

Psycho essay sample



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The opening titles of the film are split, lines bring the titles onto the screen which break it up. This is a reflection of the personality of Norman Bates, he is two people and he has a split personality. The title of the film, 'Psycho', is sliced up and animated - this is another reflection on his character. The film opens with a wide shot of the city of Phoenix, it then pans down the buildings and across the windows. The time '2. 43' appears on the screen just before the camera shows a window with the blind half down.

This suggests to the audience that something suspicious is going on inside. This then makes it seem as if the camera is entering that room because the audience wants to satisfy its curiosity, this makes the audience feel involved in the story straight away. In this scene the camera is looking down on the couple. Sam is standing above Marion. These two factors help to establish Marion as vulnerable and as a possible victim in the audience's mind. Sam and Marion talk of being respectable and insinuate that if they had sex at her house they would have to turn her mother's picture to the wall.

Here it seems as if Marion feels she is still being judged by her dead mother as is Norman. In the background of this scene a bathroom can be seen, this is a recurring part of the set in this film. It must be noted that here she is wearing a white slip. At work Marion's colleague talks of her mother giving her pills, and the millionaire talks of buying his daughter's unhappiness away. It seems that this film is full of issues involving parental control of their children.

Or it could be Hitchcock's way of inferring that there is a bit of Norman in all of us. After Marion takes the money she is wearing black, this is significant

as before she was wearing white; now she has lost her innocence as a character. As she packs the camera continually cuts to the money lying on the bed, this is done to show they way that the guilt is cutting at her. When the film cuts to see Marion in the car we hear her having an imaginary conversation with Sam in her head. At the lights she sees her boss and realises she has been caught.

The camera mounted in front of her, she continually looks in the rear view mirror - she is nervous, but this is almost symbolic of her guilt eating at her, she is looking into herself. As it gets darker the headlamps of the cars lights her face like police spotlights. The police officer who questions Marion after her nap in her car has dark glasses on... in which you would normally be able to see a reflection... however in this case the glasses are jet black. This is a reflection of Marion's self at this stage.

After exchanging her car and eating into her newfound fortune she continues to drive until the rain gets so bad she has to pull over... into Bates Motel. It has to be understood that throughout the film the protagonist is being pushed into doing things by actions out of her control. For instance, if the millionaire hadn't paid in cash she couldn't have stolen the money and if the rain hadn't started she would never have pulled over. When she pulls over we see an old house on the hill, just like the haunted house of old horror movies.

We see the silhouette (again, like old horror movies) of an old woman in the window. She registers with a false identity using the name Samuels (a reference to her wishes to marry Sam). Norman invites her to dinner at the

house but Marion hears later that his 'mother' doesn't wish for her to come. When Norman returns with Marion's supper we learn that his hobby is stuffing dead animals, taxidermy. This is quite significant as he take care of his dead mother and preserves her. After their conversation, in which we learn that Norman slightly mentally unstable, Marion returns to her room.

Norman walks to the parlour shuts the door behind him and takes down a picture of a nude woman to reveal a jagged peephole - all of this combines to symbolise feminine sexuality. Norman looks through the hole, his eye illuminated by the light from the bedroom. The camera angle shifts to his point of view, at this point the audience feel as if they are watching her, making them share Normans guilt. Just as Marion is about to take everything off the camera shifts again to give a side on close-up of Normans eye, not blinking, infixed upon her.

Back at his house we see Norman fighting with his mind as to whether he is going to kill Marion. The camera (his mother?) looks down on him. Back at room 1 we see Marion working out how much she will have to pay back to her employer, once she has done this she flushes the evidence down the toilet. The camera is directly above the bowl as the pieces swirl away with one noisy flush, as do her dreams of leaving her 'trap'. Marion is visibly enjoying the shower. This is symbolic; it is washing away her guilt. The shots of the showerhead are important in symbolising this.

The camera cuts to close-ups of the showerhead as it washes her and the audience. She now feels cleansed of her guilt and is in her own private world. While her back is to the shower curtain (and door) we see the door open to

showe a silhouette of what appears to be a woman, who whips the curtain aside. It is important that this is filmed with the camera taking the shot of the killer through the shower curtain; this makes the images blurry and so creates suspense in the audience, as they don't know who or what it is. The light in the shot is behind the killer thus creating a silhouette so the audience can't see the features.

This adds to the fear felt by the audience, as people fear the unknown (and the person is merely a black shadow, with no features). The light being behind the killer at this point is also very important when considering the narrative of the film, if the audience could make out the persons features then they would certainly guess that the killer was Norman dressed as a woman (his mother). The whole story revolves around the audience believing that the killer is Mrs Bates and not Norman so lighting the scene in any other way would be tragic.

All the audience can see is the outline of the woman (Norman). She raises the knife and at first it seems as if she is stabbing the audience, this is because the shots are taken as if from the audiences view... this adds to the terror felt in the audience at this point. From the point at which the knife is raised many shots of the action are edited together (each shot lasting only a second or so) this creates a state of confusion on screen and in turn instils this feeling in the audience.

The digetic and non-digetic sounds used increase the horror of the sequence; the ' slice' sound is combined with the use of quick editing make the stabs seem very real to the audience. This feeling of horror is added to by the

jarring high-pitched screeching music, which builds up the confusion, and the music pipes up before any action takes place making the audience jump with fright. All of these factors combine to create a sequence in the mind of the audience, which seems so real that the audience are fooled into believing that they have seen every cut into her body.

The audience becomes horrified by how gory the scene is (and perhaps by the nudity), when in fact no naked parts of her body are seen and the only blood on screen is in the bottom of the bathtub. Once the killer has left the shot of Marion's hand is significant, it is close up the heighten the emotions felt by the audience at this time, and show her hand slipping down the tiles as her life slips away. The next shots combine to create an overall sinking sensation, the feeling of things slipping away; she tries to grab the curtain but it slips off the rails and she falls to the ground.

The camera then cuts to the showerhead to show the irony that the same showerhead that was washing away her guilt is now washing away her blood, and therefore her 'life'. This film is hailed as being the first ever slasher movie, as no other film before it depicted murder in such a graphic fashion (it isn't really that graphic but we are 'fooled' to believe it is). It must also be noted that this film was the first one to show a flushing toilet! Future movies in which victims were killed in such brutal fashion used the same style of high pitched music.

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