

Psycho essay sample



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Alfred Hitchcock was an English director and producer. He used many techniques and devices in the suspense and psychological thriller genre. The movie 'Psycho' was released in 1960 and is off the psychological thriller genre. This was a time where the social norms in America were changing, there was cultural freedom and the censorship regulations were changing.

Audience reactions to the film were shocking and a lot of people were shocked at the opening scene where Marion (one of the main characters) and her lover, Sam, are sharing the same bed with Marion in a bra. At that time unmarried couples shown in the same bed would be a taboo. I will be exploring which devices he uses in the movie to answer my essay question.

Firstly let's take a look at the parlour scene; this is a great example of the devices Hitchcock uses. The scene begins with what appears to be an innocent invitation from Norman to Marion Crane, the unsuspecting guest at the Bates Motel, in the parlour itself, Hitchcock begins his work. The room is small, barely big enough for the two chairs, the lamp table, coffee table, and chest that occupy it. On the lamp table is a lamp, which is the only source of light in the room and thus the key light within the scene. The characters' positions within the room and how they are lit by this single source of light shows the audience Hitchcock's characterizations. This scene prepares the audience for the horror that is to come later on.

Marion, for instance, sits near and slightly behind the lamp. Her face is shining from the light coming off the lam, and she, like the lamp, appears to be giving out a glowing warmth. Despite the fact that she has stole forty thousand dollars from her employer, Hitchcock hasn't hid her in the shadows

to conceal her darker side. Leaving Marion in light also shows us that redemption is possible.

Now if we go to Norman we see that he is sat far from the light source and he is slightly facing one side. This creates a line of light and shadow across Norman's face emphasising the clash between his dual personalities.

The main motifs of the movie are shadows and birds. From the very start shadows appear on Sam and Marion when she opens the blinds to look out of the window, then the stuffed bird's shadow looms over Marion whilst she eats, also Norman's mother is only seen as a shadow till the end. There are a number of mentions to birds throughout the film for example Marion's surname Crane and when she is asked where she is from she replies phoenix.

The use of music is very important in 'Psycho'. The music used is a tense which sets the tone of violence and danger. The use of high pitch, almost bird like screeching, stabbing sound-motion of the violin in the shower scene is a huge success in adding to the gory horror of the stabbing. Also the fact that the music is like a bird's screech shows us that Norman is the killer rather than his mother because he collects stuffed birds.

Hitchcock uses camera angles to reveal the troubled mind of Norman Bates. As he did with the lighting, He makes the scene using terms of contrast shapes. We see Marion sitting comfortably in her chair, leaning a little forward; enjoying a sandwich Norman has made for her. Hitchcock places the camera near eye level, this particular angle provides the audience with a

sense of comfort in Marion's presence as if they know each other. However, he moves out of the comfort zone to film Norman from an awkward.

Although these two camera are spoken of as some thing big, they mean nothing unless the audience realises the contrast between them. The switch to Norman's angle suggests that Norman's world is off balance. We feel uncomfortable in this position because we are not used to seeing the world from this angle and to do so makes it difficult to understand what Hitchcock is trying to do.

The gender roles in the movie are pretty simple and stereotypical. From the beginning we see Marion in a submissive position whilst Sam is above her in the dominant position. This reflects the stereotypical views of the male being the dominant sex. Also both Marion and Norman are frustrated with the relationships they are having. Marion is frustrated with Sam who has no commitment for their relationship. Norman is stuck in a crippling relationship with his mother.

Through out the film Hitchcock uses these devices to build up horror and suspense. I personally think that the use of shadows and the camera angles are the main devices of the movie. The shadows show us how and what contrast there is but also show us a brief insight into the characters personality. The camera angles add fun to the movie hiding little things for the audience to look out for that make a really big effect on what is happening in that certain scenes. This film is a major success in establishing the horror genre, for example if we go the shower scene the use combination of music, shadowing of the character and then the murdering of the person

in the shower. Hitchcock has made great use of the devices he has used in ‘Psycho’.

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