

PSYCHO NOTES

1. The Mother, Norma Bates, is a classic super-ego character, internalized by Norman. The tension in the film comes from not knowing that she is actually dead and mummified. She is the 'thing that refuses to die' in the sense that Norman's internalization of her keeps her alive and her body is not buried but treated as alive.
2. The house is a classic 'uncanny' house: Victorian, high on a hill, 'empty'. The house contains the secret, and getting into the house stages the attempts to uncover the truth.
3. The theme of voyeurism is a perversion that is itself perverted. Instead of leading to sexual pleasure, Norman adopts the persona of his mother to kill Marion Crane. His pleasure is sadistic rather than sexual or, rather, he derives sexual pleasure from the stabbing — as God seems to do in the case of Sta. Theresa.
4. The drain and the eye dominate the shower scene; this is the Real! The camera wanders away, pausing to look at objects in the room, and then drifts out the window toward the house.
5. The role of the voice is key. Norman ventriloquizes his mother's voice, staging conversations that the audience takes to be actual until they discover the mother's corpse. Is there, like in *Vertigo*, a phrase? Possibly the shift in the role of the acousmatic voice is an indicator that *Psycho* is a different kind of 'discourse'.
6. What is the meaning of the taxidermy theme, apart from the role it plays in explaining Norman's anxiety to preserve the mother's body.
7. What's the mystery? We witness a crime but misidentify the killer, because the killer misidentifies himself.
8. Is the opening scene of embezzlement just a setup? Are there any clues there?
9. There seems to be an architectural connection. The anonymous motel as a front (a successor?) to the 'old family house' on the hill. Yet the house is the center of evil; the motel merely 'dispenses' it. The evil and the secret are identified with the unpainted Victorian house.
10. Details: the hole in the wall is through a painting — 'The Rape of the Sabine Women'. Bates Motel as a place where 'bait' is set; rooms as cages. Nearby town is Fairvale; 'vale' is the greeting, 'be well' in Latin. 'Vale' is Spanish for 'worth'. Fair value.
11. Reference film: *Dead of Night* (Ventriloquist Tale). The dummy gets the upper hand; in *Psycho* it is the aggressive mother who kills Marion. Compulsion is 'automatic' and 'automaton-like', i.e. an unconscious. The unconscious 'speaks' with a voice that is aggressive and obscene, just like the super-ego.
12. What is the position of the Agent — and who/what is the Agent? The first choice seems, in this story about the super-ego function of the mother, the obscene S1, the 'efficient cause'. That makes this the discourse type of the master-servant. The Other is then S2, a good candidate would be the motel, a 'relation of signifiers', metonymized by the rooms with numbers, parking spaces, etc.
13. But, the site of production would seem to be the \$, the clients, here the especially barred \$ of Marion, herself guilty of a crime. Not only is she, as the final cause, metonymized by her need to conceal her motives; she is 'on the run' and the metonymy-hotel is the perfect place to hide. So is this not the discourse of the university?

14. In the master-servant discourse, the site of production is pleasure, so if we stick to that we have to see the dead mother as 'a', the obscene-Real corpse of the woman Norman has internalized. Certainly, this is the productive energy behind the plot. The discovery of this is the tie-up. The Truth is in the position of the \$ in the master-servant discourse. The truth is that of Norman, the divided subject as a schizophrenic, explained in detail at the end of the film.
15. If the hysteric's discourse is relevant, we have to accept the position of truth as the dropped out 'acousmatic' element, *a*, the mother (most likely).
16. In the performance artist Douglas Gordon's reconstruction of *Psycho* into *24 Psycho*, where each frame was held for approximately .5 seconds, making the film last 24 hours, the story changes. This re-mapping opens up a topology based on the \emptyset (phi) function, the 'invisible glue' that binds the frames together to create the illusion of motion. Could it be that this story's emptiness requires it to be spread out in such a way? What other ways are there to 'spread out' *Psycho*?