

Psycho analysis essay

People



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The Shower Scene from Alfred Hitchcock's Psycho is a crucial scene in the plot of the film. The scene itself shows the death of the main Protagonist, Marion. In this essay I am going to explore the Shower Scene in detail and show how Alfred Hitchcock created the excitement present in the scene as much by Technique as by Action and I will show how the scene is so important to Psycho as a whole. Perhaps the most distinguishing feature of Psycho is the score to the Shower Scene. The composer accountable for it is Bernard Herrmann.

The Action of the scene is very fast-paced and the Music present in the scene is a direct reflection of this. The instruments present all belong to the String family; Cello, Violin, Viola and the Double Bass are all present in the Scene. This creates a very peculiar sound, no Brass instruments to create the usual 'Noise' affiliated with action and no Woodwind to soften the sound and calm things down. The sound is very rough, the high, screeching Violins create excitement as the action becomes more frenzied, so do the Violins.

Each knife blow is accompanied by 'screams' by the high violins. This goes on for the duration of the attack, there is no relent until Marion is dead. This leaves the Audience lost, confused as to what exactly is going on in front of their eyes. The screaming emitted from Marion and the Violins is almost in-sync. The excitement is carried very well, the Strings are consistently battering the Audience's eardrums with incredibly high notes, and the Strings come in fast with the knife strokes allowing no rest by the Audience.

As the attacker departs and Marion slowly slides down the wall and into the bath in her dying moments, heavy Cello and Double Bass movements seem

to drag her body down. The serene sound of a Shower opens and closes the Scene. This makes the Audience uneasy. It makes the Audience realise that all of this action is taking place in the most normal of places, the Bathroom. The drain gurgles at the end of the Scene; Marion's life is effectively "going down the drain". This is one factor of how the Excitement of the Shower Scene is created as much by Technique as by Action or Dialogue.

Another Technique used to create Excitement in the Shower Scene is the way the Scene itself was Edited. The Scene is very, very fast-paced. Action is rife and the editing of the Scene carries this. The Shots quickly snap between the knife, Marion and her attacker, Mrs. Bates. This is very skilful editing as over 75 shots are used in the Scene, all skilfully snapping into the next. The fast snapping of the Shots helps the Actors in their quest to convey extreme violence on-screen. The Shots themselves seem to be frenzied, bloodthirsty in their constant snapping.

The Audience is bombarded by various different images, this makes them very confused. This is what Hitchcock envisaged. The Audience cannot focus clearly on anything in the screen as nothing appears long enough to become an 'anchor' of sorts. The Audience are left confused, afraid of what's actually happening. Even when the attacker departs, we do not focus on Marion long enough to take in the damage she has most certainly suffered at the hands of Mrs. Bates. The shots continually snap to various objects of interest around the room, eventually panning slowly around and into her room.

The money is very clearly focused on at the very end of the Scene. We know that the money has not been touched; this throws the Audience even more.

They are now deeply afraid as this was, clearly, not a murder to get the money. The Audience are left to try and figure the motive out on their own. This Scene lasts for around 45 seconds, but contains over 75 Shots. This is very skilful editing. This clever editing is another way Alfred Hitchcock conveys the Excitement in the Shower Scene as much by Technique as by Action or Dialogue. A very peculiar aspect of this Scene is the Setting.

Hitchcock cleverly used the seemingly ordinary bathroom as the place of the brutal murder of the Audience's ' anchor' to the plot of Psycho. Before Psycho was released, no Film Audience had seen a Bathroom, in full, in a Film. Psycho changed all that. Hitchcock used the ordinaries of the Bathroom to cause massive unease in his Audience. To the people of the 1960's, a Bathroom was a Sanctuary. It was a place you could go to be your most vulnerable, a very private space. While in the Bathroom you are very vulnerable, but most people do not think of that when inside. When showering, you are naked.

You are as vulnerable as the day you were born, no clothing to hide or protect you from the outside world. You are defenceless whilst showering and to a 1960's Audience, to show a Bathroom on screen would be the height of disgust. For Alfred Hitchcock to use a Bathroom as the sight of a brutal murder was completely unexpected. Never before had a toilet been shown in a film, never mind a woman being murdered in her Shower. This caused huge controversy in the Public, just as Hitchcock had intended. People were left unsettled to see a woman at her most vulnerable being killed.

This was the biggest intrusion on someone's personal and private spaces ever shown in front of an Audience. This use of Setting to unsettle greatly enhanced the excitement in the Shower Scene by creating fear. This is another method used by Hitchcock to create Excitement in the Shower Scene as much by Technique as by Action or Dialogue. The Shower Scene in Alfred Hitchcock's Psycho is important to the film as a whole due to the main protagonist, Marion being murdered. This leaves the Audience without an 'anchor' in the Plot and we're forced to search for another to see where the story will lead us next.

We're later introduced to Norman Bates' point of view in the story and he replaces Marion as our 'anchor' in Psycho. However, the Audience remains suspicious of Norman so he does not take on the role of protagonist like Marion. In this essay I have explored the Shower Scene in detail and shown how Alfred Hitchcock created the excitement present in the Scene as much by Techniques, such as Editing and Music, as by Action and Dialogue. I have also, in my opinion, shown how important the Scene is to the film as a whole.