Norman Bates: A "Psycho" Analysis

The Plot of *Psycho*

- Marion Crane is on the run after she steals $40,000
- She stops at the Bates Motel to rest and meets Norman
- Psycho is a brilliant and innovative approach to storytelling
- Hitchcock entertains and informs his audience on the issue of mental illness

Norman Bates

- Manger of the Bates Motel
- Polite "boy next door"
- Fragile, innocent personality
- Lonely and anxious
- Resentful and critical of outsiders
- Faces extreme cynicism and verbal abuse from his mother
- Unable and unwilling to abandon her
- Norman embodies "abnormal normality"
- Suffers with an Oedipus Complex, as well as other disorders theorized by Psychoanalysis

A Fateful Shower

- Marion realizes she's stepped into her own "private trap"
- Decides to go back to Phoenix
- Contrast in her rational and logical behavior, compared to Norman's irrational actions
- Her moral conscience, The Super Ego, influences her decisions
- Marion is brutally stabbed to death by "Mother" while in the shower
- Norman comes to the scene and cleans up his mother's mess

The Story Behind *Psycho*

- Directed by Alfred Hitchcock in 1960
- Adapted from Robert Bloch's book
- Relies heavily on Sigmund Freud's theories
- Hitchcock has implored Freudian theory in a number of other films
- Usually feature the "absent mother"
- Psycho is considered one of Hitchcock's greatest films ever made

Norman's Childhood

- Father died when he was a young child
- His psychological development was stifled
- Developed a dysfunctional superego
- Norman and mother developed an erratic, co-dependent relationship
- Norman felt threatened by Mother's dating
- Repressed Oedipus Complex was triggered

Defining an Oedipus Complex

- Developed by Sigmund Freud
- Named after Sophocles' tragedy *Oedipus the King*
- Discusses a carnal desire for parent of the opposite sex and hostility towards parent of the same sex
- Occurs during the phallic stage
- Oedipus Complex is the root of the conflict within Norman Bates

The Truth Revealed

- Norman murdered his mother and her lover
- He relieved his guilt by internalizing her personality
- Began dressing and speaking like her
- He took drastic and violent measures in order to keep the allusion intact
- The "mother" half of his brain gained full control of him

The Bates Mansion

- The Superego - The Top Floor
- The Ego - The Ground Floor
- The Id Ego - The Basement

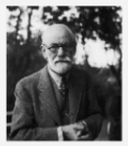
"We all go a little mad sometimes..."

- Marion overhears Norman's mother harassing him
- Norman's tone becomes serious and his speech labored
- Makes excuses for his mother's actions
- "Semantic aphasia," a disorder of speech in which ideas are difficult to convey and words don't successfully communicate anything meaningful

The Psychodynamic Perspective

- Biological causes of personality differences
- Role of unconscious mind in personality development
- Places great importance on dreams
- The Mind:
  - preconscious
  - conscious
  - subconscious
- The Personality:
  - id - basic drives and instincts
  - ego - rational and logical, maintains balance
  - superego - moral center

Sigmund Freud: The Father of Psychoanalysis



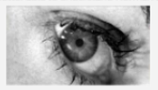
- Born and raised in Europe during the Victorian Age
- Believed in layers of consciousness in the mind
- Aroused controversy in the Victorian world
- His work is still believed to be historically relevant
- Theories are widely studied and significant

The Image of a "psychopath"

- Psychopathic tendencies included political and sexual deviance
- Stemmed from childhood development
- Maladaptive traits: voyeurism, compulsive masturbation, sado-masochism, pornographic fetishism, and possibly homosexuality
- Literature used character types like the rebel, the juvenile delinquent, the homosexual etc.
- Supposedly produced by distortions in psychological development

Conclusion

- Hitchcock reveals the character's dominance by his unfulfilled Oedipus Complex
- Norman Bates had an intense attachment to his mother
- Combined with his guilt resulted in a dissociative identity disorder
- Repressed the memory of killing her
- Studying Psycho from Freud's Psychoanalytic perspective, viewers are better able to understand Norman Bates.



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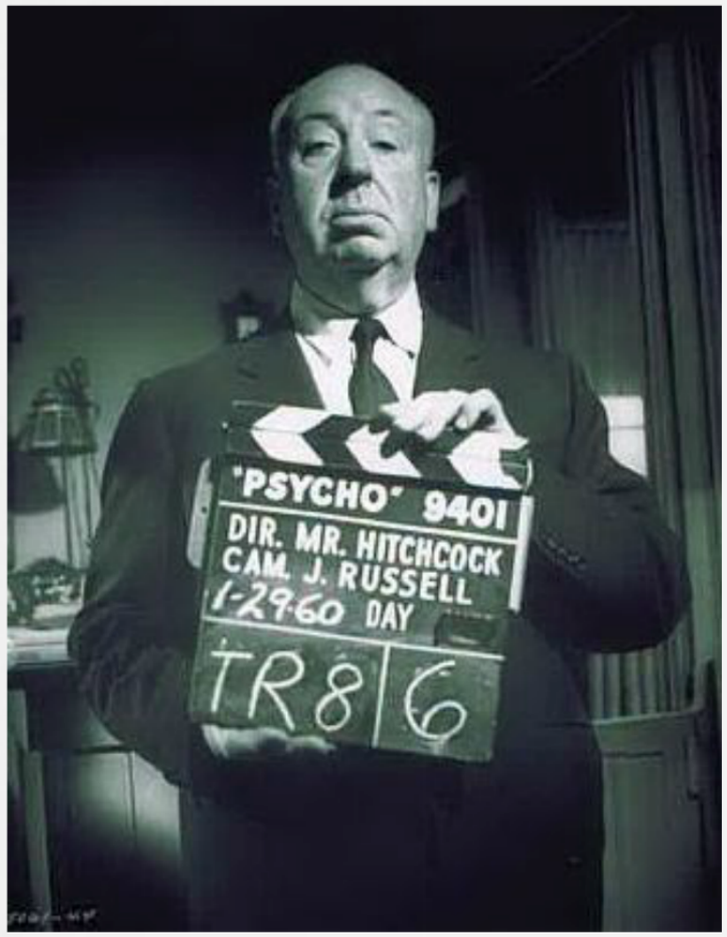

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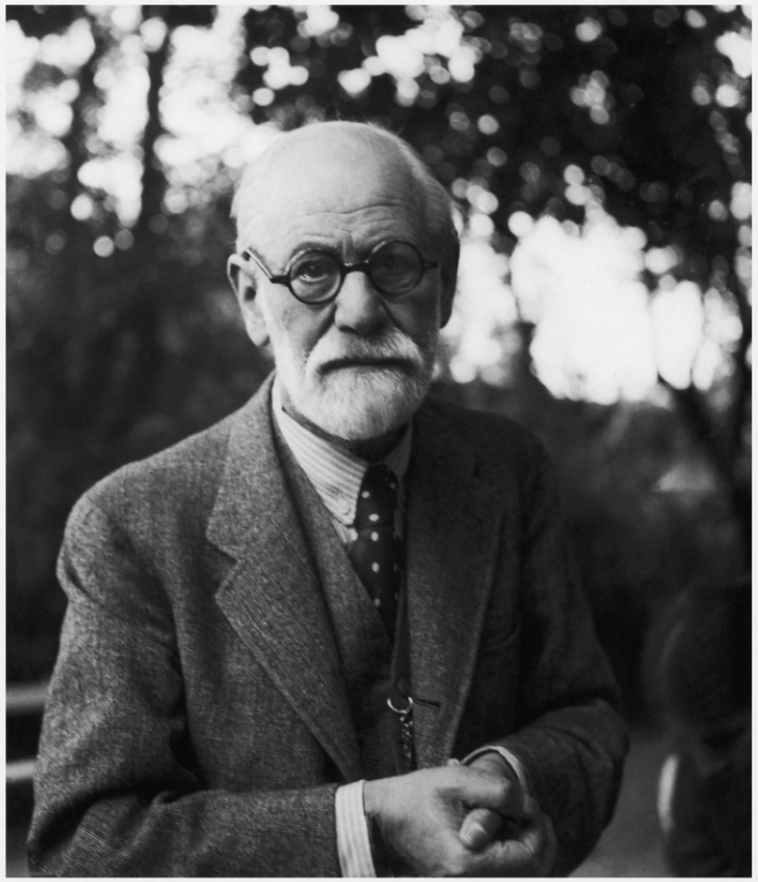

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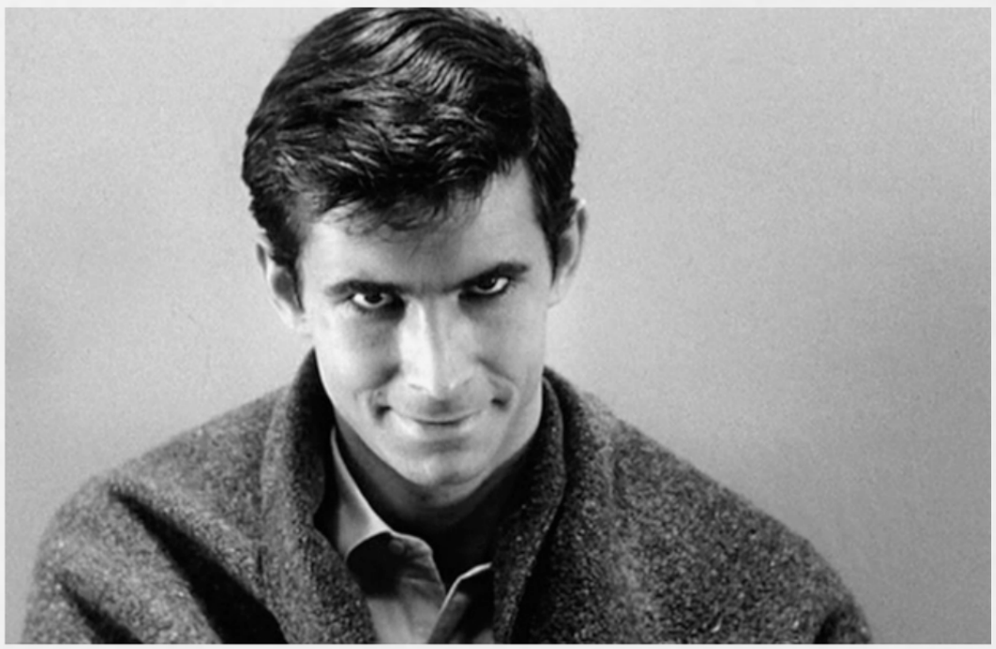

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