

SPEAKING AROUND FILM Week 3

Tutor Notes: Psycho

So far we've looked at two examples of classic Hitchcock, 'Rear Window' and 'The Birds'. Today the film is 'Psycho'

- Who's seen it?
- What is the plot?
- We have identified elements that have contributed to Hitchcock's reputation as 'The Master of Suspense'. Can you recall what these are...?

Task:

T: 'Rear Window' is interesting because the camera is used almost throughout to serve as the point of view of the character played by James Stewart ... remember the camera swooping out of Stewart's room into the courtyard of his New York apartment block and focusing in turn on the unobstructed view he has of his neighbours in their apartments as they begin the day ...

Now look at the opening scene in 'Psycho'

Viewing Extract (1): Camera swooping *into* a hotel room in Nevada where we see Marion Crane and a man in a state of undress on the bed. No dialogue but it is apparent from visual clues, such as a packed lunch and discarded formal office clothing that the two are conducting an (illicit) affair in their lunch break ...

Feedback on students comments about similarities / differences with this scene and the opening of 'Rear Window' / their speculations about the characters and their situation

T: The voyeurism identified last week is apparent here...

Viewing - Extract (2) – without sound

T: What is visually interesting in this scene? – Think about the weather, the motel, the house on the hill, Marion Chambers, and when she meets him, Norman Bates

- What is the situation between them?
- What are they saying to each other?

Listening – Extract (2) with sound

T: Now you will see the scene again with sound – were you right?

Listening Extract (2) with sound and script extract

T: As you listen (and read) I want you to focus on the language, particularly of the Bates character. Think about things like his verbal delivery – his tone of voice, intonation, and use of particular vocabulary.

- What sort of picture is being built of this character?
- What other filmic depiction of psychopathic killers are you familiar with?
- Are they like the Norman Bates character?

Modelling / drilling of prosodic features of short extract - students to use this as the basis of role play

T: We see a female figure illuminated in the window of the house on the hill – this is Bates inhabiting the persona of his dead mother

- What sort of woman can we imagine she was?
- What sort of dialogue takes place between Norman and his ‘mother’ after he leaves Marion in this scene?

(Optional) Writing task: Students to work in pairs – verbalise and then write short dialogue between Norman and his ‘mother’