

“We All Go a Little Mad Sometimes. Haven’t You?”: *Psycho* and the Postmodern Rise of Gender Queerness

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Abstract: Film historians consider Alfred Hitchcock’s *Psycho* (1960) a pivotal point in the rupture from classic forms of horror film and the introduction of a shift in sensibilities. Simultaneously, *Psycho* represents a landmark achievement in terms of queer depictions on screen. The means of generating shock value first presented in this film was a new, visible queerness embodied in the character of Norman Bates (Anthony Perkins). This article argues that apart from Bates’s queer performativity, to a certain degree, every character in *Psycho*’s cosmos is queered due to a postmodern, all-pervasive deconstruction of gender roles. While these gender-bending film elements can be regarded as groundbreaking, the ways in which queerness in the film is portrayed follows a retrogressive cinematic tradition of queerness as monstrous. Lastly, the article parallels the 1960 original with Gus Van Sant’s eponymous 1998 remake. Remaking a cinematic work from an updated societal standpoint is of utmost relevance to this study since the comparison between the original and the remake not only highlights the changing perspectives regarding queer issues but also reveals how movies that are almost identical can sustain very different meanings.

***PSYCHO* AND THE EMERGING POSTMODERN HORROR FILM**

Alfred Hitchcock’s *Psycho* (1960), an adaptation of the 1959 pulp thriller by Robert Bloch, is regarded as a pivotal point in film history in several ways. It reinvented the horror genre and inspired a new wave of horror filmmaking that represented a radical rupture from the ways horror movies had previously been produced. This is not to say that the genre changed overnight but that a slow

transformation of horror conventions began in this decade before becoming fully established in the seventies and eighties.

The post-sixties horror genre has become increasingly postmodern by concentrating on “the blurring of boundaries” (Pinedo 17) of classic horror films. Gore and “high levels of explicit, sexualized violence” (20) have become an integral part of the genre, and the postmodern world of horror is also defined by the unraveling of certainties. This new form of horror filmmaking is namely characterized by its open endings, which take away a certain security that the closed narratives of classic horror provided. Furthermore, postmodern horror films are mostly set in a familiar, seemingly everyday world, where “disorder often emerges from *within* humans to potentially disrupt the whole ordered world” (Tudor 103). Consequently, the world as such becomes an unstable, paranoid place where no safety can be guaranteed. This deep distrust permeating postmodern horror can be expanded to issues of identity and of the self, including those concerning sexuality and gender. Indeed, a new form of monstrosity found in a variety of post-sixties horror films is a newly visible queerness first embodied by *Psycho*’s character Norman Bates.

Psycho introduces us to the story of Marion Crane (Janet Leigh), who goes on the run after stealing \$40,000 from her employer. On the way to meet her lover Sam Loomis (John Gavin), Marion checks into the Bates Motel, managed by Norman Bates and his mysterious mother. That night, Marion is brutally murdered while showering. The ensuing plot centers on the search for Marion’s whereabouts conducted by Marion’s lover Sam, her sister Lila Crane (Vera Miles), and the private investigator Milton Arbogast (Martin Balsam)—the latter becoming a murder victim himself. In the end, it is revealed that Norman Bates dresses up as his mother—whom he killed ten years prior—to fulfill his murderous desires.

In terms of its narrative structure, the film defied audience’s expectations by introducing the female lead Marion Crane and then making her the victim of a murder halfway through the plot. Not only is Marion killed but, more importantly, it occurs after she repents and decides to return the money stolen from her boss. These facts have a double “destabilizing effect on audiences” (Williams 171): Both the forward movement of the narrative and the audience’s expectations are disrupted, as the timing of the murder seems morally unjustified. Seeing that Marion is punished after deciding to atone for her criminal acts takes away the sense of security that a classic horror movie would have provided. To use her own words, this act shows that “[s]ometimes just one time can be enough” to cause one’s downfall.

The world presented in *Psycho* is an unforgiving place in which bad decisions can have even worse consequences. However, it is also a postmodern world where no

universal good and evil exist. Looking at Marion and Norman, it becomes clear that neither of them is wholly good or bad. Rather, they are constructed as ambiguous and complex characters, blurring the boundaries between monster archetypes established during the classic horror film period. Marion—seemingly the film’s protagonist—is a thief and, from the ‘puritanical’ perspective of the early 1960s, a deviant for having secretive sexual encounters out of wedlock. Norman, in contrast, is introduced as a shy and polite man. Yet as the story evolves, it is revealed that underneath his anxiety-ridden, sensible facade lies a deeply troubled killer. As this essay argues, this insight is of great importance to the understanding of queerness in *Psycho*. Since the movie refuses binary divisions, queerness and its portrayal in the film are neither represented as entirely good nor evil. Norman’s remark that “[w]e all go a little mad sometimes. Haven’t you?” can therefore be read as a general statement about sanity in modern times. In other words, anyone can go mad. Most importantly, since the horror depicted in the film seems to be a part of everyday life, anyone can become a victim or a victimizer. The horror that Norman emits is of a psychological nature and thus is even closer to us—a horror that can reside within anyone.

Prior to analyzing the representation of queerness in *Psycho*, it is important to first define the meaning of ‘queerness’ as it will be used in my argument. I will refer to lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender/transsexual (LGBT) when I address elements or characters that are defined by or identify with any of these categories since they “work within monogender or nonstraight bigender dynamics” (Doty, *Making Things* xviii). In contrast, I will utilize the term ‘queer’ to address all those who do not fall into this gendered binary since their characterization is too complex to be reduced to one of these categories, involves a conscious rejection of these categories, or is a queer position taken by a non-LGBT individual. Following Doty’s classification, “‘queer’ [will be] occasionally used as an umbrella term [...] to make a collective point about lesbians, and/or gays, and/or bisexuals, and/or queers (whether self-identified queers or queer-positioned nonqueers)” (xviii).

***PSYCHO*’S ALL-PERVASIVE GENDER-BENDING PLOT**

One of *Psycho*’s greatest innovations lies in the movie’s subversion of conventional gender identities. At its center stands the gender-nonconforming Norman Bates, whose gender identity is portrayed as lying somewhere between male- and female-identifying due to his schizophrenic tendencies. Furthermore, the film features multiple layers of non-hetero-conforming and gender-nonconforming qualities that will be closely explored throughout this chapter.

Psycho can be regarded as a successor of the Gothic literary tradition. This is particularly due to the way it “continues to investigate the symbol of the dark and foreboding house, complete with a fractured personality and perhaps Hitchcock’s most horrific family secret—a macabre variation of the ‘madwoman in the attic’” (Bishop 136). Moreover, the movie strongly invokes archetypal Gothic tropes concerning monstrous queerness, especially when considering the character of Norman Bates: Works of Gothic writing are known for their “conflation of the monstrous with some form of queer sexuality” (Benshoff, *Monsters* 19). Greatly influenced by the Gothic tradition, the contemporary poetic and artistic movement known as the Decadents epitomized this queerness with its “association of homosexual behavior with elitism, death, and decay” since it featured “abnormal loves, necrophilia, and the ever-present image of the woman’s corpse.” The Decadents’ outward appearance and behavior, characterized by their “pale, thin, delicate, aestheticized, and emotional” (19) features, were quickly established as codes for standard male homosexuality. In *Psycho*, we encounter a clear conflation of the monstrous and the queer in the character of Norman Bates. Similar to the Decadents, Norman’s obsession with taxidermy associates him with death, decay, as well as ‘abnormal loves’ such as necrophilia. Norman also possesses the aforementioned visual and aural signifiers the movement was known for.

Apart from these Gothic signifiers, Norman exhibits a variety of other behaviors that can be deemed queer. An example of this is the scene in which Norman goes up the stairs of his home, swinging his hips effeminately. A moment later he returns, carrying his mother’s body down the stairs to hide her in the fruit cellar. The clear duality in Norman’s behavior, “mov[ing] [...] from the swishy gay male to the male who stands up to Mother and dominates Woman” (Greven, *Psycho-Sexual* 82), deconstructs the male-female gender binary and ultimately supports Judith Butler’s notion regarding the performativity of gender. That is, while one’s sex is connected to the physical body, gender is perceived as a social and cultural construct, which “can be neither true nor false” (Butler, *Gender* 174). It incorporates the repetition of diverse cultural and social acts and discourses, which reassert our designated gender:

In other words, acts and gestures, articulated and enacted desires create the illusion of an interior and organizing gender core, an illusion discursively maintained for the purposes of the regulation of sexuality within the obligatory frame of reproductive heterosexuality. (173)

Furthermore, unifying gender into two categories leaves no space for ‘deviant’ forms of gender. Effectively, the standard of “compulsory heterosexuality” (Butler, *Gender* 42) is upheld, promoting only heterosexual men and women whose biological body matches their respective gender equivalent. It is through interpellation—the ongoing

act of reinforcing certain character traits upon an individual by authorities—that this two-gender system has been maintained (Skodbo 39-40; cf. Althusser 1503-04).

Interpellation and performativity are processes that need to be reinforced continuously to maintain their credibility, thus leaving loopholes for resignification and recontextualization through counteractions that broaden the possibilities of embodying gender (Butler, *Bodies* 112-14). In *Psycho*, Norman's switching between feminine and masculine behavioral expectations "destabilize[s] masculine and feminine altogether" (Williams 179). This subversion of gender norms reaches its pinnacle in the film's climax when Norman appears in drag. Butler perceives the act of drag as a form of expression that "fully subverts the distinction between inner and outer psychic space" (*Gender* 174) and is able to play with and parody traditional understandings of gender identities. Drag is deceptive as it plays with gender codes connected to femininity while simultaneously maintaining the awareness of a biologically male body underneath the mask. Butler therefore describes drag as "a fantasy of a fantasy" (175), a strategy that illuminates the performativity of gender through parody—subverting any notion of a true gender core.

It is important to look at the ways gender-bending killers are oftentimes dealt with in the horror genre. Firstly, it is noteworthy that the gender fluidity of killers—Norman Bates in *Psycho*, Bobbi in *Dressed to Kill* (Brian De Palma, 1980), Angela in *Sleepaway Camp* (Robert Hiltzik, 1983)—is often not revealed until a violent unmasking of their gender identity takes place at the end of the movie. Norman's gender crossing was, thus, exploited for shock value, directly linking him to the function of the monster in horror film. Jeremy Russell Miller notes that "[b]ecause the characters are presented as actively hiding their [gender-nonconforming] identities from others, they must be trying to deceive others" (109). Following Miller's reasoning, not only are these characters hiding their gender identity to pass as heteronormative people but their coming out must be forced upon them. This implies that these characters are hiding something shocking, something that should not be brought to light.

It is Norman's cross-dressing that is the most obvious act of gender subversion found in *Psycho*. Despite the complex and confusing way the character's sexual orientation has been constructed, "men's wearing women's clothes is connected with homosexuality by most people" (Doty, *Flaming Classics* 167). Doty refers to a common generalization that unifies all gender-bending aspects of queerness under the idea of the 'deviant' homosexual, inspiring a conflation of gender and sexuality. Although incorrect, this belief must be taken into account, given that it was widespread in the early 1960s and, as a matter of fact, still is today.

Yet this groundbreaking destabilization of gender norms is not only limited to Norman Bates but incorporates almost every character in *Psycho*. Starting off with the movie's male characters, "masculinity is depicted, when not bumbling, as alternately troubled and menacing" (Greven, *Psycho-Sexual* 77). According to traditional gender roles, male "authority figures should help, rescue, and illuminate, but [in *Psycho* they] end up failing utterly in their purported missions." This is exemplified by characters such as the policeman or the car dealer, two "men who suspect Marion looks 'like a wrong one' but do not further investigate the matter" (78). Then there is Arbogast, the private investigator who is unable to solve the mystery of Marion's disappearance and who becomes another murder victim of Norman. The fact that Arbogast is the only (shown) male victim in the chain of Norman's murder victims further feminizes his character.

Most interesting, however, is the way in which Sam Loomis's masculinity is deconstructed throughout the movie, an undertaking that again reveals the performativity of gender. Sam is introduced to the audience as the paramount example of virile (heterosexual) American masculinity due to his hypermasculine body and perceptible male potency. However, as the plot progresses, "Hitchcock refuses to allow [viewers] to [see] Sam as the masculine embodiment of stability, of moral, emotional, and demeanor-related normalcy" (Greven, *Psycho-Sexual* 76). Instead of a confident and straightforward character, we see a rather reluctant and passive person. This passivity makes itself clear after Marion and Arbogast go missing and Lila demands Sam's help in her search for the private investigator. Sam reacts hesitantly, and the gender roles reverse. In place of the supposed male hero, the traditionally passive female character becomes active, pushing the action forward. Nevertheless, the ultimate deconstruction of Sam's masculinity occurs when he distracts Norman Bates with a conversation, enabling Lila to secretly search the Bates residence. In this scene, the physical similarity between Norman and Sam becomes apparent: positioned face to face—as if one is looking into his mirror reflection—Sam appears as if he could be the heterosexual, healthy, and sane "counterbalance to the psychotic Norman" (76). Looking closer, however, the physical similarity of the two men makes them interchangeable. Framing Sam and Norman in this way equates one with the other, suggesting that underneath his charming exterior, Sam could be like Norman: a closeted homosexual, a murderer, a psychotic, a monster. In addition to the formal aspects, Sam's behavior in this scene, which has been analyzed as "more than sexually suggestive" and "downright cruisy" by Greven (65), queers him even further.

Almost every heterosexual relationship in the movie is presented as troubled and breaking with tradition, since conventionally one of the core arguments of Hollywood movies lies in the assertion "that the formation of a heterosexual couple is both

desirable and necessary, and that this couple will survive all challenges to make the world (of the narrative) a better place” (Doty, *Flaming Classics* 171). Contrary to Doty’s assertion, *Psycho* introduces a rather unconventional love story. Sam is a divorcee who meets his lover Marion secretly when conducting business in Phoenix. While discussing Sam’s financial difficulties, Marion expresses her discontent with being stuck in a secret relationship and accuses Sam of “mak[ing] respectability sound disrespectful.” When Marion is killed halfway through the film, the possibility of a happy ending for the couple dies with her. With Lila’s appearance, a potential new love interest for Sam is introduced, yet no chemistry exists between the two. Though they pretend to be a couple, they remain distant.

Laura Mulvey’s famous essay “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” (1975) sheds further light on this matter. According to Mulvey, cinema has been structured by “the unconscious of patriarchal society” (14) since its beginning. In other words, the art of filmmaking has almost always been dominated by male subjectivity. Moreover, “[cinematic] pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female.” Women in film, thus, need to remain passive and silent for the perpetuation of the patriarchal order, while simultaneously serving as an “erotic object for the characters within the screen story, and as erotic object for the spectator within the auditorium” (19). In contrast, the male plays “the active [role] of advancing the story, [...] articulat[ing] the look and creat[ing] the action” (20). Mulvey further explains that in psychoanalytical terms, these distinct gender roles are based on “[the woman’s] lack of a penis, implying a threat of castration and hence unpleasure.” One of the ways of coming to terms with these anxieties for the male character/spectator lies in “the preoccupation with the re-enactment of the original trauma (investigating the woman, demystifying her mystery)” (21), followed by sadistically “asserting control and subjugating the guilty person [i.e., the woman] through punishment or forgiveness” (22).

Comparing Lila’s performance in *Psycho* to these traditional female gender roles, one immediately becomes aware of the many ruptures in classic cinematic gender conventions she embodies by playing an active role in the search for her sister. When Lila goes to investigate the Bates residence, she becomes the identifying character for the audience and thereby subdues the audience to her female subjectivity. Another break with traditional female roles described by Mulvey lies in the fact that instead of being viewed as an object, “Lila becomes a kind of voyeur as well as investigator, penetrating the mystery of Mother and her house as well as of Norman” (Greven, *Psycho-Sexual* 80). Thus, Lila is the bearer of the look, instead of the movie’s “to-be-looked-at-ness” (Mulvey 25)—what she sees, the audience sees.

Lila's gender queerness becomes fully apparent when analyzing the scene in which she rummages through the Bates house. Seeking the truth about Marion and Mrs. Bates, Lila enters the Gothic house and, by doing so, begins a journey of self-discovery. Upon entering Mrs. Bates's room, Lila is confronted with images of sexual repression. The furnishing of the room strongly "evokes nostalgia for Victorian maternal femininity" (Greven, "Death-Mother" 175), a stark contrast to Lila's gender nonconformity. Paradoxically, Lila as a clear subverter of gender norms faces a similar repression in life: She is not allowed to openly express her gender identity. While exploring the empty room, Lila is startled by her own reflection in a mirror. A second mirror placed opposite the first reflects her frightened image *ad infinitum*, revealing the infinite identities that Lila inhabits.

These reflections are reminiscent of Baudrillard's concept of simulacra—a string of copies with no known original. Transferring Baudrillard's idea to Lila's gender identity, one can read the mirror shot as a moment of clarity in which Lila detects that her allegedly stable identity is constructed out of infinite performative layers that help her fit into a society based on compulsory heteronormativity. The "binary gender system" (Butler, *Gender* 10) leaves no room for sexual and gender expressions for nonconforming individuals. Instead, it exerts pressure concerning sexualized and gendered norms on individuals that they are ultimately unable to fight and thus begin to internalize. In other words, the 'closeted' Lila has unconsciously become a copy of infinite gender prescribing copies. In order to survive, she needs to repress her identity the same way the Victorian room may have once repressed Mrs. Bates' sexual desires.

Seeing herself in the mirror helps Lila finally realize the possibilities she can aspire to by fully embracing her gender-nonconforming identity. Only now that she detects her own queer potential can she face Norman Bates's mystery, invading Norman's innermost secret life by entering his childhood room. Now "having unparalleled access to Norman's life, Lila shares in his abjection, a queer abjection that unites them both" (Greven, "Death-Mother" 177). After gaining sympathy and a feeling of solidarity with her male queer counterpart, Lila is able to move even further into Norman's mind—she descends into the fruit cellar, the "chthonic recesses of the basement, that Freudian metaphor for repressed desires and the unconscious" (177).

Revealing Lila's queerness is of utmost importance to the understanding of the basement scene. Having a second, 'sane' queer counterpart to the psychopathic Norman humanizes queerness by showing that Norman is not a psychotic killer *because* he is queer (Doty, *Flaming Classics* 177). Thus, the horror Lila faces when in the basement is not based on Norman's queerness but derived from her understanding of Norman's darkest, homicidal, necrophilic tendencies. Having opened herself up to her own repressed queer feelings, Lila is able to solve the mystery.

38 YEARS LATER: BATES MOTEL REVISITED

Gus Van Sant reworked *Psycho* thirty-eight years after the release of Hitchcock's film in an eponymous 1998 near shot-by-shot remake of the movie. Although Van Sant "desire[d] not to be pigeonholed as a 'gay' or 'queer' director" (Doty, "Film" 499), his queer perspective and influence on the New Queer Cinema movement cannot be denied. New Queer Cinema, a term coined by critic B. Ruby Rich in 1992, was a cinematic movement that

began with a group of American films that received high-profile press coverage after they had successful screenings and won awards at the Sundance, Toronto, and Berlin film festivals of 1991 and 1992. [...] For most critics, two qualities that distinguish these independently produced films from other gay and lesbian films past and present is their assumption of a queer audience as well as their desire to break from traditional narrative forms. (Doty, "Film" 497)

Psycho, known for its break with traditional narrative structuring and its queer appeal, was thus a valuable movie to be remade. Although Van Sant's *Psycho* is a great jump in time from the 1960s, it is important to compare it to its original. Many changes had happened since the 1960s in terms of gay rights and with these came a new appreciation and critical awareness in regards to queer identities in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Since the 1970s, numerous minority groups had expressed concerns that their interests were not represented by the "all-white, heterosexual, middle class intellectual elit[ist] [discourse]" (Skodbo 38). These concerns dominated the various Civil Rights Movements such as the gay liberation movement. This much-needed discursive space for marginal identities would be invigorated by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (1985), a publication marking the beginning of what is now known as 'queer theory' (Jagose 5). The birth of a respectable academic form speaking for the ones left out of the official historical discourse helped to elevate alterity into the public consciousness. By 1998, the social perception and acceptance of queer matters had changed drastically, and with it *Psycho*'s sociopolitical framework evolved for the better. Remaking a cinematic work from this updated societal standpoint is of utmost relevance to this study, since the comparison between the original and the remake not only highlights these changing perspectives but also reveals how movies that are almost identical can sustain very different meanings.

In his remake, Gus Van Sant shifts the primary source of queerness from Norman to Lila, as his version's Norman Bates (Vince Vaughn) bears less homosexual signifiers

than the original. Vaughn's appearance is closer to an idealized masculine physique than Anthony Perkins's as he is 'chunkier' and less fragile looking, appearing physically stronger. As a result, his appearance fails to fit the delicate, Decadent-like physique that Perkins possessed, further distancing him from the supposed queerness Perkins's Norman Bates emits.

Vaughn's less effeminate portrayal of Norman also reduces the queerness of the character, which could be viewed as a deliberate decision by the film's director. When asked by gay filmmaker Bruce LaBruce whether Vince Vaughn would be "playing [the role of Norman Bates] fruity," Van Sant responded with a simple "no" (D-J). In contrast, Perkins' soft voice and delicate movements, such as the theatrical flourish of the actor's hand, bear an almost feminine quality that serve as hints to the character's queerness. While characters were not explicitly acknowledged as such, certain queer markers and signifiers were used to address topics that fell under the rubric of 'sex perversion' of the Motion Picture Production Code, which prohibited the depiction or naming of homosexuality in movies prior to 1961 (Benshoff, *Monsters* 35; Benshoff, "Gay" 278).

Furthermore, there are a few crucial scenes that link Vince Vaughn's character to a heterosexual identity. In this regard, a key moment is the scene in which Lila finds a pornographic magazine filled with naked women in Norman's room. Alexander Doty explains that, in contrast to Van Sant's remake, the "bound volume [found by Hitchcock's Lila] looks as if it could be a family photo album, but [...] in [Bloch's] original book is filled with pornographic pictures" (*Flaming Classics* 178). While in the Hitchcock adaptation the pornographic content is left ambiguous and could indeed be of gay interest, Van Sant chooses to make it explicitly heterosexual. Additionally, in the remake, the aforementioned scene between Norman and Sam loses its 'cruisy' atmosphere due to the actors' performances. No suggestive looks are exchanged, no luscious poses are assumed. The dialogue instead becomes a stilted conversation between two straight men.

Another crucial difference is shown in the 'peephole scene,' which was modified to show that Norman Bates masturbates while spying on Marion (Anne Heche). This takes away much of the homosexual coding of the character since he is shown to be sexually stimulated by a woman and derives pleasure from his voyeurism. This scene becomes even more important for a queer reading when taking a closer look at the way Van Sant deploys the camera in order to deconstruct traditional notions of the male gaze in film. While in Hitchcock's original the audience witnessed a passive man spying on a half-naked woman, in the 1998 version, Norman's masturbation means that he, himself, becomes a sexualized object for the audience. The spectator's gaze is not only directed by Norman's scopophilic look but Norman himself is targeted by the

audience's gaze. By creating a complex intersection of spectatorship, Gus Van Sant ultimately subverts the traditional ways of employing the dominantly male gaze in film by turning the gazer, Norman Bates, into an object of 'to-be-looked-at-ness.' It therefore is not solely the female that becomes subjugated by voyeurism.

Van Sant introduces this subversive deconstruction of Mulvey's concept when the camera intrudes the intimacy of Marion and Sam (Viggo Mortensen) lying in bed, immediately drawing attention to Sam's nudity. While Marion is half-dressed, Sam's hypermasculine body is almost entirely exposed to the camera, which slowly approaches the couple, voyeuristically exploring Sam's naked body and further exploiting his exposed physique. As the scene progresses, Marion rapidly dresses while Sam is seen roaming around the room naked, the camera even catching a glimpse of his bare buttocks. Instead of seeking out the female to exploit her sexuality, the hypermasculine male becomes the actual object of desire. Van Sant creates a discrepancy between masculinity and the idea that the object of the gaze is implicitly feminized. This results in a queering of heterosexual male viewers as they are put in a position where they actively gaze at Viggo Mortensen's male physique.

While the link between the psychotic and the queer is removed from Van Sant's movie by minimizing Norman's queer signifiers, a more positive queer character is introduced in the form of Lila. In Van Sant's *Psycho*, Lila's performance is strongly 'butched up' by Julianne Moore's acting (LoBrutto 82). Additionally, her clothing and accessories have been not only updated to match the fashion of the 1990s but also altered to mirror Lila's gender nonconformity. Instead of the full skirt suit Lila wears in the 1960 original, the remake opts for a hooded jacket, pants, and a backpack. Lila's new outfit is thus more masculine and, at the same time, more practical for the investigation on which she embarks. Her backpack further stresses her independence as it enables her to take a different posture than in the original. Instead of timidly clinging to her purse, the backpack allows Lila to move her upper body freely and to cross her arms to show dismay toward her male associates. Her posture, as such, seems less stiff in Van Sant's *Psycho*. Her movements are more determined, firmer, and steadier, with her gait and facial expressions bearing a certain aggressiveness that Vera Miles's original delicate and hesitant portrayal did not exude. All in all, Lila's body language and attitude accentuate the newly instilled independence the character possesses.

Another indicator of Lila's 'unfeminine' agency and confidence in Van Sant's remake is her harsh and confrontational tone. In contrast to the original, she repeatedly interrupts Sam, cutting him off mid-sentence and displaying her determination not to let herself be subjugated by a man's opinion on the investigation of her sister's disappearance. In a move that empowers Lila, a lot of Sam's original dialogue is cut in

Gus Van Sant's film, while the majority of Lila's spoken text has been kept. Consequently, Lila gains even more agency by now driving fundamental conversations forward with a previously unseen resolve. Unlike in Hitchcock's film, in which her soft and shaky voice gets louder out of nervous desperation, we witness a passionate woman speaking out of anger toward Marion's lover. Hence, in Van Sant's remake, she is no longer "sorry about the tears" (Hitchcock) but apologetic for her harsh tone—a choice that makes the character appear less fragile. Her distaste for Sam's ineffectiveness, which impedes any relationship between the two characters, becomes particularly obvious in the scene in which Sam and Lila walk toward their motel room after checking in. Sam tries to put his arms around Lila but, in a break from the original film, she shrugs it off, showing her disinterest in him. Through Julianne Moore's performance, the traditional female gender norms in *Psycho* are deconstructed to a higher degree. Although Lila Crane was already a progressive and nonconformist female character in the original's 1960s context, in Van Sant's version, she becomes even less apologetic and submissive.

Lila's role in deconstructing the male gaze is also heightened in the remake to reinforce her subversion of gender norms. In Hitchcock's original, the character often averts her eyes when talking with a male counterpart. By contrast, Julianne Moore's Lila always makes direct eye contact with her conversational partners. This heightens her empowerment, as Lila refuses to be a vulnerable target of the male gaze and to be subordinated by her male counterparts. Instead, the male gaze is met by a female counter-gaze, turning her into a subject that is able to react. The scene in which Sam and Lila arrive at the Bates Motel exemplifies her attitude. As Norman peeks at the couple through a window of his residence, Lila notices him. While in Hitchcock's film she only looks at him for a moment, in the remake, she very deliberately shows Norman that she has noticed him by crossing her arms, staring back at him, and refusing to be viewed as an object.

The ultimate example of Lila's gender-nonconforming behavior can be found in the basement scene. In contrast to Hitchcock's film, where Norman is subdued by Sam and revealed to be the murderer, he wrestles Sam and defends himself. Lila is then the one who defeats Norman by kicking him unconscious, saving Sam in the process. Here the absolute reversal of gender roles takes place: The queer, female heroine saves the heterosexual male.

CONCLUSION

The choice of portraying Norman as less queer, while exposing Lila's queerness to a higher degree, shines a more positive light on queerness in Gus Van Sant's remake of Hitchcock's *Psycho*. Queerness is no longer equated with the monstrosity of a murderous character like Norman Bates but instead with the strength and independence of Lila Crane. It is indeed remarkable how changing small details in scene construction and acting can change the perception of a whole film. What the original movie and its remake both have in common, however, is the survival of a monstrous killer stuck in a realm between genders. Although at the end of the movie Norman's secret identity is revealed and he is caught by the authorities, the final images of the movie do not leave its audience with a sense of closure but instead speak a language of unease and discomfort.

Norman breaking the imaginary fourth wall by facing the camera and directly looking at the audience symbolizes a confrontation and questioning of the audience's position in regards to the diegetic world. Through his stare, Norman communicates important facts about the world he lives in, namely the understanding of a world without gender limitations, a world without the stability of a heterosexual, patriarchal, authoritarian order, a world in which evil can awaken in anyone of us. By breaking the separating wall between the film and its audience, we as viewers are included into the dark place *Psycho* creates. Norman's gaze and malicious smile reveal that the voyeuristic audience has all along been like Norman. The world he inhabits and the madness and queer monstrosity that surrounds him are revealed as being ours.

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