

The Monsters are Out

Representations of Homosexuality and Taboo in
American Horror Films



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1. Introduction

The debate on equal rights for gay people within the United States is an ongoing process. The gay rights issue has never been more prevalent as it is now. Lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and transgenders (LGBTs) are now free to express their orientation and consequently are able to protest for equal rights. However, while they are free to express themselves legally, in practice they are still discriminated against and their freedom does have limitations.

Coming up for rights has been much more difficult in the past century, when gay people were much more reluctant to come out than they are now. Homosexuality was not addressed very much because not many people wanted to identify, or even associate themselves with this group.

One form in which homosexual factors reached mainstream culture and people, albeit subliminally, was through film. The portrayal of gay characters, or characters who exhibited gay tendencies was readily done in the 1930s and the decades that followed. It should be noted however, that not all genres of movies could lend themselves to having gay or gay-like characters. Romantic films, for example, had to feature a seemingly masculine leading man opposite the female lead. Richard Dyer says in his book *Gays and Film* "It is not surprising that the genres in which gays most often appear are horror films and comedy"(30). Comedy films are the somewhat obvious setting for a gay character. The audience does not take serious the sidekick's, or in some cases the leading man's, actions and thus it is easier for him to exhibit homosexual affinities. The use of gay characters in horror films is not as easily explained and because of that, those films are perhaps the most interesting to examine.

1.1 Academic Discussion

In her essay *Genre Films and the Status Quo*, Judith Hess Wright says of monsters that “they are three-dimensional representations of our uncontrollable will to evil; we must conquer them if society is to survive”(45). This belief concurs with that of many Americans who harbor the same idea towards gays and their influence on American society. Harry Benshoff says in his essay *The Monster and the homosexual*, "since the demands of the classical Hollywood narrative system usually insist on a heterosexual romance within the stories they construct, the monster is traditionally figured as a force that attempts to block that romance”(63). The monster or antagonist is thus the homosexual ‘other’ that goes against the heterosexual norm. In his book *Hollywood*, Robin Wood, while discussing the horror genre makes use of a general formula, which, according to him may be applied to any horror film: “normality is threatened by the Monster” (71). In keeping the formula vague, Wood states that both normality and monster can be substituted by whatever is appropriate for the time. Wood goes on to say, “Although so simple, the formula provides three variables: normality, the Monster, and crucially, the relationship between the two” (71). Wood argues that the horror film is not just a narrative of good versus evil, but that the protagonist and antagonist should be examined with regard to one another. Their relationship, or lack thereof, may hint at a repressed social creation that goes deeper than the frights the film is delivering to the audience.

With regard to homophobia in American society, Vito Russo says in his book *The Celluloid Closet*,

heterosexual society has a vested interest in keeping homosexual relationships untenable and mystical because, made real, they are seen as a threat to family living. Homosexuals have always incorporated this repression into their lives and their work. Homosexual

characters have often been drawn as darkly alien and monsterlike in a twilight world of horror and dread. As an outlet for unspeakable ideas, then, the sissy often becomes a monster or an outlaw. (34)

Russo argues that the incorporation of homosexual themes in films was not only done by filmmakers to raise the topic of something that would otherwise remain unspoken, but the portrayal of the homosexual as a monster was actually welcomed by the community. These portrayals of the homosexual as the monster not only darkened the image of homosexuals but also gave the impression that such things did not belong in the real world, but rather in fantasies and in film.

The gay themes present in films can be perceived in several different ways. Antagonists and villains in horror genre could be seen as trying to break free from their socially constructed cage and their reign of terror could be perceived as a cry for help. However, their portrayal could also be perceived as the 'other' who, in the form of the 'bad guy' is more easily distanced from the 'normal' victims in the movie and the 'normal' audience watching. The 'other' has no place in society and must be destroyed as quickly as possible.

With so many different opinions on homosexuality in movies, it would be interesting to examine the discourse that forms out of these beliefs and how it relates, not only to film, but also to American society. While there is a substantial amount of discourse on the subject of gay subtext in films, there is less discussion on how the presence of gays and gay themes in horror films has changed over the years. It is worth researching how turning points in American and gay culture, like the Stonewall riots of 1969, which is widely believed to be the beginning of the gay liberation movement, affected the presence of homosexual themes in such films.

1.2. Thesis Statement

Unlike the more liberal status of LGBTs nowadays, a mere century ago, gay people were not talked about, and when that did occur, they were shed in a negative light. Like African Americans in the South before the Civil Rights movement, LGBTs were treated and in some instances still are, as the 'other' that society must work against. Their presence in film from that time is therefore important, because it is through that media that their presence in American society can be witnessed and indeed their presence in film is already tantamount to their willingness to show themselves as equal to the rest of society.

This process of wanting equality is an ongoing one; the repeal of Don't Ask Don't Tell and the ten U.S. states allowing same sex marriage; Maine, Maryland, and Washington having voted on the issue in 2012's election, demonstrate how civil rights for LGBTs is a prominent topic in American culture. Consequently, The Supreme Court of the United States very recently ruled that the Defense Of Marriage Act (DOMA), which prohibited benefits for homosexual couples which heterosexual couples did enjoy, was unconstitutional, effectively recognizing the relationship of American same sex couples as fully legitimate.

It is consequently noteworthy to discuss how the portrayal of homosexual characters and themes in films, most notable horror, are different in those before the stonewall riots, which is believed to be a turning point in the gay liberation movement, from those that were released afterwards. Coincidentally it would be interesting to examine if other factors also contributed to this change of gay representation in film.

1.3. Methodology

Eight films, of which four are somewhat recent remakes from classic horror films will be analyzed, they will be compared and the findings discussed. The films have been chosen in such a way that the original was distributed before the Stonewall riots, while their remakes were released at least a decade afterwards. In doing so, the effect of the Gay liberation movement can be examined within the chosen films. Attention will mostly be centered on specific characters, or scenes which present themselves as either containing homosexual or expressing homosexual themes.

The first four films which will be discussed in detail are: the 1931 film *Dracula*, *Cat People* (1942), *The Fly* (1958), and *Psycho* (1960). Their respective remakes with which they will be compared are: *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (1992), *Cat People* (1982), *The Fly* (1986), and *Psycho* (1998).

In order to better understand the theme and to gain better insight to answer the research question, a number of different factors will be discussed prior to the discussion of the above-mentioned movies. First, a discussion of horror and thriller movies will be presented. Consequently, a history of gays in film will be analyzed. The next step will include an overview of LGBTs in specific genres, most notably horror and thrillers. Because the Stonewall riots are used as a defining moment, it would be remiss not to discuss it as well as a few other moments that affected American gay culture. The following chapters will contain the examination of the films mentioned above and how they are precisely connected to the different points made in the chapters before. The research will also explore new points made during the study of the films. This thesis will hopefully examine not only the presence of gay themes in horror films, but also the reasoning behind it as well as the link to current events in American culture.

Chapter 2. The Horror Film

“Horror is Universal. It has appeared in a variety of forms and media in most every human Culture”(25) - Rick Worland, *The Horror Film*

2.1. Beginnings

Horror movies have been a popular genre to the masses for more than a century. Film makers, from the very beginning of the cinema’s inception, have always looked for ways to awe, and in some cases terrify their audience. The best place for these new filmmakers to acquire inspiration for their films was to turn to an older medium, namely literature.

The increase of English gothic literature in the nineteenth century was a large contributing factor to the film age that started growing by the turn of the century. Novels like Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* and Robert Louis Stevenson’s *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* were some of the first novels to be adapted onto the silver screen, most likely because of their unnatural nature. Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, which came out much earlier than the novels mentioned above, was also a popular story with filmmakers and audiences. Indeed, the first Frankenstein film adaptation came in 1910, less than a century after its first publication. The reason these characters and stories are still associated with the horror genre today, is because of the ease with which they can be adapted to trends of certain times. Time and setting are not of the highest importance to the monster narrative allowing it to be adapted in numerous forms. In his book *Danse Macabre*, Stephen King says, “the Vampire, the werewolf and the thing without a name [this could be deduced as being Frankenstein’s monster]...stand at the foundation of a huge skyscraper of books and films- those twentieth-century gothics... known as ‘the modern horror story’”(60-1)

While these characters were already present at the beginning of age of cinema, there is much debate as to what the first horror film to be released actually is. George Méliès has perhaps the strongest claim to having produced the first horror because of his film *Le Manoir du Diable* (1896). Méliès made the film in 1896 and it is one of his many ‘trick films’ which rely heavily on camera stops and careful editing to create instant materializations or disappearances. Other trademarks of his that would come back in later films, such as an elaborate set, numerous props and detailed costumes are also present in *Le Manoir du Diable*. Méliès, though not the first film maker, was most likely the first to create extraordinary stories that were to his audience, literally out of this world. As Rick Worland says in his book, *The Horror Film*, “George Méliès is rightly considered the most creative and influential pioneer of cinematic sleight of hand, the father of special effects in the fantasy film” (33).

2.2 American Horror Films

Méliès continued to make films after the turn of the century. His ambitious 1902 film *Le Voyage dans la Lune*, is perhaps one of the films he is best known for. By the middle of the 1910s however, his film career had all but ended. With Méliès and his trick films seemingly a thing of the past, Other Countries started to experiment with their own genre and techniques. German horror films became popular by the beginning of the 1920s and American film studios soon followed suit.

Universal studios quickly became the first major American production company to popularize the gothic horror films, which have spawned many sequels, and adaptations that are still popular to this day. While Universal may have been the first, rival companies like RKO , Paramount, and MGM were quick to produce their own horror movies for the audience, who seemed all too eager to substitute their real world worries with troubles that appeared to be far

worse. While Americans were still coming to terms with the Stock market crash of 1929, Hollywood it seems, provided the public with supernatural scares so they could forget the real terror of the depression taking place outside the movie theatre. As Worland says, “A given phase of the horror film often reveals something about the times that produced it, exposing the anxieties and outright fears those days, though doing it in a roundabout and thoroughly unintentional way” (56).

By 1931 Universal’s *Dracula* became the studios first horror movie. Though many people were critical of the film, citing various plot-holes, unanswered questions and a very weak second and third act, *Dracula* was a huge success at the box office. In his book, *Projected Fears*, Kendall Phillips says, “*Dracula’s* box-office success opened the floodgates for the other films that would help create the genre and define the American notion of horror. We are left to wonder why this film, with all its flaws, so captured the public imagination that it almost single-handedly launched a new genre of film” (21). The film’s success was quickly followed by another Universal horror classic: *Frankenstein* (1931). That same year, Paramount pictures released their adaptation of *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, simply titled *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1931), which also became popular among the public and is considered one the best adaptations of the story.

The forties and fifties featured sequels and reimaginings of the classic thirties horror film while at the same time new ideas sprang forth. RKO pictures became a frontrunner in the forties with titles like *Cat People* (1942), *I Walked with a Zombie* (1943) and *Bedlam* (1946). Incidentally, these films were all produced by Val Lewton, who made a name for himself by making, and often writing the successful scripts of horror films financed by RKO. Horror movies in the fifties took on a sci-fi element and explored the horrors and consequences of space

exploration. Once again, feeding on America's fear of the Cold War and Communist spies, horror movies like, *The Thing from Another World* (1951), *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956), and *It Conquered the World* (1956), struck fear in the audience watching. The titles themselves remain completely ambiguous, hinting at the communist fear of the unknown and that no one should be trusted because anyone could be a spy.

The sixties and seventies saw revitalization in zombie movies as well as demonic possession movies. When the Production Code Administration, the agency which heavily censored films from the thirties to the sixties, ceased to exist, filmmakers were at liberty to produce films that pushed the envelope. 1973's *The Exorcist*, a film about a girl possessed by the demon, became an instant classic and received ten Academy Award nominations as well as seven Golden Globe Award nominations including one for Best Picture and one for its director, William Friedkin, who had previously won an Academy Award for directing *The French Connection* (1971). Such recognitions were and still continue to be very uncommon for a horror film.

2.3 Male Oriented Horror

The horror genre from the beginning has seemingly been most enjoyed by men rather than women. In her book *Attack of the Leading Ladies*, Rhona Berenstein notes, "Men are thought to be brave viewers who enjoy and remain unshaken by on-screen terrors, while women clutch the shoulders of dates for comfort, cover their eyes in response to images too evil to view, and scream uncontrollably at the hideous exploits depicted" (2)

Perhaps the most male oriented subgenre in the horror film catalog is the slasher film. Slasher films which are argued to have started in the late sixties are predominantly male centered, with women taking up the role of the victims and the rising body count. This is most

likely because there are almost no female serial killers from which to draw inspiration. A notable exception would be Aileen Wournos, a prostitute who killed men and whose life was made into the movie *Monster* in 2003.

As a whole however, female killers are not a popular topic within American society and so they are not often featured in the American entertainment industry. Women who have played the dangerous rival to the film's protagonist are usually the 'femme fatale' type. Some of those roles include Glenn Close's character in the film *Fatal Attraction* (1987), Sharon Stone's character in *Basic Instinct* (1992), and Nicole Kidman's character in *To Die For* (1995).

2.4. The Present Horror Movie

In recent years, many remakes have been stationing themselves within the horror genre. During the early 2000s perhaps the most common remakes were those adapted from Asian horror films. Films like *The ring* (2002), *The Grudge* (2003), *Dark Water* (2005) and *The Eye* (2008) are a few examples of American remakes of Japanese horror films. In *Dark Dreams 2.0*, Charles Derry admonishes American remakes for their greedy purpose, saying, "although American remakes invariably have higher budgets, slicker production values, more special effects, and often sensuous imagery, by no means do they feel as authentic. Rather, they feel like high-quality forgeries engineered by American producers on a postmodern quest for the grail of contemporary horror: huge international profits" (303). If this is indeed the case, then producers have found this elusive grail. *The Ring* for example, became a box office hit in America, earning well over \$200 million from an estimated \$48 million budget.

While the Asian remake trend seems to have died down somewhat, the remake rage is nowhere near finished. American horror films popularized in the 70s and 80s have gained new popularity after studios injected several franchises with new life, and incidentally new money, in

order for the franchise to continue. 1976's *The Omen* was, after several sequels, remade in 2006. The same was done to *Halloween* (1978), which was remade by horror director Rob Zombie in 2007. *The Amityville Horror* (2004), *Dawn of the Dead* (2004) *Black Christmas* (2006), and *The Last House on the Left* (2009), are just a few more examples of horror remakes Hollywood has produced in recent years.

It should be noted however, that remakes, though very prevalent are not the only kind of horror film being produced. *Paranormal Activity* (2007) a film about a couple being terrorized by a demonic presence in their house became a sleeper hit after it was released. The movie, made on an estimated budget of only \$15,000 went on to earn almost \$200 million. The horror genre, though not often lauded by critics continues to be very successful and innovative.

2.5. Remakes

There are several terms that are often associated with movie remakes, which, though similar are not exactly the same. The sequel, for instance is not a remake, but rather a continuation in some form or another of the original narrative. Somewhat more difficult to differentiate from the remake, is the reboot. A reboot, unlike the remake is a complete reimagining of the story and as such changes almost every aspect of the original while still holding on to just enough that the original can be found in some form or another within. A remake on the other hand, tries to stay more true to the original storyline while perhaps only changing time and setting. The first three remakes which will be discussed, *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (1992), *Cat People* (1982) and *The Fly* (1986) fall more under the category of the reboot, while the fourth movie which will be examined, 1998's *Psycho*, is perhaps remake in its truest form, staying almost entirely true to Hitchcock's original.

A remake is however, not just a newer or better version of an already told story. There are several factors that are taken into account when a studio options the original film for a remake. Setting, time and characters for example, are just a few points which the remake should look at. Furthermore, beside the usual parts there are other aspects that can be of importance to a remake. Film historians Andre Horton and Stuart McDougal for example, are not content with calling a remake just a new version of an old movie. To them, many more things come into play when discussing remakes. In their book *Play it again, Sam*, they say, “Beyond simple remakes of one film to another with the same title and story, we are also interested in extending the definition of remake to include a variety of other intertextual types. What dynamics and dimensions are involved in cross-cultural remakes in which language, cultural traditions, psychology, and even narrative sense may differ greatly” (4). Horton and McDougal argue that the more a film catalogue grows, the more intertextual connections will be found within films, even if they are from different markets and directed towards different audiences. They use the film *Honey I Blew up the Kid* (1992), in which a toddler becomes a giant as the result of an accidental experiment, as an example. Horton and McDougal make note of how Japanese tourists in the film see the giant boy and the first thing they shout is “Godzilla” a reference to the giant lizard attacking Japan in the classic horror film *Godzilla* (1954) . Intertextuality connects films that, while not remakes in the traditional sense are still linked and refer to one another.

While remakes or sequels used to be reserved for a select few films, Charles Derry fears that remakes are far too common in Hollywood nowadays. While he does not insinuate that film studios have run out of ideas, he says that they are less daring than they used to be, and they would rather be cautious, referring to the revival of films they know have been successful in the past. “Terrified of putting millions of dollars into new, authentic material which is personal and

progressive, producers have scavenged the Hollywood archives to find ‘safe’ material: the pre-owned and previously made. The result of producers attempting to make everything old new again is a postmodern smorgasbord” (8).

In his book *Film Genre Reader III*, Barry Keith Grant discusses how even though remakes try to add new aspects to the original, such as a new setting, a more updated narrative or in some cases color, as opposed to a black and white original, the classic stays the superior one simply because of it being a classic. “It is that which must be imitated, and the basic and fundamental elements must not be changed. Therefore, to avoid an exact duplicate, subsequent imitations can merely embroider and decorate, which in most cases destroys the elegance and simplicity of the original design” (105). Grant’s approach towards remakes is in stark contrast to that of Horton and McDougal. While the remake may be deemed lesser than the original, it does provide the opportunity to introduce the original film to a new audience through the use of its imitated remake. Then, the audience can familiarize themselves with the classic, which, without the remade version, they may not have come across.

Remakes provide the opportunity to add new details to an already told story. They can freshen up a classic film or franchise, or completely reimagine it while also introducing a new generation to the original film, which inspired it. However, the over-use of remakes in the past decade is becoming tedious to the point that Hollywood seems to be unable to produce anything other than old ideas in a new form, leaving no room for new and original narratives.

Chapter 3. Gay and Lesbian Themes in Film

Homosexual themes, though now very common in all kinds of movies, were scarcely present during the golden years of Hollywood. If such themes were present they would be hidden underneath so many other plotlines and character traits that it would be difficult to spot, or it would be attributed to something else that made the character or setting unique. The main problem filmmakers faced from the thirties to the sixties was the powerful force that was the Production Code Administration.

3.1. Gay Themes, Censorship and the Production Code

Administration

From the initial appearance of motion pictures in America, several organizations, most notably religious organizations and justice departments set up censorship boards. The presence of such institutions was not a new concept in America; these organizations were busy scrutinizing through books, and to a lesser extent songs. However, America was suddenly saddled with a new medium, which called for strict regulations. In his book *Classical Film Violence*, Stephen Prince notes the apprehension many felt towards motion pictures.

Almost as soon as the new medium appeared, social authorities and other custodians of public welfare and morality regarded motion pictures with great suspicion and anxiety. They feared that cinema would bypass existing institutions of socialization such as the church, schools, and the family. As a result state, municipal, and county agencies across the country worked actively to shape and control the conditions of motion picture representation. (24)

Because the entertainment industry was wary about interference in their affairs by means of censorships and regulations from outside the Hollywood, i.e. religious institutions and the government, they created the Motion Picture Producers and Distributers of America (MPPDA). The MPPDA which in later years would become the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA), appointed Will Hays as its head. Hays introduced a number of regulations to which films should adhere if studios wished them to be released. These rules would later become known as the Production Code Administration. Studios that wanted their films to be nationally distributed had to adhere to a number of regulations regarding the content of the films they produced. While the PCA was adopted by Hollywood in 1930, strict enforcement did not take place until 1934. The PCA was extremely strict in enforcing their rules on Hollywood films, and those which did not oblige were not given nationwide distribution rights and would not have the possibility to become successful.

However, Rhona Berenstein notes how the PCA did not scrutinize horror films as much as other movie-genres, yet homosexual themes as well as violence were very present in this genre. Such themes for example can be found in the trio of stories mentioned in the chapter on the horror genre. *Frankenstein*, features two men coming together to create life and to nurture the being they have brought into the world. *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr Hyde* follows a man whose inner self (i.e the Id) breaks free and is the complete opposite from the man he tries to be. These men are next to their homosexual traits, clear monsters of the horror genre. They are much more than just a murderer, or unnatural being. Dracula is a seducer of the highest order, seducing not only women, like his beloved Mina, but also Renfield, the man who is enchanted to the point of infatuation with his master that he would do anything to please him. *Dracula* and its

themes and characters will be discussed in detail in the following chapter. The PCA though strict in their rules, were not able to prevent every shady theme from subtly appearing on the screen.

Filmmakers were clever and found ways around the PCA restrictions. Cutting a scene at a tasteful moment yet still leaving the continuation open became one of the best methods for filmmakers to imply sexual connotations or violent aftermaths. Rhona Berenstein argues that censorship helped to imply sexual connotations in horror films. A bedroom scene between a man and a woman which cuts to black leaves little to the imagination of the film's audience. When the scene is somewhat repeated in the horror genre, Dracula entering Mina's bedroom, or even him hovering over Renfield, for example, the same sexual connotations spring up mainly because it is similar to the invisible sex scene omitted from the aforementioned film. Because of the PCA, Berenstein says, "Connotations of multiple sexualities, female aggression and homosexuality endured... censorship may have contributed to those connotations" (85).

From the very beginning, the PCA was not able to regulate every questionable detail that filmmakers added to movies and their strict rules quickly came to be seen as outdated. As Benschhoff says in *Queer Images*, "With Hollywood films increasingly mentioning the unmentionable, the Production Code Administration had to rethink its strategy, and in the fall of 1961, the Code was amended to allow for the 'sensitive' representation of homosexuality, if treated with 'care, discretion, and restraint'"(93). The careful choice of words by the administration demonstrate how they themselves were unsure of how to tread these new waters of themes in film. Vito Russo, a film historian, argues, however, that the representation of gays and other taboo themes suddenly allowed by the administration were still subject to very strict regulations. In his book *Celluloid Closet* he says, "Homosexuality had come out of the closet and

into the shadows, where it would remain for the better part of two decades...homosexuality had become the dirty secret exposed at the end of the last reel” (89).

By 1966 the MPPDA had become the MPAA and with it, came the end of the PCA. The film rating system which is still known to this day, save for a few adjustments took the PCA's place. Through this new system, filmmakers were able to depict scenes, involving sexual, violent or political themes that during the reign of the PCA had been illegal to portray. The new rating system was thus a liberating move, not just for movie studios and filmmakers, and not only for the actors and characters they portrayed, but it was also liberating for the audience, allowing them to experience things which they had previously been prohibited.

3.2. The Stonewall Riots and Gay Liberation

While the end of the PCA gave way to a newly liberated entertainment industry, the portrayal of questionable themes was not readily portrayed in great numbers. Homosexuals were still the perpetual 'other' in American society, and this was reflected not only in film, but also in everyday life. Like African Americans who were still fighting for equal rights, and women, fighting against a sexist society, homosexuals were beginning to adopt the same mindset that fighting for equality was not just their right, but a necessity. Because of previous movements, American LGBTs were already motivated to join in the protests. In his book *The Gay Liberation Youth Movement in New York*, Stephan L. Cohen says, “the women's movement, Black liberation, Young Lords, and anti-war protests catalyzed gay liberationists to use words, gestures, and acts of love to challenge an ageist, sexist, patriarchal system” (25). While momentum for gay rights had been growing within the homosexual community it was the raid on the Stonewall Inn and the consequent riots in 1969 that many believe was the major catalyst for the gay liberation movement. In *Now you See it*, Richard Dyer notes how lesbians also affected women's

movements and how these two groups, women and gays found common ground in their fight for equality. “Women’s and Gay liberation provided different routes into affirmation politics, which also embraced other differences, of national and local particularities, of civil rights, socialist and feminist ideas. What united them was simply the assertion that to be lesbian or gay is a positive thing to be” (217).

While gay liberation groups had actively fought for equality for a long time, a number of factors helped the Stonewall riots become the turning point in this fight. New York city, a large urban area with many openly gay people was the perfect setting for the movement to take hold, because of the many gay bars like the Stonewall inn, many gay people saw the raid as just the beginning in a series of privacy invasions. This helped the protest and riots that followed the raid to gain momentum. The large number of American youths, both gay and straight, was far more accepting of one another especially in urban Areas like New York City and San Francisco. This also provided many supporters for gay rights issues. The previously mentioned fall of the PCA may also have accounted for the sudden demand for gay acceptance. The portrayal of gays, though still on a small scale but better than during the PCA, informed Gay people that they were not alone and that equality was a right they had to fight for together. The following discussion of the aforementioned films will hopefully illustrate this shift of gay acceptance in movies, from the subtle homosexual themes in the original, to more open narratives as well as other themes appropriate for the time frame and setting .

Chapter 4. Thirties Terrors and Taboo Errors: *Dracula*

When it comes to *Dracula*, there is perhaps no other classic movie villain that comes as close as being connected to sexuality and erotica as he is. As Rick Worland says, *Dracula* has, since his debut on screen been perhaps the most “sexually charged” (31) of all the famous movie monsters.

The film, which, as already mentioned above was Universal’s first foray into the horror genre, garnered mixed reviews for both the story and Tod Browning, the film’s director. *TIME* magazine’s review, though generally positive, hinted at potential that the film had but did not utilize. *Dracula*, *TIME* says “is an exciting melodrama, not as good as it ought to be but a cut above the ordinary trapdoor-and-winding-sheet type of mystery film” (n.p.). In his book *The Horror Film*, Rick Worland laments the fact that for a Tod Browning film, *Dracula* is not that good a movie. “Considering Tod Browning’s flair for odd, sexually unsettling material... *Dracula* should have been much better” (57). Browning would make use of this ‘flair’ in a much greater degree the following year with the controversial *Freaks* (1932). The film, about circus ‘freaks’ is mainly about Cleopatra, a trapeze artist who seduces Hans, a little person in order to steal his money. When the other circus performers find out about this, they react accordingly. What was perhaps most fascinating about the film, is that Browning recruited actual carnival performers for his cast, giving the film an even more eerie milieu. With the Production Code Administration and its enforcements still 2 years away, Browning encountered no problem in filming *Freaks*, and though MGM did not approve of the film and some theatres refused to show it, many more did so and it has since become extremely popular, gruesome nature notwithstanding. As David Hogan says in *Dark Romance*, “Undeniably grotesque, the film can today be seen as a valuable examination of love’s power to combat mispent sexuality” (59).

Despite the reviews however, Browning's *Dracula* was a success with audiences and Universal had the first of many horror hits on their hands. The film, an adaptation of a stage play, which in itself an adaptation of Bram Stoker's novel of the same name, starts out with Renfield, a man who is in Transylvania on business and is on route to his client count Dracula. He encounters problems as the local villagers are reluctant to take him to Dracula's castle. A man warns him, saying "At the castle there are vampires" (*Dracula*). Renfield however is not intimidated and goes on to Dracula's castle. After falling prey to the vampire he was emphatically warned about, he becomes enslaved by the evil count, and becomes a sort of chaperone to ensure Dracula's safe journey to England. Once there, Dracula starts to terrorize London with his bloodsucking prowess. When local doctor Seward's own daughter, Mina, becomes Dracula's target, the doctor, along with Mina's fiancé Jonathan, and professor van Helsing, who it seems is acquainted with supernatural forces, do everything in their power to save Mina and defeat Dracula.

Several scenes within the film hint at homosexual undertones. Renfield himself is a very feminine character who, from the moment he is featured, is in stark contrast to other male characters he shares the screen with. The male villagers, though they're scared are much bigger and manly in comparison to the scrawny Renfield. When he finally meets Dracula, there is an unspoken aura of awe that Renfield seems to feel in Dracula's presence. The first act of the film is the first courting between Dracula and Renfield. Other characters, even Dracula's wives, are merely superfluous scene fillers. Indeed from the way Dracula refers to Renfield's visit, it would seem almost as if it is supposed to be seen as a secret rendezvous between two lovers whose love is frowned upon.

When the wine, laced with a sleeping agent, Renfield consumed starts to have its effect, it is Dracula's wives the audience first sees descending upon Renfield. Initially it almost seems as if Dracula provided Renfield as a present for his wives. When the women are practically on top of him Dracula appears, shooing them away and motioning as if to mark Renfield as his property. The scene of Dracula descending on Renfield, his new plaything, seems sexual and the way the scene fades to black emphasizes this idea. What follows after the fade out is completely up to the imagination of the audience and while he is indeed feeding off of Renfield, his demeanor suggests other intentions as well.



Fig 1. A Kiss before Dying. An unconscious Renfield is almost devoured by Dracula's wives before Dracula himself chases them. Renfield is saved by Dracula, only to fall prey to the Count's own urges. Copyright 1931 Universal

When Dracula finally makes his appearance in London, he is so clearly an outsider, yet as he walks down the street, no one seems to notice him. Kendall Phillips notes this as well, saying,

“Dracula's strangeness is made all the more disturbing when he arrives in London and is able to move without detection among the residents of the city” (*Projected Fears*, 23). Though his strange attire would suggest immediate observation from fellow pedestrians, who are dressed so much alike that Dracula stands out even more, there is not so much as a sideways glance or a turning head from the people he passes by. Even though he may look differently, and the audience is so well aware of that fact, he seemingly blends in with the crowd, effectively hiding his true self in plain sight.

Robin Wood is quick to associate homosexuality with the Dracula, and to some extent the Frankenstein, character. However, wood argues that the homosexuality is not limited to this film, but is actually present in other variations of the character as well.

Both Murnau's *Nosferatu* and Whale's *Frankenstein* can be claimed as implicitly (on certain levels) identifying their monsters with repressed homosexuality. Recent, less arguable instances are Dr. Frank 'n' Furter of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (he, not his creation, is clearly the film's real monster) and, more impressively, the bisexual god of Larry Cohen's *Demon*. (69)

While Renfield's attraction towards Dracula is continuously demonstrated through his words of obedience and devotion, the attraction of Dracula towards Renfield is also subtly fixed throughout the film. Dracula visits the asylum's grounds and stands outside Renfield's window in order to relay his commands. In doing so, Dracula is risking discovery of his true intentions. Furthermore, with Renfield locked up, Dracula could easily have found another person to do his bidding and left Renfield at the hands of Dr. Seward. Yet, he does not do that. He remains just as faithful to Renfield as Renfield is to him, indicating the strong bond between the two.

Another strange bond is found between Dracula and van Helsing. Though they have never met, both characters act as if they know one another. Dracula has respect for the man he knows will be his undoing. Dracula refers others to van Helsing for the explanation as to what he is. Van Helsing is just like Renfield and while he does not know it, he is doing Dracula's bidding too by revealing what Dracula is instead of forcing the vampire to do that himself. In the final scene, after van Helsing kills Dracula, who by now is sleeping in his coffin, van Helsing stays behind while Jonathan and Mina leave. The professor seems to want to spend a few moments longer, in private, with Dracula, as if he is paying respects to the monster and the relationship between them.

The coffin itself is of notable importance. The first time the audience catches a glimpse of Dracula, he is coming out of his coffin, almost a euphemism for his coming out and his no longer contained sexuality. It is also important to remember that the last time the audience sees Dracula, he is once again retreating into his coffin. Having lost to Jonathan and van Helsing, Dracula has in a sense been rejected by society and he retreats back to where he is most comfortable, namely the claustrophobic coffin he does not have to share with anyone. This form of sexual containment can also be seen in Browning's *Freaks*, with sideshow performers spending time in enclosed spaces like tents, and their always moving caravans. The imagery of sexual containment will also be discussed in the forthcoming chapters as it plays an integral part in other films as well.

Perhaps most perplexing about *Dracula* is that there is little reason to have sympathy for either Mina, Jonathan, or their love life. Mina seems spoiled and Jonathan is too hard headed to be likeable. Their love seems almost one that is doomed from the start. Mina seems to echo this sentiment when she tells John "You mustn't kiss me, ever again...It's all over John. Our love,

our life together” (*Dracula*). Unlike the book, the movie features Renfield instead of Jonathan travelling to Dracula’s castle. Because of Jonathan not facing such a terrible ordeal the audience does not bond with Jonathan or feel sympathy for him and because of that he appears obnoxious throughout the movie. It is in fact Dracula, not Jonathan who is the leading man, albeit an evil one. The film ends not with the Jonathan and Mina, the supposedly happy couple, but with van Helsing and Dracula, the doomed couple who it seemed were far more intrigued by one another than the aforementioned lovebirds.



Fig 2. Facing death head on. While Mina kills and Mourns Dracula’s death in the 1992 film, it is Van Helsing who delivers the final blow to Dracula in his coffin in the 1931 film. Van Helsing is also the one who stays by Dracula’s side as the film comes to an end. Copyright 1931 Universal and 1992 Columbia.

4.1. *Bram Stoker’s Dracula*

It is already apparent from the title that Francis Ford Coppola’s film about the classic villain is based more closely on Bram Stoker’s novel, than on the play on which the 1931 movie was based on. This version starts with a so-called prologue, introducing the count to us and the circumstances leading up to his becoming the fearsome vampire. It is also Jonathan Harker, rather than Renfield, who travels to Transylvania to settle affairs with Dracula. Mina, while

awaiting Jonathan's return stays with Lucy, her wealthy and promiscuous friend. As Dracula arrives in London, Mina becomes enamored with him. After Jonathan's return to England, Dracula's true self is revealed and together with Van Helsing, and a few other men, Jonathan does his best to kill the vampire and save his love.

Coppola eroticizes the vampire story by adding many sexual scenes that though somewhat present in the 1931 version are emphasized much more freely in his adaptation. Where Dracula drives away his wives as they descend on Renfield in Tod Browning's version, in Coppola's, they have their way with Jonathan, who, though resists at first, is quickly subdued by the actions the women perform. It is only after a while that Dracula makes his appearances, chases the women off and has his way (off screen of course) with Jonathan.

The absence of Jonathan seems to provide for Mina something of a sexual awakening. She is more free in the scenes in which he is not with her and though she constantly mentions her longing for him, there is also a hint of relief that he is not with her. Mina experiences a number of things in Jonathan's absence that seem to affect her and to some extent her sexual orientation. During a thunderstorm Mina and Lucy, sexually charged, frolic around the garden, almost nymph-like. The thunder represents the unleashing of their inner selves and at some point the two women, at the height of their ecstasy kiss one another. From the scenes which follow it would seem that neither one of them seems to regret their actions.

While two women kissing even in the nineties was still a somewhat shocking shot, Coppola went a step further in a later scene. In the same garden where Mina and Lucy had their lesbian encounter, Dracula, in the form of a wolf is seen by Mina having sex with Lucy, in a very graphic scene of bestiality. Not only is the beast having his way with Lucy, but he is simultaneously feeding off of her. Though Mina seems appalled, she does not run away or

scream, but instead keeps watching her friend enjoy herself and in doing so, Mina arouses herself as well.



Fig3. Out in the rain. Mina and Lucy share an intimate moment while enjoying each other's company in a rainstorm. The storm indicates an evil presence approaching; in this case, Dracula coming to England. Copyright 1992 Columbia.

While from their first encounter Mina is not very interested in Dracula, she soon warms up to him and falls in love with the vampire, occasionally taking part in several sexual scenes, some of which do not involve sex at all yet there is a heightened sense of arousal. An example of such a scene is when a wild wolf is about to attack Mina and Dracula commands the wolf to stop. He invites Mina to pet the wolf and Mina petting the wolf, quickly turns more into a sexual caressing of the wolf, once again referring the bestiality scene that took part not too long ago.

When Jonathan is finally able to escape Dracula's castle, he and Mina immediately marry though it is obvious that Mina is far from happy about it. As she is about to marry him she says, "I feel confused and lost. Perhaps, though I try to be good I am bad" (*Bram Stoker's Dracula*).

The confusion and guilt however, are not about what she and Dracula did before Jonathan came back to her, but about how she laments the loss of her sexual freedom that with Jonathan's return, she has lost forever. Yet because he is more victimized this time around, Jonathan is more affable to the audience than the Jonathan in the 1931 version. It is Mina, through her many infidelities and demeanor who is unlikeable in the 1992 film.

Unlike the Dracula from the 1931 movie, who experienced what seems to be many sexual relationships or at the very least sensual moments with other characters, the 1992 Dracula seems to provide sexual moments for other characters. There is no real intimacy between Dracula and Renfield in this remade version. Nor is there any affinity between Dracula and van Helsing. Mina is the sole person Dracula focuses on while Mina, under Dracula's spell seems not to love him, but rather the arousal she feels because of him. Indeed, by the end of the movie when it is up to her to kill Dracula, she is more sad about the sexual freedom she will truly lose once he is dead, than of losing Dracula.

Coppola used Dracula to ignite a sexual revolution within the movie's characters, and maybe even within his audience, and in doing so, displays extremely graphic images that are taboo and risqué. It seems that the film is trying to reach the limits of its R-rating without crossing it, very much like the horror films that tried their best to get as much as possible passed the censors of the PCA fifty years before. Images of taboo seem to be commonplace in the remakes of horror films as will be evidenced in the following chapter on 1942's *Cat people* and its remake from 1982.

Chapter 5. Forties Frights and Incest Blights: *Cat People*

With *Cat People*, another factor comes into play. Here, the monster appears in the form of a woman. A female antagonist however, has never been a common one in the American horror genre. This is perhaps just as much true now than it was at the time of *Cat People's* distribution. Films like *Dracula's daughter*, *Bride of Frankenstein* are just a small amount of films which feature a female monster.

However, not all women who play villains fall into the 'femme fatale' category and it is perhaps because of this, that *Cat People* is an interesting movie to examine. The lack of female villains can also be attributed to the belief that horror, as a genre, is more enjoyed by men than by women and it would not make much sense to depict a female monster when there was no real female audience to target. As Rhona Berensten says in *Attack of the Leading Ladies*, "Convention holds that males perform both the civilized and uncivilized parts, and that their status as fiend or hero is determined via a woman. Attack a woman and you are a monster; save a woman and you are a chivalrous man" (2).

Unlike many horror films, which rely heavily on visually shocking scenes, Jacques Tourneur's *Cat People*, utilizes darkness and shadows, to frighten its audience. The film is about a Serbian woman, Irena, played by French actress Simone Simon, who is afraid to consummate her new marriage because she believes she is descendant of an ancient cat people, and she thinks she will turn into a large cat and kill Oliver, her husband. Oliver, though supportive at first, soon confides in Alice, a co-worker. After Irena finds out about Oliver and Alice, she starts stalking Alice. Though the audience never sees Irena in true cat form, there is no doubt about the amount of danger Alice faces. In his book *Dark Romance*, David Hogan says, "The extent of Irena's power is suggested but never blatantly shown. If [producer Val] Lewton had had his way, no cat

would have been seen at all, but RKO executives insisted upon a shadowy glimpse of a panther that glides through a room” (60).

The film features many other instances that arguably delve into the unspoken topic of lesbianism. The film’s lead character Irena is a successful business woman, who apparently enjoys being single. When she finally meets her future husband Oliver, she claims he is her first friend in the city. While it is not made clear how long Irena has been living in New York, or in the United states for that matter, It is still a somewhat strange idea that she has no friends, yet she has a steady job, which in itself is not a job associated with the average immigrant at all.

The chance meeting between Irena and Oliver would not seem to imply an impending romance. He catches her littering, though not intentional, at the Central Park Zoo and as he throws away her crumpled up paper into a trashcan, he points to a sign as a way of admonishing her. The sign itself, instead of a normal phrase to warn litterers, reads “Let no one say, and say it to your shame, that all was beauty here until you came” (*Cat People*). This eloquently phrased notice seems especially meant for Irena, whose actions in the film will undoubtedly disrupt the beauty around her.

Irena’s house and furnishings are important in determining her sexual ambiguity. Irena’s home is not a quaint, immigrant, tenement house, but a lavish apartment with high ceilings and luxurious furniture. What is notable about the furnishings is that they are not really feminine but almost asexual. Aside from the numerous cat portraits, the house carries no other female or indeed, emotional characteristics.

At the center of the house lies a sculpture of a man on a horse impaling a cat. The image is familiar to the audience because it is used in the opening scene of the film. When Oliver follows her home for coffee he draws attention to it by asking what significance it has to Irena.

The question is just as much to his benefit as it is to the viewer. Irena explains that the Sculpture is of King John and the cat he's impaling represents evil members of the occult who he either killed or drove out of Serbia. She mentions that she herself is descendant of the cat people and how they symbolize a group of unwanted people; at a time when massacring unwanted people was a heated topic, this fits in well with the time frame of the film. It could be seen as a metaphor not just for those who practice different religions, but also those who have different sexual preferences. Every following scene which takes place in Irena's house features the sculpture as some sort of reminder of its significance, not only to Irena, but to the story as well. The sculpture could be construed as being a reminder to Irena, of the cruelty of men and is just another reason for her staying away from them until Oliver's appearance.

The appearance of a Serbian woman who addresses Irena at her wedding dinner is just another prediction that the marriage will end badly. The woman, dressed in black resembles a cat as one of Irena's wedding guests rightly points out. The woman calls Irena 'sister' and then leaves the restaurant. The encounter is an extremely strange one, because this woman does not appear in the film again. Her purpose has been it seems to sabotage Irena's marriage before it has even started. It would seem Irena is troubled much more by this encounter than would seem logical. Irena's behavior would be more fitting had the woman been a true acquaintance or perhaps a former friend or better yet, a former lover. Hogan says "Irena - tormented not only by her peculiar talent but by an implied fear of sex – is among the more intriguingly ambivalent figures of the horror genre" (60). Indeed, Irena's fear of sex could be construed as being not just a fear of sex, but rather a fear of sex with men.



Fig 4. The cat's meow. Irena is confronted with her past just as she is celebrating her future. While at her wedding reception she is greeted by an ominous Serbian woman completely dressed in black. Note how the woman's bow resembles cat ears. Copyright 1942 RKO.

After learning of Oliver confiding in Alice, Irena starts stalking Alice and two scenes integral to the film show the ambiguity of Irena's power as well as her sexual behavior as evidenced in her fascination with Alice. Irena follows Alice through Central Park who, though she knows she is being followed, cannot see anyone, or anything behind her. She starts running faster and the shot climaxes with what sounds like a leopard's roar and it seems almost certain that Irena is about to be attacked. It turns out however, that the roar is nothing more than the sound of a bus pulling up. Though the bus and the sound that it makes is somewhat chilling, many believe that over time, the scene has become less frightening. For Stephen King, the terror of the scene is lost due to the obvious filming in a soundstage. "To theatrical audiences of the time, there was no false note in this...everything surrounding [Alice] screams fake! fake! fake!

to my eye. When the bus finally pulls up, the chuff of its airbrakes miming the cat's cheated growl, I was wondering if it was hard getting that New York City bus onto a closed soundstage” (Danse Macabre, 122-23)

However, another scene involving the two characters is still very frightening and suspenseful. Indeed, the scene also appears in the 1982 remake because it works so well. The scene takes place in an indoor swimming pool. Irena, in the form of an unseen beast terrorizes, Alice, who is helplessly splashing around in the pool. Instead of an actual cat appearing in the scene, several lurking shadows and feral-like noises come from all directions. The scene works best because Alice, like the audience, cannot see what is in the room with her, yet there is definitely some ominous presence lurking about. In her essay ‘Horror and Art-Dread, Cynthia Freeland says of the scene, We hear coughing noises off-screen and see mysterious shadows glide amid reflections on the wall... Ominous sounds from an unseen source can be very chilling” (The Horror Film,196) The swimming pool also adds a sort of sexual vulnerability, with Irena pursuing an almost naked Alice. Alice later finds her robe literally ripped to shreds, essentially leaving Alice with no choice other than to remain scantily clothed, somewhat to Irena’s pleasure.

5.1. *Cat People* (1982)

The subtitle of the 1982 remake of *Cat People*, which is ‘an erotic fantasy about the animal in us all’ already offers a glimpse into the film’s narrative before it has even begun. The film follows Irena, an orphan who travels to New Orleans to reunite with her brother, Paul. She soon gets a job working at the city’s zoo where she quickly becomes involved with Oliver, the zoo’s curator. A string of gruesome leopard attacks are quickly found to be connected to Irena and Paul and it

is up to Oliver and Irena to uncover the truth behind the leopard and how her past may have deadly consequences for her future.

Apart from the names of several characters and some scenes, the film is very different from Tourneur's 1942 original. Perhaps the biggest difference is that Irena is no longer lives alone in her fear as she did in the other film. She now has a brother who shares her exact affliction. This, however, leads to some other points in which the films differ from one another. Irena, at the beginning of the film, knows nothing of her supernatural past and it is up to Paul to educate her as to what he and she actually are.

The film itself starts with a flashback to what seems a very long time ago. There, a woman is tied to a tree in what looks like a sacrificial ritual. This seems to be confirmed when a leopard appears and goes up to the woman. However, the cat does not seem aggressive, and the woman does not seem overly frightened of its presence. Though the leopard leaps upon her, it resembles more an embrace, rather than an attack. It is later insinuated that the woman and the leopard had sexual intercourse, resulting in half-human, half-cat offspring, of which Irena and Paul are descendant. This is already a far cry from the story Irena tells in the 1942 film. Instead of just worshipping cats and in doing so gaining to ability to turn into the beasts, the 1982 version takes a big step towards the taboo, suggesting that the Cat-people are the product of bestiality.

Incidentally, the film goes on to suggest that intimacy for Irena and others like her is only safe when it takes place between two cat people. Seeing as how Paul is the only person like her, he constantly forces himself upon her and says that an incestuous relationship is the only way they can be safe from harming other people and themselves. The film takes the idea of Irena being afraid to be intimate with Oliver, and above that adds the notion of an incest relationship as

her only other option. Because of the inclusion of such themes, director Paul Schrader, known for his outlandish and erotic films, takes *Cat People* to a completely different level.

There are several reasons Schrader may have done so. The homoerotic subtext between Irena and Alice has all but disappeared and instead the erotic subtext now resides within Irena and her relationship with her brother Paul. The time in which the film takes place may very well have something to do with this absence of homosexuality. Whereas an underlying theme of Lesbianism in the 1940's would have garnered backlash, it would not have done so in the somewhat more progressive 80s. As such a different kind of Taboo would be needed to make the film stand out. Thus, risqué themes of incest and bestiality would do much better in a remade version than lesbianism which was already becoming somewhat bland compared to the aforementioned subjects.

Another point in which the films are different is in the cat people themselves. Tourneur's *Cat People* was a prime example of an early psychological horror. Irena believed herself to be part of the cat people and in doing so acted like one. The audience never saw her transform and this added to the horror of the unseen prowler, most notably in the pool scene where Alice is being stalked. It is up to the audience and their imagination to come up with what is really happening in the shadows. Here, not only is the leopard visible for many parts of the film, but the transformation from human to monster is present as well.

The swimming pool scene is also present in the 1982 film, though it does not retain the same dread as the original because of several reasons. By the time this scene arrives, the viewer has already been privy to several cat attacks, one more gruesome than the other. Because of this the pool scene, though just as well shot as the 1942 original, making optimal use of sounds and flowing shadows, is less frightening. Another reason the scene does not work so well in the 1982

version is because in the scenes that take place before it, there seems to be little to no animosity between the Irena and Alice characters. Unlike the jealous tones Simone Simon brought to her Irena, this time around the characters seem to be good friends and there is almost no hint at an intimacy between Alice and Oliver. When Irena finally appears from the shadows beyond the pool, Alice quickly accuses her saying “Why are you following me...I know you want to kill me” (*Cat People*). Unlike the 1942 film, in which Alice professes her love for Oliver and the many times Irena encounters them together, the 1982 version lacks many such scenes and because of that, Alice’s accusations seem completely unfounded.

Though Schrader is apparently not one for subtlety, there is something of a slight hint at AIDS and its repercussions in general in the film. In one scene Paul is trying to have sex with a woman he met, at a cemetery out of all places, but he is unable to hold an erection and he dismisses it by telling the woman that he likes her. Though the woman does not understand this reasoning, the audience does. If Paul and the woman have sex, then she will most likely die as a result. Paul, who throughout the film seems mostly indifferent towards woman as a whole, suddenly appears very conflicted as to what he is doing in bed with this stranger. He wants to have sex, though he is starting to regret the consequences it has for his partners. After the woman is indeed found murdered, Paul once again implores Irena to be with him and have a relationship together “Save me. Only you can stop this killing...Make love with me and save both of us” (*Cat People*). Paul is suddenly more afraid of the people he hurts after he sleeps with them. Therefore, the only way for him to go on with his life is to sleep with someone who has the same affliction. Irena on the other hand is quick to say that she is not like him, though she says this more out of fear and denial than out of what she believes is true.

Of course, when she finally does have sex with Oliver, she changes into what she feared. Unlike the original, the camera does not move away during her transformation and the audience sees a very well made human to monster change akin to the transformation in 1981's *An American Werewolf in London*. It would seem that a bit of her human conscience is still present,



because she does not kill Oliver and instead runs off. When she does finally kill someone and changes back, she tells Oliver to kill her. When he refuses, she tells him instead to make love to her once more in order to free her.

Fig 5. A face only a brother could love. The ambiguity of whether Irena was truly changing into a cat or whether she was imagining her curse, made Tourneur's 1942 original so riveting and well made. Schrader abandons this uncertainty and opts for a gory and violent alternative in his 1982 version. Here, Irena is transforming into a leopard after having had sex with Oliver for the first time. Schrader all but throws subtlety out the window. Copyright 1982, Universal.

Both films end at the zoo, though under very different circumstances. In the original, Irena finally lets herself be free but in doing so puts herself in more danger than ever. She dies

just after opening the cage of a leopard and setting it loose, effectively coming to peace with her own inner self who she set free not too long before. The 1982 version however, finds Irena trapped rather than set free. As per her wishes to be with her own kind, Oliver, after perversely tying her up on the bed, has sex with her one last time in order to once again change her into a leopard. Some critics argue that this bondage scene expresses a male adverse response to feminist advances. Furthermore, they believed that audiences would not only notice, but agree with this assumed notion of the filmmakers. Cynthia Freeland however disagrees with this idea. In her book, *The Naked and The Undead*, she argues that the audience was not susceptible to the ideology of the filmmaker and they “hooted loudly and derisively at just these scenes (The phrase ‘catcalls’ took on a new meaning in this context!)” (17). Indeed, while his tying up of Irena may have been for his own protection, it is also an indication of her confinement for the rest of her life.

The final scene of the film shows Oliver, now in a relationship with Alice, very fondly feeding and stroking a leopard in the zoo. Instead of letting her be with her own kind, though it could be argued that she is with her kind in the jungle-cat section of the zoo, Oliver has locked her up, where he can watch her whenever he wants. In both movies, Oliver is far better off than Irena, even though she could not help her affliction. As Stephen King says about Irene in the original, and which pertains to Irena in the remake as well, her character is “no more willfully evil than is poor Larry Talbot in *The Wolf Man*” (120).



Fig 5. Cats off to you. The final scenes in both the *Cat People* Movies are completely different from each other. In the original, Irena frees herself from her fears by giving in to her desires, and in doing so sets the zoo leopard free as well. In the remake, she also gives in to her lust, but in doing so turns herself into a prisoner. Copyright 1942 RKO and 1982 Universal.

Irena is meant to be sympathized with. She did not ask to be the way she was and therefore she cannot be blamed for her actions. Even though she is the monster, the perpetual ‘other’, she is so not of her own accord, and because of that she fights to escape the cage in which society as well as she has put herself in. Though she is successful in the original of setting herself free, she pays for it with her life. She still has her life in the remake, though there she is perhaps only free in her mind while her body is still trapped in a cage. The cage is like Dracula’s coffin important to Irena. In the 1931 version Irena tries to free herself from the cage she has been put in by her fear while in Schrader’s version, for fear of hurting people, the cage is the best place for Irena to be.

Chapter 6. Fifties Fears and Eighties Scares: *The Fly*

The 1958 version of *The Fly* features an unusual story structure, with the death of the main character Andre Delambre, seemingly at the hands of his wife Helene. It is only at the mention of a peculiar fly her son keeps seeing, that Helene opens up to her brother in law about the circumstances leading up to the demise of her husband. After this the movie becomes a long flashback as seen from Helene's perspective.

Andre, her husband, develops a teleportation device that seems to work. The first experiment shown on screen is of a small dish which is transported across the room. After closer examination however, the dish seems to have come out of the chamber inverted, as evidenced by the 'made in japan' letters on the bottom suddenly written in reverse. Andre tinkers with his machine for some time and eventually seems to have perfected it. However, when he makes an attempt to teleport himself, the experiment goes wrong because he fails to notice a fly simultaneously present in the teleportation chamber. The DNA of the two beings mixes and the result is catastrophic. What is noteworthy about the film is that Vincent Price, famous for portraying the villain or monster in many horror films, is the consoling brother in law in this film. He is merely a bystander taking in Helene's accounts, just like the audience.

Unlike the previously mentioned *Cat People*, there seems to be little homosexual subtext in this film. Andre seems to love his family a great deal. He and his wife are apparently sexually active, as evidenced in a few intimate scenes. However, other scenes indicate he neglects his wife and son very much as well. He spends a lot of time in his laboratory and even when he and Helene are together he busies himself with calculations as can be seen in a scene in which Andre takes Helene to the ballet but instead of enjoying the performance spends his time writing

equations on the program pamphlet. The scenes only purpose is to indicate how engrossed Andre is with his lab, and how he has no time to enjoy his family or his life outside of work.

Perhaps gay themes can be found in the place Andre spends most of his time. The laboratory is hidden away in the basement of the house, as most laboratories of mad scientists are. The lab is peculiarly divided into two separate rooms, which only makes sense when taking into account that one teleportation chamber is in one room and the second chamber in the other. The rooms serve no other visible purpose. The rooms could however indicate the two sides of Andre. He is one way in one room and different in the other, somewhat like Jekyll and Hyde. This becomes more apparent in the aftermath of the experiment gone awry.

What is different from the 1986 remake, is that in this movie, the experiment yields two separate subjects namely, an Andre with fly characteristics, and a fly with Andre characteristics. Andre is in a sense no longer present after the failed experiment. Conversations he has with Helene, are basically one sided, with Helene talking to him and Andre either writing his responses, or using signals. The audience no longer sees Andre's face, which is hidden underneath a black cloth. His left arm is incidentally also hidden from Helene and the viewer.

Though he implores Helene to search for the transformed fly, which he believes is the key to changing him back to normal, it becomes evident that Andre does not see himself recovering from his mistake. He seems to wallow in self pity and is already comfortable with dying. Helene on the other hand does her very best to find this fly. Though she is very close to catching it several times, the fly continues to elude her. The fly is still very much an embodiment of her negligent husband. It is constantly off on his own while Helene and her son are doing everything in their power to catch a glimpse of him before he flies away once more.



Fig 6. A man of the cloth. After the botched experiment, Andre is ashamed to show Helene his true self. He keeps his transformed hand constantly hidden inside his coat as well. Note their light colored clothing, symbolizing innocence while the cloth to hide his transformation is black and denotes a sinister and unnatural part of him.

The notion of shame is present throughout the movie and is personified through Andre's character. His face, hidden underneath a cloth indicates how he is afraid to show his wife what he actually is. However, the cloth is not only to spare her the fright of seeing her transformed husband, it is also there so Andre does not have to see Helene. In his book *Dark Romance*, David Hogan argues the result of the entire experiment is a reflection of inner problems Andre is facing. "[Andre] Delambre's predicament is what scientists refer to as a severe identity crisis" (114).

Of course Helene does eventually uncover what is hiding behind the cloth and in a sense comes to see her husband for what he is now. Though she has already seen his insectoid arm which he tries to hide, the face, which turns out to be a human-sized fly head, is too much for her and her fervent attempts to save her husband are quickly forgotten. As Hogan says of the shocking reveal, "[c]learly, this marriage is in big trouble" (114). It could be argued however, that this marriage was in trouble from the very start, and it is only through this unfortunate

accident that Helene finally realizes what kind of man she married. Director Kurt Neumann wonderfully shoots the revealing of Andre's face. The audience sees Helene's horror through the Andre's now fly eyes and her countless faces and screams which fill the screen multiply the horror she feels at what has become of her husband.



Fig 7. Only have eyes for you. Helene can no longer stand Andre's attempts to hide from her and she snatches the cloth of his head revealing the monster underneath. The audience see her reaction through Andre's newly acquired fly-eyes. Helene's shock at Andre's transformation is the final nail in their marriage's coffin. Copyright 1956. 20th Century fox.

With no more hope of recovery, Andre convinces his wife that death is the only option to release him of his affliction. It is now that the audience sees Andre is actually killing himself and Helene is only assisting in his death. He calculates a hydraulic metal press to come down on his head and arm, the two transformed parts of his body, and positions himself under the machine and waits for Helene to press the button. The entire scene is reminiscent of a beheading with Andre being shamed in front of the audience one last time before he dies.

The Audience does not really sympathize with Andre. Most notably because of the film's structure, with his death coming before the story leading up to it, director Neumann essentially

tells the audience there is no need to sympathize with the monster, because he will most definitely die by the end of the film. He is in fact the monster which has to be detested. This monster is different from normal people and should be treated as such. there is no room for someone or in this case something like him in society. his affliction could therefore be perceived as a metaphor for the 'other'; people who fell outside of the then perceived norm of American society like Jews, African Americans, or even Homosexuals. Helene, who is at first glance pictured as a murderer, gains sympathy through her story and her unrelenting mission to save her husband.

In the end, Vincent Price's character is burdened with telling Helene's son why his father actually died. "He died because of his work...He was searching for the truth" (*The Fly*) The truth Andre was supposedly looking for is never revealed to the viewer. Perhaps he had been looking for the truth about himself. This brings up the notion of perhaps a repressed homosexual orientation or as Hogan says, an identity crisis.

6.1. *The Fly* (1986)

As already mentioned above, the only thing the 1986 and 1958 version of *The Fly* have in common are the title and the transportation experiments performed. Indeed, the result of the terrible experiment itself differs in the two films. While the 1958 experiment leaves both man and fly intact after the experiment, albeit with jumbled DNA, the 1986 version features man and fly are spliced into one being, who, though initially is more human than fly, slowly morphs into the insect as the fly's DNA takes over the body.

Here scientist Seth Brundle has mastered the teleportation of inanimate objects, though when it comes to animals, he is somewhat less successful. The first animal, a monkey, though teleported, is literally rendered inside out by the time he appears in the other chamber. This is

reminiscent of the inverted dish from the first teleportation in the 1958 film. The unnatural death of the monkey is perhaps also a foreshadowing of what will happen to Brundle; what is inside or hidden is suddenly exposed to others.

Both films though the 1958 version handles it perhaps more subtly, feature a male character who is very sexually promiscuous. In the remade movie, Brundle, especially after experimenting on himself, becomes increasingly more lustful. Unlike the 1958 film, the effect of the experiment is not immediately detected and Brundle carries on with his activities, both sexual and otherwise, unaware of his newly acquired affliction. Brundle's girlfriend Veronica, is quicker to notice a change in his behavior and tries to convince him that something in his experiment went wrong.

Brundle's changing condition is visible to the audience, even before Veronica voices her concern, as he consumes an alarming amount of sugar and his skin starts exhibiting red splotches. This condition resonates with the viewer because it is reminiscent of an early symptom of HIV. In an article on the subject of the Fly and AIDS symbolism, Ernest Mathijs says, "the AIDS epidemic had generated worldwide media attention, making references to the disease not only legitimate, but even necessary in writings on culture. It comes as no surprise then that many reviews of *The Fly* referred to AIDS in discussing the physical decay of scientist Seth Brundle" (33).



Fig 8. Health Hazard. After his teleportation, Brundle's face and body start to break out in red blemishes that keep worsening. Brundle is in complete denial and does not want to confront what happened to him. Veronica on the other hand is witnessing the transformation first-hand and is unable to stop it. A very suitable euphemism for the 80s AIDS epidemic. Copyright 1986 20th Century Fox.

The fact that none of the characters mentions Brundle's very visible skin condition, up to the point where his face is almost completely covered, makes it seem as if talking about it is taboo, another reference to AIDS and how many people were afraid to talk about it.

Director David Cronenberg makes use of the AIDS scare of the 80s not only to frighten the audience, but perhaps also to educate them on something that many perhaps took for granted. Indeed, *The Fly* was not the only film which Cronenberg used sex as well as its repercussions as a metaphor. Other films like *Crash* (1996) and *eXistenZ* (1999) are two examples of Cronenberg films in which sex and sexual themes become part of the storyline to the point where its importance is integral to the film's narrative. Sexuality is fundamental to Cronenberg's films. In a review of *The Fly*, Thomas Doherty notes how Cronenberg is unlike other horror filmmakers.

Whereas genre stalwarts like George Romero, Wes Craven, and Tobe Hooper go straight for the jugular, Cronenberg always hits below the belt. With remarkable consistency, the Cronenberg canon shows the cost to flesh of fantasy: the sexually transmitted parasites of *They Came from Within* (1975), the plague spread by the penile projection in the armpit of the insatiable Marilyn Chambers in *Rabid* (1977), the intrauterine demons spawned by a psychotic Mom in *The Brood* (1979). (39)

Simply because AIDS makes no cultural distinction, did it make for the perfect factor which could reach all audience members. Mathijs says, “AIDS references pervade almost every layer of society, crossing boundaries of class, race, and gender...AIDS was too important a topic to be dropped from Cronenberg criticism” (35). Even after Veronica tells Brundle how unhealthy he looks, he ignores her and instead goes out to a seedy bar, in search for sex. Brundle is in denial of his disease and wants to prove his health by engaging in sexual activities with other people, and in doing so, he risks their lives as well.



Fig 9. Born again. Brundle, as he steps out of his teleportation chamber, completely naked, none the wiser as to his newly acquired condition. He is proud of what he has done, though he is in no way certain of the long term effects his actions will cause him. His nakedness alludes to the chamber as a sexual container. Copyright 1986 20th Century Fox.

The movie can be seen as an allegory for the dangers of unprotected sex in this era of an unknown and fatal sexually transmitted disease. Brundle going into the teleportation chamber completely naked is also a hint at the danger of experiencing something without protection and in doing so he is leaving himself open to an array of repercussions.

As already mentioned in the discussion of *Dracula* and *Cat People*, *The Fly* once again features a form of captivity for the main character. In this instance, the teleportation chamber serves as the container, which has dramatic effect on the protagonist's life. Brundle as well as Andre essentially leaves to the container a different man. They are both released and imprisoned by the container at the same time, because while they are freed from the chamber, something, perhaps a part of their lives, is forever lost within that small prison-like structure.

Both versions of the fly are a throwback to classic transformation horror narratives like *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* and *The Wolf Man* (1941). In both films the main character who is perhaps eccentric but nothing more, undergoes a transformation that alters not only his physical appearance, but also his attitude. The transformed part has been to some extent always been part of the original, it is only through an unfortunate circumstance that the character displays his 'other self' to characters in the film and the audience watching. While it takes time for the characters to come to term with their new true selves, it seems that by the end of both films, they see no hope of recovering from their affliction, and as the movie ends, so does their life.

Chapter 7. Sixties Screams and Remade schemes: Psycho

Though it is now more often considered to be a thriller, during its initial release many regarded it as the first modern horror film of the genre. Instead of monsters or some form of supernatural entity like popular horror narratives at the time, *Psycho* featured a psychological monster, a disturbed antagonist who, despite his somewhat eccentric behavior, looked like any other person.

Hitchcock's classic movie, follows Marion Crane, a woman who is romantically involved with Sam, a man going through a tough divorce. Though they want to be together, their lack of money prevent them from doing so. When Marion gets her hands on \$40,000 she sees it as an opportunity to start a new life with Sam. On her way to her lover, she decides to spend the night at the Bates motel, where she becomes acquainted with Norman, the proprietor, and indirectly, with his mother. When supposed tragedy befalls Marion, her sister, Lila, teams up with Sam and Arbogast, a private investigator, in order to find out what happened to Marion.

Most homosexual themes throughout the film revolve around Norman Bates' character. Many of his lines as well as the deliverance of them by Anthony Perkins hint at a somewhat underlying homosexuality. Joseph Stefano's screenplay works very well in both hiding Norman's true character yet at some times also hinting at a sinister underlying problem within. Anthony Perkins emphasizes Norman's awkward character very well. In fact, despite numerous movie roles and an Academy Award nomination for 1956's *Friendly Persuasion*, Perkins became primarily known for his role as Bates and reprised this role in three sequels following Hitchcock's original. Charles Derry says about The sequels, "Perhaps the franchise could have continued indefinitely had Perkins not died, an AIDS-related death which finally revealed the actor's homosexuality and titillated audiences with the sense that Perkins truly understood the nature of a secret life, further conflating actor with role for all time"(120).

As mentioned in previous chapters, the Production Code Administration and its standards were by this time eroding and quickly becoming obsolete. Filmmakers became more daring, trying to get all sorts of questionable details passed the sensors. Hitchcock went as far as to mention the word transvestite in the film, something that was not common at all at the time. The inclusions of homosexual themes as the years went by became easier and more common.

There are several scenes concerning Norman, which bring up the notion of a repressed homosexuality or indicate homosexual themes or beliefs. His awkwardness when receiving Marion for example reveal how unfamiliar he is with the opposite sex. The effect his mother has had on her son's uneasiness around women is apparent from several lines Norman utters throughout the film. Norman grew up with few friends and did not leave the house much, as is apparent when he says "a boys best friend is his mother" (*Psycho*). He says this to Marion as she is eating sandwiches in the motel's parlor. The way in which this parlor scene is shot, is peculiar in itself. In his book *Alfred Hitchcock's Psycho*, Robert Kolker stresses the importance of this scene. "The confrontation of Marion and Norman Bates is in some ways the core of the film: the parallel made between them provides the continuity that underlies the brutal disruption when Marion is murdered... In the 'parlor' behind his office, surrounded by Norman's stuffed birds and paintings of classical rapes, they talk about 'traps.' Marion is brought face-to-face with the logical extension of her present condition"(78) The camera shoots Marion from the front, from a straight angle, completely in view with almost nothing obstructing her or calling attention away from her. Norman on the other hand, is shot from a low angle, the background cluttered with taxidermied birds and paintings featuring naked women. To see Norman from this point of view is not only menacing but also hints at a form of sexual dominance on Norman's part. The angles also perhaps point to the way in which the

characters view the world or vice versa. While Marion is full faced and level shot indicate a well-adjusted person, Norman's one sided face and skewed angle shot denotes an unbalanced personality. The cluttered background could be perceived as an indication of a scattered psyche.



Fig 10. Bird's eye view. After Marion arrives at the Bates Motel, Norman offers her sandwiches in the parlor and the two sit and talk about how they got to this point in their lives. The apparent difference in camera angles between Norman and Marion indicates how the audience should perceive the characters. Note how even the lighting and the color of their clothes is in contrast to one another. Copyright 1960 Paramount.

Marion's death can be perceived as a dividing moment of the film. Whereas before her death, homosexual tendencies within Norman seem more internal, either in dialogue or facial expressions, after her death, there are several scenes in which Norman's body language becomes almost a telling sign of a hidden sexual orientation.

the scene in which Arbogast first comes to question Norman about Marion's disappearance shows Norman eating candy outside of the motel office. He seems intimidated by Arbogast even though he is clearly taller and perhaps more menacing. While Norman denies having seen Marion, Arbogast does not trust him and asks to see the motel registry in order to compare signatures with a piece of handwriting he has of Marion's. Norman willingly gives him

the register and Arbogast quickly finds a match. As he invites Norman to take a look, perhaps the most peculiar and interesting shot in the film is done. The camera shows Norman looking at the signature from a sideways angle and in doing so exposes his entire neck, which almost looks too long, to the screen. Not only does this shot transmit a sense of vulnerability but it reveals a visual of an almost sexual act within the shot. The strange angle seems to elicit an image of fellatio (see fig.10). Norman's constantly moving mouth along with the bobbing of his Adam's apple, because of the candy he is eating, enhances this image of oral sex.



Fig10. At each other's throats. Arbogast shows Norman Marion's handwriting which indicates that she was at the motel. A side by side screenshot of Anthony Perkins' Norman in Hitchcock's Original and Vince Vaughn's interpretation of the character for the 1998 remake with their neck shot from a peculiar and almost sexualized angle. Copyright 1960 Paramount, and 1998 Universal.

Another short scene that denotes a homosexual impression comes after the sheriff calls Norman to ask about detective Arbogast. Norman, feeling that keeping his mother in the house might be unsafe, decides to put her in the cellar. As he's walking up the stairs the camera is not

waiting for him at the top, but rather, is shooting him at the bottom, going up. The shot shows Norman from behind and demonstrates an effeminate nature as he's climbing the stairs. It is only because the viewer watches him go up the stairs from behind that this very womanlike stride is noticed, which would indicate that Hitchcock purposely put it in as an indication of Norman's true orientation. This could however, just be Perkin's own gait and consequently a part of his characteristic, which complemented Norman's own personality.

In the final moments of the film, Norman's true affliction is explained by a psychiatrist as being a split personality with part of this personality being a construction of his mother. This mother part has supposedly gradually taken over and has completely occupied him. From what the audience gathers about the queer relationship Norman and his mother have, the way it manifests itself within Norman's psyche, is exactly how they acted towards one another while his mother was still alive. The mother is constantly overbearing and controlling, forcing Norman to conform to her wants. It is thus not surprising that the mother figure that manifested within Norman's mind follows the same characteristics as her living version.

Like the aforementioned films, *Psycho* also features a container of sorts. Norman is basically a prisoner to the hotel. He cannot leave it or the house he grew up in out of some form of loyalty to his dead mother. As such, his true self manifests itself in this self imposed prison very much like *Cat People's* Irena and her leopard cage.

With regard to the two men closest to Marion throughout the film, Norman and Sam, much can be said about their presence within the film. Both are infatuated with Marion, though perhaps for different reasons. In his book *In the name of National Security*, Roger Corber explains that there is an underlying relationship between the two men. He says, "[Sam] and Norman function as mirror images of each other. Marion's encounter with Norman at the hotel

reverses her encounter with same in the film's opening scene. Whereas Norman offers her food instead of sex, Sam offers her sex instead of food" (214).



Fig11.Bosom buddies. Sam and Lila visit the motel as a married couple, hoping to find some evidence as to what happened to Marion. These two shots feature Sam trying to distract Norman from Lila's snooping. Both hint at a very intimate moment between the two male characters. Copyright 1960 Paramount, and 1998 Universal.

Together, they form the perfect person to take care of Marion's needs. It is not just Norman, but also Sam who features homosexual, or at the very least bisexual, tendencies. In his book *A Long Hard Look at Psycho*, film critic Raymond Durnat also notes the many similarities between Sam and Norman. "Both men are low-income stick-in-the-muds hamstrung by past women, unable to escape dark stifling homes and psychologically unstable"(37). Sam's refusal to marry Marion, for the sole purpose that there is no money seems somewhat suspicious. It would seem more likely that his defiance to marry Marion stems from a distrust of women, which he attained after his failed marriage. That fact that he and Marion, in having sex while he is still married, are breaking the law, is another noteworthy point. While an onscreen homosexual intimate moment would be unheard of, the next best thing would be to provide a scene which is much less

shocking, though almost just as illegal. Sam enjoys participating in an unlawful act, which is perhaps another reason why he does not want to marry Marion, because if he did, the thrill of their illegal affair will be over

The explanation of Norman's illness however, given in the penultimate scene at the police station raises more questions about Norman's character than it answers. However, the audience does not have to accept the psychiatrist explanation of Norman's psychosis. Indeed, while the psychiatrist explains that the mother half of Norman killed Marion, the final voice over of the film, provided by Norman's mother, suggests that he killed Marion, and tried to blame it on her. Thus in the end the audience is still not sure who to believe. Roger Corber suggests the film's opening sequence is already an indication of an inability to be structured and unambiguous. The opening titles and scene he says, are "meant to disavow film's ability to organize and give meaning to the events of the world. They suggest that despite its ability to conjure reality, film reinforces, rather than limits, the construction of the individual's subjectivity across variable axes of difference" (193). While the psychiatrist is trying to attach a motive to the murders, Hitchcock has already planted a seed in the mind of the viewer that the murders which have taken place in the film cannot be categorized as easily as the psychiatrist might like to think.

7.1. *Psycho* (1998)

As already mentioned in the chapter on remakes, Gus Van Sant's remake of Hitchcock's *Psycho*, is perhaps a remake in the fullest sense. The movie is filmed shot by shot, albeit this time in color, in almost the exact way as the original. The script is the exact same one Joseph Stefano wrote for Hitchcock's film. Because of this, the scenes and shots that are different jump out at the viewer who is familiar with Hitchcock's version. While in some scenes the homosexual

subtext is toned down, it seems to be intensified in others. The violence, though still tasteful shot, has also increased. The blood, now more visible and emphasized because of the movie's color, is also enhanced.

While Vince Vaughn portrays a believable Norman, it does not come as close as Anthony Perkins rendition of the character. this could be because of personality traits. As already mentioned above, because Perkins was most likely a closeted homosexual, he was able to bring that sense of a hidden secret to Norman's character and attitude.

When Norman is spying on Marion through the wall that separates the parlor and her motel room, Norman starts masturbating, something that was not present in Hitchcock's version. The scene seems suddenly forced and becomes ridiculous as well. Film Critic Roger Ebert says about this particular scene in his review of the film, "even if Hitchcock was hinting at sexual voyeurism in his 1960 version, it is better not to represent it literally, since the jiggling of Norman's head and the damp off-screen sound effects inspire a laugh at the precise moment when one is not wanted"(par.7).

This version features the same staircase scene leading up to the confrontation with his mother and her reluctance to leave the room. The audience at this point does not know that she is dead. In keeping true to the original scene, Vaughn's Norman also displays a feminine walk, though somewhat more reserved than Perkin's own walk. Several lines from the original script, due to the changing connotation of several words or phrases, now hint at homosexual themes whereas they did not, or at least not blatantly in the original. When Norman implores his mother to go down in the fruit cellar, she replies by saying "Think I'm fruity do you?" (*Psycho*) While at the time of the original film's screening, 'fruity' was already a euphemism for homosexual, it was still more often used to imply someone who is crazy or mentally unstable. By the time the

1998 version was released, 'fruity' was more closely connected to being homosexual rather than being mentally ill.

Hitchcock's as well as Van Sant's version have provided many critics and filmgoers to different conclusions regarding the sexual ambiguity within the characters of the movie.

Raymond Durnat notes how Norman is credited with so many sexual themes, some of which were added by Van Sant. "maybe actual incest with his mother went on; surely he was gay as well (getting bullied by Sam is latently homosexual)... Van Sant's remake has Norman beating his meat while admiring Marion, and , Sam baring his manly buns while standing by the window. Norman is credited with all these sins"(215).

Perhaps the most terrifying about *psycho*, both in the original and the remake is Norman's normalcy. A monster in the normal sense, even if it was once human as is the case with the antagonists in *Cat People* and *The Fly*, is, for the audience, much easier to distance themselves from. It is the revelation of Norman's true self, one which remains hidden inside him, that is the real terrifying factor of the movie. This compliments the feeling of the 'other' within American society. Norman is an example of how people may look the same, but underneath harbor sinister secrets. The homosexual theme also comes to light in Norman's hidden agenda. He seems normal at first glance, though a repressed sexuality soon makes itself known. The terror that people felt and in some cases still feel towards homosexuality, like with Norman, lies deep within.

Conclusion

Homosexual themes are no longer a form of taboo in film. It is no longer necessary for the monster to exhibit homosexual tendencies simply because he is no longer the other. The gay liberation as well as the emergence of other taboo-like themes have helped homosexual themes become a normal, rather than a paranormal part of horror films as well as other genres of film in general.

Though perhaps subtle, the presence of homosexual themes in *Dracula*, *Cat People*, *the Fly* and *Psycho* are just a few examples of the large catalogue of American films that feature gay undertones. These films, as well as their respective remakes, showcased the 'other' being ostracized, but also standing up for themselves and fighting for what they wanted. The remakes of the film illustrate that homosexuality is no longer as big a taboo as other themes, like Incest, AIDS and bestiality. Filmmakers, especially horror filmmakers make use of contemporary events in order for the audience to understand it. As such the acceptance of gay people and the ongoing fight for gay rights, is reflected in Hollywood by the gay characters who no longer hide in the shadows, but have just as much the chance to be the hero, or in the case of the horror genre, the victim as any other character.

Furthermore, the symbolism of sexual containment or imprisonment is of great importance to the films discussed. Whether it is Dracula's and his coffin, Irena and the leopard cage, Andre and Seth with their teleportation Chamber, or Norman with the Hotel and the basement he keeps his mother in, the characters are all sexually imprisoned, mostly by their own accord or by the norms of society. The horrors which occur in the narrative of the respective film, are the result of them trying to free themselves from these containers or at the very least from the suggested oppression these prisons imply.

The part that films in the early years of Hollywood played is of extreme importance as well. The 'other' as the monster, visualized the presence of homosexuality in the entertainment industry when there was no other way for homosexual themes to be portrayed in any kind of movie. The subsequent demise of the PCA is another deciding factor that gave filmmakers the opportunity to be more liberal with gay themes in their movies, which in turn helped the gay liberation on its way.

Homosexual characters are no longer the typical feminine stereotype, nor are they the monster, the 'other' who needs to be feared and defeated. Gay characters are now part of the background, they provide important plot developments, and their orientation is no longer a dirty secret which they have to keep hidden.

As such, the more accepting American society becomes, however slow that may go, so too does the entertainment industry allow for homosexual themes to become much less ridiculed and boycotted. In its place, Hollywood inserts more gore, ultra violence, or some other form of taboo theme to their horror films, that to this generation is far more horrifying than the gay subtext they witness in their daily lives. Hollywood therefore evolves just as Americans and their communities do.

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