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THE NORMAN TRINITY:
A STUDY ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE
NORMAN BATES CHARACTER FROM *PSYCHO*

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
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ABSTRACT

The Norman Trinity:

A Study on the Development of the Norman Bates Character From *Psycho*

By: Abner “Ace” Caguioa

Many continue to acknowledge Norman Bates as a creation of acclaimed director Alfred Hitchcock, featured in the blockbuster film *Psycho* (1960). Scholars attribute the narrative and the characterization of Norman to Hitchcock but fail to acknowledge *Psycho*'s true author, Robert Bloch. Failing to recognize Bloch's novel offers a problem, as most studies of the narrative pertain to Hitchcock's film. This thesis traces the development of the Norman Bates character through different interpretations beginning with Robert Bloch's novel. The study aims to understand why his character becomes younger as time progresses. The research adopts a psychoanalytic approach as well as behavior studies. Theories include Freud's concepts of the Oedipal complex, with commentaries by known film critics such as Slavoj Žižek. By dissecting Norman's into three main personalities – the son, the mother, and the adult – Norman can be carefully examined and provide information on elements of identity, violence, and fear. Besides Bloch's book and Hitchcock's film, other primary sources include Gus Van Sant's frame-by-frame remake and *Bates Motel* television series. This thesis challenges the argument that the complexity of Norman Bates does not define as a monster, but a victim. The research concludes that the fear of the psychopath does not remain in their violent nature, but in the idea that they are able to live quietly amidst society, undetected, and can only exist inside the human mind.

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Introduction

In November 1957, Mrs. Bernice Worden, hardware store owner from Plainsfield, Wisconsin, went missing. Her son Frank, the town's Deputy Sheriff, investigated the situation and found evidences leading to Ed Gein, a local farm owner. Ed Gein's multiple visits to the store prior to Mrs. Worden's disappearance and the missing cash register suggested Gein intended to rob the store. Further investigation of Gein's residence horrified this quiet little town in Wisconsin. The case proved that Gein was no ordinary robber, but was criminally insane. After Gein's mother and brother's death, he dug out corpses from the local cemetery and murdered two women, in an effort to craft a female body suit out of human skin. This unsuspecting 51-year-old man was not only a secret transvestite but also a serial killer who committed multiple murders since 1954. This grotesque story was a sensation in the Midwest and inspired the creation of famous psychopaths in popular culture, such as Buffalo Bill in Thomas Harris' *Silence of the Lambs* (1988), Leatherface in Tobe Hooper's *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1975), and Norman Bates in the cinematic landmark, *Psycho*. Among these modern monsters, Norman Bates remains the most influential character. The film becomes the immediate ancestor of the slasher film¹ and Norman Bates becomes the prototype for later fictional psychopaths, who follow the tropes of a troubled childhood, a confused identity, and the ability to blend within society.

While many associate the story of *Psycho* to legendary filmmaker Alfred Hitchcock (1960), this urban horror originates from Robert Bloch's book published the previous year. Inspired by Ed Gein's story, Bloch "immediately set about planning a novel dealing with such a character. [...] The Oedipus motif seemed to offer a valid answer, and the transvestite theme

¹ See Clover 192.

appeared to be a logical extension. The novel which evolved was called *Psycho*.” Bloch reveals that part of the fascination was due to a desire to discover the source of fear.² Bloch suggests that, “[t]he real chamber of horrors is the gray, twisted, pulsating, blood-flecked interior of the human mind” (Bloch “Shambles of Ed Gein” 557). From the pages of Bloch’s *Psycho*, Norman Bates, a “schizoid mama’s boy” grew and became an icon in popular fiction. A year later, Hitchcock’s adaptation, which contained numerous differences in both plot and characterization, successfully terrified moviegoers with intensified levels of suspense and horrifying twists that left them on the edge of their seats.

Since 1959, *Psycho* has grown into a cultural phenomenon referenced by numerous films, television shows, and different forms of literature. In addition, the narrative continues to be analyzed and criticized by many scholars and critics of different disciplines. Even though Bloch published his book more than half a century ago, elements of *Psycho* continually enter the public sphere through new studies, television, and film spin-offs that attempt to explicate Norman Bates’ puzzling character. Although Norman Bates’ appearance in Bloch’s novel begins as a 40-year-old fat, pudgy, and unattractive man with peculiar interests, Norman’s physical features dramatically alter as it moves to the big screen. A different model is reinforced by Hitchcock’s casting of Anthony Perkins, who charms a “boy-next-door” kind of appeal. Fast forward to 2013, the television series *Bates Motel* creates an even younger Norman Bates through Freddie Highmore’s performance. The research demonstrates that as the *Psycho* phenomenon expands its own universe beyond the motel, the depiction of Norman becomes more simplified, younger, childlike, and normal. Norman Bates’ evolution also questions the essence of normality. The development of his personality attempts to heighten not only society’s psychological and

² See Bloch, “Shambles of Ed Gein.”

sympathetic understanding of Norman Bates, but increase the fear that lies within the untapped chambers of the human mind.

The four interpretations of *Psycho* that will be used in this study include Robert Bloch's original novel (1959), Hitchcock's film of the same title (1960), Gus Van Sant's frame-by-frame remake (1998), and the A&E television series *Bates Motel* (2013). Bloch, Hitchcock, and Van Sant's narrative all follows the same plot. Van Sant's film is particularly intriguing to study as it does not create a new screenplay but experimentally modernizes Joseph Stefano's script³, emulating Hitchcock's cinematography. In an interview, Van Sant expressed that it was his desire to make *Psycho* prominent for today's audience. Vince Vaughn and Anne Heche, stars of Van Sant's rendition, both have no particular resemblances to the original cast of Anthony Perkins and Janet Leigh respectively. Van Sant expressed that he does not want to "mimic" their (Perkins and Leigh) performance but rather create new characters⁴. Unfortunately, the film received very low ratings, and film critics such as Gene Siskel and Roger Ebert suggested to "rent the original" instead⁵. The television series *Bates Motel* is the latest addition to the *Psycho* canon. The series aired three successful seasons, with its upcoming fourth season premiering early March 2016. The series does not comply with the same plot as the book or the films, but acts as a prologue to the original *Psycho* narrative. The series not only portrays Norman as a teenager, but also brings the elusive Mother to life.

While it may seem logical to study Norman Bates in a chronological order, there are certain complications that hinder this procedure. One problem encountered in this research deals

³ Joseph Stefano wrote the original screenplay for Hitchcock's *Psycho*. See Stefano.

⁴ See "Gus Van Sant on Remaking *Psycho*" interview.

⁵ See *Siskel and Ebert & The Movies*.

with the limited scholarship that surrounds Bloch's novel. The films, unlike the novel, are widely surveyed by scholars. Another problem is Norman Bates' multiple personalities, which shift throughout the different interpretations. The methodology for this research will follow a trope from Bloch's book, as suggested by Bloch's fictional psychiatrist, Dr. Steiner. He explains that Norman Bates has three main personalities: the son, the mother, and the normal adult. This research will be divided into three sections that will discuss how each personality differs from all four interpretations. Delving into Norman's mental being and understanding how it evolves can provide valuable information on particular issues such as the Oedipal complex, transvestism, and pornography.

This project will adopt a psychoanalytic approach including Freudian concepts such as the Oedipal complex, castration anxiety, and transvestism. While some of these have been proved obsolete and no longer resonate in today's society, many scholars refer back to these theories to further analyze Norman Bates' character. Norman's unique relationship with his Mother is a heavily studied trope and continues to challenge the Oedipal complex. It is crucial to discuss this aspect of his character as it would not only complete his personality, but also help include this research in the critical conversations. Various discussions on psychoanalytic theory will further include commentaries by Slavoj Žižek who correlates many of Freud's concepts with Hitchcock's film.

Another taboo topic discussed in this research pertains to transvestism, challenged multiple times by critics and Norman Bates himself. The section that will discuss this trope will contest Freud's definition of transvestism – a son desiring to become his mother. Marjorie Garber, Julie Tharp, and John Philips provides commentaries throughout this section, giving insight into Norman's sexual identity. These scholars agree that *Psycho* negatively portrays

transvestism and mars the social perceptions on transsexuals. They also argue that the narrative is misogynistic; however, the main dispute relies on whether Norman and his maternal performance truly qualify him as a transvestite.

While there are many other topics discussed in this research such as taxidermy, alcoholism, pornography, voyeurism, and the bodiless voice, majority of the research strives to create a solid foundation using Bloch's novel. Not only does this complement the lack of scholarship on his work, but it would also serve as the basis for Norman's development. As this research traces significant shifts in Norman's character, it also explores Bloch's original question on the origins of fear. Through the different interpretations, audiences watch Norman become normal and socially acceptable, which embellishes the idea that fear does not linger in physical deformity, or a haunting costume, but instead rest within the internal recesses of the mind.

Chapter I: The Son

Mamma's Boy

The only explanation Bloch's novel provides for Norman Bates' mental state comes from psychologist, Dr. Steiner. He reveals that Norman possesses three particular personalities that he can perform mentally, orally, and physically. Dr. Steiner refers to this phenomenon as the "unholy trinity." The three personalities are the following: the son, the Mother, and the adult. The adult Norman gives the illusion of normality and tries to suppress the other two polarized personas of the "son" and "Mother" figures. The "son" is easily detectable through Norman's private and abusive conversations with Mother. This personality serves as the submissive aspect of Norman's character. Dr. Steiner further explains that Norman acts as a "little boy who needed his mother and hated anything or anyone who came between him and her" (Bloch 170). This concise explanation functions as this section's foundation, as it focuses primarily on his child identity. This section examines how Norman is treated and abused as a child, which greatly affected and hindered his growth into adulthood. This discourse not only carries through the different adaptations, but has also become the cornerstone of Norman's character. The son personality also addresses the highly debated notion of the Oedipal complex. The evolution of Norman Bates' age; it observes his regression and significant youth through time.

Bloch describes Norman Bates as a 40-year-old, fat, pudgy, little man. Bloch challenges his readers to find a child amidst this fairly unkempt man. This becomes an easy feat as Mother not only provides the reader with an aesthetic description of Norman's physique, but administers Norman's official title of "boy." This title immediately dictates the type of person Norman would exhibit. As Norman and his Mother argue over Norman's incompetence and irresponsibility to fully manage the motel, Mother calls him "boy" repeatedly. He likens hearing

the word to the sound of banging drums. Norman responds that she makes him “sick,” to which she replies, “Do I, boy?” Norman ponders on her question:

Mother’s voice was deceptively gentle, but that didn’t fool [him]. Not when she called him ‘boy.’ Forty years old, and she called him ‘boy’: that’s how she treated him, too, which made it worse. If only he didn’t have to listen! But he did, he knew he had to, he always had to listen (Bloch 12).

Bloch instantaneously characterizes Norman to be fully aware of his own situation. Not only does Norman know his Mother’s change of tone when she uses the word “boy,” but he is also aware that this label affects him. To relate the word to the banging of drums suggests a sense of annoyance, or a warning device that alerts him of his Mother’s emotions. He points this out in his thoughts as Mother only uses the word “boy” at times when they argue Norman’s capability as an adult. The most significant aspect of this scene comes from Norman’s unwillingness to defend himself. He does not attempt to counter Mother’s mistreatment; instead, he wallows into the submissive state and gravely accepts defeat. Norman not only fails to retort back, but also accepts his failure and begins to believe his label of “boy” to be true. Norman’s title, his unwillingness to defend himself, and his submissiveness towards his Mother demonstrates Norman’s childish demeanor.

While the title he receives becomes highly significant in shaping the son aspect of his character, Mother’s arguments on Norman’s reluctance to take responsibility provides better insight into his childish behavior. Norman exhibits shy behaviors that expose his childishness despite his age. Returning to Mother’s arguments about Norman’s incompetence to manage their business, Norman admits that he “hate[s] running the motel.” Mother replies, “it’s more than that boy [...] [y]ou hate *people*. Because, really, you’re afraid of them aren’t you? [...] you did it

thirty years ago, and you're still doing it now. Hiding away under the covers of a book" (Bloch 14). Mother again uses the word "boy" to incite the presence of the child Norman. Her use of phrases such as "afraid of people" and "hiding," can be commonly associated with depictions of children. This inclination to avoid other people and "hiding" away from society pertains to shyness.⁶ Psychological and behavioral studies assert that a correlation exists between parental control and children's shyness. One study states that the "different forms of socially fearful behaviors, such as shyness, behavioral inhibition, social anxiety, social withdrawal, and reticence, are associated in young children with two forms of parental psychological control: intrusive control and criticism or rejection" (Zalk and Kerr 376). These behaviors are all relatable to Norman's supposed hate of people. Norman's anxieties over his Mother's criticism both reflect and affect his social relations beyond the motel. Not only does Norman fail to outgrow his childish behavior, but also continues to find protection behind Mother's overshadowing figure.

While the title of "boy" provides sufficient evidence to denote submissiveness, Mother's use of other labels such as "Mamma's Boy" demonstrate how verbal abuse negatively affected Norman's childhood. Mother's consistent use of the word "boy," lessens the value of Norman's name and identity, which depicts him as insignificant and worthless. Mother uses the word "gumption" multiple times throughout their disagreement. "Gumption" simply means to have initiative and become resourceful. Mother uses this word to refer to Norman's failure to grow up

⁶ Like behaviorally inhibited children, shy children get distressed when meeting new people, are hesitant when approaching unknown adults, and tend to hover around other children without joining in play. See Zalk and Kerr.

and become a man. She recalls Norman's childhood peers and playmates who referred to him as "Mamma's[sic] boy. [...] [t]hat's what they called you, and that's what you were. Were, are, and always will be. A big, fat, overgrown Mamma's Boy" (Bloch 15). This partly comedic moment when his Mother calls her own son a "Mamma's boy" provides a glimpse into Norman's childhood – a victim of taunts and bullies. Her play on the verb "to be" through "were, are, and always will be," suggests a sense of permanence and Norman's inability to change and grow. This successfully recreates Norman's childhood and proves that he was abused both by his Mother and by his peers. The type of labels he receives along with his childishness dictates his type of personality, which distorts his character and appearance into a naïve, shy, and abused child.

Considering that most of Norman's conversations with Mother happen inside his head, films portraying their exchange of dialogues in close frame risks revealing the narrative's secrets. One significant change the film adapts is its reduction of Norman's personalities from three to two. While the films' own version of Dr. Steiner states that there are only two personas: Norman and Norma (the Mother identity), Norman is depicted as a combination of both child and adult. As opposed to Bloch's bald and middle-aged Norman, Hitchcock casts Anthony Perkins, a handsome, young, and charming actor. Perkins' performance later becomes the standard model of Norman Bates throughout the *Psycho* canon. Perkins' version of Norman continues to gain critics' approval and praise till today, garnering comments such as "intelligent," and "best performance of his career⁷." Praises such as these are all unified in expressing his youth, that "brilliantly camouflag[es] his Jekyll and Hyde persona" (Vertlieb 18). David Thomson comments that the role of Norman Bates was "dangerous but playful, [...]. He [Perkins] felt the

⁷ See *New York Daily News*, June 16, 2015.

drab humor in *Psycho*, and maybe erred in thinking it would keep audiences from being terrified.” Perkins' performance transforms Norman's previous 40-year-old image by implementing a boyish charm and innocence. Eventually, this tactic portrays him as a victim as opposed to the scary, psychopathic monster.

With the employment of Anthony Perkins' fresher look, Norman looks and acts more like a child than Bloch's 40-year-old man. As the film limits the audience's encounter with Mother, Norman's childlike behavior is captured in his encounter with Marion Crane⁸, played by the beautiful Janet Leigh. In the scene, Norman invites Marion for dinner; however, Mother forbids this request. Norman leaves the house and brings down a tray of food to Marion's room and invites her into the office parlor, to be less “o-o-o-officious.” They talk about Norman's apparent interest in stuffing birds. She then asks if Norman ever went out with friends. He replies, “Friends? Who needs friends (Laughs, then with gallows humor) A boy's best friend is his mother. (Stops laughing)”⁹ (Stefano 43). One notable aspect of Perkins' performance is his smile, which heightens his sense of innocence at the beginning of the film. His cunning smile portrays a highly likeable character, worthy of the audience's trust. Perkins stuttering also helps conceal his true identity behind the illusion of vulnerability and nervousness. The main difference in Bloch's model with Perkins performance delineates the boundaries between childish and childlike. In this research, the word childish implies a negative connotation such as being silly and immature, while childlike is more positively associated with a good child's behavior, including being credulous and unsuspecting. The odd phrase “a boy's best friend is his

⁸ Mary's name changes in Hitchcock's film and becomes Marion.

⁹ Parentheticals are used in screenplay formats to denote a type of action within the dialogue, usually implying an emotion, action, or a pause.

mother” foreshadows the remainder of the narrative. Norman’s use of the word “boy” in the film differs from how it is used in the book. Hitchcock shows how Norman also sees himself as a child. The manner in which Norman laughs at the idea of “friends” expresses a hint of embarrassment, assuming he has no friends. However, the serious tone he reverts to after he delivers his line shows a high level of devotion and obedience towards Mother. Despite the limitations of the screen, Perkins still manages to show aspects of Norman’s childhood. These new childlike behaviors Perkins includes successfully portray Norman as unsuspecting, increasing the mystery and the narrative.

Kevin Wetmore Jr. acknowledges the particular age difference of Bloch’s Norman Hitchcock’s Norman. As opposed to arguing whether he has three or two personalities, Wetmore argues that Perkins’ Norman is a combination of both child and man – a teenager. Perkins younger appearance and his actions depict him as “juvenile.” Wetmore points out other childlike behaviors and subtleties that are depicted in Hitchcock’s film. He argues that Norman’s youthfulness immediately reveals itself the first time Norman appears on screen. As he steps out of the rain to greet Marion, he says “Gee, I’m sorry I didn’t hear you in all this rain.” The word, “Gee,” Wetmore points out, sets him as “an adolescent talking to an adult.” However, a more significant moment in the film goes back to their dinner in the office. Laced with stuttering and nervousness, Norman presents himself well as a teenager. Furthermore, as Marion addresses him as “Mr. Bates” he immediately corrects her to say “Norman Bates.” Wetmore argues that, “[h]e rejects the title of ‘mister’ with its adult connotations in favor of his name” (Wetmore 221).

While this moment shows Norman attempting to remove any type of formality between him and Marion, it refers more towards Norman’s teenage identity, such that despite his need to become an adult, he clings and chooses to remain in a state of childhood. While Wetmore only comments

on Hitchcock's film, the juvenile concept can also be attributed to Bloch's Norman and explain his annoying with the word "boy," which strips away his name and identity. Although it can be argued that Wetmore finds Norman more childlike than childish presents Norman as a character who struggles to grow up, reminiscent of Bloch's Norman who avoids and rejects responsibility.

Gus Van Sant's scene-by-scene remake of *Psycho* attempted to give Hitchcock's classic film a modern flair. The film garnered far fewer accolades and praises than its predecessor. Scott Briggs states in his review that this "overly reverent remake, besides being generally unnecessary, add nothing to enrich the legacy of either Bloch's novel or Hitchcock's film, or anything of any value to our appreciation or understanding of either." He also argues how the film has been reviled by critics and fans of the original *Psycho* [film] alike" (Briggs 103). Despite these criticisms, Van Sant presents certain dynamic changes with the depiction of the Norman's character. Vince Vaughn, known more for his comedic movies such as *Swingers* (1996), is cast for the role of Norman Bates. Film critic Owen Gleiberman argues that "Vaughn, as Norman, works hard to update [Anthony] Perkins' nervous-Nellie mannerisms, and he's quite good when he's mopping up after the murder (he looks full of nauseous anxiety), but the essence of Norman is that he appears harmless [...] and Vaughn is too naturally imposing." While Vaughn has very handsome features, he does not share the same charm Perkins delivered in Hitchcock's film. He lacks the boyish, young, and naïve image Perkins possessed. Vaughn's "imposing" characteristic minimizes the film's suspense and openly reveals him as the film's psychopath. Vaughn's physical features, such as his strong jaw, his 5 o'clock shadow, and a receding hairline, make him appear significantly older than Perkins. The film fails in portraying Norman's child personality. The audience's only hints of such childhood remain in Norman's

bedroom filled with toys and a small bed. While Vaughn and Perkins are placed in the same frame and script, Vaughn fails to emulate or even upstage Perkins' performance.

The most substantial modification of Norman's child archetype does not occur until *Bates Motel* (2013). The television series, like Van Sant's film, sets the *Psycho*-verse in modernity. Freddie Highmore, known for movies such as *Finding Neverland* (2004) and *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (2005), plays the new Norman Bates. Highmore has the Perkins essentials of appearing boyish, charming, and innocent. David Wiegand believes that Highmore was "a good choice to play a young Norman, in part because he shares that combination of pretty innocence with malevolent overtones" similar to Perkins' performance. *Bates Motel* offers more than a mere interpretation, but is instead dedicated to portray the teenage years of Norman Bates. This series acts as a prelude to the horrors of Bloch's story. The series is unique because it adds a physical, breathing Mother character, played by Vera Farmiga. Alessandra Stanley's review describes Highmore's Norman as a boy who "goes to high school, where an attractive, solicitous guidance counselor seeks him out. So does the queen bee of a clique of popular girls, apparently drawn to the new kid's shy reticence." Highmore performs Norman as a typical new student in high school, displaying anxieties and shy behaviors that connect it back to Bloch's novel. Highmore might emulate Perkins' model as he performs with "boyish sweetness"¹⁰, but Highmore's performance emerges more of teenage rebelliousness and reckless disobedience.

The series provides an addition of an older brother, Dylan, played by Max Thieriot, who makes Norman appear younger. Dylan is Norma's son from her first husband, whose rebellious attitude does not even acknowledge Norma as "Mother" but calls her by her first name instead. These moments that shows Dylan consciously disrespecting Mother challenges Norman's

¹⁰ See Wiegand.

perspective. Inclusion of another son provides a reference for comparison that demarcates Norman as the obvious favorite and “Mamma’s Boy.” Dylan’s presence serves as a diversion to Norman’s unstable multiple personalities. Dylan always tells him to “get away from mother” as it is unhealthy for him, and pleads for Norman to be “normal.” The series successfully depicts Norman’s childhood. These new attitudes that Norman portrays during this stage of his life justify certain personalities and characteristics of Bloch and Hitchcock’s model. Norman’s youth does not necessarily prove him to be normal, but gives the illusion of his innocence and obedience.

Oedipus & Mother

Scholarly conversations surrounding *Psycho* pertain to the story’s relation to the infamous Oedipus complex theory. This complex, introduced by neurologist and father of psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud, was based upon Sophocles’ tragedy, *Oedipus Rex*. The theory refers to a particular stage during childhood wherein the son develops a need to kill his father, and marry his mother. Despite the complexities of Freud’s concept, the main idea pertains to the son developing a sexual attraction towards the maternal figure. Some scholars have dubbed the mother-son relationship in the *Psycho* narrative as an unhealthy dose of Freud’s theory. In a sense, *Psycho* exaggerates and places Freud’s theory in its worst situation. *Psycho* and Norman Bates does not necessarily explain how the Freudian theory work, but acts as a commentary on the social anxieties the theory projects.

A key definition of Freud’s theory that distinctly incorporates Norman’s character, concerns his overly protective and obsessive attitudes towards his mother. Freud presents the following criteria, “the little man would like to have the mother all to himself, that he finds the

presence of his father disturbing, he becomes irritated when the latter permits himself to show tenderness towards the mother, and expresses his satisfaction when the father is away or on a journey” (Freud 291). The *Psycho* narrative’s lack of father figure, and the abandonment of Norman’s real father has greatly affected his childhood. Norman does not only lose a father but rejects other paternal figures he encounters. Norman’s father is only mentioned once in Bloch’s novel and was only replaced by a Joe Considine, who Norman called “Uncle Joe” – Mother’s apparent lover who helped build the motel. Uncle Joe and Mother are poisoned even before the narrative of the book begins. This happens after Norman discovers them copulating in bed, announcing their intent to marry. Dr. Steiner explains that the Mother might have developed “hatred towards men” which might explain her abusive treatment towards her son. The fact that Mother stays single for a significant time until she meets Uncle Joe, limits Norman’s encounter with other men. Norman grows well accustomed to Mother’s company that when Uncle Joe enters the picture – the closest father figure he has ever encountered – jealousy and violence develops, all of which play perfectly into Freud’s theory.

Norman’s relationship with his father is one aspect the *Psycho* tradition ignores. The father, however, is significantly different from one interpretation to another. Norman’s father in the book abandons them while Hitchcock and Gus Van Sant’s film’s state that his father died and left enough money to buy them a motel. In *Bates Motel*, Norman’s father is the first character the audiences see besides Norman. His character lies in the basement – dead, with his body smashed horrifyingly with a shelf. The series later reveals that Norman is the one who murdered his father, but remains ignorant of the fact. The book and films appear to be more subtle in portraying Norman’s Oedipus-like qualities, as it distances his relationship with any paternal figures. However, the way he kills his mother’s lovers can be seen as an indirect attack

on potential father figures. These are all evident throughout the *Psycho*-verse such as killing Uncle Joe in the book, the unnamed lover in the films, and Deputy Shelby from the television series.

Joel Lane provides a comparison of Norman with Sophocles' Oedipus and says that, "Like Oedipus, Bates has blinded himself – but only in his mind. He has successfully buried his passion for his mother and its consequences, but only by creating a grotesque facsimile of the life they had" (Lane 177). Lane refers to the impression that Norman is unconscious of his actions, that when other personalities take over, he is mentally blinded from everything else. This influx of other personalities also affects his "passion" for his Mother wherein through his mental instability, he is able to bury and repress these feelings. The development of the television series expands Lane's argument, as it effectively shows Norman during his murderous moments. It is apparent later on in the series that Norman mentally blanks out when he switches from the defensive to the offensive. During these moments, his movements also appear very robotic and zombie-like. His father's death in the first episode, titled "First You Dream, Then You Die," for instance, finds Norman in tears over his father's bloodied body, which Norman assumed was an accident. In a later episode; however, Norma confesses to Dylan that Norman was responsible for his father's death. It is important to also note that prior to this shocking revelation, Norman also attacked Deputy Shelby. After this violent outturn in the kitchen, Norman sits quietly in the car unresponsive, staring blankly into space. The difference in the series with other interpretations is that Norman kills unconsciously in *Bates Motel*. As explained in the book and movies, the moments when he first murders his Mother and her lovers affected his sanity that eventually made him a psychopath. The series, however, does not use the notion of trauma but instead depicts Norman as mentally ill that blinds him from the truth. Norman redefines and

expands the Oedipal complex as it not only focuses on the mother-son relationship but also plays on Norman's symbolic blindness.

An important moment in Bloch's novel unacknowledged by many critics refers to a scene where Norman briefly addresses his concern that he might be suffering from the Oedipus complex. He pleads with his Mother to give psychology a chance as it might prove helpful in their situation "and maybe things would change for the better." Mother expresses her indifference on the subject and calls it "filthy." As Norman tries to impose his claim, she interjects, "a lot you know about psychology! I'll never forget that time you talked so dirty to me, never. To think that a son could come to his own mother and say such things" (Bloch 15). This small scene in the book is almost brushed away as it does not resonate anywhere else in other *Psycho* adaptations. However, this moment is important as it not only illuminates the nature of the story, but also shows Norman sense of self-awareness. Mother is not only sickened by Norman's plea but utterly repulsed. She reflects social and cultural anxieties towards the Oedipal complex theory as it proposes taboo ideas such as incest, and in the case of *Psycho*, necrophilia as well. However, this is not Norman's full concern with Freud's theory. His fear appears more grounded with the fact that he cannot separate himself as a child with his Mother. His suggestions to Mother does not necessarily relate to his Mother's own sexual implication, but relates to their "situation," which revolves around the idea of growing away from the "Mamma's Boy" identity, and attaining independence.

Diane Negra expresses Norman's fears stating that Norman's development as a child may have failed in following the Freudian trajectory. She explains that:

Boys must necessarily renounce their connection to the maternal in order to identity with their fathers – this is a prerequisite for the adult, heterosexual ability

to desire women. Instead, these characters [Norman Bates, Buffalo Bill, and Frankenstein] cling to that stage of development when they desire and completely identify with their mothers and consequently, they repress and/or fear adult sexual desire (Negra 196).

Negra's explanation parallels Norman's issues such that if Norman's character were to fully follow Freud's concept then this definition of the trajectory would fit his situation without doubt. His lack of a father or reluctance to have a paternal figure, justifies his trouble of overcoming this stage of childhood. This further explains his social fear towards other people, as failure of the trajectory may "repress" sexual and other intimate encounters.

The different interpretation of Norman Bates' childish demeanor has produced a far more complex character than Bloch's original model. He has evolved from an overgrown childish 40-year-old man into a young adult with childlike qualities. As Hitchcock, Van Sant, and the series evolves away from Bloch's model, they give Norman a relatable identity. Norman's growing experience of childhood gives readers and audiences space to empathize with his character. His inability to fully grow up is driven by the horrors of his past, dictated by fear of rejection, abuse, and independence. This helps address unanswered questions and allow the audience to understand the source of Norman's childhood fears.

Chapter II: The Mother

Dial “M” For Mother

This section explores the dominant personality in Norman’s head that has controlled, haunted, and suppressed his childhood. Norman’s performance of Mother can be referred to as a deification process, wherein he portrays her as a god. He chooses to portray her with dominance and god-like characteristics – a source of justice, compassion, power, and destruction – that eventually dominates Norman Bates’ character. Bloch’s novel uses a plethora of biblical and spiritual allusions accredited to Norman’s inclination with spiritualism and occultism. These are evident in the language used in the novel such as the “unholy trinity” or the mock commandment of “thou shalt not suffer a bitch to live.” While the films and the television series do not adopt any of these spiritualistic factors, the Mother’s dominance remains the same. Scholars contend that Mother’s god-like personality derives from one of Norman’s psychic agency of human subjectivity, the super ego¹¹.

Bloch’s novel captures the deified Mother through Norman’s strong maternal portrayal. Bloch limits using the name Norma in the novel, instead frequently uses “Mother” with a prominent capital letter “M.” Similar to how Norman’s childhood labels of “boy,” works similar to the word “Mother;” however, the capitalized M gives her dominance and parallels how Christians capitalize the letter “G” of the word “God.” As rain taps hard on the window, Norman hears the sound of footsteps. He is well aware of “the footsteps without even hearing them; long familiarity aided his senses whenever Mother came into the room. He didn’t even have to look up to know she was there” (Bloch 11). Bloch’s capitalization of the word “Mother” is consistent throughout the narrative. This capitalization significantly changes the power dynamics in the

¹¹ See Žižek.

novel as it evokes fear and challenges social concepts of motherhood. The label “Mother” commands power and wields dominance. The novel easily portrays the power of these titles because of the book’s written form; however, this becomes a problem once the story is adapted on the big screen.

Similar to the biblical or Christian God, Mother displays certain attributes that show her dominance and rule over Norman’s character. Norman bestows upon Mother’s character the power to be omniscient. Throughout the novel, Norman is paranoid that Mother is aware of all his actions, movements, and thoughts. As Norman quietly plans to kill Mother at the beginning of the novel, he thinks, *God, could she read minds?* She replies aloud, “I know what you’re thinking, Norman. I know all about you boy. More than you dream. But I know that, too – what you dream” (Bloch 16). Mother’s invasion of Norman’s thoughts demonstrates her ability to be in control of his behavior and actions. This moment validates Norman’s fears and paranoia that make him vulnerable to Mother’s power. Mother’s ability to read his thoughts, fantasies, and desires dominates and strips away Norman’s sense of privacy. Mother is the only character in Norman’s head capable of such power. Both the child and the adult Norman do not display any essence of being omniscient nor have access to the Mother’s thoughts. Norman’s vulnerability and defenselessness against his Mother becomes a gateway to violence that eventually leads to the murders at the motel.

Mother’s omnipresence is another god-like characteristic that Bloch includes in the novel. This is evident after Norman has disposed of all the evidences of the Mary’s death. As he lies on his bed, he becomes delusional and sees Mother from afar, watching him sink in the same swamp where he disposed the body. He wakes and finds himself back in his bedroom. Mother sits by his bedside and whispers to his ear, “Everything’s all right,” she knows everything. She tells

him “I was watching. You didn’t think I’d go away and leave you, did you?” (Bloch 63).

Mother's reappearance by his bedside, affirms her omniscient quality, demonstrating her power and control over Norman’s movements. While this instance may present Mother’s presence as a sense of protection and solace from abandonment, it also depicts her as controlling. Mother’s existence goes beyond the walls of the house and can manifest itself anytime in Norman’s head.

Norman and Mother’s conversations provide evidence of Mother’s god-like qualities; Bloch, through these moments, establishes sound as an important aspect of the narrative’s reality. The book even starts with “Norman heard a noise and a shock went through him.” It then shifts to Norman reading a “grotesque, but effective” book about drums made of human skin, which he imagines:

The contorted mouth of the corpse would be forced open, probably fixed in a gaping grimace [...] and from it the sound emerged. Beating from the belly, rising through the shrunken inner orifices, force up through the withered windpipe to emerge amplified and in full force from the deep throat [...] Norman could almost hear it, [...] and footsteps --- (Bloch 9 – 11).

The book not only begins with sound, but also offers a brief explanation of the science of sound production. While this foreshadows the rest of the narrative, it further demonstrates the importance of sound in the story. Bloch uses the science of sound production as a precursor to Mother’s introduction, portraying her body as a type of musical instrument. Even the passage he reads also foreshadows and reflects upon the narrative’s revelation at the end¹². This scene

¹² Norman reads a passage from *The Realm of the Incas* by Victor Von Hagen.

See Bloch, *Psycho* 10.

explains the important role of sound for the Mother's existence, and becomes a true agent of force and power.

Adopting these god-like factors from the book to a visual medium would prove difficult, as it risks revealing the narrative's secrets. It would also confuse an audience unfamiliar with Bloch's novel in distinguishing reality apart from Norman's delusions. Both Hitchcock and Van Sant's films do not fully dramatize Mother's god-like qualities of omnipresence and omniscience, but through Norman's visions. They also use the power of sound that Bloch included in his novel. Mother exists through an overpowering voice that reverberates throughout the film. Her booming voice shrouds her physical identity and demonstrates her grandness. In one scene, Hitchcock includes an audio overlay of Mother and Norman's arguments, as the audience gets distracted with Marion fixing her luggage. Despite the sound of rain or Bernard Hermann's intensified soundtrack, the voiceovers are highly audible and easily discernable. The Mother screams, "No! I tell you, No! [...] (mimicking cruelly) Mother, she's just a stranger! [...] Go on, go tell her she'll not be appeasing her ugly appetite with my food.... or my son! Or do I have to tell her, cause you don't have the guts? Huh boy? You have the guts boy?" (Stefano 38-39). This scene demonstrates Hitchcock's brilliant filmmaking ability paired with Stefano's superb screenplay adaptation. Hitchcock shrouds the argument of Mother and son away from the audience and instills a sense fascination and curiosity. To show who is more dominant the Mother produces a clearer and more articulate voice, while Norman's response remains blurry and an echo. Mother's reverberating voice affects Marion who becomes shocked at what she overhears. This shows how Mother's dominance even extends beyond Norman and can have an effect over other characters as well. Mother's voice incites the audience's curiosity and

fascination to invite them to find the bearer of this commanding voice. This scene strongly establishes Mother's presence and displays her as a very abusive force against Norman.

While the book contains many of Mother and Norman's dialogue, the film limits the audiences' encounter with Mother to three particular moments. Apart from Marion's overheard conversation, there are only two other instances when the audience hears Mother's voice. Despite the limitations, both scenes depict how Mother slowly overpowers Norman's character. The second encounter of Mother's voice happens when Norman carries Mother's corpse into the fruit cellar. Unlike the first instance aforementioned, this scene reassures the existence of the mother through ventriloquism. This scene has a track shot wherein the camera follows Norman to the top of the stairs and stops before the bedroom. As Norman tries to deal with Mother's opposition to hide in the fruit cellar, "she starts to laugh, a terrible sound like an obscene melody." Norman tells her "I'll carry you, Mother," and enters the frame of the camera. He has Mother "held in his arms, her head leaning against his shoulders" (Stefano 98). This is the first time that the audience confirms the presence of a physical body in the house. Through Norman's ventriloquism, he demonstrates how he can portray two different characters that animate Mother's corpse. The laugh that sounds like an "obscene melody" continues to mock Norman's character and remains powerful over his calmer tone. However, it can be argued that this particular moment contradicts how Mother's consuming voice was initially demonstrated. The fact that Norman carries her frail body shows how Mother is physically vulnerable and weak. Norman has full control and needs to move her to the fruit cellar. This contrasts Mother's omnipresent and omniscient traits in Bloch's novel; however, this becomes challenged on the third moment the audience encounters Mother's voice.

The third encounter of Mother's voice happens towards the end of the film when Norman enters the fruit cellar screaming, "I am Norma Bates!" The film's final portrayal of the Mother's voice finally consuming Norman brings the bodiless voice's journey to a close. This moment shows how Mother's voice has materialized in another body and has possessed Norman's physical body. While Mother's voice pleads for her innocence at the end of the film, it is evident that her dominance has also killed the other personalities inside Norman's head. As the film winds down, Hitchcock brings Norman's final monologue. Norman sits on a chair, looks directly at the camera, and out of the calmness of the scene, a voiceover of Mother comes directly from his thoughts. She exclaims:

It's sad...when a mother has to speak the words that condemn her own son [...] they'll put him away now... as I should have...years ago. He was always...bad. He intended to tell them I killed those girls...and that man. As if I could do anything except just sit and stare [...] They're probably watching me [...] Let them see what kind of person I am [...] they'll see...and they'll know... and they'll say... 'why she wouldn't even harm a fly...' (Stefano 128-29).

This scene remains accurate with Bloch's own ending in his novel. This defining moment shows Norman's full transformation, wherein he has lost control of his mind and has allowed his Mother to invade and take charge of his body. Mother has truly satisfied her claim as the dominant personality, embodying herself in her son's figure and fully imposes her beliefs upon him. The clear crisp sound, without echo or reverberation, shows how the voice has materialized internally within Norman's head. These three instances show how sound portrays terror and power, which successfully destabilizes Norman's mental being. In essence, this triad of events

acts as a process where sound attempts to materialize and take form, finding solace in the body of Norman Bates.

Michel Chion has also studied these three particular moments in the film and finds them significant as it provides the process of Norman's transformation into Mother. Chion argues that this phenomenon in *Psycho* can be referred to as *acousmatic* – a voice without a bearer that seeks to find its own body. Chion breaks down the process of embodiment and argues that this only happens when both body and voice affirm each other. He states that the word embodiment is reminiscent of the word “entombment” or “internment” which relates to burial. However, Chion's essay relies on understanding whether a scene exists when the Mother's body and her voice are unified. Arguably, this only happens towards the end of the film, when Norman sits quietly with his mouth closed but thinks in Mother's voice. Chion suggests that Norman is either possessed by spirits or ventriloquism, “ultimately, the voice has not found a body to own it and assign it a place – just as the burial of the mother did not take place according to custom since it was exhumed and stuffed”(Chion 149). Slavoj Žižek also comments on this particular moment, referring to it as a failure of embodiment. Norman only ends up becoming a “zombie [...] totally powerless in itself” (Žižek 234). These two critics propose that despite the Mother's voice having control of Norman's body, the bodiless voice fails in its attempt to find a body. While Chion argues that Norman's transformation to Mother is a product of the desecration of her body through taxidermy, his other suggestion that Norman is “possessed by spirits” gives the Mother a spiritual implication. Norman fails to realize that he was never the ventriloquist in the story having full control of the Mother's corpse; rather, Mother was the one actually creating his voice.

The qualities mentioned above are all strong indications of Mother's deific nature.

However, the most god-like attribute that Norman instills in her character is the idea that she serves as a skewed epitome of justice and morality. She remains as Norman's savior, resurrected from the dead and immortalized in Norman's mind. Unlike the films, Bloch's Norman justifies his murder of Mary Crane. Norman believes that Mother's purpose is to deliver him away from such sinfulness, to protect, and save him from damnation. At the beginning of the book, Mother already shows her sense of morality through her disgust of Norman's inclinations to psychology and occultism. She responds that the only two acceptable books in her household are the Bible and educational text. She believes that the Bible is elevated than the rest of Norman's book collection, which she referred to as "trash" (Bloch 14). These associations with religious material instill in Norman Mother's own righteous philosophy and justice. As Norman enters the dream, he slowly sinks in the swamp, he sees his Mother with her arms held out. He believed, "She could save him, she was the only one!" As his view shifts, he also begins to adopt Mother's justification for killing Mary Crane. Norman blames Mary and finds her responsible for provoking her own death. He believes that, "She had flaunted herself before him, she had deliberately tempted him with the perversion of her nakedness. Why, he'd wanted to kill her himself when she did that, because Mother had taught him about evil and the ways of evil and thou shalt not suffer a bitch to live" (Bloch 62). Bloch's language style mimics the Bible, through words such as "tempted," "evil," and the addition of a mock commandment, "thou shalt not suffer a bitch to live." Mother's god-like qualities are her own self-personification affirmed by biblical imagery. Mother is portrayed both as a savior and a judge for what is good and evil. Norman affirms Mother's sense of justice by acknowledging that through her teachings, he too knew that Mary deserved to die.

This final god-like quality of justice lessens in the films due to the limitations that the screen offers. There are moments when Mother appears to impose her beliefs on Norman, but they do not have the same religious implications as what Bloch intended in the book. The television series provides a challenge to this trope since the Mother physically exists. However, there are several moments when Norman acts based on what he assumes are his Mother's beliefs. A significant difference in the series compared to the book or the films is Norman's encounters with the Mother in his head. She does not remain a voice, but a vision. She materializes in Norman's delusions which he sees and obeys.

One of the crucial moments in the *Bates Motel* series happens in the "Midnight" episode, when Miss Watson arouses Norman. As he watches her undress through a mirror, Mother mysteriously appears sitting on the couch next to Norman. Mother says, "What kind of a grown woman invites a teenage boy and changes her clothes where he can see her?" Norman argues, "No, no, no she's trying to help." Mother interjects, "she's trying to seduce you." Norman fights and defends Miss Watson. Mother gives her final statement, "You know what you have to do." The series challenges Chion's arguments of the bodiless voice, as the series embodies Mother as a delusion. These scenes suggest that Norman does not only transfer his voice to inanimate objects, but also rely heavily on a vision of the Mother who controls his thoughts. Her sense of justice reflects the same type of logic and philosophy that Bloch had in his book. She is able to convince Norman of her belief and place him into submission and obedience. The moment when Norman doubts his ethics is the same moment when the Mother takes over and provides a skewed version of morality, leaving Norman vulnerable and weak.

Žižek, in his film analysis of *Psycho*, offers another suggestion besides his commentary on Chion's suggestion on the power of voice and sound. Žižek also believes that Mother

functions as the superego based on Freud's concepts of human subjectivity. The super ego, Žižek explains, is the dominant consciousness that takes over at times of distress and trouble. Žižek argues that Norman's deification of Mother is part of this Freudian process and that her god-like attributes add to the horror of the film. Žižek relates much of the imagery in Hitchcock's film to correspond to Freud's theory on human subjectivity. He argues that the house is reflective of Norman's mind, wherein each floor designates itself as parts of Norman's psychic agency. He believes that the ground floor is Norman's normal ego, while the top floor, where the Mother resides, is considered the super ego. He points out one particular moment in the film when Norman transfers his Mother from the top floor to the fruit cellar. Žižek argues that, "It's as if he is transposing her in his own mind as a psychic agency from super ego to id. Of course the lesson of it, the old lesson already of Freud, that the super ego and id are deeply related." He says that the maternal "super ego is not an ethical agency...it is an obscene agency bombarding us with impossible orders. The more we obey it the more it makes us guilty."¹³ Žižek does not truly acknowledge or define the id in his analysis. Žižek says that both the "super ego and id" are "deeply related" such that Mother and child, respectively, is always at opposition. However, he argues, that this moment is a reversal of roles. In order to protect himself – the mother, and the child – he would need to suppress both psychic agencies. He argues that the super ego is a very unethical agency, and if those thoughts keep "bombarding" Norman's mental state, then it would be harder to not obey. This also happens in the series every time Norman allowed his Mother to intervene and invade his thoughts, the more he obeys, the more likely he becomes guilty. Although these characteristics are well played in the novel, they are removed from screen adaptations. This is due to the limitations of the visual medium, where it fails to truly look into

¹³ See *The Pervert's Guide to Cinema*.

the mind of Norman Bates. Mother loses her god-like traits on screen; however, it is important to understand that these particular characteristics still dictate Norman's thought process.

A Boy in Mother's Clothing

Bloch's novel acknowledges and confirms Norman's transvestite identity through Dr. Steiner's theory. Based on his observations, he suspects two possibilities: either Norman and his Mother crossed the boundaries of a normal mother-son relationship, or that Norman lives a "secret life" as a transvestite, quite similar to Bloch's inspiration, Ed Gein. Lila questions Dr. Steiner's theory and asks if Norman was possibly a homosexual. Dr. Steiner disagrees and clarifies that, "transvestites aren't necessarily homosexual, but they identify themselves strongly with members of the other sex. In a way Norman wanted to be like his mother, and [...] wanted his mother to become part of himself" (Bloch 167-68). The spectrum of sexuality is broad and sophisticated, and all its aspects relating to Norman would fail to be discussed given the limitations of this thesis. Many critics such as Robin Wood and Robert J. Corber have noted that Norman's cross-dressing does not at all reflect his sexuality that labels him as homosexual. Scott Briggs and Raymond Bellour even argued that Norman's name acted as a pun,¹⁴ which dissects as "Nor-man: he who is neither woman [...] or man, since he can be one in the place of the other, or rather one and the other, one within the other" (Bellour 125). Gender dynamics and sexuality within the narrative have received many debates, questioning whether Norman was a killer who was undergoing "gender distress."¹⁵ This research will instead focus upon Bloch and Freud's transvestite classification of Norman. The research strives to prove the notion that transsexualism

¹⁴ See Briggs 105.

¹⁵ See Clover 194 and Doty 155.

has remained unchanged and fails to be progressively defined throughout Norman's development. This section explores whether Norman is a true transvestite or continues to be a negative portrayal of transsexuals today.

One scene in the book provides the reader proof of Norman's potential transsexual identity – the climactic moment when Norman reveals himself fashioned in Mother's wardrobe. As Lila Crane explores the Bates' house in search of clues, she descends to the fruit cellar and finds Norma Bates' corpse with an "obscene greeting." A voice screams, "*I am Norma Bates!*" not from the body in front of Lila, but from behind where a "fat, shapeless figure, half-concealed by the tight dress" stands with a knife gripped in his hands. The figure also wears a "shrouding shawl" that hides Norman's face "white, painted, simpering" with "garishly reddened lips" (Bloch 163). This not only solves the mystery of Mary Crane's murderer, but further shows Norman's mental instability. While Bloch's description seems highly comedic with an overgrown "fat" man in a "tight dress," it portrays Norman with an urge to become his Mother. Norman uses her clothes as a costume piece to complete his performance and create a realistic appearance. This scene proves the idea that Norman does not cross-dress to fulfill his need to be a woman, but only satisfies his sense of urgency to become Mother. Norman does not limit his performance to costumes, but also accessorizes with a "shawl" and applies makeup. These beautifiers accentuate the existence of Mother in Norman's character and conceal him away. This is evident in Bloch's use of particular words like "half-concealed," "shrouding," and "painted." The affirmation Norman gives with "*I am Norma Bates*" explains the source of the voices encountered earlier in the novel and completes his act. This strong declaration and removal of the word "Mother" satisfy this section's definition of transvestism, as Norman takes on the identity of the Mother, and completely abandons his other personalities.

In Hitchcock's film adaptation, the image of a "fat, shapeless figure" disappears and adapts to Perkins' slimmer and taller physique. Not only does it make it easy for Perkins to transform into the Mother figure, but it also helps create an illusion of her physical existence. While the novel establishes the Mother's presence through sound and conversations with Norman, the film goes beyond dialogue and shows her physical form in a very creative yet concealed way. As Marion Crane makes her way through a tough storm, she comes across the motel. She immediately parks her car and runs inside the office but finds it unattended. She comes out of the office and looks at the fairly lit house across the motel. She sees a figure of "a WOMAN [sic] [who] passes the window, pauses, peers out [...] in clear silhouette. She quickly goes away from the window" (Stefano 34). Hitchcock shows the Mother figure wearing a dress and a wig. She walks gently with her two hands together by the stomach. In Stefano's screenplay for Hitchcock's film, the figure that passes by the window is designated as a "WOMAN."¹⁶

Besides Stefano's clear description of his screenplay, Hitchcock frames the scene in a way that encourages social distinctions of gender, to give an illusion that the character is indeed a woman. Hitchcock deceives the audience with the simple use of a wig. The wig that Norman wears and Perkins' slim body gives the silhouette shape and mimics that of a tall woman's contours. This is a small scene in the film but establishes the Mother's presence superbly. The idea of concealment in the film follows Bloch's novel, as her image is not fully revealed but only shown through her shape and silhouette. Her gentle movements and her stance show how Norman has learned to not only dress like Mother but act like her as well. It shows that Norman spends more time trying to be Mother.

¹⁶ Capitalization of a character's name is part of the formatting technique in screenwriting. It is used when introducing a new character.

This small scene Hitchcock adds to the story strives to build the mystery towards the end of the film. To further show difference and similarities in performance, the fruit cellar scene must be examined. This monumental moment in Hitchcock's film, while it follows the same narrative and plot of Bloch's novel, removes any type of concealment and fully exposes Norman's madness. Cinematographic elements of flickering lights and the horrific presence of the corpse show how Norman transitions into a completely different character. As it mirrors the same events of the novel, Lila horrifyingly discovers the corpse of the Mother in the cellar. The scene, engulfed with fear, illuminates the Mother's hallowed face. Lila screams and "is joined by another scream, a more dreadful, horrifying scream which comes from the door behind her." Norman's voice echoes "Ayyyyyyyyyyyy [sic] Am Norma Bates!" Norman comes into frame wearing a "wild wig, a mockery of a woman's hair. He is dressed in a high-neck dress which is similar to that worn by the corpse of his mother" (Stefano 120-21). The visual medium truly transforms Bloch's vision and makes it more perplexing than what seemed comedic especially with a visual representation of an actual corpse. Stefano exaggerates the line "*I am Norma Bates*" with "ayyyyyyyyy..." to heighten Norman's sense of insanity. The "wild wig" also encourages the idea of a deranged mentality. The similar dress that Norman and the corpse shares is an important detail added by Stefano and Hitchcock. This satisfies the definition of transvestism and shows that Hitchcock does not stray away but rather expands and reiterates the ideas of Bloch's novel and the definition of transvestism it established.

While Van Sant uses Stefano's same screenplay, there are particular differences that become less effective when Norman transforms into Mother. Vaughn's Norman does not give the same affirmations of "*I am Norma Bates*" which lessens his sense of transformation. Vaughn's performance of Mother appears less realistic as well, as his character projects to be

more perverted and sexually driven than his predecessors. The same plot happens in Van Sant's film but with particular aesthetic differences in the setting, character blocking, and script. First, the cellar appears spacious and shows a lavish collection of Norman's hobby of taxidermy that includes an aviary filled with birds. Secondly, when Norman enters the scene, the murderous smile and screams that Perkins included in his performance disappears. Moreover, the lines of "*I am Norma Bates*" is also removed from the script and instead replaced with a longer fight scene between Norman and Sam Loomis, Marion's supposed fiancé. This scene even allows Lila a chance to kick Norman's face and knock him unconscious. The new modern set may look cinematically beautiful, but it detaches the audiences away from the horror of the preserved corpse under the lamplight. Van Sant manages to retain certain aspects that Stefano and Hitchcock added in their film, such as Norman mirroring his Mother's sense of fashion. The blonde wig that Norman wears also has the same shade, shape, and volume that the Mother's corpse wears. However, Norman's acting as Mother, in comparison to Perkins, was highly unrealistic. Vaughn did not add any particular screams nor the murderous and insane grin; instead, the audience is given a more quiet, deadly, but less dramatic tone with Vaughn's version. While Stefano's script still pleads that Norman was a transvestite due to his need to become his mother, Van Sant's version of the fruit cellar scene does not complete Norman's transformation; instead, it increases the association between transvestism with the ideas of perversion and sexual violence.

According to Freudian theory, male transvestism is defined as an obsession with the mother while also being covetous and repulsed by femininity. John Philip writes in his book that the explanation at the finale of *Psycho* defends that Norman's cross-dressing behavior is not brought about by an "erotic thrill," but is done to keep the illusion of the Mother alive. He

comments that the film negatively portrays cross-dressing and associates itself with “castration, madness, murder, and monstrosity” (Philip 85). Philip builds upon two other critics’ commentaries¹⁷, which argue that the source of Norman’s maternal performance comes from the “transference of guilt.” Guilt relates to Norman’s matricide and his battle with his Oedipal complex. Philip combines Norman mimicking his Mother’s voice and the preservation of the mother’s body as foundations to his cross-dressing behavior. He argues that the voice and body mirror Norman’s later use of a dress and wig, saying that both these “incongruities and the horror they evoke are metonymically associated with transvestism and the phenomenon of transgender in general” (Philip 91). He states that the combination of several elements shows how Norman’s psyche is distorted. This critical analysis proves that the narrative’s justification of Norman’s transvestism negatively portrays transsexuals; however, what Philip pursues more in his arguments is the idea that Norman’s transsexual nature is brought about by the idea of mere guilt than affection for his Mother.

Other critics also share their opinion on the negative portrayal of transvestism, such as Julie Tharp who titles her own article “The Transvestite as Monster,” and compares and contrast Norman with another famous fictional serial killer – Thomas Harris’ Buffalo Bill from *Silence of the Lambs*. Tharp points out that one of the problems of Hitchcock’s film is that unlike Bloch’s novel, the film immediately denies that Norman is a transvestite and is dictated by definition, “a less than masculine ‘Mama’s boy’ who occasionally wears his mother’s clothes.” She then asserts that gender cannot be dismissed when understanding these two characters, and relies upon Freud’s theories and notions of “effeminacy.” Her essay is geared to understanding Buffalo Bill’s character by using Norman as its model. While Tharp fails to recognize that Ed Gein might

¹⁷ See Žižek & Chion.

have contributed to these two monsters' supposed transvestite identity, she relies more upon Freudian concepts such as the Oedipal complex and the transvestite definition of "expressing a desire to be one with his mother" (Tharp 113). However, she also argues that in order to fully understand these aspects, it is important to look into their gender dilemmas, questioning if Norman displays gender identity issues.

Tharp builds upon Daniel Harris' arguments on "effeminacy" and says, "that it is far easier for women to cross gender boundaries than for men. Whereas women are perceived to be exercising their assertiveness, men who behave in an effeminate manner are thought to be imitating women" (Tharp 110). Although Tharp fails to provide a balance between her analysis of Norman Bates and Buffalo Bill with "effeminacy," she presents this argument in conjunction with Freud's transvestite definitions. Being effeminate challenges the covetousness and repulsion with femininity that transvestites supposedly have according to stereotype. Norman's cross-dressing behavior, with his imitative efforts to be a woman through a performance of Mother, clashes with more natural women such as Marion and Lila Crane. Norman's effeminate manner manifests in the scene where he passes through the window at the beginning of the film, dressed in Mother's clothing. This, as discussed earlier, shows how he strives to imitate his Mother and become like her when he is alone. Tharp relies more on Norman's relationship with women as opposed to what Philip proposed as the "transference of guilt."

Marjorie Garber also criticizes *Psycho*'s definition of the transvestite as "dowdy or dated appearance of some transvestites." She disagrees with the narratives portrayal and argues that transvestites are not limited to dress like Mother, as they also desire "access to other arbiters [...]" to separate themselves from the notion that 'the mother' is somehow equal to 'woman.' The specter of 'the mother' is raised here so that it can be confronted, rather than mimicked or

parodied” (Garber 50). This argument appears more neutralized as compared to Philip or Tharp’s arguments; however, it provides another explanation of Norman’s transsexual nature. She explains that the reason is not the “transference of guilt” nor ideas of “effeminacy” but cross-dressing becomes Norman’s way of confronting his Mother. This corresponds with Philip’s argument, which says that Norman’s cross-dressing is his way to cope for his crime of matricide. Philip and Garber further agree that *Psycho* “marks transsexualism as a site of cultural anxiety [...] that it manifest itself in psychosis” (Garber 115). These three scholars prove that the development of Norman Bates as Mother has failed to improve the definition of transsexuals and transvestism; instead, it complicates the idea even further. What these three scholars further agree on is the idea that Norman’s transsexualism is not dictated by desires of the body, but of the mind.

In these interpretations of *Psycho*, the audience and readers find Norman Bates character at his prime of cross-dressing. However, in the newest adaptation, audiences have been deprived of this particular aspect of his character. The *Bates Motel* series does not show any of the cross-dressing elements in first two seasons and only gives a glimpse through the “Norma Louise” episode in season three. This episode gives the audience its first encounter of Norman becoming his Mother after Norma abandons Norman behind. In this episode, Norma leaves to find Dylan’s father. This is the first time that Norma has ever purposefully left Norman. Her absence causes Norman to have separation anxiety – screaming, shouting, and becoming excessively violent. As he calms down, he tells his brother, “I feel strange, like I’m outside my body.” As the episode goes forward, Norman begins to have delusions of reanimated dead animals. This longing for his mother and the strangeness of his character fully materializes as Norman cooks breakfast in Norma’s gown. Dylan comes into the kitchen and Norman tells him “Sit down honey. I’m just

making some breakfast, French toast!” Dylan asks, “Norman?” Norman responds, “Norman’s sleeping.” The series succeeds brilliantly in expanding many elements of Norman’s childhood and the origins of his maternal performance that question both his sanity and identity. It parallels the books and the films, such that all these happen the moment the Mother figure disappears. This pattern agrees with Philip’s argument of “transference of guilt” as Norman himself caused Norma’s absence. The way Norman cooks breakfast and his response to Dylan show how he has shifted character. He has very fluid movements in the scene that truly capture’s Norma’s demeanor and behavior. Showcasing this important aspect through an exchange of dialogue with Dylan aims to give the scene authenticity, as Norman can no longer be considered sane. Dylan serves as a symbol of reality and a counterpoint to Norman’s delusion that he is Mother. The line “Norman’s sleeping” can also connote to the fact that Norman has successfully hid that aspect of his character safe behind the Mother’s image. The fact that his cross-dressing scene is preceded by his violence, delusions, and blanking out, shows that Norman no longer has a sense of reality and that the boundaries of the real and the imagined are distorted and blurred.

Despite this evidence, clear contradictions exist and challenge Norman’s transvestite nature, considering that he has no physical desire to be a woman and continually lusts for them. Many critics who have commented on this trope agree that the portrayal is highly negative and damaging to the image of the transvestite. However, it should be noted that an explanation does exist and relates well with Norman’s disturbed childhood. It is easy to justify that Norman’s cross-dressing is attributed to his idea that womanhood does not equate to motherhood. However, referring back to Philip’s argument about the “transference of guilt,” he also offers another option, which he refers to as the *Phallic Mother*. Philip explains that Norman depicts another psychoanalytic theory, the castration anxiety derived from Freud and Carl Jung. The

theory argues that Norman's undying obedience auto castrates himself unconsciously. The mother then takes place and acts as the dominant phallic symbol in his life, reflective of the vertical imagery in the movie such as the house, the mother's stance on the window, as well as the murderous kitchen knife and razor. While this argument challenges other critic's stance, the *Psycho* narrative does agree with it as well. It gives Norman Bates a very misogynistic characteristic that might explain the negative portrayal of both women and transvestites. What Philip argues is that Norman consistently searches for the phallic symbol either through the verticality of the house or the knife; but ultimately finds it in Mother's persona. The cross-dressing can then be argued as not a ploy to find sexual pleasure, but a way to preserve the phallic symbol and gain power and omnipotence.

Norman Bates' cross-dressing behavior is a crucial factor to his character that has carried forward in all interpretations. Each rendition not only builds on how they define transvestism but also expands it through Freudian concepts, ideas of "effeminacy," and distinction between the real and the imagined. While all forms try to justify why Norman cross-dresses, they also each give a glimpse as to how society deals with the idea of transvestites. *Psycho* remains as a negative depiction of transsexuals gravely associated with murder and monstrosity. These portrayals, noted by critics like Tharp, Garber, and Philip, are part of the social anxiety against transvestism. They successfully connect and argue that the public fears that *Psycho* portrays can be attributed to Norman's transsexual nature, as it blurs his sense of reality and also heightens his sense of violence and monstrosity.

Chapter III: The Adult

Normal Norman

The Norman trinity, as presented by Dr. Steiner, remains incomplete without the existence of the third personality – the adult Norman. While it appears to be an insignificant personality in Norman’s head, it holds an important role of balance and suppression. The novel explicitly shows the existence of this third personality and gives distinction between the child and the adult through Norman’s conversations with other people. The reason why it is easy to distinguish the child and the mother is because these two personalities only exist within their own exchange of dialogue. Despite this, the films and the television series combine Norman’s performance of child and adult together, which somewhat conceal and buries the adult underneath the more obvious “Mamma’s boy” identity. This section uncovers the adult personality by comparing it with the previous personalities discussed, while exploring the presence of adult themes within the narrative such as his interests, vices, and desires. Norman’s adult development shows that normal does not necessarily equate to good moral behavior. Norman experiments with various types of vices throughout the different adaptations and become a prominent aspect of his personality.

The book provides extensive evidence of this third identity. Dr. Steiner of Bloch’s novel identifies this personality with the role of mediator between the child and mother identities. Dr. Steiner completes his idea of the “unholy trinity” with what he referred to as *Normal*, the adult Norman Bates. Dr. Steiner explains that the adult “had to go through the daily routine of living, and conceal the existence of the other personalities from the world.” While the child Norman and Mother carried regular conversations with each other, the adult had to “rationalize the situation” (Bloch 170-71). Dr. Steiner’s analysis gives the idea that *Normal* Norman was never part of the

mother-child conversations but acted as a third person whose only role was to “rationalize” and assess their situation. This is an important factor in his personality, for he has the ability to dictate a plan of action after the murders have been committed. The third personality neither acts as the voice of reason nor Norman’s moral compass, but rather serves to sustain their survival. He not only controls the two opposing characters in his head, but also responsible for prolonging his act of sanity through the “daily routines of living.” Dr. Steiner’s explanation reveals that the existence of the third personality is vital to keep all of the other personalities alive. If the mother’s role was there to protect her son, *Normal* Norman’s function was to protect and preserve the entire trinity.

Hitchcock limits Norman’s three personalities to two, Norman and Mother, where Norman becomes the combination of both child and adult. In the final scenes of the film, the psychiatrist explains that there are only two personalities that Norman possesses. Simon argues that, “Norman Bates no longer exists. He only half-existed to begin with... now, the other half has taken over” (Stefano 124). Simon’s explanation does not provide the same in-depth analysis that Dr. Steiner gave through his speech. He does not expand on the roles of each personality but only sees Norman as a dichotomy of two different personas. It shows that Norman is both a combination of his childhood and adulthood, wherein the boundaries are set only through his behavior. Considering that Hitchcock casts Anthony Perkins as Norman makes it clear that the film aimed to feature a younger aspect of his character, and to magnify the role of the son. Despite the recognition of only two personalities, there are certain evidences that prove that the film actually depicts three personalities.

In order to distinguish adult from child, it is imperative to study Norman’s “daily routine of living.” One of the key elements that define the adult *Normal* Norman is through the presence

of vice that have proved vital to the portrayal and authentication of the Norman Bates character. One of the main themes in the novel that does not attempt to explain Norman's distorted mentality but successfully shows his adult side is alcoholism. Norman hides liquor bottles in the motel that he occasionally uses to "calm down" his nerves. As he hears Mary preparing for bed in the room across his office, he slugs down drinks in an effort to relax. However, his excitement gets the best of him, and he finds himself looking through a little hole in the wall that features a view of the bathroom where Mary undresses. He finds it hard to focus as he stared through the hole, feeling "hot and dizzy, hot and dizzy. Part of it was due to the drink, part to the excitement, But most of it was due to her" (Bloch 47). Norman shows multiple contradictions to his personality during this scene. It contradicts the fact that Norman denied Mary a drink in an earlier scene, as he reasoned that his Mother prohibited such actions. Another contradiction relates with the alcohol, which does not act as a suppressant but as a stimulant. Norman's rebelliousness and inclination to alcohol does not necessarily show maturity, but an impression of adult behavior. The effects of alcohol on Norman's character fails to relax his excitement; rather, it gives him confidence to spy and mentally prey upon Mary – a seeming source of sexual satisfaction. Norman's passion for intimacy, fueled by this abuse of substance, becomes the cause of his black outs. During these times, he transforms into the murderous Mother and kills Mary in the infamous shower scene. This is one of the main character flaws of Norman through Bloch's novel. The addition of alcohol impairs Norman's sense of judgment and fails to restrain the other characters in his head. This reason proves why Norman's adult persona is hard to distinguish, because it is weak, vulnerable to temptation and seduction, and immature in his level of thinking and judgment. Alcoholism is absent in succeeding interpretations and no longer affects Norman's thoughts. The film strives to focus more on Norman's mental state. Norman's

sobriety in the films and the television series does, however, accent that he does have a more dangerous mind than what the book implies.

While Stefano and Hitchcock decide to drop alcoholism, the trope of voyeurism and pornography becomes one of the primary themes of the narrative. Norman as a “peeping tom” has remained consistent throughout the different interpretations that show his sense of perversion and sexual curiosity. Hitchcock still follows Bloch’s same plot in the book where Norman spies on Marion, but removes the alcohol element completely. Instead, what the scene gives the audience is a sense of perverted satisfaction through what Stefano described as Norman’s “mystified look.” As Norman follows the sound of Marion’s footsteps in the room next door, he slowly surrenders to his impulses and lifts the painting off the wall and reveals a gaping hole. Norman’s full profile fills the screen as he peeps through. Through Norman’s perspective, the audience intensely watches “Mary undressing.” The scene then shifts to an extreme close up of Norman’s eye, which “run up and down the unseen figure of Mary” (Stefano 49). While this scene appears similar to the book, there are a lot of notable differences. The “mystified look” can be interpreted with sexual implications. The film does succeed with the transference of perspective that helps showcase the idea of voyeurism and pornography. In the book, the readers are buried deep into Norman’s mentality, and can only perceive the scene through his descriptions. The film removes Norman’s internal thoughts and only gives the audience one eye running “up and down” on a figure. The audience does not only see Norman but becomes Norman’s eye. The audience adopts Norman’s highly sexualized gaze. Critics have noted the genius of Hitchcock’s cinematography such that it serves as a “masterful use of cinema’s essential voyeurism” (Griffith 76). James Griffith attempts to understand the voyeuristic implications of this scene and asks whether the transference of perspective exists. He brings up

several other critics such as William Rothman who argues that not only does the scene show voyeuristic elements, but also deprives the audience of certain images such as “viewing Marion naked [...] the fantasy of which is rape” (Rothman 304). Norman’s adult personality in Hitchcock’s film is so well-hidden by Perkin’s charming performance that it baffles audiences when they discover he is already perverted and stained. The idea of “fantasy” that Rothman suggests, shows how Norman already has developed sexual interests and urges that imply a sense of sexual maturity. This scene not only further corrupts Norman, but it also adulterates how the audience perceives him.

If Norman continues to follow the Freudian concepts, his reactions to the naked Marion would not follow what Griffith and Rothman suggested. Gertrud Koch’s essay brings up the theory of the missing phallus but does not use it to argue Norman’s transvestite identity; rather, he uses the theory as an alternative explanation for Norman’s inclination to pornography. Norman’s curiosity about Marion’s nakedness can be explained through Freud’s castration complex. Koch expands on Freud’s theory and says that the castration complex is a fear that develops through a male child’s first encounter with the woman’s sex organ, which provokes the child to think whether the woman was castrated or is hiding a penis. These ideas “give rise to the persistent voyeuristic mania to look at the female organ [...] in order to uncover the secret of the missing penis.” She further explains that this may play a significant role in the adult male as it provides “phallic omnipotence” and the anxieties of castration can be “compensated by an appeasing display of erections and potency.” (Koch 160). Bloch’s novel presents Norman as being impotent. Hitchcock’s film on the other hand, does not necessarily state Norman’s sexual inability, but shows it through Norman’s reaction of “anger and anguish” after peeping through the hole (Stefano 49). If Stefano and Hitchcock truly followed Bloch’s novel, then perhaps

Norman's reactions would reflect these same ideas of impotency. Norman suffers from an Oedipal complex marred by anxieties of castration. The "fantasy of rape" that Rothman and Griffith discuss may never take place and frustrate Norman. This would also prove Koch's argument that Norman craves for phallic dominance. Despite the presence of sexual curiosity and fantasy, Norman's inability to have an erection disables him to fulfill his sexual needs. This explains why Norman's adult character cannot hold dominance over the other personalities.

Van Sant's film adds another element that shows Norman's sense of adulthood. Vaughn's performance adds physical satisfaction to the "peeping tom" that strips away the child-like aspects of Norman's character, and transforms the voyeuristic attitudes in Hitchcock's film as pornographic. In the exact same scene in Van Sant's film, Vaughn's performance of Norman remains to have the "mystified look." While it does not give the same sense of curiosity that Perkins shows, Vaughn's smile appears more perverted. The same plot elements of adapting the male gaze and following the eye that "runs up and down" remains. Once the scene shifts back to a better view of Norman, the sound of a zipper being unzipped becomes audible and Norman begins to masturbate to the images he sees beyond the wall. The addition of physical stimulation questions and challenges Norman's impotency while continually displaying a more developed sense of sexual maturity. It shows that Norman knows how to sexually satisfy himself. He is not just a mere onlooker, but delves more into the idea of sexual fantasy. This shows that Norman has the ability to imagine and fantasize a sexual desire. This provides a significant shift in Norman's character as it no longer limited to curiosity, but now enters the realm of pornography and sexual possibility.

F.M. Christensen, on the other hand, provides correlations between violence and pornography. According to his study, there are some accounts that state some convicted rapist

use pornography as a “backup; they masturbate with if they cannot easily find a victim” (Christensen 128). This may be more appropriate for Bloch and Hitchcock’s Norman who has no substitute to alleviate sexual urges due to his impotency, but it does not address the case with Vaughn’s performance. Further on in Christensen’s book, he addresses the idea that violence may come from sexual guilt. He uses arguments by psychologist Hans J. Eysenck and Glenn D. Wilson who argue that “many of these individuals seem to have high libido but regard sex as ‘dirty’ and unacceptable, and their ghastly crimes seem to be some kind of function of this conflict” (Christensen 152). The idea of sexual guilt perhaps best fit Norman in many of the interpretations including the book and the television series. This minor addition in Vaughn’s performance shows the power of carnal desire in Norman’s character that satisfies and destroys him because of the guilt he feels. Vaughn, in comparison to Perkins, captures Norman’s adulthood more and arguable comes closer to what Bloch may have intended in the book.

While the interpretations remain inconsistent with Norman’s vices, they all agree that he desires sexual gratification but ironically fears intimacy. In Bloch’s novel, during his conversation with Mary Crane in the kitchen, they talk about transferring Mother to a madhouse. Mary immediately apologizes for her suggestion as Norman becomes defensive. As Norman assists her with her coat, Mary becomes irritated at Norman’s clumsiness, and realizes that “he was afraid to touch her [...]. The poor guy was actually afraid to get near a woman!” (Bloch 37). The novel remains unclear as to why Norman fears this type of contact, but it does remain inconsistent Norman’s perverted actions. The fact that this fear of close human contact can only be solved through the idea of murder is highly ironic. This fear, brought about by his sense of isolation, may have developed through his Mother’s death or perhaps through his abusive childhood. However, while these reasons may factor in, it seems apparent that this fear mainly

comes from his self-awareness of his impotency that does not allow him to truly satisfy his sexual needs.

This touch may not be present in the films, but Norman's encounter with Marion Crane in Hitchcock's film show how Norman also avoids intimacy. As Marion settled in the room, attempting to hide the stolen money, he hears Mother and Norman shouting at each other from the open window. Norman comes out of the house carrying a tray of food. Marion invites him inside the room, where the bed is fairly visible. Norman steps forward then slowly retract back appearing slightly embarrassed for his actions. He then suggests "it might be nicer and warmer in the office." Hitchcock's inclusion of the bedroom with the bed visible in the frame adds a sexual touch to Marion's invite. The scene is very subtle to suggest Norman's fear of intimacy; however, the action that Perkins does of stepping forward and stepping immediately backward shows a shift in his character, that while the desire exists, there are also factors that hold him back. Stefano's screenplay describes that the hesitation to enter the room come from Norman's own thoughts of "a total picture of an attractive woman and a hotel room," and that he has already reached the limit of "defiance" with his Mother for the day (Stefano 40). This scene shows how Norman's multiple personalities also struggle with each other. Both the child and adult Norman share fear of intimacy; however, while one avoids "defiance," the other avoids sexual contact and intimacy.

The setting of Norman and Ms. Crane's conversation differs from the book with the film. Moving away from the kitchen into the office is one of Hitchcock's cinematic moves, that also reflects Norman's mentality and adulthood. As discussed in the section prior, Slavoj Žižek argues that the three personalities of human subjectivity in Norman's psychology also correspond to the three areas of the house. Paralleled with Freudian concepts, he asserts that the

ground floor (where the kitchen is also located) reflects Norman's ego related to *Normal*. As he places the Mother and the top floor as the super ego, he explains that, "ground floor is ego. Norman behaves there as the normal son, whatever remains of his normal ego taking over." The similarities that Žižek points out may seem farfetched but it does provide reasons why Norman avoids inviting other people upstairs or halts other characters such as Arbogast, the private investigator, from exploring any part of the house besides the ground floor¹⁸. This corresponds well with Bloch's novel as his invite to the kitchen shows how this place provides a comfortable space where Norman can act normal, be nutritionally sustained, and continue his daily tasks. If this is the case, then it can be assumed that Hitchcock's migration of this scene outside of the house and into the office is a ploy to remove Norman away from the entrapments of his own psychic agencies.

Bates Motel does not rely on masturbation or alcoholism to reveal corruption in Norman's normal mind, instead it attempts to explore intimacy openly. The series does not truly exhibit Norman's adulthood as it portrays him as a teenager. However, it does provide where his sexual maturity and interests come from. Although the series attempts to truly capture a lot of Norman's qualities as established by the book and the films, there are a lot of changes that take place, particularly his approach to intimacy. The series does show a bit of hesitation with skin contact during the first episode of season one when his teacher, Miss Watson, touches his hand. This becomes highly challenged the moment Norman copulates with another character, Bradley Martin in the "Ocean View" episode. As Norman leaves, he leans down on Bradley's naked figure and reaches out to caress her hair. Ironically, however, he pretends to touch her and puts a huge distance between her head and his hand. Norman leaves fairly satisfied until he finds out

¹⁸ See Žižek.

that his Mother is in jail. The series may appear to break away from tradition, but it does provide justification for its changes. While he explores his sexuality through fornication, the idea of touch remains an issue. The series succeeds in giving Norman a sense of maturity through this sexual encounter; however, these satisfactions are always cut short as it happens coincidentally with misfortune for his Mother.

This instance is similar to what happens in the first episode when Norman sneaks out of the house to a party with Bradley. When Norman arrives home, he finds his Mother raped and tied on the kitchen table. This correlation becomes embedded in Norman's association with intimacy as it only leads to misfortune and jeopardizes his relationship with Mother. The series also distorts his idea of intimacy. These become highly evident when Bradley admits to Norman that their sexual escapade should never have happened and suggested that it was a mistake. She exclaims to "just forget it." Upon this request, Norman leaves the school, only hindered by Miss Watson convinces him to stay. In an attempt to grab his hand, Norman becomes repulsed by her touch and throws her hand away. This significant shift is vital to the narrative of the series as it justifies the realities of the original narrative and makes the audience understand where Norman's hesitation from human contact comes from. The audience realizes that some part of Norman's transvestite aspirations are due to this repulsion of intimacy, as he does them without any sexual implications, but only fulfills and completes an illusion in his life. As he equates his own intimacy with all these misfortunes, it creates a barrier that eventually becomes destructive and violent.

Besides the vices that change from one interpretation to another and the strong suggestions of pornography, Norman indulges himself with one type of hobby – taxidermy. Taxidermy may appear to relate more with his interest of occultism in the book, but it can also

relate to Norman's sense of sexual intimacy. Taxidermy is one part of Norman that has remained consistent in all interpretations. It is present well in the book and the films, and the series does well in introducing this trope through the loss of his dog. Bloch's book suggests that this hobby shows his connections with the dead, as he uses this technique to bring his Mother's corpse back to life. However, in Hitchcock and Van Sant's films, taxidermy serves to show a sense of intimacy. As he tells Marion Crane that she eats like a bird, and explains his hobby, he caresses the stuffed bird next to him. He explains that stuffed birds are the only animals that are aesthetically pleasing. He is indifferent with those who decide to immortalize the bodies of cats or dogs. The reason for Norman's receptiveness to stuff birds is because "they're rather passive to begin with... most of them" (Stefano 42). Hitchcock and Stefano definitely play a lot more with this trope than Bloch did in his novel. It can even be argued that Van Sant's film is a form of taxidermy, as it attempts to relive Hitchcock's glorious and successful film. However, what these two films actually deliver is how Norman forms a stronger connection with the action of stuffing of birds with his victim, whose last name, "Crane," is also a type of bird. The goal of this scene attempts to show a contrast to his sense of intimacy. While he avoids any sort of touch by Marion and hesitated to enter the room, Norman has no problem at all caressing the birds. The fact that he also calls them "passive" further shows his need to be dominant. The series on the other hand shows the audience where Norman adapts this type of hobby. Emma's father is Norman's source and inspiration to begin his interest with taxidermy. Emma's father describes Norman to be "relaxed" when he practices his hobby of taxidermy. It is after season two, however, that Norman fully embraces the hobby and moves it to the basement of his house. These show how Norman has developed comfort only through the presence of dead animals and that he does not have a problem with handling the dead, explaining the horrors he must endure to

resurrect his Mother. It can then be argued that Norman's relationship with taxidermy is beyond hobby and is an attempt to escape death. It reveals part of Norman's fear of death, such that he creates an illusion that he is never alone, always surrounded by those he resurrected.

Critics stress that Norman Bates' relation with taxidermy surpasses that of a hobby and explains it as his source of sexual intimacy. Julie Tharp argues that this interest may be more connected with his idea of pornography. Further arguments presented by Tharp, she argues that taxidermy is a form of pornography. She borrows ideas by Susan Griffin who writes in her essay that the pornographic mind opposes itself "in violence to the natural, and takes revenge on nature" (Griffin 2). Griffin's argument relates well with Norman's obsession with stuffing birds and finds it a violence to the "natural integrity of the animal." Tharp agrees and says that "Norman should have deadened his mother's living, feeling flesh and, further, preserve it in that state becomes the ultimate anti-erotic, pornographic statement, particularly because the mother is the source of *his* living flesh" (Tharp 110). Tharp's arguments expand more on Norman's hobby and suggest that pornography extends well into his personality. Griffin and Tharp's arguments show that the art of taxidermy and the violence of nature it entails, relate directly to pornography. The act of reanimating his mother defies the laws of nature. However, one can argue that what Tharp says as anti-erotic is actually the complete opposite. It is important to note that Norman has a weird relation with the human touch. Of course it can be safely assumed, considering his very close relationship with his Mother, that besides her, Norman never attempted to seek anybody else's touch. Norman's taxidermy performance to his Mother's body also functions as a very sensual moment wherein his own bare hands can work with the deadened skin and feel the intimacy he has been longing for. It may suggest necrophilia, which is perhaps a more grotesque and more obscene suggestion for this matter. However, it remains that his interest in stuffing

animals not only becomes reflective of his relationship with his mother but of his corrupted adult mind as well.

All these different vices attempt to recreate Norman Bates' character; however, what it does is show his level of maturity. Despite the film's argument that Norman only has two personalities, this section has proved the existence of three personas by studying the boundaries of childhood and adulthood. The boundaries that are laid out by these evidences relate to the idea that childhood is dictated by innocence, while adulthood is governed by corruption and how to deal with such thoughts. Norman's vices and interest not only show how complex his character is, but also make him a fairly intelligent character. His inclination to vices and pornography can be easily argued as his rebellious response to suppression and abuse, but it can also be seen as a level of self-awareness wherein he seeks to pleasure himself. However, what Dr. Steiner failed to truly understand is that through these different developments, adulthood does not necessarily equate to normality. However, in the confines of the motel and the house, the adult Norman is defined as *Normal* because of how it deals with all of his other facets and tasks of daily living. What *Normal* Norman provides are alternatives to Norman's violent nature, that argues perhaps that Norman is not a product of maternity, but of modernity itself (Janicker 247-48). He is aware of his existence and the existence of the three other personae, which reside in his mind. When he expresses to Marion in the office parlor that "we all go a little mad sometimes" he in fact refers to himself. The level of thinking, self-awareness, and the curiosity he shows is not a trope that is brought about by the mother or the child, but *Normal* Norman himself. The illusion of the adult personality may seem harmless, but *Normal* reveals itself as Norman's most dangerous personas. The danger relies on the idea that Norman is conscious and that he can easily maneuver amongst society, undetected and ignored.

Conclusion

This research provides extensive evidences that Norman's behavior still follows Bloch's idea of the "unholy trinity," displaying aspects of the son, the Mother, and *Normal* adult Norman. The trend strives to make Norman's character younger both in physical form and attitude. Norman has significantly regressed in age beginning from Bloch's 40-year-old Norman to the awkward teenager in the *Bates Motel*. This trend can be attributed to a curiosity of Norman's past and childhood. The films and the television series delve into the concept of the Oedipal complex in hopes to uncover answers Norman's behavior. The series alone offers major reinforcements and challenges to Freud's concept as they have given Mother a physical body and form and can explicitly show each other's intimacy. The study of Norman's childhood does not necessarily follow Freud's theory, but it is Norman's character who expresses and challenges these concepts. Norman acts as a hyperbolic version of Freud's controversial stance on human sexuality.

The study of Norman's portrayal of Mother provides its own sets of challenges which attempt to expose Norman's sexuality. It questions whether he qualifies to be a transvestite with desires to become a woman with multiple interpretations reveals that Norman does not equate womanhood with motherhood. Norman does not consider his portrayal of the Mother as an effeminate action but rather relates his transformation to the idea of power dynamics, shifting his character from submissive to the dominant personalities. Philip's argument of the *Phallic Mother* provides answers to Norman's practice of cross-dressing having no sexual gratification or desire for sexual reassignment. In all interpretations, Norman displays interest and lust towards women. However, his violence against them is driven by guilt and an underlying need to exude male dominance. Norman exhibits elements of transvestism, yet he does not qualify as a transvestite

based on Freud's definitions or current constructs of transvestites and transsexuals. Norman is better portrayed as a misogynistic character that deifies his Mother as a strong and dominant phallic symbol.

Norman's adult *Normal* persona reveals throughout his character's development that the constructs of normality changes. Concepts that demarcate Norman as an adult refer to vices and hobbies that are considered odd and taboo even by society's standards. The themes of voyeurism in the *Psycho* narrative remain prominent and address taboo topics that disturb audiences, readers, and critics alike, such as fetishism, pornography, and taxidermy. These vices expand in each interpretation and strive to explore whether they factor into Norman's psychology and his violent psychopathic nature. For instance, alcohol, a key theme in the novel, had been removed from the films and the television series, eliminating alternative reasons for Norman's behavior. The films and the series instead focus more on ideas of pornography, voyeurism and the sexual urges that Norman has. While it remains unclear in the films, Norman's inability to truly portray intimacy is perhaps due to Bloch's concept of Norman being impotent. These adult behaviors function as a vehicle that drives society to relate to Norman's character. While he watches and peers through the hole to spy on his victims, the audience becomes his own voyeur, watching his every move. The audience witnesses Norman's ways to violate other people's privacy, thus the audiences also commit their own violation by sympathizing and creating a hero out of Norman Bates. The development of his character reveals that while some aspect of his corrupt adult character may portray him as flawed, it also victimizes him, demanding the audience's sympathy.

Norman's multi-faceted character creates an emotionally charged narrative in terms of his split personalities. These qualities define him as a psychopath. Norman gives audiences, readers,

and critics moments that reveal Norman's method of inflicting fear; however, they all fail to realize that Norman himself experiences these terrors as well. Norman is both the monster and victim of his own story. His developing character and continued legacy of the *Psycho* tradition are living testaments to Bloch's original intention (after he learned about Ed Gein). The development of Norman Bates is in agreement with the idea that the fear of psychopaths lies not in what they can violently do, but how they can live quietly in and act socially acceptable in normal communities. Bloch, through 60 years worth of different interpretations and expansion of the *Psycho*-verse, correctly predicted that fear does not lie in the images of the masked and distorted, but resides within every person's mind. Norman proves that his insanity is not limited to one, but is accessible and possessed by all. Norman disturbingly imposes that "we all go a little mad sometimes," and it is this unknown capability of the human mind that truly frightens society.

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