

HOLDING OUT FOR A FEMALE HERO: THE VISUAL AND NARRATIVE
REPRESENTATION OF THE FEMALE FBI AGENT IN HOLLYWOOD PSYCHOLOGICAL
THRILLERS FROM 1991-2008

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis analyzes the visual and narrative representation of female FBI agents and male serial killers in the Hollywood films, *Silence of the Lambs* (1991), *Hannibal* (2001), *Taking Lives* (2004), and *Untraceable* (2008). It explores how character roles and narrative functions related to the hero character type change over time.

The films are analyzed through a textual analysis using Proppian formalism, structural, narratology, genre, and gender theories. *Silence of the Lambs* and *Hannibal* offer the groundwork of the female FBI agent in the rookie figure of Clarice Starling. *Taking Lives*, the first example in a thriller genre post-Clarice Starling, offers an agent, Illeana Scott, who is depicted as the next step, the young career woman with more agency than Starling. Jennifer Marsh, in *Untraceable*, provides a character encompassing a combination of the more positive qualities, and is an established female hero.

Beginning with *Silence of the Lambs* and ending with *Untraceable*, narrative functions and positioning moves the female FBI agents into the role of the female hero. The definition of hero, as the author defined it, is based in narrative structure with a focus on the importance of the ultimate self-rescue. It is stripped of the character's moral standings and decisions, as the author looked at the function of the character type and not the overall personality and psychological makeup of the figure. Due to this definition, while there is a female hero figure, most prominently in Jennifer Marsh, there are also heroes found in places typically not associated with common conceptions of the term "hero." Labeling the female FBI agent as the hero figure is significant because it is acceptable that women in the current time period and political climate realistically hold these positions and hold them well. Women are active in the FBI, as well as

many other federal and state agencies and the military, unlike in decades before. Therefore it is only natural, as genre and film are social mirrors, that these women are represented within fictional narratives as powerful, independent heroes.

“Everything you saw I wanted you to see.”

Illeana Scott, *Taking Lives*

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my grandfather, Jim Palazzo, who passed away while I was working on my Master's degree. He was, and still is, one of the most influential people in my life and without him I would not be where I am today. I would also like to dedicate this thesis to the real life FBI, to the men and women who dedicate their lives for the service of our country.

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INTRODUCTION

When I first began to think of a thesis topic, I had visions of science fiction television dancing in my head. I wanted to be able to work with some of my favorite shows, *Stargate SG-1*, *The X-Files*, and *Farscape* to name a few; then I came to the realization that there was a more pressing matter I had to attend to. Growing up I always had a healthy interest in film and television, but also in criminal justice. I watched *Silence of the Lambs* at the incredibly, and possibly inappropriate, young age of 9, and from that point forward wanted to be an FBI agent like Clarice Starling. I looked up to her character as a role model in my journey to a career in the FBI. Years later, I have found the character of the female FBI agent has played a significant role in recent Hollywood cinema and an analysis of how these characters are interpreted and why they have such a solid place in recent American film is necessary. These characters are not just a continuation of investigative figures, but instead, a new line of female characters born in an age of Hollywood cinema where tendencies towards conflicting representations of female figures in “power” positions are increasingly evident.

For my analysis I will be looking at the changing popular representations of the female FBI agent in recent Hollywood film. I will analyze the visual representation, gender representation, and narrative functions of these characters. The texts I will cover include *Silence of the Lambs* (1991), *Hannibal* (2001), *Taking Lives* (2004), and *Untraceable* (2008). I have chosen these texts because they are mainstream Hollywood productions that include lead characters who are female FBI agents. The representation of the characters also changes with time, with the women gaining agency from one production to another. Beginning with *Silence of the Lambs* and ending with *Untraceable*, narrative functions and positioning moves from Clarice Starling, a rookie controlled by two dividing sources, to Jennifer Marsh, an experienced agent able to work

independently. Texts I have not included, such as *The Kingdom* and *The X-Files: Fight the Future*, as well as television shows that also have female FBI agents, were excluded because they did not fit the criteria I had established for this project.

The FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation)

Crime is a major aspect of American culture, both in reality and in the fictional media. John Douglas, in the introduction to the FBI's *Crime Classification Manual*, highlighted this fact, noting, "crime and the criminal have always fascinated society" (Douglas 5). Therefore I find it to be extremely important to analyze representations of both the criminal and the system of law enforcement to gain a better understanding of the inner workings and foci of our culture. The FBI, therefore, is a relevant topic for cultural studies, as it is a major component of the American government system. The FBI, as we understand it today, was born on May 10, 1924, when Attorney General Harman Stone appointed J. Edgar Hoover Director. There was a federal law enforcement agency previous to Hoover's FBI, but there was a need for a focused organization that could move across state lines with federal jurisdiction (Reynolds 5). I decided to look specifically at FBI agents, and not CIA agents, police detectives, or the US Marshals, because I believe the FBI has since become a symbol that embodies a sense of nationalism and unites the country as a whole. While I believe there is a critical disconnect between representations of FBI agents and the CIA, police, and US Marshals, I do not have time in this thesis to also offer analyses of other popular female characters such as CIA agent/spy Sydney Bristow of *Alias*, NYPD SVU detective Olivia Benson of *Law and Order: SVU*, US Marshall Karen Sisco of *Out of Sight*, etc. Such an depth analysis would be more appropriate for a dissertation. It is important to look at the representation of the female FBI agent character type because, as I will show, they are inherently different from the female detective figure, which has

been written about in depth. This new character type, the female FBI agent, is an evolution in the line of female investigative figures and one I find to be directly tied to national identity. A figure of power within a male institution, the female agent is representative of pseudo-feminism, a seemingly powerful figure who, when analyzed, begins overwhelmingly devoid of power. Growing out of the age of the feminist and “girl power” movements this character type, beginning with Clarice Starling, also grows with time, but is inherently flawed. While they are explicitly coded as female agents, who are also working solo and without a partner, they ultimately all fall to the same struggle, both with their male counterparts and the male serial killers who are obsessed with them. The acceptance of women in the FBI, a traditionally male agency, has been a site of struggle for acceptance and relevance. Media depictions of these figures are important because they, like all media texts, shape the conceptions of the agents and Bureau as a whole to both American and global audiences. Ultimately I will illustrate that these characters do not begin, with Clarice Starling, truly as powerful and as “strong” as they are believed and applauded to be within American popular culture and throughout various feminist texts, but by the time they evolve to Jennifer Marsh there is significant evidence of the female hero.

The Serial Killer

Serial killers are common figures in Hollywood cinema, especially in the horror and psychological thriller genres. They are insidious and grotesquely harming figures that, as a culture, we have an abject fascination with¹. In order to understand the fictional representation of the serial killer I begin with the official description. The FBI Academy’s Behavioral Science Unit at Quantico, Virginia began classifying homicide in the 1970s and 80s, finally publishing

¹ John Douglas also finds this to be true, opening the *Crime Classification Manual* with “crime and the criminal have always fascinated society” (Douglas 1).

the classification system in 1986. Serial murder is defined as “three or more separate events in three or more separate locations with an emotional cooling off period between homicides. The serial murder is hypothesized as premeditated, involving offense-related fantasy and detailed planning” (Douglas 20-21). The killers in these films are stereotypes of the more sensationalized aspects of profiled serial killings: cannibalism, sexual violence, and proxy murder. Hannibal Lecter is a fictional representation of the cannibal serial killer, the most famous in American crime being Jeffrey Dahmer. Martin Asher represents the charming and sexual predator, akin to America’s Ted Bundy. Finally, Owen Reilly represents the proxy killer, a killer who manipulates people into committing the act of murder in his or her place, most famous in American crime through the actions of Charles Manson.

Methods

While I will have different foci in each of the chapters, I have concentrated my efforts on a textual analysis of these films using structural, narratology, genre, and gender theories. I am looking at the characters as an evolving form, starting with Starling and ending with Marsh. *Silence of the Lambs* and *Hannibal* offer the groundwork of the female FBI agent in the rookie figure of Clarice Starling. *Taking Lives*, the first example in a thriller genre post-Clarice Starling, offers an agent, Illeana Scott, who is depicted as the next step, the young career woman with slightly more agency than Starling. A few years later, with *Untraceable*, the next step in the FBI agent representation evolution is created. Jennifer Marsh provides a character encompassing a combination of the more positive qualities of Starling and Scott, offering a conceptual framework for future film characters.

I use Elizabeth Cowie’s work on film interpretation as a base to jump off from, to justify my methods of analysis as well as its social relevance and importance. Her article, “The Popular

Film as a Progressive Text”, looks beyond viewer identification towards the sometimes misinterpretation of films as progressive texts. She states that the viewer, and critic, cannot simply extract a character from the narrative and analyze him or her as an actual person. One cannot strip an element, such as a character, from the narrative and build an argument regarding the film text, such as in the case of the progressive readings of the film *Coma*. Cowie stresses the importance of the narrative and the unconscious in reading films. Her two main points regarding reading film are: first, to look at the nature and determinants of the narrative structure, and second as a consequence of the first, to consider the effects of these determinants and the particular construction this produces for the character’s place within the narrative, and for the viewer’s place in relation to both the narrative and the character. The importance of this concentration on keeping the character within the confines of the film’s text cannot be overstated. It is extremely easy to misinterpret of female characters in a genre, such as horror or psychological thriller, concentrated on manipulating the idea of female power and representation. Cowie’s question, originally concerned with *Coma*, is easily applied to the range of media texts I am analyzing, “are [these shows and films] different just because they have a strong female protagonist and just because they are independent strong women?” (Cowie 104)

Chapter Outline

The chapters will be organized by generic and narrative function, gender representation, and finally the FBI agent/serial killer relationship, which is found throughout all of these films, as well as other films, and has become an inherent convention. This chapter positioning allows the reader to reverse autopsy² the texts in order to fully understand their significance; to begin with a structured analysis and then see how these functions are represented and used throughout

² I use this term, invoking the use of the medical description of an autopsy, and use it as a metaphor for my critical analysis.

the films. It is important to start with semiotics, with formalism, because it represents the skeleton of a text. It allows the reader to see the basic construction of the films. For my analysis, then, Chapter Two acts as the organs, muscle system, nervous system, etc. because it is the workings, the actions of the characters. Chapter Three represents the skin, how the characters are seen, positioned, and visually interact in relation to other characters. My conclusion includes a section looking at where the arguments placed within this thesis can evolve in the future, towards a book publication or doctoral dissertation.

Chapter Summary

Chapter I. The Skeleton: A Proppian Analysis of Character Function and Genre

Folklore and film studies are usually assumed to be completely unrelated fields. I myself ascribed to this line of thought coming from a background in film studies and into the wider field of popular culture. After researching folklore for a graduate class, my film studies tunnel vision changed. I learned that not only are fields within folklore directly related to film studies, but that such hybrid forms of analysis are welcomed and celebrated within the fields of popular culture and folklore. The ability to see past a singular field of study and understand how it can relate to, impact, and intensify an argument within another field is, in itself, a selling point and further justification for the importance of the study of popular culture in academia.

My research focuses specifically on formalism and Vladimir Propp. The influential work of Propp, specifically *Morphology of the Folktale*, is a major precursor to semiotics and structuralism. Daniel Chandler, in an introductory book on semiotics, discusses semiotic narratology as “an important branch of semiotics, and tends to focus on minimal narrative units, the grammar of plot, it follows the tradition of Russian formalist Vladimir Propp and Levi Strauss” (Chandler 114). Chandler also highlights Roland Barthes’ stance on Propp, clarifying

Propp's structuralist method: "structuralists avoid defining human agents in terms of 'psychological essences' and participants are defined by analysts not in terms of 'what they are' as 'characters' but in terms of 'what they do'" (116). This clarification is necessary, especially for my argument, because this chapter includes a Proppian analysis of the films, allowing the reader to understand the characters' functions stripped of morality, gendered actions, etc. within the films' narratives,. I would like to clarify at this point that in no way do I condone the heinous actions of the serial killers within these films, I am merely using these methods of analysis to investigate the positioning of characters within the narratives. This analysis allows me to provide significant evidence to support my analysis of the progression of the female FBI agents, as well as the male serial killers within the films. While the method of formalism, as Chandler mentions, has been criticized for being reductive, cultural theorist Frederic Jameson suggests that it has redeeming features. It allows us to see "the world of a generation or period in terms of a given model which is then varied and articulated in as many ways as possible until it is somehow exhausted and replaced by a new one" (116). Jameson's defense of this method through the cultural significance it highlights in gaining the ability to understand the society of the time also serves to justify my reasonings for starting this project with Propp and narrative function as well as the importance of genre.

Chapter II. The Organs: Genre, Gender, and Character Typing

This chapter expands the ideas of genre, using the theories of Rick Altman and John Cawelti, and also delves into how the films' characters are coded and represented as aspects and representations of gendered character types in film history that are directly tied into genre. Genre is an important continued step because not only is it a classification system, but also a social mirror. Genre, and its conventions within both film and literature, are experienced and

performed in our daily lives. As citizens of a media saturated society, we are well versed in a cinematically dense colloquial spoken and visual language. Film references are tossed around in everyday conversation, understood by most as postmodern language. Genre conventions and character types are understood and used as descriptors by a range of people. To call someone Cruella DeVille³ is immediately decoded by the receiver as a negative, villainous comment. Romantic film conventions like kissing in the rain, or the Western genre's trope of riding off into the sunset, are known and widely understood and used by many. These conventions and character types are significant because of how closely tied they are to everyday conversation and the effects they have on real life.

The representations of the female FBI agents and understanding how the character type is represented and is evolving, are socially significant because of the effects they can have on film audiences. Understanding the roles, the attributes they are encoded with and are therefore held by, can reflect the time period and cultural climate. The gendering of character types is also relevant for my analysis. Positioning these women, and referring to them as heroines instead of heroes, is not an argument that can be cast aside as simply semantics. Thomas Gramstad in his article, "The Female Hero: A Randian-Feminist Synthesis" strengthens my argument by stating "What we need is not 'heroines' (who are usually reduced to passive prize objects/rewards for male heroes), but *female heroes* (active heroes who happen to be female)." (Gramstad). I question therefore, why we still gender the hero figure as male. When you look at these women, beginning with evidence gathered through a Proppian analysis, they have evolved to a point where they are just as much a hero as any other person. The term hero itself is polysemic. For example, Batman of the *Batman* series, John McClane of the *Die Hard* series, and Luke

³ Cruella DeVille is the female villain in the Disney film, *101 Dalmatians*.

Skywalker of *Star Wars*, are all accepted as hero figures, however they are also widely different in both action and personality. So why are gendered actions, related to the hero, any different? The definition of hero is expansive, and my analysis supports that. I do not believe that a universal descriptor of the hero figure is the level of morality or admiration felt by characters within the film and by extension, the film audience. If so, Batman could not be described as a hero. I also argue that they are not merely the protagonists of the text. The main trait of the hero, I find, lies in the concept of the rescue. I argue that what sets the hero apart, especially from the heroine figure, is the ability to self-rescue. This attribute, along with structuralist analyses, will show that Hannibal Lecter, Illeana Scott, and Jennifer Marsh are the heroes of their respective films. The importance of proving hero roles is twofold: one, it shows that even characters who are coded as villains, such as Hannibal Lecter, can still be deemed heroes. Two, it proves that the female FBI agent evolved to a point in film narrative function that she is not the heroine, or any of the other character types I describe in Chapter Two, but the personification of the hero.

Chapter III. The Skin: Gender, Gaze, and Relationship

The final chapter focuses on the various characters' relationships with the serial killer within the films as well as the importance of the camera gaze. This chapter also allows for a preemptive strike against negative responses towards my argument of defending Hannibal as a structurally defined hero figure. The camera gaze is important within film because of the power it is infused with. The hero of the narrative is typically the figure in control of the gaze; therefore historically the gaze has been gendered as male. The importance of the relationships and the transfer of the role of hero from the male figure to the female also bring change to the camera gaze. The gaze is no longer male, but instead one that is based in the relationship

between the two characters and oscillates between them. I have termed this new concept the relay gaze and will discuss it further within Chapter Three. This relationship is one of the major patterns found in media texts with lead female FBI agents⁴, again solidifying these characters as a new and different subcategory of the investigative figure. Harkening back to the fairytale image of Beauty and the Beast, this subversive relationship is treated differently within each of the texts, from a teacher figure (Lecter in *Silence* and *Hannibal*), to lover (*Taking Lives*), and finally to child (*Untraceable*). The various relationships correspond directly to the female character's position within the film, therefore placing the serial killer as the male counterpart to the female agent. Again, while I am not looking at their position in regards to morality, I am looking at their type of serial tendencies (cannibal, sexual, and proxy) and how they relate to the positioning of the women in the narratives. Using Linda William's article, "When the Woman Looks" will provide ample reasoning behind the choice of creators to use this age-old relationship and also aid my attempt to rectify it.

⁴ Breaking out of the thriller genre, both *Miss Congeniality* films center around Gracie Hart and the more comical serial killer in each story. Television shows with FBI characters, such as *The X-Files* and *Profiler*, have major story arcs surrounding the agent's relationship with a serial killer.

CHAPTER I.
THE SKELETON:
A PROPPIAN ANALYSIS OF CHARACTER FUNCTION AND GENRE

Introduction

Folklore, formalism and narratology, as I discussed in the Introduction, are important because it is the base of the film and highlights its social relevance. While it is rarely used to analyze film texts, the folkloric concept of formalism is still relevant. In order to begin an analysis of character types and functions in film it is important to start with the base- genre and narrative structure. One branch of the study of narrative structure and genre finds its roots in folkloristics. Vladimir Propp, who focused his work on Russian folktales and fairy tales, is applicable to other mediums, including film. He is most famous for his creation of the 31 character functions within a narrative. Propp was more concerned with text than context and felt that categorizing folktales was of utmost importance. Propp uses his construction of roles and narrative functions in specific ways, detailed to Russian fairy tales. I am using his work to discuss the overall structure of the narrative, rather than the intricacies of specific character roles, such as the Donor, and the linear movement of the functions. Propp stated, and has been continually quoted by academics using his theories, that the functions appear only once within the narrative and in linear order. As I am using them more generally, they do repeat and appear out of order. Arthur Asa Berger notes when discussing Propp's definition of the functions of characters that they "serve as stable, constant elements in a tale, independent of how and by whom they are fulfilled" (Berger 14). My use of Vladimir Propp as a method of analysis for the films aids in providing evidence to my overall argument, that the evolutionary development of the female FBI agent in Hollywood film has led to this figure fulfilling the role of the hero, and not heroine. Arthur Asa Berger, author of *Popular Culture Genres* (1992), and Peter Gilet,

author of *Vladimir Propp and the Universal Folktale* (1998), both discuss Propp's importance beyond the study of folktales. I am using their analyses of Propp because they contextualize the translations of Propp into modernized descriptives. Their research breaks down the meaning of Propp's 31 Functions as well as the seven spheres of action (or roles). I am going to briefly contextualize their research as it relates to my analysis of *Silence of the Lambs*, *Hannibal*, *Taking Lives* and *Untraceable*.

Genre/ Narrative Structure

Peter Gilet discusses a wide range of theories in his attempt to define the general folktale. I am going to focus on his section on formalism, as this is the school of thought Propp is usually placed in. While formalism is not a widely used method today, it is still important as a base. Gilet describes Propp's main unit of analysis, the Function, as "an action defined by its place in the story and in terms of its result in the narrative.... it is a segment of the narrative" (Gilet 29). He lists the 31 different Functions given by Propp and notes that it is extremely important to remember that Propp, in his focus on text as opposed to context, is concerned with the action of the functions, not the circumstances surrounding them. Propp, in *Morphology of the Folktale* (1968), also gives 7 spheres of action (or roles): the hero who reacts to the donor and weds the princess, the villain who struggles against the hero, the donor who gives aid to the hero and prepares him, the helper who helps the hero in his quest, the princess who is sought for, identifies the false hero and marries the hero, the dispatcher who makes the lack known and sends the hero off, and the false hero (Propp 80-81). I am working with a blend of Propp's as well as Arthur Asa Berger's interpretation of Propp's base of the 31 Functions and the 7 roles. My own modifications will lie in the struggle to catalogue the evolutionary figure of the female FBI agents using Propp's concept of the hero and his 31 Function structure as evidence to the

fact that as an evolutionary character type, the female FBI agent is a hero figure.

Arthur Asa Berger's analysis of Propp and the narrative function of characters flesh out the basic idea of the 7 roles. Berger stresses Propp's usefulness for modern texts, that Propp's Functions can be updated to apply to modern fictional narratives. At the very base, Propp highlighted the fundamental logic behind narratives. Berger begins his analysis by focusing on the hero figure and Propp's two hero types. Propp defines the general concept of the hero in fairy tales as, "the character who either directly suffers from the actions of the villain or who agrees to liquidate the misfortune or lack of another person" (Berger 17). Berger defines the seeker heroes as "those who seek something out or are set on a task," and the victimized heroes as, "those who leave home to fight villains, but are not sent to seek something" (Berger 15). Propp also stated that a hero must be one of the types, but never both. As the film analysis will later show, the characters of Illeana Scott (*Taking Lives*) and Jennifer Marsh (*Untraceable*) fit into both hero types and also survive many of the conflicts with the villains of the films alone.

The hero is also, as stated above, defined in relation to the villain and is in conflict throughout the majority of the text. Berger argues that the spectator or reader ties two opposite character types together into a symbiotic relationship- one cannot exist within these narratives without the other. The definition of the hero is "the character who either directly suffers from the actions of the villain or who agrees to liquidate the misfortune or lack of another person" (Berger 17). Heroes typically rescue the heroine, as well as themselves, and also spend the majority of the narrative in conflict with the villain. By this definition the beginnings of positing Hannibal Lecter as the established hero within the films are evident. Heroes are also defined in relation to the villain; in both films neither Lecter nor the FBI can be positioned without the other. Throughout the films he is motivated by his pursuit of aiding and eventually rescuing

Clarice while he is suffering personally at the hands of the FBI.

Looking into the structure of *Silence* and *Hannibal* the question is then raised, who is the real hero¹? Understanding the function of the genre, as well as the character archetypes, is important, especially here, as the character of Hannibal Lecter is seen as a villainous character because of his criminal behaviors and alternate lifestyle of cannibalism. Once the content within the narrative is stripped away, as I previously mentioned Propp suggests within his method of analysis, Lecter is left standing victorious as the heroic figure. While this is a modification to the character type it is also more of a deviation from the root of the usually more socially moral hero figure Cawelti discusses in his book, *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance*.

Starling then, by definition of the hero's journey and involvement with her, represents the heroine. The heroine, the female positioned with the male hero, "remains weak and passive as the hero stays strong and active" (Berger 20). From the start of the first film Clarice follows orders given by either the FBI or Lecter. Her passivity stems from this fact; when she is told to complete a task she acquiesces without question, acting merely as a puppet. Linda Degh comments further on the construction of the heroine figure, "the voyage from deprivation to fulfillment through suffering and tests ends in the safe haven of marriage to the mighty ruler. She succeeds because she has the proper feminine virtues that make her so deserving. She is beautiful, chaste, loyal, generous, compassionate, and hardworking" (Degh 92). The heroine is, like Clarice, usually pushed into action, never taking the initiative as the hero does. She is escaping villainous people, and is often "innocently accused, slandered, banished, and destroyed" (Degh 93).

The relationship between the hero and the villain, according to Propp, tends to be

¹ The discussion of the hero figure, as well as the other character types, relates to the structure of the narrative-beyond the moral and ethical definitions typically associated with the term.

homosocial². If the hero is gendered male, the villain must then also be male. The narrative assumption Propp makes is that along with the hero gendered as male, the princess is gendered as female. This holds true for *Silence* and *Hannibal*, as Clarice fulfills the role of the princess, Lecter as hero, and the FBI as villain. This does not hold true within the films *Taking Lives* and *Untraceable*; Scott and Marsh are female and the villains are male. I argue that the gender changes in the hero/villain position occur, most importantly, to make these formulas palatable to audiences because there must be conflict. Both Berger and Propp, as many viewers would agree, believe that this conflict makes the story exciting. Berger briefly discusses the powerful heroine figure, but states, generally speaking, it is still the heroes who are strong and active, while “the heroine remains weak and passive” (Berger 20). While this distinction will be mentioned later, I maintain throughout this analysis that this does occur with Clarice Starling in *Silence* and for the better part of *Hannibal*, but is not the case with Scott and Marsh; they are not heroine figures. Heroes typically rescue the heroine, but within these films both Scott and Marsh aid various gendered victims and eventually rescue themselves in the end.

Moving beyond the structure of the narrative, Theresa deLauretis, in *Alice Doesn't*, builds upon Propp and Lotman to look at how the narrative “works to engender the subject in the movement of its discourse, as it defines positions of meaning, identification, and desire” (deLauretis 10). Using Propp, she applies his character functions and ideas to more recent studies on narrative, as well as Lotman’s work. What is interesting in Lotman’s idea of the structure of multi-heroed texts is where “heroes of successive generations function as diachronic character doubles of each other” (deLauretis 118). Lotman is useful in looking at the mythical textual mechanics of a narrative, cementing the thought that “the hero must be male, regardless of the gender of the text image because the obstacle is morphologically female and

² A noted exception to this are *Bluebeard* story types.

indeed the womb” (119). The male then is, again, assumed to be active, the subject. The female become static, an object not “susceptible to transformation” (119). The question becomes then, do women have a place as a subject in myth? “If her story again turned out to be his story, it may be less Freud’s doing than the work of Lotman’s text generating mechanism honed by a centuries long patriarchal structure” (deLauretis 125). Applying these ideas to the medium of film finds that, “film narrative is a process by which the text images distributed across the film are finally regrouped in the two zones of sexual difference” mythical subject (male) and obstacle (female) (138).

Since this thesis involves moving from a formalist analysis of text to the psychologically based theories surrounding the analysis of context, merging the two is beneficial. The psychological school, as Gilet has described, incorporates the works of Freud and Jung into textual analysis. They take the elements of roles and functions and posit theories behind the motivations- Freud’s concept of the Oedipal complex becomes a large influence on the hero role when the method of psychoanalysis is instrumented. This method of analysis allows for narratives to be read as social commentaries and reactions to anxieties and fears within reality. Treading the waters of a history of narrative structuring around the patriarchal system and male hero is therefore difficult, but not impossible. Establishing an evolutionary line of female characters in media, who lead up to the creation of a female hero, and not a heroine, provides conclusive evidence of the fact that a hero is not always male. This brings us back to the creation of characters, and the variations on Propp’s seven roles within modern narratives.

The presence of some of these seven roles, especially the hero, princess, and villain, is found and used in specific genres. Rick Altman stated in his book, *Film/Genre*,

Genre is a complex concept with multiple meanings: genre as blueprint, as a formula that precedes, programmes, and patterns industry production; genre as structure, as the formal framework on which individual films are founded; genre as label, as the name of a

category central to the decisions and communications of distributors and exhibitors; genre as contract, as the viewing position required by each genre film of its audience (Altman 25)

Genre is an important factor in the use of Propp's Functions and roles. In cinema, especially in recent Hollywood film, genre labeling is almost always necessary to its success at the box office. Using Wyatt to support the existence of genre, Altman states "genre is a pre-sold property," the audience knows what they are getting when they buy their theater ticket (112). While this repetition is comforting to the audience, it also instills the values of Proppian ideology in today's society. The importance of structure, and the dependence on it is a force to be reckoned with. John Cawelti, in *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance* (1976), studies literary formulas and stresses the importance of standardization in keeping the bond between the creator of the text and the consumer. More importantly, these universal formulas, especially the hero's journey, makeup genre itself. In order for a genre to be accepted by society, multiple texts must follow in the same formula, or pattern. Cawelti highlights the need for both character formulas as well as plot formulas. In order for a story to work over time, these concepts must form a solid, symbiotic bond.

Both *Taking Lives* and *Untraceable* are, as mentioned before, psychological thrillers. *Silence* and *Hannibal* are also widely considered to be psychological thrillers, however they have more of a base in the horror genre than the more recent films. This genre is a blending of four of the basic genres, drama, horror, action, and the detective film. Since genre structures and generic conventions can, and do if the audience is an intelligent and discerning one, strip away the element of suspense, Altman finds a meeting point between the two. He states, "genre film suspense is almost always false suspense. In order to participate in the film's strong emotions we must provisionally pretend we don't know that the hero will be freed" (Altman 25). This is a key concept to the continued success of any suspense film. The importance for the viewer does not

just lie within the structure of the film, which guarantees a defeated villain and a victorious hero, but in the excitement of the journey to that expected end.

This is also problematic as the repetitive and “cumulative nature of genre films make them predictable, and can diminish the importance of each film’s ending” (Altman 25). With *Silence* and *Hannibal*, horror/suspense films, this can be a much larger factor. Cawelti’s theories on the success of formula deal directly with this issue found in suspense films. He found there is a fine balance between standardization and the element of surprise. While the audience needs the security blanket that only formulas can provide to gain pleasure in the consumption of the film, they also need the guarantee of enough ambiguity to keep them glued to the seats. To this end, successful formulaic works, such as *Silence of the Lambs* which jumpstarted its own sub-genre, must be somewhat unique. While Cawelti uses the famous mystery novel detective, Sherlock Holmes, as an example of a modified stereotypical character, Hannibal Lecter can also be labeled successful as well, as a modified killer villain/hero.

Character Case Studies

While I will not run a Metzian segmentation³ of the films, I will run through them chronologically according to Proppian character Functions. *Silence of the Lambs* employs 27 of Propp’s 31 Functions. To reference the definitions of the various Functions, please refer to Chart 1. The character type placement in the film, as will be discussed with more focus on the narrative in the following chapters, is grounded through the application of Proppian structuralism. The hero figure, as I will point out, is Hannibal Lecter. Clarice Starling is positioned with a character typing fluidity that corresponds to Lecter himself. Due to this malleability, left to her own devices she is the princess figure Propp and Berger describe. When

³ This method was created by Christian Metz and requires a shot by shot analysis of the film.

she is the instrument through which Lecter can act, she slides into the hero role. The villain to Lecter's hero is the FBI itself, as well as all of the various extensions of bureaucracy attached to them, most notably Dr. Chilton. Buffalo Bill, the serial killer currently sought by the FBI, at best can be categorized as the magical agent, but serves as the trial itself that the hero must overcome. He is not a villain figure because he is used as a plot device to move the narrative and motivate movements of all of the other characters.

Hannibal continues the narrative of Starling and Lecter, opening with Starling depicted as a now seasoned FBI agent. While Lecter still holds the role of hero in this film, and Starling remains the princess figure with some hero attributes, their roles shift towards the last act of the film. Starling's role as princess balances and establishes her, by the end of the film, to be a heroine- not quite full hero, but not the completely passive princess either. The villain role is three pronged. While the FBI maintains the villain status, Paul Krendler, a representative from the US Justice Department, is an individual force. There is another, more viscerally evil force at hand as well, Mason Verger, Lecter's fourth victim and the only one who survived the attack. While it may seem as though Verger is taking the place of Buffalo Bill's character, he is not. The character is more active than Bill and is directly and actively involved with both Lecter and Starling. The Italian inspector, Pazzi⁴, fulfills the role of helper, as his primary use within the narrative is to reunite Starling and Lecter.

Taking Lives uses an impressive 25 out of the 31 Functions given by Propp while *Untraceable* uses 19. There are five of the seven roles in both films- neither film has a false hero. Illeana Scott and Jennifer Marsh fill the roles of both hero and modified princess.⁵ In *Taking*

⁴ This name, Pazzi, is significant as it is Italian for "crazy." This highlights his character's Function as not only a helper, but also the carnivale character of the Fool. He represents a more modern, slightly watered down version of the Fool as his actions to engage his curiosity of Lecter's Dr. Fell and then to further assist Starling, ends in his own demise.

⁵ They qualify under the princess role only due to the fact that they are directly sought after by the villains in both films.

Lives, the Canadian police detectives, Paquette and Duval, are assigned to the case with Scott and fulfill the helper roles. Within *Untraceable*, the FBI agents and detective, Griffin Dowd and Eric Box assist Marsh and serve as the helpers. The donors in both films are the agents in charge of the divisions, LeClaire in *Taking Lives* and Brooks in *Untraceable*. The dispatcher figures are also the same in both films- the FBI. Finally, the villain roles in the films are notably both white male serial killers, Martin Asher in *Taking Lives* and Owen Reilly in *Untraceable*.

Character Function in 'Silence of the Lambs'

The spectator is introduced first to Clarice Starling as she runs through a wooded Quantico Academy trail. The first three opening Functions are: Absentation (1), Interdiction (2), and Reconnaissance (4). As Clarice is an extension of the hero figure, Hannibal Lecter, even though she has not gained the status of hero herself these Functions still apply. As she finishes her run she is asked to see Jack Crawford, a seasoned agent within the Behavioral Sciences Unit of the FBI. It is at this point that she leaves her “family,” the other rookie Academy members, in order to respond to the interdiction, the Buffalo Bill case. She is tasked with visiting Dr. Hannibal Lecter and gaining information that might aid in the case at hand.

Hannibal, the true hero of the narrative, soon repeats the three Functions. He is approached by Starling to assist with a profile of Buffalo Bill. He leaves his previous state and begins the quest of working with Starling on the case. While he is working on information from this point forward with Starling, he is also beginning his own version of reconnaissance, learning about Starling. Functions 9 and 10, Mediation and Counteraction, begin at the end of their first conversation together. Lecter agrees to take on the task of finding Buffalo Bill only when he is guaranteed that he will be involved with Starling as well. His counteraction is made clear when

Starling reaches her car in the prison parking lot. She experiences flashbacks of her childhood, realizing that Lecter was spot on in his profile of her, thus showing the audience his intentions.

Function 11, departure, for Lecter is experienced through Starling, as are most of his actions as hero throughout this installment of the narrative. Starling easily slides into the role of instrument for Lecter, as she has the ability to physically maneuver outside of the prison cell. She, on Lecter's information, goes to a storage facility and finds a decapitated head. The head, more specifically of a transvestite, is the next step in the Buffalo Bill case. When Starling returns to the prison to talk to Lecter about her findings Function 12, First Donor Action, is cemented. Starling is Lecter's helper from this point forward, his reach into the outside world.

The role of the FBI as villain⁶ is demonstrated in the next meeting Starling has with Crawford regarding Buffalo Bill's newest victim. The Functions Delivery (5), Trickery (6), Complicity (7), and Villainy (8) occur during this meeting. Starling delivers information on both Lecter and the case to Crawford. His control of Starling and, by extension, Lecter, is unknown to Starling. She is tricked into believing that Crawford is the positive guide for her and realizes it to an extent, "That's why you sent me in there, to get Lecter's help on Buffalo Bill?" She was deceived in order for Crawford to gain information in his own case. As she is a rookie at this point, and sees Crawford as a role model in the FBI, this deception fulfills Function 8, as Starling is officially a member of the FBI "family."

The next Lecter/Starling meeting is centered around Starling finding Buffalo Bill's trophy, the Death's Head Moth cocoon. During the meeting Functions Hero's Reaction (13) and Receipt of Agent (14), are seen. It is at this point that Lecter fully realizes Starling's role as an

⁶ This is also tipped off due to the focus on anagrams within the film. An anagram of FBI is "FIB". This serves as subtext due to the meaning of the term fib, highlighting the deviant and false position the FBI takes in this film and, to a lesser extent, in *Hannibal*.

agent⁷. She offers him a change of prison cell location in return for help in saving Katherine Martin from Buffalo Bill. He agrees, laying out the explicit groundwork in his expectations, “Quid pro quo, you tell me things I tell you things...not about the case though, about yourself.” The scene cuts to Dr. Chilton in his office, performing surveillance on Starling and Lecter. As Chilton is considered to be a villainous character, along with the FBI, the repetition of Functions 4, 5, and 6 are justified. The audience sees that he is both attempting to and gaining information on both Starling and Lecter surreptitiously, and illegally, while also tricking the pair into thinking their conversations is private. It is then through this act that Chilton attempts to undermine Starling and use Lecter himself to solve the Buffalo Bill case. Chilton offers Lecter a chance to vacate the facility, and Lecter accepts. It is through this assumed deception (Lecter later gains the upper hand in his makeshift cell) that Lecter is led to the object of the search, fulfilling Function 15, Spacial Change.

Starling also joins Lecter in Memphis to continue the case. In his new cell, flanked by guards, Lecter attempts to free himself from the bindings of the FBI and other law enforcement agents. Functions 16, 17, and 18, Struggle, Branding, and Victory, soon take place. Lecter surprises the guards as they bring them his dinner. He engages in a physical struggle with them, quickly killing them both. He defeats them, as well as the other stationed agents in the elevator, and secures his release to freedom. At the same time however, he is branded for his seemingly deviant acts of murder. The issue of branding is negative only to the extent that it strains his relationship with Starling, losing some of the trust they had established.

His Return, Function 20, can be seen through Starling, as she continues on his information and visits one of Buffalo Bill’s previous victims to gain more insight into Buffalo Bill. At the same time Function 21, Pursuit, is in play, as the FBI launches a separate search for

⁷ This refers to her status as a Proppian agent, not FBI.

Lecter. A small victory against the FBI is reached (a repeat of Function 18, Victory) as Starling arrives at Buffalo Bill's location the same time the FBI searches an incorrect location. Function 25, Difficult Task, is then set into place for Starling, as she is the one physically searching for Bill and not Lecter. She moves through the house, talking with a person she soon realizes to be Buffalo Bill; it is she who has to fight for survival while also saving Katherine.

The following Functions occur in their original order: Solution (26), Recognition (27), Exposure (28), Transfiguration (29), Punishment (30), and Wedding (31). The task of capturing Buffalo Bill, as well as saving Katherine Morris, is achieved by Starling's correct use of Lecter's instructions. While she is recognized, and commended, for her actions at her Academy graduation, it is ultimately Crawford and the Behavioral Sciences Unit who take full recognition for the capture. The audience is falsely led to assume that the FBI is merely the false hero of the narrative, taking recognition for what is Starling's and Lecter's. Starling receives a phone call, and in answering it realizes that it is Lecter. Lecter is given both a new literal and figurative appearance. He is officially still on the run, however his location, a Caribbean island, soon highlights a specific purpose and goal. His goal is in alignment with Function 30, Punishment. As he talks to Starling the audience sees Lecter watching Dr. Chilton arrive on the island. His response to Starling triggers the fate of Dr. Chilton at the hands of Hannibal "The Cannibal" Lecter, "I do wish we could chat longer, but I'm having an old friend for dinner." The film ends with Lecter, walking into a crowd towards Dr. Chilton, appropriately donned in a white suit. The color choice of the suit is also indicative of his new start and new path, as white is a symbol of both beginning and good⁸. While there is no actual Wedding in the film, as there are in the fairytales Propp researched, the symbolism of marriage is evident. Starling ascends to a full

⁸ Typically in heroic tales in film the hero is clothed at some point in lighter color tones and the villain in darker tones.

status FBI Special Agent during her graduation in the end of the film. This change in life status, becoming an FBI agent, marries Starling to her career. Lecter has also started a longer relationship with Starling that begins with his phone conversation with her during her graduation, but also serves to link this film to its sequel, *Hannibal*.

Character Function in 'Hannibal'

The film opens with a voiceover of Barney, a nurse who was at the psychiatric institution when Lecter and Starling first met. He introduces the characters of Starling and Lecter to Mason Verger, which allows the audience to become acquainted with Lecter and Starling as well as Verger. After the credit sequence the audience is introduced to the present day Clarice Starling. Functions 2 and 3, Interdiction and Violation, take place during Starling's involvement in a takedown gone wrong. While this is not an event tied directly to Lecter, or the main focus of the narrative, this does serve to foreshadow Starling's eventual turn to heroine later in the film. She is brought in and questioned by both the FBI and Paul Krendler, a representative from the Justice Department, about the disastrous incident. This turns into a conversation regarding Mason Verger, who has evidence regarding Lecter's whereabouts but will only give it directly to Starling in person. She is then dispensed under Function 4, Reconnaissance, to visit Verger.

Her visit to Verger's estate accounts for Function 9, Mediation, as she was explicitly dispatched to work with Verger on the Lecter case. Function 5, Delivery, is evident when she visits Verger. While Starling is there to collect information for the FBI, Verger also uses her to gain more information about Lecter, more specifically her relationship with him. In his conversation with Starling he attempts to disrupt her concepts of Lecter. While she is aware of his past, Verger, through Functions 6 and 7, Trickery and Complicity, misleads Starling. He tells her about his dealings with Lecter and also leads her to Barney, the former nurse. By giving her

this incriminating evidence on Lecter, Verger is masking his ultimate goal of torturing and killing Lecter himself.

It is at this point in the film that the audience first sees Lecter in the present. Function 11, Departure, focuses around the fact that Lecter has moved from the US, or the Caribbean (the last place he was seen in the first film) to Italy. He is there under the disguise of the name Dr. Fell, and is interviewed by the Italian police on the disappearance of his predecessor. The scene cuts to Starling in her basement office looking at evidence. She receives a letter from Lecter that highlights the changes in their roles within this film, “Clearly this new assignment is not your choice. Your job is to craft my doom. I’m not sure what I should wish you. But I’m sure we will have fun. Ta ta, H.” This leads to Functions 12 and 13, First Donor Action and Hero’s Reaction. While they do not specifically occur here, the arrival of the note triggers them into action. When Starling brings the letter to FBI forensics to be analyzed, it is traced to Italy. It is then that the scene cuts to Inspector Pazzi analyzing a surveillance videotape of Lecter, which leads him to the FBI website. He researches Lecter, finally aware of his true identity, and decides to take on the task of capturing Lecter.

Back in Starling’s office, Krendler interrupts her research. Function 5, Delivery, is repeated here, as he gains more information about Lecter from her. When she slightly resists, bringing to light previous advances Paul made to her, “Paul, what is it with you, I told you to go back to your wife,” he threatens her. Function 8, Villainy, is established through his dialogue with her, “I better see cooperation. If you work with me your so-called career here might improve, if you don’t all I have to do is draw a line through your name.” The threat to comply with the FBI and Krendler places Starling in more conflict, a decision between her career or her obsession with Lecter. She chooses to pick up the phone and contact the Italian office to discuss

the videotape they have of Lecter. This pushes Function 12 into gear, as Pazzi is working with her in order to get the reward money for Lecter's capture (even though Starling, at this point, is unaware of his intentions).

Function 15, Spacial Change, also foreshadows the demise of Pazzi. Lecter is seen at the opera, and addresses Pazzi and his wife after the end of the show. While he discusses the opera, it is clear that Lecter is on to Pazzi. Upon his return the next day to his office, Pazzi receives a call from Starling to thank him for the security tape of the perfume store. It is at this point that she realizes his intentions with the reward. He hangs up on her and leaves to pursue Lecter. Pazzi arrives to attend Lecter's lecture, which also then leads to his death. Lecter corners him and suffocates him, also gaining information on Verger. When Pazzi's phone rings Lecter answers, only to get Starling on the other line. As he hangs up with her he shoves Pazzi out of the window, slicing him open on the way, much like the fate Judas met.

At this point the lines between hero and princess are blurred for Starling, as she is placed in a liminal stage on the cusp of an eventual turn to a heroine role. This is at the expense of Lecter's character, who must become more of a villainous character to allow for Starling's growth. As Starling watches the video of Pazzi's death, Functions 16 and 17, Struggle and Branding, occur. Starling is faced with direct conflict with Lecter, as he explicitly waved at the camera to show her he knows she is watching him. This also temporarily brands him as the villain, even though his heroic path is not yet complete. A cut to Verger in Lecter's mask⁹ occurs in order to take some of the narrative focus off of Lecter. Here the villainy role is intensified. Verger contacts Paul with information on Starling, and they both agree to set Starling up, making it look like she is withholding evidence. This repeats Functions 6 and 7,

⁹ This is the same mask worn by Lecter in the first film when he was placed in transport to Memphis, to make sure he did not bite any of the personnel who came near him.

Trickery and Complicity, as Verger is deceiving Krendler into complying with him and then deceiving Starling.

By bringing evidence of Starling's accused deception to the FBI, Krendler places Function 24, Unfounded Claim, into place. This also serves to brand Starling, Function 17, as she is placed on leave for working with Lecter. Lecter soon finds out about Krendler's actions against Starling and begins his retaliation. In the final act of the film the villains converge while working in opposition to each other. Lecter walks into Starling's house, watching her as she sleeps on the couch. This serves as Functions 20 and 23, Return and Unrecognized Arrival, as he has arrived back to his "home" unbeknown to Starling. His subsequent phone conversation with her leads her into action. Function 25, Difficult Task, is issued to both characters. Starling has the task of following Lecter's orders, and Lecter's is to come away from the following events unscathed. As he leads her to the phone booth, Lecter himself is left vulnerable. He is taken by Verger's men, fulfilling Function 21, Pursuit, and also repeating Function 16, Struggle, placing Lecter and Verger in direct combat with each other. Starling calls the abduction in, only for the FBI to tell her to let them take care of it. She returns home, unable to help Lecter. When they call her later to inform her that Lecter is not being held at Verger's estate she takes it upon herself to drive to the fields behind Verger's estate.

Starling drives up to the barn and moves in, to find Lecter strapped to a device, donning his original mask. While her intention is to rescue Lecter, from Verger and the collection of boars brought to eat and kill Lecter, the opposite occurs. During the fight Starling is shot, and Verger's men are injured and fall victim to the boars. Lecter collects Starling's body, following Function 22 Rescue, as each of them rescues the other. This action, of Lecter saving Starling, triggers the end of her role as princess figure. Once Lecter rescues her, it allows her to fully

move forward as an active heroine. As he leaves he calls up to Cordell, who is holding on to Verger's wheelchair, "Hey Cordell, why don't you push him in, you could always say it was me." Cordell then takes the safety off of the chair and allows Verger to drop into the pen of boars to be eaten alive. Function 18, Victory, occurs as Verger is punished for his attempt to kill both Lecter and Starling. This ends the life of one of the villains, and the narrative moves forward to the next- Krendler.

Lecter drives himself and the injured Starling to Krendler's lake house. He takes Starling up to one of the bedrooms and extracts the bullet from her shoulder. As he works on Starling, Krendler walks into the house. As Lecter goes downstairs and chloroforms Krendler, Function 16, Struggle, is again activated. The film cuts back to Starling, who is beginning to wake up from the bullet extraction and is still groggy from the drugs. She hears the conversation downstairs between Paul and Lecter and slowly starts to walk down the staircase. She attempts to pick up the phone and call in for help, but the line had been disconnected. It is at this point that she realizes she is faced, alone, with Function 25, Difficult Task. Since this places her in direct conflict with Lecter, it also establishes her as the heroine figure. Paul, even though he is victim to Lecter, is still the villain to Starling's heroine, as evidenced in his drug-induced dinner table prayer, "Forgive us all, even white trash like Starling here, and bring her into my service, Amen." While Paul is punished, Function 30, for his actions, and forced to literally eat his own brain, this activates Function 29, Transfiguration, and the role of hero is now given to Starling.

This launches back to Function 16, Struggle, as Lecter and Starling square off in a knife fight in the kitchen. Lecter traps Starling's ponytail in the refrigerator, asking her, "Tell me Clarice, would you ever say to me stop, if you love me you'd stop?" She responds, distancing herself from him, fully fracturing the invisible line tethering them together, "Not in a thousand

years.” He is satisfied with her response, but she catches him off balance and handcuffs herself to him. He grabs for a butcher knife, and as he is still a hero figure punishes himself (Function 30) by cutting his own hand to leave Starling’s hand intact. By the time law enforcement shows up Lecter has already disappeared. The audience does not see what happens to Starling after this event; instead, the last scene in the film is of Lecter on an airplane feeding Krendler’s brain to a little child.

Character Function in ‘Taking Lives’

The film opens with a flashback of Martin Asher, the villain, as a boy committing what is assumed to be his first homicide. This opening scene includes four of the Functions, Functions 4 through 7, Reconnaissance, Delivery, Trickery, and Complicity. Within this scene- strategically placed before the credit sequence of the film- a 16-year-old Asher engages in a conversation with a male teen, learns his mannerisms and history, and finally kills him. This quick background into Asher’s beginnings serves to unbalance the audience. As they see Asher as a teenager, it is then easy throughout the rest of the film to keep his current adult identity secret, until the “big reveal.”

The first scene following the credit sequence is an introduction to the hero, female FBI agent Illeana Scott. The first glimpse of her character is a close-up of her eyes and the rest of her body, lying down in a grave. The close up of her eyes is significant, and used periodically throughout the rest of the film. This close up points out her main skill, criminal profiling. Her eyes, and her intelligence, are her weapons against the villain- an update of the fairy tale hero’s usual choice of weapon, a sword. Within this scene three other Functions are found, 1, 9, and 10, Absentation, Mediation, and Counteraction. Function 1 is evidenced by the fact that Scott has been put on assignment with the Canadian police. She is absent from her normal role within the

FBI (family). The grave she is lying in is part of a crime scene for a case that she has been assigned to and has agreed to work. Here she meets the helpers, the other agents, and the donor, Leclair.

Following a trip to the morgue she engages in conversation with Leclair about the dislike that Duval and Paquette, the helpers, have towards her. This represents Function 12, the first donor Function. The agents test her in their unwillingness to fully accept her. Leclair acknowledges this fact by telling her that they feel as though her different actions (lying in the grave) are beyond the realm of law enforcement protocol. Her reaction, which coincides with Function 13, the hero's reaction (to the donor), is to fully engage herself with the task at hand. She is seen in her hotel room pasting crime scene photos above her bed and studies them while she eats dinner. The crime scene photos can also be read as a part of Function 14, Receipt of Agent. While they are not of supernatural quality, these photos are given to Scott to aid her in finding the killer.

Function 15, Spacial Change, appears in the first scene within the police station. Scott is called in to interview a witness to the most recent killing. While it is not apparent to the spectator at this point, it is important to log this scene as the first meeting of Scott and Martin Asher. Martin Asher is posing as James Costa, an art dealer who witnessed a gruesome murder. This interrogation scene allows the hero and the villain to analyze each other. Asher/Costa¹⁰ questions her role by saying, "You don't look like a cop." She follows with, "I'm a Special Agent." This dialogue addresses her physical representation as questionable for a hero figure. She does not physically resemble a law enforcement official, or fit within the physical characteristics of the Final Girl or Female Action Heroine, as will be discussed in detail in

¹⁰ Although the reveal of Martin Asher taking the identity and acting as James Costa is not made until the end of the film, it is important to keep in mind during an analysis of the text.

Chapter Two. Scott is slim, attractive, and feminine. However, looks, as the film demonstrates, can be deceiving. She identifies herself as not just an official, but as her actual designation, Special Agent.

The next set of Functions, a repeat of 5 and 6, are found a few scenes later in a local bar. Scott is sitting alone reviewing evidence of a new murder. Asher/Costa walks in and engages in a conversation with her, trying to gain information about her. She is deceived by him and begins to establish a trust/interest in him and gives him her cell phone number. While these Functions, according to Propp, apply generally to the victim figure/s, they also come into play here as eventually Asher/Costa victimizes Scott. A few scenes later his attempt to extract information is repeated. Costa claims his art gallery has been broken into; allegedly by the killer. Scott and the detectives arrive on the scene and Costa requests Scott take him back to his apartment. During the drive Functions 5 through 7 are repeated. Asher/Costa gains more information about Scott. He questions her regarding why she took on the role in the FBI. She, deceived by Costa's seemingly genuine intentions, responds by discussing her history. We find that she is compelled to this line of work because at the age of twelve she accidentally killed a person who broke into her house. This event not only isolated her, but also led her on the journey to study and hunt killers.

After attempting to catch the serial killer, Martin Asher, Scott and the detectives stake out Costa's art show, hoping they will catch the killer in the act. They lose track of a man identified by Costa and assumed to be Asher, in the crowd. They decide it is better to send Costa away and detective Duval sets out to escort him to the airport. The man Costa set up as the killer comes in demanding blackmail money Costa owed him. Scott shows up at the apartment in time to hear gunshots. She goes up to the apartment to find Duval shot and killed and hears the start of a car

engine. She races downstairs and into her car, thus beginning Function 16, Struggle. The car chase scene ends in a crash on the bridge. The assumed Asher, already dead, is now being held at gunpoint by a shaking Costa. Scott, assuming she is saving Costa from Asher, takes the gun away from him and leads him away from the damaged car before it explodes. While they end up being false Functions, because Costa is really Martin Asher, Functions 18 and 26 appear. Function 18, Victory, and Function 26 Solution, are assumed because the fake Asher is dead and the case is now over.

Scott leaves the morgue after confirming Asher's death to return to her hotel room to pack and leave. Costa arrives and, now that the case is over, she involves herself with him. It is important to mention here the compulsion of the Villain. They not only thrive on domination, but on sexuality. Berger, assuming villains are male, also says that while women are captivated by these figures and engage in sexual acts, as Scott does here, they do not experience love for them. *Taking Lives* makes a very interesting case because Martin Asher, as the artist James Costa, is the killer hidden behind the façade of the victim. Scott, a female hero, falls for him as James Costa, all the forensic evidence pointing to the fact that he is who he claims to be. This romantic bond, a clear continuation in the subgenre from where Lecter and Starling left off in *Hannibal*, is discussed further in Chapter Three.

The next day, back at the hospital to fix Costa's stitches, Mrs. Asher is brought in to identify Martin's body. She states that the body they have is not Martin. She storms off into an elevator where she meets Costa. Function 8, Villainy, occurs here when Costa, revealed as the real Martin Asher, kills his mother. Functions 28 and 17 quickly follow this scene. Function 28, Exposure, and Function 17 Branding, are seen when the elevator doors open for Scott and she stumbles upon Asher/Costa decapitating his mother. In shock, she stumbles back, telling the

approaching detectives that Costa is Asher. She is branded a failure at this point by the detectives for being caught up in her affection for Costa and not seeing through his disguise. As they all return to Costa's apartment to look for clues as to where he is going next, Paquette physically slaps her across the face for causing Duval's death. While in the apartment Asher calls her and tells her that he knows she wanted him because she could see his real identity and that they are truly the same. Function 21 Pursuit, begins here, as Asher is intent on finding Scott.

The final act of the film involves ten Functions. Scott is seen being fired from the FBI for unprofessional conduct. While it is not revealed to the audience at this point, this scene fulfills Function 25, Difficult Task. While it is part of the twist in the film, the truth is that she was not fired but sent undercover to bait Asher. The scene cuts to about seven months later in a small farm town in Pennsylvania. Scott is living alone in an old farmhouse and is visibly pregnant. The last set of Functions, 21, 22, 16, 26, 27, 29-31, occur in the following short scene in the house. Function 21 again is pursuit, Function 22 Rescue, Function 16 Struggle, Function 26 Solution, Function 27 Recognition, Function 29 Transfiguration, Function 30 Punishment, and finally Function 31 Wedding. Asher invades her house and strips all of her weaponry (guns) from their hiding places. He tells her they should be a happy family as she is carrying his children. She responds by saying, "These are James Costa's babies," which begins a physical fight. He throws her to the floor and attempts to strangle her. She reaches for the garden shears and stabs them at him. She momentarily gains the upper hand until he grabs them, turns, and stabs her in the stomach. She quickly removes them and stabs him in the heart. It is revealed to Asher, and the audience that this was a set up undercover operation; nothing, including her pregnancy, was real and this act reestablishes her as the hero figure. This reestablishes her because as the hero, Scott, saves herself from the villain, defeats him and closes the case. The

film ends with Scott calling LeClair to confirm capture of Asher. This act fulfills Function 31, wedding, because she is returning to the FBI, a marriage of sorts and a possible promotion for her brave actions in the line of duty.

Character Function in 'Untraceable'

This film, like *Taking Lives*, opens with an introduction to the villain, another serial killer. He is seen setting up a video camera hooked up to the Internet to record a kitten dying of starvation. Following this short introductory sequence we are introduced to the hero, FBI Special Agent Jennifer Marsh. As she walks into the office she is wearing a raincoat with the hood up, and it is unclear whether she is male or female. Once she reaches the office her hood is lifted, revealing that she is female. Walking into her division, Cyber Crimes, Functions 9 Mediation, 10 Counteraction, 27 Recognition, and 30 Punishment are evident. While they occur during a short case she is working on they are still important as they qualify her as the hero character with a specific skill set who can solve a crime and capture the criminal.

She is then shown returning home to take care of her daughter. She soon returns to work, displaying her devotion to her job. Functions 9 and 10, Mediation and Counteraction, are soon repeated for the larger plot of the film. The killer's website is found and Marsh is unable to shut it down. Her boss, Brooks, does not feel it is worth investigating, because the victim is an animal. She disagrees and decides to monitor the site. We soon find that she is justified in her actions as Functions 6 and 7, Trickery and Complicity occur. The killer tricks a man looking for sport tickets, hits him with a stun gun, and places him in a van. The scene switches to Marsh being called in to work regarding the site. The killer has placed his new victim on the website. Functions 9, Mediation, 10, Counteraction, and 12, First Donor Function occur as Marsh is explicitly placed on the case by Brooks and is given the help of Special Agent Griffin Dowd. As

they work on the case the camera focuses close up shots on her hands just as Illeana Scott's eyes received in *Taking Lives*. This again points towards her skills, weapons for the hero to use to defeat the villain. Her hands allow her to access computers, an integral part in Cyber Crimes.

Soon after being assigned to the case, Marsh is introduced to her second helper, Detective Eric Box. The assignment of Box can also be seen as Function 14, Receipt of Agent. Here the magical agent is the information Marsh receives from Box about the police department's background so far on the case. Box, in the beginning of the film, also becomes the physical body to her brain. She informs him of where to go and who to question; finding the information at first and orchestrating movement towards actions based on the information. As they discuss the killer Griffin interrupts them. He informs them that the victim, Miller, is dead and that his death caused the number of viewers on the website to explode. The death of another victim marks Function 8, Villainy.

The following day Marsh throws a birthday party for her daughter Annie at a skating rink. Both Griffin and Eric arrive and they all discuss the case so far. The scene then switches back to the killer, who, following Functions 6 and 7, Trickery and Complicity, baits and traps his next victim. Marsh, Griffin, and Eric are called back to the office- the killer has set up a new victim. Once they arrive at the office and access the site they find the newest victim with his hands and feet in cement. The number of views the website gets increases the intensity of the heat lamps fixed on the man. Function 8, villainy, is repeated again as the victim is killed by the villain, burned to death under the lamps.

The next functions are set scenes apart. Since the killer is escalating, Marsh herself goes to the newest crime scene. Function 15, Spacial Change, is represented by her visit to the physical crime scene as opposed to following the progress of the helpers at the crime scene by

phone. The killer, from the crowd outside of the crime scene, sees Marsh and begins to research her. When Marsh wakes up the next day she finds that Annie noticed a video feed coming in from a camera the killer had placed outside their house. Function 16, Struggle, “hero and villain join in direct combat” begins here with the villain’s move to engage Marsh in his game. This leads Marsh into Function 25, Difficult Task, as she must now take the killer on not just for the case but to also protect her family.

The killer’s next victim draws Marsh even further into the case. He repeats Functions 5-8. These Functions, in order, are Delivery, Trickery, Complicity, and Villainy. This time the victim is one of the helpers, Griffin. Marsh as well as the rest of the Cyber Crimes office watch Griffin’s death live. Before he dies, Griffin blinks information about the killer to Marsh. This is a repeat of Function 14, Receipt of an Agent. The message was cut off, however later at the hotel Marsh cross-references the information. Functions 26 and 28, Solution and Exposure occur as Marsh figures out the identity of the killer. Marsh and Eric then go to the killer’s, Owen Reilly’s, house to capture him. He is not there, however they do recover Griffin’s body. This leads Marsh to Function 21, Pursuit; she is now in direct pursuit of the identified killer. Brooks gives her an order to take time off, however she quickly refuses to take more than a day’s break before tracking Reilly down.

She returns to the hotel to find that Reilly has possibly been there. She gets into her car and drives back to the office. While she is on the bridge the electronics in her car die after Reilly tampered with them. This follows the same pattern as *Taking Lives*. Both heroes begin a struggle with the villain on bridges. The bridges symbolize danger, foreshadowing the events to come. She finds a call box on the bridge and calls Eric to pick her up. Before he arrives she is captured by Reilly and taken to a basement.

The final showdown between Marsh and Reilly occurs within a basement- her basement. Both showdowns, for Marsh and Scott, occur in domestic settings, as I will discuss in more detail in Chapter Three. Scott defeats Martin Asher in the dining room of the farmhouse and Marsh defeats Owen Reilly in her basement. He ties her hands and feet and hangs her upside down over an old lawn mower with open blades. The website is turned on again and the FBI office, and Eric, see that she is the next victim. Functions 22 Rescue, 26 Solution, 30 Punishment, and 27 Recognition then occur in order. Marsh swings her body until she is able to grasp a pipe. She rips it out of the wall and sprays the hot air at Reilly. She saves herself from a certain death and finishes the case by then killing Reilly. The events occur streaming live on the Internet for all the viewers. Immediately after she downs the killer, winded, she flashes her badge at the camera- the hero is now recognized as reigning victorious.

Intended Character Typing

Andrew Horton's book, *Writing the Character-Centered Screenplay*, allows for a glimpse into the actual creation of characters within film- how screenwriters are motivated to create and present characters in certain lights. Horton notes the importance of incorporating theory into creative work and uses Roland Barthes and Claude Levi-Strauss to analyze the essence of character. His statement "treat character as a complex network of discourse or myths that cannot be totally explored, explained, or examined," further highlights the importance of the reliance on narrative structure (Horton 25). The creation of characters is of utmost importance for the story. Horton's advice to writers is that "the rub is to be able to create characters who have such resonance, even in what may appear to be stereotypic genre film" (26). Horton stresses that the creation of a character is always a process- and it doesn't end until the character's death. The depth of understanding the audience has for a character directly plays into its acceptance as

realistic. The level to which an audience actually believes in and accepts a character is directly correlated to the overall acceptance and opinion of the entire story. Not only is it imperative for the character to be believable to the audience, but in order to be well received, they must also be “engaging and vulnerable” (31). This is not purely on a level of screenwriting and of character dialogue, but also stresses the importance of the character roles. Horton goes on, “actions and the visible lead us to that deeper level of character and feeling that can be glimpsed without being explained away” (40). He discusses the “character tendency” leanings of victim, persecutor, and savior, figures that are easily substitutes for Propp’s figures of the princess, villain, and the hero. The victim is considered to be passive and not in control, a figure who suffers at the hands of the persecutor and is eventually saved by the savior. The persecutor is an active antagonistic figure that “works by suspicion” (42). Finally, the savior is the preserver of life and community, a hero figure with a desire to nurture (42). The fact that these characters, the three main factors in a narrative according to Horton, echo back to Propp’s focus on their relation to each other and their roles within the narrative is necessary for a hero-motivated story.

Conclusion

The use of formalism, specifically of Vladimir Propp’s method of analysis within narratology, as I have shown, is still useful today in studying media texts. Narratives, be it fairy tales or modern Hollywood cinema, all follow the same structural functions. While narratives differ in genre, and therefore in necessary structure, the analysis of the root of the narrative and character function is important in order to begin an analysis of the overall text. As I mentioned in the Introduction, Chandler notes the important difference that formalism supplies, that it is a method defined by analysts not in terms of ‘what they are’ as ‘characters’ but in terms of ‘what they do’ (Chandler 116). Beginning with a Proppian analysis of the films supplied the answer to

the questions of why, what, and where. It is significant because it gives the viewer a chance to understand the skeleton of the text, to see why characters follow certain character role functions what happens, where it happens in the placement of the narrative timeline and why events occur. This analysis allows the viewer, now armed with an understanding of the roots of the narrative, to go forth and dig further into the films. Chapter Two applies the next layer, the influence of gender and genre on character typing, answering the question Chandler mentions that structuralism is stripped of, what they are as characters.

Table 1
Vladimir Propp's 31 Functions of Characters (Berger 16)

1. Absentation: one of the members of the family absents self
 2. Interdiction: interdiction addressed to hero
 3. Violation: interdiction is violated
 4. Reconnaissance: the villain makes attempt to get information
 5. Delivery: the villain gets information about his victim
 6. Trickery: the villain tries to deceive his victim
 7. Complicity: victim is deceived
 8. Villainy: villain causes harm to a member of a family
Or, Lack: member of family lacks something, desires something
 9. Mediation: misfortune made known. Hero is dispatched
 10. Counteraction: hero agrees to, decides on counteraction
 11. Departure: hero leaves home
 12. 1st Donor Action: hero tested, receives magical agent or helper
 13. Hero's reaction: hero reacts to agent or donor
 14. Receipt of agent: hero acquires use of magical agent
 15. Spatial change: hero led to object of search
 16. Struggle: hero and villain join in direct combat
 17. Branding: hero is branded
 18. Victory: villain is defeated
 19. Liquidation: initial misfortune or lack liquidated
 20. Return: hero returns
 21. Pursuit, chase: hero is pursued
 22. Rescue: hero rescued from pursuit
 23. Unrecognized arrival: hero, unrecognized, arrives home or elsewhere
 24. Unfounded claims: false hero presents unfounded claims
 25. Difficult task: difficult task is proposed to hero
 26. Solution: the task is resolved
 27. Recognition: the hero is recognized
 28. Exposure: the false hero or villain is exposed
 29. Transfiguration: the hero is given a new appearance
 30. Punishment: the villain is punished
 31. Wedding: the hero is married, ascends the throne
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CHAPTER II. THE ORGANS: GENRE, GENDER, AND CHARACTER TYPING

Introduction

Moving from an analysis of narrative structure, this chapter focuses on the importance of the influence both gender and genre have on the creation of specific character types. Continuing the thread of genre and the importance of formula, it is especially relevant to note that both film scholar Rick Altman and literary theorist John Cawelti take ritual approaches to the concept of genre (Altman 17). This approach is based in a focus on the folk narrative as well as considering that the audience is the creator of the genre, not necessarily the producers of the text itself. This also follows the theory that narratives change in relevance and parallel the needs of a society at a given time. While both character and narrative archetypes carry throughout these cultural changes, their staying power also highlights the functionality of genre within society; that it acts not purely as escapist, but also as a social mirror. As genres reflect the cultural climate, so do the generic characters associated within them. The characters must also be easily identifiable to the audience members through texts that fall under specific genres. As genres evolve, and as subgenres are then also born, characters follow as well. These concepts tie back to the importance of folklore and Propp, as the root of the family tree, followed by literary structuralism, which is the paternal influence of film studies. This focus on the importance of the study of folk narratives and the source connection of the audience, this symbiotic relationship, displays that narratives can serve as a form of societal self-expression. In order to discuss what I am proposing, this newly evolved female hero figure, and the impact and reflection of society carried with it, one must refer to and analyze the generic roots to establish a chain of a genre's evolution through its anatomical structure.

Specific Characters

Beginning with the basics of the seven character roles as given by Propp and the functions of these characters, it is now important to look at more specific character types found in various genres that share similarities with the films I am examining. As stated before, the genre of psychological thriller is a blend of other genres, including the detective film, action, drama, and horror. The characters of Clarice Starling, Illeana Scott and Jennifer Marsh all share characteristics with female characters found within these genres. By sharing traits, the best attributes from all of the different character types, they are not then anomalies found in the course of film, but instead are evolved character types and positive, gender equalized characters.

The problems imbedded in the types of the film noir *Good/Bad Girl*, Carol Clover's *Final Girl*, Sherrie Inness' *Tough Girl* and *Action Chick*, and Linda Mizejewski's *Action Heroine Investigator* are evident in their titles alone. The use of the term 'girl' to describe these women opens the door to unequal treatment in comparison to male characters and a slippery slope to the negation of agency. Male characters are not called 'Hero Boy' or 'Action Boy,' and it is rare that they are juvenilized through the use of a term likening them to child status. Starling, Scott and Marsh, as well as a growing number of strong female characters, are not girls, they are not easily objectified figures with names like 'Tough Girl.' Through a growing period, as evidenced through an analysis of Proppian character Functions and roles, they become hero figures in their own right. They earned their badges, are extremely skilled in their jobs, are highly intelligent (usually more so than their counterparts), rescue themselves, and also display common elements of humanity. Their passion for their work should not penalize them, they are, at their core, heroes- not heroines who need to be saved, but heroes who at the end of the day get the task

accomplished no matter what is at stake for them personally. They do not need a new title, an updated blend of the character types I have described, just the one they deserve- hero.

Film Noir: The 'Good/Bad Girl'

The genre of film noir follows the conventions of the detective film, differences including noir's time period, and darker, morally ambiguous elements of the narrative, including the noir film's conventional ending in which the 'good guy' never wins the battle over evil. Andrew Spicer, in his book *Gender in Film Noir*, in looking specifically at the genre of film noir, gives a brief analysis of the typical character types within the genre. The most memorable female character type found in the genre is the femme fatale. The femme fatale figure is always female, and can be considered to be one of the strongest characters in the genre, at least when the male lead is considered to be abnormally passive. Spicer notes, "the figure of the deadly female femme fatale/spider-woman/vamp emerged as a central figure in the 19th century and became one of the most persistent incarnations of modern femininity, the woman who 'never really is what she seems to be' and is therefore, in a patriarchal culture, ungovernable and threatening" (Spicer 90). This character is part of a binary; the girl next-door figure rounds out the other half. This figure, also called the nurturer or homebuilder, is a female role that is pure rather than sexualized. She "sees her role as support and solace for the man" (91). While Starling, Scott, and Marsh cannot be labeled as either of these characters, they do exhibit elements of the other figure in noir, the 'good/bad girl.' This character is a combination of the girl next door's position as a protagonist and the femme fatale's sexuality. "The good/bad girl has both masculine and feminine qualities and although appearing to be duplicitous like the femme fatale, she proves herself to be loyal. If she cannot actively help the hero, she can support him and believe in his innocence" (Spicer 93).

Horror: The 'Final Girl'

The most widely known and used study on women in horror film comes from Carol Clover. Her work, "Her Body, Himself: Gender in the Slasher Film" examines gender representation in the horror film. Carol Clover begins her research into the Final Girl character type with the question, "Is it simple coincidence that this combination tale- trials, then triumph- bears such a striking resemblance to the classic (male) hero story?" (Clover 83) With the generic conventions of the horror slasher film in mind, she analyzes the character type of the Final Girl. In looking back into the history of character typing, she states, "By the lights of folk tradition, she is not a heroine, but a hero...she undergoes agonizing trials and virtually or actually destroys the antagonist and saves herself" (Clover 83-84). Clover's work on this female character was motivated by the fact that, "because slashers lie for all practical purposes beyond the purview of legitimate criticism...the phenomenon of the female victim-hero has scarcely been acknowledged" (Clover 77). The Final Girl is a main character seen from the onset of the film through the end, and she survives all conflicts with the killer. She is defined by Clover as, "intelligent, watchful, level headed, the first character to sense something is amiss and the only one to deduce from the accumulating evidence the patterns and extent of the threat" (Clover 79). "The gender of the Final Girl is likewise compromised from the outset by her masculine interests, her inevitable sexual reluctance, her apartness from the other girls, and sometimes her name" (Clover 80). Her masculine interests as listed by Clover are directly tied to her drive to hunt for and finally kill the killer herself. These actions obviously run counter to the basic gender binary of males as active and females as passive, therefore problematizing the application of a feminine quality to the final girl. Clover finds that in the slasher film the audience usually see the killer's point of view (hereafter, POV) in the beginning of the film, "we are linked, in this

way, with the killer in the early part of the film, usually before we have seen him directly and before we have come to know the Final Girl in any detail” (Clover 79). By the end of the film the POV drifts from the killer to the Final Girl. Clover finds that “We are in the room as the killer grabs her” and therefore by the end of the film, the viewer’s sympathy is not for the killer. We, the audience, “belong in the end to the Final Girl, there is no alternative” (Clover 79). While the Final Girl is an improvement in female character roles, she is by no means perfect. The fact that the character has to be stripped of almost all femininity and injected with as many masculine traits as possible to reign in male viewers is extremely problematic. While this definition sums up Starling’s positions, placing her therefore in a male proxy position as Clover describes, Scott and Marsh are not, as I will discuss, positioned as such. The absence of Final Girl attributes, of fitting the character type, also gains agency for the female character with an ability to maintain a level of femininity while also being deemed the hero.

Drama/ Action: The ‘Tough Girl/ Action Chick’

The concept of the “tough” character is hard to define for male characters, but even more elusive and problematic is defining the “tough” female character. It is important to define the concept of “toughness” as not just plain physical ability and the presence of muscles, but other defining aspects as well. Sherrie Inness, in her book *Tough Girls*, begins her working definition of “tough” as, “a performance of a certain demeanor and image, an act that might be more or less successful according to how many tough signifiers are adopted and how convincingly they are presented as ‘real’” (Inness 12). What one person considers to be tough is different from another’s. The idea of subjectivity within such a definition makes a scale (a range with an allowance of flexibility) helpful but still as Inness, continually notes, problematic.

Inness makes it clear that while the idea of the tough female is new within film, thanks to a

media supported gender binary myth, “women have always been tough” (18). Many fictional female characters that are considered to be tough are “considered tough because they adopt roles and behaviors associated with men” (18). By performing these behaviors and adding other masculine characteristics, they “place themselves as outsiders in relation to a culture that assumes that women should strive to act and appear feminine” (19). In the genres of drama and action she notes that “when a man appears to rescue her, the tough girl often returns to a more feminine prototype” (21). This fact, found throughout *Silence* and *Hannibal* and more commonly in other previous films, is gloriously absent from *Taking Lives* and *Untraceable*- in these films the women save themselves. The women Inness defines as tough “question and undermine gender stereotypes by adopting behaviors that are considered to be characteristic of men...they shoot guns, become police officers...they openly show that they are more than capable of taking over men’s roles even the toughest of them” (21). They are also displayed and identified not just through the body but also with the “defining features of attitude, intelligence, and acknowledgement and assumption of power in authority” (26).

Her follow-up to *Tough Girls, Action Chicks*, adds a few more ingredients to this female character type, along with newer examples. While the book is more specifically focused on the action genre, it is relevant for my argument because she does take the established Tough Girl figure and manipulate its characteristics. The title alone offers no promise for the growth of positive representation of women in action films. Demoting these women from “girls” to more colloquial terminology “chicks” is counterintuitive to the argument she is trying to make. Her additions serve to be more binding than freeing. For every point she believes she makes in favor of these “tough women” there is a resulting nail in the coffin of the case for positive, active, female heroines. She limits the allowable muscle tone of the women, saying that she should

have “not so much that she presents a threat to the males with whom she stars” (Inness 12).

Noticeably independence for these women is not interdependence, but a necessary sacrifice in order to maintain their “toughness” and hopes for filling the role of the hero. Shockingly, Inness also decides there is a glass ceiling to toughness itself, “she can be tough and aggressive, but not enough to make men nervous” (13). Obviously stakes are higher for a gender trying to make its way into genres and roles typically held by men, but Inness’ litmus test for these characters is more exclusive than inclusive.

Action/Suspense: The Action Heroine Investigator

The character of the Action Heroine Investigator, as defined by Linda Mizejewski in *Hard Boiled and High Heeled*, has similar characteristics to Inness’ Tough Girl, but is inherently different. Mizejewski not only looks at narrative function of the character, but visual images as well. The female action body is sexy, visually appealing to the audience, but also has “serious skills in sharp shooting and martial arts” to boot (Mizejewski 114). While earlier female investigators such as Jodie Foster’s Clarice Starling in *Silence of the Lambs* were widely received by audiences, they were not as sexualized as the 1995-present period, which brings the creation of *Taking Lives* and *Untraceable*. These characters, Mizejewski importantly points out, are extremely active, and unlike character roles before them, can and will kill. In referencing Clover’s work, Mizejewski states that, “Throughout the slasher genre, the police are pudgy, middle aged guys who show up too late or are easily disarmed by the killer. But here’s the brilliant loop in the genre, made possible with the action heroine as investigator: the Final Girl herself becomes the police, smarter but also more vulnerable” (145). She focuses on a more recent film, *Copycat*, as a base for establishing her creation of the modified Action Heroine Investigator. The importance here, that she fails to address, is that it takes *two* women,

Sigourney Weaver's "elegant, intellectual psychologist" and Holly Hunter's "working class cop," to defeat the killer and solve the crime (146). By the time this character evolves in *Taking Lives* and *Untraceable*, she has finally come to be one single character instead of two women having to work together. The class division, and the Cartesian mind/body duality present in *Copycat* markedly do not exist in these films. While both Scott and Marsh have assistance in the form of helpers the other FBI agents or law enforcement officials, on the cases, and the conflicts within the films, are fought by these women alone.

She also notes that the coupling within the detective film, that now there is a threatening figure focused on this heroine. Mizejewski notes that the "rules" of the genre, at their base, say that, "male detectives can be unfaithful cads but not rapists; women detectives can be beaten up, not raped" (153). Due to these restrictions, it is acceptable for the female investigator to be sexually drawn towards a dangerous man, but in the end he must be a "safe screw" (154). Noticeably, this is a double standard. It insinuates that male investigators can act in anyway they choose, whereas the women, while holding the same responsibilities as the male investigators, are held to societal rules regarding appropriate sexuality. It also hints towards the gendered acceptance of victims. Males within these genres are rarely victims, and if they are, it is rare that is sexualized or physically violent¹. This double standard, and the control of sexuality, is problematic because it further separates the genders in relation to their sexual actions and the level to which they are considered to be socially acceptable. This divide also further fractures the argument for equality across genders in relation to the hero figure. Privileging one gender, even merely in regard to their sexual actions, is therefore extremely problematic.

¹ Even when it is sexualized violence it is awkwardly passed over by film critics and audiences alike, casting a blind eye. A new example of this is the recent James Bond installment, *Casino Royale*, which includes a scene where a naked Bond is bound to a modified chair and his genitals are flogged.

Male Character Types

The representation of male characters, while not the main focus of my argument, is as important as discourse on female characters, because they are symbiotically linked. In order to analyze and interpret representations of the female characters to the fullest extent, the males cannot be left by the wayside. I argue that you must look at male characters, even in an analysis of female characters, for two reasons: first, because in order to define and properly analyze the function and representation of the female character you must see how they are defined. One of the basic ways of defining something is by starting with defining them in relation to what they are not or by what is in relation to them. Second, there is the concept and problem of the unmarked identity. While there is extensive literature on character types and roles that happen to be male, these roles remain unmarked identities. By this I mean, historically, the roles of heroes, villains, etc. were assumed to be male positions. Due to this, there is little analytical work related to film regarding the masculinity within these characters to the same extent that we analyze women in character roles, and in the impact or problematic influence they have on representations of the female character's levels of femininity. Why, through an extension of this issue then, do women need exclusive elements to be placed in the same active positions as males are? Why is it that outside of the good cop/bad cop, alpha male/beta male, and hero/villain dichotomy typing, the dark genre of film noir is the playground for analyzing the range of masculinity represented in male characters?

Film Noir: The Noir Criminal and Psychopath

The noir psychopath grew out of the noir criminal, typically the gangster figure, as a societal reaction to the changes in the sociopolitical time. Spicer notes that this character is born out of postwar anxieties and is therefore less self-confident and more socially vulnerable than its

predecessor, the gangster. The idea that this character is out of control, and typically paranoid, heightens the level of suspense within a psychological thriller, thus making the character type useful outside of the boundaries of its origin genre of film noir. The psychopath also is “American culture’s response to boredom and conformity” (Spicer 89). This also falls in line with the American cultural atmosphere post-Reagan and in the midst of a new war. Most striking is the note that the psychopath “can cope with the complex bureaucratized postwar environment through the pure pleasure of destruction itself, the delight in inflicting pain” (89). The psychopath figure is a branch of the noir criminal and is therefore not a main figure within the genre. It is important to highlight in my analysis because Owen Reilly’s character in *Untraceable* fits this type. I argue that Owen’s character is a parallel to this character’s type in film noir because in the post 9/11 American culture, which is dependent and advanced in the areas of computer technology and communication, he displays the anxiety ridden figure of the psychopath for our current sociopolitical climate.

Film Noir: The Homme Fatale

The homme fatale is, most obviously through the title alone, the male version of the femme fatale, but as a man he has more available power. The character is a “mixture of cunning, cool calculation, manipulative charm, deep rooted sexual sadism” (Spicer 89). Most importantly the figure is not explicitly visually and/or narratively coded as evil. This ambiguity does not condone the actions committed by the homme fatale, but instead highlights the relevance for the genre. These ultimate actions and intentions of the homme fatale can be masked from the audience for suspenseful narrative effect. While the character type partially fits Lecter in *Silence* and *Hannibal*, it perfectly fits the split identity of Asher/Costa in *Taking Lives*. This is clear with the film because of both the representation of his character, and the deliberate casting of Ethan

Hawke, who is rarely depicted as a villainous character. As I stated in the Introduction to the thesis, the character of Martin Asher is a stereotype of the personality of real life serial killer Ted Bundy. John Douglas notes in profiling Bundy, as well as many other serial killers that “serial killers, according to those who knew them, seemed so charming, so ordinary” (Douglas 17). The audience, because of these facts, is fooled by Costa for awhile- until the reveal is appropriate. The better fit of Costa/Asher as the *homme fatale* is also due to the fact that he does not display any of the aspects or functions of the hero figure, unlike Hannibal Lecter.

Clarice Starling: The Prototype

While *Silence* and *Hannibal* are horror films, labeling Clarice as the Final Girl is difficult. Her masculine interests as listed by Clover are directly tied to her drive to hunt for and finally kill the killer herself. While Clarice does hunt for and kill Buffalo Bill in *Silence*, it is at the behest of the FBI, she is continuing to follow orders. Her survival is not at stake throughout the film; Buffalo Bill does not personally threaten her until she is forced into a situation directly becoming involved with him. She would not have had to fight Bill if it were not for the FBI’s lack of appropriate action. She was again left, as a trainee and not a full status agent, alone. These actions obviously run counter to the basic gender binary of the male as active and the female as passive, therefore problematizing the application of feminine quality to this Final Girl. The fact that the character has to be stripped of almost all femininity and injected with as many masculine traits as possible to reign in male viewers is extremely problematic. “She is feminine enough to act out in a gratifying way but not so feminine as to disturb the structures of male competence and sexuality. Her sexual inactivity becomes all but inevitable” (Clover 87). Clarice is not objectified sexually until the sequel, but is also never seen onscreen or references romantic relationships. She is held by both the villain and the hero, and tethered between the

two. She is therefore an object for the FBI, a tool to solve their investigation, and a subject for Hannibal, a person for him to both save and playfully analyze.

Clover then looks at other key components in the horror film, including the killer, weapons, the victims, and the body. The killer, the villain figure, is key to a horror film. She states that “the notion of a killer propelled by psychosexual fury, more particularly a male in gender distress has proved a durable one” (Clover 75). Obviously Buffalo Bill is a transvestite, and Verger fills in the role of deviant sexuality in *Hannibal*, but these roles are ultimately misleads to the overall story. It is here that Jonathan Demme and Ridley Scott try to employ evasive tactics to shield the true villain of the film. The hyper-masculinity that the FBI identifies with not only ostracizes Clarice, making her a victim of their goals and ulterior motives, but also highlights gender distress for the villain. What aids in hiding this element, the FBI as a villain figure, is the use of the Buffalo Bill subplot. Creating an obvious killer figure, Buffalo Bill, takes the pressure away from the FBI. The FBI represents one of the two patterns of the killer, “the psycho type.” This killer is an “insider, a man who functions normally in the action until, at the end, his other self is revealed” (Clover 77). While the FBI are not killers in the typical concept of the character in the horror genre, they fulfill the above definition behind the killer figure. They act and justify said actions, especially in regards to the treatment and use of Starling in the field, by leaning on the past precedence set by the Bureau. They do not take responsibility for, nor do they acknowledge, the possible negative effects that having a rookie work with a serial killer could have- up to and including the death of an inexperienced agent. Buffalo Bill stands in for the second killer, the “type found in *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* and *Halloween* is one whose only role is that of killer and one whose identity as such is clear from the outset” (77). If the case to position the FBI as villainous is somewhat weak, Clover’s

idea that “in one key aspect the killers are superhuman, are normally the fixed elements and they are virtually indestructible” cements it (77-78). *Hannibal* takes this idea to a higher level with the character of Paul Krendler. Placing him as a Justice Department employee branches the idea of the FBI as the villain into a statement that governmental law enforcement institutions as a whole, as a symbol of patriarchy at its most powerful, are figures to be wary of as a nonconforming member (be it gender, race, class, or sexual orientation). All of the institutions within both films, law enforcement, the mental hospital, etc., as well as the characters who work for them, Crawford, Dr. Chilton, Paul Krendler, Pazzi, etc. are not only gendered male but ultimately work against Starling.

The weapons they use to further their agenda are bureaucracy and control. Weapons Clover notes as being conventions of horror, knives and guns, are used as helpful instruments to aid the ones who fall victim to the FBI. Clarice explicitly uses a phallic weapon, the gun, in *Silence* to save herself from Buffalo Bill. In *Hannibal*, the FBI strips her of both her identity as an FBI agent and her service weapon when she is placed on suspension after being set up by Paul. Both Hannibal and Clarice, to free them from the figurative and literal ties that bind them, use knives in both films. In *Silence* Hannibal uses the pen wielded by Dr. Chilton, normally used to work against Hannibal, to free himself from the cage cell and to push him to freedom. Hannibal, as the hero, uses this victory to continue to assist and rescue Clarice all the way through until the end of the sequel. In *Hannibal*, Clarice first uses a knife to free Hannibal from Verger and the boards, and with an element of trust hands the knife over to him so he can finish freeing himself. The knife is used again in the final act of the film. Hannibal uses a knife to incapacitate the villain, Paul, and then to free Clarice. Clarice, mistaking Hannibal’s real position towards her, chooses to continue the FBI’s desire to capture him. She handcuffs herself

to him in an effort to stop him. He picks up the butcher knife and it seems at first that he is going to cut off her hand in order to save himself. This would not and does not work within the structure of the narrative and how the characters function in it. Hannibal up to this point has successfully fulfilled the functions of the hero figure- for him to stop here would be a break from the overall drive of both films. Instead, as the viewer finds when the camera later pans to Clarice walking in the backyard with both of her hands intact, he has sacrificed himself to save her. Before he brings the knife down he states, “This is really going to hurt.” This is not just a statement relating to the physical pain the knife is going to bring, but also the assumed choice Clarice is ultimately going to make between him and the FBI.

Looking at Hannibal and Clarice in this light as victims, Clover’s statement “In the slasher film, sexual transgressors of both sexes are scheduled for earlier destruction” is still applicable (Clover 80). Within these films sexuality is traded for intelligence and diligence. When Clarice gets far in a case she is punished for beating male agents and police figures at their own game. This is especially evident in *Hannibal* as she is severely punished for what is, at the end, a job well done. Clarice has now become a liability, a threat to the traditional FBI, headed and orchestrated by white males.

Sherrie Inness’s work on the idea of the “tough girl” builds on characteristics found in Clover’s Final Girl but also proves that Clarice still ends up within the traditional role of the passive heroine. Inness, after explicitly labeling Starling as a Tough Girl, says “the film also deserves scrutiny for what it suggests about how tough women are contained. The film depicts a tough woman only to limit the threat she poses to gender norms by stressing her sexuality and femininity” (Inness 89). Again, from the beginning of the film through the end, the FBI is a threat to her toughness- from the scenes at Quantico to the end, “even after she kills Buffalo Bill

her triumph is downplayed; Starling is made to appear young and less tough when Crawford gives her a fatherly hug” (Inness 92). While toughness can be contested as an accurate measurement of a positive female character, its measurement against Clarice only furthers the accusation that she is merely a heroine in disguise.

Linda Mizejewski’s female action heroine is the next evolutionary step in female characters and is as useful in defining Clarice Starling as Clover and Inness’ types. Clearly Clarice does not fulfill this type, at least not aesthetically. Mizejewski notes this by referring to the time period in which *Silence* was created. While earlier female investigators such as Jodie Foster’s Clarice Starling in *Silence of the Lambs* were widely received by audiences, they were not as sexualized as during the 1995-present period. *Hannibal* makes an attempt to sexualize Clarice in the final sequence. Female action heroines, Mizejewski importantly points out, are extremely active, and unlike role before them, can and will kill. The ability to kill and the intent to kill are completely different. Clarice in *Silence* kills because she is forced into a fight or flight situation with Buffalo Bill. In *Hannibal* she is constructed as a gun-toting machine by all outside figures except for herself. At one point in the film it is mentioned that Guinness Book of World Records has contacted her because she is the female FBI agent with the highest kill rate. When we see her use her gun on screen it is because she again, like in *Silence*, is forced into it. The opening scene of the drug bust gone wrong is not her fault; she is forced into taking action because of a mistake made by a male official. When she fires her gun later in Verger’s barn it is to rescue Hannibal- and more importantly, he is the one directing her to do so.

When looking specifically at Clarice’s character Mizejewski points out factors that problematize her label as a strong female character. She states, “Jodie Foster as Clarice Starling is similarly sent by the FBI on an ‘interesting errand’ to Hannibal Lecter, not realizing that she’s

being used by the Bureau to get information on a different case” (Mizejewski 113). This is not a stand alone instance, “In its sequel, *Hannibal*, the FBI girl is abused and alienated by the Bureau- a recurring theme of harassment and alienation- men behaving badly” (114). Interestingly she posits Clarice and Hannibal as a pair- placing them in the same category as *The X-Files*’ Mulder and Scully². While she is referencing them in the context of popularity in popular culture this also is evidence of their pairing as hero and heroine figure. This is further supported by her finding that “in *Hannibal*, Hannibal is hunted and captured...Starling goes to his rescue, but when she is wounded, he becomes her rescuer, spiriting her away to private quarters where he nurses her back to health” (Mizejewski 174). Not only does Hannibal, fulfilling the role of the hero figure, rescue Starling after she is shot in the barn, but he carries her out of danger in his arms. Instead of cutting from inside the barn to the next shot of him at her bedside at Paul’s lake house, Ridley Scott chooses to show his carrying her in the typical hero shot, out of the darkness with her draped across his arms, hair flowing in the wind.

Returning to the beginning of the series, *Silence*, Mizejewski points out another example of Starling’s passivity within the overall narrative, “running an obstacle course with signs instructing her to love pain, sweating and sincere in the opening sequence, she obediently reports for her assignment to cannibalism and flesh stripping murder” (176). She is further victimized upon reaching her task when an inmate, Miggs, throws his semen at her through the bars, “the plot turns on Clarice’s sexual humiliation, a symbolic rape, that enables her investigation and launches her initiation into both horror and success in the FBI” (181). This points to Hannibal as the hero from his first meeting with Clarice. He notices this event and that she needs help, and he assists with almost no hesitation. In further discussion that leads to supporting this essay’s

² Mulder and Scully are characters from the Fox TV show, *The X-Files* who are widely known figures who are also FBI agents.

thesis that the FBI and Hannibal have been inaccurately coded in previous analyses, Mizejewski highlights that “Gumb’s [Buffalo Bill] perverted use of women’s bodies and the FBI’s ‘cold use’ of Clarice are parallel in their indifference toward women...the sequel cruelly reveals the true nature of the club in which Clarice so badly wants membership” (Mizejewski 181). This brief mention of the FBI’s true nature seals the case against the FBI as a positive figure in either Jonathan Demme’s film or Ridley Scott’s. *Hannibal*’s added stress on this fact does not go unnoticed by her, “in this chilly version of the FBI, there are no other women, no mentors, and no sympathetic colleagues [for Clarice]... The FBI’s treatment of Clarice [following the drug bust opening sequence] is blatantly unfair and without a hint of political complications that would make the unfairness plausible” (Mizejewski 194). She comes to the realization, but fails to comment further on it that “the truth is, there’s no comfortable outcome for Clarice in which her choices are Hannibal Lecter and a woman-hating FBI. Lecter has escaped from the FBI. She hasn’t been as lucky” (Mizejewski 196-197). Not only does this again show that Clarice is not as active as is usually assumed, but that she is limited to one decision- the FBI or Hannibal.

Ileana Scott: The Reactionary

Ileana Scott in *Taking Lives* is a bridge between Clarice Starling and Jennifer Marsh. She is not as passive as Starling and yet not as interdependently active as Jennifer Marsh. It is because she is a bridge character that she is constructed of the more positive aspects of the Good/Bad Girl, the Final Girl, the Tough/Action Chick, the Investigative Heroine, and finally the Hero. Scott, unlike Starling, is a seasoned FBI agent known for her reputation as an excellent criminal profiler. The audience’s introduction to her highlights her skills and devotion to her job. She is first seen lying down in a grave at a crime scene. As we see, to her this is a natural

course of action to get inside the mind of the killer, and to the male Canadian detectives her actions seem far too off course from the norm.

The only aspect of the Good/Bad Girl figure that Scott fits is the fact that she is loyal, although originally thought to be duplicitous. As Scott develops an interest in James Costa, the alleged victim of Martin Asher, she begins to lose her staunch façade of professionalism. The morning after dropping Costa off at his apartment after the bar surveillance attempt, Scott informs LeClair that she is leaving the case. He asks her to stay, saying her skills are still needed, and she turns him down. She calls her infatuation with Costa a “reaction to the witness.” She understands that it could compromise her judgment and attempts to remove herself from the possibility of jeopardizing the case. LeClair, in mentioning that while they were at Quantico together she was asked out by multiple male agents whom she abruptly turned down, points out his knowledge that she can not only handle the situation but has a set precedent with it. She remains on the case to fulfill her original duty, to find the serial killer Martin Asher.

Following the car chase and the assumed death and reveal of Martin Asher on the bridge, Scott slowly lets her guard down, as the case has seemingly ended. While she is in her hotel room packing up her things to return to Washington, Costa knocks on her door. They consummate their relationship, only for Scott to wake up to find that overnight Costa’s stitches had opened up and needed medical attention. Upon returning to the hospital it is revealed that Costa is Martin Asher, and that the man killed on the bridge was a convenient fall guy. Detective Paquette then blames Scott for her actions and inability to see through Costa/Asher’s deception. This is emblematic of the Good/Bad Girl, as they are, at one point, thought to be manipulatively deviant. The final scene in the film however, highlights that she has always been

loyal to the case. In fact, she was so deeply invested in finding and capturing Martin Asher that she agreed to spend seven months deep undercover, without backup, in rural Pennsylvania.

This final scene, what I have called the final showdown, not only serves as the narrative's climax but also cements Scott as a hero, while also highlighting Final Girl qualities. Clover confirms this within the horror genre, "at the moment the Final Girl becomes her own savior, she becomes a hero" (Clover 84). Unlike other Final Girls who cannot ultimately, through the use of Propp's methodology, fully be categorized as actual hero figures, Scott breaks the mold. The major issue with the Final Girl, that keeps the character from actual hero status, is what she signifies. The Final Girl is not an actual female, as Clover states, but the symbol of an adolescent male. The markers of the Final Girl as more masculine and less sexualized coincide with Clover's theory.

Scott is a thirty-something young woman, established in her career, not a teenager or novice. like Starling. She is also sexualized from the first time the audience sees her. While she is doing her job, lying in the grave getting into the head of the killer, the camera objectifies her. The view shifts from a close up of her head, eyes, and nose, a shot typically used to display an actual corpse. Her eyes are closed, and the camera pans down her face to then move to a wide shot of her extended body stretched out in the grave. These fractured body shots, even though she is fully clothed in appropriate FBI attire³, are objectifying as her eyes are closed and the voyeuristic intrusion of the audience is unknown to her. She is also, later in the film, seen having sex with James Costa. Again, the camera focuses on her body, panning and cutting fractured shots of her naked form.

³ During the investigation she wears standard business attire, pants, Oxford shirts, with a suit jacket. While Starling did this as well, Scott's clothing is more tailored with a tighter fit.

Scott, like the Final Girl, is extremely intelligent and ahead of the other detectives on the case. Her survival and ultimate victory over the killer are also directly linked to her sexuality, unlike the Final Girl whose purity and almost asexuality is what keeps her alive through the narrative. The final scene, the fight in the domestic setting of the farmhouse, between Scott and Costa/Asher, aligns with Clover's argument that the audience is sutured into the final showdown between the killer and the Final Girl and is sympathetic to the Final Girl. The twist in the film's plot, her undercover attempt to capture Asher by faking a pregnancy, not only reaffirms the power of her sexuality, but also her strength and ability as a female investigator.

Scott also falls in line with Inness' Tough Girl/Action Chick profiles. Scott, like Starling and Marsh, is in a field previously only filled by men. Scott is one of the best profilers in her field, and the audience can assume that she beat male colleagues in order to be cleared for the assignment in Canada. Scott forms her identity around her career, she is a profiler and unlike her FBI badge, which she can remove from her person, she never turns her profiling skills off. Throughout the film there are various extreme camera close-ups of her eyes. This occurs most strikingly in the interrogation room when she first interviews Costa as a victim/witness. The audience is given a chance to watch her observe him, which also further displays her skills as a profiler. Her eyes are the tools of her trade⁴. Scott follows the guidelines set by Inness for the Tough Girl, but causes a fissure in the Action Chick rules. Inness places a limit on a female character's aggressiveness, saying that going too far could "make men nervous" (Inness 13). Scott's sexual aggressiveness, her acquiescence to involve herself with Costa quite literally after the case is thought to be closed, as well as her aggressiveness to pursue Costa/Asher, are what also leads to her victory. Scott, unlike the Tough Girl or Action Chick, saves herself and

⁴ This will be mentioned in detail in chapter three concerning the struggle for the camera gaze between the agents and the serial killers.

perseveres even though the male detectives place the escape of Asher on her failure to see through his deception. Her aggressiveness, her active drive for justice, could have ended with the reveal of her lover, Costa, as Asher. Instead of breaking, which is assumed by the audience, she goes deep undercover. This is why the plot twist of her fake pregnancy works so well. The audience, used to other female heroines who need the male hero to come in at the last moment and save them, is utterly shocked that the whole scenario was created and executed by Scott alone.

The aloneness, the alienation of Scott in her fight against the villain, marks her under the Action Heroine Investigator type created by Linda Mizejewski. This allows the Final Girl elements and Inness' characteristics to blend and simultaneously update. Scott not only, as Mizejewski points out, actually kills people, she does it without any assistance whatsoever. She also works on her own and at all times of the day. When she first arrives in her hotel room she strategically tapes crime scene photos around the room, and on the ceiling above her bed, so she is constantly devising theories about the case. She comes up with the idea that Asher is "taking lives" during a bath as she again flips through crime scene photos. As I stated previously, Scott has helpers, the Canadian detectives, but she fights her final battle alone. Having a visually appealing female character who can and does kill when necessary, is provocative for a Hollywood studio film. Mizejewski places some control over the sexuality of this female figure, but Scott disregards this as well. Interestingly, Scott's character breaks the sexual boundary discussed by Mizejewski, that the female investigator can entertain bed partners, but in the end they must be "safe screws" (Mizejewski 154). She unknowingly sleeps with the killer, Martin Asher, who deceived the police forces into thinking he was James Costa. While at the time Scott thought Costa was an innocent victim in the case, the fact remains that in the end he was not.

Scott follows the role of the hero by moving past this mistake and continuing on the path to take down the villain.

Jennifer Marsh: The Deal Sealer

Jennifer Marsh is the most difficult of the three women to navigate in regards to genre character typing. She, like Starling and Scott, fits various criteria from the aforementioned character types, but comes the closest to fulfilling the role of hero. She is interdependently active while displaying the most positive and powerful aspects of the other character types. In terms of the evolution of the female FBI agent as a character within Hollywood cinema, Marsh comes in as not only the most recent cinematic example, but is the best example in terms of hero positioning. The location of the film, Portland, Oregon, is relevant as it also serves as subtle evidence of the character type progression on its evolutionary course. *Silence* and *Hannibal* take place in Virginia, Tennessee, and Italy. *Taking Lives* moves a bit more westward, taking place in Canada and western Pennsylvania. *Untraceable* makes the jump, as the representation of the character type does, to the extreme West Coast. This fulfills the American philosophy of manifest destiny both in physical location and narrative representation.

The film begins with Marsh going through her daily routine of going to work in the Cyber Crimes unit of the FBI. She is coded as the hero from this point forward as she has an established family, where she is the head of the household as a single mother. She also has to leave her family in order to face the villain and solve the impending case. Marsh only fills the role of Final Girl by surviving the final struggle against Reilly. While she is also intelligent, level headed, and the first to see that something is wrong, these are also basic characteristics found in other character types besides the Final Girl. As I mentioned in Chapter One, she is the first person to tip the unit onto the main case of the narrative. She looks into the website,

killwithme.com, and monitors the kitten's slow death. While her boss does not lend it much credence, as it is an animal and not a human being harmed, Marsh makes a note to continue to maintain surveillance on the site. Her intuition about the site, realizing that the killer could easily escalate⁵ to different victims, is what begins the fight to shut the website down.

In line with the Final Girl, she does have what have been historically classified as masculine interests, the drive to hunt a killer and protect her family. I argue that these drives are not inherently gendered. She is an FBI agent, which at this point in American culture is not as heavily stereotyped as a masculine field, therefore hunting killers is what she is paid to do; it is her livelihood. She also is driven to protect her daughter and mother, her family being extremely important. The protection and defense of family is not gendered, as a mother her drive to protect them from harm is just as strong as a father's, or a male's. Her drive to hunt the killer leads her to the final showdown with the killer, like the Final Girl. In the end the audience, as well as the internet community within the film (including her fellow agents from their field office) are there with her via the camera feed. The audience fights and cheers for her like the agents forced to watch the event take place online.

Marsh is also not the Tough Girl/Action Chick, mostly because like the issues regarding the type of the Final Girl, Marsh is a woman, a mother, and not a girl. She is aggressive, as she continues researching Reilly's site even when the boss does not listen to her at first when she brings the kitten murder to him. Yes, she is "tough" but she isn't muscular or obviously physically tough. We do not see her working out as we do Starling, nor do we see her in revealing or tight fitting outfits to reveal muscle tone like Scott. She truly is, like the hero, doing her routine job when she is pulled away to defeat the villain. It is another day for her, not

⁵ Escalation is a part of the serial killer profile as defined by John Douglas, "virtually in all cases an escalation [is found] from relatively innocent beginnings... one of which is cruelty to animals or children at a young age" (Douglas 40).

something that is assigned especially as an out of the ordinary case. She also does the rescuing and does not need to personally be rescued. While she is unable to save Griffin from his death, she does take Reilly down before he can harm any other people.

Unlike the Tough Girl/Action Chick, she does not identify herself closely with her gun. She can use her gun, but uses it conservatively, choosing not to constantly brandish it or attach it in an obvious, visually noticeable way. She also only uses her gun when it is absolutely necessary. She is seen multiple times in the film placing her weapon in a safe in her bedroom when she returns home- never leaving it in plain sight. The single time she fires the weapon in the film is to take Reilly down when she escapes his bindings. Her use of the weapon is also effective without being overkill. She shoots him in an almost anticlimactic manner. She defeats him, but shows that it was part of her job, as she turns to the camera he had trained on her, showing her badge to the people viewing it online.

Marsh fits the Action Heroine Investigator with similar modifications. While she is not overtly sexualized like Scott, she is still physically attractive. Even when she is captured and hung from her feet by Reilly, her body is fully covered in a long sleeved shirt and jeans. The shirt does not even slip down as she hangs upside down. Unlike Scott, the narrative does not revolve around this and, more importantly, Marsh does not have sex with Detective Box. This typically occurs in psychological thrillers or dramas as a release for the lead character, however Marsh does not need this. She is active and smarter than most of her colleagues, and, as I mentioned in Chapter One, this is highlighted in the same manner as in *Taking Lives*. While there were multiple close-ups of Scott's eyes as symbolic of her profiling abilities, there are multiple close-ups of Marsh's hands, which are her tools in the Cyber Crimes division. Like Scott, she has help from other FBI agents as well as Detective Box, but she also faces the villain

in the end. Like the Active Heroine Investigator, again, she can and does kill if it is absolutely warranted. Mizejewski also notes that in the detective film, which again is part of crime-based psychological thrillers, there is a threatening figure focused on the heroine. While Reilly does this after he sees her at a crime scene, she is seeking him as well. They are engaged in the capacity of hero and villain, therefore negating the label of heroine for Marsh. Unlike the heroine's role, which typically involves an outside party rescue (whether it is the hero figure or another figure), Marsh, in the end, fulfills the hero figure's most important trait, self-rescue.

Marsh, as the newest example in these films, comes the closest to bypassing the previously stated female character types. She displays some of their more general characteristics, intelligence, the ability to wield a weapon, being smarter than her co-workers, being visually attractive, and defeating the killer while also surviving. These characteristics are, however, extremely general and could easily describe modern Hollywood cinema heroes such as Jason Bourne of the *Bourne Series* or even Detectives Somerset and Mills of *Se7en*.

Hannibal Lecter: Hero to Homme Fatale

Classifying Hannibal Lecter, one of the most iconic villains in Hollywood cinema, as a hero figure may seem counter-intuitive. My previous analysis in Chapter One, through the use of Propp's narrative character functions, shows that he does fulfill the role of the hero. However, he is more than that in relation to genre. While Starling is difficult to classify as a single specific character type, Lecter is similarly multifaceted. While he is a hero according to the structure of the film, the content of the narrative also places him in a typically clear deviant role, killer. Lecter is not merely a killer, he is, and continues through both *Silence* and *Hannibal* to be, a cannibalistic serial killer. It is the clever use of his character, as well as elements from the film

noir character type, the *homme fatale*, that allows the dichotomous roles of hero and killer the rare ability to blend.

The audience is first introduced to Lecter through a conversation with Starling and Crawford. Crawford warns the rookie Starling, “be very careful with Hannibal Lecter, tell him nothing personal, you don’t want Hannibal inside your head, he is a monster.” Introducing him through a conversation instead of a visual introduction strips him from control over the narrative. Ultimately, because of this unmatched structural and visual typing of the hero and villain roles, Lecter does not have control of the narrative. This loss of control signifies from the very start of the first film installment the lack of easily identifiable black and white characters.

Throughout *Silence* Lecter spends his time aiding Starling, teaching her as well as attempting to gain her trust. Lecter, especially through his use of anagrams, informs both the audience, and to an extent Starling, of the true villains at hand, the FBI. It is due to the fact that he is honest and genuinely helpful to Starling that she keeps coming back to him, continuing to maintain their relationship. His guidance through the first film, in helping her to capture Buffalo Bill, is what saves him from the label of villain. The fact that he is not acting altruistically, that he has his own game set into play as well, is not uncommon for hero figures and therefore also justifiable. Securing his own escape in Memphis is, as I previously stated in the first chapter, a function of the hero- to escape from the villains’ capture. His escape is maintained through the end of the film. If he were truly the villain he would have been captured by the end of the film. Instead, he calls Starling to both check on her and let her know that he is still alive and safe. He gains narrative power at the end of the film, as the film closes on Lecter walking into a crowd to follow Dr. Chilton. His wardrobe, a white suit, is not only a color stereotypically symbolic of heroes, but also a color that signifies rebirth.

Hannibal begins with a voiceover of Barney, a nurse at Dr. Chilton's institution where Lecter was held in the first half of *Silence*, reintroducing Lecter to the audience via his storytelling with Mason Verger, a former victim of Lecter's Hell-bent on revenge. This voiceover again, like Crawford's warning, strips control away from Lecter, as it isn't a direct introduction to the character. While Lecter holds onto the role of hero within this film, most notably in the barn scene when he carries an unconscious injured Starling out and away from harm, he also exhibits signs of the *homme fatale* figure. Lecter is no longer in the purely pedagogical role in relation to Starling, as I will discuss later in Chapter Three, and therefore he is also repositioned.

The *homme fatale*, as mentioned previously, is the male version of the *femme fatale*. Referencing Spicer's succinct definition, this character is a "mixture of cunning, cool calculation, manipulative charm, and deep rooted sexual sadism" (Spicer 89). While Lecter had clear sadistic tendencies even in *Silence* (an example being his ability to manipulate Miggs into swallowing his own tongue), they are brought to the forefront in *Hannibal*. The charm of the *homme fatale*, like the *femme fatale*, is sexualized. While he was able to manipulate Starling in *Silence*, the passage from their clear platonic relationship in that film, to an attempt at an unwanted sexual one in *Hannibal*⁶, is what secures Lecter in an arguable position as a fledgling *homme fatale*. It is crucial to his position as hero that the sexual relationship is rejected. This rejection keeps the full label of *homme fatale* at bay, and allows Lecter to maintain his hero status. While he can display *homme fatale* tendencies, fulfilling the entire role would have led to his demise at the end of the film. Instead, as in the first film, Lecter survives to live another day.

⁶ This is a modification of the original *Hannibal* book written by Thomas Harris. In the novel version Hannibal and Starling do establish a sexual relationship.

James Costa/Martin Asher: Revisionist Homme Fatale

The characters of James Costa and Martin Asher are assumed to be the dichotomous figures of the innocent victim and a heinous serial killer throughout most of *Taking Lives*. His control over his identity, his chameleon ability to be the personality he needs to be when he wishes, is a different power than Hannibal Lecter's. While Lecter is more practiced and refined, he lacks the ability to manipulate Starling as surreptitiously as Costa/Asher can manipulate Scott. The split identity of Costa/Asher, as well as his MO for the murders he commits, fits the definition of the *homme fatale* figure. As I stated previously, this is also due to the fact that Costa/Asher never falls into the role of hero, as Lecter does. The freedom found within the villain character type, the accepted nature of the *homme fatale*, allows for Costa/Asher to be an effectively deviant character.

Costa/Asher's manipulative charm is what makes his killings successful and his capture so difficult. As the audience sees in the beginning of the film, when we are introduced to Asher as a teenager, he easily gains the trust of the other teen and kills him. His introduction as an adult is in the form of James Costa, an art dealer who has allegedly fallen victim to Martin Asher. His ability to draw both Scott and the audience away from the possibility of revealing him as Asher solidifies him as the *homme fatale*. He slowly seduces both Scott and the audience through the mask of vulnerable art dealer/victim. Throughout the film he establishes himself as the "nice guy," from saving Scott from the invasive detectives in the police station, to apologizing for the surveillance operation in the bar, to getting her to open up about her past. While he has been Asher throughout the film, it is only after she lets her guard down and becomes sexually involved with him that he allows his reveal as Asher to come through.

Owen Reilly: Noir Psychopath

Untraceable, like *Taking Lives*, opens with Owen Reilly committing one of his first acts of murder. The film opens showing the fragmented body of a man setting a kitten onto a patch of glue in front of a camera in a basement. While his identity is not revealed until later in the film, the killer is Owen Reilly. Reilly, unlike Hannibal Lecter and Martin Asher, is a proxy killer⁷. The audience also sees him set the murders into motion in real time, with Marsh and the FBI unable to capture him until the end of the film. These facts, as well as a few notable others, place him differently from the other killers. While he is still classified as a killer, as he sets up the crimes, he is not at any point either a hero or a *homme fatale*. He is not the *homme fatale* figure because his is not sexualized or in any way cunning or charming. On the same thread he also does not display any sexual interest in the film. Beyond the lack of sex, he also does not torture or kill women until Marsh, just a kitten and men. While he attempts to kill Marsh the only successful torture/killings are the males. The murders he sets up, on the website killwithme.com, are also based purely on avenging his father's death. His actions as a proxy killer are not even of his own thought. Unlike Lecter and Asher, he has a specific list of people to kill as well as a direct end game. For Lecter and Asher murder is a part of their life, tied into their various lifestyles. For Reilly it is justifiable revenge even though it is serial murder.

While Marsh is the strongest example of the hero in terms of comparison between Starling and Scott, Reilly is the weakest, and youngest of the killers at the age of 20. Again, he also does not directly end the lives of his victims, he leaves it up to the viewers and members of his website. The only forces stronger than Reilly are the people online who log in to watch, participate in, and ultimately comment on his performance. Unlike Lecter and Asher who are

⁷ A proxy killer references someone who manipulates others into physically committing the murder instead of doing it themselves. As I mentioned in the Introduction, Charles Manson is one of the most famous proxy killers in US history.

inextricably linked to Starling and Scott from the moment their lives intertwine, Reilly doesn't become directly involved with Marsh until she enters the field and he sees her from afar at a crime scene. They do not interact with each other until he confesses to Marsh on the bridge through the OnStar technology in her SUV.

His balance between passivity and activity and lack of heroic or *homme fatale* qualities places him well within the definition of the noir psychopath figure. Reilly, like the noir psychopath, represents a societal reaction to the changes in the sociopolitical climate of the time. His use and knowledge of the internet falls in line with his generation's tendency to record and display their activities publicly online almost completely oblivious to the lack of privacy. His hatred of the invasive hyper media, the coverage and money made off from his father's suicide, is what triggers him into action. He understands the system and, like Spicer notes, "can cope with [it] through the pure pleasure of destruction itself, in the delight of inflicting pain" (Spicer 89). He breaks out of a passive existence (the mental institution) and becomes active in the only outlet he knows- using media to fight media.

Conclusion

As the analysis of the female characters showed, there is a modern façade hiding the fact that the "Girls" begin their progressive evolution as princesses internally while the killers' origin with Lecter begins with heroes through superficial placements, coding. This allows for subtle feminist cover of these roles, making the casual viewer believe these female characters are all strong figures. The various ingredients of the female character types I analyzed were heavily reliant on psychoanalytical props (guns) for proven, visual strength. The killers in the feminist film theory scholars I used are considered from the start to be evil villains, not accounting for the spectrum of character types the male killers actually represent. These easy manipulations placed

both the male and female characters in these films into comfortable, conservative black and white heteronormative gender roles. When you look at the male and female characters within the narratives together, and not apart as most feminist film scholars do, you see a direct balanced relationship between them. Clarice Starling and Hannibal Lecter move from damsel/heroine and hero in *Silence* to a Starling with slightly more active control and a Lecter who slips into more of a *homme fatale* figure. These character aspects change as their relationship moves from that of a mentor/protégé to a more adult failed attempt at a more sexual relationship. Illeana Scott and James Costa/Martin Asher in *Taking Lives* are a direct progression from where Starling and Lecter left off. Scott is more of an active, sexualized character, and Costa/Asher fulfills the role of the *homme fatale*. Jennifer Marsh and Owen Reilly in *Untraceable* move into an almost reversed relationship of Starling and Lecter, Marsh is the hero figure and Reilly the weak villain, the noir psychopath. The different stages of relationships between these characters extend the analysis of their character types and will be discussed at length in Chapter Three.

CHAPTER III. THE SKIN: GENDER, GAZE, AND RELATIONSHIPS

Introduction

After looking over the structure of the film narratives, followed by a detailed character analysis of the female FBI agents and the serial killers in Chapter Two, it is now critical to analyze how these concepts come together and are symbiotically linked to each other. It is useful to bring these analyses together in a discussion of the importance of the relationship within the narrative between the primary figures of the agents and the killers. I chose to focus this analysis through the lens of the study of the camera gaze in film studies and how it applies to concepts of gender representation. The concept of the gaze is an important one within film and television studies. It is extremely important for my argument because it is the root of power in visual narratives. The ability for the female hero figure to have control of the gaze is necessary in order for them to be defined as a hero figure, and not a heroine.

Laura Mulvey's discussion of female spectatorship and viewer identification provides a base for the subject. Using Lacan's mirror phase and the basics of Freud as a psychoanalytic reference point, Mulvey delves into the problems of female spectatorship. In her "Afterthoughts" article, Mulvey states that there are two main factors in female spectatorship; the first states that females view films like men, the second questions viewership when the narrator is female. Mulvey believes that women identify with male characters because cinema returns the viewer to the mirror phase, a phase where females had power and control, therefore understanding the position because they once held it. The male point of view however, still gives females a transsexual identification, which "never sits easy." Especially with the beginnings of the character type, with Starling, she looks directly at male characters without

hesitation, something seen as rare in the definition of the female gaze. Scott and Marsh share the same trait, rarely looking down or away from anyone they speak with, male or female.

Ann Kaplan's article, "Is The Gaze Male?" moves past Mulvey's ideas of the three types of male gaze. She explains that, "the sexualization and objectification of women is not simply for the purpose of eroticism; from a psychoanalytic point of view, it is designed to annihilate the threat that women pose" (121). Can we have a female gaze that isn't masochistic? She also examines Mary Ann Doane's essay, "The Women's Film: Possession and Address," where Doane states that in order to have a film which caters to the female spectators, the gaze must be "de-eroticized". Kaplan argues that this idea of a female spectator's position just reverses spectator positioning. The female gaze, looked at through this lens, shows that there is no historical power behind this gaze, thus lacking any real or potential threat. Dominance and submission are binaries that our culture appropriates as male and female respectively. We therefore really place ourselves within either role. It is safe then for the viewer that these basic stereotypes are not normally challenged within classical Hollywood cinema or even contemporary American cinema. The need to highlight the dominant gaze (historically a masculine position) as a gaze not necessarily gendered as male is imperative. Kaplan urges that in order to forward progress for the idea of a female gaze we must first break from the binaries, the male as dominant and the female as passive, that we have held to be factual truth as a culture for so long. Cinema instruments codes to drive its point across to the spectator. It is here that the idea of "the look," Laura Mulvey's focus on the gaze in cinema, be it of the character, camera, or spectator, becomes integral to study. *Silence* and *Hannibal* are not, then, transgressive films that move past these gender binaries and into new character representation. Both films enforce the idea that the hero is male and the heroine remains gendered as female.

Taking Lives and *Untraceable*, however, do move past these traditional gender binaries and into more subversive territory.

The key element within these films is the relationship between the female FBI agent and the serial killer. Their relationships are inextricably linked from the time they meet through the end of the film. Both the agents and the killers are on the social fringe- both seen as somewhat deviant- one criminally and one socially; neither outwardly fulfilling traditional gender roles. The positioning of power, therefore, is extremely important. The explicit use of the serial killer within the films also provides comment on the use of power in the narrative. In profiling real life serial killers, John Douglas notes that “the fact that they can be labeled as serial killers means that they have been successful in what they set out to do, the longer they succeed at it the more confident they become. They tend to develop a sense of superiority over the police who cannot catch them, this empowers them even further” (Douglas 191). The partnerings found throughout the films prove to be good examples of what I am defining as a “relay gaze.” By the term “relay gaze” I mean a shared spectator gaze that both female and male spectators can identify with. The power behind the concept of the camera gaze, through my concept of the relay gaze, oscillates between the two characters. This aids in equalizing the genders, privileging neither gender because of the element of dynamic movement. The symbiotic relationship established by the narrative solidifies this form of camera gaze because of the fact that the characters are defined in relation to each other. You cannot have a hero without a villain. One cannot exist within their established identity without the other. The relationship’s allowance of power to both male and female characters gives more agency to the viewer of either gender unlike the focus on a single character. Heterosexual relationships have been coded as having a dominant male protagonist paired with a passive female protagonist. I believe that solidifying the pair as a single body, a

couple, allows the relationship of the active and passive roles to oscillate between the two characters. The relationship, albeit in this case coded as heterosexual, allows the liminal acceptance of a male character passing for passive and the female passing for active. In order for the text to be read in this light it is imperative to stick to the full narratives of the films themselves, not simply extracting images of only certain characters.

Cynthia Freeland's work, "Feminist Frameworks for Horror Films," provides an alternative approach to the study of the horror film that leads into a different reading of the films. She looks at recent feminist analyses of horror films and their common roots in psychoanalysis. She believes that, "their chief emphasis is on viewer's motives and interests in watching horror films and the psychological effect such films have" (Freeland 742). These studies focus on the camera gaze, masculinity and violent aggression, according to Freeland. She discusses Laura Mulvey's key works, saying that "it will be instructive to begin by extrapolating from her basic model so as to generate a simple feminist psychoanalytic account of horror as follows, the tension between the viewers' desire to look and the on going narrative of a film is especially acute in horror film" (743). This complicates the position of the female lead character as "the woman or visual object is also the chief victim sacrificed to the narrative desire to know the monster" (Freeland 743). This is important to establish character functions as the opening of *Silence* finds Crawford using the rookie Clarice Starling as a sacrificial lamb; giving her up in order to gain information about the serial killer Buffalo Bill from Lecter.

Linda Williams, in her article "When the Woman Looks," brings the heroine in horror film together with the monster figure, or in my case, the serial killer. Her theory about looking harkens back to Mulvey's focus on visual pleasure, "to see is to desire... many of the 'good girl' heroines of the silent screen were often figuratively or literally blind" (Williams 83). This is

important, because this blindness is experienced in all of the films to all of the female FBI agents and is related to their various skills. In *Silence* Starling is literally blinded when she is hunting Buffalo Bill, and is watched by the audience through the night vision sight of Bill. In *Taking Lives* Scott is blinded by Asher's fake persona as James Costa. In *Untraceable* Marsh is blinded when the technology in her SUV is overtaken and controlled by Reilly on the bridge. There is a punishment attached when the woman does look. All of the relationships between the agents and the killers fall in line with Williams' findings that there is a "surprising affinity between the monster and the woman, the sense in which her look at the monster recognizes their similar status within patriarchal structures of seeing" (Williams 85). Therefore the agents' "looking" only allows her to fall deeper under the control of the patriarchal system of the FBI. There is a point in the film, conventionally, where the woman questions her closeness to the monster. This is a major point that can have the power to make or break the heroine. In order to survive then, she must realize that she is not a reflection of the monster. This refusal of placed identity gains her more agency, and by the time the evolution of the character type for these agents reaches Jennifer Marsh, she has been elevated from heroine to hero status.

Hannibal Lecter and Clarice Starling: The Mentor and the Protégé

The symbiotic tie between Starling and Lecter is a strong and disconcerting one through both films. Starling begins *Silence* as a rookie, thrown into the field before she has even earned her Special Agent badge. While she is motivated, she is also extremely vulnerable as well as malleable. Her first meeting with Hannibal Lecter ultimately seals her future and identity within the FBI. Her concern and focus on her career is different from Scott's and Marsh's because she is not an established agent, but a child figure at the start of her life in the FBI. Bruce Robbins, in his article "Murder and Mentorship: Advancement in *Silence of the Lambs*," discusses the

implications Starling's position has. He discusses that it is Lecter who knows what Starling's goals involve. She is not interested in the traditional gender role of mother and he intuitively sees this within her before she fully understands her own motivations. Instead she is looking for career advancement: "what this working class woman really wants is professional achievement or advancement" (Robbins 72). Robbins positions her career desires as replacement for her sexual ones, which falls in line with her position as a rookie childlike figure. The Final Girl, again looking at Starling's roots in various generically gendered character types, is a non-sexualized figure. While he is concerned with class and upward mobility, positioning Starling and Buffalo Bill as coming from the same impoverished origins, this also plays to the mentor/protégé relationship between Starling and Lecter. As Starling rises professionally, there comes a cost. Her professionalism, according to Robbins, strips her of human emotion. "Starling, like Lecter, is in the process of becoming a bureaucratic monster...her coming of age is her entry into organized sadism; to become a professional is to resemble the serial murderer who is her mentor." (Robbins 81) However, Lecter's method is "presenting the production of emotion as a necessary part of the mentorship" (81). This statement cements their learning relationship, but also provides support for the argument that the FBI, the true villain of the films, is ultimately turning her into one of them, a bureaucratic monster. While she does choose to continue with a career in the FBI she becomes out of control when she is not tethered to Lecter. There is a small mention of this fact in *Hannibal*, when Starling is placed in the Guinness Book of World Records as the female FBI agent who has shot and killed the most people.

There is a divide in academic material focusing on these characters, between those who link Lecter's and Starling's connection sexually and those who argue that their relationship is professionally platonic. Robbins takes the side of professionalism,: "he [Lecter] enthusiastically

embraces this asexual, ethically generous interpretation of his interrogator's [Starling] deepest motives and indeed derives from his knowledge a pleasure equivalent to erotic pleasure, which clearly marks him as the good mentor." (Robbins 83) While I agree with Robbins that their relationship is one of teacher and student, both in age and professional status (rookie and seasoned professional) in *Silence of the Lambs*, by the time *Hannibal* comes around ten years later they have equaled out, both are established professionally and therefore are on equal footing, which allows for a possible development into a deeper, more sexual relationship. The fact that Lecter's attempt at a sexual relationship ultimately is rebuffed points to their character types' inability to fall into such a change in relationship status.

Starling's relationship to Hannibal, while it fulfills the traditional heroine to hero function, is still difficult for the viewer to accept. Their character types align and require a continued relationship in order for either character to exist. Even through the end of *Hannibal* Starling cannot exist without Lecter and vice versa. Mizejewski, in looking at an umbrella of investigative films, states that "the attraction between investigator and criminal is a traditional fold in this genre...there's nothing straightforward or conventional about what Lecter and Clarice need in each other, as the sequel makes clear" (Mizejewski 186). This ties back to Propp's idea that the hero's function, one of them, is to save the princess- Lecter needs Clarice in order to be considered a hero figure. Clarice needs Lecter from the first moment she meets him in order to not only navigate the FBI but for her personal survival. *Hannibal* pushes the boundaries of their relationship further than *Silence*, as they have both grown as characters, Clarice more than Lecter. "The film pushes this coupling [Hannibal and Starling] slightly...the isolated close-up of his finger running down hers is the first time a man touches her" (Mizejewski 185). This points to evidence that Clarice does fulfill the princess/virginal heroine

role. The blur between his role as her protector and his role as a sexual mate for her, traditionally the conclusion of the hero/heroine role, is thus activated. Mizejewski also finds Verger's quote interesting, as I did upon viewing the film. Verger asks his physician, "Does he want to fuck her, kill her, eat her, or what?" The audience is as confused by their actions as Verger is. The ultimate motivations of Lecter are ambivalently displayed. In the end, this factor does not matter. As long as Hannibal meets the requirements of the hero figure, and aids Clarice, whether they engage in a sexual relationship or not is not in question.

The factor of a sexual relationship is extremely important in Thomas Harris' novels upon which the films were based. While I am concentrating on representations of the characters within the films it is imperative to note that many of the articles addressing the films also refer back to the books. The issue with this, and why it is not being followed in my argument, is the problem of audience. The films generated more viewers than the books did readers, and most popular culture references and parodies of the characters of Hannibal Lecter, Clarice Starling, and Buffalo Bill refer to the films and not the books. While the following authors have addressed both the films and the books in their analyses, only the sections referring to the films will be mentioned.

Greg Garrett's article "Objecting Objectification: Re-Viewing the Feminine in *The Silence of the Lambs*," investigates the character of Clarice Starling within *Silence* and how she is viewed and treated within the film by other characters in the narrative. He looks at how she is objectified by characters and the struggle of defying objectification. His analysis points to her objectification by the FBI as a tool for her investigation and eventual capture of Buffalo Bill and even her interaction with Hannibal Lecter. His statement about an earlier scene in the film spotlights her objectification by the FBI, "Clarice Starling holds up a punching target and braces

herself as brawny male trainees light into her. She is no longer a woman; she is only a punching bag” (Garrett 1). Garrett also mentions the elevator scene in which Clarice is physically uncomfortable and also dwarfed by much taller males wearing red sweatshirts to her gray one. As referenced, before he also finds that she is a victim of the male gaze; further supporting the labeling of the FBI as villain as it is by the FBI and in the psychiatric institution that she is gazed upon. She is monitored by Crawford when convenient for him, and is both watched and recorded by Dr. Chilton. In *Hannibal* Paul is the biggest violator- the camera through his point of view looks at Clarice’s bare thigh in a meeting and also looks at the nude drawing of her by Hannibal in her office- which is covered by a piece of paper. He uses and actively seeks out any chance to objectify her. Lecter does not objectify her; she is seen as an intellectual equal, a partner. In the last act of *Hannibal* in the kitchen of Paul’s lake house- coincidentally the most domestic setting the audience ever sees her in for an extended period of time- he tests her. Trapping her ponytail in the refrigerator, he asks her, “Tell me Clarice, would you ever say to me, ‘Stop, if you love me you will stop.’ ” She responds, “Not in a thousand years.” He pauses thoughtfully and comments, “Not in a thousand years...that’s my girl.” His respect for her and her intelligence leads to his sacrifice of his hand for her decision.

Andrew Schopp’s article, “The Practices and Politics of ‘Freeing the Look’: Jonathan Demme’s *The Silence of the Lambs*” supplements Garrett’s argument and provides a good introduction to Judith Halberstam’s work. In continuing the idea of the male gaze in the film he notes that “from the film’s opening shots, in which a predatory gaze follows Clarice Starling this film posits sight, seeing, and the gaze as the greatest threats to safety and self” (Schopp 126). He also focuses on the fact that while the camera gaze changes throughout *Silence*, it is male. He notes, in discussing the sequel, that the gaze is replaced by voice, through phone conversations

and audiotapes created by Dr. Chilton. He fails to note however that all of the flashback sequences in *Silence* are from Clarice's point of view. The manipulation of camera and suturing techniques leave the audience questioning their own position and leaves them feeling abject horror, "*Silence* manipulates the viewer's growing anxiety that this predatory gaze is in fact his or her own" (Schopp 129).

Judith Halberstam's chapter in *Skin Shows*, "Skinflick: Posthuman Gender in Jonathan Demme's *Silence of the Lambs*" continues her focus on the concept of monstrous figures. She begins stating that "postmodernity makes monstrosity a function of consent and a result of habit...monstrosity no longer coagulates into a specific body...it is replaced with a banality that fractures resistance because the enemy becomes harder to locate and looks more like the hero" (Halberstam 162-163). The enemy that becomes harder to locate and resembles a hero figure is the FBI- not Hannibal Lecter, as many would assume. "In *Silence of the Lambs*, the monster is everywhere and everyone and the monster's story is not distinguishable from the other textual productions validated within the film" (Halberstam 163). In making an argument for a possible follow-up study, then, according to Halberstam there are no real, positively coded characters within the films. All of them fall to some degree under the label of monstrous. Hannibal is monstrous, as is Buffalo Bill, for their actions of brutally murdering people. Clarice can be seen as a monstrous figure through the fact that, as Halberstam states, the film allows us different identities: "the woman detective alters traditional power relations and changes completely the usual trajectory of the horror narrative" (Halberstam 166). If monstrous figures are usually coded as also being anomalies, Clarice would be within the definition as she, according to Halberstam's definition, defies traditional power relations.

Halberstam's remarks on the relationship between Hannibal and Clarice give ending points wrapping up the conclusion that they are indeed hero and heroine, as well as the mentor/protégé: "his story requires her story, and hers depends on him" (166). These follow with evidence that they are hero and heroine. While Halberstam states this to support Bill, it also works for this essay: "*Silence* is a horror film that is not designed to scare women, it scares men instead with the image of a fragmented and fragile masculinity" (168). This is not just applied to Bill's character; the FBI is also slowly becoming an "image of a fragmented and fragile masculinity" with the hiring of female agents. In conclusion what is also then in question, and will be used in further analysis of the topic, is if Hannibal and Clarice could stand for one single character. Hannibal and Clarice as one character would be virtually unstoppable. Splitting them into two and trying to demonize one half turns into a Jekyll and Hyde example. The audience, in order to accept the film, needs a fall guy so the real villain, a much scarier one (the FBI) isn't easily detected.

Ileana Scott and Martin Asher: The Lovers

Ileana Scott and Martin Asher are the next step from Clarice Starling and Hannibal Lecter. Scott and Asher are in fact lovers. Their ages are relatively equal, as are their abilities in their respective fields. They are distinct from Starling and Lecter who were decades apart in age, and therefore also had a very different relationship format. By being the middle, the bridge between rookie Starling and her mentor, Lecter and advanced Marsh and the young, inexperienced Reilly, Scott and Asher are more similar to each other, allowing for a tighter, more intimate relationship because they are at the same life stage together. The film allows the audience to see Scott and Asher (at first in the form of James Costa) before they meet each other.

Scott is an established, talented FBI Special Agent and Asher is an equally experienced killer by this point. They are stable and come into their relationship with established identities.

The film introduces each character and highlights his or her “skills” equally. A young, teenaged Asher is seen first. The viewer is with young Asher as he follows another young traveler. As they buy a car to continue their journey and spend time together, Asher inconspicuously scans the other teen, noticing their physical similarities. While the teen fixes their car on the side of the road, Asher suddenly pushes him out into the road in front of another car. When he realizes that he isn’t quite dead yet, Asher grabs a rock and bashes the teen’s skull in. He walks off singing the same song the drifter was previously singing. This represents his ability to kill and take over the life of another, and also shows the audience that he has a past of killing.

Scott’s introduction, as I briefly mentioned earlier, occurs at a crime scene later in the evening. The first glance at her is a close-up of her head, with particular detail on her face. Her eyes are noticeably closed as the camera pans down her face. She is concentrating on the task at hand, on getting into the perpetrator’s head. The wide shot of her body extended in the actual dug grave is a punctuation mark on her dedication, also placing her slightly out of the typical manner of address at crime scenes in other such films. This change in method serves to further highlight her as a figure different from the group, further ostracized. Her hands move around her surroundings, getting a literal feel for both the killer and the victim. Three men, the Canadian detectives, come over to her with flashlights, shining them down into the grave and also directly into her eyes. While she matches them visually, all wearing dark colors and clothing customary to officials, she is clearly set apart. They disrupt her, the light flashing in her eyes, which represent her profiling skills, represents the beginning of a constant struggle she will have with

them over her profiling abilities. She immediately begins to profile the murderer, adding the most thorough and detailed indicators towards a working profile of the victim and the killer. These two beginning insights into Scott and Asher underline not only the skills within their respective trades, but their heightened skill levels and dedication.

The credit sequence cuts back and forth between newspaper clippings showcasing various murders and victim photos, and a faceless Asher going through the complex process of molding a new physical identity with hair, fingerprints, and handwriting. His time and apparent practice clue the audience in to the fact that he is the murderer from the various newspaper articles. Scott is also given screen time displaying the same amount of effort and practice in her field. After she leaves the morgue she goes to her hotel room and begins to create her environment. She strategically places crime scene photos all around the room, above her bed on the ceiling, and proceeds to flip through them as she eats. She does not use the room for its actual use function, to sleep; instead she works through this time she is given away from the case. Scott, like Asher, creates an almost cocoon environment, swaddled with her work.

Any time in the film that Scott or Asher is seen alone he or she is diligently working on his or her job. Scott returns to the crime scene from when James Costa was attacked, sitting on the curb with crime scene photos, oblivious to the world around her. It is only when a mother walks behind her on the sidewalk with a young girl that Scott snaps out of her headspace and covers the photos laid out in front of her. There are very few scenes in the film in which Scott does not have her security blanket, the crime scene pictures. When Costa/Asher walks into the bar across from his art studio and walks up to her, she is drinking coffee, again analyzing various case files and photos. Later in the film, when she breaks back into Mrs. Asher's house to look for any clues about Asher, she repeats her earlier grave profiling actions. When she finds his bed

in the basement she lies down on it, to get into his head, to understand what made him the killer he is today. Later in the hotel room she even looks at evidence in the bathtub. She doesn't shut herself off from the case, even to complete a daily activity such as bathing. She never gets a chance to clean her mind from criminality. It is in the tub, however, that she figures out the break in the case, the idea that links all of Asher's murders, as well as his MO. This scene immediately leads to a filled interrogation room the next morning. Scott explains Asher to the other investigators, that he is taking lives, that all of the men he replaces lead lives different from his, that he wants desperately to be another person.

Martin Asher has equal explanatory time concerning his abilities to continue to kill and take over the lives of others through his evasion of capture. While Scott's profiling ability is symbolized through the constant placement of crime scene photos and case files, Asher's performance as James Costa is just as dedicated and advanced. Before he visits Scott in the bar, the audience gets a chance to watch him, acting as voyeurs without his knowledge, seeing Asher as Costa, being the art dealer even when he is alone and does not need to perform Costa's identity. Like Scott's attention and focus on evidence when she is supposed to be away from the case, this shows Asher's dependence on focusing on something other than who he is. While the camera gaze privileges both of these characters, making them equally vulnerable in these instances above, Scott ultimately breaks the balance at the conclusive climax of the film.

They are both at the top of their proficiency when they are in physical proximity, having each other to play off of directly. When she is fully performing the role of the investigator, also as the fullest example of the female heroine investigator figure, and when he is fulfilling the home fatale role by being James Costa, they are at their strongest. This occurs twice in the film: the first time they meet in person and then in the final showdown. It is interesting to mention

that both times this occurs, the location privileges Scott. The first meeting takes place in an interrogation room at the police station. She sees James Costa, who is currently only known to her and the audience as a witness and victim of Martin Asher, from the other side of the interrogation room's double mirror. This control Scott has of the look, of the camera gaze, also reappears in the final scene. She is given the chance to see him, analyze him, before he even knows of her existence. When she enters the room they are also visually separated and linked at the same moment. When she enters she is wearing a black suit, while he is sitting wearing a white shirt, the exact opposite of her suit. Once she sits and they begin to talk, their relationship begins and the characters are inextricably linked from this point forward. When she sits, they are on an even level, evened more so because she takes off her suit jacket to reveal a white shirt as well. They are now visually equal, and also continue to enact their abilities, feeding off of each other. As she continues to analyze him, watching him draw a sketch of the killer, watching his reaction when she drops the murder weapon by her side, he also maintains his skill, performing Costa, acting the way he would if he were in the same situation.

While they are evened here, they do not remain even by the end of the film, when Scott gains control and power over Asher. This is complicated when she sees him in the elevator, but works past it. Desire in horror also, according to Williams, lies between the woman and the monster, and although the female has some control of the gaze, at the same time the monster eclipses her power, stripping away agency because "the woman's look of horror paralyses her in such a way that distance is overcome; the monster's own spectacular appearance holds her originally active, curious look in a trance like passivity that allows him to master her through her look" (Williams 86). While this describes Scott's paralytic reaction to seeing Costa as Asher, as a monstrous figure, she is not ultimately controlled by him, as many other horror heroines are.

In the final showdown, which I will discuss in detail later, the reveal is made that she constructed and orchestrated the entire scene following her breakdown over finding out that Costa was Asher, the entire seven months he spent watching her living alone on a farm in rural Pennsylvania. After she stabs him she says, “Everything you saw I wanted you to see,” pointing directly to the fact that she is now fully in control of what is gazed at. The control of the camera gaze, and also of the narrative, is Scott’s, as this undercover operation was also hidden from the audience as a plot twist. This control also leads easily into the full control Jennifer Marsh has in *Untraceable*. This control is integral to my argument because it further solidifies the female FBI agent as a hero figure.

A key element for both characters, an aspect that easily links them together, is their experiences of ostracization. Asher is ostracized by society and by his mother, Rebecca Asher, as we learn. Scott is ostracized by her peers, the detectives, and is also away from her normal location of the Washington, DC FBI office. Mrs. Asher and the detectives also therefore act as stressors for the pair. Both affect Asher and Scott on personal and professional levels. I also argue that there is no real break for either between these two concepts. Scott is a profiler, constantly analyzing, and Asher is a killer. They do not move beyond the elements that identify who they are. They both constantly perform actions cementing their identities as profiler and killer respectively. Neither of them approach their “work” as work in the typical, 9am to 5pm time clock sense. What they do is who they are, they cannot and do not want to escape their positions because in doing so, they would in effect kill their identity, and therefore themselves.

When Scott, at the beginning of the film, leaves the morgue for the first time, she walks out with LeClair, who informs her that the other detectives thought she was “some kind of witch” because of her uncanny profiling abilities. She responds, saying that she has been called

“much worse,” tipping the viewer off to the fact that this is something she is used to dealing with, and also suffers. Later, when she is at breakfast with detectives Paquette and Duval, she is disconnected from them, again concentrating on crime scene photos. They, especially Paquette, explicitly attempt to shun her by talking about her in French assuming that she is only familiar with the English language. While she does not stand for this, dropping the photos in front of Paquette’s breakfast to make him get up from the table, it still affects her. She later reclaims her position when they visit Mrs. Asher. They continue a discussion about her in the car in French. She casually leaves the car and, in perfect French, answers the question Paquette had asked Duval. It is important to note that while the actions of the detectives are intended to draw a line between them, Scott always counters their actions with her own.

Paquette’s displeasure and distrust with Scott escalates as the film continues, as Mrs. Asher’s coincides with Martin, and especially after Duval’s death. When Scott runs to the elevator, the doors opening to reveal Asher decapitating his mother, both LeClair and Paquette look at her with quick disgust before they run after Asher. When Scott, LeClair, and Paquette return to Costa’s place, after Asher evades them in the hospital, the detectives fight about her actions. Scott attempts to apologize, and is awarded a slap across the face by Paquette, who then blames her for Duval’s murder at Asher’s hands.

Scott, as the hyper-dedicated agent, is equally upset with herself. She is escorted back to her hotel room, having been removed from the case. As she looks around the room, taking stock of his blood still left on the bed, she runs through her egregious mistake in profiling and personal judgment. She hurls her service weapon at the long mirror, fracturing her physical reflection, paralleling the effect her decision-making will have on her career. She is then seen completely naked in the bathroom, on the floor furiously scrubbing at her skin, as she experiences visual

flashbacks of her sexual encounter with Asher. These jump cuts are extremely fetishized parts of her body; however it is important to remember that these are her flashbacks, this is how she is viewing herself, in fractured images as she did in the broken mirror. This scene is important because it visually showcases that she is struggling through the transition from Starling's rookie figure to Marsh's experienced figure. This scene allows the viewer to watch her go through what ends up symbolizing growing pains. The scene also cuts between the bathroom and the agents chasing Asher down in the train station. Both Asher and Scott are attempting to flee something they fear most- for Scott it is a profiling mistake, for Asher it is being captured by the police, which would force him back into his own skin as Martin Asher and not the identity of one of his victims.

Rebecca Asher is a driving force in Martin Asher's life decisions. While she has a major impact on his actions, unlike the detectives with Scott, the impact is mostly psychological at this point in Asher's life, as he does not see her in person again until the end of the film. Most of the information the viewer receives about the Ashers' relationship is through her discussions with the detectives and Scott. When Scott interviews Asher about Martin she finds out that Martin was a twin, and she observes that all of the photos in the house are of Reese, Martin's twin, and not Martin. Rebecca shows contempt towards Martin, having obviously favored Reese until his death. It is hinted that Martin killed his brother while they were boating at the age of sixteen. It was after Reese's death that Rebecca noticed a violent change in Martin's behavior, which was followed by Martin running away.

As Rebecca tells her side of Martin's history to Scott, she notices a draft coming from a bookcase as she leaves the house. Scott returns to the house when Rebecca is gone, breaking in to investigate the bookcase. She finds that Martin was kept in the basement, the staircase hidden

behind the large bookcase. Martin's apparent childhood abuse at the hands of his mother gives Scott ample information to continue to create a profile of why Martin kills the people he kills, eventually figuring out that he is trying to become anyone but himself. Scott's intuition about the volatile relationship Martin had with his mother was correct. When she is in the hospital, going to check on Rebecca, who is also at the hospital to identify Martin's body from the car explosion, her profile is confirmed. Martin overheard Scott's conversation with the detectives about Rebecca's presence in the hospital. He takes this chance to find her and resolve his relationship with her. As Scott struck back against Paquette and Duval when they attempted to shun her and hurt her, Martin also strikes back against his mother, killing and decapitating her.

Scott and Asher, as profiler and killer, complement each other, understanding their need for each other. Their relationship is also one, as I have discussed before, that leads to a consummation of their sexual desire, which is closely tied to their personal actions. Their attraction to each other is somewhat constructed by Asher as, under the identity of James Costa, he is able to be what he believes she needs. The first time he moves towards this is after she first interrogates him. He sees Paquette corner her in the office and he goes up to them, asking to speak with Scott. Costa/Asher then lies, telling her that he could see Paquette had trapped her (having previously seen her expression with his three sisters). He attempts to establish trust with Scott, reading her as she is attempting to read him. He again interrupts her at the bar as she is working on the case file. He sits by her, commenting on the fact that she is analyzing the Band-aids on his fingers, saying she is always analyzing. As they size each other up, she decides to give him her personal cell phone number, falling slightly for his nice guy/innocent victim guise.

He uses his status as victim two more times to get closer to Scott. After an alleged break-in at his art gallery he requests that Scott drive him home. While in the car he asks her why she does what she does. She lets her guard down and tells him the origins of her decision to enter law enforcement. She says that the job is the only one she could ever picture herself doing, that it is “a compulsion, not a punishment.” She explains that when she was twelve someone had broken into her house and she grabbed a knife and killed him. This could easily have been constructed as a possible negative in her life, something that she sought punishment or forgiveness for, like Starling trying to escape the lambs. Instead, for Scott, it was a career maker in a more positive way. Her career, she explains, is important. He inquires about the wedding ring on her finger. She tells him that she has never been married, that it is to keep people at bay. This also symbolizes her marriage to her job, that it is something that she has completely devoted herself to.

The second time he plays the “nice victim” card is after the botched meet up with the fake Asher at a bar. He appears vulnerable and scared about meeting with Asher¹. When Scott drives him back to his place he apologizes to her, and she dismisses the apology, acknowledging that it is not warranted, that he did not do anything wrong. It is after these two instances that the audience is given an idea of the extent to which Costa/Asher has affected Scott. When she talks to LeClair after the bar surveillance attempt, she tells him that she has to leave, that she is having a “reaction” to Costa. She realizes the obvious attraction she feels towards Costa and is professional; she offers to leave the case to maintain its integrity. LeClair keeps her on the case, saying that she had to deal with turning against her sexual needs and desires back when they were at Quantico; that she was used to living this way.

¹ He is somewhat legitimately afraid because the man he knows he is meeting, Hart, is extorting from him.

In maintaining her professional behavior, Scott does not act on her attraction until they believe they have captured Asher following the car chase. Once Asher's DNA matches the hair on Hart's body, Scott smiles at Costa, shakes his hand and also lets it linger, hinting that the case is now sealed. Scott returns to her hotel room to pack and return to DC. Costa comes in and without talking, backs her up against the wall, looking at her and watching her reaction as she also analyzes him. As they begin to have sex, he moves her over to the bed, and they both look up at the crime scene photos still taped on the ceiling. It is at this point that he fully realizes and sees who she is, that they are the same, both fixated on horrific acts of violence. However, as we see in the final showdown, he misreads Scott. While they balance each other, as profiler and killer, they are not on equal emotional and moral ground here- she does not share his feelings on his murders. When Scott wakes next to Costa the next morning she sees copious amounts of blood smeared on her reflection in the bathroom mirror. She runs back to the bed to see that the stitches on his arm from the car crash had reopened during sex. The ripped stitches symbolize a break in his psyche, the oozing blood foreshadowing a loss of control- a loss of control that leads to the murder of his mother. The break in his psyche also opens the floodgates to a complete loss of control. He believes he has read Scott correctly, and that she then, completely understands him, that they are on an equal level of empathy. This is, if course, not true. While she is affected by the subsequent reveal of Costa as Asher, it serves to reinforce her abilities as an investigator in the end, while his misjudgment and trust of her leads to his ultimate destruction at her hands.

After the Costa/Asher reveal, Scott is, as I have stated, punished and shunned by the other detectives, and to this point, the audience as well. She is the one who broke protocol by sleeping with a witness and entering into a physical relationship with him, placing her career, her livelihood, in jeopardy. This also represents a stereotypical female response to defer to the male

in the relationship- to give up her individual life goals for him. This is short lived however because with Scott this cannot ultimately work. She is unable to be codependent, only able to function on an interdependent level. As she breaks, and is blamed and tossed off of the case she becomes someone she is not. She cries in her hotel bathroom, scrubbing him off of her body, acting like a victim. At the same time Asher, on the other hand, immediately becomes someone else on the train. The audience then assumes the opposite of what is about to occur. Flashing back and forth between a naked, crying Scott and an active Asher capturing his next victim, lures the audience into believing what typically happens at this point to heroines in these situations- they break and are unable to regroup, needing instead to be saved by the male hero. This does not work or last because ultimately Scott is more active and advanced than Starling was, and she regains her position.

The final showdown takes place in an overly domestic setting. The audience, and Asher, track her to Carlisle, Pennsylvania² seven months later to find that she is living alone and is seven months pregnant. When he surprises her in the kitchen she is literally barefoot and pregnant, the stereotypically passive traditional position of women in a heterosexual relationship. Asher, like the audience, assumes that she is powerless- especially after he mentions having stripped the house of all of the various weaponry she had strategically placed. She notices the garrote in his back pocket, his choice of weapon when killing. He tries to talk to her, telling her that they were meant to be together, that they understand each other. She is also forced to tell him that she is carrying twins, like Martin and his brother Reese. She also fights, saying these are not his babies, but James Costa's. He tells her that she could not have fallen in love with Costa because he was not her equal- Asher is. They psychically fight after she baits him about the babies not really being his because of who he is, denying the value of his true identity, saying

² She had given him the background information about Pennsylvania at his art show when he inquired about where she had grown up.

that Asher is impotent whereas Costa was not. When she grabs at the garden shears and stabs at him wildly, he grabs them from her and, without any pause, stabs her in the stomach. She pauses turns, and stabs him fatally in the chest. She explains, as she takes off the fake pregnancy suit, that it was all fake, “everything you saw I wanted you to see.” Her control of what is gazed at, what is seen, fools both Asher and the audience, proving to be a successful plot twist. The faked pregnancy as an undercover operation is successful because it was a plausible for a typical female heroine. Scott’s non-gender conforming actions not only saved her life, but also saved the character type. The fact that this was a seven-month long deep cover assignment proves her dedication to her profession, as well as the possibility and hope for strength as a hero figure.

Owen Reilly and Jennifer Marsh: The Son and Mother

Jennifer Marsh and Owen Reilly represent the next step in the agent/serial killer relationship. By this point Marsh has moved to the position of hero. She is the maternal figure to the killer and also has the most independence/control/agency. This hero positioning must be balanced however, as the other relationships were. This balance causes the killer to be somewhat of a weakened figure- as one is strong; the other must complete the balance with a calculated level of weakness. This balance is equaled in its mirror image to Starling and Lecter. Marsh takes the level of strength and power that Lecter had, but as an experienced agent in her field. Reilly therefore takes Starling’s place as a rookie, fledgling killer. The introductions of the characters also display their various stages of life, as mother and son.

The film opens on the body of a young male using a handheld camera. As he sets the camera down the screen shows him setting a kitten up on a glued sheet in what looks to be a basement. While his identity is not revealed at this point, the body belongs to Owen Reilly. Our introduction to Scott is almost as hidden. We first see her walking into a building, with her

jacket hood up, so until she decides to remove it, the audience cannot guess her gender. She removes her hood in the elevator showing that she is a middle aged, attractive woman. She walks to the security stand and flashes her badge, showing her name and also confirming that she is an FBI agent. As she sits at her desk it is revealed that she is working in the cyber crimes division, and it is quickly shown that she is good at what she does. The moment she gets in she immediately closes a fraud case, orchestrating the field team to take the suspects down.

Due to her positioning in cyber crimes, unlike Starling and Scott, Marsh sees and works at capturing Reilly from a distance, before he has the ability to be aware of her. She is given a tip about Reilly's website, killwithme.com. After looking at the site, seeing that it was streaming content on the kitten, still glued to the floor slowly dying, she takes the case to her boss. After being told that it wasn't a priority, as it was a cat and not a human, she shuts the site down. The action of shutting the site down represents a parent grounding a child, and like grounding, this first attempt is ineffective. While she was proven wrong in her assumption that this would be an easy enough issue to rectify, she continues to monitor the site, ignoring her boss' wishes.

Marsh and Reilly, like the others, have matched skill sets, which in their case is computer technology. Reilly's abilities are tied directly to his murder set-ups and the way in which he uses them (streaming through the website). Marsh's talents are equally matched and are the focus of her professional life and also bleed into her personal life. When Marsh is in the car driving home from the office she depends on the OnStar system to see the traffic route, highlighting her constant use of updated technology. Her abilities also exceed those of her boss. When she explains the site to him he asks her to speak without using the technical jargon. Like Scott's close-ups on her eyes, emphasizing her profiling abilities, there are a relatively equal number of shots of Marsh's hands, her tool in her field, underlining her strength in technology. There are

also multiple shots of close-ups of Reilly's hands as he types in information about the victims for the perusal of various site members and guests. While they are matched in skill level they also go back and forth in having the upper hand, like Scott and Asher. Later in the film when Marsh is driving away from the hotel, her car stops in the middle of Broadway Bridge. The news she hears over the radio right before it cuts out is the story about Reilly, calling him the Internet Killer and the most serious Internet crime wave to date. The electronics in her car, as well as her cell phone, have been cut. This, we learn, is at the hands of Reilly who then, as I will discuss in more detail later, kidnaps her.

Marsh and Reilly are also similarly motivated by familial factors to complete their "jobs." Marsh is a single mother supporting both her own mother and daughter, Annie, and is seen with her family any time she is away from the office. Reilly, we learn by the end of the film, is motivated to kill to avenge his father's death. Marsh works nights, specifically in order to be with her daughter during the day and able to walk her to the school bus. She is also seen throughout the film completing other tasks that are associated with mothers, taking Annie to and from karate lessons, and holding a skating birthday party for Annie. She is able to do all of this while also working on the case. Unlike Starling and Scott, Marsh has a flourishing, positive family life and is able to juggle both work and home successfully. What is also important is the struggle Marsh makes for her family. We learn that she does not even want to continue on the case at first because she does not want to take away from her scheduled time with Annie. Her dedication is towards her family first. She stays on because she is given people to aid and listen to her during the case, including a local detective, Eric Box. We also learn that Annie's father, Nick, was also in law enforcement, and he and Box went through the academy together. Later, he also tries to get her to leave the case when Reilly begins to target her, saying, "she's already

lost one parent to the job.” Marsh continues on, holding onto both her devotion to her career and her family.

Reilly is similarly motivated, but in a more visceral, deviant manner, fulfilling the role of the noir psychopath. He was impacted so harshly by his father’s suicide that he had to be institutionalized. Once he was released he was driven purely to avenge the death of his father. While his true motivation is not revealed until the end of the film, we see a glimpse when he is talking with a future victim. While engaging in small talk with his victim he discusses the fact that his father died the past year. He also talks of how they built things together and spent a lot of time together. At the end of this conversation, as punctuation mark on his talk, he tases the guy. Towards the end of the film it is revealed that all of the deaths, including the kitten, on killwithme.com are related. They are all related to a professor’s suicide that happened the previous year. Reilly not only avenges the death of his father, but also makes a point of using the skills his father taught him to do it. The death died the closest to the connection between Reilly and his father is Griffin’s. Griffin is killed with sulfuric acid, which was taken from the same university where Dr. Reilly taught. It is important that Griffin specifically died via this method because of what Griffin represents to Reilly.

Griffin, a younger agent who works with Marsh, is seen as the good son to Reilly’s bad son. Griffin sits by Marsh in the office, their desks connected, and they work together on cases. As he is much younger than she is, she acts as a pseudo-mother figure throughout the film, for him. Griffin represents everything that Reilly is not. He not only assists Marsh on a professional level, but also interacts with her and Annie away from the office, as an added family member. When he attends Annie’s birthday party Marsh also discusses his dating life with him, with a motherly interest. Griffin’s internet date with Melanie is also the avenue Reilly takes in order to

eliminate him. Reilly calls Griffin, using voice technology, to lure him into a trap. Again, the method of death Reilly sets up for Griffin is related to his father. He places Griffin in a chair, sitting in a vat of water. As people visit the site their numbers increase the amount of sulfuric acid being pumped into the vat. Reilly also makes a point of pinning Griffin's FBI badge into his naked chest, to again point out Griffin's overachieving status of the "good son". While Griffin does die, he also, because of his placement as the "good son," solves the case. Harkening back to his discussion with Marsh earlier in the film about learning Morse code in Boy Scouts, Griffin blinks his eyes in Morse code to give Marsh the information she needs to capture the killer and solve the case. Griffin's death also triggers a more directed battle between Reilly and Marsh. From this point in the film forward, Marsh and Reilly deal directly with each other.

Marsh is in control of the gaze from the beginning of the film, which is natural due to her job, sitting at a computer looking through other people's computers, being a legal voyeur whose job depends on her ability to watch others. While Marsh also has power in the ability to not be seen, being able to be behind a computer screen in an office, Reilly has control over what is seen. Due to his control over his website, and of the camera angles, the audience does not see or know who he is until Griffin is sacrificed for it, as discussed above. It is when Marsh steps out of her normal job at the desk and into the field that Reilly sees her. Up until the point she visits one of the crime scenes, the house where Reilly kidnapped one of his victims, she monitors the killer's actions through her computer in the office as well as her home computer. Bringing her job home however, is a punishable action. When she brings her job into the house, blending her two roles, Reilly is given a chance to spy on her through a video game hack Annie is given.

As the camera gaze oscillates slightly between them, it is the connection, their relationship that is important. Marsh and Reilly are connected from the beginning when she is

tipped onto his website. While they are not physically proximal to each other, or aware of their identities at first, they are still connected through the means of their skill base: computer technology. Reilly can be seen as a new killer, a rookie, even before the audience is given his actual age. Marsh takes note of the fact, when she views his work with the kitten that he, like most killers, is escalating. The kitten, while relevant in his killing pattern,³ is a test before he moves upwards to human victims. Marsh and her team also notice that Reilly is not actually performing the murders himself, he is setting them up. He is somewhat disconnected by setting up the murders. Instead he is forcing the members and guests of his website to control the force of the death via the number of people logging onto the site. This attempt to circumvent directed responsibility is inherently juvenile in nature, again highlighting his position as the son figure.

When Reilly captures Marsh on the bridge he first talks to her through the OnStar system on her SUV. He feels the need to confess his actions to her, discussing his anger over his father's death being placed online for all to watch. He places blame onto her, as a cyber crimes agent, for allowing people to do whatever they want online without control. His compulsion to confess to her symbolizes a conversation between a son confessing a wrongdoing or problem to his mother. While he does not let her go, deciding to kidnap and punish her instead for not protecting him and his father's image, she is treated differently from the men. He does videotape her capture however, transferring the power of the camera gaze control into his favor, albeit for a limited time. All of the site visitors, including her fellow agents at the office, are watching the events take place in real time. He takes her to her own basement, and hangs her upside down, also binding her hands and feet. When he sets her up it is completely non-sexualized. The other male victims were shown with exposed chests or legs. Marsh is kept in her jeans and long sleeved shirt. Even though she is hanging upside down, she is still covered, never fetishized; her

³ The kitten is owned by one of the men Reilly blames for the sensationalism of his father's death.

shirt remains tucked in, not even falling down to reveal a portion of her torso. While he does not see her in a sexual way, as she represents more of a maternal figure to him, he does comment on the faceless website visitors, "I wonder if they'll kill you faster or slower. Awful things men do to women that other men pay to watch, it will probably be faster...much faster." Reilly is correct, Marsh's capture brings the site the most visitors to date, a fast eighteen million. The most visitors however, log in after their struggle. She begins to swing her body, eventually catching the pipe, opening it up to push the steam into Reilly's face. She gets herself down and fights him. She gets her gun back and is forced to shoot him. It is here that he loses all of his control again, he fails at being a serial killer because he has gone beyond his boundaries in trying to kill her, beyond his goals of only killing the people related to his father's death. She regains all of her power in defeating the villain, and also regains control over the camera gaze- literally. She crawls up to the camera, which has been knocked onto the floor, and makes a point of looking directly at the camera into the eyes of all of the internet viewers and flashes her badge, her symbol of authority and power.

Conclusion

Analyzing the characters in relation to each other throughout these texts does show there is hope in resistance of the traditional, heteronormative roles of girl, young woman, and mother. By the ends of all of the films' narratives, the women rebel against not only the roles they have been placed in, in relation to the killers, but they ultimately succeed as professionals- therefore coming full circle and making the case for the female hero figure. As the character type moves forward from Clarice Starling to Illeana Scott and Jennifer Marsh it has also gained the all important final element of solidifying the character as a hero, and not a heroine: self-rescue. This rescue is also key because of the similar placement within the films, both in plot and in

physical location. The location itself gains more power for these women because of the history of struggle it is laced with. By reappropriating control in these settings the female FBI agent also makes positive strides throughout the films towards the label of hero.

All of the final showdowns occur in domestic settings, Starling and Lecter in Paul Krendler's kitchen, Scott and Asher in the farmhouse kitchen and living room, and finally Marsh and Reilly in her basement. The home is the ultimate representation of the domestic setting, and historically, the roles of women in the home come with burdens of gender oppression and inequality. The 1950s concept of the stay at home mother, the dutiful wife, stuck within the confines of a suburban home is a stereotype understood and used within American culture. It is because of this fact, this cultural understanding of the history of women in the home, that the provocative placements of the films' final showdown are infused with power. The movements through the home also display evidence of the evolution of the female FBI agent character type. In *Hannibal*, again, the final showdown takes place in the kitchen. The kitchen has long been associated with the stereotype of the American housewife, commonly connected with this room as opposed to any other within a typical house structure. Since Starling is still a heroine, not yet a full hero, as she does not save herself, the kitchen is an appropriate setting. This does not, however, strip agency from her character. She does fight and rebel against Lecter, refusing his sexual advances, choosing her career instead. This choice is incredibly important because it leaves room for advancement in gender representation for following films.

Taking Lives has a final showdown, as I have previously stated, that begins in the kitchen and ends in the living room. The movement out of the kitchen and into a more gender-neutral space serves as a mise en scene highlight to Scott's actions. When capturing Scott, Asher believed her to be pregnant and helpless. Scott's ruse, a faked pregnancy, worked because it

manipulated common conceptions of gender roles. She saves herself and defeats the villain, Asher, because she orchestrated the undercover operation and controlled the entire situation. Jennifer Marsh, in *Untraceable*, gains her hero status through self-rescue because the final showdown begins in her basement with her bound by Reilly. The basement is one of the most distant rooms of a house from the kitchen and away from gendered territory. Notably Marsh saves herself (from being bound upside down hanging above a lawn mower) because of her knowledge of the space and utilization of various elements (pipes, tools, etc.) in order to surprise and defeat Reilly.

CONCLUSION

Navigating the waters of gender, film, and folkloristics for this project has been treacherous but ultimately survivable. Analyzing and labeling character types is a process just as difficult and unwieldy as attempting to label genre in film. My aim to question gendered character types and try to locate evidence of a gender-neutral hero definition and role was high although reachable. The fictional female FBI agents of Clarice Starling, Illeana Scott, and Jennifer Marsh do represent a new line of female characters in Hollywood cinema; they are characters that evolve to challenge traditional power roles that have been heavily bound to gender. The visual and narrative representations of these characters, as I have discussed, is not something that can be analyzed and debated within a vacuum. In order to fully grasp the full meaning of their positioning it was necessary to look at whom they were positioned against. Enter the serial killers.

Moving from *Silence of the Lambs* to almost two decades later with *Untraceable* allowed me to see closer patterns within these films and how they seemed to evolve from one to another as if they were connected via cinema franchise or production company.¹ The choice of using a blend of the theories above allowed for an analysis that provided evidence of the significance of representation and function within the narratives, for both the female FBI agents and the serial killers. Going from a detailed, structuralist analysis of the film through folkloristics and formalism to an understanding of how gender and genre work within a film narrative and its ever changing conventions to, finally, looking at how the previous two areas come together when analyzing how the characters are placed together, through their relationships within the text.

Starting with formalism and Propp and applying it to modern film successfully showed that

¹ Which they are not.

theories from different fields of study can be blended. The ability to look at how these characters are created and are used through the narrative is not only useful, but necessary when an analysis of the overall meaning which these characters hold is the ultimate goal. The next step, in Chapter Two, looking at the ancestry of previous character types from specific genres that culminate in the creation of the characters I researched, was also critical.

As the character type progressed from Starling to Scott to Marsh they grew more and more away from explicit ties to specific gendered character types (most notably, the Final Girl) and more into a newly evolved, less gender specific, hero role. The journey to hero status for these women is also evidenced through their positioning against the male serial killers and how they are coded within their specific texts. This relationship then, is also relevant because it adds another layer to the representation and positioning of the characters in the narrative. The women are placed within certain roles, from Starling as the rookie/girl to Marsh as the seasoned agent/mother, that also grow as the characters evolve from one text to another.

Thomas Gramstad in his article, "The Female Hero: A Randian-Feminist Synthesis" believes that "What we need is not 'heroines' (who are usually reduced to passive prize objects/rewards for male heroes), but *female heroes* (active heroes who happen to be female)." (Gramstad). After pouring through these films and watching character types progress, I argue that there is more than hope for a female hero because she already exists. Clarice Starling does not fit this role but was a necessary start to the creation of this figure. Without the success of Starling through both the films and Thomas Harris' novels, there would, I argue, have been no reason for other authors and producers to continue to work with this character type. Like the old saying, if you drop a frog into a pan of boiling water it will immediately jump out, but if you place it in a lukewarm bath and slowly turn up the heat it will stay and die. This logic can be

applied to film audiences. If Clarice Starling were originally coded with as much strength and independence as Jennifer Marsh it would not have worked, both in box office success and further use of the character type. Audiences would have, I argue, jumped ship.

The definition of hero, as I have defined it, is based in narrative structure with a focus on the importance of the ultimate self-rescue. It is stripped of the character's moral standings and decisions, as I am looking at the function of the character type and not the overall personality and psychological makeup of the figure. Due to this definition, as I have discussed, while there is a female hero figure, most prominently in Jennifer Marsh, there are also heroes found in places typically not associated with common conceptions of the term "hero." Labeling the female FBI agent as the hero figure is significant because it is acceptable that women in our time period and political climate realistically hold these positions and hold them well. Women are active in the FBI, as well as many other federal and state agencies and the military, unlike in decades before. Therefore it should only be natural, as genre and film are social mirrors, that these women are represented within fictional narratives as powerful, independent heroes.

While finally having evidence of a female hero is socially significant, so by extension, is the labeling of Hannibal Lecter. The fact that he fulfills the hero role, when looking through the lens of formalism and narrative function, further supports the idea that previous ideas of hero/villain being easily identifiable black and white roles are no longer relevant or viable. The lines have been blurred into gray, the idealistic concepts of easily categorized villains and heroes have reached the point where they are Utopian ideas and not a reflection of reality or the world of literature. While this idea creates anxiety and paranoia, an overall sense of unease, it is nonetheless relevant and systemic.

My findings on the hero figure can also be extended into other mediums and genres. Further research, as I have stated in the Introduction, extending into other branches of law enforcement in television shows including Olivia Benson of *Law and Order: Special Victims Unit*, Sydney Bristow of *Alias*, Dana Scully of *The X-Files*, Brenda Lee Johnson of *The Closer*, Sarah MacKenzie of *JAG*, Caitlin Todd and Ziva David of *NCIS*, and Mary Shannon of *In Plain Sight*. Films outside of the horror and psychological thriller genres, notably the *Miss Congeniality* romantic comedy set of films can also be analyzed under the methods I have used in my analysis. Extending the research of the female hero in these various genres and mediums would further support my theory of a change in definition of the hero, that it is not a role that should be gendered, but instead evidenced through narrative function. What I find extremely interesting is the continued use of the female agent/ male serial killer plot device. It is found in all of the above examples I have listed and also in other texts without female leads, an example being *CSI*. This fascination with the serial killer figure over all other forms of criminals and continued use by authors for both television and film highlights the relevance of studying it as a continued phenomenon.

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