Freud's Worst Nightmare: Dining with Dr. Hannibal Lecter

Castration, sexual abuse, hysteria, perversity, excrement, bestiality, animal phobias – Freud's case histories read like horror movies. They are alive with fears – fear of being bitten by a horse, fear of wolves, fear of having one's bowels gnawed by a rat. His famous *Interpretation of Dreams* is permeated with anxieties and phobias of a similarly horrific nature – nightmares of falling, suffocation, ghosts, dead children, burning skin, urine and feces, people with bird's heads, snakes, men with hatchets, decapitations. In Freud's view, nightmares were the result of wish fulfillments from the unconscious, deadly dreamscapes of sexual origin in which he included murder and cannibalism (Freud 1975: 723–39). Samuel Goldwyn once offered Freud a lucrative contract to write a script for a movie about great lovers of history. Goldwyn could see how the screenwriter might benefit from an understanding of Freud's theories: "How much more forceful will be their creations if they know how to express genuine emotional motivation and suppressed desires" (Gay: 454). Freud refused outright. Goldwyn might have had more success if he had suggested a horror story.

Much of Freud's writings, in fact, contain the elements one might expect, not from the pen of a respectable, middle class doctor from *fin de siècle* Vienna, but from the laptop of contemporary masters of horror such as Stephen King or Thomas Harris. Freud's worst nightmare? How to select one dream of untold terror from such a macabre collection? To underscore the horror, one could imagine Freud's worst nightmare in a more whimsical vein. Perhaps it might have been the specter of finding himself the subject of a furious debate by opposing camps of film theorists. Or imagining himself signing a Hollywood contract to direct a film on psychoanalysis, which starred Jung in the leading role. Freud we know did not actually see an example of the modern world's newest art form

until 1909, when he, Ferenczi, and Jung (before his bitter falling out with the latter) embarked upon their famous trip to New York. On the third day, after the group dined in Hammerstein's Roof Garden, they all went to the cinema "to see one of the primitive films of those days with plenty of wild chasing." Ferenczi was "very excited" but Freud "was only quietly amused" (Jones 1957, 1955: 56).

Born in 1856, Freud would have been forty years old when the first movies were screened to an astonished public. Perhaps Freud's worst nightmare might have been being observed, "caught out," in the late 1890s in one of modernity's new picture houses, watching an early short film, a romance, or a horror-fantasy – Edison's *The Kiss* (1896), maybe, or Méliès' *Le Manoir du Diable* (1896), in which the devil plays a vampire bat. I have suggested Freud might consider being "caught out" at the movies a nightmare not because of a secret aversion to being observed, but because Freud held the cinema – considered a mass form of entertainment – in some disdain. Opera, painting, sculpture, literature – these were more to his liking. His writings on scopophilia, however, suggest he understood full well the kinds of pleasures to be derived from the act of looking. Freud was certainly not impervious to the attraction of the new phenomenon of the film star. Paul Ferris tells us that, in a letter to Max Schiller, Freud wrote that he nearly saw Charles Chaplin in the streets of Vienna. He added that the famous actor "invariably plays only himself as he was in his grim youth" (Ferris: 374). Freud could not resist the urge to psychoanalyze, to comment on the relationship between the actor's real life and his role on the screen. He himself did not like being the object of the camera's gaze. The home movie of Freud, which screens at the Freud Institute (London) and which was taken by his daughter, Anna, reveals him carefully avoiding the eye of the camera.

By the time of Freud's death in England, in 1939, the cinema of horror had developed into a sophisticated and popular form of entertainment. By the early 1920s many of the traditional monsters had already made their first appearances – werewolf, vampire, doppelgänger, ape-man, ghost-woman, lunatic, and hellhound. Masterpieces of early cinematic horror such as *Frankenstein* (1910), *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1919), *Nosferatu* (1922), and *The Phantom of the Opera* (1924) were followed in the early sound era by *Dracula* (1931), *Vampyr* (1931), *White Zombie* (1932), and *King Kong* (1933). Like Freud's dreams and case histories, the horror film was quick to explore the nature of perversity. Themes of castration, bestiality, masochism, sexual abuse, and animal phobias all made early appearances.

FREUD, FILM, AND MODERNITY

Although Freud does not appear to have used film as a cultural reference point in his writings, his revolutionary ideas share a parallel history with the world's newest art form. In some instances, Freud's psychoanalytic theories and critical writings drew upon terminology central to the cinema, such as "screen," "projection," "identification," and "censorship." In his essay on William Jensen's popular novel of the day, *Gradiva*, Freud developed a theory about the gaze in which pleasure in looking becomes pathologically voyeuristic. Theories of looking – so central to an understanding of the new mobile gaze of modernity – became, at the other end of the century, the inspiration for a new form of feminist film theory based on the importance of the male gaze, fetishism, and screen-spectator relationships.

There are other connections. Freud described his manuscript for *The Interpretation of Dreams* as a "dream-book" (Freud 1975: 257), a concept that is echoed in the popular description of the cinema as a "dream factory." Freud's theory of "screen memories" is difficult to read without immediately thinking of the mechanisms of film projection and the workings of cinematic memory. In his 1915 "A Case of Paranoia Running Counter to the Psychoanalytic Theory of the Disease," the photographic camera plays a central role. Freud's interpretation of the "click" of the camera shutter as the "sound" or "feel" of a clitoral orgasm anticipates debates about the phallic power of the camera and the pleasure involved in posing as the erotic object of the voyeuristic camera.

Freud also refused to take part in a German film illustrating his psychoanalytic concepts. Entitled *Secrets of a Soul* (1926), it was eventually directed by G. W. Pabst and became a classic of the silent cinema. Freud's *Three Essays on Sexuality* inspired another German script, *Sensational Revelations from the Night Life of the Human Soul*. Apparently it was to star the boy wonder, "Jackie Coogan as Young Oedipus and the Tiller Girls as erotic dancers" (Ferris: 332). One can see why Freud, whose professional reputation was constantly under attack for overemphasizing the role of sexuality in human development, refused to have anything to do with modernity's newest art form, which was bent on exploring and exploiting the universal appeal of narratives of sex, desire, and eroticism. The parallels between aspects of psychoanalytic theory and the cinema were brought about in part by the way the two responded to and were shaped by the new forces of modernity. There are a number of areas in which

we can see these parallels at work. They include the modern view of the "self", the structures or workings of memory, the prominent role given to the emotion of shock in both discourses, and the presence of an optical unconscious.

THE MODERN SELF

In *Freud and His Critics*, Paul Robinson draws attention to the view, held in the 1960s by a number of important intellectuals (Lionel Trilling, Philip Rieff, and Steven Marcus), that Freud was "the virtual creator of the modern conception of the self" (3). Writing in 1993, after Freud's fall from grace, Robinson continues to support this view:

Above all, the modern self is a site of internal tension and conflict. This new conception made Freud the central figure in the emergence of the modernist sensibility in the early twentieth century. (116-17)

In his counterattack on Jeffrey Masson, Robinson argues that, when Freud abandoned his theory of seduction and spoke out about his views on childhood sexuality and the unconscious, "he made himself the foremost spokesman for a new way of thinking about the subject" (117). Freud argued against traditional notions: the self was not some pre-given divine essence implanted in the body at birth, nor was it a superior, transparent entity which simply interpreted the world around it. Rather, Freud saw the self as an evolving, active force, a participant, interacting with people and events in the outside world in ways that it did not necessarily understand or even condone. Influenced by irrational forces, unconscious desires, secret wishes, hidden jealousies, and events beyond its comprehension, the self, Freud argued, was actively implicated in its own decisions even if it did not always understand their rationale.

The strains of modern life, the fast pace of living, the bustling crowd, the emergence of more democratic politics, the emancipation of women, new modes of travel, communication, consumerism, and entertainment – all of these factors and more have been cited by historians and cultural theorists as grounds for giving rise to the emergence of a new type of modern individual. Freud's attempt to define the individual as a part of this new state of flux, mobility, stress, and change, as a being not necessarily in control of – even able to comprehend her or his desires, placed him at odds with those who espoused a view of the self as rational, superior, and fully cognizant of thoughts and actions. The titles he gave

to his case histories ("The Rat Man," "The Wolf Man") emphasize the concept of the divided self, a theme that was also basic to the emerging genre of horror.

Freud theorized the concept of the repressed, conflicted individual: the horror film made the repressed, divided self the subject of its narratives. Freudian theory and the early horror film both responded to the forces of modernity through a re-examination of subjectivity. Both set out to explore beneath the surface, to look into the self, to determine the extent to which the modern subject was able to embrace or recognize the dark, non-human, animal self. As Elizabeth Wright argues, Freud's theory of the unconscious and repression are his most radical:

Author and reader are both subject to the laws of the unconscious. To concentrate on "mechanisms" without taking account of the energies with which they are charged is to ignore Freud's most radical discoveries: it is precisely the shifts of energies brought about by unconscious desire that allow a new meaning to emerge. (1984: 4)

Freud's theory of the unconscious and repression is revolutionary precisely because it offers a basis from which we might question the workings of conscious desire, and the role of the unconscious, to understand the workings of the creative process in horror – from the perspective of both author and reader. The horror genre is also radical in that it explores the formation of human subjectivity, the conditions under which subjectivity disintegrates, and the subject's fascination for and dread of sexual difference and death. *The Student of Prague* (1913) examined the divided self in relation to the double; *Nosferatu* explored the connections between sex, death, and the perverse self; *King Kong* and *Cat People* (1942) opened up the controversial area of the bestial self and the extent to which the human subject defines itself in relation to the animal. Psychoanalytic theory offers the most relevant body of work to employ as a basis for the interpretation of horror, particularly given Freud's emphasis on sexual difference in the formation of subjectivity.

Freud introduced gender into debates about the formation of the self. Despite the misogynistic nature of a number of Freud's theories and utterances, he was, in a sense, the first modern male thinker to "listen to women." Through his famous "talking cure," Freud paid close attention to what women said. Even though, at the end of his life, he pronounced in some desperation that he did not know what women wanted, he listened nonetheless. It could also be argued that the horror film, despite its

misogynistic themes, has from its beginnings "listened" to women. The horror genre created a space in which woman could take the active terrifying role of the monster (e.g., *Cat People*, *Dracula's Daughter* [1936], *Trader Horn* [1931], *Island of Lost Souls* [1933]). Gothic horror (e.g., *The Secret Beyond the Door* [1948], *Dragonwyck* [1946], *Gaslight* [1944]) explored women's anxieties about the mysterious desires of their husbands. The heroines of these dark narratives eventually found a voice, taking control of their own fate.

At the other end of the century, female academics have in turn "listened to Freud." Commencing with Laura Mulvey's famous essay on visual pleasure, feminist film debates of the 1970s and 1980s represented "a return to Freud." These theorists re-interpreted and re-read, listened for other meanings, and drew unexpected conclusions from Freud's original writings. This is why, Wright argues, psychoanalysis is crucial for feminists. It is "the only discourse offering a theory of the subject of the unconscious" and as such is relevant to "all those wanting to situate themselves outside a rigid definition of sexual difference" (1998: 173).

SCREEN MEMORIES

The role of memory, and its mechanisms, is central to psychoanalytic theory and to an understanding of the screen-spectator relationship. Freud placed crucial emphasis on the part played by memory in the formation of the modern self. The idea that the self was constructed in and through memories – conscious and unconscious – was central to emerging concepts of the modern self as a site of tension and conflict (Charney). The power of film to encourage spectators to identify closely with the main character, to experience their feelings and emotions intimately, was created by a number of factors; memory, in particular, played a key role. Memory was central not just in assisting the spectator in constructing a coherent story, but also in keeping the spectator in a constant state of fear as the horror unfolded.

In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud discussed his preference for only learning things out of monographs and spoke of his fascination for the photographic image: "I... was enthralled by their *coloured plates*" (257). When publishing his own papers, he explained that because of his fascination for the image, he drew his own illustrations. When a friend "jeered" at his "wretched" attempt, he experienced what he later described as a "screen memory" from his early youth. In this memory, Freud's father

had given his five-year-old son, and Freud's younger sister, a book with colored plates about a journey through Persia.

[T]he picture of the two of us blissfully pulling the book to pieces (leaf by leaf, like an artichoke, I found myself saying) was almost the only plastic memory that I retained from that period of my life. (258)

His "plastic memory" seems related to the colored plates as if the latter imbued his recollection with the physical quality of plastic like the coating over a strip of film. Freud carefully distinguished his "plastic memory" of tearing apart the book and its colored plates from other kinds of memories. In so doing, he emphasized that this particular memory was somehow charged with a different emphasis; his "plastic memory" had the power to enthrall like a "coloured plate." Memory is linked to color, plasticity, pleasure, and the image. Freud adds that he "recognised that the childhood scene was a 'screen memory' for [his] later bibliophile propensities" (258).

Freud's use of the term "plastic" occurs in another context, this time in relation to the cinema, when he said he did not believe his "abstract theories" could be adequately presented in "the plastic manner of a film" (Jones 1957: 114). Freud might have consciously regarded film as a superficial medium, but the associations he drew (although in different contexts) between the plasticity of memory, the movement of separated pages and memory, film as a plastic art, and the power of the plastic image suggest the opposite. It could be argued that Freud's theory of screen memories owed much to the influence of modernity's image-making machines: photography (to which Freud specifically refers), the diorama, panorama, flip books, and magic lantern shows, which were so much a part of the everyday entertainment of the period. His theory of screen memories anticipates the power and role of the moving image in the construction and repression of memories. Perhaps Freud might have agreed with Dominique Païni's much-later observation, delivered in her analysis of Hitchcock's use of rear projection: "The screen could be seen as a page on which images are inscribed. In this context, cinema is like an imprint of reality, a flat mould, a bottomless abyss, as Jacques Derrida has said" (69).

In 1899, Freud published a paper on "Screen Memories" which is of particular relevance to an understanding of the role of memory and the *associative* power of the image in horror films. Freud defined screen memories in three contexts. First, screen memories can be those that the adult recalls from earliest childhood, but which are really a cover

for memories that have been repressed. Freud argued that "a person's earliest childhood memories seem frequently to have preserved what is indifferent and unimportant." The explanation was that the "indifferent memories" of the child's early years are "substitutes, in [mnemic] reproduction, for other impressions which are really significant. This process is 'retroactive' or 'retrogressive'." He concluded that

As the indifferent memories of childhood owe their preservation not to their own content but to an associative relation between their content and another which is repressed, they have some claim to be called "screen memories," the name by which I have described them. (1975: 83)

Freud also argued that the "opposite relation" exists and is more frequent:

an indifferent impression of recent date establishes itself in the memory as a screen memory, although it owes that privilege merely to its connection with an earlier experience which resistances prevent from being reproduced directly. These would be screen memories which have been *pushed ahead* or been *displaced forward*. Here the essential thing with which the memory is occupied *precedes* the screen memory in time. (84)

Third, a screen memory is related to the "impression that it screens not only by its content but also by contiguity in time: these are "*contemporary or contiguous* screen memories" (84). Screen memories can be retroactive; that is, they originate in the far distant past where they are associated with the essential event. Screen memories can also be displaced forward; situated in the present, they can be based on an event that has taken place long after the essential event which they screen. And screen memories can be contiguous as well. Retroactive, displaced forward, contiguous – in all three instances Freud is describing a relationship between the screen memory and the essential event it covers in the context of a relationship in time. Through the power of editing, film similarly has the ability to move freely from past to present and future.

SCREEN MEMORIES AND THE HORROR FILM

Never did Covent Garden present such a picture of agitation and dismay. Ladies bathed in tears – others fainting – and some shrieking with terror – while such of the audience who were able to avoid such demonstrations as these sat aghast with pale horror painted on their countenances. (Hardy: viii)

The horror film also adopts a process, not unlike that of Freud's screen memories, to maximize its power to disorient and shock the viewer. A

horror film can present a relatively disturbing image (*truly* horrific or abject images are withheld) that has the power to activate the viewer's worst fears, and then can screen or protect the viewer from that fear by offering a more palatable one in its place. The latter images are ones that would be more acceptable to the culture and the censorship restrictions of the period. Viewers are encouraged to imagine or conjure up other horrific images – invoked by the image that has been screened. The imagined images would not necessarily be identical for each viewer. On the contrary, the barely tolerable images that are screened are most likely to uncover, or hint at, other more horrific images and scenes that remain only partially glimpsed, if at all.

The horror film plays on a range of fears and phobias that have the power to affect the viewer individually and as part of a group. Freud's theory of screen memory explains the enormous power that the flickering images of horror can assume in relation to the spectator and his/her specific fears and phobias. It should be noted that films which set out to upset the viewer by a process of direct confrontation are often referred to as splatter, or schlock. These films do not horrify through a process of "screening"; their aim is to disgust.

Walter Benjamin observed that modernity was characterized by the experience of shock. Looking back over the century, we can see that the history of modernity – played out by the horror film – has been that of exposing the audience to images which are more shocking than those of the previous decade; this, in turn, has created in audiences a desire, perhaps insatiable, to be shocked even more deeply and disturbingly than on the previous occasion. Shock feeds upon itself, cannibalistically creating its own dynamic and appetites.

The moral history of the horror film has been marked by a gradual relaxation of censorship laws over the century that has led – years or decades later – to the eventual screening of images once considered too abject for popular consumption. The images screen out or censor other images, yet it is impossible not to imagine what the latter might have been when watching a horror film. The slightest suggestion of more horror beneath the visible horror is exactly what disturbs yet entices viewers. The displacement and projection of images in time, between past and future, also works to enhance horror in relation to the unsettling effect of such movement on the spectator.

In 1929, audiences viewing *Pandora's Box* saw, in a rapid, half-glimpsed shot, Lulu (Louise Brooks) being knifed by Jack the Ripper (Gustav Diessl). By 1960, the knife in *Psycho* enters the naked woman's body;

we see her wounds and the blood splattering across her flesh. The entire narrative movement of *Psycho* relies on the process of revelation. As we travel further into the depths (blood swirling down the plug hole, the body sucked into the bog, the body buried in the cemetery, the abject horror lying in wait at the bottom of the cellar), each scene carefully peels back another layer (like Freud's artichoke) to reveal something even more shocking. In *Psycho*, the layers are peeled away to reveal new scenes which shock more than the previous ones. However, the scenes of ultimate horror (matricide, removing the mother's internal organs and entrails, bodily decay) are withheld. Truly horrific images always threaten to exceed the frame: the unspeakable thing lurking off-screen. Kristeva has suggested that "represented horror is the specular par excellence"; that the "specular is fascinating because it bears the trace in the visible, of the aggressivity" of the unsymbolized drive (1979: 44).

The horror film has always demanded an emotional gut response rather than the "detached" approach (the assumption that detachment is possible is itself questionable) stemming from the logical categories and precise formulations of positivism and formalism. A theoretical approach to the horror film based on theories of the unconscious (a murky realm), repression (never successful), abjection (the crossing of borders), and screen memories (a covering over of past anxieties) offers a way into the horror film which best suits its macabre intention and form. If employed with careful consideration, psychoanalytic theory offers a means of exploring fantasy, repression, disruption, excess, slippages, borders – all of those elements that escape a detached, formalistic critical approach (e.g., Tudor 1989; Carroll 1990). Unlike a psychoanalytic critique, a formalist approach is not primarily concerned with the roles played by consciousness, desire, and ideology in the dual acts of representation and interpretation.

THE OPTICAL UNCONSCIOUS

In the photographic camera [man] has created an instrument which retains the fleeting visual impressions . . . (Freud 1930: 279)

In his 1931 essay "A Short History of Photography," Walter Benjamin discusses a series of photographs and offers reasons why he finds the photograph so much more compelling as an aesthetic form than painting. He marvels at the way in which a photograph, no matter how carefully the subject has been posed, can capture "the tiny spark of chance, of the here

and now," that moment which Freud described as "the fleeting visual impressions." Benjamin's urge is to "find that imperceptible point at which, in the immediacy of that long-past moment, the future so persuasively inserts itself that, looking back, we may rediscover it" (7). Benjamin is fascinated by the way a photograph can capture an action or facial expression that has taken place "in a fraction of a second." This moment is not planned or arranged but spontaneous; it may even be disruptive. "Photography makes aware for the first time the optical unconscious, just as psychoanalysis discloses the instinctual unconscious" (7).

The concept of the "optical unconscious" points to a visuality which offers a different and deeper kind of richness and pleasure, one which belongs to the moment and to chance. With its flickering images, primitive tricks, and images of the everyday, early cinema also possessed the disruptive quality that Benjamin, drawing on Freud, terms "the optical unconscious." Rosalind Krauss suggests that Benjamin's concept of "unconscious optics" would have been "simply incomprehensible" (179) to Freud. I am not so sure. Freud is clear, Krauss argues, that the world of technology "is not one that could, itself, have an unconscious" (179). Not even photographic images of mass movement (even if the latter in reality possessed a "collective unconscious") could be said to possess an optical unconscious.

My interpretation of Freud's theory of screen memories, and their relation to the screening of the image in the horror film (a screening over/censoring of the truly horrific or abject), suggests that the workings of an optical unconscious are evoked by the workings of the film text, staged in the flow of the relationship between the images selected and the images discarded/rejected/repressed. A horror film draws on the imagination of the viewer to help create its effects while simultaneously creating a memory bank of images not screened, an optical unconscious. Images of horror horrify not simply because of what they reveal but also because of what they do not reveal.

Movement, fluidity, flux – the tempo and pace of modern life was echoed in the movie camera which, through the speed of projection, was able to join still images into a flow of images. The optical unconscious refers to those fleeting visual moments in a film text which invite us to pause and reconsider representation itself – the camera's power to construct or create a screen memory, open up a gap not previously comprehended, gesture toward the horror that resides in the shadows of off-screen space. It is the flickering, unstable nature of such moments that has assumed such a central place in discussions of modernity. Such

moments seem to destabilize the separation of reality and representation, creating what Margaret Cohen in her discussion of the "everyday genres" of modernity has described as "an epistemological twilight zone" (247).

It might be argued that feminist psychoanalytic film criticism (although not a unified discourse) has played a key role in the development of post-structuralist theory and has paid too much attention to the interpretation of such moments of textual rupture (in terms of gender, ideology, spectatorship in horror) and not enough to the abstract aesthetic play of sounds and images or to the epistemological twilight zone. There is no reason why such approaches should be seen as mutually exclusive. The main problem occurs when other critical approaches (structuralist, formalist, phenomenological) tend toward a neutrality, as if all experiences of horror were genderless, which is incompatible with feminist critical practice. The reason feminist writings on the horror film have drawn on psychoanalytic theory is that it enables a discussion of the text in relation to gender, fantasy, and desire. It encourages a discussion of how meaning is produced in horror in relation to the text, as well as the screen/spectator relationship. Problems arise when psychoanalytic theory is adopted uncritically or when it is employed reductively or in a manner that is too abstract. The existence of such problems, which apply to all theoretical approaches, does not mean the methodology should therefore be rejected out of hand; it should be utilized more carefully by those of us who believe that interpretation should lead eventually to more fluid, less phallogocentric, less colonizing modes of representation.

HANNIBAL LECTER: THE CANNIBAL MONSTER

Dr. Hannibal Lecter, star of three blockbuster horror films – *The Silence of the Lambs* (1991), *Hannibal* (2001), and *Red Dragon* (2002) – owes much to the founder of his profession, Dr. Sigmund Freud. Played to perfection in all three by Anthony Hopkins, his deeds are monstrous yet parodic. They play with the images of horror that are suggested but not represented; in a sense, they play with "nothing." Lecter, the brilliant psychiatrist turned cannibal, the sophisticated insidious man of words who eats his own patients, is the postmodern monster *par excellence*. Parallels between Freud and Lecter offer some insights into the nature of Thomas Harris's monster. The aim of this brief discussion is not to engage in a psychoanalytic reading of *Hannibal*, but to explore some ways in which the ghost of Freud haunts the text of *Hannibal*, just as the ruins of modernity haunt the discourses of psychoanalysis and the cinema. A parallel aim is

to suggest that the very existence, the very possibility, of a Dr. Hannibal Lecter might well constitute Freud's worst nightmare.

The monster of *Hannibal* is named after Freud's hero. Freud identified passionately with Hannibal, the famous Semitic conqueror who crossed the Alps and took Rome, "the 'Mother of Cities'" (Jones 1955: 21). In addition, Freud was one of the first psychoanalysts to offer a theory of cannibalism. Freud associated cannibalism, which he linked to the "oral phase of the organisation of the libido," with the act of identification, which he regarded as inherently ambivalent. The subject desires to incorporate, to consume, those with whom he identifies. "The cannibal, as we know, has remained at this standpoint: he has a devouring affection for his enemies and only devours people of whom he is fond" (1995: 135).

Freud also joked about the psychoanalyst as cannibal. Apparently, in 1886 Freud was struck by a cartoon in the *Fliegende Blätter* that showed a hungry lion "muttering 'Twelve o'clock and no negro'" (Jones 1953: 166). According to Jones, in the mid-1920s Freud took to seeing his patients at noon and for some time referred to them as "negroes" (1953: 166; 1957: 110). At that time, Freud was also in great discomfort because of the tumor on his soft palette. In the telling of this racist joke, Freud identifies with the hungry lion, but the act of identification transforms him into the role of cannibal, waiting for his patient/food ("food for thought") to arrive. Thomas Harris seems to have known exactly what he was doing when he named his nightmare monster Dr. Hannibal Lecter, gave him the profession of psychiatrist, and turned him into a cannibal with a sense of humor and a persuasive way with words. The significant thing, in the tradition of all great horror films, is that his monster is a deeply sympathetic, and in this case attractive and mesmerizing, figure.

Perhaps Freud's worst nightmare might have been a dream in which he dined at a cannibal feast with Hannibal Lecter, the psychiatrist whose appetite for counter-transference was so insatiable he took to devouring the "other" literally and with the appropriate garnishes. "I ate his liver with some fava beans and a nice Chianti." Freud was fascinated by the cannibal feast in which the sons of the primal horde rebel and devour the father. The twist in *Hannibal* seems to be that the father, so enraged by the century's lack of manners, has returned; Lecter, self-appointed guardian of the Symbolic order (signified by his insistence that codes of civil society, good manners, should always be observed), has taken it upon himself to eat up the unruly, impolite offspring, sending them hurtling back into the semiotic realm.

For a fuller understanding of Hannibal Lecter, we need to go to Freud's writings on the relationship between jokes and the unconscious. Part of Lecter's enormous appeal to audiences is his ability to make jokes, to pun and play with the victim/viewer. To one of his intended victims he says, playfully, "I'm giving serious consideration to eating your wife." Eating is, of course, a metaphor for oral sex – a meaning not lost on *Hannibal's* audiences. David Thompson suggests that Clarice Starling (Jodie Foster), the heroine of *Silence of the Lambs*, understood perfectly: "The rest of the world dreamed of cannibalism, but Foster's eyes widened with the sudden vision of cunnilingus. No, not even the vision – the sensation" (20). What we are screened from is the image of Lecter and Clarice as a couple, making love, having oral sex. Like Freud, Lecter also takes up a traditionally oedipal position relative to the daughter, Clarice, whom he desires (openly in the novel) and wants to devour in an erotic/sexual manner.

The final sequence of *Hannibal* treats us to a proper cannibal feast. In the gracious manner of *Babette's Feast* (1987), in which dining is symbolic of communion and regeneration, we see the doctor-as-chef dining on the brains of a victim who is still alive, trussed up, and being spoon-fed, with loving attention to detail and etiquette from his cannibal host. Lecter delicately fills the serving spoon from his guest's exposed cranium, whose top he has carefully sawed off. Lecter is literally "picking his brains." The scene, of course, created a censorship controversy. Despite the absence of blood and gore, Hannibal's excessive attention to good manners, and the general tone of camp parody, it was considered too explicit, too nauseating, too abject. There is no attempt to screen the spectator from the shocking images that relate to violence – only the sexual, as discussed above.

Lecter is very much center stage in the sequel – "in the flesh," so to speak. The joke whose humor is based on conflicting interpretations is embodied in Lecter, whose verbal play with metaphors for "eating" also makes him a perfect representative for the cannibalistic practice of critics trying to trap others into "eating their own words." The trademark of the cannibalistic *serial* killer is consumption – of people and the words they utter. Hannibal Lecter straddles the ancient world (by virtue of his name), the modern world (by virtue of his profession), and the postmodern (by virtue of his olfactory jokes). A hybrid, abject figure, he both repels and fascinates.

In the novel, Lecter and Clarice are a couple; she does not balk at the cannibal feast. Unfortunately the film resists the novel's logical ending,

retaining Clarice in the role of law enforcer, the heroic woman who refuses to be devoured by Hannibal or his sumptuous lifestyle. While this ending might offer a more "positive" heroine to female viewers, it closes down the possibility of exploring the nature of perverse female desire.

Unlike the modern censor, Freud himself may not have viewed the father/daughter couple as monstrous. A stickler for the bourgeois lifestyle, Freud would, most likely, have approved of Lecter's good manners, culinary skills, and meticulous attention to language, enunciation, and jokes. I am not sure, however, if Freud would have similarly endorsed Lecter's efforts to rescue the "dutiful" daughter (professional law enforcer) from the clutches of the FBI; that is, from the civilizing/feminizing ritual of symbolic castration. In contrast to Dr. Freud, Dr. Lecter seems to have a more finely developed grasp of the perverse.

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