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Psycho Dressed Again. Intramedial Adaptation between Tacit Reworking and Mould

Abstract: Although the term adaptation is usually applied to cases of intermediality, it can be conceptualized also in intramedial terms, that is, as an adaptation of a work inside the same medium, as is the case with the film remake. Intramedial adaptation is a continuum between two poles: the first is that of the tacit reworking, which is so different from the original that makes the term remake inadequate (and it does not pose copyright issues); the second is that of the mould, that is, an extreme form of remake which reworks in a meticulous manner the narrative and stylistic features of the previous film. In this article we will address the matter by examining how *Dressed to Kill* (Brian De Palma, 1980) and *Psycho* (Gus Van Sant, 1998) relate to *Psycho* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1960). *Dressed to Kill* makes no explicit reference to Hitchcock's masterpiece; nevertheless, it is an evident, albeit tacit, reworking of the latter. On the contrary, *Psycho* (1998) is notorious for being an almost shot-for-shot remake of the original *Psycho* (both screenplays were written by Joseph Stefano). In other words, it is a narrative and stylistic mould of the previous film more than a new adaptation of Robert Bloch's namesake novel (1959). *Dressed to Kill* – which follows the structure of *Psycho*'s plot while changing the story – updates the themes of the latter (the deadly sexual drive, the dissociative identity disorder) to a period following the sexual revolution, making clear what in Hitchcock's film was only allusive. Contrariwise, *Psycho* (1998) is such an extreme remake that it both looks like an adaptation of the story to the contemporary period and like an adaptation of the entire form of the original film, that is, as an almost identical occurrence of both the narrative and the stylistic features of the first *Psycho*.

Keywords: Intramedial Adaptation, Film Remake, *Dressed to Kill* (1980), *Psycho* (1960), *Psycho* (1998).

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The typical case of adaptation in cinema is that of “a film that relies for some of its material on a previous written work and the word differentiates such films from films produced from an original screenplay” (MacCabe 3), though a film may be adapted from a variety of sources. At any rate, the term adaptation is usually applied to cases of intermediality, that is, when pre-existing narrative content is derived from a medium different than film, such as a “written work” indeed. According to Lars Elleström, adaptation is a kind of media transformation, since it pertains to relationships between different media (511). However, as Elleström himself admits (512), adaptation can be conceptualized also in *intramedial* terms, that is, an adaptation of a work inside the same medium, for instance an adaptation in theater from play to play in theater (Laera) and from song to song in music (Ingham). This happens in the case of the film remake: as Linda Hutcheon and Siobhan O’Flynn (170) state, “[R]emakes are invariably adaptations because of changes in context.” According to Linda Seger, this is both a *praxis* and a necessity for the film’s success, accomplishing “some new resonance, some new meaning that the film brings to contemporary audiences” (65-66). Similarly, Leonardo Quaresima observes that a remake puts the text “in a different network of meaning and different cultural systems. Every remake, then, is a *recontextualisation*, an insertion of the text into a network of circumstances, independently of any way in which the text may be updated” (81). More specifically, a remake is conceived by Riccardo Fassone as a phenomenon that entails “an *intramedial* adaptation of a film” which in turn generates a hypertext establishing “an *intertextual dialogue* between two or more films” (225, our translation, original emphasis). The terms hypertext and intertext are evocative of Gérard Genette, who defines hypertextuality as “any relationship uniting a text B ([...] the *hypertext*) to an earlier text ([...] the *hypotext*), upon which it is grafted in a manner that is not that of commentary” (5), while intertextuality entails practices such as quoting, plagiarism, and allusion. Thus, both the adaptation from a literary source – a subject excluded from this article – and the remake are forms of Genettian hypertextuality.

Andrew Horton and Stuart Y. McDougal state that remakes are films that *announce* some relationship with previous films, and that “[T]he term *remake* [...] comprises a broad range of possibilities” (5). In fact, we believe that using the term remake to define such a great variety of hypertextual relationships between given films is inadequate because it leads to confusion. Therefore, we prefer to use a restricted definition of remake, the one that we believe is used in the industry as well as in critical and popular discourses: as Leo Braudy states, the term remake was first used in journalism and in the film industry (327). Raphaëlle Moine observes that

“The notion of remake was born inside the Hollywood film industry to indicate specifically a technique of film production, different from other forms of reworking and repetition, such as genre, [literary] adaptation, parody, pastiche, which have long predated the development of cinema and relate to other arts and cultural industries as well.” (3, our translation).

Hence, in our opinion, when applied to fiction film the term remake should be used only to denote a film that narrates more or less the same story of a pre-existing film, usually by explicitly acknowledging the original film (by sharing its title, for example).

According to Constantine Verevis, a remake can be intended as a threefold category: industrial, textual, and critical. Thus, it is necessary to “research into the concept of remaking, in both its legal-industrial and critical-interpretative definitions” (“Film Remakes” 29). We believe that the term remake should be used in a restricted sense, implying all three categories above. A film presented by the industry as a remake is usually endowed with the same story of a previous film, and it is considered to be a remake in critical discourses as well. Verevis rightly notices that a remake may point to the original film both intertextually and extratextually (23). On an intertextual level, we have the same characters, the same narrative world, the same key events, and so on. On an extratextual level, the original film may be referenced in the promotional materials, in order to stress the fact that a given film is indeed a remake. It can also be labelled as such in critical and institutional discourses. This helps focusing on another recurring aspect of remakes that does not pertain to the kind of intramedial adaptation that we call tacit reworking, since in this case the only mention to the adaptation of pre-existing material may be carried out by filmmakers, critics or scholars, but not “officially” announced. A film cannot be remade unless permission is granted by the copyright holders – i.e., copyright must be cleared beforehand – or unless the work has fallen into public domain. The latter case may be problematic, since a film may be an implicit remake of a previous film as there is no legal need to acknowledge the source. However, it seems to us that this rarely happens. At any rate, Moine is right in stating that “remake is above all a matter of law [*droit*]”, also in order to distinguish it from plagiarism (22, our translation): “It is not because two films resemble each other that the one is the remake of the other, and textual and legal criteria can be useful here” (48, our translation).

In the third element of his taxonomy of remakes, Robert Eberwein (29) speaks of “[A] film made by a director consciously drawing on elements and movies of another director.” He mentions Howard Hawks’s and Brian De Palma’s versions of *Scarface* (1932 and 1983, respectively); Alfred Hitchcock’s *Vertigo* (1959), *Rear Window* (1955) and *Psycho* (1960); and De Palma’s *Obsession* (1976), *Body Double* (1984), and *Raising Cain* (1992). In our opinion, only *Scarface* qualifies as a remake, since it narrates the same story of the original film, although with considerable differences. It is true that the *Scarface* remake does not mention, in its credits, the fact that it is a remake, nor does it refer to Armitage Trail’s novel (1929) upon which the original film – and maybe this one as well – is based. However, in any case, (a) the two films share the same title, and (b) the 1983 *Scarface* film is dedicated to both Howard Hawks and Ben Hecht, screenwriters of the 1932 version, directed by Hawks himself. As a matter of fact, Universal had to acquire the rights for *Scarface* before remaking it (McBride 44).

The other films mentioned by Eberwein are not remakes in any sense of the word (certainly not in industrial terms): they are clearly, albeit implicitly, inspired by Hitchcock's films, but their stories, characters, and narrative worlds are different. Similarly, Lucy Fischer (1998) discusses *High Heels* (*Tacones Lejanos*, Pedro Almodóvar, 1991, co-produced by Spain and France) as a remake of *Imitation of Life* (Douglas Sirk, 1959, US). However, it is improper to call it a remake since it is a reworking of themes and narrative elements derived from the previous film rather than a new film narrating the same story. The case of *Dressed to Kill* (1980) is akin to these, as we intend to demonstrate. As Laura Grindstaff (274) states, citing precisely *Dressed to Kill* related to *Psycho* (along with *Body Heat* [Lawrence Kasdan, 1984], "based on *Double Indemnity*" [Billy Wilder, 1944]), a "new film can borrow so loosely from an older one that it is not officially acknowledged to be a remake at all."

Nevertheless, we are aware that the remake entails many relevant aspects beyond this definition that must be acknowledge, since a film may be adapted into another film without being a remake *stricto sensu* of the former. Although Moine analyzes specifically US remakes of French films, some of her theoretical reflections are useful as regards remakes in general. She states that

"the relationship between a remake and its film source is extremely variable, even in the apparently clearest case where the new version remakes a film based on an original screenplay and where the film is revealed as a 'remake' in its credits. Some remakes redo a film almost shot-for-shot; others use a screenplay already filmed by rewriting it beforehand and inserting many or a few variants; others rework a story more loosely; and finally, others are simply inspired by an idea already filmed" (n. pag., our translation). Such a variety of options demonstrates that there are "two extreme poles between which a whole range of remakes extends." (n. pag., our translation).

The first pole is that of the "copy" of a film, that we prefer to call *mould*, that is, the extreme remake which meticulously reworks the narrative and stylistic features of the previous film. Indeed, as Quaresima explains, a remake usually bases itself on narrative features such as the plot, the characters, and the situations, but "it can also put its trust in the style," revealing that cinema is "a highly *mannerist medium*" (79). The second pole presents "the recreation of an already filmed idea," that we call *tacit reworking*. While Fassone labels this "implicit remake" (225, our translation), as noted before we do not intend it as a remake; we agree with Jennifer Forrest and Leonard R. Koos instead, who affirm that "'false' remake is not a remake at all but an *adaptation*" (21, our emphasis). Julie Sanders would not even consider it as a kind of adaptation, preferring the term *appropriation* instead, in order to stress the fact that the original material is extensively reworked, in a way that according to her is not usual in adaptations (28). Between these two poles, most remakes are characterized "more by imitation/transformation of the original sources [...] than by imitation of the film – the relationship between the dose of imitation and the dose of transformation being

extremely variable" (Moine, n.pag., our translation). In any case we are dealing with an intramedial adaptation (or at least hypertextuality), because preexisting narrative material is taken and made suitable for a new work. Moreover, Moine rightly observes that, despite their differences, the phenomena of the remake and the quotation are connected due to two factors: first, the quotation is partial, not extended to the whole film; second, they work differently because the quotation must be identified, it is a *mise en exergue* which requires an act of interpretation depending on the audience's cultural context. As regards the audience's interpretation, Moine affirms that "[R]emake clearly has two different audiences: one that knows they are watching a remade film," and that may interpret it "in light of the previous film" if they have seen it; another "that ignores the latter and so receives the film as an original" (n. pag., our translation). This is true not only for remakes, but also for other forms of intramedial adaptation, because any kind of hypertext may be best experienced only in its relationship with its hypotext. Our analysis of two films placed at the poles of the intramedial adaptation continuum aims at demonstrating such an assumption.

The Tacit Reworking: *Dressed to Kill* (1980)

Brian De Palma did direct two remakes: *Scarface* (1983 [original film *Scarface*, 1932] and *Passion* (2012 [original film *Love Crime / Crime d'amour*, 2010]). Other films of his are literary adaptations, while *Mission: Impossible* (1996) is based on the television series of the same title. However, while it is regularly acknowledged that he is inspired by Alfred Hitchcock, he never remade one Hitch's films. In fact, De Palma's Hitchcockian thrillers narrate different stories than the ones from the films which they nevertheless rework, so no copyright had to be respected. *Sisters* (1973) reworks *Psycho* and *Rear Window* (1954); *Obsession* (1976) reworks *Vertigo* (1958); *Body Double* (1984) reworks *Rear Window* and *Vertigo*; *Dressed to Kill* (1980) and *Raising Cain* (1992) rework *Psycho*. Also, in other films De Palma inserts further elements taken from Hitchcock's cinema. Most significantly, the element of the shower and its link with sex and/or death is taken from *Psycho* and used in *Carrie* (1976), *Dressed to Kill*, *Blow Out*, *Body Double*, *Scarface*, and *Passion*, while *Phantom of the Paradise* (1974) contains a playful spoof of this scene (Piemontese 127). In short, De Palma repeatedly appropriates narrative – as well as stylistic – features from Hitchcock's films, to such an extent that he has been accused of stealing from Hitchcock and thus being merely derivative (see Leitch "How to Steal from Hitchcock" 251-70). However, we wish to demonstrate that, at least in *Dressed to Kill*, such an appropriation underpins a virtuosic and mannerist intramedial adaptation of *Psycho* that gives rise to an autonomous work of fiction while at the same time offering an updating of some of the previous film's features.

Dressed to Kill is an intramedial adaptation of *Psycho* (1960), by which writer and director De Palma pays homage by reworking the theme of the double. The film clearly presents a binary structure akin to its model. In *Psycho*, Marion, a young office employer, is tired of hiding her relationship with Sam, and wants to marry him. She

steals \$40,000 and flees, reaching a motel run by Norman Bates and named after him, where she is killed, presumably by Norman's psychopathic mother. Norman covers the murder. Marion's sister Lila and Sam help private detective Arbogast to search for Marion, but Arbogast, too, is murdered by the same killer than Marion at Bates's house next to the motel. Lila and Sam find out that Norman's mother is actually dead, and that Norman, suffering from dissociative identity disorder, is the killer. After murdering his mother and her lover in a fit of jealousy, Norman unconsciously tried to keep her alive by creating a second identity in his psyche. In *Dressed to Kill*, Kate is a middle-age woman, dissatisfied with her marriage and her sex life. After a psychotherapy session with Dr. Elliott, she encounters a stranger who seduces her and they have sex. She discovers that the stranger has contracted a venereal disease, so she flees in shock, but is killed by a mysterious female character, believed to be Bobbi, one of Elliott's patients. Liz, a prostitute who finds Kate's body, is suspected of the murder, and tries to clear her name, while Bobbi stalks her. Thanks to Liz, helped by Kate's son Peter, it is finally revealed that Bobbi is Elliott's female identity, and that he kills the women that arouse him, since they reinforce his male sexuality thus hindering the attempt to transition to a unified female subject.

The plot structure of *Dressed to Kill* is a reworking of *Psycho*'s. Marion is a multifaceted protagonist, since she has a precise goal for each storyline: the relational one (to marry Sam), the financial one (to flee with the stolen money), and the psychological one (to prove to herself that she can be independent).¹ Less than midway of the film she is murdered, and her sister Lila – until then absent from the narrative – takes over as the new protagonist. However, Lila does not have strong such conflicts as her sister's: the only need that drives her is that of finding the truth about Marion's disappearance. In the first part of *Dressed to Kill* the protagonist is Kate, whose story is based on her need of being sexually satisfied – hence, her desire to have sex with a different partner.² When she is killed the audience gets confused because the protagonist then becomes Liz, who has just been introduced into the narrative. Contrary to Kate, Liz does not have strong conflicts either: her goal is that of clearing herself of Kate's murder and, to a lesser extent, making money.

Both films also present repetitions of similar particular events. In *Psycho*, Norman is questioned twice, first by Arbogast and then by Sam; Norman kills twice, and is twice shown near the pond where he submerges the bodies; Lila and Sam check in the motel just as Marion did before them; above all, Norman's psyche is split in two, and there are two Mrs. Bates so to speak (the corpse of the real mother and Norman's impersonation of her). In *Dressed to Kill*, we see Dr. Elliott's therapy sessions twice; he is asked twice about his sexual desire, first by Kate and then by Liz; he is split in two, since he also acts as Bobbi, the female identity through which he kills; a policewoman is Bobbi's *doppelgänger*. *Dressed to Kill* self-consciously stresses this point, as mirrors and reflective surfaces have a relevant role in the film (Rizzi and Tosolini 218-19): a mirror is present in both the first and the last sequence; Elliott looks at himself in

the mirror four times, three of which during the therapy sessions as if feeling afraid of losing himself because of the sexual arousal; and the policewoman is reflected in a window during the film's climax. In short, according to Bisoni, this adaptation of *Psycho* is constructed on the theme of the double: "*Dressed to Kill* shows a typical story of double personality. And it does so by using the fetishes which are more or less canonically typical of such condition: mirrors [...], split screen" (154, our translation).

The first scene opens with a tracking shot moving forward through a dimly lit bedroom with an undone bed, possibly after sexual intercourse. This camera movement "invades the privacy of couple" as happens at the beginning of *Psycho* (Canet 20). The shot continues in the bathroom lit by lamps and a window. The window is seen from the first frame: it is the first reflective surface we encounter, but the glass is opaque and prevents us from seeing what is on the other side – just like all the characters in the narrative are not able to understand what is happening. Moreover, the window is barred, evoking Kate's triple metaphorical imprisonment – her marriage, the advancing age, and the irreversibility of the adultery leading to her murder. The sense of entrapment is shared by Liz, who is coerced to stay in New York and even to enter Elliott's office so as to steal his appointment book; and obviously by Bobbi, who is trapped in Elliott's male body. In the first scene, Kate is perceived taking a shower while her husband is shaving with a razor in front of a mirror, ignoring her. She watches her husband while touching herself in pleasure, accompanied by Pino Donaggio's sensuous musical score. Suddenly, Kate is attacked by a mysterious man who appears from behind her and rapes her, as the score suddenly becomes eerie. This is a dreamlike sequence which contains several key elements that appear in the film: sexual desire and violence; a mirror which doubles images; a phallic razor which foreshadows the weapon the killer will use later. This sequence already has a strong connection to *Psycho*, whose first sequence shows a tracking shot forward through a window and entering a hotel bedroom where it is implied that Marion and Sam have just had sex.

Psycho's most famous scene is Marion's murder in the shower, which De Palma reworks as a *topos*. It is telling that *Dressed to Kill* opens with a woman in a shower who is attacked by a man and that the same circumstance is replicated at the end of the film. In *Psycho* the shower seems to be a place of purification – after talking to Norman, Marion repents from stealing and decides to go back to Phoenix – although death ensues. However, the murder is brought about by passion rather than money: Norman is attracted to her, which is why his mother's identity takes over punitively and kills her. In *Dressed to Kill* sexuality is immediately and evidently implicated. Maybe Kate is attacked because she wants to attain the sexual pleasure that her husband is unable (or unwilling) to give her; at the same time, this scene is a dramaturgical set-up of her murder, which will occur after she has committed adultery. Moreover, since her occasional partner has venereal disease, the link between sex and death has already been established. The symbolic reason for

Marion's death is triple: she is a fornicator, she is a thief, and she has sexually aroused the wrong man. As for Kate, she is punished – through the risk of venereal disease and through murder – because she is adulterous. Liz herself is killed, though only in a dream, and her sexuality is non-normative as well, since she is a prostitute. Tellingly, Peter is so absorbed in science and technology (in which he is skilled) that he seems to have no interest in sex, and that aura of sinless innocence seems to prevent him from being attacked by Bobbi – i.e., contaminated by the unsettlements of sexuality. Just like *Psycho, Dressed to Kill* presents a link between sex and guilt: “[t]he murder and the attempted murders in the film are narratively motivated by the women’s sexual fantasies and activities” (Kuhn 124). At the same time, the uncanniness of sexuality which characterizes *Psycho* is magnified in *Dressed to Kill*, being shared by Kate, Liz, and obviously Elliott, inside whose male body lives a female identity, Bobbi. As Norman-as-Mother kills the women that arouse him because Mother wants to protect him from them, Elliott-as-Bobbi kills the women that arouse him as a man because this prevents him from completing his male to female transition.

De Palma's adaptation of *Psycho*'s shower scene is twofold: not only does he use the shower as a *topos*, he also reworks the scene of Kate's murder in the elevator. The shower scene was deemed revolutionary and devastating, considering the state of mainstream cinema in 1960. De Palma increases the violence (as well as the sex and language obscenities) to such an extent that he had problems with the Motion Pictures Association of America.³ Cuts were made to *Dressed to Kill*: removing gory aspects of the murder and bodily details of the opening shower scene were removed, and some dialogues were made less crude. According to Canet (20), the explicit violence may depend on the fact that “after an era of censorship, some kind of expressive freedom in this sense was necessary”; in any case, such explicitness is a staple of De Palma, which recurs in his films regardless of the necessity of updating *Psycho*. The filmmaker substitutes the shower for an elevator and the bathtub curtain for a sliding door, which nonetheless moves from left to right like the curtain in the bathroom. As for the style, the scene contains several different camera angles, like *Psycho*'s. Instead of Bernard Herrmann's string score, Donaggio provides an orchestral piece which nevertheless evokes *Psycho*, thanks to *sforzando* chords and trombone descending glissandos.

One significant structural difference between the two films occurs in the ending. In *Psycho*, after the psychiatrist's explanation of what happened, the film cuts to a to the scene of Norman in a cell and we listen to his mental voice, confirming that he has now psychically become his mother. In *Dressed to Kill*, the correlative of the psychiatrist's explanation is followed by three other sequences: in the first, Liz and Pete talk about Elliott's condition and sex reassignment surgery; in the second, which takes place inside a mental institution, Elliott kills a nurse and undresses her in order to take her clothes; in the third and last scene of the film, Elliott – in Bobbi's identity – goes to Peters' house where Liz is taking a shower and cuts her throat (but it is then revealed that what happened is only a dream). This second dream is set up during

Liz's session with Elliott: she recounts a nightmare in which she is in the house of a friend of hers, where she has actually never set foot, and a man enters and forces himself on her, stabbing her with a razor while he does so. Such an ending provides a circular closure to the film, absent from *Psycho*. As noted before *Dressed to Kill* opened with a nightmare of the protagonist of the first part, which both foreshadowed her death and immediately suggested De Palma's will of adapting *Psycho*. The ending presents itself as a nightmare as well, but this time by the protagonist of the film's second part. While *Psycho* ended with the defeat of Norman and the reveal of what happened *Dressed to Kill* shows that the danger of what Elliott represented has been incorporated in Liz's unconscious. This reinforces the film's meanings (e.g., there is a Bobbi inside the unconscious of every one of us; sexuality has an intrinsic disturbing side⁴). Above all, it reveals once again, and in a striking way, how De Palma's adaptation of *Psycho* entails the intensification of the sexual references already contained in the previous film (albeit moderately), in a very a mannerist style that tends towards self-reflexivity. A dream is a sort of doubling of reality, a distorted mirror of it, and it is revelatory of the truth, if one has the ability to interpret it.

The Mould: *Psycho* (1998)

Gus Van Sant's *Psycho* (1998) is famous inasmuch as it is almost a "shot-for-shot" remake of the original *Psycho*. The film is not simply – or not at all – a new adaptation of the namesake novel by Robert Bloch (1959) but rather an adaptation of the previous film in its entirety, that is, a narrative and stylistic mould. In other words, *Psycho* (1998) is such an extreme remake that it not only looks like an adaptation of the story to the contemporary period but also like an adaptation of the entire form of the original film, that is, an almost identical occurrence of both the narrative and the stylistic features of the first *Psycho*. Therefore, there is an "intramedial dialogue" between the 1998 film and the 1960. In this sense, Van Sant's *Psycho* is in all and for all a remake of the Hitchcockian film" (Fassone 223, our translation). Nevertheless, the film is certainly not a copy of the original film, as Canet (18) justly states, and there are many inconsistency between the two although most of them are not easily noticeable.⁵

The adaptative *praxis* of *Psycho* (1998) seems to be motivated by the will to answer the following question: how would *Psycho* be if it were produced in our present days? Thus, the film is characterized by two crucial aspects: first, the narrative presents some changes in order to adapt the story to a different historical period, namely 1998, the year of the film's release; second, the stylistic patterning follows that of *Psycho* (1960), with some minor changes made, as if to test the modernity of the original film and, at the same time, with some features retouched as if to accomplish what was not physically possible in 1960 (but only *in potentia*). Both these changes highlight the experimental nature of the enterprise.

The plot starts on Friday, 11 December 1998 at 2:43 p.m., the same day and time of the original film, albeit in a different year. In *Psycho* (1960) the year is not specified,

but it is implied to be 1959 and in that year the 11 December was indeed a Friday. Thus, the setting and other details of the remake are made plausible for 1998: for example, the amount of money that Marion steals is not \$40,000 but \$400,000, and the cost of the used car is not \$700 but \$4,000. Some dialogues have been slightly changed as well, presumably to make them more credible for 1998. Bates's house was modified, but it still looks quite old-fashioned, or else the spirit of the previous film would be hopelessly changed.

Generally speaking, the remake contains many more (and more explicit) references to sexuality than the original film. This comes as no surprise since it is consistent with the updating. However, there is another reason, which has more to do with the adaptation: *Psycho* (1960) challenged the acceptability standards of mainstream films of the time, so much that it was judged controversial by the MPAA. The film narrates a premarital affair between Marion and Sam, and the psychosis of Norman, who is an Oedipal cross-dressing murderer; depicts a brutal killing in the shower; shows Marion in bra twice; reveals Norman's act of voyeurism, the embalmed corpse of Mrs. Bates; as well as a toilet being flushed. The film's references to sexual perversion were ahead of its time, and were both seminal and discussed by scholars (e.g., Bordwell 224-48). *Psycho* (1998) enhances such references to sexuality in order to both actualize and reinforce meanings – explicit and implicit – and the themes of the original film. At the same time, the female characters are depicted as being stronger and more active.

In the first sequence, offscreen sounds imply that someone is having sexual intercourse in an adjacent room, as Marion and Sam have presumably just done. When Sam goes towards the window his buttocks are shown: such naked body serves both as the male counterpart to the female one (Marion's) which was already present – albeit marginally – in the original film and as an eroticization of Sam. Norman masturbates while spying on Marion undressing, thus making his voyeurism even more blatant (and resulting from a phallogentric gaze, according to Donaldson-McHugh and Moore [232]). While Sam and Lila are waiting for Arbogast, Sam looks at an LP album of Judy Garland. This may be intended as a hint to gay culture, of which Garland is a staple. In this way, the film is once again subtly referring to non-normative sexuality. The fact that the album is in the hands of Sam is particularly telling, because he has been characterized as a macho since the first sequence, more so than in the original film (also thanks to Mortensen's muscularity which surpasses that of John Gavin). The record in Norman's room, in *Psycho* (1960) consists of Beethoven's Third Symphony, called *Eroica*. It has been noted that the piece may have been chosen because the word "eroica" is similar to "erotica" (Naremore *Filmguide* 67). In the 1998 version, the record is *The World Needs a Melody*, by George Jones and Tammy Wynette, which avoids the sexual innuendo. The phone booth from which Arbogast calls Lila is placed next to a strip club, from which some sounds spread (men's whistles, muffled music). In the original film, Lila finds a book with a blank cover, she opens it and reads something inside that disquiets her. The audience has no

clue about the content of the book, which in Bloch's novel is described as containing an "almost pathologically pornographic" illustration (e-book, n. pag., ch. 15). In the remake, what Lila finds are some pornographic magazines, and she looks at them with a slight chuckle. So once again what could have been only imagined by the 1960s audience is made explicit here, and Lila's reaction is that of a worldly-wise woman. This is consistent with the character's overall portrayal in the most recent version, which is decidedly different from the original film (even more than it is for Marion). In Van Sant's film, Lila dresses in casual or sporty outfits; she moves in a strong and self-confident manner from her very first appearance, when she is seen listening to music through the earphones of her walkman; and during her first encounter with Norman she winks at him. It is particularly significant that in the film's climax she does not simply remain still while Sam stops Norman, but she helps him by kicking Norman. In Van Sant's adaptation, Julianne Moore gives the character a more aggressive attitude compared to Vera Miles in Hitchcock's version, making her more akin to the "final girl" character typical of slasher films (Verevis "For Ever Hitchcock" 23), while Anne Heche plays Marion in a livelier and more agile manner than Janet Leigh's demure one, providing a "natural flirty flibbertigibbet performance" (Salt 475). The casting is relevant also for extratextual reasons. Canet explains that the choices of Heche as Marion and Vince Vaughn as Norman have been criticized because of the heavy differences between their appearance and that of Leigh and Anthony Perkins in the original film, although Vaughn closely imitates Perkins's interpretation. According to Canet, such choices are "a sign of [Van Sant's] authorship": Perkins, "vulnerable and vaguely feminine," was rumored to be a homosexual, while "Vaughn's physique is bulky and masculine"; apart from looking quite different from Leigh, Heche already was an overt lesbian in 1998. Thus, Van Sant inverts Hitchcock's choices by assigning the veiled homosexuality to Marion rather than to Norman (Canet 23; see Crawford 110). Once again we have a hint to non-normative sexuality, which is consistent with Van Sant's poetics (Staiger [14] speaks of "a strong critique to heteronormativity" that makes *Psycho* "the 'gayest' of his film so far"). This demonstrates that a strict intramedial adaptation such as a mold should not be intended as a copy, since it may entail some difference in terms of authorship, expertise, and/or meaning. In the case of *Psycho* (1998), as will be further demonstrated, Van Sant's creative intervention, made possible by his collaborators (including actors and actresses), invites to interpret the original film and to elaborate on its possible meanings (specifically implicit and symptomatic ones regarding sexuality and gender roles) without changing its narrative or its overall stylistic patterning (Crawford 109).

There are also other narrative changes in 1998's *Psycho*, sometimes subtle and sometimes more significant. In the first sequence, while Marion and Sam are in the hotel room, a fly is shown in extreme close-up: this image functions as a visual rhyme, since it foreshadows the fly that, consistently with the original film, will be shown moving on Norman's hand in the last sequence. When Arbogast enters Norman's

parlor, a shot shows some golf clubs. In a later scene, Norman stuns Sam in the same parlor using one of the clubs. In the corresponding scenes of the 1960 film, there are no clubs; instead, Norman stuns Sam with a can, which had not been set up. The original scene where Sam and Lila meet the sheriff again, this time outside a church (a place of virtue opposed to sin), has been removed from Van Sant's version. The reason may be simply not to loosen the pace of the film, as the scene contained no crucial narrative events. When Lila enters the cellar in Bates's house she not only finds Mrs. Bates's corpse but also some birds in a cage. This is consistent with Norman's hobby of taxidermy, but it is also easily understandable as an intertextual reference to the film that Alfred Hitchcock directed after *Psycho*, *The Birds* (1963), as if to stress the link between the two films, both dealing with the uncanniness of sexuality.⁶ The birds are both a visual and an aural presence, and the sound of birds causes an amusing – though probably involuntary – connection with the original film. In Hitchcock's version, a few instants before Arbogast is killed, the soundtrack contains some sounds of birds which were accidentally recorded along with the music, since there were some birds near the recording stage. Such sounds are barely audible but enough haunting if one gets to hear them, because it seems as if the stuffed birds seen before are getting back to life – as is happening, so to speak, with Mrs. Bates, in both cases thanks to Norman. In the corresponding scene of Van Sant's adaptation there are no bird sounds, but their unmistakable presence in the cellar provides a similar effect.

As regards style, Van Sant follows the pattern of the original film as if it were a musical score, that is, a set of instructions aimed at giving life to a performance. At the same time, there are some changes which are motivated by at least three reasons: first, realizing what was not possible to do in 1960 but was already – actually or presumably – in the intentions of the filmmakers; second, making the film more compliant with the taste of the 1998 audience; third, emphasizing the film's self-reflexive experimental nature.

Psycho (1960) is in black and white, while its 1998 adaptation is in color. Therefore, the use of color is something altogether new, and is reasonable in an updating of the original film. At any rate, Hitchcock himself would have liked to shoot *Psycho* in color, were it not for both budgetary restraints and MPAA rating problems. In Van Sant's adaptation the soundtrack is no longer monophonic but rather stereophonic, specifically in 5.1 multichannel digital sound. However, acoustic spatialization is used minimally, and dialogues are almost always centered, as per common practice and maybe also in order to preserve in aural terms the spirit of the original while updating it.

Psycho (1998) opens with the logos of Universal Pictures and Imagine Entertainment, while the soundtrack contains newly recorded variations on Bernard Herrmann's score for the original *Psycho*. Suddenly, the screen becomes green and the main theme of *Psycho* begins; what follows is the same visual design of the original credits, but with green instead of grey. Differently from the original film, the movement of the

letters of the title “PSYCHO” happens in synch with the first beat of every musical measure. After the credits, an aerial shot of Phoenix is shown. The shot does not start with a dissolve, as in the original film, but with a visual effect that is derived from the opening credits. The upper half of the image enters the screen from left to right, while the lower half enters from right to left, until they join in the center. This shot is more technically complicated than in the original sequence, which contained a combination of pans, zoom, and dolly. What the film achieves is what was conceptually present in the original film, that is, a single movement ending inside the hotel room. Indeed, this is probably what Hitchcock would have liked to do but was not able to accomplish given the technical limitations of the time (Rebello, n. pag.).

The scene in the hotel room in *Psycho* (1998) immediately shows the film’s general approach to *mise en scène* and cinematography. Compared to the original film, the pace is faster, the acting is somewhat more natural, the camera moves a little bit more, shots are less wide and depth of field is more reduced (Salt 472-79; Naremore “Remaking *Psycho*” 7-11). An interesting fact is that *Psycho* (1960) “is cut a lot faster than the typical American film of 1959, whereas Van Sant’s version is near the norm for its period. In other words, most American filmmakers in 1999 had caught up with the cutting rate Hitchcock was using 40 years earlier” (Salt 472). This is the reason why *Psycho* (1998) can follow the cutting rate of the original film without seeming anachronistic; at the same time, such an approach may be intended as a practical demonstration of the modernity of *Psycho* (1960). There are other evident changes. The different angle of Norman’s shot during the dialogue with Marion in the parlor is obtained through a camera movement rather than through editing, and since there is less depth of field – as per the intrinsic stylistic norm of the film – the stuffed birds above him become less prominent. During Sam’s dialogue with Norman while Lila is in Bates’s house, when the two men walk from the office to the parlor there is no cut but rather a continuous lateral tracking shot. In the last sequence, there is a long shot showing the psychiatrist entering Norman’s cell before the interrogation. When the policeman gives Norman a blanket the action is shown through Norman’s point of view, while in the original it happened offscreen.

The soundtrack of Van Sant’s adaptation is richer than the original, consistently with the current stylistic norms. A clear instance is found in the scene where Marion decides to steal the money in her apartment, during which birdsong is audible in the background along with the score (Deutsch 60). When a pigeon lands on a bush outside the window, the flapping of its wings is audible. Such choice may be simply understood as motivated by conventions of cinematic realism, but one may find once again a specific reference to birds, serving as a foreshadowing of the climax. In other moments there are subtle, almost subliminal sounds that help construe the sequences as eerie: for instance, while Lila goes towards Bates’s house the insect sounds are somewhat odd, and when she enters the house children’s laughter is audible. The use of surround sound is mostly evident in two sequences, in which voices are

panned through all the five main channels: when Marion drives her car, and when Norman mentally speaks in his mother's voice. The score has been slightly retouched by Danny Elfman and Steve Bartek. The most relevant difference is that during the psychiatrist's explanation of Norman's situation Herrmann's music underscores the dialogue, while in the original film there was no music. Here the score seems to have been inserted only to avoid an abnormally long dialogue scene without music.

Tellingly, the three most renowned sequences of *Psycho* – namely, the murder in the shower, the killing of Arbogast, and the *anagnorisis* in the cellar – all present major stylistic alterations, which confirm the self-reflexive experimental nature of this intramedial adaptation. In *Psycho's* (1998) shower scene there are both slight and heavy differences, accurately described by Canet (24-27). For instance, before the attack, there are three more shots than in the original film, one of Marion and two of the shower head. The music starts some moments after the killer opens the curtain, and the repeated cuts on axis towards Marion's mouth are substituted by a zoom-in in slow motion. The blood is seen not only mixed with the water in the bathtub but also on the wall and coming from wounds on Marion's back in an overhead shot (as per screenwriter Joseph Stefano's intention), thus making the scene gorier. The score is slightly different and includes a phrase taken from the third occurrence of the piece in the original film, when Norman attacks Lila in the cellar. The camera makes more rotating movements while shooting dead Marion's eye, and the shot continues while the camera moves away from her, avoiding the insertion of a shot of the shower head which Hitchcock inevitably had to include in the original film because of technical limitations (Canet 27). Above all, some non-diegetic inserts are present: time-lapse images of a stormy sky are seen twice, while thunders are heard in the soundtrack, and there is an extreme close-up of a dilated pupil. The shots of the sky seem to be motivated purely by a conceptual reason, that of altering the template in order to reduce the perceiver's absorption, hence reminding us of the experimental nature of the film. At the same time, the time-lapse technique evokes other films directed by Van Sant (and certainly not Hitchcock's style) (Canet 27). The pupil image has a connection to the narrative, and stresses a factual error of the original film: since Marion is dead her pupil should be dilated, but in fact it is not. The same stands for Van Sant's film, where Marion's pupil is never dilated. Therefore, this shot does not correct the original mistake; actually, it only makes more noticeable the mistake which is repeated in the corresponding shot of Marion's corpse. It is significant that such a deliberate error takes place in the reworking of this famous scene but not elsewhere in the film. For example, in the original *Psycho* when Marion leaves with the new car the stick on the windshield disappears, suggesting a continuity error since it is unlikely that someone has already removed it. In the 1998 film, the car dealer is shown removing it while Marion departs. This confirms once again that, despite the film being presented as a mould, there is a continuous fluctuation between strict adherence to the model and the renovation thereof. The glaring error of the pupil in

the celebrated shower scene is maintained while the negligible continuity error of the used car shop is corrected.

Something similar happens in the Arbogast murder sequence. In contrast with the original film he is wounded three times in the face instead of once, and his close-up is interrupted twice by non-diegetic inserts with no synchronous sound (while the score continues playing). The first of these inserts shows an almost naked woman with a black mask, and looks like a low-definition televised picture; the second shows a calf in the middle of a road. These two inserts have the same self-reflexive quality of those from the shower scene. Moreover, the shot of the woman is doubly indicative of non-normative sexuality, since it evokes both BDSM and voyeurism. A more trivial difference is also that once Arbogast has fallen there is a distorted shot of the killer from the victim's point of view. Admittedly, this POV shot may retroactively suggest that the images of the woman and the calf are mental images of the victim. The special effect of Arbogast falling down the stairs looks quite similar to the fall in the original film although it has been filmed with updated technology (through a green screen instead of rear projection, though the scene looks only slightly more realistic. Thus, newer technology is used to achieve the same result, which may be deemed deliberately stylized and surreal, as it is arguably also in its original occurrence (Carrigy, n. pag.).

The climax in the cellar has more action in *Psycho* (1998) than the original, and some shots are filmed with a handheld camera. Most significantly, one shot of a cross-dressed Norman uses the counter zoom in order to make him more menacing. This technique is never used in the original film but it is still a reference to Hitchcock, since it was pioneered in *Vertigo* (1958).⁷ Furthermore, the famous musical cue starts later here than in the original film, after the killer's identity has been revealed, and is arranged in order to make it last longer, while the phantasmic female voice shouting "I'm Norm Bates!" and screaming in the original sequence has been removed, probably because it was considered inadequate for the new rendition of the scene (for instance, Vaughn doesn't have the same twisted grin as Perkins when he appears cross-dressed).

It is well known that Hitchcock used to make playful appearances in his films. In *Psycho* (1960) he is seen outside Marion's office while she enters it in the second sequence. In *Psycho* (1998) there is a Hitchcock look-alike in the same place, speaking to Van Sant himself, who is standing in front of him. Thus, such teasing tribute to Hitchcock by Van Sant shows the emulator receiving a lesson from his mentor, in a sort of handover. Considering all this, it is not surprising that Naremore calls the film "a metafilm,"⁸ or "less a horror movie than a purely intellectual exercise" ("Remaking *Psycho*" 7). Better put, even though *Psycho* (1998) can be appreciated in itself as a thriller, its "ideal spectator" is "one who is familiar with and recognizes Hitchcock's text" (Zanger 18), in other words, one who considers it as a hypertext that dialogues with its hypotext, which is symbolically what Van Sant is doing with Hitchcock in

the cameo. It should be clear that such a dialogue does not pertain to the technical quality of a copy (i.e., whether or not the copy is identical to the original), because Van Sant's film is not a copy of Hitchcock's one but rather a creative adaptation of it that, given its unquestionable "overwhelming sameness" (Crawford 117), makes it a metaphorical mould. Differently from Leitch, we believe that, although Van Sant's approach recalls that of an impersonator, still his film uses the original *Psycho* as "the point of departure for a new interpretation" (Leitch "Hitchcock without Hitchcock" 250). According to Verevis, this approach differs from the common practice of remaking "not *in kind*, but only *in degree*" ("For Ever Hitchcock" 27). In our words, it is placed at one pole of a continuum of intramedial adaptation.

Conclusion

Adaptation is not only an intermedial phenomenon but also an intramedial one, since it entails the reuse of preexisting material which is reworked for a new purpose. Intramedial adaptation is a continuum between two poles: that of the tacit reworking, in which the hypertextual relationship is implicit (so much so that the term remake is inadequate), and that of the mould, that is, the extreme remake which strictly follows the narrative and stylistic feature of the previous film. For the purpose of demonstrating this assumption we analyzed two films that relate to *Psycho* (1960) in two radically different ways. *Dressed to Kill* is a tacit reworking of *Psycho*, because it has a similar plot structure and themes while differing in terms of story. *Psycho* (1998) is a mould of *Psycho* (1960), because it has the same narrative and various stylistic features of the previous film. Further case studies are needed in order to test our "intramedial adaptation continuum" hypothesis, and also to discuss it in light of other analogous concepts such as appropriation that may enrich our argument.

End Notes

1. On the three storylines framework see Dara Marks (*Inside Story*).
2. On need and desire see Truby (n. pag., ch. 3).
3. The lack of the MPPA rating compromises the distribution and thus the commercial success of a film. *Psycho* had similar problems, but Hitchcock managed to obtain the rating without making any change to the film.
4. De Palma stated in an interview that "[S]ex is terrifying" (Hirschberg 87).
5. See Leitch's debatable but useful list of 101 differences between the two films ("101 Ways").
6. It may be argued that the birds evoke Buffalo Bill's butterflies in *The Silence of the Lambs* (Jonathan Demme, 1991). The character was inspired by the real Ed Gein, as was Norman Bates in Bloch's novel.
7. The counter zoom is so strongly evocative of *Vertigo*, in which it was pioneered, that it is also called *Vertigo* zoom. If one is remaking *Psycho* shot-for-shot, it is decidedly unlikely that the choice of the counter zoom – absent from the original *Psycho* – is not intended as a reference to *Vertigo*.
8. Similarly, Donaldson-McHugh and Moore state that, differently from the original film, the audience of *Psycho* (1998) is "now in the position of metacritics" (231),

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