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Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho*: A Gender Studies Perspective

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Abstract

This undergraduate thesis pursues a gender study of the renowned Alfred Hitchcock's film *Psycho* (1960), the masterpiece of his filmography. The personality of the director will also be analyzed due to his turbulent relationships, especially with actresses, which highly affected his way of working. To pursue this objective, Laura Mulvey's theory about the male gaze will be used, together with other theories from Gender Studies (e.g. Tania Modleski's and Camille Paglia's), as will be the biography of the director written by François Truffaut. After presenting a general overview of Hitchcock's world, I will explore his methods of working, paying attention to the production of *Psycho* and to the film itself in relation to gender issues over the course of the different sections of the dissertation. The object of this analysis is not to discredit Alfred Hitchcock's prestige, since his work is exceptional, but instead to ascertain whether *Psycho* is indeed as misogynist as his filmmaker's reputation.

Introduction

This undergraduate dissertation studies the film *Psycho*, paying special attention to the different interpretations of it that have been discussed over the years, and adding my own. Even though at the present time Hitchcock is catalogued as a misogynist filmmaker, the reason for choosing this particular work as my object of study is because of its popularity and renowned perfection as an artwork; furthermore, while examining *Psycho*, I will attempt to clarify if Hitchcock's male-chauvinistic personality has been fairly ascribed. Hereunder in this introduction, I will explain why this object of study was chosen and the aims and methodology through which I will execute my analysis. Lastly, I will finish this section describing the structure of this project.

Being a filmic text, *Psycho* will have to be subjected to a close reading in order to cover every aspect of it, and to uncover the views of its director, in relation to gender¹. As for my topic selection, different features influenced it: Hitchcock is famous for having had a turbulent and often abusive relationship with women. Despite this, his granddaughter Mary Stone has stated that he was "very affectionate and normal; he was very funny and very different from the media persona that was created" (ABC Play). After interviewing Hitchcock, Truffaut also commented that, little by little, he started to note the contrast between the self-confident, cynical public man Hitchcock was and what seemed to be his true nature: a vulnerable, sensitive man who deeply wanted to satisfy his audience (17). Hence, there are two versions of the same person, and throughout this project, I will try to come close to the legitimate self of the director.

¹ Several literature lectures both at the University of A Coruña and the University of South Wales have been crucial to carry out this work, since they have helped me to read in depth in order to accomplish textual analysis.

It is important to clarify that when Hitchcock made his films, between 1921 and 1976, society had a different perception of women and gender roles. Often voyeuristic, sometimes to a perverse extent, he broke the limits of the seventh art by placing the camera so that it seemed as if the spectators were looking through the eyes of another person, positioning them as voyeurs in the scene he created. Hitchcock always knew where he wanted his audience to look at, a technique that also succeeded in confusing the viewer about the real storyline of his films. It is not strange that his films are still being studied and constantly imitated; he has long influenced large part of the cinema world. *Psycho* itself has been considered the film “that established a new level of acceptability of violence, perverted behaviours and sexuality in films” (Truffaut 27).

Psycho will be examined from a Gender Studies perspective, focusing on the characters, the main themes and the technical elements that helped to build it. Moreover, Hitchcock’s work will be analysed in order to ascertain whether it subscribes to the kind of patriarchal representation of gender the director has a reputation for. Some of the issues to consider are dealt with in the book *Feminist Film Theorists*, which “focuses on the groundbreaking work of Laura Mulvey, Kaja Silerman, Teresa de Lauretis, and Barbara Creed. Each of these thinkers has opened up a new and distinctive approach to the study of film” (Chaudhuri, back cover): the contribution of these scholars to cinema studies makes the critical world richer since they expose hidden misogynist behaviours and gender inequalities, in both the personal relationships and the social positioning portrayed in films.

Through the analysis and comparison of the gender roles present in *Psycho*, I will build this gender study. To pursue this objective, different sources of information will be used, the most important of which will be the following: Laura Mulvey's *Visual*

Pleasure and Narrative Cinema and François Truffaut's *Cinema by Hitchcock*². First, through Mulvey's theory of the male gaze in cinema, I will study the workings of Hitchcock's camera during shootings and what he intended to do with them. Secondly, by means of Truffaut's book we can try to examine what Hitchcock thought of his films and what his desires and intentions were with them.

To achieve the mentioned aims, this project will be divided into two main parts and, each one, into three subparts. With the intention of carrying out the study of *Psycho* in an orderly and interesting fashion, the first part will focus on Hitchcock's personality and relationships with the women around him. Therefore, the film *Hitchcock* (2012) will be useful: it narrates the process of producing *Psycho* and gives an insight into Hitchcock's relationships with women, including his wife. Moreover, several studies and interviews with the director will provide an explanation for many recurrent elements around the producing process that need clarification. In the second part of the project, *Psycho* will be extensively analyzed. Several factors will be taken into account such as gendered characters, gendered themes and the formal aspects of the film in relation to gender. The axis of this last analysis will be in large part about the importance of the women figures that appear in the film. As I will show, they have a wide role in this production, in which most men are placed in an inferior position. As expected, the project ends with a conclusion, in which I will state why Alfred Hitchcock's film *Psycho* must not be entirely catalogued as misogynist, even though the director was to a certain extent. This film highlights the importance of women's acting roles and, therefore, there is some ambiguity in *Psycho* with respect to misogyny that needs to be considered.

² Truffaut attempts to redeem Hitchcock's mastery with his book placing him on top of other great artists like Roberto Rossellini or Ingmar Bergman. In the United States, nobody considered Hitchcock a true artist; he was systematically ignored for a long time since his films had, apparently, no substance and just tried to scare people. Therefore, Truffaut's work is important to give Hitchcock the place he deserves.

1. Understanding Alfred Hitchcock and his *Psycho*

Also known as the "master of suspense," Alfred Hitchcock was a transgressor in directing his films, most of which were a great success, even though he was mostly discontent with them (Truffaut 29). His undoubted hard work and the ingenuity of his pieces will always be remembered; however, Hitchcock is also remembered as a chauvinist, obsessed with the women that were part of his professional life. There are several pieces of evidence in his films that demonstrate how his compulsive and extravagant personality could stand out on the screen on several occasions. Due to his at times aggressive attitudes, Hitchcock had some problems, and therefore, experienced some hostility, especially from the women he worked with.

In order to analyse the peculiar personality of Alfred Hitchcock, it is important to pay attention to the turning point he suffered in his life when trying to carry out his most representative film: *Psycho* (1960). His earlier, highly successful film *North by Northwest* (1959) made Hitchcock start to have doubts about his next works achieving the same success as he had previously enjoyed. He thought that, from that movie onward, the rest would be failures, so he had to reinvent himself in order to once again be acclaimed as one of the best film directors in history. He finally accomplished his mission: *Psycho* was, and still is, one of the best films in the history of cinema. With it, Alfred Hitchcock made a big leap in his film career, since it was a turning point for him, both in his private and public life. Nevertheless, after *Psycho*, he never achieved the same success ever again, and that is one of the reasons it deserves to be studied. From 1968, American critics started to pay more attention to Hitchcock because of what *Psycho* had achieved and they finally qualified it as a classic that newer films would take into account (Truffaut 11).

1.1. *Hitchcock*, the biographical drama film

Sacha Gervasi's *Hitchcock* is based on Stephen Rebello's non-fiction book *Alfred Hitchcock and the Making of Psycho* (1990). The book tells, in detail, how the idea of making *Psycho* emerged and how the production took place. Rebello created his book from personal recordings he took from Hitchcock himself and from interviews with other cast and crew members that participated in the filming. The result was a success and was later brought to the big screen by Gervasi, narrating how Hitchcock's adaptation of the original novel *Psycho* by Robert Bloch, based on true events, provokes such intense sensations on the audience.

There are several, very different critiques regarding *Hitchcock*. The film did not enjoy great success as it was regarded to be a superficial approach to the director's work. It must be noted that the fact that the film gives a minor relevance to the economic processes during the filming of *Psycho* and major protagonism to Hitchcock's relationship with his wife Alma Reville was the trigger for bad critiques. It is true that the film barely mentions the economic efforts the couple had to make to be able to finance the film by themselves, since the producer did not trust their project; however, the fact that *Hitchcock* tries to show how the director's relationship with his wife Alma really was —both masterfully performed by Anthony Hopkins and Helen Mirren— is a very important point when it comes to understanding the filmmaker's mentality and his way of working. As Duncan points out, Alma Reville (see appendix, photo 1), after having acted since the age of 16, became the right hand of the British director collaborating with him in the writing of the scripts, the editing and the dubbing of voices, as well as checking the storyline and also the scenery (31). Although she appears in several credits of Hitchcock's films, her influence was much greater than the credits suggest (32). In the film, the intimate life of both professionals is portrayed and

it is evident how the creation of *Psycho* attests how important it was that Alfred married the talented Alma. In fact, without her, he would not have obtained the final result of *Psycho* that we know today. With Reville's help, Hitchcock was able to make the film which he always had imagined: "the film possessed an uncontrollable and monstrous madness that surpassed all that had been done before" (Lehmann-Haupt).

In terms of pursuing my study, *Hitchcock* has made a great contribution due to how revealing it is about the personality of its protagonist. In the film, his obsessions with blond actresses like Janet Leigh —the protagonist of *Psycho*, played by Scarlett Johansson— are highlighted, along with the particular interest in the macabre assassin Ed Gein —the real killer who gave life to the character of the book *Psycho*, played by Michael Wincott—, apart from other fixations of the filmmaker. As a result of the director's peculiarities, Alfred and Alma's marriage is portrayed as a particular and intriguing love story in which there are many suspicions of infidelity and moments of jealousy. In fact, *Hitchcock* is a film that intends to show how the director might have had misogynist behaviours during his professional life. Not only has he gained fame for being an incomparable filmmaker, but also for his particular way of being: he was reserved, cynical and self-conscious, apart from a manipulator and a maniac. Besides Hitchcock's relationships with actresses, the film *Hitchcock* actually revolves around the couple's marital crisis. Nevertheless, it must be noted that Hitchcock experienced a psychological change throughout the production of *Psycho*, an important testimony that will be useful to examine in this gender study.

As shown in Gervasi's movie, from the beginning of the filming of *Psycho*, Hitchcock is portrayed as a peculiar and obsessive person who gets, as in previous productions, completely involved in the lives of his actors, and especially in those of his actresses. His obsession with actresses in particular verges on perversity since he spies

on them through a hole made in the wall of his office which was next to their dressing room (see appendix, photo 8), and also, from time to time, when alone, he leers at photographs of old blond actresses he had worked with. Soon, his wife attempts to stay away from him and focus on her own projects, since she cannot stand being witness to Hitchcock's flirtations and obsessions anymore. Here begins the decadence of *Psycho*: Alma stops helping in the filming of *Psycho* and Alfred seems unable to make the film as he always imagined it to be on his own. He thinks it is going to be a failure until he finally understands the importance of Alma in both his private and professional life, although he had been putting her down in front of young actresses for years: even though he is the mastermind behind the films, his wife has formed an enormous part of his success. Finally, Alfred saves his relationship with his wife, and so also saves, with Alma's help, his film.

While filming *Psycho*, Hitchcock seems to have changed: he has positioned his wife in the foreground of his life again and seems to have a new attitude towards his female protagonists, as he finally makes peace with his former star Vera Miles³. The psychological process that Hitchcock suffers between filming *North by Northwest* and *Psycho* seems to have opened the filmmaker's eyes about respecting women. However, is this a real change? In the following film titled *The Birds* (1963), he once again had some rifts with the protagonist, so it is inevitable that we ask ourselves if he had really changed: "Hitchcock not only subjected Tippi Hedren to nearly sadistic torture while shooting the climactic attack in *The Birds*, but late in the filming of *Marnie* (1964) made an overt sexual proposition to Miss Hedren and proceeded to back it up with professional threats" (Lehmann-Haupt). Even though some stories about their

³ The actress Vera Miles had always being one of the muses of the director; however, when they were about to start a new production, she got pregnant and had to abandon the project. Hitchcock never forgave her for, in his opinion, having left him: this was the beginning of their turbulent relationship that would continue for years till *Psycho* would gather them together again.

relationship are just rumours that have never being confirmed, the actress Tippi Hedren has openly talked about her problematic relationship with the director in her biographical book *Tippi: A Memoir*.

The film *Hitchcock* could be understood as a study of the man behind the camera, an artist who understood better what the male audience wanted than what women in general wanted. Thus, we learn how little Hitchcock understood women and his internal troubles with them and with his wife Alma, the only one who was always truly by his side. *Hitchcock* shows two different shades of the filmmaker's personality: on one side, the film genius who knew the industry better than anyone else; and, on the other side, the man who hid his troubles and obsessions with women behind his work. Alma was the unifying theme between both sides of him: a strong woman who brought talent and courage to the artist in the shade, while he mostly acted as an ungrateful voyeur of the actresses he hired.

Hitchcock's desire for an incessant search of the perfect blond is well known. He wanted to find the one that could really understand him; however, he seemed unable to find her; thus, due to this frustration, he decided to kill or torture them in his films, as in *Psycho*, a horror film in which the protagonist surprisingly dies only after the first 30 minutes. Some biographers and scholars claim that he was really obsessed with blond women (Duncan 16); nevertheless, in *Hitchcock*, he is portrayed as a person quite interested both in women and strange characters such as the serial killer Ed Gein — whom he talks to in imaginary sequences about Gein's disorders and about his hatred towards women.

Did Alfred Hitchcock really need to kill the women in his films in order to quench his resentment toward them? According to his biographical film, it seems so. There are

several points in *Hitchcock* in which the director expresses how he feels about women. He confesses to Janet Leigh herself —the actress who plays Marion, the protagonist of *Psycho*— that he gets sad seeing how all women "betray" (*Hitchcock* 0:52:07) him by living their lives or even getting pregnant instead of plunging themselves into his films. He cannot prevent these feelings from coming alive when he recreates the famous shower scene in front of a terrified Janet Leigh (*Hitchcock* 0:58:30): he is not happy about how the actor in charge of killing her in the shower is performing, which is why he decides to show everybody how it should be done (see appendix, photo 4). The seriousness and the impetus of the director portraying how he wants his female protagonist to be brutally killed shocked everybody in the filming, especially Leigh. He seems to be really freeing his frustration and hate towards women. This same frustration is also portrayed in another scene in which he is suggested to have a latent desire for killing Alma (*Hitchcock* 0:42:25) when they are talking about how Whitfield Cook, a famous screenwriter who had been flirting with her, would play a great lover in his film.

1.2. Alfred Hitchcock's relationships with women

Alfred Hitchcock's prestige is unquestionable; nevertheless, it is crucial to emphasize the importance that women had in his success, especially his wife, even though he apparently mistreated them most of his life. As mentioned above, from the moment their destinies joined, Alma Reville became the right hand of the British director. The relationship between both on a professional and personal level are key in the film *Hitchcock*, which vindicates the figure of Alma as a strong woman that has been working hard from an early age, before Hitchcock enters into the cinematographic life (Duncan 31).

As for the filmmaker's fondness for blond and slender actresses: "there is much new information concerning Hitchcock's relationships with the co-workers on his films—his compulsion to control and dominate such cool, blond actresses" (Lehmann-Haupt). His ideal of beauty was evident in every one of his actresses, whom he used to maintain tense relationships. Tippi Hedren is the most iconic example since she suffered most from the director's dominant and possessive attitude, but it is without a doubt that *Vertigo* was the film in which his controlling obsession is best portrayed (Cohan 12). Jane Fontaine, the protagonist of *Rebecca*, and other actors and actresses concluded that Hitchcock showed a divisive and commanding attitude towards them: he "refrained the main actors and actresses from interacting with each other and then directed them individually" (Duncan 10). This allowed Hitchcock not only to exercise more control over the performances, but also on the cast and, perhaps, the personal relationships that might arise between them. In Fontaine's words: "he asked for loyalty without concessions, but only to him" (10). In Hitchcock's defence, François Truffaut has portrayed him not only as the self-confident public man everyone thinks he is, but also as:

A vulnerable, sensitive and emotional man, who deeply and physically experiences the feelings he wants to communicate to his audience. Throughout his career, Alfred Hitchcock has had the need to protect himself from actors and actresses, producers, technicians, because the slightest flaw or least fancy of any of them compromises the integrity of the film. (10, my translation)

His films became his passion and life and he would not let anyone ruin them; his efforts, dreams and fears are reflected in his works, and therefore he wanted to control every part of them. Be that as it may, the strange and perturbing interest he had in blond actresses and his relationships with them must be questioned. A long list of blond

actresses forms part of Hitchcock's filmography; however, he did not want just any blond:

Why do I choose blond and sophisticated actresses? We're looking for women from the world, true ladies who will turn into prostitutes in the bedroom. 'Those who are like Marilyn Monroe do not interest me.' What attracted and interested him was a perfect blend of sophistication and sensuality, 'real ladies' who were 'prostitutes in the bedroom.' If he considered that an actress did not have the hair sufficiently clear, he dyed it because, as he said, 'blonds are the best victims.' (Cohan 12)

This being a gender study, I cannot leave without saying that Hitchcock's words are chauvinistic and loathsome. Hitchcock catalogued women due to their appearance but not only that. He wanted the perfect sensual blond woman for his films that would fulfil the desire of every man: being pure in front of everyone else and behaving like a manageable prostitute in private. This was his perception of the perfect actress he would even like to kill in his films. Hitchcock wanted women with "personality radiating the 'ice-cold' sexuality" (Cohan 12). However, why is blondness so important, particularly for Hitchcock? Some critics have said that "representing the most desirable form of femininity, blondness obviously reflects the supremacy of white masculinity" (13). This statement suggests that blondness is anchored to femininity, wealth and white supremacy. Nevertheless, is this what Hitchcock really intended to show in his films? It cannot be proven but it is evident that his preference for blond females is justified by him as corresponds to the "double standards of the lady/whore" (13), a way of thinking, as pointed out before, that is very harmful for women.

1.3 Hitchcock in interviews and film studies

There are several studies on Alfred Hitchcock that open a debate about whether or not there is sexism in his films. Tania Modleski stands out with her book *Women Who Knew Too Much: Hitchcock and Feminist Theory* in which she defends that "in Film Studies, Hitchcock is often seen as the archetypal misogynist, who invites his audience to enjoy their most sadistic fantasies against women" (qtd. in Byrne). There are several critics that have even argued that "Hitchcock's work is prototypical of the extremely violent attacks on women" (Byrne); however, there are other critics, including feminist ones, who refuse to simply curse Hitchcock as a misogynist. Camille Paglia⁴, against Laura Mulvey's theory of the male gaze⁵, argues that: "Hitchcock knows what he is doing, and makes sure the viewer knows what he is doing. Hitchcock does not look at women in his films, nor does he encourage other viewers to do it; he instead exposes the machinery of misogyny, the functioning of the male gaze, to the viewer" (qtd. in Byrne).

Paglia's theory is interesting and will help me to propose an argument about Hitchcock and his work, which is why I will later look closer at *Psycho*. Moreover, although some artists can be considered to have strange habits, the way in which Hitchcock harassed some of his muses leaves little room to doubt that, even in the case that Hitchcock was trying to make the spectators see women as objects, he did not see them that way too. As he stated, women to him can basically be divided into ladies and *whores, which would relegate them to a sexual atmosphere in which women are

⁴ Iconoclastic feminist cultural critic who writes about Hitchcock in her book *Sexual Personae*, and in a study called *The Birds for the British Film Institute of Hitchcock*.

⁵ Feminist film theorist author of an essay entitled "Visual Pleasure in the Narrative Cinema" that explores the male gaze that appears in films, for example in Hitchcock's, in which women seem to be lurked by male characters. According to Mulvey, women can be thought to be turned into an object under the male gaze that seeks control over them.

mostly viewed as mere objects, something degrading that can be seen in some of his films.

In both *Hitchcock* and *Psycho*, the male gaze discussed by Laura Mulvey is presented. In *Hitchcock*, it is portrayed how he intensively observes love scenes while directing actresses or how he spies on them. The gaze is an important issue in Hitchcock's films: *Rear Window* is the perfect example, since the male protagonist solves a crime by spending all his time looking through the window of his flat. In *Psycho*, there is some evidence of this theory too:

When Norman Bates is spying on Marion getting undressed, it invites us to witness the cause of Norman's arousal and the manifestation of his desire from behind a wall, kept apart from any possible sexual gratification. When the camera shifts to Norman's point of view and instantly implicates the viewer in the voyeurism, women are portrayed as sex objects. (Byrne)

The protagonist lurks at women, sometimes as Norman Bates and sometimes, more importantly, as Mrs. Bates (his mother), everyday till *she* decides to kill them. The common factor in these situations is that there is always a man lurking at a woman, who usually, in any kind of film of suspense, is the main victim. For Hitchcock, the gaze is what transmits the most to the spectators and by which they will understand more than just listening to the characters. This actually is Hitchcock's aim: to understand the real feelings of the scenes not just by listening to the dialogues that can be made out of lies (Duncan 141). Nevertheless, the camera can lie even more than words do. It makes the audience see what the director wants us to pay more attention to, sometimes hiding other important aspects of the scenes. We should not believe everything that is either told or shown to us, and go forward.

2. Hitchcock's *Psycho*

Considered today as the earliest example of the so-called slasher⁶ genre, *Psycho* gave a new meaning to violence, perverted behaviors and sexuality in movies (Truffaut 27). This work, with which the rules of suspense in the seventh art were perfected (Truffaut 11), was inspired by Robert Bloch's novel *Psycho* (1959), which is based on the crimes of the serial killer and tomb defiler of Wisconsin, Ed Gein. Bloch takes us into the dark world of mental illness, specifically into a multiple personality disorder that is increased by the Oedipus complex, something very novel for the time. Although Bloch's text was considered by literary critics as a low quality novel, Alfred Hitchcock adopted *Psycho* as a means to recover the success and the individuality of the horror genre, because since 1950 such films had been catalogued as B-movies (Clover). *Psycho* tells the story of how a secretary, Marion Crane (Janet Leigh), runs away with money from her company and shelters in a lonely motel run by Norman Bates (Anthony Perkins). Surprisingly, this mysterious and sympathetic host will turn out to be a man that dresses as his mother and bloodily kills his guests, until he is discovered by Marion's boyfriend Sam or, more concretely, by her sister, Lila.

Initially, the film received mixed criticisms, but it ultimately gave rise to very positive reviews that led to four Academy Award nominations, including Best Director and Best Supporting Actress for Leigh. In 2007, according to the American Film Institute, *Psycho* was considered to be the best suspense/horror movie of all time and Anthony Perkins as the second greatest villain in film history after Hannibal Lecter (Tracky). *Psycho* "stands out due to its freedom and its savagery" (Truffaut 27, my translation); however, it manages to set the name of Alfred Hitchcock as one of the lasting filmmakers in the history of cinema, despite him being disoriented and uninspired when

⁶ Subgenre of horror films characterized by the presence of a psychopath, who brutally kills teenagers and young people, when there are no apparent witnesses during the process (Clover)

he first found the novel, as portrayed in the film *Hitchcock*. As Donald Spoto said: "the film possessed an uncontrollable and monstrous madness that surpassed everything that had been done before" (Agudo Rodríguez) which is why it would later influence newer psycho killer⁷ films. It is evident that *Psycho* is basically a journey to evil: it starts with a lesser crime, following a robbery, a murder, the apparition of a serial killer and ends with a matricide. Its evil genius is produced in the first place for delving deep into the twisted mind of our protagonist and villain about the strange and sickly relationship that he has with his mother, something never before reflected in the cinema. In addition, it also marvelled the public with ordinary images such as pulling the tank or filming an actress wearing a bra and in the same bed as her lover, which was then considered as a taboo, and thus had never been filmed before (Truffaut 234). The filmmaker wanted to surprise the public, which is why, as reflected in *Hitchcock*, the shooting of the film was kept in total secrecy, to the point where Hitchcock made the team and cast swear that they would not disclose the details of the production.

2.1. Gendered characters

"*Psycho* will not be a blockbuster but a strange film in every way. As it is an unusual film in black and white and without relevant stars. I'm not sure it will be a success" Hitchcock said (Agudo Rodríguez, my translation). Despite not being a blockbuster, it did succeed as if it were one. The actors and actresses were hired basically because they were good value for money: Janet Leigh and Anthony Perkins were already famous but they were far away from earning the same as other stars since the budget of *Psycho* of 800,000 dollars was austere for 1960. Altogether, there are four

⁷ It is no coincidence that John Carpenter's *Halloween* saga (1978) was starred by Jamie Lee Curtis, Janet Leigh's daughter, and that the psychiatrist in the same film is named Sam Loomis, just like the character who plays John Gavin in *Psycho* (Marion's lover).

indisputable main characters in this film, two men and two women: the important ones are Anthony Perkins as Norman Bates and Janet Leigh in the role of Marion Crane; and the secondary ones, Vera Miles as Lila Crane and John Gavin in the role of Sam Loomis.

Despite appearing first and unleashing the plot, Janet Leigh, one of Hitchcock's favourite blond actresses, is not the real protagonist of the film as everybody would think, but Anthony Perkins as Norman Bates. Hitchcock promoted his film as a love story of a beautiful woman to catch attention; however, after the killing of our apparent protagonist, Mr. Bates comes to the forefront. This man will be the central piece of the story now, even though he will not be alone as protagonist since Lila Crane will replace her sister's main role and solve the mystery of the plot. Nevertheless, the importance of Marion Crane as a character does not go unnoticed. As has been commented on several occasions, one of the novelties of this film is the fact that the director kills his protagonist in the 45th minute, a decision never made before in cinema, which was concretely the one element of the book *Psycho* that convinced Hitchcock to start the production (Truffaut 284). The director gets rid of his muse in order to focus the audience's attention on another blond female character, with longer and wavier hair, Lila, but also, and specially, on the strange Norman Bates, who will replace the passive character of Marion's boyfriend, Sam. The film's initial enigma focuses on whether Marion will be discovered and caught for the theft or whether she will be able to run away with the money and disappear. However, none of those options will be the final result:

The audience always tries to anticipate the action, guess what is going to happen.

Therefore, we must not only take this into account, but also direct the thoughts of the spectator completely. The more details we give of the girl's car ride, the more

absorbed the spectator feels in her runaway. The spectators are kept as far as possible from what is really going to happen. (Truffaut 285, my translation)

Our blond victim cannot imagine the end that awaits her. She lives her ordinary life despite not being completely happy with it until she has the opportunity to change it, prompted by the comments of the owner of the money she will later steal. She lacks the necessary money to marry her lover, a fact which leads her to finally steal it, even though she is determined to return it once she is in the motel —she feels guilty and thinks that abandoning her simple life for a better one in exchange for a crime has not been worth it⁸. Marion is portrayed as an ordinary worker that usually meets with her boyfriend in secret: it is worth noting the fact that the time is shown at the beginning of the film as Hitchcock himself narrates in a voice-over: "it was three minutes to three o'clock in the afternoon, and it is the only moment during the morning in which this poor girl can sleep with her lover Sam. The indication of the hour suggests that she deprives herself of having lunch to make love" (Truffaut 283, my translation). What Hitchcock tries to indicate is that the love Marion feels for Sam is really powerful; she is completely in love with him, which is why she is later able to commit a crime in order to improve her financial situation and finally live with him⁹. Another hint hidden in the time Hitchcock chose to show foresees that a third person is going to appear: Norman, the killer that will conquer our hearts because of his shy personality until we discover his real self. Cleverly, Hitchcock will show the audience this way the danger of trusting people regarding the appearance of the person in question.

⁸ In Bloch's novel, the psychology of the characters and their thoughts are more presented and highlighted. Regarding Marion, although she may superficially seem as a suffering character to whom everything has gone wrong in life, in the book she is a woman who is also tired of her life and whose motivations for the theft are purely selfish.

⁹ After she runs away, it could be appreciated how ingeniously the white bra she wears before committing the crime becomes black upon arriving at the motel, as a symbol indicating her passage from good to evil (Truffaut 235).

In relation to gender, Marion is portrayed as a woman in love with a recently divorced man for whom she is able to steal money. Her crime will lead to her brutal killing as a form of punishment, which Hitchcock makes us observe, planning in front of our eyes the new main protagonist: Marion's killer. Afterwards, the characters of Lila Crane, Marion's sister, and Sam Loomis will work together in order to discover what happened to Marion and, therefore, discover Norman Bates' secret; however, it is important to mention that the big crime is discovered in great measure due to the desire and perseverance of Lila, who leads the search along with detective Arbogast. It seems that Lila, who is portrayed as being worried about Marion being missing throughout the film, is the real reason why they both visit Norman's motel, while Sam prefers to wait and let the detective do all the work. After that, as they confirm Marion was there, Lila is interested in trying to talk to Norman's mother, as they think they have seen through the window, to find out more details as Lila suspects that she did something to Arbogast. Sam reflects passiveness, even though his lover and the detective looking for Marion have officially disappeared. It can be noted how the new female protagonist is the one in charge of the actions; she leads Sam into the motel to solve the disappearances while he first leaves the problem to the detective and later to the sheriff, who will not take a great part in the investigation. Norman will be the only active male character left in the story, who also reflects passiveness and coyness while talking to the rest of the characters in order to hide his crimes, even though we know he is responsible for great part of the action of the story.

In general, Hitchcock kills his actress to give the protagonism to the new character: Norman; nevertheless, this is not the only character to have a major part in the second half of the film: Lila will later play one of the main roles in the story since it is her who discovers Mrs. Bates skeleton (see appendix, photo 11) and clarifies the

mystery around Norman. At this point, Hitchcock gives Lila Crane the focal point of the story, making her strong and independent: she does not fear going to the motel on her own once Sam, motionless, tells her to relax and wait for news. She, with the traditional kind of masculine personality Sam lacks, turns into the heroine who keeps repeatedly saying to go and check the motel (see appendix, photo 10) despite the fact Sam seems tired of following her suspicions. Furthermore, she develops the plan of what to do once they are in the mysterious place:

L: Sam, that old woman, whoever she is, I think she told Arbogast something! And

I want her to tell us the same thing!

[She comes out of the bathroom. Sam takes hold of her arm and stops her]

S: You can't go up there.

L: Why not?

S: Bates.

L: Let's find him. One of us can keep him occupied while the other gets to the woman.

S: You won't be able to hold him still if he doesn't want to be held. And I don't like you going into that house alone, Lila.

L: I can handle a sick old woman. (*Psycho* 1:29:47)

As a counterpoint to our apparently main female protagonist Marion, we find Norman Bates (see appendix, photo 5), a man with mental disorders. He is portrayed as a man with a rather childish mentality, who depends on his mother and cannot fend for himself; a boy with a man's body that is afraid of the outside society. Sometimes his mind is transformed, giving way to a cold, unscrupulous being that gives the impression that he is not the same person. He talks to the skeleton of his dead mother, and disguises himself in her clothes to create the illusion that she is still with him even though he killed her in an attack of jealousy. The actor in charge of carrying this role to the big

screen was Anthony Perkins who, as mentioned in *Hitchcock*, was attractive and sensitive, had innocent features and looked like someone who seems to be hiding something¹⁰, and whom the audience would be able to sympathize with. In his childhood, Anthony Perkins felt very attached to his mother just like his character to the point that he wanted his father to die; his father actually died when he was five, causing him to feel guilty for his thoughts. The conversation about this which he relayed with the director was the deciding factor that he was chosen for the role, even though in Bloch's novel, Norman Bates is fat, bald, short, and very unfriendly¹¹. Bates becomes the centre of the intrigue of the story once our female protagonist dies. We discover that within him, there are two enclosed personalities: that of the pleasant and timid man, and that of his dead mother, whom he portrays as authoritarian and jealous, due to *her* being the one who kills the women that Norman feels attracted to. Once the spectators discover that he is the real killer in the film, we understand that he suffers from a psychosis according to which his mother is still alive even though it was him who murdered her due to his jealousy of the loving relationship she had with another man. Throughout the film, Norman seems really attached to his mother, protective towards her to the extent that he cleans the scene of the murder which the personality of his mother committed in order to protect *her*; however, what kind of second life is he trying to give to his mother? It seems male-chauvinistic that Norman is transforming his mother into a killer and blaming her for his problems and crimes.

At first, Norman is portrayed as a very shy person who has a crush on Marion (see appendix, photo 3). At the beginning, the audience starts to think that he is going to be

¹⁰ In the film *Hitchcock*, it is inferred that Anthony Perkins is a homosexual and keeps it in secret, just as Norman Bates hides something too.

¹¹ Several biographers have pointed out that the role of Norman has much to do with the real life of Alfred Hitchcock, who had a special relationship with his mother (Truffaut 236). Hitchcock's mother forced him to sit at the foot of her bed and tell her everything he had done during the day, a fact that perhaps increased his interest in making this film.

the one who makes Marion return the money and continue her life; nonetheless, Norman is not whom he might seem. As it is explained once at the police station at the end, Norman was never just “Norman” after killing his mother and her lover. After Mrs. Bates' death, Norman wanted to preserve her and act as if she continued living to such an extent that he conversed with her, fictionalizing her voice, arguing, and finally killing as if it had really been her¹². Unrealistic as it sounds, the character of Bloch's novel was inspired by Ed Gein¹³ (1906-1984), an American murderer who was blamed for multiple deaths in 1957. The police found the furniture and clothes he took for his own use from the mortal remains of the women he used to either kidnap or unearth from the cemetery (Agudo Rodríguez). It is believed that his mother, Augusta, was one of the reasons why he went insane: she used to prevent anyone having influence on her two children apart from herself, which partly caused his mental disorder. It is important to clarify that in the decades around 1920 and 1930, which would match with Gein's teenage phase, the society of rural America was ultra-religious and parents used to keep their children away from the opposite sex¹⁴. In this case, Ed Gein developed a strange dependency on his mother, just like the case of Norman Bates. Nevertheless, it is visible that both killers were already mentally ill and that they are both the responsible for their crimes, even though Norman initially makes it appear that his mother is guilty for what are actually his own actions.

¹² Curiously, killing with a knife like Norman as Mother does is considered a phallic and masculine way of killing as opposed to poisoning someone, which is considered to be more feminine, and is interestingly the method Norman used to kill his mother.

¹³ Edward Theodore Gein served as inspiration for dozens of key works in literature, music and film: *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, *Deranged* or *American Horror Story, Season Two: Asylum*. There is a biographical film about Gein titled *In the Light of the Moon* that explains his life and mental problems.

¹⁴ This is also the case in the masterpiece *Carrie* (Brian De Palma 1976): the daughter's problems are engendered by her mother who is a religious fanatic that custodies her daughter from strangers.

2.2. Gendered themes

There are three great gendered themes in this film that develop throughout the plot of *Psycho*: the importance of women's roles, the loving relationship between the two lovers, and finally the mother-son relationship. First, as for the importance of women's roles: we find the victim and protagonist Marion Crane; the murderess, Mrs. Bates; and finally the heroine who solves the case, Lila Crane. This film is immersed in a context in which women occupy the most crucial roles. Although Norman Bates is the true killer, it is the personality of the mother within him who *commits* the murder of Marion as well as of other women before her. This is the plot Hitchcock created, being inspired by the real story of Gein and by Bloch's novel. It can be considered male-chauvinistic due to the fact that Norman's acts are apparently justified and derived from his mother's behaviour towards him; nevertheless, Norman is ill and, even though he is not conscious of what he is doing, his psychotic mind makes him believe that his mother is the real problem in his life, from whom he cannot escape. As the doctor explains towards the end of the film, the personality of the mother is the dominant personality in Norman's body which makes *her* another character of the film, possibly the most important since it is not till the end that we discover there is no living mother.

The role of a mother also took a starring role in the real life story of Hitchcock himself, and of those of Bates and Gein. These 3 people had experienced a protective behaviour from their mothers, which might have made them develop a peculiar relationship towards women. We cannot compare the actions of Gein or Bates with the filmmaker's; however, there is a particular relationship between Hitchcock and the women which surrounded him as we saw in section one, which might have been influenced by the close relationship he had with his mother as a child (Duncan 13).

Secondly, the erotic relationship between Marion and Sam, which is purely passionate (see appendix, photo 2). Marion wants to marry Sam, a desire hampered by her low salary and inherited debts from her father; however, Sam always leaves without giving Marion a definite answer on what they will do in the future. Marion and Sam's relationship is not common; he is a 1960 divorced man, which is why they prefer to keep it in secret in order to preserve a good reputation. It is not till the scene in which Lila and Sam are driving towards the motel when he finally says that he would marry Marion if she were alive (see appendix, photo 9). Throughout the film, Sam does not play a significant role as he is simply led by other characters like Marion, who insists on getting married, or Lila who pushes him to finally go to the motel and investigate. In fact, if it was not for Lila who came to see Sam, he would not have found out anything about Marion. In comparison to Marion, Sam looks less committed to the relationship. He seems enchanted by the secret love affair but he does not take a serious step in their relationship until the car scene, when he finally starts to think that something really bad might have happened to Marion and that he might not see her again.

Focusing on the gender roles, there is a big difference with respect to female characters and male characters: in general, the male characters remain quite motionless most of the time throughout the film. Even though we do not know the truth about Norman till the end, he is portrayed from the beginning as an ordinary motel host, shy and bored. Sam, in the same way, seems passive throughout the film until the end when he stops Norman from killing Lila when she finds the skeleton of Mrs. Bates (see appendix, photo 12). In contrast to male characters, the female ones play a wider and more active role in *Psycho*. Marion is portrayed as a passionate woman but also reckless due to the theft. The same way, Lila is also reflected as being as passionate, brave and courageous as Marion just the way the character of Lila is also portrayed in Bloch's

Psycho. Hitchcock did not change her personality; he created a very fair adaptation of the novel. It is important to consider that if he indeed was as misogynistic as has been claimed, perhaps he would have changed Lila's character and instead made Sam the real hero of the story. Curiously, this was not the case.

Lastly, the mother-child relationship between Norman and his mother, called Norma. As explained by the doctor at the end, it is based on a relationship of overprotection and jealousy of one another: he killed both his mother and his mother's lover due to his envy of their relationship and *she* killed Marion since she had affinity and attraction with her son. This unhealthy relationship goes hand in hand with Norman Bates' disorder after his matricide. As we are told while Marion and Norman are having dinner, Norman speaks of feeling trapped. Just as Marion feels trapped by her guilt, Norman is permanently trapped too living with his mother inside of him and *her* madness. After solving the mystery, the doctor begins to tell us that years ago, after the premature death of his father, Norman had to depend on the attention of his mother but when she began a love relationship with a man, Norman felt as if he had been replaced. The lack of attention Norman received due to the arrival of his mother's lover flooded him with jealousy, perhaps because his mother enjoyed an intimate relationship while he had always felt incapable of or repressed from of having one. Norman did not accept the sexuality of his mother and that he was not the centre of her life anymore, so he decided to kill them and preserve his mother just for him instead of letting her restart her life with another man: he stole the right of being a sexual subject from her. His crime overwhelmed his fragile state of mind, so he began to divide his mind; thus, he recreated his mother in his mind as if giving her the life that he took away from her.

He retained the illusion that his mother lived and denied that he had poisoned her. He began to think and speak as she did, wearing her clothes and also a woman's wig to

further improve the illusion. Sometimes Norman could be the two personalities at once, and make them talk to each other. Sometimes Norma was the dominant personality: “he was never all Norman, but he was often only Mother” (*Psycho* 1:40:45). Norman's psychosis has its origin in a denial of reality. That is to say, he generates in a certain way a parallel reality in which his mother is alive. As can be appreciated, his disorder comes from a complex of the non-dissolved Oedipus complex (López Flores 5).

In addition to the several remakes made of the film *Psycho*, currently, there is a show called *Bates Motel* (2013-2017) that was created from the extended information of Bloch's book. The show narrates the childhood of Norman Bates and explains the psychological process he suffered in order to become the killer we know by Hitchcock's work. Through the series, it can be interpreted that the cause of his disorder was his mother being overprotective of him: Norma was a woman who was abandoned by her husband with a little son. In this way, Norman Bates conceives an irrational hatred towards men which was transmitted through his mother's total dominance over him, and their very close, almost sexual relationship, which in the novel is much more explicit than in the film. Hitchcock omitted a key factor in his *Psycho*: religion. Norman's mother takes refuge in religion as a form of evasion and as a consequence sees sex as a sin.

According to the series and the book, Norma always taught Norman that "all women are bitches" (novel *Psycho* 22) except herself and that he must go away from them so that they do not corrupt him. Nonetheless, suddenly, she is the one who becomes a lover, which leads him to finally kill both her and her boyfriend. As we can state due to the mentioned facts, Bloch's plot and therefore Hitchcock's film are misogynist stories in which the mothers are guilty of raising killers. It is important to say that even though Norma's behaviour was not correct, it is Norman who possesses

the real problem: he is the one who kills women, blaming at the same time his mother, while he remains guilt-free, as well as the psychiatrist does: his reasoning corresponds to the psychological theory of Behaviorism¹⁵. Either way, we cannot be sure why Norman kills women: maybe he hates them as he hated his mother, or he may want them in a twisted way; perhaps he wants them but he is impotent or a closeted homosexual who has not accepted his sexuality yet, as well as being a psychopath. Thus, it could be due to many reasons that he ends up killing them (Núñez Puente "Re: Norman").

2.3 Form and gender

What matters to me is that the union of the pieces of the film, the photography, the soundtrack and everything that is purely technical could make the public shout. It is not a message that has intrigued the public. It is not a great interpretation that has moved the public. It is not a novel of prestige that has captivated the public. What has excited the public has been the film itself. (Truffaut 243, my translation)

Hitchcock's words show that the post-production techniques he used to create *Psycho* were the most important factor in order to make the film a success among the audience. Although *Psycho* was filmed in only 30 days with a very low budget, it has managed to earn up to 50 million dollars to date (Truffaut 244). Once everything was ready to begin, the artistic process started to take place. The filming was done in black and white because Hitchcock thought the film was going to be "too bloody" (Tracky, my translation) if it were filmed in colour, and

¹⁵ Systematic approach that explains that all behaviours are consequence of the environment of the individual, their history and their stimuli. Due to this approach, Norman's mother would be the culprit of his behaviour and murders (Joey Lee).

also to make it as cheap as possible. There are several important technical and artistic aspects that should be highlighted: the technique of suspense that Hitchcock uses in all his filmography, the music¹⁶, the importance of the shots that constitute the film, and finally the element of the gaze, which will help to outline a gender approach to *Psycho*.

Hitchcock's films are unique in this aspect; there is a shared theme throughout his pieces: "in my films, suspense is not a mere way to develop an argument. It is the argument itself" (Truffaut 59, my translation). Hitchcock's goal was to catch the attention of the audience until the final catharsis; as he once confessed: "it is very likely that I decided to shoot thriller films because of the impression Poe's stories made on me. I cannot stop comparing what I have tried to put in my films with what Poe put into his narratives" (Truffaut 21, my translation). Suspense is one of the most representative features of Hitchcock's techniques but the elements that help him to recreate such environment for the audience come from the influence of different authors. The Manderley Castle in *Rebecca* and the Bates House in *Psycho* are the cinematic parallel to Gothic places of terror that Edgar Allan Poe and Oscar Wilde described in their writings (Quiñonero). Usually it is in this kind of locations where women are victims of uncertain deaths like in Hitchcock's films.

In *Psycho*, suspense is extremely important since it is present throughout the film. When Marion decides to keep the money, she puts it in a suitcase and begins to drive through the city but her boss sees her at an intersection. From this moment, Marion will be worried about being discovered, feeling she is being

¹⁶ Nothing would have been the same if Hitchcock had not used the disturbing soundtrack by the composer Bernard Herrmann, in particular for the iconic scene of the shower: "33% of the success of *Psycho* was due to its music," said Hitchcock (Tracky, my translation).

pursued. The following scenes, until she arrives at the motel, will be immersed in a stressful atmosphere for Marion and also for the viewers, trying to figure out whether she will finally escape or not; nevertheless, the culmination of suspense will be the moment of her death, where the use of many different shots are key for its brilliance. The final editing of the film features a combination of the soundtrack and the use of shots, with which Hitchcock was known to be really meticulous. The famous shower scene¹⁷ (see appendix, photo 6) is considered to be of the most terrifying episodes ever filmed despite the fact that there is no clear stabbing. It takes place in the 45th minute, it lasts 45 seconds and is the result of around 75 different camera angles including 50 different shots (Spachis). The reason for employing these technique was that “the combination of close shots of short duration makes the sequence more subjective than it would have been if the images were presented alone or at a wider angle, making them an example of the technique that Hitchcock described as ‘Transfer the threat from the screen to the public mind’” (Spachis).

As we can see, Hitchcock uses shots very wisely, especially when Marion is on the screen. Before the shower scene, when Norman is lurking at Marion through a small hole in the wall (see appendix, photo 7), Marion is in underwear seeming relaxed and confident as she does not know she is being observed; while Norman is observing her in detail, also is the audience. Later, the sequence of the shower is composed of short shots that give us the impression of a brutal killing just as if we, the spectators, are the ones murdering her. Ingeniously, Hitchcock punishes us for lurking at Marion, just as

¹⁷ Curiously, Janet Leigh was so affected by this episode when she watched it that she vowed not to shower again, but to bathe, always with the bathroom door open. The movie caused a loss of rents in motels and several theories started to appear such as the water in the shower being freezing to scare the actress more (Tracky). If we are able to believe it, it would lead us again towards Hitchcock’s abusive behavior with his actresses, especially since Leigh was already terrified before filming the scene; whatever the case, the director would argue it was for the sake of the film.

Norman does, and at the same time makes us witness the bloody killing of a defenceless woman.

Lastly, I will discuss the gaze in *Psycho*. The fact that Hitchcock tries to turn the audience into *voyeurs* is a well-known technique of the movie-maker. There are some critics that have condemned the voyeurism implied in his movies as a masculinist use of the male-gaze, as Laura Mulvey has called it, due to his misogynist personality (Mulvey 60-1). However, with respect to *Psycho*, this might not be completely true. Marion Crane, as mentioned, is watched by men from the beginning: Mr. Cassidy, the owner of the money, the road policeman and finally Norman Bates. Even nowadays, women are still portrayed as sexual objects in the media in general, including in cinema. Nonetheless, not all viewers of films are male, and “not all females are represented as simply something scopophilic” (Byrne). This is the case of Lila Crane in *Psycho*. Hence, the film urges the audience to split women into two groups: those that are portrayed as bad or demons (e.g. Marion) and as good or angels (e.g. Lila); Hitchcock suggests throughout, the bad one dies and the good one solves the crime. However, creating such a hierarchy between women is male-chauvinistic and very damaging for them, as has been denounced by feminist theory—I will come back to Marion’s murder below.

The idea that observing a woman makes her an object or passive beneath the male gaze which seeks control over her cannot be generalized. In the case of *Psycho*, I agree with the critics who argue that Hitchcock is not just leering at women in this film, and that he is instead exposing the machinery of misogyny to the viewer. The explanation for this resides in the arrival of Marion Crane at Norman’s motel: “the fact that Marion is murdered within minutes of the shot of Norman’s eye strongly suggests that her death is a result of his gaze. Though viewers may have no conscious awareness of the fact,

such objectification is not innocent or harmless; rather, it dehumanizes people by reducing them to their pleasant-looking parts” (Thomas). I also coincide with Dori Thomas that “Hitchcock does not make viewers harmlessly observe women just for sexual pleasure; he reminds them just how violence and dehumanizing voyeurism is.” Therefore, Hitchcock uses Marion Crane’s death to declare that even though the film-goer’s often voyeuristic gaze can be a source of pleasure, this is not without its consequences.

Films do not exist separately from gazes and, according to *Psycho*, bring pleasure as well as pain (Thomas). Violence not only arises physically, it is also the result of a perspective, a way of thinking or a way of speaking. Here lays the mastery in the technique of Hitchcock because he can express more with a look than with dialogues. Therefore, taking this into account, we cannot categorize *Psycho* as misogynist, even though other pieces of evidence suggest that is what Hitchcock was most of the time. Even so, *Psycho* is ambiguous with respect to misogyny and I will discuss a few of its ambivalences below.

If Hitchcock wanted his film to be a vehicle for the male gaze, nothing so terribly bad would have happened to Marion. Furthermore, the fact that the film might represent male-chauvinism does not mean it actually is male-chauvinistic. In addition, Lila Crane—intelligent, brave and blonde—is the one who becomes the heroine of the film and not Sam or even the detective, Mr. Arbogast, who would fit better in a male-chauvinistic product; therefore we could say *Psycho* even has a feminist undertone. In any case, the film ends providing a biased explanation of a masculinist crime, since Norman Bates' mother is accused by the psychiatrist of being the actual murderer; this subscribes to the patriarchal custom of blaming women (e.g. Pandora, Eve) for the evils of the world (Núñez Puente “Re: End”). With all, Hitchcock maintained that the heroine

was Marion's sister, like in the novel *Psycho* and, even though the latter's plot is mostly chauvinistic, it cannot be completely catalogued as such. As a consequence, neither can we say that Hitchcock was entirely sexist throughout his life as a director.

Conclusion

The hard work and ingenuity of Hitchcock's pieces will always be remembered; however, the director is also remembered as a chauvinist, who was obsessed with the women that were part of his professional life. Throughout the biographical film *Hitchcock*, many elements of the personality of Alfred Hitchcock are revealed for the audience. We notice his obsession with blond actresses, whom he usually ends up killing in his films, just like Janet Leigh, and his morbid interest in the macabre assassin Ed Gein. As a result of the director's peculiarities, Alfred and Alma's marriage is portrayed as a singular and intriguing love story in which there are many suspicions of infidelity and moments of jealousy. Also noteworthy is the substantial fact of portraying the character of Norman Bates, unlike in the book, as someone who can seem likeable and trustworthy and unlikely as a serial killer. With this decision, Hitchcock shows that a killer can exist within the unlikeliest of people and that mental illness is a universal concern. Through the viewpoint of this character, who has mental disorders and is unable to have love relationships with women, Hitchcock uses the male gaze, as discussed by Mulvey, in order to exemplify that Marion is a sexual object for Norman due to his mentioned problems.

With regard to my critical approach, it must be noted that, from the beginning, *Psycho* was shown as the best example for highlighting the importance of women's acting roles in Hitchcock's filmography. This film is built through actresses: the victim and protagonist Marion Crane, the so-called murderess Mrs. Bates (said to live inside Norman, her son), and finally the heroine Lila Crane. Curiously, it is neither Marion's lover Sam or the male detective who solves the mystery of her disappearance; it is Marion's sister, Lila, who is the real heroine of the story, which denotes that the film *Psycho* is not as misogynist as most viewers might think. It is true that Norman indeed

blames the murders he committed on his mother while he plays the victim who has to clean up the crime scenes afterwards; however, it is Lila who pushes the rest of the characters in trying to solve the suspicions about the motel and about its owner. She is the one that reveals Norman's secret and the one that encourages Sam to find a solution without the help of the authorities.

To conclude this project, I will point out a few final thoughts about what I have learned during the process of writing it and how the initial goals were fulfilled. To begin with, it was enlightening to see that Hitchcock, in *Psycho*, does not make viewers observe women just for simple sexual pleasure; in fact, he reminds us how violent and dehumanizing voyeurism is through the perspective of a mentally-ill killer. Therefore, Hitchcock uses Marion Crane's death with the intention of producing a critical awakening in the viewer; furthermore, despite living in the shadows of a male-chauvinistic society, women have important roles in this film. Marion and Lila represent important female figures, while the male ones like Norman or Sam are one a killer and the other a merely passive character. Thus, I can state that Alfred Hitchcock was not the archetypical misogynistic artist he has a reputation for. There can be no doubt that he had personal problems with his actresses and that some of his films were indeed patriarchal, not only due to his personality, but also to the time in which they were made; nevertheless, *Psycho* is an exception to this: we cannot categorize it as misogynist, even though other films of him can be. Finally, in *Psycho*, the director gave his actresses important roles since none of them is the conventionally passive wife at home; Lila is the actual heroine and most importantly, Hitchcock was not afraid of making a male character such as Sam appear weak.

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Appendix



Photo No. 1



Photo No. 2



Photo No. 3



Photo No. 4



Photo No. 5



Photo No. 6



Photo No. 7



Photo No. 8



Photo No. 9

Photo No. 10



Photo No. 12

Photo No. 11

