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American Horror Story: Asylum Murphy's Queer Reality

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SYNOPSIS

In 1964, Massachusetts, a serial-killer named Bloody-Face kills and skins women. After having presumably killed his girlfriend, Kit Walker is accused of being the infamous killer and is interned in the Briarcliff Manor, home for the criminally insane.

The asylum is maintained under strict religious order by Sister Jude; a former drunk and bar singer, who turned nun after a hit-and-run in which the life of a young girl was threatened . Jude is "determined to force “productivity, prayer, and purification” on her patients[1]." Due to the arrival of Bloody Face, the asylum becomes the center of media attention. Lana Winters, a lesbian journalist, begins to investigate the care and treatment provided to the patients of the asylum. As she begins to discover the hidden horror, Sister Jude detains Lana as a patient to cure her homosexuality, and prevents the truth from ever getting out.

What ensues is a tale of sexual violence against women: electro-convulsive therapy, aversion/conversion therapy, rape, wire-hanger abortion, etc. Under these conditions, Lana forms new relationships with the patients and discovers the asylum's darker secrets. Dr Arden, employee of the institution, is a former Nazi who found refuge in the asylum after the Second World War, and uses the asylum to experiment on patients. As for Dr Oliver Thredson, Lana's psychiatrist who made his way into the asylum soon after the arrival of Kit Walker, he is the true Bloody Face. She is his next victim. As Lana plans her escape, Sister Jude also discovers the truth about Dr Arden. In order to protect himself and the reputation of the asylum, Arden (with the help of Monsignor Timothy Howard, Jude's superior) fakes a death certificate, thus leading everyone to believe Jude has died. The two, in reality, keep the Sister in solitary and try to erase her memory through the use (and abuse) of electro-convulsive therapy.

Ultimately, Lana succeeds in escaping the grips of Oliver Thredson (Bloody Face) and the asylum. As she finds her freedom, she releases incriminating recordings proving Thredson's guilt, and Kit Walker's innocence. A romanticized autobiography entitled "Maniac: One Woman's Story of Survival" triggers her rise to fame. The charges against Kit are dropped, and he regains his farm house in rural Massachusetts with his girlfriend, Grace Bertrand (whom he met in the asylum). In an unexpected turn of events, Kit finds his former wife, victim of Bloody Face, live and well in his home, as she breastfeeds her child.

Aliens, (who manifest themselves throughout the season) appear to have abducted Alma (Kit's wife), Kit, and Grace. Although Kit claims he was only examined, both Alma and Grace were abducted after their death. When they reappeared, they were live, well, and pregnant.

Years after their liberation, Kit and Lana meet again. Kit lives happily with his children; Alma was interned in Briarcliff after murdering Grace with an axe. As he visits her, he recognizes Jude, who is presumed dead. Witnessing her physical state, Kit demands Lana to use her fame and expose, once and for all, the true nature of the asylum. Consequently, Lana realizes a documentary exposing the institution, and saving Jude.

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GLOSSARY

GENDER[2]:

"A combination of gender identity, gender expression, and gender roles that describes characteristics of masculinity and femininity to people. These characteristics can change over time and are different between cultures."

HETERONORMATIVITY[3]:

"Of, relating to, or based on the attitude that heterosexuality is the only normal and natural expression of sexuality."

INTERSECTIONALITY[4]:

"The complex, cumulative way in which the effects of multiple forms of discrimination (such as racism, sexism, and classism) combine, overlap, or intersect especially in the experiences of marginalized individuals or groups."

QUEER[5]:

"Queer is a term which has been reclaimed by members of the LGBTQ community to refer to people who transgress culturally imposed norms of heterosexuality and gender traditionalism. Queer might be broadly defined as resistance to regimes of the “normal”. Although still often an abusive epithet when used by bigoted heterosexuals, many queer-identified people have taken back the word to use it as a symbol of pride and affirmation of difference and diversity."

OPPRESSION[6]:

"The systematic exploitation of one social group by another for its own benefit. It involves institutional control, ideological domination, and the declaration of the dominant group’s culture on the oppressed. Oppression = Prejudice + Power (the “isms”)."

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INTRODUCTION

"Queer uses of time and space develop, at least in part, in opposition to the institutions of family, heterosexuality, and reproduction. They also develop according to other logics of location, movement, and identification. If we try to think about queerness as an outcome of strange temporalities, imaginative life schedules, and eccentric economic practices, we detach queerness from sexual identity and come closer to understanding Foucault's comment in "Friendship as a Way of Life" that "homosexuality threatens people as a 'way of life' rather than as a way of having sex" (310). In Foucault's radical formulation, queer friendships, queer networks, and the existence of these relations in space and in relation to the use of time mark out the particularity and indeed the perceived menace of homosexual life. […] Obviously not all gay, lesbian, and transgender people live their lives in radically different ways from their heterosexual counterparts, but part of what has made queerness compelling as a form of self-description in the past decade or so has to do with the way it has the potential to open up new life narratives and alternative relations to time and space[7]."

In his book *In a Queer Time and Place*, American Philosopher Jack Halberstam seeks to investigate transgender bodies in relation to time and space. Through a study of Brandon Teena's murder, a transgender man living in rural Nebraska, as well as multiple cinematographic adaptations, he develops a new way to approach one's relation to time and space. Halberstam's theory challenges the universal and socially accepted notion of linear time. The progression of time, in the sense that there is universal *passing* of time, does not necessarily have a universal *effect* on people. He underlines the necessity to perceive time as plural, as a multiplicity: linear time acts as a canvas mostly used by western countries as a universal model of progress. For instance, Dina Spector, from the Business Insider journal, writes: "a new study by Cisco Systems reveals that one in three college students and young professionals under 30 believe the Internet is as important as air,

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water, food, and shelter[8]." For similar reasons, it is often unconceivable for young adults that in 2017 there may still be a place where the Internet cannot be accessed. As if the evolution and technology development of western countries through time was a universal standard, when only "40% of the world population has an internet connection[9]." In the same way, one's own perception of social issues, politics, etc. is affected by one's location and surroundings. In fact, one's place (both in space and time) affects one's mindset altogether. To better illustrate such argument, a quote from Edward Sapir demonstrates an undeniable link between one's beliefs (on social behaviors, politics, etc.), and their language (hence, their location):

> "Human beings do not live in the objective world alone […] but are very much at the mercy of the particular language which has become the medium of expression for their society. […] The worlds in which different societies live are distinct worlds, not merely the same world with different labels attached[10]."

This theory linking one's views to their location is what allows Halberstam to study Brandon Teena as a transgender body, his relation to time and space, and beyond the notion of queer time and place. While there are no transgender characters in the following study, Halberstam's reassessment of subcultures, queer realities and temporalities marks a significant theoretical underpinning to this research. This *queer* approach to time and space and the effects it may have is what I will refer to in this dissertation as a *queer reality*.

It is important for the rest of this dissertation to define *queer reality.* In *Bodies That Matter,* Judith Butler notes: "the term "queer" emerges as an interpellation that raises the questions of the status of force and opposition, of stability and variability[11]." *Queer* derives from normative, oppressive environments, and appears as an opposition to repression by its nature and evolution. Originally a term meant to oppress non-normative people defined as strange, unfit to social norms, *queer* was later reclaimed by *queer people* as a term embodying their fight against normative

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politics, economics and society. In a flyer entitled *Queer Terminology,* the UCR LGBT Center defines "Queer" as follows:

> "Queer is a term which has been reclaimed by members of the LGBTQ community to refer to people who transgress culturally imposed norms of heterosexuality and gender traditionalism. Queer might be broadly defined as resistance to regimes of the "normal". Although still often an abusive epithet when used by bigoted heterosexuals, many queer-identified people have taken back the word to use it as a symbol of pride and affirmation of difference and diversity[12]."

In this sense, *queer reality* thus appears as, rather than a space, a dimension in which normative oppressions are lifted. A dimension in which queer people thrive and in which variability and non-normative behaviors (sexualities, identities, unions, etc.), rather than being met with opposition and violence, are met with general acceptance.

Studies by the PEW Research Center[13] show a slow but ever growing shift in people's acceptance towards gay marriage in the United States since 2009. The ever-growing shift in attitudes towards gay marriage led to "the U.S. Supreme Court [ruling] that it is legal for all Americans, no matter their gender or sexual orientation, to marry the people they love[14]." This legalization could indicate a global acceptance of queer behaviors, but depending on one's spatial and temporal location, the degree of acceptance may differ. For instance, the state of California had legalized gay marriage in 2008. Although it consequently triggered many forms of protest (notably, the Proposition 8 which "eliminates right of same-sex couple to marry[15]"), the state of California, (where San Francisco had already become "the world's gay mecca[16]"as soon as the beginning of the twentieth century due to the presence of bars, cinemas, and a film festival celebrating queer people) had politically taken a stand for non-normative, queer people and thus, appeared as one of the first states in which a *queer reality* was possible.

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Ryan Murphy, born in 1965 transitioned from "a little boy growing up gay and scared and isolated in Indiana[17]," to being honored by the Hollywood Publicists as "Television Showman of the Year[18]" in 2016. According to David Baldwin, journalist for Variety, his television productions:

> "deal almost entirely in extremes, producing television serials that revel in the grotesque and the intensely brazen, things that don't necessarily fit into the assumed template for high profile modern day TV. Murphy is the demented plastic surgeon of this golden age, a writer who's never met a stereotype he didn't want to exploit and a director who's never seen a performance that he didn't think was too off-the-wall[19]."

In other words, Murphy *queers* the television world.

In a statement in response to the 2015 Supreme Court ruling making all bans on gay marriage unconstitutional, he addressed the role television may have played in the opinion shift towards Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) people:

> "I am so proud of our American television creators and stars like Ellen DeGeneres, Matt Bomer, Neil Patrick Harris, Max Mutchnick, and Jill Solloway just to name a few — who brought gay and transgender moments and characters into homes and in a very big way started the national conversation that had a happy ending this morning[20]."

However, in the wake of President Donald Trump's election and his dedication to "dramatic budget cuts that would eliminate the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities [and] cut federal spending by about $10.5 trillion over the next ten years[21]," a discussion on the importance and influence of said arts and television has (re)opened and has become a crucial matter in American society. Through times, arts have always been a mean to condemn a government and act as a counter-power. As Maccabee Montandon, writer and editor for

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the online magazine Fast Company, observes: "within minutes of the presidential election results gurgling to reality, the calls began to combat tyranny with, among other things, art[22]."

One of the most notorious act of defiance coming from an icon of the artistic industry was actress Meryl Streep's acceptance speech at the Golden Globe Awards. Without naming the newly elected President, she reminded her audience that "Hollywood is crawling with outsiders and foreigners[23]." The Hollywood film industry, renowned around the world for its films and TV shows is, according to Streep, made of immigrants and minorities and is to represent the lives of these people. In fact, for certain minorities whose rights are excluded and lives endangered by certain politics, positive representation in the media, "into homes[24]" of Americans throughout the United-States and beyond, is necessary. In recent years, TV show productions such as *Transparent* (Amazon), *Orange Is The New Black* (Netflix) and other mainstream TV shows such as *Looking*, *The Real O'Neals,* and *Glee* (respectively on HBO, ABC, and FOX) have shed light on the lives of people from the LGBT+ community. However, if a new liberation movement has appeared for these minorities through the Women's March movement, dance protests in front of Vice-President Mike Pence's residence — protests that strongly resemble the Women's and Gay Liberation movements which emerged in the United States during Richard Nixon's presidency — certain forms of discriminations (such as body-shaming, gender wage gap, racial and religious profiling, etc.) are yet to be resolved, or even addressed. Following actress Carrie Fisher's death, the media reflected upon her long commitment to issues of body image as well as the treatment of women in the film industry. Ryan Murphy demonstrates a similar commitment by working to broaden the spectrum of women's representation: queer women, women of color, trans women, and plus-sized women. *Half*, a foundation he created in 2016, proves another successful strategy to giving women directors more opportunities, such as directing over 50% of his own productions. Women play a central part in Murphy's cinematic world. His latest success, *Feud: Bette and Joan,* explores the relationship of

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1930's pop-culture icons Bette Davis and Joan Crawford, and acts as "an astute and occasionally shattering study of two women victimized by men, by the media, by the studio system; a cautionary, compassionate feminist tale[25]." "I want to write about women's issues and I want women, and others, to feel like they have a champion in me[26]," Murphy declared.

In spite of his current commitment, the director was not always known for his "feminist tales[27]." Zeba Blay, senior culture writer for the Huffington Post, accuses Murphy of "rely[ing] on harmful stereotypes, racist and homophobic humour[28]." One production, *Scream Queens,* has had its audience underlining the problem caused by an over-representation of stereotypically white, rich, and intellectually limited young women "spew[ing] blatantly racist, homophobic, and ableist language for the sake of being "edgy"[29]." The same article "demonstrates […] that Ryan Murphy has a women problem — one that often goes under the radar, since so many of his shows have women-focused storylines and ensemble[30]." His most controversial work was *American Horror Story: Asylum*, in which "women are systematically tortured and brutalised, often for expressing their sexuality[31]."

While *Asylum,* the second season of American Horror Story, is widely considered both controversial and sexist, I will argue that it is in fact one of Murphy's most "feminist tales[32]." Relying on Michel Foucault's *Histoire de la sexualité* and Judith Butler's gender theory, I show how *Asylum* inscribes itself into a historical discourse, which then allows viewers to reflect on current social debates. While women's conditions have evolved, Murphy brings forth the lasting "war on women[33]," the variety of discourses which shape their experiences, and offers new, more diverse portrayals. I aim at presenting how Murphy creates a *queer reality,* relying on time, place, and character distortion to turn a story of torture and confinement into a cautionary tale. In order to do so, the first part will focus on the creation of a heteronormative space in which the functions of women in society are restricted; their sexualities punished, treated, and administered. Such creation

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also underlines Murphy's use of historical references in order to create a story that transcends the screen, a feminist cautionary tale. The insertion of such historical references, as it will be developed in the second part, depends on a *queer* use of temporality and anachronisms. The contrast between different time periods, and therefore different technologies is, as I would argue, what allows the story to free women from their heteronormative spatial and temporal locations. I argue the new space in which female characters find their liberation forms a *queer reality* supposed to inspire the viewer. The ultimate part of the dissertation focuses on the different ways Murphy *queers* the screen and his cinematic approach to representing women; by relying on stereotypical characteristics and codings of gender to better subvert expectations. In the end, this dissertation aims at understanding the look Murphy offers on women, and its peculiarities.

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I — Extra-normative reality

1 — Contextual sexuality

A — Time, space and gender roles

Queer reality is always inter-relational. For its existence to be acted, there has to be a pre-existing norm or normative reality. *Asylum*'s Briarcliff*,* I argue, is precisely the ideal spatial and temporal location - in so far as it embodies intersectional forms of systemic oppression - to create both a horrific and normative environment. The specific nature of the location (in a mental institution) combined with the genre of the TV series begins to explain why "wrongfully committed to the mental institution Briarcliff Manor, Lana [Winters], a lesbian, has been subjected to electroconvulsive and conversion therapy, was kidnapped by a mass murderer (who also killed her girlfriend), raped, and — as a finishing touch — had botched wire hanger abortion[34]."

Comparing Brandon Teena's execution as told by Halberstam to Lana Winter's stay in Murphy's asylum, sexuality may be perceived as a central and recurrent sub-theme. However, Halberstam argues that sexuality in Brandon's murder is not a sub-theme, since it is "his failure to pass as a man in the harsh terrain of a small town in rural North America[35]" which generated people's perception of Brandon as sexually deviant and led to the horrific event. Likewise, Lana's sexuality and location in space and time are the factors generating a judgement upon her sexuality and from which horror ensues.

The spatial and temporal location choices in *American Horror Story* are key elements to each season, intertwining horror tropes (such as haunted locations, abandoned medical institutions, evil clowns, etc.) and carefully chosen locations to influence the context (New Orleans for its voodoo history in *Coven*, a season about witchcraft, for instance). The first season, *Murder House,* takes place in a haunted house in the center of California's liberal city, Los Angeles. The city and its renowned liberalism are to act as a character influencing its characters' beliefs and sexuality.

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Likewise, commenting on the documentary *Boys Don't Cry: The Brandon Teena Story*[36], Halberstam notes that, as a location, "Nebraska takes on the role and the presence of a character in this drama[37]." Beyond the location being the title of the season, *Asylum* refers to a catholic mental institution, shrouded in Massachusetts' strong religious origins. Although a specific location is not given, the interconnection between the state of Massachusetts and the religion-ridden institution should be given as equal consideration as other characters, since it is meant to influence the storylines and character developments. The asylum embodies the influence of strict theological principles in a specific place and time to a point where "the environment and the set become another character[38]". For instance, the character of Shelley, "a highly sexualised, dark and unruly soul[39]" was committed to Briarcliff for having extramarital sexual encounters, as did her husband who had her committed:

> "As soon as he put a ring on my finger, I was his property. He could screw every Betty in town, but I had to stay home and scrub his dirty drawers. So come fleet week, he gets home to find me in bed with two Navy guys. And I told him, it's "not for self, but for country." He decked me flat out, threw me in the car and locked me in the nuthouse. The sickest part is, they let him. Because I like sex. That's my crime[40]."

Shelley's narrative underlines the influence of society on gender roles[41] in her specific location, while neither Shelley's nor her husband's infidelity can be confirmed, the shadow of a doubt caused her to be committed to the asylum — while the exact same situation under reversed gender roles allowed her husband to pursue his life as is — thus highlighting the undeniable connection between geographical location, female sexuality, and religious control. Her true crime is to fail to conform to the set of expectations created by society under the influence of religious and political constructs. Given that non-normativity is rejected from this clerical society, being physically imprisoned in the

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institution appears to be the solution to rid society of its sinners or wrongdoers. The asylum, a geographical and moral space beyond the margins of society, renders invisible the members of society who could pervert or contaminate norms in place.

The location of asylum, geographically beyond society, is relevant to the will of creating a normative environment. If society's norms can, and in fact do, prevail over any person independently of their location, *Asylum* acts differently: its secular location emphasizes the set of norms' effect on the patients. Throughout the series, the characters are confined within the walls of the asylum, whether they are active members of the institution or patients, and are consumed by the building, its inhabitants, its surveillance. In an interview about the set designs in *Asylum*, Mark Worthington, production designer, described Briarcliff Manor as "very claustrophobic. It never allows the people inside to think of some sort of escape[42]." This statement thus underlining the role and purpose given to the location. Hallways and cells are designed narrowly so as to oppress the characters, trapped in the camera's frame and dark tones of the walls. In every frame, every room of the asylum, each inmate is isolated to surveillance. Since they have no escape, only halls, cells, and a common room, the patients can never physically or mentally escape surveillance, and the influence of what French philosopher Michel Foucault refers to as *panopticons.*

B — Women under panopticons

Jeremy Bentham, British inventor, developed the unattainable idea of a penal institution organized with such architecture that prisoners would autonomously impose discipline upon themselves (Figure 1, Appendix A, page 58). Michel Foucault, in his writings *Surveiller et punir: naissance de la prison*[43], and *Le pouvoir psychiatrique*[44] expands the concept to existing institutions such as schools, political states, and others:

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"*Le vrai effet du Panopticon, c'est d'être tel que, même lorsqu'il n'y a personne, l'individu dans sa cellule, non seulement se croie, mais se sache observé, qu'il ait l'expérience constante d'être dans un état de visibilité pour le regard*[45]."

Beyond an ideal architecture of surveillance, Foucault also applies the concept to moral constituents of society. The inscription in political discourses of legal and illegal behaviors, as well as the definition by religious discourses of moral and immoral behaviors as principles, both act as invisible panopticons, constructs of the norm. It is precisely the multiplication of such discourses (in medicine, law, etc.) that regulates society and its norms. These disciplinary discourses are later internalized by each member of society, who themselves will morph into surveilling agents; panopticons. Although architectural panopticons may not be physically achieved, Foucault raises a fair point in representing society's workings as moral panopticons forcing a certain set of expectations on its people. Both reality and queer reality are depending on the pre-existing norms, and disciplinary discourses. Foucault mainly develops panopticons as rather large sets of institutions (physical and moral). However, a smaller rural setting (such as Falls City, Nebraska or fictitious Briarcliff, Massachussetts) can have its own set of social, religious and political normative discourses. In fact, the first episode of the series revolves around the idea of panopticons in a rural setting.

The first scenes of 1964[46], Massachusetts, are set in an undefined rural part of the state where Kit Walker a "boyishly handsome attendant[47]" (soon to be presumed the infamous serial-killer Bloody Face), finishes his shift at a gas station late at night. It is after his day at work that he goes back home to his wife and finally puts back on his ring. Contrary to Lana, Kit is not homosexual, he is however married to Alma, an African-American woman.

Alma's intersectionality (as both woman, and African-American) inserts her being at the intersection of religious, political and social panopticons. The story, set during the same year the

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Civil Rights Act of 1964 which "outlaws discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin[48]" was written, technically places Alma in a post-segregation society. However, as the Manhattan Institute notes, "the end of segregation has not caused the end of racial inequality[49]." Anti-miscegenation laws "to prevent marriages between persons solely on the basis of racial classifications[50]" were still constitutional until 1967. Being an an African-American woman married to a caucasian man in 1964, Alma therefore enters religious discourses (giving her duties and expectations as a wife), and more importantly falls under social and political panopticons: illegally belonging to a white man due to their union. Particularly, Alma is constrained within the house since her intersectionality and marriage to a white caucasian man establishes her abnormality to legal, political discourses.

The second scene introduces Lana Winters, the reporter and main character of *Asylum.* Being aware and conscious of these disciplinary discourses, moral panopticons, Lana — instead of acting as agent of surveillance and responding to social expectation — will manipulate aforementioned social workings to both protect herself, and control the people around her. Her knowledge of gender roles are what allowed Lana Winters to enter the walls of the asylum. It is not, however, why she was forced to remain there. Given Lana's journalistic duties which include writing about food and recipes (quite normative for the time, food and the kitchen being the preferred space of womanhood), she is at the asylum to report on the creation of a bakery. While Lana differs from the norm by not being a housewife, her employment quickly drags her back into the set of expectation defined by her gender, thus appearing as a socially accepted exception to the norm. As she aspires to win a Pulitzer prize for her work as a journalist, Lana's inquiry on the bakery is but a cover. Rather, the truth lies in her desire to investigate on and meet the infamous serial-killer Bloody Face, which the state assigned to the care of the Briarcliff asylum. She will however use gender norms to make her way into the asylum, forcing Sister Jude into letting her

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meet the serial-killer. Unfortunately, Sister Jude perceives Lana's true intentions and forces her out of the premises. The reporter refuses to give up, and later decides to illegally make her way back into the asylum, in the middle of the night. Not only is she convinced that an interview with Bloody Face will push her career and set her apart as a female journalist, she is also determined to write about the terrible conditions and treatments of the asylum's pensioners. As she investigates through the halls of Briarcliff, a guard violently apprehends her. When Lana gains back consciousness she is in bed, has bruises on her face, and leather restraints on her wrists and ankles.

Sister Jude, head of the institution, is strong on religious principles and on preserving her reputation, as well as that of the Institution and her superior, Monsignor Timothy Howard. Similar to Lana, Jude's superiority is expressed through her perspicacity, knowledge of the panopticons and their workings. Therefore, rather than letting Lana go and pray she does not report what she had witnessed, she decides — after having apprehended the reporter — to use her knowledge of social norms surrounding sexuality to visit Lana's housemate. There, Jude quickly understands that more than a housemate and a school-teacher, Wendy is Lana's girlfriend. Exerting power over Lana's partner whose career as a teacher is at stake, Sister Jude forces Wendy to sign legal forms committing Lana to the psychiatric institution. By reminding Wendy "you have no legal standing[51]," Jude asserts a new position of power: at that time and place (1964, Massachusetts), religious discourses already considered homosexuality a sin, and political discourses considered such behaviors illegal. Moreover, it remained a sensitive topic as the heritage of the 1950s Lavender Scare (often compared to a homosexual witch-hunt) was still omnipresent:

> "A large number of titles have been attached to the 1950s throughout history including the Cold War Era, the McCarthy Era, and the Red Scare. The extreme persecution that homosexuals of this time faced makes it clear that the Lavender Scare is a worthy title to be attached to the fifties along with the others. Homosexual women were faced with a time in

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which they were hated and feared by almost everyone. Many lesbians lost their jobs, were discharged from the military, and were isolated from society because of their sexual orientation. The discrimination and fear that lesbians faced often resulted in serious and pervasive emotional and mental health issues[52]."

In the wake of a period with such normative politics, homosexuals feared for their lives at the idea of being exposed. Jude demonstrates French Philosopher Michel Foucault's social panopticon theory: she acts as an agent of surveillance and threatens Wendy with punishment in order to insure Lana will remain under her control. It also highlights that while panopticons are in place, they are flawed and can be used to suit one's personal desires (through blackmail) rather than to maintain general order and discipline.

Since homosexuality was still perceived as a mental disorder, and the government expressly acted against homosexuality, it appears the normative environment in *Asylum* is but a reference to the historical context in which the story is set. Murphy's many works are notable for such approach to history: in *American Crime Story: The People vs. O.J. Simpson,* Murphy remodels the United States' most important and renowned trial, thus placing history at the centre of the show. Murphy however, uses said historical context in order to shed light on the sexist and misogynistic behaviors prosecutor Marcia Clark had to face. I argue that *Asylum* also aims at using history in order to both shed light on women's conditions in the 1960s, and write a "feminist tale[53]".

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2 — HISTORICAL FICTION
A — The Cure

The 1960s in the United States may at seem first as a decade of social progress, marked by the Civil Rights movements and its leaders such as Dr. Martin Luther King, and the rise of feminist values reinforced by Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*[54]. Yet, it is both a time of progress and of violence, a time of opposition, fights and violent outbursts. The horrors depicted in *Asylum* are but an accurate account of the influence of society, and its conflicts with non-normative, *queer* people in the 1960s.

The most controversial scenes in *Asylum* deal with Lana's sexuality: electro-shocks, aversion-conversion therapy, and wire-hanger abortion. Until 1974, the *American Psychiatric Association in their Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Psychiatric Disorders*[55] considered homosexual behaviors a serious mental disorder. As Lana notes: "According to your bible, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, I'm *sick*. I have an *illness*![56]"

Such illnesses consequently called for the internment in mental institutions of homosexuals, as well as for a medical procedure to be provided by said institution in order to cure the disorder. The 1960s mark the appearance of psychiatry and therefore already challenge the use of electro-shocks in favor of a psychiatric approach: aversion-conversion therapy. In fact, electro-shock therapy, rather than suppressing feelings, suppresses memory. If Lana undergoes such a procedure, it is in a specific context: Sister Jude wants Lana to forget about the manipulations used to illegally intern her; she only uses sexuality as a pretext to shock her. Nonetheless, Murphy elects to show the act on screen rather than hide it, depicting what Halberstam and Cvetkovic describe as *queer archives*:

> "Ann Cvetkovich theorizes queer uses of the term "archives" in her book *An Archive of Feelings:* "Understanding gay and lesbian archives as archives of emotion and trauma helps to

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explain some of their idiosyncrasies, or, one might say, their 'queerness'" (Cvetkovich 2003, 242). The Brandon archive is exactly that: a transgender archive of "emotion and trauma" that allows a narrative of a queerly gendered life to emerge from the fragments of memory and evidence that remain[57]."

Murphy therefore uses *Asylum* to re-open these archives, or rather, to show the reason behind the traumas many homosexuals have experienced. Aversion/conversion therapy is also a "fragment of memory[58]" that emerges in *Asylum.* This therapy calls for a different, yet equally as controversial approach. British psychiatrist, Neel Burton describes the process as follows:

> "some therapists employed aversion therapy of the kind featured in *A Clockwork Orange* to "cure" male homosexuality. This typically involved showing patients pictures of naked men while giving them electric shocks or drugs to make them vomit, and, once they could no longer bear it, showing them pictures of naked women or sending them out on a "date" with a young nurse."[59]

The procedure would trick one's mind, superposing drug-induced sickness to homosexual stimulation, aiming at the therapy resulting in a certain disgust towards homosexual behaviors. In the show, Lana is forced to undergo the procedure by Dr. Oliver Thredson, a psychiatrist (and the serial-killer, Bloody Face). His aim is for her to reject her homosexual desires before engaging in heterosexual activity with a patient, while being stimulated by drugs. The sequence ends with Dr. Thredson declaring he did not believe in Lana's capacity to fight the illness; once again pointing with accuracy at the invalidity of such experiments that "have been rejected by every mainstream medical and mental health organization for decades[60]." Oliver Thredson refuses to impose on Lana sessions of aversion/conversion therapy, convinced that "aversion/conversion therapy isn't going to work with [her][61]." Thredson seems empathizing, and willing to go through his promise of helping

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Lana escape the asylum: "They can't hold you here if they don't have a current diagnosis. If I can show them I've cured you, they'll be forced to release you[62]."

In fact, in spite of his experiments, Thredson appears all throughout the show as a paternal figure, as a friend who believes in Lana's innocence and *normality*. Due to this depiction, both viewers and Lana believe and trust Thredson who appears as an intellectual savior. He witnesses the abuse of religious power on patients within such institution and rather than following the norms, will fight for Lana's escape. He eventually manipulates Lana to get her out of Briarcliff: he is her last hope. Yet, when the escape is finalized and Lana is safe in the house of Oliver Thredson, his behavior becomes much more menacing. In this first confrontation outside of any visual marker of surveillance, Lana is entirely dependent on Thredson. In the event that the asylum found out about her escape, she cannot find refuge in her former home; she cannot get in touch with anyone else either, since she remains a mentally ill fugitive and a danger to the rest of society. Thredson is therefore to act as her protector. Yet, he quickly admits to being Bloody Face, a serial killer who beheads, rapes, and skins his victims. When Lana makes sense of Thredson's true nature, it is already too late: he throws her down a chute and locks her in his basement. While Lana will succeed in escaping, her time in Thredson's basement is far worse than in the asylum: she is drugged, chained, beaten and raped. A rape that will result in a pregnancy. Lana's escape from a mainly female order acting as a form of oppression against her (that is the asylum), led her to find refuge in a male figure whose oppression over her body lacks any form of female solidarity the asylum could offer. The male figure becomes a far more oppressive order compared to the sense of solidarity Lana could still find in the asylum, in spite of her situation as a patient. Her escape from Thredson's basement eventually leads her back into a first degree of female order (in a nun's hospital). Ultimately, she is transferred back into the walls of Briarcliff and its female order, where she keeps her pregnancy a secret, all while attempting to abort the baby with a wire-hanger.

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This final act in Lana's sexual torture allows Murphy to raise awareness on the conditions of women's reproductive rights and the danger of unsupervised abortions. Lana's first attempt is to use a wire-hanger, the second is to illegally meet a nurse in Manhattan after a second and successful escape from the asylum. The surgical procedure is set to take place in a motel room, where Lana cannot scream as to not raise suspicions. To emphasize the conditions in which these procedures were set, the camera offers of close up on the nurse sterilizing her surgical tools by dipping them in boiling water. These scenes refer to the reality of women's reproductive rights in the past. The depiction of Lana's abortion, intertwined with shots of a wave of blood covering a white tilled floor; of Lana fatally shooting Oliver Thredson, whose "brains splatter onto the wall"[63]; as well as Sarah Paulson's acting (depicting anxiety, pain, and suffering) aim at underlining the uneasiness, and horror of such procedures. The viewer necessarily empathizes with a woman whose abortion should be supervised by a medical staff, in a medical environment. This scene therefore acts as a warning sent to the viewer, concerning the possible loss of the progress made in terms of women's rights: although time has past and women have gained the right to medically assisted abortion, this right could be taken away.

Murphy's depiction of all three scientific procedures can at first seem as an account of former beliefs and medical procedures. However, in the light of Murphy's will to write a feminist cautionary tale, it is important to remind the context. Beyond a story set in the past, the show is a present and modern product sold to a modern audience in 2012. I believe that Murphy's decision to create such a sexually extra-normative, trying storyline for Lana's character is to warn his audience on what their lives could become if certain legislations were to pass in the United States.

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B — War on Women

The expression "war on women[64]" first appeared in the last decade of the 20th century, when feminists thinkers, and others took to writing in order to denounce series of legislations aimed at controlling women's bodies, sexualities, and reproductive rights. More recently, as of 2010, the expression re-appeared to specifically target legislations re-defining access to contraception and abortions. The Guttmacher Institute writes:

> "By almost any measure, issues related to reproductive health and rights at the state level received unprecedented attention in 2011. In the 50 states combined, legislators introduced more than 1,100 reproductive health and rights-related provisions, a sharp increase from the 950 introduced in 2010[65]."

All of these provisions aimed at reducing (to banning) women's access to abortion: forcing them into receiving an ultra-sound before being able to request an abortion, retrieving abortions from healthcare plans, etc. This time in women's rights happened at the same time the writers started writing the season of American Horror Story, as goes to prove the date stamp on the official scripts. Moreover, many works of Murphy's prove to be a criticism of modern day society. The latest season, *Roanoke*, is set on the land of a former colony rumored to have suspiciously disappeared. The season's main storyline revolves around the ghosts of the colony rejecting new occupants. The series unfolds its final arc with one character, an African-American woman whose entire survival depends on getting her personal tapes of the events out into the world.

> "Her smartphone [turns] into an extension of her point of view, she can force everybody else to see the things only she does, a slight nod to the way videos shot on phones have helped bring larger attention to problems with police violence[66]."

Murphy therefore underlines the importance of live-streaming media in a wave of police shootings against African-American people in recent US history. I argue that through *Asylum,* its torture, its

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topics, and its female characters, Murphy reacted to the ongoing debate of the contemporary war on women. Lana's storyline is constructed with every sensitive topics approached by these legislations: the ostracism of *queer* people, the religious principles as prevailing scientific evidence in terms of diagnosis, physical abuse against women, sexual violence against women, some resulting in pregnancy, etc. *Asylum* acts as a reminder of the past conditions of women in society, and warns the possible return of such conditions.

Many would argue, nonetheless, that Lana's storyline remains too far-fetched, too sadistic, misogynistic, such as Richard Drew, blogger, who writes in a post entitled "Is American Horror Story Becoming Too Sadistic?[67]":

> "If American Horror Story season 1 was essentially a ghost story, season 2 is playing more like the 'torture porn' of the Saw and Hostel movies. And while I'm a huge horror film fan […] I have to admit this season is making me a bit squeamish. I have no problem with blood and guts but I'm not a fan of the sadism which seemed to dominate the horror movies during the Saw years[68]."

After all, Murphy could have allowed Lana to successfully escape the first time, or to successfully abort the first time instead of repeatedly dragging her character back into a position of submission worst than the one she was in before. I would argue that this repetition of situation, this accumulation of attempts and failures underlines the extent of restrictions and scrutiny surrounding sexuality(.ies). As Gayle Rubin notes in *Thinking Sex*:

> "To some, sexuality may seem to be an unimportant topic, a frivolous diversion from the more critical problems of poverty, war, disease, racism, famine, or nuclear annihilation. But it is precisely at times such as these, when we live with the possibility of unthinkable destruction, that people are likely to become dangerously crazy about sexuality. Contemporary conflicts over sexual values and erotic conduct have much in common with

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> the religious disputes of earlier centuries. They acquire immense symbolic weight. Disputes over sexual behaviour often become the vehicles for displacing social anxieties, and discharging their attendant emotional intensity. Consequently, sexuality should be treated with special respect in times of great social stress[69]."

According to Judith Bennett and Ruth Karras, women's fight for their rights started as early as the 15th century, with Christine de Pizan, Italian philosopher and poet:

> "the pro-feminine works of Christine de Pizan (1364–1430?), who not only engaged in an epistolary debate with male authorities denouncing the *Romance of the Rose* as antifeminist, but also wrote two works explicitly defending female virtue and promoting women's social well-being: *The City of Ladies* and *The Treasure of the City of Ladies*[70]."

Yet, the same war, the same discussion and the same fight have yet to end, are to constantly be repeated twenty years later (including at the time of writing). Lana is to embody the entire female community: "rather than crumble or give into her circumstances, she keeps fighting tooth and nail, never giving up on her own right to existence[71]."

Arguably, it is difficult to imagine, at first, how Murphy's *Asylum* subvert these living conditions, and turn a story of violence against women into a *queer reality.* How can the story develop to make women thrive when they are constantly persecuted; physically, emotionally and sexually abused? How can it deconstruct this space in which women are constantly under the scopes of religious, political, scientific or even social panopticons? The rest of this dissertation will study temporality, its construction and deconstruction, and the emergence of a *queer* liberation, what I name a *queer reality.*

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II – MURPHY'S QUEER REALITY

1 – QUEER TEMPORALITY

A— Temporal rift

The liberation of the female characters from the asylum and its characteristics is achieved through a particular modulation of time that will affect each character in a unique way. Especially Sister Jude whose liberation is the most affected by temporal manipulations.

American Horror Story was created as an anthology, that is, each season is set in a different time, place, and tells a different story. Since only the cast remains in each season, American Horror Story plays on the notion of identity heritage: one actor will typically play the same character genre. Jessica Lange, who plays Sister Jude "the fiercely religious head nun[72]," appeared in the first season as a bitter former Hollywood star. In *Coven* (AHS season 3) she played the Supreme, the equivalent of a queen bee in a world of witchcraft. Sister Jude's first appearance in *Asylum* is therefore meant to build on Lange's fictitious persona within the world of *American Horror Story*: "another tormented tormentor[73]". She is introduced in the first episode, when Lana Winters enters Briarcliff to meet with her. Instead, the journalist catches her "in a private moment[74]". The first sight of Jude given to the viewers was while "administering the "haircut"[75]". The head of the asylum shaved a part of Shelley's head to remove any form of beauty that could be used in order to seduce other inmates or guards. This technique reinforces Jude's strong character as it refers to the punishment imposed on women who, after the Second World War, were suspected of having slept with the enemy[76]. The viewer is therefore offered an unpolished version of Jude's character accentuated by the fact that this scene was supposedly private.

As a way to humanize and soften her, especially throughout her toughest scenes, Murphy first uses fantasy scenes in which her vulnerability is explored. In the privacy of her own room, she is seen wearing bright red lace underwear, putting on *Ravish Me Red* lipstick, and perfume. During

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supper with her superior, Monsignor Timothy Howard, the scene suddenly and unexpectedly turns into one of Jude's fantasies: she is seen stripping off her nun's clothes to reveal her underwear, unbinding her hair and making her way to Monsignor's chair. It is in these scenes, although fictitious, that Murphy offers a break to the relentless screaming, whistle-blowing and ruthless caning scenes in which Jude is usually depicted.

More important is the use of flashbacks. In presenting the past of Sister Jude the viewers are introduced to a modern, futuristic even, vision of women in society. In spite of her mature age, Jude was a famous singer whose performances seduced soldiers during the war, often for a night only. In her past, ageism defies beauty standards. The comparison to Jude when she was first introduced is drastic. Although these events are in her past, they appear at a certain time in her storyline, a time that offers the character a break from her responsibilities as head of the asylum, and as a constantly obeying the principles of her religion. Their juxtaposition to the "present" timeline is what *queers* the series temporality (Figure 2, Appendix A, page 58). Rather than keeping time linear, Murphy jumps to *queer* fantasies and *queer* memories that affect the "present" timeline by creating new approaches to relationships such as the one between Sister Jude and the Monsignor. More importantly, it shifts the viewer's perception towards Shelley who she considers a present version of her past, a "whore[77]".

Beyond flashbacks or parts of Jude's fantasies, hallucinations even replace parts of the present: in "The Name Game[78]," the tenth episode of the season, Sister Jude ends up being interned as a patient in the asylum rather than being in charge of it (due to her will to denounce Dr Arden's nazi past which could possibly bring the asylum to be shut down). Electro-convulsive therapy is administered to Jude, under the supervision of Dr Arden, who doubles the electric charge to "burn those bad memories right out of [her] head[79]". Thus, Arden underlines the real nature of electro-convulsive therapy. Jude does not need treatment, Arden only takes measures to both erase her

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memories and assert control over her mind and body. The result could be considered a success, since Jude appears in the next scene as a stumbling, puny, and disoriented old woman. When Lana, surprised by Jude's appearance and weakness, approaches her, Jude recognizes her. Suddenly, Jude's clothes are replaced with a bright blue suit and her hair is perfectly brushed. The scene becomes a karaoke song whose main singer is Jude, playing *The Name Game.* Jude appears fully conscious and able, other patients join in the dance, including Lana. When the scene ends, the viewers understand this was all in Jude's mind; they are not given, however, the real narrative. The time spent in Jude's fantasy is past and lost time cannot be recalled, even if Lana is still standing by Jude's side. It offers, however, yet another humanizing side of Jude, and a moment in which all patients, but more importantly Jude transfer to a *queer reality.* Jude (or rather Murphy) creates in this scene a *queer* reality which, contrasted with the real treatment in Briarcliff, is desirable and speaks to the unbearable repression. In spite of the treatment of women in society, their dreams cannot be crushed, and can act as a form of opposition. Judy's dancing scene is a way for her to escape the increasing oppression from which she suffers in the asylum. In this sense, Judy will be free when she will be able to dance alongside Kit Walker and Lana Winters, with whom she now shares the same living conditions, the same moral and physical restraints. In fact, Murphy himself remarked that this sequence "happened because Jessica Lange played a lounge singer turned nun, and around episode eight, after she had been put into solitary and locked up, and was covered in vomit and everything else, she said, ‘Remember when I used to sing? Can’t I just have one song, can’t I have a moment?’[80]" The actress, and Murphy himself, have purposely integrated this scene which was not originally part of the story to offer horror relief to the character, the viewers and the story.

Jude's liberation, as well as most of the other characters’, such as Kit, Grace (Kit's girlfriend whom he met in Briarcliff), Alma (Kit's wife and victim of Bloody Face), but also Lana who

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remains the main character, are all achieved with the intervention of yet another temporal manipulation: aliens and advanced technology.

B — Technological anachronism

"For the entire season of television's most horrific miniseries, the alien abduction sub-plot has befuddled and bewildered many. I must admit that I, too, was in this camp — until the finale. Because during the final 39 minutes of Briarcliff, I noticed a few juxtapositions here, an interesting correlation there." writes Alicia Lutes in an article entitled *"American Horror Story: Asylum": Ryan Murphy's Aliens are Secretly Brilliant*[81] about the misconception of the viewers concerning the presence of aliens and their highly advanced and modern technology in 1964, Massachusetts.

The first 1964 scene of episode one, as previously mentioned, introduces the interracial relationship between Kit and Alma Walker and results in Kit being accused of murdering Alma. The actual murder scene not revealed to the viewer, as to let the audience doubt Kit's innocence. What has not been previously mentioned is the way in which the scene actually unfolds before transitioning to Kit's arrival in Briarcliff:

> "Suddenly, an extremely bright light blasts down onto the farm house from above. Wind begins to swirl wildly. […] In the room, small objects are experiencing a moment of anti-gravity, floating gently in the air. Suddenly, Kit is pulled violently up, his body becoming horizontal, SMASHING against the ceiling. He is held there for a quick beat before everything that was floating drops simultaneously. Kit is SLAMMED down onto the ground. […] In the moment it took to turn over, it appears Kit has been transported away from his bedroom. A group of round examination lights hover over him. Through the blinding light, silhouetted figures appear in his peripheral vision. Their alien form unlike any human[82]."

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These aliens will make appearances throughout the show and always in relation to Kit (and Alma), whom Tim Minear, writer, says were inspired by "The Betty and Barney Hill story of the fifties and the sixties[83]," a real-life interracial couple who testify getting abducted and examined by an extra-terrestrial species.

Each time the aliens appear, it also signifies the appearance of a great form of advanced technology. Dr Arden had decided to use Kit as part of his many human experiments. When examining his body, he noticed a toughness was present in an area of his neck and pursued with a biopsy. Arden discovered, lodged inside Kit's neck, an electronic micro-chip that only the modern viewer could have the ability to identify. Kit's claims of having been abducted by aliens therefore turn out to be true, as goes to prove the unnatural element found in his body. Arden will therefore pursue his research, convinced that Kit is the aliens' *protégé*. Kit is given a drug meant to slow down his heart, resulting in an inevitable death. After having brought back Kit to life Arden will claim no extra-terrestrials visited. Yet, a bright light, similar to Kit's original abduction, had appeared during the procedure. The aliens manifested themselves and delivered to Kit a live and pregnant Grace (Kit's girlfriend in Briarcliff who died taking a guard's bullet in order to protect Kit); thus showing far superior medical knowledge and capacities since she had been killed and was not pregnant at the time of the murder. For such examples, the aliens and their technology are the embodiment of *queer reality* forming the thesis of this dissertation. Their interventions break through the spatial and temporal location of the asylum, drastically affecting the lives and storylines of most characters. During the abductions, the subjects are taken into a different space where the progression of time differs from the original normative space in which they were taken, hence the accelerated pregnancies and the reappearance of Grace who was thought to be deceased.

But beyond their interventions providing an ephemeral form of liberation, this does not explain how they fit in Murphy's scheme to physically and socially liberate the characters. Why

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abruptly shift the storylines developments of the main characters? More importantly, while it does not liberate them physically per se, how will the aliens, as the intervention of a *contemporary queer reality* in a past normative environment, are to reproduce, create, and finalize the liberation of the characters and implement *queer reality* as the new *normal*?

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2 – QUEER LIBERATION

A — Redefining Family

The ultimate liberation(s) and its (their) conditions, I would argue, are only made possible with the previous and frequent intervention of this extraterrestrial species. The intervention of the *queer* element, bearing contemporary techniques and values into the past (or rather, spatially and temporally set-back environment) will inspire the people subjected to such futuristic interventions in their idea and ideal concerning their own personal liberation. In fact, instead of the series usual and singular *horror ending* (in season one, the main characters ultimately become ghosts of the *Murder House* eternally repeating their murders in front of prospective owners, trapped in their own everlasting horror), *Asylum* will offer a happy ending to each of the main characters: Lana, Jude, Kit, Alma, Grace and their children.

While Lana's liberation bears a meaning too strong to briefly be discussed in this dissertation, Kit, Alma, Grace and Jude's storylines, which ultimately intertwine in the unfolding of the series, are to be studied in response to these interventions. As aforesaid, the aliens and their technologies first abducted Kit, and Alma, who was deceased. Past Alma's death, and in his time in the asylum, Kit met and fell in love with Grace Bertrand (another patient, and a revisited version of Elizabeth Borden, renowned axe-murder in New-England, 1892). Grace was later shot by a guard, abducted by the aliens as Dr Arden was about to dispose of her body, and reappeared alive and well at the term of her pregnancy. As for Alma, she is found breastfeeding her child when Kit, free from the asylum, returns to the farm house. Both Alma and Grace were (artificially) inseminated by the aliens, and reappeared both alive and pregnant.

The intervention of the extra-terrestrials in their lives gave way to a polyamorous relationship setting a unified goal for the three characters' future: to live a prosperous life with each other and their children. The aliens interventions drastically changed and unified their storylines.

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Both Alma and Grace's abduction liberates them, physically and legally (since officially declared dead) from the norms of the asylum or society. Lana's liberation involves printing in the media her story in Briarcliff, as well as giving the authorities a tape of Oliver Thredson confessing to being Bloody Face, torturing Lana, and framing Kit, thus clearing all legal charges held against him.

More important to this dissertation is the consequence of Kit's liberation, leading to the *queer liberation* within the series' story. All three move back to Kit's rural farmhouse where they escape the strong forms of normativity and surveillance found in the asylum. Thus, they create their own personal microcosm. In this microcosm, Kit, Alma, and Grace freely stand for interracial, polyamorous relationship: Kit spends every other night with either Alma or Grace, educates both his children, and supports both his wives.

While Alma murdering Grace with an axe, for the sake of dramatic irony, results in her own internment in Briarcliff, the short-lived queer ideal inspires a feeling of freedom and revolution familiar to Murphy's ideology and take on the normative construct of the nuclear family.

> "Queer liberalism articulates a contemporary confluence of the political and economic spheres that form the basis for the liberal inclusion of particular gay and lesbian U.S. citizen-subjects petitioning for rights and recognition before the law. […] Recent legal decisions […] have remade the politics of kinship into "family we choose", to invoke anthropologist Kath Weston's important study of queer kinship[84] ."

While the story influences the death of Grace, is does not take away or deconstruct the possibility and feasibility of such a queer kinship, where family does not equal its usual normative definition as one woman and one man, plus children issued from the parents, through sexual reproduction. In a queer reality, a family may very well be composed of one and/or multiple parent.s, the latter being a woman (or women) and/or a man (or men), and/or undecided. The children may also be the result of alternative possibilities of human reproduction such as *in vitro fertilization* (in this case, for

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instance, by the aliens). This definition of *family* only applies, for this specific spatial and temporal aspect of *queer reality*, to the inner circle, the first parental degree of family.

Yet, the fate of Judy Martin (formally known as Sister Jude) will further develop the degrees of *queer family.* As Kit visited Alma in the asylum, after she had killed Grace, he came across a deranged Sister Jude, who he had been told had died many years before, during her time in solitary confinement. After seeing her again, Kit goes to meet Lana and inform her of Judy's actual situation. Due to the attention her critically-acclaimed romanticized autobiography received ("Maniac: One Woman's Story of Survival"), Lana decides to secretly make her way into the asylum, as in the first episode, to put an image on her words in the form of a documentary, as well as to find and save Jude. Once the documentary's shooting was finalized and Judy brought out of Briarcliff, Kit took it upon himself to take care of her: Grace having been killed, Alma having been interned, Kit is alone in his *queer reality* with his two children. Jude will appear as member of this *queer family*, thus redefining the meaning entailed in *family*. One does not need to be blood-related to be family. In a montage, the viewer would notice the gradual improvement of Jude's physical and mental health. Eventually she would teach them how to dance, draw, and the children stories. Said montage allows Jude to, once more, live in reverse. She will transition from a sickly impotent old woman, to a rejuvenated elderly.

Nonetheless, Jude had, at first, lost all spatial and temporal recognitions: she believed to be located in the asylum, at a time when she used to ruthlessly discipline the patients (here, the children). She had psychologically returned to a normative space and time. Certain consequences of abusive electro-convulsive therapy are irreparable. However, in this location of *queer reality,* the children are issued from a more modern and advanced *queer location* that better understands the human mind and its psyche. After Jude's mental breakdown, the children therefore take her away in what is suggested by the re-appearance of bright lights, to be an extra-terrestrial space-shift. In a

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mise en scène that strongly connotes the Arthurian legend of Lady of the Lake[85], in which Vivian, the Lady of the Lake, takes a child that is not hers (Lancelot) deep into an element of nature (the lake; gardens in AHS) that symbolizes a portal towards a magical location an advanced form of reality. While in The Lady of the Lake it is Lancelot that returns as a grown man, in *American Horror Story*, it is Jude who comes back sane and as energetic as she was in her flashbacks: the sequence cuts to the (queer) family, learning how to dance to the blasting music of a radio-transistor under Jude's lead. It is her transition, her time in a modern, advanced, *queer-er* location that allows Jude to transition both physically and mentally, returning improved to the farmhouse.

B — Looping Narrative

The aforementioned endings only tell one end, that of Jude, Kit, Alma and Grace; it is not, however, the end of American Horror Story: *Asylum*. The twenty minutes that follow are an account of Lana's life post-asylum: her rise to fame. The episode is not only set immediately past her liberation, it is set many years later and is introduced as an interview looking back on her career. The very end, the ultimate scene unexpectedly takes the viewer back to "Welcome to Briarcliff[86]," the first episode of the series. The scene draws back to the first encounter between Lana Winters and Sister Jude, in which Sister Jude offers Lana a feminist message (Appendix B, page 59), expressing an unprecedented sentiment of female solidarity between the two enemies. The sudden return to the precise beginning of *Asylum* affects the ending in two different possible ways. The first one being a reconsideration of the events that led up to the series finale; the second being a closed open-ending.

Parts of Jude's speech, directed to Lana, such as "believe me, you cannot imagine what it took to get here. What I've lived through, what I've seen.[87]" More importantly "I hope you know

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what you're in for -- the loneliness, the heartbreak, the sacrifice you'll face as a woman with a dream, on her own. […] And I'm not even including the male hierarchy that will always try and break your spirit…[88]" could be double-coded. The viewer has been exposed to said loneliness (through Lana having to stand for and by herself in a extra-normative world), heartbreak (not only through the loss of her partner, but also through the physical and emotional abuse undergone), and sacrifices made, in order to reach her dreams of success and fame. This quote, therefore relates to all of Lana's physical and emotional tortures originating from her desire to meet Bloody Face. Most, if not all of which, are perpetrated by the men of the series.

Key to understanding the creation of a *queer* reality is the meaning of the end-to-beginning choice. The feminist message Jude delivers both acts as a final account of Lana's survival through the horrors the asylum entailed in a presumed future (that is the rest of the series, her internment, etc.), and acts as a past message to Lana's future as she rises to fame after escaping asylum. The scene has multiple purposes. It created the beginning of Lana's story, and now creates the new beginning of Lana's new narrative post-asylum. Through this specific scene the season becomes a never-ending full-circle of horror, survival, downfall, and success. Equally, it becomes an optimistic open-ending with two different interpretations. It could be argued Jude speaks to the new Lana, post-horror, who has found fame, or maybe she speaks to a past Lana, from episode one, and all of the horror depicted throughout the season was only the implied meaning in Jude's speech when she described " the loneliness, the heartbreak, the sacrifice you'll face as a woman with a dream[89]."

For the sake of continuity in this research, I believe in a full-circle, back to the beginning ending. By doing so, Murphy creates a *queer reality.* He sets the season in an alternate dimension with no precise location, and in which time does not correspond to the viewer's relation to time. It transcends all space and time. It applies, just like the fight for women's rights, to any situation, at any given time, in any given location.

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With the exception of Lana being a political body, women in *Asylum* have only been approached, in this dissertation, through their narratives: their internment, past lives, and ultimate liberation. Rather than arguing a more neutral approach in the ultimate part of the dissertation, I would argue for a study of women's bodies as intentional instrumentalizations. The focus in this next part would slightly reduce the focus on women as individuals, to more importantly focus on their bodies as a semantic tool, carrier of meaning. Due to the fact "controversies over gender and economics have produced some remarkable sights in the past twenty years: antiabortion fundamentalists joining with prochoice feminists to picket movie theaters showing pornographic films[90];" it is important to underline the instrumentalizations of women's bodies in a capitalist approach to audiovisual media. Although it may be a story, as we have seen so far, it is before anything else a product sold to an audience of nearly 5 million people. For that matter, this last part will question women's bodies through its visual aspect, rather than narration. What does the representation of women's bodies tell the viewer in *American Horror Story: Asylum*? How are women's bodies sold, or for that matter, are they being sold and used as an economic tool? If not and overall, what do these representations tell the viewer about women in society, and broadly, about Murphy's personal feminist stance?

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III — Gender: Subversion, Construction, Representation

1 — Sexual Entities

A — The Virgin, the Mother, and the Whore

In 1914, through her *Feminist Manifesto*[91], Mina Loy underlines the position of women in society as referring to three 'categories' of women that always link *woman* to *sexuality.* According to Loy, "as conditions are at present constituted you have the choice between Parasitism, and Prostitution, or Negation […] the division of women into two classes: the mistress, and the mother[92]"; before later introducing a third category of women, as the Virgin, whose "greatest sacrifice […] to make is of [her] "virtue"[93]". In 2013, Cristopher Angel[94] reuses these approaches to women by developing them in an "ecclesiological[95]" context, in which each woman is a figure of the Church (a catholic context fitting perfectly *Asylum*'s text). Although his development includes a fourth category: the Virgin, the Mother, the Bride, and the Whore; the focus here will solely revolve around the original three categories of the Virgin, the Mother, and the Whore.

In both a heteronormative context and a strict religious context, these categories appear in Asylum at multiple occasions:

— The Virgin: corresponds to Lana's body, which has never been sexually penetrated by a man. Although her immorality resides in homosexuality, her first known heterosexual encounter with a man will happen through Oliver Thredson's cruel rape rather than lustful desires. The Virgin is, in a more important chiasmic construction, also found in Sister Mary Eunice's body. The character's virginity, pale skin and rightful mind are to embody sexual and religious purity. In episode 2[96], her body will host the strongest form of vice: the Devil. Her body therefore travels to the other end of the religious spectrum. More importantly, the chiasmus appears when Mary Eunice loses her "virtue" by reversing gender expectations and raping Monsignor Timothy Howards (who himself had been preserving his virginity his entire life). Rape, in this approach to virginity, is being

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critically redefined. On the one hand, it appears as masculine oppression through which men force their way on and into women, further underlining women's weak position in a patriarchal society. On the other hand, Murphy completely subverts the common conception of virginity as virtue. Eunice's virginity triggers the intense desire for lust leading to forcing penetration and resulting in yet another subversive representation of gender roles in which the woman, rather than being weak, is the perpetrator of sexual abuse[97].

— The Mother: rather than a literal mother, this category includes women whose value and function (as reproductive) have been lost and used. While their lust may often be silenced due to their maturity. The Mother appears logically to be represented as Jude, whose position as head of the asylum imposes a nurturing function; and her position in the Church preserves her body from lust. The latter part being yet again subverted by Jude's past and present desires for men. Jude's past as a bar singer during the war redefines her body as that of the Whore, overlapping with her maternal nature.

— The Whore: is overly represented in *Asylum:* through Shelley (a nymphomaniac), Jude (a bar singer), and Eunice (a satanic rapist). The Whore calls to what, I would argue, are modern women: conscious of their sexuality and providing for their sexual needs. The whore, just like the *queer*, goes through a process of re-appropriation: the negative attribute is redefined as a positive one. As note Adam G. Galinsky and others in "The Reappropriation of Stigmatizing Labels: Implications of Social Identity[98]":

> "Another example would be the emergence in the 1990s of “queer” as a self-label for proud gay men and lesbians, a label that previously had been a deliberate and resented epithet. Similarly, many gay rights organizations use the symbol of the pink triangle, a symbol used in Nazi Germany to identify gays, to promote awareness of discrimination against gays. A marking mechanism that had been used as a device of discrimination was transformed into

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> a tool of tolerance, a symbol of pride and self-acceptance. This kind of self-labeling has several potentially positive consequences. The historically negative connotations of the label are challenged by the proud, positive connotations implied by a group's use of the term as a self-label. Where "queer" had connoted undesirable abnormality, by the fact that it is used by the group to refer to itself, it comes to connote pride in the groups' unique characteristics. Where before it referred to despised distinctiveness, it now refers to celebrated distinctiveness. Reappropriation allows the label's seemingly stable meaning to be open to negotiation[99]."

The "whore[100]," pronounced 6 times in the third episode, plays a central part in *Asylum.* Rather than creating a judgement, the Whore acts as the liberated, religiously and socially unbound woman.

Although the Virgin and the Mother both strongly subvert expectations, it is only made possible through their transition to the Whore. The Whore, beyond a religious context and in *Asylum*, is set to represent the modern woman whose body and sexuality does not abide the patriarchy. In a patriarchal system, "gender role conformity indirectly depresses sexual satisfaction for women but not men because traditional gender-based sexual roles dictate sexual passivity for women but sexual agency for men[101]." The modern woman has sexual desires and needs, not only is unapologetic but does not need to be. The modern woman, in the end, has a strong grip on her sexuality. For the Whore is a clear temporal transgression towards the representation of a modern woman, it is important to focus the attention on the creation, the coding, of her identity (by Murphy) in *Asylum.*

B — Feminine Performativity

In her presentation on "Women's Representations in Fashion Magazines at the Turning Point of the 1970s: the Production and Reception of Stereotypes[102]," Alice Morin makes the distinction

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between two categories of female targeted buyers: the woman, and the feminine. In the 1960s and 1970s, the fashion industry settled on a targeted group using "practical fashion" (corresponding to housewives and working women) to better create, innovate on the definition feminine. The feminine either calls for daring nudity, or what I would refer to as *queer fashion;* the creation of a fashion dissociating from the practical to explore new ways of dressing and using the female body. Murphy, I argue, does the same through the use of the Whore. The creator settled on characters easily identified by their clothes (the nuns in black robes; Lana, the working woman, in a green suit), to better use the Whore as a way to distance these characters from the social expectations of a nun's clothes, or a working woman's clothes. The Whore allows him to create, explore, and define his idea and ideal of femininity; the same codings reappear in each character as they transgress from their original categories to become "a whore[103]".

Femininity, in this part, is the whore's gender performance; defined as a clear and distinct correlation between a woman's identity construction and approach to sexuality. Judith Butler, American Philosopher in gender studies, defines gender performance as "a kind of imitation for which there is no original; in fact, it is a kind of imitation that produces the very notion of the original as an effect and consequence of the imitation itself[104]". In other words, one's construction and performance of gender often intends to copy a widely socially accepted set of gender expectations (as women wear skirts, while men wear trousers; women may put on make up, while men may not, etc.). In this sense, Simone de Beauvoir declared "*on ne naît pas femme, on le devient*[105]," reinforcing the theory conceptualizing a construction of gender under a set of common gender expectations.

While the appearance of the feminine in *Asylum* is, as previously mentioned, a result of a certain subversion of gender roles expectations, one can only see the lack of *queerness* and desire to subvert the idea of feminine sensuality in *Asylum*. Murphy, who had set a monochromatic color

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palette in the asylum, uses the color red as a signifier for lust, sensuality, sexuality, and femininity. The color drastically sets itself apart from the usual dark tones of the asylum's walls, clothes, etc. therefore creating a clear semantical coding in the viewer's mind. When the color appears, so does sexuality. The only possible exception would be the omnipresence of blood, only the much darker tone of red creates a black fluid with undertones of red, rather than a properly red fluid.

Women's bodies are to be sexualized through the use of red lace lingerie, *Ravish Me Red* lipstick, and wine (as object of lust). While these have been previously mentioned in the beginning of the second part, when discussing the use of flashbacks in Jude's narrative, the use of red is now more relevant: in the construction and performance of gender, and in the creation of a sensual coding. While Sister Jude is the first I mentioned, Mary Eunice will also wear the exact same outfit and make-up to express the strength of her sexual desires. It is this repetition that creates a certain codification of women's sensuality.

The risks in representing women as lustful is important, since it could result in sexual objectification used to attract a mainly male heterosexual viewership:

> "[Sexual objectification] occurs when a woman's body or body parts are singled out and separated from her as a person and she is viewed primarily as a physical object of male sexual desire (Bartky, 1990). Objectification theory posits that [sexual objectification] of females is likely to contribute to mental health problems that disproportionately affect women (i.e., eating disorders, depression, and sexual dysfunction) via two main paths. The first path is direct and overt and involves [sexual objectification] experiences. The second path is indirect and subtle and involves women's internalization of [sexual objectification] experiences or self-objectification (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997)[106]."

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2 — Murphy's Gaze

A — Male Gaze

In her seminal essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," Laura Mulvey takes a psychoanalytical approach to cinema in order to better understand the representation and objectification of women's bodies. She argues that "pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female.[107]" The "male gaze" is the term referring to the specific look the camera offers on the female body. Often the camera angles allow the viewer to identify with a male character, "image and men are bearer of the look[108]" to which women are subjected. Mulvey underlines numerous problematic techniques reinforcing the objectification of women, by relying on Freud's scopophilia theory (voyeurism, peeking into one's intimacy), and identification with gendered characters. These criteria are inter-dependent: it is the identification with the gendered characters that allows men to feel a form of pleasure and arousal in watching the objectified women. Since these analyses prove in many ways the negative aspect of such representation, I will apply the same analysis only to *Asylum*.

Scopophilia, according to the Oxford Dictionaries, is the "sexual pleasure derived chiefly from watching others when they are naked or engaged in sexual activity; voyeurism […] In a broader sense, to obtain pleasure from looking[109]." While the definition of pleasure, I would argue, is largely subjective as depending to one's liking, one can refer to the previously mentioned quote[110] from Judith Butler's gender performance theory in the creation of an original. In this sense, the original is the expectation of visual sexual stimuli. It may, at first, seem hard to notice the construction of normative codings of womanhood that could trigger sexual arousal and reinforce the "passive/female[111]" theory of Mulvey in *Asylum*: the main sex scenes being the rapes of Lana and Monsignor Timothy Howard. If overall Murphy seems to succeed in offering a gaze different from

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the male gaze, it is not entirely true. In the first scene of the first episode, after Kit Walker comes home to his wife Alma, appears to be one of two problematic scenes.

To begin with, the characters are extremely gendered : Kit is first introduced at work before going back to his wife, thus allowing men to identify themselves as providers of financial security on which women are dependent. By staying at home, Alma's character rejects any form of gender transgression and rather than being emancipated, is inscribed in a housewife stereotype. Kit greets her with "Something smells good, Mrs. Walker[112]," as she appears to the screen in a pink dress and sets the dinner table. Alma then declares "the roast should be about ready[113]," but Kit, who is used for male/masculine identification makes his sexual desire clear by responding "That's not what I'm hungry for[114]" and then pushes Alma in the bedroom and undresses her. Her role is strongly underlined by the idea that Kit expects her to have been cooking for him as he arrives, as well being called "Mrs. Walker[115]," as a way for Kit to assert his lasting and legal possession over her body and person. The identification has therefore been set and the narrative can develop towards scopophilia, sexual voyeurism. As Michel Foucault in *Histoire de la sexualité*[116] notes: "*Dans l'espace social, comme au cœur de chaque maison, un seul lieu de sexualité reconnue, mais utilitaire et fécond : la chambre des parents*[117]*.*" The bedroom, as a space for sexual activity, takes on a connotation of high privacy, intimacy. The fact that the camera follows Kit from his work, to the front of his house, the kitchen, the dining room, and the bedroom reinforces a travel from a highly public sphere to a much more private and intimate environment; favorable to scopophilia. The fact that the man is the leader of the scene also creates this bond with the viewer whose sexual arousal depends on identification.

One may argue the spatial and temporal distance of the scene from the viewer's world may possibly affect their ability to identify with the characters, but the sexual connotations and gender roles remain culturally omnipresent in modern society, and are needed in order to then be subverted. To such a counter argument, I would also note that towards the end of the season, many scenes are

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said to be taking place in 2012, at the time of airing. These scenes are far more problematic since it plays on a stronger form of masculinity, as well as strong stereotypes of masculinity. Planned Parenthood lists "sexually aggressive[118]" as one; the male character hires a sex worker (demeaning the female body), and later physically abuses her (representation of men as violent towards women). This representation of both genders acts as a negative representation for reasons Tracy L. Dietz develops:

> "These portrayals, then, have the propensity for negatively affecting the attitudes of both males and females toward women. Subsequently, the effects of possible negative attitudes may adversely affect the ability of women to ever attain gender equality with men. As evidenced in the words of Bialeschki (1990), “By conforming to gender role expectations, young girls restrict their own potential because so many important skills and activities have been designated as ‘inappropriate ’ for them” (54). Likewise, while girls may come to view the roles of women to be limited, so may boys. Boys may learn that the acceptable roles of women include being dependent, subordinate, weak, and supportive of men’s roles. Thus, they also may come to view male-female interaction as limited with men performing the roles of protector, supervisor, and perhaps victimizer of women[119]."

B —A Queer Gaze

Inspired by Mulvey's male gaze, numerous writers developed theories of biased representation in their writings. Iris Brey, French journalist specialized in gender representations in TV productions and author of *Sex and the Series* (2016), writes on a female gaze as opposed to the male gaze. Analyzing *The L Word* (2004):

> "*La série a boulversé le processus d'identification. Le spectateur, homme ou femme, regarde des personnages féminins qui elle-mêmes regardent d'autres femmes. A*

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travers leur regard, le spectateur s'identifie au désir lesbien. […] *La série ne déconstruit pas totalement le [male gaze] puisque les femmes restent des objets de désir qui sont regardés, cependant le regard retranscrit par la caméra n'est plus celui d'un homme, mais celui d'un personnage lesbien. Cela rend ambigus les ressorts habituels des codes de plaisir visuel*[120]*."*

Likewise, *In Queer Time and Place,* Halberstam explores the complexity of creating a transgender gaze through the many media adaptations of Brandon Teena's murder and transition as woman to transgender man. Halberstam studies different forms of gaze. A gaze that begins as the female (a non-dominant sexual perception of the female body) shared by Brandon and his girlfriend, that evolves so as to become a male gaze (that surrounds women's bodies in his location, to which he does not apply, and that therefore led to his death). The violence of the attack, says Halberstam, was due to the killers ability to visually perceive Brandon as a woman instead of a man; ability to apply a male gaze upon a body that is not female.

Having already argued on the male gaze, my intent is now to show that Murphy *queers* his production with an alternative take on cinematic techniques to film women's bodies. In the same manner that his approach to time, space, and situations, are *queer* compared the typical way other cinematic productions make use of such parameters.

While Murphy does make use of the male gaze at certain times, he does not make use, to my belief, of the female gaze in *Asylum.* Even though Lana is a lesbian, the only time her sexual desires, rather than her emotional desires, are visually explored is during the aversion/conversion therapy scene. Being exposed to photographs of female bodies, in an aspect of *mise en abîme,* one could notice the obvious male gaze used to photograph these women in suggestive positions. Use of the female gaze could be argued as a photograph of Lana's girlfriend ultimately appears, supposedly taken by Lana herself. The narrative, however, does not allow these gazes to break through the

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photographs and affect the first degree camera work, depicting Lana vomiting to these pictures due to the drugs she was being administered. In a scene where both the male and female gazes are presented, Murphy manages to completely deconstruct these gazes and strip the sexual value of the female bodies. The result of which is what I could only name a *queer gaze*, since like most queer aspects, it does not respond to any of the pre-existing norms of the aforementioned gazes. A gaze supposes that the viewer is exposed to the female body, and it is depending on the way this exposition is created that a scene could be qualified as male, female or transgender gaze. In this example, the viewer is exposed to the female body in a strongly voyeuristic manner (the photograph being a stolen one). The viewer is not, however, provided with the sexual value of this gaze. The *queer gaze* is a neutral (asexual almost if it were not for the undeniable sexual connotation of the photographs) presentation of the sexual vulnerability of these female bodies. They offer themselves to the camera and the viewer, both of which unwillingly, unconsciously refuse to perceive these bodies as objects providing visual sexual pleasure, satisfaction, and arousal. In fact, I would argue that the denial of sexual connotations is the core of the *queer gaze*: it is only by denying to sexualize these bodies that it can escape the (sexual) expectations of the gaze.

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CONCLUSION

> "“American Horror Story” revels in live-wire debates, like faith versus science. But the show’s real achievement is the verve with which it dives into the kitsch depths of Freudian and Catholic repression, finding ugly links among disparate types of torture: medical, religious, political. Visually, the show is equally audacious, lingering on a black-and-white wimple that frames red lipstick, then pulling classic horror-flick fakeouts, or turning a flashback into newsreel footage. In a standout episode, the asylum hosts a movie night, which takes on a self-referential feel. “We’re all going to be together in the dark, watching ‘The Sign of the Cross,’ a movie full of fire, sex, and the death of Christians,” a nun, who happens to be possessed by Satan, purrs. “What *fun*.” Then Sister Jude, who is drunk on Communion wine, introduces the film, making reference to “the incomparable Mr. Charles Laughton, who I understand is an enormous whoopsie.” This spins, somehow, into a spoken-word rendition of “You’ll Never Walk Alone.” It’s pure camp, and also quite moving, and unlike anything else on TV[121]."

Murphy, as I mentioned in the introduction, was accused of "[having] a woman's problem[122]." Zeba Blay's statement, in the case of *Asylum,* only proves to be a misconception about the series. A misconception of what actually is a realistic representation of the living conditions of queer, aged, disabled, interracial, and intersectional women in a past not so distant from the viewer's time. Murphy reopens women's "archives[123]" and rewrites their story(.ies) to offer a feminist and progressive ending that breaks through the screen and speaks to the contemporary viewer. Under such sexist and sadistic portrayals lies a contemporary message to not take one's rights for granted. Women's (reproductive) rights are still at war in the viewer's political world, and need to be fought for. Organizations, such as Planned Parenthood which medically assists women, are still being threatened[124]. Beyond women's rights, the show also advocates for women suffering from systemic

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oppression, from the patriarchal system in place in most societies. It aims at showing that women defy sexist representations and expectations forced on them in societies ruled by male chauvinism. Lana is to represent women who persist, "never giving up on her own right to existence[125];" as she declares to two patronizing police officers: "I am tough, but I am no cookie[126]".

Murphy also advocates for a new way of approaching gender in relation to a multiplicity of discourses (political, economic, scientific, social and societal, etc.) which is bound to be deconstructed. Instead of thinking male/female, or male/female/other, one should see beyond gender, at the individual rather than their biological sex.

Beyond socio-political issues, Murphy breaks the usual codes of cinematic productions, *queering up* television. American Horror Story was (and remains) one of the first contemporary television program that, each year, would start new; reviving a lost TV genre from the 1950s. Murphy's use of different cameras, at times during the same scene, brings a new artistic dimension to mainstream TV productions.

Above all, is Murphy's relation to time and space. In *Asylum,* linear time has no place. Flashbacks and queer insertions (from what seems to be the future), rather than altering, connect to the present storylines and give sense to their development. The time effects lead to the creation of a *queer reality* in which Murphy is able to explore alternative forms of social constructs (such as the definition of family), to advocate for non-normative sexualities (such as polyamorous relationships), and new forms of reproductions (such as in vitro fertilization).

Notably, it is his depiction of women that breaks codes and expectations, that *queers* the show. Rather than falling into the trap that is filming women with a male gaze, Murphy at first diverts expectations with a lesbian character as a lead. Instead of thus depicting women through the use of female gaze, Murphy manages to denudes his character of sexual connotations: women's

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parts are just as important, if not more, as their male counterparts; their roles should not be overridden for the sake of sexual arousal.

I do not claim Murphy is a feminist hero or savior. Other seasons of American Horror Story (such as *Hotel*, the fifth season) use a woman's body (that of Lady Gaga) as a capitalist argument to better sell his TV series. Rather, my aim is to show the ways in which *Asylum* itself acts as revolutionary TV production. Although I do not claim or pretend that this dissertation covers (or even begins to cover) all avenues of research *Asylum* could open.

In fact, many aspects were left unexplored, or were only hinted. The omnipresent, almost obvious, reference to fairy tales deserves to be studied in its full extent rather than remaining hinted (through the use the color red; the happy endings that every character meets; the necessity to humanize Jude and subvert the idea of the Wicked Witch or the Evil Stepmother; the subversion of Prince Charming in Dr Thredson who only saves Lana to chain and rape her; etc.). The use of women in a historical context was barely developed when one knows Anne Frank appears as a character in two special episodes. The scientific aspect of the series was also left unexplored when one knows Dr Arden uses abandoned patients to pursue human experimentations he had started in Auschwitz. All of the aforementioned parts of the series are key elements to understanding the environment created in *Asylum* and the full extent of Murphy's cautionary tale. The length of this dissertation only allowed me to develop a few of these elements. I am hoping that future works, dissertations, and research will allow me to achieve extensive analyses of *Asylum.*

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APPENDIX A

Illustration unavailable due to copyright issues

1) Bentham, Benjamin, *The works of Jeremy Bentham,* vol. IV, 1843 (originally 1791), 172-3.

Illustration unavailable due to copyright issues

2) Beeery, Nick "Sister Jude" Hero Complex Gallery, *Pinterest,* 2017, Web, 9 May 2017.

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APPENDIX B

We begin outside Jude's office, picking up Lana and Jude where we left them in Episode 201, as they head down the hallway, the staircase -- towards the arrival of Kit Walker. Lana walks faster than Jude. Around them there is a kind of * bustle and life that makes us almost nostalgic for the Briarcliff of old.

SISTER JUDE
Where's the fire, Ms. Winters?
He'll still be a killer when we get to the bottom of the stairs....
Lana's busy writing down notes as she goes.

LANA
I want to be sure and get a good
look, maybe even a few words with him...
Jude looks at her hand.

SISTER JUDE
You're not married, are you Ms.
Winters?

LANA
(slightly bristly)
Nope.

SISTER JUDE
Got a fella?

Lana tries to hide her irritation with the prying.

LANA
Not at the moment.
She notes the tension in Lana's face. Something registers with Jude -- has she guessed about Lana?

SISTER JUDE
Maybe your career's enough for you.

LANA
Right now my only interest is
getting a beat on Kit Walker.

SISTER JUDE
Today the local crime beat,
tomorrow what? A Nobel Peace Prize?

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LANA
A Pulitzer would do.

SISTER JUDE
And we all know skinning women
alive gets you more attention than healing God's abandoned souls. No headlines there.

LANA
It's all important, Sister. And I
swear I'll come back and write about your great institution, your bakery, your brilliant Monsignor...

SISTER JUDE
Sure you will, when Hell freezes over and all those little devils
put on their ice skates. (then)
A girl like you, you like to dream large. I'd venture Briarcliff is already in your rear view mirror...

LANA
You make ambition sound like a sin.

SISTER JUDE
No, I'm saying it's dangerous.

LANA
What about you? Saving the souls of
madmen and killers is a pretty lofty ambition, wouldn't you say?

SISTER JUDE
And believe me, you cannot imagine
what it took to get here. What I've lived through, what I've seen.

LANA
I'd love to hear your story
someday...

SISTER JUDE
I don't think you and I are
destined to meet again. (then, stopping)
But I hope you know what you're in for -- the loneliness, the heartbreak, the sacrifice you'll face as a woman with a dream, on her own.

SISTER JUDE (CONT'D)
And I'm not even including the male
hierarchy that will always try and break your spirit…

LANA
You don't have any idea what I'm

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capable of.
She puts her hand on Lana. A moment of true kindness and sisterly intent.

SISTER JUDE
Well then good for you, Miss Lana Banana.
But just remember, if you look in the face of evil, evil's gonna look right back at you.
They look at each other a moment. An understanding between two very similar women. Then they open the door to the outside and disappear into the light as we --

END SEASON

- « Madness Ends », *American Horror Story: Asylum.* Writ. Tim Minear. Dir. Alfonso Gomez-Rejon. Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment, Inc, 2012.

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Important to note that in the end, "the House Appropriations Committee’s fiscal year 2017 omnibus appropriations bill includes increased funding for the National Endowment for the Arts and Humanities"as reports Patrick Hipes, for deadline.com . It is not, therefore, affected by the cuts.

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