

North by Northwest

When I first saw the length of the movie *North by Northwest* I was honestly a little nervous. I love a good story and am willing to commit to it (I am a huge fan of Lord of the Rings after all) but when a story is slow (like *Gone With the Wind*) then it can be hard to pay attention for a long period of time. Luckily, *North by Northwest* was fairly action packed and had many payoffs which lead to an enjoyable watching experience. In fact, I found the film to be rather suspenseful.

To my knowledge, this is the only film that I have watched that was written by Alfred Hitcock. After I finished watching the film and read the instructions for this assignment it made sense that *North by Northwest* is a Alfred Hitcock film. I found the inciting incident of the story to be very captivating and it drew me in wanting more. I hate when a movie's plot is so obvious that you know how it will end. In *North by Northwest* I could not figure out how the protagonist was involved with the antagonist until it was revealed later in the story. This mystery encouraged me to stay engaged throughout the film until all my questions were answered. I would say that the first half of the film was excellent and really suspenseful because the audience was still piecing the narrative together with each new clue. However the later half of the movie started to slow down and I found that the climax was not very impressive at all. Let me explain.

The first half (which was long enough to be its own movie) introduced us to Roger and the antagonist. We feel inclined to root for Rogers because we are just as

confused as he is. In fact, it is as if Roger's and the audience are searching for clues that would lead to the explanation of the failed assassination attempt on his life along with the pursuit of his potential killers. We learn that George Kaplan doesn't even exist and that it is just a decoy to save a government agent. This is an example of excellent planting because the audience doesn't know who that agent is and it is not mentioned until later once we find that Roger's has been protecting his love interest this entire time (since she is in fact the agent). Another excellent example of planting and payoff is Roger's match box. When he pulls it out, when he first meets Eve she notices the strange initials on it which read R.O.T. He tells her it had to do with his business and that the "O" in R.O.T. really doesn't mean anything. This is a seemingly strange scene that makes the viewers wonder why so much attention is put on an object in the protagonist's pocket. Later it is this same matchbox that allows Roger to contact Eve and inform her that her cover is blown and that she is in danger. This scene felt great as an audience member because it felt like your investment to the small details of the film really paid off.

The film really started to slow down after the twist half way through the movie. Here Hitchcock prepared the audience for something unusual to happen. Roger is waiting at the bus stop for George Kaplan for what felt like several minutes. Tense music plays in the background and the fast paced action of the film is brought to a screeching halt. Something doesn't feel right. The aftermath of this preparation is an

exciting hit and run scene with a duster plane trying to eliminate Rogers. The film then prepares us for a drastic change in scenery. It was mentioned in the film that George Kaplan made a reservation in a hotel in South Dakota. This information coupled with the fact that Rogers is in love with Eve (which is the most unrealistic and frustrating part of this film!) and the audience's knowledge that Phillip is chasing the decoy, advertises for the sudden change in scenery. This is different from elements of the future because it doesn't necessarily make the audience hope and fear something, at least not the way it does when Rogers calls his mother and explains that he is leaving on a train . When a character talks about something they plan to do in the near future it is an element of the future.

Perhaps the most exciting aspect of this film is the dramatic irony in its plot. The fact that Rogers tries and proves that he isn't George Kaplan in the beginning of the film compared to how he tries to convince Phillip that he is, at the end, is something remarkable. Somehow Rogers manages to become the one thing he wanted nothing to do with. He originally plays the part in order to understand what is going on but towards the climax he plays the role so that Eve will be safe. I found myself really rooting for Roger because I felt like I could relate with him for I would probably respond to the same situation in a similar fashion. Phillip proved to be a good antagonist because he was mysterious and deadly throughout the film. The audience never really knew what he was thinking and that made him all the more menacing. Eve played the double agent

well but if there is one thing that I really did not like about this film, it was the romance. It just didn't make sense! It would have been more believable if Rogers wanted to save Eve out of duty, or because he knows what it feels like to try and survive Phillip. I find it very hard to grasp that he is in love with a woman who tried to have him killed! A one night stand does not have enough weight to actually make a person fall in love, especially a person like Roger's who, genuine as he might be, is still clearly capable of critical thought! This is why the climax really wasn't that climatic to me. Mount Rushmore proved more a threat than the actual villains of the story since Phillip is taken captive from the police, the gardener is dealt with swiftly, and Leonard is shot by the officers arriving at the scene. After investing in the story for such a long time, the climax felt too short and not exciting enough to really finish the film.

Overall I enjoyed the film but I found the first part of the movie to be the most captivating. The ending seemed to drag on a bit too long and the climax felt too short. Hitchcock really knew how to build suspense! I was on the edge of my seat from the beginning of *North by Northwest* till the end of the plane scene. His characters (with the exception of the love aspect, were realistic and believable. Roger's character development was really impressive. The fact that he stopped running and walked right back into danger showed a full one-eighty in his character arch. I was pleasantly surprised with this film.