to educate themselves for moral betterment. The role of nineteenth-century mass media (namely, the newspaper) was to educate as well as inform. That medium is as present in North by Northwest as some of the characters. After the development of the half-tone process and other printing innovations, the newspaper

photograph still remained a vital vestige of that American ideal in the late 1950s. It is not difficult to find the many voyeurs who serve as Hitchcock's alter egos throughout his films, such as Jeff, the photojournalist from Rear Window; however, we do not often see their "victims" as protagonists in his films. In an age of photographic media, images do not lie but are manipulated. If these ramifications are considered in terms of education, or, better yet, in terms of democracy, manipulation becomes quite a serious matter.

Advertising, Thornhill's vocation, is the fine art of persuading consumers to become dissatisfied with their lifestyle or possessions. At the outset, he also seems to have become disenchanted by his own lifestyle--stressed, emotionally removed from others, and on the verge of alcoholism. The advertising industry, though, thrives on offering a panacea or cure for such malaise. It offers a form of redemption. Jackson Lears, in "From Salvation to Self-Realization: Advertising and the Therapeutic Roots of the Consumer Culture," observes the following:

In the emerging consumer culture, advertisers began speaking to many of the same preoccupations addressed by liberal ministers, psychologists, and other therapeutic ideologues. A dialectic developed between Americans' new emotional needs and advertisers' strategies; each continually reshaped and intensified the other. Sometimes deliberately, sometimes unwittingly, advertisers and therapists responded to and reinforced the spreading culture of consumption. Their motives

and intentions were various, but the overall effect of their efforts was to create a new and secular basis for capitalist cultural hegemony. (4)

Lears's work traces the influence of religious iconography on modern secular advertising images. The implication is that either secular materialism has replaced spiritual gratification or spiritual gratification is demonstrated by the Christian mandate for stewardship over the individual's personal economy. It is significant that Thornhill offers Vandamm "piece of mind." What is really at stake in the world of North by Northwest is redemption--not the spiritual transformation that one would expect from a dogmatic Christian artist, but a transformation of identity, which is the basic essence of Christian penitence.

Being absorbed into something greater than oneself is a touchstone of such transformation. In the modern era, ideology has replaced religion as a means to this personal transformation. According to Cold War parlance, the ideologies of democracy and capitalism were often conflated vis-à-vis the scourge of international communism. This conflation also occurs in Hitchcock's Cold War films, Torn Curtain and Topaz. In North by Northwest, the art design of Robert Boyle, William Horning, and Merrill Pye reflects the architectural modernism that was popular in the 1950s. Vandamm's house outside Rapid City was created from an original architectural design by Frank Lloyd Wright. Incidentally, Hitchcock had previously directed Frank Lloyd Wright's granddaughter, actress Ann Baxter, in I Confess. The architecture of the United Nations complex is one of the world's most famous symbols of

modernism. Postwar America, especially New York, where North by Northwest begins, became the home of countless European émigré modernists and intelligentsia after the Nazis coup in 1933. Among them were the most modern of the modernists: Fritz Lang, Albert Einstein, and Sigmund Freud. In New York and Hollywood, many of these individuals and the ideas they offered found successful transformation into mainstream middlebrow consumer culture. This is the modernism that so permeates North by Northwest. It represents the conflated American democratic and capitalistic ideals par excellence--making artistic and scientific concepts available and accessible for mass consumption. Such modernism can be read as propaganda in favor of free expression when compared to the inherently repressive communist regimes of the 1950s.

In North by Northwest, regularity and rationality are closely associated with the observance of efficiency. It is a business world that runs on time schedules. The opening shots presumably depict the multitudes of workers in the financial epicenter of the world--all busy and moving. In such a system, one's personal responsibility is measured by one's productivity every bit as much as one's devotion to the overarching ideology of either capitalism or communism. Evil is diffused throughout the institution and personal culpability becomes something to be manipulated. The splitting of the antagonist threat into Vandamm, Leonard, and the various nameless henchmen makes the evil more institutional and less individualized. Culpability is shared by its bureaucrats.

The deceitful nature of the enemy spies is not demonstrated by their lying but in their simulation of legitimate professional institutions; to be sure, they are uncannily honest. As in Saboteur (1942) and Notorious, the antagonists are gentlemen killers in the business of espionage. Vandamm and his henchmen are referred to as "gentlemen" by nearly all the other major characters, from the Professor to the auctioneer to Thornhill's own mother. Spies and professional killers, too, observe schedules and efficiency. At the end of his brief initial meeting with Thornhill, Vandamm notes that "it's getting late; I have guests." As they prepare to depart at the end of the film, several indications of time and schedule emerge. Leonard observes that the plane is at 6000 feet and will certainly arrive "within the hour." Later, it is noted that they will be leaving "inside of three minutes" and Anna and her husband will travel over the Canadian border "by tomorrow morning." Attention to such itinerary details not only increases the suspense but further suggests the presence of a more transcendent order manifested by time. In other words, it is possible to organize the world by observing timelines, even by those who are considered evil.

This organization of time by the antagonists is especially obvious when compared with the time references uttered by other legitimate authority figures at the beginning of the film. Sergeant Klinger tells Thornhill that his lawyer should meet him "tomorrow morning." The judge sets up an inquest for the next day at 7:30. When Thornhill protests the court's claim, his lawyer scolds him: "Roger, wait a minute!" Within a few minutes, the symbols of legitimate authority (the law enforcement officer, judge, and legal counsel) all order his personal schedule. Vandamm and his

henchmen, complete with suits, ties, and hats, masquerade as those who can justify the manipulation of his itinerary, though in slightly more aggressive manner. It is not surprising then, that one of Thornhill's pursuers asks the other to wait for him outside the United Nations building. His masquerade is so convincing that he is able to infiltrate the United Nations and assassinate one of its members. The killer, by telling the driver to wait outside, reveals his careful observance of a deadly timeline.

In preparing for his appointment at Prairie Stop, Eve awakens Roger's sense of timeliness, serving the same function as his secretary. In this case, however, his sense of guilt over his tendency towards lateness is manipulated in order to bring about his death. Guilt presupposes a conscience as well as a moral code. Eve detects this morality in him and encourages him to be on time. She gives him a precise itinerary-- a language he understands but occasionally abuses. Promptness not only reflects his professional responsibility to observe his pre-ordained schedule, but in this case, it means his life. She tells him to take the 2:00 bus to the Prairie Stop, which is identified as "an hour and a half" outside of Chicago. Furthermore, she reminds him to set his watch to Central Time, a meticulous detail that may have been overlooked. When he gets to his destination, the other man waiting at the stop notes that the 4:30 bus is "right on time." Because Roger arrives at this fabricated meeting with Kaplan on time, he is almost murdered. His moral sense of efficiency has been betrayed.

The spies observe a meticulous efficiency as well, which associates them with the innumerable legitimate institutions of the busy professional world. Significantly, Roger's discovery of the day's timeline directly reveals Eve's complicity with the

assassins. Eve received her instructions around 9:15 that morning, but as Roger discovers, Kaplan checked out at 7:10 that morning. The awareness of the scheduling inconsistency leads him to realize the truth. He then adopts a proactive, improvisational approach to efficiency. This new strategy eventually saves Eve's life and the government secrets that were to be smuggled out of the country, ultimately restoring law and order. In Christendom, such moral responsibility is necessary to foster one's salvation and the salvation of others. Promptness, professional efficiency, and autonomous agency all derive from Hitchcock's time-related cosmology.

#### Timing, Direction, Improvisation, and Freewill

Thornhill operates in a world that is ordered by people and institutions. The epiphany he experiences reveals just how manipulated his world can be, even, ironically, at the instigation of American institutions created to maintain freedom. Operating with characteristic efficiency, espionage agents such as Vandamm and the Professor determine events by an elaborate series of stage directions and cues. Thornhill is forced to conform his schedule to the whims of whoever proves most persuasive. Deviating from the dangerous theatrical game could mean the death of Eve or himself or, more vaguely, the violation of American national security. In the film, several significant events are predetermined by the directors of this game, even to the slightest detail, such as Kaplan's "murder" by Eve at Mount Rushmore.

Undeniably, coincidence, randomness, luck, and serendipity also occur and are sometimes used to great effect, such as when Thornhill is confused for Kaplan.

Whether termed luck, fortune, fate, or chance, Hitchcock's corpus contains a plethora of references to the game, surprise turn of events, and the deus ex machina. Scholar Lesley Brill writes:

The world of North by Northwest is one of miraculous coincidences, not always happy but ultimately beneficent. It is a world in which the maker not only disdains to conceal his hand but insists on showing it through improbable plot manipulations, breathtaking artifice, and continuous musings on the interpenetration of the fictional and the true (18-19).

The manipulation of events, Brill suggests, is a microcosm of Hitchcock's control over the film, which represents divine organization. Jean Douchet notes that the Professor serves as a Divine Instrument.<sup>9</sup> Does this make the enemy agents diabolical instruments? It is intriguing to contemplate. From his first film to his last, Hitchcock's film narratives presuppose numerous underlying reasons for why things happen--true randomness, if possible, is rarely assumed. In North by Northwest, two categories exist: manipulated predetermined events and volitional human agency.

What is superficially seen as determinism in the film is only an expert form of manipulation. Theater direction provides a useful model here. Through a series of predetermined cues, actors perform accordingly, using exits and entrances, moving around on stage, and acting in a way that conforms with the appropriate directions. On the Twentieth Century Limited, Eve, who is an expert performer, asks for directions from her "director," Vandamm. He, quite literally, gives her directions to

give to Thornhill. Vandamm is repeatedly associated with theater. In almost every exchange with Thornhill, his dialogue revisits the theme. "You seem to make this very room a theater," he jibes. "You fellows could stand a little less training from the FBI and a little more from the Actor's Studio." The film brims over with such references to life-as-theater and those who direct it.

As with efficient scheduling in the business world, theatrical timing is especially important. Without it, the verisimilitude would be shattered and, possibly, disaster will ensue. Timing, in both situations, is often guided or encoded in numbers. If one looks for numerical details in the film, one will find an overwhelming amount. Thornhill's mother's phone number is Butterfield 9-0918. She warns him that his crimes may get him a sentence of "about five to ten years." Kaplan's room number is 796. The Washington Evening Star newspaper is dated Thursday, November 25, 1958. A public announcement system indicates that "Train 25 will leave in five minutes at Window 15." Thornhill claims he has "seven parking tickets." The steward is tipped \$5. Eve stays in drawing room E, car 3901. Thornhill is supposed to meet Kaplan at Highway Stop 41. Eve's room number is 463. The address of the auction is 1212. Thornhill is present for lot number 103 through 109 at the auction. His bidding values are inappropriate, that is bidding \$13 after a \$1500 bid; this impropriety heightens the importance of propriety. Sergeant Flam, officer number 1055, responds to code 76 and proceeds north to the 42<sup>nd</sup> Precinct. Even the presidents on Mount Rushmore denote monetary denominations: Washington's image is on the one dollar bill, Jefferson the two, and Lincoln the five. The great attention given to such

identification demonstrates how human behavior is dictated and mediated by numerical coordination.

The emphasis on specific names also draws attention to the various roles played by characters. They are identified by their prepositional relationships. Jason in Pittsburg, Townsend of Glen Cove, Emil Klinger of the Police Department, Laura Babson of Twining Road, Mrs. Knox of Ceylon, Mrs. Finley of the intelligence agency, and Anna Vandamm of the enemy agency all add a level of detail that is reminiscent of a play. We even learn the name of the maid at the Plaza Hotel--Elsie. Names also represent theatrical roles. Jack Philips is the pseudonym Thornhill casually gives Eve. Eve misleads the authorities by mistakenly calling him Mr. Thornycrawl. Vandamm's real name is only revealed late in the film, much to his chagrin. These are all individuals performing in roles, whether or not they are aware of them, in a grandly designed theatrical game. Using the logic of natural theology, some ingenious entity must have created this elaborate and relatively self-perpetuating system.

The superior form of directorial determinism, as Brill notes, is really the set of miraculous narrative coincidences Hitchcock and screenwriter Ernest Lehman have constructed. Hitchcock is the ultimate god-figure in the world of his films, but even he admitted in 1959 that, in making a film, the director "takes an imitation slice of life in his hands and arranges it just the way he wants it. He knows, in the first scene, just what is going to happen in the last. Now, this is a godlike quality" (quoted in Gottlieb 138). Hitchcock's direction implies the divine direction of human events and our responsibilities in shaping them.

The title, North by Northwest, implies the double meaning of direction.<sup>10</sup> The directional indicators, north by northwest, represent a navigational direction; the characters are also being directed by forces greater than themselves. Corber notes, "Like the crowds of workers who come and go in the opening shots, [Thornhill] seems to lack direction" (195). Viewed in this way, direction helps Thornhill to construct an orderly and thus fulfilling life with Eve, the harrowing events that unfold notwithstanding. He is a better man because of direction. If we apply the god-director metaphor, Thornhill will be saved from personal disaster if he redeems his disordered life and takes responsibility for himself and others. Improvisation thus serves as a metaphor for freewill in a system that has manipulated Thornhill's actions. Taking real action according to the moral imperative, like Charlie and Jeff, becomes Thornhill's major struggle. By the end, his volition demonstrates his moral courage in the face of great evil and chaos.

## Chapter Five

### The End Times

Alfred Hitchcock's death signaled an end of an historic type of artist: the Christian modernist. Like authors G. K. Chesterton, Evelyn Waugh, and Graham Greene, he worked out his Christian faith in a world shattered to its core by the horrible devices of modern civilization, only the most shocking of which were the two world wars. His iconographic worldview was translated into a secularized cinematic vocabulary. Hitchcock, a lifelong reader of novels, fully embraced the new medium of film. The transition from popular literary to cinematic expression, representative of the key technological shift in twentieth-century communication, reasserted the preeminence of the religious spectacle over that of the written word, expressing another chapter in the tension between the two oft competing forces in Western Christendom. Hitchcock's work represents a key exponent of that religious shift.

Like Chesterton, Waugh, and Greene, Hitchcock achieved success in the new and highly consumptive popular culture of the West, but did not achieve this without being deeply affected by this modern world that is prone to violence and dehumanization. Before his death, postmodernism would seriously challenge all religious orthodoxies promoting morality and cultural standards, at least in the academic and popular consciousness. As he approached his final end in 1980, the world was still seriously threatened by nuclear annihilation, environmental disaster, unpopular proxy wars, antiestablishment cynicism, and skepticism of universal moral

standards. Even until his death, he attempted to maintain an orderly schedule and work towards completing yet another project--a feature film called The Short Night, which was never ultimately produced. It is intriguing that even the working title of his last abortive work refers to time duration.

His legacy serves as a nexus for some of the most influential popular artists of the twentieth-century. He captured timeless performances of the most accomplished actors of this era: Lawrence Olivier, John Gielgud, Charles Laughton, Paul Newman, James Stewart, Cary Grant, Gregory Peck, Marlene Dietrich, Ingrid Bergman, Grace Kelly, Shirley McLaine, Dame May Whitty, Jessica Tandy, and Ethel Barrymore. He collaborated with some of the most critically acclaimed popular writers: John Steinbeck, Thornton Wilder, John Galsworthy, Raymond Chandler, Dorothy Parker, James Hilton, Roald Dahl, and Leon Uris; he also adapted works by Joseph Conrad, Noel Coward, and Sean O'Casey. He worked with many outstanding film composers: John Williams, Bernard Herrmann, Miklos Rozsa, Franz Waxman, and Dimitri Tiomkin. He used the work of such noteworthy artists and designers as Walt Disney, Salvador Dali, Saul Bass, and Edith Head. His films and long-running television series perpetuated his iconic image in popular culture. He inspired a generation of top directors, including Francois Truffaut, Martin Scorsese, Brian DePalma, and Steven Spielberg. Hitchcock has become an indispensable figure not just of twentieth-century film history but of Western culture and Christendom as well. Through slavish diligence, creativity, and self-promotion, he has achieved an immortality few artists attain.

It is fitting, perhaps, that his work deals with mortality so powerfully. Shadow of a Doubt, Rear Window, and North by Northwest serve as superb examples of the relationship between existence and transcendence. In all three films, which rank as some of his favorites, Hitchcock positions the narrative struggle in a metaphysical context. The religious themes are imbedded deeply but firmly: the moral imperative to behave ethically, the impulse to save others from destruction, the transference of guilt, the need for direction in life, the possibility of redemption, and the action that is demanded by responsible behavior. They are Christian films without being easily detected as such. Claiming these as Christian films does not automatically preclude psychoanalytic and feminist interpretations. On the contrary, dealing with Hitchcock's religious themes may actually enhance the more traditional psychoanalytic and feminist interpretations.

Hitchcock's cameos in all three previously analyzed films reveal a conveyance of time and space. In all three, a concluding denouement occurs a few days in the near future. In Shadow of a Doubt, the funeral at the end must have taken a few days to organize. In Rear Window, Jeff must have taken a few days to be released from the hospital with an additional leg cast. In North by Northwest, it must have taken a few days for Roger and Eve to get married. The caesura created by disjointing these end scenes from the narrative proper indicates the significant leap from one time-space reality to another ultimate time-space reality, reminiscent of that which is believed by orthodox Christianity to take place after death. The main characters are all resigned to their fates in reclining postures. Uncle Charlie presumably lies dead in a coffin while

Charlie reaches for support--literally and figuratively--outside the church. Jeff rests in another form of a coffin--a cast--while Lisa reclines on the bed. Roger hoists Eve up to the bed where they will probably stay for some time. These reclining bodies seem to visually suggest the final state of all bodies in the end. This final rest seems to suggest that, regardless of the difficulty of perceiving it in this world, a greater reality exists, transcendent over time and space. In it, responsible individuals, having done their work in this physical world, are affected spiritually for eternity.

In this thesis, it has been demonstrated that time and order serve as metaphors for a specifically Christian cosmology in Hitchcock's work. Audiences who eschew religious interpretations of his films ignore the full richness of the films, not to mention their significance to a long and rich heritage of moralist artists. Scholars who deconstruct the unmistakable religious overtones of his work as simply reflecting the residual hegemony of a previously dominant Christian culture demonstrate their own ignorance, insensitivity, and irresponsibility. His works are not simplistic morality tales but are complex meditations on the human condition and how we understand transcendence in a fallen, sinful world. Furthermore, they are perhaps the most entertaining, popular, and accessible films in the first century of narrative film. It is to his credit that such religious and cosmological perspectives could be transmitted, however subtly, through mass media. Like Chesterton, Waugh, and Greene, he communicates these ideological views with a vocabulary that non-Christians readily understand, appreciate, and embrace. Perhaps, in the final analysis, this will be understood as his most significant legacy.

## Endnotes

1 Perhaps the most poignant example of the futility of secular confession to the legal authorities in bringing about one's salvation is seen in The Wrong Man (1956). Based on a true story of a man wrongly arrested for armed robbery, the main character's repeated proclamations of innocence were entirely fruitless. It is only when he prays to God during his trial that the truth is revealed and he is saved.

2 Francois Truffaut draws attention to Hitchcock's manipulation of film speed in Strangers on a Train (195). As Guy enters Bruno's home, presumably to kill Bruno's father, he is met by a dog that is filmed in slow motion. Hitchcock uses the manipulation of film speed in other films such as The 39 Steps when the authorities chase Hannay across the moors.

3 Fritz Lang, who had been despised by Hitler's regime, was perhaps the most outspoken émigré director in this regard. Other earnestly pro-war films of 1940 include Mervyn LeRoy's Escape and Frank Borzage's The Mortal Storm.

4 This biographical information is almost entirely based on Donald Spoto's work. In places, his wording is difficult to discern. For example, he notes twice that Alfred's brother William was present at his father's death, but does not mention Alfred being present. May it be inferred that Alfred was not present? Perhaps this is splitting hairs, but it is important to point out the potential lack of clarity of one's sources.

5 Jean-Luc Godard said in Historie(s) du Cinema that Hitchcock was "the only one, apart from Dreyer, who knew how to film a miracle" (quoted in Conrad 46). Godard's observance of this religious aspect of Hitchcock's work is characteristic of many

French critics and New Wave filmmakers such as Francois Truffaut, Eric Rohmer, Claude Chabrol, Andre Bazin, and Jean Douchet, many of whom were influential in the early days of the Cahiers du Cinema.

6 Perhaps the most famous illustration of the Angelus is Jean Francois Millet's 1859 painting "Angelus," showing two farmers in the field who have piously stopped their work in order to pray, presumably due to their hearing the toll of the distant bell.

7 A similar ontological question dominates James Stewart's previous film, Harvey (1950), in which the very existence of the eponymous entity or the perceptive prowess of the protagonist is in question.

8 Elise Lemire's footnote in her article inspired my interest in this theme. She writes "It would be interesting to trace the point at which Hitchcock decided to feature Douglas's book in the last shot of his film and, from there, to examine not only his motivation for doing so but also the way in which Douglas's presence in the shot inflects its meaning as well as the overall film" (90). As of yet, I admit I have only partially explored this intriguing issue.

9 It is surprising, then, that the Professor says to his colleagues, "We do nothing." Does this mean that, in Douchet's view, the instrument of divine justice does not do anything to bring about justice?

10 Stanley Cavell proposes a creative theory on Hitchcock's choice of the title, North by Northwest. He suggests that this represents a reference to Hamlet that introduces the players of the play-within-a-play (Cavell 253). "I am mad north-northwest," Hamlet says. This indeed is theatricalism par excellence. According to

Cavell, numerous other important references to Hamlet exist throughout the film and these references help to represent North by Northwest as a masterpiece by association.

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