



[88]



[88]



[589]



[589]

as if I was deliberately concealing her face, and the audience would have been leery. I used that high angle in order not to give the impression that I was trying to avoid showing her, but the main reason for raising the camera so high was to get the contrast between the long shot and the close-up of the big head as the knife came down at him. It was like music, you see, a high shot with the violins, and suddenly the big head with the brass instruments clashing" (100).

Once again then Hitchcock is stressing the analogy between film and music and favouring form over content.

In the close-up of Arbogast, a plastic tube with hemoglobin was placed on his face, and then, as the knife went past it, a string was pulled, releasing the blood. The sequence of Arbogast falling down the stairs was a process shot, achieved by first doing a separate track down the stairs without Arbogast and then projecting this on to a screen. The actor then sat on a chair in front of the screen and waved his arms about. By this means the action could be stretched out and made to last longer, and also the falling became slightly unrealistic and nightmarish and 'the feeling one gets is that he's going down the stairs backwards brushing each step with the tip of his foot like a dancer' (101).

Finally Arbogast lands at the bottom of the stairs (shot [590]) and a figure rushes towards him and bends over him. Hitchcock cuts to a shot of a hand wielding a knife which, continuing the overall movement of the film, strikes down-



[587]



[588]



[589]



[590]



[591]



[592]



[590]



[590]



[590]



[590]



[591]



[591]



[591]



[591]



Sam: Sometimes Saturday night has a lonely sound. Ever notice that, Lila?

[592]



Lila: Sam, he said an 'hour—or less.  
Sam: Yeh. It's bout three.

182

[593]



Lila: Well, are we just going to sit here  
and wait?

[594]



Sam: He'll be back. Let's sit still and hang  
on, okay?

[595]

wards. There is a cry and then the knife comes up again, covered in blood. Then it strikes downward again as the scene fades out.

We fade in on Lila and Sam in the hardware store. From the two-shot Hitchcock cuts to a mid-shot of Lila. In the background we can see part of Sam's body *his hands crossed*, with his watch very visible as Lila stresses how long Arbogast has been gone. 'Sam, he said an hour - or less'.

The rest of the scene is structured around two-shots of them or single mid-shots. Lila is getting restless and impatient and tries, in an echo of the first scene where Marion employed similar methods, to persuade Sam to take some action. She reminds him (and us more poignantly) that 'patience doesn't run in my family'. We recall that it was Marion's impatience to be married that began this whole tragedy. Finally, Sam decides to go out to the old motel, leaving Lila behind in case someone phones. When he leaves, Lila is left alone surrounded by rakes and other instruments for 'scratching and clawing', as the camera tracks in on her.

This scene now dissolves out to a shot of Norman standing next to the swamp. We assume that Norman has just disposed of Arbogast's body in the same way as he did Marion's - buried it in the swamp. The dissolve links Arbogast's death to the theme of entrapment.



[596]



Lila: How far is the old highway?  
Sam: You want to run out there, don't you? Bust in on  
Arbogast and the old lady.—  
Lila: Yes, yes!

[598]



Sam: —And maybe shake her up! That wouldn't be a wise  
thing to do

[599]



Lila: Fodence doesn't run in my family, Sam. I'm going  
out there!

Sam: But Arbogast said—  
Lila: An hour—or less!

[600]



[600]



Lila: Well, I'm going!

[601]



Sam: You'll never find it. Stay here.

[602]



[602]



Lila: Why can't I go with you?  
 Sam: I don't know. -- One of us has to be here in case he's on the way.  
 Lila: Well, what am I supposed to do? Just sit here and wait?

[603]



Sam: Yeah.

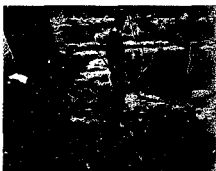
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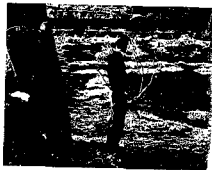


[605]



Sam: Arbogast!! Arbogast!!

[605]



[606]



Sam: Arbogast!!

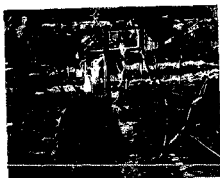
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[609]



[609]



[609]



[609]



Sam: He didn't come back here?  
Lila: Sam!  
Sam: No Arrogant—no Gates. Only the old lady at home.  
A sick old lady unable to answer the door—or unwilling.

[610]

Hitchcock then cuts to a shot of Sam's truck arriving at the motel. Sam gets out and calls: 'Arbogast! Arbogast!'. The scene is constructed as a Griffith-like parallel action sequence whereby we cut from Sam to Norman at the swamp. The last shot is a track in from mid shot to close-up on Norman before the shot dissolves back to the hardware store.

In a long shot of the store, Lila is in the back office and then she runs towards the camera until, in shot [609] she is in close-up. She is backlit and her features are hidden and indistinguishable. She is in fact lit just like the murderer. Once again Hitchcock, through purely formal means, links a relatively 'innocent' character to a guilty one.

Thus Hitchcock uses images from the murder scene as reference points by which he charts physical resemblances to Mother, and also thereby links, through attitude and action, all the characters to Mother. All the characters are bound into the pattern and all are implicated in the guilt.

Sam returns and reports back, telling Lila that he found no one at the motel except a sick old lady 'unable to answer the door - or unwilling'. We see them in two shot, as they decide to go and see the deputy sheriff.

We dissolve to a shot of Sheriff Al Chambers descending the staircase (once again the dominant movement is downwards) and passing between two classical columns announcing him as the symbol of Justice. The scene is fairly amus-



Lila: Where could he have gone?  
Sam: Anytime he got some definite lead. Maybe he went right on.

Lila: Without calling me?

Sam: In a hurry.

Lila: Sam, he called when he had nothing! Nothing but a dissatisfied feeling! Don't you think he'd have called if he had anything at all?

Sam: Yes, I think he would have. Let's go see Al Chambers.

Lila: Who is he?

Sam: Our Deputy Sheriff around here.

[61]



Lila: All right. Let me get my coat.

[61]



[612]



[612]



[612]



Sam: Good evening. Well, I—I don't know where to start—except at the beginning.

Lila: Yes.

[612]



Sam: This is Lila Crano, from Phoenix,

Lila: How do you do?

Sam: She's been here searching for her sister. There's this

private detective helping and—

[612]



Sam: Well, we got a call from this detective—saying that

he'd traced her to that motel out on the old highway—

[612]



Mrs. Chambers: That must be the Bates Motel.

[613]



Sam: He traced her there and called us to say he was

going to question Mrs. Bates.

[614]



Mrs. Chambers: Norman took a willol

[615]



Sam: No, I don't think so. Uh—uh—an old woman. Uh—his

mother. Well, anyway, that was early this evening. We

haven't seen or heard from him since.

Sheriff: Now, Your sister's missing, how long?

[615]



Lilas: Well, she left Phoenix a week ago yesterday—  
without a trace—

[614]



Sheriff: How'd you and this detective come to trace her  
to Fairvale?

[617]



Sam: They thought she'd be coming to me.  
Sheriff: Left Phoenix under her own steam?  
Lilas: Yes.

[618]



Sheriff: She's not missin' so much as she's run away.  
Sam: That's right.  
Sheriff: From what?

[619]



Lilas: She stole some money.

[620]



Sheriff: A lot?  
Lilas: Forty thousand dollars.  
Sheriff: And the police even been able to—

[621]



Sami: Everyone concerned thought—that if they could get her to give the money back—they could avoid involving her with the police.

[622]



Lila: Well, he said that Marion was there and uh—for one night, and then she left.

Sheriff: With the forty thousand dollars?

[624]



Sheriff: Like what?

Lila: Oh, I'm sorry if I seem overanxious! It's just that I'm sure there's something wrong out there and I have to know what!

100

[626]



Sheriff: Well, that explains the private detective. He traced her to the Bates place. What exactly did he say when he called you?

[623]



Lila: Well, he didn't say anything about the money. Well, it isn't important what he said on the phone, is it? He was supposed to come back here and talk to us after he talked to the mother, and he didn't! That's what I want you to do something about!

[625]



Sheriff: Well, I think there's something wrong, too, Miss. But not the same thing. I think what's wrong is your private detective. I think he got himself a hot lead as to where your sister was going—probably near Norman Bates and called you to keep you still while he took off after her and the money!

[627]



Lila: Not No, he said he was disturbed and he was going back there.

[628]



Mrs. Chambers: Why don't you call Noonan and let him say to what happened?  
Sheriff: At this hour

[629]



Sam: Well, he was out when I was there just a while ago. Why, if he's back, he probably isn't even in bed yet.

[630]



Sheriff: He wasn't out when you were there, he just wasn't answered the door in the dead of night, like some people do.

[631]



Sheriff: This fellow lives like a hermit.

[632]



Sheriff: You must remember that bad business out there — about ten years ago.

[633]



Lila: Please! Call.

[634]



[635]



[636]



Mrs. Chambers Florrie: The Sheriff wants you to connect him with the Bates Motel.

[636]



Sheriff: O's, Norman! Sheriff Chambers. Ye—Oh, I been just fine, thanks. Listen, we got worries here. Yeh. Hava you uh—had a feller stop by there tonight? Well, this one wouldn't be a customer, anyway. He's a private detective, name of—

192

[636]



Lila: Arbogast.  
Sheriff: Arbogast. Wa—Yeh, and after he left? No, that's—  
—that's okay, Norman.

[637]



Sheriff: This detective was there and Norman told him about the girl, the detective thanked him and he went away.

[638]



Lila: And he didn't come back! Didn't see the mother!

[638]



Sheriff: Your detective told you he couldn't come right back because he was going to question Norman Bates' mother. Right?

[639]



Lila: Yes.

[640]



Sheriff: Norman Bates' mother has been dead and buried in Greenlawn Cemetery for the past ten years!

[641]



Mrs. Chambers: I helped Norman pick out the dress she was buried in. Periwinkle blue.

[642]



Sheriff: 'Tain't only local history, Sam. It's the only case of murder and suicide on Folgate ledgers.

[643]



Sheriff: Mrs. Bates poisoned this guy she was-- involved with, when she found out he was married,--

[644]



Sheriff: then took a helpin' of the same stuff herself. Strychnine. Ugly way to die.

[645]



Mrs. Chambers: Norman found them dead together. In bed.

[646]



[646]



Sam: You mean that old woman I saw sittin' in the window out there wasn't Sam's mother?

[647]

ing, but not particularly rivetting, as Truffaut notes: 'I felt a let-down during the two scenes with the Sheriff.' To which Hitchcock replied: 'The Sheriff's intervention comes under the heading of what we have discussed many times before "why don't they go to the police?" I've always replied: "They don't go to the police because it's dull". Here is a perfect example of what happens when they go to the police.' (102).

The dullness results from the fact that the audience already knows all the information (and more) that Sam and Lila give to the Sheriff and his wife. It is only after the Sheriff has phoned Norman that we get some new information (in shot [641]) when he tells us that 'Norman Bates's Mother has been dead and buried in Greenlawn Cemetery for the past 10 years'. He tells us that she poisoned the man she was involved with when she found out that he was married, and then killed herself. Once again the origins of all the crimes, all the guilt of the past and the present in *Psycho* are tied to and associated with that most cherished institution, marriage.

Nevertheless, the scene reinforces the film's treatment of sexuality which cuts through the characters' repressed attitudes by satirising them. For example when the Sheriff tells Sam and Lila about Mrs. Bates and her lover's death, Mrs. Chambers says: 'Norman found them dead together' and whispers 'In bed', pursing her lips disapprovingly.



Sheriff: Now, wait a minute, Sam. Are you sure you saw an old woman?

[646]



Sam: Yes! (In the house behind the motel) I called and pounded but she just ignored me!

[649]



Sheriff: And you want to tell me you saw Norman Bates' mother?

[650]



Lila: But it had to be! Because Arbogast said so, too! And the young man wouldn't let him see her because she was too ill!

[651]



Sheriff: Well, if the woman up there is Mrs. Bates, — who's that woman buried out in Gretnalawn Cemetery?

[652]



[653]



[653]



[654]



[655]



[656]



[657]



Then Sam asks a very reasonable question - if Mrs. Bates was dead then who was that woman he saw sitting at the window. To which Sheriff Chambers asks a more baffling and even a chilling one: 'Well, if the woman up there is Mrs. Bates, who's that woman buried out in Greenlawn Cemetery?'

This is, in terms of the film's denouement, a complete red herring, and the question is never answered. Hitchcock cuts to a close-up of Lila looking quizzical and disturbed, and the shot then dissolves out.

The next scene begins on a close-up of Norman's hand on the telephone receiver. He picks up the telephone and places it on a table, and at the same time Hitchcock cuts on action to a mid shot of Norman. Norman stands up and walks across the room, the camera panning with him. This slight low angle once again frames him, so that he seems imprisoned by the architecture, (shot [653]). He turns out the light and leaves the office.

We see the house in long shot, as Norman makes his way up the path. Once again filters, or infra red film have been used to make the clouds stand out starkly against the dark sky. We cut to a shot of Norman entering the front door from inside, and pan with him as he begins to ascend the staircase. Then Hitchcock cuts to a low angle shot of the staircase, with Norman climbing. Although this is an upward movement, the end of the scene will reverse this and emphasize, through a high angle, the downward movement.



[656]



[657]



[658]



[659]



[658]



Norman: Well, mother. I... I'm gonna bring something up...

[658]



Mother: I am sorry boy, but you do manage to look ludicrous when you give me orders.

Norman: Please mother!

[658]



Mother: No, I will not hide in the fruit cellar. Ha! You think I'm fruity, ha! I'm staying right here. This is my room and no one will drag me out of it, least of all my big, bold son!

[658]



Norman: Now come now, mother! He came after the girl and someone will come after him! Mother, please! It's just for a few days, just for a few days so they won't find you.

188

[658]



Mother: Just for a few days! In that dark, damp fruit cellar! No! You hid me there once and you won't do it again. Not ever again! Now get out! I told you to get out, boy!

[658]

Many viewers have commented to me on Norman's 'camp' or effeminate walk as he ascends the staircase, and we are drawn to notice, consciously or unconsciously, the character's feminine side. He then leaves frame and begins a conversation off screen with Mother as the camera begins craning upwards. Once the camera is over the set it turns around and looks down, so that it is in a high angle position, exactly like that of Arbogast's murder.

The main purpose behind this shot was to conceal from the audience the fact that Mother was dead and simply a corpse. 'I don't want to cut where he carries her down to a high angle, because the audience would have been suspicious as to why the camera had suddenly jumped away. So I had a hanging camera follow Perkins up the stairs, and when he went into the room I continued going up without a cut. As the camera got up to the top of the door, the camera turned and looked back down the stairs again. Meanwhile, I had an argument take place between the son and his mother, to distract the audience and take their minds off what the camera was doing. In this way the camera was above Perkins again as he carried his mother down, and the public hadn't noticed a thing. It was rather exciting to use the camera to deceive the audience' (103).

Hitchcock's intentions notwithstanding, the effect of the shot is to communicate to the audience exactly that sense of metaphysical vertigo which the subject is dealing with at the moment - 'a sense of sinking into a quicksand of uncertainties or into a bottomless pit: (the camera position and movements)



Norman: I'll carry you, mother.  
Mother: Norman, what do you think you're doing?

[658]



Mother: Don't you touch me! Don't! Norman! Put me  
down, put me down! I can walk with my own...

[658]



[658]



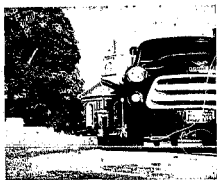
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[660]



Sam: Good morning.  
Sheriff & Mrs. Chambers: Good morning.  
Sam: We thought if you didn't mind, we'd go out to that motel with you.  
Mrs. Chambers: He's already been

[660]



Sheriff: I went out before service.  
Mrs. Chambers: Have you two had breakfast?  
Sam: You didn't find anything?  
Sheriff: Nothing. Let's clear the way here.



Lila: Well, what did he say about my sister?  
Sheriff: Just what he told your detective. She used a fake name. Saw the register myself. Saw the whole place, as a matter of fact. That boy is alone there.

200



Sam: No mother?  
Sheriff: You must've seen an illusion, Sam. Now, I know you're not the scotch-illusion type—but no women was there and I don't believe in ghosts. No—

[660]

communicates it by placing us in a certain position in relation to the action and controlling our movements in relation to the movements of the actors' (104).

Furthermore, this shot characterises an aspect of Hitchcock's narrative method, namely his authorial intrusion. In this sequence we can see that 'Hitchcock's narration capitalises on every permissible chance to display self consciousness, flaunt its superior knowledge, and mask its suppressive operations' (105).

This occurs in two ways. Firstly, the narration in Hitchcock's hands is usually through the use of subjective shots confined to the character's point of view, thus giving us limited information. And secondly the narration often intrudes and comments freely on the action by means of revelatory camera angles and sound overlaps, like the one which follows.

And so a tension is created between what the character knows and what the narration tells. But of course the narration does not tell all, and here Hitchcock is deliberately withholding information from the audience. Thus 'by exploiting certain polar possibilities of the classical schemata of narration, Hitchcock's authorial persona oscillates between being modest and omni-communicative within very narrow limits (i.e. presenting a single character's point of view) and flaunting its omniscience by suppressing crucial information' (106).

Bordwell compares this method of narration with *Preminger's*, whereby he prefers to *shift point of view* between scenes, often moving from framing one combination of characters to another, and which results in films which forego both character subjectivity and narrational commentary. And thus, while both directors work within the bounds of classical Hollywood narration, their narrative methods are very different, with the result that, as V.F. Perkins remarks: 'Hitchcock tells stories as if he knows how they end. Preminger gives the impression of witnessing them as they unfold' (107).

While he carries her down the staircase Mother demands that Norman put her down. She doesn't want to be hidden in that 'dark damp fruit cellar'. The scene then fades to black, and then fades in on a shot of the church, with Sam's truck in the foreground. The sound of church bells is overlaid over the fade out through to the shot of the church, and by this device Hitchcock narrationally invokes Mrs. Bates' supposed death, and therefore the enigma of her continuing life.

We then cut to a shot of the front of the church just as services are letting out. Lila and Sam meet Sheriff and Mrs. Chamber. The Sheriff has already been out to the motel and (as the audience already knows) there is no Mother. Norman is alone. He tells Sam that: 'I know you're not the seeing illusions type, but no woman was there and I don't believe in ghosts'. He suggests they report the theft and Marion's disappearance to the police. Then the old couple leave. Both



Ulla: I—  
 Sheriff: —there it is.  
 Ulla: — still feel that there's something—  
 Sheriff: Can you not do, I'm sorry I couldn't make you  
 feel better.



Sheriff: You want to come around to my office this  
 afternoon and report a missin' person and a the't, is  
 what you want to do. The sooner you drop this in the lap  
 of the law, that's the sooner you stand a chance of your  
 sister bein' picked up. How about that?  
 Ulla: I don't know.

[660]



Mrs. Chambers: It's Sunday. Come on over to the house  
 and do your reporting around dinner time. It'll make it  
 nicer.



Mrs. Chambers: You, too, Sam.  
 Sam: Thank you.

[660]



Sam: Maybe I am the seeing-illusions type.



Ulla: No, you're not!

[660]



Sam: Well, do you want me to drop you at the hotel or—  
 Lila Sam: —I still won't feel satisfied until I go out there!

[660]



Sam: Neither will I. Come on.

[660]



Sam: We better decide what we're gonna say or do when we walk in there.

[661]

Sam and Lila are dissatisfied, and decide to go out to the motel and find out for themselves.



Lila: We're going to register as man and wife. We're going to get shown to a cabin—and then we're gonna search every inch of the place—inside and out!

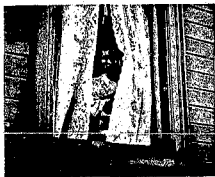
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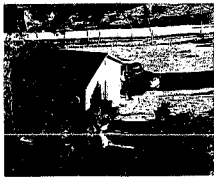
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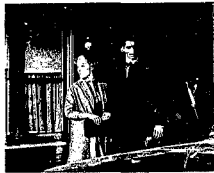
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[667]



Sam: I wonder where Nonnan Bates does his hermiting.  
 Ulla: Someone's at that window. I just saw the curtain  
 move.

[668]

## CHAPTER SIX

### FAMILY PLOT

Shot [660] dissolves into a two shot of Lila and Sam driving along the road in his truck. The road behind them is once again a process back projection shot pointing to the illusory nature of their quest. Lila says that: 'We are going to register as man and wife' before they search the place, then once again offering us an echo of the first scene of the film, since surely this is exactly what Marion and Sam did. They too, must have registered as man and wife in order to carry out their furtive love-making.

We then dissolve to a long shot of the truck pulling up outside the motel. The camera pans from right to left with it. Hitchcock then cuts to a shot of Norman holding the curtain aside and looking out of a window. This is cut with a long shot of Sam and Lila getting out of the truck from Norman's point of view. This is the last time in the film (until the final sequence with the fly) that we will be given a shot from Norman's point of view. From now on we will begin to share the consciousness of Lila, and this sequence will serve to prepare us for this transference, this displacement of emotion from one character to another. As Truffaut noted: 'The viewer constantly switches loyalties and when we learn from the Sheriff that Perkins' Mother has been dead for 8 years, we again change sides and are against Perkins, but this time it's sheer curiosity' (108).



Sam: Come on.

[66]



Norman: Hello.  
Sam: I was just coming up to ring for you.  
Norman: Oh. I suppose you want a room.

[66]



Sam: We were gonna try to make it straight to San Francisco, but uh—we don't like the look of this sky. Looks like a bad day coming, doesn't it?  
Norman: Okay.

[66]



Norman: I'll take you to Colton Tan.  
Sam: Better sign in first, hadn't we?  
Norman: No, that's not necessary.

[66]



Sam: Huh-uh! My boss is paying for this trip, and uh—Well, it's ninety percent business and he wants penicillinally notarized receipts. So uh—I'd better sign in and get a receipt.

[67]



[67]



[671]



[672]



[673]



Norman: Thank you, I'll get your bags.

[674]



Sam: Haven't any.

[675]



Norman: Well, I'll show you the room then.

[676]



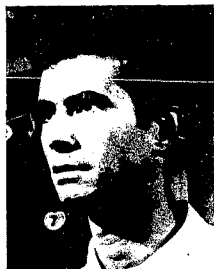
Sam: First time I've ever seen it happen.

[677]



Sami: You check in any other place in this country  
without bags and you have to pay in advance.

[676]



Normani: Ten dollars.

[676]



Sami: That racist!

[677]



[678]



[679]



[680]



[681]



[682]



Ulas I'll go on ahead.

[683]



[684]



[685]



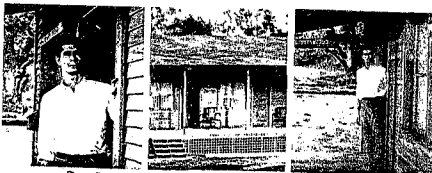
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Sam: Don't bother yourself, We'll find it.

[685]

[685]

[686]



[687]

[688]

[689]



Lila: Sam, we have to go into that cabin and search it, no matter what we're afraid of finding or how much it may hurt.

Sam: I know. Do you think if something happened, it happened there?

[690]



Lila: I don't know. But if you had a useless business like this motel, what would you need to get out? To get a new business somewhere else? Forty thousand dollars?

[691]



Sam: How could we prove that—Well, if he opens a motel on the new highway, say a year—

[692]



Lila: There must be some proof that exists now! Something that proves he got that money away from Marion—somehow!

[693]



Sam: What makes you sound so certain?

[694]



Lila: Arrgggg! He liked me, Sam! Or he felt sorry for me and he was beginning to feel the same way about you. I could tell the last time I talked to him on the phone. He wouldn't have gone anywhere or done anything without telling us, unless he was stopped! And he was stopped—so he must have found out something!

210

[695]



Sam: We'll start with Cabin One.

[696]

Lila notices someone at the window and Norman *then comes down to the office, so that they may check in.* We see all three characters in the first shot of the office, (shot [670]), but Sam and Lila are both reflected in the mirror on the wall, building them into the pattern of recurring visual motifs of duality. The first part of the scene is constructed around over shoulder shots framing either Sam or Lila or Norman, but then the rest of the scene consists of close-ups on all three characters. Sam pays, and while waiting for a receipt Lila says she will go on ahead.

Lila walks along the verandah and tries the door to cabin 1, which she finds open. She quickly checks in, and Sam joins her. They walk to their cabin, with Norman watching them, but the shot of them getting to their cabin, (shot [688]) is significantly not from Norman's point of view.

In the cabin Lila forcibly argues that she and Sam must, regardless of what they find, search cabin 1. The scene begins as a two shot, but soon moves to a close-up of Lila, and then cuts to a shot from her point of view on Sam's back, (shot [692]). Her persistence penetrates Sam's reserve and he turns to face her. They decide to begin their search.

They walk along the verandah with the camera panning with them, and enter cabin 1. Then they begin the search, looking in cupboards and drawers. Lila goes into the bathroom, and Hitchcock cuts to a high angle shot. Sam joins her, and while the high angle shot serves to stress their vulnerability, it also en-



Sam: If he sees us, we're just taking the air.

[696]



[697]



[698]



[699]



[498]



[499]



[500]



[501]



[502]



[503]



[503]



Sam: Bates!

[704]



Sam: There's no shower curtain.

[705]



Lila: Sam!

Sam: What?

Lila: Look!

Sam: What is it?

[706]



Lila: Figuring! It didn't get washed down! Look. Some figure has been added to or subtracted from forty thousand! That proves Marion was here! It'd be too wild a coincidence—

[707]



Sam: Bates never denied she was here.

Lila: Oh. Doesn't that prove that he found out about the money?

Sam: Do we simply ask him where he's hidden it?

[708]



Lila: No. But that old woman—whatever she is—she told Arbogast something. I want her to tell us the same thing!

[709]



Sam: You can't go up there!  
Lila: Why not?

[705]



Sam: Bates.  
Lila: Well, let's find him. One of us can keep him occupied while the other goes to the old woman.

[706]



Sam: You'll never be able to hold him still! If he doesn't want to be held! And I don't like you going into that house alone, Lila.

Lila: I can handle a sick old woman!

Sam: All right. I'll find Bates and keep him occupied.

[707]



Sam: Wait a minute! If you get anything out of the mother, — Can you find your way back to town?

Lila: Yes, of course.

Sam: Well, if you do get anything, — don't stop to tell me.

[708]



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[708]



[709]



[710]

ables the shower rail to form a diagonal across the frame, thus continuing a familiar visual pattern. Sam notices that there is no curtain, while Lila finds the pieces of paper that Marion had tried to flush down the toilet.

Lila decides she wants to interview the old woman to find out what she had told Arbogast. They leave the bathroom and Sam tells her she can't go up to the house. When she asks why he replies simply: 'Bates'. The repeated pun tells us that 'bats' wait for anyone who tries to discover what secrets lie in the old house. But Lila is adamant, and ironically assures him that she 'can handle a sick old woman'. Sam will keep Norman busy while she talks to Mother.

They leave the cabin, Sam moving off to the left, where he joins Norman in the office. Meanwhile Lila goes to the right, hoping to make her way to the house. Lila's movement around the corner is an image that parallels that of Mother's exit from the murder, and binds her into *Psycho's* pattern of guilt.

Herrmann's score, played low and bassy, begins as Lila turns the corner. She makes her way towards the old house. The sequence follows a by now familiar technique, and is made up of shots that track with Lila intercut with tracking shots from her point of view. Through her eyes we come closer and closer to the house, until we reach the door. Once again Hitchcock restricts the audience to share for a time the experiences of a single consciousness: 'It (has always) seemed natural for me to put the audience in the mind of a particular character' (109).



Herman: You looking for me?

[308]



[309]



Sams: Why, yes, as a matter of fact. Tho—she's taking a nap (and— I never can sleep quiet enough for her so I— just thought I'd look you up and ask.

[310]



Herman: Good. You're satisfied with your talent? Sams: Oh, it's fine!

[310]



[310]



[311]



[712]



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[714]



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[717]



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[719]



[720]



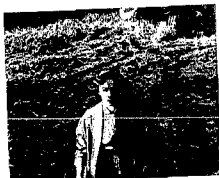
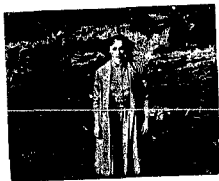
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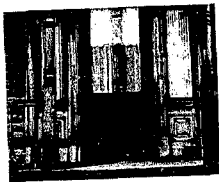
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Once again our empathy is displaced on to another character, and by participating in the action in this way 'the spectator becomes the chief protagonist uniting in himself all the characters' (110).

The viewer also participates in the scene, because it is a suspense sequence, and here the suspense is initiated by the audience having more knowledge than the character. Lila may believe she can handle a 'sick old woman', but we, the audience, know that somewhere in that house is a knife-wielding psychopath, and that at any time death may strike.

Furthermore, we cannot stop Lila - whatever happens she is committed to finding out the truth. 'Your central figure must have a purpose; that's vital for the progression of the film, and its also a key factor in audience participation' (111).

The forward tracking shots also serve to carry us further inside towards the film's dark secret, right into the heart of darkness. By participating with Lila in the exploration of the house we are forced to see clearer and to see even those things which we are afraid to see: 'Suspense itself then becomes' the embodiment of moral purpose: or if "purpose" suggests something too cut and dried a "film with a message", then the vehicle for conveying Hitchcock's complex moral sense' (112).



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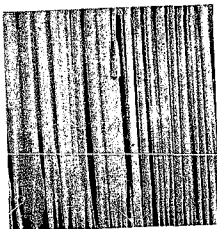
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Sam: I'm not saying you shouldn't be contented here, I'm just doubting that you are. I think if you saw a chance to get out from under you would unload this place.

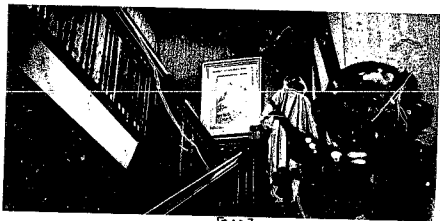
Norman: This place! This place happens to be my only world. I grew up in that house up there. I happen to have had a very happy childhood. My mother and I were more than happy.

[731]

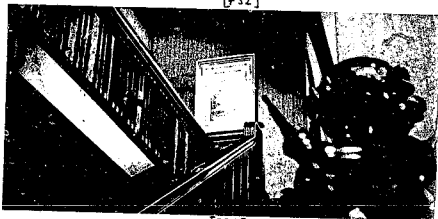
The music comes to an end as Lila places her hand on the doorknob. This shot breaks the rigorous formal technique of Lila's point of view, and initiates another method of involving the audience in the action, namely a parallel action sequence which will cut from Lila to Sam and Norman talking in the office. The new method will be as rigorously employed as the one preceding it.

Lila walks into the house, (shot [730]) looks around gingerly and, noticing that the door is still open, goes over to close it. From the closed door we cut to a two shot of Sam and Norman talking in the office. Sam is aggressively challenging Norman, and he intrudes into his space while Norman, under Sam's barrage of questions, has retreated to the right hand edge of frame.

We are struck by the physical resemblance between the actors, Anthony Perkins and John Gavin. They seem almost interchangeable, reflections of one another. In much of Hitchcock's work the representative of good is often linked to the representative of evil (cf. especially *Strangers on a Train*, and *Shadow of a Doubt*) on more levels than plot, resulting in what Rohmer and Chabrol called the 'transference of guilt' (113) theme. But here all the characters and the audience by extension, since we empathize and identify with them, are implicated in the pattern of guilt to such an extent that good and evil are so interwoven as to be inseparable. The film then dramatises the presence of evil impulses in all of us.



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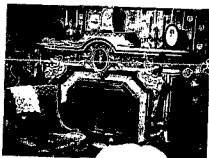
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[74]

Sam says to Norman: 'You're alone here; aren't you? Drive me crazy.' Norman replies: 'I think that would be rather an extreme reaction don't you?'. Sam answers: 'Just an expression' and Hitchcock then cuts to Lila on the stairs. Lila's discoveries in the house then will, this formal editing tells us, relate to the price of solitude and how it bears upon the threat of madness.

Now Lila begins her exploration of the house, the house in which Norman 'had a very happy childhood'. At the top of the stairs she knocks on a door and calls: 'Mrs. Bates'. There is no reply. Then Hitchcock cuts to a shot from behind her, as she opens the door and enters the bedroom.

From inside, we see a close-up of Lila entering, and again Hitchcock uses the subjective method of intercutting close-ups of Lila with shots of her point of view. She sees the bedroom with its Victorian decor, and then sees a basin, which echoes both Marion's murder and Norman's hand-washing. She sees the fireplace, looks inside a cupboard - all Freudian feminine images of enclosure. She looks at the dressing table, moves in closer to the camera, and then Hitchcock cuts to a shot of a bronze cast of crossed female hands. He then - and this is unusual for a film of this period - zooms in on the hands. It is a strangely disturbing image, but one which seems to encapsulate the atmosphere of sexual repression, particularly when it is juxtaposed with the rest of the decor - a black cupid in the entrance hall, the nude goddess statue in the bedroom, the dressing table where Mother presumably beautified herself, and the indentation of a single body in a bed made for two.



[748]



[749]



[749]



[750]



[751]



Sam: You look frightened, have I been saying something  
frightening?  
Norman: I don't know what you've been saying.

Sam: I've been talking about your mother, about your  
motel. Are you going to do it?  
Norman: Do what?

[752]



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[754]

[754]

Lila suddenly starts as she sees herself in the mirror, her image reflected twice over. Herrmann's score, rhythmic and tentative, which begins as she enters the bedroom, now ceases as she goes over to the bed and runs her hand over the outlined body.

Then Hitchcock cuts back to a two shot of Sam and Norman in the office. You can see Sam reflected in the mirror drawing him too into the pattern of double images. He harrasses Norman, asking him what he is going to do.

Continuing the Griffith parallel action method, Hitchcock cuts to Lila at the top of the stairs again, as she enters another bedroom. The house with its three stories, can be likened to the houses in dreams, read symbolically so that the three levels represent Freud's tripartite divisions of the psyche into super-ego, ego, and id. The controlling force of the super-ego, which orders and represses, is associated with the upper level; the parents' role in this process makes it the perfect locale for Mother's bedroom. The ego is on the ground floor and the id, the locus of unconscious amoral instinctive impulses, is to be found on the lower levels, the cellar.

In Norman's room Lila discovers a visual correlative for his psychotic state. The toys and cuddly rabbit suggest arrested development; the unmade bed hinting at adolescence. The *Ereos* on the turntable and the book without a title offer



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[769]



Sam: In a new town you won't have to hide your mother.



Norman: Why don't you get in your own car and drive away from here!

[770]



Norman: Okay!

Sam: Where will you get the money to do that, Bates, or do you already have it socked away?



Norman: Shut up.

[770]



[770]



Sam: A lot of money—\$40,000. I bet your mother knows where the money is and what you did to get it. I think she will tell us.



Norman: Where's that girl you came here with? Where is she?

[771]



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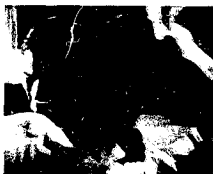
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further mysteries, unexplained aspects of the man. But she is still no closer to the enigma of the house.

The entire sequence is shot almost exclusively in close-up, and Hitchcock complies with his rule of varying the size of the image in relation to its emotional importance. And he ensures that the audience is continually included in the events, that they continue to participate in the action for 'if the camera should suddenly become distant and objective the tension that's been created would be destroyed' (114).

Hitchcock then cuts back to Norman and Sam who are now beginning to quarrel. Norman retreats from Sam's continued harassment and enters the parlour. Sam follows him. He tells Norman: 'I bet your Mother knows where the money is... I think she will tell us'. Norman then realises that Lila might be in the house, and he looks out the window. Hitchcock cuts to a shot of Lila moving down the stairs, further developing the dominant downward movement of the film.

Hitchcock cuts back to Sam and Norman who are now struggling. The camera pans with Norman as he picks up an object from the table. He uses it to strike Sam who falls to the ground. Then Norman leaves the office. The violence is again treated in a stylized manner.



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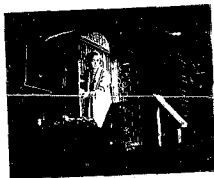
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[788]



Lila: Mrs. Bates?

[86]



[87]



[88]

Lila, descending the staircase, sees Norman running up the path through a curtained window. She turns and runs, and then sees the stairs that lead to the cellar. Almost magically she is drawn to them. She runs and hides halfway down the flight, as Norman comes in. In one shot (shot [780]) we see Lila in the foreground and Norman in the background as he climbs the stairs. She is behind the barred balustrade, an image of entrapment. Then the camera jibs up as she begins to ascend, but she looks down and from her point of view we see a shot of the cellar door, (shot [782]) Lila descends, the camera jibbing down with her.

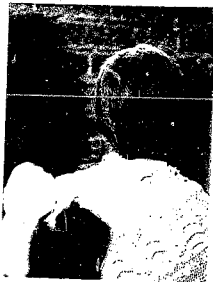
From inside the cellar we cut to Lila entering. The camera pans across with her, as she comes to another door which she then opens. The cellar represents the Id, but it also represents a sexual symbol into which Lila must enter, and it is in this fruit cellar (Mother insists on its being 'fruity' in her joke) that we discover the source of the fruition which is in fact dead and rotten.

The music has a spiralling motif, as Lila descends into the depths. Inside the cellar Lila walks forward and then Hitchcock cuts to a shot from her point of view. We see an old woman sitting with her back towards Lila. There is a bare light bulb in the top of the frame, the light once again standing in for 'Mother'. Lila calls out: 'Mrs. Bates', and when there is no reply she begins to walk forward, the camera tracking back with her.

Hitchcock cuts to a tracking shot from her point of view, moving in on the immobile figure in the chair. Then he cuts back to Lila who walks right into big



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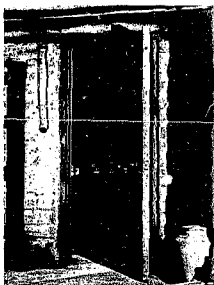
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[795]

close-up. We then cut to a shot of the old woman, as Lila's hand touches her right shoulder and then withdraws as the figure begins to turn around. On action, Hitchcock cuts to a 'choker' close-up as the woman comes into view. When her turn is completed, the figure does a little jiggle announcing its arrival, and we see a mummy grinning in death.

Lila screams when she sees this hideous apparition and in so doing, knocks the light bulb which then begins to swing wildly. Lila screams in close-up and Hitchcock cuts to the cellar door. On the soundtrack Lila's screams fuse with the music which begins the motif of shrieking violins which accompanied the shower murder. The light continues to swing, alternating the room into light and darkness, swishing shadows across the cellar.

A figure now runs into the doorway and stands dramatically in the entrance, (shot (795)). The figure, bearing a knife, demands acknowledgement by another theatrical gesture, similar to the one with which he/she greeted Marion in the shower. We cut back to Lila's face looking stunned and frightened, then back to the figure as Sam runs in behind him, grabs him round the neck, and holds the arm that wields the knife.

The camera begins to track in as the men struggle together. We see that it is Norman as the wig that he is wearing begins to slip from his head. His features are distorted as he grimaces and seems to struggle, not only with Sam, but with



[296]



[297]



[298]



[299]



[300]



[77]



[711]



[800]



[801]



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[802]



[803]

himself. The dress or theatrical costume that he wears begins to fall from him, as he is transformed before our eyes from Mother to Norman.

The camera moves into a close-up of the hand and the knife, and we cut back to Lila shocked at what she is witnessing. Her gaze reminds us that at the end of her quest she found sightless eyes. The all-embracing eye imagery of the film now appears as a vision of life in death - the rotting corpse whose dead eyes are given the illusion of life by the flickering light.

We cut back to Sam and Norman struggling as the camera begins to track out - this movement offering the spectator an extraordinary sense of release. We then cut back to Lila and then back to her view of Sam finally overcoming Norman. We then see a close-up of the wig which exposes Norman's fetish, revealing how impossible his attempt to become Mother really was.

The shadows and light which alternate across the wig seem also to be symbolically charged, suggesting black and white, good and evil, the quick and the dead. This duality is present in the final shot, the close-up of the corpse with the light flashing across the empty sockets of the eyes. Here condensation reveals a visual correlative of one of the film's dominant and most profound themes, like light and dark, reality and illusion confront each other, making us realise the futility of Norman's attempts to convert the real world from what it is into what he would like it to be.



[806]



[805]

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[806]



[807]



Sheriff: Well, if anyone gets any answers it'll be the psychiatrist. Even I couldn't get to Norman, and he knows me. You want enough, Miss Lil? Yes.

[808]



District Attorney: Did he talk to you?  
Dr. Richman: No. I got the whole story—but not from Norman.

[809]



Dr. Richman: I got it—from his mother.

[809]



Dr. Richman: Norman Bates no longer exists.

[810]

Hitchcock dissolves to a long shot of the imposing facade of the county courthouse. A crowd has gathered outside the building. This is followed by a closer shot of the building and then a shot of the passage inside. Policemen and reporters stand around waiting. Then Hitchcock cuts to a long shot inside an office. The District Attorney and his Assistant sit on the right, while Lila and Sam, their backs to the camera, and Sheriff Chambers, sit on the left.

Sheriff Chambers tells Lila that he expects the psychiatrist to get some answers from Norman, and then he asks her if she is warm enough. Later in the scene Norman/Mother will be cold and will ask for a blanket, and this question serves to link Lila and Mother. The psychiatrist comes in the door to the left and the camera tracks across to the left in order to centre him in frame.

The scene is constructed around mid-shots of the psychiatrist intercut with reaction shots of the other people in the room. The camera often pans and tracks with the psychiatrist but remains fairly distant from him. The cut-aways are hardly ever from the psychiatrist's point of view, and this objective treatment is unusual in *Psycho*, but in keeping with the scene which is purely informative and expository.

It is part of the film's deviant nature to structure the narrative in such a way that the exposition comes towards the end of the film rather than at the beginning which is more usual. The fact that other conventions, for example the kill-



Dr. Richman: He only half-existed to begin with.

[811]



Lila: Did he kill my sister?

[813]



District Attorney: Well, now look, if you're trying to lay some psychiatric groundwork for some sort of plea, this fellow would like to cop—

[815]



Dr. Richman: And now, the other half has taken over. Probably for all time.

[812]



Richman: Yes,—and no.

[814]



Richman: A psychiatrist doesn't lay the groundwork. He merely tries to explain it.

[816]



Lila: But my sister is—

[817]



Richman: Yes. Yes, I'm sorry. The private investigator, too.

[818]



Richman: If you drag that swamp somewhere in the vicinity of the motel, you'll— Uh—have you any unsolved missing persons cases on your books?

[818]



Chief of Police: Yes. Two.

Richman: Young girls?

Chief of Police: Did he confess to—

[819]



Richman: Like I said,—the mother—

[820]



Richman: Now to understand it the way I understood it, hearing it from the mother,—that is, from the mother half of Norman's mind—you have to go back ten years,—to the time when Norman murdered his mother and her lover.

[820]



Richman: Now he was already dangerously disturbed, — had been ever since his father died. His mother was a clinging, demanding woman, and for years the two of them lived as if there was no one else in the world.

[810]



Richman: Matricide is probably the most unbearable crime of all — most unbearable to the son who commits it. So he had to erase the crime, at least in his own mind. He stole her corpse. A weighted coffin was buried.

[824]



Richman: At times he could be both personalities, carry on conversations. At other times, the mother half took over completely. Now he was never all Norman, but he was often only mother.

[828]



Richman: That's what she met a man — and it seemed to Norman that she "threw him over" for this man. Now that pushed him over the line and he killed 'em both.

[822]



Richman: He hid the body in the fruit cellar. Even treated it to keep it as well as it would keep. And that still wasn't enough. She was there! But she was a corpse. So he began to think and speak for her, give her half his life, so to speak.

[826]



Richman: And because he was so pathologically jealous of her, he assumed that she was as jealous of him. Therefore, if he felt a strong attraction to any other woman, the mother side of him would go wild.

[828]



Richman: When he met your sister, he was touched by her —grieved by her.

[830]



Richman: He wanted her.

[831]



Richman: That set off the 'jealous mother' and 'mother killed the girl'.

[832]



Richman: Now after the murder, Norman returned as if from a deep sleep.

[833]



Richman: And like a dutiful son, covered up all traces of the crime he was convinced his mother had committed.

[834]



Sam: Well, why was he — dressed like that?

[835]

ing of the star halfway through the film, are flagrantly broken also gives Psycho its deviant status.

The psychiatrist explains that Norman killed his mother and her lover 10 years ago, since he was pathologically jealous. The guilt he experienced at having committed matricide was so severe that he tried to keep his mother alive by stealing her corpse and then pretending, by inventing conversations between himself and her, that she was still alive. Half of his personality then became hers in an attempt to maintain the illusion that she was alive 'But, when reality came too close - when danger or desire threatened that illusion, he dressed up even to a cheap wig he bought' and, since he displaced his own jealousies on to Mother, when Norman was attracted to a woman Mother went wild and had to kill the object of his desire. Now Mother, the stronger personality has taken over, and Norman Bates has ceased to exist.

This explanation that the psychiatrist offers has often been criticised, but it seems to me that the film is constructed to encourage the spectators' scepticism. The character as portrayed by Simon Oakland is unattractive, smug and complacent. He seems completely indifferent to the fates of Norman's victims and indeed to Norman himself. Furthermore the scene which follows will dramatise the real complexities of Norman's state, the almost 'unknowability' of his persona, to such an extent that the viewer cannot help but reject the psychiatrist's glib simplistic bromides.



Dilett: Attorneys: He's a transvestite!

[836]



Richman: Ah, not exactly.

[837]



Richman: A man who dresses in women's clothing in order to achieve a sexual change, or satisfaction, is a transvestite.



Richman: But in Norman's case, he was simply doing everything possible to keep alive the illusion of his mother being alive.

[838]



Richman: And when reality comes too close,—when danger or desire threatened that illusion—he dressed up, even to a cheap wig he bought.



Richman: He'd walk about the house, sit in her chair, speak in her voice. He tried to be his mother!

[839]



Richman: And uh—now he is.

[841]



[842]



Richman: Now that's what I mean: when I said I got the story from the molar. You see, when the mind houses two personalities,



Richman: there's always a conflict, a battle.



Richman: In Norman's case, the battle is over,—and the dominant personality has won.

[843]



Sheriffs: And the forty thousand dollars? Who put that?

292

[844]



Richman: The swamp. These were crimes of passion, not profit.

[845]

Psycho itself offers us another account of Norman's 'condition' which we must now consider. We have evidenced that the relationship between Norman and his mother is a neurotic one with clear sado-masochistic undertones. When Marion overhears their argument, Mother shouts out: 'Go on! Go tell her that she'll not be appeasing her ugly appetite with my food or my son, or do I have to tell her because you don't have the guts, hey boy? You have the guts, boy?' It is almost as if she is pushing him into repeating the original act of matricide. Mrs. Bates is one of Hitchcock's 'heavy' mothers, all of whom 'constitute a grim gallery of ogres' (115), and she prefigures Mrs. Edgar the resentful mother in *Mania*.

Norman (like *Sacher-Masoch*) out of his sense of guilt, creates a fictional universe centred around the idealising exultation of love for the punishing woman. Norman's masochism makes of Mother 'an idealised powerful figure both dangerous and comforting' (116). Freud believed that oedipal conflict was the cause of masochism. Fear of castration by the father led the male child to assume a passive position to placate the father. Beaten by the father or a female who is a substitute for him was a form of punishment for desiring the mother and also a regressive alternative to it. The punishment acquired 'libidinal exaltation' and Freud said that 'here we have the essence of masochism' (117).

In contrast to the Freudian view that the mother has little psychological impact on her children's development, Deleuze argues that 'the mother is the primary determinant in the structure of the masochistic fantasy and the etiology of

the perversion' (118). He sees masochism as originating in the pre-oedipal oral stage of development, whereby the mother is both source of the infant's comfort and also depriver of pleasure. The perversion is rooted in the fear of being abandoned by the mother, and the masochistic fantasy has as its primary desire 'dual unity and the complete symbiosis between the child and its mother' (119). The promise of blissful reincarnation of the child, reincorporation of the child into the mother's body, is exactly what Norman acts out by dressing in Mother's clothes and sublimating his own ego to hers.

Deleuze also notes that while idealising the mother the masochist denies the father 'the father is nothing. He is deprived of all symbolic function' (120). *Psycho* is notable for its 'absence of the father' motif. Norman and Sam's fathers have both been dead for a long time, and certainly in Norman's case the father has little significance in his narrative. Lila and Marion too seem to have no father and only their mother is mentioned as Sam asks in the first scene: 'Do we turn Mother's picture to the wall?'

'In general,' Jack Foley writes, 'Hitchcock's "fathers" and "father-figures" tend to be weak - Henry Travers in *Shadow of a Doubt* - or else, as in *Family Plot*, *Marnie* and *Psycho*, "missing". When they are dominant, they are usually at least partially - and sometimes totally - unsympathetic: the German submarine captain in *Lifboat*, Joseph Cotton in *Shadow of a Doubt*, James Mason in *North by Northwest*, the diabolical Cassidy in *Psycho*' (121).

Often this 'father-figure' may be split into various aspects: 'What we did was to split this evil character into three people: James Mason, who is attractive and suave; his sinister-looking secretary; and the third spy who is crude and brutal' (122). *The same might be applied to Shadow of a Doubt*, where Joseph Cotton and Henry Travers can be seen as contradictory aspects of the same 'character'. Again 'doublet'. Foley suggests that such splitting along with the fact of 'projection' is indicative of an essentially paranoid structure. And: 'Indeed paranoia characteristically involves not only a problem with the father but fixation at the narcissistic stage' (123).

And here it should be noted that in *Interviews*, Hitchcock has never mentioned his relationship with his mother, but often relished telling the following story about his father: 'I suppose the earliest thing I can think of is when my father who was a wholesale and retail fruit and greengrocer at the time, sent me with a note to the local chief of police, who glanced at the little piece of paper and then led me along a corridor and I was locked in a cell for five minutes. Then he let me out and said, "That's what we do to naughty boys"' (124).

Norman's fetishism is part of his identification with the pre-oedipal mother and he also keeps his cuddly toys which are further manifestations of this fetish. For 'most children regardless of sex, use transitional objects to soothe the separation from the mother. If the child cannot accommodate itself to this separation, the transitional object may be retained and lead to fetishism' (125).



Police: Guards the feels a little chilly. Can I bring him this blanket?

[846]



Richman: Oh, sure, Chief of Police. All right.

[847]



[848]



[848]



Another's Voice: Thank you.

[848]



[848]



[849]



*Mother's Voice: It is sad when a mother has to speak the words that condemn her own son.*



*Mother's Voice: I can't allow them to think I would commit murder. Put him away now as I should have years ago. He was always bad and in the end he intended to tell them I killed those girls and that man.*

[849]



*Mother's Voice: as if I could do anything but just sit and stare like one of his stuffed birds. They know I can't move a finger and I want to just sit here and be quiet just in case they suspect me. They are probably watching me—well, let them.*

284



*Mother's Voice: Let them see what kind of person I am—*

[849]

This scene may also be seen to be a kind of inverted happy ending: the combination of the domineering 'father-figure' psychiatrist (who blames Mrs Bates for the crimes), Mrs Bates (who blames Norman for the crimes) and Norman (now entirely silent - children should be seen and not heard) suggests, as does Family Plot, but in an even more diabolical way, the return of the 'missing' father and the restoration of the 'family'. This is reinforced by the casting: Robin Wood notices the physical resemblance between Gavin and Perkins (Sam and Norman) and is aware of the film's narcissistic tendencies, but he does not notice the physical resemblance of both of these actors to the psychiatrist as played by Simon Oakland.

The psychiatrist, his performance over, takes out a cigarette and a policeman enters the room. This is shot from approximately Sheriff Chambers's point of view. The policeman says: 'He feels a little chill. Can I bring him this blanket?' The psychiatrist shrugs and the District Attorney gives his permission.

We cut to a shot of the passageway as the policeman comes out. He gestures to two colleagues and then walks away from the camera down the passage. The camera trucks with him until he leaves frame by entering the door to the left. A fellow policeman has opened the door for him.

We hold on the second policeman and we hear Mother's voice off-camera: 'Thank you'. The first policeman then comes out and his colleague closes the door behind him.

Hitchcock cuts to a long shot of Norman sitting in the corner of the bare room with a blanket wrapped round him. The bottom half of the frame is masked in the Academy print and in the video. The camera then tracks in until Norman is in close-up. At the same time we hear Mother's voice-over offering a self justification for her crimes and a condemnation of Norman. Her words mock the pathetically simplistic explanation. This almost catatonic young man, thinking these thoughts, is clearly irredemable and beyond our comprehension.

Kristen assumes that this shot is from the policeman's point of view and argues that: 'The bottom of this frame is masked to suggest the borders of the window through which the policeman is viewing' (126).

I disagree with this assumption for three reasons. Firstly, we have seen that Hitchcock in keeping with his 'purist' principles, always shows us a shot of the character looking. If not before, then in conjunction with, a point of view shot. In this case, we never see a shot of the policeman looking, and in fact the camera pays him scant attention. Secondly, the masking is over the entire shot and includes the tracking in. If this was shot from the policeman's perspective then as we tracked in the window frame would be left behind and would fall out of the shot this is a track not a zoom, after all). And finally, if this is from the policeman's point of view, then the track in is completely un motivated since he does not enter the room at all.

The only possible explanation for the masking, it seems to me, is that when the sequence was shot it was composed for wide screen 1:1.85 and the Academy framing was ignored, as a result the tracks which *would have been* lying on the floor would have been visible in Academy. The masking serves to hide them. Once again the cameraman Russell is guilty of sloppiness.

'Mother' tells us that she is just going to sit here and stare: 'like one of his stuffed birds', recalling Norman's conversation with Marion, when he told her that his mother was 'as harmless' as one of his stuffed birds. At that time he also told Marion that he couldn't put Mother in an institution with the 'cruel eyes' studying her, and here he reminds us of this. Mother says: 'They are probably watching me', and the audience is reminded once again of their voyeuristic position in that the only people watching him are the audience.

Norman looks down and Hitchcock cuts to a close-up of the fly on his hand. Mother tells us that she is 'not even going to swat that fly', and we cut back to a close-up of Norman's face as he smiles directly into the camera. Hitchcock then superimposes a shot of Mother's grinning death head skull over Norman's features. This is held momentarily and then it dissolves into a shot of Marion's car being dredged from the swamp.

For one extraordinary moment then, we are offered a shot where all three images are present at once, so that we see in one shot (a) a shot of Norman looking directly at the camera; (b) a shot of Mother's skeleton 'whose skull flickers



*Mother's Voice: not even going to start that fly.*

[850]

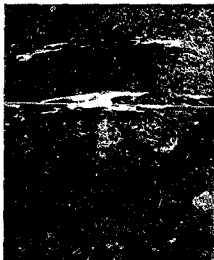


*Mother's Voice: I hope that they are watching, they will see, they will see and they will say "why she wouldn't even harm a fly."*

[851]



[852]



[853]



250

[853]

briefly beneath her son's features and whose personality he has now assumed; and (c) a heavy chain which seems anchored to his heart, hauling up the murder victim's car which contains her corpse' (127). This is a rich condensation whereby the relationship between all three is encapsulated.

This shot then dissolves through to the shot of the car being pulled from the swamp. Reversing as it does the film's dominant downward movement, this final shot of the film withdraws the audience from the dark depths of the swamp and offers us a powerful release from the forces of darkness.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

## I CONFESS

Hopefully this dissertation has revealed *Psycho* to be a profound work of anxiety by one of the great artists of anxiety. Its major theme is universal and has much in common with both *Macbeth* and *Heart of Darkness*. But, what distinguishes any work of art is that this theme should be seen on reflection to inform the whole, not only the content but the method.

This study, then, and its particular methodology of examining the film empirically from shot to shot, has insisted upon exploring the relationship between form and content on the premise that *Psycho* is a film wherein 'the form does not embellish the content (but) it creates it' (128).

It is perhaps now necessary to reverse the movement of the first shot of *Psycho*, (that is from the general to the specific) and ask instead how this particular study can illuminate our understanding of the nature of film itself or contribute to the development of film criticism in general.

Throughout my dissertation I have consistently drawn the reader's attention to the formal qualities in Hitchcock's work by noting how certain sequences, for example the rain and windscreen wiper imagery when Marion arrives at the motel, pre-echo the shower scene. This emphasis on form presumes that 'the meaning of a Hitchcock film is not an esoteric something cunningly concealed

beneath a camouflage of "entertainment"; (but that) it is there in the method, in the progression from shot to shot. A Hitchcock film is an organism with the whole implied in every detail and every detail related to the whole' (129).

The study, then, pays close attention to *Psycho's* *mise-en-scene* for it is in the positioning of the scene, in the camera movements, in the camera placements and the cutting from shot to shot that Hitchcock produces meanings and relates the viewer to those meanings. This approach was initiated by the *Cahiers* critics and 'the attention to *mise-en-scene* to the extent of a certain historically necessary formalism is probably one of the most important positive contributions of auteurism to the development of a precise and detailed film criticism engaging with the specific mechanisms of visual discourse freeing it from literary models and from the liberal commitments which were prepared to validate a film on the basis of their themes alone' (130).

But historically *mise-en-scene* criticism was met with much hostility by Anglo-saxon critics. In *Cahiers du Cinéma* 23, in an article entitled 'Sam Fuller: In Marlowe's Footsteps' Luc Moullet suggested that film's claim to significance lay in its embodiment of tensions, complexities and ambiguities and that the cinema favoured the communication of vision and experience as against programme. 'We have' he wrote 'a strong aversion to would-be philosophers who get into making films in spite of what film is' and he noted that 'young American film directors have nothing at all to say' and praised Fuller, since in his work

'there is something he wants to do and he does it naturally and effortlessly' (131).

Thus, by a close analysis of Fuller's formal style he went so far as to claim that 'morality is a question of tracking shots' (132). This dictum was intentionally provocative in its time, for its refusal to distinguish form from content, and was greeted with acidic response by both Richard Roud and Penelope Houston in *Sight and Sound*. Houston began her defence of traditional liberal values by arguing that 'Cinema is about the human situation, not about "spatial relationships"' (133) and that criticism should examine film primarily in terms of its 'ideas'.

The resulting debate brought about significant changes in attitudes towards film, but as John Caughie points out Moullet's statement (and presumably Godard's equally outrageous 'the tracking shot is a moral statement' (134) seems less scandalous than it did to the critics of *Sight and Sound*: 'if it is construed to indicate an awareness of the relationships between strategies of *mise-en-scene* and the production of ideologies' (135).

Nowhere, it seems to me, is this relationship more apparent than when Hitchcock exchanges one *mise-en-scene* strategy for another and I have at all times attempted to alert the reader to these shifts in the text.

This can be further elucidated by another example which immediately springs to mind, this one from *Rear Window*. The plot concerns a news photo-

grapher who, confined to a wheelchair by a broken leg, gazes idly at the behaviour of the neighbours across the courtyard of his Greenwich Village apartment. His observations lead him to suspect that one of the neighbours has murdered his wife. Throughout the film, Hitchcock reveals the action only from the protagonist's (Jimmy Stewart's) point of view, so that we only witness the events that he sees, and only from inside the apartment.

This technique is rigorously adhered to throughout, except for one small scene 'a moment which crystallizes the themes into a single lesson' (136). The scene in question deals with the death of a neighbour's dog and the camera actually ventures out into the courtyard to cover the owner's grief.

This break in the structure, being the only sequence outside the apartment shot from other than Stewart's point of view, encapsulates the film's moral significance as articulated by the owner 'You don't know the meaning of the word neighbour' and as Chabrol points out: 'From then on the implications of the scene become vertiginous: responsibilities press upon one another at every imaginable level to condemn a monstrously egocentric world whose every element on every scale is immured in an ungodly solitude' (137).

In the case of *Psycho*, these morally revelatory moments are not only associated with Hitchcock's use of the subjective tracking shot, but with an entire repertoire of shots that constitutes his style. The meaning of the film, then, and its specific moral qualities, derives from the complex, not from one of its com-

ponents, and the film's ideological/moral position is not a result of one of its elements in isolation ('The tracking shot is a moral statement' (138)), but the combination, interaction and fusion of all the elements that constitute a complex *mise-en-scene*. To speak of form is then to speak of synthesis of certain stylistic elements and to realise that: 'The meanings which are contained most securely within a film are those formed at the deepest levels of inter-relation and synthesis.' (139).

Each formal element, then, is less important for its independent value than for its contribution to a network of significant relationships which in itself is the expression of 'meaning'.

Consider, for example, the shower murder sequence in *Psycho* once again. As Victor Perkins points out: 'If the emotional intensity of the scene's action permits extreme imagery, it is also largely a consequence of it. The correspondence between action, image, meaning and effect is so tight that each maintains the others' (140). Hitchcock could, (since this was all filmed on a set) for example, have moved the camera back and given us a series of long shots, offered us a more detached view of the slaughter, but this distant view would have been inappropriate to our experience of the scene. The spatial limitations were not only physical but also related to the psychological/emotional enclosure.

To ask whether Hitchcock has found the form to suit his subject or the subject to suit his form, is to become trapped in an existential chicken and egg type

dilemma. Rather we should realise that 'Extended and shaped throughout the whole picture such moments compose a unity between record, statement and experience' and that 'synthesis here where there is no distinction between how and what, content and form, is what interests us if we are interested in film as film. It is that unity to which we respond when film, as fiction, makes us sensitive to film as film' (141).

This study also has been concerned with the consideration of the nature of empathic response, which is often associated with the concept of identification, but empathy and identification should not simply be equated. Identification with the character enables the spectator to share in a valuable vicarious experience, but it cannot be isolated from our other active pleasures. Our involvement with characters and in their actions is only one part of a wider and more complex experience.

This is exemplified by Hitchcock's noted ability to bring about a displacement or transference of identification in *Psycho*. We begin by identifying closely with Marion, and later displace our concerns on to Norman and Lila. This displacement of identification is achieved not simply by an exploitation of convention ('Crime does not pay'), but by a change in the nature of the dramatised situation. The first half of the film is about concealment, whereas the second is about search and revelation.

Furthermore, critics such as Robin Wood have accurately and subtly demonstrated the audience's sense of complicity in the criminal actions committed during the course of many of Hitchcock's films. As we have already noted, Wood claims that we are 'led to accept Norman Bates as a potential extension of ourselves... we all share in a common guilt' (142).

But what Wood does not acknowledge, however, and the film never admits this explicitly, is that it also contains many elements (Norman's appearance in drag, the psychiatrist's speech, etc.) which allow us to specifically reject Norman as an 'extension of ourselves', and to allow us to see him as simply a mental case, someone we can dismiss as a psychopath. The sense of complicity is there, but it may be forgotten, and by offering us 'beneficial shocks' (143) Hitchcock creates villains who function precisely as scapegoats for our sins, people who allow us to say at the conclusion of the film (with Mrs. Bates) *I didn't do it; he did.*

Thus, our involvement is a mixture of awareness and forgetfulness, of close identification and detachment. In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud writes of this dualism as part of the condition of dreaming: 'Whenever my own ego does not appear in the content of the dream, but only some extraneous person, I may safely assume that my own ego lies concealed by identification behind this other person; I can insert my ego into the context...there are also dreams in which my ego appears along with other people who, when the identification is resolved, are revealed once again as my ego...thus my ego may be represented in a dream several times over, now directly and now through identification with extraneous

persons. By means of a number of such identifications, it becomes possible to condense an extraordinary amount of thought material. The fact that the dreamer's own ego appears several times or in several forms in a dream is at bottom no more remarkable than that the ego should be contained in a conscious thought several times or in different places or conventions - e.g. in the sentence 'When I *think* what a healthy child I was' (144).

One might add that dreams also involve the question of 'forgetting', and that the above quotation suggests Hitchcock's actual technique.

Nevertheless, the analogy with dreams and films should be treated with caution, as there are important differences between the two, namely 'filmic perception is a real perception; it is not reducible to an internal psychic process. The spectator receives images and sounds offered as the representation of something other than themselves, of a diegetic universe, but remaining true images and sound, capable of reaching other spectators as well, whereas the dream flux can reach the consciousness of no one but the dreamer' (145).

As a result, in our experience of the cinema we may feel powerful emotions, but our intellect and judgement are never completely submerged. The subconscious does not control the film/dream as it does the real one, and as a result 'we can trace our reactions with a detachment which is unattainable in dreams and very difficult in any real situation of like intensity. We can analyse

our dreams and our real experiences after the event. In the cinema we can observe our involvement while it is taking place' (146).

As Victor Perkins points out, this detachment allows us to appreciate the element which most distinguishes film and dream, namely *staysis*. A film is the product of both its creator's conscious and unconscious, and it is therefore an organised experience, but one which incorporates the empathic response of the spectator into its pattern. Thus our involvement is as much a part of the film as its *mise-en-scene*. The film maker shapes and controls a number of variables, including audience identification in constructing his work, and in Hitchcock's case audience response is often a key to the film's meaning.

Furthermore, Hitchcock's 'identification effects... often are unique, because he exploits the directness of our response in a very individual way. The motive behind our identification, not just the fact of it, is integrated into the structure and meaning of his films' (147). Thus like Marion, we wish to escape to a private island. We leave home, assert ourselves, go out into the world, only to find there a distorted version of what we thought we were leaving behind.

Yet Hitchcock realises that fantasy is both dangerous and essential, and the irony is that 'In Hitchcock's world a man's moral and psychological integrity, even his physical existence, is threatened by precisely those desires and illusions which make life tolerable' (148). As a result the protagonist must make a clear distinction between the world as it is and the world as he would like it to be. Ex-

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cho explores, like no other film, what happens when one is unable to make that distinction.

Finally, the thematic bipolar antimonies presented in the film - fantasy and reality, good and evil, light and dark, guilt and innocence etc., are reinforced by the motif of doubling preserved throughout the film. This extends, not only to the *mise-en-scene*, where it is present in, for example the mirror imagery, but also to the characterisation, and here the doubling motif is to be found in the presentation of two sisters, Marion and Lila, two 'lovers' Sam and Norman, resembling each other, and even two mothers - one a disembodied 'voice' in Norman's mind, the other a stuffed 'body'. And Norman's 'transvesticism' may be conceived of as a desperate attempt to unite them' (149).

In fact, the pairing of a young, sexually attractive woman with an older sexless (at times as in *Vertigo* dead) woman, is another familiar motif, and suggests the splitting of the mother's two aspects - sexual attractiveness and old age. And Norman's murder/rape of Marion is, in effect, a re-enactment of his crime, a 'performance' in which Marion becomes the 'double' of his murdered mother.

This symmetry is yet another aspect of the formal qualities of Hitchcock's work, and yet another part of the rich and satisfying texture that the film provides. As Jean Luc Godard points out, this partly accounts for the pleasure we receive in viewing *Psycho*. 'People say that Hitchcock lets the wires show too

often, but because he shows them they are no longer wires. They are pillars of a marvellous architectural design made to withstand our scrutiny.' (150).

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