

**DISPLACED EMPATHY: NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE, STYLE
AND SUSPENSE IN ALFRED HITCHCOCK'S PSYCHO**

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AND SUSPENSE IN ALFRED HITCHCOCK'S *PSYCHO*

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This dissertation examines audience empathic response arising from the narrative technique of style and suspense in Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho*. Throughout the film, the viewer is encouraged to identify with one character or another. This is achieved by a narrative method which oscillates between being subjective and objective. Likewise, the suspense sequences depend upon the audience's watching and waiting for critical information.

Both empathic response and meaning then, become a function of the film's form. *Psycho* is investigated where style and content are inseparable. This is recognised by the methodology which studies the film text empirically by offering a critical analysis of the movie experience.

Hitchcock is revealed as a master artist of anxiety whose work binds together narrative, image, rhythm and audience involvement. Each element sustains and supports the other, producing a rich and varied synthesis.

DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation is my own, unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of Master of Arts in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University.

John Henry Howarth

10th day of September 1966

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE: RICH AND STRANGE	1
An Introduction	
CHAPTER TWO: EASY VIRTUE	10
Marion's Theft and Flight	
CHAPTER THREE: THE BIRDS	28
Arrival at the Motel	
CHAPTER FOUR: TORN CURTAIN	45
The Shower Murder	
CHAPTER FIVE: THE MAN WHO KNEW TOO MUCH	65
Arbogast's Murder and the Aftermath	
CHAPTER SIX: FAMILY PLOT	82
All is revealed	
CHAPTER SEVEN: I CONFESS	102
A Conclusion	

CHAPTER ONE

RICH AND STRANGE

The last ten years have produced a formidable body of theoretical and critical writing about the cinema. Much of this writing has been an attempt to formulate a 'scientific' approach to criticism and to free the discipline from the bondage of 'critical impressionism' criticism of the kind which Brecht called 'merely a collection of primitive culinary noises'- noises which range from 'Yum yum!' to 'Ugh!' (1)

These attempts to systemise criticism have resulted in the development of new schools of thought, each with its own set of values and parameters of inquiry. Much of the discourse is complex, and there is a range of material and opinions mostly influenced by Marxist/materialist, structuralist, semiological and psychoanalytical approaches. Since these approaches offer challenges to our traditional modes of critical response and are often couched in a highly technical vocabulary (or 'jargonese') there have been 'charges that film theory and film studies have become alienating and obscurantist' (2). In reply to these charges Catherine Belsey argues that 'This is an easy way of evading conceptual challenges.... (for) of course jargon exists but from a perspective in which ideology is held to be inscribed in language, so that no linguistic forms are ideologically innocent or neutral' (3). And in order to question current ways of thinking a new language, one inscribed by a different ideology needs to be applied. For, 'to re-

sist all linguistic innovation by implication is to claim that we already know all there is to know.' (4).

Nevertheless, it seems to me, there are two disturbing tendencies within the new discourses that need to be articulated. The first of these is the split between theory and an interest in films themselves. Thus Todorov declares that 'the object of structuralism and semiology ... is the literary discourse *itself* rather than the works of literature.... such analysis will discover in each work what it has in common with others or even with all other works: it will be *unable* to state the individual specificity of each work' (5). This has resulted in disturbing (to me at least) studies, for example Metz's Psychoanalysis and Cinema, wherein the author offers an all-embracing idealised construct with minimal reference to any films. Rather, it seems to me, any theoretical practice needs to be tested against one's actual experience of existing texts for, 'the cinema can be understood only in relation to the films that are being made, and new films can and must enlarge and alter our ideas of what the cinema is.' (6)

The second symptom is 'a certain tendency to forget about what constitutes adequate data in the headlong rush to keep up with the latest developments in *haute culture*' (7). For example, in the Cahiers collective text on Young Mister Lincoln, there are at least ten identifiable mistakes in the reading of the film as anyone who has watched it on an editing table will attest. These kinds of mistakes are often the results of academics who are trained in other fields like linguistics, applying themselves to film studies without sufficient understanding of

the technical aspects of the medium (see for example Rothman's reading of the masking in the last sequence of *Psycho* and my questioning of this analysis). Whatever the reasons, shoddy research is inexcusable.

This study then attempts to avoid these symptoms by rigorously subjecting Hitchcock's *Psycho* to an empirical analysis of the film's *mise-en-scene* by looking at the 'composition, harmony, the placing of actors and objects, the movements within the frame, the capturing of a movement or a look: in short the intellectual operation which has put an initial emotion and a general idea to work' (8).

This has been achieved by a close study of the video copy of the film, and by running through the shots one by one, freezing the frame, running back and slowing the movement down, so that I was able to scrutinize all aspects of the film. The illustrated screenplay was also helpful in this regard, but in all cases I have used the video as the principal text, and when there were discrepancies between the two, the video always took precedence. This accounts for the occasional non-sequential shot numberings in the illustrated text. Furthermore, in describing the action, I have broken the film down into shots not since the shot is seen as the smallest unit of meaning, but simply since the splicing together of one shot to another between cuts offered an easy and familiar punctuation mark which facilitated differentiation.

The strategy I have adopted when approaching the *mise-en-scene* then, is one in which the theoretical position is implicit, and in which different disciplinary perspectives have been brought to bear on the material. This inter-disciplinary approach is not intended to be a plea for eclecticism in film studies, nor will it, I hope, be confused with methodological timidity. On the contrary, it is written in the firm belief that the only film criticism that is worthwhile is located within a solid framework of theory.

The psychoanalytical approach that informs much of my analysis encourages this synthetic reading of the film. As Melz remarks: 'Psychoanalysis cannot be the only discipline concerned in the study of the cinematic signifier and that its offering has to be articulated with others' (9). This is because Lacan's reading of Freud is based on the assumption that the structure of the unconscious is the structure of language - a reasonable enough premise if one concedes that 'all the material available to the analyst is verbal: what is analysed in the psychoanalytical interview is not the patient's dream but the patient's report of his dream' (10).

The psychoanalytical approach presumes that films and dreams are, at the very least, siblings. For '(the cinema) encourages narcissistic withdrawal and the indulgence of phantasy which when pushed further enter into the definition of dreaming and sleep' (11). But this is with the acknowledgement that the dreamer is hardly ever aware of the fact that he is dreaming, whereas the spectator is always consciously aware of the fact that he is watching a film.

Freud describes dreams as the 'disguised fulfilment of repressed wishes' (12). These wishes have been subject to distortion and adopt a veil of disguise. It is important, then, to distinguish between the manifest content of a dream and the latent dream thoughts. All dreams are meaningful, and the meaning of the dream is the cause of the dream. The mechanisms which serve to change and distort the latent content into the manifest content, Freud called condensation, displacement, dramatisation, symbolisation and secondary elaboration.

Like dreams, films can be treated as the fulfilment of wishes and must similarly be subject to distortion via the self-same mechanisms. What we see when we watch a film is its manifest content. To understand the latent content we must do work on the film. We must read the text for 'Dreams and art are not merely linked because they fulfil wishes, but because both have to make use of strategies in order to overcome the resistance of consciousness: 'work' is done by the dreamer and the artist to transform their primitive desires into culturally acceptable meanings' (13).

The essence of condensation is that in the manifest content one thing can stand for a great many associations. As Freud expressed it: 'Dreams are brief, meagre and laconic in comparison with the range and wealth of the dream thoughts' (14). He also called this process 'overdetermination', which often results in an ambiguity which is most clearly demonstrable in the way condensation treats words or names. Thus, in *Psycho*, Norman Bates traps birds by leaving

'bait' for them. He then kills them and stuffs them. Likewise he feeds Marion before killing her, and she 'eats like a bird' and has a bird name - Crane. His own name, Norman, is almost an anagram of Marion, and it also points to his sexual androgyny for he is neither woman, 'Nor-man'. Furthermore we can see condensation at work in the powerful image when Norman, sitting in the parlour beneath stuffed birds of prey 'becomes simultaneously the bird (from his resemblance to it) and its victim (from his position under it)' (15).

Displacement is a process whereby the emotional charge is separated from its real object or content and attached to an entirely different one. Freud cites as an example a dream a woman had in which she strangled a white dog. Through analysis and free association he concluded that the woman was feeling resentful towards her sister-in-law and in the dream the emotion of resentment, even of murderous hatred, is displaced from the image of the sister-in-law on to that of the animal.

The shower murder is then in the same sense, an example of displacement at work. Norman would like to sleep with Marion. He displaces his desires on to Mother, who carries out a cruel parody of the sexual act by stabbing Marion to death. Norman's pathological jealousy of his mother has also caused him to displace this jealousy on to her, so that she will become jealous of anyone Norman is attracted to.

Condensation and displacement often take place together since : 'one of displacement's most notable virtues is that it encourages condensation and even enables it to occur' (16). For Lacan and Metz, metaphor and metonymy are linguistic formulations of what Freud discerned in condensation and displacement, but the parallels are not exact. 'When condensation begins to form, things start to pile up on top of each other creating new relationships rather like the work of metaphor' (17).

This attempt on Metz's part to situate the homology between linguistics and psychoanalysis is similar to my own method, but I have chosen to retain the terms 'displacement' and 'condensation' rather than metaphor and metonymy, since I feel that the psychoanalytic phraseology is a more exact description of the 'dreamwork' or in this case, the 'filmwork'.

Dramatisation is a simple mechanism to understand, and the parallel between dream and film is here clearly apparent because by far the greatest part of remembered dreams are vivid visual images and 'If motion pictures had existed when Freud was writing *The Interpretation of Dreams*, they would have provided him with the precise analogy for dramatisation by visual imagery, which he considered characteristic of dreams' (18).

Symbols are another way in which the latent content is translated into the manifest content of dreams. Freud learned about them by studying different

sources - fairy tales and myths, jokes and folklore, poetic and colloquial linguistic usage.

In dreams, symbols are used almost exclusively for the expression of sexual objects and relations, but this is not always the case in other fields, e.g. films, and 'the interpretation of any symbol, however public, has to be mediated by the context in which it is found' (19). This I have at all times attempted to do in my reading of *Psycho*.

Secondary elaboration is the outcome of the dreamer's natural tendency on awakening to make some sense of his recollection of the dream. Dreams often consist of jumbled ideas, fragments of memory and emotionally charged experiences which the dreamer elaborates upon to make them capable of expression in words, or to conform to a narrative or have some kind of order or significance.

Films are already worked upon and given some kind of narrative structure by the film maker, but in addition to that, viewers themselves elaborate upon the film text. Thus, 'readers not only work on texts, but texts work on readers, and this involves a complex double dialectic of two bodies inscribed in language' (20). Consequently my reading of *Psycho* is a highly personal one, and despite the rigorous application of a methodology, I am simply capable of illuminating the text and offering a single ending of it. Certainly other equally valid readings are possible and indeed desirable.

Finally, in the now legendary Truffaut interviews, Hitchcock has commented at length about all aspects of his working methods. This study consequently quotes liberally from those interviews. This is not done in defiance of D.H. Lawrence's axiom about trusting the tale and not the teller: indeed what an artist says about his work should not have any more validity than what anybody else says about it: its values can only be assessed by the test to which one must subject all criticism, the test of applying it to the art in question and asking oneself how much it contributes towards either understanding or evaluating it.

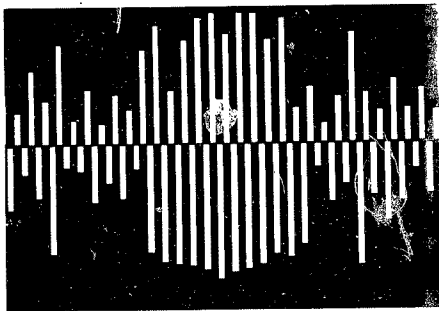
Nevertheless, it should be remembered that Hitchcock constructs his films around how he believes an audience will respond - 'You have to design your films just as Shakespeare did his plays - for an audience' (21). Any discussion of empathy in his work must, therefore, take cognisance of Hitchcock's working methods and his intentions. For, 'every Hitchcock film is a contract whose terms, implicit but unambiguous, undertake to provide the audience with particular emotions codified even more formally than in genre films, from an *oeuvre* irreducible to any genre' (22).

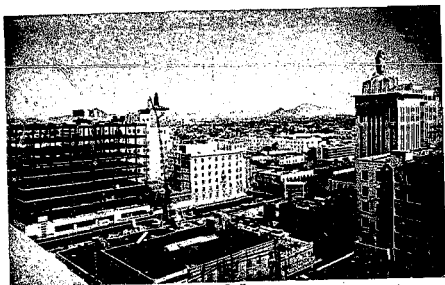
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DIRECTED BY **ALFRED HITCHCOCK**

ALFRED HITCHCOCK





[1]



[2]



[3]



[3]



[3]

CHAPTER TWO

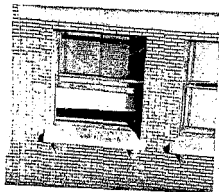
EASY VIRTUE

Psycho's stylized credits in severe black and white were designed by Saul Bass, and are expository and explicitly narrational. The Hollywood cinema has 'canonised' it - is stylised "narrativisation" of the credits sequence, assigning it a range of functions' (23) and here the words and names are wrenched apart suggesting the forceful splitting up and division of personality. The music, too, enters into the system of narration and Bernard Herrmann's score for violin and cello is imbued with colouristic effects common in 'films dealing with amnesia, shock, suspense, neurosis and kindred psychological and psychiatric themes. The music counterpart of the troubled mental states... is a musical style which emphasizes vagueness and strangeness, especially in the realms of harmony and orchestration' (24).

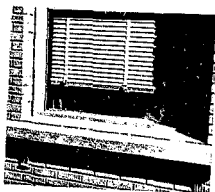
Truffaut contends that Hitchcock often opens his pictures 'on a symbolic note' (25); and *Psycho* begins with a panoramic view of the city. The camera then begins to pan from left to right, and as it does we can see the lines of the buildings on the edges of the frame bend inwards indicating that a wide angle lens was used. There is a dissolve to a slightly closer view of the city streets as the title 'Phoenix, Arizona' appears on the screen. In mythology the phoenix is the bird which rises from its own ashes just as Mother will rise up and live again in the form of the bewigged Norman Bates. The bird imagery, which will become important later on in the film, is also hereby introduced.



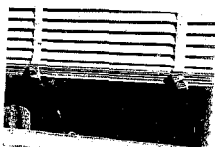
[4]



[4]



[5]



[5]



[5]



[5]



[5]



Sam: You never did eat your lunch, did you?

14

[6]



Marion: I better get back to the office. Those extended lunch hours give my boss excess acid.

[7]



Sam: Why don't you call your boss and tell him you're taking the rest of the afternoon off? It's Friday, anyway—and hot.

[8]

The camera continues to pan from left to right and there is a dissolve to a still closer shot of the city as the title 'Friday, December 11th.' appears on the screen. The title dissolves out and the panning motion continues. Then the camera seems to hesitate, unaware of its destination and then, as if arbitrarily, to continue panning and zooming in at the same time. We zoom in on an apartment block and dissolve to a closer but still long shot of it with the title '2.43 p.m.'

The film then 'opens by making us aware of time and ends (except for the releasing final image) with a situation in which time (i.e. development) has ceased to exist' (6). We dissolve to a high angle closer shot of the building (shot [4]) as the panning and zooming continues. But this zooming initiates the downward movement of the film, and from now until the end of the film almost all the movement of the film will be downwards plunging us into the depths of loneliness and despair. We now cut to a close-up shot of a window (shot [5]) and the mismatching of the decor indicates that we have moved from location to studio, from the open exteriors to a closed interior world.

The camera begins to track in and enters the window under the venetian blinds. The room is dark and the camera slowly pans from left to right, opening up the iris to adjust the f-stop to the darkened room. This is done unobtrusively by the 'opening-up' hidden in the camera movement and the 'invisibility' of the technique is typical of the classical Hollywood cinema. The pan continues until

we reach the two characters, Sam Loomis (John Gavin) who stands over a bed on which Marion Crane (Janet Leigh) is lying. He is bare chested and she wears a white brassiere and slip.

This opening sequence is characteristically Hitchcockian: 'In pictures that don't open up with violence you almost invariably apply the same rule of exposition: from the furthest to the nearest. You show the city, then a building in the city, a room in that building. That's the way *Psycho* begins' (27). And as Truffaut observes, this movement is a general principle of Hitchcock's working method 'that's one of your rules: from the furthest to the nearest: from the smallest to the biggest' (28).

And, like the crane shot in *Young and Innocent*, Hitchcock 'used a similar shot in *Notorious* starting with the camera set up high above the large chandelier the shot takes in the whole reception hall to wind up on a frame of the key in Ingrid Bergman's hand' (29). In that instance Hitchcock noted that he 'substituted the language of the camera for dialogue. In *Notorious* that sweeping movement of the camera is making a statement. What it's saying is: 'There's a large reception being held in this house, but there is a drama here which no one is aware of and, at the core of that drama is this tiny object, this key' (30).

So too in *Psycho*, the camera is 'making a statement' for in general we can say that the moving camera makes connections. It connects one part of the world with another. The panning movement therefore suggests a connection between

the world at large and what happens in *that* room to *those* people. The general is to be found in the particular. Furthermore, the hesitancy of the camera and its almost arbitrary movement suggests that almost any room could have been picked, and that the story it revealed would have as much significance as this story; or rather that this story has universal significance. For clearly 'the effect is of random selection: this could be any place any date, any time, any room: it could be us' (31).

This movement 'also allows the viewer to become a Peeping Tom' (32) and the audience-as-voyeur will become an important element in *Psycho's* makeup. In the context of the entire film, the scene carries strong overtones of the Freudian 'primal scene' - with the audience in the position of the child seeing his parents copulating. This might indeed be characterised by Bazin's comments on the sexuality of film itself: 'alone, hidden in a dark room, we watch through half-open blinds a spectacle that is unaware of our existence' (33). And again 'an invasion of privacy, the quasi-obscenity of viewing' (34).

Furthermore, the opening movement in the film is from light to darkness and *Psycho* will speak to us of the eternal and the finite, of being and nothingness, of life and death - but seen in their naked truth' (35). So begins our journey into the heart of darkness.

On Sam's line 'You never did eat your lunch, did you?' we cut to a close up of Marion's meal which introduces the theme of appetite. Their furtive love



[7]



Marion: What do I do with my free afternoon? Walk you to the airport?



[7]



[7]



Sam: We could lazy around here a while longer.

[7]



Marion: Checking out time is three P.M.

[7]



Marion: Hotels of this sort—are not interested in you when you come in. But when your time is up—Oh, Sam, I hate having to be with you in a place like this.

[7]



Sam: I've heard of married couples who deliberately spend an occasional night in a cheap hotel. They say it's very exciting—
Marlon: Oh, when you're married you can do a lot of things deliberately.

[7]



Marlon: For this. For meeting you in secret—so we can be secretive. You come down here on those business trips and we steal lunch hours and—



Sam: All right. What do we do instead? Write each other lurid love letters?

10



Sam: You sure talk like a girl who's been married.
Marlon: Sam—this is the last time.
Sam: Yeah? For what?

[7]



Marlon: Oh, Sam, I wish you wouldn't even come.



[7]



[8]



[8]



Marion: I have to go, Sam.

[8]



Sam: I can come down next week.

[8]



Marion: No.

Sam: Not even just to see you? To have lunch—in public.

Marion: Oh, we can see each other.

[8]



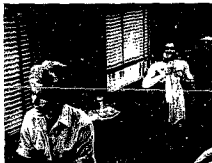
Marion: We can even have dinner—but respectfully—

[8]



Marlon: In my house with my mother's picture on the mantel and—

[8]



Marlon: my sister helping me broil a big steak for three.

[8]



Sam: And after the steak, do we send Slater to the movies? Turn Mama's picture to the wall!

[8]



Marlon: Sam!

[8]



Sam: All right!

[9]



Sam: Marlon, whenever it's possible I want to see you. And under any circumstances.

[10]



Sam: Even respectability.

[10]



Marion: You make respectability sound—disrespectful.
Sam: Oh, no—I'm all for it! It requires patience, temperance—a lot of sweating-out. Otherwise, though, it's just hard work.



Sam: But if I can see you and touch you even as simply as this—I won't mind.

[10]



Sam: I'm tired of sweating for people who aren't there!

[10]



Sam: I sweat to pay off my father's debts and he's in his grave!

[10]



Sam: I sweat to pay my ex-wife alimony, and she's—living on the other side of the world somewhere!

[10]



Marion: I pay, too.

[11]



[12]



Marion: They also pay who meet in hotel rooms.

[13]



Sam: A couple of years and—the debts will be paid off, and—if she ever remarries, the alimony stops and—



Marion: I haven't even been married once yet!



Sam: Yeah, but—when you do, you'll swing!



[6]



[6]



[6]



[6]



Marion: Sam, let's get married!

[6]



Sam: Yeah! And live with me in a storeroom behind a hardware store in Fairview! We'll have lots of laughs!

[6]

making snatched in a hotel room at lunch hour seems both shameful and humiliating, and Hitchcock 'wanted to give a visual impression of despair and solitude in that scene' (36). We cut to a medium two-shot of Sam and Marion (shot [7]), who lie back down on the bed and kiss. The camera tilts with them, and then tracks in at an oblique angle. Marion's line: 'Hotels of this sort are not interested in you when you come in, but when your time is up...' is ominous and fateful; an intimation of mortality in another hotel room. They talk of marriage and Marion's despair motivates her getting up.

We cut to a wider angle shot (shot [8]) and the camera tracks back disguising its movements by incorporating it with Marion's walk forward. From shot [10] two major themes are presented: the dominance of the past over the present and the influence parents have over their children's lives. Mother's picture must be turned to the wall, and Marion and Sam cannot marry since he has to pay off his dead father's debts, as well as alimony to his ex-wife. The insistent tendency of the past to repeat itself in the present is a familiar theme in Freudian theory, and in analysis this is called 'transference'. 'Elements of transference turn up in every relationship. We recreate in a friend what we felt for a sister or brother; in a spouse what we felt perhaps for a parent... the important thing is that they keep recurring' (37).

The film's title could be a shortened version of either psychopath or psychoanalysis (or through condensation a combination of both) and transference or 'repetition compulsion' informs all aspects of *Psycho* from the central theme to the repetition of certain motifs in the decor. In shot [11] this is apparent in



[16]



Sam: I tell you what. When I send my ex-wife alimony, you can lick the stamps!

[17]



Marion: I'll lick the stamps.

[18]



Sam: Marion, you want to cut this off—go out and find yourself somebody available?

Marion: I'm thinking of it.

[19]



Sam: How could you even think a thing like that?

[21]



[20]



Marion: Don't mix your plates.

[20]



Sam: Hey, we can leave together, can't we?

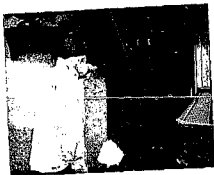
Marion: I'm-mm, I'm late.

[20]



Marion: And uh—you have to put your shoes on.

[20]



[20]



[21]



[21]



[21]



Mason: Is Mr. Lowery back from lunch?

[21]



Caroline: He's lunching with the man who's buying the Harris Street property. You know—the oil lease man? That's why he's late. You got it headache?

[21]

the use of mirror imagery which suggests other sides of personalities while repenting them.

Marion's line: 'They also pay who meet in hotel rooms' is an ominous foreboding that prepares us for another meeting in another hotel room where she will indeed pay for her sins.

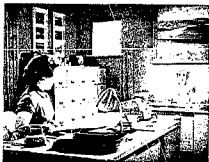
This entire scene has been constructed to favour Marion as Sam is generally in long shot in the background, and his arguments against marriage seem a poor case against Marion's yearning romanticism. The camera encourages the audience to participate in her predicament by tracking in on her line: 'I'll lick the stamps'. This tracking shot initiates the subjective approach which will be used from now until the shower scene.

We now dissolve from Sam to the interior of an office looking out on to the street. Standing outside we can clearly see Hitchcock making his obligatory appearance. These appearances are never entirely arbitrary, but relate to the major themes of his films in some way. In *Dial M for Murder*, for example, Grace Kelly has killed a man in self defence, but her jealous husband has planted evidence to make it appear as if it was a pre-meditated murder, and that she killed the man because he was blackmailing her. Hitchcock makes a very unobtrusive appearance in this film, seated in a photograph placed on the mantelpiece. Like his heroine he is 'framed' as it were. In *Strangers on a Train* the principal motif



Marlon: Oh, it'll pass. Headaches are like resolutions—
You forget them as soon as they stop hurting.

[21]



Caroline: Have you got some aspirin?
Marlon: No.
Caroline: I've got something—not aspirin.



Caroline: My mother's doctor gave them
to me the day of my wedding.

[22]



Caroline: Toddy was furious when he
found out I'd taken tranquilizers!



Marlon: There any call?

[23]



Caroline: Toddy called me—my mother
called to see if Toddy called.

[24]



Caroline: Oh, your sister called to say
she's going to Tucson to do some
buying.

[25]



Caroline: and she'll be gone the whole
weekend, and—

[26]



[27]



Cassidy: Wow! It's as hot as fresh milk!



[27]



Cassidy: Say, you girls oughtta get your boss to all-
condition you up! He can afford it today.

[27]



[27]



Lowery: Oh, Merlon, will you get the copies of that deed
ready for Mr. Cassidy?

[27]



Cassidy: Yeah, tomorrow's the day! My sweet little girl.

[28]

of the film is that of doubles, and Hitchcock makes his appearance carrying a *double bass*.

Here he wears a *straw hat*, which links him through condensation to Cassidy the business man who believes he can buy off unhappiness. The scene introduces a major theme, that of interfering parents, and Hitchcock is both associated with the interfering parent and is clearly interfering in his own daughter's (Patricia Hitchcock's) scene, as she plays the office worker, *Caroline*.

Caroline's mother interferes in her life by phoning to check up on her relationship with her husband, and by giving her tranquilizers on her wedding day. Presumably it was not the prospect of the ceremony that filled Caroline with apprehension. That her mother's doctor prescribed the tranquilizers suggests that it was a tradition of the women in her family to face sex only in a tranquilized state. What is astounding is the nutty offhand ease with which she makes public her fear of sex' (38).

In shot [27] Cassidy and Lowery enter the office and the camera pans across with them. From shot [28] Cassidy sits on the corner of Marlon's desk and begins to flirt with her. He talks of his daughter's wedding and shows Marlon a photograph of her. We are at once reminded of Marlon's own wish to marry Sam and through a process of condensation or 'over determinism' she begins to associate marriage, money and the buying off of unhappiness.



Cassidy: Oh—oh, not—not you. My daughter. A baby!

[26]



Cassidy: And tomorrow she stands her sweet self up there and gets married away from me.

[28]



Cassidy: Ah—I want you to take a look at my baby.

[29]



Cassidy: Eighteen years old—

[31]



Cassidy: And she never had an unhappy day in any one of those years!

[30]



Llewellyn: Care ten, Tom. My office is air-conditioned.

[31]



Cassidy: Do you know what I do about unhappiness? I buy it off. Are uh—are you unhappy?

[32]



Cassidy: I'm buying this house for my baby's wedding present. Forty thousand dollars, cash!

[34]



[36]



Marion: Uh—not inordinate, v.

[33]



Cassidy: Now that's—that's not buying happiness. That's just—buying off unhappiness.

[35]



Cassidy: I never carry more than I can afford to lose! Count 'em!

[37]



[38]



Caroline: I declare!

[39]



Cassidy: I don't! That's how I got to keep it!

[40]



[40]



Lowery: Tom, all--cash transactions of this size! Most irregular!

[41]



Cassidy: Oh, so what? It's my private money! Now it's yours!

[42]



[38]



Caroline: I declare!

[39]



Cassidy: I don't! That's how I get to keep it!

[40]



[40]



Lowery: Tom, uh—cash transactions of this size! Most irregular!

[41]



Cassidy: Oh, so what? It's my private money! Now it's yours!

[42]



Lowery: Uh—suppose we put it in the safe and then—
Monday morning when you're feeling good—



[64]



Cassidy: Oh, speaking of feeling good,
where's that bottle you said was in your
desk?

[65]

[65]

[66]



Cassidy: Oh-oh!

[67]



Cassidy: You know, uh—sometimes I can keep my mouth
shut.

[67]



Cassidy: Lowery, I am dying of
this/CA/come?

[48]

[48]



Lowery: I don't even want it in the office
over the week-end. Put it in the safe
deposit box in the bank and—

Lowery: we'll get him to give us a
check on Monday, instead

[49]

[50]



Carolyn: He was flirting with you.

[51]

Carolyn: I guess he must have noticed my wedding ring.

[51]



[51]



[51]



[51]



[51]



Lowery: Come in.

[52]



Marlons: The copies.

[52]



Marlons: Uh—hi, Lowery. If you don't mind, I'd like to go right on home after the bank. I have a slight headache.

[52]

From shot [30] on, the scene has been choreographed to enable Hitchcock to cut from an over-shoulder two-shot on Marion, to an equivalent matching one on Cassidy. This cutting together of matching two-shots is perfectly conventional but by placing Cassidy on the edge of the table, Hitchcock is cutting from a high angle shot to a low angle one, and both compositions offer us images of entrapment. For, although Cassidy is presented to us from a low angle which normally would make him seem imposing, here he is boxed in by the ceiling, enclosed by the decor.

From shot [50] the men enter Lowery's private office, and Marion puts the money in an envelope before she joins them. She tells Lowery that she has a slight headache and would like to go straight home after the bank. Then she leaves.

Caroline offers her pills to knock out her headache, and Hitchcock cuts to a close-up of Marion (shot [54]). This draws our attention to her remark, giving it weight and emphasis: 'You can't buy off unhappiness with pills', she tells us, but clearly she has begun to associate unhappiness with buying off. It has become a commodity to her. We cut to a long shot as she leaves, and the camera pans with her and then lets her leave frame. Hitchcock holds for an unusually long time on a picture on the wall; a dreary landscape with a road leading nowhere. This suggests her journey into the unknown which follows.



Cash: You go right on home! Because me and your boss are going out and get ourselves a little drinks' done! Right?

[52]



Lowery: Uh—of course. Do you feel ill?
Marlowe: Uh—just a headache.

[52]



Cash: Well, what you need is a week-end in Las Vegas—the playground of the world!

[52]



Marlowe: I'm going to spend this week-end in bed. Thank you.

[52]



Carollee: Aren't you going to take the pills? They'll knock that headache out.

[53]



Marlowe: Can't buy off disappointments with pills. I guess I'll go put this money in the bank...—then go home and sleep it off.

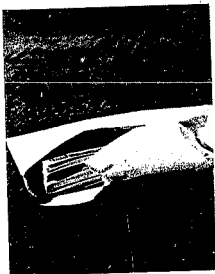
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We dissolve to shot [56] wherein Marion is now dressed in a black brassiere and slip. She comes in from the left of frame and then looks towards the bed. The camera tracks in and tilts down onto the bed, revealing the envelope with the \$40,000. The camera then pans across to the left to an open suitcase with Marion's clothes in it.

This shot is masterful in its economy and exploitation of the moving camera. Wordlessly but with Herrmann's deterministic 'loaded' score, we are given information. The scene is coded in that Marion's white brassiere has been exchanged for a black one, as she exchanges innocence for guilt. Her gaze tells us the reason for this guilt, and the moving camera begins to make connections. Unlike montage, which tends to separate the world into different units, the moving camera connects one part to another. So here the tilt down connects Marion's black lingerie with the money and the panning shot connects this to her packed suitcase. With the greatest economy we know that she has decided to steal the money and leave town.¹

¹ Unfortunately as the camera tracks in on the money and tilts down, we can see on the top of the frame in the Academy print, the shadow of a French flag. This is a device clipped on to the top of the screen to cut off any light from entering the lens and causing a light flare. *Exakta* was shot and originally projected in wide screen at the 1:1.85 ratio and as this shadow would have been masked out of the audience's view; but nevertheless the shadow should have been avoided as all 16 mm prints are governed in the Academy ratio of 1:1.33. The film was photographed by John Russell who was Hitchcock's cameraman. Presumably his usual feature collaborator, Robert Dukes, a marvellous craftsman, would not have allowed this kind of oversight to have occurred.



[57]



[51]



[60]



[61]



[61]



[62]



[63]



[63]



[63]



[64]



[64]



[65]

The scene is silent, except for Herrmann's music, which begins over the track in on to the envelope, and conveys a sense of decision. The shots are structured in a manner which will become familiar to us, and which is characteristic of Hitchcock, i.e. we first see a close-up of Janet Leigh, and then we cut to her point of view. I'm what they call a purist in terms of cinema, as much as I can be; I'm inclined to go for the subjective, i.e. the point of view of an individual. So that visually you do a close-up of him, then you show what he is looking at, then you cut back to the close-up, and then you see his reaction' (1951).

This method of editing owes much to the Kuleshov experiment and Pudovkin's resulting theories of montage. In the experiment a close-up of an actor showing no emotion, that is expressionless, was cut together with a shot of a bowl of soup, then the same shot of the actor was cut in, followed by a shot of a smiling young girl. Audiences were asked to respond to the material, and in all cases they apparently felt that in the first shot, the actor was hungry, and in the second shot he appeared happy, yet the same shots of the actor were used throughout.

Hitchcock employed this method of montage most efficiently in *Rear Window*, and he clearly had great faith in montage's ability to manipulate audience response. 'He looks and now we cut to what he sees and you show a woman holding a baby in her arms, then you cut back to him and he smiles. Now take away the middle piece of film. Have his close-up and instead of cutting to a woman with a baby, cut to a girl in a very risque bikini.



[65]



[66]



[67]



[67]



[67]



[67]



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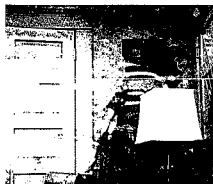
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[67]



[67]



[68]



[67]



[70]



[71]

Now you use the same smile, but you've changed him from a benevolent gentleman to a dirty old man only by changing one piece of film and that is the power of montage' (40).

This kind of montage where we see things from the character's point of view is almost like a displacement mechanism, whereby the audience displaces its response to a particular shot on to the close-up of the character, and in Hitchcock it allows us to experience directly what the character is experiencing. It is assumed that as we share the protagonist's perception we begin more closely to identify and empathize with that character. Certainly the film is constructed in this way since 'It (has always) seemed natural for me to put the audience in the mind of a particular character' (41).

This scene also introduces the first of a series of pre-echoes of the shower murder. For, firstly the plan of Marlon's room is similar to that of the motel, and secondly in shot [59] as she leans to the left to put on her shoes, in the background we can see into the bathroom with the shower, and the shower rose is clearly visible. And, throughout the scene, as she moves about, the camera moves with her, revealing this shower rose on a number of occasions. The scene also re-inforces the motif of doubles and other sides of personalities through its use of mirror imagery in shot [61]. Finally, after some deliberation, Marlon places the envelope with the money in her handbag and leaves the room.



[72]



[72]



[73]



[74]



[74]



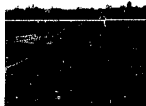
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[76]



[76]



[77]



[78]



[78]

And so Marion begins the journey that will lead her to her death. We dissolve to a shot of her behind the wheel of her car (shot [68]) and then we hear Sam's voice: 'Marion, what in the world...what are you doing here? What is it, Marion?' We thus have access to her thoughts, to her stream of consciousness. Then we cut to a shot of Marion's point of view (shot [69]). We have a street scene with pedestrians crossing the street in front of Marion's car. It is a process back projection shot which gives the scene a heightened, theatrical, almost surreal quality. This is reinforced by the sound track, which is similarly stylized. We hear no traffic noise or crowd noise, but only footsteps treated to give a 'hollow' effect.

Psycho is a film about interior landscapes, about psychological states rather than sociological issues, and thus this stylized treatment reinforces the claustrophobic mood which permeates the film: 'The entire psychic world which the film portrays is increasingly isolated, increasingly withdrawn and interior. It is the corridors of the mind with which we are concerned not of the broader vistas of a country or a people. Because it examines pointedly private worlds, *Psycho* is paradoxically among the most universal of films' (42).

We then cut back to a close-up of Marion in shot [70] and then to a shot of her point of view in shot [71]. Here we see her boss Mr. Lowery and Cassidy crossing the road. Lowery smiles in acknowledgement. We cut to Marion smiling nervously back at him, and then we cut to a point of view again as Lowery

hesitates, perhaps wondering what Marion is doing driving around town. She said she had a headache and was going to bed.

We cut back to Marion looking apprehensive, and then the lights change and she drives off looking back towards Lowery.

Now we dissolve to a shot of the road coming towards us from Marion's point of view, and then we dissolve back to her face. The light outside is growing darker; night is beginning to fall. We cut to a shot of the road with cars travelling past, their lights on Marion. She pulls back from their brightness in the next shot (shot [78]). And then we dissolve out.

Hitchcock is rigorous in his use of the close-up of Marion cut to her point of view method, and it is exactly the same method we witness in almost all his films. For example, in *North by Northwest*, when Cary Grant is moving towards the Frank Lloyd Wright house, he employs the same structure - Cary Grant/ Cary Grant's point of view: Cary Grant/ Cary Grant's point of view, etc. It seems reasonable to assume that not only is this structure designed to encourage the viewer to identify with Marion by showing her perception but also that it cannot really be read any other way: 'The film is a system of signals that can be read one way only, and where each signal is designed to produce a specific effect meticulously assigned to its appropriate position in the overall structure: a dramatic method that is strictly Pavlovian' (43). And clearly Hitchcock himself believed that the design of his films allowed him to control audience response: 'Psycho



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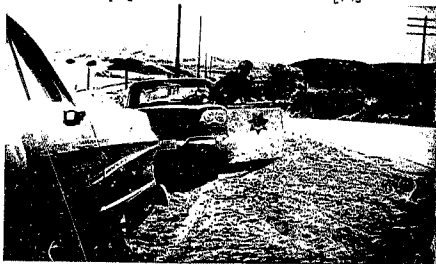
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[83]



[84]



[85]



[86]



[87]



[86]



Patrolman: Uh—hold it there!

[87]



[87]



Patrolman: In quite a hurry.

[88]



Marion: Yes. Uh—I didn't intend to sleep so long. I almost had an accident last night, from sleepiness. So I decided to pull over.

[89]



Patrolman: You slept here all night?

[90]



Marion: Yes. As I said, I couldn't keep my eyes open.

[91]



Patrolman: There are plenty of motels in this area. You should've—I mean, just to be safe—

[92]



Marlon: I don't intend to sleep all night! I just pulled over. Have I broken any laws?

[93]



Patrolman: No, no'am.
Marlon: Then I'm free to go?

[94]



Patrolman: Is anything wrong?
Marlon: Of course not. Am I acting as if there's something wrong?

[95]



Patrolman: I am, yes.
Marlon: Please—I'd like to go.
Patrolman: Well, is there?

[96]



Marlon: Is there what? I've told you there's nothing wrong, except that I'm in a hurry and you're taking up my time.

[97]



Patrolman: Now, just a moment! Turn your motor off, please.

[98]



[97]



Patrolman: May I see your license?

[98]



Marlon: Why?
Patrolman: Please.

[99]



[100]



[101]



[102]



[103]



[104]



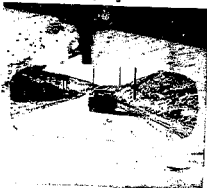
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has a very interesting construction and that game with the audience was fascinating. I was directing the viewers. You might say I was playing them like an organ' (44).

We dissolve to a shot of Marion's car parked alongside the road in broad daylight. The shot is compositionally balanced by the telephone pole dividing the frame, and this balance between horizontal and vertical objects imposes artistic form on an increasingly chaotic situation. This particular compositional balance will be repeated later at the motel. As Truffaut observed: 'I must say that the architectural contrast between the vertical house and the horizontal motel is quite pleasing to the eye'. To which Hitchcock replied: 'Definitely. That's our composition. A vertical block and a horizontal block' (45).

A State Highway patrol car then pulls up and reverses behind Marion's car. A policeman gets out and knocks on Marion's car window waking her up. She is startled and from her point of view we see the policeman in shot [85]. The wide angle lens used on his close-up brings him more directly into contact with us, and at the same time distorts his features, making him both grotesque and fearful.

In a film which explores the motif of the gaze, this is the only character whose eyes we do not see, and it serves to distance him from us. He is watching Marion and us. He is safe from our gaze, while we are not safe from his. Hitchcock is also exploiting our (and his) fear of the police, since he is 'still scared of

police men. In fact, I don't drive a car on the simple fact that if you don't drive a car you can't get a ticket. I mean, the getting of a ticket to me is a rather suspenseful matter' (46).

The policeman tells Marion that: 'There are plenty of motels in the area. You should have... I mean, just to be safe...' (shot [92]). The irony of this statement is of course only apparent later, since he now sends her to exactly the place where she will be least safe.

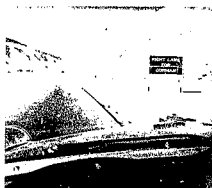
The policeman gets suspicious and asks to see Marion's licence. The scene is constructed for the audience to feel anxiety and to wish for Marion's escape. Hitchcock believes this to be a normal audience response and 'a general rule... When a burglar goes into a room all the time he is going through the drawers, the public is generally anxious for him' (47).

Finally the policeman decides to let Marion drive off, and Herrmann's music, now becoming more frenetic, suggesting flight, accompanies her. This scene is constructed yet again around close-up shots of Marion cut with shots of her point of view, and is reminiscent of similar shots of Scotty following Madeleine in Vertigo.

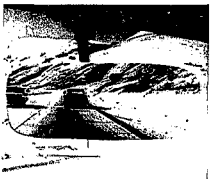
Marion's point of view shots of the road are very deterministic and fatalistic in quality as the road rushes up towards her. On her close-ups we can see the road behind her head with the police car following. These are process shots done



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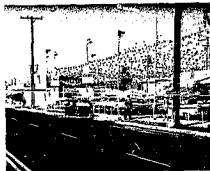
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[119]



[120]



Car Dealer: Be with you in a second.
[120]



[121]



[122]



[123]



[124]

in the studio with back projection, and therefore they have a slightly unreal quality. This conveys exactly the hopelessness and pointlessness of her attempts to escape the past. This is an unreal escape.

The policeman then turns off on another road, and Marion sighs with relief.

We dissolve from a close-up of her face to a shot of the car driving into a used car lot. Marion climbs out of the car and walks down the lot. The camera tracks with her (shot [125]). This shot is intercut with tracking shots from her point of view on the number plates of the cars in the lot. Once again we are drawn into identification with her consciousness.

She buys a paper from a stand and pages through it, presumably looking to see if her crime has been discovered and reported yet. As if in response to her fear, the policeman arrives across the road (shot [128]). The audience sees him but Marion does not. She reads the paper and walks back into the lot.

The policeman's behaviour has been rather strange. First he let her go, and now he suddenly appears as if from nowhere. Why? Jean Douchet suggests that this is an example of the occult: 'The very appearance of the cop, reminiscent of the motor cycle cops in Cocteau's *Orphée*, belongs to the domain of fantasy. He is at one and the same time conscience and the Angel of Order dispatched for a last attempt for salvation. But he cannot save someone who does not want to



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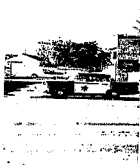
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[132]



[133]



[32]



[33]



Car Dealers: I'm in no mood for trouble.
Marion: What?
Car Dealers: There's an old saying, "First customer of the day is always the most trouble!"

[33]



Car Dealers: But like I say, I'm in no mood for it so I'm gonna treat you so fair and square that you won't have one human reason to give me—

[33]



Marion: Can I trade my car in and take another?
Car Dealers: Do anything you've a mind to. Bein' a woman, you will. That yours?

[33]



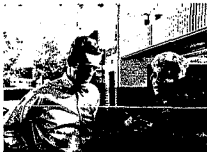
Marion: Yes, it's just that—there's nothing wrong with it, I like it—
Car Dealers: Sick of the sight of it? Well, why don't you have a look around here and see if there's somethin' that strikes your eyes

[33]



Car Dealers: and meanwhile I'll have my mechanic give yours the once over. You want some coffee? I was just about—

[133]



Marion: No, thank you. I'm in a hurry. I just want to make a change, and—
Car Dealers: One thing people never oughtta be when they're buyin' used cars and that's in a hurry.

[135]



[134]



Car Dealers: But like I said, it's too nice a day to argue. I'll uh—shoot your car in the garage here.

[135]



[136]



[137]



[138]



Car Dealer: That's the one I'd've picked for you myself.

[138]



Marlon: Uh—how much?

[139]



Car Dealer: Go ahead and spin it around the block.

[140]



Marlon: It looks fine. How much will it be with my car?

[141]



Car Dealer: You mean you don't want the usual day and a half to think it over? Hah! You are in a hurry, aren't you? Somebody chasin' you?

96

[142]



Marlon: Of course not. Please.

[143]



Car Dealer: Well,—it's the first time a customer has ever high-pressed the salesman! Uh—I'd figure roughly—your car plus seven hundred dollars.

Marlene: Seven hundred.

[43]



Marlene: All right.

[45]



Marlene: I believe I have the necessary papers. Is there a Ladies' Room?

[46]



Car Dealer: Ah,—you always got time to argue money, uh?

[44]



Car Dealer: I take it you can prove that car is yours—I mean, uh—out of state license and all. You got your pink slip and—

[45]



[46]



[147]



[148]



Car Dealers: in the building.



[150]



[150]



[150]



[151]



[151]



[151]



[52]



[53]



Car Dealer: I think you'd better take it for a trial spin. Don't want any bad word of mouth about California Charlie.

[53]



Marlow: I'd really rather not. Uh—can't we just settle this?
Car Dealer: I—might as well be perfectly homes with you, ma'am. It's not that I don't trust you, but uh—

[53]



Marlow: But what is there anything so terribly wrong about—making a decision and wanting to hurry! Do you think I've stolen my car?

[54]



Car Dealer: No, ma'am. All right, let's go inside.

[55]



[56]



[56]



[56]



[57]



Mechanics: Hey!

[58]



Marlene: Oh, just put it in here. Please. Thank you.

[59]

be saved. If the reader-spectator is familiar with the notions of magic, he knows that the audience's wave of hostility prevents the Angel from accomplishing his mission'(48).

Marion is joined by the car salesman, California Charlie. She is startled by his opening line: 'I'm in no mood for trouble'. Charlie offers to have his mechanic look her car over, and as she leaves, Marion notices the policeman (shot [136]). She then walks down the lot and the camera tracks with her. She stops to look at a car and is then joined by Charlie. She decides to buy this car and when she immediately accepts his price he becomes suspicious. 'I take it you can prove that that car is yours', he says. Marion asks where the Ladies' room is, and the camera tracks with her and Charlie in two-shot, as they walk off. Marion looks over her shoulder and this is intercut with a shot of her point of view tracking away from the policeman.

She enters the bathroom, the camera in a high angle position. Marion takes the money from her handbag and we see a mirror reflection of her, reminding us again of the duality of human nature. She counts the money over the basin, a shot which pre-echoes Norman's hand washing, again binding different parts of the film together quite formally. She counts up \$700, and then leaves the bathroom.

She joins Charlie who is a little uneasy and suspicious. Then he reluctantly agrees to the sale, and they go into the office. Hitchcock cuts to the policeman who turns his car round and drives it into the lot. This shot serves to

compress time since the signing of forms would take considerably longer in real time, and thus it drives the narrative forward while maintaining audience interest.

Mation and Charlie come out of the office, and again she notices the policeman. She quickly climbs into her new car and drives off. She is stopped by an off-screen shout. It is the mechanic with her suitcase and coat. She lets him put them on the back seat and then drives off in a hurry. The policeman joins Charlie and the mechanic and the three watch her leave. The entire scene then has served to illustrate the pointlessness of her attempts to run away and make a new life with Sam. Whatever she does is observed. She exchanges her car for another, but all this is done with the knowledge of the policeman. Who is she fooling? Clearly no one. But even knowing this she goes on with her plan as if driven by forces stronger than herself.

CHAPTER THREE

THE BIRDS

The futility of her escape plan is further re-inforced in the travelling shots of Marion which follow. The shots are again studio process shots, and the back projection serves to create a heightened unreal cityscape. Once again we return to the pattern of mid-shots of Marion intercut with shots of her point of view, and again the structure is carried through rigorously.

Now we also begin to share Marion's thoughts, what she imagines other people to be saying about her. First she imagines a conversation between Charlie and the policeman, and then one between Lowery and Caroline. Lowery is concerned about Marion not coming in to work on the Monday morning. In the shots through the windscreen, from Marion's point of view, afternoon gives way to evening, and evening to night. 'As the world before her darkens, there is a darkening of the mood of the scenes invoked by the voices culminating in Cassidy's rage and threat of vengeance' (49).

Significantly Hitchcock cuts to a tighter shot of Marion framing her in a choker close-up. This break in the shot structure is as characteristic of Hitchcock as his rigid adherence to a particular pattern, and demands our attention. In *North by Northwest*, Hitchcock likewise emphasizes James Mason's pain on learning of Eve Marie Saint's betrayal of him, by similarly breaking from the



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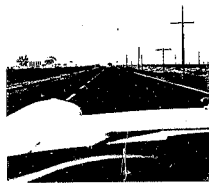
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Car Dealer's Voice: Heck, Officer, that was the first time I ever saw the customer high-pressure the salesman! Somebody chase 'er!
 Patrolman's Voice: I better have a look at those papers, Charlie.

[161]



Caroline's Voice: Yes, Mr. Lowery?
 Lowery's Voice: Caroline? Marion still isn't in?
 Caroline: No, Mr. Lowery. But then, she's always a bit late on Monday mornings.
 Lowery: Buzz me the minute she comes in.

[163]



Caroline: I called her sister, Mr. Lowery, whom she works, —the Music Makers Music Store, you know, — and she doesn't know where Marion is any more than we do.

[165]

ss



Car Dealer: She look like a wrong-one to you?
 Patrolman: Aced like one.
 Car Dealer: The only funny thing, she paid me seven hundred dollars in cash.

[162]



Lowery: Then call her sister — if no one's answering at the house.

[164]



Lowery: You'd better run out to the house. She may be, well — unable to answer the phone.
 Caroline: Her sister's going to do that. She's as worried as we are.

[166]



Lowery: No, I haven't the faintest idea. As I said, I last saw your sister when she left this office on Friday. She said she didn't feel well and wanted to leave early. I said she could. That was the last I saw—Now wait a minute. I did see her sometime later, driving—Ah, I think you'd better come over here to my office—quick! Caroline, get Mr. Cassidy for me!

[67]



Cassidy's Voice: Well, I ain't about to kiss off forty thousand dollars! I'll get it back, and if any of it's missing I'll replace it with her fine, soft flesh! I'll track her, never you doubt it!

[68]



Cassidy: You checked with the bank, na? They never laid eyes on her, na? You still trustin' her? Not exceptin'! She was there while I dumped it out! Hardly even looked at it! Plannin' And—just even flirtin' with me!

[69]



Lowery: After all, Cassidy, I told you—all that cash! I'm not taking the responsibility! Oh, for heaven's sake! A girl works for you for ten years, you trust her! All right. Yes. You better come over.

[70]



Lowery: Oh, hold on, Cassidy! I-I still can't believe—it must be some kind of a mystery. I-I can't—

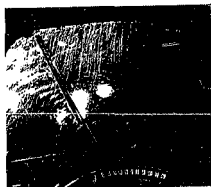
[71]



[72]



[173]



[174]



[175]



[176]



[177]



[178]

Cary Grant/his point of view structure, to cut to a low angle shot on James Mason.

Cassidy's words bring pleasure to Marion, and she imagines his rage and in particular his threat - 'I won't kiss off \$40,000. I'll get it back, and if any of it is missing I'll replace it with her fine soft flesh'. Rothman points out that this fantasy has a masochistic aspect. Cassidy lacks the power to make good his threat to make Marion pay with her fine soft flesh, but nonetheless the 'fantasy of being subject to murderous violence (a fantasy destined to be fulfilled) also underlies the scenes Marion imagines' (50).

Underlying the scene is, however, also a sadistic impulse namely to take vengeance against the likes of Cassidy: men who regard Marion as a piece of flesh to be bought and consumed.

Immediately we cut to a shot of the road as the first drops of rain begin to fall. This pre-echoes the shower murder, the hiss of the rain pre-figuring the noises of the shower and the windscreen wipers swing back and forth reproducing the rhythm of the knife blows. As V.F. Perkins points out: 'Punishment becomes less completely arbitrary by virtue of this sequence of pre-echoes. It becomes appropriate not to (Marion's) actions but to her attitudes. She is destroyed by an explosion of forces existing within her own personality: the savage equation of sex and punishment, the self comforting contempt for others "desires" the dirty old man deserves to lose his money' is a short step from 'the



[79]



[79]



[80]



[81]



[82]



[83]



[84]



[86]



[87]



[88]



[89]



[90]



[90]



[90]



[91]

filthy slut deserves to lose her life'. It belongs to the same order of psychotic reasoning. Implicated as we have been in Marion's thought we cannot entirely refuse the guilt of Mother's action' (51).

Then the motel sign appears out of the darkness and the water. Blurred outlines and the oblique angles of the shot conjure up a mood of unreal strangeness: 'This motel which contains deep dark ugly secrets about a twisted and demented soul rises up into consciousness like the Freudian id, that storehouse of repressed wishes and motives buried deep within the unconsciousness' (52).

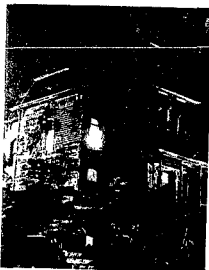
The manner in which these pre-echo sequences operate and the relationship that exists by linking one sequence to another in this purely formal manner has, it seems to me, a profound significance both for Hitchcock's art and for any understanding of the relationship between form and empathic response. For Hitchcock has always insisted that his art is a formalist one: 'I am interested not so much in the stories I tell, as in the means of telling them' (53). Style was for him, then, at least as important as content.

'When I say that I am not interested in content, it's the same as a painter (not) worrying about the apples that he is painting - whether they are sweet or sour. Who cares? It's his style, his manner of painting them, that's where the emotion comes from, the same as in sculpture. Any art form is there for the artist to interpret it in his own way and thus create an emotion' (54).

Furthermore Hitchcock always insisted that this style was almost solely responsible for empathic and emotional response in an audience. 'I don't care about the subject matter; I don't care about the acting; but I do care about the pieces of film and the photography and the sound track and all of the technical ingredients that made the audience scream. I feel it's tremendously satisfying for us to be able to use this cinematic art to achieve something of a mass emotion, and with *Psycho* we most definitely achieved this. It wasn't a message that stirred the audiences, nor was it a great performance or the enjoyment of the novel. They were aroused by pure film' (55).

This implies then that the cinema is a formalist or even an abstract art, whereby the repetition of certain visual motifs can be likened to the repetition of motifs in music. In fact Hitchcock has always insisted on stressing the analogy between film and music, and likening his working methods to those of a conductor. 'I have to say I am equivalent to though maybe not so good as a conductor conducting an orchestra without a score' (56). Or a composer: 'I would prefer to write all this down however tiny or however short the pieces of film are - they should be written down in just the same way a composer writes down those little black dots from which we get beautiful sound' (57).

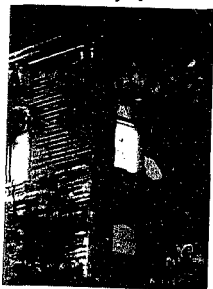
Hitchcock then cuts to an objective long shot of Marion's car pulling up outside the motel. The low bass notes in the strings are drawn out, and the rain sound continues loudly on the track. Marion climbs out of the car. This is followed by a close-up shot from behind her as she enters the office. She finds no



[192]



[193]



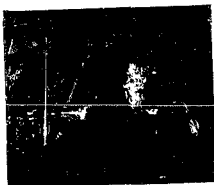
[194]



[195]



[196]



[197]



[198]



[199]



[200]



[201]



Norman: Dirty night

[200]



[201]



Marion: Do you have a vacancy?

Norman: Oh, we have twelve vacancies

[202]



Norman: Twelve cabins—twelve vacancies. They uh—they moved away the highway

[203]



Marion: Oh, I thought I'd gotten off the main road

[204]



Norman: I know you must have. Nobody ever stops here anymore unless they've done that

[205]



Norman: Well—there's no sense dwelling on our losses.
[205]



Norman: We just keep on fighting the lights and following the formalities.
[206]



[207]

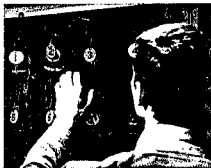


Norman: Your home address. Oh, just the town will do.
[208]



Marion: Los Angeles.

[209]



[210]

one, comes back out, and the camera tracks with her as she moves to the corner of the motel building. She looks up, and we cut to a long shot of the house. Marion now in close-up looks, and we see a closer shot of the house. There is a light in the windows, which makes the building look like a face with two eyes staring out into the night. She, and we, notice a figure passing by one of the windows.

Marion then goes back to her car and hoots, until a figure leaves the house and runs down the pathway. Norman has an umbrella in his hand, but he does not open it. I can only see this as a phallic symbol, and his inability to use the umbrella properly seems to point to his impotence. They enter the office and both Norman and Marion are momentarily reflected in the mirror (shot (201)). But in the rest of the shot we will see only her reflection: as they face each other across the desk. Norman's first line: 'Dirty night' is ironic, in view of what will follow.

Hitchcock now intercuts between two matching two-shots, the one favouring Norman at a slight high angle and the one favouring Marion at a slight low angle. Their conversation is charged with double meaning.

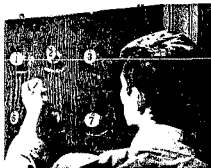
Norman: 'They moved away the highway'.

Marion: 'I thought I'd gotten off the main road'.

Norman: 'I knew you must have. Nobody ever stops here anymore unless they've done that. But there's no sense dwelling on our losses. We just keep on lighting the lights and following the formalities'.



[210]



Norman: Cabin One.

[210]



Norman: It's close in case you want anything. It's right next to the office.

[211]



Marilyn: I want sleep more than anything else. Except maybe, food.

[212]



Norman: Well, there's a big diner about ten miles up the road, just outside of Fairvale.

[213]



Marilyn: Am I that close to Fairvale?
Norman: Fifteen miles. I'll get your bags.

[214]



[215]



[215]



[216]



Norman: Boy, it's stuffy in here.

[216]



[216]



Norman: Well, the old mattress is soft and—

[216]

Marion surely has moved off the right moral road. She has strayed, and where she has strayed the 'lights' will soon be put out. The 'formalities' will give way to cruelty and despair. There will be only darkness.

She then signs the register as 'Marie Samuels'. This name links her to her lover Sam and is a manifestation of her wish-fulfilment to be married to Sam, to make her name his. Naturally this is conveyed by a mechanism which embodies both condensation and displacement.

When Norman asks her to fill in her home address, saying that just a town will do, Marion glances over to her bag. In the newspaper sticking out she reads: 'O.K.' and 'Los Angeles'. She is given a 'sign' from the outside world. External forces are prompting her to say 'Los Angeles' and the deterministic quality is enforced when Norman responds to the town by changing his mind about what cabin to give her. He chooses cabin 1 - or is that choice made for him?

Chance or fate further drives the narrative on, and Marion to her premature death later in the scene. Norman tells her that she is only 15 miles from Fairvale. She hesitates and perhaps contemplates driving on, but Norman immediately offers to get her bags. The moment passes. Her fate is sealed.

Norman and Marion enter the room and he opens the window to let in some air, claiming that: 'It's stuffy in here'. This could be his real motivation, but it



Norman: there's hangers in the closet and stationery with "Baise Mère" printed on it, in case you want to make your friends back home feel envious.

[2.16]



Norman: —and the uh—

[2.16]



Marlowe: The bathroom.

[2.17]



Norman: Yes. Well, uh— if you want anything just— just tap on the wall.



Norman: I'll—I'll be in the office.

[2.18]



Marion: Uh, thank you, Mr. Bates.

[218]



Norman: Norman Bates.

[219]



Norman: You're not really gonna go out again and drive up to the diner, are you?

[220]



Marion: No.

[222]



Norman: Well, then, would you do me a favor? Would you have dinner with me? I was just about to, myself. You know, nothing special.

[223]



Norman: Just sandwiches and milk. But I'd like it very much if you'd come up to the house.

or

[225]



[226]



Norman: Well, I—I don't set a fancy table but the kitchen's awful homely.

[227]



[228]



[229]



Marion: I'd like to.

[230]



Norman: All right. Uh--y-you get yourself settled, and-- and take off your wet shoes.

[231]



Norman: and I'll be back as soon as it's ready,—with my—



Norman: with my trusty umbrella.

[231]



[232]



[232]



[232]



[232]



[232]



[232]



[232]



[232]



[232]



[234]



[234]



[234]



[234]



[234]



[235]



[236]



[236]



Woman: No! I tell you no! I won't have you bringing strange young girls in here for supper—

[237]



Woman: by candlelight. I suppose, in the cheap erotic fashion of young men with cheap, erotic minds!

Norman: Mother, please!

[238]



Woman: And then what, after supper? Must! Whippers!

Norman: Mother, she's just a stranger! She's hungry and... it's raining out.

[238]



Woman: Mother, she's just a stranger! As if men don't desire strangers! Ah! I refuse to speak of disgusting things because they disgust me! Do you understand, boy?

[239]



Woman: Go on! Go tell her she'll not be appeasing her ugly appetite with my food, or my son! Or do I have to tell her 'cause you don't have the guts! Huh, boy? You, have the guts, boy!

Norman: Shut up! Shut up!

[240]



[240]



[241]



Marion: I've caused you some trouble.

[241]

could also be a ploy. He opens it so that she may overhear the scenario he stages between himself and Mother. It could be his means of keeping Marion out of the house and away from its secrets. After all, the scene could have been directed so that Marion herself opened the window.

Norman then shows her the room but hesitates and stutters on the word 'mattress'. The *parapraxis* is perhaps due to the similarity between this and the word 'maricide' - the focus of his guilt. He is also unable to say the word 'bathroom' which draws our attention to the room and emphasizes it.

Marion is once again reflected in the mirror on the line: 'Thank you, Mr. Bates'. And then in matching close-ups cut between them Norman invites Marion to have dinner with him. When she says: 'I'd like to' we cut to a mid two-shot of them and Norman leaves, saying he will be back 'with my trusted umbrella'. Hitchcock thus drives the symbolic point home so to speak.

When she is alone, Marion puts her suitcase on the bed and begins to unpack to the accompaniment of music. She looks all around the room for a place to hide the money, and then in a repetition of the office scene, she is once again given a 'sign' from the 'O.K.' in the newspaper.

The \$40,000 is, of course, what Hitchcock calls the *macguffin*; something which the characters have an interest in, and which drives the narrative forward, but which is of little significance in itself or for the audience. For Hitchcock:

'The audience are being nursed along, petted and worried about, so that... pieces of plot are being thrust into their minds' (58).

He explains the origin of the term 'macguffin' in the following way: 'As the story goes, two men are in an English train and one says to the other:

'Excuse me sir, what is that strange looking package above your head?'

'Oh, that's a macguffin'.

'What's that for?'

'That's for trapping lions in the Scottish Highlands.'

'But there are no lions in the Scottish Highlands'.

'Then that's no macguffin' (59).

The absolute unimportance of the macguffin is another example of Hitchcock's stress on form rather than content. He simply dismisses it: 'and macguffin doesn't matter at all. You have to have it because the spies have to be after something, and I reduced it to its minimum in *North by Northwest*, when Cary Grant says to the C.I.A. man:

'What is this man after?'

The 'heavy' James Mason.

'Oh', says the C.I.A. man: 'Let's say he is an importer or an exporter'.

'What of?'

'Um, Government secrets' (60).

Marion wraps the money in the newspaper and places it on the bedside table. As she does so, we hear a woman's voice, loud but muffled by distance: 'No, I tell you, no.' Marion is shocked, and 'the simultaneity of the intrusion of this voice and Marion's guilty gesture is uncanny, as though the voice emanated from Marion's imagination' (61).

Marion goes over to the window and listens to the rest of the conversation between Norman and Mother. We cut from close-ups of Marion in profile to long shots of the house from her point of view.

Norman begs Mother not to continue, but she is relentless:

'And then what? After supper, music? whispering?

Her words echo Sam's in the first scene:

'And then after the steak? do we turn Mother's picture to the wall?'

This scene and the first one are further linked by the reintroduction of the theme of appetite on Mother's line:

'Go on; go tell her that she'll not be appeasing her ugly appetite with my food or my son'.

As Foley points out: 'The prominence of "appetite" in Hitchcock's films - again and again one sees people eating and there is often an equation of eating with sex - carries strong overtones of the child's dependence on the mother for food, a dependence which Mr Slater calls "the oral-narcissistic dilemma."' (62)

(of Chry Grant's 'forced feeding' in *North by Northwest* - a film whose hero not only has a mother problem but a conspicuously oral problem: alcoholism).

In any case, the following passage from *The Glory of Hera* is directly relevant to Hitchcock:

'...the mother's implicit sexual demands upon the child (threaten) him as much as her hostile resentment. The 'appropriate' fantasy response to such a double threat is an act of sexual violence, a sadistic oedipal rape. On the one hand, it takes revenge upon the mother for her hostility and her impossible demands, and on the other it fulfills, with grim irony, the sexual needs she has displaced from husband to child... From the helpless, confused, impotent, and scorned child he becomes the aggressive, potent, bullying ravisher.' (63)

Norman shouts at her to 'Shut up' and then slams the door. Marion then goes outside to wait for him. We cut to a shot from behind her [241] and when Norman enters the frame the camera tracks forward and pans to the right with him, allowing them to face each other on either side of the frame.

Marion says: 'I've caused you some trouble' and Norman after hesitating replies: 'Mother - what is the phrase: she isn't quite herself today'. In retrospect the line is hilarious - Mother is definitely not herself: she is Norman. But even on first viewing it incorporates the notion of the instability of personality.



Norman: No. Uh--uh. Another--m-my
Another on--What is the phrase? She
isn't quite herself today.



Marlon: You shouldn't have bothered.
I really don't have that much of an
appetite.



Norman: Oh, I'm sorry. Uh--I wish you
could apologize for other people.

[241]



Marlon: Don't worry about it. But as long as you've fixed
the supper, we may as well eat it.

[241]



[242]



[243]



Norman: It uh--it--it might be uh--nicer--uh--uh--and
warmer--in the office.

[244]



[244]



[244]



[245] n.



Marion: Well, I'm just...
Norman: Calm... I'm... just...
Uh... bi... I'm... at a...
[246]



Marion: All right. Uh...

[247]



[249]



[248]



[251]



[250]

She then suggests that they eat their meal, and steps back to behind the door, allowing Norman space. As she does so, the camera tracks back and we are able to see the bed through the doorway, introducing the idea of sex. The centre of the frame is now occupied by a lamp and 'again and again a lamp will be associated with the mother becoming her surrogate in the frame and the emblem of her mystery' (64).

Norman hesitates and then we are allowed to see the reason for his hesitancy. From his point of view we see Marion standing outside the motel room door looking exactly like a hopker waiting for a client. Norman backs off, suggesting it would be nicer and warmer in the office. Marion smiles and then closes the door, and then the camera tracks with them as she joins him in the office. Norman entices her further into his web by suggesting that they go into the parlour. They move into a darkened room.

Norman turns on a light in the parlour, revealing a room furnished with stuffed birds on the walls. The lighting from below casts grotesque shadows on the walls. And, the birds, seen from Marion's point of views shots [249 and 251] appear chilling. Norman invites Marion to sit down which she does. He says: 'It's all for you; I'm not hungry' once again introducing the notion of appetite, but also echoing her earlier phrase: 'I really don't have that much of an appetite' which could be read as an appetite for food as well as a sexual appetite for him.



Norman: Sit down.

[2 52]



Marion: Oh—thank you. You're very kind.

[2 53]



Norman: It's all for you. I'm not hungry. Go ahead

[2 53]



Norman: You—you eat like a bird.

[2 54]



Marion: And you'd know, of course.

[2 55]



Norman: No, not really. Anyway, I hear the expression 'eats like a bird'—let's really a false—false—false. Because birds really eat a tremendous lot.

[2 56]



Norman: But—I—I don't really know anything about birds. My hobby is stuffing things. You know—taxidermy.

[2 57]



Norman: And I guess I'd—just rather stuff birds because—I hate the look of beasts when they're stuffed.

[2 58]



Norman: You know, foxes and chimps and—some—some people even stuff dogs and cats. But—Oh, I can't do that.

[2 59]



Norman: I—I think—I think only birds look well stuffed because—Well, because they're kinda—passive—to begin with.

[2 60]



Marion: It's a strange hobby. Curious.

[2 61]



Norman: Uncommon, too.

[2 62]



Marion: Oh, I imagine so.

[2 63]



Norman: And it's uh—it's not so expensive as you'd think. It's cheap, really. You know—needles and thread—sawdust. The chemicals are the only thing that uh—that cost anything.

[2 64]



Marion: A man should have a hobby.

[2 65]



Norman: Well, it's—it's more than a hobby. A hobby's supposed to pass the time—not fill it.

Marion: Is your time so empty?

[2 66]



Norman: No. Uh—Well, I—I run the office, and uh—tend the cabins and grounds, and—and do little errands for my mother—the ones she allows I might be capable of doing.

Marion: Uh, do you go out with friends?

[267]



Norman: Well, uh—a boy's best friend is his mother.

[268]



Norman: You've never had an empty moment in your entire life, have you?

Marion: Only my shore.

Norman: Where are you going?

[269]



Norman: I didn't mean to pry.

Marion: Fine. I'm looking for a private island.

[270]



Norman: What are you running away from?

[270]



Marion: Well, why do you ask that?

[271]



Norman: No. People never run away from anything. The rain didn't last long, did it?

[272]



Norman: You know what I think? I think that—we're all in our private bars—clamped to them.

[273]



Norman: And none of us can ever get out. We—we scratch and claw—but—only at the air—only at each other. And for all of it, we never budges an inch.

[274]



Marion: Sometimes we deliberately step into those traps.
Norman: I've been in mine. I don't mind it anymore.

Marion: Oh, but you should. You should mind it!

[275]



Norman: Oh, I do—but I say I don't.

[276]



Marion: You know—if anyone ever talked to me the way I heard—the way she spoke to you—

[277]



Norman: Sometimes—when she talks to me like that—I feel I'd like to go up there—and curse her—and—and—and love her forever! Or at least do it here!

[278]



Norman: But I know I can't. She's ill.

[280]



Marion: She sounded strong.

[281]



Norman: No, I mean—if, she—she had to raise me—all by herself, after my father died. I was only five and it—it must've been quite a strain for her.

[282]

The first part of the scene consists of mid-shots on Norman intercut with mid-shots on Marion. The shots balance each other in that Marion is composed on the left edge of the frame, while Norman is composed on the right. The compositions in themselves are unbalanced, and the relationships of the characters to the decor create essentially unstable images. This kind of composition is characteristic of Hitchcock and 'Each shot is thus for him like a menace or at least an anxious waiting' (65). His *mise-en-scene* then is that 'of a disequilibrium comparable to that of a heavy mass about to slide down too sloping an incline' (66) which results in a 'stilted style which is immediately recognisable 'in the admirably determined quality of this disequilibrium' (67).

Hitchcock rigorously maintains this structure for a long time until shot [278]. During this time, Norman initiates a conversation about birds and tries with the phrase 'You act like a bird'. Then he says in shot [256] 'I hear the expression - act like a bird - is really a fals-fals-falsity'. His stuttering draws our attention to the parapraxis and his inability to say the correct word, namely *falsity* (*phallus*). This once again underlines his impotence.

The rest of the conversation is both revealing in that it tells us of the emptiness of Norman's life, and of the emotional bonds he has to his Mother: 'A boy's best friend is his mother'. The scene also develops the theme of entrapment and prisons from which we cannot escape. Norman says: 'We're all in our private traps - clumped in them, and some of us can never get out. We scratch



Norman: I mean she didn't have to go to work or anything like that. He left her a little money. Anyway, — a few years ago, Mother met this man.

[283]



Norman: And — where he died. Now, it was — and into great a shock for her. And — and the way he died —

[284]



Now Mother thought

[285]



Norman: And he — he talked her into building this motel. He could've talked her into anything.

[286]



Norman: I guess it's nothing to talk about while you're eating. Anyway, it was just too great a loss for her. She had nothing left.

[287]



Norman: Well, a son is a poor substitute for a lover.

[288]



Marlowe: Why don't you go away?
[287]



Norman: To a private island, like you!
[290]



Marlowe: No—not like me.
[291]



Norman: I couldn't do that. Who'd look after her? She'd be alone up there. The fire would go out.
[292]



Marlowe: Wouldn't it be better—if you put her—some place?
[293]



[294]



Norman: You mean an institution? A madhouse?

[294]



Norman: It'd be cold and damp like a grave. If you love someone, you don't do that to them, even if you hate them. You understand that—I don't hate her. I hate what she's becoming. I hate the illness.
[295]



Norman: People always call a madhouse "someplace" don't they? Put her in "some place!"
[296]

and claw but only at the air, only at each other'. This is a perfect description of what Marion will do in the shower. She will 'scrunch and claw' to get away from the murderer, but it will be futile.

Furthermore, this passage of Norman's links him to Sam's sense of entrapment at the beginning of the film. Both men are victims of their past 'born into' their traps. Marion, too, is linked to this entrapment by her search for a private island and, as Robin Wood points out: 'The confrontation between Marion and Norman is in some ways the core of the film - the parallel made between them provides the continuity that underlies the brutal disruption when Marion is murdered. It is part of the essence of the film to make us feel the continuity between the normal and the abnormal: between the compulsive behaviour of Marion and the psychotic behaviour of Norman Bates' (68).

From shot [278] Hitchcock breaks away from his structure of shots to establish a new one. Marion and Norman are no longer linked by balancing compositions, but rather she is shot from a slightly lower angle straight on, while Norman is shot from a low angle in profile. This indicates that they are experiencing the events very differently. Where Marion's response is calm and ordered, like her composition, Norman appears more and more unbalanced.

We are offered too, images of entrapment, (the ceiling boxing him in) and darkness (the owl swooping above his head). Hitchcock was fascinated by this bird imagery, which he saw almost as a symbol of Norman's derangement: 'The



Marlon: I'm sorry. I didn't mean it to sound uncaring.

[297]



Norman: What do you know about caring?

[298]



Norman: Have you ever seen the inside of one of these places? The laughing and the tears—and the cruel eyes studying you?

[300]



Norman: My mother there? But she's harmless.

[301]



Norman: Why—she's as harmless as one of those stuffed birds.

[302]



Marlon: I am sorry. Uh—I only felt—it seemed she's hurting you. I meant well.

[303]



Norman: People always mean well. They click their thick tongues and shake their heads and suggest—Oh, so very delicately—

[304]



Norman: Of course, I—I've suggested it myself. But I hate to even think about it. She needs me.

[306]



Norman: It isn't as if she were a—
a marine—a tawny thing—She just goes a little mad sometimes.

[308]



[309]



Norman: We all go a little mad sometimes. Haven't you?

[310]



[310]



Marlon: Yes. And sometimes, just one line can be enough. And thank you.

[311]



Norman: Thank you, "Norman."

[312]



Marlon: Norman.

[313]



Norman: Oh, you're not uh—You're not going back to your room already?

[313]



Marlon: I'm very tired. And I'll have a long drive tomorrow. All the way back to Phoenix.

[314]

owl, for instance, has another connotation. Owls belong to the *night world*: they are watchers, and this appeals to Perkins's masochism. He knows birds, and he knows that *they* are watching him all the time. He can see his own guilt reflected in their knowing eyes' (69).

But everything in Hitchcock however 'psychological' - and delusions of being watched are rooted, according to Freudian theory, in being watched over by one's parents - everything in Hitchcock revolves also around the conditions of film itself - its construction, its viewing: the owls are also obvious analogues for *Psycho's* audience ('they're watching him all the time'). As Foley notes, 'Given their narcissistic, self-reflective elements...these films might be described as the "facility by which the ego looks at itself"' (70).

The issue of Norman's masochism is one to which I return later, but his psychological state is clearly linked to that of his Mother's and to madness - 'she is ill'.

The introduction of the theme of *madness* is emphasized by Hitchcock once again breaking an established pattern of cutting for another. From shot (294) when Norman leans into the empty space in front of his head and chillingly says: 'You mean an institution, a madhouse?' and here we become aware of Norman's own unbalanced psychotic state as he attacks Marion with the line: 'What do you know about caring?' (shot (298)).



Norman: Really?

[315]



Marion: I stopped into a private trap back there—I'd like to go back and try to pull myself out of it.

[317]



Marion: before it's too late for me, too. Norman: Are you sure you wouldn't like to stay just a little while longer?

[319]



Norman: I mean—just for talk?

[320]



Marion: Oh, I'd like to, but—

[322]



Norman: All right. Well, uh—I'll see you in the morning. I'll bring you some breakfast. All right? What time?

[324]



Marion: Very early. Dawn. Norman: All right, Miss uh—

Marion: Crane.

[325]



Norman: Crane. That's it.

[325]



Marion: Good night.

[326]



[327]

[328]



[329]

[330]



[331]

Then he reintroduces the all-embracing eye imagery: 'The cruel eyes studying you', which will link up with the final scene of the film. Then Norman most tellingly reveals that Mother is: 'As harmless as one of those stuffed birds'.

This discussion brings Marion face to face with the logical extension of her present condition. By describing 'traps' he defines the psychotic state, the condition of permanent anguish where development becomes impossible. The parallel between Norman's position and hers is clearly established when he says: 'We all go a little mad sometimes. Haven't you?'

It is her perception of Norman's condition and the parallel with her own that gives Marion her chance for salvation. She replies: 'Yes, and sometimes just one time can be enough. And thank you.' Marion rises and the camera tilts up with her (shot [313]). We cut to a high angle shot from her point of view on Norman, where she tells him (and us) that she will be going back to Phoenix the next day. She wants to escape from her particular trap before it is too late. Her decision is clearly made, and she has regained her freedom of will and her power of rationality.

Then Hitchcock cuts to Marion in profile (shot [325]) as she tells Norman that her name is Crane. We cut to his realisation. This break from the formal structure ominously draws our attention to Norman's reaction, and at the same time reminds us that her name is that of a bird, and Norman likewise is true to



[331]



[332]



[333]



[334]



[335]



[336]

his surname 'Bates'. He sets 'baits' for birds, feeding them before killing them.

Marion says goodnight and leaves, the camera panning with her as she goes. Then Norman looks at the register and sees that she has signed her name 'Marie Samuels'. He seems to make up his mind about something and goes back into the parlour. This is almost the first time that we have seen anything in the film other than from *Marion's point of view*, and it initiates a radical shift in emphasis in the film.

Norman takes a picture off the wall which depicts a classical rape scene. He then peers into a hole in the wall. From his point of view, we see Marion undressing. And then Hitchcock cuts again to eye imagery; a big close-up of Norman's prying eye in shot [334]. This re-establishes the viewer as voyeur, and also introduces the expectation of a sexual encounter between Norman and Marion. The hole within a hole is charged symbolically. It is an eye and an emblem of female sexuality.

Then Norman replaces the picture. He appears to be darkly transformed, (shot [338]) as he leaves the parlour and makes his way to the house. Hitchcock cuts to a shot of him entering the house, and then to a reverse angle as he stops in front of the stairs. He hesitates and seems unable to ascend them. Then he turns and walks into the kitchen where he sits down at a table.





[344]



[345]



[346]



[346]



90

[346]



Once again I can only read this imagery in Freudian terms. The ascending staircases with their repititious movements and the breathlessness they produce is symbolic of the sexual act, and Norman's inability to ascend the staircase draws our attention to his impotence.



[348]



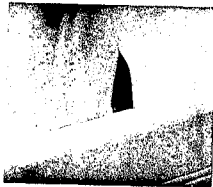
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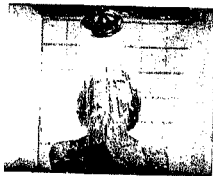
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CHAPTER FOUR

TORN CURTAIN

Norman looks directly at the camera, and his gaze almost magically conjures up the shot of Marion which we now cut to. She is sitting at a table writing. In big close-up we see that she is subtracting 700 from 40,000, and we assume she is calculating her debt, and perhaps figuring out a means of paying back the \$700, since we also see her savings book which is open. She then tears up the paper she has been writing on, and looks for a place to throw the pieces away. She gets up and walks towards the bathroom, and in so doing she is reflected in the mirror; but she is oblivious of this alter-ego doggedly pursuing her. She throws the torn pieces of paper into the toilet bowl and pulls the chain.

This tearing up of the figures might seem ambiguous, in that some viewers might read it that she has now changed her mind about returning the money. But everything else points to the fact that she intends to return to Phoenix. The last part of her dialogue with Norman, the look of calm on her features, and the joy with which she first greets the cleansing stream of the shower, suggests contrition and new purposes.

Besides, the washing away of the figures seems to me to be symbolic of the washing away of her sin, her guilt: a kind of lavabo. Characteristically Hitchcock uses the iconography of the Catholic Church, but then treats it ironically.

Marion then slips off her robe and gets into the shower. We cut to a close-up of her feet climbing into the tub, (shot [350]). She pulls the curtain closed and then we cut to a mid-shot of her behind the curtain. In close-up, (shot [352]) Marion unwraps a soap bar and turns the water on. We cut to a shot of the spray from her point of view, which is then followed by a series of shots of Marion voluptuously surrendering to the cleansing stream of water.

The shower becomes a ritual in which her guilt is symbolically washed away. This baptism will soon be violently interrupted and it is ironic that it is at this precise moment, the moment of disavowal, that she will suffer punishment for her crimes.

Before I analyse the precise imagery in the celebrated shower murder sequence which follows, there are a number of general points that can be made about this scene. At the outset, it is apparent that the scene is made up of a montage of rapid close-ups. There are in fact 78 camera set ups for 45 seconds of screen time, and the scene took 7 days to shoot. This fragmentary treatment serves different purposes.

Firstly it allows Hitchcock to stylize the sequence, since to film it as a continuous piece of realistic action would have made it obscene and nauseating. A lesser director might have shot the scene more explicitly by using make up and special effects, and Hitchcock himself considered this idea before abandoning it. 'We had a torso specially made up for that scene with the blood that was sup-

posed to spurt away from the knife, but I didn't use it. I used a live girl instead, a naked model who stood in for Janet Leigh. We only showed Miss Leigh's hands, shoulders and head. All the rest was the stand in. Naturally, the knife never touched the body. It was all done in montage' (71).

So we never see Marion's wounds, nor do we see blood pulsing or pouring from her body. Rather Hitchcock's stylized treatment 'aestheticises the horror, abstracting it from reality so that we receive the most powerful and vivid impression of violence, brutality and despair. An extreme of intellectual and emotional shock is conveyed, without provoking physical revulsion - which would detach us from the film (72).' The sound track too is stylized, and instead of Marion's screams we hear the screeching of violins.

The fragmentary treatment enables Hitchcock to subtly alter the viewpoint. Up to this moment we have almost exclusively seen everything through Marion's eyes. The dominant mode that Hitchcock has so far adopted has been a subjective approach characterised as follows: close-up of Marion cut to Marion's point of view.

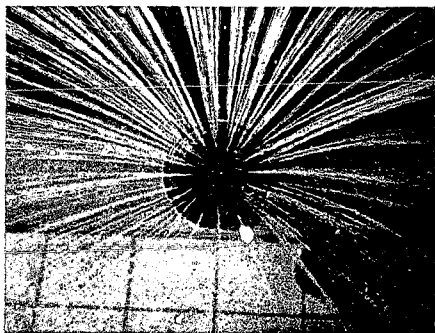
We have not only seen the world through her eyes but we have also been party to her thoughts and imagination. By the end of this scene this will no longer be possible. She will be dead. Our identification with her must therefore be severed.

Hitchcock initiated this by allowing us to gaze on Marion from Norman's point of view through his peep hole, but now he very gradually, almost imperceptibly, alters the viewpoint during the course of the murder so that we see less and less from Marion's point of view, and more through the eyes of the murderer. And the fragmentary technique allows this shift in perspective to be unnoticeably (paradoxically one could almost say smoothly) accomplished.

The radical shifts in viewpoint serve also to hide the identity of the murderer from the audience. It is necessary for the moment for us to believe that we have seen 'Mother' committing the murder; the killer's real identity will only be revealed later.

Furthermore this montage approach enables Hitchcock to extend the sequence in time. As Truffaut noted: 'We solve the problem of time by manipulating space', to which Hitchcock replied: 'That's right. We have already talked about the fact that film can be used either to contract time or to extend it at will' (73). Extending the time is essential here, since the audience needs time to appreciate the emotional horror of the attack.

The close-up treatment is also justified by the confined setting in which the murder occurs. A similar treatment in an outdoor setting would seem gratuitous. But here it is also justifiable because the size of the images relate directly to their emotional importance.



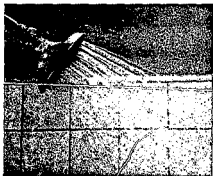
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[58]



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In this Hitchcock may be seen as a classicist who was 'against virtuosity for its own sake. Technique should enrich the emotion. One doesn't set the camera at a given angle because the cameraman happens to be enthusiastic about that spot. The only thing that matters is whether the installation of the camera at a given angle is going to give the scene its maximum impact. The beauty of image and movement, the rhythm and the effects, everything must be subordinated to the purpose' (74).

The scene not only depicts a violent murder, but it is also a symbolic rape. In fact, *'Psycho'* derives most of its power from the sexual implications and overtones - from the impossibility for Norman Bates of a normal sexual relationship' (75).

This results in his committing a grotesque and brutal parody of the sexual act wherein the knife he wields can be seen as a phallus, not only because of its Freudian significance, but because of its repetitive rhythmic movements and also because of its relation to other images, namely the vaginal imagery in the liquid round shapes of the shower rose, the drain and Marion's mouth. The scene is symbolic rape also in the context of the audience's expectation of a sexual encounter, an expectation provoked by Norman's prying, Marion's nakedness and her voluptuous surrender to the shower' (76).



[55]



[56]



[57]



[58]



[361]



[362]



[363]



[363]

07



[364]



[365]

The symbolic imagery then leads us to understand not what we assume to be happening but what is in fact happening, namely Norman dressed up as his mother is enacting a pathetic imitation of the sexual act.

The knife may also be read by its similarity in shape as a bird's beak. It seems to swoop and peck and, like the birds in the parlour, this is a night bird and a bird of prey. Norman gives the birds life as he gives Mother life, but the life he gives them exists only in his sick imagination. 'The knife-beak thus denotes the eruption of an illusory past into the reality of the present' (77).

The murder scene begins properly from shot [358]. Marion is still busy washing herself - (the water is symbolic of rebirth, a fresh start. From this angle we can see a suggestion of movement in the background as the door opens. The camera begins to track in (this is not a zoom as there is no optical drift and, since this is shot in a studio one assumes it would have been relatively easy to 'fly' one of the flats) and Marion, almost to accommodate the camera, steps aside. We track until we reach a mid-shot silhouette of the figure, and then the curtain is pulled aside.

The figure stands frozen and poised wielding a knife. We cannot see the face, but much of the shattering impact derives from Herrmann's score. The high pitched violins suggest the shrieking of birds and the slashing of knives.



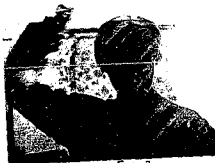
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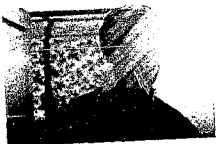
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[B 73]



[B 74]



[B 75]

'As always in Hitchcock, when the curtain opens, theatre is invoked' (78). The figure is clearly putting on a performance, but since Marion is turned away, we must assume that the performance is for the audience. The stylized posing of the murderer suggests the dramatic but also the religious. There will be something ritualistic about this slaughter.

Hitchcock then cuts to a close-up of Marion's face. She screams but we only hear the violins. Then he jump-cuts again to a closer close-up of just her mouth. The 'classical' Hitchcock is here prepared to break the rules of Hollywood invisible editing to fragment time and space, to ensure that 'the screen rectangle...be charged with emotion' (79). The dislocation created by this jump-cutting then creates a severe emotional dislocation heightened by the score.

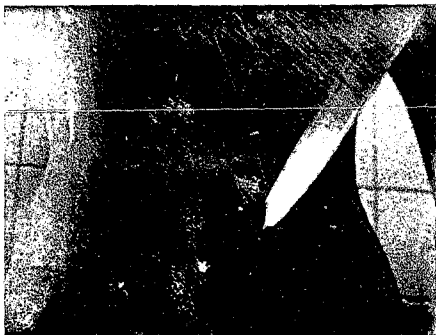
We then cut to a slightly low angle (shot [362]) on the murderer whose face we cannot see, as he/she appears as a silhouette. We cannot distinguish who this is, and in actual shooting, Perkins did not actually play the role. Truffaut notes: 'I asked him a question about *Psycho* that had always puzzled me. At the moment Janet Leigh is being stabbed in the shower, I wondered who had stepped into the bathroom with knife in hand. Was it Anthony Perkins wearing a wig, a woman, a stand-in, a dancer? Bearing in mind that the killer is filmed in back lighting conveying the impression of a shadow show, any of those possibilities is plausible. Hitchcock informed me that the attacker was a young woman wearing a wig. He added that the scene was shot twice, because even though the only lighting was placed behind the woman, the reverberations of the white bathroom

walls was so strong that it revealed her face too clearly. That is why her face was blackened in the second take, so as to create the impression of a dark and unidentifiable silhouette on the screen' (80).

The killer stabs with the knife in a diagonal downward movement. This contributes strongly to the compositional movement, the consistent downward motion which ends in Marion's fall. And as has been pointed out earlier, this is part of the overall movement of the entire film. Indeed 'each of the climaxes is built around a vertiginous descent which sweeps the audience further downwards towards an abyss of darkness, madness, futility and despair' (81).

Hitchcock then cuts to a mid-shot [363] of Marion trying desperately to escape from the blows but these come on relentlessly in shots [364] and the high angle shot [365]. The high angle stresses her vulnerability, further reinforcing the diagonal downward movement of the knife, which does not touch her flesh. This is followed by a series of shots intercut between Marion's screaming face and the killer's relentless stabbing, (shots [366-375]).

Shot [376] is a close-up of the knife passing Marion's stomach in a downward path. We then cut back to a close-up of Marion screaming, and then to a low angle shot of the knife against the ceiling. This is a shot from Marion's point of view, but significantly as the life begins to flow from the bleeding wounds, we will no longer see any more shots from her point of view. All the remaining shots of Marion will be presented from the killer's viewpoint.



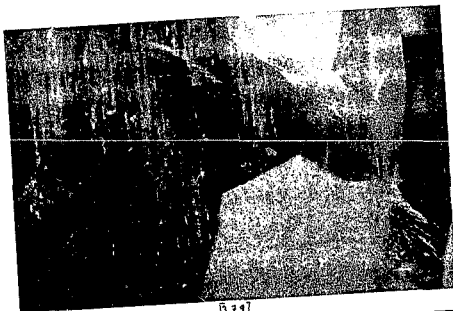
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So in shot [379] we get a glimpse of Marion's writhing torso and then we jump-cut rather erratically and violently to shot [380] a close-up of Marion screaming. This is followed by a high angle shot [381] of her feet, with her blood mingling with the water, and then a shot [382] of her turning away from the blows with the knife striking past her. Shot [383] is another high angle shot of Marion's feet, presumably from the murderer's point of view.

Shot [384] is a close-up of Marion's hand against the tiles forming a visual pattern that we have become accustomed to from as early as the tiles. Then we see a portion of her face and arm, followed by a shot of the murderer leaving the room [386]. It is shot from where Marion is standing in the shower, but is clearly not her point of view, since she is looking away at the time.

In shot [387] we return to Marion's hand now sliding down the tiles continuing the pattern of downward movement. And then we see her (in shot [388]) beginning to slide downwards.

Interestingly, in the Academy print and the video, the bottom half of the frame is masked to conform to the 1:1.85 wide screen ratio. This is presumably since Janet Leigh would probably have been wearing a brassiere when the scene was shot, and this would have been visible in the Academy section of the print. The illusion of her nakedness needs to be maintained and this necessitated the masking.



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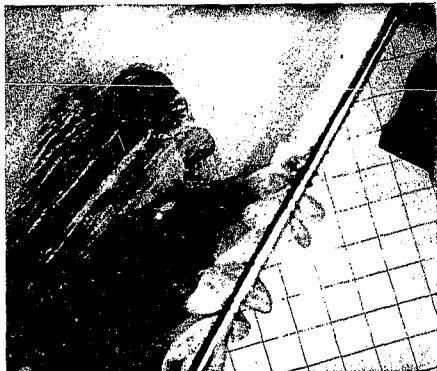




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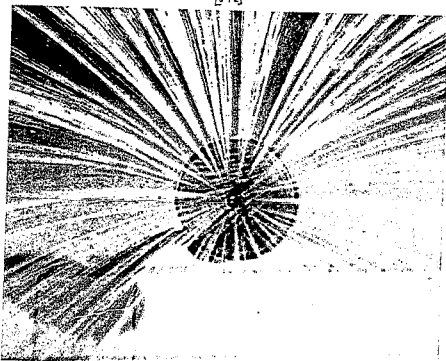
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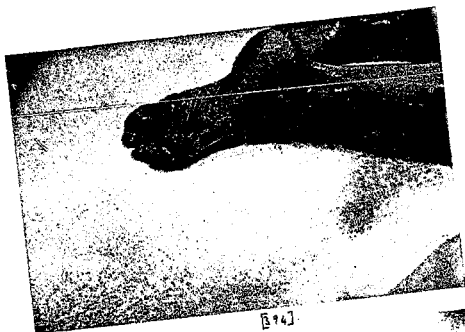


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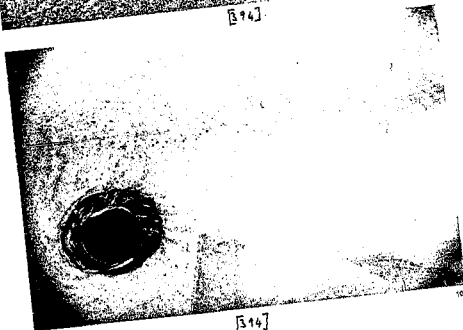


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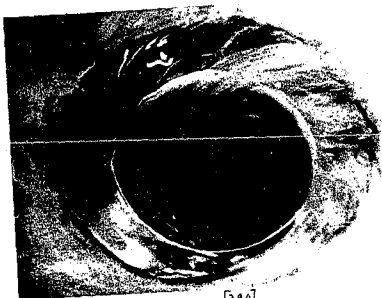
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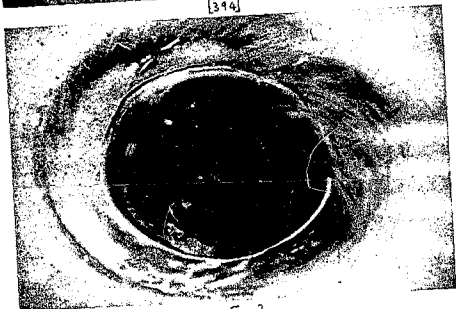
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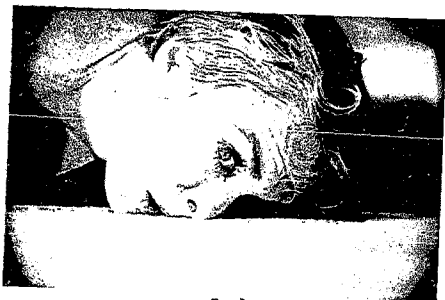
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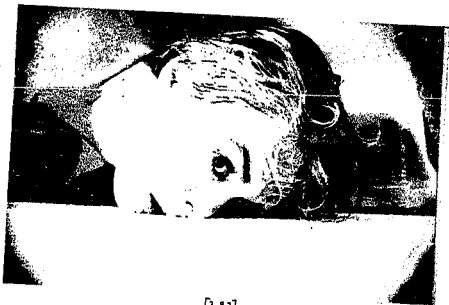
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Marion then reaches out to try to grab hold of something to raise herself up—her will is fighting for life, but this momentary tentative upward movement is short lived. We see a close-up of her hand grabbing the shower curtain and then in shot [390] we see from a high angle the futility of her gesture. In shot [391] the curtain is torn from its railings and Marion falls to her death in shot [392].

Meanwhile the water continues to flow from the shower rose, indifferent to the violence below. We cut to a shot of Marion's feet as the blood mingling with the water, flows from her body. The camera pans and zooms (this is unusual for a film of this time but significantly Hitchcock 'hides' the zoom in the panning movement), until we are left with an image of the drain as the water and blood swirl and disappear into blackness.

From a close-up of the drain, there is an extraordinary lap dissolve to a close-up of Marion's sightless dead eye. We notice a drop of water (perhaps a tear) in the corner of her eye as the camera begins to track back and to roll. The roll is the least used camera movement by any film maker and is very unusual. It was more than likely achieved in the laboratory in the optical printer, as this would have been easier than shooting it on the stage.

In any event, the roll and track combined reproduce exactly the spiralling movement of the water down the drain and link the two images. This produces a sensation of vertigo and 'It is as if we have emerged from the depths behind



[392]



[397]



[397]



Norman: Mother! Oh God! Mother, mother! Blood, blood! [347]



the eye, the round hole of the drain leading down into an apparently bottomless darkness. The potentialities for horror that lie in the depths of us all, and which have their source in sex, which the remainder of the film is devoted to sounding'. (82).

The camera continues tracking away from Marion's dead eye. Then there is a cut to the shower rose with the water spouting out as if it remains indifferent to Marion's fate.

Then in shot [397] the camera continues tracking and tilts up moving outside the bathroom. As it crosses the door the screen goes white for an instant, masking a cut so that the camera movement appears continuous. The camera tracks into the bedroom and pans to the right till we reach a close-up of the newspaper with the money wrapped in it.

The camera then pans to the right and tracks over to the window and tilts until we see the house. Then we hear Norman's voice shouting: 'Mother! oh God! Mother! Mother! Blood! Blood!'. Once again the moving camera is used to make connections between one part of the world and another, between one event and another. This (seemingly) continuous track then connects Marion's death with the money and with the house.

The murder scene is one of the most violent scenes in cinema, and it affects our response to the rest of the film. 'As the film unfolds there is less violence

because the harrowing memory of the initial killing carries over to the suspenseful passages that come later' (83).

For the spectator the scene is horrific because if it is carried out as a punishment then the punishment is too severe for the crime. Especially since it comes at the point when Marion has decided to return to Phoenix and attempts to purify herself and wash away her sins. But the water, the cleansing agent, participates in draining her life away and 'its cleansing stream provides the decor for her defilement. Its promise of forgiveness mocked and countermanded in vicious retribution. The stark ironies of the collision between symbolic meanings and experienced realities explode across a gaping chasm of futility' (84).

The murder is also a shattering alienating effect, in that the film up to now, has been constructed so that we identify with Marion by sharing her point of view and her thoughts. Any identification we may have with her is now brutally severed.

At the time we are engrossed in Marion's fate, committed to her salvation, but after the murder is over and she is dead, we are left shocked 'with nothing to cling to, the apparent centre of the film entirely dissolves' (85). What do we do? Hitchcock provides the answer - we simply displace our affections, our empathy, and our identification on the next possible character - Norman Bates. 'And the spectator soon reveals his disloyalty. At the moment of desolation he resolves to forget his earlier existence and entrust his loneliness to the first in-



[399]



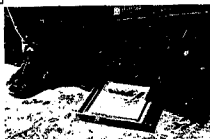
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dividual who can afford his consolation - the smiling, amiable motel keeper, the woman's murderer' (86).

Hitchcock cuts to a long shot of the house and Norman runs down the pathway towards the motel. The shot is accompanied by the same violin music which accompanied the murder. *Hitchcock thus formally links Norman to the murder* and later in the sequence he will give us further 'clues' as to the true identity of the killer.

Norman opens the cabin door and the camera tracks with him as he runs over to the bathroom. This movement enables the audience to participate with him, to move with him. We then cut to a mid-shot from behind him as he looks down on the scene of the carnage. The camera holds on him as he comprehends the horror before his eyes.

Then he spins around and covers his mouth. In so doing he knocks over a picture of the bird off the wall. This scene seems to me to be another verbal pun 'Here's Norman bumping off another bird', which draws our attention to language and to a kind of displacement mechanism. It also provides us with another clue as to who the murderer is.

Norman then begins the lengthy process of cleaning up after the crime. The scene is a long one, but this is necessary, for we must have time to adjust after the emotional shock of the murder.



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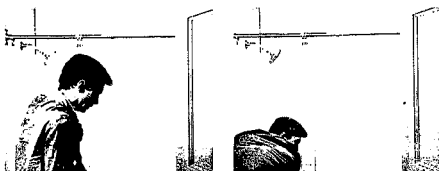


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We also need time to find a new centre, something to attach ourselves to. As Wood points out: 'Hitchcock uses all the resources of identification technique to make us become Norman' (87.) The camera therefore begins to obsessively follow Norman's every move. It pans and tracks with him as he goes over to the window and closes it. It pans and tracks with him until he goes out the door. And then, from outside the cabin it tracks with him on the verandah. He collects a mop and pail from the office, and the camera pans with him as he goes back to the cabin.

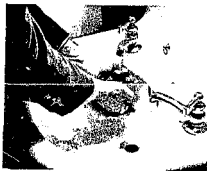
Inside the cabin, the camera tracks across the room with Norman as he goes to the bathroom. Hitchcock cuts to a tighter shot of him, (shot [407]) and then tilts down with Norman as he bends over. The camera then tracks back to accommodate him as he spreads the shower curtain across the floor.

For a second we see Norman through the curtain in a recreation of our first view of the murderer. This clearly links him with the crime as does shot [409] which is a close-up of his hands with blood on them. This is a traditional and accepted symbol of guilt, and one is immediately reminded of Lady Macbeth. The shot is not a subjective one, but many of the others that follow will be from Norman's point of view.

Hitchcock cuts to a close-up of Norman's disturbed face, as he pans with him, and he pans with him as Norman washes the blood off his hands. Once again, we are offered a view of Norman that links him to the murder - we see



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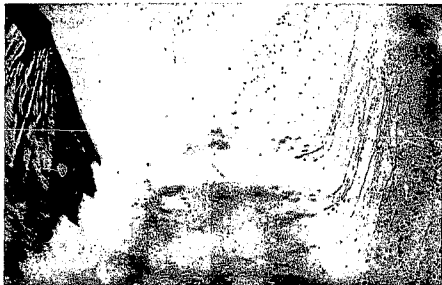


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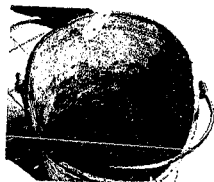
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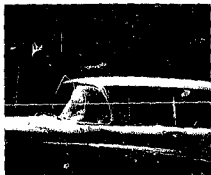
[621]

the blood being washed from his hands down the drain. Norman then begins to mop up the bath and shot [413] is clearly a subjective one from his point of view.

After all traces of Marion's blood have been cleaned up, Norman drives her car close to the cabin and opens the boot. He then goes back to the cabin and carries out her body now wrapped in the shower curtain. As he comes out of the door he appears like a grotesque parody of a bridegroom carrying his bride across the threshold. He dumps her body in the boot and goes back into the room to remove all other traces of Marion from the cabin.

Our sympathies are now beginning to be shifted to Norman, and Wood contends that this shift has been prepared for us by the fact that 'Norman is an intensely sympathetic character, sensitive, vulnerable, trapped by his devotion to his mother - a devotion, a self sacrifice which our society tends to regard as highly laudable' (88). And as Truffaut notes: 'The viewer becomes attached to Perkins because of the care with which he wipes away all the traces of his crime. It's tantamount to admiring someone for a job well done' (89).

Norman enters the room and sees the key on the floor, shot [428] which he picks up and pockets. Hitchcock pans with him as he packs Marion's clothes into her suitcase. He then tidies the room replacing the bird picture. Then, in shot [380], Hitchcock cuts away to the money to remind the audience of its existence and, if as has been suggested, we begin to displace our empathy on to



[422]



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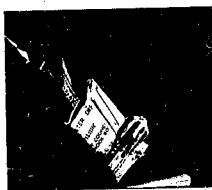
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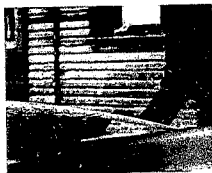
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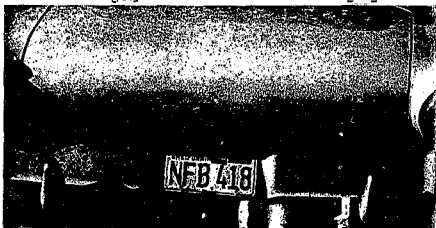
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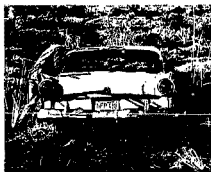
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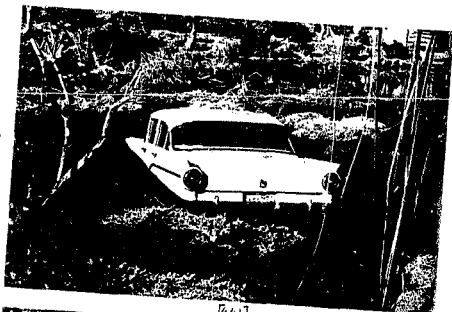
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Norman, then this shot serves to allow the audience to participate in the suspense of whether Norman will discover the money or not.

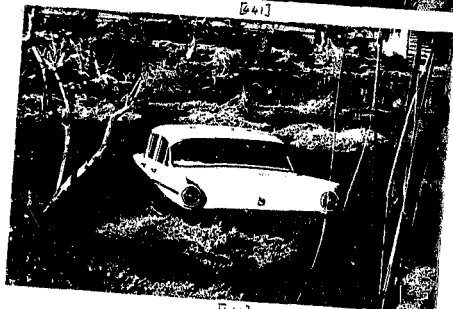
Norman takes the mop and pail outside and the lights of a passing car momentarily stop him. He then drops them in the boot and comes back for a final check. He sees the newspaper with the money, picks it up, carries it outside and dumps it in the boot. Then he drives the car off.

It should be noted that by so enticing the audience's participation, Hitchcock has constructed the film in such a way that the audience will identify and empathize with the murderer. It might be contested as to whether this does occur, but certainly the film is constructed (by the tracking and panning shots which move with Norman) to encourage our identification. The public's acceptance of Anthony Perkins is *unequivocal* and definitive. At all the screenings of *Psycho* I have attended, the audience has loudly voiced its disappointment when Perkins, during his careful searching of the murder area, does not discover the envelope containing the \$40,000, but lets it vanish instead with the car (and his victim) into the swamp' (90).

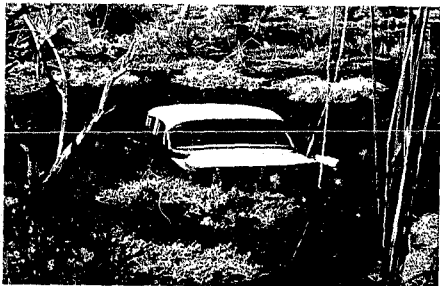
Norman drives the car off, and Hitchcock then cuts to a close-up of the number plate (shot [439]) as the car slowly moves away from us. Norman comes out of the car and pushes it deeper into the swamp, so that we are now in a high-angled position looking down on the car as it slowly sinks into the swamp.



[641]



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[445]



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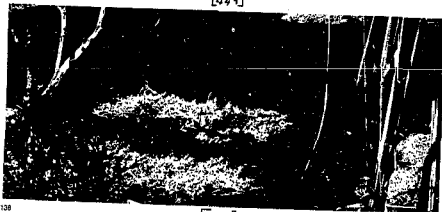
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[449]

Hitchcock cuts to a close-up of Norman's face as he watches the car. He pops some candy into his mouth and nibbles away like a bird. We cut to Norman's point of view of the car sinking into the swamp. The remainder of the scene follows the familiar Hitchcockian subjective method, namely a close-up of Norman, followed by Norman's point of view, etc.

This sequence was shot day-for-night, and works very effectively because we can see from Norman's close-ups the sun was behind and to one side of him or in a 'kicker' position. Other sequences in the film, for example Arbogast's arrival at the hotel which were also shot day-for night, are less successful, because the sun was at a less oblique angle.

As Hitchcock cuts from Norman to his point of view, the scene is constructed for us to share his apprehension when in shots [443] and [445], the car stops sinking for a moment.

In every screening I have attended, there was an audible sigh of relief from the audience when, from shot [449] the car begins to sink until it disappeared from view. Hitchcock himself calculated upon the audience responding in this way: 'When Perkins is looking at the car sinking in the pond, even though he is burying a body, when the car stops sinking for a moment the public is thinking: "I hope it goes all the way down". It's a real instinct' (91).

Through the employment of subjective identification techniques then, Hitchcock has directed the audience into displacing the empathy they felt for Marion, on to Norman. As Truffaut notes: 'One intriguing aspect is the way the picture makes the viewer constantly switch loyalties. At the beginning he hopes that Janet Leigh won't be caught. The murder is very shocking, but as soon as Perkins wipes away the traces of the killing, we begin to side with him, to hope that he won't be found out...the viewer's emotions are not exactly wholesome' (92).

And as Truffaut further notes: 'The public's reaction is an essential component of (Hitchcock's) work' (93). The director often implicates us, the audience, in the criminal action, and our response to the guilty characters reflects the criminal psychology that the film dramatises. Our empathy with the criminal indicates our own dark undercurrents, the possibilities of our own unexplored selves.

This can be seen in both *Strangers on a Train* and *Frenzy*. In *Strangers on a Train* Bruno hopes to implicate Guy in a murder by placing his lighter at the scene of the crime. But on his way to doing so, Bruno drops the lighter down a drain. Meanwhile Guy is busy playing a tennis game. Hitchcock uses Griffith-like parallel action cross-cutting between the tennis match and the killer's frantic efforts to retrieve the lighter from the drain. As he cuts to bigger and bigger close-ups of Bruno's fingers stretching and grasping, we *will* him to get the lighter, and thus become implicated with his guilt.

Likewise in *Frenzy* Rush has killed Babs and placed her body in the back of a potato truck. He drinks a cognac and eats a grape, and then decides to pick his teeth, but he cannot find his initialled diamond tie-pin which he usually uses to dig the food from between his teeth. Then he remembers that in the struggle with Babs, she grasped it. He must now retrieve it. He climbs into the back of the potato truck, and tries to pry the pin from her death grasp. Meanwhile the truck driver jumps in the front of the truck and drives off.

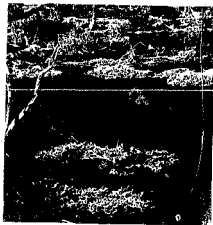
Rush must eventually break the fingers to retrieve the tie-pin. He is a despicable murderer and his task is a grizzly one; yet Hitchcock manipulates the audience into siding with him: 'In *Frenzy* you have the man in the potato truck. You see, you build up all the suspense - will he get the tie-pin out of the girl's hand in time before he gets caught? So we show the truck stopped a couple of times. He hides and eventually achieves it. But we are rooting for him all the time to get that tie-pin back' (94).

The displacement of empathy from Marion to Norman in the audience implicated us in both the theft and (if not the murder) the concealment of the body. And, since our own impulses not only those of the characters are involved, this raises the issues of Hitchcock's complex and disconcerting moral sense, whereby he makes us aware, (perhaps not always consciously,) of the impurity of our desires.

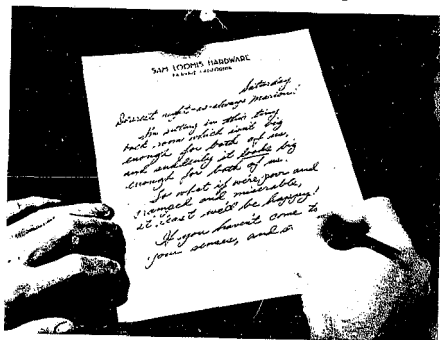
He portrays a universe in which good and evil are so interwoven as to be virtually interchangeable, and which insists upon the existence of evil impulses in all of us. The vision of the world is one which many viewers and critics find disturbing, but as Robin Wood points out: 'It is one of the functions of art to disturb: to penetrate and undermine our complacencies and set notions and bring about a consequent readjustment in our attitude to life' (95).



[450]



[451]



[452]



[453] Woman: They tell you what its ingredients are,



Woman: and how it's guaranteed to exterminate every insect in the world,



Woman: but they do not tell you whether or not it's painless.

[453]



Woman: And—and I say, insect or man,



Woman: death should always be painless.



Lila: Sami

[454]

[454]

[455]

CHAPTER FIVE

THE MAN WHO KNEW TOO MUCH

The next scene opens on a letter being written by Sam which returns us to the ironic textures at the beginning of the film: 'Dearest Right-as Always Marion, I am sitting in this tiny back room which isn't big enough for both of us, so what if we're poor and cramped and miserable? At least we'll be happy. If you haven't come back to your senses and still ...'

Sam turns the page and Hitchcock cuts on action to a mid-shot of him writing at his desk. The camera then tracks back until we see all of the hardware store. This camera movement is similar to the tracking shot out from Marion's eye, and the two shots are linked.

As a result the attitude that the customer is expressing: 'It tells us what its ingredients are and how it's guaranteed to exterminate every insect in the world...death should always be painless' can be linked to Mother's psychotic reasoning, whereby Marion's death was merely the extermination of a pest.

Behind the counter there is a sign reading: 'Tools sharpened' and the walls are hung with scythes, rakes, axes and picks-grim reminders of Marion's stabbing. Then we cut to a shot of Lila arriving outside the store and entering. The assistant calls Sam and he and Lila begin talking. We are struck by her resem-



Summerfield: Sam! Lady wants to see you!

[454]



[454]



Sam: Yes, miss!
Lila: I'm Marion's sister.
Sam: Oh, sure—Lila!

[455]



Lila: Is Marion here?
Sam: Why, of course, not! Something wrong?

[457]



[458]



Lila: She left home on Friday. I was in Tucson over the weekend and I haven't heard from her since, — not even a phone call.

[459]



Lila: Look, if you two are in this thing together, I don't care! It's none of my business.

[460]



Summerfield: Oh, that's okay, Sam. I brought it with me.

[462]



Lila: But I want to talk to Marion and I want her to tell me it's none of my business! And then I'll go—

[461]



Sam: Bob! Run out and get yourself some lunch, will you?

[461]



Sam: Run out and get it!

[463]



[664]



Sami: Now—what thing could we be in together?
Lila: Sorry about this year.

[665]



[666]



Sam: Well, is Marlon in trouble? What is it?

[467]



Arbogast: Let's all talk about Marlon, shall we?

[468]



[469]



Sam: Who are you, friend?

[469]



Arbogast: My name is Arbogast, friend. I'm a private investigator. Where is also, Miss Capone?

[469]



Lila: I don't know you.
Arbogast: Oh, well, I know you don't, because if you did I wouldn't be able to follow you.

[469]



Sam: What's your interest in this?
Arbogast: Well, uh—forty thousand dollars.
Sam: Forty thousand dollars?
Arbogast: That's right.

[469]



Sam: Well, one of you better tell me what's going on and tell me fast! I can take just so much of this and I—

[469]



Arbogast: Now take it easy, friend. Take it easy. You just—
Your girl friend owes forty thousand dollars.

[469]



Sam: Who're you talking about? What is this?

[470]



Lilas: She was supposed to bank it on Friday for her boss. And she didn't. And no one has seen her since.

[470]



Arbogast: Someone has seen her. Someone always sees a girl with forty thousand dollars!

[471]



Lilas Sam, they don't want to prosecute. They just want the money back.

[472]



Lilas Sam, if she - here—

[473]



Sam: She isn't! She isn't.

[474]



Arbugast: Miss Crane, can I ask you a question? Did you come up here on just a hunch and nothing more?

[475]



Lila: Not even a hunch. Just hope.

[476]



Arbugast: Well, with a little checking, I could get to believe you.

[477]



Lila: I don't care if you believe me or not! All I want to do is see Marion before she gets in this too deeply!

[478]



[479]



Sam: Did you check in Phoenix? Hospitalist? Maybe she had an accident. Or a hold-up!

[480]



Arbogast: No—she was seen leaving town in her own car—by her employer, I might add.

[481]



Sams: I can't believe it. Can you?

[482]



Arbogast: Well, you know we're always quickest to doubt people who have a reputation for being honest. I think she's here, Miss Crane.

[483]



Arbogast: Where there's a boy friend—Well, she's not back there with the nits and bolts but she's here in this town—somewhere. I'll find her. I'll be seeing you.

[484]



[484]



[484]



[485]



[486]



[487]



[488]



[489]



[490]



[487]



[490]



Arbogast: Good evening.

Norman: Evening.

Arbogast: I almost drove right past.

[492]



Norman: I'm always forgetting to turn the sign on, but we do have a vacancy. Twelve, in fact.

Arbogast: Oh—

Norman: Twelve cabins—twelve vacancies. Same candy?

Arbogast: No, thanks.

152

[490]



Arbogast: Uh—the last two days I've been to so many motels that my eyes are blurry with moon, but, y'know, this is the first place that looks like it's hiding from the world.

[490]

blance to Marion, as she and Sam stand next to some rakes, instruments of 'scratching and clawing'.

As they talk, Hitchcock cuts to a shot of the man outside watching. The voyeur theme is thus reintroduced and developed when Sam becomes concerned about the assistant overhearing. He tells him to 'run out and get yourself some lunch' a line which echoes the first line of the film 'You never did eat your lunch' and makes us recall Marion's death.

Arbogast then enters in big close-up (shot[466]) interrupting their conversation. He tells Sam about the money. Sam angrily insists that he knows nothing while Lila assures him that she only wants 'to get Marion out of this before she gets into it too deeply'. The line is of course ironic - how much deeper can she get than at the bottom of a swamp?

Arbogast tells them that he believes she's around somewhere, and then he leaves. The scene dissolves to a montage sequence of him going from one hotel to the next. Each shot has a significant change of angle and dissolves one into another.

The sequence has the same music over it as that which accompanied Marion's journey and quite naturally it will lead Arbogast to the same destination, the Bates Motel.



Norman: Well, I'll tell you the truth. I didn't really forget to turn the sign on. It just—it just doesn't seem like any use anymore, you know?

Arbogast: Oh?

Norman: You see, that used to be the main highway right there.

[490]



Norman: Oh, that's no trouble. Uh—in today's linen day, I always change the beds here once a week whether they've been used or not. Hate the smell of dampness, don't you?

Arbogast: Linen.

[490]



Norman: You uh—you out to buy a motel?

Arbogast: No.

Norman: Reason I asked, you said you'd seen so many in the past couple of days, I thought maybe you uh—What uh—what was it you wanted to ask?

[491]



Norman: Well—if you want to come in and register?

Arbogast: No, no-no. Sit down. I don't want to trouble you. I just want to ask you a few questions.

[490]



Norman: It's such a—I don't know—crazy smell. Come on.

Arbogast: Um-hm.

[490]



Arbogast: (Well—you see, I'm looking for a missing person. My name's Arbogast. I'm a private investigator.

Norman: Oh?

[491]



Arbogast: I've been trying to trace a girl that's been missing for—oh, about a week now—from Phoenix. It's a private matter—the family wants to forgive her. She's not in any trouble.
Norman: I didn't think the police went looking for people who aren't in trouble.

[491]



Arbogast: Oh, I'm—I'm not the police.

Norman: Oh, well.

Arbogast: We have reason to believe that she—came along this way and may have stopped in the area. Did she stop here?

152

[492]



Norman: Well, no one's stopped here for a couple of weeks.

Arbogast: Oh. Would you mind looking at the picture before committing yourself?

[493]



Norman: Commit myself? You sure talk like a policeman!
Arbogast: Well, look at the picture, please.

[493]



Norman: Uh-huh.
Arbogast: Sure?
Norman: Yeah.

[495]



Arbogast: Well, she may have used an alias. Uh—Martin
Camp's her real name, but she could've registered under
a different one.

[496]



Norman: Well, I'll tell you, I don't even—even much
bother with uh—jargon's napsack'ing anybody. You know,
one by one you drop the formalities. Uh—I shouldn't even
bother changing the sheets, but—did holdis die hard.
Which reminds me.

[497]



[498]



Arbogast: What's that?
Norman: The lights—the sign.
Arbogast: Oh.

[499]



Norman: We had a couple last week said if the thing
hadn't been on they would have thought this was an old
depressed—

[500]



Arbogast: Well, you see—aren't that's exactly my point?
And you said that nobody'd been here for a couple of
weeks and there's a couple came by and—

[501]



Norman: Yeh.
Arbogast: —they didn't know that you were open.
Norman: Yeh.

[502]



Arbogast: Well, as you say, old habits die hard. It's possible this girl could have registered under another name. Do you mind if I look at your book?

Norman: No.

[503]



Arbogast: Thank you. Now let's see. Now here's the date somewhere—Um-hm.

Norman: See—there's nobody.

[504]



Arbogast: Yeh, I see. Now let's see what we have here. Now do I have a sample of her—handwriting here.

[505]



Arbogast: Oh, yes. Here we are. Marie Samuels. That's an interesting alias.

[507]



Norman: Is that her?
Arbogast: Yeh, I think so. Marie—Marie—Samuels. Her boy friend's name is Sam.

[508]



Norman: Hm.

[509]



[509]



[509]



Arbogast: Um-hm. Was she in disguise by any chance?

[510]

Arbogast drives up to the motel and talks to Norman on the verandah. They go into the office, where he explains to Norman that he is looking for a missing person. From a two-shot of them talking, Hitchcock intercuts between individual mid shots of the men. Arbogast can be seen reflected in the mirror, reminding us once again of the 'double' or 'alter ego' theme. During the inquiry Arbogast shows Norman a picture of Marion and ironically suggests Norman's eventual fate when he asks: 'Would you mind looking at the picture before committing yourself?'

Norman pretends not to recognise her and insists that no one has stayed at the motel. Then he unwittingly says that he had a couple there the last week. Arbogast, being quite pushy, asks to see the register, and checks the signatures against a sample of Marion's handwriting. When he sees the 'Marie Samuels' entry, he immediately links that by association to Sam.

Norman bends over to look, and there is a strange low angle shot [509] of him nibbling on his candy. *This identifies him with birds, as he looks just like a munching chicken.* The camera jibs down with him, and then jibs up with his body movement. Arbogast shows him the picture again and *he admits now to recognising Marion.* He tells him that Marion spent the night and left the next day.

The sequence is made up of low angle close-ups on Arbogast and Norman intercut together. Norman is starting to become nervous and stutters in his



Arbogast: Want to check the picture again?

[511]



Norman: Look, I-I wasn't lying to you, mister. It's just that—

Arbogast: Oh, I know that. I know you wouldn't lie.

Norman: You know, it's tough keepin' track of the time

around here—

Arbogast: Oh, I know, I know.

[512]



Norman: Oh, yeah! Well, it-it was—it was raining and uh—her hair was all wet.

[514]



Norman: I tell you, it's not—it's not really a very good picture of her either.

[516]



Arbogast: No, I guess not. Now tell me all about her.

[517]



Norman: Well, uh—she arrived uh—rather late one night, and she—went straight to sleep and uh—left early the next morning.

[518]



Arbogast: Well, how early?

Norman: Oh, very early.

Arbogast: Um-hm. Which morning was that?

Norman: Uh—the uh—(h-h-h-h-h-h-h-h-h-h) the next morning—Sunday.

[519]



Arbogast: I see, Um-hm. Uh—did anyone meet her here?

Norman: No.

Arbogast: Did she arrive with anyone?

Norman: Mm-mm.

Arbogast: Um-hm. She make any phone calls or—

Norman: No.

[520]



Arbogast: —locally!

Norman: Hm-hm.

Arbogast: Did you spend the night with her?

Norman: No.

Arbogast: Well, then—how would you know that she didn't make any phone calls?

[5 2 1]



Norman: Oh, w-we—well, she was very tired a-and uh—See, I—and I'm standing b-to uh—remember it, I'm making a mental picture of it in my mind. You know, you can make a mental pictorialization of something—in your sub-conscious.

[5 2 2]



Arbogast: That's right. And that takes time.

Norman: Uh—she was—she was sitting back, there—

[5 2 3]



Norman: No-no, she was standing back there with a sandwich in her hand—and she said uh—she had to go to sleep early because she had uh—a long—d-d-d-d-drive uh—ahead of her.

[5 2 4]



Arbogast: Um-hm. Back where?
 Norman: Back there where she came from.
 Arbogast: No. No, you said before that she was uh—
 sitting back there—
 Norman: Oh, uh—
 Arbogast: —or standing—

[525]



Norman: —yes. S-back in my uh—in my parlor there. Uh—
 —she was very hungry and I made her a sandwich. And
 then she said uh—that she was tired and she uh—uh had
 to go uh—back to bed.

[526]



Arbogast: Oh, I see. Uh—how did she pay you? Cash?
 Check?

[527]



Norman: Cash.
 Arbogast: Oh, cash, huh? Um-hm. And uh—after she left
 she uh—didn't come back?

[528]



Norman: Huh-uh. Well, why should she?

100

[529]



Arbogast: Yeah.

[530]



Norman: Well, Mr. Arbogast, uh—I guess that's about it, ain't it? Oh! I've got some work to do. If you don't mind.

[531]



Arbogast: Well, to tell you the truth, I do mind. You see, if it doesn't jell, it isn't espie. And this ain't jelling. It's not coming together. Something's missing.

[532]



Norman: Well, I—I don't know what you are—could expect me to know. People just come and go, you know.

Arbogast: That's right.

[533]



Arbogast: She isn't still here, is she?

Norman: No.

Arbogast: Um-hm.

[535]



Arbogast: If I wanted to uh—check the cabins—all twelve of them—I'd need a warrant, wouldn't I?

Norman: Listen, if you don't believe me, come in.

Come on with me, and you can help me change beds—okay?

[537]



Arbogast: Oh—oh—well, thanks.

[537]



[538]



[539]



[540]



[541]



[542]



[543]



Norman: Oh-ho, change your mind?
Arbogast: Oh.

[544]



Norman: You know—I think I must have one of those focus
you just can't help belie-
Arbogast: Is anyone at home?
Norman: No.

[545]



Arbogast: Oh, well, there's somebody sitting up in the window.

Norman: No, no, no, no, there isn't.

Arbogast: Oh, sure there is. Take a look.

[546]



Norman: Oh, uh—that uh—that must be my mother. She's she's in there—an invalid—an invalid. Uh—it's uh—practically like living alone.

[547]



Arbogast: Oh, I see. Well, now if this uh—girl, Marion Crane, were here, you wouldn't be hiding her, would you?

Norman: No.

Arbogast: Not even if she paid you well?

Norman: No.

[548]



Arbogast: I get's just say for the uh—just for the sake of argument—that she wanted you to gallantly protect her—you'd know that you were being used—that uh—you wouldn't be made a fool of, would you?

Norman: Well, I'm—I'm not a fool.

[549]



Arbogast: Well, then—

Norman: And I'm not capable of being fooled! I'm not even by a woman!

Arbogast: Well, it's not a slur on your manhood, I'm sorry.

[550]



Norman: Now let's put it this way. She might have fooled me—but she didn't fool my mother.

[551]

speech, Arbogast is unhappy about the story, but Norman offers him no other information. They leave the office, as Norman claims he has work to do and has to make the trip.

On the verandah Arbogast turns to the left towards the house, while Norman turns to the right to the rooms. Arbogast notices Norman's hesitation outside cabin 1, and then he turns and sees the old house. Norman joins him and when Arbogast asks him about the woman in the window, Norman tells him that his mother is an invalid and cannot be seen because she is 'confined'. This suggests a cramped and claustrophobic existence, like the one Sam wrote about in his letter. Once again we are reminded of a world where people are closed in, trapped in cages where they 'scratch and 'm' to get out.

Arbogast then pushes Norman further by saying: 'You wouldn't be made a fool of, would you?' Norman lets his guard down for a moment and says: 'I am not capable of being fooled, not even by a woman', and then admits: 'She might have fooled me - but she didn't fool my Mother'. Arbogast looks for an opportunity to see Mother, but Norman will not allow it, and he finally asks the detective to leave. Arbogast drives off, and as he does, the lights of his car brush past Norman, where we can see him smiling.

Arbogast then goes to a telephone booth and reports back to Lila. He tells her that he is not satisfied and that he is going back to the motel in the hopes of interviewing Mrs. Bates, the 'sick old mother'.



Arbogast: Well, the other mother. Could I—
could I talk to her?
Norman: No. As a matter of fact, she's married.
Arbogast: You said she was married. Just all
the way to some place that you've put out on

[552]



Arbogast: Yes, but you for—
Norman: So I think it'd be much better if you left now.
Arbogast: Uh—All right. All right. You sure would save
me a lot of legwork if you'd let me talk to her again—Oh
I need a warrant for that, too?
Norman: Sure.

[554]



[555]



Arbogast: You know—she's old women are usually pretty
sharp—

Norman: Now, this—mister—
Arbogast: Yes, a moment, I wouldn't disturb her.
Norman: Mister Arbogast, I—I think I've—I think I've
talked to you all I want to.

[553]



Arbogast: Uh-huh. All right. Thanks anyway.

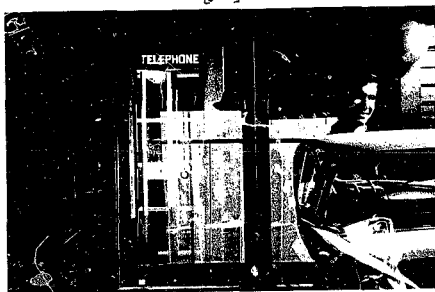
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Arbogast Oh, hello, Lillian? This is Arbogast. Is uh... Lila there? Say, let me talk to her, please. Hello, Lila, Lila, listen. Martin was up there. Yes, she's out last Saturday night at the Bates Motel. It's right out here on the old highway. I don't know what time she was in. It was Sunday the Well, this young fellow that uh runs the place said that she just spent the night—left the next day, and that was it. Now, Oh—no, not was it. Well, I don't question him, believe me, but uh—I think I got all these ways to go. I'll just have to pick up the pieces from here. Well, I tell you, I don't feel uh—entirely satisfied. Uh—see, this has had a so-called mother. I think she was. Martin and talked to her. So. So, unfortunately, he wouldn't let me see her. Well, I was, but uh—I think I'll get her in the motel first. No—see, she was there with Louisa. I'll be back in about an hour. All right, time I go. I—You'll be happy to know what I think. Uh—I think our friend uh—Sam Loomis didn't know that Martin was here. Yeah! All right. See you in about an hour. Oh, less. Right. Bye-bye.

[57]



[557]



[558]



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Arbogast, Gates?

[560]



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[564]



[566]



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[569]



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[593]



[594]



The next scene begins with a long shot of the motel, Norman is seen leaving the office and walking down to the cabins. The camera pans slowly with him until he enters one of the cabins. The panning movement continues until a car enters from right. We see that it is Arbogast. He stops, climbs out of the car, and begins walking to the office. The camera follows him by now panning left.

Hitchcock then cuts to an empty frame slightly closer to the office, which Arbogast then enters from the right. We cut to a lowish angle inside the office as Arbogast enters. He calls out; 'Bates', another pun on 'bait', but instead he is offered a view of their victims - birds.

Again we experience a sequence constructed of close-ups on the subject, intercut with shots from his point of view. Arbogast notices the birds on the walls, and then the safe, which he looks into. It is surprisingly open, and if Arbogast hoped to find the \$40,000 he is disappointed.

Then he leaves the office, comes out on to the verandah as the camera tracks with him until he is in close-up. He looks from right to left of screen and Hitchcock cuts to a long shot of the house from his point of view. The house is shot day-for-night, and presumably in infra red film, since the sky has the slightly heightened quality of infra red stock. This is particularly noticeable in other shots of the house, where clouds are present, and they stand out dramatically from the sky. This was achieved by either using the infra red film (which is less

sensitive to the blue side of the spectrum) or using a red filter on the camera, which would achieve the same effect and thus blacken the sky.

The house, too, through our familiarity with 'Gothic castles' in horror genre films, adds to the spectator's expectation of menace, but Hitchcock denies striving for this kind of effect: 'The mysterious atmosphere is, to some extent, quite accidental. For instance, the actual locale of the events is in Northern California, where that type of house is very common. They are called 'California Gothic' or when they're particularly awful, they're called 'California Gingerbread'. I did not set out to reconstruct an old fashioned Universal-horror picture atmosphere. I simply wanted to be accurate, and there is no question but that both the house and the motel are authentic reproductions of the real thing. I chose that house and motel because I realised that if I had taken an ordinary low bungalow, the effect wouldn't have been the same. I felt that type of architecture would help the atmosphere of the yarn' (96).

The scene is silent except for Herrmann's bassy music and the odd effect (like the door closing). Hitchcock cuts to a closer shot of the house with Arbogast walking along in front of it. Arbogast climbs the stairs on to the verandah and looks around, presumably to ensure that Norman is nowhere around. Then he takes off his hat in deference to the old woman he expects to meet ('Arbogast is a surprisingly courtly man') (97).



[574]



[575]



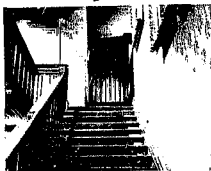
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[583]



[584]



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Hitchcock cuts to the inside of the house as Arbogast enters in mid-shot. Then we see a shot of the staircase from Arbogast's point of view, as Hitchcock employs his by now familiar structure of subject intercut with subject's point of view. Arbogast closes the door and winces when it clicks loudly. Then we are offered a few more point of view shots of the house, and then there is a jump-cut (from shots [581 to 583]) as Arbogast begins moving forward towards the staircase.

The entire scene is a suspense sequence, one of the ways in which the audience is invited to participate in a Hitchcock film. And as in all suspense sequences it is based on the audience being given prior information.

Hitchcock usually cites his bomb-plot-theory as an example of this. 'You and I are sitting talking; we'll say about baseball. We are talking for five minutes. Suddenly a bomb goes off and the audience have a ten second terrible shock. Now let's take the same situation. Tell the audience at the beginning that under the table - and show it to them - there's a bomb and it's going to go off in five minutes. Now we talk baseball. What are the audience doing? They're saying: 'Don't talk about baseball-there's a bomb under there!' Get rid of it!' But they're helpless. They can't jump out of their seats up on to the screen and grab hold of the bomb and throw it out' (98). In this case all that's necessary is for the audience to know that somewhere in this house there is a killer lurking and that at any time death could strike.



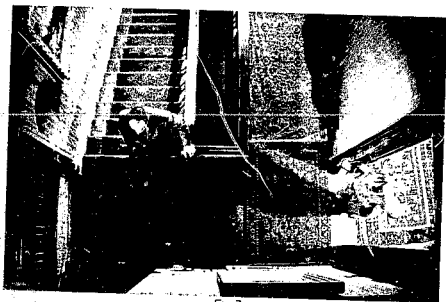
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[588]



[588]



[588]

Hitchcock then cuts to a tight close-up of Arbogast's legs from behind him, (shot [584]). This is a particularly disturbing cut since there is such a radical shift in perspective that it takes a while to orientate oneself. Then he cuts to a high angle shot on Arbogast as he ascends the staircase. The camera on a crane, tracks and cranes back with him, keeping him the same size in frame. There is a cut away to an open door, and then Hitchcock cuts back to Arbogast ascending.

Finally there is a cut to a high angle shot looking directly down on Arbogast [588], and then the music which accompanied the shower murder begins, playing wilder, faster and higher. A figure carrying a knife runs out of the room to the right of the frame and stabs at Arbogast's face. This is followed by a big close-up of Arbogast as a knife wound opens on his face with blood spurting out.

When death and destruction come in Hitchcock films, he often cuts to a high angle studying the action dispassionately, like an indifferent or ironic god, for example after the man has been set fire to at the petrol station in *The Birds*. Gianetti notes that these kinds of angles imply destiny or fate and 'the characters below are reduced to scurrying insects trapped in a maze' (99).

Hitchcock explains his own reasons in the following way: 'I deliberately placed the camera very high for two reasons. The first was so that I could shoot down on top of the Mother, because if I'd shown her back it might have looked

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