

We Still Need to Talk About Norman: The Contemporary Gothic in *Bates Motel*

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Resumo: Estrelada por Vera Farmiga (Norma Bates) e Freddie Highmore (Norman Bates), *Bates Motel* estreou em 2013 como uma série de TV derivada de *Psicose* (Robert Bloch, 1959; Alfred Hitchcock, 1960). A proposta é construir uma *prequel* contemporânea para a história, que promete mostrar um retrato de Norman Bates durante sua adolescência, revelando a complexa relação entre ele e sua mãe. Alguns elementos góticos são trazidos de volta pela série, como a casa abandonada; sombras projetadas; ações que se passam à noite; a prática da taxidermia; a questão do duplo, do estranho e da paranoia. Assim, o objetivo deste trabalho é observar como *Bates Motel* revive e expande a história original, sobretudo em se tratando do gótico contemporâneo, no qual temos a retórica da psicanálise como um tema bastante explícito na narrativa, e não apenas como ferramenta para a análise do texto. Dentro dessa perspectiva, registra-se a impossibilidade de harmonia familiar, assunto crucial na série, visto que cada relação esconde algum tipo de problema. Ainda, tem-se a mãe monstruosa, figura ambígua, que extravasa o seu amor descomedido, ciúme e superproteção; bem como o herói patológico, figura introspectiva, que oculta sua monstruosidade. Reviver essa história, portanto, não apenas nos permite recordar uma narrativa perturbadora, mas também experimentar algo novo, visto que esse é o propósito da ficção derivativa: criar uma nova trama a partir daquela já conhecida pelo público.

Palavras-chave: ficção derivativa, *Bates Motel*, gótico contemporâneo, mãe monstruosa, herói patológico.

A glimpse into the world proves that horror is nothing other than reality.
(Alfred Hitchcock)

Reviving *Psycho*... Once More

Psycho was published in 1959 by writer Robert Bloch, who was born in Chicago, United States, in 1917. His first novel, *The Scarf*, had been published in the 1940s, and then he became a prolific and well-known writer of horror stories. Nevertheless, *Psycho* is his most renowned story and it was inspired by the actions of a real murderer and body snatcher from Wisconsin, Edward “Ed” Gein, who inspired other cinematic villains, such as Jame “Buffalo Bill” Gumb in *The Silence of the Lambs* (1991). The book opens with the figure of Norman Bates, a man in his forties, living with his mother and managing a motel near their house. Then we are introduced to Mary Crane, a young woman who steals 40 million dollars from her employer. On the way to the town where her boyfriend lives, she stops at the motel and meets its eccentric owner, Norman Bates. After a conversation with the man during dinner, she decides to give the money back in order to redeem herself. However, when the reader is convinced that everything will be just fine, the story undergoes a twist and plunges into murder and irrationality, since Mary is killed while taking a shower. The short-lived moment of redemption is therefore interrupted forever, and the story turns to focus on Norman all over again.

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Based on Bloch's story, Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* was released a year after, starring Janet Leigh as Marion Crane and Anthony Perkins as Norman Bates. In fact, it was through the performance of Perkins in the film adaptation that the character Norman Bates became immortalized. Even though critics were hesitant when the movie first came out, it was an immediate success and was nominated for four Academy Awards: best supporting actress, best cinematography, best art direction, and best director. Unlike the book, the film opens with the girl (*Marion Crane* now), a Hitchcock strategy to divert the public attention from the central story. When we find out that the woman is only a supporting character, we are forced to take a new perspective once the seeming protagonist is discarded. In addition, there have been three sequels to *Psycho*, although neither of them has been directed by Hitchcock and neither is related to the sequences of Bloch's work: *Psycho II* (1983), *Psycho III* (1986), and the made-for-TV *Psycho IV: The Beginning* (1990). Anthony Perkins returned to his role of Norman Bates in all three sequels and directed one of them. In general, they were well received by critics, but considered inferior to the original movie.

The revivals, however, did not stop with the 1990 film. A remake of *Psycho* was released in 1998 by director Gus Van Sant, starring Vince Vaughn and Anne Heche in the most prominent roles. This version though received mostly negative reviews by critics and public. Furthermore, *Hitchcock* was released in 2012, a biographical film about the making of *Psycho* (based on a non-fiction book), directed by Sacha Gervasi, with Anthony Hopkins in the leading role. More recently still, *Bates Motel* came out, a derivative 2013 TV series¹ – produced by Universal Television for A&E Network – which reboots the story in the present day, starring Freddie Highmore as Norman Bates and Vera Farmiga as his mother. The TV series works as a contemporary prequel to *Psycho* (1960) and “promises to give viewers an intimate portrayal of how Norman Bates' psyche unravels through his teenage years”. Besides, “fans will have access to the dark, twisted backstory and learn first hand just how deeply intricate his relationship with his mother, Norma, truly is and how she helped forge the most famous serial killer of them all” (*Bates Motel* – Episodes, Video & Schedule – A&E Website diffusion).

The first season of the series was released with ten episodes, with its premiere on March 18, 2013. Following strong ratings and favorable reviews, a second season was already confirmed for 2014, probably also around ten episodes. Depicting the life of Norman Bates and his mother prior to the events portrayed in Hitchcock's film – although in a different fictional town, Oregon's White Pine Bay rather than the previous California's Fairvale –, *Bates Motel* offers a remodeled story in a 21st century setting, unlike Hitchcock's tale that takes place in the 1960s. *Psycho IV: The Beginning* (1990) had already given us some clues of what might have happened in the past, during Norman's youth, but *Bates Motel* expands much more this possibility of constructing a prelude for one of the most famous thrillers of all time. The story begins after the death of Norma's husband, when she purchases an old house and a motel located in a coastal Oregon town, where she can start a brand new life with her 17 year-old son. Norman Bates (Freddie Highmore) is a shy and smart boy intensely closed to his mother. At the very beginning, he is resistant to starting over in a new place, but changes his mind when he makes some friends at school. Norma Louise Bates (Vera Farmiga) is the resilient, intelligent, and beautiful widow, who is emotionally intricate and utterly devoted to her son. Apparently, they are a lovely family with a normal relationship.

Naturally, other characters appear throughout the narrative, such as Bradley Martin (Nicola Peltz), a beautiful and popular 17 year-old girl who befriends Norman. She is Norman's first love, but then gets somewhat involved with Dylan. Dylan Massett (Max Thieriot) is Norman's half-brother, son by Norma's first marriage. They have a troubled relationship, since he is the outsider who tries to save Norman from their suffocating mother. Norma, indeed, does not like it when he suddenly appears on the doorstep asking for shelter. Then we have the friendly Emma Decody (Olivia Cooke), a peculiar and clever girl who has

¹ Curiously, back in the 1980s, there was a television movie, spin-off of *Psycho* (1960), also entitled *Bates Motel*. It was originally produced as a pilot for a TV series, but the project failed.

cystic fibrosis. She gets an almost immediate crush on Norman and is always showing up on his house. Another character is Zack Shelby (Mike Vogel), the young and handsome deputy of the town. He feels attracted to Norma and finds himself immediately drawn into her life. But he hides suspicious business. The sheriff and the moral center of the town is Alex Romero (Nestor Carbonell), who also gets involved in Norma's life after an incident at the motel. He has secrets too. Lastly, among the most significant characters so far, we have Miss Watson (Keegan Connor Tracy), the compassionate teacher at Norman's high school. She is the first to perceive that Norman may have some deep emotional issues that are going unnoticed. Conveniently enough, the season finale ends up with her death.

Recognizable Gothic Elements

As Catherine Spooner (2006, p. 8) points out, "like a malevolent virus, Gothic narratives have escaped the confines of literature and spread across disciplinary boundaries to infect all kinds of media, from fashion and advertising to the way contemporary events are constructed in mass culture". For sure, one of these media is the cinema, in which the Gothic theme is recurrent. According to Misha Kavka (2002, p. 210), "Gothic film brings a set of recognizable elements based in distinct *visual codes*. Such codes constitute the language, or the sign system, of the Gothic film". Some examples are the ruined castle or abandoned house on a hill with fog; the dark cemetery and crosses; the close-ups of mad, starring eyes; the passing of a black cloud across a full moon; and so forth. "These are the elements by which the historically mutable Gothic has become Gothic film" (KAVKA, 2002, p. 210). *Bates Motel* is a TV film that may borrow some of these visual codes. In terms of physical space, we are able to recognize the abandoned/isolated house (and the motel attached to it), that is to say, a domestic setting a bit far from the town. Nobody lived there for some time until Norma Bates decides to buy it. The house, a kind of refuge to Norman's mother in *Psycho*, almost functions as an independent character coming to life. In *Bates Motel*, it is not that different, since the original setting was quite preserved; the house serving again as a refuge to the newcoming family at the same time that it seems to get a life of its own.

Another element is the frequent use of darkness and shadows in the scenes. Many scenes and probably the most important actions take place at night. It is during the night that strange people knock on the door. And it is during the night that we see Norma observing Norman in the bedroom over and over again, like an apparition. As Kavka (2002, p. 214) reminds us of, "shadows, in fact, are one of the crucial elements that [old] Universal series exploits for the visualization of the Gothic. Casting shadows is one way of manipulating space". Also, this technique can be traced back to German Expressionism, for instance: lightening effects, distorted backdrops, claustrophobic spaces, extreme camera angles, shadows disproportionate to the objects that cast them, and so on (KAVKA, 2002). With shadows, therefore, it is possible to create a *monstrous space*, a setting characterized by a monstrosity – physical or even mental – that cannot be (fully) seen.

In terms of physical bodies, the most remarkable thing we can notice in the TV series – apart from homicides and their resultant corpses – is the practice of taxidermy, "the art of preparing, stuffing, and mounting the skins of animals for display or for other sources of study. Taxidermy can be done on all vertebrate species of animals, including mammals, birds, fish, reptiles, and amphibians" (courtesy of Wikipedia). Back to Bloch's *Psycho*, yet in the first pages, we encounter a stuffed squirrel that Norman shows to Mary Crane inside the house. In Hitchcock's *Psycho*, we know that Norman usually stuffs birds. However, he is not a professional taxidermist; he is an amateur, only doing this as a hobby, "my hobby is stuffing things. I think only birds look well stuffed because... well, because they're kind of passive to begin with" (HITCHCOCK, 1960). In *Bates Motel*, we come to know how he learns this practice with Emma's father, right after seeing a car running over a dog near the motel. Norman catches the animal and takes it home in order to stuff it and preserve its "life"

forever. Norma and Dylan consider this act creepy at first, to say the least, but start not to give much importance to the presence of the animal in Norman's bedroom.

In terms of mind, the Gothic can be seen in *Bates Motel* through the theme of the double. This subject, evident in *Psycho* (novel and film), is only implicit in the TV series up to now, since we were just introduced to the story, the characters, and Norman's split personality. Otto Rank, the great specialist concerning the double, as Sigmund Freud (1919, p. 11) points out, "has gone into the connections which the 'double' has with reflections in mirrors, with shadows, with guardian spirits, with the belief in the soul and with the fear of death; but he also lets in a flood of light on the surprising evolution of the idea". Accordingly, besides reflections in mirrors, shadows, guardian spirits, and the soul, the theme of the double may arise through other elements: the simulacrum (a portrait, for instance), ghosts, marionettes, twins, avatars, the process of metamorphosis, the symbiosis between human and animal, mental disorders, etc. Thus, the phenomenon of the double is usually associated with the uncanny, the unfamiliar that is profoundly familiar or, in other words, "that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar" (FREUD, 1919, p. 2). Still, "something which ought to have remained hidden but has come to light" (FREUD, 1919, p. 15). Freud also calls this phenomenon "the return of the repressed", "a return of something which has always been there (in the unconscious) and whose sudden appearance calls up the feeling of the 'uncanny'" (KAVKA, 2002, p. 210).

In addition, Freud (1919) affirms that the castration complex is one of the factors that turn something frightening into something uncanny. In the case of Norman Bates, the uncanniness, indeed, comes from the unsolved Oedipus complex that is externalized in the shape of a pathology; we may say then that childhood issues keep returning through a psychotic disorder and, in consequence, there is the split of the self. In the mechanism of psychosis, there is a disturbance in the relationship between the ego and the external world. And if the ego represents the person and his/her social behavior, it means that the individual has some sort of difficulty in dealing with the real world, unable to separate what is real from what is not. Detached from the real world, plunged into hallucinations and delusions, Norman produces an alternative reality where his "mother" commits the crimes on his behalf. Therefore, "the 'double' has become a thing of terror" (FREUD, 1919, p. 12). The Gothic effect, hence, may materialize as a threat coming from without, but it always gives voice to anxieties from within (KAVKA, 2002). By apprehending the fear associated with the erratic confines of our subjectivity, it is easy for the Gothic to explore the evil inside us. However, up to this point in *Bates Motel*, Norman's mental disorder is only suggested in the moments when he undergoes some memory lapses; all of a sudden, strange things occur, but he simply cannot recall them. The first season of the TV series, in this sense, only provide us with some glimpses of what could be this Gothic effect regarding the double and the uncanny phenomena. Anyhow, it is not possible for us to behold the evil within, but still we are able to sense it – even when it has not completely come to light yet.

The Contemporary Gothic

Kavka (2002, p. 210) states that "the Gothic is about paranoia, defined as a projection of the self on to the outside world". However, we may wonder in which way this projection is different nowadays from what it was decades ago. How to define the contemporary Gothic? According to Steven Bruhm (2002, p. 259), "the central concerns of the classical Gothic are not that different from those of the contemporary Gothic: the dynamics of family, the limits of rationality and passion, the definition of statehood and citizenship, the cultural effects of technology". Besides, Bruhm (2002, p. 261) adds that:

What becomes most marked in the contemporary Gothic – and what distinguishes it from its ancestors – is the protagonists’ and the viewers’ compulsive return to certain fixations, obsessions, and blockages. Consequently, the Gothic can be readily analyzed through the rhetoric of psychoanalysis, for many the twentieth century’s supreme interpreter of human compulsions and repressions.

Thus, through the rhetoric of psychoanalysis, some concerns, like the limits of rationality, for instance, can be better understood. Whether in fiction or in real life, the mind itself becomes a kind of prison, a secret chamber that can reveal all sorts of paranoid fears, and, for sure, psychoanalysis can shed lights on them. As stated by Spooner (2006, p. 18), “one of the favourite tropes of contemporary Gothic is the repressed memory of childhood abuse, as in Stephen King’s *The Shining* (1977)”. The same applies to the story of Norman Bates. In both narratives, the “psychological prisons characteristically disintegrate under repeated mental strain, terminating in madness and breakdown” (SPOONER, 2006, p. 18). Nonetheless, the contemporary Gothic is not about psychoanalytic themes popping up from the texts fortuitously or about psychoanalysis as a simple device to analyze the texts. Instead, we have psychoanalysis as a very explicit subject in the narrative, which is usually referred to as the psychoanalytic Gothic.

What makes the contemporary Gothic contemporary [...] is not merely the way Freudian dynamics underlie Gothic narratives [...], but how contemporary Gothic texts and films are intensely *aware* of this Freudian rhetoric and self-consciously *about* the longings and fears it describes. In other words, what makes the contemporary Gothic contemporary is that the Freudian machinery is more than a tool for discussing narrative; it is in a large part the subject matter of the narrative itself (BRUHM, 2002, p. 262).

Bruhm’s definition to the contemporary Gothic sounds great if we consider the construction of the character Norman Bates (in the novel, in the film, and in the TV series). In the first chapter of Bloch’s work, the protagonist himself mentions the Oedipus complex to his “mother” during an argument, suggesting his awareness of the Freudian concept. Also, as well as in Bloch’s novel, Hitchcock’s version uses the title *Psycho*, something that already alludes to Freud, even before we can acknowledge the plot. In the case of *Bates Motel*, we have the previous versions to warn us about what will possibly happen, plus an obvious conflict between mother and child unfolding on the screen.

Besides the limits of rationality, the rhetoric of psychoanalysis might clarify the dynamics of family too. “The contemporary Gothic registers the (Freudian) impossibility of familial harmony, an impossibility built into the domestic psyche as much as it is into domestic materiality” (BRUHM, 2002, p. 264). This familial incongruence is one of the crucial points in *Bates Motel*, since every family relation exposes some kind of strangeness, even in a disturbing level, as it happens with Norma and Norman. Norman has an odd passionate devotion to his mum. Norma loves Norman too much; she is overprotective, jealous, oppressive, and impulsive. On the other hand, she does not care at all about her eldest son, Dylan. To the same extent, Dylan dislikes her and her smothering conduct towards Norman. However, Norman and Dylan are not the best friends in the world, either. Furthermore, there is a mystery involving Norman’s father, who died, out of the blue, in a suspicious domestic accident – event that pushed the Bates family to move to another town immediately.

Moreover, it was Freud who made the figure of the tyrannical father central to the protagonists’ Gothic experiences. But we also came to watch the tyrannical mother occupying a dominant position afterwards. “Although father and son constitute the usual scenario in Freud’s phallically centered thinking, the Gothic provides equal opportunity for the monstrous mother as well” (BRUHM, 2002, p. 265). Nevertheless, “the mother [...] need not be a castrating bitch in order to produce a Gothic effect. Sometimes the horror is ‘caused’ by her strong sense of love that becomes overindulgence” (BRUHM, 2002, p. 275). It is possible to

visualize Norma Bates through this description. The character shocks the spectator precisely because she seems so nice and caring, but out of nothing goes very insane. She is a lovely person, but at the same time is violent and persuasive. The interesting thing is that we never know what to expect from her – which is possible, of course, due to Vera Farmiga's outstanding performance.

According to Kristeva, paternal prohibition is not the only reason the child must achieve distance from the mother. The child must 'object' the mother – discard or jettison the primal connection to her, deem her dangerous and suffocating – if she/he is to gain any autonomous subjectivity whatsoever (BRUHM, 2002, p. 266).

Norman Bates does not discard the primal connection to his mother. As a result, he does not gain any autonomous subjectivity and continue to be very dependent and attached to her. Repressed contents then are externalized through a mental disorder. Thus, along with the monstrous mother, *Bates Motel* brings a new kind of protagonist to the Gothic, the introspective, pathological hero, whose monstrosity lies within (KAVKA, 2002). Norman is the guy next door, the nice boy who has good grades at school and an apparently normal social behavior. However, throughout the first season of the TV series, his abnormality begins to appear little by little by means of the disturbing relationship with his mother, the friendship with the dead dog, apparitions in his bedroom, memory lapses, the conversations he has with himself, and so forth.

With *Bates Motel* reviving and reinterpreting *Psycho*, with mother and son side by side, we can ask ourselves which one is the protagonist. Who is in the leading role: Freddie Highmore or Vera Farmiga? A great joke about these questions was made in a Comic-Con 2013 video (YOUTUBE, 2013), in which Freddie Highmore visits the original *Psycho* house. During the journey, he realizes that Vera Farmiga is considered more important than he is; he even asks if people remember that it is Norman who survives in the end, not his mother. Then, he starts to act like crazy, trying to scare visitors around the motel, really incorporating the character. For sure, this comic episode reflects the actors' excellent performances and the good acceptance of the characters towards the public. As far as we know, Norma Bates is not the protagonist; Norman is. *Bates Motel*, nonetheless, is a great chance for the fans getting to know more about this enigmatic woman. As she plays a key role in the first season of the TV series, we may well have two protagonists instead of one, not only due to the importance each one has, but also due to their double construction, stressed even by the almost identical names. Thus, we can see the pathological hero and the monstrous mother at the same level – in a narrative that is aware of the psychoanalytic rhetoric and the repressed questions it can elucidate.

Final Considerations

Spooner (2006, p. 8) calls attention to the fact that “while we all may think that we can recognize the Gothic when we see it [...] few of us ask questions about why Gothic is so popular at this time, or what its contemporary manifestations might mean”. One reason for the popularity of the Gothic these days might be our need to have Gothic experiences, because they are able to describe our own traumas, and traumas have to be experienced in order to be exorcized. Consequently, we crave the Gothic because we really need it. As stated by Bruhm (2002, p. 273):

We need it because the twentieth century has so forcefully taken away from us that which we once thought constituted us – a coherent psyche, a social order to which we can pledge allegiance in good faith, a sense of justice in the universe – and that wrenching withdrawal, that traumatic experience, is vividly dramatized in the Gothic. We do not seek out one Gothic experience, read one novel, or see one movie, we hunt down many. [...] For our traumas [...] are legion: the tyranny of the

lawgiving father, the necessity of abjecting the mother, the loss of history and a sense of pre-formed identity, and the shattering of faith in a world that can permit the Holocaust and genocide or reconstruct us as cyborgs or clone each of us into another self.

Our traumas are many, old and new; we have, then, an extensive list of repeated traumas along with new traumas that might appear here and there in accordance with our historical context. For this reason, there are stories being told over and over again, bringing diverse traumas into the discussion for us to jettison them (or try to, at least). This necessity of repetition occurs because, as Bruhm indicates (2002, p. 274), “in [the] vacillation between wanting life and capitulating to destruction, we keep needing the Gothic to give shape to our contradiction”. Furthermore, “inured to Gothic shocks and terrors, contemporary culture recycles its images in the hope of finding a charge intense enough to stave off the black hole within and without, the one opened up by postmodernist fragmentation and plurality” (BOTTING, 2002, p. 298). Moreover, considering the quotation in the epigraph, Hitchcock reminds us that horror is nothing other than our reality.

In addition, another factor is that Gothic sells. It has “become supremely commercialized, be it mainstream or niche-marketed. Gothic no longer crops up only in film and fiction, but also fashion, furniture, computer games, youth culture, advertising. Gothic has always had mass appeal, but in today’s economic climate it is big business” (SPOONER, 2006, p. 23). By the turn of the twentieth century, hence, the Gothic had consolidated its position as the material of mainstream entertainment (SPOONER, 2006). The Gothic mood has definitely been spreading across literature, film, music, TV series, advertisements, etc., and Gothic becomes a normalized and commodified genre among many others. But it also has appeal on the academic ground:

The academic passion for Gothic is reflected by its widespread favour throughout mainstream popular culture. This may seem like a paradox: in a culture devoted to the pursuit of happiness, where racial unity and equality have become fashion statements used to market soft drinks and leisure clothing, how can a genre with associations of evil, death and decay, sensory disorientation and psychological instability, be regarded as anything other than a minority taste, either avant-garde subversion or cult underground predilection? This is how many contemporary critics would like to see Gothic: as a marginal genre, invested with subversive potential; a form in which the dark unconscious desires of our pleasure-seeking society are exposed and dissected (SPOONER, 2006, p. 25).

The Gothic, indeed, is not a marginal genre invested with subversive potential. Instead, it “provides a language and a set of discourses with which we can talk about fear and anxiety, rather than being reducible to whatever fear happens to be promoted by the media at any given time” (SPOONER, 2006, p. 30). In consequence, Gothic literary and cinematic narratives may have a social role in the lives of readers and viewers, promoting an open debate on subjects that people have strong aversion to, are afraid of, or even ashamed to talk about, like evil, death and decay, sensory disorientation and psychological instability, all already mentioned above.

Psycho’s success inspired a wave of contemporary psychological horror films and it will carry on inspiring. By doubting “the power of rationalism, specifically that of psychoanalysis, to conquer the irrational” (HERVEY, 2007, p. 236), it allows us to keep asking ourselves what is real and what is not. “*Psycho* ends with Norman diagnosed but certainly not cured” (HERVEY, 2007, p. 236). It seems that his dead mother will continue to be present symbolically in the archaic Bates house, lurking in secret recesses maybe forever. Reviving the story through other versions, like *Bates Motel*, not only allows us to recollect a good and disturbing tale, but also to experience something new, since this is the purpose of prequels and sequels: to create new storylines from that one which is already known to the audience.

We have to take into account that the schizophrenic transvestite Norman Bates became an archetype of horror, incorporated to our pop culture. So, reviving a story like *Psycho* is a way to sell more products too. One example is the fact that Robert Bloch's *Psycho* remained unedited in Brazil for about fifty years, being published again (by DarkSide Books) only this year, curiously after the release of the TV series. There are two editions, paperback and hardcover, the last including a special section with images from Hitchcock's classic. Readers have, then, another opportunity to experience the story. Moreover, another way for readers/viewers to interact with the story is the *Bates Motel* website <http://www.batesmotel.com/12rooms/>, in which the Internet users can visit the twelve motel rooms through mobile applications.

As a matter of study on the academic ground as well as mere entertainment to mass culture, these examples support the idea that the Gothic may be profitable – both intellectually and financially. In any case, “the Gothic operates as an *effect* of representation rather than as its *object*” (KAVKA, 2002, p. 227) – a sentence that, for sure, summarizes the genre inasmuch as the Gothic is about feeling something, not necessarily about seeing or touching it. *Bates Motel* mixes other different genres, but it certainly participates in the Gothic tradition too, frightening us with the monstrous mother's presence, an insistent voice in Norman's head; and in ours as well.

Finally, “to what extent are psychos made, to what extent are they born, and if it's a combination, can a mother be the exactly wrong mother for her child and vice versa?” (PASKIN, 2013). We still need to talk about Norman not only because we want to know how a teenager came to be a legendary killer, but also because we are curious about whether his mother had any responsibility in the process. Besides, we all know some problematic child or mother (or even father), and we all know that disturbing familial relations, codependent and excessively intimate, are very common in a society that confuses love with any other thing. Other Normans and Normas wander around; and we will need to talk about them indefinitely.

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