

# Analysing psychco

[Entertainment](#), [Movie](#)



Films were invented in 1895, and Psycho was released in 1960 so films were a recent phenomena. Hitchcock first worked in film in 1920, but this was silent film and he produced captions to go with the picture of the screen. When he made Psycho, colour film had been invented but he chose to film it in black and white. It was going against the current trends of cinema and it was also cheaper. But he used to conceal things and make the scenes on screen look more dramatic and it was very effective.

Using black and white made the seeing blood softer for the sense and made the violence stylised. Bernard Herrmann, who composed the music for Psycho said 'I felt I was able to complement the black and white photography of the film with black and white sound'. The music in the film consisted of only string instruments, which were usually used for romantic films not horror - so again Hitchcock was going against conventions again. The chords used in the film were 2 major and 1 minor to create discordance. The Psycho theme is repeated throughout the film with very little variation.

The music has a lack of completeness to it, the sounds aren't harmonious and they are unsettling. Hitchcock made strong orders to the cinemas that showed his film that he didn't want anybody entering to see the film after the film had started. This was abnormal for the time but it was because Hitchcock thought that if people entered the theatre late and did not see the star actress Janet Leigh, they would feel cheated, but after the first day theatre owners enjoyed the long lines of people waiting to see the film.

One of the most symbolic scenes in this movie is the parlour scene where Norman, the owner of the motel that, Marion, played by Janet Leigh, goes to

stay at. Norman invites her, the only person staying at the hotel to eat with him in his parlour behind his office. We see them together as he is showing her where to sit and is putting down his tray of food. Then as they both sit down and begin to talk we hear their conversation and watch them as a shot reverse shot, both of them separately. Marion is in the light with a modern lamp next to her which makes her look somehow angelic.

She is sitting on a soft chair which is curved and there is a milk jug in front of her which is white and also curved, the curved objects suggest her femininity and we feel more in touch with her. She is wearing fairly light clothing and states that she is going to return to phoenix, letting us know that she is capable of redemption and this makes us see her as a nice character and causes us to feel sympathy for her. She also has behind her a round picture frame which goes with the rest of the mise en scene around her, which is all delicate, angelic and feminine.

This is a great contrast to Norman, who is sitting in the dark part of the room. The chair that he is sitting on is very angular and dark and isn't as soft as Marion's, it reflects his character that is revealed later in the film, the sharp and strange person that he is. Everything around him is much less modern than what Marion's sitting in, instead of a lamp he has an unlit candle, which suggest darkness and that he is stuck in the past and can't seem to find a way out .

The fact that further from the light source compared to Marion also suggests that he is further way from reality and from God. Amongst the old furniture behind him there's also a heavy and dark chest of drawers which darkens his

part of the room and reminds us again of the past. The birds that he stuffs are nearly always in shot, either next to him or from above him, showing his two sides, the one that he's a predator and kills people while he's his mother and then his prey side, the side of him where he is a victim of his psychosis.

Norman's connection with speech is also ominous and his face is in the dark so we feel as if not everything about him has been revealed, that there is another side of him that we have not yet met. There is a part in this scene where Marion brings up the subject of Normans mother he begins to get very defensive, music begins to play and he leans forward and we see him from a low angle shot as he dominates the screen and the light lights up half his face, he seems more menacing and mysterious.

This is a key moment of tension in the film, because the audience begin to feel uneasy of Norman. Throughout this scene Norman is shot from different angles to show his menace and his vulnerability. We always see him with one side concealed, we see the dark side and the owl that he has stuffed coming down on him and here we see his mother personality coming through. When Marion is filmed, she is always filmed in mid shot, and face front so we can see her and nothing is hidden. This shows us her normality and stability but can also be fairly static.

She is virtually at eye level with us so we can see her clearly and relate to her, but with Norman we never see his face in full view and we feel cut off from him and as if we cannot relate to him and are uneasy of him. We never see them both together when they have both sat down and are talking; we see most of the scene in shot-reverse-shot where both of them are

completely separate from each other. This emphasises the difference between them and the gap between them. We can see Marion's normality and his abnormality very clearly in this scene.

At the end of the scene when she stands up to go, she becomes much more dominating of the screen and he becomes to look much more vulnerable because he is smaller and in the corner, so we are reminded that he is also a victim. The next major scene in this film is the shower scene, where Marion, the main character of the film and the one that the audience have come to see gets killed off. Its was shocking to be let into such a private place, as a bathroom in the 1960s and it was even more outrageous then to see the close up of a toilet being flushed.

We would not expect a murder to take place in a bathroom because we think of a bathroom as a clean place, a haven not where someone is killed because this is a messy act especially if they are being stabbed. When she enters the shower, she goes in there to be cleansed of her guilt because she had recently decided to take the money she had stolen back. When she undresses to get into the shower we only see her legs as respect to the actress, Janet Leigh, but the fact that she has got no clothes on makes her appear more vulnerable.

When she steps into the shower, she shuts the curtain, at this moment in the film we feel cut off from her and also that we should see no more as a shower is such a private act. But we get let into the shower with her. This is pure cinema as we are totally involved with what the character is doing; we could also see it as voyeurism. This is when you are spying on someone

when they are meant to be in privacy. It also reminds us of when Norman was peeping in on Marion from the office. When Marion is in the shower she seems relaxed and pleased.

We see the shower head from her point of view; it seems to be prying down like one of the birds was prying down in the parlour scene. Everything seems to be positive and she is in a good mood and is enjoying the shower, and then we see a diagonal shower head which looks like the threatening knife. She is moving further and further away from the middle of the screen and we begin to see a figure in the background. The audience feel suspense and feel very tense. Then suddenly the curtain is drawn back and the high pitched Hitchcock theme begins to play.

We get an extreme close up of her mouth screaming and the audience feel like screaming with her. In this scene we never actually see Marion being stabbed, it is a series of shots that change so quickly we are given the illusion of stabbing and we become alarmed and confused. When the murder has left, her hand begins to come out to us as a sign of asking for help, but the only thing she manages to grab onto is the shower curtain and she pulls it down with her and we hear the rattle as it falls with her.

Then she falls onto the floor and we move to the plug hole and watch her blood being washed down the drain and the plug hole changes into her eye and we see water falling down from her eye, it looks like a tear drop and we feel sorry here for Marion as she had no means of defence and was completely vulnerable and no-body is going to discover her murder. The money that Marion stole is missed greatly by its owner and he has sent a

private investigator called, Arbogast. He goes to interrogate Norman but does not feel all that satisfied with his reply.

So he decided to go and check out the house of Norman. As Arbogast enters the house the camera shots cut between medium close ups of his face and shots of the inside of the house from his point of view. He then begins to slowly walk up the stairs and the camera follows behind him as he goes up and we get a close up of his legs bending as he climbs. We get a close up of the bedroom door slowly opening and then we go back to Arbogast very quickly, this builds up the tension.

Then unpredictably as the camera is looking down on Arbogast with an extreme high angle shot 'Mrs Bates' rushes out from the sides which shocks the audience as they are not expecting someone to attack from the side.

While Arbogast climbed the stairs there was low stringed instruments playing a pizzicato tremolo and violins playing haunting harmonics and then as the sequence is finished it is followed immediately by the ear-piercing sounds of the murder theme that was played when Marion was getting stabbed. The high angle shot helps Hitchcock to hide the identity of the killer from us.

The same angle is used later when Norman carries his supposed mother down to the cellar, to hide from us the fact that she is just a skeleton. In this scene Hitchcock cuts between angles that cause us to feel involved with the characters and angles that are just for observing. This lets us identify with the person under attack but also lets us watch the horror of it. This is like a double whammy effect which causes us to feel frightened and terrified.

Hitchcock has directed this film very cleverly and throughout the whole film the audience are in suspense and in other times they are terrified.

He has cleverly used effective camera shots and very clever editing techniques such as audacious editing in the shower scene where he created a feeling of confusion, madness and panic. Even at the end of the film when we begin to feel closure due to the psychiatrists' explanation he still makes us feel uneasy when we leave the film because of the superimposing of the mothers skull onto Normans face as the camera moves away from his grinning face. The film ends completely when they are hauling out Marion's car but the abstract bars come across as if shattering our feelings of closure. And the chords at the end do not come to an end.