

The theme of death in alfred hitchcock's "vertigo" and "psycho"

[Life](#), [Death](#)



The theme of death is strongly present in Alfred Hitchcock's masterpieces "Vertigo" and "Psycho". In both movies, we notice how dead people are sometimes taken into account more than the living and how life might revolve around one dead person. While James Stewart's character in "Vertigo" is involuntarily denying Madeleine's suicide and death, and striving to see her face in every woman on the road, we see on the other hand, how Norman Bates in "psycho" is holding two shifting voices and opinions in his head. Although there are major variations on how death is portrayed in these two movies, which will be discussed in this essay, there are also some similarities on how death is being dealt with or perhaps their attempts to hold onto their lost ones in any imaginable way.

In "Vertigo", the movie is about a detective called John 'Scottie' Ferguson who falls in love with a woman named Madeleine after her husband asks Scottie to instigate about her as she was acting mysteriously for a period of time. The scene when Madeleine attempts suicide and Scottie tries to rescue her convey how love and passion cannot be enough and how fear and the uncertainties a person hold might be stronger despite any existing feelings. The camera is unbalanced and zooms from the floor to the ground and the music gets more intense to tell the audience how Scottie is feeling at that moment. The Camera moves swiftly between Scottie who is trying to beat his vertigo to save his love and Madeleine who is running to the rooftop until we hear her scream while jumping, at that particular long shot we clearly see Scottie's denial of Madeleine's death by him looking at the dead body and rolling his shaken eyes off in a way to "deny" what just happened, which

explains his complete silence at the mental institute as a way of processing what happened that day.

Death can also cause a type of obsession about the person who dies, As Sigmund Freud says “ something almost like admiration”. Scottie is effectively transforming Judy to Madeline only to see her as a parallel to his beloved Madeleine. It’s true that the death of beloved ones can change people into rather rude and rigid personalities, which is the way we see Scottie treating Judy as an ‘ object’ and a model of Madeleine. “ Psycho” portrays death and its aftermath in a distinctive approach, which is about a boy named Norman Bates who kills his mother out of Jealousness of her new life which represents the “ Oedipus complex”. However, Norman doesn’t let go his mother after murdering her, but he actually considered her as a vital part of his being. For instance, we see how the two voices in his head exchange whenever he feels sexual towards Marion.

Hitchcock used the bird eye view camera angle when filming the conversation between Marion and Norman in the office room which refers to power. In addition, shifting between close-up and medium shots to display Norman’s face expression and to give the audience a hint about the double mechanism that Norman hold. In addition to the Camera angle and his facial diagnosis, we notice the volume of his voice changing between the strong, dominated voice which represents the mother and the shrouded, soft voice which express Norman’s opinion. Whenever Norman is killing a person, he must be dressed similarly to the way his mother would do, which suggest that his mother is the one who is dominating everything and that Norman

gave her the ultimate permission to do so, as if she is the one who is full of jealousy and him as the submissive son, which means that they are again displaying the oedipal complex but with different rules.

To conclude, Alfred Hitchcock's "Vertigo" and "Psycho" revolve around death as one of the major themes that dominated how these movies proceed. These movies give the audience a new perspective of death to observe and study as these scenes are based on many Freudian ideas. The main comparison between these two movies in regard of death is how death is being handled. we see in vertigo how a person can deny the death of his significant other but in some point accept it and start to change someone else to resemble that person, whereas in Psycho we see that the death of Norman's mother resulted in him choosing to keep two viewpoints and reactions of everything as a way to continue his life. other difference is that Scottie's actions toward Madeleine's death such as described above are based on love and grief, whereas Norman's actions were based on guilt, monophobia, and narcissism.