

“YOU AND I HAVE BEGUN TO BLUR”: THE DOUBLE AND QUEER MONSTROSITY
IN BRYAN FULLER’S *HANNIBAL*

By

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To Jackie Elliott, my fellow colleague who spent many an hour on her couch screaming about *Hannibal* with me.

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This thesis explores the double as a trope of queer desire in the television series *Hannibal*. I focus on the way in which the series visually and narratively establishes consulting FBI profiler Will Graham and cannibal psychiatrist Hannibal Lecter as doubles of one another.

While previous books and films in the *Hannibal* franchise use queer-coding to convey pathology, the show reclaims Gothic and Hollywood horror tropes that convey queer subtext to depict an explicitly queer relationship. *Hannibal* realizes the potential of these conventions to disrupt heteronormativity and create alternative spaces for queer futurity. For example, the erotic triangle between Hannibal and Will and their shared love interest Alana Bloom, which would traditionally be used to convey Hannibal and Will’s queer desire with Alana as a heterosexual conduit, ends in each member of the love triangle paired off into a same-sex couple.

Visually, the show conveys Will and Hannibal as doubles through scenes depicting their bodies as actually conjoined, breaking down the physical boundaries of the body to suggest their identities are blending. In addition to the paralleling of Will and

Hannibal, the series reproduces dialogue and framing from other entries in the franchise of Hannibal's love interest Clarice Starling, but with Will Graham in her position.

Hannibal uses these deliberate allusions to the couple Clarice and Hannibal in the relationship between Will and Hannibal to critique heteronormativity and reveal the constructed nature of gender. The series utilizes the double to break down normative binaries and deconstruct gender and heteronormativity.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

This thesis considers queerness in Bryan Fuller's 2013-2015 television series *Hannibal*, particularly within the long lineage of queer narratives in horror and Gothic texts. *Hannibal* is a contemporary NBC television series adaptation of Thomas Harris's Hannibal Lecter series. The show follows FBI consultant Will Graham, an intensely empathetic forensic profiler who is brought in by the FBI to track down serial killers with his unique ability to assume their point of view. Over the course of the series, Will develops an intense relationship with Hannibal, the infamous cannibal psychiatrist. In spite of the program's realism—there is no supernatural narrative in *Hannibal*—the series utilizes Gothic and horror conventions such as the erotic triangle and doubling to depict the madness, monstrosity, and desire within the characters. *Hannibal* primarily explores queerness through narrative and visual doubling both within the series and intertextually.

The television series utilizes a complex system of visual and narrative doubling between characters in order to dramatize the desire between Hannibal and Will. In the show, the motif of doubling functions as a queer mode in two primary ways—the doubling of Will with the object of Hannibal's romantic desire Clarice Starling, and the doubling of Will and Hannibal. The show uses deliberate allusions to the romantic relationship between Clarice and Hannibal rewritten over the relationship between Will and Hannibal to critique heteronormativity and reveal the constructed nature of gender. In addition, the series focuses on consulting FBI profiler Will Graham and cannibal psychiatrist Hannibal Lecter as doubles of one another. Much of the visual doubling in the series takes place in the Will's dreams, developing queer desire in a space separate

from reality. The series employs mirrored shots and nonlinear cross-cutting to portray the interiority of the characters, emphasizing their identification with each other. These techniques are used frequently to suggest visually that the men's identities are blending. Doubling in the series thus becomes a means of breaking down strict binaries—of space, the body, and identity. In this way, *Hannibal* uses horror and monstrosity as modes for deconstructing the strict binaries of gender and sexuality.

Horror and Gothic texts have a long-standing legacy as narratives that explore queerness but ultimately restore the heteronormative status quo. *Hannibal* portrays monstrosity as a much more permanent disruption of heteronormativity than most of classic horror. The classic Hollywood monster typically threatens sexual normativity by disrupting the heterosexual couple. However, Benshoff notes that most films end with a return to the prior heteronormative status quo, with “the monster...vanquished by the forces of normality” (*Monsters in the Closet* 10) and “the ‘normal’ couple...reinstated after safely passing through their queer experience” (*Monsters in the Closet* 37). However, *Hannibal* does not resolve with this restoration of normalcy. Instead, *Hannibal* utilizes narrative conventions of horror and Gothic texts and realizes their queer potential by permanently disrupting heteronormativity and hegemonic binaries. Through this subversion, *Hannibal* offers a potential queer futurity that realizes the promise of monstrosity as a queer disruptive force. The series offers an exploration of non-normative sexuality and deconstructs gender, reclaiming the metaphorical queerness the monster has long represented. Thus, I argue that *Hannibal* realizes the queer possibility present in horror as a genre.

CHAPTER 2

“WAS HE SOME KIND OF QUEER?”: QUEER REPRESENTATION, HOMOSEXUAL PANIC, AND HOMOPHOBIA IN THOMAS HARRIS’S HANNIBAL LECTER SERIES

I will contextualize Bryan Fuller’s TV series within the broader franchise surrounding the character of Hannibal Lecter to understand how *Hannibal* functions within the horror series that precedes it. Given my focus on the queer double depicted in *Hannibal*, I discuss the often controversial relationship the Hannibal franchise has had with all valences of queer representation, including the depiction of gay, lesbian, and transgender characters in nearly every entry and adaptation of the franchise. My analysis begins with the infamous portrayal of the primary antagonist Jame Gumb in Jonathan Demme’s 1991 *Silence of the Lambs* and the backlash the film incited, then moves through a closer assessment of Thomas Harris’s depiction of queerness throughout the Lecter book series. Although the *Silence of the Lambs* film adaptation is the most well-known case of drawing backlash from the queer community in the franchise, underlying elements of both homophobia and homoeroticism are present in nearly every novel in the book series, with many of Harris’s villains relying on queer-coded tropes and his own representations of homosexuality frequently containing troubling undertones.

Of the numerous books and film adaptations in the franchise, the 1991 film version of *The Silence of the Lambs* received the most adamant backlash. The film caused an outcry amongst LGBT activists, including the Gay and Lesbian Alliance against Defamation, who openly protested against it (Phillips 41). Reaction to the film was polarizing, creating a division between groups of feminist and queer activists. Following the film’s release, the *Village Voice* brought together critics across the queer and feminist divide to discuss its impact in “Writers on the Lamb: Sorting Out the Sexual

Politics of a Controversial Film” (Phillips 41). The split between LGBT and feminist activists became even more blurred when several gay male activists outed Jodie Foster as a lesbian (Staiger 142). Protests broke out outside the 1992 Academy Awards ceremony, as *Silence of the Lambs* took home five awards, including Best Picture (Phillips 39). The volatile reaction to the film in part stemmed from the political and cultural moment in which the film was produced, at the height of the AIDS crisis, with many queer activists fearing even more violence would be directed at the community in response to the film (Staiger 142; Tasker 36). The objection by the queer community solidified into a protest. Janet Staiger writes that activists felt that, even if the film was not intended to be homophobic, its reliance on images associated with stereotypical queer coding and “[even the suggestion of a connection] between homosexuals and serial murders was irresponsible” (Staiger 142). This reaction defines the central problem of homophobia and queerness in Harris’s franchise—although moments in the series attempt to separate pathology from queerness, ultimately the reliance on queer-coding just reinforces the connection.

The response to *The Silence of the Lambs* stemmed primarily from “the fear...that *others* might see gay male sexuality in that image of deviance” (Tasker 37), and thus from the queer-coding frequently associated with pathology. Some of the associations of queerness and pathology in Buffalo Bill’s character manifest in his relationship with Hannibal Lecter through the long-standing motif of cannibalism as a metaphor for queer sexuality (Crain 28). Caleb Crain constructs Bill and Hannibal as doubles of one another, writing “the homosexual (and would-be transsexual) serial killer, Buffalo Bill...almost never speaks. The viewer...only uncovers him by passing first

through the mind of Hannibal Lecter, the cannibal...Bill has the cannibal's tattoos and pierced body parts, and...Lecter has the stereotypical homosexual's refined taste" (49). *The Silence of the Lambs* utilizes the Gothic and horror trope of the cannibal and the double to evoke queerness, thus associating not only Gumb but Hannibal with queer-coding. This metaphor becomes explicit in the *Hannibal* television series through Hannibal's romantic desire for Will Graham.

In addition to the cannibal-queer motif, Buffalo Bill's modus operandi draws upon narratives of gender confusion, as he abducts women to create a female skin as a means of transforming out of his own fractured identity. Simultaneous with drawing upon these tropes, the rhetoric of the novel and the film consistently attempts to distance Buffalo Bill from a transsexual identity. In the novel, Hannibal mentions that Buffalo Bill is not transsexual three times in the text, as does Clarice Starling's FBI director Jack Crawford once (*The Silence of the Lambs* 164, 165, 169, 181). In fact, every mention of transsexuality in the book centers on discounting Jame Gumb as transsexual. The novel uses voices of hegemonic authority to diagnose Gumb's identity—FBI agent Jack Crawford, former psychiatrist Hannibal Lecter, and the John Hopkins Hospital, which denied Gumb gender reassignment surgery (*The Silence of the Lambs* 322). Here, Harris borrows from narratives in which queer individuals have been told that their desire or identity is false, thus tapping into the historical construction of queerness as pathological. The narrative attempts to distance Gumb from a transgender identity; however, the novel employs this separation primarily through medical channels, thus depicting queer identity as diagnosable.

This separation of queer codifiers from Gumb's own identity contributes to Judith Halberstam's reading of Buffalo Bill as a figure who, rather than being queer, operates from a heterosexist positionality, having fallen "prey to the most virulent conditioning heterosexist culture has to offer—he believes that anatomy is destiny" (*Skin Shows* 167) and that true gender resides in "skin, or outward appearance...the fetishized signifier of gender for a heterosexist culture" (*Skin Shows* 168-9). Harris does make attempts to separate the perception of Gumb's as transgender from his own pathology. However, all of these attempts come from normative figures of authority which treat Gumb's identity as diagnosable and thus draw on a long history of characterizing queerness as pathological, reinforcing this association through queer-coded tropes.

The novel also dismisses Gumb's homosexual relationship with Benjamin Raspail, Gumb's lover, who explains to Lecter that "*Jame is not really gay, you know, it's just something he picked up in jail*" (*The Silence of the Lambs* 172) in a moment in which the text sharply separates identity from act, implying that the sex Gumb has with male partners does not necessarily make Gumb himself a queer man. However, the moment also draws on troubling associations of queerness with the culture of prison rape. The utilization of queer coding for characters presented as having a false queer identity also created the controversy around the film adaptation of *Silence*. Yvonne Tasker writes that many of those opposed to the film felt that the presentation of Buffalo Bill was more shallow than in the novel, "instead...fall[ing] back on images of gender deviance and of gay male identity as psychopathic yet effeminate. Crucially, this is a question of...the intricacy of words versus the supposed simplicity of images" (Tasker 37). By appropriating iconography and narratives that are typically queer-coded while

attempting to distance a monstrous figure from a “true” queer identity, the relationship between *The Silence of the Lambs* and queer representation is uneasy, failing to deconstruct homophobic coding due to its reliance on those tropes.

Harris began associating his villains with queer-coding and queer monstrosity in his debut Lecter novel *Red Dragon*. In the case of Francis Dolarhyde, the titular antagonist of the novel, this queer-coding manifests itself through Dolarhyde’s own homosexual panic. Dolarhyde, who bites his victims, quickly earns the nickname in the press of the “Tooth Fairy.” He shows disdain and discomfiture with the title, writing in his letter to Dr. Lecter, “*They like to sling demeaning nicknames, don’t they? The Tooth Fairy. What could be more inappropriate?*” (*Red Dragon* 131). In order to try and trap Dolarhyde, the FBI has tabloid reporter Freddie Lounds interview Will Graham about Dolarhyde. During the interview, Will uses extremely derogatory language and preys upon Dolarhyde’s queer anxiety in order to lure him into kidnapping him. When discussing what Will should say to enrage Dolarhyde, psychiatrist Alan Bloom concludes, “The killer’s objection to the name ‘Tooth Fairy’ was grounded in the homosexual implications of the word ‘fairy.’ Bloom believed he had an unconscious homosexual conflict, a terrible fear of being gay” (*Red Dragon* 197). Here, the text links Dolarhyde’s homosexual panic with the potential of unrealized queer desire. However, Eve Sedgwick has described homosexual panic as a form of heteronormative policing, operating via “homophobic mechanisms” (*Between Men* 92). Dolarhyde’s anxiety can be read as a manifestation based on homophobic manifestations rather than true queer impulses, much as Gumb’s understanding of gender can be read as heterosexist rather than queer. The FBI’s plan to lure Dolarhyde into a trap backfires, however, when he

kidnaps Freddie. The text further reinforces Dolarhyde's queer desire through the homoerotic description of his attack of Lounds once he has him captive. Dolarhyde bites Lound's mouth, mutilating his face. Harris uses erotically charged language to describe this encounter, "He placed his hand on Lound's heart and, leaning to him intimately as though to kiss him, he bit Lounds's lips off and spit them on the floor" (*Red Dragon* 218). Here, as with Gumb and Hannibal, the book associates Dolarhyde with cannibalism, coding his violence with a subtextual queer valence. Instead of depicting his homosexual panic as a purely homophobic response, this action hints at Dolarhyde's character having a potentially repressed queer identity. Although Dolarhyde can be read as a homophobic rather than queer villain, the text ultimately reinforces his pathology as queer through the homoerotic way in which his violence manifests itself.

Harris's final novel *Hannibal* engages with multiple homophobic valences and depicts an explicitly queer character for the first time in the series. The novel provides a more straightforwardly homophobic character than Harris's previous books in the form of Paul Krendler, the misogynistic Justice Department officer who acts as Clarice's aid and rival in the hunt for Hannibal Lecter. Of Hannibal Lecter, Krendler says "I've always figured he was a homosexual" because of "All this artsy-fartsy stuff. Chamber music and tea-party food. I don't mean anything personal, if you've got a lot of sympathy for those people, or friends like that" (*Hannibal* 299). Krendler's assumptions about Hannibal's sexuality play into stereotypical perceptions of gay men as refined or cultured, and he regards Clarice in her position as a FBI agent with the same homophobic contempt. Krendler often makes derogatory references to Clarice being queer, a reaction to Clarice's disinterest in him. He claims that Clarice's relationship with her female

roommate is “very likely a sex thing” (*Hannibal* 304) and thinks of Clarice’s home as “some goddamned dyke den...” (*Hannibal* 383). Of Margot Verger, Mason’s lesbian sister and the first openly queer character in Harris’s franchise, Krendler muses, “He bet Margot wished she had a dick” (*Hannibal* 302).

Krendler even experiences a moment of homosexual panic that comes from his homophobia and heterosexist policing of his sexual identity. When thinking of his animosity to Clarice, Krendler imagines a sexual encounter with a woman who looks like Clarice, “her pants around one ankle asking him what in the hell was the matter with him, and why didn’t he come on and do it, was he *some kind of queer?some kind of queer?some kind of queer?*” (*Hannibal* 382). Again, this moment revisits some of the ambiguities between homoerotic desire and homosexual panic at play throughout Harris’s entire series. However, unlike in other instances throughout the novels, this moment reads as primarily based around homosexual panic and a fear of being perceived as queer, since Krendler does not experience any explicit same sex desire or have any homoerotically charged encounters with other men. The novel condemns Krendler, as he directs his homophobia at Clarice and Hannibal, the two protagonists of the book. Krendler’s narrative arc ends with him lobotomized, and Hannibal and Clarice eat his brain in an intense moment of revenge and comeuppance. Ultimately, although the book presents neither Hannibal nor Clarice as having a queer sexuality, one of the ultimate acts of the consummation of their relationship is the queer-coded act of cannibalizing Krendler. Although the *Hannibal* novel vilifies Krendler, the book still inflects Clarice and Hannibal’s characters with these coded horror tropes, thus concluding their narratives on an ambivalent note.

However, in the case of Margot, the only openly queer character in the book, Harris relies on numerous lesbian stereotypes and homophobic narratives about queer identity. Characters in the book frequently conflate Margot's sexuality with her gender identity. The book often refers to lesbian penis envy and the potential of the lesbian phallus. Upon first meeting Margot, the narrator observes, "Her cornsilk hair had receded enough to make Starling wonder if she took steroids and had to tape her clitoris down" (*Hannibal* 62). By having Clarice, who is one of the major protagonists of the book, react to Margot in a way that is similar to Krendler, the text validates Krendler's homophobic readings of her and undercuts the condemnation of his homophobia. When Barney, Margot's friend and a tertiary character in the series, becomes attracted to her, his immediate response reads like possible homosexual panic or queer confusion due to the way he reads Margot's gender. The narrator says, "He had never felt any attraction to men. But Margot for all her muscles was clearly not a man, and he liked her" (*Hannibal* 361). The *Hannibal* books contain moments to critique homophobic narratives throughout. However, through his reliance on queer-coded tropes, Harris fails to realize the subversive potential in motifs of queer monstrosity, instead merely reinforcing stereotypical representations and the association of queerness and pathology.

In Harris's series, homophobic characters are generally portrayed as repugnant, as in the case of Paul Krendler. However, often these homophobic characters also have moments of homosexual panic that read as potential repressed queer desire, such as with Francis Dolarhyde. In addition, in the case of Margot, Harris's representation of explicit queerness contains homophobic undertones. The very act of using queer-coding

of antagonists in the series also inscripts queerness as uncanny or unsettling in some way. Contextualizing queerness in previous entries of the Hannibal franchise provides a means of understanding some of the ways in the television series moves beyond the precedents set by the Hannibal franchise. The show creates new meanings from the framework of the previous books and films, a product unique to adaptations within franchises which create critiques through alterations to their original source material (Marazi 240). In the case of *Hannibal*, the series makes allusions to previous entries in the franchise in order to deconstruct heteronormativity and gender norms. Where Harris's book series and its film adaptations largely failed to navigate the complicated relationship between queer coded narratives and homophobic representations, the *Hannibal* TV series realizes the subversive potential within these stereotypical narratives of monstrous queerness, creating new queer modes of futurity.

CHAPTER 3
“COULD HE DAILY FEEL A STAB OF HUNGER FOR YOU, AND FIND
NOURISHMENT AT THE VERY SIGHT OF YOU?”: DECONSTRUCTING GENDER
PERFORMANCE AND HETERONORMATIVITY THROUGH ADAPTATIONAL
DOUBLING

The *Hannibal* TV series creates new queer meanings from the original franchise through the intertextual doubling of Clarice Starling and Will Graham. The show reproduces dialogue and shots of Clarice and Hannibal’s romantic relationship from both the book and film adaptations in the *Hannibal* series and replicates them in the dynamic between Hannibal and Will. This doubling creates a space for critique of both heterosexist and queer narrative conventions. This critique is unique to the mode of adaptation, because “we experience adaptations as palimpsests through our memory of other works that resonate through repetition with variation” (Hutcheon 8). Thus, *Hannibal* relies on allusions to the ur text specific to the mode of adaptation to locate subversive potential in queer-coded narratives and critique the homophobic and gendered constructions of the previous texts in the franchise. By utilizing parallel scenes between itself and other entries of the franchise, the *Hannibal* series creates a queer romantic dynamic between Will and Hannibal.

The parallels between Clarice and Will indicate the romantic nature of Will and Hannibal’s relationship. However, the relationship between Clarice and Hannibal is more sexual than between Will and Hannibal. For instance, Clarice and Hannibal kiss in the novel and the film franchise. By contrast, Will and Hannibal never kiss on screen or engage in any sexual behavior that is not a part of Will’s own fantasy. In spite of this lack of sexual consummation, the TV series lifts scenes from previous entries in the franchise to construct Hannibal’s relationship with Will as equally romantic to his relationship with Clarice. Hannibal’s response is exactly the same upon encountering

Clarice in the *Hannibal* novel and Will in the series after an extended period of separation:

“Dr. Lecter handed one to Clarice Starling. ‘If I saw you every day, forever, I’d remember this time.’” (*Hannibal* 522)

Hannibal: If I saw you every day, forever, Will, I would remember this time. (“Dolce”, 3.06)

Both encounters illicit a response of longing and desire from Hannibal, a seeming reunion with his beloved from whom he has been long parted. Both moments indicate the intensity with which Hannibal is enamored with Clarice and Will, singling out the importance of this moment while also hinting at Hannibal’s desire for a future together. This comparison allows viewers of the series to recognize the queer desire between Will and Hannibal in spite of the absence of a sexual encounter. In this way, *Hannibal* operates similarly to depictions of queer desire in classic horror cinema. In early Hollywood horror film, a system of coded signifiers emerged as “...audiences came to understand how a narrative ellipse could signify an off-screen sexual liaison” (*Monsters in the Closet* 35). By creating Will as a double of Clarice, the series builds on a long tradition of using parallels to fill in these ellipses with queer desire, drawing on the fluidity of shared identity common in early horror film, in which there was often “slippage between the male and female as objects of queer desire....” (*Monsters in the Closet* 67). However, *Hannibal* uses this parallelism to move beyond hinting at Hannibal’s feelings for Will as subtextually romantic, confirming the romantic nature of his feelings and thus deviating from the depiction of queer desire in early horror films.

In another instance of parallelism, the *Hannibal* series solidifies the romantic nature of Hannibal’s desire for Will. In the film *Hannibal*, an adaptation of the novel of the same name, when discussing Dante’s first sonnet, Hannibal asks, “Could he daily

feel a stab of hunger for her and find nourishment in the very sight of her? I think so. But would she see through the bars of his plight and ache for him?” His words serve as a reaction to and analysis of the sonnet, but more importantly as an obvious metaphor for his own feelings for Clarice, which he fears may be one-sided longing. In “The Number of the Beast is 666...,” the penultimate episode of the series, Will asks his psychiatrist Bedelia du Maurier, Hannibal’s former lover, about the nature of Hannibal’s feelings for him. “Is Hannibal...in love with me?” the FBI consultant asks hesitantly, to which Bedelia replies, “Could he daily feel a stab of hunger for you, and find nourishment at the very sight of you? Yes. But do you ache for him?” Will’s use of the phrase “in love” dispels any notion that the dynamic is purely platonic rather than romantically queer. This moment not only confirms the nature of Hannibal’s feelings for Will, but Bedelia’s question and Will’s silence in response creates an ellipsis that opens up the possibility of this queer longing as reciprocal. Through this confirmation, *Hannibal* reclaims the queer desire at the heart of subtextual constructions in early horror.

By applying the romantic framework of a heterosexual relationship onto a sexless dynamic, *Hannibal* complicates the correlation between romantic and sexual desire, offering a depiction of a romantic but asexual bond. Portraying Hannibal and Will’s dynamic as asexual while still depicting them engaging in sexual relationships with women problematizes queer representation in the show. However, the asexual nature of Will and Hannibal’s romantic relationship subverts the hegemonic construction of the romantic as automatically sexual, queering the traditional romantic-sexual dynamic. The series uses the previous well-known relationship between Clarice and Hannibal as context for establishing the queer dynamic between the two male protagonists. Such

utilization not only highlights the romantic nature of Will and Hannibal's relationship, but also critiques the heterosexist dynamic between Clarice and Hannibal through imitation.

By exactly reproducing dialogue and visuals that formerly depicted Clarice and Hannibal in the queer dynamic of Will and Hannibal, the series highlights not only the performativity of heterosexuality but also gender as well. There are two scenes in the television series which borrow heavily from visuals of the *Hannibal* film in order to create direct parallels between Will and Clarice, placing Will into a highly feminized position. The first is from the *Hannibal* season two finale, "Mizumono," when Hannibal discovers that Will's season-long pseudo-seduction has been a ploy to betray him to the FBI. This scene directly doubles a sequence at the end of the *Hannibal* film, in which Clarice attempts to recapture Hannibal to turn him over to the FBI. The acting in this scene plays an important role in the mirroring between adaptations, as Hugh Dancy, who plays Will Graham in the show, perfectly replicates Julianne Moore's performance as Clarice Starling.

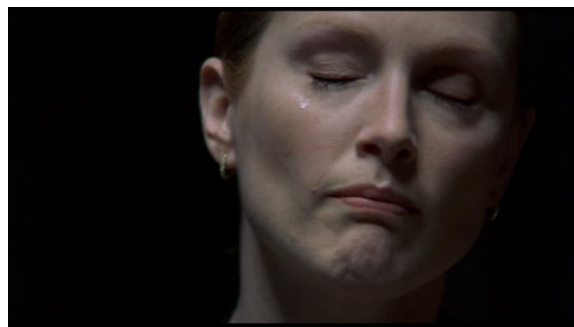


Figure 3-1 Julianne Moore, *Hannibal*, Film, MGM, 2001.



Figure 3-2 Hugh Dancy, *Hannibal*, Television, Lionsgate, 2014.

Hannibal: ...You would deny me my life, wouldn't you?
Clarice: Not your life.
Hannibal: Just my freedom. You'd take that from me. (*Hannibal* film)

Hannibal: You would deny me my life.
Will: No, not your life, no.
Hannibal: My freedom then, you would take that from me. ("Mizumono," 2.13)

Both scenes are nearly identical. The dialogue repeats. Hugh Dancy mimics Julianne Moore's pained expression, highlighting the deliberate decision by the creative team of the TV series to reproduce the scene exactly. Dancy reproduces Moore's gestures, copying her body language to convey Will's emotions. In addition, Dancy employs feminized overtures in his mimicry; he closes his eyes, unable to look at Hannibal in this moment of betrayal, and he is clearly overwrought with emotion that he is trying to contain as Moore's Clarice did. The moment captures the emotion and desire Hannibal elicits from Clarice and Will, even in a moment of betrayal.

By exactly doubling Moore's performance, Dancy associates Will's character with gestures that have previously been coded in the franchise as feminine. This moment again evokes the slippery nature of identity between male and female objects of desire in horror (*Monsters in the Closet* 67), using shared gesture as a means of breaking down boundaries between gendered bodies. The act of doubling here serves as a critique which highlights gender performativity, through the performance of an actor imitating an actress. This act disrupts constructions of gender, as Dancy's performance

reveals these feminized gestures are not inherent to one particular gender, but rather coded, as “there is no original or primary gender...*but gender is a kind of imitation for which there is no original...a kind of imitation that produces the very notion of the original as an effect and consequence of the imitation itself*” (Butler 314). Dancy’s performance replicates that of the female love object in the heterosexual relationship from the “original” *Hannibal* film in his male object of queer desire in the television series adaptation. In doing so, the series also reveals the ways in which adaptations inflect the “original” text they derive from, exposing that the urtext is in fact an intertextual construction as well, since “even the original was influenced, or inspired, by something prior, hence the notion of intertextuality...” (Marazi 238). This parallelism thus uses the constructions of the original heteronormative framework to blur the boundaries between masculine and feminine gestures, indicating the constructed nature of such binaries of separation.

Along with this scene, the *Hannibal* series reproduces another sequence from the film that even more clearly highlights Will Graham as a feminized figure by borrowing heterosexual cues of romance for Will’s relationship to Hannibal. The narrative of this scene in the TV series exactly parallels the film, with Hannibal saving Clarice and Will from Mason Verger’s Muskrat Farms.



Figure 3-3 Anthony Hopkins, Julianne Moore, *Hannibal*, Film, MGM, 2001.



Figure 3-4 Hugh Dancy, Mads Mikkelsen, *Hannibal*, Television, Lionsgate, 2015.

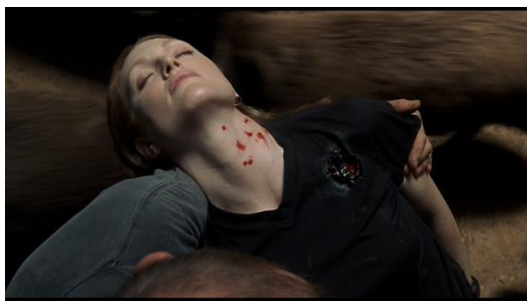


Figure 3-5 Anthony Hopkins, Julianne Moore, *Hannibal*, Film, MGM, 2001.



Figure 3-6 Hugh Dancy, Mads Mikkelsen, *Hannibal*, Television, Lionsgate, 2015.

In both Figure 3-3 and 3-4, Hannibal carries Clarice and Will, the respective objects of his desire, away from a scene of danger in his arms bridal style. The composition reverberates with the gendered and heterosexual visual of the husband carrying the bride over the threshold into marriage. The body language here draws upon long traditions of swooning maidens who must be saved by a strong male hero. By placing Will, the male protagonist of the show, into this ordinarily feminized position, the series questions the long-standing heterosexist construction of women as the weaker gender

that need to be saved by men. In addition, the paralleled exposure of Will's neck in Figure 3-6 eroticizes his body in a way usually reserved for depictions of sensual femininity.

By eroticizing Will's body in a stereotypically feminine way, *Hannibal* offers a critique common in the gender inversions of homoerotic horror films, exposing the cultural comfort with the abuse and objectification of the female body ("Way too Gay" 142). Writing this extraordinarily feminized body language onto male cop Will Graham draws attention to the performative nature of gender in film as well as complicating Will's masculinity. Placing Will into Clarice's position allows the *Hannibal* TV series to reveal the ways in which Clarice had been traditionally feminized in previous adaptations and thus expose the heterosexist dynamics of other entries in the franchise. In addition to critiquing the heterosexist narrative conventions formerly at play in the franchise, doubling in *Hannibal* serves as a means of deconstructing the boundaries of identity, body, and space, thereby utilizing the double to meditate on alternative queer forms of being.

As I will discuss in greater detail later in this thesis, the *Hannibal* TV series is extraordinarily preoccupied with portraying Will and Hannibal as doubles of one another and utilizing this doubling to depict queer desire between the two men. However, this doubling does have a more muted precedent in the original Hannibal Lecter novels, between Hannibal and Clarice as the two Gothic romantic leads. The romance between the pair draws upon conventions of monstrous doubling and desire associated with the Gothic, such as transformation and blurring of identity boundaries between two characters. As Tasker writes of the relationship between Hannibal and Clarice in *The*

Silence of the Lambs, the film borrows from a typical narrative of doubling between cop and criminal, structured around the “convention—even a cliché—of crime fiction and crime cinema that the cop and his suspect are similar creatures, perhaps even doubles” (Tasker 75). There are numerous instances of doubling and the blurring of boundaries between Hannibal and Clarice in the series. Most strikingly, the film adaptation of *The Silence of the Lambs* highlights this visually, as can be seen in Figure 7, by superimposing Hannibal’s face over Clarice’s as his reflection in the glass that separates them.



Figure 3-7 Anthony Hopkins, Jodie Foster, *Silence of the Lambs*, Film, MGM, 1991.

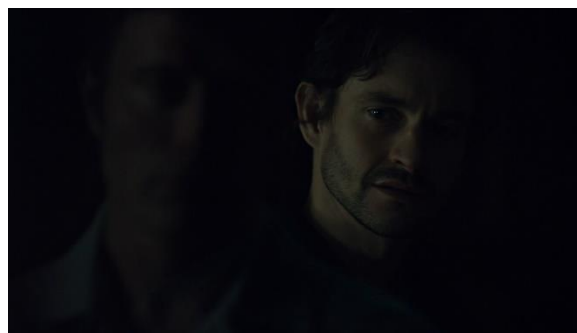


Figure 3-8 Mads Mikkelsen, Hugh Dancy, *Hannibal*, Television, Lionsgate, 2015. As can be seen in Figure 3-8, the *Hannibal* TV series reproduces this same technique, and does so exhaustively. Figure 3-8 depicts Hannibal and Will’s first reencounter, six years after Hannibal has turned himself over to the police, again with Hannibal’s face superimposed onto Will’s via his reflection in the glass. Of the six episodes that make

up the series' final arc, this shot is reproduced in some variation in all but one episode. By using superimposition and reflection to create this effect, both shots create the dissolving boundaries between Hannibal and both Clarice and Will respectively, blending his physical body into theirs. The shot highlights Hannibal's place not only as a double but also as a figure whose separate identity from his two objects of desire is rapidly blurring into one, no longer existing as a physical entity outside of them but rather conjoined to their bodies.

Halberstam writes of *Silence*, "Boundaries...are all mixed up in this film until they disappear altogether, becoming as transparent as the glass that (barely) divides Lecter and Starling. Lecter illustrates to perfection the spooky and uncanny effect of confusing boundaries, inside and outside, consuming and being consumed, watching and being watched" (*Skin Shows* 164). The blurring of normative boundaries is a threat posed by monstrosity in general, which "[does] not so much...threaten to overrun the boundaries of the proper, as...promise to dissolve them" (Shildrick 2). Monstrous desire, rather than being directed at an object, forms around excessiveness and transformation. Hannibal's desire for Clarice and Will ultimately forms from the queer-coded horror at the heart of his own identity—he wishes that they will adopt his "lifestyle" and become cannibals with him. Cannibalism functions parallel to Hannibal's desire to become one with Will and Clarice, a desire that is ultimately queer as, "Cannibalism and homosexuality violate the distinctions between identity and desire; between self and other; between what we want, what we want to be, and what we are" (Crain 34). Because cannibalism involves consumption of human flesh, the act breaks down the barriers separating human bodies. Hannibal's identity forms from a horrific action that blurs respectable

boundaries, and his cannibalism metaphorically reflects his intention to transform Clarice and Will into reflections of himself. However, rather than achieving this by cannibalizing the objects of his desire, he intends to break down these boundaries by transforming them into cannibal doubles of himself. This transformative excess often threatens hegemonic binaries, including gender and sexuality (MacCormack 255). Hannibal's relationship with Clarice and Will engages, both visually and narratively, with this monstrous desire for transformation and the rapid merging of identities.

In the case of *Hannibal*, the dissolution of identity threatens not only the physical barriers separating Will and Hannibal into individuals, but also Will's own construction of heterosexuality. As stated, these sequences of Will and the imprisoned Hannibal discussing the FBI's latest case, set in the Baltimore State Hospital for the Criminally Insane, take place after a six year time jump within the series. In these scenes the pair frequently discuss the events in Will's personal life since he last saw Hannibal, including the fact that Will has married during the intervening years. In "And the Woman Clothed with Sun," Hannibal compares Will's marriage to the slaughter of families by the season's serial killer antagonist the Red Dragon, "Like you, Will. He needs a family to escape what's inside him" and asks Will "How did you choose [your family]? Ready-made wife and child to serve your needs. A stepson or daughter? A stepson absolves you of any biological blame. You know better than to breed." By placing these discussions within these mirrored sequences, the series deliberately juxtaposes Will's intense identification with Hannibal with his heteronormative relationship, and thus highlights the similarity of and tension between his marriage and his bond with Hannibal. In addition, the language Hannibal uses depicts Will's family as nothing more

than a normative construction, a doomed attempt by Will to deny his true nature. Thus, *Hannibal* builds upon these doubling shots, lifted from a heterosexual relationship in *Silence*, not only to break down normative binaries of physical separation but also disrupt Will's marriage and nuclear family unit, threatening Will's heterosexuality.

The blurring of boundaries of identity between Clarice and Hannibal continues throughout the book series. This narrative is reproduced in the show in Will and Hannibal's relationship. In the series, Hannibal often makes reference to his "memory palace," a place in his mind to which he can retreat, for instance, when he is incarcerated. The books and television series imply that Clarice and Will inhabit this space with him.

"Clarice Starling's memory palace is building as well. It shares some rooms with Dr. Lecter's own memory palace--he has discovered her in there several times...." (*Hannibal* 543)

Hannibal to Will: Your memory palace is building— it's full of new things. It shares some rooms with my own. I've discovered you there, victorious. ("Digestivo", 3.07)

In *Hannibal*, after Clarice becomes Hannibal's lover, he speaks of them sharing a memory palace, encountering each other within their own minds. He says the same to Will after they have re-encountered each other following Will's search for Hannibal. The series makes the men's shared internalized mental space even more explicit earlier in the season.



Figure 3-9 Mads Mikkelsen, Hugh Dancy, *Hannibal*, Television, Lionsgate, 2015.

In the shot in Figure 3-9, from the episode “Secondo,” while on a quest to Hannibal’s home in an attempt to understand him more thoroughly, Will imagines a conversation with Hannibal. This encounter occurs simultaneous with scenes of Hannibal in Florence, so the viewer knows that the two men are not together. However, the series treats Will’s projection of Hannibal as genuine, as if their conversation actually occurred in reality. This sequence fully realizes the encounters that the *Hannibal* novel and Hannibal’s dialogue to Will in the series hint at, indicating that both Clarice and Will share psychic space with Hannibal. Hannibal invades both Will and Clarice mentally, inhabiting a place with them that exists outside of the corporeal, thus dissolving the boundaries of identity mentally and physically.

In addition, both texts also engage with the idea of Hannibal transforming Clarice and Will, one of the primary effects and motivations of monstrous desire. This mutation primarily manifests as the breaking down of binary boundaries, with Hannibal influencing Will and Clarice to move beyond the normative modes of being. However, Hannibal’s description of such metamorphoses seems to indicate that he is not entirely in control of their transformations, complicating the agency monstrous figures typically possess. His motivations seem to be primarily centered on mutation and rebirth rather than control.

Hannibal about Clarice: “He could feed the caterpillar, he could whisper through the chrysalis; what hatched out followed its own nature and was beyond him.” (*Hannibal* 523)

Hannibal to Will: I can feed the caterpillar, and I can whisper through the chrysalis, but what hatches follows its own nature and is beyond me. (“Su-Zakana”, 2.08)

The above passages are concerned with the transformation of Clarice and Will under Hannibal’s control, but do not indicate that Hannibal has any real control over the

situation. He is as much a part and participant in the transformation as he is the orchestrator of monstrous desire. Clarice and Hannibal's relationship contains elements of doubling, blurring identities, and transformation, muddling the boundaries between them. The television series lifts these motifs directly from previous adaptations and applies them to the relationship between Will and Hannibal, replicating the monstrous desire for transformation from the original heterosexual relationship and thus casting doubt on the naturalness of heteronormativity.

By drawing parallels between Will Graham and Clarice Starling, *Hannibal* deconstructs gender performance and heteronormativity. By feminizing Will's body, the show draws attention to the eroticization of Clarice in previous adaptations, revealing the gendered associations of sensuality to be a construction. In addition, the series mimics the romantic elements of a heterosexual relationship to create a queer romantic if asexual one. This doubling operates in the series in much the same way as queer performativity does: as a means of revealing the constructed nature of heterosexuality. According to Butler, repetition is the means by which heterosexuality claims originality. Thus, when queerness mimics heteronormativity, the act of performance reveals heterosexuality itself to be an imitation and therefore disputes its claims to originality. This use of doubling as deconstruction separates *Hannibal* from earlier entries in the franchise. Whereas the previous books and adaptations in the Lecter series drew upon queer-coding for heteronormative villains and thus reinforced the idea of monstrosity stemming from queerness, the show imitates a heterosexual model in a queer relationship, deconstructing the notion of monstrosity as the product of same sex desire by revealing the ways in which heterosexuality can be monstrous. *Hannibal*

simultaneously embraces queer monstrosity while complicating the idea that this monstrosity stems exclusively from queerness. Instead, by duplicating dialogue and scenes from Hannibal and Clarice's romance with Hannibal and Will, Fuller undermines the naturalization of heteronormativity, locating monstrous desire within a heterosexual relationship and thus revealing a shared element of the unnatural in both queerness and heteronormativity.

CHAPTER 4
“THEY ARE IDENTICALLY DIFFERENT, HANNIBAL AND WILL”: THE DOUBLE AS
TRANSFORMATIVE QUEER DESIRE

In addition to doubling Clarice as a means of disrupting gendered norms, throughout the show also replicates Hannibal Lecter’s representation in other adaptations with Will. In this case, the intertextual doubling belongs to the series’s larger theme of Hannibal and Will as doubles of one another, the motif the series uses to construct their queer desire for one another. The television series draws upon famous lines and iconography from previous film adaptations including *Silence of the Lambs* and *Red Dragon* in order to solidify Will as Hannibal’s double. This doubling relies on Hannibal Lecter’s prominence within the popular imagination, because such images only have resonance if the viewer understands the allusions to the original series. In addition to paralleling Will with representations of Hannibal in other adaptations, the series repeatedly constructs Will and Hannibal as doubles of one another within the show’s narrative.

Traditionally in Gothic texts, the double serves as a construction for representing the unspeakable repressed Other, an articulation of desires the protagonist has abjected. Thus, these texts largely construct the homoerotic double as the threat of repressed queer desire, which the protagonist must inevitably reject (*Between Men* 92). However, in *Hannibal*, this intense visual doubling becomes a mode of reincorporation rather than separation. By visually realizing characters’ intimacy and identification with one another, the series breaks down the strict boundaries between reality and fantasy, thus opening up an in-between space for imagining alternative queer potentialities and modes of being.

One such instance of doubling within the series highlights the complex nature of Will as a double, as he acts as both double to Clarice and Hannibal simultaneously. In *The Silence of the Lambs*, Hannibal explains his motivations for what he does in the following quotation, while in *Hannibal*, Will Graham discusses his recent transformations within the series into a much more monstrous figure, recognizably similar to Hannibal.

“Nothing happened to me, Officer Starling. / happened. You can’t reduce me to a set of influences. You’ve given up good and evil for behaviorism, Officer Starling....Can you stand to say I’m evil? Am I evil, Officer Starling?”
“I think you’ve been destructive. For me it’s the same thing.” (*The Silence of the Lambs* 21-2).

Will: You can't reduce me to a set of influences. I'm not the product of anything. I've given up good and evil for behaviorism.
Hannibal: Then you can't say that I'm evil.
Will: You're destructive. Same thing.
("Naka-choko", 2.10)

By giving the dialogue of both Hannibal and Clarice to Will during this homage, the series highlights the ways in which Will acts as a double for both of the characters. This scene also blurs the sense of identity in the show, since the dialogue meditates on Hannibal’s nature and whether or not he can easily be defined as an evil figure. However, in the television series, Will begins by describing himself, before the conversation moves on to discuss Hannibal as an evil figure and how exactly he is evil. By constructing the doubling quote in this way, Will’s relationship with morality becomes conflated with Hannibal’s. This moment takes place in a longer series arc in which Will pretends to give into the same cannibalistic urges as Hannibal in order to seduce him into revealing his true nature. By directly quoting Hannibal from the original book series, Will acts as a mirror, reflecting back at Hannibal a version of himself existing within Will. That ability to reproduce sameness through his empathy is something that Hannibal finds attractive about Will, and the series emphasizes it by Will directly quoting

Hannibal. The series uses this intertextual doubling to emphasize not only Will as double of both Clarice and Hannibal, but also to further the narratives within the show of the continually blurring separation of identity between Hannibal and Will.

In addition to dialogue, the *Hannibal* series recreates some of the most infamous iconography associated with Hannibal Lecter, namely, the muzzle that has come to be the symbol for Hannibal as a character.



Figure 4-10 Anthony Hopkins, *Silence of the Lambs*, Film, MGM, 1991.



Figure 4-11 Hugh Dancy, *Hannibal*, Television, Lionsgate, 2014.

As Figure 4-10 and 4-11 demonstrate, the show takes Hannibal Lecter's haunting muzzle and places it onto the body of Will Graham, inscribing Will with a visual synecdoche of Hannibal's character. It is important to note that, because of the trajectory of the series, *Hannibal* technically takes place before any of the books in the series, with the exception of the origin story *Hannibal Rising*. Thus, in the internal timeline of the series, Will's stay in the Baltimore State Hospital for the Criminally Insane

occurs before Hannibal is ever captured, meaning that his parallels with the famous iconography associated with Hannibal chronologically precedes Hannibal being imprisoned or placed within the famous muzzle. The doubling thus makes Will the originator of these visual signifiers within the narrative temporality of the series, actually causing him to supplant Hannibal's identity and even further blurring the boundaries of the two men's separate identities.

In addition to the striking visual doubling of Will and Hannibal through the muzzle, Will also narratively and visually doubles Hannibal during his imprisonment for Hannibal's crimes. The series puts Will in Hannibal's place at the end of the first season by sending him to the Baltimore State Hospital for the Criminally Insane for Hannibal's crimes. In this instance, Will not only acts as a double for Hannibal, but the pair effectively switches places in a scene that reproduces the introduction of Hannibal Lecter as a character in the first novel *Red Dragon*.



Figure 4-12 Edward Norton, *Red Dragon*, Film, Universal, 2002.

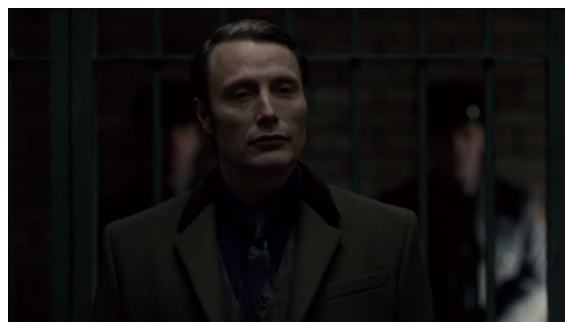


Figure 4-13 Mads Mikkelsen, *Hannibal*, Television, Lionsgate, 2013.



Figure 4-14 Anthony Hopkins, *Red Dragon*, Film, Universal, 2002.

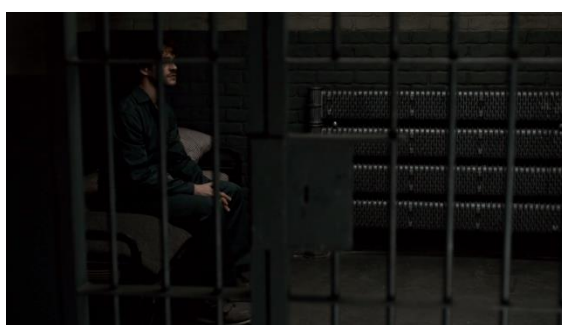


Figure 4-15 Hugh Dancy, *Hannibal*, Television, Lionsgate, 2013.

The images on the left, Figures 4-12 and 4-14, show the very first re-encounter between Hannibal and Will in the film *Red Dragon* since Will captured Hannibal years before, an adaptation of the very first scene of Hannibal in the book series. Figures 4-13 and 4-15 are screenshots from the climactic scene of *Hannibal's* season one finale, in which Hannibal comes to visit Will for the first time since Will has been imprisoned. The *Hannibal* scene replicates the shots from the encounter in *Red Dragon* with Will and Hannibal's positions reversed, emphasizing that Will is not only Hannibal's double, but Hannibal is also his. This sequence in *Hannibal* becomes an axle of intertextuality, as it doubles the scene from *Red Dragon* and also parallels a later sequence in the show, when Hannibal and Will first re-encounter each other after Hannibal has finally been imprisoned. This scene not only creates a narrative set of doubled doubles, but also

reinforces the notion that Will has become even more purely Hannibal Lecter within the series, their identities blurred. While Will is in fact doubling the Hannibal Lecter of other adaptations, within the timeline of the series, Hannibal is the one doubling Will, who stands as the original chronologically. This supplanting of the original mimics queer performativity and the relationship between queerness and heterosexuality, in that as “heterosexuality only constitutes itself as the original through a convincing act of repetition. The more the ‘act’ is expropriated, the more the heterosexual claim to originality is exposed as illusory” (Butler 314). Thus, the supplanting of the original through the repetition of doubling is in and of itself a queer act. In this way the series is queer in its very structure and assumes a queer positionality in relationship to the original franchise.

In addition to these allusions to other adaptations, *Hannibal* exhaustively constructs Hannibal and Will as doubles of one another both narratively and visually within the series. The show utilizes this doubling as an articulation of the intense identification the men feel toward one another as well as a desire for unity that entrances both of them throughout the series. In a scene from season two episode “Ko No Mono,” the show not only depicts Hannibal and Will as doubles of one another through a series of shot-reverse shots, but also indicates that the transformative nature of their desire is mutual, with Hannibal undergoing a metamorphosis alongside Will. Will and Hannibal have a conversation about the nature of God, death, and sacrifice in Hannibal’s psychiatric office, a frequent meeting place for them throughout the series.



Figure 4-16 Hugh Dancy, *Hannibal*, Television, Lionsgate, 2014.



Figure 4-17 Hugh Dancy, *Hannibal*, Television, Lionsgate, 2014.



Figure 4-18 Mads Mikkelsen, *Hannibal*, Television, Lionsgate, 2014.



Figure 4-19 Mads Mikkelsen, *Hannibal*, Television, Lionsgate, 2014.

The scene begins with several standard shot-reverse shots as the pair speaks facing one another, establishing the space, their location in the scene, and their conversation. The camera shows Hannibal listening to Will, then cuts to Will in his established location saying, "You sacrificed Abigail" in Figure 4-16, referring to the young woman that he and Hannibal had become father figures toward in the first season and that Hannibal had presumably killed in order to orchestrate his framing of Will for his crimes. The shot then cuts back to the reverse shot where Hannibal is sitting, but this time, Will sits in his place, staring back at himself (Figure 4-17). Will tells Hannibal, "You cared about her. As much as I did," all the while staring into his own face. The scene then returns to Will, sitting as he was in Figure 16. The camera cuts back to the reverse shot (Figure 4-18) Hannibal back in his original position as he states, "Maybe more." The camera then returns to the original establishing shot of Will (Figure 4-16), but this time, as before, Hannibal has taken his place (Figure 4-19). Hannibal asks of himself, "But then how much has God sacrificed?" before the scene cuts back to him in his original location, and the sequence once again establishes the normal order of shot-reverse shot, with each man back in his appropriate place.

This sequence establishes the two men as doubles of one another. The scene indicates both that this conversation is directed internally, having the visuals show them speaking to themselves, as well as displaying the fact that each man sees himself in the other, that Will and Hannibal both recognize themselves as doubles of one another. The combination of dialogue and visuals indicates that Will feels in some ways responsible for the crimes that Hannibal has committed, as though they occurred at his own hand. This motif continues throughout the show, with Will telling Hannibal in the season three

episode “Dolce,” “Every crime of your feels like one I’m guilty of.” Will comes to empathize with Hannibal so intensely that even Hannibal’s actions feel like his own, blending their identities into one. The scene also articulates that this identification is not mutually exclusive; while Will sees himself in Hannibal, Hannibal also sees himself in Will. This indicates that the transformation taking place between the two men via their queer desire for one another is not simply a metamorphosis orchestrated by Hannibal, but a mutual occurrence affecting them both. Much like Hannibal’s description of Will’s transformation, this scene establishes that Hannibal lacks total control over the situation. Hannibal is a participant in the transition happening between them. While he attempts to change Will, he too changes. Will himself states that this is the case in the second season finale, when Hannibal asks him after his betrayal, “Do you believe you could change me the way I’ve changed you?” Will answers simply, “I already did.” The show breaks the rules of shot-reverse shot in order to depict the doubling taking place between Hannibal and Will, and in doing so visualizes the mutual nature of their transformation, a transformation that Hannibal does not control, but takes part in.

The final shot of season 2 episode “Naka-Choko” visually articulates the rapidly blurring boundaries of separation between the two men. In the episode, as part of a longer season arc in which Will has been effectively seducing Hannibal in order to get him to reveal his cannibalistic nature, Will pretends to have murdered reporter Freddie Lounds and brought her flesh as a meal for Hannibal and he to share. Although the seduction is presumably a ruse designed only to expose Hannibal’s secret to the FBI, the episode’s close indicates that Will’s identification with Hannibal is more than a ploy

on his part. The final frame of the episode shows a close-up of Will's facial expression, his eyes closed, with Hannibal's face superimposed over the left half of Will's face.

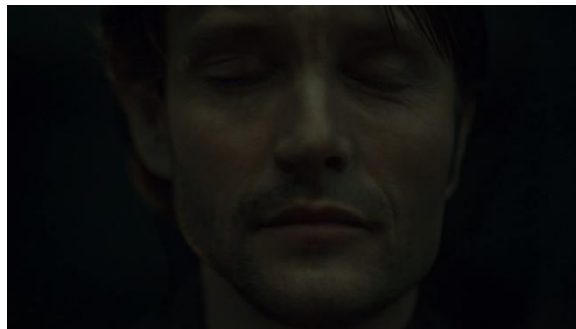


Figure 4-20 Hugh Dancy, Mads Mikkelsen, *Hannibal*, Television, Lionsgate, 2014.

The shot merges the two men's faces into one, violating the physical separation of their bodies in order to articulate Will's mental and emotional identification with Hannibal. An insert of this shot reappears later in the series, in the penultimate episode, when Bedelia tells Will after Hannibal has been imprisoned, "Hannibal Lecter does have agency in the world. He has you." The repetition of this shot reinforces this moment as representative of Will and Hannibal's intense identification with one another, and the way in which their separate identities break down into a unified singular one. The series represents this unity through the dissolution of bodily and psychic boundaries. Thus, this scene portrays Will and Hannibal as doubles whose desire for one another threatens the construction of normative binaries of separation, such as physical and mental identity.

The superimposition of Hannibal's face over Will's dissolves any attempt at separation with the object of desire by breaking down physical boundaries. Patricia MacCormack writes of this dissolution of boundaries as fundamentally queer, "Monstrous relations, in their fluid invocation of desire as wonder and horror, where the other collapses in on the self because it is neither same nor opposite, are queer and

queer theory itself could similarly be described as monstrous” (255). By showing Will and Hannibal to be physically one, *Hannibal* realizes this collapse. The break down of corporeal boundaries dissolves the bodily constructions of identity, such as gender and sexuality, and disrupts these constructions to offer alternative modes outside normative binaries. This disruption signifies “one of the things that ‘queer’ can refer to: the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone’s gender, of anyone’s sexuality aren’t made (or *can’t be* made) to signify monolithically” (“Queer and Now” 8). This visual convergence of Will and Hannibal occurs simultaneously with a presumed act of cannibalism, an articulation of the queer-coded trope that forms Hannibal’s primary identity and the horror at the center of the transformation Hannibal desires for Will.

Their metaphorical physical merging occurs through an act which itself violates the boundaries of the body, “The body is a convenient boundary for the definition of the self....cannibalism and homosexuality....violate...that boundary. The act offers an ecstatic union; it offers to relieve the self of the burden of selfhood; it offers a chance to surrender the body, to consume or be consumed by another” (Crain 34). However, in the case of Hannibal and Will, this union is not realized through cannibalizing one another, but through cannibalizing others together. Thus, Hannibal’s ultimate desire for the pair is to violate the normative physical boundaries of others through the consumption of their bodies, with their own bodily dissolution occurring metaphorically through their shared identity as cannibals. Through this dissolution, the series opens up space for realizing alternative queer articulations of being and interacting that exist

between the hegemonic binaries. *Hannibal* uses the double to further explore this alternative form of queer desire through a narrative of Will's transformative "becoming."

The television series frequently utilizes the language of "becoming" to describe Will's transformation through his intense identification with Hannibal. During Will's aforementioned journey to Hannibal's former home, Will has a conversation about his role as Hannibal's double with Chiyo, a childhood friend of Hannibal. Chiyo says to Will, "If you don't kill him, you're afraid you're going to become him" to which Will replies "Yes" without hesitation. The moment signifies the transformative nature of Will and Hannibal's relationship, altering Will's being through his desire to understand Hannibal. In the series finale "The Wrath of the Lamb," Will and the FBI set up a plan to fake Hannibal's escape from prison in order to entrap the Red Dragon serial killer. Will tells Bedelia his intentions for Hannibal, "I don't intend Hannibal to be caught a second time" to which she replies, "Can't live with him, can't live without him. Is that what this is?" He answers, "I guess. I guess this is my becoming." This "becoming" culminates in the climactic scene of the series with Will giving into Hannibal's desire for him—killing with Hannibal and thus becoming one with him.

The rhetoric around Will's transformation as "becoming," a process in flux rather than already concluded, signifies his queer desire toward Hannibal as offering an alternative existence not yet realized. Queer disruption opens up the potentiality of this in-progress form of being, constructing queerness as that which has not yet been realized, as Muñoz writes, "Queerness is a structuring and educated mode of desiring that allows us to see and feel beyond the quagmire of the present" (1) as well as "...a mode of being and feeling that was then not quite there but nonetheless an opening"

(9). Given that Muñoz constructs queerness as predicated on hope and thus utopia, this articulation of queer becoming within a horror text seems odd. However, Muñoz notes that “hope along with its other, fear, are affective structures that can be described as anticipatory” (3). This comparison identifies both hope and fear as driven by anticipation, and therefore existing as modes for articulating queer potentiality.

The series often positions Hannibal and Will’s relationship between the present and potential futures or alternative possibilities, adhering again to Muñoz’s construction of queerness as “the rejection of a here and now and an insistence on potentiality or concrete possibility for another world” (1). For instance, in “Primavera,” the second episode of the third season, Will has a conversation with his pseudo-adopted daughter Abigail that indicates the way his relationship with Hannibal occupies a position of potentiality. In the previous season finale, Hannibal had planned to run away with Will and Abigail, to start a life as cannibals together, the culmination of Will’s false seduction. Unbeknownst to Hannibal, Will planned with FBI agent Jack Crawford to arrest Hannibal on that night. However, Will has reservations about his original plan and ultimately confesses the plan to Hannibal just as Jack descends upon the house. Hannibal retaliates by attacking Jack and Will before fleeing the country for Italy at the episode’s end. Of the missed opportunity for a life with Hannibal, Will says to Abigail, “It’s hard to grasp what would have happened, could have happened, in some other world did happen.” Will’s words indicate the precarious position his relationship with Hannibal occupies, with a consummation of their intense intimacy positioned as an alternative possibility that has not come to fruition in this world, but may have in another. Their desire for each other has the potential to open up new worlds and new modes of being.

This intimacy and desire exists as queer, articulated through the double which breaks down physical and mental boundaries. Thus, in *Hannibal*, Will's ultimate desire of becoming one with Hannibal rests on the horizon, articulated in visual and narrative moments of doubling but not yet realized.

As a genre, horror is largely predicated upon a fear of the disruption of normalcy. Therefore, the disruptive nature of horror provides a lens for imagining alternative constructions of gender and sexuality, and thus the perfect narrative structure for exploring queer possibilities. However, horror as a genre and the Gothic novel typically subsume the disruptive potential of the monstrous figure through death and a return to the heteronormative status quo. *Hannibal*, on the other hand, more fully realizes the queer potential within horror narratives.

CHAPTER 5
“YOUR MEMORY PALACE SHARES SOME ROOMS WITH MY OWN”: BLURRING
BINARIES, THE EROTIC TRIANGLE, AND QUEER FUTURITY

Hannibal dramatizes queer desire through erotic triangles, following a common Gothic narrative. The second season of *Hannibal* contains a love triangle between Hannibal, Will, and their mutual love interest psychiatrist Alana Bloom. This triangle offers the only dramatization of potential sexual desire between the two men in the series. The show articulates this subtext through sequences set in the space of fantasy, disrupting the boundaries of reality within the series. *Hannibal* follows many similar narrative arcs of articulating queer desire through erotic triangles in which the “normative man uses a woman as a ‘conduit of a relationship in which the true *partner* is a man” (*Between Men* 26). However, the triangulation between Alana, Hannibal, and Will ends with Will giving into Hannibal’s desires for him, leading to their mutual destruction. The final scene furthers this queer disruption by implying that the pair has survived. Thus, the narrative blocks any possibility of restoring the heteronormative bond with Alana as well as permanently disrupting Will’s marriage, subverting the typical horror film defeat of the monster and restoration of the heteronormative status quo.

Only one couple survives relatively unscathed from the wreckage of monstrous triangulation in the series: Alana and her wife Margot Verger, a former sexual partner of Will Graham. Margot adds an additional element to the typical Gothic erotic triangle, and her presence helps to disrupt and subvert the typical sublimation of queer desire through heterosexual conduits, instead creating queer alternatives. The show also uses Alana and Margot’s relationship to highlight the queer nature of Hannibal and Will’s dynamic. *Hannibal* visually duplicates artistic sex scenes of Alana and Margot with Hannibal and Will, adding an erotic layer to scenes between them in spite of the

absence of sex. The triangulation between the four of them also concludes with the pairing off of two queer couplings: Alana and Margot in marriage, and Hannibal and Will in seeming death. In the case of Alana and Margot, the couple offers a queer counterpoint to Hollywood horror's triumphant heterosexual couple. Arguably two of the only characters in the series to get a traditional Hollywood happy ending, the series concludes with Alana and Margot alive, married, and raising a child. Thus, Alana and Margot offer an example of the way in which *Hannibal* queers traditional horror narratives.

Hannibal uses parallel shots of Alana and Margot's sexual encounters with scenes of Hannibal and Will to not only eroticize Will and Hannibal's relationship but also to demonstrate the way queer desire breaks down the boundaries of the physical body in the show. The shot also indicates Margot sleeping with Alana as an encounter with herself, as though, like Hannibal and Will, she sees herself in Alana.



Figure 5-21 Katharine Isabelle, *Hannibal*, Television, Lionsgate, 2015.



Figure 5-22 Hugh Dancy, Mads Mikkelsen, *Hannibal*, Television, Lionsgate, 2015. In the third season episode “Dolce,” Alana and Margot have their first onscreen sexual encounter. The sex scene is shot in a highly stylized manner, as can be seen in Figure 5-21. The sequence uses overlays and superimposition to create doubled shots of conjoined bodies that represent the erotic encounter. For instance, in Figure 5-21, the image of Margot’s face is doubled and reflected on both sides of the screen, with a faded fissure down the center joining the doubled image together. This visual articulates same sex desire in the series as manifesting through the figure of the double. *Hannibal* uses this artistic sexual encounter to manifest the common metaphor for sex of two bodies becoming one.

The show then reproduces this conjoined shot later in the episode with Hannibal and Will (Figure 5-22). The visual evokes Aristophanes’ speech about soul mates from Plato’s *Symposium*, in which humans originally existed as a conjoined being with two heads and eight limbs before the gods severed them. This shot realizes the desired queer transformation pulsing at the center of Will and Hannibal’s relationship: to break down the binaries of physically separate bodies to become one conjoined being. By depicting a sex scene between Alana and Margot through this shot of their bodies conjoined, and then duplicating that shot in the same episode with Hannibal and Will in

their place, the series not only associates Hannibal and Will's relationship with explicit queer sex but also depicts the transformative desire between Hannibal and Will—the desire to break down the barriers that separate them and morph into one—as an erotic one. As mentioned above, these two queer pairings actually form from a previous triangulation between all four. Unlike the typical function of an erotic triangle in Gothic fiction and horror where queer desire is sublimated into a heterosexual pairing that acts as a conduit, here the triangulation resolves itself into two separate queer couplings. Even prior to the triangle severing to establish these queer dynamics, the show uses the erotic triangle to explore queer desire in an experimental sex scene between Hannibal, Alana, Will, and Margot in the show's second season.

Hannibal uses cross-cutting to construct an alternative place that brings all three parties of the erotic triangle together and reveals the numerous dynamics of this triangulation. Will and Alana share a flirtation in the first season of *Hannibal*, sharing a kiss before Alana insists that Will is too troubled to begin a romantic relationship. Hannibal is aware of Alana and Will's romantic interactions, as Will tells him about the aborted kiss immediately after it occurs. In the following season, after Will and Alana's failed flirtation, Hannibal and Alana engage in a romantic relationship. Their relationship very much follows the standard pattern of erotic triangulation in which the female character acts as a conduit between the two male characters. In "Futamono," the episode in which Hannibal and Alana start sleeping together, Hannibal specifically taunts Will prior to his romantic encounter with Alana by telling him, "I'll give Alana Bloom your best." This triangulation culminates in a highly experimental scene in the

episode “Naka-Choko” that blurs the boundaries of physical and mental separation between Alana, Will, and Hannibal.

The episode sets up two parallel sex scenes: one between Hannibal and Alana, and the other between Will and Margot Verger, a lesbian patient of Hannibal who attempts to get pregnant. The sequence utilizes cross-cutting, fades, and grotesque special effects to blur the concept of reality and fantasy, breaking down the boundaries of space. After showing each couple’s impassioned kissing as they move into the bedroom, the camera cuts to a close-up of Will’s face as he stares down at Margot. The scene then cuts to a reverse shot of Alana looking up at him, creating a gaze between the two that transcends physical location. The sequence moves to a close-up of Alana kissing Hannibal, then pans without cutting as she turns her head and kisses Will, creating the illusion that the three of them are in the room together, transgressing their separation across space. Following this kiss, Will looks over Alana’s shoulder and catches the gaze of the wendigo, a solid black form with antlers that Will frequently imagines as a metaphor for Hannibal’s monstrous nature. The sequence creates a gaze between Will and each of the other members of the erotic triangle.



Figure 5-23 Mads Mikkelsen, *Hannibal*, Television, Lionsgate, 2014.



Figure 5-24 Mads Mikkelsen, Hugh Dancy, *Hannibal*, Television, Lionsgate, 2014.



Figure 5-25 Hugh Dancy, *Hannibal*, Television, Lionsgate, 2014.

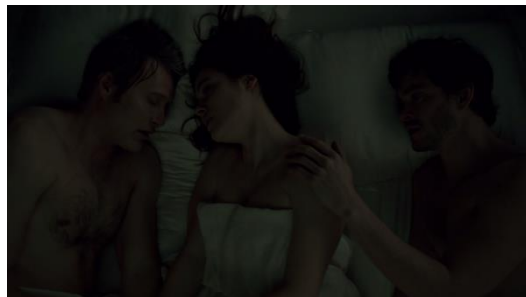


Figure 5-26 Mads Mikkelsen, Caroline Dhavernas, Hugh Dancy, *Hannibal*, Television, Lionsgate, 2014.

The scene then furthers the identification between Hannibal and Will with a shot of Hannibal throwing his head back in a gesture of ecstasy that then fades into Will in the exact same position (Figures 5-23, 5-24, and 5-25). This fade indicates the blurring of boundaries between Will and Hannibal's separate identities, once again visualizing the disintegration of physical separation between them and violating the boundaries of the body.

The final shot of the sequence pulls back to reveal a frame of Alana, Will, and Hannibal in the same bed together, Alana turning away from Will and into Hannibal's arms (Figure 5-26). This final shot emphasizes the intimacy between all three characters within the triangle, suggesting a sexual encounter not limited to the two potential heterosexual pairings of the triangle, but between all three of them. This sequence eroticizes Will's relationship not only with Alana but also with Hannibal, portraying queer desire between the two men within the realm of fantasy. The portrayal of this sexual encounter within an imagined place not only disrupts the boundaries of the physical, but suggests the sexual and erotic element of Hannibal and Will's relationship as potential between them not yet realized. The scene articulates this eroticism through Hannibal and Will's roles as doubles of one another, cross-cutting each man's moment of sexual climax as one fluid movement, as though they climax as one. The simultaneous nature of these sex scenes creates ambiguity about reality in the sequence, utilizing the visuals instead to portray the complicated dynamics within the erotic triangle. Will's fantasy utilizes cross-cutting to transgress separation across physical locations, creating an explicitly sexual encounter that takes place within psychic space. Thus, queer desire occurs in sequences which break down the traditional boundaries of space and the body. This transgression of boundaries offers a queer articulation of desire, poised within the gap between binaries.

Hannibal uses cross-cutting across separate locations to queer erotic triangulation. Through this technique, the TV series opens up a place that parallels the transgressive position of queer desire, as in "queer renderings of postmodern geography, the notion of a body-centered identity gives way to a model that locates

sexual subjectivities within and between embodiment, place, and practice” (*Queer Time & Place* 5). Because the space created through this cross-cutting is separate from physical reality—seemingly taking place within the minds of the characters, via vision or fantasy, but no less “real” for viewer or character—explorations of queer eroticism unfold, as Halberstam describes, between spaces and bodies, straddling normative parameters.

The violation of the clear boundaries of setting within *Hannibal*, much like the queer construction of the metaphorical space of the closet, represents the constant “crossing and recrossing” (*Epistemology of the Closet* 71) implicit in queer identity. The construction of a new space between reality and fantasy thus invites explorations of queer desire, as exposed queer identity exists within this alternative place “out of the closet, but into what? what new unbounded spatiality? the room, the den, the attic, the basement, the house, the bar, the university, some new enclosure whose door, like Kafka's door, produces the expectation of a fresh air and a light of illumination that never arrives?” (Butler 309). This precarious spatiality is queer, as it is predicated on the potentiality of fantasy not yet realized, much as “the figure of the closet produces this expectation, and...guarantees its dissatisfaction. For being ‘out’ always depends to some extent on being ‘in’; it gains its meaning only within that polarity” (Butler 309). Thus, this erotic triangulation exists within a queer space, one which not only breaks down binaries but is also positioned precariously between them. The queer narratives of *Hannibal* are particularly suited for exploration within this place, as through the erotic triangle the series explores sexual fluidity or bisexuality, a queer experience that occupies the space between homosexual and heterosexual.

The climactic scene of the *Hannibal* series finale “The Wrath of the Lamb” realizes the queer potentiality that runs throughout the entire series, ending with the metaphorical consummation of Will and Hannibal’s desire to break down physical and mental boundaries and become one. Having cornered the Red Dragon, the season’s serial killer antagonist, on a cliff outside the safe house in which Hannibal and Will have been lying in wait, Will gives into Hannibal’s ultimate desire for him: that he will join Hannibal as a killer. He willingly kills the Red Dragon with Hannibal in a manic, animalistic fight which involves unleashing the dark urges Hannibal has sought to cultivate within him throughout the course of the series. This moment signifies Will’s ultimate identification with Hannibal; he has essentially become him, the transformation that propels his arc throughout the entire series.



Figure 5-27 Hugh Dancy, Mads Mikkelsen, *Hannibal*, Television, Lionsgate, 2015. Looking upon the bloody scene before them, Hannibal explains to Will, “This is all I ever wanted for you. For us.” “It’s beautiful,” Will replies before tenderly embracing him, his head leaning on Hannibal’s chest in an intimate and romantic gesture (Figure 5-27). He then slowly leans over the edge of the cliff, pulling Hannibal along with him, the pair still locked in a tight embrace as they fall to their presumed death in the waters below.

This final sequence follows not only the horror tradition, but also many early queer texts, which “ended with the death or suicide of the gay protagonist” (*Monsters in*

the Closet 37). In this way, queerness in the series embodies the death drive, embracing queer negativity (Edelman 3-4). However, an after-credits scene complicates this queer negativity. The last sequence of the series reveals Bedelia sitting at a dining room table. A pan to her legs under the table reveals that one has been cut off, the table furnished with her missing leg as the entree. The table is set for three. Thus, the series ends ambiguously, implying that Hannibal and Will may have survived their fall. Unlike Lee Edelman's assertion the death drive should not be embraced in order to imagine an alternative future or no social order (4), this shot ends *Hannibal* on a much more ambivalent note of possibility beyond death, thus imagining a potential queer future from the framework of death.

Through these two final scenes, *Hannibal* both adheres to the narrative constructions set by early horror films and other early queer texts that followed these models but also ultimately subverts them. Unlike these texts, through which queer potentiality can only be achieved in death, the ambiguity at the close of *Hannibal* allows for the possibility of a queer potentiality for Hannibal and Will not yet explored. The narrative of the series gestures to this potentiality manifesting through cannibalism, giving Hannibal and Will a shared identity that continues to break down bodily boundaries and thus realizes Hannibal's desire queer transformation for Will. In this way, *Hannibal* updates the queer horror conventions by not only permanently disrupting the heteronormative status quo, but also opening up space for a queer futurity not extinguished by death.

Hannibal's ambiguous ending realizes the potentiality that Will indicated when he speculated upon what might have happened in "some other world" in "Primavera." Will

and Hannibal's final embrace indicates the realization of the queer transformation at the heart of the series: the breaking down of separate identities so that the two men can finally become one, a metaphorical sex scene. Reviewers such as Jeff Jensen recognized this intentional romantic transformation, writing, "When they were finished, Will fell into Hannibal's arms, the two finally becoming one, their symbolic marriage finally completed and consummated." The metaphorical marriage obstructs any heteronormative restoration, with Will disavowing his wife and stepson to finally embrace his queer nature.

However, in spite of Will and Hannibal achieving the queer possibility of their relationship, the openness of the ending resists closing off Will and Hannibal's dynamic as retaining potentiality. Hannibal and Will's relationship remains queer, as a "glimpse of the worlds proposed and promised by queerness" (Muñoz 1) still "not yet here," (Muñoz 1) but "always in the horizon" (Muñoz 11). *Hannibal* embraces negativity as a rupture for exploring and articulating new forms of queer desire. Thus, *Hannibal* fully realizes the potential of horror narratives as a lens for transgressing binaries, deconstructing gender and sexuality, disrupting heteronormativity, and imagining queer futures.

CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSION

Hannibal utilizes Gothic and horror narrative conventions in order to explore alternative forms of queer desire. In particular, the series uses the trope of the double to deconstruct gender and imagine alternative queer futures. Through the parallels drawn between Will and Clarice, the series highlights the constructed nature of gender and heterosexuality. Unlike previous entries in the *Hannibal* franchise, which used queer-coding to depict heterosexual villains and thus monstrosity as stemming from queerness, *Hannibal* imitates a heterosexual relationship in a same sex one, dispelling the notion of heteronormativity as the natural “original” and highlighting the unnatural present in both queer and heteronormative desire. The show also uses the romantic framework of Hannibal and Clarice’s relationship to explore a biromantic asexual dynamic between Hannibal and Will.

The doubling of Hannibal and Will serves as a means of transgressing the boundaries of the body and the mind, imagining instead an alternative mode of queer desire focused on blurring binaries. *Hannibal* uses monstrous transformative desire to break down the boundaries of the body, gender, and sexuality, revealing the subversive queer potential in this narrative. By dispersing the erotic triangle of Hannibal, Will, and Alana into two queer couplings, *Hannibal* realizes the potential in a Gothic convention to permanently disrupt heteronormativity. In addition, the visual doubling of Hannibal and Will within this erotic triangle dissolves the boundaries of physical location, offering an alternative space that imitates the in-between nature of queer experience. Through this fluidity, the television series utilizes horror’s disruptive potential to violate the binaries of gender and sexuality, establishing horror as a useful lens for scholars and artists to

imagine alternative modes of being. *Hannibal* characterizes queer becoming as a precipice on the horizon, simultaneously embracing the negativity of monstrous queerness and the death drive while still utilizing the potentiality for queer futurity. In a period in which same-sex desire can be depicted on screen, *Hannibal* depicts a biromantic relationship and thus reclaims a metaphorical narrative that often stood in for queer experience at a time when that experience could only be dramatized through coding and subtext. *Hannibal* utilizes the subversive potential of queer-coded tropes in horror, fulfilling the counter reading queer audiences have often brought to the monstrous other (*Monsters in the Closet* 15). Rather than returning to the normative status quo, *Hannibal* fully realizes the subtextual queer potential that has always been present in horror narrative conventions.

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