

(A)Typical Jimmy: James Stewart and Hollywood Studio Era Acting

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by

Jennifer Huzera, B.A. (Hons.)

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Abstract

In this thesis, I wish challenge the myths surrounding Hollywood Studio Era performance styles. It is problematic that the vast majority of commentaries on studio era acting rely on the idea that actors of this period were moulded by Studio executives into palatable personas which appealed to the masses of film viewers, and relied on this persona as the basis for all of their roles. While this may be true in some cases, the most enduring of these performers cannot be defined so simply. The more respected actors of the period were not merely “playing themselves” in every single film – they actively *created roles*. This thesis focuses on James Stewart, an actor who seemed to always rely on his recognizable personal traits to play characters, but who actually adapted his acting techniques to portray a wide range of roles beyond his well-known persona of the mild-mannered, unassuming, hesitant, all-American man.

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Introduction

All the more important, then, becomes the training—and mastery—of those features of face and body that can be controlled. For each actor they form a personal repertory of signs that he or she is able to display [...] It is from that pool of personal physical resources that actors select their signs.¹

It is deeply problematic that the vast majority of commentaries on studio era acting rely on the idea that actors and actresses of this period were moulded by Studio executives into palatable and unchanging personas which appealed to the masses of film viewers, and relied on this persona as the basis for all of their roles. For instance, John Fawell, in his book entitled *The Hidden Art of Hollywood: In Defense of the Studio Era Film* (2008), in his chapter called “Hollywood Acting,” under the subheading “One Persona,” claims that “Hollywood [...] did not really believe that actors could transform themselves from movie to movie. [...] Hollywood prized actors, not for their versatility, but for their consistency.”² While this may be true in some cases, the most compelling, well-received and enduring of these performers cannot be defined so simply. It is rather arbitrary to say that performers at this time apparently did not so much perform as insert themselves into various fictional situations and ‘act’ their own personalities in front of the camera. It would be extremely difficult to prove that this mode of acting was the leading practice at the time, especially because most Hollywood performers were intentionally presented this way in order to appeal to audiences, a marketing scheme which encouraged viewers to believe they were personally familiar with, and become

emotionally invested in the stars.³ This thesis aims to demonstrate that, in fact, even an easily caricatured actor such as James Stewart did not always rely on his recognizable traits to create a character. He was able to play varied roles and relied on different gestures and signifiers of performance during his long career in acting to create differing effects. Thus, in this project, I will address some of the myths surrounding Hollywood Studio Era performance styles, specifically focusing on the period from the early 1930s to the early 1960s, through the examination of a number of the performances of James Stewart.

The Studio Era of Hollywood has been written about *ad nauseum* in innumerable texts throughout the history of Film Studies. This is true for a variety of reasons, not the least of which is the lasting appeal of the films of this era. They are timeless classics, often consisting of engaging stories, glamorous actors and actresses and grand aesthetic styles. My interest in this era lies precisely in the glamour and long-lasting appeal of these films, and also in the artistry of these, the building blocks of the contemporary Hollywood industry. Not only are these films important to the viewing history of North American audiences, but they have historically also been popular and inspiring to international filmmakers and their audiences. What are the sources of the enduring, widespread appeal of these films? My belief is that these films and the Hollywood industry were so popular and still are due in part to the life breathed into the films by the actors and actresses of the period. It seems obvious to me that the majority of the most effective performers of the time were multidimensional and retained their appeal with their fascinating and glamorous personas. Their perceived 'real' personas, however, are

not the most important aspect of these performers. Many film actors came to the cinema from stage backgrounds, and were most often already trained in stage performance traditions. It is necessary to refute the notion that actors and actresses in this period relied simply on their personas (real or studio-manufactured) for crafting their roles. My aim in this project is to prove, through the detailed analysis and consideration of one actor in particular, that actors in this era were not only capable of, but experts at, performing more than one modified role.

I have chosen James Stewart and his film acting career as my object of study as I feel he is an actor who made his career playing roles that were not only varied, but also contradictory. Stewart came from a prosperous family who made their home in Indiana.⁴ He attended private schools as a child, and completed, with Honours, a Bachelor's Degree in Architecture at Princeton University. At Princeton, he joined a theatre group called the Triangle Club, where he was accepted as a musical performer, highly adept at playing the accordion. After graduating from Princeton, he joined the University Players, another theatre group. By 1932, a play that Stewart appeared in, entitled *Carry Nation*, debuted on Broadway. When *Carry Nation* closed, Stewart appeared in a variety of other productions, and eventually garnered a fair amount of favourable critical attention for his theatre roles which attracted talent scouts from Hollywood. He was signed to a contract with MGM in 1935.⁵ At first, he had a complicated relationship with Hollywood, coming from Broadway theatre only to be deemed too awkward to market as a typically masculine male lead for films.⁶ Stewart scholar and biographer Gerard Molyneaux notes that Stewart's actor's training was typical of any studio star; he participated in physical

exercise and callisthenics, singing lessons, and a variety of screen tests.⁷ Rather than working closely with an acting coach or subscribing to a particular school of acting, Stewart learned simply by doing; he appeared in eight films in 1936 alone.⁸ It took some time before Stewart fell into the hands of director Frank Capra, who helped to create the well-known man-next-door persona that became synonymous with Stewart (and often mistakenly understood as his 'real' personality). While this is perhaps the most recognizable of the Stewart characters, he was not limited by this persona. One need only look to his roles in Alfred Hitchcock's thrillers, or Anthony Mann's Western films to see the variety of character types Stewart was adept at performing. Neither the emotionally repressed character in Hitchcock nor the ambiguous Western hero can be considered the typical man-next-door.

Stewart is fascinating in that he starred in a great variety of films from many genres in numerous types of roles. He remains recognizable as an actor from film to film (unlike the ever-morphing Lon Chaney), but maintains a separation between the majority of his characters' personae (unlike other actors like John Wayne or Peter Lorre, who nearly always played the same type of character and came to be defined by the genres in which they most frequently starred). Stewart is the ideal actor to use as an example of the variable nature of the Hollywood star's performances and acting styles as he is neither defined by a single genre or character type nor is he a chameleonic actor, physically shifting shapes from role to role. I intend to examine in-depth a variety of the films Stewart starred in from genres as varied as the Capra Drama, the Hitchcock Thriller and the Anthony Mann Western in order to demonstrate that not only were Stewart's roles

different in character type, but that he also relied on very different physical signifiers of performance, such as bodily gestures and facial expressions, in order to construct and convincingly play them.

The fact that Stewart did not have an acting coach or belong to a particular school of acting may appear to support the notion that he was likely just performing his own 'real' persona and character traits on film. This, however, is not the case. One need only to look as far as his biography to note that Stewart was anything but the typical man-next-door character he often portrayed. Gerard Molyneaux astutely points out Stewart's family's "exceptional educational and financial background" which "at the very start [...] point[s] to the non-Capraesque James Stewart."⁹ Furthermore, Stewart did not always play the same character types, thus implying that he could not always be playing 'himself.' While on the surface he may appear to be the perfect example of a Studio-era non-acting star, attentive observation of his performances suggests evidence of actual acting. Stewart uses various types of audiovisual signifiers in his performances, using his main mediums (his voice and body) to portray different psychological traits and internal motivations for his characters.

One might assume that an actor's performance in a film is manipulated significantly by factors other than the performer himself. This notion is, of course, correct. It is impossible to claim that a performer, especially in film, exists in a vacuum. The performance of an actor on film is affected not only by filmic techniques such as camera angle, lighting and editing, but also by the film director's manipulation of the actor. My aim in this project is to demonstrate that although Stewart's performances and persona

were affected by these factors, a close reading of his body movements and his use of his voice reveals that much of a spectator's understanding of his performance comes from the 'signs' generated through Stewart's physical and vocal choices.

Literature Review and Methodology

In examining the acting style of a particular performer, it is important to acknowledge not only academic work specifically focused on him, but also earlier theoretical writing which has perhaps informed both the actor's performance, the performances of his various co-stars and also those who write about him. In my research on James Stewart, I take into consideration early theories of acting and performance through an anthology of such works entitled *Star Texts: Image and Performance in Film and Television* (1991), compiled and edited by Jeremy Butler. The book is comprised of four parts, the first of which is named "Creating Performance: An Ongoing Debate." This section of the book is further broken down into two subsections, "The Naturalists" and "The Anti-Naturalists." The six essays contained within this part of the book are written by some of the most influential film and theatre acting teachers and theorists: Constantin Stanislavski, V.I. Pudovkin, Lee Strasberg, Lev Kuleshov, Bertolt Brecht and Robert Bresson. These theorists and teachers' manifestoes and meditations on acting in cinema and theatre provide a wide range of views and opinions on the style best suited to film acting. The influence of one theory upon another becomes clear in a closer examination of the texts, but the most relevant texts to the acting style of Stewart are those by V.I. Pudovkin and Lev Kuleshov. These are theories that emphasize naturalism and realism in

acting. Pudovkin notes the importance of a subjugation and re-expression of the actor's own interiority and living individuality in order to create a character who is at once fictional and someone who could conceivably exist in reality.¹⁰ This does not imply that the actor is synonymous with the character he plays, but indicates that each character he portrays embodies parts of the actor's real self. An argument that I will return to later in this project is that each character played by Stewart is comprised of both the body and some of the gestures natural to the actor. While his characterizations tap into his pool of personal physical resources, the way in which he deploys performative signs creates roles that are not merely mild variations on his immutable persona. While Kuleshov's stress on the precision of an actor's performance may not necessarily apply directly to Stewart, his focus on subtleties of movement are very relevant to the study of Stewart's acting style.

In his essay "Remarks on the Actor," Siegfried Kracauer extrapolates on some of the above mentioned theorists' ideas and further examines the differences between the performances of screen and stage actors. Kracauer's essay is an important one to consider when examining Studio-era acting styles. While this essay is not focused on a specific type of acting, the comparison between theatrical and screen acting is important to consider. Many actors in Hollywood, Stewart included, were familiar with and in fact trained in stage acting traditions. Kracauer's argument points to the important notion that film actors have also had to contend with the belief that screen acting is inferior to stage acting, and have had to work to legitimize film acting because of this notion. Kracauer's arguments regarding realism in film acting, the camera's ability to convey to the audience the correlation between an actor's minute movements and his character's inner changes

and on the subtlety of gesture¹¹ apply directly to Stewart's performance style, and again, will be referred to later in this project.

A more contemporary examination of acting, Cynthia Baron's dissertation *Before Brando: Film Acting in the Hollywood Studio Era* (and subsequent book *Reframing Screen Performance* (2008), a co-written reworking of her dissertation) is an in-depth examination of the influence of theatrical acting styles on film acting during the early studio era, and of the transformation from the studio-style of acting to Method acting, popularized in the early 1950s. Baron purports to aim to delineate a style of acting particular to the Hollywood Studio Era. In the process, she traces the history of acting styles from Broadway theatre to silent film, to early sound film and finally to the Method via detailed consideration of archival materials from the 1920s through to the 1960s. Her dissertation draws on a broad and interesting field of research, and her arguments are clearly well-founded and supported, rendering her work a useful starting point from which to examine acting styles and theories of acting during the Studio period.

Baron's dissertation is a valuable history of actor training in Hollywood, from the end of the Silent era through to the dominance of the Method. Her focus on the Studio era after the introduction of sound makes this a work which has significant relevance to the topic of this thesis project. The case studies and film analyses that she provides are interesting and useful in understanding the arguments that she makes regarding particular actors' performance styles. However, the problems with Baron's work lie in the focus of her argument. She seems to have a dual agenda where one eventually takes over the other. On the one hand, she initially attempts to define the studio era acting style, but along the

way this initial goal is transformed into a project of historical recovery where highlighting the contribution of marginalized female acting coaches becomes the more important objective. While it is important to note that actor training was not frequently reported upon, especially in the popular press, this should not have interfered with making more empirical observations regarding the performance styles of actors during the time, or making more connections between their acting influences and their own performance styles. Ultimately, despite her opening claims, she admits in her conclusion that her work does not provide any satisfactory hypotheses of a style of acting specific to the Studio-era. Baron's inconclusive research indirectly supports my argument, as it suggests that any attempt to paint all Studio-era Hollywood actors with the same brush is futile. Some actors might have been highly theatrical, while others might have adopted a more subdued realist style. Others still, were probably not acting at all. Clearly, however, the "One Persona" argument does not hold water, yet it remains predominant in literature on the subject.

John Fawell's *The Hidden Art of Hollywood: In Defense of the Studio Era Film*, an even more recent work on studio era cinema, features a chapter called "Hollywood Acting" which discusses the types of performers and performance styles valued in the Hollywood Studio Era. The book's title suggests that Fawell might attempt to refute the many dismissive arguments that have been made about the studio era, and thus it follows that in the chapter on acting he might seek to explain that acting in the Studio era was more than just men and women playing characters with their own personalities and attributes. Within the first two paragraphs of this chapter, however, Fawell defends this

common notion. He claims that many actors came from the theatre to cinema, and at that time directors asked that actors try to forget all of their techniques of performance and just appear before the camera so that the camera might find who they “really are.”¹² Once the camera and director found what worked for a particular actor, it was difficult for the actor to move away from that image. Fawell’s chapter on Hollywood acting seems to be simply a repetition of the oft-theorized notion of the performer acting his own personality for the camera.

Dennis Bingham’s *Acting Male: Masculinities in the Films of James Stewart, Jack Nicholson, and Clint Eastwood* (1994) explores the performance style of Stewart in detail. He devotes six chapters, a full third of the book, to the analysis of Stewart and his films. As the title suggests, Bingham concentrates on Stewart’s performance in relation to masculinity, and elaborates on his designation of Stewart as “Your Average Bisexual” performer. Ultimately, Bingham argues that the various genres that Stewart typically performed within drew out different parts of his star persona: in Capra’s films, Stewart combines the ‘mama’s boy’ personality and the Christian masochist with a jaundiced view of America; in the Westerns, he draws on the male hysteric and moral sado-masochist; the biopics depend on the notions of the visionary, the family man, and the war hero; in Hitchcock, he combines various aspects of all of these.¹³ Bingham claims that Stewart’s durability as a star comes from the complexity of his character. It is the contradictions within his image that make him an interesting star to study.¹⁴

Bingham presents a contentious issue. By discussing Stewart’s persona, is he discussing his acting style? At times, it is difficult to discern whether his concern is with

Stewart's star persona and its resistance to the manufacturing influence of Hollywood, or if he is interested in Stewart's ability to perform masculinity. His concern with the performance of masculinity, or, in Stewart's case, the effect of the feminine characteristics or traits present in Stewart's performances seems to suggest that his interest rests in Stewart's performance style. Bingham's assertion is that this aspect of Stewart's performances does not change; he can be consistently understood as a bisexual with regard to his performances of masculinity. The analysis of Stewart's persona that Bingham engages with suggests that Stewart does change, but only according to his real life experiences, such as his service in the Air Force during WWII, which again reinforces the idea that actors perform their real selves. Ultimately, it seems that Bingham is concerned with understanding Stewart's performance style, but his argument is far too focused on the idea that Stewart is only projecting various aspect of his own ambivalent masculinity. His obsession with Stewart's expression of his masculinity on film weakens his analysis of Stewart's performance style. While gender is an important part of performance for all actors, Bingham overdetermines the importance of gender in Stewart's performances, and due to this obsession, tends to pass over other important facets of his roles. An additional problem is that he only discusses and analyzes the films in Stewart's canon which fit his argument and dismisses those which do not by either ignoring their existence entirely, or by, as in the case of *Rope* (1948), deeming his roles as miscastings or generally unmatched to his persona. The dismissing of *Rope* betrays Bingham's inability to deal with Stewart's actual performative choices – what Stewart *does on screen* to create his characters. Because Stewart's gestures, movements and

speech patterns do not fit Bingham's narrow definition of the actor's effeminate masculinity, the author disregards the fact that Stewart does perform a male character in *Rope*; he plays a male character whose behaviour is made fully comprehensible through effective acting techniques, even though these techniques do not fit into the established stereotype. The aim of my work is to avoid this incomplete and oversimplified examination of Stewart's performances.

In order to effectively make my argument, I will first need to outline the popular perception of the typical James Stewart role. For this I will depend on my examinations of Stewart's Frank Capra films, particularly *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (1939) and *It's a Wonderful Life* (1946), and also *Harvey* (1950) and *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (1962). These are the roles for which Stewart is best known. The fact that these films span several decades, while Stewart's performances remain relatively similar, will serve to counteract Bingham's basic argument that, as the actor matured, his personality changed and therefore his performances changed. Rather, I will suggest that the "typical Stewart" is merely a role that he had the skills to perform throughout his life. But he also had the acting skills necessary to perform other, very different roles. In order to demonstrate his variable performance abilities, I will complete a focused examination of several other films, including all four of his films with Hitchcock (*Rope* [1948], *Rear Window* [1954], *The Man Who Knew Too Much* [1956] and *Vertigo* [1958]) and two films of Anthony Mann (*Winchester '73* [1950] and *The Naked Spur* [1953]).

It will be important to note both the character types that he plays, and the ways in which he communicates their emotions, motivations and needs in the films. I will argue

that Stewart does not depend on the same base character to define each of his roles. I intend to closely examine each film and analyze Stewart's performance cues with special attention paid to his use of facial expression, body movement and vocal intonation and expression. These will demonstrate his construction of emotion and motivation. Also important to note will be the way in which Stewart creates the impression of power struggle, especially through the carriage of his body in comparison to the other performers in the film. A further important aspect of Stewart's performance style which I feel will be significant to note is the way in which Stewart takes up space on screen and moves through it. How does this communicate the essence of the characters he is playing? This kind of research can only be performed by textual analysis; I intend to carefully examine in detail his performances in these various films and make my conclusions from what I can observe in his roles. I will intentionally avoid discussing in detail the cultural, economic and industrial contexts of these films. These are relevant issues, of course, but as my interest is in Stewart's acting – what he actually *does* on screen – and not necessarily in describing or defending the Hollywood Studio Era, I will as much as possible exclude all external considerations and focus only on the actor's onscreen performance.

One might ask how it is possible to examine the actor's performance on screen without taking into consideration camera angles or other editing effects, or at least why I might have chosen to examine Stewart's performances without taking into detailed consideration these effects. I would be remiss not to keep these in mind when reading Stewart's performance cues, but do not want to focus my investigation of his

performance cues on these external manipulations. This is an entirely different project and one worth pursuing, but not an angle which I wish to examine in this project most simply due to space constraints. I will, of course, make mention of camera angles and shot types in my descriptions of the scenes in the films which I am examining, but my focus is more directly on Stewart and his body, and especially the way in which *he* manipulates scenes with his physicality.

Throughout my work on this project, I have come across several other possible considerations to make while writing on Stewart's performances in films. Consulting the scripts, with screen directions, of the films which I am analyzing may have provided some additional contextual information to my research, but I chose not to take these into account in my work simply due to the difficulty of obtaining reliable copies of these scripts. I might have also attempted to work into my argument a comparison between Stewart and other leading men in films by the same directors, or between Stewart and other actors in the same film in order to draw on the overall atmosphere created in the film. This approach might have shed some light on what parts of Stewart's performance were of his own design versus what was encouraged or created by the director. I have chosen not to do include this kind of analysis, however, as I feel it would not have significantly changed the outcome of this project. Furthermore, I might have referred to reviews of the films written contemporarily with their releases, but decided not to do this as not only is this not a reception study, but also because I suspect that these reviews might have been tainted with the popular media perceptions of Stewart advanced by

Studio promotion machines at the time, and as such would have more to say about Stewart's manufactured persona than his acting per se.

Chapter Breakdown

This project will be broken down into three chapters, each focused on particular types of films. As previously noted, Chapter One will examine the idea of the Typical Stewart through an examination of four of his most typical roles: George Bailey in *It's a Wonderful Life*, Jefferson Smith in *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*, Elwood P. Dowd in *Harvey*, and Ransom Stoddard in *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*. All four of these roles can be considered typical of Stewart as these four characters possess similarities to Stewart's own perceived persona. These characters are all mild-mannered men who, for a variety of reasons, find themselves in crises of either politics, family, law or self and whose emotional boundaries are tested. There are certainly a good deal of similarities in Stewart's performances in these films which will be useful in trying to illustrate who the Typical Stewart was. In order to define the Typical Stewart, I will analyze scenes from each of these films which exemplify in some way the most recognizable Stewart persona. I will examine each performance and by drawing attention to particular physical and vocal mannerisms, delineate a set of performance signs that can be readily observed in Stewart's acting.

Chapter Two will examine characters that are a significant departure from the previously analyzed performances. In this chapter, I will be concerned with the exploration of Stewart's performances in Alfred Hitchcock's films. Especially important to my analysis of his performances in these films is the differing degrees of emotionality

of the characters. In my first chapter, I will spend some time focusing on the importance of emotional expression and release to the Typical Stewart character. When comparing the Typical Stewart to the Hitchcockian Stewart, it is crucial to note the differences in emotionality of the characters. I will examine both how the Hitchcockian Stewart emotes (and how each of the characters that Stewart plays differs in that respect), and also how this effects the relationships between the Stewart characters and their counterparts. How does this emotionality, or lack thereof, change the way in which the Stewart persona is perceived? What does this performance of emotional repression indicate about Stewart's acting ability? How does Stewart demonstrate that his characters are repressing emotion? Can changes in his performance be readily observed?

Chapter Three will rely on the analysis of Stewart in the Anthony Mann Western. My films of study will be *Winchester '73* and *The Naked Spur*. I have chosen to examine Stewart in Mann's films for a variety of reasons. First, I would like to analyse Stewart in films other than Hitchcock's, as he is a director well-known for his very controlling behaviour with actors. I want to be clear and demonstrate that the variety in Stewart's performances was not simply due to the heavy hand of one particular director. Second, I am interested in how the Mann Stewart in many ways combines the Typical Stewart persona with that of the Hitchcockian Stewart. How do the highly emotional Typical Stewart and the emotionally-repressed Hitchcockian Stewart personas work together to create the persona of the Mann Stewart? How does the expression of emotion serve the cold and distant Western character in Stewart's case? How does Stewart use different performance signs in order to portray these characters? How does Stewart perform moral

ambiguity? The roles which Stewart plays seem to be ones in which he needs to perform aggressive masculinity. How does this relate to his other roles, and how does his expression or repression of emotionality affect this performance?

My aim in this project is to take a new approach to the examination of James Stewart's acting. By observing his communication of emotions, physical movements and general behaviour on camera in these films, I wish to prove that it is not accurate to assume that Hollywood Studio System-era actors relied only on their innate charm and natural personalities to craft characters. By simple empirical observation, the viewer of a film can see manifold influences, nuances and mental processes in action when observing an actor such as Stewart perform. Stewart is not the only actor to whom this theory applies, but he is the focus of my research due to his diverse canon affording me numerous objects of study and also due to his enduring appeal.

¹ Jean Alter, *A Sociosemiotic Theory of Theatre* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990), 264.

² John Fawell, *The Hidden Art of Hollywood: In Defense of the Studio Era Film* (London: Praeger, 2008), 129

³ Fawell, *The Hidden Art of Hollywood*, 129.

⁴ Gerard Molyneaux, *James Stewart: A Bio-Bibliography* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1992), 2.

⁵ Molyneaux, *James Stewart*, 2-8.

⁶ Dennis Bingham, *Acting Male: Masculinities in the Films of James Stewart, Jack Nicholson and Clint Eastwood* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1994), 24.

⁷ Molyneaux, *James Stewart*, 9.

⁸ Molyneaux, *James Stewart*, 10.

⁹ Molyneaux, *James Stewart*, 2.

¹⁰ Pudovkin cited in Butler, *Star Texts: Image and Performance in Film and Television* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1991), 36.

¹¹ Sigfried Kracauer, "Remarks on the Actor" in *Movie Acting: The Film Reader*. Pamela Robertson Wojcik, ed. (New York: Routledge, 2004), 20.

¹² Fawell, *The Hidden Art of Hollywood*, 130.

¹³ Bingham, *Acting Male*, 78.

¹⁴ Bingham, *Acting Male*, 96.

Chapter One: The Typical Stewart

James Stewart is an actor many of whose physical and vocal gestures are highly recognizable and easily caricatured or mimicked. Stewart has a very specific body language and type, and this obviously affects his performance style. Like other actors, it seems logical that even his own personal mannerisms and tics become entwined with the mannerisms of the characters he plays. Although I have made the claim that I do not wish in my research to demonstrate that actors of Stewart's era relied on only a limited repertoire of movements and physical or vocal attributes to make their careers, I feel it crucial to examine the typical expectation of what a Stewart performance will entail in order to show how he frequently and significantly deviates from it. It is necessary to examine both the types of roles that Stewart is best known for as well as the physical and vocal characteristics attributed to his acting in order to ascertain most completely what this Typical Stewart performance includes.

In this chapter, I will closely examine and analyze one scene in each of *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*, *It's a Wonderful Life*, *Harvey*, and *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* in order to elucidate what audiences have come to expect of Stewart's performances, through a varied sampling of the types of films he starred in throughout his career. This pool of films includes two of Stewart's dramatic films with director Frank Capra, a rather eccentric comedy, and a classical Western. Throughout this gambit of films, the type of character that Stewart is most well-known for playing is repeated over and over again, every time depending on similar performance cues, both vocal and physical. My aim is to demonstrate that although Stewart played similar characters at

various times throughout his career, and was indeed well-versed in the mannerisms of this character, further interrogation of his career and the films he acted in will show that he far from depended on this character to carry him along in the business. In later chapters, I will demonstrate the scope of Stewart's acting ability and the variety in his characters, both in type and in performance style.

James Stewart as an actor has been described in numerous ways which, while he is celebrated, have reduced the scope of his talents. He is most frequently described as playing the unassuming "man-next-door" type or the bumbling American Hero. He is well known for his portrayals of passionate, dedicated community members, men who are trustworthy, family-oriented, innocent and well-meaning. Physically, he is accurately described as tall, lanky, with long arms, legs and neck. His movements are usually slow, careful and measured. His voice is a particularly often noted characteristic. He speaks with a very typical American accent, using language and tempo which suggests a high-class upbringing (even when he plays more down-to-earth characters). His delivery of dialogue is also very slow and laboured, and he is often described as stammering or stumbling over his words, suggesting that he has difficulty expressing himself, or is to some degree inarticulate.

Several theorists, including John Fawell, James Naremore and Dennis Bingham have written about Stewart's typical characters and his acting style. I will consider the writings of Naremore in a later chapter, but Bingham's work is an interesting source to draw on at this point in my argument. Bingham's book, *Acting Male: Masculinities in the Films of James Stewart, Jack Nicholson and Clint Eastwood* is an examination of these

actors' performance styles and particularly their interpretations of and intersections with the idea of masculinity. Bingham's claims regarding Stewart's performance of masculinity are part of a very specific argument, and are of little use to my research, but his analysis of Stewart's typical performance style is important to consider.

Bingham initially refers to Naremore's writing on Stewart in his book *Acting in the Cinema*. Bingham is most interested in Naremore's claims that Stewart is the most emotional actor of his time, being able to cry frequently in his films and still not lose the sympathies of his audiences. He claims that Naremore describes him as having played troubled, cranky and often slightly repressed characters.¹ Bingham himself describes Stewart as frequently portraying the earnest idealist or the nostalgic home-spun boy-next-door type. While he was able to communicate sweetness and idealism, he was also adept at performing in roles which required him to enact deep emotion, anxiety, and pain. He was, according to Bingham, "not afraid to appear weak, neurotic or even psychotic," much like the 1950 rebel actors such as Marlon Brando or Montgomery Clift.² Most commonly, however, Stewart can be expected to play characters who symbolize honesty and American ideals. Stewart was later able to play the more disturbing roles of, for example, Alfred Hitchcock's films because he could hide "under the shelter of the All-American 'Jimmy Stewart' persona."³ In fact, Bingham argues that by the 1950s, Stewart's performed personality was so convincing that the continuing success of his career depended on his choosing significantly different roles in order to challenge the boy/man-next-door persona he had built.⁴

In opposition to the reported perceptions of audiences of the time, Bingham cites John Ford's claim that actors such as Stewart manufactured their public personalities very carefully in order to ensure their marketability. Stewart had studied acting and clearly knew what types of roles worked for him, and held relatively fast to these in his early career. Bingham states that the essential Stewart persona is that of Elwood P. Dowd, the main character in *Harvey*. In this film, Bingham notes, Stewart plays a small-town man, a friendly neighbour. He makes extensive use of his gentle face and voice and his slim, graceful yet awkward body.⁵ Bingham, like others before him, emphasizes the typical Jimmy Stewart image: the American hero, the decent, loyal and hardworking man who bears an air of the rural. He is often the shy, earnest man-next-door who is able to express himself with an unusual emotional intensity. He at once sounds and carries himself with the pride of a well-educated man, but also appears at times to be unsophisticated and inarticulate. According to Frank Capra, Stewart is the perfect blend of what he called the "common touch" and upper-class breeding.⁶

His early characters are easily caricatured, seeming almost like a cartoon (in fact, according to Bingham, Stewart appeared as a cartoon character in a Warner Brothers 1940 film parodying Hollywood personalities⁷): a long neck, and long, thin arms and legs, slightly drooping eyelids and large lips. Early on, his physical peculiarities were important to the characters he played, who were bashful and boyish with little finesse. In some films such as *Mr. Smith*, Bingham observes, his physicality was used to comic effect in numerous scenes. He remained a dramatic actor, however, due in part to the sincerity of his verbal delivery and his gaze, often emphasized by close-up and medium

shots. Bingham states that Stewart's forward-bent shoulders and expressive facial and vocal abilities communicated honesty and intelligence. His characters often expressed a very close emotional bond with America and its ideals, and this, Bingham claims, is all the more believable as this reflects Stewart's true-to-life beliefs, evidenced by his commitment to military service and the American Air Force, and his life-long involvement in American politics.⁸

Mr. Smith Goes to Washington

I will begin my detailed study of Stewart's most recognizable roles and physical and vocal acting techniques with an examination of Capra's *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*. In this film, released in 1939, Stewart plays Jefferson Smith, a recently appointed and inexperienced U.S. Senator who finds himself at the centre of a corrupt and messy political situation. He is appointed Senator both due to his attractive naiveté and his inexperience, which the other politicians see as an opportunity for manipulation. Upon his appointment, he is encouraged to introduce a bill to the Senate. Smith, as the head of the Boy Rangers, feels a commitment to community and America's youth, and proposes a piece of legislation which would authorize a government loan to buy a piece of land in his home state in order to open a national boys' camp. The land that Smith is interested in is already intended to be a part of another plan to build a dam overseen by the twisted antagonists of the film, Jim Taylor (Edward Arnold) and Senator Joseph Paine (Claude Rains). Paine and Taylor fabricate some paperwork which indicates that Smith already owns the land for which he seeks a loan, and frame him, reducing his political

support and making questionable his integrity. Smith's assistant and later love interest, Clarissa Saunders (Jean Arthur), encourages Smith and urges him to filibuster to postpone the bill that Taylor and Paine have proposed which affects the land in question. Smith, with Saunder's help, speaks for over twenty-three hours, and though he nearly gives up after Paine introduces loads of telegrams and letters calling for the expulsion of Smith from political office, he presses on, even after having fainted. With the assistance of Saunders and the eventual admission of corruption from Paine, Smith regains the support of his followers and is successful.

The most interesting and fruitful scenes in terms of Stewart's performance style in *Mr. Smith* are the scenes in the Senate during his filibuster. These scenes are remarkable because of the wide spectrum of emotions Stewart's character experiences. Not only does he go from the morose lows of defeat to the manic highs of enthusiasm and idealism, but he goes from one to another in a matter of seconds. His performance here is of note because its variety affords Stewart the opportunity to display his versatility in one role. These scenes are for this reason truly a tour-de-force of performance. I wish to explore the first part of this prolonged sequence; the scene after Smith finishes reading an excerpt from the Declaration of Independence, still relatively early on (seven hours) in the filibuster. As he explains the need for young boys to escape their boredom at home and exercise their bodies and minds, he appeals to the other Senators on a personal level, explaining that the new crop of men who will take their jobs deserve to have to opportunity to learn outside of schools and their homes. He describes how this boy's camp would allow boys from all over the country, from different nationalities, economic

and social backgrounds to meet one another and learn about each other. He finally reaches his boiling point, frustrated that the men in the Senate do not seem to understand that the principles Smith himself and his boy's camp stand for are those on which the nation of the United States was built. He is interrupted by another Senator, who asks him to please yield the floor and continue his oratory in the morning. Upon receiving advice both from Saunders (in the balcony) and from the President of the Senate, Smith continues, and is delivered an encouraging note tucked into the Constitution from Saunders which urges him to read it from the beginning, and also explains that she is in love with him.

When he first appears in this scene, Stewart appears to be somewhat worn out, his hair dishevelled and sweaty, his face a bit long and weary. He is shown in medium shot, holding in his left hand a book from which he reads the Declaration of Independence. Despite some evidence that he is tiring, his facial expression is very open and frank. His eyebrows are somewhat raised, signalling his honesty and appealing to his counterparts. As he stands, he holds his arms open, lifted slightly from his sides, bent at the elbows. As he speaks, he often taps the book with his right hand for effect and to add emphasis to his speech. The camera moves to a long shot, and now his full stance can be seen. He stands with his legs apart in a strong pose, suggesting his steadfastness and commitment to his goal. He stands with his shoulders set downward, in a relaxed and confident manner, indicating his assuredness in his cause. While he speaks, his eyes shift from side to side, indicating that he is making as much eye contact with his fellow Senate members as possible (though many of them are turned away from him).

Stewart relies on his arms and hands gesturing for emphasis and to ensure that even this relatively stationary body position appears dynamic. His voice, especially in the early and late parts of this scene is very strong, sure and he speaks loudly, further indicating his self-assurance. Interestingly, though he is continuously speaking, using different tones and cadences, his mouth rarely opens wide, and it seems that his jaw is quite set. The strength in the way Stewart holds his jaw also helps to communicate a sense of passion and commitment. He is maintaining a very high degree of control over his own body in order to maintain control over the Senate room.

When Stewart reaches a particularly passionate part of his speech (when he declares that the nation of America was built on the very principles he proposes to teach the boys at his camp), his anger at his fellow Senators and his passion for the project registers in his eyes, his body's posture and his voice. His eyes flash with anger and become wide and wild. He paces back and forth rather than standing relatively still in one spot, and even further emphasizes his rage by stiffly holding his neck and throwing his head (and thus also his hair) about while he speaks. His voice changes in that he becomes louder, and his tone changes to nearly a growl. He juts his bottom jaw outward in disgust as he refuses to explain to his boys that all of the policies and morals that they believe in are for show in order that politicians may use political bodies such as the Senate for personal gain.

Stewart's body language changes again as he apologetically explains to the Senate members that he has stepped out of line and has potentially offended them after whistling at them in order to see "if they still [had] faces." Here he is desperate for them to pay him

some attention, to understand his pleas. His voice becomes quieter, wavering with exhaustion and despair, and his jaw weakens somewhat. His body becomes limp as he slouches and uses his hands to support him while leaning on his desk. He sways back and forth while his legs remain firmly planted to the ground. As he exclaims “Either I’m dead right or I’m crazy!”, he makes his hands into fists which he shakes near his face, showing a level of exasperation not yet seen in Stewart’s performance. He is mocked by one Senator, and shows good humour, smiling and saluting him. When he is asked whether he would be willing to defer the rest of his speech to the next morning by another Senator who cites Smith’s probable exhaustion as a valid reason to quit, Stewart’s face registers this. He allows his eyes to droop somewhat and partially close; he leans his head toward his right shoulder and allows his mouth to hang open part-way while he listens. He looks to Saunders in the balcony with the same facial expression, and watches her advise him to ask the President. He slowly and halting asks the President for advice, and upon learning that he would lose control of the floor upon deferring until the next day, and considers his response. He nods his head, looking downward toward his desk and breathing “uh-huh” before putting his hands in his pockets and beginning to walk in a tight clockwise circle, resuming his speech.

A page runs to his desk, carrying a book which Stewart takes and opens. He reads Saunder’s note, and looks up toward her for confirmation of her expression of her feelings for him. He pauses for so long that a Senator asks if he is giving up the floor, to which he responds with a resounding and firm “Oh no,” shaking his head and smiling coyly. He continues to speak with a strong and sure tone of voice, swaying his body from

left to right, almost like a swagger. His eyes are once again bright and confident, his stance wide and firm. He begins to read the United States Constitution from page one, resolute and reassured, confident that he can if not convince than at least break down his opponents.

This scene is revelatory in not only its use of Stewart as a multi-talented performer, but also in summarizing a set of Typical Stewart performance cues. Most notable in this scene is Stewart's performance of Smith's determination and passion. His character's sense of determination is clear through Stewart's stance, the use of his voice and his body language, including his insistence on maintaining eye contact with his audience (the other senators) who are doing their best to avoid paying him any attention. He is firmly planted in the ground when standing, and he holds his body taut and upright, illustrating his pride and strength. His use of his jaw as a signalling mechanism is also important in this scene. His jaw is a primary mode of emotional communication for Stewart, who uses it in this scene to demonstrate his anger, determination and also his sense of defeat. Finally, the use of his arms and hands as tools for emphasis is also clear in this scene. Stewart often relies on hand motions to punctuate his performances, using them to highlight certain moments in his speeches, as in this scene.

It's a Wonderful Life

The second film which I am interested in exploring Stewart's performance in is *It's a Wonderful Life*. Released in 1946, this is arguably Stewart's most famous and well-known role. In the film, he plays George Bailey, a small-town real-estate man who has at

heart the interests of the community rather than his own. The film gives vignettes from George's entire life, starting with his childhood, using events throughout his life to demonstrate how much of a community citizen George is. These vignettes include a variety of scenes such as one in which a young George stops his boss, the town chemist, from accidentally poisoning a young patient; when George meets his future wife, Mary; George's father's death and George's induction into the family business, the Bailey Building and Loan Association. George's only ambition throughout his adolescence and young adulthood is to move away from Bedford Falls, his hometown, and travel the world, but he is constantly asked to make concessions and give up his own dreams in order to help others. He eventually marries Mary, and on their way to their honeymoon, they witness a run on the Bailey building, as the entire town attempts to withdraw their holdings in the company. Again, George (and in this case, Mary also) sacrifices his happiness in order to spread his \$2000 in honeymoon savings among the townspeople in order to help them through this poor financial time.

George is assisted at the Bailey Building and Loan by his Uncle Billy (Thomas Mitchell), who in a strange set of circumstances loses \$8000 on Christmas eve, the same day that the company is to be audited. When George is informed, he panics and appeals to his enemy and local slumlord, Henry Potter (Lionel Barrymore) for a loan to save his company. Potter refuses him, and George despairs. He goes home and is rude and irritable, and treats both Mary and their four children poorly. He leaves the house and goes to Martini's Bar where he gets very drunk and says a prayer before getting into his car, crashing into a tree and then making his way to a bridge where he plans to commit

suicide. Fortunately for George, an angel aiming to earn his wings, Clarence (Henry Travers), is looking after him, and jumps into the river before George can make a final decision, ultimately saving his life.

Clarence is revealed to be George's guardian angel, and proceeds to show George what Bedford Falls, and the lives of his family and friends would have been like if George, as he had wished, had never been born. As they tour the town together, George discovers that it is now called Pottersville, as Potter has power over everything, including the real estate and the banks. The town is derelict, and his family and friends have all suffered through a variety of unfortunate circumstances as George was never there to give them his help. George takes Clarence's lesson to heart and begs for God to grant him the gift of life once again, which he receives. He returns home and is thankful to see his family, and even the police officers waiting to arrest him because of the disappearance of the \$8000. Just as George thinks he is on his way to prison, the townspeople and his family and friends arrive at his house and deliver generous donations which are meant to help the Bailey Building and Loan get out of trouble. George ultimately learns that "no man is a failure who has friends" and, in a note from Clarence, learns that he helped him to earn his wings.

There are numerous scenes in this film which feature intense performances from Stewart, but one of the most interesting is the scene after George and Mary's wedding, when the investors run the Bailey Building and Loan. The film is fascinating in its totality as a collection of intense moments of performance. Other scenes of note, such as the scene in Martini's Bar before George decides to commit suicide, or the many scenes in

which George attempts to communicate with his family and friends while Clarence is giving him a tour of Bedford Falls without him, are numerous and relevant. I have chosen to examine the Building and Loan run because of the precarious position Stewart's character is placed in. He is unaware of what the problem is, and must come in to the scene, learn of the problem which is causing the town's panic, think quickly about how to re-earn the community's trust, and plead with them to remain loyal. This is also a scene in which Stewart is required to demonstrate a wide array of emotions and traits, ranging from fear to pride, optimism to desperation, cunning to honesty.

As George and Mary are being driven out of town by taxi, they pass the Bailey building and see the town's residents gathering outside its doors. George cannot leave town without checking in on the situation, and finds that the building is locked and that Uncle Billy is hiding inside. All of the customers who were standing outside flood into the waiting area and begin to panic, calling for their accounts to be closed and their investments returned to them. Billy explains to George in private that the bank called in their loan, and that the Bailey company is completely withdrawn. Then Potter calls and offers to help the Bailey company by bailing them out, and paying the investors fifty cents for every dollar they had invested the Building and Loan. George refuses his offer and goes out into the lobby of the building to explain to his investors what has happened. Unfortunately, even after they are assured that their money will return to their accounts and all will once again be well, many of the investors want their money back immediately and once word reaches them that Potter will pay them fifty cents for every dollar of their shares, they threaten to leave and go to Potter. George pleads with them not to allow

Potter the control over their money, and thus the Bailey Building and Loan. Mary offers their honeymoon savings, a total of \$2000, to the investors in order to tie them over until their accounts are restored. George proceeds to distribute all but two dollars of their savings, and the Bailey Building and Loan remains open until the end of their business day, avoiding foreclosure.

The scene begins after George and Mary have left the Bailey home in a taxi, on their way to their honeymoon. The driver brings George's attention to the run, and he goes directly to the Bailey building. As the real trouble isn't clear to George right away, Stewart performs this beginning of the scene quite calmly. He registers his confusion at the scene with a furrowed brow, squinting eyes, and an open mouth. He speaks slowly and carefully, almost whispering that he had better go and take a look, although Mary begs him not to stop. Stewart is shown in medium shot, running slowly toward the building in the rain. He keeps his gaze on the building and his customers, not yet sure of the problem. As he reaches the door, he stops and kindly greets some of the townspeople organized around the doorway, his voice earnest and warm. He unlocks and pulls back the door's gate and lets himself and the people into the lobby.

As he enters the lobby, he is again shown in medium shot, approaching the desk and searching the office to find Uncle Billy. He spots Billy drinking at the doorway of one of the offices at the back of the room, and jokingly asks if the building is closed because it is a holiday. His tone of voice is still rather light and friendly, but has become more tense, finally indicating that he suspects there is a real problem. He continues to invite the people into the lobby, using a welcoming and calm tone of voice, one slightly

different from the one used to address Uncle Billy. He jumps over the counter supporting his body by resting his hands on it while flinging his legs over toward the right of his body. He jumps with ease, indicating a certain level of athleticism and strength in his body. He approaches Billy, who explains the problem with the bank. Stewart's facial expression changes as he begins to understand the depth of the problem. He begins by looking at Billy with some level of concern on his face, working his jaw and tilting his head toward the right, breathing heavily. As Billy explains the situation, Stewart squints his eyes and tenses his jaw further. As he clarifies that the bank has taken all of the Bailey money, his tone of voice changes dramatically, from calm and quiet to harsh and loud, indicating his sense of distress. He turns away from Billy, walking toward the window in the background, and removes his hat with his left hand, swinging it by his side for effect, hinting at his frustration.

The phone rings and Billy picks it up, notifying George that it is Potter. As he hears this Stewart swings around from the window abruptly, raising his eyebrows and widening his eyes with surprise. He picks up the phone and listens to Potter's offer, standing awkwardly, with his shoulders hunched forward and his head down. His eyes are drawn downward and his forehead is wrinkled, showing discomfort and a certain amount of disgust at Potter's offers. He sits in his desk chair and growls a refusal at Potter, offended by his greed and tactlessness. Off-camera, he hangs up the phone and walks to a photo of his father hanging on the wall. In the next shot, Stewart stands in front of the photo, his body titled toward the camera and Uncle Billy, his gaze fixed on the image, his head turned to the right. He nervously runs his left hand through his hair,

shifting his eyes from side to side when he turns his head back away from the photo. He pauses to sigh before heading out of the private office into the lobby space of the building to talk to his customers. As he begins to walk, Billy asks if his wedding had been nice, causing a warmth to fall over Stewart's face, and giving him reason to smile, very gently and only for a moment. He replies in a tone that is completely separate from his previous one of tension and frustration. Now his voice is again soft and calm.

Stewart exits the office and approaches the crowd with a look of apprehension on his face. His eyes are wide and his mouth is slightly open, but his jaw is tightly clenched and he holds his head tipped downward, avoiding communicating a sense of confidence through direct eye contact with anyone. His arms are held at his sides, and he walks with some reserve, his body registering a tension all over. This part of the scene is shot starting with a medium-long shot, allowing Stewart to seem relatively small in the space, further emphasizing his apprehension. As he begins to speak again to the crowd, reassuring them, his own voice sounds somewhat nervous and shaky, though he is obviously attempting to fight the fear taking over. He uses his hands to gesticulate and but as police sirens (called over for crowd control by Potter), he visibly deflates, dropping his head down to his chest, his arms to his sides, almost comically exaggerating the gesture. He lifts his head and rubs his lips with his right hand, signalling his anxiety and his attempt to ground himself.

The crowd's attention reverts from the windows to George again, and he explains, to the best of his ability, the situation they are in. He begins with a tone of voice which is more confident than before, assuring them that they will once again see their money and that the bank will re-open next week. As dissenters call out and argue that they want

more of a guarantee from George, his confidence wavers, and he once again visibly shrinks, his shoulders hunching forward, his head tilting down again. He slowly walks toward the counter, his voice becoming progressively whiny, indicating his desperation for his customers to trust him and listen to his logical explanation. As he becomes more stressed, even his physical appearance changes. His hair looks quite dishevelled now, as he is not only wet, but he also frequently puts his hands in his hair and he speaks. He attempts to rally the crowd together, and in a reassuring motion, speaks to them with his arms outstretched, in a symbolic group hug motion.

Some customers appear to understand George's plea, but others are steadfast in demanding their money. George agrees to pay some of them back, but according to their contracts, they must wait 60 days for repayment. Stewart shows that George is not only nervous, but also growing somewhat disappointed with the principles of his customers by using a depressed-sounding tone of voice to explain this to the customers. He sounds as if he is breaking down, and looks that way as well, keeping his gaze down and away from the eyes of the customers. When they threaten to go to Potter for at least half of their money back, he again springs into action and leaves his passive and dejected mood behind. He again jumps over the counter, intercepting his customers between the desk and the door, pleading with them not to go to Potter for a payout. He speaks to them in a quick tone, holding his chin up and his jaw tight. He is now angry that they would consider abandoning the Bailey company in order to satisfy their own needs rather than taking part in the company that looks after others. His voice has taken on a slightly gruff sound, as he explains how Potter would benefit from their running to him.

In this portion of the scene, Stewart's body is positioned in such a way that he is not facing the camera, and is about one-quarter turn from having his back to the camera. Despite the limited view of his face and frontal body, his emotions are still communicated effectively. His eyes are still squinted, signalling his tension and passion. He is leaned in toward the group, connecting more directly with them as he pleads with them. He gesticulates with his hands, emphasizing his points, but also uses his legs to create emphasis. He bends his knees and jumps up and down slightly at key points in his speech. His confidence is clearly growing, but as the crowd murmurs dissent once again, he grows depressed and frustrated with them. He again runs his hand through his hair and hangs his head, suggesting that he is ashamed that he has failed to convince them. Just as he believes he has lost them, Mary suggests that they spread their honeymoon savings around between the customers, and his entire demeanour changes. His eyes widen, his eyebrows jump up onto his forehead and his face loosens, including his jaw and his mouth. His shoulders loosen and he again nimbly jumps over the counter, this time with even more energy than before in order to give loans to his investors. At the end of the scene, as he and his employees including Uncle Billy wait for the clock to tick over to six, Stewart's eyes move jerkily from the door to the clock. He stands leaning backward, gripping two dollar-bills in his hands. As the clock strikes six, he jumps into the air and he excitedly shouts "Bingo!," his eyes wide and his whole body showing his relief.

As in the scene in *Mr. Smith* which I analyzed in the previous section, this scene confirms many of Stewart's performance's features. Again, Stewart depends heavily on his body language to communicate his character's emotions and desires. That in this

scene he is with his back to the camera for an extended sequence is telling with regards to his ability to communicate an intense emotion such as desperation with his body rather than just his face or voice. He also depends on his jaw as an expository cue, using it to show George's differing levels of tension throughout the scene. Eye contact is also significant in this scene. It is distinct from his role as Mr. Smith in that George's audience actually cares what he is telling them in this scene, so his eye contact is not only returned, but is also important in advancing his cause. His eye contact with his customers is a part of what ensures that his character maintains their trust, thus confirming Stewart's ability to communicate trustworthiness and honesty, simply through his use of his eyes. His use of his hands to emphasize his dialogue is again important in this scene, as he uses them frequently to engage his customers, pleading with them to remain faithful to the company. He also uses them to signal the fact that he is thinking, working through the company's problem in his head, by moving them in a way that suggests propulsion or forward motion. Also notable is his use of props, such as his hat, in his hands (similar to his use of the books in *Mr. Smith*).

Harvey

The third film which I wish to discuss is *Harvey* (released in 1950). Stewart is widely recognized and aligned with the character he plays in this film, the friendly, innocent and naïve town drunk, Elwood P. Dowd. The film explores Elwood's relationships with his family and his imaginary animal friend, or "pooka," a six-foot-tall rabbit called Harvey. Elwood lives with his sister and niece in a small town, and attracts

much unwanted attention to his family as a result of his insistence to politely introduce everyone he meets to the obviously invisible Harvey. His sister, Veta (Josephine Hull), is madly trying to find her daughter a husband, and sees Elwood's behaviour as a threat to the image of their family. She decides to have him committed to a sanatorium. When she attempts to explain to the doctor at the hospital why she wants to have Elwood committed, she admits to occasionally having visions of Harvey herself, which results in the doctor admitting her and releasing Elwood.

Dr. Chumley (Cecil Kellaway), the head doctor in charge of the hospital, sends a pair of his employees, Dr. Sanderson (Charles Drake) and his nurse (Peggy Dow) out to locate Elwood and return him to the hospital. They find him at a bar, where they encourage him to reveal the details of under what circumstances he came to know Harvey. They eventually return to the hospital, where Dr. Chumley reveals to Elwood that he, too, has spent time with Harvey, and understands Elwood's situation. Elwood is offered a 'serum' which will rid him of his visions of Harvey, and Elwood agrees to take it in order to make Veta happy. As Elwood and the doctor disappear into an examining room, Veta has a change of heart and convinces Elwood not to take the serum, allowing him to continue visiting with Harvey. Ultimately, Harvey is given the choice by Elwood of whether he wishes to continue spending time with Dr. Chumley, or if he wishes to return to the company of Elwood. At the end of the film, the sanatorium's gate opens and closes, seemingly by itself, as Harvey leaves Dr. Chumley and rejoins Elwood.

Throughout the film, the character of Elwood requires a rather static performance. Elwood is a simple and calm man, who does not experience moments of passionate

emotions. He remains constantly amiable and is a kind and polite person, never raising his voice or vocally disagreeing with anyone. At no point in the film does Elwood show any sign of frustration, anger or sadness. He is very easy-going and tends to adjust well to any situation. An interesting scene to examine in the film is the one in which Dr. Sanderson and his nurse find Elwood in the alleyway behind the bar and convince him to tell the story of how he met Harvey. This scene is intriguing because Stewart is required to recount what would generally be understood to be an emotional story without demonstrating any excessive emotion, either in his voice, on his face or in his body's movements. Throughout the film, as previously mentioned, Stewart plays Elwood rather statically, which is typically fitting for the film, as the subject matter and theme of the film do not require Elwood to express emotions or changes in personality. In this scene, Elwood has stepped out into the back alley behind his favourite bar, Charlie's, and is intercepted by the doctor and nurse, who take the opportunity to ask him a few questions in order to assess him as a patient. He eventually sits down on a box in the alley, and continues to cooperatively answer their questions.

Dr. Sanderson asks Elwood how he came up with the name "Harvey" for his friend. Elwood explains that it is his name, and then proceeds to explain where and when he met him and how Harvey had asked Elwood what his favourite name was, stating that by coincidence, that was also his own name. Elwood tells the story in two voices: he narrates the story, and speaks Harvey's dialogue as well. Sanderson presses him, trying to get to the bottom of why the pooka is named Harvey, asking him for his father's name and his childhood best friend's name. Elwood obligingly replies, but offers no alternate

explanation for Harvey's name. Finally, the scene is interrupted by a group including a police officer who are searching for Dr. Chumley (currently out with Harvey). Dr.

Sanderson, the nurse and Elwood collect themselves in order to return to the sanatorium.

In this role, Stewart is not required to play a wide variety of emotions and reach different passionate plateaus, but instead he must play one constant, rather passive and very stable mood. Elwood is a calm and compliant man, who always speaks slowly, with a consistently relaxed tone. He is passionate about his politeness and his interest in listening to and connecting with other people, but his passion is not the type which requires him to behave loudly or with flourishes. Instead, Stewart imbues Elwood's speeches and movements with sincerity and conscious intent. As the scene begins, Stewart is seated on a box, shot from a high angle, making him appear rather diminutive and emphasizing the character's childlike innocence and personality. As he speaks, he looks up at Dr. Sanderson and the nurse with his head turned toward the left, his eyes peeking out from under his hat. His facial expression remains almost always the same: his eyes are opened widely, his eyebrows raised in a relaxed position. His face and jaw are not held tightly, but hang loosely, and his mouth and lips move with a smooth freedom, his lips frequently making an "o" shape as he thinks.

As he sits on the box, he is slightly recumbent, leaning on the wall behind him, further emphasizing his relaxed demeanour. At first, he holds his arms and legs in a crossed position, which might at first be read as a position indicating discomfort or a desire to shield himself from the questions of the doctor and the nurse. But as he tells his story, he becomes increasingly absorbed in it, and uncrosses both his arms and legs,

opening himself up to them and using his hands to make a circular, paddling movement to accentuate his story. The only time that his facial expressions change is when he is speaking Harvey's dialogue. He pulls his face downward, elongating it further and furrows his brows and forehead, making his mouth into a frowning shape. He tilts his head downward, which requires him to look upward with his eyes at an even steeper angle than before. His voice also changes when he gives Harvey's dialogue. Throughout the film, Stewart uses a calm, relaxed and relatively flat tone for Elwood's voice. When he imitates Harvey, however, Stewart's voice deepens and he adds a comical, caricature-esque tone.

Again, as has been a staple of the characters I have described previously, Stewart uses his hands for emphasis during his speech. He also juts his chin forward as he speaks, and communicates a sense of magical joy through his eyes, which sparkle with innocence as he tells his story. Stewart consciously ensures that Elwood's actions and dialogue are very deliberate, not expending any extraneous energy or making any quick or unnecessary movements. In fact, the only other significant bodily movements Stewart makes during this scene are of his head, looking toward the left when Dr. Sanderson asks him questions, indicating a sense of concentration and depth of thought. He leans his head and upper body slightly forward when Sanderson asks him a further question, as if completely engrossed in Sanderson's words. He maintains almost constant eye contact, despite Elwood's airy personality, indicating a willingness to confront the doctor and his questions. Paradoxically, he meanwhile manages to communicate a sense of Elwood's shy nature and inwardness, especially through his body position, sitting down, below the

doctor and nurse, with his long legs and knees bent and close to his face. He is at once a shy and quiet man who has a strong sense of himself and feels unthreatened by these imposing figures.

While this role is significantly different from those that Stewart plays in *Mr. Smith* and *It's a Wonderful Life*, he maintains certain recognizable cues. As noted, his hands and arms play an important role in his performance, peppering his speech with emphasis, the paddling of his hands drawing Dr. Sanderson and the nurse into his fantastical world, absorbing them (members of the scientific, rational world) into his non-rational, dream-like story. In the role of Elwood, Stewart's jaw also plays an important part. Although it is not a focal point of his performance, it is still crucial to compare his use of it with its use in either of the Capra films. Its slackness and therefore lack of prominence is important in demonstrating Elwood's relaxed and uncomplicated emotional state. The same is true of Stewart's use of body language. The fact that he is not noticeably tense or uptight is indicative of Elwood's soft demeanour.

The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance

Finally, I wish to examine Stewart's role in John Ford's *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (1962). In this film, Stewart plays Ransom Stoddard, a city lawyer who, while travelling through the country is accosted by the local sociopathic outlaw Liberty Valance (Lee Marvin). He is injured severely in a fight with Valance, and is taken to the town of Shinbone by Tom Doniphon (John Wayne), where he is looked after by Peter and Nora Ericson (John Qualen and Jeanette Nolan), the tavern owners, and their daughter

Hallie (Vera Miles). As he heals, he works for the Ericsons, doing dishes and serving in their restaurant. Ransom takes an interest in the well-being and education of the town, and remains in Shinbone, teaching reading and writing to the townspeople while he researches the jurisdiction of the local law enforcement, convinced that the town's Sheriff could arrest and stop Valance from terrorizing the town.

Eventually, Valance returns to Shinbone, making a shambles of Peter's Place, the Ericson's restaurant, and embarrassing Ransom, who is protected by Tom in a tousele with him. Although Ransom has no interest in fighting violence with violence and prefers the law, he finally realizes that in the country, the likes of Valance are unlikely to abide by the hand of the law. He starts to learn how to shoot, and also runs for public office, becoming a delegate sent to Washington D.C. in order to have the area encompassing Shinbone declared a state. After another altercation with Valance, he finds himself in a duel-type of situation with him. He meets Valance with aggression and after suffering through a dose of Valance's harassment, he manages to shoot him and rids Shinbone of Valance's maniacal tyranny. Ransom is hailed as a hero by the townspeople and wins the affections of Hallie, who has been waffling between being romantically interested in Ransom or Tom. At a later political rally, Tom reveals to Ransom that it was in fact he that shot Valance in order to save Ransom and win over Hallie, but that he believes that Ransom should continue to live under the title of "the man who shot Liberty Valance" and at least give Hallie something to be proud of. Ransom is elected to office, and he and Hallie get married, moving away to Washington, where Ransom eventually becomes a congressman, the state Governor and ultimately a likely Presidential candidate.

A key scene in the film in terms of Stewart's acting comes early on in the film when Ransom is helping the Ericsons in Peter's Place. Valance and his gang come into the establishment and bully some other patrons into abandoning their table. He makes quite a scene, and while he catches the attention of all of the other patrons, Ransom, who is in the kitchen, has not yet seen him. When Ransom leaves the kitchen with a tray in hand, ready to be delivered to Tom's table, he sees Valance and shows evident discomfort with his presence. He rallies himself, and attempts to walk by Valance's table without paying him any attention, but Valance trips him, causing him to throw the tray and the food that was on it. Ransom becomes irate, but before he can speak, Tom steps in, placing himself behind Ransom, and he chastises Valance, demanding that he pick up the food. Valance plays coy and passes the demand along to Ransom, but Tom is steadfast and repeats his orders. One of Valance's gang members attempts to become involved in the altercation, making a move toward the food and toward Ransom who is still on the floor, but Tom stops him in his tracks by kicking him in the face. Finally, Ransom reaches his boiling point and jumps to his feet, frustrated both by Valance's cruelty and Tom's assumption that he needs to be protected. He angrily picks up the plate and the steak which have been the subjects of the exchange, and slams them onto Tom's table.

For Stewart, playing the character of Ransom Stoddard must have been a rich experience. The character is closely related to the usual Stewart character in that he is a generally kind man, concerned with the best interests of his community, willing to make sacrifices to better their collective experience. This character, however, on top of experiencing the usual emotions of a Stewart character delves not only into performance-

heavy scenes of desperation, passion and frustration, but also into deep and roaring anger. This scene is especially interesting in this respect.

At Stewart's entrance into the scene, he is leaving the kitchen, tray in hand, looking downward at it, as if concentrating on not dropping it. As Peter stops him to add another item to the tray, a half-smile can be seen creeping onto his face. As he lifts his eyes briefly from the tray, and spots Valance at his table, the smile quickly fades and a look of concern takes over. His jaw visibly tenses and his mouth hangs open slightly. In terms of his body language, his shoulders also drop with disappointment from their previously tense position. Ransom appears to make direct eye contact with Valance in a shot-reverse-shot sequence. As Valance laughs and makes fun of Ransom for being the new waitress, Stewart registers Ransom's discomfort by closing his lips, frowning and running his eyes around the room, seeking reactions from the other patrons.

He finally grits his teeth, straightens his shoulders and walks forward, reverting his gaze forward, away from Valance and somewhat downward. He walks straight towards Valance, and trips over his outstretched leg with his left foot. Stewart's fall in itself is a fascinating sequence of movements. He stretches forward and throws his left leg up into the air, almost over his head. The tray sails from his hands and he lands on the floor, hands first. He flips over onto his right side and then rolls onto his back, in a move resembling that of a prey animal caught by a predator. As Ransom regains some idea of his place in the scene, Stewart rests on the floor, looking up at Tom, and then turning to Valance. His hair is messy, sweaty and dishevelled, signalling his disturbed state. As Tom confronts Valance, Stewart's face is held in a grimace, both of anger and at the pain

of having to be protected by someone else. When Valance demands that Stoddard pick up the plate, Stewart lifts himself partially off of the ground, and his voice is hoarse, his breathing is laboured as he snarls “No!” in response. Tom tells Ransom not to become involved, and Stewart settles back onto the floor in his prey position.

As the confrontation between Tom and Valance goes on, Ransom loses his patience, and gets onto his hands and knees, keeping his gaze on Valance. He leans on his left hand in order to support himself, but must get back down onto the floor to avoid being in the line of fire as Tom kicks away one of Valance’s gang members. Stewart shows a commitment to the action in the scene by obviously shuddering in response to the kick. He remains on the floor for a few more moments, but as the scene heats up even further, he grabs the chair which stands between Valance and Tom with his right hand, helping himself up off the floor. He places himself directly between the two, and speaks in a tone in which his voice shakes with anger. He is disgusted that two men would nearly come to blows over a dropped steak. In two wide paces, he walks to the back of the shot, and gruffly picks the steak and plate up off of the floor. He slams the two together, dropping the steak, and again picks it up and slaps it onto the plate. In the same angry tone, he says “Here!” and “There!” as he attempts to pick everything up. He walks the plate over to Tom’s table and throws it down. In a tone that absolutely drips with venom, he growls “Now, it’s picked up!” and stares at the two men with nothing but contempt on his face. His body language and facial expression are tense, tough and angry. His brow is wrinkled, and his eyebrows are pressed together and downward in fury, his mouth is held in a grimace. Although he has stood up to both Tom and Valance, he keeps back in the

shot, not yet ready to stand physically in between them but symbolically occupying that space.

Once again, this role allows Stewart to perform a variety of emotional highs and lows. The level of anger he communicates in this scene is unusual for him to have to portray, as his characters do not typically react as hotly as Ransom does. While at first it seems almost out of character for a Stewart role, upon further reflection, it fits well within the Typical Stewart. Generally, Stewart's characters are calm, non-confrontational city-dwelling men who use emotion to appeal to their opponents. We see this in *Mr. Smith*, as Smith uses emotion in his filibuster to convince his fellow senators to vote for his legislation, and again in *It's a Wonderful Life*, George uses emotion to convince his customers to stay loyal to the Bailey Building and Loan. Here, Ransom uses emotion to attempt to appeal to Valance. Because Valance is such a hardened criminal, completely disinterested in the pleas of a naïve city lawyer, and because the way of the law is so different in the Western country versus the city (where Ransom's inquiries into jurisdiction and his law texts would be the rational means of dealing with a man like Valance), Ransom is pushed to the emotional edge. He needs to have an emotional explosion in order to break the tension of the moment and even remotely register in the argument. Stewart's performance of hysterical anger registers quite clearly, especially in comparison to John Wayne's performance. Wayne, whose character is also angry and frustrated, just moments away from enacting physical violence on Valance, does not display his emotions in the same way. Stewart's hysterics are a complete reversal of Wayne's stoic and stone-still anger.

In this scene, as with the others described in this chapter, Stewart again makes use of his hands as gestural tools, the most significant example of this being the sequence with the steak and the plate. The violence of his movements communicate his anger and disgust. He also uses his body as an expressive tool, registering his tension and frustration in his shoulders and the rest of his body. His jaw is again a tool which signals his emotional changes, going from loose and smiling to tense and fearful at the sight of Valance. Finally, his use of eye contact with Valance especially is telling. He seldom takes his eyes off of Valance once he sees him, which in this scene signals his extreme discomfort with Valance's presence in the restaurant and his sense of powerlessness.

The Typical Stewart's Physical and Vocal Style

I feel that after having broken down some of the most performance-rich scenes in some of Stewart's most typical roles it has become relatively clear what the Typical Stewart performance consists of. As others have written, Stewart tends to act with raw emotion, allowing himself to become absorbed in the scene and seeming very sincere in his delivery. There is no doubt that Stewart relates to the characters he plays, as he so completely seems to internalize their characters with both his face, body and voice. The characters that he is well-known for playing do require him to communicate a certain amount of innocent charm, a friendly, neighbourly kind of behaviour. He is in some ways very naïve, painfully honest and all-too-willing to sacrifice himself for his cause. Bingham's characterization of the Stewart persona as the earnest idealist or the nostalgic home-spun man next door is for these roles very apt.

It is also important to note Stewart's most common physical actions and vocal tics. He is adept at using his face, especially his mouth and jaw for the expression of emotions or moods. While his eyes and eyebrows are also a useful tool for him, especially in terms of eye contact, he tends to show more with the lower part of his face. As Bingham notes, Stewart also relies heavily on his shoulders as an expressive tool. He tends to make good use of his spindly limbs as well, using especially his arms in a gestural way, both in order to communicate emotion, but also to punctuate his speeches. In terms of his voice, the Typical Stewart role requires that he speak with a somewhat shaky voice, usually rather quiet and calm in tone. Infrequently, such as in *Liberty Valance*, he is required to be more aggressively expressive with his voice, convincingly registering either anger or frustration. While this is a film in which I locate the Typical Stewart character, even here he demonstrates that he is more than able to deviate from his expected roles and mannerisms. This will be further elucidated in Chapter Two, through my examination of Stewart as an actor in Alfred Hitchcock's films.

I have drawn particular attention in each scene analysis to Stewart's body language, his use of eye contact, his jaw and his hand motions. If the Typical Stewart character is understood to be a mild-mannered, kind and friendly man, how do these performance details complement that notion? Regardless of the film examined, all of the above described characters behave similarly. They all desire to maintain direct eye contact, usually in order to appeal to their opponents in some way. This refusal to avoid the eyes of others signals honesty and openness in the Typical Stewart character. This openness is also communicated through Stewart's always expressive body language and

gestural motions with his hands. Stewart's characters have nothing to hide, and freely express themselves, frequently through very easily readable postures. The use of his hands as gestural tools not only ensures that his characters' speeches remain engaging, but also literally draw people into his world, urging them both physically and emotionally closer. The use of his jaw as a signalling mechanism draws attention to the amount of self control Stewart's characters are able to exercise. This self-control is what allows them to remain friendly and amicable. Although they may experience various emotional peaks, they do not always act on them, and rarely lose control. The main point to emphasize here is that these characters have in common their ability to openly express their emotions through voice, face and body. These characters, as Stewart plays them, rely very heavily on their emotions as ways in which to associate with and solve problems between themselves and other characters. This notion will be further clarified by my observations of Stewart's performances in Hitchcock's films as well.

¹ Dennis Bingham, *Acting Male: Masculinities in the Films of James Stewart, Jack Nicholson and Clint Eastwood* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1994), 10.

² Bingham, *Acting Male*, 10.

³ Bingham, *Acting Male*, 14.

⁴ Bingham, *Acting Male*, 16.

⁵ Bingham, *Acting Male*, 23.

⁶ Bingham, *Acting Male*, 24-26.

⁷ Bingham, *Acting Male*, 27.

⁸ Bingham, *Acting Male*, 27.

Chapter Two: Stewart in Alfred Hitchcock's Films

James Stewart performed in four films directed by Alfred Hitchcock between 1948 and 1958. The first of these films, *Rope*, was released in 1948. In it Stewart played a detective-like role as Rupert Cadell, a schoolteacher who uncovers his ex-students' 'perfect' crime. Hitchcock did not use Stewart as an actor in another of his films until he made *Rear Window* in 1954, casting Stewart as L.B. "Jeff" Jeffries, a wheelchair-bound photographer. Stewart appeared in two more Hitchcock films at two year intervals thereafter, in 1956 performing the role of Dr. Benjamin McKenna in *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, and in 1958 the role of John "Scottie" Ferguson in *Vertigo*. It is important to note that these roles occurred later in Stewart's career, after his recognizable character was already well-established. Even the earliest of these films, *Rope*, was released well into Stewart's career, two years after *It's a Wonderful Life*. Stewart did not perform these roles in direct succession, without interruption by other projects. He did sixteen films between *Rope* and *Rear Window*, and about two films and various television roles between each of the later Hitchcock films. This implies that the Hitchcock films were not just a phase in Stewart's acting career. He was given the opportunity to change his characteristic performance style back and forth between films, and shows that he was evidently successful at manipulating his style.

The roles Stewart played in Hitchcock films show a significantly different type of character style for Stewart. The roles he played are deeply affected by the thematic concerns of each film and his performance style is also heavily mediated by Hitchcock's editing techniques. There is a strong focus in each role on the solving of a mystery,

placing Stewart frequently in the role of the detective, where he attempts to collect clues and follow the rationale of the criminal(s) or solve the main thematic problem. The worlds of Hitchcock's films are often shady and shrouded in darkness and mistrust. Stewart must, to varying degrees, resist becoming emotionally involved in the mysteries he is attempting to solve and remain rational, communicating with numerous other characters in a rather distant fashion. Further to this, it is clear that several of the Hitchcock characters that Stewart plays significantly repress their emotions, which necessitates a crucial change in the Stewart performance and persona. Therefore, this allows Stewart little recourse to the typical Stewart character type, the benevolent family man or man next door who attempts to solve problems and bring unwilling factions together through appeals to their emotions. In this chapter, I will use *The Man Who Knew Too Much* to demonstrate the subtle ways in which Stewart amended his persona and performance style in the Hitchcock films, and then I will examine in detail scenes from the other three of Stewart's collaborations with Hitchcock (*Rear Window*, *Rope*, and *Vertigo*) in order to elucidate how significantly the Hitchcockian Stewart differs from the typical Stewart in performance style. I will take into consideration both the different character types that he plays, and the different performance cues that he uses in order to communicate these characters' motives and emotions.

Theorist and scholar of performance and acting style James Naremore examines the performances of many of the actors, including Stewart in *Rear Window*, in his book entitled *Acting in the Cinema* (1988). I referred to this chapter earlier when examining Bingham's analysis of Stewart's acting style. While Naremore conducts a very interesting

reading of Stewart and his fellow actors in *Rear Window*, I think it is more important to consider the overarching observations that he makes about Stewart's performance as the Hitchcockian detective, and how (or if) this type of role changes the way in which Stewart uses his body and voice in order to perform. Regardless, an engagement with Naremore's chapter raises some valuable points from which to begin this analysis.

Naremore begins by highlighting the details of Stewart's role as Jeff in *Rear Window*. He stresses the importance of the role of editing to his performance, noting that Stewart's acting is limited primarily to reaction shots and "gestureless moments".¹ He notes the extreme differences in the performances required of Stewart versus that of Raymond Burr, who plays his neighbour, the murderer Lars Thorwald. As Thorwald lives in an apartment across the courtyard, and the camera remains within the confines of Jeff's apartment, Thorwald is rarely shot in anything closer than a long shot. While the camera is within close quarters of Jeff, Stewart is required only to move the smallest facial muscle or subtly turn in order to communicate a significant and noticeable change in his behaviour. The other neighbours, including Burr as Thorwald, must make great, sweeping pantomimic movements in order to be noticed and be registered by the camera.²

Naremore also takes into consideration the confines that Stewart's character is placed within for the duration of the film. Because Jeff is recovering from a broken leg, he is restricted to a wheelchair, and his movements, and thus Stewart's performance, are located mainly within his upper body and face. The most tension-filled moments in the film are shot in close-up, making full use of Stewart's expressive face.³ The camera concentrates on his eyes and his other most expressive tool in this role, his voice, which

he uses in much the same way as he did in *Mr. Smith*, relying on raspy tones for dramatic emphasis.⁴ Naremore states that “Stewart was important to Hitchcock primarily because he could elicit a strong sense of identification from the audience.”⁵ Stewart’s prior roles as intensely emotional, fragile or simply “common” men made him a valuable asset to Hitchcock, who could depend on audiences to recall his prior roles, and then use this identification to ensure that Stewart’s characters were all the more unsettling. *Rear Window* is just one example of this, as both *Vertigo* and *Rope* also depend on a play with the established Stewart persona to disturb the audience.

In this chapter, I will follow the same *modus operandi* as in Chapter One. I will examine one scene in each *Rope*, *Rear Window* and *Vertigo* and with these analyses, I will demonstrate how the Stewart of Hitchcock differs significantly from the Stewart of Capra and other films discussed in Chapter One. Not only will I take into account his character types, but also the way in which he uses his voice, face and body in order to perform these roles. I have deliberately chosen not to examine a scene in *The Man Who Knew Too Much* in detail. This is not because it does not satisfy my argument, but because while Stewart’s role in the film does require some changes in his performance style, they are very subtle. The other three films offer a much more significant variation from the typical Stewart character than does *The Man Who Knew Too Much*. This film, however, is still valuable to my argument, as in this role Stewart is far more aggressive than in any of the previously analyzed roles. He also demonstrates a tendency toward the repression of emotion, a hint towards the behaviours of the other Hitchcock characters that he plays. Rather than becoming emotionally absorbed by the kidnapping of his own

son, he maintains a critical distance from the problem by obviously repressing his feelings, and appears to use rational thought and reasoning to determine how to rescue his son. This performance fits in a liminal space between the Typical Stewart and the Hitchcockian Stewart and is important to examine for just this reason.

Stewart performs the character of McKenna using similar performance cues as in his “typical” roles, although overall the character is darker and more brooding. He is not emotionless, but is often communicating with characters whom he does not trust or to whom he must not reveal his emotions. The character of McKenna requires Stewart to perform a role in which he must repress his emotions in favour of appearing disaffected and almost hard-boiled. Eye contact for McKenna is confrontational rather than welcoming. Stewart’s hand movements in this film are of a similar type to those described in Chapter One, but he uses props now to communicate nervousness and tension rather than passion, determination or deep thought. His jaw serves the same communicative purpose in this role, demonstrating clearly emotions such as tension, frustration and relief. Most interestingly, as McKenna, Stewart uses his voice differently. It loses some of its usual expressive tone, with fewer high and low tones. In this role, Stewart’s character must maintain an emotional distance from the events that have transpired in order to be able to successfully solve the mystery of where his son is. Despite whatever emotions his character might be experiencing, Stewart’s voice is a crucial way in which to communicate the repression of these emotions. His character attempts to use his voice simply as a tool of communication of the facts; his tone is

straight and emotionless, as over-expression could be dangerous, both for himself and his family.

Even in a role as similar to his typical roles as that of Benjamin McKenna, it is quite apparent that though he relies on the same types of performance cues, Stewart uses them to different effect. The key difference is in the overall manner of behaviour of the character. McKenna is a family man and an upstanding citizen, which resonates with the typical Stewart character, but he is not highly expressive. Any familiarity with the Typical Stewart renders the lack of expression in Stewart's performance highly suspect. It appears at first that he rejects emotion in favour of a more rational approach to conflict. Unlike in *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*, for example, where Ransom reacts to conflict with explosive emotion, in the Hitchcock films, and especially in *Rope*, Stewart plays characters who defer the expression of wild and passionate emotion. Although it might be argued that Stewart's Hitchcock characters instead deal with conflict from an approach based more in reasoning and lucidity, I will argue that it is not reason which informs Stewart's performances, but instead the repression of emotion. Stewart's Hitchcock characters, like his typical characters, are still highly emotional, but all know the risk of expressing these emotions and choose instead to hide them to differing effect.

Rear Window

The first Hitchcock film I will examine is *Rear Window*. In this film, Stewart plays L.B. "Jeff" Jeffries, a professional magazine photographer who is bound to a wheelchair in his apartment in New York due to a broken leg. Jeff spends his days

sleeping, interacting with his nurse Stella (Thelma Ritter) and his longtime girlfriend Lisa (Grace Kelly), and watching his neighbours in their adjacent apartments. He becomes particularly interested in his neighbour Lars Thorwald, who cares for his severely ill and bedridden wife. Jeff notes that Thorwald's wife disappears one night, and watches Thorwald leave his apartment multiple times carrying a heavy suitcase afterward. He subsequently observes Thorwald cleaning several tools, including a saw, and forms a theory in which he suspects that Thorwald has murdered and disposed of his wife.

Jeff contacts a friend, a detective for the New York Police, and attempts to convince him of Thorwald's crime. The detective investigates, but finds nothing suspicious, and quashes Jeff's theory. Jeff attempts to convince both Stella and Lisa of his theory, but both write it off as a product of his overactive imagination. Later on, a neighbour's dog is found dead, and Jeff's suspicion is once again peaked. He explains that Thorwald buried evidence in the courtyard garden and killed the dog in order to prevent him from digging the evidence up. Jeff sends Lisa to plant a threatening note under Thorwald's door. The note indicates to Thorwald that someone is watching him and knows what has happened, and invites him to meet with Jeff at a nearby bar. When Thorwald is lured out of his apartment, Stella and Lisa agree to go dig in the garden and expose what he has buried, but they find nothing. Lisa decides to try to find evidence in the apartment, climbs the fire escape, and slips in through an open window.

As Lisa searches the apartment, Stella returns to Jeff's apartment, and they watch in horror as Thorwald returns home to find that Lisa has broken in. He assaults her, and Jeff calls the police, who arrive in time to save Lisa from certain trouble. They arrest her,

but not before she locates Mrs. Thorwald's wedding ring, which she slips on her own finger, manages to point out to Jeff across the courtyard, and takes with her from the apartment. Unfortunately, Thorwald notices her signalling, and sees that he is being observed by Jeff and Stella. Jeff sends Stella to the police station in order to bail out Lisa, and telephones his detective friend to re-assert his suspicion of Thorwald's crime. The detective agrees to come over and speak with Jeff, and makes it to Jeff's apartment just in time to see that Thorwald has broken in, has assaulted Jeff, and is pushing him off of the window ledge, attempting to kill him. Jeff falls from the window and lands on the ground below. He survives, but breaks his other leg, and is confined for an even longer period of time to his wheelchair, and thus his apartment. Thorwald is apprehended, and confesses to the murder of his wife.

The scene which I wish to examine in greater detail is the scene in which Jeff, unable to communicate with Lisa, watches her climb into Thorwald's apartment, and eventually be assaulted by him. This scene is remarkable in that while Stewart's character is experiencing a wide array of emotions, raging from fascination to fear, he is unable to communicate them directly to his intended interlocutor. In this scene, Jeff's reaction resembles in many ways the reactions of the typical Stewart characters, but due to the circumstances, Jeff is limited in how he can express himself, and thus must practice a different type of emotional expression. Whereas usually his voice factors quite significantly into his emotional expression, in this scene he cannot risk shouting to Lisa, and further vocal expression, due to her distance away from him, is rather pointless.

In this scene, shot entirely in shot-reverse-shot sequences, Lisa and Stella leave Jeff's apartment in order to dig about in the garden in the courtyard and attempt to find incriminating evidence linking Thorwald to the disappearance of his wife. They dig, but uncover nothing. Not satisfied, Lisa motions to Jeff, who is watching intently from his window, that she will go up and look around Thorwald's apartment. She climbs the ladder of the fire escape, and climbs to Thorwald's floor, Jeff all the while harshly whispering (as shouting out to her would attract attention), begging her not to. She climbs from the fire escape through the open window, and carefully searches the apartment. In the bedroom, she locates Mrs. Thorwald's purse, and motions to Jeff that it is empty.

When Stella returns to Jeff's apartment, they become distracted from Lisa by watching Miss Lonelyheart, another neighbour, who appears to be preparing to commit suicide. Stella asks Jeff to call the police, and as they watch Miss Lonelyheart, Thorwald returns to his apartment. When Miss Lonelyheart appears to get distracted from her suicide plan, Stella and Jeff heave a sigh of relief, but suddenly, Jeff notices that Thorwald is unlocking his door. He and Stella watch as Thorwald finds Lisa and grabs her, shaking her violently. The police finally answer the phone, and Jeff informs them that he is watching a woman get assaulted, and gives Thorwald's address. Thorwald dims the lights at his apartment, and Lisa screams for Jeff, who is unable to help. Within moments, the police arrive and interrupt the assault, arresting Lisa, and thus saving her from Thorwald.

Throughout this scene, Stewart is shot in either medium-close up or medium shot. The shots of him are intercut with shots of other characters across the courtyard (either

Lisa, Stella, Miss Lonelyheart or Thorwald, and combinations thereof), all shot in long shot. At the beginning of the scene, Stewart watches Lisa and Stella with an air of fascination. He is curious to see what they will uncover in the garden, and watches wide-eyed and open-mouthed. When they reveal nothing, he leans back in his chair, disappointed and frustrated. As he notices that Lisa is climbing the ladder to the fire escape, Stewart's facial expression becomes immediately concerned, wrinkling and raising his brow and he shakes his head "no," whispering in a harsh tone "don't do it!" His gaze goes back and forth between the bar which Thorwald is at (visible between the buildings across the courtyard) and Lisa, climbing the ladder, signalling his anxiety at her being discovered.

As he watches her ascend, his mouth hangs open in shock and awe. He then drops his gaze, his eyes in his lap. He rests back in his chair and rolls his eyes in a move which signals his exasperation and sense of defeat, as he acknowledges his inability to do anything to stop Lisa. He leans forward again as Lisa tries to open the window, and growls "LISA!" with an expression of anxiety on his face. His chin is pushed forward, his brows are once again furrowed, and he winces. Stewart watches as she climbs off of the fire escape and in through the open window, and he communicates his anxiety and nervousness by rocking back and forth in his chair, putting his nervous energy into action. He throws his hands up in the air in an "I-give-up" motion, and then looks down into his lap again, unable to watch the events unfold. Unlike in several of his other previously examined roles, as Jeff, Stewart uses his hands to signal his inability to openly

communicate, using them to show mainly his frustration and exasperation with Lisa's blatant disregard for the warnings that she did see and hear him give her.

As she searches the apartment, he frowns in annoyance at her risk-taking, and rolls his eyes. Despite his obvious desire not to see her in trouble, he cannot bear not to watch, and looks up, watching her with his eyes wide, his eyebrows raised and his mouth open in disbelief at her audacity. Lisa enters the Thorwalds' bedroom, and desiring a better view, Stewart raises a camera outfitted with a telephoto lens to his right eye. As Lisa rummages through various bags, finds the empty purse and pantomimically shows it to him, he drops the camera and grumbles "Come on, come on, get out of there!", sending his gaze to the bar, and then back to Lisa.

Stella re-enters the apartment, and Stewart turns the wheelchair jerkily toward the door, signalling his tension and jumpiness. He demonstrates visible relief that Stella has returned, sighing and turning his chair promptly back to the window. He reaches with his left hand for his telephone and pauses before picking up the receiver, looking up at Stella as she urges him to give Lisa another moment. He looks back over to Thorwald's apartment to watch Lisa, but leans his body over toward Stella, who stands at the right of his chair, in a movement suggesting that he needs her support. Stella directs his attention to Miss Lonelyheart, and Stewart's eyes move back and forth between Miss Lonelyheart's apartment and Lisa. When Stella, afraid that Miss Lonelyheart will commit suicide, demands that he call the police, he dials the phone, but continues to move his eyes between her apartment and Lisa. When he notices Thorwald coming down the hall and opening his apartment door, Stewart's face registers a sense of panic. His eyes

become wide and he gasps. His entire body shakes and then stiffens with fear, and he raises his right hand, in a signalling motion, trying in vain to get Lisa's attention.

The critical shots in this scene are shot from a lower angle, showing Stewart's face from below, interrupting the viewer's view of his facial expression and thus demonstrating a way in which Hitchcock chose to muddle with Stewart's well-known emotional persona. The use of this angle also promotes dramatic tension to build. As he watches Thorwald discover and begin to assault Lisa, Stewart's face registers all manner of tension. His jaw is held tight, with his mouth firmly closed. He holds the phone in his left hand, down from his ear. He draws his right hand in a loose fist to his mouth, and rubs it against his lips, signalling his anxiety and frustration. This movement in particular signals Stewart's performance of the inability to communicate as he literally blocks his mouth with a fist.

As a voice speaks to him over the phone, he grasps the receiver with both hands, and holds it tightly to his ear. In a gruff whisper, he explains to the operator that he needs the police to attend to the woman being assaulted, and as he gives information, he shakes his right hand up and down in a cutting motion, as if somehow confirming that he is point-by-point stating facts. As he states that the apartment in which the assault is happening is in the rear, his right hand makes a circular motion. He is physically directing the police to the back side of the building, a direction which is given in vain, as the police cannot see him gesturing (another cue drawing on the theme of the difficulty of communication in the film). He hangs up the phone, and is left with Stella to watch the assault, unable to help.

As Lisa is man-handled, thrown this way and that, Stewart's breath is unsteady and raspy, he swallows nervously, inhales in gasps, and winces in pain, as if being assaulted himself. As Thorwald dims the lights and his character's ability to see is limited, he breathes heavily and with a fixed stare maintains his gaze on Thorwald's apartment window. He appears to weaken and seems almost faint as he sees that Lisa is being roughly held by Thorwald. He becomes re-animated and automatically stiffens in reaction to Lisa shouting "Jeff!". As he realizes again that he is unable to help, his eyes tear up and he shakes with frustration and fear. Lisa continues to shout, and Stewart registers how torturous his inability to interfere is by holding his tensed hand to his mouth and then grabbing the back of his neck with both hands, gritting his teeth. Just as the scene reaches its dramatic climax, the police interrupt Thorwald, and Stewart's face and body relax as he sighs a deep breath, relieved that Lisa is out of direct danger.

As previously indicated, this scene is important in that it allows Stewart to demonstrate his ability to express tension, anxiety, fear and a myriad of other emotions, mostly without the expressive tool of his voice. Also, due to his relative inability to express his emotions with his whole body, the majority of his expressiveness comes from his eyes, his arms and the rest of his upper body. Clearly, then, Stewart does not play an unemotional character in this film, but rather a highly emotional man who is restricted in the ways in which he can express himself. This is the first step in the repression of emotions that he practices in the films that I will examine later in this chapter.

In this scene, it is once again fruitful to observe his jaw, as this is the locus of much of his expression of tension and relief. Also important in this scene is his arm and

shoulder movement, related once again to his communication of tension, anxiety and relief. As this scene is shot in shot-reverse-shot format, eye contact is not really an issue, however Stewart uses his eyes as expressive tools which are especially powerful as he is shot from such a close distance. Physically, Stewart-as-Jeff differs from the Typical Stewart in that his physical movements are pointing to his inability to express himself rather than assisting him to do so. The movements themselves are recognizable from character to character, but while in the typical films, Stewart is using his jaw, hands and shoulders to bolster his words, making clearer his intentions and feelings to both his fellow characters and to the film viewer, in his role as Jeff, Stewart uses these body parts to communicate mainly that he cannot communicate. His movements, rather than consisting of flourishes and wild gesticulations are muted and depressed. Unlike his typical characters who are optimists and rally the troops, as it were, with their motivational speeches and accompanying physical gestures, Jeff uses his gestures to emphasize his pessimism and dismay. Due to his inability to make Lisa understand what he wants through his physical movements, Jeff is rallying no-one, and in a sense is communicating only with himself.

When Stewart does have the opportunity to use his voice in this scene, it is significant. He loads what few words of dialogue he has with as much emotional expression as possible, relying heavily on his raspy whisper (reminiscent of *Mr. Smith*) and urgent, panicked tone. In terms of character type, it is important to note the difference between Jeff and someone like George Bailey. Jeff is unwilling to speak up and attract attention to the scene in Thorwald's apartment in order to save Lisa for fear that he would

reveal himself as part of the breaking and entering scheme. Though Jeff loves her, he shows a tendency to be selfish and unwilling to sacrifice himself in order to help someone else (very unlike George Bailey, who is ultimately willing to allow the police to arrest him in order to cover for his Uncle Billy, who is truly at fault in the lost money mix-up). Perhaps this is a sign of the change in the Stewart persona, from the kind, friendly community man to the cold and distant observer, or perhaps it is simply a detail related to the practical circumstances of the narrative. Either way, it is a significant shift in the expected behaviour of a well-known persona.

Vertigo

The second of Stewart's Hitchcock films I wish to examine is *Vertigo*. In this film, Stewart plays John "Scottie" Ferguson, a retired detective who leaves the force due to an accident in which a policeman-friend falls to his death from the roof of a building after Scottie suffers a bout of vertigo and loses his grip on him. Scottie is asked by an old school friend, Gavin Elster (Tom Helmore), whether he would consider working as a private investigator for him and collect information on his wife, Madeleine Elster (Kim Novak). Scottie reluctantly agrees, and follows Madeleine all over San Francisco, observing that she seems to be obsessed with a woman named Carlotta Valdez. Elster informs Scottie that Valdez was her great-grandmother whose tragic life ended in suicide, and that he believes that Madeleine's obsession is dangerous and spells a bad end for her. Scottie saves Madeleine from her own suicide attempt by pulling her out of San Francisco Bay, and begins a short love affair with her. She reveals some details about a

recurring dream she has, and Scottie identifies that the location of the dream is the San Juan Battista Mission. He takes her there, and in a kind of daze, she rushes up the church's bell tower, and throws herself off to her death. Scottie's vertigo renders him helpless, as he cannot climb the steep stairs to follow and stop her.

A trial is held where Elster testifies that his wife was mentally unstable, and Scottie is acquitted. He suffers for some time of shock and remains for a period of time in a sanatorium, where he is frequently visited by his good friend Midge (Barbara Bel Geddes), who is deeply in love with him. When he is released, he is still obsessed with Madeleine, and constantly re-visits places where they spent their time together, consistently mistaking other women for her. He eventually runs into Judy (also Kim Novak), a girl whose resemblance to Madeleine is uncanny. He then becomes obsessed with her, beginning a romantic relationship with her and convincing her to dye her hair and change other aspects of her appearance in order to mold her into Madeleine. On one occasion, Judy puts on a necklace which Scottie recognizes as having belonged to Valdez, and he realizes that Madeleine and Judy are actually the same person. In a rage, he drives Judy to the Mission, and drags her up the bell tower, his vertigo apparently cured. He interrogates Judy, who admits to having been paid by Elster to stand in for his wife and be part of a cover-up for his wife's murder. A nun interrupts their conversation and startles them, and Scottie inadvertently pushes Judy out of the tower, killing her.

The most interesting scene in the film, and the one I will examine, is the scene in which Scottie notices Judy's necklace and becomes aware of how he has been used in the Elster scheme. This scene is important to examine because it highlights so effectively the

different type of character that Stewart plays in this film. Scottie is as far from the man-next-door, amiable, innocent family-man type of character that Stewart usually plays as possible. Scottie, like Jeff in *Rear Window*, essentially refuses the advances of the girl who loves him, remaining relatively cool and disaffected by Midge's advances. He becomes quite unhealthily obsessed with Madeleine, and engages in an adulterous affair with her. Unable to save Madeleine a second time, Scottie is deeply emotionally scarred. He then becomes uncomfortably aggressively obsessed with Judy, and becomes very controlling. Upon understanding Judy's role in the Elster scheme, Scottie becomes vengeful and physically rough with her, implying his capacity to behave abusively. Finally, it is in fact Scottie who, inadvertently or not, is responsible for her death. Scottie is a far-cry from the typical Stewart character.

In this scene, Judy has been completely transformed into the image of Madeleine. Scottie sits in a chair in Judy's apartment while she prepares to go out for dinner with him. She is wearing a black dress, exactly the style that Madeleine wore at the Mission on the day of her death. As she gets ready to leave, she and Scottie playfully flirt. She attempts to put on a necklace, but cannot close the clasp. She asks Scottie to help her, and he happily obliges. Scottie looks at her reflection in the mirror, and notices that the necklace is one that belonged to Madeleine's great-grandmother. It dawns on him that Judy and Madeleine are in fact the same woman, and he realizes how Elster and Judy had taken advantage of him. He decides to change their plans for the evening, and drives Judy out to the Mission. She asks him several questions on the drive, and he provides her with short, cryptic, unclear answers. When they arrive, she resists getting out of the car, and

Scottie physically pulls her out, dragging her by the arm to the doors of the church, claiming that he needs her help in revisiting a piece of his past.

When the scene begins, Stewart is shot reclining in a chair by the window of Judy's apartment. He is shot from behind, but his right hand is visible resting on his chin, and his right leg is bent and crossed over his left in a position suggesting relaxation and comfort. As he speaks with Judy, his voice is warm and his tone playful. He flirtatiously suggests that she "come 'ere..." with a raised eyebrow. Because he is sitting, when he speaks to Judy, Stewart's face is tilted upward and slightly to the left. His facial expression is relaxed and open, and his mouth is held in a half-smile. When Judy asks for help with the clasp of her necklace, Stewart easily gets up out of the chair, and positions himself directly behind her. At first he looks at the back of her neck, focusing on the clasp, but as he looks up, he squints his eyes shut, as if to focus more closely on what he sees in the mirror. He bites his lip as he examines her reflection, and suddenly his face drops in disbelief. The camera zooms in and moves about ninety degrees to shoot him head-on rather than in profile. Stewart blinks his eyes repeatedly and holds his mouth with his lips straight, and his jaw loose. This is a clear moment of the repression of emotion, as Stewart's character is having an important realization, but is not at all allowing his emotional reaction to come to the fore by blocking it with a blank stare.

A flashback to Madeleine looking at the painting of Valdez in a gallery signals his memory working to put all of the pieces of the mystery together, and the camera returns to his face in close up. As he thinks, he tilts his head to the right. His brow wrinkles slightly, and his eyes are now set on one fixed point. His mouth is tightly closed, and his

jaw is somewhat more tensely held. His facial expression clearly communicates a sense of hot anger and malice as he continues to stare forward. Judy re-enters the shot and as she approaches him, Stewart's eyes move excruciatingly slowly toward her. A similar movement of his head follows his eyes. He is so focused on the revelation that he has just had that he cannot hide his distraction. He stares directly at her as she speaks to him, not dropping eye contact even for a moment. His head is tilted slightly forward, signalling his aggressive desire to confront her. As Judy embraces him, Stewart's body is stiff; he does not allow his body to soften to her as he resists her romantic advances. He raises his hands to touch her back stiffly. Judy implores him to act romantically, but as she embraces him, he stares off into the distance, obviously planning his next move in the relationship. As she pulls away, he closes his eyes thus avoiding eye contact, and emotionlessly allows her to kiss him.

The next shot takes place in the car as Scottie drives Judy back to the Mission. Stewart's expression is cold and blank as he stares forward through the windshield. His head is tilted slightly forward and to the right, and his mouth, lips and jaw are all held tightly closed. His expression is one of calculation and anger. Judy observes that they are driving quite far to get to dinner, and her speech seems to break his trance. Again, he very slowly turns his head to look at her and disapprovingly stares at her. When he speaks to her, his dialogue is slowly and deliberately delivered. When Judy speaks again, asking where they are going, Stewart again slowly turns his head, leers at her and half-smiles. This smile, unlike the first in this scene, is dripping with disgust and malevolence. He replies in a distant and mysterious tone, his voice quiet and oozing with nastiness.

When they arrive at the Mission and park the car, Stewart promptly launches himself out of the car. As he speaks with Judy, he uses an aggressive, excited tone (this is the first time we see overt emotion from Scottie since his moment of recognition earlier). He walks in few steps around the front of the car, looking at Judy the entire time. He explains the story of Madeleine to her as he moves around the car, using a voice that calls to mind the voice of a psychotic maniac. He speaks very slowly and deliberately, clearly repressing his desire to express himself openly given how severely emotional Madeleine's death was for him. He opens Judy's car door, and physically pulls her out of it by the arm. He then swings her body around to his right side, gripping her arm tightly. He speaks at her, holding his face threateningly close to hers, and holds firm on her even when she does not squirm to get away. When she does try to pull away, he grips her even more tightly, and violently shakes her. As he attempts to get her to walk with him toward the church, he holds her restrictively from behind by both arms, and while staring at her constantly, in turn drags and pushes her to the church doors, aggressively pushing her inside.

This scene is especially effective in demonstrating Stewart's ability to play different character types. Stewart's Scottie is a deeply disturbed and unsettling character. He is incredibly aggressive and malicious. While like other Stewart characters, he is intensely emotional, he does not openly communicate his emotions with his fellow characters (his repressed emotions are made clear by his obviously mentally damaged state). Judy notices a change in Scottie's demeanour, but does not understand why. The emotions he experiences are communicated in cues meant to be observed and understood

by the film viewer, helping the film's thriller-style narrative to develop by creating suspense regarding Scottie's next move. Stewart uses his eyes, upper body and voice effectively to communicate the changes in emotion that his character experiences. His eyes, due in particular to the close up shots of his face, are used to signal Scottie's emotional disturbance in this scene. Stewart's slow and deliberate movements with his head, neck and shoulders also help to show his emotional pain and disconnection from Judy. These movements are also loaded with dramatic tension, communicating anger, disgust, disbelief, and a desire for vengeance. Stewart's use of his voice works in tandem with these movements. His tone is cold and distant, making him appear at once unemotional and at the same time threatening.

Scottie is by no means unemotional, but the emotions that are present in the character, including anger, frustration, mistrust and betrayal are noticeably repressed. No typical Stewart character is even remotely capable of this kind of behaviour. Not even the relatively atypical angry Ransom Stoddard could muster this level of rational malevolence. Scottie is not just angry, but calculating and thirsty for revenge and confrontation, two desires never present in a typical Stewart role. Also crucial to note is that Stewart creates a character who not only is emotional, but can turn his emotions into their opposite. He channels his intense love for Madeleine into a deep hatred of Judy; his desire and fixation on Madeleine transforms into his sadistic need to exact vengeance on Judy. This kind of emotional slippage is unthinkable in the typical Stewart role.

Rope

The third and final Hitchcock film that I wish to examine is *Rope*. In this film, Stewart plays Rupert Cadell, the ex-teacher of Brandon (John Dall) and Philip (Farley Granger), two young men who, after having strangled their friend David, serve a party of guests (including his father [Cedric Hardwicke] and girlfriend [Joan Chandler]) dinner off of the chest in which his body is hidden. Rupert, as their teacher, often theorized about the benefits and art of murder, and Brandon refers constantly throughout the film to how interested in and proud of their scheme Rupert would be. Rupert is invited to the dinner as well, and after David does not appear for the party and through observing the behaviours of his hosts, he becomes suspicious that they somehow prevented David from attending. The dinner party abruptly ends when the attendees become increasingly concerned about David's whereabouts. As he leaves, Rupert's suspicions are confirmed when he is accidentally handed David's hat from the closet on his way out. Rupert returns to their apartment after all the guests have gone home in order to investigate, claiming he has forgotten his cigarette case. He sits down for a drink and banter with Brandon, explaining a theory on how he thinks the men have murdered David. Brandon remains cold and calm, but eventually Philip, who has been drinking away his guilt all evening, confesses. Brandon claims that Philip has been ill, and dismisses his confession. Rupert discovers the body in the chest and exposes the crime, disappointed that the men took his philosophies to heart and committed a murder.

The scene in the film which I think is most significant in terms of Stewart's performance is at the end of the film, when Rupert returns to the apartment in order to

confirm his suspicions and expose his ex-students as murderers. Although Philip and, in particular, Brandon aim to impress him and gain his approval by murdering David, Rupert does not give them the reaction they desire. Hitchcock plays directly with the notion of Stewart as an emotional actor by having Rupert outright refuse to become emotionally involved with Brandon and Philip. Rupert not only refuses to become emotionally engaged in the murder, but also rejects emotional involvement with any other character in the film, including Ms. Wilson (Edith Evanson), the housekeeper who dotes on him. Stewart plays a rather flat character, present in the narrative mainly as an expository device. His involvement in the film is purely rational; he enters the scene, observes the other characters' behaviours, and then methodically unravels the mystery in a matter-of-fact tone, pushing others rather than himself to emotional peaks.

In this scene, Rupert has returned to the apartment and plans to reveal that he understands the circumstances behind David's absence from the party. After some brief and awkward exchanges with Brandon and Philip, sitting down in a chair with a drink, he stands up and begins to describe his theory of their involvement with David. For much of the explanation, the camera aligns with Rupert's eyes, moving through the apartment as if following the movements of Brandon, Philip and David. The two men listen intently to Rupert's theory, Brandon occasionally interjecting with an arrogant suggestion or comment. Eventually, Rupert approaches the chest, and Philip panics, essentially admitting to having murdered David. Brandon denies this, and Rupert continues his explanation. He reveals that his suspicions have been further confirmed by the fact that Brandon is carrying a gun in his pocket. Brandon laughs, and places the gun on the piano,

refusing to admit any malicious intent. Rupert reveals that he has in his possession the rope which the men used to strangle David, playfully teases them with it, and then opens the chest, uncovering the body.

At the beginning of the explanation of his theory regarding David, Rupert is standing perpendicular to Brandon. Stewart avoids eye contact with either of the other two characters in the scene. As he speaks his eyes search the room, moving up and down and from left to right. His dialogue is spoken in a slow, deliberate way, with little expression or tonal inflection. He holds a cigarette in his right hand while he speaks, but when he pauses to think, he places it in his mouth and puffs on it. After a segment in which the camera follows the movements he describes, it returns to his face. Stewart's eyes are focused and his brows are wrinkled, deep in thought. As he explains his theory further, he uses the hand which holds the cigarette (his right) in a waving motion from left to right, as if physically propelling the story forward. This movement seems to be much more for the benefit of the film viewer, unlike the Typical Stewart's hand motions which aim to draw other characters closer to him. This left to right motion resembles sweeping, and can be read as Rupert's desire to keep both Philip and Brandon away from him. At this point in the scene, he rarely makes eye contact with either Brandon or Philip, but as Brandon interrupts him to remind him that if they had killed David, they could not have hidden him but in the apartment, Stewart looks directly into his eyes, possibly looking for a hint of guilt.

Stewart walks away from Brandon, slowly moving toward the chest. He holds his cigarette in his right hand, and his left is casually in his jacket pocket. His eyes are again

not settled on any particular point, but searching the room. His facial expression is relaxed and nonchalant; Stewart's character has the upper hand in this scene. As he approaches the chest, he turns around to face the two men. He does not so much as flinch at Philip's outburst, and turns his body slightly toward Brandon as he walks away. Stewart walks forward, his back toward the camera, until he stands face to face with Brandon. As he speaks, he shifts his weight from his left to his right leg, and makes fleeting eye contact with him. He uses the hand which is holding the cigarette to paddle, emphasizing his speech.

When he reveals that he knows Brandon is carrying a gun, he lifts his chin with confidence, and points to the pocket concealing it casually with his cigarette. Brandon awkwardly laughs and places the gun on the piano, while Stewart continues shifting his weight, and shakes his head. He maintains eye contact with Brandon, only watching as he places the gun down, and then returns his gaze to his eyes. As Brandon walks away, Stewart's eyes follow him, and then return briefly to the gun. He turns and walks to the back of the set, toward the ashtray, where he leans down, lifting his right leg up off the floor, and disposes of his cigarette. The camera pans in and moves around Stewart's left side to reveal him removing the rope from his left jacket pocket with his left hand. He holds the rope between his two hands, clutched tightly in front of his abdomen, his fingers playfully manipulating the tension of the rope. His fingers are visibly shaking, adding to the suspense of the scene and revealing Rupert's restraint in the way that he has revealed his theory.

Stewart's physical movements in this scene are almost entirely practical. As an actor involved in the performance, he must interact physically with the other characters in the scene, but the character does not become emotionally absorbed in the narrative. He maintains a critical distance not only from the murder but also from Brandon and Philip, and rejects any notion of the typical Stewart. In terms of what little expression there is in this scene, the majority of Stewart's performance is in his eyes, his voice and his hand movements and prop use. With their nearly constant searching movements, Stewart's eyes reveal Rupert's methodical examination of the scene and deductive abilities. Stewart's voice is used as a tool simply to indicate Rupert's expository role in the film. His voice rarely changes pitch, volume or tone, ensuring his rational and relatively objective position in the film. His use of his hands and props in his hands in the scene serve little purpose but to gesture toward the advancement of the narrative.

Stewart in Hitchcock

I feel that it is clear how different Stewart's Hitchcock characters are from the typically recognizable Stewart character. While perhaps there is little variation in what parts of his body Stewart relies on for expression, the way he uses them to express his characters' emotions and desires is very different. The main and most significant difference between Stewart in his typical films and the Hitchcock films is the type of character he plays. The Typical Stewart character is kind, bumbling, honest and frequently becomes completely emotionally absorbed in the events of the narrative. In Hitchcock's films, Stewart plays a variety of characters, all of which serve the purpose of

the investigator or detective. There is, to some degree, a hard-boiled quality to each of them which is not present in the Typical Stewart. These characters must maintain an emotional distance from the problem they must solve in order to remain objective and be successful in their investigation. This is most effectively achieved through the repression of emotion and the refusal to allow others any access to his characters' inner workings.

Stewart is affecting in these roles precisely because the audience does not expect the repression of emotion from his characters. It seems apparent that Hitchcock chose Stewart for these roles in order to highlight the tensions between rationality and emotionality. He paradoxically places a well-known emotional actor in roles which emphasize the rationality of the characters. He playfully hints at this paradox in the character of Rupert, Stewart's earliest Hitchcock character. Although Brandon and Philip commit the murder of David in order to impress him and solicit an emotional response from him, Rupert resolutely refuses to acknowledge their deed emotionally. He remains cold and practical, rejecting their desire to be admired by him. Stewart, by this time well-established as a passionate and highly emotive performer, is the perfect actor to carry out Hitchcock's will in this role. Though apparent to varying degrees in all of Stewart's Hitchcock roles, this quality is not limited to these films. I will demonstrate in my next chapter which examines Stewart in Anthony Mann's western films that this rejection, or, at the very least, resistance to emotional expression is also clear in these roles.

¹ James Naremore, *Acting in the Cinema*, (Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1988), 241.

² Naremore, *Acting in the Cinema*, 242-245.

³ Naremore, *Acting in the Cinema*, 258.

⁴ Naremore, *Acting in the Cinema*, 253-256.

⁵ Naremore, *Acting in the Cinema*, 255.

Chapter 3: Stewart in the Anthony Mann Western

A significant portion of James Stewart's film output was in the genre of the Western. He did several films with John Ford, such as *How the West Was Won* (1962), *Cheyenne Autumn* (1964) and the previously analyzed *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*, among others. The other Western director with whom he worked most frequently was Anthony Mann, with whom he did eight films, five of which belonged to the Western genre, including *The Man from Laramie* (1955), *The Far Country* (1954), *Winchester '73* (1950), and *The Naked Spur* (1953). This chapter will focus on the examination of Stewart's roles in the two latter films, and will attempt to demonstrate the way in which Mann's Westerns in particular required the adjustment of Stewart's performance style and persona. As in the previous two chapters, I will examine one scene from each film and use this scene to highlight the main differences between the Typical Stewart, the Hitchcockian Stewart, and the Mann Stewart. Further, I will also use these scenes to demonstrate that the performance variations noted in Stewart's Hitchcock films were not simply due to Hitchcock's overbearing control over his actors, but that these differences in style and persona can be seen in other films as well.

Dennis Bingham, in his book *Acting Male*, devotes a short portion of his chapter entitled "Stewart Postwar" to Stewart in Mann's Westerns. The main point he makes about the "Mann Stewart" character was that he was caught in between hero and villain status, drawing the normally black-and-white hero vs. villain dichotomy into question by introducing a high level of moral ambiguity into the characters.¹ Also important is Bingham's observation that Mann inverts the Stewart persona in these Westerns,

changing his characters' interests from the optimistic overall good of the people to very personal and selfish choices based on "past disillusionment."²

In terms of aural and physical cues, he notes that Stewart relies on his voice for different effect in the Westerns. He states that Stewart uses a much more level tone of voice than in his other roles, and rarely allows it to go into higher registers. He also claims that Stewart resists his trademark stammer and hesitancy and restrains his face and body much more than in his usual roles, a point which I will return to and contest later in this chapter.³ Importantly, Bingham raises the issue of Stewart's emotionality in his Western roles, noting that generally he maintains a cool and disaffected persona, rarely allowing this shell to crack and reveal the emotional character underneath.⁴ I will also come back to this point, drawing it out further through the examination of the scenes in the films which I will examine. In direct opposition to Bingham's argument, I will demonstrate that not only does Stewart allow his characters' emotions to come through, both through body language and vocal expression, but that the Mann Stewart relies quite heavily on a particular type of emotional expression which, unlike the Typical Stewart, does not draw other characters closer to him, but instead pushes them away. The Mann Stewart uses emotion as a tool of domination and control, often relying on the instillation of fear into his counterparts in order to complete his tasks and get what he wants. So while Bingham claims that the Mann Stewart has no use for the expression of emotion, my argument will clearly reveal that the case is exactly the opposite: the Mann Stewart character both displays emotion as a by-product of his reactions to and interactions with other characters, and also keenly uses this expression of emotion to his advantage.

Winchester '73

In *Winchester '73*, Stewart plays Lin McAdam, a man who is travelling across the United States with his friend 'High Spade' Frankie Wilson (Millard Mitchell) in search of an outlaw by the name of 'Dutch Henry' Brown (Stephen McNally). The three eventually meet in the town of Dodge City, Kansas, where they meet saloon girl Lola (Shelley Winters). The men participate in a shooting competition in which the grand prize is a famed Winchester '73 rifle. Lin and Dutch Henry are the two finalists, tying each other in every round. In order to break the tie, Lin bets that he can shoot through a stamp placed over the open hole in a piece of jewellery thrown high in the air. Dutch Henry takes the bet and loses since Lin is successful. Before leaving Dodge City, Henry assaults Lin and steals the rifle. The film follows Lin and Frankie's pursuit of Henry, and also tracks the transfer of the Winchester rifle from hand to hand. It is traded by Henry to a gun dealer at a desert saloon called Riker's, then is stolen from the gun dealer by Indians. Later, the Indian tribe is involved in a battle with a faction of the Army (with whom Lola and her boyfriend Steve [Charles Drake] and Lin and Frankie are hiding out), and the Winchester rifle is taken as bounty and handed off to Steve as thanks for his help during the battle. After the fight, Steve and Lola move on toward a ranch which Steve intends to buy and make their home, but is killed by his business partner Waco Johnny Dean (Dan Duryea), who then takes the rifle as his own. Waco Johnny Dean kidnaps Lola, and takes her to a secret hiding place where they reunite with Dutch Henry and plan a bank robbery. Henry informs Johnny that the rifle belongs to him and takes it back. The group travels to a nearby town, and the men take their places in preparation for the robbery. Johnny and

Lola are stationed at the saloon across the road from the bank and meet again with Lin and Frankie, who arrive just before the robbery is to take place. Lin, after speaking with Lola, accosts Johnny and demands that he bring him to see Henry. Henry escapes to a nearby rocky hill followed by Lin, who reveals that Henry is actually his brother Matthew, who killed their father. After a lengthy gunfight, Lin shoots Matthew and takes back his rifle.

The scene in this film which I feel is particularly interesting with regards to Stewart's performance is the scene in the saloon at the end of the film when Lin and Frankie speak with Lola, who reveals to them the identity of Steve's murderer, Johnny. Lola is seated at the saloon's piano and is playing idly. They causally walk toward her and make small talk before she reveals that Steve has been killed. When she mentions Waco Johnny Dean, they recall being told that Dutch Henry was travelling in order to meet with him. This piques Lin's interest, as he is now sure that Henry must be nearby. He approaches Johnny, who is standing at the bar, and begins by gruffly, but rather politely asking him if he knows the whereabouts of Henry. When Johnny plays coy with him, Lin loses his patience and attacks him, threatening him physically. Johnny finally concedes, and leads Lin out of the saloon, where a gunfight breaks out.

This scene is interesting for a variety of reasons. First, the beginning of the scene illustrates clearly the type of Western character that Stewart is portraying. It highlights Stewart's hybrid Western hero which combines the kind of cool and disaffected but sometimes aggressive persona typical of Western men, with a man who, in certain situations, is able to maintain a relatively friendly tone. The Mann Stewart character is for

this reason quite ambiguous. His physical movements mirror (or one could even go as far as to say that he uncomfortably imitates) the swagger of the typical Western hero, his walk stiff-legged and slow. This scene also draws attention to the internal struggle in Lin between his tough exterior and his soft internal emotions as he speaks with and feels empathy for Lola. Finally, this short scene also contains one of the most severe emotional outbursts from Lin, in which he goes from his kind demeanour speaking with Frankie and Lola to a flash of harsh anger and physical aggression in his exchange with Waco Johnny Dean. While many scenes in the film demonstrate these points on their own, this scene is especially rich in the extremes of the Lin character.

At the opening of the scene, Lin and Frankie walk up to the front gate of the saloon. Lin is walking ahead of Frankie. Stewart, as mentioned, walks slowly but purposefully with his legs very stiff, with no bounce to his step as if he has no knees. He holds a rifle in his right hand, and wears a stiff grin or grimace on his face—his teeth are clenched and his lips are curled. As he pushes the gate of the saloon open with his left hand, he looks around himself from under his hat brim, uncomfortably surveying the men standing outside of the saloon. Once inside the saloon, he stops and again examines his surroundings with his eyebrows raised and his head turning from one side of the room to the other slowly, finally settling his eyes on the floor, avoiding direct eye contact with anyone in the room.

He lifts his eyes briefly and happens to lay them upon Lola, who is seated at the piano. As his eyes catch view of her, Stewart's mouth twitches slightly into a smile. He looks back toward Frankie, over his right shoulder, while shifting his weight from one

foot to another, signalling his excitement to see her. He raises his left arm and points toward her, rubbing his fingers together as if either trying to jog his memory or camouflage the act of actually pointing at her while mumbling to Frankie “Isn’t that...?” Lin and Frankie walk toward Lola, and station themselves on the left side of her. Stewart’s walk, while still maintaining the characteristics of Western physicality, exudes a kind of confidence and elasticity not previously seen in his movement in this film. In a friendly, yet still nonchalant tone, he says hello to Lola, and smiles down at her, standing above her while leaning his left elbow in the piano.

Lola asks them what they are doing in town, and Lin defers answering in favour of reversing the question. He says “Well, now, let’s turn that around. What’re you doin’ in town?” while physically turning the rifle that he held in his right hand end over end and leaning it against the piano. Here, his play with the prop intelligently mirrors his dialogue. The playful way in which he manipulates the rifle mirrors the change in emotion Lin experiences as he walks through the saloon doors and sees Lola. He entered the saloon ready to shoot if necessary, but upon finding Lola, decides to readjust his focus, and thus turns the gun over into a less practical position. He stands next to the piano with his right hand on his hip, and listens as Lola explains that Steve is dead. Stewart’s face remains expressionless, his smile having now faded, as he looks back and forth from Lola to Frankie and then back again. Lola points out that the murderer, Waco Johnny Dean, is standing at the bar, and Stewart’s eyes slowly move up to examine Johnny at the bar. As he stares at him, his head leans slowly to the right, signalling his thought process as he puts together the pieces of information that lead him to understand

the significance of the name. This slight lean of the head is comparable to the Typical Stewart's use of his hands in that this subtle movement communicates the same type of process, but in a far less emotional, demonstrative way. Stewart does not drop his eyes from Johnny except to briefly look at Frankie as if to kick start his memory as well. Stewart slowly moves to stand up straight and removes his hand from his hip, assuming a less casual and much more combative stance. He automatically reaches for his rifle and begins to walk toward him at the bar. Lola interrupts him by grabbing his left arm in order to warn him to watch Johnny's left hand. Stewart's eyes drop down from Johnny to Lola, and he smiles at her in thanks, chuckling softly.

Stewart's character arrives at the bar, having walked slowly from the piano and stands to Johnny's left. He begins a terse conversation with him, speaking at his usual slow pace with a gruff and cold tone, but this time enunciating clearly and at a noticeably louder volume as if to draw attention to the exchange. He does not look at Johnny, instead averting his eyes toward the bar. He asks the bartender for a shot of whiskey and takes it, leaning down toward the shot glass rather than throwing his head back and exposing his neck. This choice is significant in that Stewart is clearly attempting to demonstrate Lin's relationship with Johnny is based on mistrust as he is unwilling to expose his neck, a sensitive and vulnerable part of the body to him, even in the simple act of taking a drink. As Johnny plays stupid and avoids answering Lin's questions directly, Stewart's face and body register an increased level of tension until he finally breaks down and leaps at Johnny with speed. He angrily grabs Johnny's left arm with his left hand and wrenches the arm behind Johnny's back. He throws him face down onto the bar,

demonstrating a physical strength not expected from the usually passive Stewart. He transfers Johnny's arms into his right hand and then holds his neck and chin in a chokehold with his left, jamming his face down into the bar top.

The camera then moves to a close-up of Stewart's face which is absolutely sputtering with anger. Stewart's eyes are wide, his face is sweaty and his mouth and lips are tightly closed. His chin is held forward and his jaw is tight. He shouts questions such as "Where is he?" (referring to Henry) several times at Johnny, his voice laden with outrage and his eyes ever-widening and hysterical. His entire body is shaking with anger as he thrusts Johnny's face against the bar. His mouth, like his eyes, is continuously changing shape, registering the increasing level of frustration he is experiencing. He is grimacing, baring his teeth in a growl of aggression. Such a facial expression is never seen in the Typical Stewart, and particularly not in front of the camera of Frank Capra, for example. Every time Lin poses another question to Johnny, his face becomes increasingly intense, until he finally releases Johnny having taken out as much pent-up irritation on him as he sees fit. As he follows Johnny out of the saloon, he blindly grabs his rifle, and slowly walks outside.

This scene, as mentioned, contains moments of emotional extremes, including hints at emotional repression and outbursts of rage. As the typical Western hero, Stewart attempts to maintain an air of distance and disaffection. He tries not to become too emotionally involved with anyone save for Frankie, his travelling partner and best friend. He too, like the Hitchcockian Stewart, has a problem to solve, and must remain focused on the task at hand rather than allow himself to become distracted. Emotional repression

comes in handy in a role such as this one, where his character is at the centre of the narrative, full of action and emotional highs and lows. His repression of emotion is made clear in his tone of voice (flat and cool), his frequently non-emotive facial expression, and his body's relatively static positioning. Even his stiff walk adds to the image of emotional repression that Stewart's character gives off.

All of this, however, is in some ways contradicted by Lin's emotional side, demonstrated by Stewart in very subtle ways until his attack on Johnny. Hints are given to Lin's emotional capacity through slight physical cues in Stewart's movements. The modest adjustment of his walk as he approaches Lola at the piano hints at his romantic feelings toward her. His frequent smiles in response to Lola also demonstrate a crack in his tough exterior. His expressions of excitement through fidgeting such as his weight-shifting and pointing at Lola also convey an emotional expression not typically seen in a Western hero. Most obviously, Stewart illustrates Lin's emotionality in this scene in his physical aggression with Johnny. As does Stewart's character Ransom Stoddard in *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*, Lin attempts to speak with his opponent in order to reason with him, but ultimately finds himself able to communicate with Johnny only through physical contact. This physical contact is driven expressly by emotion, which is communicated throughout Stewart's physical appearance. His eyes, mouth, jaw, chin, teeth and even the sweat on his skin all produce an image of violent anger and punishing frustration. This style of emotional response harkens back to the Typical Stewart, who relies on emotion to make his point clear. The crucial difference here, however, is that his emotions are generally used for antisocial purposes. The Mann Stewart, unlike Typical

Stewart, does not use his body to draw other people in. Rather, his performance of emotional violence serves to dominate others and cause alienation and fear in his adversary. His character uses emotion to both physically and mentally manipulate Johnny into cooperating with him, regardless of the cost.

The Naked Spur

The same analysis can be applied to Stewart's character ex-rancher Howard Kemp in *The Naked Spur*. In the film, Kemp is on a mission to locate outlaw Ben Vandergroat (Robert Ryan), wanted for killing the Marshall of Abilene, Kansas. On his search, he meets prospector Jesse Tate (Millard Mitchell) and discharged Lieutenant Roy Anderson (Ralph Meeker) who join him and eventually help him capture Ben and his companion Lina Patch (Janet Leigh). The two are arrested by Kemp and his gang, and begin their travels back to Abilene. On their way, they are attacked by a group of Indians, who shoot and injure Kemp. His injury slows their progress, as they must frequently stop to allow him to rest. Lina looks after him as he has delusions and when Kemp is finally sentient again, he realizes how much she has helped him.

Lina resists her attraction to Kemp as she feels a loyalty to Ben, but one evening, they stop for shelter in a cave, and Ben plans his escape, asking Lina to distract Kemp while he exits the cave through a narrow tunnel. Lina and Kemp discuss their plans for after they return to Abilene, and Kemp indirectly asks Lina to marry him. She is confused by her competing emotions, but embraces and kisses him regardless. Ben attempts to escape, but is caught by Kemp and his men. The next day they encounter a deep river

which cannot be crossed. They argue, and after an altercation, Ben takes Jesse aside, informs him that he knows of a nearby gold mine and incites him to run off with him. Jesse agrees, and once they are a fair distance away from the group, Ben shoots him and hides from Kemp and Anderson, who have come to seek out Jesse, on the top of a rocky hill. From this lookout, Ben takes aim at Kemp and Anderson. Kemp climbs the hill and kills Ben, throwing his body down into the rushing river. Anderson climbs across the river on a rope in order to collect Ben's body for ransom, but dies in the process. Kemp reels in Ben's body, vowing to return it to Abilene in order to collect his ransom, but is convinced by Lina, who has now completely fallen in love with him, to leave the body behind and start a new life with her.

The most interesting scene in this film is constructed in a rather similar way to the once previously described in *Winchester '73*. The scene in which Kemp, Jesse and Anderson locate Ben for the first time and arrest him is rich in emotional extremes for Stewart's character. In this scene, Kemp is unable to climb the side of a steep hill in order to get access to Ben, who is hiding and throwing rocks down at him. When he attempts to climb the hillside using a rope and falls, Anderson steps in and climbs up. Anderson sneaks up on Ben, but is interrupted by Lina, who throws herself on top of him in order to give Ben a chance to retaliate. Anderson, Ben and Lina have a tussle before Kemp and Jesse climb up and stop them. Kemp orders Jesse to tie Ben up and interrogates the pair. Stewart's character controls the situation, standing over the other characters, who are all at this point on the ground for one reason or another. He uses his position to dominate the others, standing tall and looking downward at them, maintaining eye contact. When Ben

is tied up, he and Lina are told gruffly by Kemp to stand up. Stewart holds a gun in his right hand, directing it toward Ben. It is at this point that Ben reveals to Jesse and Anderson that Kemp is not a sheriff as he claimed, but has been hunting him down in order to collect a ransom. Stewart's face registers his unhappiness with the revelation of his lie through the simple movement from left to right of his eyes, signalling his shifty, duplicitous personality. His breathing also increases in visibility, drawing attention to his rising tension and stress.

As he becomes progressively more uncomfortable with the information being revealed about him by Ben, he gradually lifts his left hand in which he also holds a revolver. He assumes a hunched-over position as if intending to shoot, and aims his guns now not at Ben, but threateningly at Jesse and Anderson. They sense his aggravation, but ignore him and continue to make arrangements to split the ransom into thirds between the three captors in order to ensure that they are remunerated for their parts in the capture of Ben. Meanwhile, Ben speaks to Kemp in a playful, teasing manner, in effect taunting him for so lazily covering up such an important detail and at the same time encouraging Jesse and Anderson to rise up against him. Finally, Kemp has had enough. He angrily barks at Ben to stop speaking with him so casually, explaining that although they may have once had a friendly relationship, it "don't mean dirt to [him] now." His anger is again focused on Ben, so he readjusts the angles of his revolvers slightly toward Ben, forgetting now about the other two. His anger shows on his face, through both the intense stare directed at Ben and the shaking of his cheeks and jaw, which is held tensely and pointed forward toward Ben. He growls at Ben that he intends to bring him back to Abilene in order to see

him hung, and as he speaks, he slowly lifts the right gun, as if aiming at his head. When he is done making his threatening speech to the group, he lowers the gun and asks for the location of their horses. Ben indicates that they are nearby, and Kemp waves the guns at the group, instructing them to move in the direction of the horses. He need not use force to get them to move, as all four other characters are convinced simply by his voice and prior emotional display that he is serious. Rather than treating Jesse and Anderson like his partners, after his embarrassment by Ben, he treats them as if they were his captives as well.

In this film, Stewart plays a similarly emotionally-conflicted character as is Lin McAdam. He needs to maintain an outward appearance of emotionlessness in order to both appear tough and resilient to Ben, his captive and enemy, and also in order to be the effective leader of his group. It would not serve him well to appear to be easily emotionally manipulated, as throughout the film Ben attempts to turn his captors against one another. Kemp's outward emotionality would only help Ben's cause. Like in *Winchester '73*, however, Stewart contradicts his character's tough and disaffected outer persona in this scene by clearly and passionately expressing his emotions. And, as is demonstrated in this scene, his emotionality does enable Ben to manipulate him. Kemp realizes this, however, and quickly turns his emotionality around in order to use it against Ben and the rest of the group, using it to instill fear into them and exercise his control over them. This is conspicuously different from Stewart's performance as Rupert in *Rope*. Rupert does not pretend to have no emotion in order to manipulate his former students. Rupert truly appears to lack any emotional involvement whatsoever with their crime. In

Rope, Stewart performs what can be understood to be emotional detachment, while in *The Naked Spur*, he performs the *performance* of emotional detachment, a completely different act altogether.

His physical movements are used to push the other characters away from him, creating a dramatic distance between them rather. Here, he uses his aggressive stance, his intense eye contact and his hands (and thus props) in order to intimidate the other characters and regain his position of domination and control over them. This behaviour is in direct opposition to the way in which the Typical Stewart would use his physical movements, relying on emotional physicality to draw people toward him and involve them in the narrative by making them feel welcome and comfortable. The Mann Stewart does not depend extensively on large and sweeping movement, but rather on subtle and calculated movements in order to express himself. This suggests a desire to repress emotion. But as in *Winchester '73*, Kemp is unable to fully repress his emotions when pushed to the edge, and expresses his anger, frustration and embarrassment as minimally as possible, but also manipulates this expression in order to use it against the other characters.

Stewart in the Mann Western

It seems accurate to state that Stewart performs both a distinct character type and uses different performance signifiers in order to portray his characters in Mann's Westerns. Stewart's Western character in these films is identical to neither the Typical Stewart nor the Hitchcockian Stewart, though he relates in some ways to both. His

motivations are similar to that of the Hitchcockian Stewart, in that both feel threatened in some way while they aim to solve a problem and thus feel the need to keep their emotions concealed from other characters. Stewart in the Mann Western, however, reaches a point at which he cannot hold back his emotions any longer, and on rare occasions, desperately uses them to communicate with other characters. While the repression or elimination of emotion is close to the Hitchcockian character, such manifestation of feelings is very similar to that of the Typical Stewart character. This hybrid emotionality, at times repressive but at others highly expressive, is in some ways paradoxical, but is used to convincing effect in the Mann films. It adds to the notion of Stewart's characters as ambiguous Western heroes, confused both in their morals and in their mode of behaving, unsure as to whether or not, and when overt passion is appropriate. A further detail which points to the ambiguousness of the Mann Stewart is his ability to *use* his emotions for certain purposes, and not only to rely on them as a method of release. The Mann Stewart draws upon his emotions to move other characters, both mentally and physically, through fear. His passionate emotional expression, sometimes unwanted by the character he plays, can be a tool of manipulation, a trait unfamiliar to that of the Typical Stewart.

Despite Bingham's claims to the contrary, it is obvious that Stewart drew on his typical characters for inspiration at moments in his Western performances in Mann's films. It is clear that Stewart *does* rely on overt emotionality and sometimes even emotional outbursts to bolster his characters' personas and communicate their needs and desires. The two scenes analyzed in this chapter are just two very conspicuous instances

of this in the two films, but both films are peppered with other, more subtle moments of deep and powerful emotional expression on Stewart's part. It is also clear that Stewart relies on some of his typical performance cues to enrich these roles, such as the stammer (which he depends on to communicate determination despite nervousness), and the combination of his dialogue and accompanying hand movements (in these cases, several instances of fiddling) which communicate excitement, insecurity and even shyness. Careful examination of these roles reveals that they are informed by both the Hitchcockian Stewart and the Typical Stewart; the Mann Stewart is meticulously constructed with aspects of each persona, and combines some of the gestures common to both with altogether new physical signifiers in order to establish an even more varied, further complicated impression of Stewart and the signs generated through his performances.

¹ Dennis Bingham, *Acting Male: Masculinities in the Films of James Stewart, Jack Nicholson and Clint Eastwood* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1994), 54.

² Bingham, *Acting Male*, 58.

³ Bingham, *Acting Male*, 54.

⁴ Bingham, *Acting Male*, 55.

Conclusion

In this project, I have examined James Stewart's performances in a variety of films in order to demonstrate the falsehood of the myth that Hollywood Studio Era performers relied consistently on the performance of a single character type as a base for every role throughout their careers. Stewart's career has been a shining example of the opposite of this notion. I have, for obvious reasons including his incredibly high film output, been unable to perform an analysis of all of his roles. I feel, however, that the sample that I have chosen to write about has clearly demonstrated that while this notion may be applicable to some of the actors and actresses of the time, the most interesting and long-lasting Studio-era careers were based on the ability to not only remain in some ways recognizable from role to role but also to transform oneself from character type to character type.

James Stewart is especially relevant to this project for a variety of reasons. Most interestingly, Stewart was not a formally trained actor, suggesting that he might be the perfect example of an actor who did not rely on formal acting techniques to create characters but instead performed what he knew- his own personality. This is not the case, as his career spanned decades during which he played a wide variety of character types and demonstrated an ability to move from total likeability to moral ambiguity. Not only did he maintain a career in Hollywood for over sixty years in spite of early doubts about his marketability, but he moved successfully from genre to genre, from the screwball comedy to dramatic thrillers, from the Western to the biopic, from fantasy to war films. Stewart not only succeeded in this variety of films, but has become an icon in several of

the genres. Nor is it accurate to suggest as Bingham does that, as he aged, Stewart played different characters types to reflect his greater maturity and self-confidence as a man. As a case in point, *Harvey* and *Rope* are films from the same period, and yet the happy-go-lucky daydreamer of the former and the cold, level-headed investigator of latter have very little in common as individuals and Stewart incarnates them accordingly.

My approach to the examination of his acting style relies heavily on the close observation of his physical movements, facial expressions and the expressive use of his voice. I have paid particular attention to his eyes, mouth, jaw, shoulders and arms as expressive tools, and have noted how their variable uses have affected the character types that Stewart performed. I have indicated how important the sense of emotional expression was to Stewart's "typical" characters, and how this emotionality is necessarily different in some of his other roles, such as in Hitchcock and Mann's films. While in his more Capra-esque roles, Stewart used his body, face and voice to openly express emotion, in Hitchcock's films, Stewart used these same signifiers to demonstrate emotional control and repression. In Mann's films, Stewart carefully straddled the line between high emotionality and emotional repression, demonstrating how his characters, while attempting generally to reject emotionality in any form eventually could not resist expression, and finally *manipulated* emotionality in order to affect the other characters. Always relying on the same signifiers to communicate his characters' motivations and emotions, Stewart was able to use these signifiers to different effect in different roles.

My examination of Stewart's performances has focused on the physical, from his body to his face and voice. In this project, I aimed to demonstrate that while a

performance in film is built via a multitude of minds and bodies, from the actor himself to the effects of the camera put into action by the film's director and editors, ultimately the actor himself is largely responsible for the cultivation of his persona on screen and for the cues which he chooses to use in order to communicate parts of his characters to the audience. A close reading of the actor's body is crucial in noting this agency and exactly how the actor manipulates the way in which a film viewer can comprehend his character's motivations and emotions.

This project is by no means exhaustive. Though I have argued specifically for the re-examination of Studio-era acting, this type of research and analysis can be applied to many different performers involved in various periods of Hollywood cinema, and even other national cinemas. Another subject of this type of analysis could include an actor such as Colin Firth, who thus far has had a similar career to Stewart. He, too, could be dismissed as a dimensionless, "one persona" actor who relies heavily on his early roles as characters in filmic versions of historical fictions such as *Pride and Prejudice* (1995). While Firth does seem to relish performing in a historical film, as evidenced by his frequent roles in such films (*Shakespeare in Love* [1998], *Girl with a Pearl Earring* [2003] and most recently *The King's Speech* [2010]), his career cannot be simplified in this way. He, like Stewart, has performed in a variety of different genres (drama, romantic comedy, children's film, musical, and so on), and he has also played a variety of different character types. It follows, then, as my research on Stewart has demonstrated, that for each of these character types, he must rely on different gestural cues in order to communicate his characters' motivations and emotions.

My hope with this project is both to give due attention to the career and talent of James Stewart, one of the most prominent actors in Hollywood's history, and to suggest a new way of examining and critiquing the performances of actors whom audiences feel they can easily describe and reduce to a set of recognizable gestures and a typical persona. While a simple categorization is in some instances a useful way to be able to negotiate an examination of an actor's performance style and career, I aim to point to the problems with this kind of oversimplification, and to show how plainly actors demonstrate to the audience how they construct their characters. Actors rely on common gestures, facial and bodily expression in order to build characters, and communicate with their audiences. During his career, James Stewart, though not formally trained as an actor, became a master of communicating with his audience and demonstrated that for his style of performance, formal training was not a necessity.

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