

"I take pride in the fact that *Psycho*, more than any of my other pictures, is a film that belongs to filmmakers, to you and me."

Alfred HITCHCOCK
(Interviewed by François Truffaut)

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PSYCHO* UNIVERSE: "THE ANXIETY OF INFLUENCE" IN HITCHCOCK'S WORKS

Literary works, Harold Bloom claims, misread the works that preceded them insofar as they are creative readings. Hence, according to the New York critic, any interpretation is a reading that deviates from the text that precedes it (a *misreading*) and opens a space for the new work: "There can be no strong, canonical writing without the process of literary influence, a process vexing to undergo and difficult to understand. [...] Any strong literary work creatively misreads and therefore misinterprets a precursor text or texts" (BLOOM, 1995:18). Or as one of Bloom's readers puts it, "misreading involves a ravenous appetite for books: every literary work tries to clear a path through the forest in its fight for visibility or, to use the appropriate trope, the immortality of fame" (ALCORIZA, 2014).

This essay, drawing on Bloom's theory as part of its theoretical framework, places Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960) and its sequels in dialogue with Gus Van Sant's mimetic hypertextual exercise in his film (*Psycho*, 1998), and with *Hitchcock* (2012), the recent film by Sacha Gervasi, whose

plot –inspired by Stephen Rebello's research work– explores how the British master handled the filming of *Psycho*, one of the most analysed and commented on films in the brief but intense history of cinema. *Hypertextuality* is understood here to mean a manifestation of cinematic intertextuality: the relationship established between one text (referred to by Genette as a *hypertext*) and a previous text, or *hypotext*. Throughout this article, I will therefore be using the term in its widest sense, coined by Robert Stam, which includes remakes, sequels, revisionist films, pastiches, re-workings and parodies. This is a cinema of replication (a *cinema of allusion*, in the words of Noël Carroll) "of the already said, the already read, and the already seen" (STAM, 2000: 305)¹.

The anxiety of influence: a hypertextual exercise?

According to Bloom, "texts don't have meanings except in their relations to other texts [...]. A text is a relational event, not a substance to be analysed" (BLOOM, 1975: 106). Bloom's theory assumes an anti-idea-

listic version of the creative process. Everything is in the books. The creative process is nothing but a duel to the death between "past genius and present aspiration" with works that share the same imaginative force, in which "the prize is literary survival or canonical inclusion" (BLOOM, 1995: 7). In this way, the author's imaginative power would be superimposed onto the settings and circumstances that contextualize the work², dictating conditions that can be explained according to what Bloom calls "revisionary ratios" (ways in which a text is related to others) that encapsulate the anxiety of influence: "'Influence' is a metaphor, one that implicates a matrix of relationships –imagistic, temporal, spiritual, psychological– all of them ultimately defensive in their nature. What matters most (and it is the central point of this book) is that the anxiety of influence *comes out of* a complex act of strong misreading, a creative interpretation that I call 'poetic misprision'" (BLOOM, 1997: xxiii). Applied to the field of cinema, Gus Van Sant's *Psycho* could thus be understood simply as a misreading of Hitchcock's *Psycho*, just as Gervasi's *Hitchcock* is a misreading of both and of all the films that have been made in response to the genius of their predecessor, from the complete film saga (*Psycho II* [Richard Franklin, 1983], *Psycho III* [Anthony Perkins, 1986] and *Psycho IV: The Beginning* [Mick Garris, 1990]) to Brian de Palma's works, Douglas Gordon's art installation *24 Hour Psycho* (1993), and the whole genre of psycho thrillers and slasher movies it inspired³. This article will explore how these misreadings are expressed.

The first question raised by the mosaic of infinite influences assumed in Bloom's is the following: if Van Sant and Gervasi misread Hitchcock, that is to say, if they turn *Psycho* into an object of reinterpretation, who did Hitchcock misread? "Hitchcock [Éric Rohmer would say] is sufficiently renowned to merit comparison with

no one other than himself" (ROHMER, 1989: 168). Each of his films is "pure suspense, that is, it is a constructed film" (ibid. 168). Indeed, although Hitchcock, like any filmmaker, has been subjected to external influences, we can find echoes of continuity between his films prior to *Psycho* and his previous work on television that are remarkable enough to support Rohmer and Chabrol's claim. In other words, Hitchcock rewrites himself in successive films; the intertextuality

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of his work consists mainly of intertextual references to his own films. Thus, the filmmaker's originality, as James Naremore points out, "lies in his ability to continually remake or recombine a basic repertory of narrative situations and cinematic techniques, thus creating a characteristic world" (NAREMORE, 1999-2000: 5); there are even authors, such as Stuart McDougal, who believe that the reworking of his own works became an obsessive factor that allowed Hitchcock to rethink the relationships "between the work of a younger, more exuberant director and a mature craftsman" (McDOUGAL, 1998: 67). As Carroll would suggest with reference to the repetition of stories and stereotypes in mass art, Hitchcock plays with "variations of recurring strategies"⁴. At the narrative level, for instance, and with no intention of

providing an exhaustive account, his films are often divided into two stories: the main plot, containing the action that maintains the suspense, and a sub-plot related to a love story; this is the case in *Psycho*, but also in his earlier works (*Rear Window* [1954], *Vertigo* [1958] and *North by Northwest* [1959]) as well as in his later films (*The Birds* [1963], *Torn Curtain* [1966] and *Topaz* [1969]). In *Psycho* this *variation* is produced by subverting the audience's expectations by killing off the star in the first act, an effect that has been subsequently imitated, as it was in *Scream* (1996) by Wes Craven. As Pauline Kael's describes it: "Hitchcock teased us by killing off the one marquee-name star early in *Psycho*, a gambit which startled us not just because of the suddenness of the murder or how it was committed but because it broke a box-office convention and so it was a joke played on what audiences have learned to expect" (LOPATE, 2006: 338). Indeed, Hitchcock himself would remark that "the first part of the story was a red herring [...] to distract the viewer's attention in order to heighten the murder" (TRUFFAUT, 1985: 269). Hitchcock thus captivates the audience with the pretext of the theft until the moment of the murder, when it is revealed that it was merely a "MacGuffin", not the main focus of the plot: Norman Bates' (Anthony Perkins) split personality.

The murder itself points to another recurring element in his films: his way of creating a sensation of violence without the need to depict a violent act, simply by suggesting it through the editing. This is especially evident in *Psycho* in the forty-five seconds of the endlessly analyzed shower scene (in which the penetration of the knife into the victim's flesh is never shown, and for which seventy camera setups were needed), but also in *Rear Window* or *Torn Curtain*, among many others. A director who seeks to produce a sensation of reality does not achieve it by filming

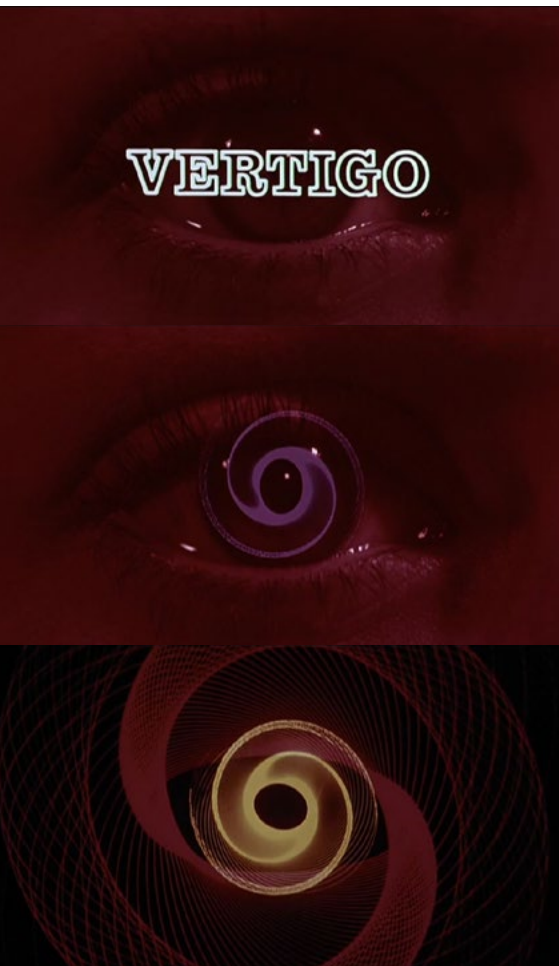


Figure 1. The eye seen as the “matrix of identity and guilt”. Film credits for *Vertigo* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1958)

it, but by *constructing* it through the editing, through *pure film*. This is what Truffaut refers to as Hitchcock’s creative use of “imagery” (TRUFFAUT, 1985: 265). Hitchcock would thus suggest that “more often than not, the photographic reality is not realistic”; the audience needs to be made to feel it:

In *Psycho* 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 the 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 their enjoyment of the novel. They were aroused by pure film. (TRUFFAUT, 1985: 282).

Take for example another recurrent aspect in his films: the eye and, by extension, the gaze as a “matrix of identity and guilt”. The opening credits of *Vertigo* [see Figure 1] feature a close-up of Kim Novak’s eye, and her iris transforms into a spiral and takes on various swirling geometric designs to the sound of Bernard Herrmann’s violins, a technique that Hitchcock would reuse in *Psycho* to end the famous murder scene (also accompanied by stringed instruments) by shooting the spiraling movement of the blood swirling down the drain of the bath, a rotary motion that the camera then imitates by spinning around its axis, ending on open eye the lifeless victim [see Figure 2]⁵. It is not by chance that Donald Spoto (1999) should note that in Hitchcock’s most important films, the moment when the hunter becomes the hunted is often linked with the act of staring. Indeed, this happens to James Stewart the first time his neighbour stares back at him in *Rear Window*, a film whose plot is built around the act of staring; and in *Vertigo*, where the audience, together with the main character, spies twice on Kim Novak. It is worth noting that the filmmaker chose his main characters to be, respectively, a photographer and a detective, both dedicated to observation, and both of

whom, moreover, are played by the same actor. The “morally blind” voyeurism of these two films would be taken to its extreme in *Psycho*, where the criminal’s sick and corrupt gaze is the prelude to death: Bates peers at his victim through a hole chipped out of the wall while she is undressing right before the stabbing and, to reveal his position, he removes no less than a painting of *Susanna and the Elders*, the Bible story of a beautiful and God-fearing woman (Daniel 13:1-64) who is falsely accused of adultery by two voyeurs who were unable to have their way with her when she was preparing to bathe (this is why the stabbing of Marion Crane [Janet Leigh] is also considered a symbolic act of rape) [see Figure 3 on next page]. The eye is also the place where, shortly afterwards, Arbogast (Martin Balsam), the detective who has apparently has tried to observe too much, is stabbed, and the empty eye sockets of Bates’ mother’s stuffed corpse –which seem still to be observing her son’s life from the beyond– underline the hallucinatory aspect of its final appearance, intensified by the shriek of terror of Lila Crane (Vera Miles) and the swinging movement of the bare-bulb light fixture that the actress knocks into⁶. In general terms, Hitchcock’s treatment of the gaze in his films (enhanced by his use of point of view and his careful staging) seems perverse because it turns the audience into *voyeurs* who, depending on the case, identify with one or another of the characters (irrespective of the characters’ morals and whether they play the role of protagonist or antagonist), provoking a split between their ethical principles and the curiosity that the film has awoken in them. Thus, in *Psycho*, the

Figure 2. Life dripping away. Spiral movements. *Psycho* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1960)





Figure 3. The “morally blind” voyeurism of *Psycho* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1960). Prelude to death

audience initially side with the thief, hoping that she will get away with the crime; then, the care with which Bates –an innocent young man subjugated by his mother– wipes away all traces of the crime, makes us sympathize with him and admire him for a job well done, and even makes us anxious for the car containing the proof against him to finally sink into the swamp; and finally, when we discover he is keeping a secret, we want him arrested. Hitchcock manipulates the feelings of the audience, arousing constant dualities or binaries (attraction/repulsion) when they become involved in the film, just like the dualities of his characters (Norman Bates’ split personality, but also the dual personality of Kim Novak in *Vertigo*, Cary Grant in *North by Northwest* or Paul Newman in *Torn Curtain*, among others)⁷.

In short, remaking as a transversal process in Hitchcock films is encoded in the filmmaker’s *anxiety* to achieve technical perfection (or *pure film*) and thereby to achieve the highest expressive potential in his stories in order to manipulate the emotions of the audience by means of suspense⁸. Hitchcock purposely differentiated between mystery and suspense. In an interview with George Stevens Jr., he remarked:

Mystery is an intellectual process, like in a “whodunit”. But suspense is essentially an emotional process. You can only get the suspense element going by giving the audience information. I dare say you have seen many films which have mysterious goings-on. You don’t know what is going on, why the man is doing this or that. You are about a third of the way through the film before you realize what it is all about. To me that is completely wasted footage because there is no emotion to it (STEVENS, 2006: 258).

These two elements (technical perfection and the purpose of stirring up

certain emotions, sometimes visceral, in the audience) are the dominant traits of the creative personality that Sacha Gervasi seeks to show us in his recent bio-pic.

The creative process: towards emotional intensity and inclusion in the canon

Hitchcock is a film which, just like the pictures of the filmmaker it depicts, combines a secondary love story (the relationship between the director [Anthony Hopkins] and Alma Reville [Helen Mirren], his wife and the often unacknowledged co-writer of most of his projects, who feels attracted to the writer Whitfield Cook [Danny Huston]) with a main plot (the filming of *Psycho*) filled with cinephilic references. For my analysis, what interests me is not the metacinematic character of Gervasi’s film –which shows the whole process of how *Psycho* took shape from beginning to end– but the exercise of intertextuality and irony employed in the film by adapting some of the elements of Hitchcock’s films explained in the previous section. The most striking of these elements is the dark and split personality of the filmmaker, apparently harmless, but with a background of contained violence (like that of his own characters), made explicit in the figure of Ed Gein (Michael Wincott), the real serial killer of *Psycho*, whose story served as the inspiration for Robert Bloch’s novel, which was adapted for the screen by Joseph Stefano. Gein appears to him, in the form of a psychotic consciousness –sometimes in dreams, other times while awake– to reveal to him the signs of his repression of impulses he should be releasing: “You just can’t keep the stuff bottled up,” he warns him⁹. At one point in the film, Hitchcock admits: “All of us harbour dark recesses of violence and horror.” In-

deed, the scene where he seems to release these “violent and horrible” impulses coincides with the filming of *Psycho*’s shower scene. Gervasi shows the repressed subconscious of Hitchcock turned into a murderer, as Gus Van Sant did in his 1998 version by adding the near-subliminal images of storm clouds and the eye of a predatory night bird. Thus, faced with Perkins’ stunt double’s lack of courage in handling the knife, Hitchcock decides to wield it himself with “ungovernable rage and homicidal violence”, while we cut to a series of close-ups of Janet Leigh (Scarlett Johanson) utterly terrified (in the image and likeness of the original close-ups) and reverse shots of Hitchcock, juxtaposed with the faces of all the people who Hitchcock subconsciously desired to kill, namely: Geoffrey Shurlock (Kurtwood Smith), the censor from the MPAA who wants to withhold the Association’s seal from his film because of the toilet scene; Paramount President Barney Balaban (Richard Portnow), who refuses to finance the picture; and Cook and his own wife, whom he suspects of having an affair [see Figure 4 on next page]. “Beware, all men are potential murderers” says Hitchcock shortly afterwards, when he asks Alma about her relationship with Cook. In this way, Gervasi expresses, in film critic Richard Brody’s words, how “Hitchcock is both terrified and amused by the play of his own mind (which makes sense –so are viewers). [...] Hitchcock is no mere puppet master who seeks to provoke effects in his viewers; he’s converting the world as he sees it, in its practical details and obsessively ugly corners, into his art, and he’s doing so precisely because those are the aspects of life that haunt his imagination” (BRODY, 2012: 3).

Together with violence, sex is also repressed by Gervasi’s Hitchcock. His

personality struggles between his attachment to his wife (without whom he cannot live or complete a project) and his sublimated lust for blonde actresses whom he tries to turn into stars [see Figure 5]. Gervasi's Hitchcock is also bulimic: he transfers to food his unsatisfied appetites on the creative and marital level; in other words, he calms his *anxiety* in times of crisis, gorging on food and drink at the expense of his health.

In a certain way, Hitchcock's violence is intrinsic to the act of creation itself, as *Psycho* is a film, as Gervasi shows, conceived to manipulate the audience, to victimize it. The scene of the film's premiere is enlightening in this respect: Gervasi shows a Hitchcock who prefers to go up to the projection booth or to hide in the lobby rather than sit in the stalls, so that he can observe the audience's reactions. While the famous shower scene is on screen, he plays the role of director as audience murderer (directing *as* stabbing) [see Figure 6 on next page]. Shrieks and violins fuse while Hitchcock, out in the lobby, slashes a baton as if it were

a knife, conducting the audience's emotions, peeping at them stealthily, as if he were one of his own voyeur characters¹⁰. The filmmaker is utterly pleased when he checks that he has perfectly orchestrated every element (staging, music, editing...), that he has achieved the *longed-for* technical perfection as he brings the reaction of the audience to its climax¹¹.

The audience, as suggested above,

Thus, Gus Van Sant dares not go a step further in the direction of his 1998 version, turning his film into a replica rather than a paraphrasing of its predecessor [see Figure 7; page 66]. As he tried to recover everything originally contained in Joseph Stefano's screenplay and that Hitchcock did not include because of The Code of Production of the Motion Picture Association of America, the film is more

an audiovisual practice and homage than an original creation. Speaking in *Bloomean* terms, in his shot-by-shot *misreading* of the film, Van Sant admits that the master has reached the peak of what could be achieved or, in the words of Jordi Balló and Xavier Pérez, "this revisitation could only be done in the manner of Borges' character Pierre Menard's remake of *Don Quixote*, by reconstructing it exactly shot

by shot, word for word, in a film in which the accessory elements (the colours, the actors...) are the only ones that change, but which are precisely the ones that attest to the passing of time and history" (BALLÓ and PÉREZ, 2005: 245-246). In fact, the alteration

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is thus victimized, but what is truly important is the fact that the way of making horror or suspense films itself (psycho thrillers and slasher movies) has been frozen by the original scene¹². Hitchcock has managed to haul all directors up to this point.

Figure 4. "Ungovernable rage and homicidal violence": Hitchcock wields the knife during the filming of the shower scene, projecting the images of his subconscious



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of these "accessory elements" —such as the explicitness of the sexual repression of Bates, played by Vince Vaughn (when he masturbates while watching Anne Heche undress), the subsequent crimson river of blood in the bathtub, or the inserted shots of the murderer's subconscious during the stabbing— works to the detriment of the film in the sense that it destroys or mitigates the "pure film" effect pursued by Hitchcock, as Van Sant's film is no longer a "model of taste and discretion", as Hitchcock used to boast —paraphrasing *The Code of Production*— of having achieved with *Psycho*, but draws more from the style of slasher movies than from the master of suspense himself¹³. In fact, according to Stephen Rebello, "ironically, many of the powerful and suggestive moments in Hitchcock films gained their force because the Code endorsed the understated style that was a hallmark of the director" (REBELLO, 2013: 77); in other words, the Code worked to his advantage, even if he had to constantly struggle against it. In *Psycho* (unlike his later films, to which the Hays Code no longer applied)¹⁴, Hitchcock does not abandon himself to the obscenity of the crime: everything is mathematically meas-

ured, *constructed* (as Rohmer would say), to provoke audience reaction without the need to provide graphic details. He achieves maximum intensity by means of an extreme cooling of the process, which Van Sant fails to achieve despite his mimetic adaptation, thereby proving that technical perfection is not everything. If it were, Van Sant's film would have become another work of art as influential as its predecessor; nevertheless, it *has* been important as a homage or rhetorical exercise. As Verevis puts it, in a statement that recalls the reappropriation entailed in the concept of *anxiety of influence* that was the starting point of this essay, "*Psycho 98*—indeed, all of the *Psycho* remakes— draws attention to the very nature of cinema, to the nature of cinematic quotation and cultural production, to the fact that every film, every film viewing, is a type of remaking" (BOYD and BARTON PALMER, 2006: 28). It is not that Van Sant corrupted the identity of the original film but that his work failed to participate in the genius, in the "insurmountable classicism" (BALLÓ and PÉREZ 2005: 245) of its predecessor.

In the wake of Van Sant's formalism, although with a very different approach, other texts have also put



Figure 5. Hitchcock playing Bates. Spying on Vera Miles in her dressing room as she undresses

special emphasis on the writing process of *Psycho*. Douglas Gordon experiments with it in *24 Hour Psycho*, an art installation that screens Hitchcock's film with no soundtrack at a speed of two frames a second, thereby lengthening its 109-minute duration to 24 hours [see Figure 8 on next page]. In so doing, Gordon appropriates the potential of the new media to breathe new life into other contexts of cinematic experience, such as the museum space, highlighting the possibility of inhabiting the image in real time, so that the audience of his installation can reconstruct Hitchcock's

Figure 6. Director as audience murderer. The recreation of *Psycho*'s premiere in Sacha Gervasi's *Hitchcock* (2012)





Figure 7. Gus Van Sant replica: *Psycho* (1998) based on *Psycho* (1960)

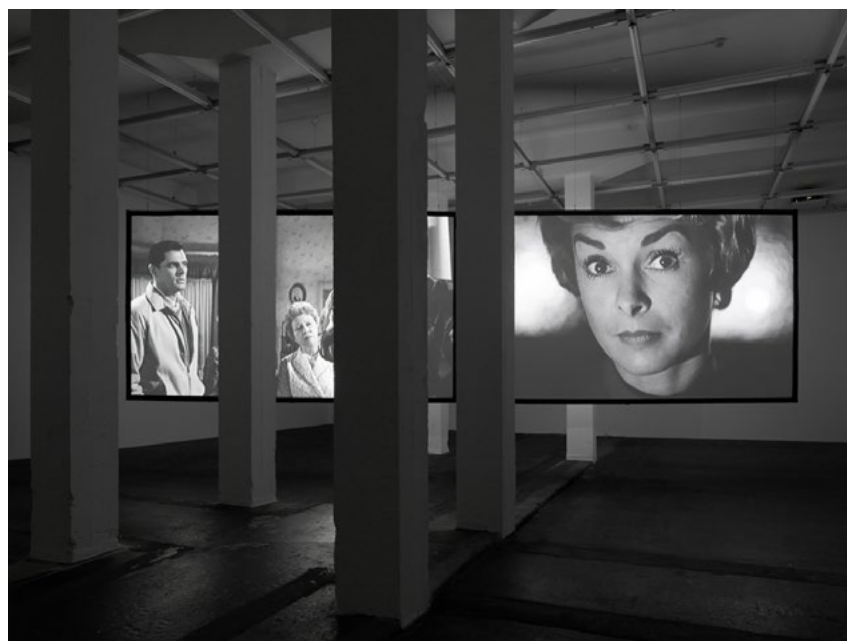
work, augmenting the moment every time they view it, and this extremely slow reviewing can subvert the author-viewer relationship in the work of art. Being aware of what they are watching and, therefore, of the passage of time, i.e., that the temporal framework of the installation absorbs that of the viewer, were the premises that would inspire the opening of Don DeLillo's novel *Point Omega*, which begins with a character visiting *24 Hour Psycho* for the fifth day straight, who is mesmerized the shower scene – “the rings on the shower curtain spinning on the rod when the curtain is torn loose, a moment lost at normal speed” – while he reflects on his condition and experience as a viewer: “He began to think of one thing's relationship to another. This film had the same relationship to the original movie that the original movie had to real live experience. This was the departure from the departure. The original movie was fiction, this was real” (DELLILO, 2010: 13).

Other examples could be added of film or art practices that draw on the classicism of *Psycho*, including the television sequels of *Psycho* produced, like Van Sant's film, in response to the success and proliferation of slasher movies of the late seventies that *Psycho* itself inspired. Although they share the same fictional universe with their hypotext and use the same recurring intertextual strategies¹⁵, the systematic use of gore scenes [see Figure 9 on next page] (in *Psycho II* Lila Crane [Vera Miles] is murdered with a butcher's knife plunged down her throat, while Dr. Bill Raymond [Robert Loggia], Bates' psychiatrist, is accidentally stabbed in the chest by Mary Loomis [Meg Tilly], who

later on repeatedly stabs Bates [Anthony Perkins] in the hands and chest until at last he grabs the knife blade and, finally, kills his real mother with a blow to the head with a shovel) links these films more with the terror genre than with Hitchcock's work, as much as their filmmakers seek to pay homage to their predecessor (at the end of *Psycho II* a motto can be read on screen similar to the one that Van Sant would use some years later with his *in memory of*: “The producers acknowledge the debt owed to Alfred Hitchcock”). It is no surprise that the critics defined the successive sequels as “commercial parasites” at the service of the industry, the complete opposite of what *Psycho* originally was: a low-budget film independently financed by its director, which eventually garnered overwhelming success.

In conclusion, it is clear that the heterogeneity of all these revisitations, paradoxically, has not inspired or revitalized the appearance of new creations or aesthetic proposals that can measure up to their predecessor. In other words, none of them has achieved –as Bloom would say– inclusion in the film canon; rather, under the pressure of their heritage, they have contributed with their homage to the consolidation of *Psycho* as a film classic, while proving ineffective in terms of their own influence, although they have at least given rise to readings (misreadings?) and theoretical analyses dealing with the question of the intertextuality, metacinema and cinematic reflectivity of the *Psycho* universe, such as the analysis that this essay has sought to present. ■

Figure 8. The augmented moment. *24 Hour Psycho* art installation, by Douglas Gordon



Notes

- * The research for this article was enabled with the support of the Research Project 'Study and analysis for development of Research Network on Film Studies through Web 2.0 platforms', financed by the National R+D+i Plan of the Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness (code HAR2010-18648).
- 1 Stam applies Genette's classifications to the field of film analysis; Genette's concepts are, in turn, a rearrangement of terminology previously proposed by Julia Kristeva, based on Bakhtin's notion of dialogism. Genette uses the term transtextuality to refer to "all that sets the text in a relationship, whether obvious or concealed, with other texts" (GENETTE, 1997: 1); for Stam, intertextuality, defined as the "effective co-presence of two texts in the form of quotation, plagiarism, and allusion" (STAM, 1992: 23) forms part of this category. A general picture of the use in film theory of the categories coined by literary theory can be found in the study by José Antonio Pérez Bowie (2008), *Leer el cine: la teoría literaria en la teoría cinematográfica*; especially in the eighth chapter, "Cine e intertextualidad" (151-168). Salamanca: Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca. See also Mijaíl Iampolski (1996). *The Memory of Tiresias: Intertextuality and Film*. Translated by Harsha Ram. Los Angeles, CA.: University of California Press; and Angélica García-Manso (2012). *(Séptimo Arte): Intertextualidad fílmica y metacine*. Madrid: Ediciones Pígalión.
 - 2 "Not putting literature at the service of spurious purposes would have also led him to consider spurious the purposes of those who have used the arts of reading and writing without full appreciation of the agonising element in literary creation. Thus, neither politics, which would have introduced class struggle as a corrective factor in literary creation, nor religion, which would have turned the texts into an object of worship and a source of obedience, nor even philosophy, which would have exiled poetry from its system or would have adapted it to its educational design, would be able to provide a trustworthy account of imaginative life... Books are simply the trace of their influences; there is something more solid than the book in the effort that its author has had to make to be known" (ALCORIZA, 2014).

- 3 *Psycho* has over time become one of the perennial classics of the history of cinema with the highest number of imitations, homages and parodies, which it is not my intention here to cover completely but merely to point out. An in-depth analysis of this can be found in *After Hitchcock. Influence, Imitation, and Intertextuality*, published by David Boyd and Richard Barton Palmer in 2006 (Austin: University of Texas Press), especially in the chapter written by Constantin Verevis "For Ever Hitchcock. *Psycho* and Its Remakes". On the other hand, Brian de Palma's films have given rise to a number of analyses of the "dense appropriation of Hitchcock's cinematic vocabulary and themes: voyeurism, pursuit, rescue, guilt, punishment, and the use of multiple identities or disguises" (SQUIERS, 1985: 97).
- 4 "But just as variation against a background of repetition is available in other forms of art, variation is also possible in mass art. Mass art does not merely repeat the same stories and stereotypes. Sometimes, it plays variations of its recurring strategies, as in the case of Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho*" (CARROLL, 1998: 88).
- 5 It is obvious that eyes are a symbolic element metaphorically present in other objects of the scene, such as the showerhead, the drain, the toilet, the basin or the pail with which Bates cleans up every trace of the murder [see Figure 10 on next page].
- 6 The function of the bare-bulb light fixture in the macabre basement sequence has also been analysed as a great example of staging. See Tarnowski (1976: 47-55). On the function of the gaze in Hitchcock's works, see George Toles' chapter "Psycho and the Gaze. 'If Thine Eye Offend Thee...': Psycho and the Art of Infection", in KOLKER (2004: 119-145); and previous works such as *Hitchcock — The Murderous Gaze* (ROTHMAN, 1982); *Viendo mirar* (GONZÁLEZ REQUENA, 1989: 148-163); and *Psicosis. El encuentro del ojo con lo real* (ARIAS, 1987).
- 7 Spoto argues that the use that Hitchcock makes of mirrors in *Psycho* is a visual symbol not only of the split personality and concealed identities, but also of the introspection of the characters: "mirrors are endlessly accumulated: at the hotel, in the office, where Janet Leigh regards herself in a hand mirror, at her home, in her car, in a



Figure 9. Four glimpses of gore in *Psycho II* (Richard Franklin, 1983)

used-car-lot washroom; at the motel counter and in the motel rooms; and, most tellingly, in the room of the killer's 'mother,' where the meaning of the double mirror becomes clear. [...] But for a true glimpse of our divided selves, one consults a mirror ('I'll buy you a new mirror,' Hitchcock had added to the script of *Under Capricorn*, 'and it'll be your conscience'). The mirror as a symbol of the fractured personality is complemented



in *Psycho* by the cutting imagery: Saul Bass's title designs, which tear and split the names; in what Hitchcock called the basic geometry of the film - the bisecting horizontals and verticals..." (SPOTO, 1999: 422). See also KOLKER (2004: 136 et seq.) for more about the use of mirrors in Hitchcock's work.

8 Rewriting in Hitchcock goes far beyond the mere adaptation of certain scenes and the recycling of certain symbolic objects, put at the service of different stories. Consider his two versions of *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1934/1956). The latter actually initiates what has become known as the classic thriller sextet (made up of the aforementioned *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, *The 39 Steps* [1935], *Secret Agent* [1936], *Young and Innocent* [1937], *The Lady Vanishes* [1938], and *Saboteur* [1942]), all of which, according to Robert Kapsis (1992), exhibit a continuity and consistency that goes beyond any attribution to the influence that the house style of British Gaumont could ever have had on his style. For a detailed analysis of the evolution of Hitchcock's (mannerist?) style, see CASTRO DE PAZ (2000).

9 Ed Gein, with his apparent normality, deliberately recalls the archetype of the main characters of the television series *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*, made up of 350 episodes (all of them presented by Hitchcock himself, although he only directed 17), that were broadcast by CBS in the US between 1955 and 1965, and that served as inspiration for *Psycho*; in fact, the film was shot with the technical crew and support team that took part in shooting the television series (in fact, Hitchcock discovered Vera Miles when she starred in *Revenge* [1955], the episode that launched the series). This explains why *Hitchcock* begins with an Ed Gein prototype unexpectedly committing fratricide, in clear imitation of the beginnings and surprising endings of the episodes of the series: with the appearance of the director on the same film set to present, with his characteristic British sense of humour (in Hitchcock's words), "the title to those of you who can't read and to tidy up afterwards for those who don't understand the endings". The

title of Gervasi's film, *Hitchcock*, is also split by lightning when it appears on screen, yet another symbol that suggests the director's split personality and that reinterprets Saul Bass' tearing and splitting of *Psycho*'s closing credits. In the same way, Gervasi introduces other hypertextual elements from the series to end his film: once again, the front-angle shot of *Hitchcock* looking directly into the camera and presenting his own conclusions of the episode; the crow that perches on his shoulder -another nod to cinephiles that foreshadows his next project, *The Birds* [1963], and the phlegmatic turn with which he offers his left profile, whose silhouette always appeared on screen. And over a black background, the closing credits are shown to the sound of Charles Gounod's well-known theme for the television series, *Funeral March of a Marionette*, increasing, this way, the levels of the *mise en abyme* we are offered (a story about Hitchcock, presented on television by Hitchcock, about the creative process of *Psycho*).

10 From the very beginning of the film, Hitchcock is shown as a voyeur [see Figure 11a on next page], when he watches his wife dressing, half-hidden behind a newspaper while in the bath: "Muhammad had the eyes of peeping Toms gouged out with arrows", Alma tells him as she feels him watching her. "Well, that must have been rather painful", he replies. At his office, we see Hitchcock spying from his window on Vera Miles (Jessica Biel) out on location [see Figure 11b]; and, later, on his wife and former co-worker [see Figure 11c]. At another point, Gervasi shows him uncovering a little hole in the wall (precisely after taking down a mirror), strategically placed in the room next to Miles's dressing room, to watch her undressing [see Figure 5 on page 65]. Shortly afterwards, in a rehearsal, Perkins (James D'Arcy) asks him why he peeks at Leigh through the peephole, to which the director replies: "Well, don't ask me. I'm just a man hiding in the corner with my camera, watching. My camera will tell you the truth, the absolute truth". Hitchcock turns his job, like the photographer in *Rear Window* or the detective in *Vertigo*, into a voyeuristic obsession: he spies on his actresses, spies on his wife...; he hides his gaze even when he is not behind the camera.

11 On Hitchcock as an orchestra conductor, he himself said "The main objective is to

Figure 10. The symbolism of the eye at the scene of the crime in *Psycho* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1960)

arouse the audience's emotion and that emotion arises from the way in which the story unfolds, the way in which sequences are juxtaposed. At times, I have the feeling I'm an orchestra conductor, a trumpet sound corresponding to a close shot and a distant shot suggesting an entire orchestra performing a muted accompaniment..." (TRUFFAUT, 1985: 333).

12 Other than Brian de Palma's reconstruction of the murder scene in the shower in *Dressed to Kill* (1980) and *Blow Out* (1981), countless filmmakers have paid it homage and even parodied it, such as in *High Anxiety* (Mel Brooks, 1977) or the short film *Psycho Too* (Andrew Gluck Levy, 1999).

13 Constantine Verevis adds another factor: "The role of the 'final girl', prefigured only rudimentarily in *Psycho's* Lila Crane, is reinterpreted in Julianne Moore's performance as the 'spunky inquirer' (Clover 203), familiar to viewers of the genre from *Halloween's* Laurie Strode to *Scream's* Sidney Prescott (Neve Campbell)," (BOYD and BARTON PALMER, 2006: 23).

14 The Code of Production of what was then the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA), subsequently known as The Hays Code, was enacted in 1927. Although it has no legal force or coercive power (as films are protected by the First Amendment), this self-censorship that Hollywood applied to its films was essentially respected so as to avoid political censorship at the state level. Infringement of the Code of Production meant that the film could not bear the MPPDA seal, which would result in serious barriers to its distribution and screening. However, there were directors, like Hitchcock, who knew how to basically circumvent the Code, who learnt to work within its limits and to negotiate with the censors, creating a staging that suggested crime, nudity or sex without explicitly showing it. From 1968 onwards, when the Hays Code was replaced by the Classification according to age groups, the opening would lead to the proliferation of gruesome B-movies in the terror genre (splatter, slasher, gore, etc.), from which most of *Psycho's* sequels and remakes have taken their inspiration.

15 For instance, *Psycho II* starts with a reproduction of the shower scene, retains the Gothic mansion and the motel as places where the action unfolds, and the actors Perkins and

Miles as luring actors; revisits the spying eye motif, this time on Mary (the young protagonist, Marion Crane's niece), whom Bates invites for an improvised dinner of sandwiches and milk (as he did with his aunt in Hitchcock's version), and even some specific shots are imitated, such as the picture of Bates taking his mother in his arms or the suitcase that falls down the stairs just as Arbogast did.

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Figure 11. "Muhammad had the eyes of peeping Toms gouged out with arrows." The voyeur director: he spies on his actresses (b), spies on his wife (a/c)...

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